

 **FAITH
FEEDS**

Having a faith conversation with old and new friends is as easy as setting the table.

**FAITH FEEDS GUEST GUIDE
CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION**

C21



THE CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY CENTER

**BOSTON
COLLEGE**



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The C21 Center Presents

FAITH FEEDS

The **FAITH FEEDS** program is designed for individuals who are hungry for opportunities to talk about their faith with others who share it. Participants gather over coffee or a potluck lunch or dinner, and a host facilitates conversation using the C21 Center's biannual magazine, *C21 Resources*.

The **FAITH FEEDS GUIDE** offers easy, step-by-step instructions for planning, as well as materials to guide the conversation. It's as simple as deciding to host the gathering wherever your community is found and spreading the word.

All selected articles have been taken from *C21 Resources*.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

“Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth- in a word, to know himself- so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.”

—Pope Saint John Paul II

Here are three articles to guide your **FAITH FEEDS** conversation. We suggest that you select two that will work best for your group, and if time permits, add in a third. In addition to the original article, you will find a relevant quotation, summary, and suggested questions for discussion. We offer these as tools for your use, but feel free to go where the Holy Spirit leads.

This guide’s theme is:
The Catholic Intellectual Tradition

THE HEART HAS ITS REASONS

By Robert Imbelli

From C21 Resources Spring 2013

At heart it's a love story. As Robert Wilken writes in his splendid study, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*:

“The church gave men and women a new love, Jesus Christ, a person who inspired their actions and held their affections. This was a love unlike others. For it was not only that Jesus was a wise teacher or a compassionate human being who reached out to the sick and needy, or even that he patiently suffered abuse and calumny and died a cruel death, but that after his death God had raised him from the dead to a new life. He who once was dead now lives. The Resurrection of Jesus is the central fact of Christian devotion and the ground of all Christian thinking.”

And Wilken continues: “After the coming of Christ, human reason had to attend to what was new in history, the person of Jesus Christ.”

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition is the two-millennia effort to ponder the meaning and implications of that new reality and to investigate its relation to other facets of human experience. It addresses the new questions that arise from humanity's ongoing discoveries in the realm of science and the ever more pressing encounter with the other great religious tra-

ditions. The Catholic Intellectual Tradition is the joyful celebration and the continuing exploration of what St. Augustine called the “beauty that is ever ancient, ever new.”

It should be noted at the outset that the word “intellectual” is not used here in a narrowly academic or merely conceptual sense. Augustine's invocation of “beauty” is a clear signal that the aesthetic enjoys equal rights of citizenship with the conceptual in “giving an account of the hope that is in us” (1 Peter 3:15).

St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* stands side by side with the great Gothic cathedrals whose soaring architecture inspired him. Raphael's frescos draw liberally from both the sacred Scriptures and from secular sources. The poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., breathes the same air of truthful discovery as do the stupendous revelations of contemporary astronomy. Indeed, one of the salient contributions that the Catholic Intellectual Tradition can make to our contemporary conversation is to resist reducing reason to the merely pragmatic or technical and to restore our sense of wonder at a universe “charged with the glory of God.”

Already at the dawn of modernity Pascal cautioned against a reductive understanding of reason with his



stirring affirmation: “the heart has its reasons which reason does not understand.” Pascal, great mathematician and philosopher, was certainly not countenancing irrationalism, but insisting, with Shakespeare, that “there are more things in heaven and on earth” than are dreamt of in a narrowly rationalistic philosophy or a merely utilitarian science.

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition is a priceless diamond: its varied expressions in theology and philosophy, natural law and morality, scientific research and artistic creativity. There also emerges from it an enhanced conviction of the responsibility incumbent upon the Catholic university to steward and advance that tradition.

One can, of course, rightfully distinguish sub-traditions within the great tradition, like branches arising from the mighty river. Franciscan and Dominican, Benedictine and Ignatian sensibilities can complement and even compete with one another. Both contemplative and active commitments, concern for justice and care for the earth, can find ample resources and generous hospitality. The various subtraditions surely sensitize to features essential to a fuller understanding of the Catholic tradition and are omitted at the peril of an only partial vision. Indeed, one constitutive meaning of “catholic” is “comprehensive:” embracing the whole. And a Catholic university has the crucial responsibility of incorporating the richness of diversity within the common search for truth and wisdom that constitutes a distinctive community of mind and heart: an “alma mater.”

However, though there are multiple strands of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, multiple ways of bringing it to expression, there is an underlying “depth grammar” that each particular representation must embody and exemplify, the “incarnational” and “sacramental.” They celebrate “a sacramental vision of reality,” a sense that material reality, the body, the flesh (though always prone to being distorted by sin) is fundamentally good, because created by God.

But the Catholic Intellectual Tradition goes further yet. “Incarnational” and “sacramental” are not just ideas, abstract principles. They are rooted in the concrete, indeed in a person. For the overarching confession, the article upon which the whole tradition

stands or falls, is its confession of the Incarnation. God’s eternal Word entered fully into the human condition, into human history with its hope and joy, its suffering and pain. The “incarnational principle” is founded upon the Person, Jesus Christ.

No wonder, then, that the cross stands as the privileged Christian symbol. For the Incarnation, the entrance into the human condition of the Son of God, could not bypass death. The tradition marvels that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, and the Son so loved us that he gave himself for our salvation. The cross represents this wondrous love that does not deny death, much less inflict death, but enters into death in order to transform it. Jesus’ cross incarnates God’s supreme Word of love: “my body for you.”

Hence the Church’s liturgical tradition acclaiming that Christ, by his cross and resurrection, has conquered sin and death and set humankind free. And the Catholic Intellectual Tradition has sought to give a reasoned account of the hope that Christ’s life-giving death and resurrection to new life has revealed, and to ponder its implications for persons and for society.

The Incarnation of God’s love is not primarily a fact of the past. The risen Christ is present in the community gathered in his Name, present in the Word proclaimed, and especially in the Eucharist celebrated. It is for this reason that Robert Wilken insists: “The Resurrection of Jesus is the central fact of Christian devotion and the ground of all Christian thinking.” One often hears that there are three great religions of the Book: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. There is much truth in that perspective; but it risks slighting a unique distinctiveness. Christianity certainly gives pride of place to both Old and New Testaments in its liturgy and theology. But Catholicism in particular is far better described as the religion of the one to whom the Book points: the person of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition, in its multiple forms, is the quest to explore the significance and implications of the inexhaustible Mystery of Jesus Christ, to give expression to the reasons of the heart.

Robert Imbelli is a priest of the Archdiocese of New York and Associate Professor Emeritus of Theology at Boston College.



THE HEART HAS ITS REASONS

“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope...”
-1 Pet. 3:15

Summary

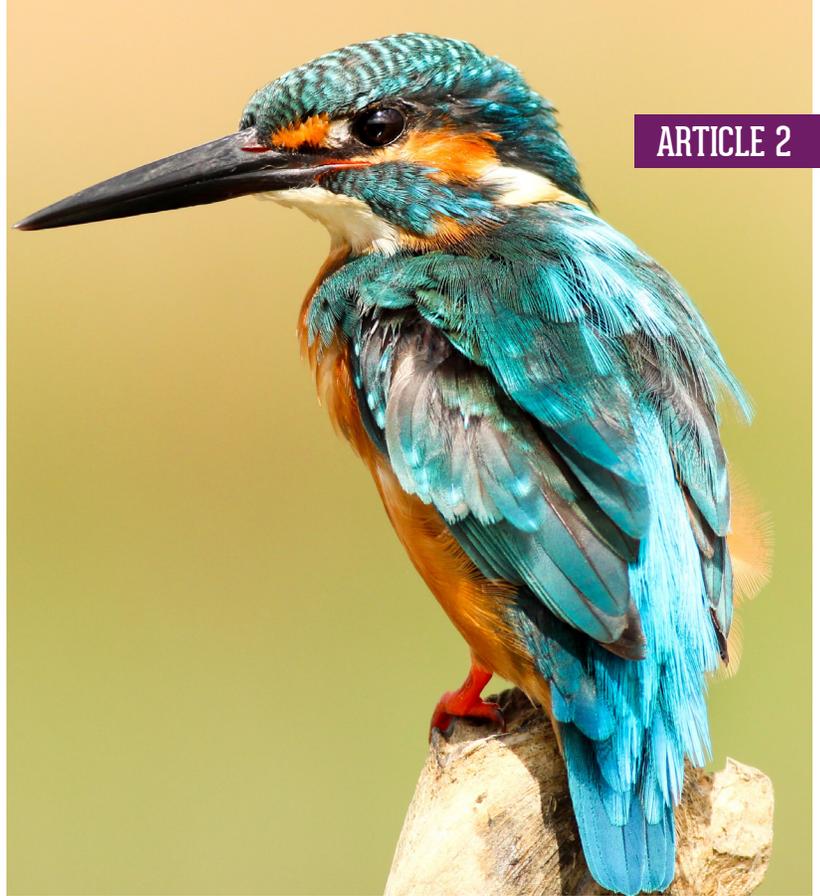
Theologian Robert Imbelli provides an overview of what the Catholic Intellectual Tradition is: the exploration of the meaning of Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection for the human person and the created order through a variety of disciplines. Imbelli suggests that though the Catholic Intellectual Tradition has diversity within it, its unity resides in a common “grammar of the incarnation and the sacramental.” An appreciation of this tradition should stir the mind and heart toward a greater love of the person of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Conversation

1. Do you have a favorite piece of art or music, book, poem, or Scriptural passage from the Catholic Intellectual Tradition? What does it reveal to your mind and heart about God, yourself, or others?
2. Is there a particular sub-tradition or spiritual tradition (Franciscan, Carmelite, Ignatian, Dominican, Benedictine) of Catholicism that resonates with you? Why?
3. Has anything you have ever studied helped you to fall in love with Jesus or deepened your Catholic faith? What was it? What effect does that/might that have on your life?

REVISITING THE IDEA OF THE CATHOLIC IMAGINATION

By Paul Mariani



From C21 Resources Spring 2013

Let's begin with lines Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote some 135 years ago, though the words are as fresh today as they were when he wrote them. News that stays news was how Ezra Pound defined the special quality of successful poetry. To which a poet like Fr. Hopkins, working within the powerful tradition of the Catholic/Christian imagination, would add, Good News that remains always Good News.

A Jesuit Scholastic winding up his classes in theology—Dominican Thomism, laced with his brilliant insights into the heart of Franciscan Scotism, Hopkins was just months away from ordination when he wrote the untitled sonnet known by its first line: "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame." What he caught in this poem was nothing less than the very doing-be, the essential inscape of the thing, the brilliant ignition of Creation caught in daylight, sunlight, God's light as it were, enacting the splendor of nature's myriad selves, unselfconsciously, there to be caught or not by the human observer as something to be admired, wondered at, and its Creator praised. Two Oh! moments of recognition in one line, connected by the recurrent ks and fs and ds of the words flashing together. A kingfisher diving from a branch and hitting the water of a stream, say, as the sun hit it

slant, so that the iridescent blues and reds and speckled grays of the bird's feathers suddenly seemed to catch fire.

A scientist looking at a kingfisher might see it as a small to medium-sized brightly colored bird of the order of Coraciiform, divided among river, tree, and water kingfishers, all with large heads, long, sharp, pointed bills, short legs, and stubby tails.

But Hopkins wants to catch something more. Not an Audubon specimen to be stretched out on a drawing board and studied, but a living creature, caught by the eye and not the net as something to be admired for the distinctive thing it is, its brilliant colors bursting into flame.

So too with the smaller dragonfly, its wings beating incredibly fast as it darts among the lily pads of a pond, say, on a summer morning, its brilliant colors rainbowing there before us to witness to. But because Hopkins was an artist who loved to sketch, trying to capture the active inscape of the thing his eye caught there, the doing-be of the thing, he puns here, seeing the dragonfly as if it were drawing with flames across the canvas of the summer air.

Kingfishers and dragonflies, caught perhaps one summer afternoon when Hopkins had gone down to the Clwyd in the Welsh vales near St. Beuno's, where he pondered his Thomism.

Which got him to thinking not only about what we see, but about what we hear, like the distinctive plunk of a rock as it falls into a stone well along which it has rested for who knows how long. But alive now, alive with motion, as it strikes the water like and unlike the kingfisher. Or the pizzicato plunk of a stringed instrument—violin, viola da gamba, mandolin, guitar, piano, harpsichord, or fiddle—the taut wires suddenly come alive with the instant strike of hammer or finger or bow.

Which is like and distinctively unlike the way bells in belfries and campaniles will ring out in every small shire and university town and great city like London, each shaped to ring out its distinctive sound, alone or as part of a larger harmony. Each thing, then, doing what it was made to do, whether made by mortals, or—better—by the great God Creator.

But Hopkins's Catholic imagination is far from finished with this meditation. If everything—from stones to kingfishers—"Selves, goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,/ Crying Whát I dó is me: for that I came," then what about each of us? What I do is me, we are reminded. And for most of us the words which immediately follow will resonate: for that I came.

There are at least fifteen places in the New Testament where those words are spoken, by Jesus or describing Jesus. Most dramatically, perhaps, is the moment when Jesus, scourged and beaten before being brought back before the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, tells Pilate point blank that he has come into the world "that I should bear witness to the truth." Or, as he told the crowds to whom he spoke: "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness."

The light shining on us, the Light gracing us is what the sacral imagination sees in the quotidian round of things, so that we kiss our hand to the Creator when it dawns on us who and what the Creator is and who we his creatures are. And what are we, then, if not images of Christ as the Father sees us, each of us being Christ in the world, in ten thousand or a hundred thousand or a billion places, who play now (act, enact, imitate, and romp about in the profound mystery of sons and daughters before the Creator, "Lovely in limbs, and

lovely in eyes not his/ To the Father through the features of men's faces."

How many Christian artists and musicians and singers over the past two millennia have taken up musical instrument or paintbrush or chisel or pen or pieces of bright mosaic, as, say, in the Church of San Clemente in Rome, just yards from the Coliseum, with its extraordinary mosaic of the Tree of Life, where the cross itself—that image of suffering transubstantiated into victory and joy—is rooted in the very earth from which we all sprang, and which flowers now, embracing all of God's creation in its mothering branches: bird, beast, and humankind.

It is what the Catholic imagination adds to the reading of Creation, then, whether in the ancient Psalms or the Evangelists or Augustine or Dante or Dame Julianna of Norwich or John of the Cross or Shakespeare or Cervantes or Donne or Herbert or Hopkins or Eliot or Péguy or Claudel or Merton or Levertov. Or—more broadly—what it looks for in whatever and whoever it meets, seeking for what it finds there that can offer substance, filtering it as needed, like water from different sources, whether the one heeded be Herodotus or Plato or Aristotle or Propertius or Pater or Rabelais or Baudelaire or Rimbaud.

It's all there, all those treasures for the taking: in the stained glass windows of our churches and cathedrals, in the stones shaped and fitted patiently, lifting higher and higher no matter the cost in time and effort, in plainchant, in Bach and Mozart and the Congolese Missa Luba, in the earliest images of the Good Shepherd, based as much on the myth of Hermes as on the Hebrew Psalms, but reconfigured now in a new imagination, solidly rooted in the things of this world—earth, rock, fire, water, sky—but lifted by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, who bodes and abides behind it all, through and with and in Him, as one sings at the culmination of the Eucharistic Prayer, and the world once more shivers to wakefulness to embrace the Mystery.

Paul Mariani is the Emeritus University Professor at Boston College and the author of *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life* as well as collections of his own poetry.

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies dráw fláme

Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies dráw fláme;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying Whát I do is me: for that I came.

Í say móre: the just man justices;
Kéeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
Chríst—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.



REVISITING THE IDEA OF THE CATHOLIC IMAGINATION

**“The world is charged with the grandeur of God.”
—Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.**

Summary

In this essay, scholar and poet Paul Mariani explores the Catholic intellectual tradition by unpacking a poem by the Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins. Mariani argues that poetry, like art, music, and other forms of writing, are integral to the Catholic imagination. These contributions ultimately help us to understand the truth written in *Gaudium et spes*: “Christ... fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear” (no. 22).

Questions for Conversation

1. Mariani suggests that the Catholic intellectual tradition should help a person to come to know two things better: who God is and what he/she is made for. Can you think of a work of art, book, or piece of music that has helped you to discover your vocation or revealed something to you about God you previously didn't know?
2. Read Hopkins' poem. What stanzas speak to you and why?
3. Our culture privileges science as the ultimate authority on creation. How do the humanities and the contributions of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition help us to know things about the human experience that science cannot reveal?



THINK CRITICALLY, ACT LOVINGLY

By Jeremy Zipple, S.J.

From C21 Resources Fall 2017

January of 1996 was snow-clogged and bitterly cold, even by New England standards. So for a kid from Mississippi, trudging across the Boston College campus in old sneakers and the warmest jacket I owned—a few threads above a windbreaker—I was Shackleton braving the South Pole. I was a high school senior and had flown up to interview for a Presidential Scholarship. But after two days of trying interviews and unrelenting winter, I felt impossibly out of place. Not only were the cold and the distance from home unbearable but I was an unrefined public school kid and these future Presidential Scholars had been reading Homer in ancient Greek since third grade.

I was ready to declare defeat and find a school south of the Mason-Dixon. But then I ended up at a dinner in McElroy, sitting across from an older gentleman wearing a tweed jacket, maroon and gold rep tie, and a warm smile. He claimed to be a Jesuit priest, which I had a hard time believing. He was so witty

and bright and normal—and most of the priests I knew from childhood were not. This was of course the legendary Fr. Bill Neenan, who would become a friend, mentor, and the person who personified a BC Jesuit education for me. (He would also be the one who'd say to me, when I was hemming and hawing over whether to join the Jesuit order, “Jeremy, sh*t or get off the pot.”)

Another Jesuit priest, Adolfo Nicolas, former superior general of the worldwide order, once remarked that Christians ought to be like giraffes. They should have tall necks, he said, so that they might have a global vision of the world, its challenges, and its sufferings. And also like giraffes, their hearts ought to be big enough to pump blood up that tall neck. Someone with a wide vision of the world's struggles and a big heart to respond to them, that is a true Christian, said Fr. Nicolas.

Bill Neenan had both, and he and Boston College attempted to instill both traits in me. Bill was a world-class economist—the first Jesuit to serve on

the faculty of a public university in the United States (University of Michigan) before arriving at BC—and he was also a caring and committed priest. The intellectual and the spiritual melded so seamlessly in him, and that is what St. Ignatius of Loyola wanted in his priests. Catholicism wasn't supposed to be an endeavor that eschewed serious intellectual inquiry or that ran and hid from the real world and its challenges. Rather “the world is charged with the grandeur of God,” as the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins put it. And our job as Christians, Ignatius taught, was to point out and lift up and bless God's activity in the manifold places it is to be found. It was Ignatius' key insight that grace is always at work in unexpected places: jail cells and brain cells, boardrooms and classrooms, laughter and tears.

At BC, I spent the summer after freshman year living and volunteering with a dozen other Presidential Scholars. Each Friday afternoon, after a week of work in prisons, food banks, and homeless shelters, we would sit around in a dorm lounge, grappling with the social and economic factors that created situations of such great suffering for our clients. We would pore over philosophical and theological texts too, trying to figure out why God would permit such conditions to exist in the first place and what we could do to assist in bettering them. That summer, along with Kairos retreats and philosophy seminars, urban immersions and Sunday night Masses, volunteer days at the Campus School and weekly prayer groups at St. Mary's Jesuit residence—and of course plenty of long talks with Fr. Neenan—these are the experiences by which BC taught me to be, God-willing, a Christian who thinks critically and acts lovingly.

There are Catholic universities that have let Catholic identity slip away as they have taken pains to avoid offense; to be hyperinclusive and politically correct. And there are Catholic universities that have tacked in the opposite direction, becoming so rigidly Catholic—narrowly, tribally, insularly Catholic—that they have

forgotten the fundamental mission of Christianity is giraffe-like, aimed at making the whole world more human and therefore more Christlike. I appreciate that Boston College is intentionally and unabashedly Catholic while simultaneously open to diversity and all manner of intellectual inquiry.

And I am convinced that today, the mission of Boston College and Jesuit education is more critical than ever. Whether they are fleeing perpetual civil war in Mosul or facing heroin addiction and joblessness in the Rustbelt, human beings are crying out for reasons to hope. And yet, many of us seem to have abandoned God as a life-giving source. Millennials continue to flee religion at a faster pace than any previous generation, and their parents are not that far behind. So the Jesuit university is a place that says: wake up; God is still beckoning. Yes, right in the midst of this world, in the midst of all its tragedies and heartaches.

At a birthday party last night, I had a random conversation with a bright 20-something who was raised with no religion and said he was agnostic. But when he found out I was a Jesuit, he declared Pope Francis, that good Jesuit, the most inspiring person on the world stage right now. And he later christened Martin Scorsese's *Silence*—about 17th-century Jesuits encountering another faith tradition in a time of persecution—the most inspiring film of the year. Augustine's famous dictum—that our hearts restlessly seek God, even in a world that shuns God—came to mind. And I was grateful again to be associated with this great Ignatian tradition, with Fr. Bill Neenan and countless other women and men who've cultivated tall necks and big hearts through it and taught others to do the same. Boston College is a keeper of that tradition. That is why its mission is so necessary. That is why I am grateful for it.

Jeremy Zipple, S.J., '00, Th.M., M.Div. '14 is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and the associate pastor of St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church in Belize City. He is a former Executive Editor at America.



THINK CRITICALLY, ACT LOVINGLY

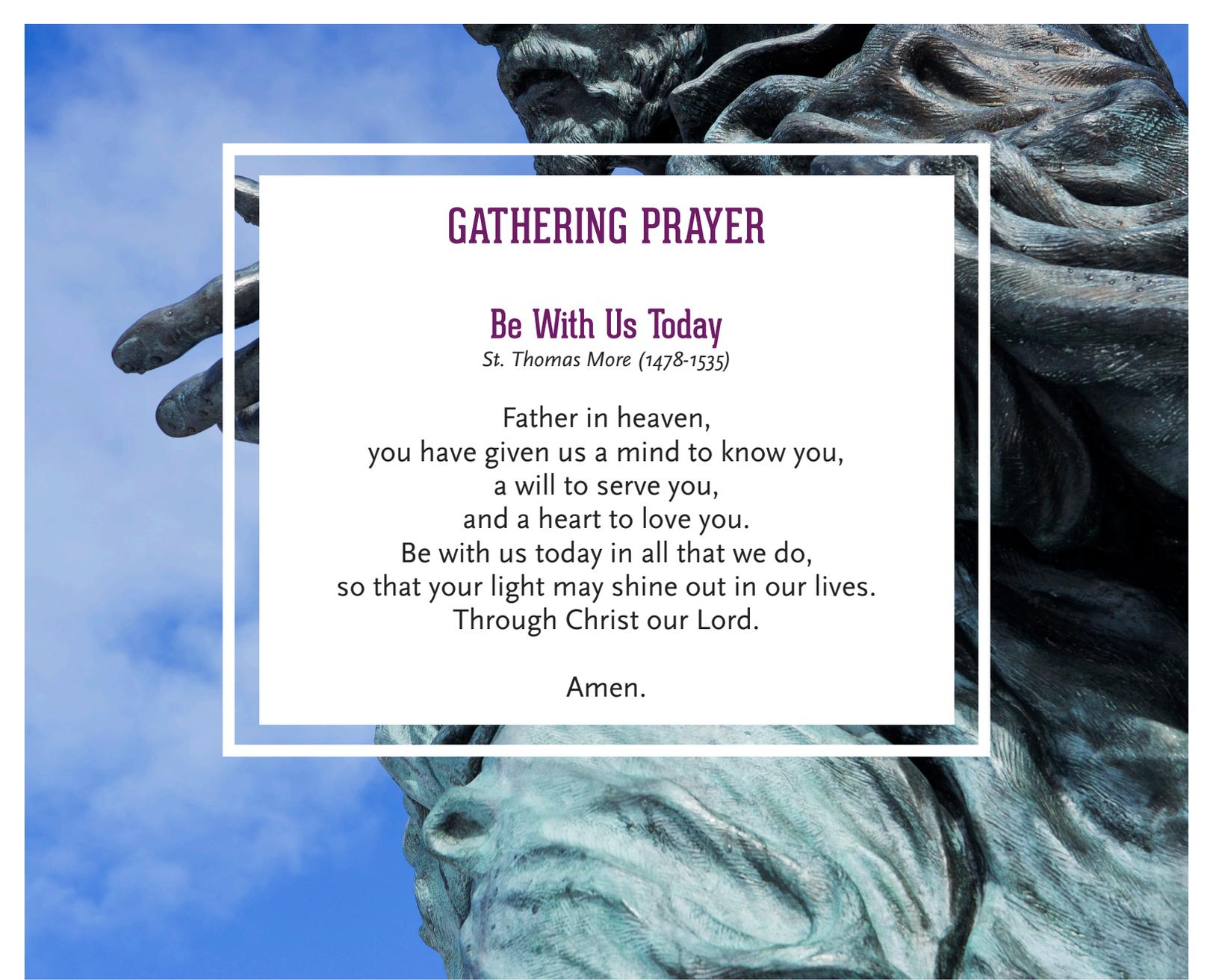
“Faith is like a bright ray of sunlight. It enables us to see God in all things as well as all things in God.”
—St. Francis de Sales

Summary

The Jesuit priest Jeremy Zipple shares the story of his first experiences as an undergraduate student at Boston College and his encounter with a priest who would have a great impact on his life, particularly his quest for knowledge and the movement of his heart to serve others. Zipple paints a personal portrait of how education in the Catholic intellectual tradition can move the mind and heart to great heights.

Questions for Conversation

1. Zipple’s story speaks to what that Catholics profess: that faith and reason go hand in hand. Have you ever felt like you had to hide your faith to advance in your studies or your career? Do you ever feel that people think that faith is more of a feeling and something that is not intellectual? How do you respond?
2. Have you had a teacher or mentor help you to appreciate the Catholic intellectual tradition? What did he or she teach you about the faith?
3. Zipple says that our faith should move us to think critically and act lovingly? Does the faith engage both your mind and heart?



GATHERING PRAYER

Be With Us Today

St. Thomas More (1478-1535)

Father in heaven,
you have given us a mind to know you,
a will to serve you,
and a heart to love you.

Be with us today in all that we do,
so that your light may shine out in our lives.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For more information about Faith Feeds, visit bc.edu/c21faithfeeds

This program is sponsored by Boston College's Church in the 21st Century Center, a catalyst and a resource for the renewal of the Catholic Church.

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