



THE WRITING TEAM: Pilong Bosaing, Br Gregory, Michiko Tatchell (top row)

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The Rev Wilmer Toyoken (bottom row)

FOREWORD

This narrative of the Evening Prayer (EP) of St. Michaels Multicultural Anglican Church is systematically presented by Greg Tatchell. He articulately describes the evolvement of our EP since its resurrection 6 + years ago. And I am aware that the Evening Prayer has a humble beginning. His memory of the beginnings is accurate – I well remember when he came back from his 1st Missourian Benedictine Convocation with the thoughts of Bishop Bill Franklin. And, 6+ years later, I couldn't be happier with the results of the path we embarked upon for St Michaels. Amazingly, attendance not only grew, but doubled with the short messages/mini homilies and the use of BAS and BCP EP liturgies, done alternatively.

I also well remember where the inspiration came from 4+ years ago regarding mini-Homilies/messages (MH's). He has captured that accurately as well, and, again, I couldn't be happier with the effect. Br Gregory's analysis in Conclusion 8 regarding workload is insightful. Another 4+ years of MH's will certainly be sustainable with a somewhat lessened MH frequency. As I enter my 11th year at St. Michaels, his idea of discontinuing MH's (but not EP) for the summer as a way of ensuring sustainability is well worth consideration by the Trustees.

Like Br Gregory, I feel that the 4 Testimonials are quite exceptional, and deserve the emphasis he has placed upon them. I also agree that they serve as very good proxies for all EP congregants.

The core section of this work, Section II on THEOLOGY, captures the emphasis we have focused on in Evening Prayer. As you read the Sections on the Wagon Wheel (II.7) and the Sistine Chapel (II.8), try to ask yourself if the material might be making too much in the way of demands on EP congregants. In my view, it is yet another Testimonial to emphasize that our life-long Christians were up to it, and that we shouldn't necessarily be wary of challenging our parishioners in this way.

Finally, I'd like to end with the 1st sentence of this work, the recommendation of Bishop Bill Franklin, when he encouraged Br Gregory with these words:

"ensure that the journey was not a solo one, but one that would benefit the home parish as well"

I support the Brother in saying that surely the Bishop would be pleased with the effect his recommendation has had on an ordinary parish church. From my perspective as the Rector, I think it is fair to say that we have likely exceeded what might have been expected. I expect our EP congregants would come to the same conclusion.

It is my hope that this work of Greg encourages and inspires not only the EP congregants but the whole church congregation as well.

"Padi Wilmer"
The Rev Wilmer Toyoken
Rector of St Michaels Multicultural Anglican Church

CONGREGANT TESTIMONIALS

1.	Moses Kajoba	-	The OT is in the NT Revealed	19
2.	Michiko Tatchell	-	The Sistine Chapel	28
3.	Blanca Mestito	-	Psalm 137	46
4.	Pilong Bosaing	-	Life Together	54

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Fore	word	i
Table	e of Contents	ii
Figu	res & Appendices	iii
INTE	RODUCTION	1
ı.	From Vanilla to Neopolitan	6
	1. Beginnings (6 Aug 2015)	7
	2. Evolution 1 - Adding Messages/Mini-Homilies (20 Oct 2017)	8
	3. Evolution 2 - COVID & Zoom (11 Apr 2020)	10
	4. Evolution 3 - Benedictine Liturgy (6 Apr 2021)	11
	5. Surveys (Nov 2020 & Dec 2021)	12
	6. Summary	14
II.	THEOLOGY	18
	7. The Wagon Wheel	
	8. Salvation & the Sistine Chapel	26
	9. The Centrality of Temple	33
	10. The Psalms	42
	11. Summary	49
III.	A Hybrid Evening Prayer (Vespers)	50
	12. Variations on Lay Participation	50
	13. Music	52
	14. Closing with a Question/Reflection	53
	15. Combining Liturgy and Business	57
	16. Summary	59
TEN	I CONCLUSIONS	61

FIGURES

FIGURE 1	TIMELINE	& ATTI	ENDANCE	6	
FIGURE 2	BENEDICTINE BEGINNINGS - MONTE CASSINO IN NOV 2014				
FIGURE 3	THE OT IN	THE N	TT - Q7 OF SURVEY #2	18	
FIGURE 4	WAGON WHEEL #1 - THE 4 GOSPELS				
FIGURE 5	SCRIPTURE #1 - ISAIAH IN THE 4 GOSPELS				
FIGURE 6	WAGON W	HEEL #	2 - HABAKKUK & ROM, GAL, & HEB	22	
FIGURE 7	7 SCRIPTURE #2 – HABAKKUK, RO, GAL, AND HEB				
FIGURE 8	THEOLOGY	CAN B	E FUN! - OY TO THE WORLD	24	
FIGURE 9	THE SISTI	VE CHA	PEL – 16 COLORINGS.	25	
FIGURE 10	THE SISTI	VE CHA	PEL CEILING – ZECH, DAVID & JONAH	26	
FIGURE 11	GOD & A	DAM —	LIGHT & DARKNESS	29	
FIGURE 12	SCRIPTUI	RE #3 -	JONAH	30	
FIGURE 13	PROFOUN	VDLY C	HRISTOCENTRIC	32	
FIGURE 14	Воок Са	OVER #1	! - The Message of Salvation	33	
FIGURE 15	Воок Са	OVER #2	2 – SACRED ART	34	
FIGURE 16	THE THR	EE TEM	TPLES	36	
FIGURE 17	LAMENT	#3 - TH	IE WEEPING PROPHET	37	
FIGURE 18	LAMENT	#2 - Ps	ALM 137	38	
FIGURE 19	LAMENT	#3 - NA	ABUCCO - VA PENSIERO	39	
FIGURE 20			PSALMS		
FIGURE 22			R		
FIGURE 21			NT - A TABLE		
FIGURE 23	Joy Koga	AWA Ho	APPENDICES	63	
1. Apr	endix I	_	2022 AGM – EP Survey #2 Summary – as Ratified	A1	
		_	2021 AGM – EP Survey #1 Summary – as Ratified	A2	
• •			Dec '21 - Survey #2 – EP (Vespers) at St Michaels	A3	
		-	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •		
	endix IV	-	Nov '20 - Survey #1 – EP (Vespers) at St Michaels	A18	
	endix V	-	Shi Hen – Original Life Vows Project	A28	
6. App	endix VI	-	The Monastic Tradition & the Church (#13 of 14)	A40	
7. App	endix VII	-	BAS Evening Prayer Booklet (Day 1 of 6 ½ years)	A52	
3. Appendix VIII -		-	Benedictine Vespers (Year 6 of 6 ½ years)	A59	

INTRODUCTION

At my first Missourian CSL-OSB Benedictine Convocation in May of 2015, during an interview with our Benedictine Bishop, the Right Reverend Bill Franklin, his Grace encouraged this Benedictine neophyte to ensure that the journey was not a solo one, but one that would benefit the home parish as well. Six weeks after that interview, with the encouragement of the parish priest, the Rev. Wilmer Toyoken, we began Evening Prayer (Vespers) at St Michaels Multicultural Anglican Church (SMM) on Aug 6, 2015.

Nearly 3 years later, in writing the 13th reflection of the CSL-OSB Novitiate program, the pastoral/theological grounding/foundation behind Bishop Bill's suggestion came into strong focus.

The title of that March 2018 reflection had a very long title:

"What can the Monastic tradition give to the church?"

That reflection hearkened back to the original inspiration from + Bill (see APPENDIX III):

<u>I. MY PARISH:</u> While not phrasing it precisely the same as Francis' question "what can the monastic tradition give to the church," Bishop Bill clearly encouraged me in the same vein in a one-on-one interview in 2015.

- As a result of his encouragement, we began Evening Prayer [sic Vespers] one-day-a-week soon after my return. That was about 2 ½ years ago. In 2018, we are up to Evening Prayer twice a week, with an average weekly attendance of well over a dozen.
- Without the monastic tradition background (and + Bill's encouragement) our Parish in all likelihood would still not have prayer services during the week. This has been a big change for our parish.
- The question it raises, and possibly Br David was trying to lead us to the lens that would help with this question, is "what else can the monastic tradition give to our church?"

It was this March 2018 reflection that also served to finalize my Benedictine mantra, which had been evolving over the first 2 ½ years of discernment as a Benedictine:

This reflection has also had a significant effect on my Benedictine formation, leading me to append "Prayer first" to my Benedictine mantra (see p-4):

"LIFE TOGETHER. UNDER GOD'S WORD. IN CHRIST. IN PRAYER."

Note that these 9 words are the title of this reflection on 6 ½ years of Evening Prayer at St Michaels Parish. These 9 words/4 concepts not only are the four pillars of my personal Benedictine principles, but also serve to describe very well the four pillars of

understanding of Evening Prayer at St Michaels. This will be expanded upon fully in Sections II and III, THEOLOGY, and HYBRID WORSHIP.

A third quote from Appendix III highlights the centrality of the fourth concept of the mantra above:

II. FRANCIS' FOCUS - "and it was this that was always foremost. Prayer."

If the quote above highlights Francis' primary focus, a second one that would surely come close is "his love for the church – the whole church – was unwavering."

 Bishop Bill obviously saw this potential back in 2015, and it is heartening to see the significant effect this has had on the prayer life in our parish, with Evening Prayer twice a week when before there was none.

ORIGINAL INTENTIONS

The original intention for my Life Vows Project was tightly focused on the 4th element of the mantra on the title page - "<u>IN PRAYER</u>". As can be seen in Appendix IV, the original Life Vows Project Proposal contained the detailed genesis referred to at the beginning of this Introduction:

Sept 2019 EMBER 5 Update for Abbot David

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

A contemplative reflection on each of the 150 Psalms, to be submitted in book form, with as many of the Psalms delivered in mini-homilies as is possible in the anticipated 3-year life of the project (1+ year research [ending Aug '19], then 20 months writing [ending Apr '21]).

OBJECTIVE: I see 4 objectives for this Life Vows project, building on my 2017 work when I was still a Novice:

- 1. deepen my prayer life (the Psalms are Prayers).
- 2. enrichen my understanding of Monastic life (the Psalms occur 57 times in the RULE; 41 Psalms occur 84 times in the NT; and we do approximately 10 Psalms per day up here at the Abbey).
- 3. add spiritual & theological depth to the discernment process of the 3 years leading, hopefully, to my Life Vows in 2021 (the Psalms are Spiritual, the Psalms are Theology).
- 4. ensure this is not done in isolation (give it life with Mini-Homilies in my church community).

In 6 ½ years of Evening Prayer (EP) at St Michaels Parish, all four of these objectives have borne fruit to some extent. Over time, however, the focus inexorably gravitated to number one and four; a deepening of prayer life, and a robust involvement of the parish through the EP process.

As will become apparent in Section I.3, mini-Homilies/messages became a permanent part of Evening Prayer in October of 2017. It took a bit of time, but doubts began to creep in about my Life Vows project, especially with my migration to Objectives 1 & 4 above (and a concurrent lessening of focus on Objectives 2 & 3). While Psalms are central to a Benedictine prayer life (indeed, to any prayer life), it quickly became clear

that trying to convey this with mini-Homilies in Evening Prayer more and more took on the character of Mission Impossible. As time evolved, this manifested itself in the mini-Homilies – the Psalms became adjuncts, not the Primary focus.

And, as the Psalms faded into the background, doubts about the appropriateness of my Life Vows Project muscled to the forefront. Still, two years ago, as Appendix IV clearly shows, I was stubbornly refusing to change tack, and was sticking to it, at least in my Sept 2019 update to the Abbot. Six months later, COIVD & ZOOM changed everything. With the reach and visual capabilities of ZOOM, our approach to the mini-Homilies changed quickly, and the move away from the Psalms soon was complete.

By the summer of 2020, it was abundantly clear that the Life Vows Project was no longer about preaching & reflecting on the Psalms (Section II.10). And, in its stead, my focus more and more became the evolution of the complete EP package at St Michaels over the 6 ½ years since Bishop Bill made his May 2015 recommendation. And thus this 100-page package.

FOUNDATIONS

There are four foundations for this CSL-OSB Project on the evolution of Evening Prayer at St Michaels:

- 1. The Church & the Monastic Tradition Novitiate Reflection, quoted extensively above (Appendix III).
- 2. The one-page summary of two EP surveys, summarized for the Rector's report to the 2021 & 2022 Annual General Meeting (Appendices I & II).
- 3. The Congregational Surveys behind the reports in 2 above (Append. V & VI).
- 4. The extensive grounding in the Psalms that occurred up to Sept 2019.

In the 16 Sections of this Project, the focus will be primarily on the 1st three of these foundational documents: the Church & the Monastic Tradition; the one-page Survey summaries for Annual General Meeting presentation; and the detailed Surveys themselves. As the Table of Contents shows, the project will approach the material in three steps. One, *From Vanilla to Neopolitan*, explores the broad strokes of EP evolution over the last 6 ½ years. Two, it will look at how a deepening embrace of *Theology* became more and more a part of the mini-Homilies. And, three, it will look at four variations on what today has become a hybrid version of Evening Prayer/Vespers. Section I follows, beginning with 'Beginnings.'

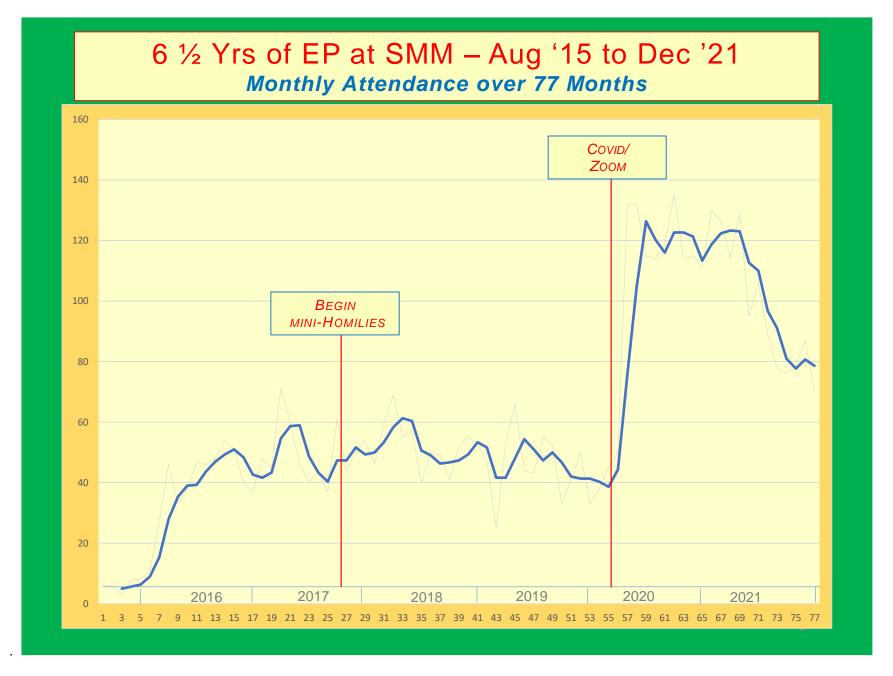


Figure 1 Aug 2015 to Dec 2021 - 6+ Years of Monthly EP Attendance, plus Two Seminal Events.

I. BEGINNINGS - FOUR SEMINAL STEPS

The broad stroke 6+ year beginning/evolution of Evening Prayer (EP) at St Michaels Multicultural Anglican Church (SMM) in Vancouver, BC, Canada, can be described in four seminal steps: beginnings (Aug '15); introducing mini-homilies/messages (Oct '17); the advent of COVID (Mar '20); and introducing Benedictine Vespers liturgy (Apr '21).

1. In the Beginning – 6 Aug 2015

As indicated in the introduction, Bishop Bill Franklin "encouraged this Benedictine neophyte to ensure that the journey was not a solo one, but one that would benefit the home parish as well."

The parish priest at SMM, the Rev Wilmer Toyoken (Padi Wilmer) was very receptive to what + Bill had recommended, and in a very spontaneous fashion planted the mustard seed by suggesting that we achieve the objective by starting an Evening Prayer (EP) program at St Michaels. Within a week, we held an Evening Prayer service at SMM on Tue 6 Aug 2015.

Previously, in our 132-year-old church, there was a long history of Evening Prayer, although only on Sundays (although the last instance was at Advent III in 2001).

BUT, there has never been weekday EP at SMM in 34+ years, going back to at least 6 Feb 1981. The graph of 6+ years on the previous page shows how prolonged the radical establishment of weekday EP has been to the traditions of St Michaels Anglican Multicultural Church (SMM).

THE ROLE OF PADI WILMER

It is impossible to over-emphasize Padi Wilmer's commitment to the establishment of Weekday Evening Prayer (EP), right from the beginning. Excepting holidays, over 6+ years he has rarely missed an Office. The demands on his time has increased inexorably, as the program evolved from once a week to twice a week (in Easter 2016), and as we added mini-Homilies/messages (at Thanksgiving 2017), and then wrestled with COVID and the advent of ZOOM (during Lent IV 2020). Just one example should suffice to show his level of effort – for the last 4 ½ years, he has averaged over 100 Homilies/mini-Homilies a year, evenly split between

Sundays and Evening Prayer. In 2021, he did 60 EP mini-Homilies alone (by comparison, his sidekick did only 38). It is probably a safe bet to say that there are few Anglican/Episcopalian priests in North America who have preached as often as Padi Wilmer has, over such an extended period of time.

The workload in the beginning, over the first few years, however, was minor by comparison. In the beginning, in the last five months of 2015, there was only either the Priest or the Brother (9 times), or both (9 times also). But we endured, with a *FIELD OF DREAMS* optimism fueling our passion. From such austere beginnings, imagining a weekly average of 30+ in 2020 would have seemed delusionary!

BOOKLETS & A BIBLE

St Michaels Multicultural (SMM) refined their Evening Prayer Booklet in 2017, when they hosted an Anglican Communion/Episcopalian Asian Ministry (EAM) Convocation in August of that year, marking the 2nd Anniversary of EP at SMM. This commemorative booklet can be found at Appendix VII. Early on, we bought bibles for the EP program to augment the booklet/liturgy. This was the first instance of adding to the preparation workload – we quickly learned that a smooth flowing Office required that the readings be just a color-coded cord away for the congregants. While the 10 minutes that it took to pre-set the bibles seemed like a lot at the time, this was to pale in comparison to the large-scale commitments of time that came with the mini-Homilies in 2017, and then preparing one-of liturgies/booklets, including the daily readings, after COVID hit in 2020, and everything moved on-line.

For the first two years, however, prior to the advent of mini-Homilies, the preparation workload was minimal, especially in comparison to what came after Thanksgiving of 2017 (Section I.2 following).

2. Introducing mini-Homilies/Messages - Thanksgiving 2017

There were three primary Benedictine influences on Evening Prayer (Vespers) at St Michaels Multicultural (SMM) Anglican Church. The first was in getting it started (the previous section, I.1). The second was in the radical introduction of a mini-Homily (this section). The third was the adoption of the CSL-OSB Vespers

participative Office for Tuesdays. Of these three, the one that had the biggest impact on the workload/preparation time for Padi Wilmer and Br Gregory was the subject of this section – the introduction of mini-Homilies/messages as a permanent part of EP (Vespers) at SMM.

The inspiration for this radical augment to Evening Prayer is worthwhile including here. Two of St Michaels 'Saints' (so called as recipients of the Diocesan honor of ODNW) were life-long attendees at the Sunday 8:00 BCP service, which included a shortened homily. They asked Padi Wilmer if it would be possible to have something similar at Evening Prayer, even if it was a somewhat untraditional addition to the Evening Office. Just as Padi Wilmer responded to + Bill's idea of involving the church in the Brother's Benedictine journey with the idea of starting Evening Prayer, he responded to Terry & Marg Cutforth's idea of short messages with immediate implementation.

Irrespective of its genesis, however, the program addition of mini-Homilies (MH's) turned out to be a bigger commitment of time than anticipated, as 15-minute messages became the norm over time. Since beginning MH's at Thanksgiving in 2017, Padi Wilmer has given approximately 250, while the Brother has given approximately 150. The pattern evolved over time, and now sees Padi doing Thursdays and the Brother doing Tuesdays, while they cover for one another during holidays/breaks. To be clear, though, the split is not even. As can be seen from the numbers above, the Priest does over 60% of the Evening Prayer MH's.

An insecurity of the two homilists was how it was being received by the Evening Prayer (Vespers) attendees. Answers to these unknowns were finally answered using surveys (*SurveyMonkey*). Over two different surveys in Nov 2020 and Dec 2021 it became clearer that the approach was successful and that the congregants were happy with three MH aspects: content (the OT emphasis); frequency (at every EP); and duration (15 minutes).

These two surveys are covered off more thoroughly in Section I.5. First, though, we cover off in the following section the very significant impact of COVID and ZOOM on the SMM Evening Prayer program.

3. COVID & IMPLEMENTING ZOOM - LENT IV 2020

It is a toss-up as to what has had the most dramatic effect on Evening Prayer at St Michaels - the introduction of mini-Homilies/messages in Oct 2017, or the advent of COVID in March 2020.

These two, however, do have three things in common. One, they both dramatically changed the traditional BAS/BCP format of EP. Two, they both added significantly to the workload of the Priest and the Brother. And, three, they both radically changed the EP/Vespers experience for the congregation.

While COVID certainly impacted 'two' and 'three' above, the most obvious and dramatic change because of COVID came with 'one' – EP traditions. 'One' brought about the end of the face-to-face Office in the Chapel. Within a week of the closing of the church, Zoom had been implemented, and weekday in person face-to-face worship was at an end for the foreseeable future. The last EP in the Chapel was on Tuesday March 17th, led by Danilla Severin, with Padi Wilmer preaching. Missing just one EP Office (Thursday the 19th), Zoom was up and working in time for the next Tuesday Office, on March 24th. A new normal had begun, although that was not at all apparent at the time. This rapid move from face-to-face to Zoom is yet another example of where the Priest deserves the highest praise; many churches in the Diocese took weeks before even Sunday services were on-line.

The most positive aspect of Zoom had to do with participation. As was clearly seen in Figure 1 on page-6, attendance more than doubled almost immediately. The first two months of Evening Prayer with Zoom must have met a need, although again it wasn't obvious at the time. In a time of total societal shutdown and isolation, possibly one of the greatest legacies of having established an EP program 4 ½ years previously was that it was ready to meet the needs of a fearful and isolated congregation hungry for spiritual nourishment. The sustenance provided by EP during the beginning of the COVID pandemic was clear – attendance not only more than doubled, but for the two months immediately after, EP had the highest two months of attendance in the full 6+ year program. This can surely be classified as a

blessing, and worthy of all the overhead and effort entailed by Padi Wilmer and the Brother in establishing and evolving the program.

4. Benedictine Liturgy – April 2021

In the beginning, in August of 2015, preparation for Evening Prayer was little more than opening the BAS to the proper page, and making sure that the readings for the evening were available on the lectern.

4+ years later, however, with the move of EP to on-line, preparation time had increase exponentially. With ZOOM, the liturgy needed to be available on-line, with the readings for the evening on-line as well. Yet once again, Padi Wilmer took on responsibility for this. It was only after six months that the Brother started to take on the responsibility for creating the file for his Tuesdays.

Up until COVID, the level of effort, especially with the mini-Homilies, was significant, but manageable – the level of nourishment for the homilist was, as always, high, and the workload was never onerous. After COVID, after a while, though, it all started to feel like too much. Most churches in North America (really, the whole world) have long had a Sunday bulletin. Whether printed or not, getting these ready is typically overseen by the Priest, but done by an Administrative Assistant. During COVID, all the work at SMM was done by the Priest. So, for the first six months of COVID, the Priest was actually producing three bulletins a week; one for Sunday, and one each for Tuesday and Thursday. As stated above, it was only after six months that the Brother took responsibility for the liturgy for Tuesdays.

After six months of doing this, however, the Brother was feeling like it was too much. The solution was expediency in the beginning – with the permission of the Abbot, he occasionally used the Benedictine liturgy produced by CSL-OSB, which, in addition to the liturgy, included the Gospel and Psalms for the day. So, after six months of laboring with the on-line file, the Priest gave the Brother permission to use the Benedictine file, which off-loaded him considerably, allowing him to focus exclusively on the extra OT reading and the Homily. Quality improved dramatically, as with the extra time graphics more and more became a central part of the homilies. Section II will provide multiple examples of the use of Graphics.

5. Surveys - Nov 2020 & Dec 2021

As described earlier, the move to ZOOM in March of 2020 accelerated the rate of change of SMM's approach to Evening Prayer. To check out how the changes were working, the two leaders (Padi Wilmer and the Brother) decided to try a survey with the EP congregation in time for Padi Wilmer's first COVID year report to the Annual Meeting in February of 2021.

SURVEY #1 - NOV 2020 (APPENDIX VI)

The survey itself can be seen in Appendix VI. Analyzing the results, the two leaders felt satisfied that the accelerated rate of change had been positively received by the congregation. As an aside, it could be noted this survey was the first of more than 20 in the year since. The methodology found much favor with the respondents, establishing a second new normal for the congregation (ZOOM itself being the first).

Even without the survey, however, the signs were that the ZOOM approach was wildly successful. Almost immediately, as covered earlier, attendance at EP more than doubled, especially in the first two months after closure of the churches (see Figure 1, page-6). The survey reinforced this view, in several ways. One, on the mini-Homily/message, 86% rated it 5 out of 5 in meeting their spiritual needs. Two, regarding two nights a week of EP, 95% of the respondents said that it was just right (i.e. not more or less often than twice a week). And, three, with regards to the full EP service, 22 respondents had an average score of 4.4 out of 5 in ranking how EP met their spiritual needs. We regret not asking a similar question with regards to Fellowship – in the middle of a Pandemic, we believe that score would have been high as well.

In Padi Wilmer's year-end survey report (see Appendix II), the most surprising strategic level observation was that in 2020, EP attendance made up over 1/3rd of the total Sanctuary attendance at SMM. Prior to the Pandemic, it would have been less than 10%.

SURVEY #2 - DEC 2021 (APPENDIX V)

But for this project, Padi Wilmer and the Brother might not have commissioned a 2nd Survey. Having done so, however, the results reinforced those from Nov 2020, and provided the foundation for the Priest's 2022 Annual Report (see Appendix I).

As can be seen in Appendix I, the results in Survey #2 closely tracked many of those in Survey #1. One of the 'new' findings reinforced our feeling that ZOOM was likely becoming the New Normal for churches across the Communion. Certainly, the same thing was true for the Brother's Benedictine Order, as it brought fellowship and shared spirituality to a dispersed group that before COVID only met twice a year. For SMM, 90% of the respondents wanted ZOOM to continue even after the church reopened. If you eliminate the 10% that indicated 'Not Sure', 100% wanted to continue a hybrid – both ZOOM and face-to-face. A second 'new' finding resolved our concern over whether there was too much diversity, in our approach to both music and the liturgy. 72% said that they liked the diversity, while the remainder weren't negative about it; they merely indicated that they were not sure.

Possibly the most unorthodox aspect of EP (Vespers) at SMM has been the introduction of a question for Reflection/Sharing after the Office was concluded. With a composite score of 4 out of 5, this question reinforced what seemed obvious to the leaders – participation was high and sharings intimate. This aspect of EP is another example of the leadership of a Priest who understands the needs/desires of his congregation – the idea originated solely with him.

ATTENDANCE

While not an aspect of the two Surveys, attendance could be another insight into whether or not Evening Prayer was meeting the weekday needs of the congregation. As covered earlier, Figure-1 on page-6 shows Evening Prayer attendance over a 77-month period, presented as a 3-month rolling average. At the risk of stating the obvious as you look at the graph, while mini-Homilies proved to be popular with the congregation, it didn't add to attendance (maybe the positive is that neither did it drive attendance down?). From the graph, however, it is crystal clear that the impact of COVID dramatically affected attendance, even moreso than

the first year of EP at SMM, and at a much quicker rate. Even though there has been some drop-off in 2021, EP attendance still represents over 25% of all Sanctuary attendance, and is still more than double what it was pre-Pandemic.

6. SUMMARY

By the measure of attendance alone, Bishop Bill Franklin's recommendation to have Br Gregory's Benedictine journey benefit St Michaels has borne much fruit. Combining the graph on page-6 (Figure 1) with the fact that 25% of Sanctuary attendance comes from EP, the impact seems indisputable. Much of the credit for this goes to the Priest. It was Padi Wilmer's idea to start EP, based on + Bill's encouragement to 'do something.' And it has been Padi's ongoing commitment and energy ever since that has made it such a success in meeting the needs of his congregation.

The diversity introduced into the EP program demonstrates clearly how this has been an evolving facet of the Office. The two seminal changes, highlighted on the graph on page-6, were, one, the introduction of mini-Homilies at Thanksgiving in 2017, and then, two, the introduction of ZOOM with the advent of COVID, in March of 2020. The first of these considerably accelerated the spiritual growth of participants, while the second of these made EP much more accessible, as can be seen on the page-6 graph.

The two EP surveys (Nov '20 & Dec '21) were most helpful to the EP leaders, ensuring that the evolving program continued to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation.

The final point to make in this summary regards workload. The two points above (mini-Homilies and ZOOM) did not come free of charge. At twice a week, the team produces 100+ EP bulletins/liturgies a year, with an associated 100+ MH's a year. Combined with his Sunday homilies, Padi Wilmer must be the only full-time Priest in the Diocese (the Communion?) who has personally done 100 Homilies a year over a 4+ year period.

As will be seen in Sections II & III, this project includes four 1-page Testimonials on different aspects of Evening Prayer. These are all done by congregants who

attended regularly over several years. Along with the insights from the surveys, the insights from these four 1-pagers seems to make clear that no matter what the workload, the level of effort is well worth it. The one caution the SMM Trustees need to wrestle with, however, is whether or not the level of effort required of the Priest is sustainable?

Doing so many EP mini-Homilies/messages in a year creates many opportunities of going deeper than is usually the case at EP. The following Section, on Theology, gives four examples of where that deep diving has occurred, with congregational 1-pagers providing a perspective beyond that of the two leaders.

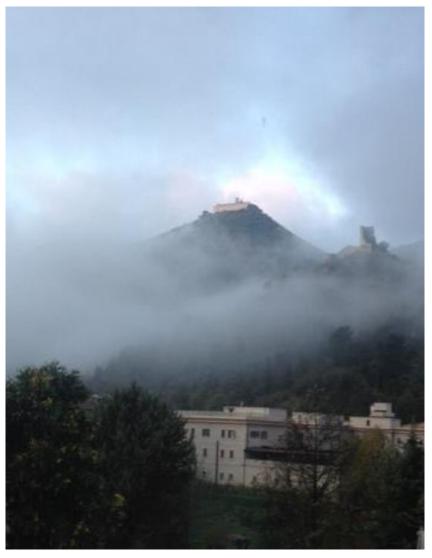


Figure 2 Benedictine Beginnings - Monte Cassino in Nov 2014

LIFE TOGETHER. UNDER GODS WORD. IN CHRIST. IN PRAYER

II. THEOLOGY

Since October 2017, there have been over 400 Evening Prayer (Vespers) mini-Homilies/messages, 250+ of which have been done by Padi Wilmer, and 144 by the Brother. The Survey #2 Report to the 2022 Annual Vestry devotes 3 of 5 points to this aspect of Evening Prayer (see Appendix I).

This section on Theology looks at four themes/aspects that have dominated/stood out across the 400+ Homilies

- 1. The Wagon Wheel the OT in the NT (Sec. 7) [1st 1-page Testimonial Moses Kajoba]
- 2. The Message of Salvation & the Sistine Chapel (Sec. 8) [2nd 1-page Testimonial Michiko Tatchell]
- 3. The Centrality of Temple 3 Temples & Christ (Sec. 9)
- 4. The Psalms (Sec.10) [3rd 1-page Testimonial Blanca Mestito]

Relative to Theology, the most exciting aspect of the Surveys (& the four Testimonials that follow in this section and the next) is the discovery that it has not been too much for our congregants – the majority seemed to have thrived and grown.

7. THE WAGON WHEEL - The OT in the NT

Over the 4+ years of mini-Homilies/messages there has been one phrase we have used well over 100 times, especially relevant given our OT EP focus:

"THE OT IS IN THE NT REVEALED"

On the next page is the 1st of four Testimonials in this work. The four writers have been full time attendees at EP since the beginning of COVID – the next page is by Moses Kajoba ODNW, a long time Rectors Warden. His picture can be seen on the inside of the front cover, 1st row, middle. The seven highlighted words above forms the theme of the 2nd half of his Testimonial, which he quotes verbatim.

One of the questions in the Dec 2021 EP Survey #2 asked the congregation whether these seven words took on more meaning over time.

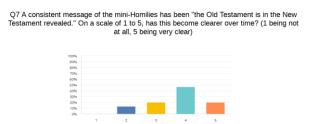


Figure 3 Q7 - Dec '21 Survey Results - Understanding the OT in the NT Concept?

I guess I can call myself a "newbie" to Evening Prayer because prior to the shutdown due to COVID19 in March 2020 my attendance at Evening Prayer was sporadic and very seldom. This was due to the fact that it was hard for me to drive from work to St. Michael's after my workday ends in time to make the 5:30 p.m. start.

With the COVID19 shutdown and St. Michael's moving to holding Evening Prayer via Zoom I have been able to attend a majority of the Evening Prayer services since April 2020 as I am able to join the service either from my office, or from our home. On one occasion I was able to attend Evening Service while parked on the roadside following a traffic jam that prevented me from reaching our home prior to the start of Evening Service. What a joy to be able to do this!

The Mini Homilies, and the discussions that follow on many occasions, have helped me to understand the scriptures better as in effect this provides me with a form of "bible study" which I have been missing and which I am not disciplined enough do on my own. I am very thankful to Rev Wilmer and Brother Greg, as well as all the many leaders who help organize and run Evening Prayer. I am also grateful to the many people who participate in the numerous discussions that follow. Thank you, and thank you again.

While I have loved all aspects of the Evening Prayer Service and the topics and readings covered, I would like to point out my particular enjoyment of the "Wagon Wheel" and what it has taught me. I will venture to say that it has truly been "eye-opening" for me.

Prior to my being introduced to the Wagon Wheel, I was not able to appreciate the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. At the time, most of the Books in the Old Testament seemed like reading about "Jewish history" without necessarily connecting them to Jesus and the Good News message in the New Testament.

For many years, starting with my time in Sunday School in the early 1970s, I have listened to scripture and homilies from both the Old and the New Testament but for the most part I was never able to connect the Old Testament with the New Testament. Maybe I am simply a person who learns better with "visual aids" but thanks to the Wagon Wheel I can now truly say that I understand what it means when one says that the "the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed".

The Wagon Wheel clearly shows how each of the writers in the New Testament draws from the Old Testament, and this in turn has helped me to understand how the various prophecies in the Old Testament become fulfilled in the New Testament. What a way to enrich my understanding of the Bible.

Once again, thank you for introducing me to wonderful Wagon Wheel.

Moses Kajoba

From reading Moses' Testimonial, it certainly reads like a 5 out of 5, doesn't it? Even though the composite score (3.7 out of 5) was below the feelings expressed in Moses' testimonial, the two leaders were quite happy with the composite score. The concept is by no means an easy/obvious one, and if we had done a survey prior to COVID, it is highly likely that the composite score would have been much lower at that time. It would seem, though, that ZOOM and the use of graphics helped get the concept across, over time, much like a process of osmosis. Moses cites the decided impact visuals have on his learning; "maybe I am simply a person who learns better with 'visual aids'" - many of us are like that. This section will review three different 'visuals' used to try to convey this concept of the OT is in the NT revealed.

7.1 THE 1ST WAGON WHEEL – THE GOSPELS & THE OLD TESTAMENT

Perhaps the best conceptual approach was the first one we used, and which we used over and over again. Figure 4 below, referred to as the 1st Wagon Wheel, shows the 4 Gospels, and which books of the Old Testament they drew from.

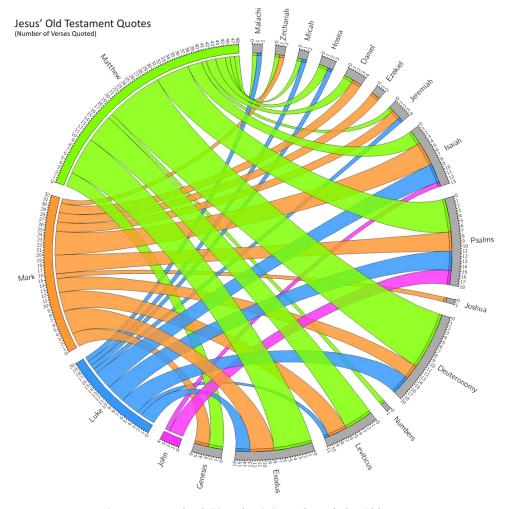


Figure 4 Wagon Wheel #1 - the 4 Gospels and the Old Testament

The way Figure 4 was introduced to the EP congregation was by focusing on Matthew. The lime green color emanating from Matthew from the top left made it very easy for the congregation to focus their attention. Figure 4 documents that Matthew draws on the OT 48 times. Can you see this? Further, it makes the point that Matthew draws most heavily on Genesis, Deuteronomy, and the Psalms. Is this clear as well? The third and final point was to compare John's use of the OT relative to Matthew, highlighting the fact that not all Gospel writers leaned on the OT to the same extent. Is it clear how significant the difference is between Matthew and John in this context?

7.2 Using Parallel Gospel Scriptures - The Gospels & the Old Testament

We found other ways to emphasize the concept of the OT in the NT, especially with the Gospels. Figure 5 following is the best specific scriptural example we came up with to emphasize this point.



Reader: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew, Mark, Luke & John

People: Glory To you Lord Jesus Christ

Reader: The Proclamation of John the Baptist

neader: The Fredamation of John the Bapti	
Matthew 3:1-3 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."	Mark 1:2-3 ² As it is written in the prophet Isalah ,
³ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,	"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;
"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."	the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,"
Luke 3:4-6 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."	John 1:22-23 ² As it is written in the prophet Isaiah ,
³ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,	"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;
"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."	3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,"

Reader: The Gospel of Christ

People: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

The readings may be followed by silence, a reflection, a canticle, a responsory, an anthem or a hymn.

Figure 5 The Gospels and the OT - All 4 Gospels Quoting the Same Prophet

Instead of an image/graph, Figure 5 shows how we also used specific parallel scriptures from the Gospels, highlighting obvious similarities between the four. In this case, all

4 Gospels citing Isaiah with regards to John the Baptist was probably the best example of using quotes from Scripture to emphasize the concept that the OT is in the NT revealed. Is it obvious to you as you examine Figure 5?

7.3 THE 2ND WAGON WHEEL – ALL OF THE OT AND NT

A more complicated approach, possibly only joyful to the two leaders, can be found in Figure 6.

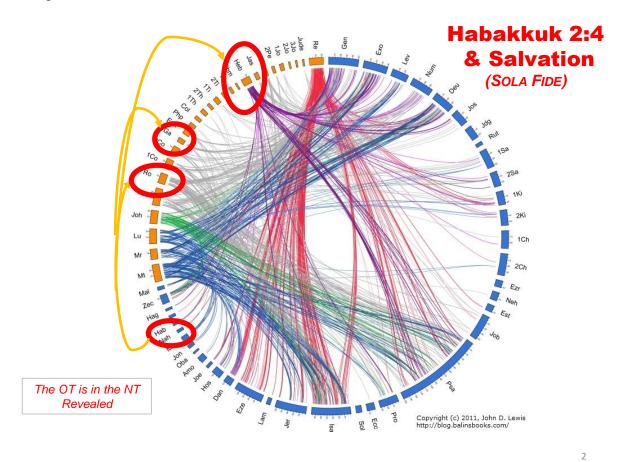


Figure 6 Habakkuk Quoted by Three Different NT Books

Similar to Wagon Wheel #1, with the difference here that all the NT books are included, not just the 4 Gospels. The specific lesson applied in Figure 6 was not with regards to the Gospels, but with regards to the Letters, with Habakkuk 2:4 the focus: "the righteous will live by his faith." This great NT Sola Fide drumbeat of the Reformation was shown to originate in Habakkuk, as picked up by the New Testament authors in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. Figure 6 was used to show this graphically. Note the circle around 'Hab' (Habakkuk) and then the yellow lines leading to circles around 'Ro', 'Ga',

and 'Heb' (Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews). Is it easy to discern the linkages? If not, the similarity between the specific scriptures might make it easier, as in Fig. 6 following.

HABAKKUK 2:4 & THE REFORMATION (SOLA FIDE)

The Power of the Gospel

Romans 1 ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith"

Law or Faith

Galations 3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for "The one who is righteous will live by faith." 12 But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, "Whoever does the works of the law will live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"— 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spiritthrough faith.

Christ's Sacrifice Once for All

Hebrews 10 Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach. ³⁷ For yet

"in a very little while, the one who is coming will come and will not delay;

³⁸ but my righteous one will live by faith.

My soul takes no pleasure in anyone who shrinks back."

³⁹ But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved.

Figure 7 The Reformation - The Habakkuk Scripture quoted by Romans, Galatians & Hebrews

For the seasoned eye (for the unseasoned eye?), is it possible to see that this is an excellent example of how the OT is in the NT revealed, in a core Protestant theological way (*Sola Fide*)? But that it might be too much for some congregations? To the two SMM EP leaders, it was a wonderful sign of the evolving sophistication of the EP congregation after 4+ years together that the Figure 6 & 7 Habakkuk examples didn't seem to be too much for our congregation.

How do you make Theology fun? This may seem like a Mission Impossible question for many. But, with the use of graphics made possible by ZOOM, we made the effort, even if it was sort of kooky. Figure 8 following was one effort at levity, offering a variation on a Christmas favorite, *JOY TO THE WORLD*. The welcome doormat following we leave to your discernment to decide whether it is worthy of a chuckle or not!

What is your experience/understanding of Hanukkah (Chanukkah)



Figure 8 Theology can be Fun!

7.4 THE FINAL EXAMPLE

The final example of "the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed" will be covered off in detail in the next section, but will be introduced here. In the summer of 2021, we developed a 16-evening program with the theme of A MESSAGE OF SALVATION, using 16 frescos from the Sistine Chapel ceiling as our guide and inspiration. In each case, there was an Old Testament scripture associated with the fresco. This project represented the biggest piece of work undertaken over the 4+ years of MH's at St Michaels. At one point, consideration was given to using this project as the Life Vows project for the Brother.

On the following page, Figure 9 shows the framework for the 16 evenings. This particular figure was chosen because of congregational involvement in creating it - all 16 frames were colored by members of the EP congregation (and their kids & grandkids!).

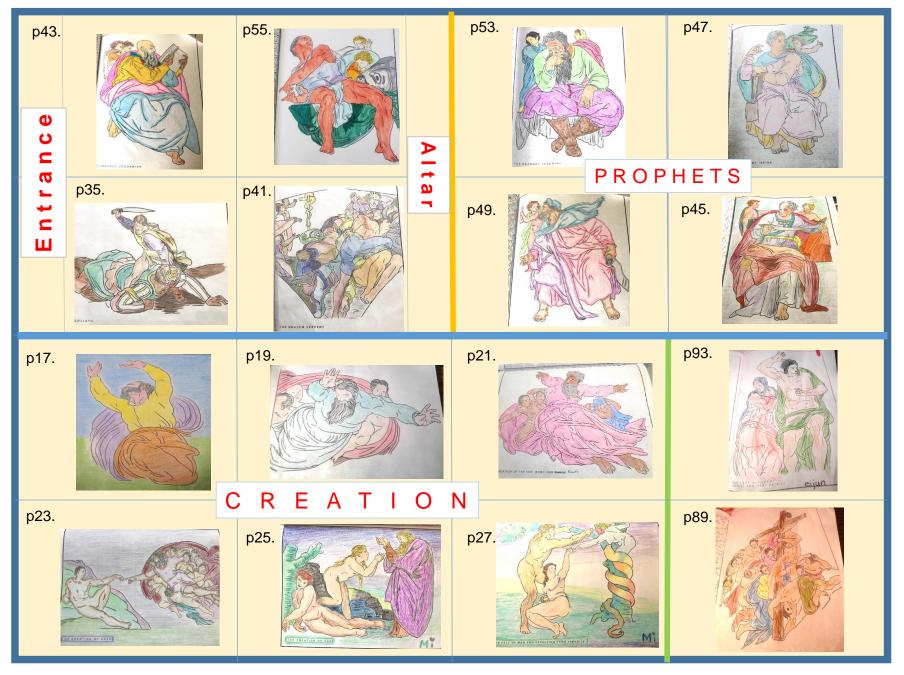


Figure 9 Congregational Art & the Sistine Chapel

ZECHARIAH (14, p.43), DAVID (10, p.35), & JONAH (20, p.55) & THE PLAN OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL



Figure 10 The Sistine Chapel Ceiling - Keeping Oriented - Jonah over the Altar

Dec 2021 - 26 of 128 - G.R. Tatchell

8. THE SISTINE CHAPEL - THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION

One of the reasons that the 16-week program of the Sistine Chapel has been the highlight of the 4+ years of mini-Homilies (MH's) for me was because it was a joint project with my wife Michiko. The 2nd of the four congregational Testimonials for this project is hers, can be seen on the page following, and reflects our shared joy.

We used two frameworks for the 16-week EP program. The first Framework, Figure 9, was introduced at the end of the previous section. The second Framework was the Sistine Chapel ceiling itself. Figure 10 on the previous page shows how we helped focus attention within the dense arrangements of the complicated ceiling – in this case, as the heading shows, Zechariah (over the west entrance), David (to the south of Zechariah), and Jonah at the other end of the chapel (directly over the altar in the east). Michiko's 1-page testimonial makes special mention of Jonah, and we will return to him.

A second reason that this 16-evening program has been a 4+ year highlight for me was the extended time it provided to focus on a specific theme – THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION. A third reason was the degree of congregational involvement. Figure 9 encapsulates this, and in a way, is a perfect talisman for what this whole project is really about – not theology, not liturgy, not art – but instead congregational engagement, nourishment and growth. A fourth reason for ranking the 16-evening program my highlight of the 4+ years of MH's was the opportunity to dive deep into a life-long love of mine – Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel. A favorite family story is about my 1976 visit, on a biking trip to Rome with a good friend. The family loved the fact that I went to the chapel three times, but my good friend was firm that once was more than enough for him!

In summary then, this 16-evening program incorporated three loves of my life. One, I got to do it with Michiko (we visited the chapel together the year I applied to the Benedictines, after a visit to Monte Cassino – see Figure 2 on page 15). Two, it gave me the opportunity to explore Michelangelo in the theological context, a perspective that was largely absent in my two visits to Rome. And, three, it provided four hours of time presenting the material while learning yet again that the best way to learn something well is to be able to present it to a receptive, eager audience.

One of the new activities my husband and I discovered during the Pandemic was Jigsaw Puzzles. One of them, a 1000-piece puzzle of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling was challenging, but it became one of our favourites. After staring at the 1000 small pieces, we might be able to say that we could understand a little bit more how the people who finished the Sistine Chapel Restoration (in 1994) felt about their job. At the same time, my vision and desire to learn more about the Bible through the Sistine Chapel Ceiling was percolating in my mind.

So, I asked Greg if he was willing to tackle the project or not. Fortunately he enthusiastically agreed with me. With our priest's blessing, we chose 16 well-known Biblical subjects and people for the 16 mini-Homilies. We found a very good hard-covered text book for those who were interested in these Bible Study Sessions. During the Spring & Summer of 2021, we continued our regular Evening Prayer on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and presented one section of the Ceiling in each homily.

After 16 homilies about the Ceiling, we learned and discovered so much more than we knew before about those Prophets and the Biblical stories. I particularly enjoyed the mini-Homilies on Jonah, Zechariah and Jeremiah.

This project was a very unique and pleasant way to study the Biblical stories, especially to a person who loved Art like me. We not only learnt about God's Word, but also about Michelangelo's Theology. For example, Greg explained to us why Michelangelo put the fresco of Jonah directly over the altar. Jonah being in a large fish for three days and three nights – this is the only sign Christ ever used to prefigure the resurrection (see a coloring of the frescoe below).





We even asked some participants and some Sunday School children to colour the Prophets and subjects in the Sistine Chapel colouring book to let them be familiarized with those Biblical stories and prophets. Figure 9 gives a sense for the efforts they all put into this, while Jonah above gives a close up view.

It took a lot of energy and time to organize this project but I believe it was more than worthwhile - it was a very popular project with the congregation.

Written by Michiko Tatchell

8.1 A METAPHOR - FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

In Michiko's write-up in green on the previous page, she referred to "the Sistine Chapel Restoration (in 1994)." My first visit to Rome in 1976 was prior to the Restoration. Our 2014 visit was after the Restoration. I feel incredibly blessed that I was able to see the 'before' and 'after,' albeit with a nearly 40-year gap. The difference cannot be described. The most famous fresco in the Sistine Chapel, Figure 11, shows why it needs to be seen.



Figure 11 Light & Dark - Before & After the Restoration

These before and after images serve as a proxy for one of the dominant images of both the Old and New Testament – darkness and light. Despite the darkness, I returned to the Sistine Chapel 3 times in 1976. When I visited again in 2014, the contrast was stunning. This contrast serves us well in trying to understand the effect time had on us during Evening Prayer over 6+ years. I remember well our first couple of years, before the Homilies. Week after week, we would without fail always follow the Daily Lectionary for Tuesday and Thursday. It was only after a year that a light came on, and we slowly realized that we were reading the same Psalms over and over again. Nobody shone a light and said "why are you constantly repeating the same Psalms?" The answer, I believe, is that the leaders and the congregation weren't really paying that much attention. Could the same thing be said for the Psalms on Sunday?

The advent of mini-Homilies began to change what I could possibly refer to as inattentiveness? With the advent of the MH's, we became much more intentional. In addition to having the Psalms read to us, we read the Psalms in our bibles. And, as time went by, we gradually began to highlight words in the Psalm of the day, and then spoke to those words during the MH. The congregational Testimonial by Blanca Mestito in Section II.10 shows the effect this had.

The same effect was felt, we believe, when it came to the rest of the scriptures. Intentionality became tightly focused. As was seen in Figures 4 through 7, scripture was not only read, but rigorously linked with sourcing scripture from the Old Testament. And, as we did in the 16-evening program, the scriptures were not only OT-NT synthesized, but augmented by frescos from the Sistine Chapel. This is perhaps best illustrated by the example suggested by Michiko, Jonah. If you get a chance to watch the homily web-linked by her, you will discover how central Jonah is to our faith and to the Jewish faith. And yet is never a part of Sunday readings in the 3-year Sunday Liturgy.

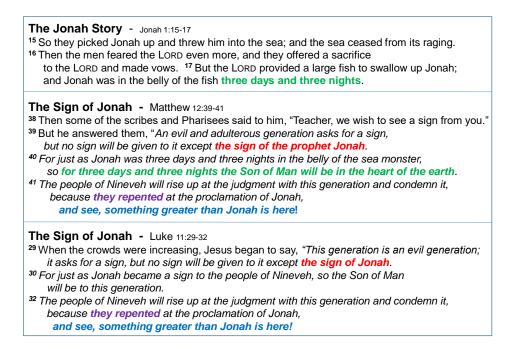


Figure 12 Light & Darkness - Bringing Jesus' Words into the Light

Figure 12 shows how, in addition to the use of the fresco of Jonah, we showed the source scripture in the OT in Jonah (3 days & 3 nights). Then, we highlighted Jesus' invocation of the sign of Jonah in Matthew 12 & Luke 11. It was emphasized that the two Gospel readings are not a part of the Sunday liturgy, and Sunday attendees would never have heard them. Did we thus bring the light out of the darkness?

After these last four pages is it easy to see, after the long 16-evening program, why I might have been considering it as my Life Vows Benedictine Project? Instead of a stand-alone project, however, I finally realized that it would be an integral part of something with a wider perspective – the view of 6+ years of Evening Prayer at St Michaels. And, as it turns out, the longest section of the broader work!

In addition to the Sistine Chapel itself, three articles/books were important resources:

- 1. The Centrality of Christology 'Profoundly Christological'
- 2. Scriptures & Frescos A Message of Salvation
- 3. Sacred Art A Coloring Book

8.2 A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE - PROFOUNDLY CHRISTOLOGICAL

In my two visits to Rome and the Sistine Chapel, I never came away with the reflection that Michelangelo had a strong theological foundation, as referred to in Michiko's Testimonial on page-26. Her highlight of Jonah over the altar is maybe the best example of Michelangelo's Theology in action. Zechariah over the entrance, emphasizing the fact that he built the 2nd Temple, and that the Sistine Chapel is built to the same dimensions, is a good second example. The real epiphany in crafting the 16-evening program, however, came from John W Dixon's article The Christology of Michelangelo: The Sistine Chapel (next page). The revelations of the 16-evening Sistine Chapel all grew out of this article, and its articulation "The chapel is profoundly Christocentric."

My one regret was that I could not convince myself to spend the \$55 to buy the full article – the attached precis is all I had access to!

8.3 THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SISTINE CHAPEL - SCRIPTURE & FRESCOS

The second source was a book called the Sistine Chapel – A Message of Salvation. This book was of a table-top variety, with many biblical quotes, and excellent reproductions of selected individual frescos from the ceiling and altar wall. Michiko and I quickly agreed that this could be the primary source for the congregants, and arranged the purchase of 20 copies so that each congregant would have their own copy for study and to accompany the MH's. This proved to be a wise investment. The cover of the book follows Figure 13 on the next page.

Journal of the American Academy of Religion. LV/3

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF MICHELANGELO: THE SISTINE CHAPEL

JOHN W. DIXON, JR.

The Sistine Ceiling basically means what it instantly and evidently says.

-S.J. Freedberg

The sober efficiency of critical technique is adequate for understanding the complexities of ordinary art. It is often defeated by the terrible simplicities of very great art.

Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel is a very great work of art, in conception and execution, in form and intellect. It was not made for the sake of form or intellect, which were only servants to the central act, but as an act of worship and proclamation. It can be understood only by participating in the act, which is an act of worship. It is not an argument, a display of an iconographical program, or an illustration of verbal ideas, although all these things are present in the work. Rather, it is a Christian liturgical act and can rightly be understood only as it is apprehended in its performance.

The chapel is profoundly Christocentric. It is presented in a mode that, while known in earlier Christian art, is here distinctively Michelangelo's and deserves to be included in any fully developed historical Christology.

The Problem of the Chapel

Although the Sistine Chapel is one of the best known works of art, it still presents problems of interpretation. Four of the most serious are:

John W. Dixon, Jr. is Professor of Religion and Art, Emeritus, at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514.

¹ This could be understood as asserting that only believers in a particular faith can truly understand a work created in that faith. The question is a complicated one, too large to be debated here. As plain assertion, I would say only that it is not necessary to be a believer, only necessary to enter into the attitude of belief, or, at the minimum, engage the Coleridge-Eliot "willing suspension of disbelief".

Figure 13 The Chapel is profoundly Christocentric

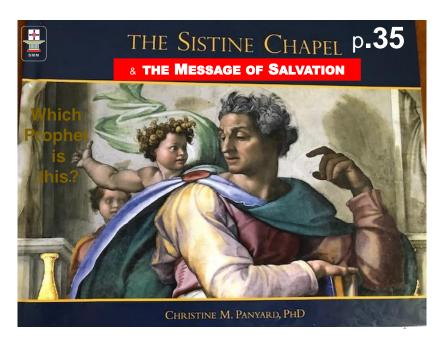


Figure 14 The Sistine Chapel & The Message of Salvation

8.4 SACRED ART - THE COLORING BOOK

The third source was a little bit of serendipity, and was really only a partial success. Figure 9 at the beginning of this section was derived from this book. Figure 15 on the next page shows the cover of the coloring book, our third source.

The partial success referred to above had to do with an aspect of the Sistine Chapel that has challenged Popes and Cardinals and critics ever since it was first painted over 400 years ago. The challenge of course had to do with the nudity throughout the ceiling and the Judgement wall behind the altar. Michiko and I had both been familiar with the chapel for much of our adult lives, so the contentious aspect of the art had long since faded from our memories. I should, though, have anticipated that maybe it might not be appropriate for youngsters. The Sunday School leader helped me see this. So, Figure 9 is primarily the work of adults, and mostly kids outside of the church!

This wasn't my only surprise. Again, having been familiar with the chapel for most of my long adult life, I just assumed that everyone knew about/was familiar with the Sistine Chapel. Wrong, Br Gregory! I was genuinely taken aback when asked the question "What is the Sistine Chapel?" Remember – don't assume, and never forget no question is a bad question.

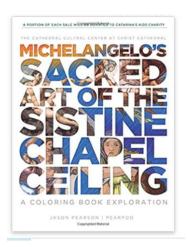


Figure 15 The Controversial Coloring Book - Nudity in the Church?

8.5 Four Hours of Mini-Homilies (MH's)

At an average of 15 minutes per MH, it meant that the 16-evening program created the opportunity to not only do extensive research over an extended period of time, but then also to spend four hours sharing the results of that research.

You would think four hours would be enough? Surprisingly, not so. One realization was that in 16 evenings we only covered 16 frescos – there are 57 on the chapel ceiling, which doesn't even include the even larger Last Judgment on the Altar wall. I suggest though that it was enough for the congregation. And, if the truth be told, I was exhausted after the two months!

But, I had absolutely no regrets, and look forward to using a 2nd time the material we developed for the summer of 2021. When the time is right (the summer of 2022?) I am sure Michiko and I (and hopefully the congregation with us) will enjoy even more the opportunity to dive deep a 2nd time.

8.6 THIRD TIME THROUGH THE DAILY LECTIONARY

The idea of diving deeper the 2nd time through a 16-evening program has a clear parallel with the next section, on The Three Temples.

After 4+ years of mini-Homilies/messages (MH's), Saint Michael's congregants are well into their 3rd cycle through the Daily Lectionary. Whether reading alone or preparing and presenting MH's, there is no doubt that repeated cycles almost automatically takes you deeper and deeper. The depth we were able to get to in the next section is clearly attributable to this "3rd time through" effect.

9. THE THREE TEMPLES

The Benedictine discipline of the Daily Lectionary (DL) begins to really bear fruit after the first two-year cycle through all the bible. In my seventh year of the DL, I am now well into my fourth cycle through the bible, and marvel how much I continue to gain new insights almost every day, as synthesis marches inexorably on, with an osmosis type effect. Certainly, my heart swells in response to the readings even more than was the case 6+ years ago at the beginning of my Benedictine journey.

Perhaps the best testimonial of this journey is how ingrained the Office has become as a part of my life. Whereas early on I was often behind (but always caught up), now I am always ahead (targeting by at least 8 days) in case I miss a day because of travel (or projects!).

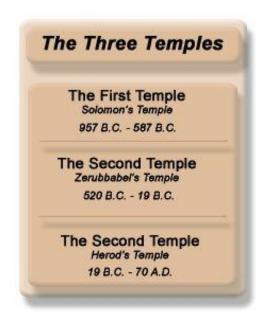
The effect of synthesis, though, is the important point, as this applies as equally to the congregation as it applies to myself (although they may not yet be consciously aware of this). This is especially true, I believe, since we began mini-Homilies (MH's) at Thanksgiving in 2017. Focusing on our 2021 multi-week program on the three temples (the title of this section) might be the best way to show the 3rd cycle effect (their 3rd time through the bible) on the congregation's ability to absorb more complicated, synthesizing messages.

9.1 THE INTEGRATING GRAPHIC - THREE TEMPLES

From the time that Solomon built the 1st Temple in Jerusalem to the time of the destruction of the 3rd Temple in Jerusalem in 70_{AD}, 1,000 years of history elapsed. In year 1 of the DL, this march of time occupies over five months, beginning in 2021 on 14 June, and going into the 3rd week of November just prior to Advent. Covering eight books in that time, it is almost impossible, without effort, to keep the big picture at the forefront. The way we tried to keep the big picture at the forefront was to use Figure 16, on the following page.

With the respective dates arrayed across the top, the graphic shows a representation of Solomon's Temple (top), a representation of Zechariah's Temple (bottom left), and Herod's Temple (bottom right). Whether we were buried in Samuel or Kings or Jeremiah or Ezra, we grounded it in Figure 16, as a sort of roadmap.

THE THREE TEMPLES - 957BC, 520BC, AND 19BC









1

Figure 16 The Three Temples - Solomon, Zechariah, and Herod

G.R. Tatchell - 36 of 128 - Dec 2021

The dates at the top of the graphic (957_{BC}, 520_{BC}, and 19_{BC}) seem irrelevantly ancient to most folks. Despite that, we tried to ground things in even more specific dates, especially around the destruction of Solomon's temple, and the building and consecration of the 2nd temple. On these two occasions, the bible provides an abundance of dates, not just of the year, but of exact dates in the calendar year. We used these very specific dates as a way of emphasizing the centrality of the temple in Jewish life – the dates were not only precisely recorded, but preserved for over 2,500 years. Personally, it is a constant sort of amazement to me when I read those books every two years, and rediscover the many specific dates in Ezra & Nehemiah.

9.2 Points of Emphasis - Three Highlights

With just two readings a week (Tue & Thu), a holistic sense of those thousand years of temple history would be impossible to discern. In terms of emphasis, then, we highlighted/focused on the end of Solomon's temple and the creation of the 2nd temple. We did this with the aid of three cultural/biblical vehicles – a Rembrandt painting, a biblical Psalm, and a beloved Verdi choral arrangement.

We started with Rembrandt's evocative painting of Jeremiah in Figure 17.

The Weeping Prophet





Figure 17 The Weeping Prophet - Jeremiah - Michelangelo on the Left, Rembrandt on the Right

Rembrandt's painting is of Jeremiah in the cistern at the time of the destruction of the 1st Temple, with its emphasis on the characterization of Jeremiah as the Weeping Prophet. Accompanying him, we included Michelangelo's similarly moody fresco from the Sistine Chapel, familiar to the congregation from our summer series on the Sistine Chapel. The objective here was to move from specific scriptures to an understanding of the effect the destruction of the temple had on the Jewish tradition in 586_{BC}, and the feelings it has engendered ever since. Rembrandt's Jeremiah was the first step in this.

The second highlight was Figure 18 following, the 137th Psalm.



The appointed psalm for the day is read alternatively

PSALM 137 Lament over the Destruction of Jerusalem (Va, Pensiero)

1 By the rivers of **Babylon** there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. 2 On the willows there we hung up our harps. 3 For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" 4 How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? 5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! 6 Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy. 7 Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem's fall, how they said, "Tear it down! Tear it down! Down to its foundations!" 8 O daughter **Babylon**, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us!

All: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen

Figure 18 Psalm 137 - Lamenting over the Loss of Jerusalem

Of all the Psalms, this is the Lament that is most evocative as an expression of loss & longing, and is super specific with regards to the exile after the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586Bc. Many of the St Michaels congregation are immigrants, and we asked them to try and explore whether they were touched in any way by the expression of feelings in this Psalm.

The third congregational Testimonial of this project was by Blanca Mestito, and is included at the beginning of the next Section (II.10), with its focus, and her focus, on the

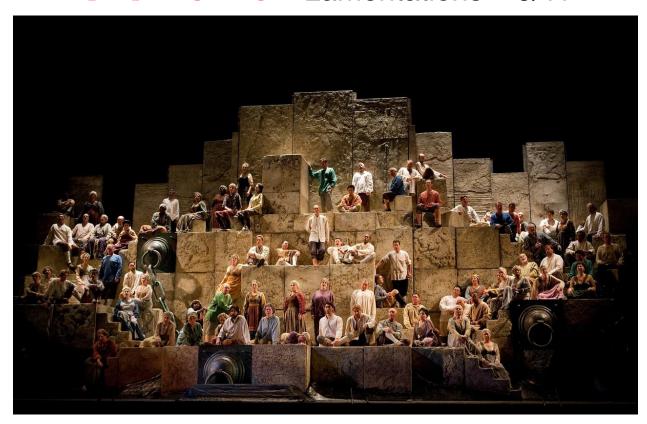
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Psalms. However, a central part of what she had to say had a direct bearing on this Psalm, and the question above regarding how they might have been touched by this Psalm. It is worthwhile to quote Blanca's lifelong exposure to this:

And it was during the Evening Prayer when we read Psalm 137, the words are like the lyric of the song that I liked since I was young, Rivers of Babylon. I may never know the connection of that song if I did not join the Evening Prayer. The hymns in church I'm not surprised if they're from the Psalms, but Rivers of Babylon I heard everywhere and I had no idea it came from the Psalms. Evening Prayer taught me a lot about psalms.

After Rembrandt and the 137th Psalm, the third highlight of this section was from Verdi's opera Nabucco, *Va Pensiero*. During EP, we showed an audio-visual clip of the opera, which Figure 19 following captures.

Va Pensiero – Lamentations – 9/11



Psalm 137

Figure 19 Ps 137 - The Met production of Nabucco - Va Pensiero

As only opera can do, it had the potential to touch three of our senses – sight (the figure above, and the lamenting facial expressions of the singers in closeups), sound (the unforgettable choral piece), and mind (the words of *Va Pensiero*). Can you see how

being able to touch the congregation with three aspects of the senses is only possible at a church with the multi-media environment of ZOOM? Would you agree that the congregation will likely forget all the dates and all the kings and all the invaders names, but are much less likely to forget the evocative sense of loss captured by Rembrandt, Verdi, and Ps 137? Blanca Mestito's memories above, stretching back a lifetime, encourage me to believe that this is so.

As an aside, notice the top right-hand corner of Figure 19, and the inclusion of 9/11. This was done as a reminder that the *Va Pensiero* choral piece from NABUCCO was the very first piece of music performed by the MET Opera on their return after 9/11. It was their commemoration of that date.

After six pages of this, though, the question may be going through your mind, so what? All of sections II.7 & II.8 focused on finding the OT in the NT revealed. Where does that fit in here?

9.3 JESUS AND THE THREE TEMPLES

In the 4 Gospels, the phrase *Son of Man* occurs 87 times (out of only 92 in the NT). Along with all the other names used for Christ, it escapes the notice of most readers (you too?) that *Son of Man* is spoken by no one but Christ. If you hear it any time over the three year cycle of Sunday readings, you know that it is Christ referring to himself.

The word 'temple' has the same quality about it. We hear it repeatedly throughout the three year cycle of Sunday readings. And, like the phrase 'Son of Man' it too is heard fleetingly, and likely doesn't register. After all, what does it have to do with Christ, anyway? And thus the question at the end of the previous section.

Jesus and the temple are linked together in two memorable ways. The first we probably remember from Sunday School, more as background than anything – his ejection of the money changers from the temple courts. And he followed this up with his disciples even more dramatically by saying "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up again in three days." This was early in his Ministry, and his disciples had no way of knowing he was using the temple as a metaphor for himself, and to his death and resurrection, just as he told them later that his sign was the sign of Jonah (three days and three nights in the belly of a big fish). Equally forgettable, perhaps, in all the drama of Jesus' Thursday night trial, was the accusation that he was going to rebuild the temple in three days.

Scattered as these Temple allusions are infrequently throughout the Gospels, it is not surprising that the Gospel allusions to the Temple get lost in the rush. But our theme of the OT is in the NT revealed helps us discern the importance of Temple, obscure though it seems on the surface.

So, for the 5 months of Temple centric readings in year 2 of the DL, we highlighted the obscure with the aid of Figure 16, being sure to allude to the temple-centric incidents in Jesus' life, and this use of the Temple as a metaphor for his own body.

·* * *

We now conclude Section II on Theology with the Psalms. On the surface, it may seem that this doesn't fit with our overarching theme of the OT is in the NT revealed. It will be seen, however, how frequently the Psalms are used in the NT. And, more dramatically, that three of the 7 sayings of Christ on the Cross come from the Psalms

SHI HEN

PSALMS

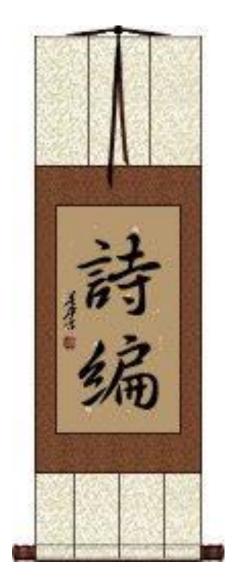


Figure 20 Shi Hen - Psalms

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10. PSALMS - THE ORIGINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

The Japanese Kanji character on the previous page, at the bottom, in purple, is the Japanese Kanji for Psalms: 'Shi Hen'. I used it as the title of my Benedictine Novitiate reflection on the Psalms (the scroll on the previous page depicts 'shi hen' in calligraphy). Kanji characters are often creative expressions. This is especially the case with shi hen. The leftmost character means 'poem', while the rightmost character means 'compilation.' Pretty descriptive of the book of Psalms, would you say?

I especially used it because of a major point of emphasis of two of the authors I read during my Novitiate (Merton & Lewis) – that the Psalms are Poems. Merton declares it emphatically, in capital letters, in the first four words of Chapter 1: THE PSALMS ARE POEMS. He expands on this with the statement that they are more than poems; they are religious poems. Lewis stresses this poetic nature even more; "most emphatically the Psalms must be read (prayed) as poems." Merton qualifies this further to give the proper context; that they are religious poems, and thus poems of prayer.

Thomas Merton's Eucharistic highlight also provided a theme (again from Appendix V) that best captures for me the enduring, endless, spiritual power of the of the Psalms.

"... the reality which nourishes us in the Psalms is the same reality which nourishes us in the Eucharist.

In either case we are fed by the Word of God.

In the Blessed Sacrament, 'His flesh is food indeed.'

In the Scriptures, the Word is incarnate

not in flesh but in human words."

With just 50 words, Merton thus captures the enduring essence of the Psalms for me, as experienced over 20+ years of attentiveness and study.

On 19 Sept 2019, my update to Abbot David articulated my Life Vows Project:

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: A contemplative reflection on each of the 150 Psalms, to be submitted in book form, with as many of the Psalms delivered in mini-homilies as is possible in the

anticipated 3-year life of the project (1+ year research, then 20 months writing).

OBJECTIVE: I see 4 objectives for this Life Vows project, building on my 2017 work when I was still a Novice:

- deepen my prayer life (the Psalms are Prayers).
- enrichen my understanding of Monastic life (the Psalms occur 57 times in the RULE; 41 Psalms occur 84 times in the NT; and we do approximately 10 Psalms per day up here at the Abbey).
- add spiritual & theological depth to the discernment process of the 3 years leading, hopefully, to my Life Vows in 2021 (the Psalms are Spiritual, the Psalms are Theology).
- ensure this is not done in isolation (give it life with Mini-Homilies in my church community).

So, here we are, in the 42nd page of my Life Vows Project, and only now are the Psalms being highlighted with a section of their own. What happened?

Well, as stated in the Introduction to this work, COVID happened, and, along with it, ZOOM. Sections II.7, 8 & 9 over the previous 26 pages show where my energies, time and passion have been spent. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, and especially given the four congregational Testimonials, this has been the right choice. Bishop Bill, with his recommendation to "ensure that the journey was not a solo one, but one that would benefit the home parish as well," I suspect would approve.

A central focus of this work has been Section II.7, The Wagon Wheel (the OT is in the NT revealed). The very first figure in the 17 pages of Appendix V (Psalms) anticipates this approach with remarkable prescience (the mustard seed?). I insert the first figure from that Appendix here as Figure 21 to help emphasize the point.

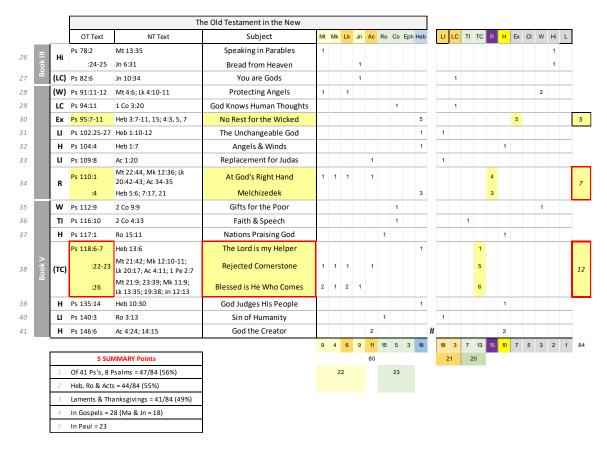


Figure 21 The Old Testament in the New - An Earlier Variation than the Wagon Wheel

While not quite "The OT is in the NT revealed", Figure 21's articulation of "The Old Testament in the New" can surely be seen as my mustard seed, and the level of detail the

precursor of the Wagon Wheel in Section II.7 (would you agree that the Wagon Wheel is much more intuitively obvious than Figure 21 above?).

So, thus, my original Psalms project became subsumed within the broader scope of this Evening Prayer project, likely strongly influenced by Bishop Bill's recommendation to me to "ensure that the journey was not a solo one, but one that would benefit the home parish as well." As this project will hopefully clearly show, the direction it took clearly benefitted the home parish, to which the four Testimonials clearly attest. How, then, did the Psalms manifest themselves within the broader work – was it possible to throw out the bathwater without throwing out the baby at the same time?

One perspective on this question can be found in Blanca Mestito's *RIVERS OF BABYLON* Testimonial on the page following, with the emphasis it gives to Psalm 137. Unbeknownst to her, it fit perfectly with the writing I had already done on Psalm 137 in Section II.9 (The Three Temples).

And thus the lengthy quote from her Testimonial (paragraph 3) on page 37 of Section II.9. What Blanca helped articulate was the tragic wasteland that the Psalms represent for (most?) parishioners. One of the regular EP attendees inadvertently revealed this mind set during his efforts to begin the Daily Lectionary (DL), observing that he didn't bother with the Psalms. If you think that this is the case despite decades of listening to Psalms every Sunday, would you say that the use of 'tragic' is not being too dramatic? A lesson for me was our first couple of years of Evening Prayer. Unswervingly using the Psalms from the DL for Tuesday and Thursday, how long did it take before even Padi Wilmer and the Brother realized the extent of the repetition? It was longer than it should have been!

One of the objective of my original project proposal was to ensure that "as many of the Psalms (were) delivered in mini-homilies as is possible in the anticipated 3-year life of the project." Blanca's testimonial was so heartening because it showed that a life long Christian was able to move beyond their single Psalm focus and discover with excitement that a favorite song of her youth in fact was from a Psalm; City of Babylon! Blanca thus gave me hope that giving the Psalms more of a focus could bear fruit.

Before I joined our evening prayer all I mostly knew about the Psalms was that they were a part of the Old Testament. And that my favorite was Psalm 23 - especially if I'm in trouble the verse comforts me spiritually and emotionally. It may sound unreal but better to have something to cling on than nothing at all.

When I joined Evening Prayer, Psalms were always part of the readings. I never really asked why, all I do is follow in the reading. The first reading and second reading are what I usually made sure I know which one. And when we started reading all about the Psalms, I can't even remember how many weeks we did the Psalms. Thanks to Greg he made sure those Psalms that we may never have known that we read them in the Evening Prayer.

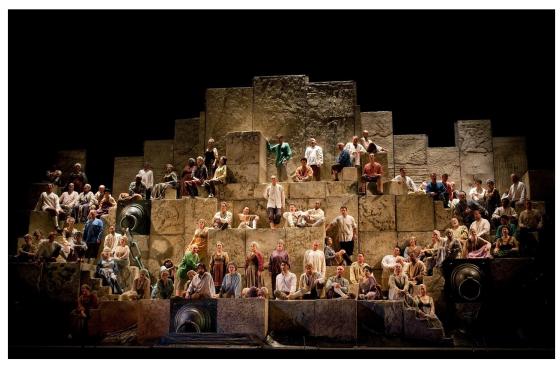
And it was during the Evening Prayer when we read Psalm 137, the words are like the lyric of the song that I liked since I was young, Rivers of Babylon. I may never know the connection of that song if I did not join the Evening Prayer. The hymns in church I'm not surprised if they're from the Psalms, but Rivers of Babylon I heard everywhere and I had no idea it came from the Psalms. Evening Prayer taught me a lot about psalms.

I may never know psalms have more than one author and it has around 150 chapters if I did not join the evening prayer. And read that Psalms is a collection of poetry that recounts Israel's history and God's covenant promises.

Thank you for the lessons about Psalms now I understand more about its content and its messages. I appreciate it a lot more not just "Psalm 23".

Written by Blanca Mestito





Psalm 137

6

Editor's Note: The above Graphic is from Figure 19 on page 37. Entirely without co-ordination, Section II.9 was being written as Blanca was creating her Testimonial and her reflection on Ps 137. See Paragraph 3 above and how it was used there.

But, I also learned that it was very difficult to make them the <u>sole</u> focus. Psalm 8 and Psalms 41 & 42 worked very well early on, but I quickly learned after that that 10+ minutes solely on a Psalm is a quick way to lose your audience, embarrassingly obvious when they were so close in our small EP Chapel! Thus began my slow journey away from the Psalms as the sole focus of my Life Vows Project. The break was only complete, though, after the advent of COVID and the dawning realization of the graphical potential of ZOOM.

The great learning was that parishioners are much more likely to remember a Psalm if you use it as an augment to the broader EP message. The best example, I believe, is Blanca's SONG OF BABYLON Testimonial and Psalm 137 (see Figures 18 & 19 to understand how it was originally presented, and how this might have triggered Blanca's understanding and retention). There were other examples. A minor one that I used to try to trigger interest was verse 8 of Psalm 72, "from sea to sea"; this was the source of the Canadian Latin Motto, A MARIE USQUE AD MARE.

The most dramatic of the examples of the OT (the Psalms) are in the NT revealed would have to be Psalms 22 & 69. These of course provide multiple examples of the words used by Christ on the Cross, and of the actions of those around the Cross ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," and "It is finished" are two of multiple examples).

While discouraged by the blank stares induced by the Psalms, Blanca's Testimonial does give me hope. The learning is that the approach has to be right. I do though feel a great inadequacy that I was unable to convey the endless spiritual depth of the Psalms. Perhaps the Durer painting on the next page might have helped, if I had had it at the time?

As it was, I could do little more than ineffectively tell the EP group that every feeling under the Sun can be found in the Psalms (well done Blanca, that you remembered that there were 150 of them!).

One final observation. After writing this section, I was quite conscious of the lack of Figures for this section on the Psalms – think back to how many you have seen in the other Sections (10 alone in Section II.8). The addition of Durer was Michiko's idea. The lack of Figures here shouldn't be surprising, though. The Psalms are Prayer: ethereal and spiritual, and not conducive to Eureka images. Durer caught the essence of that in Figure 22. I think the lack of substantive images is also a sign of why Psalms are so difficult to convey in 15-minute homilies – they work best alone in prayer, in harmony with Durer. For a message (as

opposed to prayer), they almost always need to function as an augment, as Blanca helps us understand with her memory of Psalm 137.



Figure 22 Durer - Prayer

11. SECTION II SUMMARY

Perhaps reflecting my love of theology, and the fact that I had 18 months of mini-Homilies rich in graphics to draw on, this section on THEOLOGY will be far and away the biggest of the three sections of this work (32 pages out of the 60 pages of writing, excluding the Appendices).

The second Section of Theology (The Message of Salvation, II.8), with its decidedly Christological focus (Profoundly Christocentric), was the most formidable undertaking of this work. The four hours of mini-Homilies were also the most significant undertaking of the Brother's 144 mini-Homilies across 4+ years, by far. The second of the four congregational Testimonials underpinned the 10 pages of II.8 and reinforced the joy it was to the husband and wife. Readers are strongly encouraged to use the web-link provided in Michiko's Testimonial on page 26 for an insight into where this joy came from.

Her Testimonial also helps to make the point about how foundational all four of the congregational 1-pager Testimonials are. Far more than the Surveys, the Testimonials are substantive & focused, well informed & deeply thoughtful. If someone were to look for a quick way to understand this extensive work, all they really need to do is read the Conclusions at the end of this work, and the three Testimonials in this section (and the one in Section III, all listed above the Table of Contents). This point is the first point made in the Conclusions at the end of this work.

The final point of this Section on THEOLOGY can best be made by quoting from Moses Kajoba's page-17 Testimonial, when he observes that some people "learn better with visual aids." Michiko certainly strongly seconds this point. I think this especially applies when it comes to communicating the complexities inherent in trying to explain OT-NT scriptural linkages. The ability to do this is only made possible with the use of graphics, a capability inherent in ZOOM, and is yet another reason why ZOOM has so quickly become a New Normal.

The final section of this work, Section III following, describes other aspects of worship made possible by being on-line with ZOOM, in what is described as Hybrid Worship.

III. HYBRID WORSHIP - FOUR OTHER ASPECTS

From the 40+ pages so far in this work has come the dawning realization that weekday Evening Prayer at St Michaels Multicultural Anglican Church (SMM) has evolved into a hybrid of the traditional Evening Prayer/Compline/Vespers in the BCP and the BAS.

The most radical change was the introduction of mini-Homilies/messages (MH's) in 2017, at the request of a life-long couple at SMM. Much of the previous Section on Theology has focused on this aspect of the evening office, with a special focus on the time since COVID hit. There were four other changes as well, somewhat more minor in nature, which will be the focus of this final section:

- 12. Variations on Lay Participation.
- 13. Music.
- 14. Closing EP With a Question/Reflection [4th 1-page Testimonial Pilong Bosaing]
- 15. Combining EP with Impromptu Church Business

12. Variations on Lay Participation

Evening Prayer/Vespers around the world is very traditional; Psalms, a Gospel, and a prayerful liturgy. Traditional, too, in the sense that it is often led by Lay Leaders, with the Psalms and Gospel read by a member of the congregation. Early in the beginning, Padi Wilmer trained several lay leaders, and EP at St Michaels was as traditional as any other in the Anglican Communion, excepting the inclusion of music (covered in the next section).

With the advent of messages/mini-Homilies (MH's) in Oct 2017, things changed considerably. EP continued with a Psalm and the Gospel, but added an Old Testament reading, as it was the OT that the MH focused on more and more. The liturgy continued unchanged from the BAS, and can be seen in its St Michael's clothing in Appendix VII. For an outsider, though, it would have been quickly obvious that if it was familiar, it was definitely a form of EP 2.0, with the three additions of music, an OT reading, and an MH.

With the advent of ZOOM in April 2020, an outsider might then have had more difficulty discerning that the Office was EP/Vespers. Now, being on-line with ZOOM, Appendix VII was augmented with the Psalm, OT reading and Gospel embedded, and a Frontispiece Graphic reflecting the theme of the evening. And, utilizing the functionality of ZOOM's Screen Share, a separate PowerPoint file was sometimes brought in with more Graphics,

in what was becoming a multi-media message. A survey question (Q-8, Appendix V) looked for feedback from the congregants on whether or not the visuals/Graphics made a difference. The obvious learning was that the visual learners (50%) thought they made a big difference, but that the non-visual learners thought they made no difference (30%). The remainder thought that they made somewhat of a difference.

The final change happened in the last year, and introduced the Vespers liturgy used by the Benedictines, as a 2nd option for St Michael's on-line Zoom EP Office. With the permission of the Abbot and Padi Wilmer, the Brother began using this liturgy for Tuesdays, with its full participation character, beginning in Easter of 2021 (see Appx VIII).

With the Benedictine Vespers liturgy, Tuesday lay participation now took on a dimension that was less familiar, and more involving. Those portions previously spoken by the Worship Leaders diminished considerably, assuring all attendees an active part in the Office. After half a year of this, we asked the congregants for their feedback on this new active approach to Evening Prayer. With EP Survey #2 in Dec 2021, the leaders were relieved to see that the majority of the parishioners liked the diversity they encountered between the Tuesday and Thursday approaches to the Office. In Q-8, 80% indicated they liked the diversity, while 20% said they weren't sure. This response was very much in keeping with one of the Vision Statements of St Michaels – "Richness in Diversity."

Pilong Bosaing's Testimonial in Section 14 provided an honest and humorous perspective of the 'praying on my toes' effect on parishioners having to wait to hear their names called during the participative Tuesday EP Office.

We conduct BAS and Benedictine evening prayers, which tend to get us more involved. So, I have to be alert and be more present when called upon to participate on short notice, which I describe as 'praying on my toes'.

One final consideration for the EP leaders. The satisfaction with diversity indicated in Survey Question-8 above, seems like Good News, doesn't it? And yet the nature of Survey statistics is that sometimes you need to scratch beneath the surface. In this case, it may be mere coincidence, but since the introduction of the 'praying on my toes' aspect of EP, there has been a gradual decline in EP attendance (see Figure 1). Whether it is or isn't related to the introduction of participative diversity, or to a combination of factors, the leaders might want to explore why this might be so, with the caveat that attendance is still double what it was prior to ZOOM.

This theme of diversity continues in the next section on Music.

13. Music

From the beginning, Padi Wilmer has ensured that each EP Office began and ended with a hymn. For years, prior to ZOOM, he provided accompaniment with his guitar.

With the move to ZOOM, he became ever more creative with the adaption of music from the Internet for the opening and closing music selections. This has been so successful/well met that he has brought this technique to the Sunday service. During the Christmas 2021 services, in particular, it had a splendid effect.

While music is not a traditional part of Evening Prayer, it is so popular with the St Michaels congregation that it is hard to imagine SMM EP without it. In our ongoing discussion of the impact of EP on Padi Wilmer's workload, it needs to be kept in mind that the music is one other aspect of his EP workload – in addition to preparing the liturgy/bulletin and his MH.

Since adopting the Benedictine Vespers liturgy for Tuesdays, music has not been a part of the Office on those occasions. Again, in the Dec 2021 EP Survey #2, the congregants were asked about this, and in Question-11 expressed strong satisfaction with the diversity (80%) relative to the music (alternating between music on Thursdays and no music on Tuesdays). One respondent's comment, though, did wonder aloud about why music couldn't be included on Tuesdays. So it is missed, if even by a minority?

Like the concluding comment at the end of Section III.13 (previous page), it does leave hanging the question whether lack of music on Tuesdays might be a possible contributing factor in the Figure 1 decline observed in EP attendance since Easter 2021 (although Tuesday and Thursday attendance is mostly equivalent).

* * *

Two aspects of a Hybrid EP Office have been explored so far; diversity in liturgy, and diversity in music. The final two aspects of a Hybrid EP Office conclude Section III, with the next section focusing on Questions & Reflections, and then the final section focusing on a related topic, EP and Business (no, this is not a misprint!).

14. CLOSING EP WITH A QUESTION & REFLECTION (Q & R).

In the last year or so, Padi Wilmer began what seemed like a new tradition of posing a message related question for reflection after EP. Survey Question-10 results, along with Pilong Bosaing's 1-page Testimonial (next page), show how popular this initiative has been with the EP congregation.

Pilong gives Q & R pride of place, saying that the most significant aspect of EP for him "is ending it with questions and reflections" from the messages/mini-Homilies. The entire final paragraph of Pilong's Testimonial was so compelling, to this point, that further below all of it is repeated/highlighted.

Before that, though, two other perspectives; feedback from the congregants in the Dec 2021 Survey (Question-10), and Padi Wilmer's short reflection on his motivation in introducing Q & R a year ago.

1. THE DEC 2021 SURVEY - Appendix III contains all 15 question of EP Survey #2. What it does not show are the congregant comments. The comments from respondents on Question-10 stood out for two reasons. One, there were seven of them (the other 14 had an average of just one). Two, the 7 comments were all positive and were also reflected in Pilong's thoughts and feelings. Five of them are worth repeating:

"The sharing/reflections of others adds to my understanding of the lesson. AND, makes the group bonded together."

"It helps to get us to think about how the topic affects us."

"Once in a while it is nice to express your thoughts & feelings."

"Most of the time, the sharing is good to hear other people's thoughts, but sometimes it's hard to think what to say."

"Nice to hear from other participants and get to know others a bit deeper than at coffee."

In her comment, Pilong's wife Monica was equally articulate:

"For me, I feel like it has brought us closer together as a church family. I feel comfortable to share without being judged."

This is a good segway into a paragraph of Pilong's, capturing many of these points:

"The most that I find very significant in EP is ending it with questions and reflections from the homilies. It was not what I was expecting as a form of fellowship and it was intimidating at first.

LIFE TOGETHER IN EP & CLOSING EP WITH A QUESTION/REFLECTION

While I look forward to Sundays as a day of prayer and worship at SMM, having our fellowship after the service caps and completes the day for me. At times it reminds me of those rare visits to the small town where I grew up in the Philippines of being with all those many relatives and friends. As for Evening Prayer (EP), I attended only a few times when it so happened that I was in the neighborhood. I did not see the need to be at EP regularly and I felt that Sunday worship is more than good enough for me. But then things changed when the Covid pandemic came about almost two years ago. We went on lockdown when the government to contain the spread of the Coronavirus mandated that gathering of people be restricted. And that included banning congregations to gather at their places of worship. We were not deterred at SMM as we adapted, despite the drastic changes that were occurring. Being grateful because of technology we were able to continue worship services on Sundays including the evening prayers on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Through the internet via Zoom on our devices, we went on to worship together from almost anywhere while keeping ourselves safe and complying with the health guidelines by the diocese and the government.

Perhaps, because the fellowship after this Sunday online service no longer felt what it used to be, I thought of joining EP to look for what I felt was lacking. Having the time from not having to travel in rush hour traffic finally got me into joining EP. I found out that what I was looking for was not there, instead other things that I was not seeking came about. It was only at the later stage of my life that I started to seriously practice my faith and not having studied the Bible were the reasons why I think I always struggled to understand the lessons, psalms and gospels on Sundays. It was during Evening Prayer services through the teachings of Padi Wilmer and Brother Greg in their homilies which helped me to learn and find some meaning and see some clarity from the scriptures. I am not only learning about the scriptures but also learning about church history and of others like the Jewish traditions. I found it very interesting how creative Brother Greg is in teaching about the prophets and Bible stories through the works of Michelangelo on the walls and ceiling of a historic landmark. I compare it to a compound exercise where one kind of exercise would provide multiple benefits to many parts of the body. Besides learning about religious topics, I also gained knowledge on different subjects such as the painter, Michelangelo, about fresco painting and the Sistine Chapel. We conduct BAS and Benedictine evening prayers, which tend to get us more involved. So, I have to be alert and be more present when called upon to participate on short notice, which I describe as 'praying on my toes'.

The most that I find very significant in EP is ending it with questions and reflections from the homilies. It was not what I was expecting as a form of fellowship and it was intimidating at first. Over time I came to look forward to it because it forces me to look within, to reflect and to find a voice for the thoughts or the emotions that may arise in response to a message. I always have a hard time expressing myself and have always been unsure of myself but I have learned to take instances like these to not run away and instead meet the challenge. And what I found remarkable though was not about me but about others and the kind of fellowship happening among us. I feel that the question and reflection period somehow led to something that I am honored to be a part of. A place where I feel connections occur and where I see openness just being there; with joys, pains, difficulties and challenges arising without the fear of being judged. And a place where someone said that she feels safe. Yes, that too, and I fully agree.

Written by Pilong Bosaing

"Over time I came to look forward to it because it forces me to look within, to reflect and to find a voice for the thoughts or the emotions that may arise in response to a message.

I always have a hard time expressing myself but I have learned to take instances like these to not run away and instead meet the challenge. And what I found remarkable though was not about me but about others and the kind of fellowship happening among us. I feel that the question and reflection period somehow led to something that I am honored to be a part of. A place where I feel connections occur and where I see openness just being there; with joys, pains, difficulties and challenges arising without the fear of being judged. And a place where someone said that she feels safe. Yes, that too, and I fully agree."

2. PADI'S MOTIVATION TO INTRODUCE Q & R - Like much else in Evening Prayer (EP), the initiative was usually Padi Wilmer's, be it starting EP, introducing messages/mini-Homilies (MH's), or, in this case, introducing Questions & Reflections (Q & R). We have told the stories of his trigger for starting up EP 6+ years ago, and for introducing MH's. It seems appropriate to complete his Trinity by hearing in his own words what motivated him to introduce such a successful augment to end EP:

Pending from Padi

The title of Pilong's Testimonial begins with the same first two words as the title of this work: LIFE TOGETHER. Aspects of life together can be seen throughout his Testimonial, and throughout the six congregational comments above. Some of the key words are:

> "fellowship ... family ... bonded together ... get to know one another better ... connections ... openness ... feels safe"

These all reinforce SMM's experience outside of worship, at the last two summer retreats at Manning Park prior to the advent of the pandemic. In 2017, we introduced the concept of the First Nations Sacred Circle, as experienced by the author while at school. At Manning Park, we did the circle three times each weekend up there. Participation was open, authentic, and safe, as expressed by the participants at the time. And, for both years, it was voted the best part of the retreat. With that pre-pandemic experience, we shouldn't have been surprised that we had the same response with Q & R after EP?

As mentioned at the beginning of this work (Figure 1), attendance more than doubled at EP immediately after the pandemic began and the church was closed. Surely it was this previous experience with the Sacred Circle, and then the renewal of that experience by Padi

Wilmer with the introduction of Q & R in 2021? The overwhelmingly positive response to Q & R is probably the biggest learning (re-learning!) with this work.

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The final topic of this work is related to this section on EP Questions & Reflections. As popular as Q & R's were discovered to be, it raised the question of what the feelings of the congregation would be when the Q & R is replaced when the need for a Business session arose? Would all respondents be as open-minded as the one who commented "Business is important as well."