

August 14, 2020

I am planning to do an adult faith formation conversation online after Labor Day and I will start with some of the sacraments using video presentation that I create and include some related materials that you might want to use at home especially movies, poetry, and readings from other disciplines that correlate with what I think is a more approachable and useful understanding of the essence of the sacrament than the conventional and typical rubrical/legalistic offering.

Nathan Mitchell is a scholar of the liturgy that I was fortunate to have been exposed to years ago at Notre Dame when Notre Dame was still interested in the handing on of the Catholic Faith and not creating a museum to house the Catholic Faith of the 1950's.

Nathan was an engaging witty extremely competent teacher, preacher, and lecturer. In his 2006 book, *Meeting Mystery*, he begins with, as I try to do, the experience of the people and unpacks that experience with precise and spot on insight utilizing the scholarship and research of other disciplines to gain a broad and deep understanding of where the "people are" rather than beginning with a catechism or ritual book.

He begins his discussion of sacramental ritual with an analysis of our culture which he accurately believes is the only place to begin and he suggests that the long standing image metaphor of a tree is no longer a workable or real place because people do not stand under a tree anymore but on "crabgrass" which is a rhizome.

We are no longer a hierarchical top down well rooted system or structure but more like crabgrass which is a series of interconnected differences. We touch one another with a touch that is not full handed but, perhaps, tentative and more gentle, less confidently assured but more open to understanding than understood.

For instance, couples marrying in a Catholic Church in these times have diverse and multiple reasons for choosing the Catholic Church but if the particular parish plays games or imposes conditions that are irrelevant to the love that they seek to consecrate, moving to another venue is not a deal

breaker, it is the love that the couple wants consecrated that is important not conforming to arbitrary and needlessly harassing policies.

My observation is that when a couple comes to me to arrange a marriage they are responding to an inner experience, grace, if you will, and not looking for ecclesiastical approval.

The “workings of God” that I have been talking about, do not need a license from any church or institutional authority.

Like Abraham’s son born to Hagar, the son of man will be like a wild ass an image that should be unsettling and one that we will look at more thoughtfully as we think together about the rituals of sacraments and how they shape our lives.