

## GLIMPSE

"All the Better to Hear You, My Dear"

Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J.

I had a Philosophy teacher who mentioned to us one day that the reason birds didn't talk to each other was that they had nothing to say. The little chirpers outside my window seem not to have been listening to that wise old classroom bird who had lots to say about almost everything. These birds and many others, to whom I have bent my ear, seem to have much to say and they trill-talk in varying tones and patterns. They seem to get responses from others across, over there somewhere.

Around the northern parts of our country, on many beautiful lakes, loons can give quite an excited ululation when eagles appear, warning their fellows to, pardon the pun, duck or dive under so they will be safe. Their partners seem to understand exactly what is being said. In the dark of a quiet evening, a loon pours out his/her soul in a long sighing complaint of longing. Upon our hearing it, we all say, "Amen, I have been there too." Birds may not have much to say to each other, but they seem to enjoy going on and on entertaining us their listeners and have much to say, perhaps even more than our old professor of Truths.

On the other wing, we human beings have much to say and it seems many move about searching for someone to listen. There are many personal devices with which to transmit plans, questions, warnings and, very often, nonsense. Brevity seems to be the most important message. Most news programming highlights sound-bites lasting as short as possible. They intend to capture the essence of the item so as to provide more time for the commercials, to which few really listen.

The very center of real communication is the creative sharing of something judged as good. It is good for my being created and a creature. It is also judged good for your further creation as a creature. I want what is good for you. So communication and love have much in common. The problem is that it cannot be contained or restricted to a sound-bite; both takes sacred time.

A Sacrament has two essential elements, a something, a material such as bread/wine, water, oil. With the material there is a *gesture* which has to be accompanied by *words*. Sacraments are quite in keeping with human psychology. We are inward/outward beings. Gestures and words, such as Christmas gifts accompanied by a card or verbal expression is how we do real love-sharing. It is our human and liturgical way.

Now there is, in my way of thinking, the Sacrament of Conversation. The *gesture* is the speaking by the other. The *words* are my saying, "Tell me more". You are telling me something good for my being a creation and your words are assisting that. My words are not interrupting, but encouraging your part in the sacred sacrament of conversation. You're speaking and my listening for the good of both of us. I, in my turn, might celebrate that same sacrament, but later, after I have reverently received. It is only a glimpse, and please, I cannot tell you more.