

North American Newsletter

Spring, 2022

The Ocean Refuses no River

Rev. Gisela Wielki

I was recently introduced to a very short Round with few words and a seemingly simple message: *'The Ocean Refuses no River. Hallelujah.'* But seemingly simple words are often rather profound.

Every stream, creek and brook, even the smallest of rivulets, whatever its origin, flows in ever wider growing rivers, eventually into the ocean.

And out of the ocean occurs the great rising of water. Seasoned with salt, substance of earth, the ocean's water is drawn up into the cosmos by the rising power of the sun. It is in time returned to the earth as life bestowing, life giving sustenance blessing and baptizing all who dwell upon the earth. Water knows no discrimination.

We are all embedded in our own stream of life. It may be wide or narrow, filled with rocks and many eddies, pure or defiled. It may carry a lot of the freight, the burden of others. It may ever again be in danger to dry up. But whatever its nature, it will always, even if by way of countless detours and obstacles, arrive and never be refused by the ocean of life.

Who draws us up out of the ocean of life into spirit heights? It is the power of resurrection. It is the Risen One, the Easter-Sun. What we bring with us into this rising is the salt, the flavor of our selves, that seasons all our actions and inactions of compassion, all our strengths and weaknesses, all our doubts and errors, all the wisdom we gather from the lessons of life.

Christ wants us to become the true, the pure salt of the earth, unadulterated by either self promotion or self negation but true and pure in its seasoning of self knowledge, and the enhancement of wisdom and light in our lives and in the world.



A Sharing from the Legacy Giving Initiative

Faith DiVecchio, Legacy Giving Coordinator and Veronica Schlegel, Boston Community Member

I look forward to meeting many from around the region as the Money and Biography Workshop travels to various congregations in the late spring and fall of 2022. Stay tuned also for details about a Zoom workshop in the fall of 2022 on Wills, Living Trusts and Healthcare Proxies. Please feel welcome to reach out if you are interested in joining the Donor Circle Conversations, beginning Oct. 2022. I can be reached at giving@thechristiancommunity.org or 413-717-5249.

The legacy work is like planting a perennial garden across the region. It begins with a loving cultivation of the soil, finding a “gardener” (or legacy liaison) in each congregation to develop an individualized approach to this initiative, and the sowing of seeds. Hope, trust, and faith are necessary as we await what comes forth from the seeds and the ongoing building of our sacramental and community relationships.

I asked one of our liaisons, Veronica Schlegel, from the Boston congregation, to share her story of stepping in to be a local “gardener” in the legacy initiative:

“When approached by the Legacy Group in 2021 to be the Boston Congregation representative, I was quite honestly not sure what I could bring to the group: I am not a fundraiser, nor a treasurer, nor any good with money. But in talking to Faith at the 2021 Ordinations she persuaded me that my connection to the sacraments and to those who have died would be a helpful addition to the group. These Threshold experiences are indeed connected with the Legacy Giving.

Our priests often have to visit for the Last Anointing and to prepare for unexpected deaths, sometimes traveling in adverse conditions to fulfill the Sacraments. This is a role in which our retired priests also assist.

During my pregnancies, each of my children brought me a ‘learning gift’ to study: Distant Healing, Homeopathy, Anthroposophy. My fourth child deepened my connection to the Sacraments in The Christian Community. I felt his first movement during a sermon, as large spring snowflakes gently fell outside the chapel window.... ‘the incarnating soul is like a snowflake gently falling to the earth.’ During his baptism I became aware of the importance of the substances and the symbols used in connection with the elements, to help the incarnating child come into this lifetime.

Kris was six months old on the day of his funeral, a special service that is to give comfort to the family of the child. Two weeks before his death, he was diagnosed with Acute Lymphatic Leukemia. We were initially admitted to our local hospital, and then on Palm Sunday, rode in an ambulance up to the city, where the consultant at the Children’s hospital was the world’s leading authority on infantile Leukemia. We were discharged home with hospice on Maundy Thursday. Holy Week has been interwoven for me since that week with tests, results, insights, talks, emotions and also the knowledge that his coming into our lives was indeed a gift.

On the second Sunday of Easter there was a moment when he looked scared, and looking into his eyes I reassured him that all would be well, we would be with him. As he took his last breaths in his fathers’ arms, I heard the voices of the angels welcoming him home and, following his last breath, an expansion of his soul, an opening of the spiritual world to receive his soul with joy and unconditional love. This connection with the ‘Comforter of Our Earth Existence’, this ‘accompaniment’ and realization of Christ in the Etheric was indeed a gift that

has assisted my work and deepened my connection to the Sacraments of The Christian Community.

Our community would not exist without our priests, and we need to support our retired priests, who make themselves available to give homilies, write books, and fulfill Sacraments as needed. Leaving a legacy to your congregation or directly to the fund for retired priests is one way to assist. Please consider leaving a legacy for The Christian Community when you prepare your will. Also, anything you do to support the daily running of our churches: ironing, flowers, cleaning etc., comprises a 'living legacy' ensuring the continuation of our Sacraments for 'all present, all true Christians who are born, all who have died' and for our Earth."

Thank you, Veronica!

Faith DiVecchio

Harmony Lake Children's Camp

Rev. Carol Kelly

East Coast Christian Community Children's Camp

There is hardly a day that goes by that camp does not enter my mind, either through a song, an email, a memory, a child, an insight, an idea for an activity, or a new teenager who enters my life. The 17 days we spend at camp create a small "school for life" where challenges and joys are held together by friendship and song.

Many of the campers coming now are children of former campers. I cannot recommend it highly enough for your children, your teenage counselors and your college-age counselors. It gives them a chance to find out who they can be, in nature, in community, in reverence to God, in gratitude for all that we have been given.

Hillsdale, NY
July 28-August 13t

Camp Directors:
Revs. Carol Kelly and Anna Silber

A promotional poster for Harmony Lake Children's Camp 2022. The background is a scenic view of a lake surrounded by trees and mountains under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the image. The main title "Harmony Lake Children's Camp 2022" is in large, bold, green letters. Below it, in smaller white text, is "Join us this summer, for an everlasting experience in the woods of Hillsdale New York!". Further down, in orange text, is "Harmony Lake Children's Camp is being brought to life this summer by The Christian Community for children ages 8 - 14". At the bottom, in white text, are the dates "Camp Dates: July 28th - August 13th" and the location "Camp Location: 10 Green River Ln, Hillsdale NY 12529". At the very bottom, in orange text, is "Register your camper at campharmonylake.org".

**Harmony Lake
Children's Camp
2022**

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The Path from Easter to Ascension and Whitsun

Rev. Cynthia Hindes

Each festival season offers us a glimpse of the continuing evolution and revelation of Christ.

At Easter, we enter the “light” time of the year at the altar. Coming out of the heavy black of Passiontide (to which perhaps modern humankind feels a natural affinity), the red and the green at the Easter altar fairly explode in an intensity of love, life, and brightness. In the vocabulary of color, red signifies love and courage, and green means life and hope. After the heaviness of Passiontide, we certainly may feel we need all six weeks of the Easter season to absorb the depth and meaning of the love and the life in which we now find ourselves. It takes time to accustom ourselves to the enormity of Christ's deed. For no less than the blackness, He has inhabited and thereby illuminated the hopelessness of matter and death. Through His everlasting presence, death has been transformed. Death is now alive, for Christ dwells in it. And every year at Easter, He reaffirms for us His enlivening of death.

At Ascension, something further begins to stir. The love and courage of the red at the altar remain, but the borders now gleam in a metallic gold, radiant like the sun. We can see this gleaming as an image for matter transformed. At Ascension, we can see Christ as rising like the sun to sit at the right hand of the Father. He “was taken up and a cloud received him from their eyes” (Acts 1:9). But we must not imagine Him as leaving the earth. Rather Christ *expanded* his being, took on a new form, and became luminous and diffuse, cloud-like, uniting heaven and earth. The disciples had not the wherewithal to follow His expansion into another form of being. At the same time, “two men dressed in white” bring the disciples’ gaze gently back to earth and remind them that He will return in the same way they had seen Him disappear. In other words, someday, humankind will develop the capacity to see Him in his “cloud” form. Every Ascension, Christ renews His expansion once again in the spheres around the earth. Like sunlight, He radiates love. And He stretches our powers of perception as we try to follow Him into spirit heights.

Ten days later, at Whitsun (or Pentecost), the altar becomes like the sun itself, gold and white, the picture of the radiance and selfless purity of light itself. In exchange for Christ’s expansion into a form in which most of us can no longer (or not yet) see Him, Christ and the Father have sent us comfort and healing in the form of Spirit awareness and understanding. Their love at Whitsun expands us, too. Our own light of awareness increases as we struggle to understand and embrace the Truth, the immensity of Christ’s activity. Being together in community helps us in this struggle for Truth, for together, we can achieve more than we could alone. The healing Spirit came to the disciples while they were gathered in prayer. Each individual received their own flame of spirit awareness. They were each inspired and received comfort, clarity, strength, and courage. But gathered together, connecting themselves to the divine world, they created something greater than the sum of the parts. A picture for this creation of a greater whole is depicted in the tradition that at Pentecost, each of the apostles contributed one sentence toward the creation of the Creed. Each disciple could understand and contribute a different aspect of the relationship between God, humankind, and the world, together creating a greater whole.

Each Act of Consecration of Man is an opportunity for this healing Spirit to descend, the time when the healing Spirit is particularly close. It is an antidote to the tendency which naturally attends this time of the year, to be divided and scattered. The Sunday Service for Children on Whitsun Sunday also emphasizes the uniqueness of this season with its inclusion of the hymn, “O Come Creator Spirit,” into the text of the children's service.

Johnstide, still with white and gold at the altar, brings us to what is both a pinnacle and a new beginning, for St. John would remind us of all that we have come to know of the meaning of Christ's sojourn on the earth. He reminds us that our Deliverer came to the field of earth and has entered humankind's broken and burdened nature. St. John would set us aflame so that burning with longing, we can unite with the One who bears us into the ocean of light while still on the earth. Now Christ's light and His life and love are to be born in us, to stir and grow in our hearts. Now it is up to us to carry the meaning and ripeness of His deed.

Priest Ordinations in Toronto, Canada

A Letter from our Regional Coordinator (Lenker), Rev. Craig Wiggins

Dear Christian Communities in North America,

Many people streamed together, not only from North America, also from as far away as Australia. They came to celebrate the Sacrament of Ordination for four individuals who have decided to leave behind the lives they have led and to take up the work of a priest in The Christian Community. They absolved the last phase of their training at our seminary attached to the Toronto church, engaging regularly with the congregation there. Under the leadership of Seminary Directors Revs. Jonah Evans and Patrick Kennedy, assisted by other priests and artists, they prepared themselves from mid- January on for this momentous step.

We welcomed three members of the Circle of Seven, the central leadership of The Christian Community, one of whom, Rev. Oliver Steinrueck, celebrated the ordination services. The organizational team, composed of members and friends from as far away as Calgary and Vancouver, took care of a flawless and welcoming venue. All in all, everyone present experienced a heartwarming and inspiring festival.

Warm Greetings to all!

Rev. Craig Wiggins



The new priests
(as pictured, from left to right):

Robert Bower (USA)
Nigel Lumsden (Great Britain)
Damien Gilroy (Australia)
Erica Maclennan (Canada)

Sermon Offered on Easter Day in Denver, Colorado 2022

Rev. James Hinds

On Easter we celebrate the empty grave. Christ is risen. But on this day in the Ukraine the graves are full. How are we to think of Easter in light of so much death? Hundreds of thousands of people are being violently thrust across the threshold separating the living and the dead. An ocean of grief fills the land. How can this happen after God has come to help us?

He did not come to earth in order to save us from ourselves. Having become our equal he respects our freedom even more than we do. But he also said that he would be with us “even unto the end of earthly time” (Matt. 28:20). He made that possible through his death and resurrection. *This man, our God, knows death from the inside out.*

The first Easter Sunday made it possible for him to be the Son of Man, God present in every human soul. He told us, “What you have done to one of the least of my brethren you have done to me” (Matt. 25:40). We do not see him alongside of us, for we must be free. But he walks with us wherever we go, even through death itself. He feels all the pain of the world, even ours. Because of Easter he is with us always, and with all suffering souls around the world. He is the comforter of all the grief and suffering our earth lives and deaths can bring.

Those souls in the Ukraine who suddenly find themselves passing through death will also find the comforter, the Christ waiting for them. And what is their future? What is to become of their future destiny? The meaning of any human life is rarely perceptible in a single event, a singular moment. It can only manifest through time – time on earth and time in heaven. Christ, who is the Lord of Karma, of human destinies, will give them time, a wisdom-filled future destiny. Every human death is like a seed of future life. The warmth, comfort and light of Christ will bring it to blossom in a future existence. We celebrate the empty grave at Easter for it is the promise that, with time, every grave on earth will also be empty.

Book Review

Sunny West, Member in Colorado Springs

Sacramental Theology for a Modern and Future World – The Seven Sacraments in The Christian Community by Michael Debus

This is a book for all those seeking to understand the origin and evolution of the seven sacraments through the centuries. The author uses the work of Rudolf Steiner to explain how the spiritual world works into human biography at every stage of life and how that interaction is reflected and furthered through the sacramental life of Christian communities. He shows why the sacraments we celebrate today are appropriate for spiritually autonomous human beings. His description of the priesthood and the “proto-community” that stands behind all local congregations is especially illuminating.

Having raised four daughters in The Christian Community, I found the chapters on Marriage, Baptism and Confirmation most helpful in understanding how these sacred acts have benefited them throughout their lives.

I recommend this book for all those who wish to deepen their relationship to The Christian Community. It is the best and most comprehensive book I have ever read on why The Christian Community exists and how it blesses human lives.

The Incarnation of a Divine Being

Rev. Carol Kelly

Christ came to earth, clothed in an earthly body, as we are now.

Through Jesus, He was able to penetrate the very substance of the earth. Through his breathing and blood he has altered ours. Powerful spiritual forces streamed into human beings and into the physical earth as He sacrificed Himself in total freedom.

Interestingly, perhaps unwittingly, people have designated "Earth Day" on April 22nd, at Eastertime, when the resurrection forces are the strongest. We celebrate the transformed, Christ-imbued earth!

Far into the future, when we human beings have overcome egotism and recognized the spirit within us, we will achieve harmonious community life without strife. We will have overcome the Adversary who seeks to reduce us to machines, to usurp human consciousness and cause us to use our brilliance for marketing and exploitation.

How do we get there from here? The old saying, "You can't get there from here" does not apply. The truth is, you can ONLY get there from here. You can only keep going in the direction of transformation, of yourself and of the earth, toward a new way of being.

We hear in the service that Christ has risen as the "meaning of the earth." If we were not intended to be more than we are now, if life was not meant to be a path of development, why would meaninglessness drive us to despair? Why wouldn't meaninglessness just be OK? But it is not. Without meaning people suffer much more acutely because they think it is for nothing. People become depressed or destructive because nothing matters.

Our true Spirit, our true higher self, hovers somewhere above us. If we were able to bring it fully into ourselves at all times, we would radiate from within, through all the layers of soul with which we struggle mightily. We would experience the Resurrection within ourselves, entering our breathing and our blood, strengthening us and bringing what has died in us to life again.

Whenever we offer a "life line" to someone in despair, comfort a friend or a person who is ill, tend to a patch of neglected earth, overcome weariness for the sake of others, pray instead of simply giving up, we find the resurrection within.

When I feel stuck I ask myself, "Is it something outside which can't get in, or something inside which can't get out?" Either way, Christ is the door. He asks only for our openness and warmth of heart.

The Incarnation of a Divine Being into a physical body, is you yourself. That is what we are celebrating at the altar. That is what we are consecrating: Our truest self.

Adventure Camps

Rev. Ann Burfeind

Adventure Camps offer backcountry camps for children, teenagers, and young adults that foster community, social connection, and personal growth while discovering respect and reverence for one another and the natural world.

This summer, there are five adventure camps: two for high schoolers, and three for children entering 5th/6th through 8th grades. The camps offer the freedom for children to be children, and teens to be teens while at the same time creating a structure within which growth both as an individual and as a group or team is enabled. Adventure camps seek the right balance between the form and rhythm of school life and the freedom that summer and nature offer children beyond the school setting.

Adventure Camps are organized, led, and held by a team of young adults, experienced outdoor enthusiasts, Waldorf teachers and alumni, and Christian Community priests, all dedicated to the work of creating safe and fun camps for children today. The children, their families, and the community we build are at the center of all that we do.

Find out more at www.adventurecampsc.org or contact us at info@adventurecampsc.org

No one is kept away for financial reasons. Flexible payment plans, sibling discounts and some financial aid are available. Please reach out to us and we will find away to make the camps work for you and your family.

If you are able to donate, please do so on the site under “support” or reach out to us to discuss other means, as we have plenty. All donations are tax deductible and go towards our financial aid fund or towards the purchasing of new gear.

Children's Backpacking Camp - Harriman State Park, NY

Rising 6th - 8th graders

June 13 - 18

High school Backpacking Camp - Catskills, NY

Rising 9th - 12th graders

June 23 - 30

Children's Kite Camp - Cape Henlopen, DE

Rising 5th - 8th graders

July 6 - 13

Young Adults Conference - Chicago

Approximately 19 - 29 year olds

July 15 - 17

High school Canoe Camp - Namekagon River, WI

Rising 9th - 12th graders

July 22 - August 1

Camp Greenwood Lake for Children, Gov. Dodge State Park, WI

Rising 3rd - 8th graders

August 4 - 11



The Handwriting on the Wall: Holy Week and Michael's Balance

Rev. Peter Skaller

Playing on a see-saw as a child was fun if the child on the other end was about your size. Then you could rock gently up and down. But if the other child was heavier and mischievous, this could become a problem. A common trick was for the other to apply all their weight and then leave you stranded up in the air while they laughed. And if you pleaded to be let down they also could hop off quickly so that you come hurtling down with a crash. Schoolyard and classroom play quickly taught you that some classmates could be mean. (Maybe you wondered about your teachers as well?)

And so, when my oldest son was about 5 years old he asked his mother: "Mommy, is there more good or bad in the world?" He was already weighing the world on Michael's see-saw-scales. Now when a child asks such a question it's probably best to answer that there is more good, even if you aren't so sure yourself. Or, you could deflect the question and say something like: Well, just look at the stars, sun, clouds, birds, chipmunks, flowers, and trees. Actually, often I myself can only be comforted by doing that.

The 20th and now also the 21st century have been filled with both supremely vile evils and holy deeds of courageous sacrifice and everything in between. But perhaps we had best let the archangel determine which side is heavier. Instead, perhaps we should focus on weighing ourselves. Yes, what about that log in one's own eye and the speck in the other's? (Lk 6:41-42)

The time before Easter is a potent time for taking truthful stock of oneself, for "Christian Self-knowledge". In the Catholic Church, the Sacrament of Confession during Lent is strongly encouraged, and in our church during Passion, the Sacramental Conversation would be a good practice. Or, on our own we can focus extra attention on "weighing" ourselves, especially during Holy Week as the realities of our human state are displayed before us in the painful images around Christ's Passion, which, after all, are pictures of us ourselves. I'd like to explore the role of Archangel Michael in this process.

The Handwriting on the Wall

The Old Testament Book of Daniel is a book of many spellbinding stories.¹ In the 5th chapter the image of the balance, or scales, appears in the story about "**The Handwriting on the Wall**".

To recap this story, King Belshazzar of Babylon is in the midst of a lust-filled, indulgent party. Furthermore, the sacred gold and silver vessels of the Hebrew temple have been usurped and profaned by being used for imbibing wine while the gods of gold and silver are praised. Suddenly a mysterious hand appears and inscribes strange writing (Aramaic) on a wall as the king's knees knocked together in terror. The text read: "*Mene, mene, tekel upharsin*". The terrified Belshazzar calls for the wise prophet Daniel to interpret the writing since neither he, nor his advisors, nor anyone else in Babylon can understand it. Daniel interprets for Belshazzar:

- *Mene, mene* means numbering, counting. God has numbered your days.
- *Tekel* means weighing. God has weighed you in the balance and finds you too light. You've been arrogant, lacking humility, and you have dishonored God.

¹ E.g. Daniel in the Lion's den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the oven, Daniel's dream interpretation, and the at times funny tale of Susanna being falsely accused of adultery.

- Upharsin means to split, divide. Your kingdom will be divided and given new kings.

That night the king is murdered and the kingdom breaks apart.

The Handwriting Rephrased for Today's World

We can rephrase Daniel's interpretation of the handwriting to provide a contemporary and universal meaning:

- Mene, mene: A person's life is numbered insofar as it is experienced solely in the world of time, and hence of death. Also, various numbers such as our SSN, age, income, and IQ define us, and many decisions today are based on statistical analyses of numbers.
- Tekel: Many souls appear morally "too light" through their arrogant lust for power, perversion of justice, disregard for truth, greed, propensity to violence, thievery, and abusive treatment of nature.
- Upharsin: Creation has been fragmented through the worship of matter and denial of the Creative Spirit weaving through it. Even though today's science has been able to show nature's oneness and interconnectedness (e.g. "system's theory") we only seem able to act on the basis of pieces,² also in questions of health and illness.

The phrase "the handwriting is on the wall" is today a generally-used idiom conveying a prophecy of dire consequences resulting from a lack of moral weight. Every day we are told of possible near-future catastrophes in almost all facets of our earthly life. The "handwriting" is directly before us and doesn't require a seer like Daniel to read it. It comes from media "experts", from biblical eschatology, as well as from spiritual seers from many traditions. But most important, if willing, we ourselves can directly read it through our own observations. Here is a little haiku I composed:

The Handwriting on the Wall Today

Decipher the script
in refugees, fires, and lies.
The vanishing frogs!

Whose Handwriting Was it and Is it?

The Book of Daniel states that the inscription was made by a "hand" of God. Was it Michael's hand? Michael, the angelic "Prince", is mentioned by name multiple times in prophetic contexts.³ Daniel has a Messianic-vision remarkably similar to John's in Revelation 1. This figure says to Daniel (10:21), "...*there is no one who stands firmly with me... except Michael, your Prince.*" The centuries-old Christian portrayals of Michael holding the scales may well have come from this story which dates back to the 6th century BCE.

² For example, the single-factor focus on limiting fossil fuel use will not do much for the Earth's health unless we also rethink current practices in forestry, agriculture, fishing, water use, transportation, and building construction, as well as the roles of racism, widening economic disparity, and excess consumerism, to name just a few factors.

³ The concept of souls being weighed by an angel can also be found in ancient Egyptian texts and in other cultures.

The “Handwriting” in our Passion Service

The Passion texts of The Act of Consecration of Man have reframed the handwriting on the wall into a ritual language for today:

- **“O Man, empty, is the place of your heart”** (i.e. we are too light);
- **“you have lost the Spirit”** (we have forgotten who we are and live in the temporal realm of death);
- **“you live in the...spirit-forsaken house of earth”** (both our body and the Earth, our houses, are understood in terms of material fragments and thus have and are breaking apart).

And who is this Spirit of *“the worlds afar and... earth near”* that we ask to look away from our evil-infected heart and to instead look upon our weakness? Who is wielding the great moral balance before us during this time? Who will strengthen us so we may stand up from the despair of our *“lamenting on the ground”*?

Holy Week and Self-Knowledge

Spiritual teachers, including Rudolf Steiner, emphasize that traversing the path of self-knowledge requires the courage to stand firmly and not yield to despair as we come face to face with our shortcomings and errors, and eventually with the adversarial beings working in them. The Act of Consecration makes it clear at the beginning of the Offertory that we embark on this journey full-well knowing that we are *“unworthy creatures.”*

The biblical account of Holy Week is replete with descriptions of people as unworthy creatures, beginning with the short-lived, superficial Hosannas, to the mass hysteria, perversion of justice, and torture of an innocent man.⁴ Such images are not meant simply as historical narratives, though they are that too. They are archetypal guides pointing to the strayings, denials and weaknesses we find within ourselves as we walk the difficult path of self-knowledge on the way to unveiling the Easter Mystery of Christ-in-us.

Some might say that calling ourselves *“unworthy creatures”* is negative thinking. But true positive thinking does not lie in whitewashing our fallen natures. Rather, it lies in our thinking-work with the New Confession and New Faith arising out of the Easter event. It lies in holding faith in the forgiving grace of God. It lies also in our coming to understand how Easter has enabled the corrective power of karma to allow continued striving beyond death and into the future. The Amazing Grace of Easter would have no meaning if we didn't need it!

The Work of Michael Today

Michael's current mission in relation to humanity, is described in the text for our Michaelmas service, here paraphrased:

⁴ The short-lived, superficial jubilation of Palm Sunday, the money-changing in the temple foyer, the thievery and betrayal of Judas, the slick-trick questioning of the chief priest, the dark political scheming of the Scribes and Pharisees, the disciples' sleepiness in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter's use of a weapon that injures a soldier and later his denial, the distortion of justice, the torture of an innocent human being, and the murderous group frenzy by the same people who cried Hosanna.

- *Earnestness that streams from his shining prepares our hearts for the light.* He is the earnest bearer of the scales in our conscience, through which we may gain true knowledge of our moral weight.
- *Once, his stern, threatening hand stretched toward the Dragon's power.* And in our time this continues; we know this because the next statement applies only to "moments" when his gesture shifts. He helps us in our battle with adversarial beings that seek to weaken our resolve to become true human beings and which also bring us to fragment and number our world through materialism.
- *Today, he momentarily changes the sternness against the Dragon's power, and his hand beckons to us: Follow me. I lead you to the higher comprehending of the Easter deed of life and death which is to bring heavenly light into the earthly light.* The Prince of God helped Daniel with his messianic vision. Today he helps us refine our thinking to a deeper understanding of Easter. THIS IS THE NEW HANDWRITING ON THE WALL!

Notice that Michael's "hand" is twice mentioned. I would say the "stern hand" is the one that wrote the original handwriting on the wall and holds the balance. Today's hand is of "the heavenly Prince" now beckoning towards Daniel's messianic figure now appearing clearly as the Christ of the Easter victory and the source of hope that we may be healed.

Grace

The archangel more and more places the scales in our own hands of conscience. More and more we see that we ourselves are responsible for and actually write the handwriting on the wall. But as already said, the only safe way to wield the scales of self-knowledge so as to avoid sinking into an abyss of despair, is to simultaneously hold firmly to our hope that Easter can and will occur within us.⁵

In Luke 18 is a powerful gospel passage. After Jesus' conversation with the rich man, the disciples asked: *"Who then can be saved?"*; Jesus' answer was: *"For human beings alone it is not possible, but with God's power working in them it is possible."*

At the beginning of the main text of our Act of Consecration, at the onset of the Gospel Reading, we hear: *"If your grace make me worthy, my heart can be pure..."* An essential understanding of the Christian path of self-knowledge is this; the deeper we weigh ourselves, the more we come to realize that ultimately we cannot "save" ourselves, that is, we cannot under our own power alone tip the balance so that:

- we become morally heavy
- we can come to know the Spirit that renders the world whole
- we may find our eternal selfhood and overcome death,
- ultimately we will be able to love.

"The Law (which provides the standards for weighing morality) was given through Moses, but grace and truth come through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

Amazing grace... how sweet the sound...

⁵ "Something greater than Jonah is here." (Luke 11:32)