

NewEvangelists.org

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New Evangelists Monthly #3

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Forward

New Evangelists Monthly is an informal, dynamic, crowd-sourced “meta-magazine” showcasing the best posts faithful Catholic bloggers publish each month. Here you will find many different, but faithfully Catholic viewpoints, insights and perspectives.

Contributing authors submit their very best piece from the prior month between subsequent first and second Saturdays. Readers are welcome to visit anytime, even while contributions are still being accepted for a new issue. Back issues are available in the archive.

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7 Quick Takes Friday: 7 Things [at Catholic Alcoholic]



Here we go again with our [7 Quick Takes Friday](#) hosted by [Jennifer Fulwiler](#) over at [Conversion Diary](#). We reciprocate links to her blog and then post 7 “quick-takes” on our blogs.

I do NOT miss these seven things, now that I am sober:

I do not miss: 1. Missing Mass because we didn’t get our act together to go in the morning. And I would be drinking by the afternoon so I couldn’t go to evening Mass. Nine times out of ten we would go in the morning. But if we didn’t for some reason, then I chose alcohol over God.

“How high a price we pay for the burden of habit! I am fitted for life here where I do not want to be, I want to live there but am unfit for it, and on both counts I am miserable.”

Augustine of Hippo, Confessions

I do not miss: 2. Begging God to please help me stop, take over my will, give me a miracle, make me stop drinking for good please. I remember yelling at God telling him free will was a stupid idea!

“For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.” **Romans 7:15**



I do not miss: 3. Not remembering a great evening because I had had too much to drink. I especially ruined date nights with Husband. The night would start out wonderfully, with sushi and Chardonnay. Then, inevitably I’d want to have more wine. Perhaps we’d skip the movie and instead “hang out and drink.” That’s when the best

conversations happen, right? We were bonding, sharing out feelings. Right. By the end of the night, I'd most likely said things and behaved in ways I wasn't proud of.

Ah! Those who rise early in the morning in pursuit of strong drink, lingering late inflamed by wine, banqueting on wine with harp and lyre, timbrel and flute, but the deed of the LORD they do not regard, the work of his hands they do not see! **Isaiah 5:11-12**

I do not miss: 4. Hangovers. Working from home gave me the opportunity to be hungover and still get my work done—I could be miserable with a headache and lay in bed with my laptop and my Advil. Forcing myself to get up early to get the kids off to school, fed and with their lunches was such a chore. And then as soon as they were out the door, I'd head back to bed for more uselessness.

1809 Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion. **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

I do not miss: 5. my children's worried faces. I'd pick the little darlings up from school and they'd be excitedly sharing their day with me. *Mom, they gave us hot chocolate today during safety patrol. Mom, I'm the star student next week so we need to make my poster. Mom, can you help me tonight with my Literature project?* And then, inevitably on the way home, I'd stop at the convenience store and pick up a 6 pack of Michelob Light. Back in the car, my children's faces were down, their sweet voices quieted. The cloud of alcoholism had surely infected our family, in unspoken words.

“Pride is the king of vices...it is the first of the pallbearers of the soul...other vices destroy only their opposite virtues, as wantonness destroys chastity; greed destroys temperance; anger destroys gentleness; but pride destroys all virtues.” **Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen**

I do not miss: 6. Husband's irritation and worry. At times during my drinking days, Husband would say to me, “Honey, I don't mind drinking every now and then, going out and having fun with friends, or staying home and drinking. But I can't do this every night. Maybe just on the weekends?”

“The husband is the head of the wife just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the Church – read on – and give his life for her (Eph. V, 25). This headship, then, is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion; whose wife receives most and gives least, is most unworthy of him, is – in her own mere nature – least lovable. For the Church has not beauty but what the Bride-groom gives her; he does not find, but makes her, lovely. The chrism of this terrible coronation is to be seen not in the joys of any man's marriage but in its sorrows, in the sickness and sufferings

of a good wife or the faults of a bad one, in his unwearying (never paraded) care or his inexhaustible forgiveness: forgiveness, not acquiescence. As Christ sees in the flawed, proud, fanatical or lukewarm Church on earth that Bride who will one day be without spot or wrinkle, and labours to produce the latter, so the husband whose headship is Christ-like (and he is allowed no other sort) never despairs.” **CS Lewis, *The Four Loves***

I do not miss: 7. being separated from God. I think many of us have that “one thing” that blocks us off from the light of God. The more we focus on the thing, rather than on God, the more we separate ourselves from grace. Once I put down the thing I loved and walked away, God was able to enter my life and fill the vacuum left inside of me. And how glorious to be filled in this way!

“Virtue is its own reward, and brings with it the truest and highest pleasure; but if we cultivate it only for pleasure’s sake, we are selfish, not religious, and will never gain the pleasure, because we can never have the virtue.” **Cardinal Henry Newman**

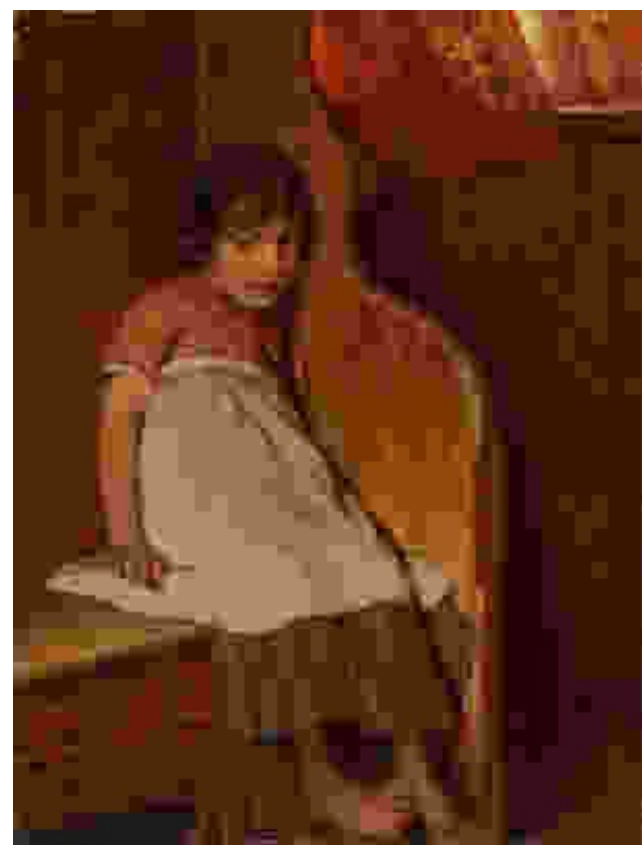
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This contribution is available at <http://catholicalcoholic.com/2013/02/22/7-quick-takes-friday-7-things-i-dont-miss-now-that-im-sober/>

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It Worked [at The Breadbox Letters]



Reading a marvelous blog post on The Bell of the Wanderer last night, I immediately thought of Bunny.

When this beloved oldest grandchild of mine was three, she sometimes had trouble with tantrums. Anger would overtake her and cause all of the manifestations we can associate with that age: crying, kicking, screaming, flailing, stomping, hurling herself backwards onto the floor.

One day when something didn't suit Bunny, we endured a painful stretch of minutes filled with 'all of the above.' Finally, (after exhausting what I thought of as my options) I leaned in close and said, softly, 'Sweetie, you don't

have

to do this.'

The answer was a definitive 'YES I DO!!!' Bunny stuck out her lip and emphatically crossed her arms.

'But you know, you can stop whenever you want.'

'No I CAN'T!!!' (shouted).

'Then you can ask Jesus to help you.' I waited.

Still angry, still crying, still stomping, Bunny yelled through clenched teeth: 'Jesus - HELP ME!!!'

I was surprised. I realized I hadn't expected her to do it.. not really. It hit me that Bunny probably wanted help as much as I wanted her to have it.

I looked into that precious tear-streaked face and knew. In spite of anger, in spite of her age and immaturity, this little one meant

exactly

what she was saying.

It was only a few seconds before Bunny looked up at me and smiled.

Her words came in a whisper.

'It worked.'

It does work. Indeed it does. And to read a grown up version of how beautifully, [click here to visit 'Bell of the Wanderer,' and read 'I Met Him in a Foxhole.'](#) You'll be glad you took time to do so.

This contribution is available at <http://thebreadboxletters.blogspot.com/2013/02/it-worked.html>
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Lent, Week One: Embracing Our Otherness [at The Trenchcoat Introspective]



Don't go up there! Those other ducks are gonna jump!
(via EBInfoWorld)

It's surprisingly difficult to tell where the Catholics are.

I mean, don't get me wrong, there are tons and tons of Catholics. Everywhere. That's sort of the point. But what I mean is that it's surprisingly difficult to tell who is and who isn't until you run them through the various tests we often use to find each other. (My favorite is the Steubenville Litmus Test. You tell people you graduated from Steubenville, and if they don't immediately respond with "huh?" you've got a live one.)

When did this happen? Where are the crucifixes, the saint medals, the stopping to pray in the middle of WalMart because it's 3PM? What happened to no meat on Fridays (even in Lent, many of us try to bend the rules)? What happened to crossing ourselves as we pass a cemetery out of respect and prayer for the beloved dead?

And who the heck are we trying to fool?

Are we embarrassed to be Catholic? Are we so desperate to fit in that we can't even do the little things? Is that it?

Because, guess what: That world we're trying to fit into doesn't like us very much. In case you haven't noticed, the secular world favors all sorts of things we are supposed to stand against. And just because we're staying quiet doesn't mean they'll leave us alone. Haven't the past few years proven that?

Look around you. And I mean, really look, beyond where you've chosen to. Stare into the very soul of this world and tell me what you see. Stop ignoring the evil around you. Stop saying it's just something we don't understand. Because we understand it perfectly well. We're standing on the side of the Destined Path, staring down the gullet of the Abyss.

Perdition is only a whisper away. And we ignore it because it isn't convenient. It isn't comfortable. We're tired of getting shouted at.

That's the height of foolishness. We can't just stand there nodding. We need to gird our loins and get moving. Because the enemy isn't going away.

Lent is about turning back to God. It's about being who He created us to be, his masterwork. It's about running headlong down the path before us, conquering our obstacles together as God's army on Earth. It's about coming home.

So come home.

We can't hide our faith away like a dirty little secret. Well, I suppose we *can*. Many of us do. But we mustn't.

We absolutely must let it show. Because the armies of darkness need to know we're still fighting. Because those wandering lost between the trenches need to see our banners waving proudly, so they can find the strength to soldier on, to come back home. Because to set God on the back burner and to treat him like someone we're ashamed to know is foolish, insulting, and traitorous behavior. He deserves better. He's the Creator of the Universe, and *He died for us*. Should we really repay Him by ignoring him, by penciling Him in for an hour on Sunday?

I say no. We shouldn't. We should wear his crest (the cross on which He died, still bright with blood) with honor, proudly in plain sight. We should treat the images of those valiant soldiers who came before us (and fight still beside us) with dignity and care, keeping them close to our hearts. And we should not ever, ever be ashamed of our traditions, because that is a part of who we are. It doesn't matter how "optional" they've become.

Why is it so important for us to do these things (if doing them out of the love for our Father and his Son is not enough)? Because these things, these traditions and sacramentals, exist for us. They are there to remind us that we don't fit in. That we will never fit in.

How could we? This is not our home. We don't belong here. The things that exist here exist but for a while, and our place is in eternity, with the One who loves us above all things. We cannot — we must not — forget that.

So I challenge each and every one of you to be a little daring. Be proud to be Otherworldly. And be a beacon to guide others home, rather than a lamp shrouded in fear and discomfort. Your Father will not thank you for your silence. Our marching orders are clear.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Don't be afraid. God and His whole celestial army are beside you.

Now live out your mission, and be truly His people.

You made a promise when you were confirmed. There's no turning back.

Now let's go do something incredible.

-E. G. Norton

This contribution is available at <http://trenchcoatintrospective.wordpress.com/2013/02/15/lent-week-one-embracing-our-otherness/>
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Catholicism: Empowering Women for 2000 Years [at Carrots for Michaelmas]

Another post about birth control, Haley? *Really?* It's true. Sorry, folks. But I think Catholic teaching on contraception is really crucial to understanding the respect for womanhood that the Church affirms. This is Part IV of this series, so be sure to read about how [Marian doctrine](#), the [Catholic understanding of vocation](#), and the [female saints and doctors of the Church](#) empower women before starting on Part IV.



The Church's stance on birth control is one of the most controversial issues of our day. Why should women be enslaved to pregnancy and child-rearing instead of pursuing something, *anything* else? Why should a woman's right to contraception be taken off the table? Why is the HHS Mandate such a big deal? Does the Church just want all women to be oppressed, barefoot, and pregnant in the kitchen? These questions completely miss the point. **Far from wanting to degrade women, the Church always wants to honor womanhood.**

Before our conversion, I was on the Pill for a year and a half. We got married young, I was only 20, Daniel was 21, and we were both still in college. At the time we were attending a Baptist church. I can't tell you how many of our well-meaning friends and members of our faith community asked when they heard of our engagement, "*So, Haley, have you started taking birth control, yet? Because you gotta take it a couple months ahead of time for it to be really effective so you don't end up pregnant!*"

Apart from being a really invasive question, what kind of message did that send to me? **A.** Pregnancy is a disaster that needs serious prevention in order to be avoided. **B.** There is something flawed in the way your body works. You need a prescription to fix this problem you have so that you're not the cause of a horrible inconvenience (at best) to yourself and your poor husband.

These folks had our best interests at heart. But far from feeling liberated by this push for the Pill, I felt ashamed of my womanhood, embarrassed of my pesky fertility. The way my body was created was clearly flawed. I had a serious problem and it hinged on the unfortunate fact that I was born a woman.

Fast forward to when I quit taking the Pill my last semester of college and got pregnant just after graduation. [Unplanned, unexpected](#), but we were indescribably happy about it. Assuming we were disappointed, many of our friends attempted to commiserate with us. "Wow. *Your life is really gonna change,*" they'd grimace. "*Things are gonna be different*" was about the most encouraging phrase they could muster. The pastor at our Baptist Church even asked, "*This wasn't planned, was it? I mean, you'd have to be crazy to want to be pregnant right now, in **your** situation!*" Our situation being that we were young and Daniel had another year of school to finish and a thesis to write

That attitude really was a storm cloud over my glowing happiness. **I had failed. I had ruined us. There was something wrong with me and because I hadn't altered the way my body worked with meds, I was supposed to feel embarrassed or stupid or ignorant for "getting us into this situation."**

I can't tell you the striking difference between this mindset and the way Catholics responded to our big news. There was no pity in our Catholic friends and professors faces for this hapless young couple. They were actually excited! "*Praise God!*" they'd say. "*What a blessing! How wonderful!*" *Maybe there isn't anything wrong with me?* I wondered. *Maybe it's not insane to be thrilled that we're expecting before having our careers settled and being financially secure. Maybe this womanhood thing is something to celebrate?*

As we began reading the teachings of the Church on marriage, fertility, and contraception, I started to think about my body differently. There wasn't anything broken about it. There wasn't anything to apologize for. By making procreation a central feature of sex, we were honoring each others' bodies and their Creator. We were fearfully and wonderfully made and we could embrace the womanhood and manhood we brought to the marriage bed. We could be sub-creators, participants in God's redemptive, creative work and that miraculous creation of a new soul could happen within *me*.

Instead of something to be ashamed of, I began to celebrate the unique honor of my womanhood. Because God has given women an opportunity to share in his creation that men will never have. My husband will never know what it is like to grow new life inside himself. Granted, he will also never know what it feels like to throw up everyday for several weeks due to extreme morning sickness. I'm not saying pregnancy is easy or without sacrifice, but it is cosmic

and amazing. An eternal soul is entering the world and I have been chosen to participate in this work. I am honored. I am celebrated.

If we think that by denying our fertility we are being liberated, we have been sadly taken in. By divorcing procreation from sex, women are degraded. We have to apologize for our womanhood, the possibility that we might get pregnant and inconvenience someone. Better to have a surgical procedure render us sterile so that we don't ruin any poor man's life by landing him with, of all things, a *baby*.

One of the lies about contraception is that increased access to the Pill decreases the number of abortions performed. That's rarely true and misses the big picture which is that when a country turns to a contraceptive mentality, changing it's view of the purpose of sex, the abortion rate increases:

“Contraception has been shown to decrease abortion rates primarily in countries with already high abortion rates. These represent a minority of countries. Contraception has been shown to *increase* abortion rates primarily in countries with already low abortion rates. These represent a majority of countries. **Contraception has been shown to slightly reduce abortion rates after its initial increase of abortion rates, but has never been shown to reduce abortion rates back to pre-contraception levels.**” ([Read more of this article about the studies on this topic in detail.](#))

When we no longer value the way God created women, and prescribe a medical fix for their natural fertility, are we really respecting womanhood?

Catholic teaching about marriage, sex, fertility, and contraception affirms the value of women and protects us from degradation. As a Catholic woman, I can fully embrace my body. I don't need to apologize for my womanhood. I am honored and celebrated.

This contribution is available at <http://carrotsformichaelmas.com/2013/02/19/catholicism-empowering-women-for-2000-years-part-iv-my-body-isnt-broken-the-church-and-contraception/>
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The Eucharistic TARDIS: Doctor Who, the Catholic Church, and the Hole in the Western Heart [at The Back of the World]



“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11

So far, my 2013 has been the year of “Doctor Who”. I’ve been a Sci-Fi fan all my life, but only in the last couple of months have I become a fan of the long-running BBC show. I blame my friend, Dan: he’s been after for a long time to watch it, and I’ve suddenly found myself knee-deep in season 3 of the Russell Davies revival that began in 2005.

For those who haven’t yet been converted to being “Whooligans”, the show follows the escapades of a human-like alien who simply goes by “the Doctor.” Our hero is the last member of a species known as the “Time Lords”, and he travels through Time and Space in a ship known as the TARDIS (which bears a remarkable resemblance to a police box from 1960’s London). The Doctor usually has a companion or two as explores the depths of history and the farthest reaches of the Universe.

The show is rather brilliant, in an unusual sort of way: by not taking itself too seriously (for instance, some of the villains are downright silly), the show somehow manages to tackle incredibly serious themes with a lot of depth and profundity. And yes, some of these themes are inescapably theological...

Lately, I’ve been reflecting on the TARDIS in particular, because I think it’s an example of how,

as someone once said, “Christianity haunts the Western sub-conscience.” That is to say, that no matter how post-Christian our society gets (and, by the way, “Doctor Who” is a decidedly post-Christian show, as a lot of Sci-Fi is), Western civilization lives and breathes the mystery and the symbolism of the Church. This is why, for example, you can pick up the novels of any of the 20th century’s greatest non-Christian American or European writers, and you are bound to find to find any number of biblical images and allusions.

With the TARDIS (which, by the way, stands for “Time and Relative Dimension in Space”), I think we see that God has indeed written eternity on our hearts, and even after all these years of secular enlightenment, we still feel this angst about being away from Communion...

There are a lot of reasons why I think that the TARDIS is Eucharistic...

For starters, the TARDIS is not at all what it appears to be. On the outside, it looks like an old police call box, no bigger than a phone booth. But a look inside the TARDIS reveals that it’s a vast spaceship, with plenty of interior room. This absolutely baffles the characters on the show taking a first glance through the entrance: frequently, their jaws will drop, and then they will walk around the outside, and then look through the door again and exclaim something to the effect of “BUT THAT’S IMPOSSIBLE!!!” Here we find a nice difference between the “accidents” and the “substance” of the TARDIS: just as Catholic theology teaches that although the Eucharist still appears to be bread and wine, it is actually the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, so too the Doctor reveals that there’s a lot more to the TARDIS than meets the eye...

The next reason is that the TARDIS is, as the Doctor explains, a living being, despite the fact that it seems to be an inanimate object. I’ll assume that comparison is self-explanatory...

The third reason I think the TARDIS is Eucharistic is that, once inside the TARDIS, passengers find that they are able to escape the usual bounds of time and space. This is particularly true of those who “eat and drink” the TARDIS... Like I said, I’m only on season 3, but so far I’ve encountered two examples of this.

First, at the end of season 1, there is the series of episodes where the Doctor and Rose fight the Emperor of the Daleks. When all seems lost, Rose pries open the heart of the TARDIS and is accidentally infused with the “Vortex” that allows the ship to travel through space and time. Having “eaten” the Vortex, Rose is given immense power: she is able to return to the distant future, where she instantly defeats the Daleks, saves the Doctor, and brings Jack back to life (making him immortal in the process). She also scatters “clues” for herself throughout space-time, so that will paradoxically be able to “find her way back” to the moment in time where she is needed.

Second, at the beginning of season 3, the Doctor meets a woman named Donna on her wedding day. Donna has a bit of a problem: she has, unbeknownst to her, been drinking the same type of

particles that exist at the heart of the TARDIS. This makes it so that she encounters the Doctor rather unexpectedly: she is instantly transported onto the TARDIS as she is walking down the aisle towards her groom, because the particles in her are attracted to the particles on the TARDIS.

To my mind, these two episodes mirror some aspects of the Eucharist that Catholic theologians have long noted: that the Sacrament takes the one who partakes into a trans-temporal and trans-spatial reality. That is, in the Eucharist, the communicant is a part of an event that overcomes the normal bounds of space and time.

Writer George Weigel, in writing about the Eucharistic theology of Bl. John Paul II, says that “at Mass, John Paul suggested, those who receive Holy Communion are time travelers, for the reception of the glorified body of Christ brings us into as close contact as is possible in history with the time-beyond-time, the time of God’s Kingdom come in its fullness. If the Eucharist is, in a sense, trans-temporal, it also trans-spatial or, in John Paul’s preferred word, ‘cosmic.’”

And theologian William Cavanaugh has written that “the Eucharist produces a catholicity which does not simply prescind from the local, but contains the universal *Catholica* within each local embodiment of the body of Christ. The body of Christ is only performed in a local Eucharistic community, and yet in the body of Christ spatial and temporal divisions are collapsed... Consumption of the Eucharist consumes one into the narrative of the pilgrim City of God, whose reach extends beyond the global to embrace all times and places.” (Cavanaugh, *The World in a Wafer: A Geography of the Eucharist as Resistance to Globalization*).

And so you see, I can’t help but wonder how much of the Doctor’s travels aboard the TARDIS are shadows of our collective desire to encounter the “time-beyond-time” in the Blessed Sacrament. After all, God has written eternity on our hearts...

“Doctor Who” is not “The Lord of the Rings.” What I mean is this: J.R.R. Tolkien was a very devout Catholic, whose worldview oozes through every pore of his novels. While Tolkien never gives you explicit allusions or allegories, you don’t have to work very hard to explore how Mariology informed the character of Galadriel, or to compare Aragorn’s journey through the Paths of the Dead to Holy Saturday, etc. “The Lord of the Rings” and “The Hobbit” are profoundly and inescapably Roman Catholic novels.

By contrast, I think any “theology of Doctor Who” that’s faithful to the show wouldn’t be Christian. In fact, I think if the show has an official religious viewpoint (Russell Davies describes himself as an atheist), “Doctor Who” presents an Eastern religious outlook. For instance, I think the “incarnations” of the Doctor seem to have much more in common with the avatars of Vishnu than anything Christological.

Nevertheless, the show manifests a lot of what fellow blogger Laura would call “[Catholic Cravings](#)” just beneath the surface. I would go so far as to say that the Doctor shows the world that

there is a “Eucharist-shaped hole in the Western heart,” a hole that’s been there since we wandered away from Peter’s Barque. Might it be that the reason why audiences love “Doctor Who” so much is that on-board the TARDIS, we hear echoes of the universal call to Communion?

This contribution is available at <http://backoftheworld.com/2013/02/20/the-eucharistic-tardis-doctor-who-the-catholic-church-and-the-hole-in-the-western-heart/>

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MAKING BABIES FOR GOD AND COUNTRY??? Not exactly the point...AT ALL [at catholicboyrichard (Stephen Francis)]



Ross Douthat (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

I just finished reading an [op-ed](#) by [Ross Douthat](#), a fairly conservative columnist who is a [Roman Catholic Christian](#) and has appeared on numerous television and radio venues as well. I link it here:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/02/opinion/sunday/douthat-the-birthrate-and-americas-future.html?smid=fb-share>

I have not been overly familiar with him until recently, but lately took note of the above article from the [NY Times](#) which he wrote entitled “The [Birthrate](#) and America’s Future.” At first glance I reacted with caution, as many times such articles are coded ways of slapping actively [LGBT people](#) in the face or worse, or to coldly criticize women who choose careers and the like.

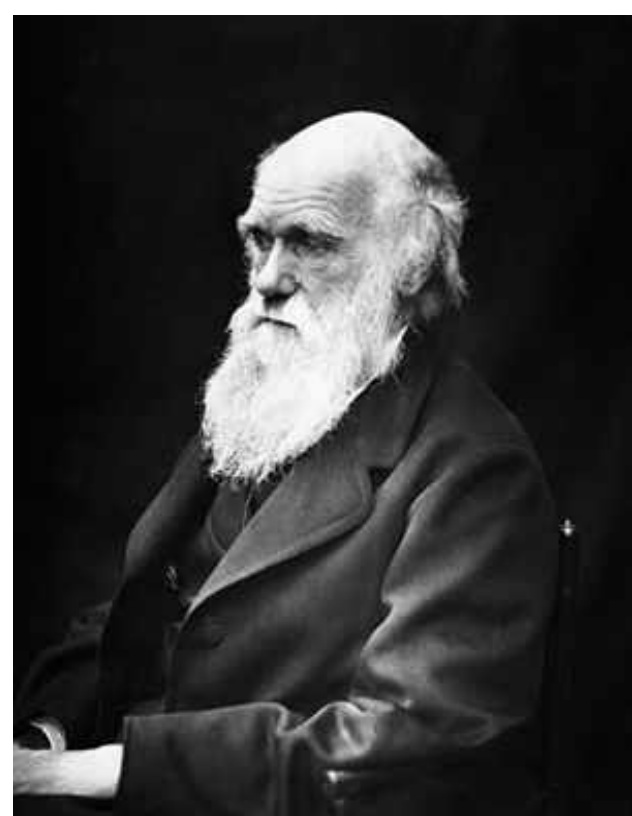
But this one did not appear that way, at least to me. Rather he presents compelling reasons, in a concise fashion, that carry what I believe is objective truth. I think most of us can agree, whether we happen to be liberal, conservative, a mix, or “other,” that family as has been known for millennia is DOA. And that one generation did it. Mine.

MICHIGAN RECORDS - MTA-000-0000000	
The State of Michigan Department of Public Health Registry of Vital Records and Statistics	
M307910-RR ASHLEY, MI 91-4567-20378 (Physical Number)	
CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE	
1. Place of Marriage: ASHLEY, MICHIGAN 2. Date of Marriage: 08-16-1989 3. Version Number: 4968	
4. Full Name Party A: RITA ANN BRANDON 11. Full Name Party B: JOHN ALAN ACKERMAN	
13. Surname After Marriage: RITA ANN ACKERMAN	11A. Surname After Marriage: - same -
4. Date of Birth: 04-19-1989 5. Occupation: student	13. Date of Birth: 07-25-1984 13. Occupation: mechanic
14. Residence: 321 Elmview Lane, Ashley, MI 48806	
14. Address and Street: 1621 E. Maple St., Ashley, MI 48806	
7. Number of Marriages: none 13A. Widowed or Divorced: no	15. Number of Marriages: none 15A. Widowed or Divorced: no
8. City/Town: Ashley State/Country: MI	16. City/Town: Clarksburg State/Country: MI
9. Name of Mother/Father: Gail Marie Brandon	17. Name of Mother/Father: Jane Lara Ackerman

What is behind pretty much all argument of marriage redefinition as well as the entire [pro-choice movement](#) as a whole is, in two words, “personal fulfillment.” And believe me when I say I am

not particularly against being fulfilled. But in our frenzied and literally orgasmic quest for it, we have, unfortunately very literally, “thrown out the baby with the bath water.”

I heard recently that the argument for marriage redefinition is, in reality, a recognition of the **evolution** of marriage instead. I tend to agree. The issue however is, should it have been evolved in the first place, and who then decided to do the evolving in this case? It is not based this time on natural selection or any [Darwinist](#) theory here either. It is purely the decision of humans, particularly those in powerful societies such as the [United States](#), who have cracked open the retaining walls of societal building blocks such as traditional opposite-gender marriage, and expected no buildings to cave in as a result. And now, as they collapse in droves, we call it “progressive thinking” or some such other stifling drivel.



English: Charles Darwin (1809-1882) in his later years. This image is flipped. Darwin’s mole was on the right side of his nose. (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

One might rightly wonder why I, who happen to be a same-gender attracted and divorced man, feels so strongly on this. Obviously my re-commitment to a more vibrant Catholic Christian Faith has a definite impact on my thinking, but to me it is more than that. I have lived long enough (now 57) to deeply regret the decision I made while yet in my mid-30s to terminate an essentially decent marriage in order to explore a world (LGBT) that gave me lots of pleasure and even more heartache. It did not “fulfill” me to have a steady stream of one-night stands—but instead rather robbed me of my integrity, and only made it all the more an uphill battle when I finally began to understand at age 49 that God had called me to something more needful in my life, and that was a walk with Him, even if the option of earthly romance was not in that equation for me.

I am not suggesting all actively LGBT persons have this experience. I know of many sane and

solid same-gender couples who put heterosexual [marriages](#) in general to shame, and whose love for one another indeed lasts for a lifetime. But even if I had found such love during my actively “gay” years, and a couple of times I came close to doing so, what I soon realized was that, aside from body parts, it would have been no more particularly “fulfilling” than my marriage was anyway. And those beautifully carved and able-bodied men who I ravished in my younger years are now, like me, no longer carrying the youth and beauty I once craved from them sexually. In short I might as well have stayed within the relationship I already had, and realized that fleshly fantasies are exactly that—and that only other-based love, whether sexual or not, actually brings real satisfaction in this life or the next.

But we tend not to accept that line of thinking as young, fairly in-shape 30 something’s. At least some of us do not. And we particularly do not do so as 20s or tweens. We just look for the better career, the nicer house or car, the increasingly exotic ways to prolong life and youthful beauty, and the wideness of the world which we might “miss out” on by being committed to one person of either gender through good times or bad. Then, once society is set up to enable that pattern of mindset by easy divorce, even easier contraception, and, if need be, abortion when that fails, we tend to take advantage of those “outs” and do so to our ultimate sorrow later on in life. Again, I speak for me not others, but I believe my experience is not the uncommon one.

I saw tonight a sarcastic and rather ripping response to the above-referenced article by Mr. Douthat. The link is just below, but the essence of it was the strong implication that he was, in the most basic terms, a hate-monger who was trying to ruin other’s lives by, among other things, forcing women to feel guilty for not using their baby making machinery more effectively for the good of man (and I do mean man!) kind.

<http://www.alternet.org/gender/why-are-conservatives-obsessed-making-women-breed>

The inaccuracies just in that assumption alone are too pervasive to cover in this one post, but suffice it to say I do not think that is what he was suggesting at all. The real point of his well-written article had to do with a much bigger picture in my opinion. Not all women should have babies. But the ones who do should be in stable relationships and be willing to nurture those children. And we need more people, both women and men, to make the choices needed to build strong families once again. And one of those choices is to once again begin strengthening the traditional nuclear opposite-gender family.

Rather than evolution of marriage, might I suggest we need a revolution of sacrificial giving in order to become strong as a nation and world again. And really, that is not so very revolutionary anyway, except to a society that has grown to expect so little of ourselves other than “personal fulfillment.”

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Where Is God? [at A Spiritual Journey]

People see sufferings all around and ask "Where is God?" Suppose that there are no sufferings at all, would they then ask the same question? I doubt it. God came two thousand years ago in person and not all believed in him. If he comes again today in person, would all then believe in him? I doubt it. So, don't ask "Where is God?" again.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2013/02/where-is-god.html>
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7 Myths Singles Must Resist: Myth #5 Attraction Is Physical [at The Veil of Chastity]

Based on the emails I get from you, the myth that **attraction is purely physical** keeps many of you from having confidence in God's plan for your vocation. I struggled with this topic over the last couple weeks because I am trying to prove something that is a *mystery*. Attraction is a mystery. But, I also believe it to be supernatural and not all things that are supernatural are impossible to prove. They are difficult to prove, but not impossible.

The approach I am using to bust this myth includes the profound insights from Blessed Pope John Paul II regarding human love and sexuality. Here is a little primer on the approach and then I will tie it to my own personal experience.

You Are A Person

*“The essential **reason** for choosing a person must be **personal**, not merely sexual. Life will determine the value of a choice and the value and true **magnitude** of love. It is put to the test most severely when the sensual and emotional reactions themselves grow **weaker**, and sexual values as such **lose their effect**. Nothing then remains except the value of the **person**, and the **inner truth** about the love of those connected comes to light. If their love is a **true gift of self**, so that they belong to the other, it will not only survive but **grow stronger**, and sink **deeper** roots. Whereas if it was never more than a synchronization of sensual and emotional experiences it will **lose its raison d’être** [reason for existence] and the person involved in it will **suddenly** find themselves in a **vacuum**.”*

Blessed Pope John Paul II

In very simplistic terms, Blessed Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* distinguishes between the “gift of self” (chaste marital sexual love) and lust (to use). [Chastity](#) is the virtue that fights against lust and allows for the **gift of self**. The gift of self can only be realized when we understand which “self” we are referring to. The ‘self’ is a person and that person is you. You are the gift.

You, the human person, are both body and soul and this true gift of self requires the **integration** of your body and your soul. The challenge is to bring these two aspects of yourself together. In addition, you must fight against the forces of darkness which are always at work to build a chasm between your body and your soul. To be holy means to be made “whole” and the integration process, through the power of grace, makes us whole.



Disharmony

As a single girl I did not understand the amount of disharmony there was between my body and my soul. I fell into the trap of emphasizing my body and allowed society (and myself) to distort and disconnect my body from my soul. My guess is that this is happening to you. We are living in a time where the body and the soul are more disconnected than in any other time in history.

But this disconnect and disharmony is nothing new. As a result of the Fall of Man, the relationship between our body and our soul is in constant **tension**. Because Man revolted against God, the body started to revolt against the soul. Now, the body no longer obeys the dictates of the soul. Our struggle is to find harmony and the only way to do this is through Chastity and a Sacramental life in Christ.

You may be asking, “*What does this have to do with my vocation?*” Dr. Alice von Hildebrand teaches that marriages are going to pieces and collapsing because, unless there is harmony between our body and our soul, it is almost **impossible for us to properly relate to the opposite sex**. I believe this to also be true in the dating world. The disharmony is not only leading to divorce, it is causing [delayed and missed marriage vocations](#).

My Story

As a single girl, I struggled with common girl issues like body image. I was also in need of girl-type healing. You know, the type of healing associated with a poor understanding of our bodies. I was riddled with negative messages resulting in a negative relationship with food and a poor body image. In other words, I, as a person, was disconnected. And this led me to focus on this aspect of myself. Because I was focusing on my physical body, I was attracting guys who had the same focus. Thankfully, my commitment to Chastity kept me from being used.

I am also ashamed to admit that I was attracted to and attracting very good-looking guys. As it teaches us in *Isaiah 6: What you revere, you resemble; you become what you worship*. Because I focused on the physical for myself and the guys I dated, my results yielded only the physical. I experienced that **vacuum** in my relationships that John Paul II refers to above.

Once I started living a Sacramental life and committed whole heartily to Chastity, my body and my soul began to merge. It was undetectable at the time, but looking back, I can see the healing proof. Once I took the focus off of the physical and allowed the Lord to integrate my body and my soul, I was able to love and be loved as a person, body and soul. And, in God’s perfect timing, I met Gregg.

I am not saying that I was merged completely when I met Gregg. In fact, with God's grace, I am still being merged. But, the process needed to at least start so that I could be loved as a whole person and learn how to love a whole person.

What You Can Do

What I have presented so far is pretty deep stuff so I will stop here. Next week I will tie all this together with Chastity, [Superabundance](#), [The Veil](#) and specific advice to help **[merge your body and soul](#)** (posted 2/28/13). In two weeks [Gregg will share his perspective on attraction from a guy's point of view!](#)

In the meantime, please go back and read the above profound and beautiful words by Blessed Pope John Paul II again. Have you experienced this vacuum in your relationships? Are you allowing too much focus on your body and is this keeping you in bondage? Think about what you are focusing on. What do you revere? You remain in my prayers.

God love and bless you!

This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2013/02/14/7-myths-singles-must-resist-myth-5-attraction-is-physical/>
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Before & After My Conversion - Follow Up to SiriusXM Radio 129 Interview [at TASTE and SEE]



I was on "[Seize the Day](#)" radio show today to talk about [my conversion/reversion back to the Catholic Faith](#). The show is on [The Catholic Channel](#) on SiriusXM Channel 129. My talk has been posted on the Internet, but you have to have a Free Trial membership or a subscription. Feel free to write to me if you want to access the recording and I will send the directions. You know how it is. You always forget or miss an important part of the message you want to convey when you talk publicly. Well, that happened to me this morning. Soon after the interview ended, I realized I did not bring out my Before & After Conversion/Reversion snippets. Then I remembered I have a blog! Thanks be to God. Here they are. God truly works wonders.

Before I had the Faith, I shouted for the right to have an abortion if that is what I wanted. **After I had the Faith**, I went to, and continue to go to, [Eucharistic Adoration for an End to All Abortion](#). **Before I had the Faith**, I shouted for the right to have an abortion if that is what I wanted. **After I had the Faith**, I founded and held the St. Gerard Walkathon five times to raise \$17,000 to help pregnant girls and women in need. The money went to [a local shelter for women facing crisis pregnancies](#) and to the local [Birthright](#) crisis pregnancy counseling center. **Before I had the Faith**, and I was growing up, I made fun of my aunt and uncle for their display of Christian items in their home. **After I had the Faith**, I display many of the same items in my home, such that when the furniture delivery man dropped off an end table, he asked me if I was a Catholic Sister.

Before I had the Faith, I shunned the Pope for what I perceived to be his controlling and oppressive authority.

After I had the Faith, I breathe a sigh of relief that the Pope is guiding me and the whole Church in a trustworthy fashion founded on Jesus Christ. I do not have to figure everything out myself anymore, which was certainly not trustworthy.

Before I had the Faith, I could not integrate and move on after my father's suicide.

After I had the Faith, I pray for the salvation of his soul, I visit his grave site, and now, I am [writing a book](#) about [my experiences](#) with that aspect of my life.

Before I had the Faith, I believed women should have the opportunity to become priests.**After I had the Faith**, I wrote a newspaper and magazine article entitled, [A Woman In Support of the All-Male Priesthood](#).

Before I had the Faith, I shouted for my right to have premarital sex and to use artificial contraception.**After I had the Faith**, I wrote about living a life of [chastity before marriage](#), as well as [within marriage](#). It does not include artificial contraception, but suggests Natural Family Planning via the Crieghton Model FertilityCare System.**Before I had the Faith**, I complained about having to go to Mass and I even stopped going.**After I had the Faith**, I go regularly to Sunday Mass, I also go to Daily Mass when I can, and, I attend the Eastern Catholic Melkite Sunday Divine Liturgy and other services as well. God is so good. I love all of [Catholicism, East and West](#).

image - source unknown

This contribution is available at <http://www.tasteandsee2.blogspot.com/2013/02/before-after-my-conversion-follow-up-to.html>

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Embracing Our Vocations: The Key to Joy [at A Dreamer's Wife]



Image courtesy of Stuart Miles/FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Sometimes pursuing dreams can be selfish.

We may be so focused on achieving what we want to accomplish so that we can make more money, be recognized, feel valued, etc., that we risk damaging relationships and destroying our faith.

So, how do we know when our dreams are good or when they are detrimental to us or others? I think the answer comes when we take a look at **what it means to have a vocation.**

The past few days especially, I have been thinking about this quite a bit. It's been a consistent topic of conversation between my husband and me as we navigate what God is calling us to do. And guess what? I received a newsletter from DynamicCatholic.com this past Saturday with a [special message from Matthew Kelly](#) regarding this exact thing. Here is what he wrote:

The Peace and Joy of Unique Ability

A few nights ago my little girl, Isabel, came into my office at home after her bath. With a huge smile, she walked over, grabbed my phone, held it to her ear, and said, "Call me, daddy!" I played along for a few minutes and then she came over, got up into my lap, buried her head in my chest and gave me a big hug. It was one of those times when I was able to be completely in the moment... and I was happy.

If I think back a few years, I was not so happy. I wasn't unhappy. I loved my work, but something was missing. I didn't have the deep peace and joy I have today. What was missing? Vocation. We talk a lot about it, but too often our talk is sterile and dispassionate. But vocation really is a thing of beauty. It is that thing that helps us make sense of everything. It is the feeling of finally being at home in our own lives. It is that place where your unique ability explodes usefully. It is the thing of great worth.

It also requires tremendous work.

How are you doing with your vocation? This Lent, I would like to encourage you to either search more rigorously for your vocation or give your vocation another look and recommit to it. Take it to the next level.

The world and the Church need more people who love life and live it with passion and purpose. Vocation animates us – brings us to life. Vocation fills us with a peace and joy that is immeasurable if we embrace and dedicate ourselves to our call.

Pretty powerful stuff! Being an involved parent and spouse requires a lot of sacrifice, but it is also extremely fulfilling! This is exactly why my husband Adam tells people that he is the happiest that he's ever been! I'm sure the same can be said for anyone who has responded to God's call for their life. This is where we find our purpose, passion, and as Matthew Kelly stated, "peace and joy."

Maybe, though, you are still saying "What is a vocation or how do I know what my vocation is?" I did a quick little Google search to find a definition and stumbled upon the website Vocation.com. While it is geared to those contemplating religious life, I found a great little article worth sharing titled, [Is it a vocation or a job or a profession?](#) Below are a few paragraphs...

[...] when we use the word vocation we introduce a vertical dimension into our life, especially into our thinking process and decisions, since the point of reference when we talk about vocation is God's will – what we believe he is calling us to do with our life, the purpose for which he created us as it relates to the salvation of our own soul and the salvation of others. So a vocation is not something you switch out of on a whim, since it is not something you go into lightly. In following a vocation the main question is: What does God want? and not: What do I prefer? So it would be a major mistake to approach a vocation to the priestly or consecrated life, or to marriage, thinking only of ourselves and not being willing to commit ourselves to it, "for better or for worse" because we know God wants us to see it through.

And so, if there is ever a conflict between our profession and our vocation, it is always the vocation that has to win. A married person who knows that a career opportunity that opens up to him will most probably destroy his marriage must opt for his marriage vocation even if the price is his career. A baptized doctor who risks losing his license if he refuses to do certain immoral procedures will follow his Christian vocation and even at the cost of his medical

career. A priest who is a great success in a particular field of ministry and is asked by his bishop to serve in a different area must follow his priestly vocation which includes obedience to his bishop, rather than his “success” in a particular field.

I think the key when evaluating our dreams, is to always be sure that our aspirations are under the umbrella of our vocation. Just as the article above mentions, if our goals are at the expense of living out our vocation, then they must be abandoned or reconstructed.

For us personally, the re-working of goals is why many of you may have been wondering why Adam’s website isn’t up yet or why we haven’t been promoting any new songs. In addition to a lack of ample time, we have been going through a process of identifying priorities, finding nuggets of truth and wisdom, and assessing how everything fits in with our vocation of helping each other get to heaven and raising holy children. I firmly believe that God wants to use Adam’s musical talents to reach people, but just how that all is going to happen is still in the works! I have already seen how much grace and peace he has given us especially in the past year, so even though the road ahead is a mystery, I have no doubt that we are on the right path.

When we stop trying to do things our own way and embrace God’s plan for our life, we will find true joy that is unattainable anywhere else!

This contribution is available at <http://adreamerswife.com/2013/02/08/embracing-our-vocations-the-key-to-joy/>
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The Idols I Worship- Part 4 [at City of God]



To read the first 3 posts in this series click here:

[Part 1](#)

,

[Part 2](#)

,

[Part 3](#)

So... where was I? Oh yeah-- putting other things before God.

Immediately after my initial conversion experience I fought hard to keep God at the center of my life. But at some point I grew very comfortable in my relationship w/ Him and very slowly other things became more important. Mainly my family, my children, and my desire for wanting more children.

These things of themselves are not bad things. Actually, they are very good things to desire and cherish. However, I think I began to put them before the Lord. To idolize them.

It took losing my own child for me to realize this.... and even then I didn't realize it right away. Only after months of deep sadness and longing for Max was I at a point where I could even attempt to see my disordered view of things.

These days I am back to fighting hard to keep God at the center of my life. I am not in a comfortable place where other things can slip into my top priority slot. I think this is a good thing. Jack and I think about having more children and discuss it often. But I am always in check. It is not

something I am willing to put before God again. If He opens the doors for us to have more children then we are all in. But I am having to let go of trying to control that dream. I have a beautiful family that I have been dearly blessed w/. I am enjoying every minute of time I have w/ them. I cannot sit a hope for some "dream family" when I really have a dream family already. And no matter how wonderful my family is I must not elevate them to a status that comes before the Lord. Nor do I want to. My hope needs to lie in God alone.

Thank you for taking the time to read over here in my little corner of the Internet. I am just sharing my heart and my struggles. Every time I have an epiphany like this I realize that I have so much left to learn. Writing all of this out has really helped me to document my journey as a Mother and as a Christian.

I leave you w/ a quote that is quite popular right now. And it's no wonder it is so well-known and used... it is so true. It is a quote I have kept close to my heart over the past few years as I have learned (once again) to keep God first in my life.

***Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things are passing away:
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.***

-- St. Teresa of Avila

This contribution is available at <http://letusbuildthecityofgod.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-idols-i-worship-part-4.html>
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What Should I Give Up for Lent: 20 Options [at A Catholic Life]



Our Lord tells us, as recorded in Scripture, "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). And St. John the Baptist announced the coming of the Saviour with the ominous admonition, "Do penance: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2).

With regard to prayer, St. Paul tells us to "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17). And Our dear Lord advises us, "Amen, amen I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you." (John 16:23). Also He said, "If you abide in me [i.e., "live in Me," or "stay in the state of grace"], and my words abide ["live"] in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7). Further, Our Lord has said, "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:36). And in the Book of Judith we read, "Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord." (Judith 4:11).

Our obligation to do apostolic work, no matter who we are, is seen in the general admonition of St. John the Baptist, ". . .make straight the way of the Lord . . ." (In. 1:23; Is. 40:3). The Church has used this counsel in her Advent liturgy, so we know it applies to all—at least to the extent that all must pray and do penance for the success of the Church's missionary activity, help support it financially—and wherever possible take an active part in the conversion or reconversion of those we know.

The primary purpose of Lent, of course, is to help us become truly holy—and we should work toward this goal during Lent by extra prayer, penance, good works, almsgiving, attendance at Mass and reception of the Sacraments (the chief sources of grace).

As such, let us consider the following

20 PIOUS PRACTICES FOR CATHOLICS TO PRACTICE DURING LENT:

1.

Abstain from Meat

We should all know that Catholics are required to abstain from all meat on Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, and all the Fridays of Lent. This is the minimum requirement and violation of this law is a mortal sin and, if you die without Confession and Contrition, for this sin your soul will be damned.

Yet, certainly we can do more than the simple minimum practice for Lent? Traditional Catholics will still fast and partially abstain from meat on all weekdays of Lent unless a 1st Class Feast falls during the week (e.g. 1st Class Feast of St. Joseph on March 19). By partial abstinence, a person is allowed to eat meat only at the major meal.

2. Fasting

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, all Catholics are bound under pain of mortal sin to fast. Those between 18 and 59 years of age (Can. 1252), are also bound to fast on these two days . Only one normal-sized meal and two smaller meals that do not equal the normal meal are allowed. Eating between meals, however, is prohibited although fruit juices and milk are allowed. This is the minimum under the current Code of Canon Law.

What should a traditional, pious Catholic do? All days of Lent but Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and 1st Class Feasts are days for us to fast and partially abstain from meat. If you fast all of these days, you will have fasted the 40 Days of Lent, as Christ did in the desert.

[See laws of fasting and abstinence for more information.](#)3. Limit (i.e. Remove) your Television During Lent

Even if you have not read

Television: The Soul at Risk

(

[and I do highly recommend it](#)

), the television is by most accounts, an occasion of sin. Limit your television to only a few hours a day for your entire family or - better yet - unplug it all together. Television is a passive activity not only leading to obesity and passivity but allowing indecent speech and dress as well as suggestive dialogue and environments into our very hopes. Unplug it for Lent. And think about

keeping it unplugged afterward.

4. Daily Rosary

If you are not praying the daily Rosary, you should be. Our Lady appeared to three shepherd children in Fatima. These three shepherd children were given messages and a miracle was even performed there that was witnessed by thousands. In the miracle on Oct 13, 1917, the sun danced, changed colors, and was hurled towards earth as if to destroy it. The sun then rose again in its original position. This event was witnessed by 70,000 thousands of people! It's been called, the

[Miracle of the Sun](#)

Before this on May 13, 1917, Our Lady told the 3 children (Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco): "Say the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war." In an apparition on July 13, she requested devotion to her Immaculate Heart and Communions of reparation on the first Saturday of each month. In a September 13th apparition, she stressed the importance of the daily Rosary, and in her final apparition, she said, "I am the Lady of the Rosary."

So

[pray the Rosary daily](#)

- and use Lent to start if you need to.

5. Wear the Brown Scapular

First, if you were not traditionally invested in the Brown Scapular (or if you are uncertain),

[find a traditional Catholic priest](#)

to be properly enrolled in the Confraternity of the Brown Scapular. Recall that by the wearing of the Brown Scapular, Mary promises to pray for us at the hour of death. And more than that - intercede with God to obtain the graces we need to remain in the state of grace. And if we are in a state of mortal sin, she will intercede for us that sanctifying grace may come back into our soul before we die. Mary also promises that the Scapular will be "a safeguard in danger." Those are the two promises by Mary for those that wear the Scapular.

While those who wear the Scapular are required to fast on Wednesdays and Saturdays in addition to the daily prayer of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, priests nearly always dispense the Faithful to instead simply pray the Rosary Daily (See #4).

If you lost your Brown Scapular,

[simply purchase one online](#)

. The Brown Scapular does not have to be blessed before it is worn, unlike most Sacramentals.

6. Saturday Devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary

If you don't already, set aside the First Saturday of March (which this year falls during Lent) as a time for special reparation and prayers to the Mother of God. See the post

[Saturday Devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)

for more ideas on how to sanctify this day.

7. Go to an extra Mass or more each week of Lent. [The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the greatest prayer there is.](#) **8. Add** a Holy Hour, once a week, twice a week, or each day.

"If we really loved the good God, we should make it our joy and happiness to come and spend a few moments to adore Him, and ask Him for the grace of forgiveness; and we should regard those moments as the happiest of our lives." - St. John Vianney

(on Adoration of Jesus in the Most the Blessed Sacrament)

"

Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us." - St. Alphonsus Liguori

9. Pray for the [Souls in Purgatory](#)

We have an obligation to pray for our relatives and for anyone we may have harmed by our sins. A Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament after Mass is extremely efficacious for the Poor Souls and can lead to the gaining of a plenary indulgence—all other conditions for this being fulfilled.

We should pray fervently and frequently for the souls in Purgatory. Start by adding the St. Gertrude Prayer to your daily prayers

"ETERNAL FATHER, I OFFER THEE THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD OF THY DIVINE SON, JESUS, IN UNION WITH THE MASSES SAID THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TODAY, FOR ALL THE HOLY SOULS IN PURGATORY, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal Church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen."

Our Lord told St. Gertrude the Great that 1,000 souls would be released from Purgatory every time this is said! This prayer has now even been "extended to living sinners which would alleviate the indebtedness accrued to them during their lives."

Additionally, it should be widely promoted for the Faithful to ask the clergy to offer the

[Holy Sacrifice of the Mass](#)

with the intention of freeing the souls in Purgatory. Many souls are released from Purgatory by the graces from the Mass. Furthermore, we should seek to gain

[Indulgences](#)

for the souls in Purgatory. The easiest way to do this is by obtaining an Enrichion of Indulgences which lists the indulgenced prayers and the conditions for obtaining the indulgence.

Furthermore, the souls in Purgatory are greatly aided when we offer our Holy Communions for them. Make it a practice to offer your Holy Communion at least once weekly for the souls in Purgatory.

In the past I have reflected on

[Praying the Stations of the Cross](#)

- which also

[happen to have indulgences attached to them](#)

- and at this time I would also encourage you to pray the Stations for the souls in Purgatory. Similarly, through almsgiving, penance, and fasting done with the intention of freeing souls in Purgatory, we can directly help the suffering souls in the Church Suffering. And these souls, when freed from their purgation, shall certainly pray without ceasing for our salvation.

10. Pray for those in Danger of Dying Such prayers should be offered to Our Lady to apply as she desires, for she sees clearly who really needs the extra graces at any given time. **11. Pray for anyone you may have had the misfortune to lead into sin.** Not only should you make [prayers of reparation](#), but you must seek out these souls and seek to repair the damage. Lent is an opportune time for this. **12. Prayer for the End of Abortion**

"From its conception, the child has the right to life. Direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, is a 'criminal' practice (GS 27 # 3), gravely contrary to the moral law. The Church imposes the canonical penalty of excommunication for this crime against human life."

MEMENTO, HOMO, QUIA PULVIS ES, ET IN PULVEREM REVERTERIS.



ASH WEDNESDAY

<https://www.facebook.com/our.guest.guide>

13. Go to Weekly Confession [Confession is the only means that our Lord instituted for the forgiveness of sins](#)

14. Make an Examination of Conscience at Lunch and before Sleep

As recommended in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, make your

[examination of conscience](#)

at lunch and then again before sleep. At lunch, reflect on your words, thoughts, and deeds (or lack thereof) for each hour of the day up until then. If you have sinned, make a sincere Act of Contrition. Remember to confess these sins at your next Confession. In the evening, again make an examination of conscience on each hour of the day starting with lunch until the present moment.

15. Make Voluntary acts of Daily Penance To Sr. Lucy of Fatima, Our Lord revealed that "The penance I now ask and require is that necessary for the fulfillment of My law and the performance of one's daily duties." **16. Perform Good Works of Mercy**- Increase your donation at Church.

- Give to [traditional monasteries and convents](#).

- [Support good traditional Catholic schools](#).

- Support crisis pregnancy centers.

- Support local soup kitchens.

- Help those who are poor.

17. Do Apostolic Work- Take someone to Mass with you.

- Take someone to Confession with you.

- Invite someone to become a Catholic—start talking to him about it. [Buy him access to an online education course to instruct him in the teachings of the Faith](#). - Get a priest to visit a fallen-away Catholic, especially an elderly one.

- Distribute Catholic books and booklets. A [list of recommended books is available here](#). **18.**

Perform 15 minutes of Spiritual Reading Daily

[Read from the Bible Daily](#) or the [Lives of the Saints](#). Or, check out my list of [Recommended](#)

[Books for Lent.](#)

19. Consecrate Your Life Each Day to God

Each day of Lent, pray and renew both your [Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus](#) and your [Dedication to the Blessed Virgin Mary](#).

20. Talk as Little as Possible

Vain speech is of little avail for the eternal life. During Lent, mirror the practices of the religious orders and speak only when necessary. As said in the [Rule of St. Benedict](#), "Indeed, so important is silence that permission to speak should seldom be granted even to mature disciples, no matter how good or holy or constructive their talk, because it is written: *In a flood of words you will not avoid sin* (Prov 10:19); and elsewhere, *The tongue holds the key to life and death* (Prov 18:21). Speaking and teaching are the master's task; the disciple is to be silent and listen"

Conclusion

As you can see none of these practices included "giving up" candy, chocolate, dessert, et cetera. There is a modern misconception that Lent is about dieting or about "giving up" time wasters in order to increase in productivity. This is not further from the Truth. For those of you out there who think Lent is about getting in shape and increasing efficient, "you have received your rewards" (cf. Matthew 6:5) and the discipline of Lent has done little to help your immortal soul. So join me in sharing, bookmarking, and passing along these lists to your friend, relative and contacts. Let us make this Lent one of mortification for the honor and glory of Almighty God and for the salvation of our souls.

This contribution is available at <http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2013/02/what-should-i-give-up-for-lent-20.html>

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Becoming someone more.... [at A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars]

This year has been a wonderful and humbling year in my faith walk. As everyone in the world knows by now, I earned a master certificate as a catechist in the Catholic Church a few years ago. Struggling with what and where to use my knowledge, I lectured at different parishes in the diocese and facilitated a few book discussions and substituted for the high school theology teacher and the confirmation classes at the parish while continuing to write here on the "Pillars." Finally, I received the assignment to teach regularly the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) program for both the adults and the children needing to be baptized. During this time, I have attended workshops and lectures on this process.....er journey and learned much about what is expected of me.

What a journey it is! As the catechist for these delightful adults and children, it is humbling to be responsible for bringing Jesus and His teachings to them. If Peter can do it, so can I. Of course, his teacher was none other than Christ Himself, and he was able to lay eyes on Him, touch Him, and know Him in such a real tangible way that gave Peter no doubt whatsoever. Faith, the gift from God is giving this to me.

Where else would I go? To Whom would I turn? What else is equally real and eternal? As Peter asked, so I ask as well.

This gift of faith in God; the Blessed Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is what I must share and pass on to others. It is my mission to join in on the journey of life sharing Christ's love and teachings to all who will listen.

But, I need to ask for help as in a previous post on the "Pillars" are [you tending the garden](#) as well? Please be part of this journey with me by praying for these candidates and Elects while they continue to learn Church teachings, experience conversion, and anticipate reception of the sacraments. Both they and their catechists need your prayers now more than ever during this time of enlightenment and final preparation.

Welcome these excited people when you see them and let them know you are there for them and praying for them. This is a very exciting time for them AND the Church, indeed! So become someone more; become an advocate for those in the RCIA programs around the world.

This contribution is available at <http://acatholicmumclimbingthepillars.blogspot.com/2013/02/becoming-someone-more.html>

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Convicted for the Millionth Time [at Martin Family Moments]

I am so dense and God is so patient. Apparently I need big Aha! moments to hear God speaking to me.

That happened at Mass today. Alexander was actually being quiet for five minutes as we stuffed his mouth full of oyster crackers and I was able to hear the whole second reading:

Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us.

For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Their end is destruction.

Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame."

Their minds are occupied with earthly things.

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

Most people probably tend to focus on the glorified body part of this reading, as I usually do. But today, the parts that seemed as if they were shouted at me were "**Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame". Their minds are occupied with earthly things.**"

You guys, I am the "their".



Aha!!!!!!!!!!

Tomorrow is my birthday, and while I enjoy feeling loved and having a special day, I really have a hard time with getting older. I will be 34 years old, but more than that, I will have a 10 year old son.

I gave birth to John-Paul on my 24th birthday, induced a month early and because my gallbladder needed to be removed. After 8 months of sickness and terrible pain, the doctors finally figured out the problem. John-Paul was deemed big enough to be born, and since I couldn't keep any food or water down at the end, the best plan of action was to deliver him early.

My labor lasted 36 long hours and it wasn't until his head was crowning that I realized he and I would share a birthday. What a gift! I was such a young girl to become a mother at 24, but it was all I ever wanted.

My body bounced back quickly after the labor and surgery (thank God for youth), but it was never the same. I had a scar from the incision to remove the gallbladder and three small scars where they had inserted the other instruments to do the

[laparoscopic procedure](#)

. I also had stretch marks and loose skin from the pregnancy.

Phil says my stretch marks are battle wounds that I proudly won when my body held and delivered

5 gorgeous babies, and I know he's right, but my struggle to look "good" started to overwhelm me. Having four babies in five years didn't help the situation, and while I never developed any sort of eating disorder (through God's graces) I did focus way too much on my belly. I've never worn a bikini in my life, and I never will, but I wanted to be able to wear pants without the dreaded muffin top. I get discouraged by the models and actresses who become mommies but still look like girls.

The older I've gotten and matured (I hope) I realized that the importance of exercise for me was more of a mental health benefit than a physical health benefit. I honestly do workout to be healthy and get rid of stress and anxiety. But I do not enjoy getting older or seeing more wrinkles in the reflection squinting back at me. I put too much thought and effort into wanting to be a certain size or fit into my old clothes. So every once in a while, I use an excuse (like Lent) to drop weight. This Lent we gave up sweets and started eating less gluten and more veggies. As I stepped on the scale each morning, I realized the thrill of losing pounds was the real reason I was eating this way. I wasn't giving glory to God. I wasn't sacrificing something good to bring me closer to Jesus Christ at all. I was on a diet disguised as a Lenten sacrifice.

There is nothing wrong with someone (healthfully) dieting to lose weight or someone (honestly) working out to get in shape, but when vanities and pride get the better of me, I need a big Aha! moment to see it.

The other morning I was in the bathroom about to take a shower and had to force myself not to step on the scale. But as soon as that shower was done, I couldn't resist the temptation and had to see the numbers.



Step away from the scale.

I told Phil, if I am truly going to sacrifice sweets and pleasurable food for Lent for the right reasons, then we needed to hide the scale until Easter. Or maybe forever. God was already starting to work on my heart, and then the second reading today just confirmed it.

If only there was a soul-scale where I could see how I measured up in God's eyes and keep my focus on improving that number! But God doesn't work like that. He doesn't care how much I weigh or how far I run. He cares about my soul. I may never get that glorified pre-baby body back, but I will get a glorified body *for all of eternity* if only I can live my life in such a way to get to Heaven.

Colleen

This contribution is available at <http://martinfamilymoments.blogspot.com/2013/02/convicted-for-millionth-time.html>

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Pieces of the heart [at Rediscovering Glory]

I love when people share a part of their heart with me. It makes such a huge difference in the way I relate to them. It makes it easy to relate to people.

When I am struggling with something it helps me so so much when people share a part of their experiences and heart with me. It means that people are

authentic

and it is something that is really missing in this world. But I realize that a lot of time before we can share a part of our hearts with each other they must first be fragmented and broken.

We share out of our brokenness and out of our vulnerability and that is when we are really authentic and real. Because all of the guards are down...we are reaching out from our brokenness because we need help. In order to be approachable we must first share a part of ourselves.

For me, personally I trust the people who are vulnerable with me because then I can be vulnerable with them. This helps us to really be authentic people.

Today I was thinking about how social media sometimes stops us from being authentic. I can post certain things on facebook and twitter, etc. to make me look a certain way. I can post all the pictures where I am smiling...and everything happy that happens to me. While I share none of the bad. This is not a bad thing in fact I think it is a good thing to have those parts of your life not visible to everyone you know and to the whole world.

But I feel that there is more of an opportunity to be really authentic in the blogging world. I really love blogging and I think it helps us to be authentic by encouraging us share pieces of our hearts with others. Even if we are sharing with people we do not know outside of the internet. We are still learning to be open and to be authentic.

I doubt that anyone would take the time to write an entire blog post just to fool people into looking at them a certain way. It is far easier to share parts of our hearts on blogs because that is what we are passionate about. Maybe it can even help us to be more authentic in our daily lives. I really do not know. But we need to be authentic.

We cannot make our lives a lie without suffering some horrible effects, including mental disintegration. In the book

The Midnight Dancers

by Regina Doman she talks about this. In the book this double lifestyle is conquered by people being honest and real, by people being authentic. The most important way that they do that is by being vulnerable and sharing pieces of their hearts-even when that is difficult.

Okay, it is

always

difficult for me to share pieces of myself with others. So if you have any tips on being more authentic please share them with me! :) I would appreciate any thoughts and comments about this.

This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.com/2013/02/pieces-of-heart.html>
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Tu es Petrus [at One Arrow Alone]

On the feast of the Chair of St. Peter (*Cathedra S. Petri*), and surrounded by the buzz about the upcoming resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, I would like to offer a few words on the subject. And what a subject he is!

I am a Catholic of the ‘Benedictine generation’. This is true on a chronological level: I was received into the Church when he had been reigning for three years. It is also true on a personal level: our Pope’s humility, shyness, patristic exegesis and academic clarity greatly appeal to me, as does his concern for the soul and structure of Europe.

So, on the one hand, I am sad that he is leaving. On the other hand, I admire him for it and I am happy for him. Besides, the idea of the quiet Pope, having accepted, fulfilled and renounced his duties all in due time, and now ending his life in monastic peace, reading and praying, should appeal to our religious sense of aesthetics. It reminds me of nothing so much as Bilbo Baggins, who was not destined to carry the Ring to the Fire and ‘the End of All Things’.

It is beautiful to see the precedent of Pope Celestine V thus transposed to the busy 21st century, which, notwithstanding its garrulous streams of commentary, has probably been touched somewhere deep by this unexpected news. (And this style of saying farewell, too, reminds me of Bilbo Baggins.)

I salute His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, with the words of Galadriel:

Namárië! Nai hiruvalyë Valimar.

Nai elyë hiruva. Namárië!

This contribution is available at <http://turgonian.blogspot.nl/2013/02/tu-es-petrus.html>
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The First Sunday of Lent: Temptation in the Desert [at Journey to Wisdom]

I love Pope Benedict! I love his books on

Jesus of Nazareth

. It is in my reading of His first book in the series (from the baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration) that I have based this reflection on, and the quotes were taken from that book.

On the

[First Sunday of Lent](#)

we read in the Gospel of Luke of how Jesus was led into the desert for forty days to be tempted by the devil.



Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil.

He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live on bread alone'." Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.'" Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, ***"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you', and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"*** Jesus said to him in reply, ***"It also says, "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test." When the devil had finished every temptation he departed from him for a time." Luke 4:1-13***

What is the central temptation here? Pope Benedict XVI states that it is the temptation to "push God aside as secondary, if not actually superfluous and annoying, in comparison with all the apparently far more urgent matters that fill our lives."(pg. 28) We are tempted to see the realities of our world as more real than our relationship with God. And this puts all of our actions on a shaky foundation, disordering even out best intentions.

With this in mind I remember a time when I was driving home from church with my son Stephen and we ended up behind someone with the bumper sticker: Coexist. Nice, it sounds good and accepting...except in my opinion, it is one of the most disingenuous bumper stickers out there. It is a devilish trick indeed to appeal to our natural desire for unity, and to do it by making faith take a back seat to the goal of unity. The other bumper sticker on this young lady's car proved my sense to be true. It said: "While you are at church, I am out doing good things." So, in fact, Coexist is not some statement about being kind and accepting of different creeds, but a statement that religion, in general, and Christianity specifically, is just one big childish distraction that needs the "real world" grownups to admonish them to all play nice and get along so that good things can be done.

The feeling that faith in God is superfluous to serving mankind is a growing attitude. And even among practicing Christians the temptation to pull bits of Scripture out of the Bible and separate it from its source (GOD!) is strong. (And to be fair to Coexist, her philosophy becomes all the more acceptable because of this.) However, this undermines the strength of our faith and thus the strength of our compassion. If you think that keeping the lines about feeding the hungry and clothing the naked from the Bible is fine, but don't care if we lose those passages about loving the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength, especially when loving God is equated with following His commands, you are not terribly far off from Coexist's take that faith and worship undermine good works. Is this not the temptation to push aside faith and worship for more "real" concerns?

The reality is quite the opposite, as we see with Jesus in His temptations. When Jesus goes into the desert He does so in obedience to the Spirit, in a continuation of His baptism. He enters into a time of intensive prayer and fasting in which He seeks to draw His strength and His love from the Father. Now He enters into our temptations to push God away. These temptations to push God away crop up for a number of reasons; because we can't fix everything, because we suffer and others also suffer, because we desire to be in control of our own destinies and be assured that all will be well. Jesus endures His temptation under great physical stress, He shares, in a way, our weaknesses. He is showing me that my only hope in resisting "the delusions of false philosophies" is to recognize that we do not live by bread alone, "but first and foremost by obedience to God's word." (pg. 34) An obedience that leads to the love of God abiding in me

. *"Whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him."* 1 Jn 2:5

I can imagine very good reasons for giving into the temptations that are presented to Jesus; taking care of bodily needs is good, having a just man in power is good, being able to have faith in the Lord's protection is good. But in all these actions the devil is tempting Jesus (and me, every day in some way) to become my own god, to decide for myself what God would do, and to demand that He do it. The devil does not want me to submit my desires and actions to prayer and to the commandments first. He does not want me to grow trust in Him through times of suffering. He does not want me to learn to know the Lord, through prayer, through His living word and through obedience to His commands. He wants me to relativize His word, so it is abstract, distant and His commandments are malleable.

If we do not really take to heart what Christ is doing when He refuses to turn a stone into bread to feed what must have been a profound hunger, when He refuses to assume earthly political power, or when He refuses to put God to the test, we also are at risk for allowing the reality of God, and of His Son recede into the abstract. And with our faith simply an idea or a concept, we are susceptible to the tyranny of moral relativism, which saps our moral strength. And when we lose our moral strength the good that we seek to do becomes perverted into something that in the end is so much more harmful. This is where we become enslaved to "compassionate solutions" like abortion for unwanted pregnancies....because we do not have the moral fortitude to teach virtue. Because we do not have the enduring love of God in us to help us to suffer with and through these situations, which are often messy and painful all the way around.

We cannot love and serve or even coexist with others with the supernatural strength it takes in this world without the love of God in our hearts. And it is in prayerful listening and obeying God's commands that leads to a relationship with him which places His love in our hearts. When we can act with that foundation of love, we can truly serve the "urgent matters" that present themselves with true integrity and authentic compassion. It is not easy to resist the temptation to push God to the side, let us all pray for one another to keep God at the center of all that we do.

Peace and Grace of Christ to all!

Heidi

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-first-sunday-of-lent-temptation-in.html>

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10 Tips for Fine Tuning your Media Antennas [at Written By the Finger of God]

Thanks, Annabelle. I like your litmus test - short and to the point.

Hey, just thought I would let you know I received my medals! Thank you so much they are wonderful. Got my priest to bless them :)

Everyone's got a story... but none of them are edited, lol. I know that I often fail to do the simple litmus test. Thankfully, I've at least gotten pretty good at it with regards to movies!

Anyway, I nominated you for a "Liebster Award". If you'd like to accept and participate, check it out here: <http://animakinsi.blogspot.com/2013/02/liebster-fever.html>

Hope you're doing great! :-)

Ha ha ha we have stories but they're not edited..

This contribution is available at http://anabellehazard.blogspot.com/2013/02/10-tips-for-fine-tuning-your-media_21.html

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Reflection on Philippians 4:10-13 (with video of Bella leading the rosary) [at Andrew and Julie's Adoption Story!]

Philippians 4:10-13 "I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have received your concern for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need, for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what is to have little, and I know what is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

"Poor Me" by Antoinette Bosco (as written in Catholic Women's Devotional Bible)

"I've noticed there are a lot of people walking around with a "poor me" complex, wearing self-pity like a second skin.

There was Regina. Every sentence she uttered was prefaced 'with my luck...' and the rest of the statement was always bad news. My relative Justine has a way of finding the flip side of all nice things. I bought her an apron, but it was too pretty to wear. I bought her a cake, but it was too fattening to eat. Mary was one who never said a word. She just sighed deep, heavy sighs, regularly. You couldn't mistake what she was saying about her terrible lot in life, even though she minced words.

From my own weakness. I've come to understand why some people are chronic complainers, mired in self-pity or on the greed track. It is because basic to our nature as human beings is the desire not just to have, but to have MORE.

Some people suffer from a constant condition of subjective poverty.

No one denies that objective poverty exists, where people have no shoes or running water, have shabby homes and scanty food.

Subjective poverty is different. It means feeling poor in relation to others, feeling deprived because we don't have what someone else has, be it money, fame, good looks, good health, and so on.

I remember reading words of wisdom once from Saint Francis de Sales, something I scribbled in a notebook back in my college days. He wrote that truly rich people are the ones who are content with their possessions not looking over their shoulders to see how much more other people have, and then becoming miserable from the inequality. Truly the choice of being rich or "poor me" is mostly ours to make. "

This was me for so long...probably 33 years of my life. It was not until this past fall when some life changing things happened to me and my heart was broken enough to truly let Jesus enter into it fully, that I was able to see how rich I am because I possess Jesus. I don't need my health, I don't need my kids or family's health. In fact, I don't

need

my family at all. As sad as it is to lose family or friends, or to suffer great financial hardships. It is even more sad to be without Jesus. I can't take my family nor my friends, nor my house or food or clothes with me to heaven. Things of this earth are passing, which makes them less important than the ONLY thing that matters...that Jesus is with me for all eternity! Yes, food is good for us...necessary for us to live on this earth. But the thing is, we are NOT meant to stay on this earth forever. We are meant to love Jesus forever. So, if my cross is to have terrible health problems and terrible financial problems...it is a blessing...because it allows me the opportunity to be united to Jesus and His suffering even more. UNITED TO JESUS! That is what my whole life is now about.

On a practical level, day to day. It means that I spend more time reading Scripture, more time praying alone and with my family.

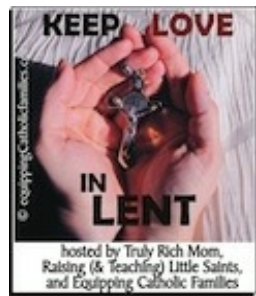
It means that I spend more time reading the lives of the saints. I have found it amazing that the more I read the lives of the saints, the more I realize that they were not perfect, but at some point in their life...they came to realize that what they wanted most was what was truly important...to be united to Jesus, now and for all eternity. They inspire me. They intercede for me. I am blessed to have discovered a love for them.

It also means that I do not have anxiety about where our next meal will come from. It means that if we have to eat hot dogs and mac and cheese or just plain bread and water, it is not a big deal. God is providing us an opportunity to suffer. At first I was mad/sad that my children have to be denied the best things in life, the best opportunities in life. But this made me realize that God has actually blessed them too... to give them an opportunity to suffer for Him...to be united to Jesus, which is the BEST THING IN LIFE, at such a young age. What a blessing.

As Bella led us in our rosary last night...my heart swelled with love...for all God has truly given me...I am rich!! The whole video is black because I had to hide my phone under a blanket so she wouldn't see it (or she just preforms for the camera). She can also say the rosary in Latin, we rotate every other night. She is still learning how to keep count on the beads (as you will hear in the video). Hey, she is only 2 years old. I still have a hard time staying on the right rosary bead.

This contribution is available at <http://andrewandjuliesadoptionstory.blogspot.com/2013/02/reflection-on-philippians-410-13.html>
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God's Love at Work [at JOY Alive in our hearts]



I'm participating in the Keeping LOVE in LENT Blog Link-Up 2013, hosted by [Raising \(& Teaching\) Little Saints](#), [Truly Rich Mom](#) and [Arma Dei: Equipping Catholic Families](#). We'll be sharing different ways, tips, stories and real-life experiences that will help us focus on Lenten sacrifices, prayer and good deeds, and how to carry them out with LOVE instead of a GRUMBLE. Please scroll down to the end of the post to see the list of link-up entries.

One Ash Wednesday, I made up my mind to lose those stubborn five pounds. I set out to simplify the family meals and eliminate snacks, sugary sodas and desserts. Before I could get the pantry cleaned out, my brother-in-law called to ask if our family would help him get his daughter and her 3-year-old son out of town. And out of a marriage situation of drugs and abuse. Thus began our Lent of Love.

Theresa and Joey arrival three days later challenging my schedule, my meal preparations and my Lenten resolve. The Lord had not told these two hurting people to give up Cokes and chips and brownies for Lent — any more than he had told me! My children needed the comforting snacks in the pantry more than ever as they helped me rearrange our home to welcome two new people.

The unexpected sacrifice of making room for them in our lives began our family-style Lent of Love. God, who is Love itself, kept us alert to his presence in boundless opportunities to serve. Their need for love followed us wherever we turned, led us where we needed to go and jumped out at us from behind a door. Little inconveniences became little joys, like watching out for Joey whose favorite place to play was up and down the stairs in his first two-story home.

Lent that year meant loving Theresa. Loving her in everyday ways as she and Joey adjusted to a new city, new surroundings, our schedules and our way of life. Loving her by helping her find a job, a day-care center and later an apartment. Loving her with God's love.

We saw the fear and sadness in their faces and body language slowly transformed into trust and hope. We took them to Mass and to prayer meetings and they absorbed the love of the Lord until they were full to overflowing with gratefulness. We saw Love at work.

When Theresa got her first paycheck she filled the pantry and refrigerator with all the items on that week's grocery list. I got home from grocery shopping to find no room for the same items I had

bought. We laughed and cried and hugged each other. Then we stuffed cans and bottles anywhere they would fit.

We would take long walks together after supper and sometimes she would cry because she didn't have the family she saw laughing and talking at the dinner table. Theresa didn't always agree with our counsel, but she knew we all loved her and wanted the best for her.

Their visit lasted exactly through Lent. We helped them move into an apartment on Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

I didn't lose weight, but I lost forever my presumption that I could dictate what self-improvement program the Lord would help me with during Lent. The best change we can make, with God's grace, is learning new expressions of his love to freely give those he puts squarely in our path. His love gave us our Lent of Love.

I learned the deep and permanent connection between Love and Lent. The connection is stronger than family ties. It's the joy of giving that comes at the far end of willpower crumbling into frustration that drives us to call out for God's help, then let go and watch Love at work.

When we give our Lent to the Lord of Love, we take him at his word. *"Glory be to him, whose power working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine."* (Eph 3:20)

What unexpected challenges are making this a Lent of Love for you?

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Check out the Lent reflections participating in the Keep LOVE in LENT Blog Link-Up 2013! We'll be sharing different ways, tips, stories and real-life experiences that will help us focus on Lenten sacrifices, prayer and good deeds, and how to carry them out with LOVE instead of a GRUMBLE.

Discover new Catholic Blogs to follow!

[**Equipping Catholic Families: Keep LOVE in LENT**](#)

[**Call Her Happy: 40 Simple Lenten Activities for Kids**](#)

[**Lenten Love: Little Acts of Love**](#)

[**Grow the Roses: Keep Love in Lent**](#)

[**Family At The Foot Of The Cross: Loving Service**](#)

[**Catholic Homeschooling Joy: A Lenten Activity**](#)

[**JOY:Keep the Love in Lent**](#)

[**Twenty Tuesday Afternoons: Tuesday # 11: Pancake Tuesday / Keeping Love in Lent**](#)

[**Campfires and Cleats: Why a Failing Lent Really Isn't**](#)

[**Harrington Harmonies: Make a Lenten Holy Hour**](#)

[**A Mommy of Three:Good Deeds for Lent**](#)

[**Loving the Semi Country Life: Lent:special time to reflect and keep the love in lent**](#)

[**Written By the Finger of God: A 7 Step Lenten Plan**](#)

[**Mommy Bares All: Giving Up and Making Space for Love this Lent**](#)

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[**Eyes On Heaven: I am Choosing to Live**](#)

[**Joy Alive in Our Hearts: "God's Love at Work"**](#)

[**Life of Fortunate Chances: Love is Fun: Keeping Love in Lent**](#)

[**Fifth of Five: Keep the LOVE in Lent**](#)

[**I Blog Jesus: for Praying our Loud!**](#)

[**Overflow: Loving Lent with Little Ones**](#)

[**This Cross I Embrace: Keep LOVE In Lent**](#)

[**Sole Searching Mamma: 15 Ways to Experience a More Meaningful Lent**](#)

[**Catholic All Year: My Biggest Lent Fails and How I Learned Mortification...**](#)

[Four Little Ones: Keeping Love in Lent](#)

[Gaels Crafty Treasures Keeping Love in Lent](#)

[Bear Wrongs Patiently: Lent for the Scrupulous](#)

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[LoveLetters 7.10: Teacups {Keeping the Love in Lent}](#)

[Little Saints in the Making: Keep Love in Lent](#)

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[Normal Chaos: Our Own Personalized Lenten Journey](#)

[These Little Blessings: Gifting Love this Lent](#)

[The Cajun Catholic: The our Father; a lenten reflection](#)

[Truly Rich Mom: Keeping Love in Lent... Even When It Is Difficult](#)

This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/keep-love-in-lent/>
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A Big-Enough Sin [at Smaller Mannhattans]



When I was a kid I was a glib liar. I wouldn't lie to get other people in trouble; but I'd lie to get myself

out

of trouble. A typical example: it's winter and I'm not supposed to play in the creek. So after school my friends and I ride bikes out into the woods. We roll up our sleeves and pants, take shoes off, and make a dam in the creek. I come home a bit wet. "Don't you sneak past me! Are you wet?"

I don't know...maybe a little.

Didn't I tell you to stay out of the creek?

Yes'm.

Well?

*But we were just **by** the creek- throwing rocks.*

Uh-huh...well, you better stay out of the creek and if you can't stay dry you better not be

by

the creek either.

Yes'm

[scoot]." See, nobody's hurt by that. Just a little victimless lie to smooth out my life. Of course sometimes I'd get caught, and endure some punishment; but it was all kind of pro-forma to me.

So one day in early Spring I take off after school to go play basketball at Paul Grant's house. Momma knows I hate wearing shoes if it's not freezing cold. "Don't you leave this house without putting your tennis shoes on!"

Yes'm.

And you better not take 'em off once you get out of sight.

Yes'm

[scoot]."

I bike over to Paul's. "Hey let's go play at EHS (Episcopal High School, about a mile away).

OK!

" Once there, it's not,

you know

, freezing. I take my tennies off and tie them to my bike's handlebars. We head over to the courts and play until it's time to go home.

I bike home. I walk in, Momma gives me the Death Stare. Uh-oh. "Your daddy wants to talk to you when he gets home.

Uh...ok."

Daddy gets home. "I understand your momma told you straight to your face today not to take your shoes off because it's so cold.

Uh...yessir.

Did you take your shoes off anyway?

Uh...no!

So you kept your shoes on?

Yes!

(What am I supposed to say? All I can do is bull through at this point.) OK- I'm gonna ask you One Last Time: did you disobey your momma and take your shoes off today?

No!

Well, whose tennis shoes did Mrs. Grant see hanging on your bike over at EHS this afternoon?
[What?

What!?

]

Uhhh...mine.

Now this is when I get my punishment. It'll be way big, but life as we know it will continue. But Daddy didn't say a thing; he just looked at me with the saddest, most pained expression I'd ever seen on an adult's face. And at that instant I understood that I had hurt,

badly

hurt my parents by disobeying and lying. It had never occurred to me that hurting parents was even possible; and that it

was

possible because they loved me, but I wasn't sure why that was so.

It turned out that Momma had called Mrs. Grant earlier to have her send me home. Knowing we had gone to EHS, she drove over, but didn't see us in the back playing ball. Returning home, she called my mom: "I went over to EHS but couldn't find the boys. But Christian was there, I saw his bike and his tennis shoes tied to the handlebars." Can you believe it!?

Oh, my punishment: there wasn't one. My father just got up off the sofa and went to hang out in the kitchen with my momma. They were cool to me for a long time. I never did say I was sorry, although for the first time, I was. I was so undone to realize how hurtful it was to lie that I was terrified of bringing it up. I was afraid they wouldn't believe I was sorry (having cried wolf so often), and wouldn't forgive me. But I learned a lifetime's lesson about lying and love that afternoon.

I was lucky to commit a Big-Enough Sin when I was kid instead of waiting 'til I was 20. Or 50. Or never. It would seem odd to recall so old a sin, but I've thanked God for the Tennis Shoe Lie almost every week for more than 40 years. On the other hand, my parents have forgotten about it; but that would be in the

[nature of forgiveness](#)

We cover the

[Prodigal Son](#)

every year in Catechism class. We pay special attention to the older son: he is jealous of the newfound love between his forgiving father and his repentant younger brother. He could have it as well; but unlike his brother, he hasn't committed a Big-Enough Sin to shock him into realizing he

too should seek forgiveness. He figures he has nothing to repent for, and doesn't. And misses out on the deeper love that springs from repenting and forgiving.

Time permitting, I introduce the Prodigal Son parable with the story of the Tennis Shoe Lie. It pumps some personal and contemporary meaning into an evergreen tale the kids have already heard a thousand times.

**Converse All-Stars by [Wahyu Affandi](#)*

This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2013/02/a-big-enough-sin.html>
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Silence the Voices [at worthy of Agape]

More often than not in life we remember criticisms more than we remember compliments. When someone asks me to recall the last time I received a compliment it takes me at least twice as long to recall than if someone asked me to regurgitate the last insult or criticism thrown my way. Chances are that I can spit back that insult word for word as if you had just said it to me, but I probably can't remember the last compliment with the same amount of clarity. The voices of dissent, disapproval, and disbelief haunt us.

I've found this phenomenon to be true in nearly every facet of life, whether it is with regards to my work, my family life, my writing, or my friends. However, it is even more true when it comes to relationships. The voices of all the suitors gone by are pretty quiet when I'm single. But it seems that the second a new relationship begins to bud and blossom those voices come back, and they come back with a vengeance. Suddenly and all at once those criticisms and words haunt us with a renewed fervor.

I'm just not in love with you.

You are too clingy.

You are boring.

You have too much baggage...so now I'll leave you with more.

You aren't tall enough.

You aren't smart enough.

You are a whore.

You are such a prude.

You are a liar.

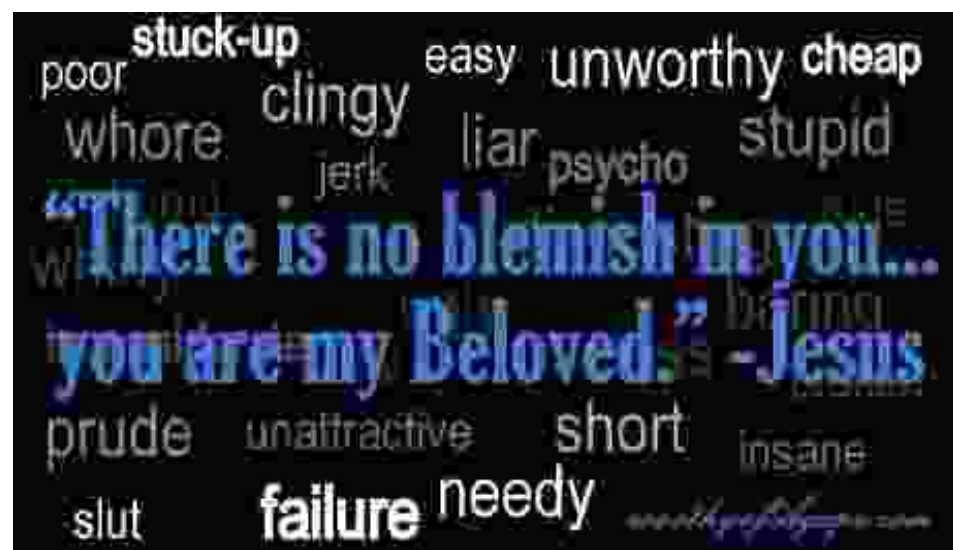
I can't believe anyone would ever want to be with you.

Who would knowingly want to have children with you?

You'll never find your future spouse.

Goodness knows the list could go on, and in our heads, it does. Those phrases pop back in and haunt us, threatening to kill this new relationship – and any hope of a relationship at any point in our lives – stone dead. What are we to do? We have to learn how to silence the voices.

Easier said than done, right? Trust me, I know. The nay-sayers are everywhere. I've learned, however, that we need to listen *beyond* the voices. Each of those phrases, at least in my head, still sounds like they are coming out of the mouth of the person who said it. None of those people are still in my life, so why would I want to listen to their voices? Why does their opinion matter to me anymore? When I'm honest with myself I know their opinions hold no weight, and yet their voices, their hurtful words, stay with me. So we listen beyond their voices, we listen to the *good* voices in our lives. If we don't have good voices in our life then we listen to God (His voice should be the first one we listen to anyway). What exactly does He tell us?



*"You are all beautiful, my beloved, and **there is no blemish in you.**" – Song of Songs 4:7*

"I will...speak to her heart." – Hosea 2:16

"I, the Lord, alone probe the mind and test the heart..." – Jeremiah 17:10

"God is love" and "love never fails." – 1 John 4:8 and 1 Corinthians 13:8

"I command you: be firm and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go." – Joshua 1:9

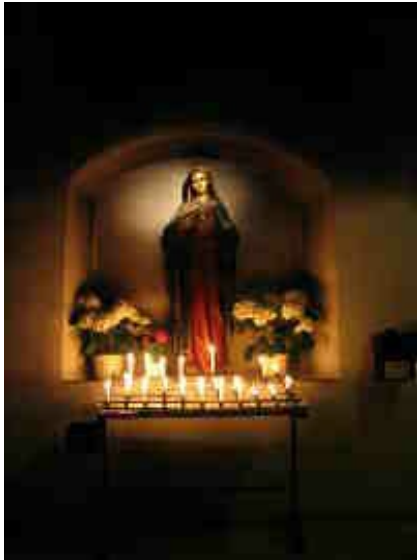
Memorize *His* words. When the voices start to haunt you, taunt you, or mock you, repeat His words of love over and over. Say them out loud, shout them if you must. As Pocket Full of Rocks sings, "Louder than the voice/ that whispers you're unworthy/ hear the sound of love/ that tells a different story."

He has claimed you and called you as His own. His voice, the voice who created YOU and calls you good, is the voice that drowns out all of the other voices – if we let it. We can let the voices of our past, the criticisms and insults, haunt us, or we can be washed clean in His love and in His voice. It is His voice that tells a different story – regardless of where we've been. His voice knows us, even our deepest wounds, and loves us still. Isn't that a voice worth listening to?

This contribution is available at <http://worthyofagape.com/2013/02/18/silence-the-voices/>
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Mary prejudice [at Convert Journal]



It has been 3.5 years now, but I remember a conversation that I had with my friend (a convert and eventual sponsor) Rigsby. It had become very clear to me that my Protestant denomination was straying further and further from the truth. For a short period I [considered myself adrift](#) and was therefore in full research mode.

The Catholic Church was not initially at the top of my list. Or in second place. Or third. There were just too many issues (I thought). One-by-one the Protestant communities that I was interested in were found to be wanting, having their own issues with the truth.

I believe now that the Holy Spirit basically boxed me in and forced me to fairly look at the Catholic Church. I was [really surprised](#) by what I found. Before I [went further](#), I needed to address... “the Mary issue”.

I might have asked Rigsby about Marian doctrines, exactly what they were, why they were believed, their historical basis, their scriptural basis, or even their logical and rational basis – all of which would have shed light. I didn’t because I assumed they were wrong and that I could not believe them as Catholics do. This seemed like a big hurdle. My question was instead “do Catholics have to believe that stuff?” Oy vey!

My problem was good, old-fashioned prejudice against the Catholic understanding of Mary. My Protestant denomination was closer to Catholic beliefs than many, but a real gap in understanding and belief was still there. Before going any further, I list here the 4 Marian dogmas:

- Mother of God: while Jesus’ divinity is eternal, His human incarnation was not and Mary was the mother of that; this title was settled at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431
- Perpetual Virginity: ever virgin, before and after Jesus’ birth (and no, there is no properly understood scriptural evidence to the contrary – quite the opposite actually); explicitly

recognized at the Council of the Lateran in AD 649

- Immaculate Conception: refers to Mary's birth, not Jesus' – she was born without the taint of original sin; why would God provide any less for the mother of His Son?; would the King of kings be born of a sinful womb?
- Assumption: like Enoch and Elijah, Mary was assumed into heaven at the end of her life on Earth; would Jesus do less for His mother than these prophets?; BTW – this is *assumption*, not *ascension*

Additionally and expanding on the above:

- Mary's impeccability (sinlessness): Mary was born and preserved sinless; this is related to the dogma of her immaculate conception
- mediatrix: via her role in salvation history and closeness to Our Lord; this does not make her divine in any way; see also advocatrix, co-redemptrix, mediatrix and advocate of all graces
- Queen of Heaven and Earth: not dogma (yet), but how else would Christ honor and elevate His mother?; she is the queen to His kingship
- veneration: because of all the above!; rest assured that we [do NOT worship her](#) – she is the most worthy Saint, but not divine / not God in any way

My purpose here is not to provide apologetics to defend each of these items (many very thorough ones are available), but rather to list “issues” that may be separating you from the fullness of the Church Our Lord founded. My suggestion is this: put them aside for now. This is similar to taking a test and coming to a halt on a difficult question. Do not get hung-up, move on and come back later. You may find this hard to believe now, but someday you will find it difficult to understand why all Christians do not understand Mary as Catholics do. They are missing so much (note on that point: the Protestant “reformers” [retained](#) much of these [beliefs](#), but over time their divergent creations have fallen further and further away.)

As you study with an open mind and heart other Catholic claims, you will find their truth. Expect to be surprised! Eventually your “master list” of issues will dwindle, but by then you will accept the Church is who she says she is and trust her. If unresolved issues such as this remain, you will see them at most as difficulties in understanding – not claims that you deny. At that point, you are ready to become Catholic. Actually, at that point you are already in communion with the Catholic Church, albeit informally. You accept most teaching and lean on the [authority and infallibility](#) of the Church (given by Christ) for any remaining difficult part. You will be not all that different than the Apostles as described in John:

Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, “Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father.”

As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

“Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Indeed! I will close with the following video for your consideration. It is far from the complete story, but makes many important (in hindsight obvious) connections for scriptural blockheads like me. It is one of my favorites and still touches me every time I watch it:

(If you do not see a video above, [click here.](#))

This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2013/02/mary-prejudice/>
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More Catholic Examinations of Conscience: The Syllabi of Errors [at V for Victory!]



Mary, Exterminatrix of Heresies. But since Mary is the perfect type of the Church, we can also think of this as an image of the Church defending us with Truth.

Some months ago, in this space, we considered [St. Thomas More's syllabus of errors](#) emanating from the sect of Luther. Popes have also issued or approved syllabi of errors. In modern times, we have the [1864 Syllabus of Errors](#) condemned by Bl. Pius IX, and the [1907 Syllabus of Errors of the modernists, *Lamentabili sane*](#), issued by the Holy Office (now the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith) under St. Pius X. Bl. Pius IX, Pio Nonno, had the great privilege of defining the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, but also the great sorrow of reigning during a time when secular states, stirred up by the doctrines of Freemasonry, warred against the Church and seized the Papal States. St. Pius X also lived through these turbulent times; the sulfuric smell of modernism, against which he worked hard to fortify the Church, stank strongly in his nostrils. In our day, notwithstanding the warnings of St. Pius X, the windows of the Church were opened to let in the smog and poisoned atmosphere of the world, so that even faithful Catholics are not immune to error. It pays to go down these two lists of condemned errors and ponder whether any of them have had any influence over us.

How many of these errors have been voiced in seminaries and RCIA classes, and even from the pulpit? Many will probably sound familiar. For example:

Pius IX, Paragraph 7: The prophecies and miracles set forth and recorded in the Sacred Scriptures are the fiction of poets, and the mysteries of the Christian faith the result of

philosophical investigations. In the books of the Old and the New Testament there are contained mythical inventions, and Jesus Christ is Himself a myth.

Pius IX, Paragraph 14: Philosophy is to be treated without taking any account of supernatural revelation.

Pius X, Paragraph 35: Christ did not always possess the consciousness of His Messianic dignity.

Pius X, Paragraph 55: Simon Peter never even suspected that Christ entrusted the primacy in the Church to him.

Pius X, Paragraph 63: The Church shows that she is incapable of effectively maintaining evangelical ethics since she obstinately clings to immutable doctrines which cannot be reconciled with modern progress.

Note well that the Popes hit one or two of our sacred American cows right between the eyes:

Pius IX, Paragraph 47: The best theory of civil society requires that popular schools open to children of every class of the people, and, generally, all public institutes intended for instruction in letters and philosophical sciences and for carrying on the education of youth, should be freed from all ecclesiastical authority, control and interference, and should be fully subjected to the civil and political power at the pleasure of the rulers, and according to the standard of the prevalent opinions of the age.

Pius IX, Paragraph 55: The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.

If our peace has been disturbed by any of the items listed in these Syllabi, then we can rid ourselves of them and not be troubled by them anymore, secure in the knowledge that, since they are condemned, they cannot be true.

This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2013/02/more-catholic-examinations-of.html>
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Before I became a mom, I was a really good one. I had all kinds of ideas of what I was going to do with Ellen, how I would raise her, and things I would most certainly not do. Having a kid really changes that, no? One thing that I am still convinced that I am going to rock is incorporating Catholic activities into our lives. Catholics love to observe, teach and celebrate, and I want to reflect that in my home. So, while I might not be making my own pasta from scratch each night while washing my dishes with my homemade dish soap, I’m going to do this, dang it. At least one of them...



1. Make a Prayer Chain: List 40 intentions or people on 40 slips of paper. Link them together into a chain. Rip one off each morning of Lent and pray for that need.

2. Bury the Hallelujah: Explain why we don't proclaim hallelujah during Lent. To symbolize, write out hallelujah on paper and bury it in the yard or [put it away in a box](#).
3. Temptation Cookies: While baking cookies, tell your children about the temptation of Jesus in the desert. When the cookies are done, leave them on the table, but they cannot eat them until the next day. Talk about how tempting this might be and what we can do to resist temptation.
4. Memorize a Prayer: The Act of Contrition would be a good one for Lent, but if your kids already know it, pick a prayer they are unfamiliar with.
5. Color Easter Eggs: While you do, talk about why they are part of Easter. [They represent new life](#).
6. Watch an Easter Related Movie or Show: Veggie Tales and Storykeepers are just a couple of the many series that have Easter specials.
7. Read Easter Books: I like The Crippled Lamb, The Story of Easter, and The Legend of the Three Trees
8. Children's (or regular) Stations of the Cross: Visit one, Read one, [Color one](#), etc.
9. Make Pretzels: They symbolize arms crossed in prayer. Find out more [here](#).
10. Pick a Service Activity: It can be something small like paying for the person behind you in line at lunch, or do something bigger like visiting a nursing home to chat with residents. Talk about the Corporal Works of Mercy today.
11. Study the Saint of the Day: The dates of Lent are always changing, so pick a day to do this and learn about the Saint for that day. Read his or her biography and maybe even find a craft or prayer to go along with your study.
12. Make a Tomb Scene: I like [this one](#), and [this one](#).
13. Browse a Catholic Book Store: Wander around and look for Easter and Lent related items. Maybe even treat your little one to a small gift.
14. Visit a Cemetery: Find a family member in a cemetery and explain how Jesus died so this person could go to heaven.
15. Go to Church: But, not during Mass or Adoration. Instead, just explore the building.
16. Adoration: You might not be able to stay long, but try for 10 minutes or so. Before going, prep your child on what Adoration is, how we behave and what is to be expected. Sit in silence for just a little while or help your child pray. Ask him or her what he thought of the experience after you leave.
17. A Daily Mass: You might not be able to get the brood out of the house each day to do this, but pick on day to get up early and attend Mass on a weekday. Maybe even have a special breakfast at home afterwards.
18. Rosary: Catholics always pray the Sorrowful Mysteries during Lent. It may be hard to get wiggly kids to sit for this, but just practice. Maybe even [find a guide](#) for your child to follow along with. If you're feeling really ambitious, consider making your own Rosary while you pray it.
19. Divine Mercy Chaplet: Do this in the same way you did the Rosary. [Use a guide](#) if it helps. Or, [listen to one](#) using an app for your phone.
20. Take Stock of Sacrifices: Write a journal or talk about how your sacrifice is going this Lent. What can you do better? What are you doing well?
21. Learn an Easter Song: I like [Christ the Lord is Risen Today](#), but I know there is also a [Veggie](#)

[Tales song](#) you could use too.

22. Make Hot Cross Buns: They symbolize Christ's suffering on the cross.
23. Plant Something: Plant flowers, a plant or [Easter grass](#), take care of it and watch it grow. Talk about new life and rising from the grave.
24. Make an Easter Basket for a Neighbor: Fill it with your favorite treats and surprise your neighbor with your gift. Don't forget to add a prayer card!
25. Make a [Crown of Thorns](#): I love the idea of taking out a thorn for each good deed your child does.
26. Explain the Easter Bunny: I also love these Scriptures that show what a "[real Easter bunny](#)" is. Act it out with a stuffed animal.
27. Easter Coloring Pages: Spend a day relaxing and coloring some cute pages. [I like this one](#).
28. Read the Story of the Last Supper: Either read it straight from Scripture or find a kid's version. Either way, prepare a nice meal for dinner, and read and discuss the story while you eat.
29. Plan and Cook a Meatless Meal Together: Obviously, save this one for a Friday. Go simple like mac n' cheese or try something more complicated that looks good to them. Explain why we abstain from meat on Fridays of Lent.
30. Almsgiving Activity: [Create an almsgiving box](#) and choose a charity to donate to. Save all of your change this season by putting it in your family's box.
31. Petting Zoo: Visit a petting zoo, but make sure they have lambs or sheep. Talk about why we call Jesus the Sacrificial Lamb.
32. Fill a Bag to Donate: Declutter your house and make a donation to Goodwill. Toys, clothes, books, housewares, etc. are all fair game. This is part of almsgiving too.
33. Light a Candle at Church: Let your child choose a special person to light a candle for.
34. Dress in Purple: Explain how purple is a color of mourning but also a color of royalty – Jesus the King.
35. Write a Note to a Clergy Member: Whether it be local or further away, have your kids choose a person to write a letter to. Maybe your kid wants to write a thank you letter. It could even be a letter asking questions about our faith. You might get a great response!
36. Get a Fast Food Fish Sandwich: This is the one time of year that advertisers take Catholics into account. I like to support that idea by feasting on some fatty goodness.
37. [Make Resurrection Cookies](#): Make sure you read the story along with it.
38. Pick a Nice Outfit for Easter Mass: Shop the closet or the store and talk about dressing our best for Jesus and the celebration of Easter
39. Go on a Garden Walk: Explain the story of the Garden of Gethsemane while you meander.
40. Attend a Passion Play: Most churches have them. Look around at your local parishes. If you're more adventurous, try out for a part.

Did I miss anything important?

If you like it then you shoulda put a pin on it.

Check out the Lent reflections participating in the Keep LOVE in LENT Blog Link-Up 2013!

We'll be sharing different ways, tips, stories and real-life experiences that will help us focus on Lenten sacrifices, prayer and good deeds, and how to carry them out with LOVE instead of a GRUMBLE.

Discover new Catholic Blogs to follow!

[Equipping Catholic Families: Keep LOVE in LENT](#)

[Call Her Happy: 40 Simple Lenten Activities for Kids](#)

[Lenten Love: Little Acts of Love](#)

[Building Rocks](#)

[Grow the Roses: Keep Love in Lent](#)

[Family At The Foot Of The Cross: Loving Service](#)

[Catholic Homeschooling Joy: A Lenten Activity](#)

[JOY: Keep the Love in Lent](#)

[Twenty Tuesday Afternoons: Tuesday # 11: Pancake Tuesday / Keeping Love in Lent](#)

[Campfires and Cleats: Why a Failing Lent Really Isn't](#)

[Harrington Harmonies: Make a Lenten Holy Hour](#)

[A Mommy of Three: Good Deeds for Lent](#)

[Loving the Semi Country Life: Lent: special time to reflect and keep the love in lent](#)

[Written By the Finger of God: A 7 Step Lenten Plan](#)

[Mommy Bares All: Giving Up and Making Space for Love this Lent](#)

[The Irish Lassie Shop: Seek God Everywhere](#)

[Hand-Maid with Love: Living Lent, Loving Lent](#)

[Words On Heaven: IN THE DESERT FOR 40 DAYS](#)

[On The Way Home: Keeping LOVE in Lent](#)

[Homeschooling with Joy: Keep Love in Lent](#)

[Mountain Grace: Keep Love in Lent](#)

[Eyes On Heaven: I am Choosing to Live](#)

[Joy Alive in Our Hearts: "God's Love at Work"](#)

[Life of Fortunate Chances: Love is Fun: Keeping Love in Lent](#)

[Fifth of Five: Keep the LOVE in Lent](#)

[I Blog Jesus: for Praying our Loud!](#)

[Overflow: Loving Lent with Little Ones](#)

[This Cross I Embrace: Keep LOVE In Lent](#)

[Sole Searching Mamma: 15 Ways to Experience a More Meaningful Lent](#)

[Catholic All Year: My Biggest Lent Fails and How I Learned Mortification...](#)

[Four Little Ones: Keeping Love in Lent](#)

[Gaels Crafty Treasures Keeping Love in Lent](#)

[Bear Wrongs Patiently: Lent for the Scrupulous](#)

[Rosary Mom: Keeping Love in Lent](#)

[LoveLetters 7.10: Teacups {Keeping the Love in Lent}](#)

[Little Saints in the Making: Keep Love in Lent](#)

[Blessed with Full Hands: Keeping love in Lent- Praise Him](#)

[Normal Chaos: Our Own Personalized Lenten Journey](#)

[These Little Blessings: Gifting Love this Lent](#)

[The Cajun Catholic: The our Father; a lenten reflection](#)

[Truly Rich Mom: Keeping Love in Lent... Even When It Is Difficult](#)

[GATHERING GRACES: Keeping LOVE in LENT](#)

[Salsa Pang Sulyap – Fullness Of His Love](#)

[LiturgicalTime: Keeping Love in Lent – Finding Balance](#)

[Grace Loves Iggy: love in lent](#)

[Sacred Oysters: Empty \(Keeping LOVE in LENT\)](#)

[Tercets:Make Heart Rosary Decades to Pray for Others](#)

[The Diary of a Sower: Our Lenten Prayer Tree](#)

[A Living Garden — Giving for Others with Love: Keeping LOVE in LENT](#)

[Homegrown Catholics: Motivated by my childrens’ activities {Lent}](#)

[MyBroken Fiat: Keeping Love in Lent... Barely](#)

[Journey to Wisdom: Keeping Love in Lent: Bands of Love](#)

[Softening My Heart: An Anniversary Lesson duringLent](#)

This contribution is available at <http://callherhappy.com/40-lenten-activities-for-kids/>
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Spacing Babies [at Messy Wife, Blessed Life]



When Becky hosted a Women Connect linkup a few months ago, I wrote

[the post I didn't want to write about struggling financially](#)

. The linkup prompted me to write about something that had been on my mind for a long time, but I had been too {scared, nervous, embarrassed, depressed} to share. It was such a relief to let it all out. I received support and feedback from women (and a few men) who had been there or who were currently in a similar situation, and left feeling encouraged. Becky's hosting another link up and once again I'm writing

that post

, the one I've half written and erased a dozen times in the last few weeks, the elephant in the room.

For Valentine's Day, my parents bought my 14 month old, Lucia, her first baby doll. She's a natural little mama, feeding her baby a bottle and patting her to sleep.

Watching my baby love on her baby doll brings me to tears.

She would be an

amazing

big sister.

I once read that the best gift you can give your child is siblings. Companions. Life long friends. Shoulders to cry on. Partners in crime. Others who know where you've come from and really, truly understand because they've been there too. I totally believe that - my little brother, my only sibling, means the world to me - and

I'm so ready to give Lucia a little brother or sister.



My body has had ample time to recover from childbirth. While there will always be new challenges, I feel like

I've got this motherhood thing down

and I have

so much extra love to share

with another little one. I know this isn't exactly a common feeling, but I was ready to get pregnant again when Lulu was five minutes old.

Lucia just started walking. We're only nursing a few times a day now.

She's so independent.

Much more toddler than baby. I love holding my little girl's hand and going for a walk with her. I love watching her touch her toes as she listens to "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" for the millionth time. I love scooping her up and hugging and kissing her when she falls. I thought I wouldn't love any stage as much as the baby stage, but I have loved each one just as much!

I don't wish Lucia was still a baby, but I feel my heart and home is ready for a baby again.



My husband feels the same way. We've always wanted a large family. Since we first started dating, our "ideal" number of children has been stuck at five, but sometimes I think I want *even more*

When I became a mother, it felt like the most natural thing in the world to me.

I was finally the person God created me to be. I've wanted to be a mother since I held my first baby doll and it has been

everything

I thought it would be.

Are there hard days? Absolutely! Are there times when I feel like the

*worst mother that has **ever** or will **ever** live*

? Yep. But those moments are fleeting for me. I recently read an article that said parents report happiness at lower levels than non-parents and I just

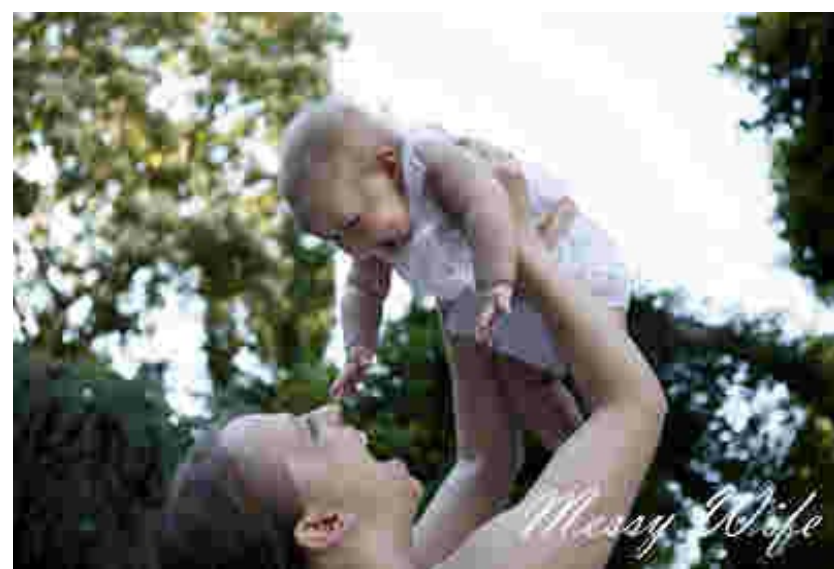
did. not. get. that. at. all.

The joy I have as a mother cannot even compare to my life before baby.

So if we are going to have a large family, it makes sense that we would start trying to conceive soon.

We are mentally and physically ready to grow our family. *But financially, we just aren't there.*

David is working part-time while he continues to look for a job in his field. I work part-time as a teacher. And we live with my parents.



I'm not one to think they you have to have an established career, a house, and a large savings account in order to have a baby.

We had Lucia when we were living on David's grad school stipend and it was the best thing we've ever done. {

Yes

, she was planned.} Money was tight, but we were super thrifty (against popular belief, babies have very little material needs, especially in those early months, and nearly everything can be found secondhand). We made it work.

Technically, we could make it work with another little one right now.

With Lucia's hand-me-downs, I can't think of a single thing we would need for the next baby. While my parents think we should be more financially stable before growing our family, they would be thrilled to have another grandchild. They abhor the thought of us moving out and not spending time with Lucia every day, so they would actually LOVE having the next grandchild in their home. Without having to pay rent, we are able to make it financially and can even save a little. David has great health insurance (

and

the price doesn't increase with additional children).

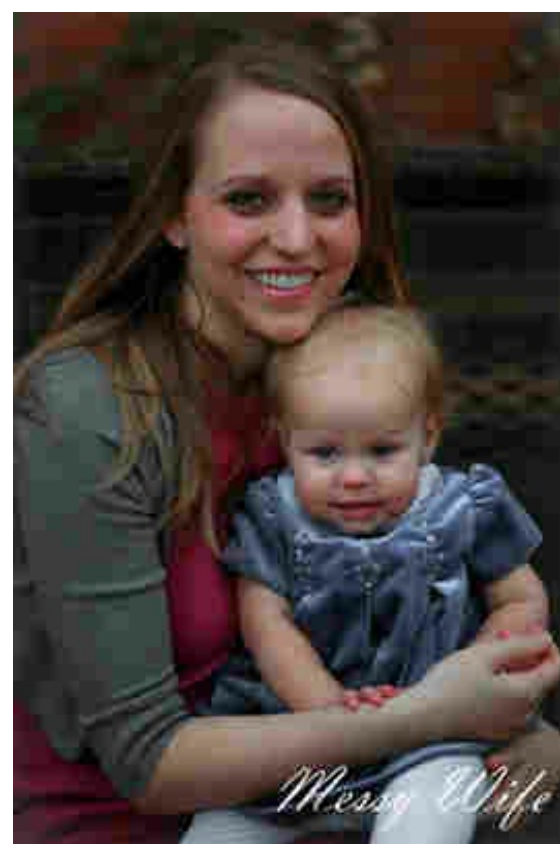
Yet despite the fact that we could get by,

we know that we just aren't in the right place.

And that

hurts

. Although my parents would love to have us here forever, we are ready to have a place of our own, even if it's just a small apartment. While we are making ends meet, we are still carrying around quite a bit of financial stress, which would only be exacerbated by the responsibility of providing for another little one. If my husband gets a job soon, that may mean yet another out of state move and I'm not sure how I would handle a baby and a toddler in a new place without a support system.



That's where we are now, anyway.

We use

[Natural Family Planning](#)

, so we evaluate

monthly

whether we have serious reasons to continue to avoid pregnancy or whether we can be less strict about abstaining on fertile days. Maybe next month will bring a job for David or just a change of heart.

Two years apart seems like the perfect spacing for siblings, but **I'm making my peace with the fact that that might not be God's plan** for our first two babies. Who can plan that perfectly anyway? Even with charting my cycles and knowing *exactly* when I ovulate, it took us four months to conceive Lucia. **Making babies isn't an exact science, it's an act of faith, hope, and love.**

Mandi

P.S. Between now and February 28, all proceeds from ad space on Messy Wife, Blessed Life will go toward [Kaia's adoption fund](#). See ad space options [here](#).

This contribution is available at <http://www.messywife.com/2013/02/spacing-babies.html>
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The Effects of Penance [at Veritas Lux Mea]



The Season of Lent is now well underway and no doubt we have all faced some kind of temptation to give up on our commitments. It can be tough going, and sometimes we can even fool ourselves into thinking that giving things up for a prolonged period of time can be a real drudgery. But when this happens we need to bring ourselves back into check and remember that Lent is really a time of immense blessing. This is because it is a time of renewed focus and spiritual vigour. It is a preparation for the great Feast of Easter wherein we celebrate our union with the Resurrected Lord. But before we can be raised with the Lord, we first need to die with Him. And that is what Lent is about. It is about learning, in a deeper way, to unite ourselves with the Lord in His Passion – especially as we learn to die to ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him (Matt 16:24).

We typically do this by taking up some form (or forms) of Penance during the Lenten Season. For example, we might give up a particular type of food that we really enjoy; or we might give up a specific activity so that we can spend more time in prayer or Scripture reading. Whatever we decide to do (or not to do) for Lent can be summarised into three broad categories, or “Acts of Penance”:

- Prayer
- Fasting
- Almsgiving

But why Penance? Are Acts of Penance even effective? And if they are, what exactly do they effect?

There are principally two things that Acts of Penance effectively accomplish in the lives of Christians in a state of grace:

- 1) They make satisfaction for our sins
- 2) They help us to overcome our spiritual foes

Some people might argue that these acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are all external and really have no intrinsic value. Rather than external actions, we should be focussing our efforts on spiritual matters. But I would counter that these external acts are not merely external. Not only are they driven by a deeper desire for an internal spiritual transformation, but they also help to advance it.

Our sins, and their effects, have both internal and external (or physical and spiritual) elements.

This is why, in the Confiteor during Mass, we confess that we have greatly sinned in our thoughts and our words; in what we have done and what we have failed to do. This refers to matters both internal and external; physical and spiritual. If we are to make satisfaction for our sins then, the Penance we do needs to correlate. So, Penance can never be only an internal thing – it also needs to be accompanied by outward actions.

So who does satisfaction need to be made to? Well, to whomever we sinned against. And who do we sin against? Well, first and foremost, when we sin, we sin against God (Ps 51:4). But we also sin against others and even ourselves. By virtue of the various acts of Penance, we actually provide the corrective satisfaction for each of these “persons” that we sin against, or as the Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it:

"Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms [of penance], fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others."
(CCC # 1434).

How is this so?

- **Prayer** – by spending time with the Lord, we make satisfaction for our sins against God
- **Fasting** – by denying ourselves some form of good (e.g. food), we make satisfaction for the sins committed against ourselves
- **Almsgiving** – by giving in love, we make satisfaction for our sins against others.

What is really amazing about this is that our Acts of Penance are not only beneficial to ourselves; but they can also be applied to the sins of others [see [here](#) for a previous blog where I discuss this further].

Overcoming our Spiritual Foes

Not only do the Acts of Penance make satisfaction for our sins, but they also help to foster holiness so that we might fight against future sin. As Christians in the Church Militant, our enemies have traditionally been categorised as the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The world – referring to the things around us that distract us from loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and loving our neighbour as ourselves.

The flesh – the tendency of our human nature to pursue its own selfish desires and passions.

The devil – that great foe of mankind whose desire it is to try to lead humanity away from God in his own disobedience in which he and a third of the angels fell.

St. John gives us another way of categorising our spiritual foes in 1 Jn 2:16, where he calls our enemies the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.

How do the Acts of Penance help us to overcome these foes?

- **Prayer** – Sacred Scripture reminds us that pride leads us to fall (Prov 16:18) just as it did the devil (Isa 14:12-15). When we are lifted up in pride, we fall into the same condemnation as the devil (1 Tim 3:6). Prayer is an act of humility in that we acknowledge we are not able to do things in our own strength. In this way, prayer counteracts our pride. And when we give ourselves to prayer, God gives us the grace and spiritual fortitude that we need to overcome the temptations of the devil.
- **Fasting** – the best way to overcome our flesh is denying it some form of good. This is because by the denying of good, we learn discipline...and through this discipline, we become less prone to give into our fleshly desires so easily.
- **Almsgiving** – the Tenth Commandment is that we should not covet any of our neighbours' goods. We do this with our eyes when we see what others have and, out of a feeling of entitlement or even jealousy, desire it for ourselves. And it is this sin of covetousness that the world appeals to when it seeks to distract us from God by offering us its wares under the guise of wealth, fame, and power. Through the Act of Almsgiving, we esteem others better than ourselves, and rather than seek to gain we seek to give. In this way, we overcome the temptation of the world which feeds on our covetousness.

So, the effects of the Acts of Penance are that they make satisfaction for sins (our own, and even the sins of others) and they help us to overcome our spiritual foes. But if we dig deeper along these lines, we see that there is more to the story...

Our Acts of Penance only have merit insofar as they are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, it is only because of the infinite merits of His Person and Work that any of our good works have merit at all. Jesus' redemptive work on the Cross of Calvary makes ultimate satisfaction for sins, and it was through the Cross of Christ that the devil was vanquished (Heb 2:14-15). Therefore, it is only by being united to Christ that we are able to make satisfaction for sins and given the strength and grace to overcome our foes.

But, when we do unite our Acts of Penance with Christ's redemptive work, by virtue of the fact that they are united to Him, they become meritorious...and through this we are made to share in His redemptive work. In the words of St. Paul, we are made co-workers together with Him (2 Cor 6:1). Co-workers of what? What was Jesus' mission on this earth? To redeem Creation by defeating the devil, and making satisfaction for the sins of the world (e.g. 1 Jn 2:2; 1 Jn 4:10). If that was the Lord's mission, and if we are made co-workers together with Him, then guess what? As co-workers united to Christ, our good works accomplish the same things!

So, as we continue along our Lenten journey together as the Body of Christ, may we constantly remind ourselves of the import of the sacrifices we are making. And in all that we say and do, may we continually unite ourselves to Christ so that our good works can have redemptive merit for ourselves and the sins of the whole world.

[penance.html](#)

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Intentional Fasting [at Kitchen table chats with a Catholic Matriarch]

Prayer, almsgiving, and fasting are the three pillars of Lenten observances. After the first full week of Lent, I feel the fruits of each of these. Fasting, especially, has been significant for me. I abstain from meat every Friday all year long, so the Friday fasts of Lent are routine for me. Therefore, I had to find another offering. I spend a great deal of time on the computer as part of my work. Blogging and social network sites are part of my job as a writer. But sometimes, they can be time sinks that squander away time I don't have to waste. One link leads to another which leads to another and so on. I am limiting myself to checking my Facebook newsfeed once daily. I am also not clicking on links unless I think they are pertinent to my job (exceptions made for videos of my grandkids!). No random cat videos. No flash mobs.

In addition, I am using my devotional aids to come up with daily and weekly fasts and sacrifices. For example, avoid advertising for a day to detach from materialism. No flipping through the catalogs that arrived in the mail. No browsing the online shopping sites. No television with commercials. No radio in the car. It was actually quite refreshing to escape the pull on my pocketbook.

This Lent, I am also trying to offer each sacrifice for a specific intention. Certainly, the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, the upcoming conclave, and Pope Benedict's successor are worthy intentions. The health and well-being of my husband, children, and grandchildren also merit some of my Lenten sacrifices. There are many friends whom I love and gladly fast for their benefit. But it is also very humbling to fast and sacrifice for various people who are difficult to love or even like. They will never know of my efforts and I may never know of any fruits of my offerings. Skipping a meal for the benefit of someone with whom I find it difficult to carry on a civil conversation challenges my capacity for charity. But to do so also allows me to see this person from a new perspective. It is nearly impossible to dismiss or disregard someone for whom I have prayed so intently.

The words "offer it up" have long been part of the Catholic lexicon. This Lent I am finding it valuable to offer up my sacrifices and penance for the benefit of others. It is a good exercise in humility to make my Lenten exercises focus away from myself. I am sure many have figured this out long ago. I am grateful to have finally found this insight this Lent.

This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2013/02/intentional-fasting.html>
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Outside the Asylum: Progressives: Don't hold your breath waiting for Vatican III



What are Ukrainian feminists doing in Paris, anyway?

As is to be expected when the Chair of Peter is vacated, encomiums for the departed pope are quickly replaced by speculation about the next. This is a game anyone can play, whether you're Catholic or not. The only difference now is that the departing pope can read the speculations along with the rest of us.

As is also to be expected, at least since the dual conclaves of 1978, much of the speculation will follow the lines of secular politics, taking absolutely no account of the Catholic Church's peculiar imperatives. By that, I mean that you'll read a lot of silly talk about prospects for the Church changing its "policies" on various action items, as if a change in pope meant a change in doctrine. That there might be a reason for the Church to teach the same things in 2013 as it did in 1013 or AD 113 seems not to occur to certain people.

One thing that is different from eight years ago: various self-styled progressives have not only greeted the news of Benedict XVI's renunciation with glee — almost a “

[Ding, dong, the witch is dead](#)

” attitude — but are almost certainly convinced that, with “God's Rottweiler” out of the way, the Spirit of Vatican II will finally sweep away the last vestiges of the homophobic, patriarchal “old

Church” and blow in a kind of “Catholic spring”.

“The church has such influence worldwide that it would be great to see a Vatican III!”

[gushed Nicholas Kristof in the New York Times](#)

, while

[Rainbow Sash opined](#)

, “The new Pope will have an opportunity like Pope John XXIII to open wide windows of the Church so that fresh ideas may fill the Church by calling for a new Ecumenical Council of the Church, Vatican III.”

Don’t make plans to attend Vatican III anytime soon ... by which I mean, not in our lifetimes.

For one thing,

the myth of Vatican II as the entry point for a “more progressive era” is about played out

.

I’m not saying nobody believes it anymore; I’m saying that its influence has been on the wane for at least a decade, if not longer.

The parishes that are gaining the converts and producing the candidates for religious life are more orthodox and traditional.

The “Nuns on the Bus” may be the media darlings, but the nuns on Oprah — the

[Dominican Sisters of Mary](#)

— are the ones with a real, viable future.

The current crop of bishops may have a ways to go as leaders, but they're not the accommodationist doormats chosen by Paul VI.

For another thing, **the only cardinal electors who didn't participate in the last conclave — the conclave that elected Benedict XVI — are cardinals that Benedict himself has chosen.** Now, let's think about this carefully: What are the odds that the guys who elected "God's Rottweiler" to be Supreme Pontiff are going to turn around and elect a disciple of Hans Küng to succeed him?

Third, **the Western (first) world no longer owns the Church.** The bulk of the Church's billion-plus members are in second- and third-world countries, where they don't have the money or the resources to be self-indulgent heretics and schismatics. Gay marriage may be a *cause célèbre* in Europe and North America; in Africa and the Middle and Far East, they have more important issues to worry about ... like keeping from being killed by their local jihadists. If anything, *we're* mission territory for *them*. We Americans need to get over the idea that we can judge the *sensus fidelium* of the global Church from ABC News polls and Pew Center surveys of Yankee opinions — we're just not all that pivotal in the life of the Church.

As a corollary to the third point, Number Four is that

the rest of the Church doesn't want "the progressive era".

Four-fifths of the world doesn't give a rat's patoot about the fact that women can't be ordained priests, and sees "gay marriage" for the oxymoron it is.

In Africa, abstinence-based programs work better than condoms and contraceptives in stopping the spread of HIV because they don't have "culture factories" hell-bent on glorifying

[sexual stupidity](#)

.

[George Weigel writes](#)

, “The twenty-first-century cultural air is toxic, anti-biblical, Christophobic. It teaches the soul-withering notion that to do things ‘my way’ is the summit of human aspiration and the very definition of maturity. And it regards those who hold firm to biblical religion and its moral teachings as idiots at best, irrational bigots at worst.” This is the legacy of Western “progressive” policies; small wonder the rest of the universal Church wants nothing to do with it.

In general, papal transitions are about shifts in tone, not substance. Radical change as it’s usually defined in secular circles — a more liberal position on abortion or gay marriage, for instance — is deeply improbable, no matter who takes over.

Yet there are many areas where new directions are plausible. One could imagine a non-Western pope, for instance, or a pope more attuned to the argot of popular culture, or a pope less inclined to have secularism as his *idée fixe* [?], or a pope with a good head for business management who can finally implement a serious reform of the Vatican itself (or, at a minimum, to curtail the Vatican’s occasional genius for stepping on its own story).

In other words, there is plenty of room for authentic reform of the Church.

But the future direction of the Church has already been set in motion, and it isn’t towards the materialist, libidinal gutter of the Progressive Church.

Rather, it’s towards a newly energized, newly militant

[Evangelical Catholicism](#)

, ready to engage the world rather than conform to it.

That is what Bl. John XXIII intended, and what Bl. John Paul and Benedict XVI have given us.

The progressives aren’t out in front. They’re being left behind.

This contribution is available at <http://tonylayne.blogspot.com/2013/02/progressives-dont-hold-your-breath.html#.UTJ3bcrNhuM>
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Prayer: 30 Minutes of Silence [at From the Pulpit of My Life]

Both yesterday and this morning I implemented one of my New Year resolutions: sitting in silence. Here is what happened today.

I wrapped a blue shawl around my shoulders, crossed the ends in front of me in my lap, and enfolded my hands in it. I looked at a small statue that illustrates Jesus knocking on a door. It is inscribed with the phrase, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock..." (Rev. 3:20) I prayed silently, "I'm here,

LORD

. Please come in."

Then, closing my eyes I quietly chanted the name of Jesus, using the refrain of a familiar hymn. After chanting the name aloud about three times, I chanted inwardly; that is, in my mind, several more times. Then I interiorly "whispered" the name of Jesus.

Finally, I was still. Occasionally there were distractions. To return to silence, I silently repeated the name Jesus.

At some point during this 30 minutes I had the experience of complete stillness, which gave me an awareness of God's inner presence. I rested in that.

I ended by thanking the

LORD

and praying the Glory Be prayer.

This contribution is available at <http://fromthepulpitofmylife.blogspot.com/2013/02/prayer-30-minutes-of-silence.html>

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Coping with Envy [at Savor His Goodness]

Have you ever wished that you were more like that girl? You know the one I'm talking about. She's always put together, she seems to have life figured out, and everyone loves being around her. I've definitely been there. I sometimes get caught up in comparing myself and becoming envious of other people, and I'm sure many of you can relate. Envy is really easy to fall into because our flesh is so weak (Galatians 5:14-26), and it causes us to devalue our gifts from God, which takes away our joy.

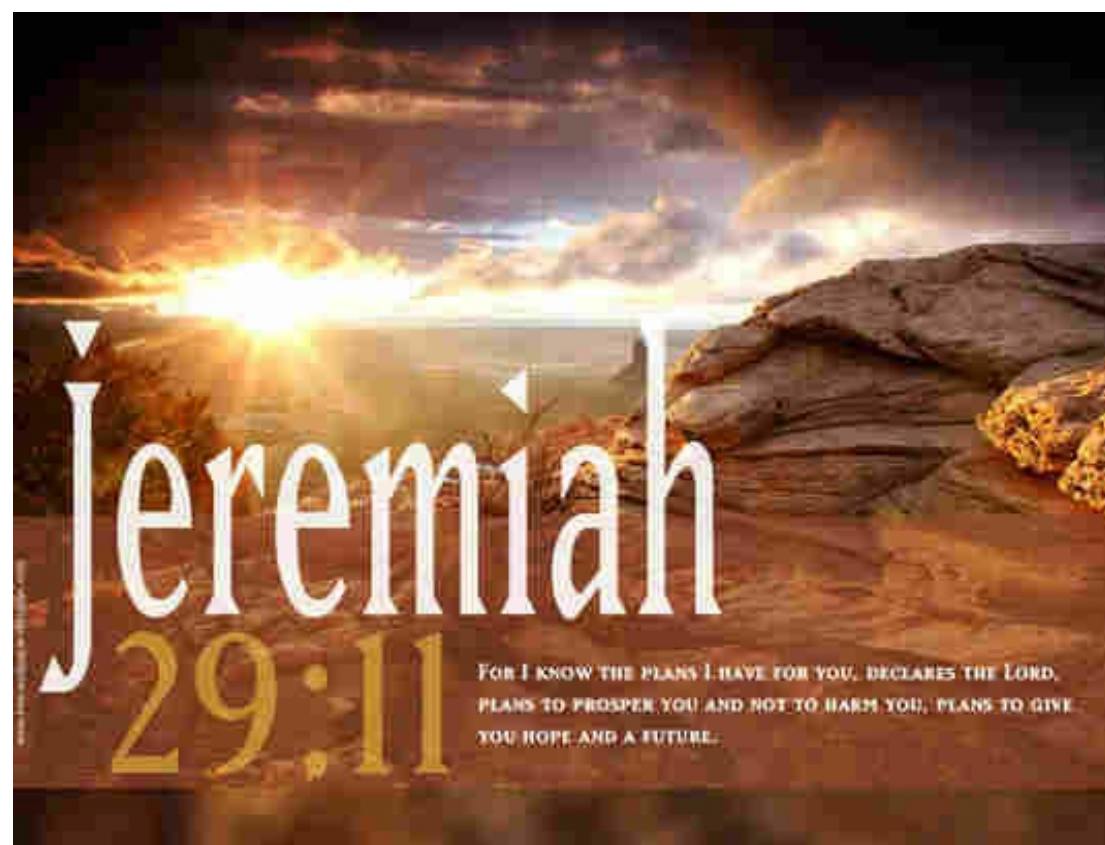
At our Bible study this week, Father Barron defined envy in a couple different ways. It's sorrow at another person's good or pleasure in their failure. It's feeling as though something in you has died when someone else succeeds. It's comparing yourself to others and finding yourself lacking. And it all stems from [pride](#). So what can we do to help counteract those envious feelings? Father Barron said the antidote to envy is **admiration**.

First of all, we have to admire the gifts that God has given us. I have my own personal struggles with this. Wishing I was more outgoing and extroverted. Wishing I was funnier. Wishing I was more animated. However, that's just not the way that God made me. I'll see people who are blessed with those gifts and get caught up in being envious of their personality. Father Barron said that *fear is the root of every one of the deadly sins*, and I can see how it plays into my own envy through the fear of not being good enough, the fear of failure, and the fear of not being accepted by others. I have loved Father Barron's videos so far because he is SO positive and encouraging, reminding us that God has blessed us all individually with our own unique gifts.

*"There are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. **To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.** To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. **But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.**"*

-1 Corinthians 12:4-11

God has given us different individual gifts because he has called each one of us to a specific purpose and mission in our lives. He has amazing plans in store for each and every one of us.



We also have to remember that God works through us to accomplish great things. He is responsible for all that we do.

"O Lord, you mete out peace to us.

*For it is **you who have accomplished***

all we have done."

-Isaiah 26:12

Envy closes us off to God's plans for us, and it inhibits us from letting him work through us to accomplish so many good things. We really need to appreciate and admire the many gifts he has given us so that we can best carry out his plans for our lives.

Also, when Thomas and I were doing our homework for the study, I was talking to him about how I sometimes have a really negative way of handling envy. When we watched Father Barron's video, he gave a name to my way of coping with jealousy: "scapegoating," or undermining and attacking another person. If I am envious of something another person has or does, I sometimes think about a negative quality of theirs and a positive quality of mine to build myself up. Yikes. It's such an ugly, nasty thing to do that I don't even want to admit to doing it on here! And while it might make me feel better in the short term, that is not the right way to handle it, and it's definitely not giving any glory to God.

That leads into Father Barron's next point. **We have to admire others and their gifts from God.** Consider the way in which we are all related to each other and the importance we all have in this world through reading this passage from 1 Corinthians:

"As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you."

Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. **If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy"**

-1 Corinthians 12:12-26

We are all members who make up the body of Christ. We all have different individual gifts, but we are all necessary to work together to accomplish God's plans.

Also, regardless of whether our friends fail or succeed, we are called to be supportive and offer them love. We must make an effort to praise them for the good that they are doing and the gifts we see in them that come from God. Recognizing and appreciating those gifts in our friends is a way to glorify God and his creation. After all, he is the one who has blessed them with those gifts, so it

would only be right to credit him with the good we see in others.

"Would you like to see God glorified by you? Then rejoice in your brother's progress and you will immediately give glory to God. Because his servant could conquer envy by rejoicing in the merits of others, God will be praised."

-St John Chrysostom

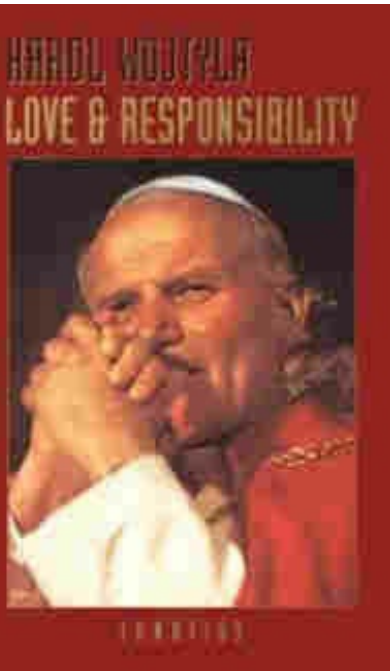
Reflecting on all of that definitely helps me feel more content with who I am and the person God has created me to be.

How do you cope with envy?

This contribution is available at <http://catholiccookiejar.blogspot.com/2013/02/coping-with-envy.html>
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[Love and Responsibility] Part 1: Libido and the sexual urge [at Arleen Spenceley]



*This post is part 1 in a sex and love series based on what I learned from my favorite parts of the brilliant book *Love and Responsibility* by Blessed Pope John Paul II. All quotes, unless otherwise noted or used for emphasis, come from the book.*

In a chapter on the sexual urge, Pope John Paul II brilliantly differentiates the 'libidinic' interpretation of the sexual urge (as popularized by Freud) from the 'religious' one.

The 'libidinic' interpretation says the sexual urge is "fundamentally an urge to enjoy" whereas the 'religious' interpretation says the sexual urge is designed to "orient us toward another person," according to Edward Sri. True orientation toward the beloved curbs a person's urge to use somebody.

"Libidinic" is a derivative of the Latin word

libido

, which means "enjoyment resulting from use."

Freud's version of the sexual urge is incompatible with life as Christ calls us to live it, for at least three reasons:

1. It's a bummer for babies.

A sexual urge based on libido requires acquiring pleasure to be the primary purpose of the urge. If acquiring pleasure is the primary purpose of the urge, "the transmission of life," more commonly called makin' babies, is simply a side effect. Which means orientation toward another person - be it the one with whom you're having sex or the one you co-create while you do it - isn't necessary.

2. It means humans are really just animals.

A sexual urge based on libido requires little else of a person than sensitization to "enjoyable sensory stimuli of a sexual nature." It encourages us to immerse ourselves in "enjoyment resulting from use" every time the opportunity to "use" arises. Then it convinces us that we

have

to. The result? We are governed by our urges (sort of like my dog is).

3. It masquerades as justification for contraception and abortion.

If procreation is only a side effect of acting on the sexual urge (as it is when the urge is based on libido), abstinence is illogical. So when "the earth is threatened with overpopulation" but making babies isn't a primary purpose of sex (as it isn't when the urge is based on libido), "have less sex" makes less sense than "suppress fertility." In other words, even when good reasons exist not to have babies (including but not limited to "I'm not ready to be a parent."), people for whom the sexual urge is based on libido can't conclude what JP2 concludes: "We ought to aim at limiting the use of the sexual urge." Instead, they "aim at the preservation in full of ... the pleasure of sexual intercourse, while at the same time curbing ... procreation."

My hunch is we who agree with JP2 on this are few and far between.

(But Jesus wasn't kidding when he called it a narrow road.)

This contribution is available at <http://www.arleenspenceley.com/2013/02/love-and-responsibility-part-1-libido.html>

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Johnny Cash, Redemption and Me [at Rambling Follower]

playlist the very best of
johnnycash



Yesterday at Best Buy, while was picking up power cords for my MacBook and my iPad, I also bought CD of Johnny Cash's greatest hits for \$6.99.

Growing up in the 1960s and 1970s,

[Johnny Cash](#)

seemed hokey, corny and square to me. Now, when I listen to his deep baritone, which I did on my long commute to work this morning, I am moved and inspired. Johnny also makes me smile.

Johnny: where have you been all my life?

Johnny Cash was a man full of desire, passion, fury and humor. The fourth of seven children, he was born in Arkansas during the Great Depression. His parents named him J.R. because they could not come up with a name. The family picked cotton and his childhood was steeped in poverty and gospel music. He became John R. Cash when he joined the Air Force because the military insisted he have a proper name.

In many ways, Cash's life was what my high school students would call a big hot mess. He struggled mightily, in particular with an addiction to prescription pills. In his younger years, he was a womanizer. He married twice and fathered five children. He spent many nights in jail for misdemeanors. He understood he was a sinner and he sought redemption his whole life.

My weaknesses are not the same as his, But when I listen to Cash's music, I understand how far we all ramble from the path we are called to walk. I admire his humility in facing that he is flawed and in need of saving.

There is no doubt when listening to his songs that the culture that shaped him was working-class and rural. He sings about rivers, trains, guns, cars, picking cotton, working an assembly line, boozing and praying. There is no doubt he understands he was called into being and that the circumstances of his life are infused with a Presence of something beyond what he can see.

When I listen to his iconic song "I Walk the Line," which is not an overtly religious song, I hear yes a man yearning for a woman, but beyond that, a human heart yearning for redemption and longing for eternity.

*You've got a way to keep me on your side
You give me cause for love that I can't hide
For you I know I'd even try to turn the tide
Because you're mine, I walk the line*

"

This contribution is available at <http://ramblingfollower.blogspot.com/2013/02/johnny-cash-redemption-and-me.html>
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Profession of Passionist Vows {Sister Cecilia Maria} [at Glimpse of Peace]



Sister Cecilia Maria wears the white veil of a novice in the chapel cloister at St. Joseph Passionist Monastery, KY

Thirteen hours of travel (4 driving; half in a rental car from Tennessee to Kentucky) brought me my hotel in Owensboro at about midnight. Twelve hours later I was on my way to St. Joseph Monastery, arriving early for the 1:30 Mass of Religious Profession for my friend Sister Cecilia Maria.

Following the Liturgy of the Word, including an [exceptional homily by Father Rodger Hunter Hall](#), the Rite of Religious Profession began as Bishop Medley called Sister Cecilia's name. She stepped forward for the examination, *"In your desire to follow Christ Crucified more perfectly, are you resolved to cherish in your heart a loving and grateful remembrance of the mystery of the Passion, and to express it in your life, observing consecrated chastity for the sake of the kingdom, embracing voluntary poverty, offering to God the gift of your obedience, and observing enclosure?"*

To this examination, Sister Cecilia replied, *"I am so resolved."*



Sister Cecilia Maria responds to the examination by Bishop Medley as the Rite of Religious Profession begins.

Bishop Medley led the congregation in solemn prayers for God's grace for Sister Cecilia Maria, after which she made her profession of vows. Sister spoke her vows with great conviction, kneeling before her Superior, Mother Catherine Marie, seated at the foot of the altar. As Prioress of the Passionist Nuns at St. Joseph Monastery, Mother appeared jubilant and deeply peaceful, tenderly speaking her acceptance of Sister Cecilia's vows with such love.



Mother Catherine Marie receives Sister Cecilia Maria's profession of vows.



Sister Cecilia Maria receives her new black veil from Mother Catherine Marie.

Newly professed as a Passionist Nun, Sister Cecilia Maria received a black veil and Passionist ring, signifying her marriage to Christ Crucified. The Passionist sign was placed on her habit over her heart as a constant reminder of her Divine Spouse and the sorrows of His holy Mother. A crown of thorns set upon her head and a simple cross positioned on her back, Bishop Medley bid her to be faithful to her vows and to follow Christ in humility, obedience and self-denial. Together with her sisters, she sang “Veni, Sponsa Christi” (Come Spouse of Christ), a love song.

The Lord of lords holds your life in His embrace. The King of kings fills your soul with His own grace...



Sister's new black veil proclaims that she belongs entirely to Christ.
Sister appeared in that moment as a [living icon on fire with divine love.](#)



Through tears of joy I photographed these moments as best I could without moving from my pew or causing too much distraction.



Wearing a crown of thorns as a reminder to follow Christ in humility, obedience and self-denial, Sister prepares to receive Holy Communion at her Mass of Religious Profession on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple.

The cloistered sisters' heavenly liturgy and simple, holy music, with sung Latin responses (Sister Cecilia's preference), created a slightly surreal ambiance at Mass. A baptismal 'river' runs the entire length of the center isle of the monastery chapel ~ holy water breaking the ground to mark the nuns' enclosure. At the presentation of the gifts, the sisters processed on one side of the holy river and Sister Cecilia's mom and grandma processed on the opposite side of the isle. Sister Cecilia crossed out of the enclosure within the sanctuary at the sign of peace, at which time her parents, grandmother, and close friends approached her for an embrace.



Bishop Medley incenses the gifts and the altar, at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer.



Holy water flows through the center isle of the monastery chapel.

Gustav Holst's "O God Beyond All Praising," the recessional march and closing hymn, played expertly by Sister Cecilia Maria's younger sister, Whitney, on violin, *happened* to be the same song to which their parents had recessed on their wedding day. How fitting that their daughter's wedding song would voice theirs:

And whether our tomorrows be filled with good or ill, we'll triumph through our sorrows and rise to bless you still; to marvel at your beauty and glory in your ways, and make a joyful duty our sacrifice of praise.

This contribution is available at <http://glimpseofpeace.blogspot.com/2013/02/profession-of-passionist-vows-kentucky.html>

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How to Have a Hugely Successful Blog [at Sue Elvis Writes]



I create a blog, and write a post. Now all I need is some readers. How do bloggers get people to come and share their stories? I know if I do a Google search I will find lots of ideas, such as... create an easy-to-read and attractive blog, link up to blog carnivals, comment on other people's blogs, follow other bloggers in the hope they will follow me, advertise through the social media like Facebook and Twitter... There are loads of suggestions and I'm not going to repeat them all. They all have the same aim. They all say: get out there and be seen. Because it doesn't matter how good a blog post is, if no one knows about it, it's never going to get read.

But I don't want to write about such ways of promoting a blog. Anyway, you've probably heard all that before. What I'd like to do is share a few different ideas that just might make your blog hugely successful.

But before I start, I should list my credentials for writing about hugely successful blogs. That seems to be what people do. For example, I just read a post with a similar title to this one, and the author began by listing all the facts and figures that entitle him to write on this subject: the number of his followers, the number of subscribed readers he has, his blog rating compared to all the other blogs in existence.... It was very impressive.

I will admit I don't have any such credentials. My blog is little. Half my followers are family. And of the remaining real followers, some people have followed me twice by mistake. The number of

followers I have isn't worth displaying in a Followers gadget, so I don't have one. I might have a few subscribers but I'm too afraid to look in case I get discouraged by how few people really are interested in what I have to say.

So why am I writing a post called *How to Have a Hugely Successful Blog* when I don't actually have one? What gives me the right to share some advice? Well, I guess the advice isn't really mine, and maybe I've redefined the term 'hugely successful'. My definition hasn't anything to do with the number of followers. Have I confused you? I think you'll understand once I start my list.

How to Have a Hugely Successful Blog

- Write about the things you are passionate about, even if you think no one will be interested in them, because you need to...
- Be yourself.
- Write when you have something to share and not when you think you ought to write a post.
- Don't spend much time dwelling on your own posts. Write, publish and then don't hang around waiting for readers. Go and enjoy other people's stories instead. And I mean really enjoy them. This leads to the next point...
- Don't skim through bloggers' posts quickly looking for something appropriate to say so you can leave your calling card. Take time to get to know a blogger. Appreciate his/her writings. Write a comment because you want to say how much you like a post, not because you want to be noticed.
- Don't visit and comment only on the big name blogs. Go looking for those smaller pearls where not many people stop to chat. Find some posts that don't have any comments, read them and appreciate them. Someone took time writing them. Stop and say hello.
- Comment on other people's posts even if they haven't commented on yours. Be understanding. Sometimes people get busy and can't reciprocate comments, but everyone likes to see some friendly words waiting to be published.
- When you get busy, don't worry about writing or replying to comments. If we are understanding about other people's lack of time, they will understand when we are in a similar position.
- Read comments left on your own blog carefully, and respond if time allows. Appreciate these comments. Someone spent time writing them. Great friendships can be made through the comments box. Friendships are more important than followers so...
- Don't worry about the number of followers you have. If you get distracted by such things, don't display a gadget on your blog...

- And don't follow other blogs just so those bloggers will follow you back. If you follow, be a real follower.
- Don't worry about stats at all. Just enjoy writing and sharing, without wondering how many people are reading.
- Never compare your blog page views with that of other blogs. (I'm wondering about the value of a displayed page views gadget. Is there actually any value?)
- Instead of promoting your own blog, consider promoting someone else's.
- Go off and enjoy life when you're not blogging, instead of hanging around to see how successful you are.
- Be generous.
- Think of others and don't focus on yourself.
- Spread joy.
- Be loving.
- Enjoy.
- Be thankful.
- **Be kind.**

Now it's time to make a confession: I am hopeless at taking my own advice. I haven't necessarily done all of the above. So if I haven't been following my own suggestions, how do I know they work? Well, I have been observing. I've been watching my favourite bloggers, those 'hugely successful' bloggers who have befriended me and drawn me into their circle. I am slowly learning from them. They know what is important. It isn't lots of followers. It isn't being popular. It isn't stats at all.

No, what's really important is kindness. All the above suggestions can be summed up in that one word. From kindness flows joy and love, which connects people together and touches hearts. I am sure God works through such blogs, in big ways, as well as small ones. Size does not matter at all.

So how can we have hugely successful blogs? All we need to do is rethink what we mean by 'hugely successful'...

This contribution is available at <http://www.sueelviswrites.com/2013/02/how-to-have-hugely-successful-blog.html>
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A Vocation to Motherhood [at Catholic All Year]

Well it turns out that my cousin Pryor, to whom I dedicated my [baby gear post](#), has a [blog](#) too. (Why does no one tell me these things?) Also, she has a [new baby lamb and a fear of chicken embryos](#). She is expecting her first baby (I *did* know that) and I was touched by [her post](#) in which she wonders about going back to work after her baby is born. It got me thinking back to my days as a working gal. And how I ended up where I am now.

This is me on my last day as a flight instructor:



Scanned from a Polaroid, but isn't it awesome?

My student is totally pointing at my belly.

Well, I guess not quite. This was my last flight, one month to the day before Jack was born. But I was still teaching a couple of ground school classes right up until the end. The husband had to call my boss on the way to the hospital to tell him I was going to miss my class that night.

Because I hadn't quit yet. Because I wasn't sure if I wanted to.

Honestly, I had never been a real "baby person." They are adorable, sure. But they seemed awfully needy. And I hadn't really known any babies very well since my sister was born 22 years previously. So I wasn't sure how I was going to feel about sitting around all day looking at one. My mom had worked, and I don't remember it ever bothering me as a child. (If you ask nicely in the comments I bet she'll tell you the story of what happened the day she went back to work after

my sister was born.)

And wasn't I rather overqualified to be *just* a mom? I had two degrees and had only recently acquired enough flight hours to start applying for airline jobs. I figured that was out of the question, at least in the short term. But I thought maybe I would want to keep flight instructing locally.

The husband was in business school, so my pitiful little income was all we had besides his savings. (Saving hadn't really occurred to me before I met him.) And my parents and I had invested a lot in my education and preparation for the job market. I already owned all the books and gear and had just finished organizing and standardizing the whole ground school curriculum.

Didn't I owe it to my parents, and my students, and my flight school, and myself to go back? Then . . . baby Jack was born. And a funny thing happened. I became a mother.



And all those things that had bugged me about other people's babies were totally awesome in my baby. And even the things that weren't totally awesome were manageable.

I realized that while I enjoyed being a pilot, my vocation was to motherhood. I realized that nothing else would fulfill me in the way that dedicating myself to motherhood would. The hilarious stuff, and the adorable stuff, and the tedious stuff, and the boring stuff, and the gross stuff, all of it. I realized that this was the path God had chosen for my sanctification.

Once I knew those things, it was just a question of logistics, and of allowing myself to trust God and my husband to provide for our family. They say, "Every baby comes with a loaf of bread." In our case it has been true.

I didn't learn much from the husband's time at business school (I believe that *he* did.) But I do remember the concept of "[sunk costs](#)" really resonating with me. Whatever time or money I had invested in my career was already gone. To make decisions for the future based on sunk costs is a bad way to run your business. It's an even worse way to run your family.

And I have been amazed by the way that things I learned and experienced and prepared for to be a flight instructor really have turned out to be applicable in my life as a mother.



Well, not *that* literally.



I guess it didn't help much here.

But what could prepare you for that?

(He was supposed to be getting dressed for Mass.)

Now, my vocation is not every woman's vocation. I believe that some women must have a dual vocation, as it were -- to motherhood and to a profession for which they are uniquely gifted. [Saint Gianna Molla](#), for instance, had a vocation to motherhood and to medicine, both of which allowed her to give a beautiful witness of love to the world before she died. And, as my family has settled into a manageable routine lately, I have felt called to write as well as to mother. But I am grateful that it can all be done while my babies are sleeping (sometimes while they are sleeping on me). I am so very grateful to God and to my husband that I am able to stay home with my children. I know some women must work to support their families. I think they make a great sacrifice to do so.

As I look back on my early days of motherhood, I realize that it was my indecision that saved me, really. If I had been decided on going back to work I may have followed some of the terrible advice I read about starting my baby on bottles "just in case" and being sure to leave him with other people so we would both "get used to it." I shudder to think about what I would have lost.

I'm so glad I put off my decision, and allowed myself to be devoted to motherhood in those first weeks and months.

When I did go back to my flight school again it was just to gather my things, and I brought my baby with me.

It hasn't all been cupcakes and pony rides since then. But I have always been comforted by the conviction that I am where I'm supposed to be.

I think that the best place for my babies to be has been with me. But babies are resilient. They probably would have been great in another situation as well. I think more importantly, the best place for me to be has been with my babies. In saying "yes" to God's plan for my life I have been blessed in ways I couldn't have imagined before. These children are my vocation and they are perfecting me day by day.



This little nerd, for instance, is working on [my humility](#).

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicallyear.com/2013/02/a-vocation-to-motherhood.html>
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Home Improvement; Soul Improvement [at Notlukewarm]

This year one of our goals has been to get our house to look a bit more polished and tackle some projects that need to be done. Quick list: vertical blinds, replace screen on the patio, paint the front door, and give the yard some love. In my active fantasy life I also somehow clean out our garage. Some small things to need to be done like clean out some kitchen drawers and cabinets and re-cover window valences. We also decided to get new furniture for the living room.

It is all coming together and going according to plan. Except the furniture. We picked it out on Dec 29 and were told it would be in the warehouse in about a month and then delivered right after; so maybe six weeks tops. I was not thrilled but could live with it. I do not have my new furniture. I have called twice looking for the furniture. The first time I was told in a week or so it would be delivered. Then, I saw the charge for the furniture on my bill which made me suspicious since I was not going to be charged until I actually had the furniture in my house. So I called again. It still has not been delivered to the warehouse. I am not happy. I dislike being strung along and told I am not reading my bill correctly. I think when living room furniture is under the Am't due column it is pretty obvious.

So what is the point of my diatribe? I think I am supposed to learn a lesson here about not needing things to be perfect. My couch now has a cover on it that needs to be replaced and I don't want my family to see it looking like that when they come over for the anniversary dinner. It's silly, it's my family, they have all been to my house before and being together, followed closely by how good dinner tastes, is more important than my couch. But I want to impress them. So now I am forced to wait for my couch and swallow some pride when they see my old couch instead of something new and pretty.

It is difficult for me to believe I am appreciated and loved for myself and so making sure my home is as good as it can be is one way for me to make sure I am valued. Why? Well, how about this quote from my grandmother in regard to a young woman she had met, "She's not that pretty, but she keeps her house very nice." I can't recall who she was talking about but I knew the person and thought it was a mean comment. I also wondered if this woman was very pretty in my grandmother's eyes could she keep a messy house? For a long time I was a cause of despair since according to some family members I was not that pretty nor kept house well.

So the couch brings up past hurts and feelings of disappointing my family. It is a couch though, not a reflection on me as a person. I am much more than a clean house and tidy garage. While I know this in my mind, it is harder for it to reach my soul.

My plan of attack is to spend more time with the one who loves me unconditionally. For we are all his own and loved more than we can imagine.

This contribution is available at <http://notlukewarm.blogspot.com/2013/02/home-improvement-soul-improvement.html>

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The Catholic Church is Small [at More Like Mary~More Like Me]

This post has been in my head for years now. And with today's very BIG news that our beloved

[Pope Benedict XVI is resigning from the papacy](#)

, now is as good of time as any to share my thoughts on the smallness of our big faith.

The Catholic Church is quite huge-over 1 billion people worldwide. It spreads to every country and truly knows no boundaries. It has existed-unchanged-for 2000 years. It's one of the many reasons I love my faith. The expansiveness. The history. The consistency.

But my personal experience of being a Catholic has been anything but huge and expansive. The Catholic Church, as I know her, is very small. Very tight-knit. Today's news demonstrates just that. My entire facebook feed is filled with nothing but Catholic friends commenting on Pope Benedict's news. Prayers for him. Pictures of him. Status updates about how proud we are to be Catholic. Friends who live all over the country-hundred of miles away from me-are united today in one thing. And it makes me feel so close to them.

Being Catholic is like having an instant connection to fellow Catholics. Because of our faith, Ted and I have never had a hard time making wonderful, life-long friends wherever we go. We just seek out authentic Catholics-and friendships are formed. When you meet a fellow Catholic-you know you are meeting someone who shares your faith in Christ, your understanding of the role of Mary and the Saints, your love for the Mass and the Eucharist, your respect for all human life, your reverence of sex, and your admiration for the Holy Father. My most cherished friendships are hinged on this fact-that we belong to the same Church. That we are members of this same, small family.

The internet and social media definitely have something to do with it. It connects Catholic across the world in a way that has never before been possible. It's only because of social media that I know Bonnie and was able to participate in the

[miraculous healing of her son](#)

. When her son was stillborn and came back to life after being dead for 61 minutes, she asked everyone she knew to pray for the intercession of Fulton Sheen-a great American priest from her diocese. I printed out the prayer she wrote and taped it to my desk at work. And I prayed. And I hoped for a miracle-even though I doubted one would happen. But a miracle

did

happen. And because of our prayers-because of

my

prayers-Bonnie's son is healed and Archbishop Sheen is currently in the process to be declared Blessed (one step before Saint). The Saints may seem so far out of reach-so "famous" in the world of Catholicism. But they became saints from the prayers of very ordinary Catholics-just like myself. And this connection that I now have to a great man becoming a Saint-reaffirms to me that our faith is so small. So close.

It may seem from the outside that our faith is too big to be close and personal to individual Catholics. Little old me in Florida and the great big Pope all the way in Rome. But even that chasm is crossed with the many friendships I have with holy Catholics. In 2005, I had the opportunity to meet then Archbishop Burke in St. Louis. I kissed his ring and was introduced to him by my cousin who was a seminarian at the time. Ted had the opportunity to meet him a year later during his cousin's confirmation. A friend of mine is still in communication with now Cardinal Burke all the way in Rome because of his work with the Church in St. Louis. Hannah's godfather was ordained a deacon by him in Rome a few years ago. And although we've never met him, we have another funny connection to Cardinal Dolan, the popular head of the USCCB. Cardinal Dolan's parents bought Ted's house when Ted was four years old and moving into another one.

We were thrilled when these good and holy man were elevated to become Cardinals of the Church. Cardinals-meaning they will be among those electing the next Pope! Even with the possibility that they could become Pope themselves!

The Cardinals are not just far away figures, men in funny hats using an outdated system of white and black smoke to choose the next Pope. They are real men. Two of them-especially-are very real to me. And this connection, however small, that I have to Rome and the upcoming election makes me feel like I really matter to this Church.

I know that I matter. I know that we all do. Because the Catholic Church is the Church that Christ founded so many years ago when he gave Peter the keys to the Kingdom. It is the single greatest blessing of my life to be a part of this Kingdom. To be a Catholic and be surrounded by other Catholics. To belong to this personal, close-knit, and very small faith.

This contribution is available at <http://morelikemary-morelikeme.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-catholic-church-is-small.html>
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The all sufficient Sacrifice of Christ [at Washed, Sanctified and Justified...]

You said,

You can attempt to twist Scripture all you want to justify a pagan sacrifice that is meaningless.

1. I don't see any twisting of Scripture
2. The Mass is not a pagan sacrifice.
3. The Mass is full of meaning. All of God's plan of salvation for mankind is revealed in it. Because in it is revealed His love for mankind, Jesus Christ.

The Mass is not a propitiatory sacrifice

Yes, it is. Propitiatory means to "put an end to" or "wash away" sin. That is precisely what the Mass does. In the Mass, the Blood of Christ is applied to our sins and washes them away.

The Mass is our Passover feast. Because Christ is our Passover:

[1 Corinthians 5:6-8](#)

King James Version (KJV)

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Perhaps you refuse to keep the Feast. But we don't.

and does nothing but deny, denigrate, disparage, dishonor and DISANNUL the benefits of the ONE, ALL-SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE OF CHIST ON THE CROSS!

On the contrary, it is in the Mass that the benefits of the all sufficient Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is applied to our souls. If you choose to believe.

If you choose to deny, denigrate, disparage, dishonor and disannul the Mass, then Christ died in vain for you:

[Hebrews 10:25-31](#)

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

God always required the shedding of blood for sin. We see this from the fall in the Garden when Adam and the woman could not cover their nakedness of sin by any self-effort (as with leaves). For God to cover them with coats of skins there had to be the shedding of blood of spotless animal/s (pointing to the spotless Lamb of God, Jesus).

True.

That the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world does not mean that the sacrifice had been made at that time.

Who said that it had?

If it had, then: (1) Jesus would have had to have had a body prepared Him by the Father—being already become the seed of the woman [virgin born of the Holy Ghosty], (2) suffered and (3) died thousands of years before His crucifixion.

Steve nowhere made any such remark, so that part of your objection is without any foundation.

What Steve did say, which I thought was Protestant doctrine, is that the grace which Christ poured out from the Cross is applied to all in all of time. Whether it be before the Sacrifice or after. From Adam to the future which we have not yet arrived. Without the Sacrifice of Christ, no one's sins would be forgiven. This is why we depict Christ on the Cross (

[1 Corinthians 1:23](#)

). And this is why we believe it is an eternal Sacrifice.

No sacrifice prior to the Cross could take away sins and there is none thereafter that can take away sins.

Who said there was? Did you not understand that the Eucharist is the self same sacrifice that took place on Calvary?

Here is what Protestants miss and don't understand. And the reason they don't understand is because they don't understand the Scriptures.

In the Old Testament, we learn that Sacrifice is not simply the slaughter of the victim. Sacrifice is also the offering of the Victim. And Sacrifice is also the consuming of the Victim.

Christ takes care of the first two aspects of His Sacrifice. We participate in the same Sacrifice by consuming the Passover. Have you not read in Scripture?

Exodus 12

King James Version (KJV)

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, 2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. 3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: 4 And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: 6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. 7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. 8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. 9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. 10 And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

READ [in context] and CONSIDER WELL:

Excellent advice which you should take. We understand Scripture in the manner which Scripture advises:

[1 Corinthians 2:14](#)

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

[2 Corinthians 3:6](#)

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

The first thing that Protestants did wrong with regards to understanding the Word of God is to reject the Traditions of Jesus Christ. The Mass being one of them. These Traditions predated the New Testament Scriptures. And it is upon these Traditions that the New Testament is based. That is why, when you read the Scriptures, you don't recognize the Traditions that are there illustrated.

Let us go over these in context.

Heb:9:22: And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. God's word emphatically says that there is no remission [of sins] without the shedding of blood. Roman Catholicism teaches that the Mass is a bloodless sacrifice and therefore it cannot be a propitiary one for the remission of sins.

Not true. The actual word used is, "unbloody". Not "bloodless". The verbiage is thus:
1369Through the ministry of priests the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is completed in union with the sacrifice of Christ the only Mediator, which in the Eucharist is offered through the priests' hands in the name of the whole Church in **an unbloody and sacramental manner until the Lord himself comes.**

The words, "unbloody" and "sacramental" are united with the word "and". Which means that they are together. Sacramental means "mysterious". It is the mystery which existed from the foundation of the world:

[1 Corinthians 2:7](#)

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

We believe that the wine becomes the Blood of Christ. Therefore, Blood is involved. But it is not visible to the eye of flesh. By faith alone does one discern this Blood of Christ in the Cup of Salvation:

[1 Corinthians 10:16](#)

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

[1 Corinthians 11:27](#)

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

Therefore, the Blood of our Lord is consumed in the Eucharist and that is why it is propitiatory for our sins. Where do you get the Blood of Christ which you claim washes away your sins, since you deny the Eucharist?

Now, let's look at your verses in context.

Heb:7:27: Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

True. But if that means that Christ no longer offers Himself to the Father, why is the Lamb standing in heaven as though slain?

[Revelation 5:6](#)

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Heb:9:12: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Well, He did. How does this contradict the Mass. It is because He did that we can celebrate the Mass.

Heb:9:26: For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Heb:9:27: And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

This also does not speak against the Mass, but confirms it.

Heb:10:10: By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Yes. Once for ALLLLLLLLLLL. That includes us. And the benefits of the Sacrifice of Christ, are applied to us, in the Mass.

Rom:6:9: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10: For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Excellent! It is Protestants who accuse us of killing Christ over and over. But we don't believe that at all. We simply obey His Word and "do this in remembrance" of Him. We "re-present" the once for all sacrifice upon the altar as He commanded. Yes, we have an "altar". It is the Table of the Lord. But it is an altar of Sacrifice:

[Hebrews 13:10](#)

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

1Pet:3:18: For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: The payment for the sins of the world required not only the physical suffering at the hands of men and on the Cross, but required Jesus to suffer the equivalent of eternal separation from the Father...

Hm? One thing which that verse does not say is anything about the Mass.

However, what kind of weird heresy are you teaching there? What does that mean? *“but required Jesus to suffer the equivalent of eternal separation from the Father”*....

Huh?

You don't believe that the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the Cross is eternal, but you believe He is eternally separated from the Father?

Mt:27:46: And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Mk:15:34: And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Jesus is not there accusing the Father of forsaking Him. If you knew and understood the Scripture, you would know that Jesus is there calling to mind the prophecy of the Suffering Servant from the Psalm. It is the first verse of Psalm 22:

Psalm 22

King James Version (KJV)

1My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?....

Read the whole thing if you are not familiar with it. Jesus is letting the Jews know that His Crucifixion was prophesied, long ago.

...whereby He was suffered the wrath of God and was bruised (eg. Isaiah 53).

Still nothing which can possibly be construed to be in contradiction with the Mass.

Jesus had to suffer the equivalent of spiritual death (separation from God in suffering and torment—being forsaken) as well as physical death and then be raised again for our justification.

No He didn't. Jesus was never forsaken or separated from the Father. This is your teaching which you are reading into the Scriptures because you don't understand the Word of God.

Rom:4:25: Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. How many times does the Holy Spirit have to tell you through Scripture that Jesus was offered ONCE for the sins of the world?

Only once. How many times does Scripture have to tell you that you apply the grace of His Sacrifice on the Cross to yourself by consuming His Body and Blood in the Eucharist?

And Scripture says that if any sacrifice representative of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross could have taken away sins, then Jesus would have had to have suffered often since the foundation of the world.

But the Eucharist is not "representative" of Christ's sacrifice. It is Christ's sacrifice.

The Mass and the Catholic priesthood are meaningless

The Mass is our remembrance of Christ's entire life.

The Eucharist is Christ's re-presentation of His Sacrifice upon the Cross at Calvary.

The Catholic ministerial priesthood, is the ordination of men who are completely dedicated to Christ as is suggested in Scripture:

[1 Corinthians 7:32](#)

But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

except for holding people in bondage to a false sacrificial system

The false system of worship is the one you are proposing. The Scripture is very clear that it is in the breaking of the Bread, the Eucharist, that Jesus Christ is revealed:

[Luke 24:35](#)

And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

and good works for salvation

This is the main teaching of Scripture from one end to the other. St. Paul teaches:

[Galatians 6:6-8](#)

6Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

That explicitly teaches that we are justified by works and not by faith only.

Here, lets go through it together.

[Galatians 6:6-8](#)King James Version (KJV)6Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

If you read the previous 5 verses, this is a reference to Confession. St. Paul is saying, if you have sinned, you need to go to the Priest and confess your sin. But this has nothing to do with this discussion. I included this verse in order not to be accused of leaving anything or posting out of context.

7Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Here St. Paul states the overall adage. In more common language, our actions will result in consequences. If we do good, good will come of it. If we do evil, evil will come of it.

8For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

Now, St. Paul is more specific and explains what he has said in verse 7.

He that soweth to his flesh.

To me, that means the one that acts selfishly.

shall reap corruption.

To me, that means that individual will be condemned to “rot” in hell.

but he that soweth to the Spirit.

The Spirit, in this case, is a reference to the Law of the Spirit. Which is the Law of Love and therefore this is a person who acts with love towards his neighbors.

reap life everlasting.

To me, “live everlasting” means heaven.

St. Paul is here teaching salvation by works and not by faith only. One who sows good deeds will reap life eternal.

when salvation is all of grace through faith in Christ and His finished work alone.

That does not seem to be the case. Read also

[Matt 25:31-46](#)

. The sheep are rewarded for well doing. Just as again it is confirmed in

[Rom 2:7](#)

and

[2:13](#)

. You can actually see this teaching throughout the Scriptures, Old and New Testament.

If you continue to follow these false doctrines you will die in your sins.

I’m afraid it is the other way around.

1. It is you who follow false doctrines. Here, I’ll show you and exceptionally blatant one which you have just mentioned. Scripture nowhere says anything about faith “alone” except to decry its efficacy for salvation:

[James 2:14](#)

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

[James 2:24](#)

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

It is you who follow false doctrines. It is you who will die in your sins if you don’t reject them and come to the Fullness of the Truth which is only taught in the Catholic Church.

[Ephesians 3:10](#)

King James Version (KJV)

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by

the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Works and grace cannot be mixed!

Works are grace.

Rom:11:6: And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Well, since you have taken this out of context, you simply post one verse. But in order to understand it correctly, you must post a great deal, both from the Old and the New Testaments.

Lets begin. Why does he say, “no more of works”? Have you not read in Scripture where Jesus says:

[Matthew 20:1-3](#)

King James Version (KJV)

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

To what is Jesus here referring? To the Jews. The Jews made a contract with God. They had an agreement with God. Have you not also read in Scripture?

Exodus 19

King James Version (KJV)

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. 7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. 8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

In essence, the Old Covenant of the People of God through Moses with God, is a labour contract. They keep the works of the Law, God saves them.

But it is no longer of works. It is now of grace. Does that mean that there are no requirements. There remain the Ten Commandments:

[John 14:21](#)

King James Version (KJV)

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

And Jesus has added the Sacraments:

[Mark 16:16](#)

King James Version (KJV)

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

That is what St. Paul means, no longer of works.

Old Testament. Do good deeds all your life. Maybe God saves you at the Judgement.

New Testament. Do good deeds meet for repentance. Wash away your sins calling on His name in Baptism. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Walk upon Mount Sion with the Saints.

Romans 4, below, is actually a confirmation of the doctrine of faith AND works. But your tradition has twisted the Scriptures beyond recognition, therefore you don't understand what you are reading.

[Romans 4: 1](#): What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? 2: For if Abraham were justified by works,

First off, the Church does not teach justification by works "alone". But by faith and works.

And that is only a "manner of speaking". Because in reality, we are not justified by faith and works. But those who do the works of God are justified in His eyes.

[Romans 2:13](#)

King James Version (KJV)

13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Do you understand? We don't justify ourselves by faith or works. God justifies those who obey Him and do the works of the Law. God justifies. We don't.

**1994 Justification is the most excellent work of God's love made manifest in Christ Jesus and granted by the Holy Spirit.....
he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.**

That is true. And it is again, the Teaching of the Church. That is, in fact, why works are so important:

[Philippians 2:11-13](#)

King James Version (KJV)

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

We work out our salvation because it is God working through us.

If we are not doing good works then God is not in us.

3: For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

This is an awesome Scripture which you have to follow throughout the pages of the venerable book in order to understand its true meaning. Study and show yourself approved! These words were first stated by Moses in

[Genesis 15:6](#)

. And they are explained in the book of St. James.

[James 2: 21](#) *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Did you notice that? The words, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works,....”

Was that by works or by faith? By works. When? When did this take place?

“when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”

But you object? Pull up any Bible that you want, there it is in black and white. He was justified by faith AND WORKS.

You still object? Then explain this. If Abraham was justified by FAITH ALONE in

[Gen 15:6](#)

, or at anytime, why was he not justified back in

[Genesis 12:1-5](#)

? Because, you see, that is when St. Paul says is his first recorded action in faith.

[Heb 11:8](#)

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

So, then, if Abraham were ever justified by faith alone, it should have been in Genesis 12. But since he first had to obey God's commands and thus add works to his faith and thereby make his faith perfect, he was not justified by faith alone.

As you can see, Protestant theology has taken that verse completely out of context. But it is necessary that they do so in order to confound the populace. Because it is true that the Reformation stands or falls with the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And that doctrine never had legs. Therefore, they must confuse and contort the Scriptures in order to keep you in bondage to their lies.

4: Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

Again, this is a reference to the Jew. Him that worketh. The Old Covenant. But reckoned of grace is about the Sacramental System which Christ installed. Wherein, we, the laborers who were found late in the evening, are paid the same coin. We are saved in this life and walk with the Saints on Mount Sion.

And it is in the Sacraments, that we are justified by faith APART FROM WORKS. Baptism is the work of God. Not of man. Burn that into your brain. Justification, the washing away of man's sins, is done in Baptism. No man can do that. God alone can do that.

5: But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

That is us. We who believe in Christ and obey His every word:

[Hebrews 5:9](#)

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

We are saved according to our faith. A faith which is expressed in works:

[Galatians 5:6](#)

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Let me explain further. We are saved ACCORDING to our faith. Which is expressed in works. But we are neither saved by our faith or by our works. Except in a manner of speaking. Because without either or both, we are not saved. God, in His mercy, saves those who by their faith act out in love.

6: Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 7: Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

King David is one of the circumcision. And he is making reference to one specific incidence in his life. His adulterous affair with Bathsheba and resulting murder of her husband. David repented. God forgave David. But all David did was ask forgiveness through God's representative. Yeah. Just like we do in the Sacrament of Confession. God made his repentance known to the Prophet Nathan. And it is Nathan who advised him of God's forgiveness.

Therefore, this confirms that this is a reference to the Sacraments. God washing away our sin, in the action of the Holy Spirit, when we repent of our sins before the priest (

[Heb 13:17](#)

).

9: Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. 10: How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

He is still explaining the same idea. The Sacramental idea. David represents the circumcision. But the New Covenant now includes the Gentiles. The uncircumcision. Abraham was not yet circumcised and had not yet offered Isaac upon the altar when his righteousness was **first** mentioned.

I highlight the word, first, because justification is a process. And apart from his works, Moses, inspired of the Holy Spirit, declares that Abraham is just in the eyes of God.

Abraham was called out of Ur in Gen 12. By faith, he obeyed.

He was first declared righteous in

[Gen 15:6](#)

And his righteousness was tested and confirmed in Gen 22.

That's a process. Not a one time event.

11: And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

This is a reference to us. We who come from the pagan and gentile nations. He is our father also because God made the Covenant with him before he was circumcised. Circumcision was a sign of the Covenant. But God had declared him righteous before he was circumcised. And he was circumcised because of his righteousness.

12: And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. 13: For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14: For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: 15: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

We need to look at Scripture more closely to see what St. Paul means here:

[Genesis 26:5](#)

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

The Commandments had not yet been written in stone when Abraham obeyed God's commandments. Obviously, then, the Commandments existed although they were not written on a physical media. The Law has always existed. But it is in the heart of man.

That is what he means by, "where no law is". If the law did not exist, God would not have destroyed the world in the Flood.

So, what does St. Paul mean in this verse? He means that the Jews kept the law BY FAITH. The Commandments are there to test the faith of man. This is why they continue to be essential to the Faith of Christ. People who do not keep the Commandments, have no faith in Christ.

[1 Corinthians 7:19](#)

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of

God.

Therefore all who are of Christ, are His by faith. And all who live by faith are the seed of Abraham. That is what St. Paul is saying. Jew or Gentile, who keeps the Commandments because of their faith, is a child of Abraham, a child of the promise.

16: Therefore it is of faith,

There, you see. That is the conclusion to which we must arrive. It is of faith. Those who keep the Commandments do so, of faith. But there is more to that verse, so I only took it apart so you could see the conclusion of the previous idea. It also begins a separate idea which I will explain.

16: Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace;

You see, faith is the first grace which we receive. It is the prevenient grace of God, which we receive without any merit of our own.

to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Which confirms what I said above.

17: (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Remember the verse that says, “justifieth the ungodly”. That is what it is referring to, “quickeneth the dead”.

18: Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19: And being not weak in faith,

Being not weak in faith, what did he do? Did he say, “Oh, I know you can do it God!” No. He, himself, entered into his wife in the physical, matrimonial sense and they bore a son. Even though they were both well beyond their child bearing years.

he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: 20: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21: And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

There, you see? By his strong faith, he acted. He worked.

22: And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

And so, St. Paul has also explained that verse to you. By faith, he worked and THEREFORE, it was counted to him for righteousness.

23: Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24: But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; 25: Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

And St. Paul continues. It was not written for Father Abraham alone. But for us, that we, acting in faith, may be made just in the eyes of God.

Eph:2:8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Repent, cry out to God for the free gift of salvation and come out of that false, idolatrous system unto eternal life.

Why'd you leave out verse 10?

[Ephesians 2:10](#)

King James Version (KJV)

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Now, ask yourself. Are we created in Christ Jesus when we are justified? Or are we created in Christ Jesus when we are born? Or when we are first conceived? What does Scripture say?

[John 1:3](#)

King James Version (KJV)

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

That means us. We were all made by Christ from the first moment of our existence. And we were all made to keep the Commandments of God. The Commandments are the works which existed from the beginning of time which God made that we should walk in them.

Rom:10:9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Amen! Here's a different version of the same teaching. It is directly from the mouth of Our Lord.

[Mark 16:16](#)

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In love,

May you also receive these admonitions as they are intended. In love,

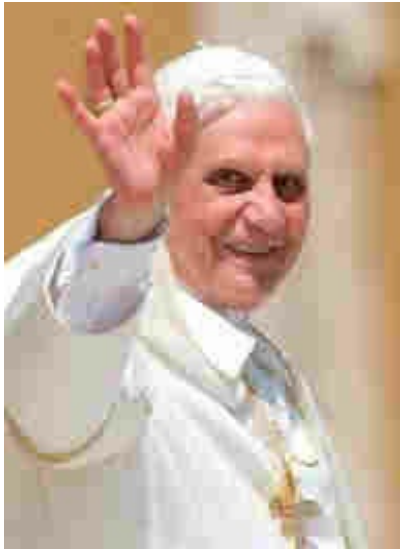
Sincerely,

De Maria

This contribution is available at <http://washedsanctifiedandjustified.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-all-sufficient-sacrifice-of-christ.html>
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Pope Benedict XVI's retirement [at A write a day can keep the writer (relatively) sane]



One thing that keeps flicking through my mind with the announcement of Pope Benedict's retirement is "What a German thing to do!".

Keep in mind that I have been around Germans in America since 1986. Keep in mind that I have been living in Germany for almost a year. One thing I have come to know is that Germans are so pragmatic. If something is not working, they *will* fix it. If someone is not doing something correctly, in their eyes, they will say something about it in clear, succinct wording! And, if a German can no longer do something in the right way, the way it should be done, he or she will no longer do it.

So, if Pope Benedict prayerfully assessed his ability to be the Pope, and decided that he no longer had the physical or mental capability to perform the position's duties in the proper way...well, of course, he would have to retire. What else is a good German to do? I mean, it is no easy thing to be Pope!

He has been looking increasingly frail. I have been a little worried about him sometimes. So, this retirement of this wonderful Pope is not totally shocking to me. A bit surprising, yes. But what's a good German to do, after all? Either do the job right, or don't do it at all. Richtig, Papst Benedikt? Vielen Dank!

Sackcloth and Ashes [at Garden of Holiness]

One of the nice things about having a blog is that you get to stand on a soap box any time you get an urge to string more than 140 characters together. So, I'd like to take a moment to pretend all the network and cable media are out there listening so that I may educate them about what they either do not know, don't care to know, or pretend not to know: the Catholic Church is not a political entity or a democracy. It is neither a denomination nor a bunch of sinless saints either, though that last one is something it really ought to be.

No, the Church, most closely, is a family, a big one. The members, past, present, and future are in various stages of sanctity from the most depraved sinner who refuses to step foot in the door, to the grossest hypocrite enthroned in the pew front and center, to the saintly old lady offering her sufferings unnoticed from the back pew.

Like any large family we squabble. This one with the beam blinding him wants to take the mote out of that one's eye. You know how it goes. Some of us are best buddies, some of us best enemies, and some of us just can't stand sitting in the same car with others of us, much less the same pew. "His politics are touching me!"

The only thing we have in common is Christ, the Eucharist. Well, Him and sin. We all fall short in some way and we all need Him. I guess that makes three things we have in common. But that's it.

I forgot the other Sacraments. We have Baptism in common and Marriage, Confirmation, Last Rites, Holy Orders, and Confession. Some of us really need to make that list way more common, but I digress.

We don't even speak the same language, aside from Latin, so it really is hard for us to have a decent conversation across the dinner table or the Altar. Who needs it anyway? We go to Mass to hear, not to be heard, so really, that's not as big a problem as it could be.

Our biggest problem is ourselves, that "falling short" business. Our second biggest problem is that whole "bear wrongs patiently" injunction. Nobody but a saint could manage that with people like *

insert name here

* around.

Oh. Right. Sainthood. Holiness. That's what we're supposed to be shooting for. That's that mark we keep on missing.

Which brings us to today. It's that time again, time for repentance. It's time to fast, rend our garments, get all ashy and penitent. Yes, my sweet Evangelical friends, of course we could do this

any time and on our own initiative just like David did. We can also do it when the Powers That Be call us to do it just like Nineveh did. Or we could do it this way, too, the way most of us are much more likely to do it, just like our elder brothers and sisters, the Jewish faithful, do each year, we can be called to a scheduled and seasonal ritual of repentance.

Which brings us to Mass and Ashes today and you, my usual audience of people who read to the last paragraph or so. You're used to endurance, so this season may just be your kind of thing. This year it you may be called to offer up your regular seat and parking space to someone new showing up for their Ashes. You may be called to offer up the knee jerk response of jerks just because our faith happens to be in the news. And hardest of all you may even be called to give up a gentle and faithful Papa to ill health and old age long before you are ready.

It's going to be a long haul this year. We've got a lot to offer this year. Might as well get to it because it seems that now is a very acceptable time, like it or not.

This contribution is available at <http://gardenofholiness.blogspot.com/2013/02/sackcloth-and-ashes.html>
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A Beginner's Guide to Praying [at Catholic & Crunchy]

One of my favorite things to do these days is to pray. I know that makes me sound like a brown noser, but you don't know the past struggle I've had with prayer! Most of my life, I just did the typical pray-on-Sunday, before dinner, sometimes before bed praying. When I went off to college and even after, my prayer life was almost non-existent. I still attended church (though not nearly as regularly as I wish I had), and that was about the only time I actually talked to God. So when I began my reversion, one thing I knew was that I wanted to revamp my prayer life and get closer to God. I wanted to be able to talk to Him! I was really intimidated by the idea of trying to have this prayer life that I'd never had... I didn't really know how to get there. I felt like I only saw extremes. People were either like me, or they were soooo pious and I felt that was unattainable.

Now, I pray a lot, and most of the time it doesn't even register as prayer. It's just me and God talking, and I will have days where I think I'm *still* not praying enough (really, will we ever be?), but then I have to stop and think of all the conversations I have with God throughout the day that don't feel like they "count", but most certainly do. So how did I get from a once a week pray-er to someone who loves it and it comes naturally for? Well, I have to say it didn't come naturally at first. Just like anything else, I had to build prayer habits. Without them, I don't think anything would have stuck, and certainly wouldn't have grown into the prayer life I have today. If you're looking to step it up a notch, or are even starting out from scratch in this department, hopefully the efforts and steps I took will be helpful to you. I would say it took about a year for my prayer life to completely transform with some hard work and lots of encouragement from people further on the path than I. These tips shouldn't all be used at the same time. If you find certain ones helpful, try doing one at a time until it is routine. Then you can add another. The best way to overwhelm yourself and give up is to try too much all at once!

Tips to Build a Robust Prayer Life

Starting Out

- A lot of people I know say that when they were little, they were told to say a Hail Mary any time they heard sirens. I can't recall when I started this, but I would say sometime within the last year. The idea being, of course, that you are praying for whoever is in need of those sirens and whoever is providing the public service to that person. It's not necessarily routine (because hopefully you aren't hearing sirens multiple times a day or even daily!), but can be a great reminder to pray for others. If you have children, tell them about this. They probably won't let you forget it!

- Along the same lines, pray for the souls in purgatory when you pass a cemetery. You can either pray for ALL souls or specifically the souls in that cemetery... or it may remind you to pray for the soul of a loved one. If it's not a Catholic cemetery, it's likely that those souls could use a few extra prayers (though I know our cloistered brothers and sisters are praying fervently for them)! There is a cemetery on my way to work and every time I see a new tent up, it reminds me to pray for all the souls.
- Lent is coming up, as you are probably well aware. What a great time to commit to more prayer! You don't have to give something up; you can instead add something that will bring you closer to God. Most churches give out free Lenten devotionals. If yours doesn't, I bet you can find one online (let me know if you need help!). A great way to build habit is by committing to daily prayer during Lent. They say 30 days makes a habit, so you will be ahead of the game!

Lent



- The key to me for someone just starting out is to pick one or two times of day that you will always pray... ALWAYS. After a month or two of doing it, it will be complete habit and you will actually miss it if you skip a day. I don't mean miss it as in, "Oops, I forgot!". That will happen, but you'll actually begin to miss the quiet time with God. You could do something like pray at wake up and bed time, or meals. Make it something easy to remember!
- Once that has become a habit, add to it. You can do this as much as you want, and as fast or slow as you want. You will find that after a while (and be patient!) that you won't have to consciously think about these prayer times because you will be in conversation with God throughout the day anyway. But you need the routine to get yourself to a place where you are naturally and frequently praying.
- Work on praying with your spouse and children. If you are single, you may see if there is a friend or two who will pray for you. The more you normalize it (rather than saving it for something you do in private), the more you are likely to become used to it, do it often, and even enjoy it!
- Build confidence in praying 'free style'. As Catholics, we rock recited prayers. And that's ok... good even! But free style praying is important too because it is in that that you will *converse* with God instead of just talking *to* him. My husband, having a Protestant upbringing, is very good at this. In fact, it's still something I struggle with and lean on him for. I can talk to God all day in my head, but it's harder when it's out loud. That's ok! Start with whatever makes you most comfortable. Ideally, you'll be doing some of both anyways.

- Get to adoration. I will be honest. I feel bad saying this, but I used to feel pulled to go to adoration, but really felt like it was a chore. Now I find myself missing and craving it! Adoration is ideally spent with your mind totally open to God, but it takes a while to get there. I'm not there yet! Of my hour, I try to commit 20 minutes to that, and the other 40 is either spent saying the rosary or reading the Bible or other religious material. Back to the point though, adoration is a great way to increase your prayer life. If you are a mom, you might think about starting a kids adoration hour so you can have the opportunity to go and not worry if your kids are a little loud! You don't have to have an assigned hour to go. We usually go on random Friday nights, but not weekly.



- Speaking of adoration, get out of your comfort zone. Have you ever been to Taize Prayer? I had never heard of it until last year, but now I am hooked. At the church that does it locally, the church is dark, with tons of candles on the floor of the altar and a big wooden cross in the middle. There is lots of beautiful, soul stirring chanting. Oh man, it gives me goosebumps just thinking about it. Experiencing things like that can really shake up your prayer life because it's so different from how we normally pray. I'm sure there are other awesome prayer services out there that I don't even know about!



- One of my favorite things to do that really helps me remember to pray is to offer my day up to a cause, person, group of people, or situation. I don't do this daily, but usually when I know I'm going to have a tough day. Once I've identified what I'm offering the day up for, I find

myself thinking about that every time I get frustrated. Instead of dwelling on my emotions, I say a prayer, and it grounds and centers me almost every time. I would like to add this as a daily thing eventually but, regardless, it is a very good prayer tool!

- Pray the rosary on car trips. We try (we aren't always successful) to pray the rosary or chaplet of divine mercy any time we'll be in the car for more than an hour. You're driving, so there are way less distractions than if you were sitting at home. I've heard moms say that it can really calm the kids down, too! Laudate is my go-to app for the rosary, but there are lots out there. You can also get a rosary CD. That way, you don't have to actually hold the rosary to keep up. Or, your spouse can hold/lead the rosary. Whatever works!

Remember what I said... don't look at these lists and think you have to do it all at once, or work up to doing it all. These are things that have worked for me during different times. Some things I am doing and will probably do for life, while others bridged me to more natural conversations with God. Try out a few of the suggestions and you'll find what works for you. We all come to God in different ways!

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicandcrunchy.com/2013/02/a-beginners-guide-to-praying.html>
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When I opened up the most recent issue of *Catholic Digest*, I was delighted to see several meatless recipes for Lent. I picked this one to make for Ash Wednesday:

BLACKENED TILAPIA WITH FETTUCCHINE ALFREDO

2 teaspoons paprika (*I always use **smoked** paprika*)

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme

1/4 teaspoon cayenne

1/2 teaspoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

4 tilapia filets

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 pound fettuccine (*plus a little gluten free pasta for myself*)

1/2 cup heavy cream

1/2 stick unsalted butter

1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

FETTUCCHINE: Bring pasta pot to boil and add fettuccine. Follow directions for pasta. Drain. Meanwhile, bring cream and butter to a simmer in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Stir in Parmesan cheese. Toss with fettuccine.



TILAPIA: Combine spices in a small bowl. Pat fillets dry. Rub mixture on both sides, covering them well. Heat oil and butter in heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Saute' tilapia for three minutes each side, or until cooked through. Serve over fettuccine alfredo.



Catholic Digest, Feb/March 2013, p. 54-55

Since Ash Wednesday was a fasting day, I had tried to eat only a little for breakfast and lunch so I could enjoy this, which looked delicious in the magazine. I have to admit, in the nearly seventeen years since becoming Catholic, fasting is a huge struggle for me. I plan out in my mind when and what I'm going to eat, and find myself thinking about food for most of the day. My first Ash Wednesday fast was a disaster: I ate so little for breakfast and lunch that by the evening I was famished and grumpy, and it was difficult to prepare dinner. I just about bit Joe's head off when he arrived home from work. After that, for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday I started eating a mid-to late-morning snack instead of breakfast, a regular-sized lunch in the early to mid-afternoon, and a small dinner. That's worked out pretty well, except for the fact that I find myself thinking about when I'm going to get to eat next. (Know what's funny? On those days that are particularly busy and I barely have enough time to grab anything to eat, I'm eating the same amount—maybe less—than when I'm consciously fasting, but I don't get all that hungry and I don't think much about food. Why is that?)

This particular Ash Wednesday the Lord gave me the grace to fast cheerfully (I am so thankful that the Church does allow us to eat a little bit, though!!) and I was able to enjoy preparing and eating this. It was super quick and delicious. I had never prepared anything “blackened” before, and truthfully I think it was less spicy than most blackened dishes would be. I’d never made pasta alfredo before (I have no idea why), and Larry asked me, “Uh, Mom? Can you make pasta like this more often?” I reminded him that the reason he liked it so much is because it’s made with butter, cream, and cheese. But yes, I WILL make pasta alfredo more often!



And guess what? My version looked even better than the picture in the magazine. And it was so quick to prepare that Joe and I had time to attend Mass after dinner. Here’s what I wore:



Moe is preparing dinner tonight; I'm off to the butcher to grab what he needs!



About momn3boys

Don't let the title fool you. If you come to my house for a home-cooked meal, you will likely find one or all three of our boys shoveling their food down like, as my grandmother used to say, they were going to a fire. There is never a dull moment in my house, and my dear, sweet boys have driven me to the confessional more times than I can count. As for me, I'm a convert to the Catholic faith, teaching assistant, book lover, and racing fan. We love the outdoors, movies, food, Indy Car racing, and each other. I have an old, deaf, senile, infuriating, and loveable yellow Lab; and very unruly hair. You're always welcome in our home, but enter at your own risk. Especially the laundry room.

This contribution is available at <http://eatingslowly.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/our-ash-wednesday-dinner-blackened-tilapia-with-fettuccine-alfredo-from-catholic-digest/>
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Why I Love My Spouse/Why I Love God: Deep Conversion, Deep Prayer



yesterday's rose (for the 15th, our monthly anniversary), one of countless roses the hubby has given me

Years ago, I was in one of those moods, and I asked my husband why he loved me. His response? "Because you love me."

I was quite perturbed by his response. "What are you saying, you only love me because I love you? That's the best you can do?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"Well, do you have other reasons for loving me?"

Silence.

"I guess I was expecting something like, 'Because you make me laugh'..."

"Okay, because you make me laugh."

I don't know that I ever got what I wanted to hear. 🙄

As I've matured through the years, I've realized it doesn't matter what his answer is. I know I am loved, period. I know that he loves me — all of me — my insecurities, my inadequacies, my faults, my quirks.

As I've matured, I've found too, that I can respond that way now. I love him because he loves me.

Fr. Dubay writes about how conversion happens....

More commonly the path to truth and moral goodness is gradual.

.... and the motivation behind people's conversions.

That simple fact points to the sheer goodness and beauty of the saints, those who live heroically well what Catholicism is and teaches... Only truth can produce these heroes and heroines with their burning love, radiant chastity, overflowing generosity, exquisite patience and fortitude, all that is lofty and noble. They are prime illustrations of the evidential power of beauty.

Yes, this. I've said before that I'm married to a saint, or an angel. He is indeed a beautiful soul, after 23 years I still don't know what I did to deserve him.

People like Newman who study ecclesiastical history are aware of this symphony of beauty. They are struck with the wholeness, the unity and the inner radiance of divine revelation as it is preserved in the magisterial office established by Jesus himself. Honest intellectuals seem especially attracted to the coherence, completeness and consistency of this otherworldly phenomenon.

... which made me think of another quote from another saint:

Late have I loved you, o Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace. – St. Augustine

There are many reasons I love God, but I suppose I can't adequately put them into words either. It's not just because he's powerful and almighty and because he's my Creator and my Deliverer and my King... often, I love Him simply because He loves me. He loved me first, and He continues to love me even when I am at my most unlovable.

And herein lies the motivation: I love because there can be no other response. No other response at all to be made, but that I love Him back.

I could probably write volumes on how God has infused the world with Himself, with BEAUTY. My friend, for instance, found God [in a coral reef](#).

In the next few weeks, as part of my Lenten journey, I will stop and find five beautiful things each

day that speak to me of God's Beauty and Love.

More thoughts on Love, Husbands and Fatherhood:

[Fathers](#)

[Happy Father's Day and A Short Tribute to Two Fathers](#)

[The Forgotten Paternal Instinct](#)

and a couple of threads from our homeschooling forum that I was reminded of as I wrote this post:

[HELP! Marriage Stories of HOPE, Please](#)

[husband as best friend](#)

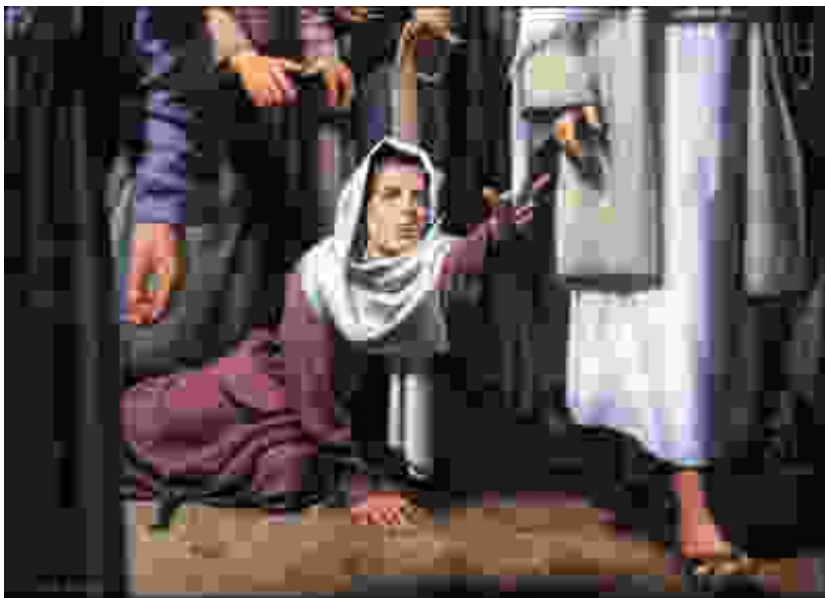
This contribution is available at <http://www.andthesethygifts.com/2013/02/16/why-i-love-my-spousewhy-i-love-god-deep-conversation-deep-prayer/>

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Your faith has saved you [at AJ's life in FOCUS]

Since January I've decided to commit in a deeper way to studying and reading Scripture more frequently and thoroughly. I've started by reading through the Gospel of Matthew very slowly. I've used a few different resources to supplement my reading. One is an app on my phone; iPieta. It is an absolute must have for any Catholic with a droid, iphone, tablet, or ipad, it is amazing what you can find on there!! Specifically I have been using a few items under the section "Bible Commentaries" on the app: the Haydock Bible Commentary and the Catena Aurea. This has really allowed me to dig into Scripture and have a better understanding of what is said and what is happening.



I've been amazed at the ministry of Jesus as I've been reading, especially the times Jesus heals people. One thing that really caught my attention while I've been reading is what He says to them after they have been healed; "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." (Mt 8:13)... "take heart daughter; your faith has made you well." (Mt 9:22)... "According to your faith be it done to you." (Mt. 9:29) ...

I read this and am amazed that just their faith has made them well. What I've read has just been perfect for where I am. We're kind of at an in between point of the semester. The excitement on campus from our students following a National Conference in Florida which 6,000 people attended has worn off in many ways, we begin spring break at the end of the coming week, and there are just over 2 months left of the semester. Lately, I've found that I feel like my faith is being put to the test a bit. Not that I'm doubting anything, just that I feel like I really have to persevere. Which is one of several reasons why I am so glad I've been reading the Bible.

After reading these miracles I found myself thinking about my own faith, not in a comparing type of why, just in a wondering way. It's the same sort of feeling I had while I was in Rome in the fall, where every corner you turned (it seemed) someone had been martyred for the faith. I wondered then and for weeks that followed...would I have that great of faith? To look death in the face and stand up for what I believe knowing that if I did so I would die... I like to think I would, but that takes a lot of faith! I thought the same as I've been reading through Matthew, would I have the courage, strength and faith to approach Jesus and ask Him for something so great? Again, I like to think I would but in the situation I just don't know.

This past Tuesday I went to confession, thank the Lord for this gift! I confessed my sins, the priest gave me some feedback and encouragement, I was given a penance, I stated an act of contrition, and was given absolution - all the key components to receiving grace we don't deserve from God. Before I left the confessional, the priest said, "Go your faith has saved you." I laughed and thought to myself, THANK YOU LORD! It really was a neat moment, a God moment. I returned to the pew and thought how truly blessed I am to not only know and love God, but to accept and seek His love.

Thursday I had another reminder of how small my faith often is when I heard the Gospel proclaimed during Mass from Matthew chapter 7 verses 7-12...

"Jesus said to His disciples: 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish? If you them, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.'"

May we increase our faith this Lenten season and continue to grow closer to Christ as we pick up our crosses and unite our sufferings with His.

This contribution is available at <http://ajgarciavc.blogspot.com/2013/02/your-faith-has-saved-you.html>
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Intimate Preparations [at Amazing Catechists]

“And so I take (my wife) not for any lustful motive, but I do it in singleness of heart. Be kind



enough to...bring us to old age together...” Tobit 8:7

“..Now, gird up your loins and arise...” Jer: 1:17

Which scripture verse more accurately describes how a couple should prepare for the conjugal embrace? Praying for a singleness of heart, without lustful motive...or girding up one’s loins for “war”?

Yet many couples prepare for intimacy by “girding up their loins:” wearing condoms, inserting diaphragms, taking a pill, putting on a patch, having an IUD inserted, undergoing an operation. It seems to me that these couples are preparing more for “war” than for the marital embrace, “protecting” themselves against unwanted pregnancy, “protecting” themselves against their spouse’s fertility.

Compare that to the couples who do not use contraceptives. They are generous in opening their marriage to children, and when necessary, they use Natural Family Planning and abstain in the fertile time. They’re not girding up their loins; they’re not “protecting” each other from an unwanted pregnancy. When they give of themselves in the marital act, it is a total gift, not a partial one.

The question is: How do *you* prepare for intimacy?

Some might answer, “We watch porn.” Others may say, “I make sure my diaphragm is in place,” or “We keep a packet of condoms by the bed.”

And yet...are these really appropriate ways for a couple to prepare for the most intimate act

between husband and wife?

Obviously not.

So how can a couple prepare? Here is a short list of helpful ways:

1. Pray Together

Marital prayer is an ideal way to prepare for intimacy. When marital prayer is frequent, praying before relations becomes a logical extension. The conjugal embrace is itself a prayer. Let's review what makes this act so holy and meaningful. In the marital embrace, with their bodies, husband and wife renew their wedding vows. Becoming one with our beloved spouse is the ultimate spiritual, physical and emotional experience. We become one flesh...so much so that sometimes, nine months later, we must give the representation of that oneness a name.

2. Throw Away the Contraception

No, I'm not asking couples to have as many children as possible. But what I am saying is that for the conjugal embrace to be honest and life-giving, it must be free, total, faithful and fruitful. Natural Family Planning allows a couple to love each other as God loves: freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully. NFP couples chart the wife's fertility signs and, if avoiding pregnancy, abstain in the fertile time. They are not using devices; they are giving themselves fully and they are open to children with each and every act of marital relations. See my previous post on the [Theology of the Body in a Nutshell](#). For more information on NFP, check out my previous post entitled "[Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about NFP.](#)"

3. Healthy Relationship

I know a few couples who fight constantly. These same couples brag that they have a great sex life. Well, they may have a lot of "good feelings" but when a couple is not getting along in their day-to-day life, sex, even 'good' sex, is not going to fix that. What about the husband who treats his wife in a condescending, critical manner, then expects her to be ready and willing to engage in the marital embrace...or a wife who constantly nags her husband, then wants him to be affectionate to her? Communicate with one another; treat each other with kindness, respect and love.

4. No Pornography

Some secular marriage counselors recommend that a couple use porn to "spice up their sex life." Instead of "enhancing" a marital sex life, viewing sexually explicit videos has the potential of destroying a marriage. Blessed John Paul II said: "...the problem with pornography is not that it shows too much of the person, but that it shows far too little." Porn trains people to be selfish about their sexuality, not selfless. It teaches them to think about sex as something they take, not something they give. Any behavior that causes a person to be self-centered or selfish is never good for marriage. And...pornography can be highly addictive. Mary Anne Layden, co-director of the Sexual Trauma and Psychopathology Program at the University of PA's Center for Cognitive Therapy, called porn the "most concerning thing to psychological health that I know of existing today....pornography addicts have a more difficult time recovering from their addiction than cocaine addicts, since coke users can get the drug out of their system, but pornographic images

stay in the brain forever.”

5. Single Candle Light

I enjoy romantic, candlelit dinners with my husband. Well, why not a candlelit conjugal embrace? In the 15th century, it was common for painters to place one solitary lit candle in their paintings to symbolize the presence of Christ. If you have small children or might fall asleep too quickly afterwards, perhaps you can use an electric candle/light...or set an alarm...but be prudent. A simple, solitary light can bring more symbolism to your intimacy. And...it can help put you both in the “mood.”

6. Focus on Your Spouse

“Intense love does not measure; it just gives.” This quote from Blessed Mother Teresa is an ideal quote for marriage. Marriage isn’t all about “me.” It’s about “us.” What are your spouse’s needs? Think of his/her needs in all facets of your relationship. Intimate ‘memos’ bring a couple closer. Notes in your spouse’s lunch, special messages left on his workbench or on her desk, daily texts are all ways to intimately connect during the day and let your spouse know you are thinking of him/her. The important thing is to focus on the other in all things and when it comes time for the marital embrace, this selflessness will follow naturally.

7. We Can Work It Out

When you consider all the day-to-day challenges like children, work, fatigue, family bed, stress and sickness, it’s often a miracle that a couple has the time to engage in marital intimacy at all. The spontaneity of early marriage eventually gives way to planning for intimacy. “Family bed?” Consider another location for the marital embrace. Mom too tired? Perhaps Dad can take the kids out to the park while Mom gets a well-deserved rest after dinner. Dad too stressed? Mom can have a hot relaxing bath waiting for Dad when he arrives home.

Do you want to prepare for the holiest, most satisfying intimate experience possible? Treat your spouse with respect, pray together, focus on your spouse, don’t use porn and be creative in finding time for intimacy.

To celebrate St.Valentine’s Day, I’ve made the Kindle edition of my book, [Come My Beloved: Inspiring Stories of Catholic Courtship](#) FREE on Kindle (Feb. 12-16). To download your copy, click [here](#).

Happy Valentine’s Day!

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My Knight (or Redneck) in Shining Armor (or a beat up pick-up truck) [at Raising Angels]

This evening I picked up nine (yes nine and no not all for me) pizzas. When the lady at the counter put them out for me she asked, "Want to take half now and come back for the other half?"

That would have been a very practical solution. However, I knew that the six other people crammed into that tiny waiting area were looking at me thinking, "SHE's the reason my pizza is not hot and ready in five minutes like promised." Besides, I figured, how heavy can nine pizzas be?

I managed to grab the tower of pizzas with my keys in hand and purse over my shoulder without dropping one single cheesy pie. When I turned to the door, I realized my dilemma. It was not going to be so easy to open that door with the tower of pizzas in my arms.

At that very moment, before I even reached the door to contemplate this problem further, a woman standing next to it held it open for me. "You must be having a party," she smiled. I thanked her profusely and went on my merry way...until I reached my car.

Hmm, I really should have listened to that young lady behind the counter. That's what I was thinking as I so deftly unlocked the back of my car only to discover that I could not pull the door open with the pizzas in my arms. I tried leaning them on the bumper so I could free one arm to pull it but then it wouldn't open because the pizzas were in the way. I tried to pry it open with a finger I could get free while holding the pizzas but one finger does not even budge that back door.

I was seriously contemplating placing the pizzas on the ground (not sure why I felt this would be disgusting as they were actually in boxes and not simply laying in a sloppy mess across my arms), when I heard a voice. "Hey! Do you need a hand?"

I looked up first because I figured on the side of town I was on, the only helpful hand I would get

was from Heaven. Then I heard it again. "You really look like you could use some help."

This time I looked around at ground level because I totally did not want to miss the white knight on his stallion that I was sure was coming to rescue this poor damsel in distress. What I saw instead was what we here Southerners refer to as a redneck. And yes, he was jumping out of his beat-up old pick-up...not off a handsome stallion. Before I could refuse him, and let's face it, how could I possibly refuse him when he had obviously been watching the whole comical this girl has bitten off way more than she can chew scene, he was at my side opening the door for me. He held it while I put the pizzas in the back and then, get this; he closed it for me too.

I thanked him and then stood in total awe as he jumped back into his truck that he had pulled over in the line of traffic just so he could help me. No matter how he was dressed or what he drove, he was a knight all the same to me. In one simple but selfless act, he had saved me.

I took off in a very cheesy smelling car with a big grin on my face thinking about how these simple random acts of kindness had blessed me beyond measure. These people had looked outside of themselves for a moment and had seen me. Without knowing who I was, they placed my needs in front of their own. It had a very powerful effect.

And then I thought, isn't this the way it should be? In fact, isn't this the way it used to be? What has happened to us as a society that such simple acts of kindness blow me out of the water?

I've shared recently about the [prayer](#) either Nelson or I pray over the kids every night, so it won't surprise you to know that these kinds of events also get me thinking about how I can train my children to be people who hold doors open for others. How do I teach them to do random acts of kindness for total strangers with no promise of reward?

I think the answer lies in exactly what happened to me today. When someone held the door for me when I was pushing the double stroller with one hand and holding Mackenzie's hand in the other, I noticed it was almost always a woman...no doubt a mother. I would always thank them and then ask God to allow me to remember what that was like so that when my hands were finally free some day, I could hold the door for someone whose hands were full. When a man offers to carry

something or reach something that I can't, I pray I can raise up sons who will do that for another woman some day.

The way I can teach is by doing it. Children tend to follow our examples. They see what we do and imitate it. When I do something nice for a stranger and my kids are there, we talk about it. I tell them how I knew that person needed something that I could help with and how much I love it when someone does the same for me.

We start by modeling. We continue by teaching. We follow through by training. There is indeed only one of me; however, I am raising four souls. That's quadrupling my opportunities to pay it forward!

So many times we see the big problem so we look for the big, change the world solution. What we forget is that it starts with one. It starts by making a decision to look up once in awhile and notice the people around us. If we're watching, we'll catch opportunities to help.

If we think about how much our actions might bless someone instead of how inconvenient it is to us, we might not change the world. We might, however, change that person. Who knows? That might just be the start of something big.

This contribution is available at <http://raisingangels.blogspot.com/2013/02/my-knight-or-redneck-in-shining-armor.html>

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Unstoppable Force Meets Immovable Object [at St. Joseph's Vanguard]

Bob says:

March 6, 2013 at 9:56 pm

Christ gave to the church pastor-teachers to teach the Scriptures.

Which is Catholic Teaching. We call it Magisterium. Whereas, Protestants teach that anyone who picks up Scripture can start making doctrine. THAT is the fruit of Sola Scriptura.

You may think you follow the teachings of Christ

I know I follow the Teachings of Christ and after many talks with you, I know that you don't. You follow traditions of men.

but your church has doctrines that deny the teachings of Scripture.

Your religion contradicts the Teachings of Christ in Scripture.

No papacy in the Scripture,

Jesus established one Pastor over His flock. We call him, the Pope:

John 21:15-17

King James Version (KJV)

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

no celibate leadership,

Jesus Christ is our model of celibate leadership:

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

no priest forgiving someone of a sin,

It is one of Christ's commands:

John 20:23

Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

2 Corinthians 5:18

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

no prayers to Mary,

Jesus Christ was her little boy. Therefore, if He asked her for life's necessities, what makes you too good to do the same?

no immaculate conception,

Mary is called "Kecharitomene" in Scripture. Meaning that she is always full of grace. And where one is full of grace, there is no sin.

no indulgences,

Luke 11:41

But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

no treasury of merit,

Matthew 19:21

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

no praying to dead to saints,

Luke 16:24

And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

no penance,

Acts 26:20

But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

1 Peter 4:1

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin

no office of priest in the NT church,

1 Timothy 4:14

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

no infant baptism.

Matthew 19:14

King James Version (KJV)

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Acts 16:15

And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Need I go on?

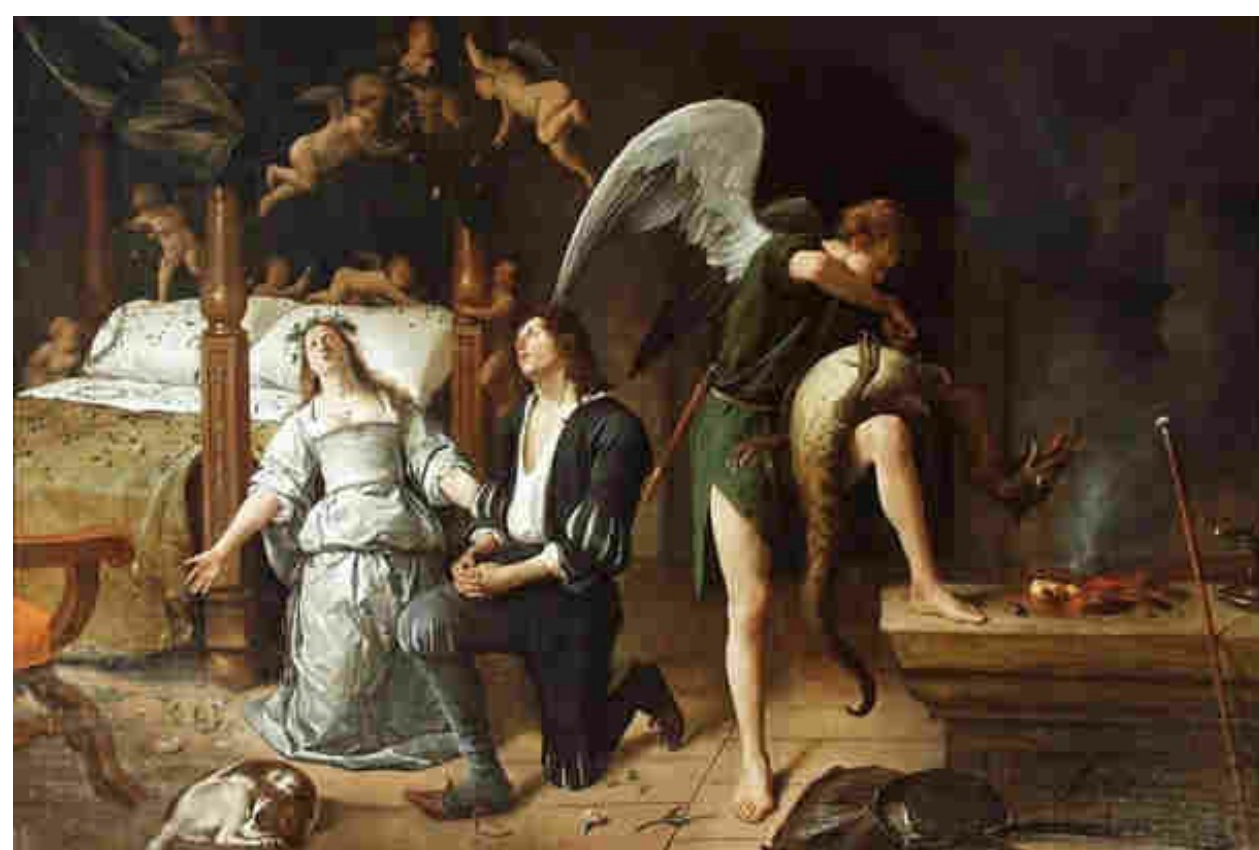
Now, show me Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, contraception, divorce and remarriage, homosexual clergy and bishops approved in Scripture.

This contribution is available at <http://www.devinrose.heroicvirtuecreations.com/blog/2013/03/01/unstoppable-force-meets-immovable-object/>

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Let Us See Whether His Words Be True [at Forget The Roads]



Sarah and Tobias as Raphael binds the demon

This is Part Twenty of my series on the canon of Scripture; [Part One is here](#). The information contained in this post is, in my opinion, material that must be presented when talking to someone who supports the 66-book Protestant canon – it is very, very hard to refute, and it haunts you.... Like the earthquake that occurred at the moment of Christ’s death, it could be some kind of coincidence – *NOT!*

Our Protestant hero has pieced together the evidence that shows that the New Testament is overflowing with allusions to the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament, so much so that the King James Version of the Bible originally contained cross-references to these many allusions. This is another nail in the coffin of the popular Protestant authors’ argument against the possibility of the Apocryphal books being Holy Scripture....

You reach for your great-aunt Lorraine’s Catholic Bible and cautiously begin looking up some of these supposed allusions. You’ve gotten to the point where you won’t take anyone’s word in this matter – you want to see things for yourself. *Where is Sirach, anyway?* Finding it, you compare the Matthew 6 allusion to Sirach 7 – none too impressive. Both passages discourage “vain

repetition” in prayer, not really a blinding flash of insight....

Matthew’s allusion to Wisdom 2:17-22, however, is mind-boggling.

Matthew 27:41-43 reads:

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, ‘He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the king of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now if He delights in Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’

Your Bible’s cross-reference refers you to Psalm 22:7-8:

All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.

Psalm 22 is quite obviously a prophecy of Christ’s suffering, written hundreds of years before the fact, and fulfilled in the book of Matthew – the Psalmist describes how Jesus was mocked and taunted, with the people crying out “Let the Lord rescue him!”

You then read Wisdom 2:12-22 in your great-aunt’s Catholic Bible:

Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings, reproaches us for transgressions of the Law and charges us with violations of our training. He professes to have knowledge of God and styles himself a child of the Lord. To us he is the censure of our thoughts, merely to see him is a hardship for us, because his life is not like other men’s, and different are his ways. He judges us debased; he holds aloof from our paths as from things impure. He calls blessed the destiny of the just, and boasts that God is his Father. Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him. **For if the just one be the son of God, He will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes.** With revilement and torture let us put him to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, ‘God will take care of him.’ These were their thoughts, but they erred; for their wickedness blinded them, And they knew not the hidden counsels of God; neither did they count on a recompense of holiness nor discern the innocent souls’ reward.

*If that is not a prophecy of the suffering of the Son of God, then you’ve never seen one! It is obvious that the chief priests with **the scribes and elders were alluding to TWO prophecies when they taunted Jesus: the prophecy in Psalm 22, and the prophecy in chapter 2 of the book of Wisdom where “the just one” is called “the son of God”!***

You shiver at the sheer beauty of the correspondence of those passages – and yet one of the passages prophesying the suffering of Christ is from an “Apocryphal” book! No wonder the Pharisees 70 years after the establishment of the church decided to toss the Septuagint version of the Bible out the window! Passages like that one from the book of Wisdom made it all too easy for

the Christians to prove that Jesus was the Messiah!!

That's an old dodge – tossing books out of your canon when opponents quote them to prove you're wrong.... Zwingli did that with the book of Revelation, and Luther with II Maccabees....

What is the alternative name of the Apocryphal books again? The “deuterocanonical” books – maybe you'll start thinking of them by that name now. After reading that quote from the book of Wisdom, it's hard to think of them as “Apocryphal” any more.

In fact, you are beginning to wonder if you should rethink the whole subject of the Apocrypha....

[For Part 21, please click here](#)

On the memorial of St. Polycarp

Deo omnis gloria!

This contribution is available at <http://forgettheroads.com/2013/02/23/let-us-see-whether-his-words-be-true/>
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If Only..... [at 8 Kids And A Business]

We're a peculiar bunch, we humans. Most of us never seem to be satisfied with our lot in life. No matter how good or how bad, we instinctively reach out for something more.

As someone who wears many different hats in a 24-hour period, I hate to admit it but I am guilty as charged. If only my kids would do more chores; if only I could land that contract; if only I could finish that lesson plan; if only.....

Recently, a person of advanced age who has great material wealth but failing health wistfully remarked, "if only I had more money, all my troubles would be over." The person was visibly anxious while saying this. I probably shouldn't have been surprised at that statement but it made me pause because it didn't make any sense. Money isn't going to solve the myriad health problems or reverse the aging process. I felt very sad for this person who, in my eyes, was still searching for something more and relying heavily on things of this world to appease an inner restlessness. That the person was an atheist certainly didn't help.

It's a symptom of something larger in society, this restlessness that is so common to most of us. That's why self-help gurus and books, creams and potions that promise magical results and the latest super-food fads are so popular. We think they will satisfy our longing for something more and better.



It seems to me that the real problem is a lack of trust in Providence, and for some people, it's the result of not knowing what Providence is. When I am restless and wanting something other than what I have, it is because I have failed to accept that God is handling things and life is unfolding as He wills. That's not to say that I shouldn't expect my kids to do their chores in a timely fashion or that I should stop working hard. What it means is that I not become anxious when things don't seem to be going the way I planned.

Because it's not all about *my* plans.



“YOU HAVE MADE US
FOR YOURSELF O
LORD, AND OUR HEART
IS RESTLESS UNTIL IT
RESTS IN YOU.”

It would be infinitely more productive to stop searching for external solutions to satisfy our desires. Whatever we think will solve all our problems and make life better isn't out there. The cure for our restlessness lies within our souls. Resolving to place all our confidence in God who holds us in the palm of His hand is the only true answer. “Our hearts are restless,” wrote St. Augustine, “until they rest in Thee.”

Deo Gratias

[linking this to New Evangelists Monthly](#)

This contribution is available at <http://8kidsandabusiness.wordpress.com/2013/02/15/if-only/>
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My Nanny Diary: Lessons in Empathy [at Prints of Grace]



Because I've had lots of experience taking care of children of all ages, I sometimes think that I shouldn't become impatient, tired, exasperated...because I know what to expect, to some extent, and I don't have the responsibility of raising the kids from conception to age 18. I do feel a very strong sense of responsibility being the adult in charge of such precious, dependent, lovable, vulnerable, and impressionable people. I can't think of many more important vocations than being a nurturing, loving parent and/or caregiver.

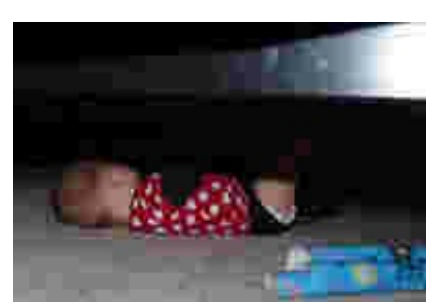


I know that moms and dads often feel worn out, even knowing what to expect, but I think I tend to get in trouble by falling into thinking that because I'm taking care of the kids for a designated amount of time in a day, instead of being responsible for them 24/7 like their parents, that I somehow shouldn't experience any of the same negative emotions, challenges, and such when faced with the natural struggles that ensue with teething infants and tantrum-prone toddlers. Upon closer examination, the notion is quite ridiculous that anyone would be able to endure such situations and circumstances at length without feeling the least bit worn out, tired, confused, exasperated, and/or stressed.



It doesn't really make sense to think that any job will be without conflicts or crises. There will always be trials and days that are more problematic than others. Ultimately, I know that beating myself up for not being Mary Poppins isn't going to help the situation or make me more relaxed. I do know that it's utterly impossible to put everything I've read and learned about children over the years into practice every minute of every day, so at least I've gotten that particular lesson through my head and have removed it from my unwritten childcare goals.

A really big problem is that I tend to discount the fact that, although we don't have children of our own, we do have an awful lot going on in our lives outside of work that requires a great deal of time, energy, work, and such that isn't necessarily part of other people's lives.



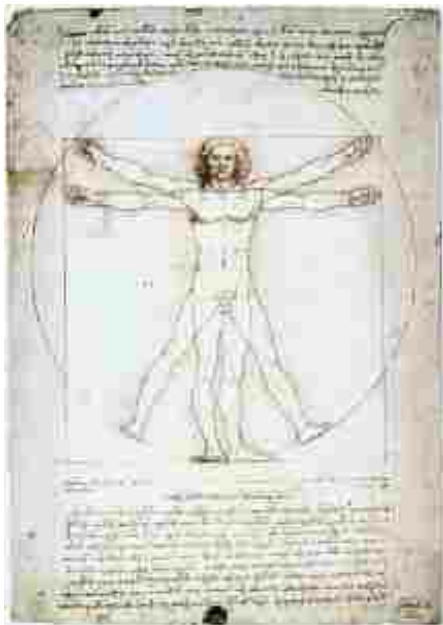
We each have our own crosses, challenges, and difficulties in life, and saying ours are worse than someone else's instead of just being different (while likely trying in other ways) doesn't seem to be wise or very compassionate. We rarely, if ever, know all of the factors contributing to someone's suffering, so who are we to say ours is more significant or deeper? There is something to be said about being grateful for what we're given as well as for the things we don't have to deal with, but that can be done without making light of another person's pain, be it in mind, body, or spirit.

Lord, help us be compassionate to all we meet. We often have no idea of the crosses they are carrying, the attention, love, affection, understanding or the healing they are in need of. Open our eyes and our hearts this Lent so we are aware of the suffering around us and are willing to let You work in and through us to alleviate it. Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://printsofgrace.blogspot.com/2013/02/my-nanny-diary-lessons-in-empathy.html>
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A Theology of Human Sexuality Based on Natural Law Ethics [at Marian Apostolate of the Laity]



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by Jayson M. Brunelle, M.Ed., CAGS

The Church's teachings on sexual morality are supported by the philosophical foundation of natural law ethics, which is a most common-sensical, teleological, goal/purpose-oriented system of ethics, first articulated by Aristotle, adopted by Aquinas, reconciled with Christian theology, and, ultimately, accepted by the Magisterium as likely the most philosophically sound foundation for its understanding and rational explanation of the moral teachings promoted by the Church of Christ. In a nutshell, natural law is an ethical philosophy which is largely based on the human person's understanding of that which is truly perfective of his or her human nature, a nature that he shares with all other human persons, coupled with the reality of the teleological, goal/purpose-oriented nature of human acts. Thus, from a theological vantage point, the moral commands according to which we, as Christians, are expected to live our lives, are entirely rational, purposeful, and spring from the very essence, nature and composition of the human person. Thus, moral actions are those human acts that are committed knowingly and willingly, which are authentically perfective of our nature as human persons, and which are carried out for a specific purpose or goal which, in itself, is morally upright.

Thus, we, as human persons who possess the rational faculty of intellect, are clearly aware that committing any of the seven deadly sins (even if we have not had the good fortune of a basic

training in theology, and, therefore, do not know, explicitly, what the seven deadly sins are by rote memorization) constitutes irrational behavior that will inevitably result in some form of malady, as it is a precept of right reasoning that vice is its own punishment, and virtue, its own reward.

Applying natural law ethics to human sexuality, it is not difficult to see why the Church teaches what it does concerning morally licit sexual activity. First, human persons need to be understood as the body-soul composites that they are. Thus, the truly moral conjugal act constitutes the highest external and physical manifestation of that internal, committed union between husband and wife, who have made a total, complete and exclusive gift of themselves to each other via a reciprocal and public exchange of vows. This union of husband and wife constitutes an authentic “good,” which truly is perfective of the respective natures of the newly married couple. Moreover, this interior commitment of unconditional human love, which, through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, strives to become divinized and raised beyond the purely natural to the supernatural level, must additionally be physically, outwardly and bodily consummated via the conjugal, marital act, which is also, and necessarily, an authentic good, for, as stated above, the human person truly is a body-soul composite.

Human sexuality speaks the language of committed love; for, the spouses, in giving themselves to each other physically, are communicating to each other, via body language, what they have already promised to each other on their wedding day. The conjugal act constitutes the physical, bodily manifestation of the totality of the gift of self that both spouses have made to each other through their exchange of vows. Thus, they give everything they are and have to each other, exclusively, holding nothing back. This is precisely why the Church is opposed to artificial means of birth control. For, the use of such methods of artificial contraception literally puts up a physical barrier, preventing an authentic, true and complete self donation in the physical sense; for persons, as body-soul composite beings, must allow for a complete and unimpeded gift of self not only spiritually, but physically as well. For, it is a fundamental axiom of the Church’s moral teachings that love is fruitful. The human family is truly a reflection of the Divine Family of the Trinity, in that the two, in becoming one, become three; that is, the love between the spouses, not unlike the Divine Love between the Father and the Son, is so real, so metaphysically and ontologically profound, that it actually blossoms into new life that is reflective of the union from whence it emerged. In the case of the human family, the love between the spouses is personified in the person of their child. In the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, which is the Divine Love of God, is the Divine Personification of the Love between the Father and the Son.

This brings me to the teleological purposes for and goals of human sexuality. I spoke earlier about how committed human love, and the consummation of such love via the conjugal act between a married man and woman constitutes an authentic good which is truly perfective of the respective human nature’s of the spouses. Moreover, the conjugal act, to be moral, must be purposeful and/or goal oriented. As it turns out, there are two purposes or goals of committed human love: namely, (1) authentic union, or love, and (2) openness to new life, or procreation. Thus, the *unitive* and *procreative* (love and life) dimensions of human sexuality are the teleological goals that must

remain authentic and intact in order for the conjugal act to be morally licit.

Having said this, it should come as no surprise that any sexual act that is not in conformity with the two-fold teleological purpose of human sexuality as viewed and understood by natural law ethics would not constitute a morally licit human act. Thus, this teleological axiom serves as the sound criterion by which various human sexual practices are deemed either moral or immoral, ethical or unethical. Thus, Sacred Tradition, which is the Living Tradition of the Church, guided and directed, as it is, by the Spirit of God, has located in natural law ethics sound philosophical axioms that shine the natural lights of human reason on the Church's moral theology and confirm the Church in the truth of its teachings, especially as these latter are applied to the ever-changing and evolving world of reproductive science and technology.

Having established the twin-fold criterion by which the morality of various human sexual activities may be assessed, it is now possible to understand clearly why the Church teaches what it does regarding sexual morality. In essence, any human sexual activity that fails to live up to the two-fold purpose and goal of procreation (or a genuine openness to and possibility of new life, which can only be a consequence of sexual copulation between a male and a female of the human species) and union (committed, married love, which, on a purely biological note, releases the hormone, oxytocin, sometimes called the "love hormone," which facilitates an emotional bond amongst the partners), would, therefore, be considered immoral.

Based on this simple and straightforward principle of teleology, much of our secular society's "commonly practised" and "socially acceptable" sexual activities, despite the reality that they are, indeed, commonly practised, socially accepted and even promoted and encouraged as goods to be sought after, are inherently immoral, on account of these activities not meeting that twin-fold, teleological criterion by which the morality of said activities is assessed and ascertained. Examples of commonly practised sexual activities that do not conform to the moral requirements of natural law ethics and, for that reason, are considered by the Church to be objectively immoral are: (1) sexual activity prior to marriage; (2) extra-marital sexual activity; (3) solitary sexual activity; (4) sexual activity between persons of the same gender; (5) intentional arousal of the sexual appetite through the viewing of graphic sexual imagery (intentionally viewing any form of pornography, even if there is no "physical activity" on the part of the viewer as a consequence of having viewed said materials; (6) not keeping custody of the eyes; (7) giving into, and/or entertaining, as opposed to shunning, lustful thoughts.

Yet, any consideration of morality in general, or sexual morality in particular, would be incomplete without at least a cursory treatment of the fundamental and necessary distinction between the objective nature of the act and the subjective culpability of the individual committing the act. Quite often, my mother calls me to ask if something she has done is a mortal sin or a venial sin. While her question presupposes the very real distinction between mortal sin and venial sin, she, not unlike many lay Catholics of her generation, fails to grasp the distinction between the objective gravity of the act and the subjective culpability of the individual committing the act. In reality, she's one of numerous victims of a confusion of theological terminology that was rather popular throughout the pre-Vatican II era. It seems to this author that prior to Vatican II, the good

sisters who taught CCD classes would draw a vertical line down the chalkboard, creating two columns. At the top of the first column they wrote, "Mortal Sins," while the other column was topped off with, "Venial Sins." It seems as though the sisters proceeded to list all of the "mortal sins" in one column, and the less serious, venial sins in the second.

The confusion, in this author's estimation, sprang from an ignorance of the complexity of the psychology of the decision-making process. It seems that the prevailing belief, prior to the Council, was that the only persons who were affected by the impediments to the full exercise of freewill were bona fide, certifiable "lunatics;" that is, persons who were mad and had lost their sanity. Aside from these poor souls, it was believed that everyone always acted with full consent of the will.

Happily, we now possess a much greater appreciation for the complexity of the human psyche, and the reality that neuroticism, one of the "Big Five" personality traits, is a continuum; that is, we're not dealing with an all or nothing situation here, i.e., sane vs. insane. Instead, each person's mental health, and, as a consequence, their ability to act with greater or lesser degrees of freedom, lies somewhere on a continuum. The Catechism of the Catholic Church identifies four impediments to acting with full consent of the will: habit, fear, extreme emotion and external coercion. Thus, if any of these mitigating factors are present, the person is not acting with full consent of his or her will, and, therefore, cannot have committed a mortal sin.

Further, traditional moral theology additionally makes a theoretical distinction between the object of an act, the intention behind the performance of the act, and the circumstances surrounding the act. According to this formula, all three aspects of the act must be deemed "good" in order for the act, as a whole, to be "good."

While I believe that what I have written thus far is, indeed, a fairly accurate reflection of the Church's philosophical and theological understanding of and teachings regarding the issue of sexual ethics and morality, the Church, in its pastoral outreach, is not insensitive to the genuine needs of her members who, from their own phenomenological life experience, and within their deepest selves, experience a real, genuine sexual attraction to persons of their own gender. It cannot be stressed enough that there is absolutely no sin whatsoever in the experience of this sense of attraction (provided it is not indulged or acted upon) for, this is how God has chosen to create certain persons who unmistakably bear His own image and likeness. Being born with a sexual attraction to persons of the same gender is an experience of life that God, in His infinite, inscrutable and unknowable wisdom, has desired for certain persons, not unlike God's desire that one individual be born with blonde hair and blue eyes, and another with a dark skin, brown hair and eyes. Why? Why does anything happen the way it does? Why does God choose as He chooses? These are some of those perennial questions that have baffled and confounded the greatest of human minds, at least during their existence on this planet earth. We, as human persons who possess the spiritual, rational faculties of intellect and will, know so very much and so very little simultaneously. As human persons who are conscious of our own consciousness, aware of our own awareness – this, from a metaphysical and epistemological standpoint, is an absolutely astounding, incomprehensible reality. Moreover, we all, each and every one, possess and grasp

that most fundamental and self-evident moral imperative: do good and avoid evil. One can deny and defy every possible authority with the sole exception of one's own conscience. To one's own conscience one must be obedient, if one is to possess any peace of mind whatever. With this fundamental reality in mind, I shall conclude this brief essay on morality, specifically, sexual morality. For, few moral issues provoke as much controversy and disagreement as those which pertain to the arena of human sexuality, despite what this author believes to be the fundamentally sound reasoning of natural law ethics.

This contribution is available at <http://marianapostolate.com/2013/02/11/a-theology-of-human-sexuality-based-on-natural-law-ethics/>
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Infertility Labor [at This Cross I Embrace]

Between Ash Wednesday and the First Sunday of Lent, I remember praying and telling God that I felt like I wasn't offering enough. The sufferings that are ongoing in our lives, and even the unexpected sufferings, were all quite easy to handle, and I just didn't feel very connected.

And, as if in response to that prayer, Lent just kicked it up a notch.

After a super exhausting and longer-than-anticipated shift at work on Friday, I got pulled over and given a ticket on the way home, then had to rush to get dinner together before Stations (with an additional dose of guilt and reaming from the in-laws for not attending a 9th birthday dinner party for my niece), followed by waking up Saturday at 5:00am to drive 2 hours both ways to an all-day workshop, catching up on phone calls and emails on Sunday and receiving the birth announcement of married-same-time-as-me ex-best friend's 4th baby (yes, fourth... and there are more than 18 months between all of her kids, so this isn't a "pregnancy every year" situation, I've just been infertile that long), I then proceed to wake up this morning to start the work week, shower, go downstairs, all the while bemoaning how exhausted I feel and how dark it is outside (must be raining??)... and while preparing breakfast, notice the oven clock says 1:30am. Yes. I woke up at 1:00am, after falling asleep around 11:00pm, and SHOWERED.

At least now I have some better opportunities for offering it up, right? ;)

I also had a Moment last week. A Moment when the pain of childlessness choked me, catching me by surprise. Hormonally-charged, perhaps, but mostly a throwback to "Infertility Year 2." It was bad. It was ugly. It was everything we know that infertility can be, at its worst. And it offered no hope or beauty or grace.



And while I didn't expect to meet it, the Moment was manageable because I've gone through them before. While the pain was suffocating, I remembered not to fight against it and gasp for air, but

rather to go through it and breathe long and slow.

These are the lessons you learn as a veteran. I may not be a pro at working through the pain of labor and delivery, but I think in much the same way, I am seasoned at managing the pain of childlessness, even when it appears unannounced like a premature rupture of heartstrings - the strings of love that are grown and cultivated with hope, and rupture unexpectedly in a moment of lost hope.

The analogy is a labor of its own - a labor of love are both. The blessings and graces obtained at the end are tangible in one, intangible in the other, and yet equally powerful and real. It is in recognizing this that we are better able to heal after the pain of an Infertility Labor; we are better able to open our hearts to conceiving those strings of love in our heart once again. And perhaps, with time, carry that fruit in our hearts longer and longer with each conception.

I don't know when next I will go into Infertility Labor. But one thing I do know... I'll be ready.

This contribution is available at <http://thiscrossiembrace.blogspot.com/2013/02/infertility-labor.html>
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“I’m participating in the Keeping LOVE in LENT Blog Link-Up 2013, hosted by

[Raising Little Saints](#), [Truly Rich Mom](#) and [Arma Dei: Equipping Catholic Families](#). We’ll be sharing different ways, tips, stories and real-life experiences that will help us focus on Lenten sacrifices, prayer and good deeds, and how to carry them out with LOVE instead of a GRUMBLE. Please scroll down to the end of the post to see the list of link-up entries.”

Make a Lenten Holy Hour



Harrington Harmonics

Holy Hours aren’t just for Lent. But if it’s something you don’t usually find the time for then it’s a great way to draw near to Jesus during these forty days. Our lives are so very busy that it’s sometimes difficult to slow down and find time for prayer. This is precisely the reason I love Eucharistic Adoration. It’s nice to just be in His presence and be still; it’s a retreat from the world.

“Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us.” ~ St. Alphonsus Ligouri

Here’s how going weekly to this devotion takes the **grumble** OUT and keeps the **love** IN Lent.

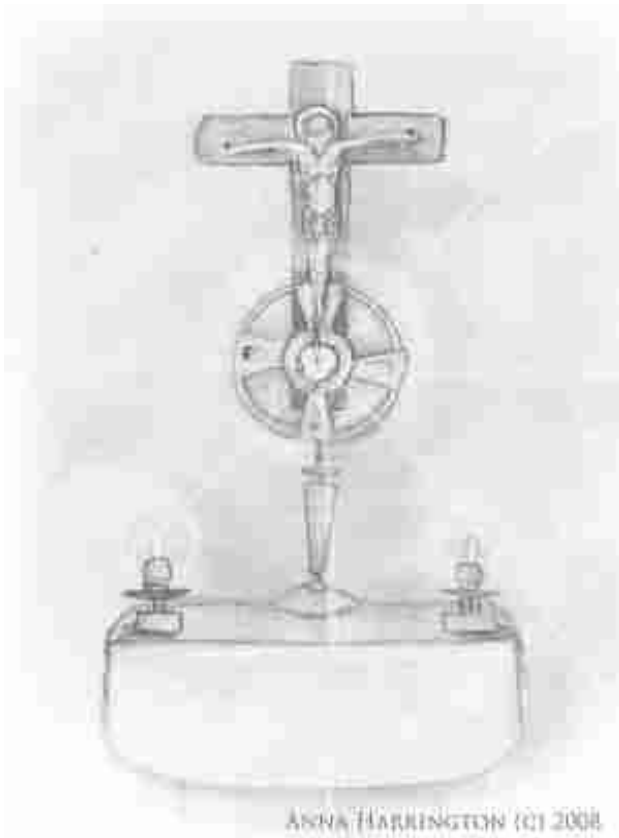
True Presence:

It’s Jesus. Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity- so He is truly present. When I go to Eucharistic Adoration I can feel God’s presence there. Like the sun warms the body, Eucharistic Adoration

warms the soul shedding the Son's light on our spirits. I feel comforted and remember that I'm not supposed to be carrying life's burden without Him.

"Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Hidden Mystery:



Drawn by my daughter at one of our visits to the Blessed Sacrament

This is a hidden mystery which we can only see with the eyes of faith. (Hebrews 11:1) Therefore, I can't convince you that it is real. *But I can share that the effects are real.* When I go there I am usually overwhelmed with life's demands but when I leave I am at peace again. This devotion keeps me balanced and puts my whole life back into perspective so that life's struggles no longer feel unbearable.

"There is no difficulty about Christ's presence in the Eucharist as a sign, but that He is truly present in the Eucharist as He is in Heaven, this is most difficult. Therefore to believe this is especially meritorious." ~ St. Bonaventure

Union

When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion we become one with Him. And if I am one with Him and you are one with Him, then we are one with each other. Gazing on Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament reminds me that I am not alone in this walk. Instead, we are all in this together. Now that's something that only Jesus can bind together! Knowing this gives me so much strength and encouragement that I no longer feel like grumbling.

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” 1 Corinthians 10: 16-17

Are we too busy to spend time with Christ? What can we do to make time for Him? Please comment on how making a Holy Hour fills you with God's grace or how it feeds your soul.

Special thanks for the hostesses:

[Raising Little Saints](#), [Truly Rich Mom](#) and [Arma Dei: Equipping Catholic Families](#) and [also New Evangelists Monthly](#).

Here's a list of others participating. Please feel free to spread some blog love and visit their Catholic blogs!

This contribution is available at <http://www.harringtonharmonies.com/2013/02/make-lenten-holy-hour.html>
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The Light in the Window [at La Dolce Vita ... the sweet life with three sons]

A few years ago my friend and I were standing in front of St. Peter's Square in Rome. It was late -- almost midnight -- and no one was around.

No one, except for the Pope.

You see, if you're facing St. Peter's Basilica and look up and to the right, you can see the windows of the Papal Apartments. And that night a light was on.

It was a surreal moment. A place which can be filled with hurricane frenzy -- bustling crowds, long lines, tour guides yelling

follow me

! -- now felt like the eye of a hurricane in which all noise and chaos are suddenly gone and there is that moment, however brief, of blessed stillness. It's a moment which illuminates the fundamental truth that we are not alone; that sometimes we simply need to ignore everything else to focus on that light and know there is a God in heaven, there is peace in the world, there is hope ... and that there is a Pope behind that window.

Today, as the world watches one Pope leave and prepares for another to be elected, as cardinals gather from all over the world, as centuries of Catholic tradition are displayed, celebrated, scrutinized, criticized and questioned, I think back on that night.

And go to the quiet of that light in the window.



Look up and to the right ... the light in the window.

This contribution is available at <http://ladolcevitathesweetlifewiththreesons.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-light-in-window.html>
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