



Sisters of the Precious Blood

April 2019 Volume 4, Issue 4



Please consider saving paper, ink and the environment — print only if necessary.

We have eliminated much of the heavy color areas to minimize the use of colored ink. Thanks!

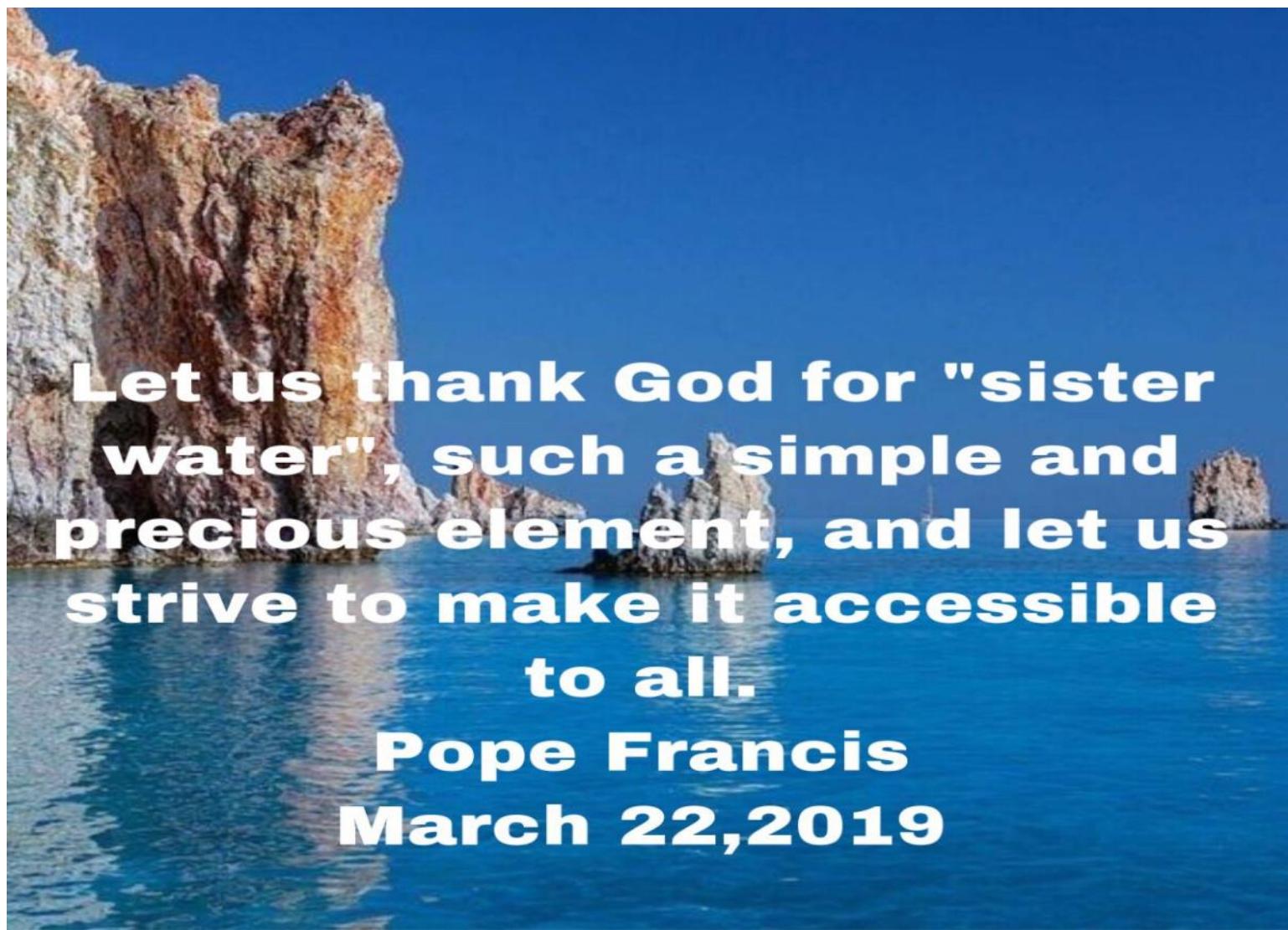
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

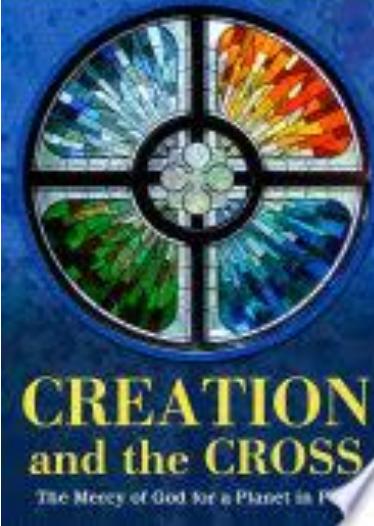
• Water	1
• Creation and the Cross	2
• Salvation —reflections	3
• Salvation—continued	4
• Earth Day	5
• Artistry under the Dome	6
• Poem: Sister Cordelia	6
• Death Penalty	7

Enacted in our ASSEMBLY DIRECTIVES 2015 we will remember to...

- Continue to articulate and integrate our Spirituality in our sharing among ourselves and with others.
- Increase our use of social media to promote Precious Blood Spirituality.
- Stand with the marginalized, make a collective commitment to promote and witness non-violence, and strive to effect reconciliation among God's people.
- Act responsibly in the use and care of our planet's resources.
- Network with other individuals, agencies and groups to be effective in our current reality.

Stories from around our CPPS world





Creation and the Cross ~ Elizabeth Johnson

In her latest book, *Creation and the Cross*, Sister of St Joseph Elizabeth Johnson, one of our top US theologians, brings together our Precious Blood spirituality and responsible use and care of our planet—emergent directives one and four! People equate redemption with pardon for sins, gained by Jesus’ death. But this focus on sin excludes the whole created world since it did not sin. Johnson sets out to show how a proper understanding of redemption embraces every created thing.

But first she must dismantle satisfaction theology (see the article “Being Saved” in this issue of Grassroots). Since Anselm’s 1098 work *Cur Deus Homo* (Why a God Man?) made satisfaction theology dominant, she adopts Anselm’s own writing device to demolish it. She invents a dialogue partner “Clara,” who like Anselm’s Boso represents the common inquiring person—or us! The whole book is therefore a conversation between Elizabeth and “Clara,” which helps make this theology book easier to read.

The first part of the book discusses Anselm’s satisfaction theology and its historical contexts. Not only are these contexts foreign to us (e.g., feudal honor, ransom practice), they do injustice to our understanding of God and self. Therefore satisfaction theology is erroneous and harmful, she says, and turns to her understanding of salvation in the wider context of creation itself.

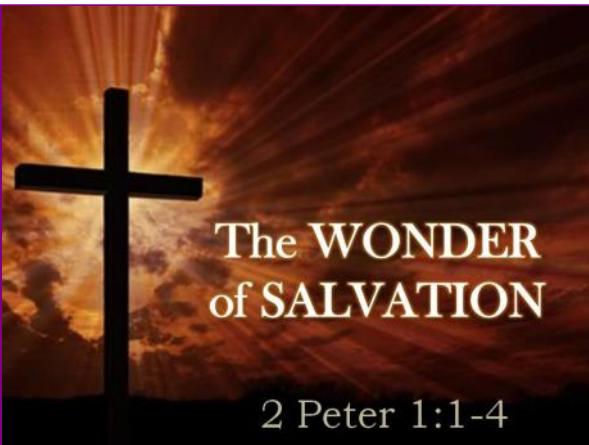
First she gives us a solid scriptural basis. Perhaps you will want to start your reading with Book II, a moving discussion of Isaiah 40-55 and the names for God in Hebrew. Compassion is the chief attribute of God. “A God of astonishing creative power seen in the magnificence of the skies and the earth, YHWH is merciful and gracious, delivering people from the hand of their oppressors, forgiving sin, and interacting with the world with a relentless concern for justice.” That is redemption, and we are active participants in it (see section 2.6). And so was Jesus, with his mission. “When a mission gets its grip on your heart, you faithfully stay the course, regardless...a passionate sense of right and wrong and love for others prevents you from doing otherwise.” That is why Jesus died. God’s creative power “in the beginning” then operates in resurrection and is continuing to operate until the end. The resurrection reveals God’s creative power anew. “This is what is essentially salvific...the resurrection lifted the Crucified One into the role of the Christ, the person chosen by God to usher in a new age of redemption...”

After a rich discussion of the post-resurrection metaphors Christians developed to speak of being saved, Johnson turns to the created universe in Book V, “God of All Flesh: Deep Incarnation.” Rather than the synoptic Gospels, she uses the Gospel of John. It begins “in heaven with God as Word creating the world, and traces this Word’s descent into the world in Jesus Christ...” *The Word became flesh*, not human or a man, and “flesh” is material substance that includes molecules and chemicals and the star dust of the universe itself. Section 5.5 draws on the Sophia texts of the Wisdom tradition of Hebrew scripture, the Hebrew hinge that allowed belief in incarnation to take root in the Christian tradition. Then she continues: “The flesh that the Word of God became as a particular human being is part of the tree of evolving life on earth, which in turn is part of the vast body of the cosmos.” “...In Christ, God enters into the biological tissue of creation in order to share the fate of biological existence...God shares the life conditions of foxes and sparrows, grass and trees, soil and moisture (quoting Niels Gregersen).” “...The Creator of all flesh is silently present with creatures in their pain and dying...accompanied in their anguish and dying with a love that does not snap off just because they are in trouble. The cross gives warrant for locating the compassion of God right at the center of their affliction.” God in Christ accompanies, and invites us into a mission of accompaniment with suffering people and all creatures.

In Book VI Johnson uses Pope Francis’ “Laudate Si” encyclical to apply the theology of accompaniment to the environmental crisis of today. For “coming from the same Source and being loved with the same ineffable affection, all species form together *one splendid universal communion* (LS 200).”

Submitted by: Sister Mary Garascia, CPPS

- **Directive:** Continue to articulate and integrate our Spirituality in our sharing among ourselves and with others.



Is a rose a flower? It is difficult to answer “yes” about this beauty, this representative of human love on Valentines Day and on coffin displays, this adornment of floats and race horses, whose petals are strewn before brides, whose fragrance is perhaps the world’s oldest perfume, this religious symbol and gift to Juan Diego. “Flower” is too simple a term. It doesn’t capture the rose-ness of roses!

What does it mean to be saved? “Being saved” has largely been limited to “saved from sin,” and so our appreciation of the richness and

beauty this rose of our faith, salvation, is not as full and nourishing as it could be.

First, a word about “saved from sin.” It is one necessary petal of our salvation rose. Unfortunately this petal became so overgrown and distorted that it has made our salvation rose grotesque. In the 11th century, Bishop Anselm of Canterbury taught the “satisfaction theory” of salvation: Adam’s sin offended the infinite Creator and broke the “order of creation”, the harmony God intended between people and with God. This divinely created order could only be restored by Jesus, a being with the same divine status with God. As a true man, however, the man Jesus owed everything to God, as we all do. What could the man Jesus give God? Death is the penalty for sin in Genesis. Since he was sinless, Jesus did not have to die; his death was the one thing Jesus could freely give God to repay or “satisfy” the debt owed for our sinning. This “satisfaction theology,” adopted and strengthened during the reformation and counter reformation, became enshrined in Catholic catechisms, devotions, and liturgical practices. Among the many criticisms of this theology is that it pictures a vindictive God who requires the death of his beloved Son. You can read more criticisms in the works of Pope Benedict XV, writing as the theologian Joseph Ratzinger, and in the recent book by Elizabeth Johnson, *Creation and the Cross*. But for now, let’s look at other petals of our salvation rose to help us better appreciate “being saved” during our Holy Week prayer.

Irenaeus of Lyons (d 202) coined the motto you see sometimes on inspirational cards: “*The Glory of God is man fully alive.*” Jesus’ life and teachings reveal for us our true natures: we are not just evolved and thinking animals but we have this amazing, spiritual essence that is like God’s. Being saved, scripture tells us, means becoming aware, waking up, becoming a new creation, being glorified or made holy, understanding ourselves as images or mirrors of the divine. No one can take away our divine dignity. Jesus’ life even more than his death motivates us to live as people fully alive. His revelation about our beautiful selves saves us from despair when we fall and empowers us to get up and go on. Have you experienced this kind of being saved?

Another salvation image in scripture (cf Luke 15) is of being found—the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost prodigal son. Jesus’ world was full of conflict and confused moral choices, a world easy to get lost in. So is ours. The first Christians were known as followers of “The Way,” and John’s Gospel word for Jesus is Light. Some times in my life were dark, full of conflict, times I was lost in confusion. How about you? There were huge graces of insight or light during those times, perhaps only realized later. These graces “find us,” light up our path or way, and save us.

The kingdom is another salvation image in the teaching of Jesus. The kingdom is the restored order of creation that Jesus announces. Paul takes it one step further: Jesus is the new Adam who gives us the Spirit and makes us His body. “You are the body of Christ,” he tells the Corinthians and his other church communities. These communities are to embody “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth...” The Eucharistic community, preeminent embodiment of kingdom, unites us with one another.

When we truly experience the unity flowing from community, love changes us and saves us from everything in us that separates us from others and Christ. Have you experienced love within and through community? Within the community of family? Of friends? Of work and civic groups? Of our Church? Have you experienced the energy and purpose that comes from this communal love? That is being saved!

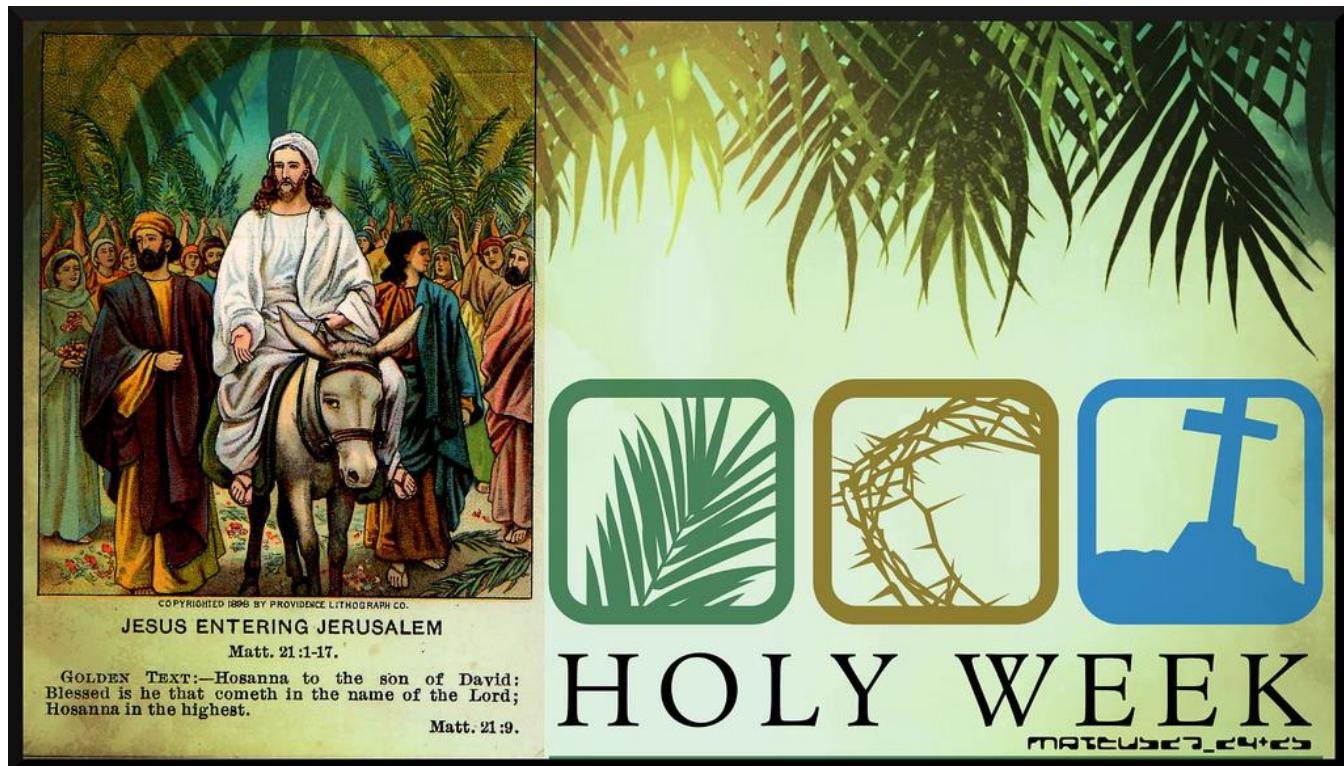
What about the death of Jesus? Today we still understand his death as the consequence of sin, but do we understand this more sociologically or environmentally. As humans, our evolutionary past lives within us in destructive behaviors flowing from survival of the fittest, territoriality, aggression and so on. As the most free of animals, we humans make bad choices, cruel choices, choices that live on in the families and cultural structures we create.

"Human history is a sad story of violence, war, injustice, and the slaughter of the innocent," remarks Fr. Tom Rausch. This is the world we are born into—the Original Sin we inherit and participate in when we ourselves freely sin. This is the world that killed Jesus when he criticized and threatened the "powers that be" of his day. None of the founders of the other world religions died a violent death. As a human, Jesus would have died, but that he died violently gives us Christians a special lens to view ourselves and our world. It makes us focus on the worst of human nature, on how we still persecute and crucify others. Contemplating the violent death of Jesus calls us to convert from all forms of violence and become instead compassionate, reconciling and healing persons, in act and not only in word. Have you experienced yourself becoming more that way? That is an experience of being saved.

There are many other images and experiences of saving: being freed from the situations, addictions, and wrong thinking that keep us from being fully alive; being restored to wholeness after tragedies of life like death, divorce, betrayal; receiving the Resurrection gift of hope that makes facing death bearable. Please ponder these salvation rose petals for yourself. And may our Holy Week reflections on the mystery of being saved lead us to increased awe at what God has done through Jesus to save us!

Submitted by: Sister Mary Garascia, CPPS

- Directive: Continue to articulate and integrate our Spirituality in our sharing among ourselves and with others.





ARTISTRY *Under the Dome*

This art fair showcases the talents and works of artists either living in or originally from Mercer and Auglaize counties. This premier juried art exhibit and sale features 30 artists and includes some art work from seven local high schools. More than 1,000 people attend the event each year. All are welcome to meet the artists, enjoy their marvelous creations and consider buying items. Many pieces make wonderful gifts. No entrance fee; donations are appreciated.

As founder of this event, Sister Martha Bertke, continues to serve on the planning committee. Her involvement along with other committee members is crucial to the success of this exhibition.

Submitted by: Sister Martha Bertke, CPPS

Directive: *Network with others...to be effective in our current reality*

“IN NATURE, NOTHING EXISTS ALONE.”
— Rachel Carson, 1962



Nature's gifts to our planet are the millions of species that we know and love, and many more that remain to be discovered. Unfortunately, human beings have irrevocably upset the balance of nature and, as a result, the world is facing the greatest rate of extinction since we lost the dinosaurs more than 60 million years ago. But unlike the fate of the dinosaurs, the rapid extinction of species in our world today is the result of human activity.

The unprecedented global destruction and rapid reduction of plant and wildlife populations are directly linked to causes driven by human activity: climate change, deforestation, habitat loss, trafficking and poaching, unsustainable agriculture, pollution and pesticides to name a few. The impacts are far reaching.

All living things have an intrinsic value, and each plays a unique role in the complex web of life. We must work together to protect endangered and threatened species: bees, coral reefs, elephants, giraffes, insects, whales and more.

The good news is that the rate of extinctions can still be slowed, and many of our declining, threatened and endangered species can still recover if we work together now to build a united global movement of consumers, voters, educators, faith leaders, and scientists to demand immediate action.

Taken from: <https://www.earthday.org/campaigns/endangered-species/earthday2019/>

SPRING

When days begin to lengthen
And buds like tightened fists relax,
Earth now moist and plowed
and seeded,
Gets down to business
growing things.

Then we yearn for Easter joy.
But somber Lent still lumbers on;
The tomb remains unopened;

Heaven's time, we'd assumed
was in sync with earth's,
But Christ commands His own arising!

By: Sister Cordelia Gast, CPPS

"The world tells us to seek success, power and money;

God tells us to seek humility, service and love."

Pope Francis

"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

Coretta Scott King



Please note: This year, Earth Day (April 22nd) falls on Easter Monday. Therefore, we invite you to celebrate Earth Day anytime during the Easter season, or on a day of your choosing.

Governor Gavin Newsom halts death penalty for 737 inmates

I want to share some very positive news with you. California Governor Gavin Newsom will sign an executive order this morning (March 13) that implements a moratorium on California's death penalty. This news is huge! California's death row represents about one-quarter of the nation's death row population.

The work to end executions has been a long fight and we are seeing very hopeful signs around the country in places like Washington, Wyoming, New Hampshire and Colorado. Our own work here in Ohio is part of a broader context where people are rethinking the death penalty. Governor DeWine is thinking carefully about executions and the death penalty. Recently at a news conference he was asked about the death penalty and said, "I think there is a lot of things we know today that we have the benefit of seeing how it [the death penalty] has played out since 1981. We know more today."

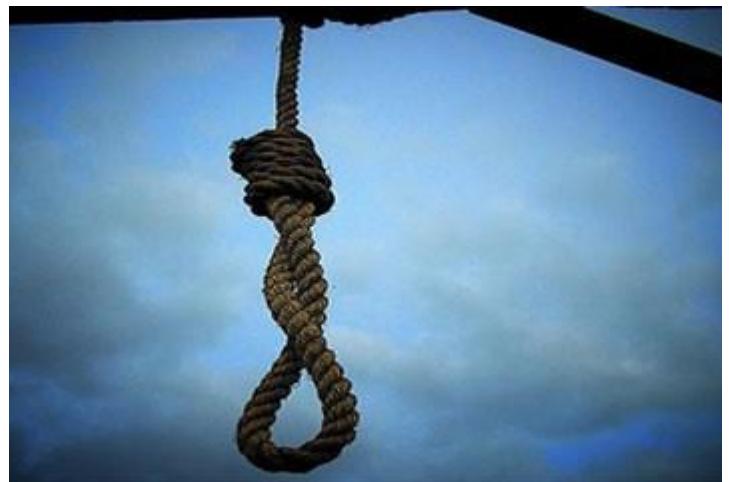
From: Kevin Werner, *Executive Director of OTSE – Ohioans To Stop Executions*

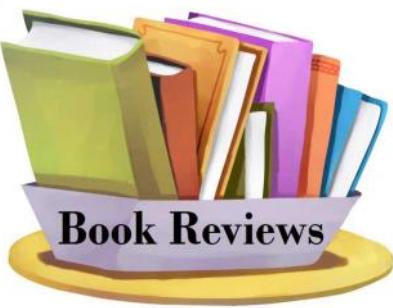
To learn more details about the death penalty and the history of where each state stands on this issue, check this website. <https://deathpenalty.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=001172>

Should the death penalty be allowed? Learn more here: <https://deathpenalty.procon.org/>

Updated: 30 States with the Death Penalty and 20 States with Death Penalty Bans

3/13/2019 Explore which states have the death penalty and which have bans, along with information such as which states have moratoriums or court-ordered stays on the use of capital punishment.





Grassroots welcomes Book Reviews

Reading books improves your brain, imagination, and memory. You can gain knowledge, reduce stress, and improve your vocabulary. Books can take you to another different world, where you can relax, be enriched and challenged.

Through book reviews you can become familiar with books, authors, publishers and your thinking skills become sharper. We welcome **book reviews** that relate to the "Emergent Future Directives". Good books you have read should be shared with others. Please consider submitting a Book Review any time; don't wait to be asked.

I will give a gift of a plant for the next special occasion, in place of a material one.



How is God's dream for me evolving today?



Send us your articles (approximately 125 to 150 words or less) for our next issue. Next issue articles for *Grassroots* are due April 25 so that we can meet our goal of having it in your hands by 05_01_2019.

Please submit to Marty Bertke m.bertke@hometowncable.net
— or to Mary Lou Schmersal cppsnews@bright.net

Your contributions make all the difference!

Thank You