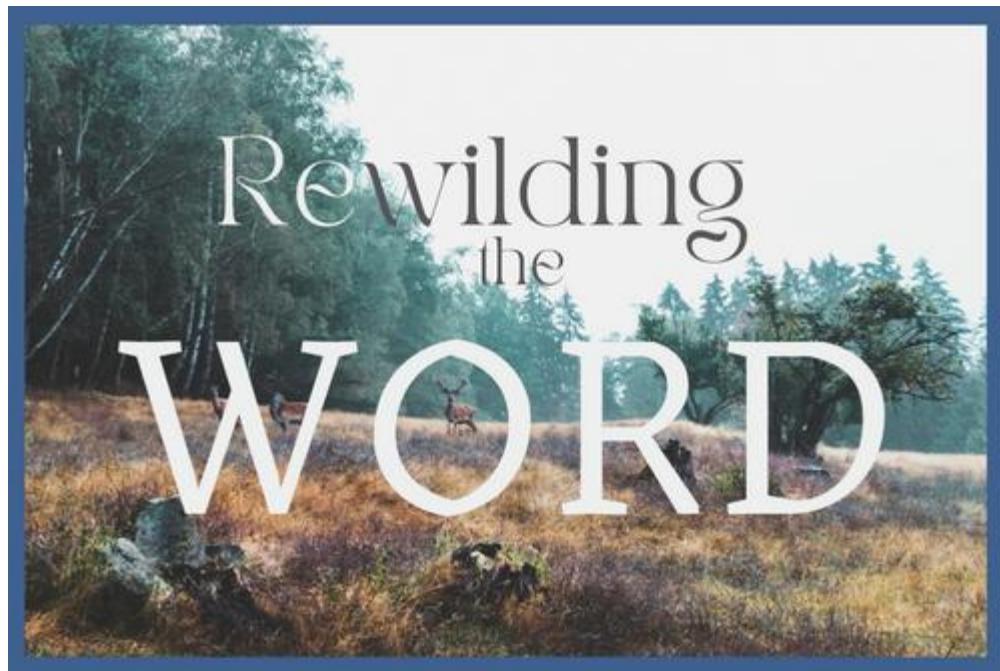

GANZ - #18 - REWILDING THE WORD (FEBRUARY 2026)



Quotes before Ash Wednesday on 18 February 2026

St. John Chrysostom (347-407 CE), *Homilies on Genesis* - When the devil, as you remember, evil spirit and enemy of our nature as he is, saw the first human being living in the garden, how his life was carefree and how he lived on earth in bodily form yet like an angel, (23d) he wanted to trip him up and dislodge him with the hope of greater promises, and so he cheated him of the possession of what he had. *This is the extent of the evil of not keeping within proper limits but aspiring to greater heights.* A wise man has made this clear in the words, "Through the devil's envy death entered the world."⁷ Do you

⁷ Wis 2:24.

see, dearly beloved, how from the beginning *it was from intemperance¹ that death had its entry?* ... Do you now recognize the harm caused by intemperance?²

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), *Book of Images* – “The Man Watching” (in part): The image from Genesis 32:24-29, when Jacob wrestled throughout the night with an Angel.

Whoever is conquered by this angel
when the angel does not refuse to fight
walks away erect and ennobled,
strengthened by that fierce hand
that, like a sculptor's, shaped him.
Winning does not tempt that man.
His growth is this: to be defeated
by ever greater forces.

A Story

I became 10-years old in June of 1964. As a result, I had the good fortune to grow up within the greatest generation of folk and rock singer-songwriters ever. What permanently impressed itself on me was the way that we politically powerless young people *sang* our protest of a growingly rogue government (in some of its departments, things about which General Eisenhower in his Inaugural Address in 1953 had warned us, and which those departments did not heed).

President Eisenhower, our 34th President from 1953-1961, began his speech this way:

Almighty God, as we stand here at this moment my future associates in the Executive branch of Government join me in beseeching that Thou will make full and complete our dedication to the service of the people in this throng, and their fellow citizens everywhere.

Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby, and by the laws of this land. Especially we pray that our concern shall be for all the people regardless of station, race or calling.

¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “intemperance” – 2.a. – 1547 – Lack of moderation or restraint; excess in any kind of action; immoderation; spec. excessive indulgence of any passion or appetite.

² John Chrysostom. *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*. Edited by Thomas P. Halton, Translated by Robert C. Hill, vol. 74, The Catholic University of America Press, 1986, p. 24. My emphases added.

May cooperation be permitted and be the mutual aim of those who, under the concepts of our Constitution, hold to differing political faiths; so that all may work for the good of our beloved country and Thy glory. Amen.

We sang our protest, singing a whole catalog of memorable songs. Think Woody Gurthrie, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, Joni Mitchell, Peter, Paul and Mary (their remarkable ability to communicate famous songs), the Chad Mitchell Trio, Sam Cook, Joan Baez, Neil Young, Cat Stevens, and so many others. And, to give proper credit, all these singer-songwriters were indebted to the very greatest American songbook, which is constituted of Black spirituals, proceeding from a people whom it pleased us to enslave but who with consummate grandeur, and from places and circumstances of such intense sorrow at our hands, *sang* their protests.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904), composer of the *New World Symphony* (composed in 1893)³: “The future of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies. This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States.”

The following Latin antiphon, and its different musical settings, I offer here, to America right now - its ultimate protest song.⁴

Musical Settings of the Following Text

Taizé, *Ubi Caritas* (released 1996); John Rutter and the Cambridge Singers, *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* (released 1988); Voces8, *Lux* (released 2015), arranged by Ola Gjeilo; The Monks of Glenstal Abbey (Moroe, County Limerick, Ireland), *Gregorian Chants* (released 1997); Bob Hurd (director and arranger), *Journeysongs* Third Edition, Volume 26 (released 2012); Anna Lapwood (director and arranger) and the Pembroke College Girls’ Choir, *Celestial Dawn* (released 2022); Dan Forrest (director and arranger) and the Beckenhorst Singers, *The Peace of Wild Things: Choral Music of Dan Forrest* (released 2024).

A Text

“Ubi caritas est vera, Deus ibi est”⁵ – is a Latin antiphon that was probably composed in the late 8th century, perhaps by the scholar and considerable poet, St. Paulinus (c. 730-

³ Wikipedia notes: Astronaut Neil Armstrong took a tape recording including the *New World Symphony* along with him during the Apollo 11 mission, the first Moon landing, in 1969.

⁴ So much greater and more to the point than our banal, and at points intensely irritating, national anthem. If we must choose, then give us “America, the Beautiful” please.

⁵ The most current Roman Catholic version of this Latin antiphon, after having researched the earliest manuscript versions of this text, prefers *Ubi caritas est vera / Deus ibi est* – “Where charity is true /

802 CE), Bishop of Aquileia (a town near the northern end of the Adriatic Sea, between Italy and the Balkans).

Where true charity is, God is there.⁶

By the love of Christ, we have been brought together:
let us find in Him our gladness and our pleasure;
may we love Him and revere Him, God the living,
and in love respect each other with sincere hearts.

Where true charity is, God is there.

So, when we as one are gathered all together,
let us strive to keep our minds free of division;
may there be an end to malice, strife and quarrels,
and let Christ our God be dwelling here among us.

Where true charity is, God is there.

May your face thus be our vision, bright in glory,
Christ our God, with all the blessed Saints in heaven:
such delight is pure and faultless, joy unbounded,
which endures through countless ages world without end. Amen.

A Close Reading of the Text

“Where true charity is, God is there” – In English, verbs have *moods*, giving a speaker or writer the ability to express not only *an action* but also *his or her intentions or attitudes* inside these actions – “The characteristic of a verb’s form that shows the speaker’s attitude and expresses whether the action is a **fact** [Indicative mood], a **command** [Imperative mood], a **possibility** [Subjunctive mood], or a **wish** [Conditional mood].”⁷

The repeated refrain in our Latin antiphon does *not* say that God better be present [Imperative], or that God “ought” or “might” or “could” be present [Subjunctive], or that God will, we hope, be present … if certain conditions are met [Conditional].

God is there [in that place]”, while the Classical Music tradition has been widely committed to a text that reads *Ubi caritas et amor/Deus ibi est* – “Where charity **and** love are / Deus is there [in that place].”

⁶ For this current Latin text and English translation: <https://gregorian-chant-hymns.com/hymns-2/ubi-caritas.html>.

⁷ See Bryan Garner’s magisterial *Garner’s Modern English Usage: The Authority on Grammar, Usage, and Style*, 5th edition (Oxford: 2022).

No.

The refreshing and beautifully clear point: *Where true charity is, God is*. When God speaks, God uses the Indicative mood⁸, and I think that God always and only uses that mood – the mood that expresses what is real (the truth of things) – “where *true charity is*” – and our commitment to it rather than to convenient lies: “*Where true charity is, God is present, there*.” I am captivated by the thought of what a person would sound like [notice Subjunctive mood], or be like, if he or she were to speak or write only about what was real, communicating only in the Indicative mood. We are reminded of that line in Matthew 5:

³⁷ All you need say is “Yes” if you mean yes, “No” if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the Evil One.⁹

If, but more likely *when*, we ask “Where *are* you God?”, expressing this in a plaintive or complaining or worried way, God’s answer is: “Get to work [Imperative mood]¹⁰ loving someone (not manipulating him or her or meddling in his or her life)! Do the hard work of friendship.” *Because where love is, God is*. It is as simple and as profound as that.

We recall that beautiful statement of Fr. Joseph Whelan, SJ, but made famous the world over by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ’s use of it (the anniversary of whose death was yesterday, on February 5th, in 1991):

Nothing is more *practical*¹¹ than
finding God, than
falling in Love
in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.

⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**indicative**” – 1.a. – 1530 – *Grammar*. That points out, states, or declares: applied to that mood of a verb of which the essential function is to state a relation of objective fact between the subject and predicate (as opposed to a relation merely conceived, thought of, or wished, by the speaker).

⁹ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#). Doubleday, 1990, p. Mt 5:37.

¹⁰ God would not use the Imperative, giving us a command as I have written it. Instead, what God did and does is *to BE what He means* by loving us, each, without condition. His eloquent demonstration is the “command” that God gives – “Love one another *as* [i.e., in the way that] I am loving you.”

¹¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**practical**” – I. **Having to do with action.** I.1.a. - ?a1425 – Of, relating to practice or action, as opposed to speculation or theory. Frequently designating that area of a particular subject or discipline in which ideas or theories are tested or applied in practice.

It will decide
what will get you out of bed in the morning,
what you do with your evenings,
how you spend your weekends,
what you read, whom you know,
what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in Love, stay in love,
and it will decide everything.

The “practical” point indicated in that first line is that there is no other way to know God, to find God close, to understand what He is up to, *except to be like God*, to love others with the love that God has poured into us.

Romans 5 (NJB): ³ Not only that; let us exult, too, in our hardships, understanding that hardship develops perseverance, ⁴ and perseverance develops a tested character, something that gives us hope, ⁵ **and a hope which will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.**¹²

In other words, “Where true charity is / God is there.”

Rumi (1207-1273) – “Lift the discernment-sword that rules a thousand compassions.”¹³

“let us strive to keep our minds free of division; / may there be an end to malice, strife and quarrels” – To be discerning is a spiritual gift of great significance.¹⁴ In the most fundamental sense, we mean by *a discerning people* what Eisenhower prayed (above) that we American citizens would be: “Give us, we pray, the power to discern clearly right from wrong, and allow all our words and actions to be governed thereby.” But at the heart of this gift of the Holy Spirit is an ability to *distinguish* most particularly what is of God (truth, beauty, unity) and what is of human beings alone.

¹² [The New Jerusalem Bible](#). Doubleday, 1990, p. Ro 5:3-5.

¹³ Barks, Coleman. *Rumi: The Big Red Book: The Great Masterpiece Celebrating Mystical Love and Friendship* (p. 56). Kindle Edition.

¹⁴ David Lonsdale, SJ, “Discernment, *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (2005): “Human beings, faced with moral choices, find themselves subject, individually and corporately, to contradictory inner and external influences, some of which incline them to good, others to evil. Moreover, it is often difficult to distinguish, in practice, between good and evil pressures or ‘stirrings’ in a person, a group or a community, an institution, a nation state or globally.”

St. Augustine composed his masterwork (413-427 CE), *City of God*, on the theme of discernment - a Christian's power (through grace) to distinguish *self-love* and what comes of that (the city of human beings) from the *love of God* and what comes of that (the city of God).¹⁵

Citizenship in one or the other [city] is determined, not by the accidents of one's birth, parental lineage, or place of residence, but by the object of one's love or the end to which all of one's actions are subordinated: in one case, "the love of God to the contempt of oneself"; in the other case, "the love of oneself to the contempt of God" (14.28).¹⁶

But what happens, repeatedly, is that this holy power to *distinguish* becomes, through temptation, a noxious habit (= a vice > vicious) of *separating* ("keep our minds free of division", we pray), which will always end up in some form of "malice, strife, and sorrows." We have no more eloquent example given us than that of Jesus in His ability to distinguish - God is God; humans are not God - yet fervently to fight for the connection between the two, to find and to establish forevermore the "right relationship" between the two.

John 17 (NJB):

²⁰ I pray not only for these
but also for those
who through their teaching will come to believe in me.

²¹ May they all be one,
just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you,
so that they also may be in us,
so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.

²² I have given them the glory you gave to me,

¹⁵ **Civitate Dei, De (The City of God).** Written at intermittent intervals between 413 and 427, the *City of God* is Augustine's longest and most comprehensive work. It is also one of the foundational books of Patristic literature [i.e., from the 1st century to the 8th century]. Its unique achievement is to have clarified Christianity's ambiguous relationship to the temporal order and to have established, in opposition to some of the most influential Christian writers of the Constantinian era, **its radical transcendence vis-à-vis the Roman Empire and, indeed, all possible regimes or political dispensations.** Implied in Augustine's position on this issue is a rejection of the classical notion of the city or its equivalents as self-sufficient totalities capable of fulfilling all of one's basic needs and aspirations. **Without renouncing their citizenship in the temporal society to which they belong, Christians form part of a universal, albeit invisible, society in which alone salvation can be attained.** [Fortin, Ernest L. "Civitate Dei, De." *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, p. 196.]

¹⁶ Fortin, Ernest L. "[Civitate Dei, De.](#)" *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, p. 197.

that they may be one as we are one.¹⁷

Jesus' great power of discernment was *to distinguish for the sake of relating even very different things*. And most severely for us, He commanded us to *love our enemies* (i.e., those whom it pleases us to imagine are *certainly* not like us!). We so easily distinguish *us* from *them*, but then, by the Holy Spirit given us, we *refuse* to separate ourselves from them. We look for a connection; something good, however small, through which to be at common cause. The Christian *genius* is being able to find that thing through which to make a connection with an enemy. Think of a young man in World War I, a German soldier on Christmas Eve, raising his voice in prayer to the silent night ... and then all the combatants, inside the opposing trenches joining him in that fervent adoration: "Silent night / holy night / all is calm / all is bright." Genius.

A Prayer

St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 CE), *Proslogion*, 1 – I acknowledge, Lord, and I give thanks that You have created Your image in me, so that I may remember You, think of You, love You. But this image is so effaced and worn away by vice, so darkened by the smoke of sin, that it cannot do what it was made to do unless You renew it and reform it. I do not try, Lord, to attain Your lofty heights, because my understanding is in no way equal to it. But I do desire to understand Your truth a little, that truth that my heart believes and loves. **For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand.** For I believe this also, that 'unless I believe, I shall not understand' [Isa. 7: 9]. [emphasis added by me, *St. Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (Oxford World's Classics), "Proslogion" translated by M.J. Charlesworth (p. 87). Kindle Edition.]¹⁸

¹⁷ [The New Jerusalem Bible](#). Doubleday, 1990, p. Jn 17:20-22.

¹⁸ Latin: **Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam.** Nam et hoc credo: quia "nisi credidero, non intelligam" [Is 7,9].