

The Morning Star

Wycliffe College Community Newsletter



Remembering the Dead: Of Christ's Death and Our Own

By Joseph Mangina

I enjoy visiting old graveyards. I like to wander around, reading the tombstones, taking note of the dates and places of birth, the biblical verses and sentimental poetry.

Last summer my wife and I were walking through an Episcopal churchyard in Cooperstown, New York, where we stumbled on a particular grave from the 1830s. The tombstone gave the woman's name and her dates, and then the inscription: "She had her faults, but was good to the poor." I would love to know the story there. There is always a story, a life lived and rounded off by death, a stretch of time that says *this person lived this particular life given them by the Creator*.

Any number of theologians, including Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar, have pointed out that without an ending one's life would lack definition and clarity. Strangely enough, if my existence just kept going on and on indefinitely I would not be *me*.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT WYCLIFFE?

- Apr 28-30 – Multi-Faith Center Event: Our Whole Society Conference – page three
- Apr 29 – The Plight of the Middle Eastern Church: A Lunch with Rev Dr Canon White – sold out
- May 13 – Convocation! – page three
- May 14 – Preaching Day – page three

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These thoughts came to mind as I was reading the fine book by Ben Myers titled *The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism* only,

(Lexham Press, 2018); we've been reading it as part of an adult study series in my congregation. Discussing the creed's claim that Jesus "died," Myers asserts that "for Christians the death of Christ is the turning point of human history." A friend of mine was puzzled about that claim. Why the death of Christ, she wondered? Isn't there something overly negative, pessimistic, and basically gloomy in an obsessive focus on Christ's death? Are we Good Friday Christians only, and not also Christmas, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost Christians? Hadn't Myers missed something?

My friend had a point. Just as we should not separate the atoning work of Christ from his incarnate person, so we should not separate Jesus' death from either the life that preceded it or from the resurrection that followed. In my systematic theology classes I always try to steer my students toward a holistic understanding of Christ, one that tries to take seriously the full dimensions of his divine-human personhood. As Myers himself points out, the Apostles' Creed seems rather in a rush to get from "born of the Virgin Mary" to "suffered under Pontius Pilate." This is one reason the Creed should not be read in isolation from the gospel narratives and from the Scriptures as a whole.

Nevertheless, I do think there's something fundamentally right in Myers's assertion. As we read the New Testament, it is striking to note the extent to which all lines converge on the

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death of Christ. We see this narratively, as the crucifixion is foreshadowed from the very beginning of Jesus' story—think of Herod's slaughter of the innocents, or the "sword" that Simeon predicts will pierce Mary's soul (Luke 2:35). We see it sacramentally, as Paul insists that baptism is baptism *into* Christ's death, while the Lord's Supper is the latter's visible proclamation: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes" (Rom. 6:3, 1 Cor. 11:26). We see it apocalyptically, when John the Seer is lifted up to heaven, where he beholds "a Lamb standing as though slaughtered" (Rev. 5:6). This pattern holds true across the Scriptures. It is no accident that throughout history the cross has been the most common and universally recognized symbol for the Christian faith.

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To read the complete article, visit the Wycliffe blog, "Vestigia Dei—Traces of God" at wycliffecollege.ca/blog

About the Author

Joseph Mangina is Professor of Systematic Theology at Wycliffe College.



Upcoming Events

Event by Multi-Faith Center: Our Whole Society Conference—April 28-30

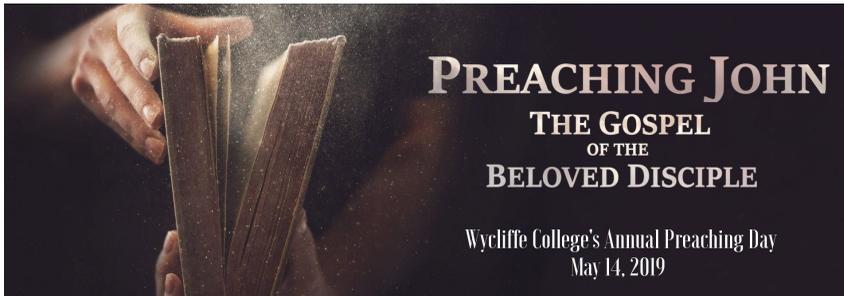
All TST students are invited to this event. The topic will be “Identity & Common Ground in an age of Transition. More info: <https://www.interfaithconversation.ca/2019>

Convocation— May 13, 2019

For Convocation Day schedule, visit <https://www.wycliffecollege.ca/about/events/convocation2019>

Preaching Day — May 14, 2019

This year Dr Joseph Mangina and the Rev. Dr. Annette Brownlee will be looking at the gospel of the beloved disciple, the book of John. Dr Mangina is close to completing a new book on John’s gospel while Dr Brownlee’s recently released book *Preaching Jesus Christ Today* provides a constructive approach for the busy preacher who seeks to be faithful to the text. <https://www.wycliffecollege.ca/preachingday>



News & Announcements

From the Registrar

April 29th—TST Language Exams and Registration

Please note that TST Language exams will take place on April 29th. Please register by April 19th. See details here: <https://www.tst.edu/academic/language-exams-courses>

More News & Announcements

Chapel Schedule for this (exam) week

We don't want to spell out the e-word but here it is! But do not fret, and join us for Morning Prayers at Founders' Chapel at 8:30 Monday to Friday. There will not be other Chapel services except for Morning Prayers during the week, but you are welcome to use the Chapel space anytime for personal prayer and reflection. We wish you all the best during the exam week!

Chapel for this summer

The Chapel will be opened for personal prayer and reflection but there will not be any Chapel services during the summer. They will resume in the fall though! We would like to give thanks to God and a special thank-you to the Chapel team for having organized services throughout the academic year!

From the Registrar cont'd

The winter term is (almost—for those who still have exams/papers) over! Now think about summer!

Wycliffe is offering a full slate of summer courses to fit a variety of schedules including intensives, evening, weekend, and online courses. Please see wycliffecollege.ca/summercourses for a full listing. These courses include

- *Bonhoeffer on Scripture, Christ, and Church* taught by David Clark, and
- *Management and Leadership of Nonprofit Organizations* taught by Clayton Rowe.

Registration is now open!

Last but not least, have a wonderful and blessed summer!

STAY CONNECTED!



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