



Λόγος

LOGOS



VOLUME 9, NUMBER 2 • January 2015

REFLECTION: *In the Bleak Midwinter?*



As people begin to read this reflection, the Christmas season will just be ending and the ambivalence of a New England winter will be settling in—some will love the snow-laden streets and houses covered with glistening icicles. They revel in the Currier and Ives dreams of winter in America. Others will only see the onset of an eight-week long prayer for deliverance. As a friar who grew up in southern climes, I am in the

prayer of deliverance category. The bleak midwinter seems to capture my soul and hold it hostage. It is not that I long for surfboards and suntan lotion, or somehow cease my ability to function when the temperature drops and the sidewalks ice over. No, it is not that at all. Rather, I am caught in the “betweenness” of this season. Christmas is over but I want the lights and the decorations to remain. The reminders to take the tree down seem constant, but I will fight to keep it up well into February. Wrapped into this sense of disquietude is a

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longing for the thaw of Easter, but Lent has not even begun. We are simply biding our time—left to wait in the doldrums of the bleak midwinter—it seems like every morning we are faced with blankets of snow, cars that need to be de-iced, and desperate attempts to cover our faces when a nor'easter rips through Smith Hill. And then again, maybe it is just a matter of perspective.

Christina Rossetti, in her now famous poem, described the bleak midwinter as the time when Christ came into the world: *Earth stood hard as iron,/ Water like a stone;/ Snow had fallen, snow on snow,/ Snow on snow;/ In the bleak mid-winter,/ Long ago.* But, the funny thing is that Bethlehem in December averages in the 60's—even in its coldest month, January, that “little town” only infrequently dips below freezing. There was, more than likely, no snow on the ground. The earth had not hardened from the cold temperatures nor had the water frozen like stone. Rossetti's home, however, was London—she knew little of Mediterranean environs and the balmy temperatures of life just outside of

Jerusalem. In her bleak midwinter, she found solace in a God who would break through that to reach her, to reach all of us, in the midst of our own humanity. Perspective changes us.

And perhaps that is the real thrust of this time after Christmas for Christian believers—we are forced to rethink our perspective on things. It is not that we are tacitly biding time waiting for the next season to begin, or wondering secretly if a spring thaw might ever arrive. It is that the presence of the Christ in the world demands a response from us—one that begs us to change our perspective. For if in that bleak midwinter so long ago, God deigned to enter into our humanity so fully as to become one like us in all things but sin, does that not ask us to rethink how we live and move in this world? Or are we so entrapped by the commercialism of Christmas that these weeks “between” condemn us to forget the very thing that we celebrated. If anything, it is this time that should be the time of our quickening—of new life coming to birth within us, or of arms outstretched that can embrace

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a wider reality than ourselves. Like iris bulbs seemingly dormant and inert, this is the time when what lies beneath sustains and nurtures new life. There is nothing bleak about it.

But what lies beneath? Are our hearts hard as iron or frozen like a stone? Or can we indeed take the spirit and call of the season we have just celebrated and let it enflame our hearts and minds? Imagine that world! Imagine what is possible when we allow the Prince of Peace to reign in our hearts. Imagine what we become when the Wonder-Counselor speaks words of consolation and forgiveness through us. Imagine when we can look at every other person in this world as possessing a part of Emmanuel—God is with us.

This winter then, I will don my scarf and gloves almost happily and not whisper under my breath curses against the snow and ice (as if those ever did any good anyway!). Instead, the time “between” can become a time to create a new vantage point—a time to see the world with the eyes of God. Isn’t that the very thing for

which we all secretly long? A world that is changed because Christ entered it—to see the world as he envisioned it. Rossetti perhaps said it best: *If I were a wise man/ I would do my part;/ Yet what I can, I give Him—/ Give my heart.* And that is the key—for it is in the giving of this season, of this time in-between, that we can learn to see the world anew. In the end, the seemingly bleak midwinter is just a matter of perspective.

Fr. R. Gabriel Pivarnik, O.P.

Vice President for Mission and Ministry

Director of the Center for Catholic and

Dominican Studies

SETTLING IN:

Reflections by Our New Campus Ministers

*Spirit, lead me where my trust is
without borders*

Let me walk upon the waters

Wherever You would call me.

*Take me deeper than my feet could
ever wander*

*And my faith will be made stronger/In the
presence of my Savior.*

--Hillsong United, Oceans

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These lyrics have echoed throughout my first semester in Campus Ministry. The popular Christian song, describing Jesus' call to Peter on the water, has quickly become an unofficial anthem. It has played a significant part in the spiritual life of Campus Ministry, known as a favorite among students and a cornerstone for experiences of prayer, worship, and small-group reflection. It is only fitting that "Oceans" now marks three meaningful memories of my experience as a new Campus Minister.

I first remember a group of students introducing me to the song at full-volume from a laptop in the kitchen of the Campus Ministry Center. It was clear to see that these students connected to the music and identified with the lyrics. It was even clearer to see their joy in sharing the song with me. My semester has been full of moments such as this, small moments and conversations full of great joy in building relationships. I am awed by our students in countless ways, and I am humbled with gratitude for their openness to share their joy and their lives with me this semester.

I then remember students playing "Oceans" as the meditation hymn for the Connections Retreat and the Campus Ministry Council Fall Retreat. Kneeling in prayer, we sang together of the doubt and fear to walk on the water to Jesus, and the faith to face the wind and waves. Over these retreat weekends, I witnessed students sharing their own fears and struggles in living their faith amidst the waves of college life. Growing in trust of God and one another, they came together through talks and small-group reflections to create a faith-filled community of mutual support and love. Beyond the retreats, I watched these students come together in the presence of the Savior, gathering for Praise and Worship throughout the semester. Hearing "Oceans" played again, I shared in adoration of Christ who called us together, and in prayer that we may faithfully respond to Christ's call as individuals and as a college community.

Finally, I remember the song's presence in Peer Ministry, an emerging program committed to engaging students in peer-to-peer ministry, grounded in small-group

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reflection, prayer, and authentic Christian community. They listened to Matthew's Gospel passage and the song "Oceans", and together reflected on challenge and suffering in the Christian life. For me, this narrative of Christ's call to a fearful Peter on the water exemplifies the Peer Ministry program itself—an act of faith in response to Christ's invitation to us in Campus Ministry, to create new and formative initiatives to nourish the spiritual community of Providence College. I am amazed by the many graces at work in Peer Ministry, and the many people who have faithfully supported the growth of this program, repeating Jesus' words to the disciples, "Do not be afraid".

However, no memory or song can fully express my gratitude for this past semester, for the grace of God alive in Campus Ministry and the Providence College community. It remains an incredible blessing that the Holy Spirit would lead me again to Providence College, the very place where I first heard Jesus' call to me. I look forward to many more moments of joy and faith-filled community, and trust that the

echoes of "Oceans" will not be far behind.

Kelly Hughes '11

Campus Minister for Outreach and Evangelization and Coordinator of the new Peer Ministry Program

What a quick five months it's been. My feet are beginning to feel more settled in my role in Campus Ministry, though I often do feel I'm still running! Being an alum has occasioned gratitude for what's familiar from my years at PC: the start of basketball season, the beautiful campus, and the friendliness and passion of the students, to name a few. But being, now, 'on the other side of the desk', I find myself being struck by things I would have otherwise just taken for granted as a student here. I'm struck by the commitment of our student leaders in Campus Ministry. They give hours upon hours to their ministries from deep wells of dedication. I'm struck by their desires to spread the Gospel and to bring about justice, as well as their openness to growth and transformation. I'm struck, too, by their hope.

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More broadly, I'm also struck by the mission of Campus Ministry in college settings and the leavening effect it can have on a campus. To have a place for healthy socializing, for learning about faith and asking the big questions of life, as well as a place to be challenged and encouraged in deep and transformative ways is an important part of faith and human formation. Now, these are all things that I benefitted from as a student here at PC. But they are things I might not have seen in their full force until being on the 'other side of the desk'. Such is the nature of our vision, though: it transforms as we move more deeply into life and new circumstances. Such is also the journey of our students at PC: while here they will grow and learn to see the world and their lives in new ways. And to conclude on this note, I'm struck by the gratitude I feel for the role of accompanying our students on these journeys. My prayer is that in such accompaniment we all might be drawn toward a veritas-shaped vision of our world and lives.

Robert Pfunder '09
Campus Minister for Global Service

The most edifying experience as a new Campus Minister has been working with many talented young women on campus. In particular, this fall thirteen women along with three campus ministers, attended a Women's Outdoor Wilderness Retreat in Saugus, MA. We spent two nights camping and a full day hiking in Breakheart Reservation.

While out on the trail, Father Ambrose Little, O.P. offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in a covered pavilion, followed by adoration and confession. Afterward, we processed on a little trail through a marshy area with Father who carried the Blessed Sacrament back to the campsite. It was dusk and as Father walked past holding the Blessed Sacrament pairs of mallards flushed out flying in praise of the King of Glory. When we reached the campsite, Father put Jesus in a small, portable tabernacle, designed for the retreat. He stationed the tabernacle on an altar in a special tent. That night we prayed compline in the tent and it was delightful to hear the young women singing the Dominican version of the *Salve Regina* with the punctuated *O Clemens, O*

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Pia. Christ's peace and order pervaded the campsite.

During the hike on Saturday, we were climbing over a rocky trail and the groups were splitting up to walk in different directions. I asked one group, "Do you know where you are going?" At that moment, a man in his eighties walked towards us on the trail and said, "You are going to heaven!" His name was Paul and he spoke to the women about "his Savior, Jesus Christ" that they were "so fortunate to know Him now" when they were young. He said he could tell that the women in our group loved God and that God was close to them. The providential meeting reflected the essence of what one senses in so many students at Providence College. There is a deep and unspoken love of God reflected in them, a confidence that radiates a security of knowing who they are in the world.

This understanding came out clearly during the fireside discussions. One of the students, a member of the sophomore class, gave a reflection on how women have a particular communion with God and

their neighbor. "As women of God," she stated, "we are all mothers, in a way. We are nurturers. And whether our vocation is the sacramental married life, the religious life, the single life, we feel an inclination to comfort and empathize with others." While roasting marshmallows, another student, this one a junior, offered her reflections to the participants. As a gifted orator and someone who is able to see the greater needs of others, she delved into deeper questions of how current culture often objectifies women. She encouraged the women listening to create a spirit of solidarity that supports and builds up our families, friends and people we work with in the community. These remarkable young women exemplify the quality of students at Providence College who radiate God's love and give that assurance to many. It is a gift to work with them.

Sr. Anne Frances Klein, O.P.

*Campus Minister and Assistant to the
Chaplain*

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Masses and Confessions

St. Dominic Chapel (*when school is in session*)

Sunday Masses 11:00 a.m.
4:30 p.m.
7:00 p.m.
10:30 p.m.

Weekday Masses 11:35 a.m.
4:30 p.m.
9:00 p.m. (*Monday – Thursday*)

Confessions 12:00 noon – 12:30 p.m.
(*Monday – Friday*)
8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
(*Monday – Thursday, with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*)
3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. (*Saturday*)

St. Thomas Aquinas Priory Chapel

(*when school is in session*)

Weekday Mass 7:25 a.m. (*Monday – Friday*)
8:00 a.m. (*Saturday, with Morning Prayer*)

Morning Prayer 7:10 a.m. (*Monday–Friday*)

Office of Readings and Evening Prayer
5:30 p.m. (*Monday–Friday*)

Evening Prayer 4:45 p.m. (*Saturday and Sunday*)

During vacation periods, the following schedule applies:

Mass 7:30 a.m.
(*Monday–Friday, with Morning Prayer*)
8:00 a.m.
(*Saturday, with Morning Prayer*)

Office of Readings and Evening Prayer
5:30 p.m. (*Monday–Friday*)

Evening Prayer 4:45 p.m. (*Saturday and Sunday*)