



Dry Bones

Hear the Word of the Lord

Weekly Topics

Week 1: How did we get here?

- The cataclysmic changes of modernity

Week 2: Why do we suffer?

- An evolutionary and mimetic understanding

Week 3: Jesus' message of love


- More on mimetic desire and scapegoating
- The death of scapegoating

Week 4: The importance of Church

- Feeding our conscious and unconscious

Week 5: Pulling it all together

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Last Two Weeks

1. Christians are transitioning from a static worldview that looks back to when we were made in the image of God and sinned – to a dynamic, Teilhardian worldview that looks forward to us becoming the image of God.
2. In the dynamic worldview, suffering and death are consequences of the evolutionary process and are not punishment from God. Original Sin evolved from self-preservation as selfishness and mimetic rivalry.

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Why is this retreat important?

1. Our underlying premise: Catholic Tradition wisely teaches that we need salvation – help from God – to overcome the effects of Original Sin – our separation from God.
2. As our worldview is shifting, there is a simultaneous shift within our Church regarding responsibility for faith; from relying on the ordained to be our representatives to God, to personal responsibility for our faith.
 - This shift was a focus of Vatican 2.



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Why is this retreat important?

3. Personal responsibility requires a personal, trusting relationship with God built on prayer, knowing our Tradition, and being the Body of Christ.
4. Abbot Jerome tells us the core message of the Bible is God telling us, “I’m with you, I love you, trust me.”
5. Yet the static worldview of salvation, as still commonly taught and believed, is an impediment to trusting God.



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Why is this retreat important?

6. A focus of Vatican 2 reforms was on supporting Catholics to develop their relationship with God. The focus before Vatican 2 was on teaching Catholics religion and morality.
 - The people in the pews were to pray, pay, and obey.
7. The transition to supporting people as they build a relationship with God is challenging. As the Church struggles, there is a backlash against Vatican 2 and a push to “go back to the good-old-days.”
8. There is no going back. What the Church needs are people who do the hard work of building a relationship with God.
9. We are trying to break down the barriers to trusting God.

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Comments/Questions from Last Week

1. If we are still becoming, is the Catholic Church still becoming? Is this what we are seeing with young people leaving the Church?
 - The people are the Church. The institution is the structure – it is not “the Church.” So yes, the Church is still becoming.
 - Young people leaving is a complicated problem and there is not a single answer for why. I believe the reasons include...
 - The Church is struggling to transition our wisdom stories to a dynamic worldview – our truth is hidden.
 - There is a misconception of why we go to church. It is not primarily to get, but to give.
 - There is a lack of trust in institutions.

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Comments/Questions from Last Week

2. How do evolution and God’s will (love) collaborate?
 - Life biologically evolves towards self-aware creatures. Self-aware creatures evolve towards social awareness.
 - As humans evolve to become more socially conscious, we are becoming more inclusive and loving. This gives us the best chance to survive. God is creating us in God’s image through the process of evolution.
 - As humans evolve from being driven by self-preservation to being driven by love, we evolve through stages of sin – through stages of choosing not to love.
 - Conscience is formed mimetically as we go through these stages & evolves through personal relationship with God.

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Comments/Questions from Last Week

3. Should we switch to just large group discussion?
 - Think about it and we’ll vote during the book raffle.
 - Remind me if I forget!

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A Change in Perspective

Over the past two weeks we have focused on the impact of evolution and science on our understanding of how creation, sin, suffering, and death impact humanity. Salvation theology is shifting from failure to be the image of God, to hope in becoming the image of God.

Over the next two weeks we will focus on how Jesus and the Church help us to be human and evolve into the image of God.

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- Yahweh Prayer
- Scripture, Ez 37:1-11, 12a, 14a NRSV

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

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Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

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Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: ... I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live..."

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Delving into Mimetic Desire


This is important to our understanding of Jesus and the Church.

Mimetic Desire is complicated...

- Mimetic Desire = After basic needs are satisfied (food, sex, safety, shelter), people's desire becomes social.
 - People want what other people want.



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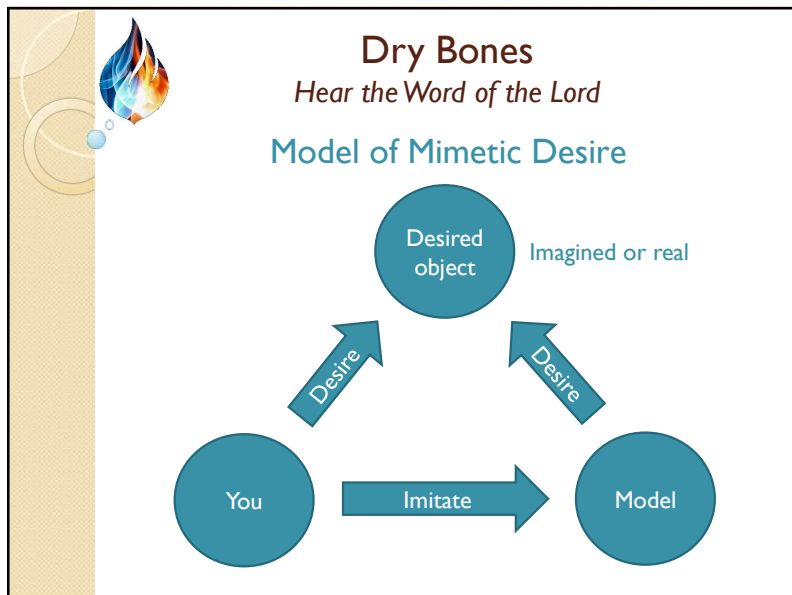
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Delving into Mimetic Desire

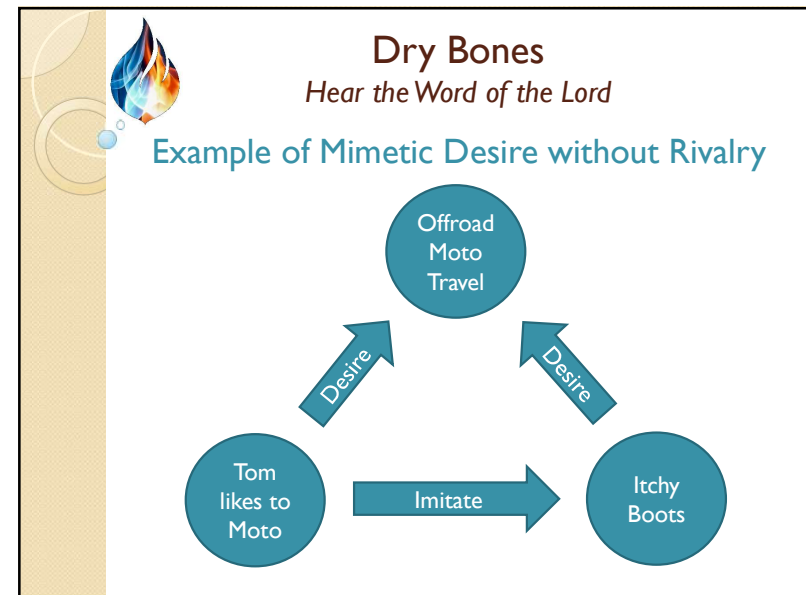
Rene Girard, a philosophical anthropologist, tells us that all our social desires are mimetic. Mimetic desire is important for survival...

- Mimetic processes encourage language and social skills.
 - Mimesis is hard wired. Babies imitate mouth movements days after being born.
- When we imitate others, we avoid danger and set goals without having to learn everything on our own.
- Mimesis is often unconscious. Why do we dress the way we do? Why do we greet the way we do?
 - Because that is the way we do things.

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Delving into Mimetic Desire + Rivalry

Things are different when objects of mimetic desire are in limited supply. This desire leads to rivalry between individuals or groups. Objects include...

- Items of monetary value are an easy example.
- Status within a community or organization (work, clubs, church) like fame, political power, successfulness
- Personal attributes/talents like intellect, athletic ability, artistic talent, physical attractiveness – even skin color.
 - **Brown vs Board of Education**

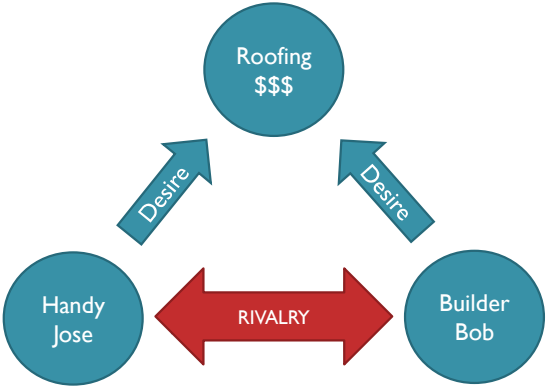
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Example of Mimetic Desire with Rivalry



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graph TD
    A((Handy Jose)) -- Desire --> B((Roofing $$$))
    C((Builder Bob)) -- Desire --> B
    A <--> |RIVALRY| C
  
```

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Delving into Mimetic Rivalry

Escalating mimetic rivalry leads to violence between individuals and communities...

- 40% of solved murders occurred during arguments and romantic triangles (based on 2015 data from FBI).
- As people of color demand human rights, whites feel threatened, and violence breaks out.



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Delving into Mimetic Rivalry

Violence relieves the frustration within mimetic rivalry – but it rarely addresses the root cause of the rivalry...

- The root cause of rivalry between Builder Bob and Handy Jose is an unsustainable economic system.
 - “One study estimates it would take 5 Earths to support the human population if everyone’s consumption patterns were similar to the average American.”
 - [Center for Sustainable Systems, Univ. of Michigan](#)



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Delving into Mimetic Rivalry + Scapegoating

Escalating rivalry between groups is likely to explode into widespread violence. Scapegoating reduces breadth of violence...

- The scapegoat is typically weak.
- The violent perpetrator doesn't recognize the scapegoating.

What's the way out of this? Is the situation hopeless?

- Rivalry is the consequence of escalating mimetic desire; it leads to violence.
- Mimetic desire is helpful and hard-wired within us.

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Book Raffle & Vote!!!



OR



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Is Mimetic Rivalry Inevitable?

Jesus says 'no.' He shows us a different path...

- Jesus' life did not buy into mimetic rivalry – he did not seek “worldly” power.
 - “Not of the world” means not buying into society's structures of greed, mimetic escalation, and violence.
- Jesus' teaching exposed the destructiveness of mimetic rivalry – he taught nonviolence.
- Jesus' passion is an example of being victimized by mimetic rivalry (powerful religious leaders turn against him) – yet he refused to participate in the rivalry.



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Is Mimetic Rivalry Inevitable?

- Jesus' death was scapegoating...
 - Better for one to die than many.
- Jesus' resurrection validates his life and teaching...
 - This is the way to be fully human.
 - This is what it means to be the people of God.
 - This is the path to the kingdom of God.
 - Since Jesus is one with God, it makes clear that God sides with the scapegoat and the oppressed – not violence!
 - When Christians realized this, it was an “aha” moment that explicitly revealed God's nature to them.

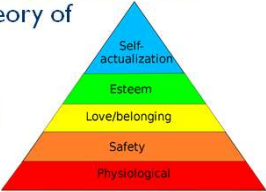
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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Let's look at each aspect of Jesus' life from a mimetic rivalry perspective. Once we do, I think it will be impossible to "unsee" him from this perspective.

- We are integrating the science of evolution (how), with Teilhard's theology of God providing a direction for evolution (why), with Girard's theory of mimetic desire (our self-aware/socially-aware path forward).
- Maslow's pyramid will be helpful for the next slide.



Maslow's Hierarchy

The diagram shows Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a pyramid with five levels from top to bottom: Self-actualization (blue), Esteem (green), Love/belonging (yellow), Safety (orange), and Physiological (red).

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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' life avoided mimetic rivalry...

- Conceived out of wedlock, born with the animals.
- His baptism by John – an example of avoiding rivalry.
- Jesus specifically rejects escalating mimetic desires.
 - Devil = the accuser who drives mimetic desire!
 - Stones to bread = Take control of your life.
 - Appeals to our ego need for security/survival
 - Jump from the pinnacle = Show you are special.
 - Appeals to our ego need for esteem/affection
 - All the kingdoms are yours = Grab power.
 - Appeals to our ego need for power/control

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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' life avoided mimetic rivalry...

- He picks working-class people for disciples.
- He does not climb the social ladder.
- He teaches with authority – he 'walks the talk.'
- He brings people back into the community by healing and forgiving.
- He is without rivalry and violence during his passion.
 - Washing of the feet, put away your sword.
- He avoids escalating mimetic desire after his resurrection.
 - Do you love me? Feed my lambs and sheep, tend my sheep. In other words, serve my people.

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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' teaching exposed the destructiveness of mimetic rivalry...

- The Beatitudes (Mt 5), Blessed are...
 - the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 - Because competition and rivalry lead to destruction.
 - they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
 - They have lost much and are no longer fighting to keep what they have.
 - the meek, for they will inherit the land.
 - they who hunger and thirst for *righteousness*, for they will be satisfied.

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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' teaching exposed the destructiveness of mimetic rivalry...

- The Beatitudes (Mt 5), Blessed are...
 - The merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
 - The clean of heart, for they will see God.
 - The peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
 - They who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 - You when they insult you because of me your reward will be great in heaven.
 - Jesus was the righteous one.



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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' teaching exposed the destructiveness of mimetic rivalry...

- Healing is the forgiveness of sin – always a reduction in mimetic rivalry and return to the community...
 - Healing the deaf mute, the blind, the woman with hemorrhages, and the paralytic – the curse is removed, they are restored to the community.
 - The Centurion's slave – Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and I will be healed.
 - Right relationship between the Centurion, the slave, and Jesus.



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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' teaching exposed the destructiveness of mimetic rivalry...

- Jesus prays for oneness...
 - So that [my disciples] may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us. (Jn 17:21)
- Washing of the feet. (Jn 13)
- Put away your sword. (Mt 26:51)
- Love God with your whole heart and your neighbor as yourself. (Lk 10:27)
- Love your enemy. (Mt 5:43)

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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' passion is the result of mimetic rivalry, and he is scapegoated...

- He heals by the power of the prince of demons. (Mt 12:24)
- He is a blasphemer. (Mk 14:64)
- Better for one to die than many. (Jn 11:50)
- Crucify him, crucify him! (Mk 15:13-14)
 - Jesus' murder relieved the mimetic frustration of both the powerful and the powerless.
 - They banded together against the troublemaker.
 - But killing him did not resolve the underlying mimetic rivalry – it is just a safety valve for communal frustration.

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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' resurrection validates his life and teaching...

- He was one with the Father...
 - This is not something he achieved – it is the result of being in relationship.
 - When we see Jesus, we see the Father.
 - God wants unity in diversity.
 - God is nonviolent.
- We are to be one with God.



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The way of Jesus vs Mimetic Rivalry

Jesus' resurrection validates his life and teaching. Lessons to us include...

- Being in tune with God is a process of letting go of being an individual and becoming a 'third something'.
 - It is like marriage. Marriage is the 'third something' created by two persons. It becomes something real. Spouses contribute to it, suffer for it.
- The power to turn away from mimetic rivalry is given through prayer. It cannot be achieved through our will.
- By trusting God, you are changed.
 - This is to hear the word of the Lord.
- This is what Jesus did and knew, and it is what mystics and saints learn.

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Jesus' Message of Love


I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.

Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world.
(Jn 17:15-18)

The wisdom of our age says we are evolving to become the image of God.



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Jesus' Message of Love

God is not mad at us for being imperfect. God is creating us to be the Children of God, the Body of Christ, fully human, made in the image of God (love).

- We are evolving to become fully human, fully conscious.
- We are still very young.
- The path forward is through relationship with God and incarnating that relationship – making it physically real.
- This process of evolving past mimetic rivalry will take thousands, maybe millions, of years.
- We are on an exciting journey!

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Take a Step Back...


God has been working on creating self-aware creatures capable of love for 14 billion years...

- This is the why of creation. Evolution is the how.
- We are those creatures, only 500,000 years old.
 - If creation is compressed into one year, humans appear at 11:40 PM on December 31st.

As we grow in freewill and love, God invites us to choose our evolutionary path past mimetic rivalry.

- Jesus showed us what we, as a species, can become.

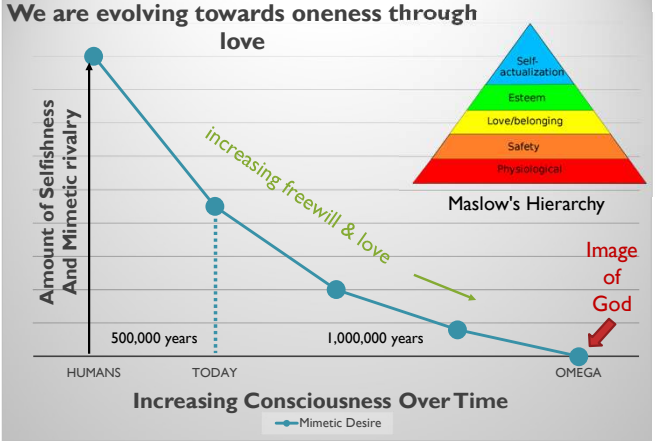
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We are evolving towards oneness through love



Maslow's Hierarchy

Amount of Selfishness And Mimetic rivalry

increasing freewill & love

Image of God

500,000 years

TODAY

1,000,000 years

OMEGA

Increasing Consciousness Over Time

Mimetic Desire

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Table Discussion

Jesus shows us the path to becoming fully human

Name one thing that struck you in today's presentation and that you will think/pray about this week.

Insights to share with the whole group?

Next Week – The importance of church

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