



Office of Mission and Ministry

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

Λόγος LOGOS



VOLUME 4, NUMBER 2 • Spring 2010

includes books on theology, church history, spirituality, and art history, with a special focus on those which bear upon the Dominican Order.

We hold him in our hearts and pray for continued blessings on his life and ministry.

At the same time, we are delighted that Fr. Gabriel Pivarnik, O.P., assistant professor of theology and a member of the Province of St. Joseph, has agreed to succeed Fr. McGonigle as director of the Center. Fr. Pivarnik is a graduate of the College of William and Mary, where he majored in history and presented a thesis entitled “African-American Autobiographies and Changing Historical Perspectives”; the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception, where he received his M.Div. and S.T.L.; and most recently The Catholic University of America where he received his S.T.D. in sacramental theology. Popular with his students and with faculty colleagues, Fr. Pivarnik will bring great energy and a broad interest in all things Catholic and Dominican to his role as director of the Center.

Masses and Confessions at St. Dominic Chapel (when school is in session):

Masses for Sunday:

4:30 P.M. *Saturday Vigil*

4:30 P.M. *Sunday*

7:00 P.M. *Sunday*

10:30 P.M. *Sunday*

Weekday Masses:

11:35 A.M., 4:30 P.M. (*Monday-Friday*)

9:00 P.M. (*Monday-Thursday*)

Confessions:

3:30 P.M. - 4:30 P.M. *Wednesday*

8:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M. *Wednesday*

3:30 P.M. - 4:30 P.M. *Saturday*

OFFICES

Office of Mission and Ministry

Fr. Joseph J. Guido, O.P., *Vice President*

Fr. Kevin D. Robb, O.P., *Associate Vice President*

401.865.1210

www.providence.edu/Mission+Ministry

Center for Catholic and Dominican Studies

Fr. Thomas D. McGonigle, O.P., *Director*

401-865-2870

www.providence.edu/CDDS/

Chaplain to the National Alumni Association

Fr. John S. Peterson, O.P.

401.865.1520

Office of the Chaplain/Campus Ministry

www.providence.edu/Student+Life/Spiritual+Life/

401.865.2216

Fr. M. James Cuddy, O.P., *Chaplain*

Fr. Thomas J. Ertle, O.P., *Assistant Chaplain/*

Campus Minister

Ms. Gail Berkowitz, *Campus Minister*

Ms. Meghan Griffiths, *Campus Minister*

Ms. Sherry Humes Dane, *Director of Liturgical Music*

Mrs. Jane Larson McGuirk, *Administrative Assistant*

Mrs. Patricia Campellone, *Wedding Consultant*

A MEDITATION: *A God with skin on*



ne of my fondest memories from childhood is going to the library with my mother and younger brother. My brother and I would race one another to see who could get to

the children’s section first, and when we did, invariably we were struck by the wonder of it all. Row after row of books, the stacks taller than our heads and the uppermost shelves a reach for little hands and arms. There were books about boys like us and books about children from far off places, stories about how cities were built and how to build bird houses, books about animals and dinosaurs and the planets, and of course our favorites: Curious George, Hardy Boys, and the Time-Life series on nature and ancient civilizations.

My brother and I would sit side by side on the floor between the stacks reading, a pile of books on either side of us. While normally we would chat and tease one another, play at cowboys and Indians, or wrestle—imitating the holds of Killer Kowalski or Bobo

Brazil—here we were silent. The only sounds were those of the turning page, the occasional shifting of position, and the distant, muted voices of the librarians and other patrons. Absorbed as we were in words that made even imaginary people and places feel real and immediate, time seemed to stand still.

And so it does each Christmas on campus. The students are gone. Exams are done, grades turned in, offices closed, and nary a phone call or email requires a reply. And if we are lucky as we were this Christmas, falling snow dampens the ordinary sounds of the city. For a few days, a week perhaps, time is unhurried and undemanding, and if one chooses to, one can become absorbed in words and the worlds they make real.

This Christmas I read *Lit* by Mary Karr, the Peck Professor of Literature at Syracuse University. A memoir about her plunge into alcoholism and her far more difficult climb to sobriety, it is alternately funny, haunting, and both irreverent and devout. It is also consistently and unsparingly honest.

A MEDITATION: *A God with skin on*

At one point she describes how, having tried sobriety on her own terms and failed every time, she reluctantly accepted the fact that she needed the assistance of others. But she was not yet ready to accept God's help. In fact she fussed and fumed, and railed against the very notion of God and of getting down on her knees to pray "to the air molecules". So a fellow alcoholic, an elegant if somewhat tweedy Harvard academic, said to her, "If you need God with skin on, go to your group and ask the first person you see."

The notion of turning to a member of her AA meeting as her "Higher Power" struck her as being nearly as absurd as praying to God. After all, the meeting was an odd assemblage of the Chanel wearing and the tattoo sprouting, of bikers and professors, students and the woebegone. But grudgingly she took the advice. In doing so she discovered that grace can be found in improbable places and, in time, found her way to prayer, and faith, and eventually to the Church.

Reading this on the eve of Christmas, I could not help but be struck by the phrase, "God with skin on". This is the very wonder and mystery of Christmas: "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). But the wonder and mystery does not stop here. It goes on to include a woman who grabbed hold of the hem of Jesus' garment and was healed, and another who dried his feet with her hair and kissed them, and was forgiven. It is Peter sinking in the water, afraid for his life, caught by the hand of Jesus and led to safety. It is the skin of God that was ripped and beaten, hung on the cross, and laid in his mother's arms. And it is a God with skin on that Mary felt impelled to embrace and that Thomas begged to touch.

It is also the mystery of the Church, an improbable assembly if ever there was one. Some among us may be saints but many more of us are sinners. Arrayed in every guise and hue, and coming from every walk of life, our faith is variously strong or wavering, nascent or hesitant. We bicker and pout, dissemble and sometimes betray. But we also feed the poor, defend the defenseless, and when necessary, give our lives for the truth of Christ. Unlovely we are, to be sure, but not without grace. Indeed, for many people we are the only skin that God has, blotched and mottled though it may be.

The wonder and mystery, then, is both that God has skin to take hold of and that it is within the grasp of us all. This was true in Bethlehem of course, but also Jerusalem, and then too it is true in Providence and in whatever corner of the world is ours. It wraps around the comely and those who are not, around family and friends, foes and the stranger. Sometimes it is seen for what it is but most often not: just another drunk trying to stay sober, we think, or a child reading a book.

But God's compassion is wiser than we know. For when the upper shelves of faith seem too high for us to reach, and when prayer seems like speaking "to molecules of air", it is a God with skin on who sits by our side, his Word bringing distant things near and making the improbable real.

NEWS AND UPDATES

Advent Lessons and Carols

In what has become a signature event at Providence College, more than one hundred members of the Liturgical Choir, *I Cantori* and the Concert Chorale sang a selection of Advent and Christmas music during a service of *Lessons and Carols* on Saturday, December 5, in St. Dominic Chapel. Fr. Brian J. Shanley, O.P., president of Providence College, presided at the service and students, faculty and staff members read selections from the Old and New Testaments. Under the direction of Sherry Humes Dane, Director of Liturgical Music, and Dr. T. J. Harper, Director of Choral Activities in the Department of Music, *Lessons and Carols* provides a welcome break for students preparing for final examinations and serves as a gentle reminder to all of the deeper meaning of the season. A clip of the service can be viewed on YouTube by typing in *Providence College Lessons and Carols '09*.

Immersion Experiences

For the second time in as many years, eleven student volunteers and two members of the Campus Ministry team—Fr. James Cuddy, O.P. and Ms. Megan Griffiths—headed down to New Orleans for a week of service during the second week of January. Entitled *NOLA Immersion*, it is one of several immersion experiences scheduled for Christmas and Spring breaks. The others include *My Brother's Keeper* and *Habitat for Humanity*, the former of which places students in positions of service in southeastern Massachusetts while the latter sends students to eleven locations across the eastern United States. Each of the immersion experiences is complemented by a series of reflections on students' experience and how it bears upon their understanding of their faith. In addition, all students engaging in service during Spring break will have an opportunity to attend an *After the Break* retreat upon their return.

Strategic Planning

When the division of Mission and Ministry came into being in July 2005, one of its first tasks was to develop a five-year strategic plan for the Office of the Chaplain/

Campus Ministry, the Center for Catholic and Dominican Studies, the Chaplain to the National Alumni Association, as well as the division as a whole. Entitled *Cor ad cor loquitur*: Heart Speaking to Heart, it drew upon the views and experiences of more than one thousand members of the Providence College community. It will expire in June 2011 and preliminary planning for a new strategic plan has begun. Like its predecessor, the new strategic plan will be based on extensive research both nationally and here at the College which will include surveys, interviews, and focus groups involving students, faculty and staff, alumni, parents and friends of the College.

To that end, if you would be interested in participating in a survey or interview, or if you have views that you would like to share at this time, please contact Fr. Guido at jguido@providence.edu. We are especially interested in your responses to three questions: What do you think we are doing well to serve the religious and spiritual needs of the Providence College community? What are we not doing that you think we should consider doing to enhance our ministry to the College? What have been your best and worst experiences of the Catholic and Dominican mission of Providence College and why?

Transitions

Fr. Thomas D. McGonigle, O.P., associate professor of history and director of the Center for Catholic and Dominican Studies for the last four and a half years, will retire from the faculty and as director at the end of this academic year. He will return to his home Province of St. Albert the Great to assist in various ministries and to help prepare a critical edition of the papers of Fr. Samuel Mazzuchelli, O.P., whose cause for canonization has been accepted by the Holy See.

We are deeply grateful for Fr. McGonigle's long and distinguished service at Providence College as both a teacher and administrator, and for the generosity of successive provincials who lent us one of their best and brightest. We are grateful as well for his generous benefaction of his personal library to the Center. Numbering many hundreds of volumes, the collection