



connect

A Newsletter for High School Religion Teachers, Campus Ministers, and Principals
Compliments of Saint Mary's Press • October 1998

featuring

Liturgy, Prayer, Music, and Formation: A Challenge for the Catholic High School

David Haas



In presenting workshops to liturgists and musicians all over North America for about thirty-five weekends a year, I hear a lot of concerns. The following are some of the most common and persistent questions I get:

- What can we do to encourage our young people to appreciate liturgy?
- What music can we use to reach them?
- How do we recruit teens to be involved?
- How can Mass be made more interesting for them?

These concerns loom large in most parish communities and Catholic high schools across the country. In most parishes, teens seem disengaged from the worship experience. They

are bored, or they are not even showing up at all. Liturgy often does not speak to their needs and culture; it does not seem to acknowledge who they are. Teachers, liturgists, musicians, youth ministers, and parents are desperate to find any tool, program, or “bag of tricks” to bring some relief to teen boredom with the liturgy.

When we stop and reflect for a moment, boredom and the perceived irrelevance of liturgy to life are issues not only for teens but for the adult faith community as well. The average Catholic who sits in the pew every weekend arguably experiences a similar boredom or apathy toward worship and faith; it lurks within all of us! Perhaps the biggest obstacle to reaching out to young people in terms of worship (and our entire faith life, for that matter) is ourselves, the adult faith community. If we approach our parish liturgical celebrations with a yawn, we cannot expect teens to be excited about the liturgy. Though we have certainly not intended it, we do so many things that make it impossible or unappealing for them to become involved. In this brief article, I will examine some of these issues and offer some strategies for the future.

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in touch

Dear Readers,

This summer we were pleased to sponsor three workshops focused on the High School as Faith Community—East Coast, West Coast, and Midwest—putting us in touch with 125 of you. Get a bunch of you together and something wonderful happens! It has been a privilege to witness God’s grace taking off in each group. It has been exciting, too, to see twelve religion teachers and campus ministers who participated in three previous summer workshops now forming the three leadership teams for this year’s workshops. We hope that participants in each region will now be able to offer one another ongoing support and encouragement in the great work of forming communities of faith in our schools.

Speaking of being in touch, with this issue we’re including a prepaid

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Liturgy, Prayer, Music, and Formation

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Worship: A Place for Teens

When I was a teenager, as a musician I was invited and encouraged to be not only involved in worship but also a leader. My friends and I were not just told to come and join; we were empowered to take charge. I was the leader of the parish folk group for a while. Adults were involved, but I was the one who led the rehearsals, did the principal planning of the music, and was responsible for the group's overall ministry on Sundays. Our youthful energy was not only allowed, but also held high as something the parish needed and valued. Things were understandably not perfectly nuanced and polished; at times we were disorganized, and the decisions we made were not always the best ones. But the primary dynamic in my experience as a teen in a parish was that young people were valued and revered. We were given the chance to participate and show what we could do. In addition to the music ministry, teens were involved as lectors and eucharistic ministers, and we even had youth members on the parish liturgy committee.

In many parishes that I visit today, teens are kept at the edges of parish liturgical life. In most places, they are encouraged to be involved, but rarely are they invited to be in leadership positions. They are not asked their opinion about what music should be chosen or other discretionary aspects of the liturgy.

Ironically, it is many of us liturgical and musical leaders today, the empowered teens of a past age, who are (I believe unconsciously) putting up barriers of access to teens in our liturgical life. As we have grown in our liturgical skills and sophistication, we deem our youth at times not ready to make the decisions that more "skilled" professionals should make. Many of

our choirs and contemporary ensembles, our lectors, our hospitality and eucharistic ministers cannot find a young person in their midst.

There are other reasons for this than our own tight hold on the reins, of course: teens today are much busier than they were a few decades ago, thus the time commitment is difficult for them, and other factors also enter in. But I believe young people can play a much more significant role in our worship than we have let them play. What appeals to them more than anything in liturgical celebration is the sense that the liturgy is theirs, that they have an investment in it.

Reflecting the World of Youth

I hear from young people that the liturgies they experience are primarily planned and executed by adults, and thus carry an adult agenda. Although liturgy is not intended to serve any single group's agenda or issues (including teens'), our young people need liturgies that affirm and honor who they are, what they bring, what they value; they need liturgies that reflect their culture.

Reflecting their culture does not mean giving in and selling out to the culture. I mean here that we need to walk in their world and invite them to bring their world to ours. This is difficult because many of us adults are suspicious and fearful of the world of young people; it is hard for us to trust it and find our spiritual values within it. When our teens do bring their own world to the liturgy, what they offer will not necessarily reflect our spiritual or liturgical biases. But it will be real, authentic, and filled with God's passion and message.

In the high school worship environment, this means that at

times we have to let students make decisions that we perhaps would *not* make—truly an exercise in letting go. When I talk with high school campus ministers or parish youth ministers, it is amazing to hear, for instance, what music kids want to have at their liturgies. Almost universally, kids want to sing "On Eagle's Wings," or "You Are Mine," or "Be Not Afraid," or "We Are Called" at every single liturgy they have. In other words, they lock onto certain songs they like, and regardless of appropriateness (e.g., "On Eagle's Wings" is a funeral psalm), they want to sing these songs whenever they gather liturgically. Often we respond by telling them that a given song is or might not be "appropriate" for the liturgy that day. And the result is a

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in touch

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postcard for you to use to give us feedback on *Connect* and to offer any other thoughts or suggestions you have for the press. We look forward to hearing from you!

This issue of *Connect* is devoted to the perplexing problem of how to involve teens in the liturgy. Our feature article is by David Haas, whose journey of music ministry is leading him more and more to be with youth. Then, in the "from the classroom" article by Terry May and Kathy Leos, we hear about how a high school in Dallas has worked on turning liturgical lethargy into liturgical life.

May your ministry this year be filled with good fruits.

Warmly,

Barbara

Barbara Allaire
Editor for High School
Curriculum Materials



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confused and disillusioned look on the young people's faces. They feel rejection, even though that is the farthest intention from our mind. We need to let go and let them choose a song or two that might seem way out in left field. Remember, think of the alternatives.

There are many such examples of letting go of our own agenda in favor of allowing teens to express themselves from their viewpoint, however naive or narcissistic it may seem at the time. The nuancing and direction toward better quality or more appropriate choices can come later. But first comes their energy and enthusiasm.

The High School as Formative

An unfortunate reality is that our teens often have two distinct liturgical and faith communities, which often (if not usually) are following different paths in terms of pastoral and liturgical practice. The school in many cases is a much more formative environment for teens growing into a mature appreciation of liturgy and prayer. Given that, it is critical that the school have a liturgical vision and strategy. Holding a Mass once every two months does not adequately proclaim liturgy as a value or an important element in the spiritual formation of our youth. I am not suggesting daily or even weekly Mass as the answer (frequency certainly does not guarantee anything either), but a one-hour experience every couple of months cannot make much of an impact.

Teachers and campus ministers need to offer creative options for prayer and worship in the high school. Certainly the celebration of Mass is the center of our life of faith, but we also need to create and provide other models of cele-

bration: liturgy of the hours (adapted morning and evening prayers), prayer services marking important seasons or events in the school community's life, and small-group prayer experiences.

Retreats, concerts, and other spiritual formation experiences should be seen as integral not just to the religion curriculum but to the spiritual life of the entire school. The school choir program can include a liturgical music repertoire that could be performed and experienced in several venues: concerts, choir tours, and so on. Rallies and concerts by talented local musicians can use music as a tool for evangelization. These and other creative approaches will foster a liturgical piety that is not seen as occasional but as part of the fabric of the school's life.

Referring to the unique Catholic identity of a high school will be but an exercise in lip service unless liturgy and prayer are truly a centerpiece of the school's life. I am not speaking of a mandatory, rigidly scheduled routine of required attendance, but of celebrations carefully prepared with students in leadership roles, executed with energy and passion. These can result in prayer experiences from which no one would want to be absent. Required attendance at liturgies will not even be an issue if celebrations are truly events that speak to our teens.

Recruitment of students (in the sense of beating the bushes) for liturgical ministries won't be necessary either. In high school communities where such ferment is allowed to take place, the young people are falling over one another to be involved as liturgical planners, lectors, eucharistic ministers, musicians, ministers of hospitality, and yes, even homilists.

From the School to the Parish

It is so sad to realize that young people have few if any opportunities in parish life to participate in music and other liturgical ministries, even in the contemporary music ensembles that exist in most parishes. The chasm between school life and parish life unfortunately is often huge. Many parish leaders have no idea what talents lie in their congregation; in too many places the unbelievable resources within our youth never seem to get tapped, mostly because the youth are not even asked.

Campus ministers, religion and music teachers, and choir directors in our high schools need to develop links and contacts with the liturgy and music leaders in the parishes their students are from. Young people are not likely to come forward on their own to offer their talents to the parish, but school staff can keep in touch with parish liturgy leaders to let them know what—and who—they might be missing. In the school environment, teens can also develop the confidence needed to bring their gifts to the wider parish.

Music in the Mix

Music is a big issue in all this talk of teens and liturgy. We have to be honest and realize that in many cases, the Top 40 provide a deeper personal connection for our young people than the traditional structures of home, parish, and school. Music is the land where our teens dwell—because it belongs to them. The tendency is to judge and reject the values of the musical world our teens live in, rather than to be realistic and learn from the music our kids listen to.

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Music ministers and school campus ministers cannot ignore the staggering influence of music. To understand how it speaks so powerfully to our teens, we can ask them: What is it about the sound, the beat, or the message that speaks to them? Is it the personality of the artist? What about the lyrics? While we should not be phony about our enthusiasm for their music, we need at least to honor their culture and the sounds that surround it, even if we do not understand or like it ourselves.

The influence of contemporary Christian music (not Catholic liturgical music) is also staggering. What was once seen as music for Protestants, mostly evangelicals, is now a part of the musical and spiritual world of our youth. Research shows that Catholic youth are buying the recordings of Christian artists such as Amy Grant, Jars of Clay, DC Talk, Points of Grace, Kirk Franklin, Michael W. Smith, and many others. Denominational nuances and doctrinal differences do not have any effect on the appeal of this music to our young people. They are touched by it, and its message is getting through. In many cases, contemporary Christian music has more influence on our youth than parish liturgies and catechesis or religion classes in school.

How do we respond? We need to take off our blinders and see the different genres of communication that reach our young people. The answer is not to resist or censor but to reflect on what implications this phenomenon might have for our liturgical celebration in the lives of youth.

The music I am talking about is not a replacement for liturgical music, for it has a different agenda. Contemporary Christian music, for the most part, is performance-oriented, centered either on the

artist or on listening to the music. Its theological message, most often, is more I-centered, reflecting a more individualistic faith. Liturgical music, on the other hand, has the assembly, the congregation, as its primary "voice"; it is pointed toward an expression of God's covenant relationship with the *people* of God. Liturgical music is participatory in its very essence; the main "singer" of the prayer is the gathered community.

I am not suggesting that we choose one genre over the other. There is room and purpose for both approaches. What matters in the end is whatever ministers to and reaches our kids best, not necessarily where or in what context God happens to be revealed to them. But the increasing popularity of Christian listening music with our teens should awaken us to realize that today in many cases, liturgy and music particular to sacramental faith are going against the grain of young people's tastes.

With that said, though, I still strongly believe that the failure of liturgical music with youth is not necessarily because of its style, sound, or beat. On a deeper level, the music is often not expressed or executed in a passionate, energetic, and compelling manner. Some people will say that we have to be careful that liturgy not become entertainment. Agreed. But it is an insult to our youth to say that entertainment is all they are looking for. Above all, they need liturgy that is enthusiastic, filled with investment and joy. They (like all of us) need strong music, preaching, and symbols that take a stand for something and move us at an emotional level to commit ourselves to action. To desire liturgical music that inspires us at a deep level is not a sign of entertainment-seeking but of longing for life-giving transformation. And that is

what good liturgy ends up doing; it transforms us communally in Christ.

Regarding music in the liturgy, then, to involve young people we do not necessarily have to use non-liturgical Christian songs in our worship experiences (although once in a while this would not be an awful thing). Rather, we should search for and choose liturgical music that can truly express the energy we are speaking of. Then we need to allow teens, with their unique, often outrageous personalities, to put their own flesh on the music itself. The music should be chosen and prepared by teens (with guidance, of course), and led and implemented by teens.

Good music is available from liturgical music publishers, but liturgical composers and publishers are also challenged now to create new, fresh settings of ritual texts and seasonal songs for liturgy. At the same time, it is important not to abandon our liturgical and musical heritage. The music of the past is not necessarily dull, but the way it is presented may be so. Hymns, chants, and other traditional forms need to be presented in a vital and vibrant fashion and in balance with music and sounds that are unique to the culture and world of youth. It is not "either/or"; it is "both/and." Our comfort with a variety of musical styles can be an ideal way to teach our teens that our worship is rooted in tradition but at the same time is always new, ever on pilgrimage, spinning toward further renewal.

Advocacy and Mentorship

Underlying all I have said about involving youth in liturgy is a single understanding and strategy: We have a great call to become advocates for our young people in their spiritual search. We need to

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mentor and apprentice them, to be present to their unique and vibrant gifts, and to honor who they are. In this way we will empower them as young leaders and ministers, as faith-filled worshippers. The wonderful document of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry—*From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents*—states our calling boldly:

The foundation of our efforts is our role as youth advocates. . . . We support families and parishes in providing liturgical formation to the young. We walk with them as they encounter the height and depth, length and breadth of God's love. (No. 97)

We can share our knowledge of liturgy with teens, but more important, we are challenged to share our faith—faith in God and faith in the divine life within each of our young people. To mentor teenagers means to let them succeed *and* fail in their

efforts, all the while sharing with them the story of this wonderful God of ours, who loves us all no matter what. We need to offer a blessing to our young people over and over again.

We also need to be a bit more daring, to experiment, to reach out and open ourselves to sounds and insights different from our own. This is how young people can be a blessing to us if we let them be; they will push us to go beyond our own experience.

We can also recognize the connections we have with our students. We can remember our own youth, what we were yearning for in those days, and how we were either encouraged or diminished in our efforts to express those longings. When we do that, we will find that things are really not that different. The coating may look different or sound different but the message is the same: We need God desperately, and God is there for us.

Liturgy can be one of the most powerful formational experiences in the life of a high school community—if only we take the adventure with no life preservers or parachutes, letting gifts emerge among our students as the Spirit leads. May our young people shine!

David Haas is the director of the Emmaus Center for Music, Prayer, and Ministry in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and he is a campus minister and artist-in-residence at Benilde–Saint Margaret's High School in Saint Louis Park, Minnesota. He has published over twenty-five collections of liturgical music and has written books and resources on prayer and spirituality. He is active as a concert performer, a workshop and retreat director, and a composer of liturgical music. In 1991 he was nominated for a Grammy Award for his recording *I Shall See God* (GIA).

resource reviews

Child Labor Is NOT Cheap (Resource Center of the Americas, 1997); three-lesson curriculum, 40 pages containing 27 pages of reproducible handouts with video *Zoned for Slavery*; purchase for \$29.95.

One of the finest sources of materials for justice education is the Resource Center of the Americas. In their latest resource, *Child Labor Is NOT Cheap*, the center provides three lessons for grades eight to twelve and for adult study groups on the worldwide problem of child labor. The book focuses particularly on the hundreds of thousands of child workers in our hemisphere who produce goods for the U.S. market in assembly plants called *maquiladoras*. The three

“ . . . ”

On being a young cantor

Maria Kujawa has served as a cantor at Masses in her home parish, Saint Mary's, in Winona, Minnesota, throughout her high school years. She comments on what it means to her:

In the years since I began being a cantor, the prayer aspect of it has grown for me. I realize that I'm not up there to perform for people, I'm there to help *them* worship by singing.

I love the responsorial psalm. It is usually slow and reflective, and it stays with you. When I sing the verses, I realize it's important for people to understand the words. Then when they join in on the refrain, they are really participating in the whole psalm. They remember that refrain, and they grow from it. It is really such a privilege to be able to help people pray in that way.

lessons give an overview of the situation; examine the conflict between social responsibility and “the bottom line” through a role-play exercise based on a case study

of a U.S. athletic-wear firm with a plant in the Dominican Republic; and explore actions that have been taken to solve the problem of child labor, including actions by young

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from the classroom

A Thousand Teenagers Singing at Mass?

Terry May and Kathy Leos

Every August, despite our enthusiasm to bring fresh ideas to our classrooms and curriculum, the same question lingers for us as we plan for another year of all-school liturgies: How do we get a thousand teenagers to sing at Mass? The limitations of our acoustically-challenged "basilica" (a.k.a. the gymnasium) notwithstanding, we always seem to find ourselves struggling with lack of student (and faculty) participation in the musical moments of our celebrations.

We have tried a number of "solutions," including reconfiguring the worship space to make the choir more visible; bringing in additional sound equipment to improve the clarity of the music; even "planting" choir members throughout the community, in the hopes that their singing would inspire their peers to sing. Each solution had a modicum of success, but the results were far from our expectations.

After a few years, we realized that the real issue is not how to get students to sing but how to develop a music leadership that serves not as performers or "cheerleaders" to the assembly but as true ministers of the sung word.

One of our first changes was to move away from using the choir class exclusively as the way to provide singing for liturgies. Most of the gathered community had responded to the choir as an audience would, politely listening to the group as though at a concert performance. Instead, we created an extracurricular music ministry program, meeting once a week for ninety-minute rehearsals. Now music ministry is open to the entire student body; it includes both

vocalists and instrumentalists, students and faculty, Catholics and non-Catholics. Working with them to develop their musicianship, we are able to train cantors and soloists.

Our focus is not only or even primarily musical, though. We see this activity as an opportunity for spiritual development. As in most parishes, we expect a level of commitment from those who want to be part of this ministry. A portion of each rehearsal is spent in prayer and education about various aspects of liturgy and the Scriptures, and attendance for the whole meeting time is required. As a group, we read and reflect on the scriptural passages for a given liturgy, and together we choose music from a range of possibilities.

In the process, our music ministers have developed a communal bond, and it is clear that the music and their ministry mean something to them. The other students see this, and they sense that the music folks are sharing that bond with the whole community. Now we have students approaching them to join the group. Although the music, being liturgical, is distinctly different from what they listen to at home, many of our students have decided that it is not "not cool" to be in music ministry. All kinds of kids have gotten involved—athletes, computer specialists, students from various ethnic groups.

Our music choices reflect the different worship experiences our students bring from their home parishes—from traditional hymnody and contemporary compositions to gospel, Hispanic, and chant. By giving the music ministers a voice in the repertoire from

which we choose our liturgical music, we have all expanded our musical and liturgical horizons. Additionally, we have become less piano-dependent, as we experiment with accompaniments ranging from drum and guitar to flute, trumpet, chimes, trombone, and harp. This variety adds a sense of newness to songs that we introduce at one Mass, then reuse at another liturgy during the school year.

The success of our music ministry program has not happened overnight. The past four years have been a process of trial and error. We had a pretty good idea of what we wanted, but we weren't always sure how to get there, and we're still not totally satisfied. We still can't get all one thousand teenagers to sing! But the small successes show us we're on the right track: the seventeen-year-old boy who was moved to tears by a solo performance of "Amazing Grace"; the sound of a thousand pairs of hands clapping to "Share Your Bread with the Hungry," by David Haas; the student who stopped us in the hall to say how she "really got something out of Mass" that day.

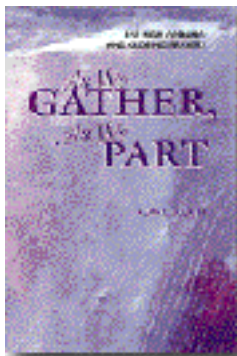
In the language of a teenager, we must be doing something right.

Terry May is the director of public relations and the director of music ministry at Bishop Lynch High School in Dallas, Texas, and serves as a cantor in her home parish.

Kathy Leos has been the director of choirs at Bishop Lynch High School for fourteen years, and also works with the diocesan office for youth ministry in Dallas.

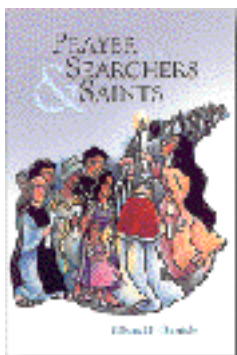
from the press

Several new publications from Saint Mary's Press offer help with group prayer and reflection on the lectionary readings.

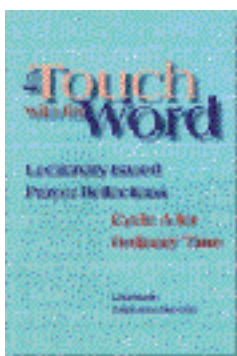


As We Gather, As We Part: 150 New Opening and Closing Prayers, by Carl Koch, will be welcomed by those who want to begin or end a class, a meeting, a school event, or any type of gathering with a prayer. Each prayer includes a biblical passage. The price is \$4.95.

Do you want to invite your students or colleagues to get to know some of the great figures in the Christian heritage while praying along with them? Edward F. Gabriele's **Prayers with Searchers and Saints** provides brief prayer services in the spirit of forty ancient and modern men and women with whom we are privileged to address God—such as the Virgin Mary, Teresa of Ávila, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, Thomas Merton, Hildegard of Bingen, and Thomas Aquinas. The price is \$14.95.



With the beginning of a new liturgical year, we have two resources for praying with and reflecting on the Sunday lectionary readings: **In Touch with the Word: Cycle A for Ordinary Time**, by Lisa-Marie Calderone-Stewart, offers three sets of prayerful reflection questions for each Sunday—one for adults, one for teens, and one for small children. The price is \$15.95 in paper binding, \$18.95 in spiral binding.



Maryann Hakowski's **Sharing the Sunday Scriptures with Youth: Cycle A** provides action-centered activities to engage

young people with God's word. The price is \$24.95.

To place an order, write, call, or fax the Orders Department, Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320; phone 800-533-8095; fax 800-344-9225.

resource reviews (continued from page 5)

people. The lessons give excellent information and, even better, a way to engage students imaginatively in the issue.

Purchase from Resource Center of the Americas, 317 Seventeenth Avenue SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414-2077; phone 612-627-9445; fax 612-627-9450; e-mail rctamn@tc.umn.edu; web site www.americas.org.

Corpus Video/Fisher Productions is a small company that produces and sells high-quality videos for adult education and spirituality in the spirit of Vatican Council II. Its video series feature popular Catholic presenters such as Fr. Michael Himes, Richard Rohr, and Joyce Rupp and include thoughtful study guides that can be used in small-group settings. The videos and the study guides easily could be the basis for ongoing study or faith development groups among a high school's faculty, staff, and even parents.

The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to Catholicism, with Fr. Michael Himes, is a ten-video series that offers a "depth dimension" to many of the key Catholic insights: *Grace, Trinity, Baptism, Salvation, Incarnation, Reconciliation, Church, Sacraments of Vocation, Eucharist, and Tradition*. Those who have heard Father Himes speak at conferences know what a treat he is to listen to. His five-video series, **Questions of the Soul**, takes on the topics of prayer, spirituality, suffering, spiritual discipline, and the need for a spiritual community. And his four-part series, **The Vision of the Gospels**, offers homiletic insights into the central themes of each Gospel.

New programs include Joyce Rupp's three-video series, **Spiritual Growth in Tough Times**, and Richard Sparks's four-part series, **Making Sense of Morality**.

I highly recommend the fine offerings of Corpus Video for adult education and formation. Their pricing is competitive (\$29.95 per single video, or \$25.00 each plus shipping when purchasing a whole series).

To receive a catalog or to order videos, contact Corpus Video, Box 727, Jefferson Valley, NY 10535-0727; phone 800-795-0444; fax 914-245-1354.



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Created for delight, not exhaustion

Brian Swimme, a physicist and cosmologist, is known for his work relating science to theology. A snippet from an interview with him in *U.S. Catholic* reminds us of what it's all about:

I remember when I first started as a professor, I couldn't understand why everyone was always exhausted. Finally it dawned on me that people were not only exhausted, they were proud of it. There's a certain sense of making ourselves miserable because we feel that it justifies who we are. But the idea of driving ourselves into exhaustion so that we can feel good about who we are is a false understanding of the human. The human, rather, is a creature that was really created for delight, for a sense of astonishment. What would our culture be like if we took this understanding as our grounding? Your purpose and worth wouldn't be the amount of commodities you have; it would be the way you could enter into the delight of life. (*U.S. Catholic*, June 1997, p. 12)

Acknowledgments

The excerpt on page 5 is from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), *From Age to Age: The Challenge of Worship with Adolescents* (Washington, DC: NFCYM, 1997), page 19. Copyright © 1997 by the NFCYM.

The excerpt on page 8 is by Brian Swimme from "Where Does Your Faith Fit in the Cosmos?" *U.S. Catholic*, June 1997, page 12.

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