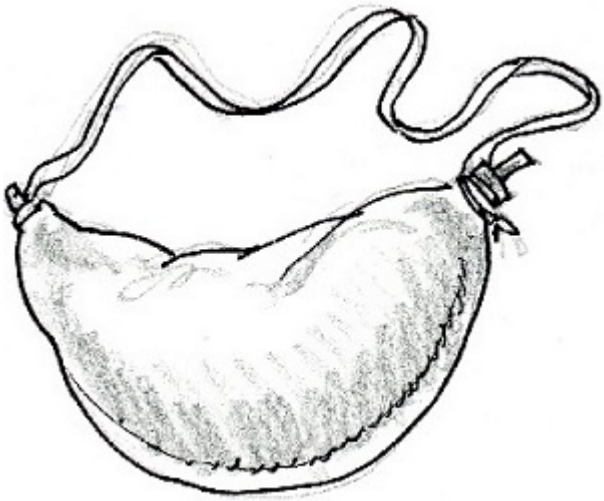
Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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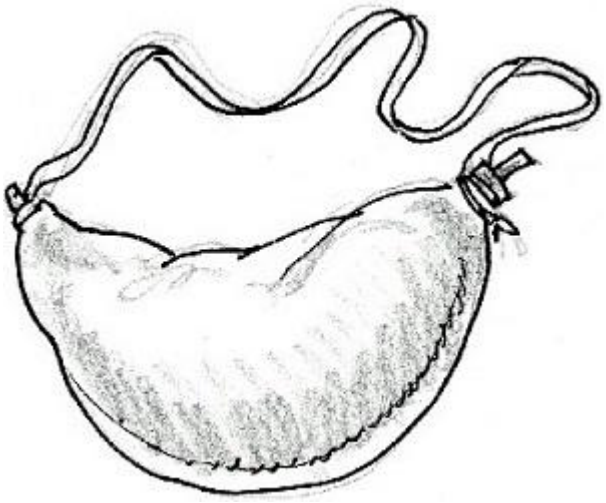

“New wine must be poured into fresh wineskins” (Luke 5:39).

*Col 1:15-20; Luke 5:33-39*

The parable of the wineskins had its say not long ago when a conservative bishop shut down the New Wine program in his diocese because he felt it was creating expectations in its lay participants. His more traditional expectations meant curbing their enthusiasm before any other Vatican II notions took hold.

Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr gave Catholics a real handle on why change in the church creates tension with his own parable of the Contents and the Container to describe the difference between spirit and structure. The breath of the Holy Spirit is the mysterious contents that always challenge church containment. *Ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church must always be reformed) is the rule rather than the exception. It is the nature of the church to adapt itself to changing conditions to keep its unchanging mission fresh and effective in each successive age and culture.

The conflict between Jesus and the religious conservatives of his time was really a rejection of his proclamation that something new was happening that the cherished traditions could not contain or express. They wanted discipline, control, structure and even severity to protect the status quo. Jesus wanted them to see that there was a wedding going on, an outpouring of love that reminded everyone that joy is the appropriate response to the divine presence. There is a time for everything. Now was the time to break forth in singing, dancing and feasting, for the bridegroom is here.

Clinging to a time-sensitive and culturally defined model of church that may have worked once (for some) but no longer meets the reality to be served is to make the container more sacred than the contents.  Insisting on the Tridentine Latin Mass as a preferential option for dissent from the universal church is to enshrine a 17th century baroque world that exists now largely in museums as the epitome of Catholicism.

Grim religion does not like surprises and seldom RSVPs to wedding invitations, knowing just how unpredictable and emotional love can be, especially if there is too much wine.  But joy will never miss the chance to witness the moment when something old, new, borrowed and blue dares to try again to create a whole new life.

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