

NewEvangelists.org

new
evangelists
monthly

April
2013

New Evangelists Monthly #4

April 2013

- [New Evangelists Monthly - April 2013](#)

New Evangelists Monthly - April 2013

- [Forward](#)
...about this eBook
- [A Parable About Sola Fide](#)
The Back of the World by Ryan McLaughlin
- [Trembling at Confession](#)
Carrots for Michaelmas by Haley Stewart
- [Indeed, He is Doing a New \(Yet Familiar\) Thing](#)
Forget The Roads by Renee Lin
- [Dear Teenage Girl](#)
The Veil of Chastity by Cindy Hurla
- [Worrying is NOT a "Mom Thing"](#)
Messy Wife, Blessed Life by Mandi R
- [Grabbing the Ropes](#)
The Cloistered Heart by Nancy Shuman
- [Want to Promote Theology of the Body? Read and Recommend a TOB Novel!](#)
Plot Line and Sinker by Ellen Gable Hrkach
- [We Are Not in the Lost and Found - Aleteia](#)
Aleteia: The news of the world from a Catholic perspective.
- [Imitating the Pilgrim Witness of Jesus and Pope Francis](#)
Domesticity and Doctrine by Erika Reece
- [Tradition, Scripture....and experience?](#)
Kitchen table chats with a Catholic Matriarch by Denise Hunnell
- [Our Lady of Fatima and the Communion of Saints](#)
Our Ordinary Life by Christine Smith
- [Smart Kids](#)
Smaller Manhattans by Christian LeBlanc
- [How Great It Is To See You. Please Come Back!](#)
Harvesting The Fruits Of Contemplation by Michael Seagriff
- [7 Quick Takes \(Vol. 34\): Mercy for Parents](#)
Working to be Worthy
- [Duality of Being Christian](#)
A Spiritual Journey by David Wong
- [The Church is Ahead of the Mathematicians on Ecumenical Dialogue](#)
Stacy Trasancos by Stacy Trasancos

- [**Why Are You Still Sleeping? A Palm Sunday Reflection**](#)
Journey to Wisdom by Heidi Knofczynski
- [**Out of Ashes Beauty Will Rise: Our Infertility Story \(Part 1\)**](#)
her Little Ways by Valerie
- [**@Patron of Compulsive Disorders**](#)
Written By the Finger of God by Anabelle Hazard
- [**There Is No Greater Love...**](#)
Raising Angels by Amy Parris
- [**Promise of Lent**](#)
JOY Alive in our hearts by Nancy Ward
- [**The David L. Gray Show**](#)
DavidLGray.INFO by David Gray
- [**Defending The Catholic Church**](#)
8 Kids And A Business by Terry McDermott
- [**Will the Next Pope Be the Antichrist? The Last Pope? Is The End Near? and other burning questions**](#)
Catholic Sistas by Erika Vandiver
- [**Eric Metaxas Stops in Nashville on Bonhoeffer Tour**](#)
A Dreamer's Wife by Stefanie Shick
- [**High Tech Confession**](#)
call her happy by Jenna Hines
- [**Freedom for Me but not for Thee!!!**](#)
Ranting Catholic Mom by Suzanne Carl
- [**Jesus meets his Disciples 2nd Sunday of Easter**](#)
Journey unto the Lord by Deacon Hipolito Lagares
- [**Popes among us**](#)
Convert Journal by George Sipe
- [**Pope Francis: The Wisdom of Old Age**](#)
From the Pulpit of My Life by Ruth Ann Pilney
- [**What is it About?**](#)
worthy of Agape by Amanda Mortus
- [**Papal Transfixion**](#)
St. Joseph's Vanguard by Devin Rose
- [**Don't shut Him out**](#)
Jumping In Puddles by Jennifer Cox
- [**An End to Lent and an Easter Beginning**](#)
Martin Family Moments by Colleen Martin

- [**An Emmaus Walk On Easter Sunday**](#)
The Hill Country Hermit by Theresa Doyle-Nelson
- [**Sic Transit Gloria Mundi**](#)
Theological
- [**Resurrection - how did St John believe before the others?**](#)
Veritas Lux Mea by Justin Geldart
- [**Six Components of Liberal Catholicism that Seek to Destroy the Church: Part 2**](#)
A Catholic Life by Matthew P
- [**Review: Love in a Broken Vessel**](#)
This That and the Other Thing by Ruth Curcuru
- [**Habemus Papam**](#)
Shealynn's Faerie Shoppe by Shaylynn
- [**Who's In Charge Here?**](#)
Thoughts on Grace by Colleen Spiro
- [**St. Patrick's Day Poetry**](#)
CF Family by Allison Howell
- [**Lent, Week Four: Finding Discipline and Brotherhood**](#)
The Trenchcoat Introspective by Elizabeth Norton
- [**In Which I Make A Good Confession Badly**](#)
Eating Slowly by Sharon Babineau
- [**Why "The Bachelor" Sean Lowe's marriage isn't doomed**](#)
Arleen Spenceley by Arleen Spenceley
- [**Confession Is Scary: NOT!**](#)
Rambling Follower by Allison Salerno
- [**Good Friday**](#)
City of God by Sarah Napier
- [**I THOUGHT YOUR NAME WAS RICHARD...so who is "Stephen Francis???"**](#)
catholicboyrichard (Stephen Francis) by catholicboyrichard
- [**Martha Or Mary: On Choosing The Better Part**](#)
Colleen Duggan by Colleen Duggan
- [**The Great Hidden Cross of Motherhood**](#)
In Holy Company by Jennifer Sagel
- [**Parable of the Unforgiving Servant**](#)
Washed, Sanctified and Justified... by De Maria

- [**The Marriage Issue: It's About the Kids**](#)
Peace Garden Mama
- [**An Interview with Author Mike Aquilina**](#)
Catholic Book Blogger by petesocks
- [**Christ Has Risen, Alleluia! The Easter Triduum Revisited**](#)
Prints of Grace by Trisha Niermeyer Potter
- [**Just for a Moment... Step into My Shoes**](#)
Sue Elvis Writes by Sue Elvis
- [**On Modesty and Evangelization: 5 Lies We Tell Our Daughters**](#)
New Evangelizers
- [**Be Not Afraid: The Sex Post**](#)
Captive the Heart: A Sprightly Wedding Blog For the Catholic Bride by Stephanie Calis
- [**The Power of Words - A Lesson from Proverbs for Kids**](#)
Sole Searching by Susan Husband
- [**Which comes first -- Easter or the eggs?**](#)
by Rita Buettner
- [**Holy Thursday {Do WHAT in memory of You, Jesus?}**](#)
Glimpse of Peace by Bridget Adams
- [**Heroes**](#)
AJ's life in FOCUS by AJ Garcia
- [**Reflection: On Pope Benedict's Resignation \(part 2\)**](#)
Quidquid Est, Est! by Matthew Rose
- [**Social Justice Catholic vs. Pro-life Catholic: A False Dichotomy**](#)
The Syrophoenician Woman by Bethanie Ryan
- [**The Oddity of Weekday Mass**](#)
Little House in Chicago by Tess Civantos
- [**Holy Thursday and Foot Washing - Misunderstanding What Catholics Do**](#)
Designs by Birgit by Birgit Jones
- [**The World Does Not Understand Humility**](#)
V for Victory! by Anita Moore
- [**Enemies and.....genuine what???**](#)
A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars by Ebeth Weidner
- [**You Are Enough**](#)
This Cross I Embrace by Amy
- [**Getting Out of a Spiritual Slump**](#)
Savor His Goodness by Caitlin

- **[Six Interesting Things to Know about Pope Francis](#)**

Marge Fenelon by Marge Fenelon

- **[The Look](#)**

The Spiritual Workout by Liesl Baumann

- **[Love at home](#)**

Finding Former Glory by Emily

- **[The Church Doesn't Love Women?](#)**

Catholic & Crunchy by Stacy Cash

- **[Saint Patrick Holy Trinity Shamrocks](#)**

Tercets by Elisa Garza

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.

eBook editions such as this are available within a few days following submission deadlines (the second Saturday of each month). eBook formats include .mobi for Kindle users, .epub for most other eBook readers and .pdf for everyone else.

For the latest edition of *New Evangelists Monthly*, or for more information about this New Evangelization initiative, visit us at:

NewEvangelists.org

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: Regardless of where you enjoy *New Evangelists Monthly*, either online or in this format, note that copyright is exclusively retained by the respective contributing authors. If you wish to use or redistribute any of their content, please contact them directly for licensing information.

A Parable About Sola Fide [at The Back of the World]

Fr. Bryan is a friend of the blog, and a priest in the Pacific Northwest. The other day, he sent me an email, encouraging me to write a post about “eternal security.” Also sometimes called the doctrine of “once saved, always saved”, it’s the idea, popular with a lot of evangelicals (particularly of a Calvinist bent) that a Christian who is truly in a state of grace cannot ever lose that grace, no matter how grave a sin they commit. We Catholics don’t believe in that doctrine, but Fr. Bryan suggested that I write a post arguing that there’s actually more “security” for the believer in the Catholic position.

This is not that post.

But it is the post before that post. It’s a not-so-subtle exploration of how some evangelical ideas (like eternal security, or like *sola fide*) that *seem* to offer comfort to the Christian can actually do him a great deal of harm.

Fr. Bryan, your post is coming up a little later in the week. But until then, I offer you...

“Fluffy Around the Middle”: A Parable

Once, there was a young man named Ryan, who wanted very badly to run a marathon. He had watched the elite Kenyan runners come racing down the streets during the Boston Marathon one year, and felt the thrill of watching them charge onward after twenty-some-odd miles of grueling New England hills, and new immediately: “THAT is what I want to do!” He wanted to feel the immense joy of crossing the finish line after running a long distance race, wanted to experience the famous “runners’ high,” wanted to hear the roar of the crowds...

And as luck would have it, he spied a sign hanging on a light pole on Beacon Street that read “Want to Run Your First Marathon? Call Coach Martin at xxx-xxxx!”

Ryan called immediately, and set up an appointment for his first personal training session the following week. He was very, very excited: with Coach Martin’s guidance, he felt sure that next year it would be him that was flying into Copley Square at sub-5-minute-mile pace. In his eagerness to start, he went and checked out a few books from the library on “How to Run Long Distances.”

On the first day of training, Coach Martin greeted Ryan warmly. Seeing the library books under Ryan’s arm, he chuckled. “I’m not really into having a bunch of rules and plans. I think they can really discourage a runner, and weigh him down. My belief is that the most important thing is that a runner believe he’s going to cross the finish line. It’s important to remember that the Race Organizer wouldn’t let you begin the marathon if he wasn’t

going to make sure you got to the end.” Ryan began furiously taking notes, but that started to feel like an awful lot of effort...

“Come on!” said Coach Martin, “let’s head down to the track.” As they walked through the office building towards the quarter-mile track outside, they passed by another coach’s office. This coach seemed much less friendly than Coach Martin, and he looked up only long enough to give them a snarl. “That’s Coach Ulrich,” whispered Coach Martin. “He believes that some people are born runners, and some aren’t, and there’s nothing you can do to change that. Between you and me, he’s not much of a coach.”

Once they got out to the track, Coach Martin gave Ryan a big smile, and said “alright, why don’t you start with a quick lap around the track.” “Sounds great!” answered the still-excited Ryan. He ran the lap as hard as he could, wanting to make a good first impression. But to his chagrin, Coach Martin looked disappointed. “No, no, no, listen: running a marathon isn’t about working hard. It’s about believing. If you work hard at this, you’re just going to get discouraged.” “Ok, well, what should I do instead?”

“Nothing,” said Coach Martin. “I think you’re ready. You want to do this, right? I’m signing you up for the Cape Cod Marathon next week”

“Excuse me?”

“I said you’re running the marathon next week. You’ll do fine. I don’t mind if my runners do a lap now and then, but I don’t want you to think that running a marathon is about work. Believe that you’re going to get to the finish line, and the Race Organizer will make sure the rest happens. If you don’t stop believing, then you won’t stop running.”

“Well, should I work out more? Maybe go on a diet?”

“Nah. Listen, if you’re going to eat fried chicken, eat fried chicken boldly. Just keep believing that you’re going to run the marathon, and you’ll be across the finish line before you know it.”

Race day came (all too quickly), and Ryan was a bit nervous. He looked around, and the other runners seemed really fit and in great shape. He took a look at himself in the mirror, and if he was honest, Ryan had to admit that he was a bit—how can we put this delicately?—“fluffy around the middle.” He bent down to tie his shoes—and they were loafers, mind you: Coach Martin had insisted that running shoes were invented by superstitious old Italian coaches who were looking to make a quick buck.

The starter’s pistol fired to signal that the race had begun. As he began running, Ryan immediately sensed that something was terribly, terribly wrong. After a quarter of a mile, he was breathing heavy. After a half mile, he felt queasy. Finally, just before the one-mile marker, Ryan puked, then passed out.

When he regained consciousness a short time later, Ryan was deeply embarrassed: a lot of people were staring at his puke on the side of the road. And he was also deeply discouraged: hadn't Coach Martin said that believing that he would finish was what counted, and that the Race Organizer would make sure he got to the end? **Was there even such a thing as a Race Organizer??!** This race certainly didn't seem very organized to Ryan.

Ryan was having a bit of a "crisis of faith." Running the race was not at all like Coach Martin had assured him it would be! He asked a lot of questions, looked into a lot of theories about running...and finally looked back at those library books he had checked out. He noticed a book towards the bottom of the pile by somebody named "Coach Francis." This book had some interesting theories nestled in its pages, theories that definitely contradicted a lot of what Coach Martin had to say...

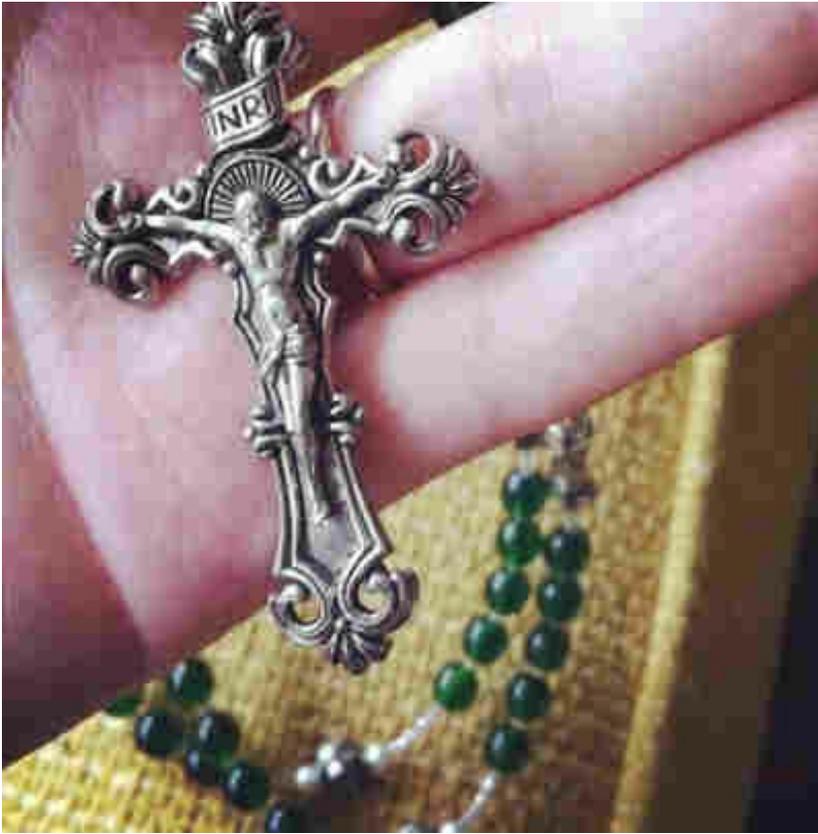
Oh, Coach Francis knew all about the Race Organizer, and he definitely believed that the Race Organizer wanted all of the runners to finish the marathon. But he also talked about a lot of difficult things that went in to running a marathon, things that, to be frank, sounded like a lot of work. In fact, he made it very clear that not everyone who starts a marathon is able to finish it. Coach Francis was all about disciplining yourself to run a successful marathon. He had some bizarre training methods (apparently, during his glory days as an Olympic runner, Francis would roll around naked in the snow...), but he seemed to know what he was talking about.

So Ryan set up a training session with Coach Francis. And they worked out a plan: Ryan was going to start running a little more each week. He was going to eat healthy, and give up smoking once and for all. He would put some inspirational pictures of runners up in his bedroom, just to give himself some extra motivation. He would meet weekly with Coach Francis, and he would have to be honest about how closely he had stuck to the plan, but Coach Francis would be kind about it and give him a few words of advice. And, whether it was an Italian superstition or not, Ryan was going to invest in a nice pair of running shoes...

It's been a year now since their first session. Ryan hasn't run a marathon yet. But you know what? The other day he ran 12 miles, and he did it in a pretty good time, too. He's going to keep training hard, working to get closer and closer to his goal.

And the funny thing is, as much work as it is, he feels more confident than ever that the Race Organizer wants him to win the race...

Trembling at Confession [at Carrots for Michaelmas]



As we approach Holy Week, I've been thinking about all my friends and readers who are going through RCIA this year to be confirmed this Easter. Are you afraid about making your first Confession? *I was. I was terrified. I was so excited to be confirmed, but the anxiety of making that first Confession loomed over me.* It felt like an excruciating torture I was going to have to endure before being accepted into the Church.

I remember so vividly coming to the end of the Penance service during Lent, lining up for the confessional and trembling. Most cradle Catholics I know are surprised to hear how scared I was, but they also haven't ever carried 25 years of unconfessed sin around. It's a tad intimidating.

One of my anxieties was just the shame of telling someone *out loud* everything horrible I had done. As I waited for my turn, I realized my perspective was off. *Jesus already knew. He already knew everything. And he was the only one that mattered.* But I was still afraid that I would chicken out. That I would hold back the worst things because I was too ashamed to speak them out loud. There was a statue of Our Lady right next to my spot in line. I asked her to pray for me. *"Please give me the courage to make a true, full confession. Don't let me knowingly hold anything back. Please, please, help me."* My hands shook. The people in front of me in line were chatting together about this and that and I was baffled by their nonchalance. *Why aren't they scared?* I wondered, as my knees knocked.

When it was my turn, my stomach lurched. I knelt. My voice trembled. The tears came. It all

tumbled out: my sin, my selfishness, my failures. Then I heard the priest's voice. Not words of condemnation, but encouragement. Not despair, but grace. He told me my penance. I prayed the prayer of contrition and heard the words of absolution. Then: *Go in peace*. And let me tell you, I did. When you get to leave 25 years of guilt behind you, you go in peace.

I left and knelt in the church to complete my penance. *Ask for Jesus' blessing on you and your family*. That's it? *Is that even a penance?* I wondered. *Sounds more like a gift. That's not nearly enough to make up for what I've done!* I thought as I looked up at the crucifix above the altar. ***It's not enough. Was the answer. You can't make up for what you've done. I made up for what you've done. Just like this. On the Cross. This is all my gift to you. I love you this much.***

Can we understand God's love and mercy if we don't face our sin? Can we rejoice over our salvation if we don't realize what we've been saved from?

I had been wrong about Confession. It wasn't a humiliating hoop God was making me jump through. It was a gift offered out of His love. He didn't want me to bear the weight of my guilt any more. He wanted me to offer it to him, to let it go, to be reconciled, to live in grace. He wanted to give me the chance to be free from sin, to receive his mercy and love.

Now when I hear someone is about to make their first confession, I am so excited for them. The joy, the peace, the beauty of it. During this lenten season when I go to Confession before Holy Week, I won't tremble in fear like I did the first time, three years ago. I will tremble instead at the weight of God's mercy. *Behold! God's love for you.*

This contribution is available at <http://carrotsformichaelmas.com/2013/03/11/trembling-at-confession/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Indeed, He is Doing a New (Yet Familiar) Thing [at Forget The Roads]



I think the reading from Isaiah

today may have been somewhat startling to some of us:

Thus says the LORD, who opens a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters,

Who leads out chariots and horsemen, a powerful army, Till they lie prostrate together, never to rise, snuffed out and quenched like a wick.

Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not;

See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers.

Wild beasts honor me, jackals and ostriches, For I put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland for my chosen people to drink,

The people whom I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise. Isa 43:16-21

Startling, because most of us are familiar with another version of this proclamation:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. Rev 21: 3-7

Wow! The “new thing” proclaimed in Revelation was actually harkening back to the “new thing” announced in Isaiah many centuries before! Indeed, “there is nothing new under the sun,” as King Solomon warned us.

Well, there is and there isn’t.

Consider the story told by our new Papa:

He described how during the conclave he was comforted by his friend, Brazilian Cardinal Claudio Hummes, as the votes were going his way and it seemed “a bit dangerous” that he would reach the two-thirds necessary to be elected.

When the threshold was reached, applause erupted in the frescoed Sistine Chapel.

“He (Hummes) hugged me. He kissed me. He said, *‘Don’t forget about the poor!’*” Francis recalled.

“And those words came to me: The poor. The poor. Then right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars as the votes were being counted, until the end. Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi.”

Compare this now with the story told by St. Paul:

Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.... But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. *They only asked us to remember the poor—*

the very thing I also was eager to do.

Nice to know that the successors to the apostles are cut from the same cloth as they were, and are of the same mind! Not a surprise though, really – God is indeed doing a new thing in His Church in every generation, and yet that “new thing” runs always along predictable lines. Like my garden – we are blessed with a profusion of daffodils, hyacinths and the like in the garden outside my window, a delight to see. I never tire of looking out at all the new flowers! And yet, while each of those flowers is indeed new, the fact that I have flowers in my garden is not new – it happens at this time every year. And it is in this continuity that we Catholics find our security as well as the freedom to innovate, to grow and develop, always adhering to the original pattern laid out long ago.

This, of course, is our major difficulty with Protestant doctrines – they are “new things,” novelties, ways of understanding Scripture that have no precedent before the time of the Reformation. It is as if two-headed dogfish began sprouting in my garden this spring. I would not be oohing and ahing – I would be feverishly googling the number for Hazmat.

New things in the Catholic Church have Biblical and historical precedents, which is why we can state categorically to non-Catholics (and to liberal Catholics) that, no, Pope Francis will not be ordaining women or condoning homosexual acts. Newness can be expected, yes, and yet continuity. Spring is the season of newness, and yet Spring itself is not new. We await it after every winter. Newness and rejuvenation are to be expected, not feared, in a Catholic context, because the God who has ordered the seasons has ordered the steps of the Church.

Lord Jesus, send forth your Spirit! Renew the face of the earth!

On the memorial of St. Patrick of Ireland

Deo omnis gloria!

Photo credit: Narcissus jonquilla L. Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid, España, by Cillas

This contribution is available at <http://forgettheroads.com/2013/03/17/indeed-he-is-doing-a-new-yet-familiar-thing/%20>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Dear Teenage Girl [at The Veil of Chastity]

Dear Teenage Girl,

I have been asked several times recently how to ‘reach you’ with the wisdom and power of Chastity. Each time, my response has been “*I am not quite sure.*” You already know that you can get pregnant and/or an STD from sex. But, these facts are not very convincing when you are in the **heat of the moment**.

*“Deep within yourself listen to your conscience which calls you to be **pure**. ... **Passing encounters** are only a **caricature of love**, they **injure hearts** and **mock Gods plan.**”*

Blessed Pope John Paul II

I also will never tell a girl that she will be damaged in some way if she does have sex outside of marriage. Although unchaste behavior does **injure** our relationship with ourselves and with God, that message is just not very loving. So, how do we reach you with the Truth?

I am going to try to draw a picture for you. No, actually several pictures. The first is a picture of your future which I will draw from the deepest desires of your heart. The second is a picture of how you are designed (biologically, emotionally, spiritually and physically). And the third picture will help you connect the first and second picture.

The First Picture

I don’t think your exact age right now really matters. You could be 12, 14 or 18 years old and I think this first picture will look familiar to you. It is a picture of the future you are hoping to have. It includes love, trust, family, life and faith. Do you know why I believe this? Because logically I don’t think anyone hopes for hate, betrayal, being alone, death and doubt.

So, close your eyes and picture your future painted from the desires of your heart. It includes a husband, right? And children, right? This is normal. This is healthy. God put those desires there for a reason. The picture you painted of your future is **beautiful**.

“Be sober, be watchful! For your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking someone to devour.”

1st Peter 5:8

Keep that picture in the front of your mind as you navigate through the next 10 or so years because you will be **challenged**. Hatred, betrayal, loneliness, death and doubt stand ready to enter your

life.

The Second Picture

Wow, that last sentence was quite a **Debbie Downer** statement wasn't it? I included it because I think you are old enough to hear the **Truth**.

There are **tripping hazards** in your future and you need to know about them. In order to **see** and avoid these tripping hazards, you need to first understand how you are **designed**; how we are **all** designed. So let me paint the second picture for you.

You have a body and a soul. This is true whether you are a Catholic or an atheist, male or female. If you are a human person, you have a body and a soul. In order to **accept the gifts** of love, trust, family, life and faith, [your body and your soul must be in harmony](#) with each other. Your body and soul **cannot be significantly disconnected**.

*“In the **absence of chastity**, a person is **easily seduced** into doing things that are **beneath his dignity**, things that are **shameful**, things that do not accord with who he truly is”*

Angelic Warfare Confraternity

Here are the things that **disconnect** your body and your soul:

1. [sex outside marriage](#) 2. allowing anyone to use your body 3. doing things that are beneath your dignity 4. contraception 5. immodest dress 6. immodest language and 7. entertainment and media which glorifies the 6 prior things listed

Chastity is a powerful virtue and is **required** in order to keep your body and your soul in **harmony**. Chastity, simply put, includes saving sex for marriage and remaining open to life within marriage (not contracepting). When contraception is used, it is a **violation of our design and dignity** and it is a violation of the virtue of Chastity.

Contraception. Oh, yes, I went there. As a teen, you will most likely be tempted and maybe even pressured to go on the **pill**. It would be **better** for you, precious teenage girl, to create a child in the heat of the moment than it would to be on birth control and **get used** by boys/men for the next 10 or 20 years.

It is very hard to admit to ourselves when we are **being used**. We want to believe that the boy we are intimate with is not using us, that he loves us and that we have a future with him. But, as Blessed Pope John Paul II stated, these are “*passing encounters*” and are “*only caricatures of love.*” “*Deep within yourself*”, you know this. And, I am so sorry to inform you, so does everyone else.

Even if you do not believe you are being used, you need to know that sex is designed to **create babies within the Sacrament of Matrimony**. When you disconnect sex and babies and sex and

matrimony, you **disconnect** your body and our soul. So please avoid this tripping hazard so you can accept the good gifts that God has for you!

Formula for a healthy relationship



The Third Picture

“Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.”

Psalm 37:4

I have **wonderful news** for you! God **knows** who your husband is! So, doesn't it make sense for you to stay close to the One that has the **inside scoop** on your future? Stay close to Him in the Sacraments (Confession and the Holy Eucharist received at Mass), in prayer, Eucharistic Adoration and in Sacred Scripture. The **grace** from the Sacraments and this **closeness** with God will **strengthen you** in your commitment to **Chastity**.

“Either God or Satan is in the bridal chamber.”

Alice von Hildebrand, *Man and Woman: A Divine Invention*

Chastity is a life-long virtue (**not** just a teen virtue). It means to honor our bodies by protecting the holiness of the marital embrace (the Holy of Holies). Sex is **only** for marriage and we must remain open to life if we want to enjoy this closeness with God.

The Veil

I sincerely remember being a teenager. We want love and affirmation. We believe every other girl our age has a perfect life. We experience rejection. This desire for love and affection as well as the hurt of envy and rejection are not limited to your teenage years so you might as well strengthen yourself as soon as you can! **How?**

*“...Behind the second **veil** there was a tabernacle which is called the **Holy of Holies...**”*

Hebrews 9:4

*“...**the veil** shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the **Holy of Holies...**”*

Exodus 20:33

If I could transport myself back to my teen years, it would help to know that I was covered by a **veil**. Please [go here to read about The Veil](#) and [Superabundance](#). Although the veil is just a metaphor, I think you can follow the concept. God knows who your husband is and He will [arrange your marriage](#) if you stay close to Him **and** commit to chastity. Because you are covered

by a veil, only your husband will be able to ‘see’ you. All other guys will, thankfully, reject you. This will be frustrating and painful but oh so rewarding when you realize that, **in your husband’s eyes**, you are the girl of his dreams.

As it instructs us in sacred scripture, be ‘**asleep**’ in the will of God and do **not** ‘stir things up’ until the Lord says it is time.

“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up, nor awaken my love, until it pleases.”

Song of Songs 8:4

Hold on to these pictures, dear Teenage Girl! **Remain chaste**. Remain **asleep** and refrain from **stirring**. **Hope** in the Lord. **Wait** on Him.

God love and bless you!

Other posts you may enjoy:

[Dear God: What Do You Want From Me?](#)

[Is He The One?](#)

[A Man’s Perspective On Attraction](#)

This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2013/03/13/dear-teenage-girl/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Worrying is NOT a "Mom Thing" [at Messy Wife, Blessed Life]

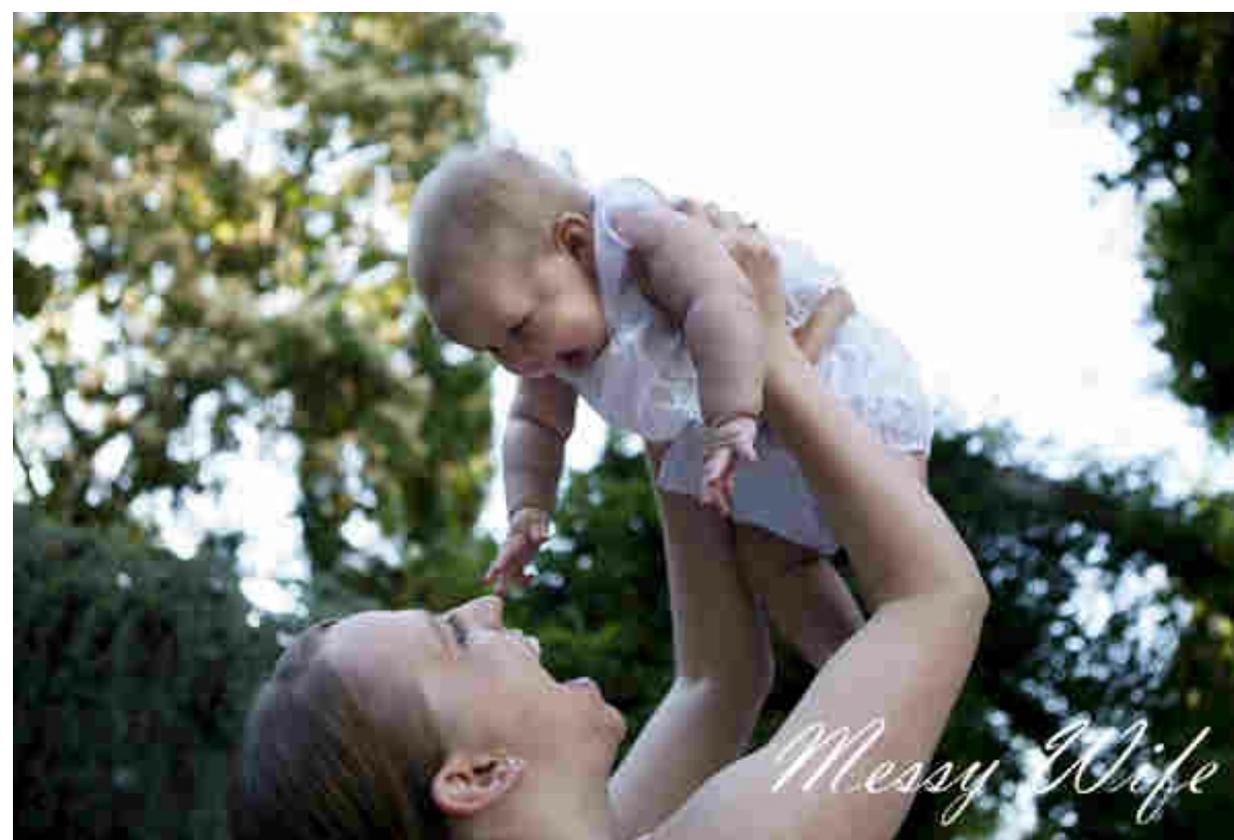
My mom has always been a worrier. And she's always justified her worrying by saying, "You'll know what it's like to worry like this when you're a mom."



Guess what? I'm a mom now and *no one* would describe me as a worrier.

Do I worry about the big things? Sure. When there is a reason for the worry.

But the little stuff? Not really.



I'm not an uptight mom. I'm much more go-with-the-flow. I know there are a ton of moms out there like my mom. Worriers. And if you are anything like my mom, that worry erodes some of your happiness. Your freedom. It steals some of the joy from your life. And keeps you from enjoying what you have.

I have my own joy stealers and time wasters. My biggest one is planning. Always planning for a bigger, better future and never enjoying the present. Dreaming and planning about the "whens".
"When David gets a job, we'll...." "When we buy a house, we'll...." "We'll do X when..."

But I don't worry. Not really. I worry about Lucia's health when she has a particularly nasty cough. But not when she has a little runny nose and definitely not when she's healthy.



That doesn't mean I don't prepare. That I don't make rules or have safety measures. That I don't take my daughter for check ups or put plug covers in the plugs. It just means that once I do what I **can** do, I don't dwell on it any more.

I wish this was a tutorial post. I wish I could give you a few short steps to living a worry free life. But it's not. I think hardcore worrying is the combination of temperament and life experiences. Maybe you're a born worrier like my mom or had a traumatic event that caused your worry overload. Maybe both.



I only have two pieces of advice, and they are both pretty vague:

- 1. Trust in God.** Lay your worry on Him. I admit this can be difficult and it's not a guarantee that bad things won't ever happen to you and those you love, just the knowledge that God will help carry you through whatever comes.
- 2. Excessive worry is *not* a "mom thing". *It's not obligatory.*** It's not necessary. Don't feel like you have to worry because you are a mom. Don't think if you don't worry, you aren't a concerned, caring mother. My mom is not the only one who wrongly thinks this way. Care for your child the best you can, that's all you can do, and then don't worry about the rest.



Mandi

This contribution is available at <http://www.messywife.com/2013/04/worrying-is-not-mom-thing.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Grabbing the Ropes [at The Cloistered Heart]

I am a needy person. I'm in great need of God. Yet, knowing that He has "thrown down" numerous "ropes" to help me scale walls between Him and me, I often turn away from His helps and let myself remain needy. And, frankly, very stubborn.

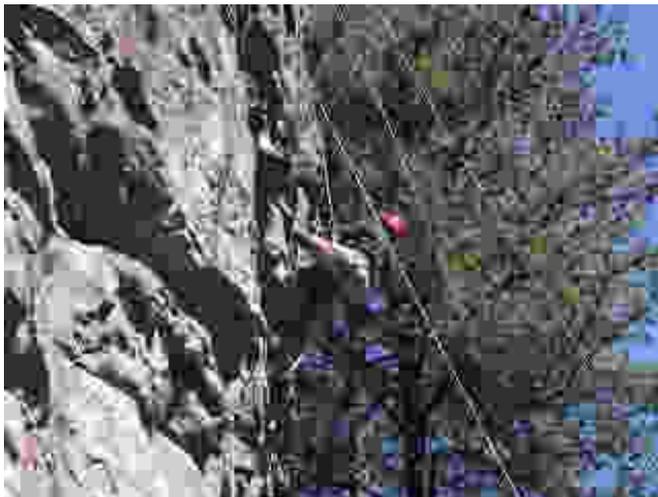
"Lord, help me," I beg. And then I forge ahead under my own steam. I think of the joke (we've probably all heard it) about the man on the roof of his house as flood waters rose all around him. He prayed and trusted God. People called out to him from boats and a small plane, offering aid. Nope, said he - God will save me. When the waters swept over him and he went to meet his Maker, he asked God why He hadn't come through. "But I did come through," he was told. "I sent you two boats and a helicopter!"

What ropes are before us today, just waiting to hoist us into the Presence of God on earth? He has provided oh, so many aids! There is the amazing Sacrament of Reconciliation to pull us out of serious sin. There is His Presence in the Eucharist, where we can adore and even receive Him.

As we discussed a few days ago, there are ropes to pull us toward God in personal prayer... aids He has provided to snatch us out of the grasp of distractions so we can concentrate on Him. Thus we'll be able to "hear" more clearly His guidance for our everyday lives.

Ah, but there is an enemy of our souls, one who'd like nothing better than to cut every one of our ropes. Or at least to convince us that we shouldn't use them, we don't need them, they're silly, we should be stronger and more intellectual than those who might need such things.

The Sacraments. Scripture. Holy music. Sacred art. Holy reading. The rosary. Various devotions that the Church has found worthy of approval. Stations of the Cross. These have been "dropped down," as it were, through the merits of Our Lord's death and resurrection. These are of much more value than all the ropes mankind ever made.



I will admit it. I'm a needy person. I need the Sacraments. I need Scripture. I need holy music and sacred art and saints and my guardian angel and lots of devotional reading. I need helps to keep me focused in prayer. I want nothing more than to stay tied tightly to my Lord, Jesus Christ.

I am a needy person. So I'm grabbing the ropes.

Text not in quotes © 2013 Nancy Shuman. All Rights Reserved.

thecloisteredheart.org_ [Click here to leave comments in the Parlor](#)

This contribution is available at <http://www.thecloisteredheart.org/2013/03/grabbing-ropes.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Want to Promote Theology of the Body? Read and Recommend a TOB Novel!

March 11, 2013 by [Ellen Gable Hrkach](#)



One of my favorite ways to promote the Theology of the Body is to recommend novels with a great TOB message. [My publishing company](#) publishes novels with Theology of the Body themes.

Speaking of novels we publish, [our company](#) has recently signed a contract with author [Erin McCole Cupp](#) to publish her suspense novel, “Don’t You Forget About Me!” We look forward to working with you, Erin!

Want to learn more about the Theology of the Body? Interested in promoting it? This list is not all-inclusive...and pardon the shameless self-promotion of my own TOB books... (Note: not all of these books have been published by Full Quiver Publishing.)

[The Mystery of Things](#) (Debra Murphy)

[Emily’s Hope](#) (Ellen Gable)

[In Name Only](#) (Ellen Gable)

[Stealing Jenny](#) (Ellen Gable)

[Passport](#) (Christopher Blunt)

[Angela’s Song](#) (AnnMarie Creedon)

[Fatherless](#) (Brian Gail)

[Lessons in the Journey](#) (Patrick Dawson)

Do you have any favorite TOB novels to add? Please feel free to comment below!

Copyright 2013 Ellen Gable Hrkach

[body-read-and-recommend-a-top-novel/](#)

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

We Are Not in the Lost and Found - Aleteia [at Aleteia: The news of the world from a Catholic perspective.]

We pulled up to church on Easter morning – all eight of us miraculously bathed, shoed, besocked, and wearing Easter finery that had managed to remain clean all the way from house to parish. I opened the side door, and a torrent of children burst out, jumping from the van, launching themselves into the air, flinging arms and legs wildly, and landing with satisfied grunts on the winter-faded mulch below. The distance between my house and church is exactly 3 miles, not that you'd know it by my children's ecstatic response to release.

As he was squatting on the ground, post leap, my oldest son spotted a [rosary](#)

. He picked it up, and immediately four siblings were clustered around here, chattering about this find. There was much agitation, and responses ranged from "Let's keep it!" to "Why would someone drop a rosary on the ground? Leave it here, it serves them right," to "Put it in the lost and found! The person will look there!" Happy to hear that while I may be raising savages, they're not immoral savages, I followed them into the church, thinking about all the rich symbolism in my kids' responses to a wayward rosary. I thought, "There's an article for sure! All the different ways the world responds to a lost soul!" and was feeling all happy and satisfied that the tricky brainstorming section of writing was already done. Then I saw the parish's 'Lost and Found' box, and the whole story fell apart.

The box was a sad looking jumble of brooches, watches, empty key rings, glasses, and, wound through all of them like a writhing pit of vipers, at least half dozen rosaries, just like the one my son was holding, knotted up in a manner that firmly spoke of a long stay in the Lost and Found. The kids happily deposited one more object into the void, and traipsed off past the doors, blessing themselves, genuflecting to Jesus once more in the tabernacle, and happily accepting the adoration of all the grandmas who live for Easter Sunday, when they can see all the children in ties and frills.

I sat down, my body in the pew, my mind at the Lost and Found box

. I thought I'd been shown a sign – the rosary as a lost soul. But then, that box – was that how we were to view God's treatment of us? Is he happy to just heap us all together in an indistinguishable stew? Sure, we were in Heaven, but we were heaped together so impersonally! Those objects had not been looked over by anyone in ages. Would that happen to us? An impersonal afterlife lumped together with other souls – no longer lost, but "found" only in the vaguest sense. Is this what Galatians meant when it taught us that there was no longer slave or freeman? Jew or Gentile? Man or woman? Is that we are all an impersonal lump of soulstuff?

Years ago, I remember someone offhandedly talking about a woman he knew who was trying to

share the Gospel with him. Unwilling and unable to accept her news, he interpreted the exchange as trying to land “a big catch” for God. I recoiled at this thought at the time, knowing that God was concerned with the salvation of all souls, not just “the big ones”. However, the image of the Lost and Found box in my mind, I found myself hoping I was wrong. After all, if the salvation of some souls is more important to God than others, then it meant he looked through that jumble, right? It meant that he looked through it with a critical eye and carefully untangled some important individuals from the rest of us lot.

I put the whole thing out of my mind, and concentrated on Easter. The church was gorgeous; Father had busted out the incense, which makes me giddy and my four-year-old hysterical (“Mommy?! SOMETHING’S BURNING!”), and there was palpable relief that we’d survived another Lent, another Good Friday, and were now witness to the Resurrection. (He is risen! Alleluia!) I belted out the

[Gloria](#)

, despite my usual reluctance to sing publically. I went up to receive the Eucharist with a heart full of joy and peace. Kneeling down after returning to my seat, I watched person after person walk up to receive our Eucharistic Lord. Dads in ties, carrying toddlers sporting the matching clip-on version, college kids home for the holiday, conceding winter’s lingering presence in their knee-high snow boots, but thumbing their nose at the temps with their gauzy pastel dresses. The church was packed, and everyone was wearing their Easter best.

It then hit me, as I watching the communion line dwindle down, how wise Holy Mother Church is to have the faithful process up this way. Before I converted, I’d seen a whole slew of different ways to observe the

[Lord’s Supper](#)

. I’ve been places where plates of bread and grape juice were passed among the pews, handed from person to person. I’ve been places where they were arranged on a table like a buffet, and you walked up and helped yourself. I’ve seen the pastor with an actual loaf of bread, another one with pita, break that, set it aside, with pre-cut cubes of bread passed among the congregation. I wouldn’t say I’ve seen it all, but I’ve seen a wide variety.

But this way, each individual person standing up

, walking to the altar, and receiving Jesus’ body, blood, soul and divinity is such a marriage of the individual and the collective. When you pass bread and wine from person to person along the pews, once the plate gets behind you, you’re blind. You remain an individual. But when every person stands up, walks themselves up to Jesus, the whole parish sees. You get a powerful visual of the universality of Catholicism. There are your brothers and sisters, right in front of you.

There

is that pregnant woman, and you pray for her at that moment, for her health and her child.

There

is that elderly man, tenderly supported on his walk to the Eucharist by his equally frail wife. You pray for them, for all our elderly, and for marriages everywhere, that they should all be marked by such loyalty.

There

is the young man who left for college last year, and he returns to his seat followed by your prayers. We all chose to walk to Jesus through our own free will, but we are not alone on that walk. And there, waiting for us – for each of us individually – is Christ himself.

We are not rosaries, keyrings or eyeglasses, lost and jumbled up in a tangled ‘Lost and Found’ box somewhere. We are individual souls, united in Christ’s body, and he meets each one of us as our brother, our friend, and our God.

This contribution is available at <http://www.aleteia.org/en/lifestyle/documents/we-are-not-in-the-lost-and-found-784001>

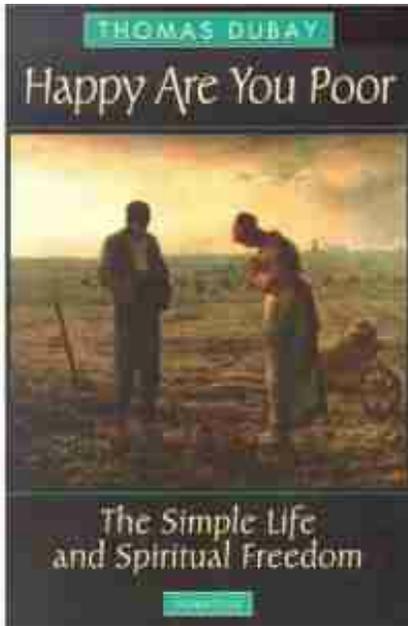
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Imitating the Pilgrim Witness of Jesus and Pope Francis [at Domesticity and Doctrine]

"At his last breath the multimillionaire is just as penniless as the dying beggar in a Calcutta street."

Thomas Dubay, Happy Are You Poor



What the Church desperately needs today is for its followers to give authentic witness to the truths of the Gospel. Over Lent, we were profoundly blessed by God to be given another simple, loving man with deep personal holiness to help us as our

Papa

: Pope Francis. His namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, being one of the most remarkable Christian men of all time -- remembered for his love, purity, peace, and of course, poverty.



By all accounts Pope Francis embodies what it means to walk in the spirit of evangelical poverty that Jesus calls His followers to embrace, that Francis of Assisi lived, and that Thomas Dubay outlines in his book,

[Happy Are You Poor](#)

. Catholics all over the world are thrilled with his simplicity and embrace of only the bare minimum to sustain himself and do his job. I, too, am so very encouraged and enlivened by his example! I eagerly look forward to all that God will say and do through him.

But -- and I have no doubt Pope Francis would agree -- our admiration is not useful unless *we, too, follow his example*

in our daily lives. It is imperative for us as professing Catholic Christians not simply to stop at lauding the humility of a Pope, declaring what a great message he is giving to the Church at large, and hoping that more bishops and priests follow his example. Those sentiments are understandable, yes! But after we have done those things, we must go take the next step. We must pause to consider what Jesus Christ is saying to us personally through this man we consider our appointed shepherd and spiritual father. Can we in good conscience nod our heads in approval, call for others within the Church to imitate him, and then continue to spend large sums of our own money (or money we don't even have!) on acquiring fancier homes and cars, the latest in fashionable home decor, the newest electronics, artificial tans and wrinkle creams, toys/gear/supplies for our numerous hobbies, and the like?

Dubay's chapter entitled Pilgrim Witness opens up with this:

"There is much in Scripture to which a theist has little difficulty in giving theoretical assent but to which in concrete daily life he grants almost no assent at all. No convinced theist has any problem in admitting that idle talk is reprehensible for several reasons, one of which is that it impedes the biblical call to continual prayer. But in daily living few give any thought at all to the problem of continual chatter and the account we are to render of it on Judgement Day (Mt. 12:36).

Most of us have heard over and over in liturgical readings the admonition of Jesus that we must give up all that we possess to be his disciples (Lk. 14:33), but few in the humdrum of the day-by-day round even advert to detachment, let alone practice it with any approximation of totality." [p. 81]

We have a particular problem here in the United States with the dominant value of our culture being economic: "the American dream" and "the good life" being two popular phrases where obtaining wealth and the indiscriminate spending of that wealth is the unsaid principle. For the Christian this should pose a serious dilemma, as this ideology flies in the face of the entire Gospel ideal. But the value of the economic "good life" is so pervasive that the ordinary American Christian has become utterly desensitized to Jesus' call to "give up all that we possess." We have been lulled to sleep -- by our education system, the media, our peers, sadly even our own family members and churches -- and we've convincingly assured ourselves that we can arrange our lives around the things of the world (possessions and pleasure seeking) and yet still have all the treasures of heaven added on to us as well.

Dubay relates a specific excellent example about how the underlying economic ideal forms our decisions as Christians:

*At Mass one Sunday morning in October a serious, deeply religious couple hear that the following week there is going to be a collection for the foreign missions. As they drive home Mrs. Jones is likely to say, "Bill, do you think we could afford something like \$20 or \$30 for this collection?" After some musing Mr. Jones may well respond that he, too, thinks they could afford that amount as their contribution. **While most would indeed consider Mr. and Mrs. Jones a generous couple, we must note something significant. When both of them used the expression "we could afford", they meant "without changing significantly our level of consuming."** They did not mean "we could afford \$20 or \$30 if we dine out less frequently or give up smoking and cocktails, or if we cancel our vacation trip, or sell one of our sports cars."*

Even in serious people the good life ideology is operative, and it profoundly influences what they do and do not do on the operational level. If Mr. and Mrs. Jones were to give up the good life ideal, they could give far more to the foreign missions. [p. 84]

Ethicist Richard McCormick wrote something similar: "It can be argued that the single dominating and organizing value in American culture is economic... This means that other values will be pursued and promoted only within this overriding priority.

Thus, justice in education, housing, medical services, job opportunity is promoted within the dominance of the financial criterion -- 'if we can afford it', where 'afford' refers to the retention of a high level of consumership

."

As Christians we are told plainly that we're merely pilgrims in this world (1 Peter 2:11, Heb 11:13-16), but we rarely live as if that's our reality. "We assume that we belong here, that this is our fatherland, that our security is enhanced by a higher salary, a paid-up mortgage, and adequate coverage by insurance," writes Dubay. We need to rediscover the great freedom and joy that we are offered in Christ when we

arrange our daily living

like pilgrims! We need it not only for our own souls, but for the sake of the conversion of the world -- a world that desperately needs and even desires to discover authentic pilgrim witnesses.

Dubay said in his book that the world and those of us in the world need "lived prophecy." Indeed. The lived prophecy has to be spoken through

each

of us, whatever our state in life, not just through our dear Pope, our parish priest, and some monks and nuns living in the cloister.

Before Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio became Pope Francis he gave an interview where he spoke on some very relevant points pertaining to this consumerist idolatry that threatens so many of us in our quest for God. I want to end with a few of his quotes (and please, listen to the entire interview -- it's fantastic):

"In today's society new idols are continuously established and driven by consumerism... There is where people get hooked. Indeed there is a strong need to renew the faith."

"Only Jesus provides the answer to this rampant idolatry. And he reigns from the Cross. If we deny the Cross of Jesus, we deny Jesus."

"An interesting fact is the amount spent on non-necessities world wide... On those things that are not necessities, or superfluous things, the greatest amount is spent on pets. The most unnecessary spending is made on pets. Pets are idolized... And the second largest amount of money is spent on cosmetology. Cosmetics. ...There are millions and millions spent on these two things. Meanwhile the Pope is talking about children who are dying of hunger in underdeveloped continents like Africa, Asia and America. First come pets. And then if there is something left, we throw it to the children."

"If you don't worship God, you will have something else. I don't know which one: A pet.

Cosmetics. I don't know."

(Last year in the United States

alone

,

[over \\$53 billion](#)

was spent on pets and at least

[\\$33 billion](#)

on cosmetics.)

This post is part of a continuing series of posts on the book [Happy Are You Poor](#). [Go here](#) for the first post of the series!

This contribution is available at

<http://domesticityanddoctrine.blogspot.com/2013/04/imitatejesuspopefrancis.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Tradition, Scripture...and experience? [at Kitchen table chats with a Catholic Matriarch]

This past week I enjoyed watching EWTN's The Journey Home hosted by Marcus Grodi. Each episode of this show highlights the conversion story of an individual and explores the factors that drew him or her to the Catholic Church.

[The episode that I watched](#)

featured Monsignor Jeffrey Steenson, Ordinary for the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter. This is the construct that allows those from the Anglican Communion who wish to enter the Catholic Church to come into full communion with Rome yet maintain some of their Anglican patrimony. As the Episcopal Church lurches farther and farther from the faith handed to the Apostles by Christ, more and more Episcopalians are choosing to swim the Tiber and come home to the Catholic Church.

I encourage you to watch the full hour with Monsignor Steenson that I have linked above. Marcus Grodi asked Monsignor Steenson how the Episcopalians justify their radical departure from traditional teachings on marriage and sexuality. His answer was enlightening. It seems that the Episcopalians (as well as dissident or progressive "catholics") place experience on par with Scripture and Tradition. He said that over and over he was told that he must listen to the experiences of those involved in homosexual relationships in order to develop his moral teaching on this topic. However, if experience is equal to or even trumps Scripture and Tradition, then the teaching of Scripture is reduced to no more than an historical opinion of an individual author. There is no eternal truth. There is only a situational code of behavior that is relevant in the context of an individual's experience.

As if to confirm this opinion, Bishop Marc Andrus of the Episcopal Diocese of California

[writes in the Washington Post:](#)

For Episcopalians, tradition is a moving force that is not only dynamic but that changes quality over time, and we might liken the change to be one of more light being cast into the world...

It can definitely be unsettling to find that some structures and beliefs are not fixed and unchanging. Add to that the fact that the Episcopal Church has no doctrine of infallibility, of anybody, and one can understand those who prefer more predictability. For me, I hope to stay open to divine surprise.

As we await the election of a new pope, there are those who are hoping that the next Vicar of

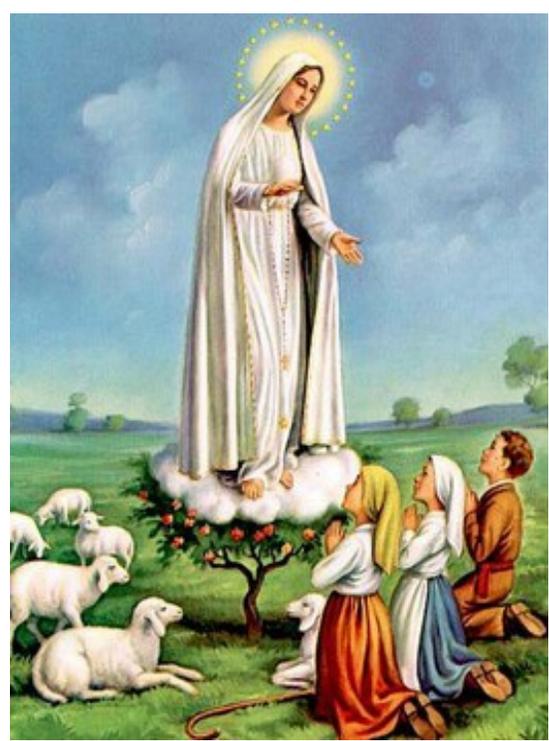
Christ will proceed along the path Bishop Andrus favors--a church built on the shifting sands of popular culture. But Christ did not build His Church on sand. He built it on the Rock of Peter. The doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church, , based on Scripture and Tradition, have persisted for 2000 years. The Church has weathered countless persecutions, the Borgias, and numerous heresies. Christ promised the Gates of Hell will not prevail against Her. She is His Bride. He will protect Her. It is the mission of the Church and therefore, of the faithful to shape the culture rather than be shaped by the culture. Our experiences must be judged against eternal truth. They do not define truth.

This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2013/03/tradition-scriptureand-experience.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Our Lady of Fatima and the Communion of Saints [at Our Ordinary Life]



Some recent musings...

I recently picked up a

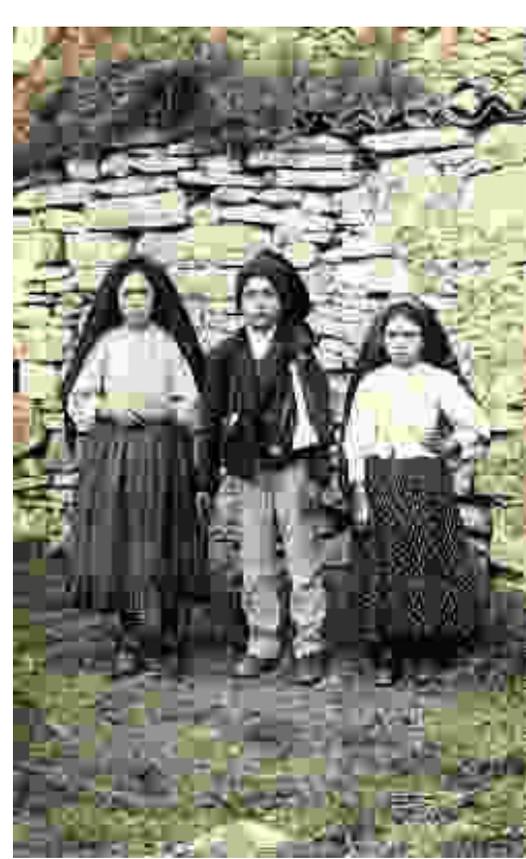
[small book about Our Lady of Fatima](#)

. It's a pretty basic overview of the story of Fatima (when Mary appeared a number of times to three Portuguese children in 1917, giving them important messages for the world), but still the most in-depth account of the apparitions I've personally read.

As I've been reading, I've been surprised by how many times the children were reminded of the great need to make sacrifices for sinners: "In all that you can, offer God a sacrifice in reparation for the sins with which He is offended and in supplication for the conversion of sinners."

They took this message very seriously, and for the rest of their lives (very short ones, in the case of Jacinta and Francisco), found many ways to offer sufferings for this purpose. The book shares a

few examples of some of the simple ways they found to do this: giving their lunch to poor children (and thus being hungry themselves for most of the day), not taking a drink of water even when they were very thirsty, and wearing a length of rope tied around their waists (under the clothes, almost like a hair shirt).



One line in the book mentioned that the children "acquired a very lively understanding of the admirable dogma of the Communion of the Saints." This refers to the teaching that the Catholic Church is made up of three parts: those souls who are in heaven (the "Church Triumphant"), those in Purgatory who are being purified for Heaven ("The Church Suffering") and those faithful on Earth ("The Church Militant"). I began reflecting on this, particularly on the duties of us members of the Church Militant.

Of recent years, I've come to see the purpose of life here on earth as basically a battle (hence the term "militant") to save one's own soul and - depending on his Vocation - the souls entrusted to him. So in my case, I have the duty to help my husband

[and children get to Heaven](#)

as well.

But thinking of it now in the context of Our Lady's teachings at Fatima, I think I'm understanding for the first time that I also have a real responsibility to all those other souls on earth who are in

danger of rejecting God and going to Hell.

It's so easy to forget about this. I had come to imagine that the only way I could have a positive impact on other's souls was by being a good apologist for the Church - being able to convince people through logic of the truths of the Faith. Deciding that wasn't a skill I possessed, I had thought this removed my obligations to all those other sinners on Earth (of which, of course, I am certainly one). "As long as I'm striving to live a holy life, and teach my children to love God," I thought, "I'm doing what I'm supposed to. I don't have the time to volunteer for this or that charitable organization...I don't have much money to donate to the missionaries I might like to", etc. etc. All this time, I wasn't remembering Our Lady's message to us. I spend so much time lamenting the distressing state of the world and the pervasiveness of sin and corruption as if it's everyone *else's* fault. But what have I been doing to offer reparation for these sins? What graces have I been trying to win for those souls at risk?

Even if I never left my house for the rest of my life, and never spoke to anyone in the world besides my own husband and children, I could still be helping sinners. It only takes my prayers and sacrifices, offered for their sake.

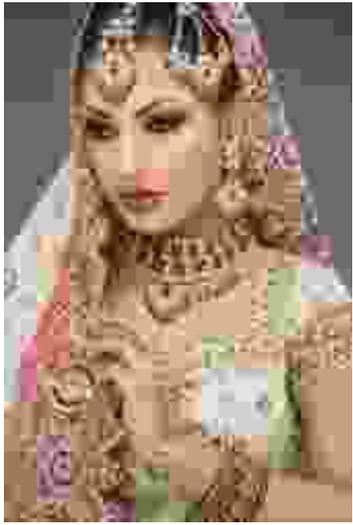
...And I should think that if someone was humbly and generously making little sacrifices throughout his life for the sake of God and for other people....he would have a good chance of "getting himself to heaven" in the process.

Although I've been praying it for years, I had also forgotten the origin of the prayer [called, appropriately, "The Fatima Prayer"] Mary asked us to include after each decade of the Rosary:

"O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy"

This contribution is available at <http://ourordinarylifeextraordinary.blogspot.com/2013/03/our-lady-of-fatima-and-communion-of.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Smart Kids [at Smaller Mannhattans]



as a bride adorned for her husband

1. In the March 20 class we covered this bit of Acts:

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." Every year I run a [skit](#) with a Saint Paul, a mother, a father, a deathly ill daughter, and a dishrag to show how this sort of miracle prefigures the physical aspects of sacraments. The kids have to get into the roles on the fly; and they do a good job, especially considering I don't read the verses until the skit is done. But this year Paul and the mother went beyond the usual performances. First, when the father brought the dishrag to preaching Paul, Paul just stood there with it. Sometimes Paul will vigorously handle it, or breathe on it before giving it back, which already shows what the kids have learned. But this year: nothing. I prompted, "So Paul, you gonna do anything, or just stand there while his daughter dies?" Paul says, "*Uhh...should I bless it?*" Well I dunno, you're God's man, not me. And he launches into a beautiful ad-libbed blessing of the rag: "*Dear God, please put your healing power into this rag so the little girl can get better,*" and serenely hands it back to Dad. Normally during these skits the peanut gallery is yelling advice to the players, but they all shut slap up at this. Dad is absolutely sober as he carefully accepts the rag and takes it home to his wife. The mother focuses on the sick child, played by a rubber fetus on her desk. She takes the rag, and using all her 12-year-old nascent maternal instincts, softly strokes her sick daughter. After a few seconds she stops, and tucks the rag as a blanket around the baby. "So how is she?" *She's all better now.* The class is totally silent, plugged in, and ready to burst with thoughtful answers to a series of pointed questions that lead to conclusions about how

sacraments work.

2. On March 27 we finished our Grand Catholic Tour of the Bible with the

[Book of Revelations](#)

; which is no surprise considering it's the last book. The whole sweep from Eden to the Fall to Jesus to the Second Coming to the New Jerusalem is recapped. The kids hear: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them." We compare the New Jerusalem with Eden in their sinlessness and happiness.

After class a couple of kids come up. "Hey Stratopops, we have a question: why is it called the New Jerusalem and not the New Eden?" Ehh...great question! Nobody's asked that before! I never thought about it before! Huh...well...OK: in Eden did God have a body?

No, God doesn't have a body.

Right, except for...?

Jesus.

Yes, Jesus has a body; was he in Eden?

No.

Right. And in the New Jerusalem will we live with the Lamb?

Yes.

Who is...

Jesus

. Yes. Were there cities in Eden?

No it was just a garden.

Yes, but a big garden wasn't the sort of world Jesus lived in. So maybe it's important that after the Second Coming we live in a place that's a sinless version of the world Jesus lived in the first time, so it'll be a city, not a garden. And tell me where God dwelled with the Israelites.

In the Meeting Tent.

Oops, I mean

after

the Tent.

In the temple?

Yes, in...

Jerusalem!

Yes, so maybe God doesn't want to go back to living in the Garden of Eden. Maybe he wants to live in a perfect version of Jerusalem. Is that enough of an answer?

Yes, that's fine.

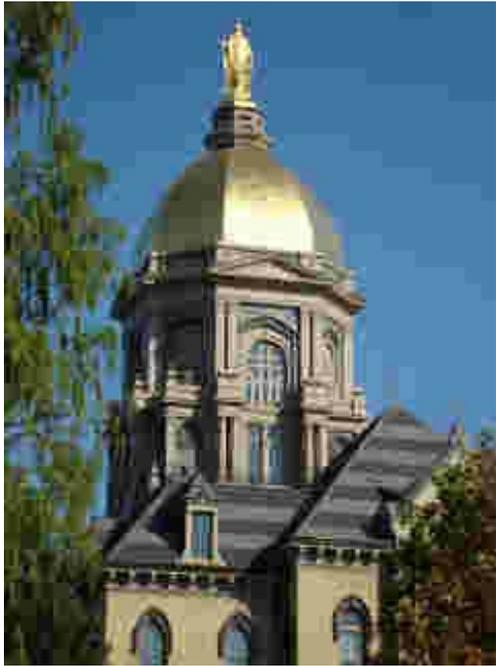
OK, you kind of caught me by surprise. If I learn anything else about this great question I'll let y'all know."

Smart, smart kids. They are a wonder.

This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2013/03/smart-kids.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

How Great It Is To See You. Please Come Back! [at Harvesting The Fruits Of Contemplation]



Easter and Christmas are the two times during the course of the year when many Catholics come to Mass who do not regularly do so. As Christ's representatives on earth, we need to welcome every one who enters His Church.

But if we really love our absent brothers and sisters and care about the salvation of their souls neither we nor our priests would allow them to leave without lovingly challenging them.

What follows is an older post with a new name and introductory sentence that attempts to do just that.

Imagine entering Church, sitting down in a pew and in your heart, hearing Jesus say:

"I am always here – 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year - waiting for you. But generally I am alone, abandoned and ignored.

So when I looked out from behind the closed doors this morning, I was overjoyed to see **you!** While there were many familiar faces among those filling the pews, there were a good number whom I have not seen in some time. If you only knew the joy I experience when you come!

I take delight in all My people, but I experience a special joy when those who stay away come to be with Me. I have so much to give each of you!

How I hunger for your presence here every Sunday. How I want to be one with you and fill you

will My graces. How I want to give you the spiritual nourishment you need to withstand the weekly onslaught and temptations that surround you.

I offer you My Word and most especially My Body, Blood Soul and Divinity!

But if you have not been coming to Sunday Mass, if you have intentionally ignored or disobeyed My commandments, if you have unconfessed mortal sin on your soul, then there is something you must first do before approaching Me at the altar if you are to eternally benefit from Holy Communion.

See that little box, that little room off to the side or in the back of the Church? At least once a week, I sit there in the person of my priest, waiting for you to come, to humble yourself, to acknowledge your sinfulness, to ask for my forgiveness and to resolve to sin no more .My mercy is yours for the asking!

It really isn't that difficult. I already know where you have failed Me, yourself and others. There is nothing You could ever tell my priest that he has not heard or that I have not forgiven through him countless times before. Truth be told, fewer come to see Me in the confessional each week than visit me in my locked tabernacles!

Pride caused your first parents to disobey me and the same pride keeps so many of you away from Me! Swallow your pride! Humble yourself. Come to this place of forgiveness, healing and mercy – the source of new life. I can not shower you with the graces I have for you in Holy Communion unless you do so.

I am sure you can understand then why your absence from Sunday Mass and the confessional saddens Me so! There is rarely any valid reason for you to miss Sunday Mass or for you to approach Me in the Blessed Sacrament unworthily.

I love you! I will always love you!

I can only offer you eternal life. You must choose it!

So please come back to Mass and confession.

I can hardly wait to see you again."

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2013/03/how-great-it-is-to-see-you-please-come.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

7 Quick Takes (Vol. 34): Mercy for Parents [at Working to be Worthy]

-1-

"Some people just shouldn't have kids."

"Well, neither should we, but someone's gotta do it."



-2-

While Jeremy and I were engaged, we were visiting my cousins who asked us about having children. I admitted I was somewhat scared, afraid I would mess them up. "Oh, you will. We all mess up our kids. The question is just how badly." This assurance, from parents I greatly respect, made the whole endeavor much less intimidating.

-3-

I question my decisions about my children frequently. When should I insist on a particular schedule? How much of that does he really need to eat? Since he missed his nap, what time should we put him to bed tonight? Daily choices need to be evaluated to increase the odds that I am doing what is best for our family.

-4-

The question that most plagues me, though, isn't one I can answer by doing enough research or reading parenting blogs. Am I living out my faith authentically? I know, from inspiring first-hand experience, that what parents model is crucial for a child's faith.

-5-

To know how I share my faith with my children requires soul-searching. A lot of it. (I've found those 5AM nursing sessions to be good for this type of thing.) This isn't like deciding whether or not to circumcise, a one-time decision. I need to be diligent in seeking God, daily, relying on his grace to pull us through this messy life.

-6-

I must be able to identify my faults in order to correct them. I must strive always to live out the calling to which I have been called. But just as importantly, I must accept God's mercy. When he forgives and calls me out of darkness into light, I must be willing to answer. Accepting mercy requires humility.

-7-

It's hard for me to accept mercy. I want to be good enough, to do it on my own. If I cannot accept God's mercy, though, I am in no position to give it to those around me. Pray for me, would you? And for every other parent raising a child. We can't do this alone.

This contribution is available at <http://workingtobeworthy.blogspot.com/2013/03/7-quick-takes-vol-34-mercy-for-parents.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Duality of Being Christian [at A Spiritual Journey]

A Christian is both timid and bold ~ timid because he realizes that he is finite before God; bold because God empowers him. A Christian is both humble and proud ~ humble because God is great to him; proud because he has God. A Christian is both invisible and visible ~ invisible because he hides himself in God; visible because God dwells in him.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2013/03/duality-of-being-christian.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

A Stanford School of Engineering research team has developed a [new mathematical model for how society becomes polarized](#), published in the March online edition *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. These models are similar to models that seek to predict the behavior of matter based on certain known modes of action, and they are always more difficult for human systems because humans are, inherently, unpredictable (that free will thing). However, they are not without benefit. Opinionaters, debaters, political pundits, anyone passionate about ideologies, can benefit from the insight.

As a Catholic trying to understand better ways to communicate with others, I see a couple of ecumenical insights in this study. Catholicism is all about unity because God is unity, three Divine Persons who are One God. But as we all know, people are divided. Christians are divided, even Catholics are divided. Ecumenism calls us to engage with the world, outside our own Catholic spheres. Consider the models.

Model 1 – Homophily

The prevailing mathematical theory of social polarization goes like this: Like seeks like. People surround themselves with other people who share their opinions, thereby reinforcing those like opinions. Thus the name, homophily (*loving the same*).

The model also assumes that people within the polarized groups form opinions to minimize disagreement among like-minded peers, so that the opinions within the polarized group tend toward an averaging unity. People want to appear unified within their groups.

But does that hinder groups from uniting with outside groups? It would seem so.

The Stanford researchers, however, refute this model of homophily. Why? As one of the doctoral candidate and co-author of the paper put it, "[You can't create outliers by averaging.](#)" Over a long enough time, they say, this model would predict that society as a whole, as more and more averaging occurs, would become unpolarized and united, monophilic. I don't agree with this conclusion because mathematically or naturally, there's no law that averaging within an outlier subgroup will ever be, or must ever be, extended to the entire population. Just because some molecules react with other ones, doesn't mean the material world will someday be a monosubstance. But consider the other model anyway.

Model 2 – Biased Assimilation

The research team at Stanford uses another social science model called *biased assimilation*. This model assumes that what polarizes people is the way they form opinions. When presented with

inconclusive evidence (for instance, studies about homosexual behavior, studies about contraception and abortion, studies about whether animals can think, etc.) people easily accept evidence that supports their already held opinion, and discredit anything that does not fit it. They, thus, tend to make more out of inconclusive evidence than they should. It seems counter-intuitive that two people could be presented with the same information, but become further divided in opinion, but the researchers say that is what happens.

Okay, I think we all can relate to that.

If you've debated online, you know how it happens. You provide a link to something that you just know will convince the opponent to have an epiphany, and it doesn't work. Instead, you both talk past each other because you both are trying to further hold your opinions. Have I been guilty of this too? Probably, without even realizing it. At least being aware of the tendency will help to avoid it.

Biased assimilation shows us also why we need to be careful about media choices. Highly polarizing news sources intentionally seek out stories that will further polarize; it's how they build their audience. Likewise, Internet targeting systems also place ads and news stories in our feeds based on computational preferences. It's something to be aware of, especially the next time you read or hear a story that makes your blood boil. Try not to assimilate the information with bias, try to understand what the other person is saying.

Catholic Model – Four Concentric Circles

Here's the thing. I generally find myself wondering after reading these studies why they needed math to figure this out. Isn't this common sense? The Catholic Church has been pondering human nature for a long time, and rather than mathematical models, Pope Paul VI, for instance, uses an analogy in his 1964 encyclical on ecumenism, [*Ecclesiam Suam*](#). He describes four concentric circles (96-115) that hold all mankind. Rather than viewing mankind as forming groups and subgroups that are either polarized or united, he describes mankind as one large circle, *already united already by God*, one species.



The circle of mankind includes atheists, other religions, and other Christians — everyone. The next, smaller circle is that of all religions, united because they all seek God. The third inner circle is that of Christians, united because they believe in and love

Christ. The fourth, innermost, smallest circle is that of Catholics. So instead of the seeing mankind as polarized by opinion into unmixable substances like oil and water, Catholics are asked to view mankind as one race already and to work from the inner unity we have as Catholics to reach out and draw others in.

So, there is some truth in the Homophily Model, and we ought to avoid seeing ourselves as isolated groups only uniting within. There is some truth in the Biased Assimilation Model, and we ought to be careful that our media sources do not cement extreme biases. However, no mathematical model can ever fully account for the inherent free will of humans. Any parent of a two-year-old or broker on Wall Street knows that. As much as we may benefit from the insight of the mathematical models, I still think the Catholic Church is ahead of the mathematicians on this issue. And I was careful not to assimilate them with bias.

Source: [Science Daily](#)

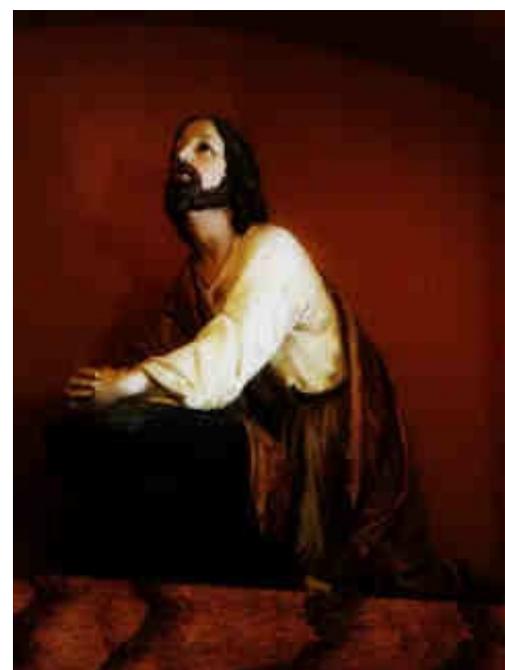
This contribution is available at <http://stacytrasancos.com/the-church-is-ahead-of-the-mathematicians-on-ecumenical-dialogue/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Why Are You Still Sleeping? A Palm Sunday Reflection [at Journey to Wisdom]

March 24, 2013

Then going out, he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he arrived at the place he said to them, “Pray that you may not undergo the test.” After withdrawing about a stone’s throw from them and kneeling, he prayed saying, Father, if you are willing to take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done.” And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping from grief. He said to them “Why are you sleeping?” Get up and pray that you may not undergo the test.” Luke 22: 39-46



I am completely overwhelmed by the readings for this Sunday. They are so rich, but so familiar, that it takes quite a lot of readings to settle myself down into prayer. Since the readings are so familiar every distraction serves to claim priority in my ill focused mind. Still, the words “**Why**

are you still sleeping?” keep echoing back to me. Sleeping? Me? I am doing my best to post a reflection on these readings and I am stuck in confusion and that uneasy feeling that I am not at all up to the task. Yet, the I keep hearing the words:

“Why are you still sleeping?”

Don’t you love the persistence of our Lord when you have allowed a smidgen of His word to penetrate your heart? The danger is that, much like the befuddled, grief stricken apostles, I have no idea where I am being led with this question. So it is much easier to fall asleep, to complacently put aside His request for my attention rather than allow His word to unsettle dormant and dangerous desires in my soul. I like feeling as if I am just fine, that I have everything under control. But when you let the word of Jesus echo in your heart and mind, you will soon feel a stirring in your soul; the troubling of sleepy, complacent waters. And yes, you will find that all is not well there. But persist, be brave and keep praying! Because you and I are needed when the hour of darkness falls on us in our own time.

“Why are you still sleeping?”

It is becoming clearer to me that the call of Christ to awaken in each of us the desire to cultivate a heart of unceasing prayer is becoming more and more urgent. Maybe it is because recently, at a Lenten retreat, I was struck by an image a gentleman shared with us. He had received this image during our meditation time. At first he had been a little distracted by the fast paced music that was playing quietly in the background, thinking that it was not very “Lenten”. But he persisted in his prayer and soon enough he settled in and could see in his mind Jesus walking very quickly with His disciples following behind. The man caught up with Jesus and asked him why He was walking so fast. Jesus replied “because there is not much time.” It sent chills down my spine.

Or maybe it is because our new Pope Francis has, like Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, pinpointed spiritual poverty as the prevailing sickness of the wealthier nations of the world. And it is a sickness that has left us sleepy and complacent as objective truths are replaced with the dictatorship of relativism. We are being enslaved by our baser desires, and many of us are not in the least bit aware of it. The farther we go down this path the harder it is to desire truth - to seek it out with the energy and fervor that are needed to stay awake and endure in the dark mysteries of life. The words of Jesus in the gentleman’s meditation “there is not much time” fall even harder on my heart after I hear this.



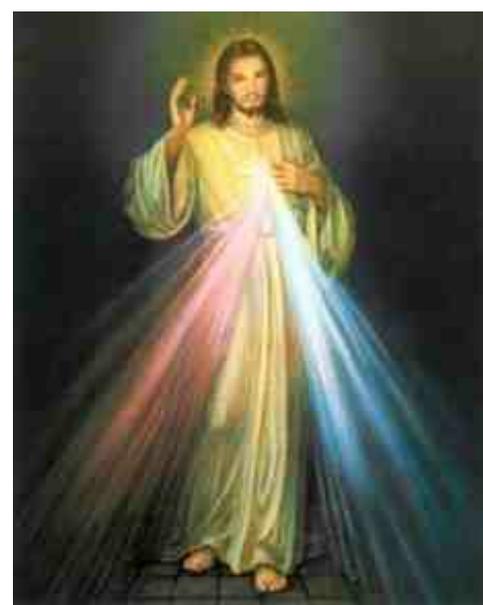
Why are you still sleeping?"

Have you ever noticed,.....that the universe, and every little bit of the universe, is always hardening and narrowing and coming to a point?....I mean this,....If you dip into any college, or school, or parish, or family- anything you like- at a given point in its history you always find that there was a time before that point when there was more elbow room and contrasts weren't quite so sharp; and that there's going to be a time after that point when there is even less room for indecision and codices are even more momentous. Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing."
Pg.280-281

In our distracted, social networked, trans-gendered, create- your- own- truth world the time we have to reach souls is diminishing fast. We are entering into a time where straddling between faith and culture will no longer be possible. Are we doing enough? Are we giving our young ones not just words of truth, but a living relationship with Truth Himself? Are we teaching our own little ones how to pray more deeply and more intimately with Christ, so that their love for their Lord will override the incredible pressure to side with a culture that increasingly cannot acknowledge objective truth, and is, in fact, hostile to it? If not we need to wake up, and we need to wake up now. If we cannot teach our own children that Jesus wants you to persist in prayer, through all the struggles and through all the grief of our lives, how in the world are we going to be light for those who lurk in some of the darkest shadows of despair? And, again, the pervasive hostility to our faith and the ever-present distractions make these outreaches even more urgent!

“Why are you still sleeping?”

One way to help us to awaken those around us who share our faith is to teach about prayer and to let every one know that it is in prayer that we learn to love Jesus with passion and with courage! It is in prayer that we begin to discern His voice, and as we persist through our distractions and through our sleepiness we will know that He is always intimately present. We really need to let the Spirit into our imaginations and let Jesus show us how we are written into His story. To give to one another the courage to cry out to Jesus like Bartimaeus did, persistently. Or to run the gauntlet of accusers, those voices that discourage us and would keep us from seeking the Lord, like the sinful women with the alabaster jar - so that you can weep at His feet and receive His tender love and forgiveness. We need to give our young people the inheritance that is theirs by their baptism.



If you have perceived that persistent call of Jesus, to awaken your soul to prayer and to help others awaken as well , as always He does not leave us orphaned and alone. There are growing ministries responding to this call. One that is reaching out to our children is

[One Heart ~ One Fire Ministries](#)

, please visit the site and learn more about it.

Peace and Grace to all of you!

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2013/03/why-are-you-still-sleeping.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Out of Ashes Beauty Will Rise: Our Infertility Story (Part 1) [at her Little Ways]

**Note* It is with both fear and trepidation that I write this post. I may lose "friends" or "blog followers" by sharing such a painful (and shameful) part of my past, but I also feel prompted by the Holy Spirit to share our story so that others may know the truth, learn from our stumbling, and perhaps choose a different path.*

I only ask, that if you are not Catholic, or even a "faithful" Catholic that you reserve judgment, and if you choose to comment, do so kindly. Whether or not you agree with the Teaching Authority (The Magisterium) of the Catholic Church is not what this post is about. While not originally a "Catholic blog", "her Little Ways" has evolved from miscellaneous "mommy blogger" to "Catholic blogger" ...written by a sinner...growing in faith and love for the Catholic Church...and striving daily toward living a life of holiness. I thank you in advance for displaying grace as I tackle this sensitive topic.

All of us are broken.

All of us are sinners.

But for some of us, our sins walk around on the outside of our bodies every.single.day.

But the beautiful thing about Christianity, and specifically Catholicism, is that we can be forgiven. That absolution can be granted. That healing can take place.

To place on those who mourn in Zion

a diadem instead of ashes,

To give them oil of gladness in place of

mourning,

a glorious mantle instead of a listless

spirit.

They will be called oaks of justice,

planted by the Lord to show his

glory.

Isaiah 61:3

Out of ashes beauty will rise.

Out of infertility, IVF, and separation from God (our ashes) a good and holy child, additional blessings, and a return to/deepening of the Faith (beauty) will arise.

Life is a journey. One that is filled with amazing highs and incredible lows. But a journey that is always best walked with God.

The First Big Low

Not one ever "expects" to get an infertility diagnosis. Especially if there has been no previous problematic history with either spouse.

After four years of recurrent miscarriage, our OB/GYN referred us to an infertility specialist. At 33, I wasn't getting any younger and I was already in a "race against the clock". (Already, this gives you a peek into my mindset...

I'm in control...I make the rules...I will do everything according to my will

...etc., etc.)

Never works out that way...does it?

So, after undergoing lots of tests, we come to the conclusion that I am not the problem.

What? My spouse is the problem?

Wait, I didn't sign up for this. I mean, I know I stood at the altar and entered into the marriage covenant, "For better and for worse...for richer and for poorer...in sickness and in health" but I meant for all those struggles that come with child-rearing or with dealing with a spouse that leaves the toilet seat upright and toothpaste in the sink or when we lose our parents or God-forbid a child.

Not that I would be

childless

...

I'll never forget the

specialists

words coming over my cell phone as I sat in my red Saturn SUV in a grocery store parking lot. "We are so sorry, Valerie, but Chris and you have a less than 1% chance of ever conceiving children on your own. Dr. B suggests either going straight to IVF or using donor sperm."

Donor sperm? I wanted to vomit. My world came crashing down around me.

An Incredible High

As my husband and I came to terms with our diagnosis (because infertility truly is a couple's diagnosis...not a him or her issue), we vowed we would exhaust all medical avenues to conceive our child. Regardless of the cost.

How little did I know how much this choice would actually cost.

We

knew

that God wanted us to have children. After all, our Heavenly Father

would not allow man to create and design such a science without his consent. Isn't God the creator of all things???! Infertility specialists were the hands and feet of Jesus...bringing joy and happiness and babies to infertile couples...right?

Needless to say, both my husband and I were poorly catechised in this area of our faith.

Abortion...absolutely wrong.

But, IVF...

We never even

thought

that this might be wrong. We truly believed in our hearts that this was God's way of allowing infertile couples to experience and bring about new life. We never even considered all the steps of the process that are sinful in and of themselves...and how much life is actually destroyed in the process.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Way ahead.

I'll skip the sordid details, but suffice to say that in November of 2003 we underwent a successful IVF procedure.

On August 4, 2004 the sweetest, most precious, most-wanted/prayed for baby (ever!) entered into the world. All glorious 6 lbs. 12 oz. of her. With blonde hair, blue eyes, and the most delicate fingers I had ever seen. She made our "family" complete and we were ever grateful to God.

He

had answered our prayers!

Mary Catherine, 3-days Old, Coming Home from the Hospital



Prayers answered, our family complete, we paraded our "medical miracle" around like an IVF badge of courage sharing with anyone and everyone our story of how God had answered our prayers through science.

Little did we know what "lows" were still in store for us...

walk with Him
Wednesday



@ a holy experience

As this may be a lot for many of you to digest...both those of you who do not understand or accept the error of my ways or why the Catholic Church even has a say, or those of you who are shocked and reeling from my "confession", I only ask for your grace and prayers and that you return tomorrow for, "the rest of the story."

Valerie

This contribution is available at <http://kueterfamilyblog.blogspot.com/2013/03/out-of-ashes-beauty-will-rise-our.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

@Patron of Compulsive Disorders [at Written By the Finger of God]

I'm sharing this one on www.convertjournal.com for the wonderful New Evangelist's monthly link up, and the other wonderful monthly link-up blitz at . (Aren't we blessed to swap posts and discover talented writers within the Catholic circles?)

As a cradle Catholic, I've had the privilege of learning about and praying for the intercession of many saints for all my life. Lose my keys again? Calling on Saint Anthony. Test coming up? St. Joseph of Cupertino to the rescue. Pregnancy issues? Alternate between St. Gerard Magella and St. Raymond Nonatus. Husband unemployed? St. Joseph's novena hasn't failed. For homeschool issues, St. Anne is my patroness. Persecuted on face-book? St. Joan of Arc. Oh, I need humility here? St. Therese of Liseux, pray for me.

But there are modern day concerns that I'm stumped over which saint to pray to. Such as the problem of quasi-compulsive shopping disorder, which is an honest to goodness recurring struggle for me. Last time I hoarded children's books (which they haven't all read yet), this time it was buying the shiny pewter sandals at 75% that kicked it off. On the way home, I rationalize that I need a pair in cognac, too. Pretty soon, those nude flats begin to make sense inside my mental shopping cart, and suddenly, I make it my mission to add those black winter boots on clearance for next winter because surely, it's an offer I can't miss. Next thing you know, I've justified that my closet is not even half the size of Imelda Marcos' shoe collection and I'm browsing online to compare prices, and promising to return the following day.

Looking through my impossibly fixed bank account, that's when I know I'm in serious need of heavenly intercessors.

I know better than to ask St. Jude. He won't be able to relate to the need for another pair of shoes. (If you recall, Jesus clearly instructed them NOT to take an extra pair of sandals for the journey.)

I'm embarrassed to ask Blessed Theresa, who has her hands full interceding for her order and the dying of Calcutta. Ditto for the Blessed Mother. As for St. Pio, the wonder miracle worker, I have a feeling I'll get a stern answer along the lines of "No Way, Jose!" (Or "Non e possibile, Giuseppe!" if the internet translator is correct.) And I can forget about asking the Church's top guys during this tumultuous time in Church reform and persecution. They'd reroute me to Luke 10:4.

So I turn to someone who's never refused my soul assistance no matter how silly the prayers are: my guardian angel.

"Please, guardian angel, give me ~~shoes~~ graces to overcome my weaknesses. I want to return to the daily motherly duties of my life without fantasizing about sandals. Enter my thoughts. Surround it with the holy so that temptation doesn't overcome me. Give me peace."

I don't know if my angel networks me an unknown saint up in heaven (@patronoffirstworldproblems) to help intercede for me or if he approaches the throne himself or gathers a fleet (#angelSOS) to vanquish the legion of devils attacking me.

But I am sure of one thing: he obtains graces because when I browse the shoe shop the next day, I feel an absolute revulsion for everything displayed on the aisles and a deep remorse for even remotely believing the lie that things of this life can keep me satisfied. So I exit empty handed and head for the grocery next door, where I gladly shop for artichokes and pears for the kids.

Throughout salvation history, we've read about how the angels *guide* us like they did St. Joseph and St. Peter. Angels also *minister* as Hebrews 1:14 points out "Matthew 4: "behold angels came and ministered to him." Angels *protect* us as they did Daniel and Philip. Angels *guard* our souls: "Psalm 91: 11 For He will command His angels to guard you in all your ways."

The Catechism 336 sums up the role of our guardian angels: "From it's beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession. Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life."

"Make yourself familiar with angels, and behold them frequently in spirit; for without being seen, they are present with you," St. Francis De Sales advised.

Oh I will, St. Francis I will. My guardian angel is the patron of spiritual warfare. From here on out, he's not going to be my last resort when he is the most knowledgeable of all my struggles and the closest one who can answer my pleas for help to, well, anything and everything.

This contribution is available at <http://anabellehazard.blogspot.com/2013/04/patron-of-compulsive-disorders.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Lately the posting has been spotty. Every time I hit the publish button I feel a sense of relief. It feels good to be back. I should visit my old friend more often. Writing is so very cathartic for me.

I'm weird like that.

However, life moves at a pace that makes sitting down to write feel like a luxury (kind of like sitting down to lunch which I do on the rare occasions I go out) rather than a necessity. It gets put at the end of the long "to do" lists and by the time I make it to the end, there's no more doing left in me.

Something occurred to me tonight though that made me make the sacrifice of losing sleep in order to write. We watched [The Passion of the Christ](#). Since the movie came out, we've made viewing it part of our Lenten tradition. If you live under a rock and haven't seen it, do. That being said, I totally get why some people can't. It is the hardest movie I've ever loved to watch (does that make sense?).

Over time, we have "prettied up" the Passion a bit. We've made it less gory, less gruesome, less hard to swallow by tying it up in a neat little package of the images of the Stations of the Cross and the Crucifixes that hang in Catholic churches. Some churches don't even use the Crucifix because it is so very horrid. I get that too.

This movie doesn't pretty up one single moment. It is appalling and disgusting and terrible in its portrayal of Jesus' suffering and death. It is, I think, the closest thing out there to the real deal. It's gut wrenching just like it should be. It gives Good Friday and whole new meaning.

For all of those reasons, it is also a beautiful film. It moves me...every time.

Tonight though, there was one line that echoed in my mind long after the credits rolled.

"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."

You know the scene. Jesus is sitting at the table with his disciples, the day before His death. It is the Last Supper. It is heavy with a literal meaning that no one but Jesus understands. It is the truth He lived and died for - us, His friends.

Suddenly I found myself at that table. I feel for Peter as he tells Jesus, he would follow Him to death, then within hours, denies ever knowing Him. Sacrifice, I have learned is all nice and good, until you have to do it.

I, like Peter, want to do that, but how can I? I hear Jesus speaking to me in the midst of hearing the actor say his lines.

You do it every day.

Then, just to drive His point home, He shows me how. God's good to me that way.

When you drop everything to visit a friend in the hospital, you lay down your life.

When you cook a meal for someone, you lay down your life.

When you stay up later than you want because someone needs your ear, you lay down your life.

When you go out of your way to drop someone off, you lay down your life.

When you open your home to house guests, you lay down your life.

When you bring a forgotten lunch, project, or book to school, you lay down your life.

When you make a call just to check in on someone, you lay down your life.

You don't lay down your life because someone tells you to. You don't lay it down because of guilt. When you lay down your life, you do it out of love.

Of course, the disciples, most of them at least, very literally lived out the words of Jesus. I, thanks be to God, have not been called to be a martyr. At least, not yet. I have, however, often thought it's not such a bad way to go. In the Catholic Church, dying a martyr for your faith is pretty much considered a ticket straight to Heaven...some days I feel as though this may be my best shot. I'd like to think I could do it though I'm not so naive to say that without a doubt. Staring death in the face does not often bring out the best in people.

Watching Jesus suffer for my sins on a big screen brings out a strong desire to live up to my full

potential. Jesus died for me; therefore I should live for Him. At the same time, it hits me with a twinge of guilt that I'm not doing anything remotely close to that. But Jesus, because He loves me, gently used that movie tonight to remind me that I do sometimes get it right.

If you're a parent, you have learned the art of laying down your life for your friend. If you're caring for a parent, you are laying down your life. If you're silently suffering and offering it up, you too are laying down your life.

Those are heroic acts of love and Jesus sees them.

In this final week of Lent, let's bring it home strong. Let's not forget He died for us. Let's live our lives for Him!

This contribution is available at <http://raisingangels.blogspot.com/2013/03/there-is-no-greater-love.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Promise of Lent



As we come to the end of Lent 2013, we see how far we have come. And we see how far we have to go to become the wholly holy children of God he created us to become.

He began a good work in us on Ash Wednesday and inspired us to launch out into the deep of many unknowns. The unknown of our own capacity to make the change he inspired in us. The unknown of our perseverance and of the strength of our expectant faith.

What is not unknown now is that new sureness inside us that we are growing spiritually. Whatever the outcome of our Lenten resolutions, something in our spirit is urging us on to continue to cooperate with the grace poured out to us during these 40 days and abounding even more during Eastertide.

Perhaps it is the grace to continue with a new devotion, a better prayer time, or additional time spent pursuing spiritual wisdom or before the Blessed Sacrament. It could be a new appreciation for a food or activity we denied ourselves that we will always enjoy more because of our sacrifice this Lent. Awareness of a weakness we hadn't recognized before can bring us the resolve to cooperate with God in strengthening our faith that, with the help of the Lord, we will be victorious.

We are growing up in the Lord! Let us now enjoy the Easter season and all the beauty, glory and new life springing up around us. And praise God for the beauty, glory and new life budding in our soul.

The one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil 1:6)

What good work that God began in you during Lent will you continue after Easter?

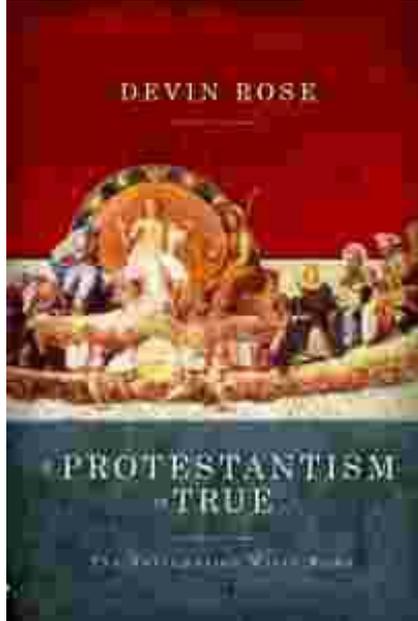
This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/promise-of-lent-2/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The David L. Gray Show [at DavidLGray.INFO]

by [David L. Gray](#)

On Sunday, March 17, 2013 I chatted with Catholic author Devin Rose, a former atheist, who penned the book [‘If Protestantism is True: The Reformation Meets Rome’](#). Devin blogs at [St.](#)



[Joseph's Vanguard](#), and has written articles for Catholic News Agency, Fathers for Good, Called to Communion, and appeared on the Eternal Word Television Network discussing Catholic-Protestant topics.

This is the first show I've ever done talking about Catholic apologetics. I really appreciate Devin's approach this subject. He went from being a militant atheist to being someone who we can look to for guidance on how to evangelize to non-Catholics without the bitterness or polemics, which can sometimes do more harm than good in the effort to convert hearts. The show began with us talking about his conversion to talking about theological particulars to talking about the results of the Protestant religion over the nearly past 500 years.

I really enjoyed this show! It was informative, insightful, and fun! I hope to have Devin back on in the future. I hope you enjoy listening to it! To hear the recorded broadcast you can either go directly to the [archive website](#), or **Just Press PLAY Below to Listen**.

This contribution is available at <http://www.davidlgray.info/blog/2013/03/dlgs-devinrose/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Defending The Catholic Church [at 8 Kids And A Business]

(This post is also at Catholic Insight catholicinsight.com)



Like many faithful Catholics, the resignation of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI left me feeling uncertain and deeply saddened. For a few days, I felt a little weepy and the wet, slushy weather fuelled my winter blahs.

With a heavy heart, I went to work each morning as a visiting nurse in the community. On one of my rounds, a patient struck up an unwelcome conversation. A non-Catholic, the person weighed in with unsolicited negative opinions about the Papacy, the outgoing Pope and the Catholic Church.

“Oh, Lord,” I silently prayed, “I really don’t want to have this conversation today.”

In the nursing profession, we are taught to put the patients’ needs first. Our Standards of Practice instruct us to listen with empathy and to set our own beliefs and values aside so that we don’t make value judgements that might interfere with patient care. A professor in a mandatory Nursing Ethics course once told me to “leave[my] religion at home,” when I voiced my pro-life opinion in class; Canadian nurses don’t have Freedom of Conscience rights. It’s very clear that my religious beliefs are to be checked at the door when I leave for work in the morning.

As a conscientious professional, I am expected to do my job and move on, but the person was attacking my Church and making some very unkind and untruthful comments about my Pope. In defense of Holy Mother Church, I felt compelled to say something. With a quick, silent prayer to the Holy Spirit and with my heart pounding, I calmly and charitably addressed all the erroneous statements that were made. The person countered with more incorrect remarks which I addressed as best as I could. Eventually, the person began to ask questions seeking to clarify mistaken information and then the topic of conversation changed.

Unless we raise our families in completely segregated communities where we don’t engage at all with the rest of society, faithful Catholics, both young and old, will be subjected to negative comments and attitudes regarding our beliefs. It’s inescapable. Everything from life issues, large families, ordination of women, traditional marriage, clergy scandals and celibacy is ammunition

for those who want to attack the Church. Over the next few months we will most likely experience a surge in anti-Catholic sentiment as we adjust to a new Pontiff. How is a faithful Catholic supposed to respond?

Defending Holy Mother Church begins at home. It starts with families rooted in and strengthened by family prayer and parents who seek to build up the Domestic Church through well-formed education in the Church's teachings and modelling a Catholic way of life. Children look to their parents as the prime example of how to engage in the world and if we openly love and defend the Church we will raise children who will most likely do the same. Unless we restrict all contact with the rest of the world, we can't protect our children from anti-Catholic opinion. We need to give them the tools to defend Her in truth and charity. We don't undertake this responsibility by ourselves and so the support and assistance of other faithful, well-formed Catholics is invaluable. It takes a Catholic village to raise a Catholic child. When our kids become young, independent adults, there is a greater likelihood they too will be defenders of the Faith if they have learned to do so from an early age.

My 12-year old son stepped into the fray when he spoke out against abortion to a group of Catholic classmates who said they were in favour of it. He realized that they didn't really know what they were saying and although he was subjected to ridicule, he felt that their statements needed to be addressed. In a Gr. 10 religion class, another son corrected a teacher who obviously didn't know her facts. In campus lecture halls, my university-aged children have defended the Catholic Church regardless of the response from other students and instructors. My children are ordinary, fun-loving kids with friends of various or no religious beliefs, but with God's grace, they have learned that speaking up in a restrained, intelligent manner without condemnation is sometimes necessary. I'm sure you can add examples from your own experience.

"If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world – therefore the world hates you." (*John 15:19*) We all know that we are to live in the world but not be of it and sometimes that involves some risk to reputation and career. Jesus' teaching that we "cannot serve God and wealth" (*Matthew 6:10*) is very evident when it becomes necessary to defend Catholic belief in a workplace setting. That's why, with the grace of God, we learn to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves," (*Matthew 10:16*) and we trust that the Holy Spirit "will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say." (*Luke 12:12*)

In a world that is pervasively secular, there is increasingly less acceptance of Christ's Gospels and Catholic teachings. By His own reasons, the Lord has placed us in this time in the places and situations in which we are living. We are called to be witnesses where we are planted. This is not the time to remain silent in the face of insults and false statements. On the other hand, it is also not the time to be adversarial when faced with hostility. A composed, well-informed, respectful demeanour works best. Of course, our actions in society, whether at work or at play, have to reflect our Catholic Christian faith; above all, practice charity. In this Year of Faith, "it is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize." (*Porta Fidei*) "Caritas Christi urget nos." (*2Cor. 5:14*) Evangelization includes defending, with patience and love, Holy Mother

Church.

Deo Gratias

This contribution is available at <http://8kidsandabusiness.wordpress.com/2013/03/12/defending-the-catholic-church/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Will the Next Pope Be the Antichrist? The Last Pope? Is The End Near? and other burning questions [at Catholic Sistas]

Mel - Shared from spiritdaily.com

For our discernment:

DEPARTURE OF POPE CAUSES THE EYE TO GLANCE BACK AT ALLEGED PROPHECIES FROM SAINTS, MYSTICS, AND EVEN POPES

While the abrupt departure of Benedict XVI and the implications of his abdication are unsettling to many, even disturbing, and while there is little question that the Church remains in crisis over homosexuality (persecuted by it from within and without, necessitating perhaps a “reform council”), one must take the Pope Emeritus at his word: that he simply had no more strength to carry forth his pontificate.

Yet, it brings out the prophetic.

Did he “flee,” as so many alleged prophecies — from classical mystics and saints and even popes — have had a pontiff fleeing from Rome?

One cannot describe his retirement as that, not at this point, not with information at hand, although there are the haunting words that Benedict himself spoke at the very beginning of his Petrine Ministry: “Pray for me, that I may not flee for fear of the wolves.”

More recently — on Ash Wednesday, just days after announcing his abdication — he spoke of “individualism and rivalry” and divisions which he said “disfigured” the face of the Church.

Thus there remains that unsettled air and still the reverberation of thunder; many are those whose eyes revert to prophecy, being rich in history when it comes to matters of the Church.

Noted one Marian film-maker from England, John Bird: “On learning of the most distressing and disturbing news of Pope Benedict’s resignation, I experienced a very deeply felt sense of foreboding for the immediate future of the Church. When the Arm and the Justice of God strikes the leader of His people, then the whole Church in effect will become subject to the final ordeal which must precede the forthcoming Eucharistic Reign of Jesus: ‘Awake sword, against my Shepherd, against the one who is close to me, strike the Shepherd, scatter the sheep (Zechariah 13:7).’

Others might focus on the positive possibilities of a new, dynamic, Marian Pontiff in this world of — indeed — apocalyptic-like turmoil. It is exciting to contemplate the conclave (and to pray for the decision).

Did the Pope hear from God, from the Blessed Mother? He alluded to listening to such a Voice. And it certainly has occurred with previous pontiffs. Pius XII is said to have had a vision of Jesus beside his bed at a critical time in his pontificate, when he was feared dying (he went on for several more years). Some claim the Blessed Mother sent a seer to advise Paul VI to remain on the throne.

What about prophecies that had only three popes after John XXIII? Are these to be discarded? Do we await the “Great Pope” of other predictions (or have we already seen one)?

One must never despise prophecy, although always treat it carefully.

Let us move beyond Malachy:

In 1340, an alleged seer named John of the Cleft Rock (1340) said, “Toward the end of the world the Pope with the cardinals will have to flee Rome under trying circumstances to a place where he will be unknown. He will die a cruel death in this exile. The sufferings of the Church will be much greater than at any previous time in history.”

There was Pope Pius IX (died 1878), who said, “The Church will suffer exceedingly. Her servants and her chieftain will be mocked, scourged, and martyred.” (Did that pertain to the Communist oppression?)

There was another Pius (X, who died in 1915): “I saw one of my successors by name fleeing over the corpses of his brethren. He will flee to a place for a short respite where he is unknown, but he himself will die a cruel death.”

There was Jacinta of Fatima (died 1920), who “saw the Holy Father in a very big house. He was kneeling before a table holding his face in his hands and he was weeping. Outside there were many people; some were throwing stones, others were cursing at him and saying many ugly words to him.”

There was Sister Marie Chambon (died 1907): “The triumph of the Church will be hastened by devotion to the five wounds and the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.”

There was Venerable Mary of Agreda (1665): “In the last times the Lord will especially spread the renown of His mother: Mary began salvation, and by her intercession it will be concluded. Before the Second Coming of Christ, Mary must, more than ever, shine in mercy, might, and grace in order to bring unbelievers into the Catholic faith. The powers of Mary in the last times over the demons will be very conspicuous.”

There was Werdin d’Otrante (13th century) who said that a great pontiff would precede the anti-christ. Or, getting back to John of the Cleft Rock: “God will raise up a holy Pope over whom the angels will rejoice. Enlightened by God, this man will reconstruct almost the entire world through his holiness and lead all to the true faith.”

There was Saint Bridget of Sweden (1873): “When the feast of Saint Mark shall fall on Easter, the feast of Saint Anthony on Pentecost, and that of Saint John on Corpus Christi, the whole world shall cry, ‘Woe.’”

There was Elizabeth Canori-Mora (1825): “God will employ the powers of hell for the extermination of these impious and heretical persons who desire to overthrow the Church and destroy its very foundation. These presumptuous men in their mad impiety believe that they can overthrow God from His Throne; but the Lord will despise these artifices, and through an effect on His Mighty Hand He will punish these impious blasphemers by giving permission to the infernal spirits to come out of hell. Innumerable legions of demons shall overrun the earth, and shall execute the order of Divine Justice by causing terrible calamities. After this frightful punishment I saw the Heavens opening and Saint Peter coming down again upon the earth; he was vested in pontifical robes, and surrounded by a great number of angels, who were chanting hymns in his honor, and they proclaimed him as sovereign of the earth.” For our discernment. (These one can find in a little book called Prophecy For Today, currently out of print; soon to be reprinted).

And so it goes.

There have certainly been greater crises. There have been popes who were arrested, even jailed, popes who indeed did have to flee, there have been popes who were immersed in sexual scandal, a time when orgies reportedly occurred in the Lateran Palace, when Church funds were spent in bordellos, when pontiffs waged war or named emperors. At one point during the Middle Ages there was a seventy-year absence of the pontificate from Rome, followed by the disaster of the forty-year Great Schism, when two and eventually three popes fought for control. There were times when one could pay money to become a cardinal and when rectories were the place of concubinage. There were the problems under Basel and Constance — leading to reform councils, as such might well now aid the Church, if under strict papal control.

Tumultuous times. Disturbing ones. But also energizing ones.

A call to arms. A call to sanctity, to prayer; a call to us during Lent, the exact right time for it.

[resources: Lenten books; Medjugorje pilgrimage, Michael Brown: purification, future, self-illumination]

[Print article]

ShareThis

E-mail this link directly

Spirit Daily on Twitter Facebook

Return to home page <http://www.spiritdaily.com>

click here to go back to main book page or For second section of books click here or Spirit Daily Gift Store here

click here for: healing books, here for afterlife, here for spiritual warfare, here for Father DeGrandis

Michael Brown's books autographed [click here]; Book specials here

The Last Secret by Michael Brown A look at the apparitions of the Virgin Mary throughout Church history, from the year 40 A.D. to present! You'll be astonished at the number. This is the first comprehensive history of Mary's entire history of apparitions — how they helped form history, how Mary intervened to institute the Church, to heal, and to save her people from war and plague — to the current day. Originally released in 1997 and now newly republished, this book is historical but will amaze you with the way the Blessed Mother helped build up what is now the oldest institution on earth! Heavy on history, it's a work meant to be a reference guide as well as a vehicle for long-term mediation! [CLICK HERE](#)

For our discernment:

DEPARTURE OF POPE CAUSES THE EYE TO GLANCE BACK AT ALLEGED PROPHECIES FROM SAINTS, MYSTICS, AND EVEN POPES

While the abrupt departure of Benedict XVI and the implications of his abdication are unsettling to many, even disturbing, and while there is little question that the Church remains in crisis over homosexuality (persecuted by it from within and without, necessitating perhaps a “reform council”), one must take the Pope Emeritus at his word: that he simply had no more strength to carry forth his pontificate.

Yet, it brings out the prophetic.

Did he “flee,” as so many alleged prophecies — from classical mystics and saints and even popes — have had a pontiff fleeing from Rome?

One cannot describe his retirement as that, not at this point, not with information at hand, although there are the haunting words that Benedict himself spoke at the very beginning of his Petrine Ministry: “Pray for me, that I may not flee for fear of the wolves.”

More recently — on Ash Wednesday, just days after announcing his abdication — he spoke of “individualism and rivalry” and divisions which he said “disfigured” the face of the Church.

Thus there remains that unsettled air and still the reverberation of thunder; many are those whose eyes revert to prophecy, being rich in history when it comes to matters of the Church.

Noted one Marian film-maker from England, John Bird: “On learning of the most distressing and disturbing news of Pope Benedict’s resignation, I experienced a very deeply felt sense of foreboding for the immediate future of the Church. When the Arm and the Justice of God strikes the leader of His people, then the whole Church in effect will become subject to the final ordeal which must precede the forthcoming Eucharistic Reign of Jesus: ‘Awake sword, against my Shepherd, against the one who is close to me, strike the Shepherd, scatter the sheep (Zechariah 13:7).

Others might focus on the positive possibilities of a new, dynamic, Marian Pontiff in this world of — indeed — apocalyptic-like turmoil. It is exciting to contemplate the conclave (and to pray for the decision).

Did the Pope hear from God, from the Blessed Mother? He alluded to listening to such a Voice. And it certainly has occurred with previous pontiffs. Pius XII is said to have had a vision of Jesus beside his bed at a critical time in his pontificate, when he was feared dying (he went on for several more years). Some claim the Blessed Mother sent a seer to advise Paul VI to remain on the throne.

What about prophecies that had only three popes after John XXIII? Are these to be discarded? Do we await the “Great Pope” of other predictions (or have we already seen one)?

One must never despise prophecy, although always treat it carefully.

Let us move beyond Malachy:

In 1340, an alleged seer named John of the Cleft Rock (1340) said, “Toward the end of the world the Pope with the cardinals will have to flee Rome under trying circumstances to a place where he will be unknown. He will die a cruel death in this exile. The sufferings of the Church will be much greater than at any previous time in history.”

There was Pope Pius IX (died 1878), who said, “The Church will suffer exceedingly. Her servants and her chieftain will be mocked, scourged, and martyred.” (Did that pertain to the Communist oppression?)

There was another Pius (X, who died in 1915): “I saw one of my successors by name fleeing over the corpses of his brethren. He will flee to a place for a short respite where he is unknown, but he himself will die a cruel death.”

There was Jacinta of Fatima (died 1920), who “saw the Holy Father in a very big house. He was kneeling before a table holding his face in his hands and he was weeping. Outside there were many people; some were throwing stones, others were cursing at him and saying many ugly words to him.”

There was Sister Marie Chambon (died 1907): “The triumph of the Church will be hastened by

devotion to the five wounds and the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.”

There was Venerable Mary of Agreda (1665): “In the last times the Lord will especially spread the renown of His mother: Mary began salvation, and by her intercession it will be concluded. Before the Second Coming of Christ, Mary must, more than ever, shine in mercy, might, and grace in order to bring unbelievers into the Catholic faith. The powers of Mary in the last times over the demons will be very conspicuous.”

There was Werdin d’Otrante (13th century) who said that a great pontiff would precede the anti-christ. Or, getting back to John of the Cleft Rock: “God will raise up a holy Pope over whom the angels will rejoice. Enlightened by God, this man will reconstruct almost the entire world through his holiness and lead all to the true faith.”

There was Saint Bridget of Sweden (1373): “When the feast of Saint Mark shall fall on Easter, the feast of Saint Anthony on Pentecost, and that of Saint John on Corpus Christi, the whole world shall cry, ‘Woe.’”

There was Elizabeth Canori-Mora (1825): “God will employ the powers of hell for the extermination of these impious and heretical persons who desire to overthrow the Church and destroy its very foundation. These presumptuous men in their mad impiety believe that they can overthrow God from His Throne; but the Lord will despise these artifices, and through an effect on His Mighty Hand He will punish these impious blasphemers by giving permission to the infernal spirits to come out of hell. Innumerable legions of demons shall overrun the earth, and shall execute the order of Divine Justice by causing terrible calamities. After this frightful punishment I saw the Heavens opening and Saint Peter coming down again upon the earth; he was vested in pontifical robes, and surrounded by a great number of angels, who were chanting hymns in his honor, and they proclaimed him as sovereign of the earth.” For our discernment. (These one can find in a little book called Prophecy For Today, currently out of print; soon to be reprinted).

And so it goes.

There have certainly been greater crises. There have been popes who were arrested, even jailed, popes who indeed did have to flee, there have been popes who were immersed in sexual scandal, a time when orgies reportedly occurred in the Lateran Palace, when Church funds were spent in bordellos, when pontiffs waged war or named emperors. At one point during the Middle Ages there was a seventy-year absence of the pontificate from Rome, followed by the disaster of the forty-year Great Schism, when two and eventually three popes fought for control. There were times when one could pay money to become a cardinal and when rectories were the place of concubinage. There were the problems under Basel and Constance — leading to reform councils, as such might well now aid the Church, if under strict papal control.

Tumultuous times. Disturbing ones. But also energizing ones.

A call to arms. A call to sanctity, to prayer; a call to us during Lent, the exact right time for it.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicsistas.com/2013/02/28/will-the-next-pope-be-the-antichrist-is-the-end-of-the-world-near/>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

ADVANCE READER'S COPY - UNCORRECTED PROOF

ERIC METAXAS

New York Times Best-Selling Author of *Washington*

7 MEN

AND THE SECRET OF
THEIR GREATNESS

Being Good Friday and all, a lot of Catholic mom bloggers are taking the [Tridium](#) off from blogging, so you're not going to see a lot of 7QTs today. But, lo and behold, here I am, bringing you the latest and freshest (mmm hmmm...).



gratuitous Easter picture: confronting the rabbits

Let me reuse that participle phrase again:

Being Good Friday and all, I wanted to tell you all about my experience with one of my favorite iPhone apps: [Confession: A Roman Catholic App](#) (\$1.99).

Mike and I went to a reconciliation service on Monday to start Holy Week. We heard the story of the Prodigal Son, said a community Act of Contrition, and then got in line to get all squeaky Catholic clean.

I got into the confessional, pulled out my app, and it was the easiest Confession ever. Tell me you don't get in there and forget everything you were going to say, and then you leave thinking, "Oh my gosh! Do I need to go back? I forgot all of that stuff. Now am I really forgiven? I don't feel better at all!" Because, um, that's what happens to me.

So, I downloaded Confession, and I'm totally in love. I felt a little weird swiping around on my iPhone while I was in line, but maybe I was just giving my fellow line-waiters more to add to their lists...not judging the potential judging.

Anyway, it went a little something like this:

I opened the app and put in my password (you can have multiple, secure accounts on one app), and then I read through the examination of conscience and clicked on the ones I needed to confess (you can add custom ones too).

 Back

1st Commandment

Do I not seek to love Him with my whole heart?

Have I been involved with superstitious practices or have I been involved with the occult?

Do I not seek to surrender myself to God's Word as taught by the Church?

Have I ever received Communion in a state of mortal sin?

Have I ever deliberately told a lie in confession or have I withheld a mortal sin from the priest in confession?



Users



Examination



Confession



Prayers

Once I got in there, I told the priest how long it had been since my last confession – because the app keeps track of that – oh yeah! Then, I read my sins from the list it made for me (it was a very short list, of course...), checked them off as I read them, and then hit next. The app takes you through the dialogue of confession and tells you what the priest is going to say and what your response is.

Confession

Next

Begin Confession

In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit

Father, it has been 0 day since my last confession.

This app is intended to be used during the Sacrament of Penance with a Catholic priest only. This is not a substitute for a valid confession.



Users



Examination



Confession



Prayers

Back

Finish

Receive absolution and respond "Amen"

If Priest says, "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good" answer "For His mercy endures forever."



Users



Examination



Confession



Prayers

Easy sin free peasy.

What? That was too boring for you? Add it to your list.

UPDATE: While I was writing this post, I got an update for the app. I know. My life is crazy unpredictable like that. Anyway, the new app allows you to set reminders to go to confession, track the count of your sins, and add your vocation for a more specific examen (I think).

This contribution is available at <http://callherhappy.com/iconfess/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Freedom for Me but not for Thee!!! [at Ranting Catholic Mom]

What is the point of 'coming out' for people who identify as homosexual?

1. To silence the opposition. (From Courageous Priest.)

Two gay seniors at George Washington University say they feel alienated because the chaplain at George Washington's Newman Center rejects homosexuality, and they aren't going to take it anymore. The seniors, Damian Legacy and Blake Bergen, have announced a coordinated campaign to rid the campus of the Roman Catholic priest, reports The GW Hatchet, the school's independent student newspaper. They also assert that 12 or more students have quit the Newman Center in recent years because they can't tolerate [Father Greg Shaffer's](#) ardent anti-gay "and, for the record, anti-abortion beliefs." Shaffer has worked for five years at George Washington's Newman Center. He told the Hatchet that religion and unrestricted speech "play a vital role at a diverse university like GW." Legacy and Bergen say they are primarily upset about the counseling Shaffer offers. They say he urges students who have homosexual feelings to lead a life of celibacy. Catholic Church doctrine maintains that homosexual desire isn't a sin, but acting on that desire is, according to the website [Catholic.com](#). Legacy told the Hatchet that he spent considerable time at the Newman Center during his first two years at George Washington. He was an altar server at mass. He believed that he would become a Catholic priest after graduating. All that changed, though, when Legacy told Shaffer that he and Bergen had entered a homosexual relationship. Shaffer allegedly charged Legacy with being immoral and lacking in faith. "To have my faith leader view me that way, just because of one piece of the way that God made me, and to think that one part is responsible for the destruction of my human dignity, it just didn't... I can't even begin to describe the mental conflict that it creates," Legacy told the Hatchet. The two gay seniors are also unhappy about a [blog post Shaffer](#) authored back in May 2012, just after President Barack Obama publicly endorsed gay marriage. "As Vatican II states, God is the author of marriage. He has defined marriage as between a man and a woman," Shaffer then wrote. "Every single rational person knows that sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are unnatural and immoral. They know it in their hearts." The plan to oust Shaffer includes the creation of a video containing the statements of several students who have left GW's Newman Center. That video, Legacy and Bergen hope, will surely arouse the generally left-leaning campus to anger, thus forcing school officials to act. Other aspects of the proposed GW Newman Center insurgency include filing a formal complaint with the administration and conducting a series of prayer vigils outside the center. Legacy and Bergen will also distribute a letter to high-ranking administrators. According to The Hatchet, the letter will cite academic studies connecting homophobic behavior to loss of appetite, insomnia and other detrimental psychological consequences. Finally, Legacy will request that GW's Student Association defund the Newman Center (which is affiliated with the school but officially part of the Roman Catholic Church). This year, the Center reportedly collected \$10,000 in funding. Last semester, Legacy presented

a report to the school's Office for Diversity and Inclusion explaining that other schools, such as New York University, vet and evaluate religious leaders before allowing them to work with campus affiliated groups.

2. To charge a group with hate crimes.

[This army training presentation lists CATHOLICS as an extremist hate group.](#)

It recommends that army personnel avoid participating in meetings or fundraising efforts with the groups on the list. See page five, where army personnel are PROHIBITED from Participating in a public demonstration or rally, attending a meeting or activity, fundraising, recruiting or training, taking a leadership role, or distributing literature for any extremist group. Then see page 24 for the list of extremist groups that includes Catholicism.

3. To force what they view as TOLERANCE, meaning, "You must shut up about any objections you have to me or my life. I will be in your face everyday forcing you to see me and my lifestyle. I will do it in a way that forces you to explain to your children what homosexuality is, and violate your desire to keep your child innocent of my sexual activities."

4. To stop heterosexuals from expressing any interest in them?

5. As a public, free, personal ad for sex partners?

This contribution is available at <http://rantingcatholicmom.blogspot.com/2013/04/freedom-for-me-but-not-for-thee.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Jesus meets his Disciples 2nd Sunday of Easter [at Journey unto the Lord]

John 20:19-31

Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE)

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

The Purpose of This Book

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1965, 1966 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Brief Reflection:

Mostlikely Jesus disciples were meeting in the upper room where the Last Supper was celebrated. It is obvious that the disciples were full of fear. They were afraid that the authorities would come after them, not an easy thing. As they sat there in the upper room Jesus "came and stood in their midst." Jesus gave them the normal everyday eastern greeting: "Peace be to you."

What was the meaning of that peace greeting? According to Wm. Barclay-it means; "May God give you every good thing." Right after that Jesus gave his disciples the commission. The Church have being entrusted by Christ to carry on his message of peace and forgiveness. The Church which St Paul calls the body of Christ. (Eph. 1:23 and 1Cor. 12:12).

We are all dependent on Jesus. It is essential that we grow in our relationship with the Lord in order to faithfully proclaim his message of everlasting love to all our friends and family. By virtue of our Baptism we are Christ's Apostles. We are God's messengers as Jesus was his perfect messenger because of his perfect obedience and perfect love. Actually the word "apostle" means one who is sent. Jesus was sent by his Father. We are sent by the Church to proclaim the message of Jesus loud and clear.

After Jesus gave his disciples the Peace greeting Jesus breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit." The Church is given the power of the Spirit to empower it in the proclamation of Jesus message of peace and forgiveness. The Church is entrusted with the sacred ministry of Reconciliation. As St Paul would say we are ministers of reconciliation.

Now let's welcome doubting Thomas. This is the same Thomas who told Jesus when Jesus proposed to go to Bethany on the news of Lazarus's illness who said; "Let us also go, that we may die with him. (John 11:16). So Thomas was very courageous but the natural pessimist and was full of grief and kind of loner. He is the type of person that needs to see in order to believe. We are in good company with doubting Thomas. We would say: Show me the money!!!

So Jesus visit his disciples for a second time and doubting Thomas is there and Jesus invite Thomas to make the test and Thomas profession of faith is magnificent: "My Lord and my God." As a Christian community let us stay together in Christian fellowship. Thomas made the mistake of withdrawing himself from his friends and suffering alone. In times of trials and tribulations let us stick together with our brothers and sisters. Let us pray for one another.

Let us also be true to our own doubts and limitations. To doubt is very healthy!!! So we are in good company with doubting Thomas. It is ok to say, I have my doubts, I don't get it, I dont understand, I don,t see it.....

In case you may be asking whatever happened to doubting Thomas, after Jesus dead the disciples divided up the world among them and India fell by lot to Thomas. According to the apocryphal book called The Act of Thomas, Thomas brought Christianity to India and even the King became Christian. But Thomas was asked 2 times to go to India before he was able by God's grace to say yes, that he would go.

Easter Peace!!!!



This contribution is available at <http://www.deaconpolo.com/2013/04/jesus-meets-his-disciples-2nd-sunday-of.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Popes among us [at Convert Journal]



Our new Pope, the Vicar of Christ, the Supreme Pontiff came to us last week “out of nowhere.” All the prognosticators seemed to miss him but there he was, humbly serving Our Lord in Argentina. Only a few weeks ago, people sat beside him as they traveled together on the bus or subway. Some would recognize him as the Archbishop and others undoubtedly saw him as “just” some priest (he dressed simply).

When Cardinal Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio washed the feet of AIDS patients, people saw a humble servant. When he was ordained to the priesthood, they saw a faithful man responding to God’s call. When he taught literature and psychology to high school students, people saw a good teacher. When he himself was in high school, people saw a future chemist.

Only at the last conclave was Archbishop Bergoglio seen as papabile (this time, it was assumed that a younger man would be chosen). Otherwise, before and after the last conclave, the future Pope Francis was just one of the faithful working among and with us. Had we stopped to consider him as a future pope, we may have remembered that no one from the Americas was ever chosen nor was a Jesuit ever chosen. “Theoretically” any man may one day be selected as the pope. Some might have thought Jorge Bergoglio would make a fine one but that his chances were the proverbial slim to none.

When the white smoke appeared, we were overjoyed! We did not know who had been selected but it did not matter. Our confidence rests in God that we would get who we need (not necessarily who we want). Even if the Cardinals were not open to the Holy Spirit, we know for certain that He will protect the Church until the end of time.

This is our faith in Christ and His Church. It is also our love for His vicar, even when we do not yet know who he is.

While we did not know who would become the pope (and neither did the Cardinals until their 5th vote), God – who is outside of time – always did. Jorge Mario Bergoglio was always a future pope, unbeknownst to him and everyone else. May his reign be long and fruitful!

One day, Pope Francis' reign will end and another man will become St. Peter's 266th successor (the 267th pope). Today that man is among us, somewhere in the world. No one, including him, knows that he will be the next Holy Father. Not only is he among us now, but so are several of *his* successors. On average, the last 10 popes were elected at 66.9 years of age and reigned for 13.5 years. With us now are possibly 5 future popes (267, 268, 269, 270 and maybe 271)!

Who might they be?

- a Cardinal in his early 60's who just attended his first conclave.
- a Bishop who is about to turn 50 and will be named an Archbishop in a few years.
- a parish pastor in his mid-thirties.
- a seminarian in his early twenties.
- a boy of 8 looking forward to becoming an altar server.

Whoever they are, those future popes (unless Christ returns first, of course) are out there now. God knows who they are and is forming them for exactly what will be needed. The Holy Spirit is with us.

This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2013/03/popes-among-us/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Pope Francis: The Wisdom of Old Age [at From the Pulpit of My Life]

I am getting to know our new Holy Father by reading the transcripts of his addresses. I feel like I can get a truer picture about him by what he, himself, says more than by what others say about him.

Pope Francis gave

[an address](#)

to the College of Cardinals on Friday, part of which made a deep impression on me. It was the part alluding to old age. Why? Because I am old.

Old age is – as I like to say – the seat of life’s wisdom. The old have acquired the wisdom that comes from having journeyed through life, like the old man Simeon, the old prophetess Anna in the Temple. And that wisdom enabled them to recognize Jesus. Let us pass on this wisdom to the young: like good wine that improves with age, let us give life’s wisdom to the young. I am reminded of a German poet who said of old age: *Es is ruhig, das Alter, und fromm*: it is a time of tranquility and prayer. And also a time to pass on this wisdom to the young.

These points resonate with me.

Wisdom comes from having journeyed through life.

Life is often described as a journey. I think of it as a journey to eternal life with God in heaven. Nowadays we use GPS for finding our way to a destination, especially to a place with which we are unfamiliar. I am new at using GPS, but I've grown to appreciate it. I can follow the directions exactly and reach my destination. But sometimes I make a wrong turn or I decide I want to take a different route, and the GPS readjusts to my new position and still gets me where I'm going.

In life we sometimes make unwise turns that take us in the wrong direction; that is, away from God. We may drift away from going to Church for example. Soon we no longer give prayer a priority in our lives. Yet our destiny is still heaven and union with God, our Creator. No matter how far we drift, God knows where we are, and his grace of repentance is always available--- something like GPS. According to Pope Francis, God never tires of forgiving our failures. Whether we stay on the straight and narrow path or veer off course we grow in wisdom from our experiences.

Wisdom enables one to recognize Jesus.

Wisdom is the highest of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. It "enables one to know the purpose and plan of God." (CCC glossary) By exercising the gift of wisdom we can go beyond the simple knowledge of Christian truth and penetrate the truths so we understand them even better. In exercising Wisdom we perceive Jesus in the Eucharist and in our neighbor. At the end of the day during my [Examen](#) time, I review my day to discern when and where I have recognized Jesus---or not.

Wisdom is to be shared with the young.

When I was young my parents and grandparents shared their wisdom with my siblings, cousins, and me. My Grandma Lucas did this by telling funny stories about herself and her experiences. Some she told over and over again. This is how she passed on the truth about life. One truth I remember to this day has to do with not judging others or making negative generalizations about groups. Grandma said, "There is good and bad in everyone and in every group. Look for the good. It's there." My father passed on a similar piece of wisdom when he often said, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." In a similar vein he often quoted, "As you ramble on through life, whatever be your goal, keep your eye upon the doughnut, not upon the hole." Here he was promoting a positive, hopeful outlook, even in difficult circumstances. We may do the same for the younger generations, even when they don't seem open to it. It may take.

Old age is a time of tranquility and prayer.

One reason I retired when I did is that I longed to devote more time to prayer and contemplation. Many retired folks say they are busier than ever. That's okay as long it isn't a way of avoiding prayer, which leads to communion with God and to inner peace.

So, when I see that I've overextended myself with volunteer activities, I re-prioritize my goals and/or drop some the the things that keep me from giving God more of my attention. We should not look on prayer as doing nothing. The world actually needs *more* prayers. Our Holy Father seems to suggest it's a duty of old age, and a wise use of our time.

May we who are old continue our journey

and appreciate our gifts,

especially that of wisdom.

May we share our gifts with the young

even when they seem reluctant to listen.

May we pray always.

Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://fromthepulpitofmylife.blogspot.com/2013/03/pope-francis-wisdom-of-old-age.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

What is it About? [at worthy of Agape]

My favorite thing to talk about lately, as you might guess, is my book! While I certainly talk about it *a lot* in real life, I've realized that most of the posts in which I explain the book are buried in the archives. So, I've decided to do a few things to correct this issue:

1. Write a blog explaining what the book is about and why I wrote it in the first place.
2. Link to all the posts in the category of "[Worthy – The Book](#)" and to all of the posts in which I [quote/talk about](#) the book.

What the Book is About

Most women, at least at some point in their life, have questioned their own worth, for however short or long a time. Are we worthy of love, happiness, joy, peace? My book addresses the struggles that we face in our quest to be found worthy. The book does this in three sections. Section one addresses the lies that Satan tells us as he tries to pull us down with him. Section two looks at the lives of Mary and Jesus and how their lives overcome the lies that Satan has tried to sell us on. Finally, in section three, I look at how to live out the truth that God *does* find us worthy. What does that look like in the world today? What does the truth of God's love mean for our lives?

Basically, the book is about you and it is about me. It is about telling Satan where to go and where he can shove his lies. It is about finding hope and living in the world, but not of the world. The book is about knowing and believing – in the depths of your soul – that God finds you worthy, period.

Why I Wrote the Book

I'm sure I've said it before but I never, in a million years, dreamed I'd write a book, much less want to publish it. I wrote the book for a lot of reasons, I suppose! I wrote it because I wrote a series of blogs at the [end of 2011](#) and [early 2012](#) that felt like they needed to be more than just blog posts – they all turned into chapters which make up most of the third section of the book. I wrote the book because I felt (and still feel) that there is a great need for a book just like mine. I have read a number of books that address the lies Satan tries to sell us – both as women and as humans. I've read books on womanhood and femininity. I've read books on authentic Catholic womanhood. But I've never read a book that ties all of those concepts together. I don't think we do God justice if we only write about the lies that Satan spins. I don't think we do our story justice if we dive in to the happy parts of the story without addressing the struggles of our lives. And I don't think it does us any good to talk about God's love without practically applying it to our everyday lives. In my mind, all of those parts go together, you can't have one without the other.

So many other books left me with questions. What about the power of the Eucharist? What about the example and life of Mary? Okay, so you've given me this life changing message, but what do

you want me to do with it? I hope my book answers those questions and more!

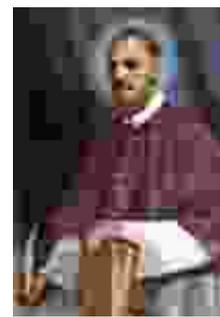
Why I Think You'll Like My Book

God only knows why you'll like my book or what you'll get out of it. As I wrote in the introduction, I hope He speaks to you through it far more than I do. I think you'll like it because it was my goal in writing it to meet you where you are. I get so annoyed with books that make it sound like if you aren't married and having babies you are a failure as a Catholic woman. I get tired of books for single ladies that seemed to only whine about being single. I want this book to meet you where you are – whether you are single or married, a mother or not, lost or deep in your faith.

God knows I'm biased because I wrote the book, but I think you'll like it. I hope you give it a chance. I hope that He touches your heart through it, and if that happens, then all the toil will be worth it. To Him be the glory, now and forever.

May 14th, 2013. *Worthy* will be available on Amazon in an e-book format and hard-copy format. Mark your calendars!

p.s. My project for the week is to try and set-up the book so y'all can pre-order it...pray for me!



Sts. Peter and Paul, pray for us. St. Francis de Sales (patron saint of writers), pray for us. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, pray for us. St. Rose of Lima, pray for us. St. Thomas Aquinas, pray for us. Blessed John Paul II, pray for us. All holy men and women, pray for us!

p.s. Want to see the front cover of the book? Be sure to “like” [Worthy of Agape](#) and tell all your friends to do the same! If the page reaches 200 likes by Thursday night, I'll post the cover in Friday's Quick Takes!

This contribution is available at <http://worthyofagape.com/2013/03/20/what-is-it-about/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Papal Transfixion [at St. Joseph's Vanguard]

We follow Christ, not Steve Martin nor Bob.

Here is what Christ says:

Matthew 25:31-46

King James Version (KJV)

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Yeah, that Teaching is in the Bible. So is this one:

Revelation 22:12-15

King James Version (KJV)

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

And this one:

Romans 2:1-13

King James Version (KJV)

2 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

1 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Yessir, you teach a doctrine of demons. I will stick with Jesus Christ.

This contribution is available at <http://www.devinrose.heroicvirtuecreations.com/blog/2013/03/13/papal-transfixion/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Don't shut Him out [at Jumping In Puddles]

Man, today was one of those gives-you-a-good-perspective-on-life days. Like, where you are subtly, but

strongly

, reminded that

just maybe

the things you think are so

big

and frustrating and on and on... are actually not

that

big of a flipping deal. Now, this is not to say that the struggles I have are not important to me and my life, but let's be honest: some things ARE more serious and hard and a big flipping deal.

For example... infertility. There are SO many women (and men) who desire to have children. To be a mom (and a dad). To fully live out their vocations.

And, they can't. For whatever reason. I am not going to pretend like I know all the details. Or how they feel. Because, I have no idea. I can empathize, as I believe I would be devastated if I found out that having some babes was not an option for me.

I have a good friend, J, who has been struggling for about 5 years. She has such a strong desire to be a mom, and has not been able to make it happen (not without trying and praying and trying and praying). She has had the run around, and finally found some hope by using the

[Creighton Method](#)

of NFP. By having a wonderful NFP teacher and the opportunity to have surgery at Creighton University in Omaha, NE... she was hopeful to break through the wall of infertility.

Please pray for her. And her husband. She found out she will need more surgery in a few months. She is completely beside herself. She is hurt. She is sad. She is angry.

She wants to run away from God.

Don't you feel like that sometimes? We're all like, "Nope, I can't handle THIS right now. God, it's just not working out."

I mean, since we're being honest (we are, aren't we?), I do this. But, with everything. The big and the small

. The really serious, and the not so serious. The hard and the easy.

You know what happens? I quickly realize

it's hard to do it alone

. God uses these things, whatever it may be, to test us. We know, as Christians, that through great struggle, comes great joy. We have to muddle through the crap to get to the good, to the prize, to the streams of gold and honey.

It's part of life

. And, it sucks. I know. (which, I realize is actually not comforting. I'm sorry!)

But, as I said to J earlier:

... but God is going to work here in some way. He won't abandon you. Tell Him everything. All of your feelings, no matter how harsh. It's ok to be hurt and angry. Just don't shut Him out, even if it feels easier that way. You may not feel anything or better right now. But, you will at some point if you keep Him close...

(sometimes I surprise myself with the good things I say!)

We must rely on God. He wants to be there for us. Jesus is proof that through great, great, struggle comes amazing and beautiful joy. It's the best example we have. We have to trust God throughout it all.

I love having these kind of days. I love when God reminds me that I need Him. I love that He nudges me to go a little deeper. I love that He loves and desires ME.

He's just so good... that God. ;)

An End to Lent and an Easter Beginning [at Martin Family Moments]

When do you start celebrating Easter?

We start on Saturday night and after a Lent of no sweets (except for Sundays and Holy Days - I didn't want you to think we were saintly - ha!) for everyone in the Martin Family, sugar never tasted so good!



Baking your wife a yellow cake with vanilla frosting even though you prefer chocolate cake with chocolate frosting?
Now that's love.



Then we gave the kids an Easter gift:



It was

[The Hobbit](#)

, and while the boys were thrilled somebody was definitely not...



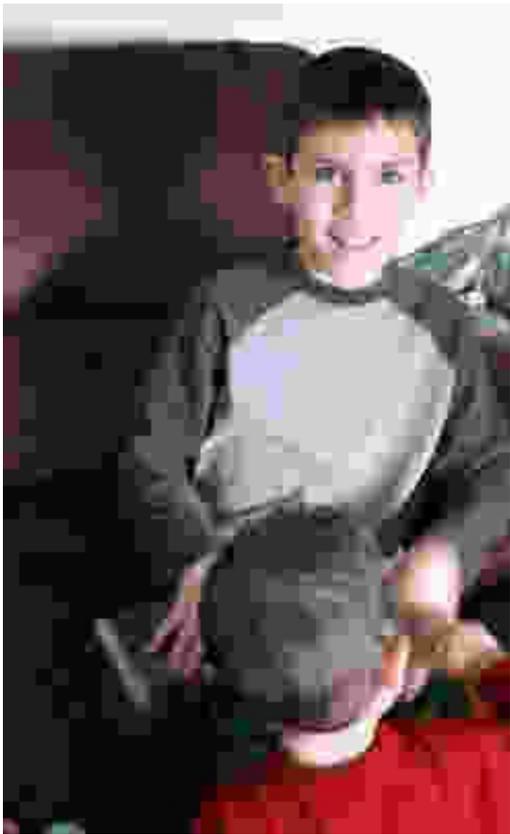
"But that's a BOY movie!"



"That's not cool at all!"



"Yesssss!"



"Woo-hoo!"



Maybe she's just upset about her liturgically inappropriate pajamas?

We can all act like ungrateful children though, can't we? God pours His blessings onto us, and we wish we had something else instead, something we *think* is better. I have learned this Lent that God always provides the strength we need to handle life's events and we can lean on Him without fail.

I missed you all during my self-imposed Holy Week fast! I'm not sure I'm cut out for this whole fasting business because I think the point is to help end attachment to whatever it is we've given up, but I seem to only desire it more. Or perhaps that's what makes it a sacrifice? And [some of you](#) made [big announcements](#), how [dare you](#)? ;)

This was the best Good Friday (sacrificious?) I can remember. I felt so loved by Christ as I really was able to focus during the service at our church. Alexander was the most well-behaved he's ever been, and we were even able to go to Confession after and remembered to start the [Divine Mercy Novena](#) that night. Talk about God's grace!

At one point during the service, I leaned over to a fidgety child who was complaining he was tired and I said "Just know that Jesus died on the cross because He loves you so much. Even if you were the only person in the world, He still would have died for you". I completely convicted myself with the words that spilled out of my mouth.

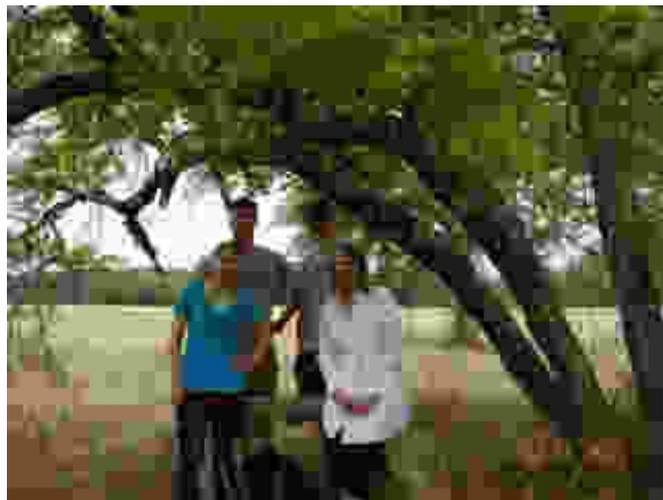
Tonight, as I fill the baskets and eggs with little presents for those I love, I will remember how much God loves each and everyone of us, and be thankful for all the gifts He has given me. A joyful Easter indeed!

Colleen

This contribution is available at <http://martinfamilymoments.blogspot.com/2013/03/an-end-to-lent-and-easter-beginning.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

An Emmaus Walk On Easter Sunday [at The Hill Country Hermit]



Easter, 2013

One of our holiday traditions is to take a family hike. On Easter, though, this hike has special meaning to me. It reminds me of the story of

[St. Cleopas](#)

hiking to Emmaus with a friend (

[my favorite theory is that his friend was his wife](#)

). The two were confused and struggling to grasp the events of all that had been happening.



Easter, 2013

I guess we should make many of our hikes, walks, or strolls Emmaus-styled ... pondering the life of Jesus, what his life and death mean to us as Catholics/Christians ... and make special efforts to see a little piece of Jesus in at least one person we meet along the way.

This contribution is available at <http://www.theresadoyle-nelson.blogspot.com/2013/04/an-emmaus-walk-on-easter-sunday.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi [at Theological]

HABEMUS PAPAM! God Bless Pope Francis!

“So passes the glory of the world.”

I was watching EWTN’s coverage of the *sfumata* and the announcement that we once again have a Pontiff, and one of the commentators mentioned this phrase. It comes from the rite of the coronation of a Pontiff; the best description that I could find of this rite is in Henry Morton Robinson’s 1950 novel *The Cardinal*, with its fictional description of the Coronation of Pope Pius XII:

A cowed monk approached. In one hand he carried a lighted taper; in the other, a tuft of wax-impregnated hemp. Bowing to His Holiness, the monk brought flame and hemp together. Fire flashed momentarily, then vanished in smoke.

“*Sic transit gloria mundi*,” cried the monk.

As the procession moved at the tempo of high ritual past the statue of St. Peter, the symbolic act of earthly consummation was re-enacted. In sepulchral tones, “*Sic transit*” reverberated through the Basilica.

To remind the Pope of the fearful jeopardy in which he would live, and the ultimate dust to which mortal glories return, the hooded monitor approached him for the third time. Again flame met hemp, again the lugubrious warning sounded: “*Sic transit gloria mundi*.”

“So passes the glory of the world.” And yet the Church remains. She does not pass away. She has withstood 21 centuries. For all the talk by the secular media about corruption, intrigue, and scandal, the Church is not on the verge of collapse. Our Lord has promised us this: “the gates of hell shall not prevail against” the Church (cf.

[Mt. 16:18](#)

). The Church remains. She will always remain. For She is not a committee or a club, loosely bound together by a vague goal; she is a Body, the Body of a Living Person, the Person of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As He “dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him” (cf.

[Rom. 6:9](#)

), so neither will She.

Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, in *The Divine Romance*, describes the Church:

The Church . . . is the continuation of the Incarnation. It is not an institution like a bank, but a life, not an organization like a club, but an organism, not something *horizontal* extending from the Apostles as men to us as other men, but as something *vertical* in which Divine Life descends first from God to Christ, and then on to us in the Church.

The Church does not exist to be the plaything of the secular media; and nothing the media says... none of their speculations over whether Pope Francis will do this or will Pope Francis do that... will change the reason for Her existence.

Yes, there is corruption within the Church...She is composed of weak, fallible, sinful human beings. Those blessed to live within her sacred fold* are not impeccable; if they were, what sort of message would that send to the rest of sinful, struggling humanity? It would be the “*Noli tangere*”—Do not touch Me—of Our Lord to Magdalen, but without His humility, a “*Noli tangere*” of pride, disgusted by the sinfulness of those outside Her. But the Church does not look down upon the sinful; She does not tear them down, belittle them; She draws them to Herself! She draws them upward, onward, “UP...UP...Up to God!”—to “the Perfect Life, Perfect Truth, and Perfect Love, Which is God” (cf. Sheen, *Characters of the Passion* and *Three to Get Married*).

Sheen argues that it is the fallibility of the Church that will draw men to Her. He is not condoning sin, but saying that the Church and Her leaders are able to have compassion on the infirmities of men, because Her members, too, are tempted (cf.

[Heb. 4:14](#)

). He explains this in

The Fullness of Christ

:

Suppose every Vicar of Christ was a saint; suppose every member of His Mystical Body was another St. John the Baptist or another St. Theresa. Would not her very perfection accuse and condemn those who were outside? Too high an ideal often repels rather than attracts. She would be so saintly that she would no longer allure ordinary mortals. She might even appear to struggling souls as a terrible Puritan, easily scandalized at our failings, who might shrink from having her garments touched by sinners like ourselves. Where then would faith be for those who doubted? Where would hope be for those who were unholy? Where would charity be for those who were in sin? No, a perfect Church would be a stumbling block.

Then, instead of men being scandalized at her, she would be scandalized at men—which would be far worse. (Sheen, *Fullness of Christ*, [Washington, D.C.: National Council of Catholic Men, 1935?], 55-56)

As Pope Francis asked us, “

[Let us always pray for one another](#)

,” so let us pray for those outside the fold of the Church who detract Her, simply because they do not understand. One day their glory will pass, too. One day the glory of each of us, individual members of the Church of Christ, will pass. But the glory of the Church will not pass.

For She is Christ’s.

And Christ is God’s.

And God is Eternal.

Viva Papa Francisco!

Let us pray for our Pope Francis.

May the Lord preserve him, and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies.

Thou art Peter,

And upon this Rock, I will build My Church.

Let us Pray:

Almighty and everlasting God, have mercy upon your servant, Francis, our Sovereign Pontiff, and guide him in Your goodness on the way of eternal salvation; so that, with the prompting of Your grace, he may desire what pleases You and accomplish it with all his strength. Through Christ Our Lord.

R. Amen.

V. Mother of the Church.

R. Pray for us.

V. St. Peter.

R. Pray for us.

This contribution is available at <http://theological-librarian.blogspot.com/2013/03/sic-transit-gloria-mundi.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Resurrection - how did St John believe before the others? [at Veritas Lux Mea]



Happy Easter!

This morning as we were in Mass listening to the day's Gospel reading, I had an interesting theory, which I thought that I'd share. The Gospel reading was taken from Jn 20:1-9:

On the first day of the week,
Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning,
while it was still dark,
and saw the stone removed from the tomb.
So she ran and went to Simon Peter
and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them,
“They have taken the Lord from the tomb,

and we don't know where they put him.”

So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb.

They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter

and arrived at the tomb first;

he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in.

When Simon Peter arrived after him,

he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there,

and the cloth that had covered his head,

not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.

Then the other disciple also went in,

the one who had arrived at the tomb first,

and he saw and believed.

For they did not yet understand the Scripture

that he had to rise from the dead.

After hearing that the Lord's Body was no longer in the tomb, Sts. Peter and John ran to the site. We are told that St. John outran St. Peter, but when he arrived at the tomb, he didn't venture in. Instead, he remained outside only peering in to see whether the words of the women were true. It was only after St. Peter had arrived, entered the tomb, and affirmed that the Lord's Body was gone, that St. John entered the tomb. In a [previous blog](#), I mentioned that one allegorical interpretation of this pericope is that St. Peter (naturally) symbolises the teaching authority of the Church; whereas, St. John symbolises the spirit of the Church. Whilst the spirit of the Church is eager to believe, it always waits for the wisdom of the Church's teaching authority before it does so. This morning, I had an additional thought...like I said, just a theory, but food for thought nonetheless...

We are told that after St. Peter had examined the tomb, St. John entered and when he saw, he believed. Whilst we are told in verse 9 that they didn't yet understand the Scripture that Jesus “had to rise from the dead”, St. John had some sort of faith in the Resurrected Jesus. Now, it may be that St. John was more prone to belief than St. Peter – some people just have a gift of more childlike faith than others. But, I wonder if there wasn't something more to it – something beneath the surface that St. John wants his readers to dig deeper to find. After all, that wouldn't be out of key with the way that St. John has written his Gospel. Leon Morris, an Anglican New Testament scholar, said that the Gospel of St. John was a pool in which a child could wade and an elephant could swim. He was right – the Gospel of John is simple to understand, and yet extremely deep in its complexity at the same time.

Just a few verses prior to this statement of St. John's belief (Jn 20:9), we are told that he had taken the Blessed Virgin Mary into his own home (Jn 19:27). Think about it...

Jesus died on the Cross on the Friday at 3pm; after which St. John took Mary home with him as his own mother. We are told nothing about what happened on Holy Saturday; and then on Sunday we are told that St. John “saw and believed”. What made his reaction different to St. Peter's? I would hazard to guess that it was spending time with the Blessed Virgin Mary. Allow me to expand...

Mary stood at the foot of the Cross for the entire ordeal of the Crucifixion; but after His Body was laid in the tomb we hear no more of her – not even when it came to something as important as anointing the Body of her Son. The Blessed Virgin Mary was not in the company of the women who went on Easter Sunday morning to anoint the Body of Jesus. One would think that as His mother, she would be the first to be present for such an important event, especially given that Jesus was her only Child.

Why didn't Our Lady attend the tomb with the other women? I think that it is because she knew that His Death was not the end. Remember, she had already lost Him once before...in the Temple when He was but a boy of twelve years old (see Lk 2:41-51). And when she found Him...**after three days**...He asked her why she was looking for Him, as He was simply doing the work of His Father.

St. Luke tells us that Mary treasured these things in her heart (Lk 2:51)...and I believe that she recollected this when she lost Him again at the Crucifixion. She remembered that He was about His Father's business...and so she didn't go looking for Him in the tomb. In this way, Our Blessed Mother was the first disciple to believe in the Resurrection. Now, let's go back to Holy Saturday. It is probable that St. John and Mary spoke about the events that had transpired on Good Friday. And if Mary knew that Jesus' death was not the end, she would have shared this with St. John. Imagine that! Not only was Mary the first disciple to believe the Resurrection...but she was also the first disciple to share its glorious message.

Now, I may be wrong...and maybe I'm seeing something that isn't there...but I don't so if you consider the significance that Our Lord continually bestows upon His Blessed Mother.

In fact, as the Catholic Church seeks to be more faithful in its witness and evangelisation, I think that this sort of message is timely. If the Church wishes to be successful in her evangelisation endeavours, she must seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

Despite what modern-day marketing tells us, the success of the Church will not be determined by attractive programmes, or fancy-fangled ideas which seek to capture peoples' attention in an attempt "entice" them into the Church. No! The surest way to lead people to the Lord Jesus Christ is through Mary.

Because Mary always...**ALWAYS**...points us to Jesus.

[On a parting note, I thought that I'd also share a favourite song of mine that ties in beautifully with the Gospel passage above.]

| [Contents](#) |

Six Components of Liberal Catholicism that Seek to Destroy the Church: Part 2 [at A Catholic Life]



In a continuation of

[Six Components of Liberal Catholicism that Seek to Destroy the Church: Part 1](#)

, where I discussed the grave errors present in religious indifferentism, I wish to explore the false concepts of human freedom.

To recap, Eminent American theologian Msgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton wrote an enlightening article in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* (1958) titled “The Components of Liberal Catholicism”. Despite its appearance before the Second Vatican Council, Msgr. Fenton appropriately presented, as in prophetic fashion, the coming attack on the Church from within. Msgr. Fenton summarizes liberal Catholicism into six main categories which together pose the greatest threat to the Church in our modern times:

1. Religious Indifferentism
2. **False concepts of human freedom**
3. Advocacy of the separation of Church and state
4. Minimism
5. Subjectivism
6. The evolution of at least some dogmatic teachings of the Church.

To start our discussion, I wish to excerpt from Professor Alasdair MacIntyre's

[After Virtue](#)

. In this text, which I

[reviewed in a separate blog post](#)

, MacIntyre specifically addresses the false concepts of human freedom. At the very core of

[MacIntyre's book](#)

is the notion that the Enlightenment project of justifying the existence of morality outside of a teleological context (whether that be for the end of justice, for the end of observing God's revealed Law, etc) has failed.

MacIntyre places emphasis in his text on the false notions of human freedom which are similarly condemned by Msgr. Fenton. MacIntyre write:

[T]hose rights which are alleged to belong to human beings as such and which are cited as a reason for holding that people ought not to be interfered with in their pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. . . . the rights which are spoken of in the eighteenth century as natural rights or as the rights of man. . . . there are no such rights, and belief in them is one with belief in witches and unicorns.

The best reason for asserting so bluntly that there are no such rights is indeed of precisely the same type as the best reason which we possess for asserting that there are no witches and the best reason which we possess for asserting that there are no unicorns: every attempt to give good reasons for believing that there *are* such rights has failed (69).

In short, he does not believe any such

rights

exist for the mere fact that we are "humans" and he attacks that any such

rights

can truly be "self evident".

But, even if this were true, how is this an issue of grave importance to Catholics? Does it not seem to be only a philosophical or a political debate?

On the contrary, these issues are of paramount importance to Catholics.

"These principles emanate from the spirit of French revolution and its complete revolt against God, Church and the Catholic social order through which man replaced God as the sole arbiter of what is good and true. Vennari does a good job explaining the underlying ideology of the French revolution, namely naturalism, with its denial of revelation, supernatural life

and its victorious attempt to drive Our Lord Jesus Christ from the life of the society"
([Catholic Family News](#))

In fact, many of the six components of liberal Catholicism have their roots in the Enlightenment. Let's revisit religious indifferentism to see their connection with Enlightenment principles.

The heretic

[Martin Luther](#)

remarked, "No one must be constrained. Liberty is the very essence of faith." Such a statement, which has rooted itself in Western Democracies in our Post-Enlightenment society, is nothing other than a grave evil. His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI's words in

[Mirari Vos](#)

serve as a guide for our times and a warning to turn away from liberty of conscience:

Now We consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: indifferentism. This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion... 'without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate'...

This shameful font of indifferentism gives rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone. **It spreads ruin in sacred and civil affairs**, though some repeat over and over again with the greatest impudence that some advantage accrues to religion from it. "But the death of the soul is worse than freedom of error," as Augustine was wont to say. When all restraints are removed by which men are kept on the narrow path of truth, their nature, which is already inclined to evil, propels them to ruin. Then truly "the bottomless pit" is open from which John saw smoke ascending which obscured the sun, and out of which locusts flew forth to devastate the earth. Thence comes transformation of minds, corruption of youths, contempt of sacred things and holy laws -- in other words, a pestilence more deadly to the state than any other. Experience shows, even from earliest times, that **cities renowned for wealth, dominion, and glory perished as a result of this single evil, namely immoderate freedom of opinion, license of free speech, and desire for novelty.**

Some would say that the cause of discord in the Church originated at the 2nd Vatican Council. While I do feel that the Council was one of the most debilitating assaults to the traditional faith, our world has been suffering from a pernicious cancer induced during the Enlightenment. The philosophers of the enlightened led to the French Revolution and the essential collapse of Catholicism in what was once regarded the most Catholic nation in the world. Since that time we have seen mankind exalted and the faith and piety of many vanish. And as the Faith was toppled in

France and outlawed, they replaced Catholicism with a humanism that praised human freedom and these so called "rights". There was no longer speak or original sin, salvation, redemption, reparation, Faith, etc. Now there is only "rights" and "privileges".

Our Blessed Lady's appearance in

[Fatima](#)

(1917) illustrates the revolution in the hearts of mankind long before the Council. And, recall Our Lady's similar appearance in

[La Salette](#)

(1846). Our world has been rebelling against authority, against traditional manners of dress and practices of sexuality, etc, etc for generations. And it was this modernism that was so forcefully condemned by

[His Holiness Pope St. Pius X](#)

. Unfortunately, modernism – the true cause of our problems – has been misunderstood. We are certainly – and should not be – opposed to advances in technologies and ways of life that improve our living. However, modernism the heresy is the movement in Roman Catholic thought that sought to interpret the teachings of the Church in the light of philosophic and scientific conceptions prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Unfortunately, modernism entered the ranks of some prominent members of the clergy in the 1950s and 1960s leading to the collapse of interior piety and reverence as well as the exterior visibility of our internal faith (e.g. genuflections, public processions, etc). It was precisely this school of thought of modernism that individuals present at the Council sought to fight – people like Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre. Unfortunately, the members of the clergy who consented to the enlightenment philosophies have worked exceedingly hard to tarnish the name and reputation of His Grace Marcel Lefebvre and any Catholics who wish to attend the Mass of the Saints. Have you noticed that of all priests canonized as of this point, none of them said the Novus Ordo Mass...



And so we arrive back at human freedoms. If we accept these, we put ourselves in opposition to the Holy Church and its teachings of sin, redemption, and salvation. No Catholic can believe in inherent rights to "life, liberty, and property" that are divorced from God. For liberty is no right at all. As St. Thomas Aquinas affirms in

[Q. 47, Article 2 of the Summa](#)

, inequalities (yes - inequalities) are things from God.

When Origen wished to refute those who said that the distinction of things arose from the contrary principles of good and evil, he said that in the beginning all things were created equal by God. For he asserted that God first created only the rational creatures and all equal; and that inequality arose in them from free-will, some being turned to God more and some less, and others turned more and others less away from God. And so those rational creatures which were turned to God by free-will, were promoted to the order of angels according to the diversity of merits. And those who were turned away from God were bound down to bodies according to the diversity of their sin; and he said this was the cause of the creation and diversity of bodies. But according to this opinion, it would follow that the universality of bodily creatures would not be the effect of the goodness of God as communicated to creatures, but it would be for the sake of the punishment of sin, which is contrary to what is said: "God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good" (Genesis 1:31). And, as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei ii, 3): "What can be more foolish than to say that the divine Architect provided this one sun for the one world, not to be an ornament to its beauty, nor for the benefit of corporeal things, but that it happened through the sin of one soul; so that, if a hundred souls had sinned, there would be a hundred suns in the world?"

Therefore it must be said that as the wisdom of God is the cause of the distinction of things, so the same wisdom is the cause of their inequality. This may be explained as follows. A twofold distinction is found in things; one is a formal distinction as regards things differing specifically; the other is a material distinction as regards things differing numerically only. And as the matter is on account of the form, material distinction exists for the sake of the formal distinction. Hence we see that in incorruptible things there is only one individual of each species, forasmuch as the species is sufficiently preserved in the one; whereas in things generated and corruptible there are many individuals of one species for the preservation of the species. Whence it appears that formal distinction is of greater consequence than material. Now, formal distinction always requires inequality, because as the Philosopher says (Metaph. viii, 10), the forms of things are like numbers in which species vary by addition or subtraction of unity. Hence in natural things species seem to be arranged in degrees; as the mixed things are more perfect than the elements, and plants than minerals, and animals than plants, and men than other animals; and in each of these one species is more perfect than others. Therefore, as the divine wisdom is the cause of the distinction of things for the sake of the perfection of the universe, so it is the cause of inequality. For the universe would not be perfect if only one grade of goodness were found in things.

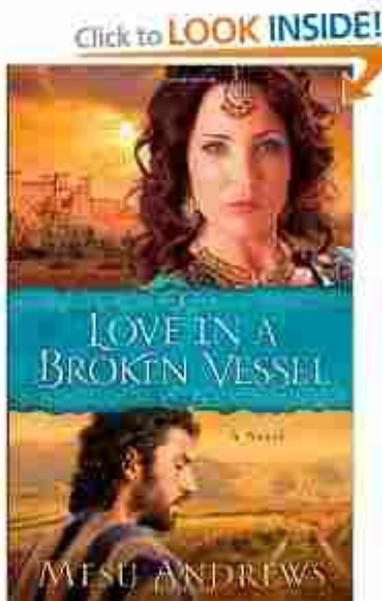
All things, aside from sin, come from God - equalities and inequalities, rain and shine (cf. Matthew 5:45), light and darkness. Should we ascribe to the modern notion that all peoples possess the same rights, duties, privileges, and entitlements, then we place ourselves in opposition to Almighty God and His Holy Church.

This contribution is available at <http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2013/03/six-components-of-liberal-catholicism.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Review: Love in a Broken Vessel [at This That and the Other Thing]



About the Book:

Hosea has been charged by God with a difficult task--marry a prostitute in order to show God's people the nature and depth of his love for Israel. When Hosea goes to Israel to proclaim God's message, the prostitute God tells him to marry turns out to be his childhood friend Gomer. He finds her broken and abused, unwilling to trust Hosea or his God. But when marrying Hosea becomes her only choice, Gomer does what she's good at--she survives. Can Hosea's love for God and God's love for Israel heal Gomer's broken spirit?

With her potent combination of in-depth research and masterful storytelling, Mesu Andrews brings to life a complex and fascinating biblical story of the power of love and forgiveness in the face of utter betrayal.

My Comments:

I've heard it said that it is a man's world, and while that may not be completely true today, clearly for most cultures in history, it was true. It seems that the worst thing you could call a woman in Old Testament times was a harlot, yet I rather doubt that these women woke up one morning and

decided that they'd prefer a life of prostitution to a life as a wife and mother. In the New Testament, it was the WOMAN caught in adultery who was going to be stoned until Jesus stepped in. Last time I checked, it took two to commit that crime. Where was her co-defendant?

Those were the thoughts that went through my mind before I picked up *Love in a Vessel*. As those familiar with the Book of Hosea in the Bible are aware, God called Hosea to marry a prostitute. God told Hosea that the prostitute would reject his love and return to her old life. God told him she would have children who were not his. God told him to love her anyway. In short, the book of Hosea is a metaphor for the love God has for us, children who reject Him even though He offers a better way.

I found *Love in a Vessel* to be an easy engaging read. In the book Gomer was sold into prostitution as a child, she didn't choose it. I guess in a lot of ways it is like us being "sold" into original sin by Adam and Eve. As God sent Jesus to save us, He sent a childhood friend and prophet, Hosea, to save Gomer. Once she started her new life, she could not embrace it completely, just as we reject God and sin. Just as we think things would be better if God did things our way, Gomer didn't like things Hosea was called to do and felt abandoned by him.

I read the book the first week in Lent and God and I are having some discussions about how He isn't doing things my way. That may be why this book ended up in my path this week. Still, though it gave me food for thought it was also a good story that fleshed out the Biblical characters and to me, made them more human.

I'd like to thank the publisher for sending me a review copy. Grade: B+.

“Available March 2013 at your favorite bookseller from Revell, a division of Baker Publishing Group.”

Habemus Papam [at Shealynn's Faerie Shoppe]

To my Catholic readers: I know this is old news to you by now, but WE HAVE A POPE!

After Pope emeritus Benedict XVI resigned, we had several pope-less days and I was so excited to see a Twitter post proclaiming "Habemus Papam-- we have a Pope!" Then I got a text from Pope Alarm just a few seconds later (why yes, I did sign up to get a text for the big news!) and had the honor of being the first one to run around the house telling my family!



I don't remember much about Benedict's election so this week was, I think, the very first that I heard about the smoke tradition. The Cardinals vote on the Pope multiple times each day. After each set of votes, they light a fire and send smoke up the chimney of the Sistine Chapel. Black smoke signifies that they have not reached a decision, and white smoke means that they were led by the Holy Spirit, made a conclusive vote, and HABEMUS PAPAM!

We turned on EWTN (a Catholic channel, where you are much more likely to just get to see everything going on at the Vatican and not have to suffer through all the snide comments on how everyone thinks that they can be a better pope than the popes).

We basically sat there for an hour, watching the smoke and the crowds in the square of the basilica, praying for the new pope, and wondering who it is!



I of course grabbed my travel sketchbook and sat doodling. Lately I've been trying to be more decisive with my sketches, so these are all drawn directly with pen (no erasing mistakes) and then splashed with a bit of watercolor. (I recently discovered the epic

[Urban Sketchers](#)

' blog, and I'm surprised by how much these sketches are similar to their style!).

I think that the Swiss Guard are pretty awesome. I wish they'd shown more of them!



The wait was very very long... so I drew St. Peter's, a happy pilgrim girl who appeared on screen for about two seconds but was so picturesquely joyful, a clock that they kept filming, and some of the crowds. It's surprisingly difficult to draw things on TV; they sure don't keep the camera pointed in one direction all the time!

The excitement and prayerfulness of the crowd there was inspiring.

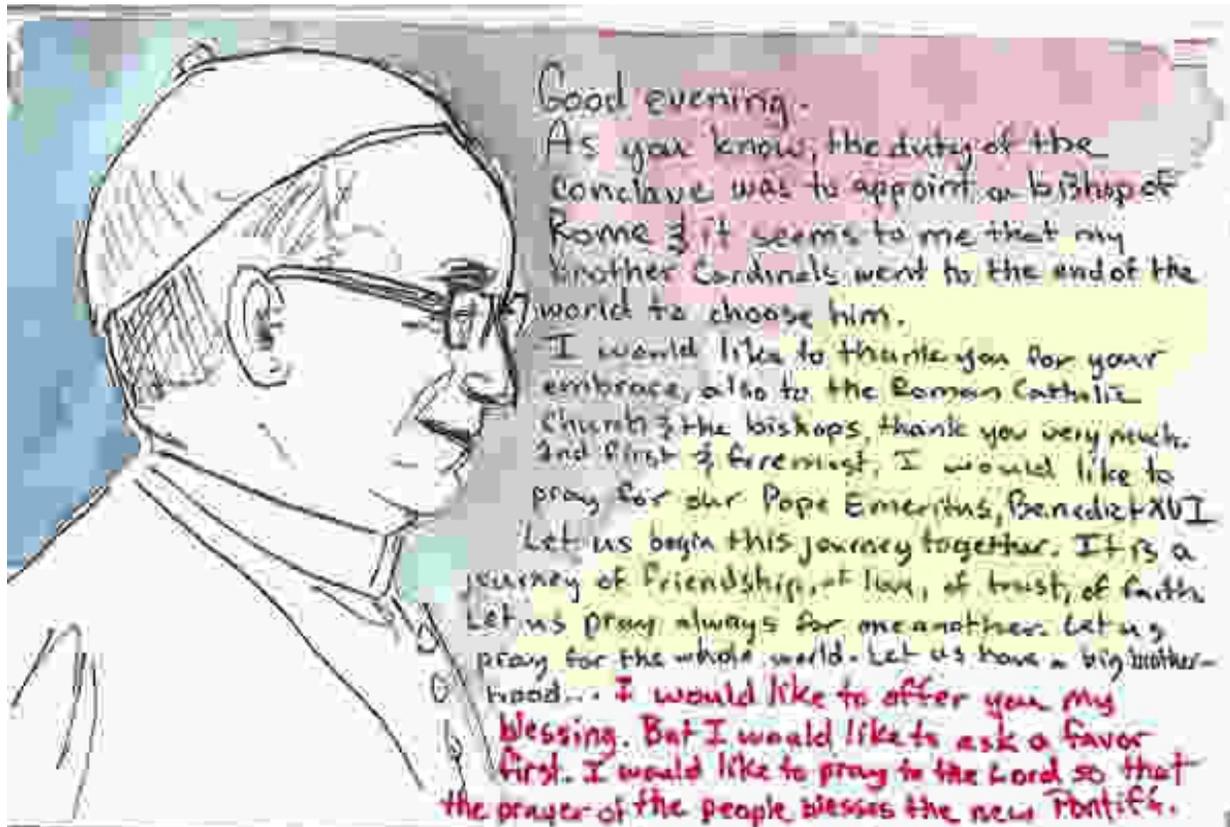
POPE FRANCIS

Jorge Mario BERGOGLIO

from Argentina 1 a Jesuit
3



And finally, they announced the Pope! Francis I is from Argentina and looks like he will be a wonderful pope. He's a theologian and from the Americas and, judging by his speech, has a sense of humor. I'm excited, hopefully he'll be just as strong and totally epic as JP II and Benedict.



(this is a REALLY rough translation that a friend shared on facebook; more polished ones are

now online)

I was impressed by his humble request for prayers before he even gave the Apostolic blessing.

He surprisingly didn't come out in the full garb with the red cloak; just the white habit and the stole (basically a prayer shawl but with deep symbolism).



(Here's the

[Altoids watercolor tin](#)

that I made several months ago if you were wondering how it's holding up! It works really well. Also, I found a waterbrush in Mom's scrapbook stash yesterday. It's pretty epic.)



Just because I'm posting pictures that I drew of Pope Francis' election today... here's a pen-only sketch from when when pope emeritus Benedict announced his resignation. Just pretend that the hands are the right size and all that.

I don't remember too much about the previous papal election. We were on a class trip to the state Capitol, and someone said something about the pope being sick during a tour of one of the offices. When I got home that day, Mom told me that John Paul II had passed away. Even though I'm racking my brains, I don't have any strong memories of Benedict's election. We just got a new pope and everything was as it should be. When you are in fourth grade, things seem to just work out like that and there is nothing remarkable in it.



Several months later (Jan 2006, judging by where this was in my old sketchbook) I drew a picture of JP II and then a quick sketch of Benedict XVI. It was only after JP II's death that I read encyclicals and books by him and his successor and the wisdom of these two saintly men has really strengthened my faith!

Let's pray for the new Pope Francis I and the entire church!

This contribution is available at <http://shealynns-faerie-shoppe.blogspot.com/2013/03/habemus-papam.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Who's In Charge Here? [at Thoughts on Grace]

It's been an exciting Lent, hasn't it? And, I agree that it's also been a reminder of who is in charge. On a personal level, I've felt the power of God's grace in my own weakness - a realisation that I can survive failure okay but not a lack of trust.

God bless, Colleen:-)

Vicky, thanks so much. God's grace is sufficient. I forget that sometimes. God bless!

Thanks for your post, Colleen. My Lents never go as planned either. I guess I need humility more than anything else.

I was very caught up in the Conclave and the new pope too! There's just something about Pope Francis. I don't think we've ever had a pope quite like him.

God bless!

Mary, I agree with what you said about Pope Francis. There is something very special, very holy, about him. God bless!

Actually, Man plans and God laughs is, I believe, a Yiddish-ism. My mom taught it to me as a child. All to remind us, I am sure, what St. James tells us, (James 4)

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know [h]what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

Richard, I read that, too - that it is a yiddish saying. Thanks for sharing about James 4. God bless and Happy Easter!

St. Patrick's Day Poetry [at CF Family]



Reverie. By A. Marjorie Robinson

Any Woman

I am the pillars of the house;
The keystone of the arch am I.
Take me away, and roof and wall
Would fall to ruin utterly.

I am the fire upon the hearth,
I am the light of the good sun,
I am the heat that warms the earth,
Which else were colder than a stone.

At me the children warm their hands;
I am their light of love alive.
Without me cold the hearthstone stands,
Nor could the precious children thrive.

I am the twist that holds together
The children in its sacred ring,
Their knot of love, from whose close tether
No lost child goes a-wandering.

I am the house from floor to roof,

I deck the walls, the board I spread;
I spin the curtains, warp and woof,
And shake the down to be their bed.

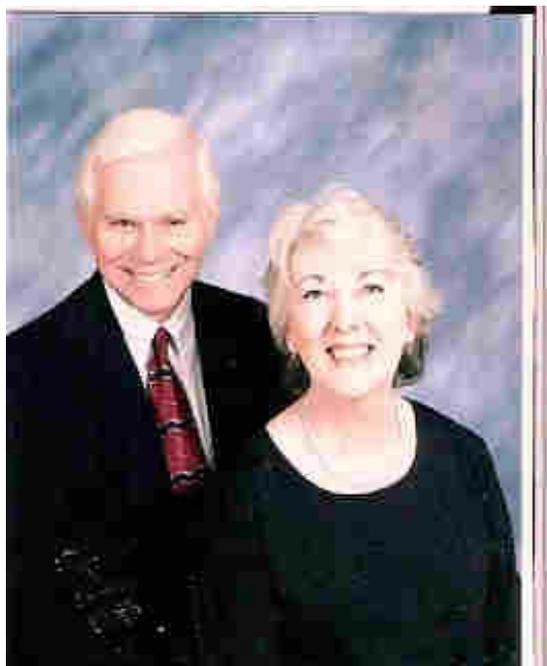
I am their wall against all danger,
Their door against the wind and snow,
Thou Whom a woman laid in a manger,
Take me not till the children grow!

This favorite poem was written by Irishwoman Katharine Tynan (1861-1931), who, even before the likes of Steinem and Friedan set her free and unburied her, seems to be neither handicapped by her sex nor denigrated by her work at home. She seems to recognize and revel in her power, responsibility, and love.

The lady painted in

Reverie

(by an Irishwoman, of course, for this is St. Patrick's Day!) reminds me of my Irish mother (Monica Grace Maguire).



My father is Tom Sherlock ~ half Irish, half Italian (Gaelic and Garlic, so to speak!)

Both of these selections were chosen from

[this book of Irish art and poetry](#)

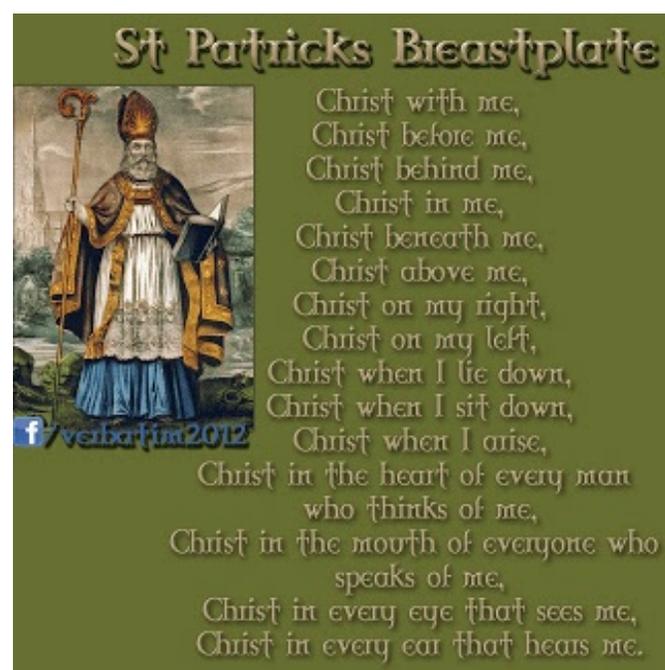
, a gift from Ken and a treasure for the senses.

When we visited Ireland many years ago as volunteer missionaries for the Assemblies of God (Because, you know, Ireland doesn't know about Jesus. Sheesh.), we spent several hours organizing the

[Bible college's](#)

library, surreptitiously reading the good saint's words (Like our children do now when they're supposed to be cleaning their rooms.). We thought that he might be saved (!). He and his words came back to us ten years later as we studied Catholicism.

Saint Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, and caller-home to the Church for Ken and me, pray for us this day, especially our new Pope Francis and all the bishops.



With love and thanks, Allison

This contribution is available at <http://www.northerncffamily.blogspot.com/2013/03/st-patricks-day-poetry.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Lent, Week Four: Finding Discipline and Brotherhood [at The Trenchcoat Introspective]



You aren't alone on the path. Are you brave enough to see that? (via Love your Way)

Anyone who's been reading this blog since its inception knows that discipline is one of those virtues I am less than stellar at. (Remember when I was blogging for six days a week? That didn't last long. . .)

And yet, discipline is an essential part of our Lenten journey. In fact, to try and get through this time of penitence without true discipline is like jogging at night. In a swamp. In heavy fog. If it's not impossible, it certainly complicates things.

Why is it so important? Well, let's break down the word, shall we? In its first usage, "discipline" meant the type of instruction used to train an apprentice, follower, or soldier — literally, a disciple — in a craft or way of life. So who needs discipline more than the disciples of God? We have the greatest craft, the most noble calling. We are God's army on earth.

And we really need to start working together, rather than against each other.

Clearly, the Twelve Apostles needed plenty of discipline. Whenever Jesus isn't paying attention to them, they're always bickering among themselves and being, well. . . human. One of my favorite instances is when they are arguing about who of them is the greatest. It always makes me laugh because we're still like that today.

Don't we spend so much of our time focused on us, and what makes us so special? It's good to be aware and proud of our heritage as Catholics, to be sure. But how often do we find ourselves at the other extreme, bashing our Protestant brothers and sisters because they don't have what we have? We sometimes act like they are lesser Christians, because we've got our Magisterium and all they have is an abridged version of the Bible.

But here's the thing. We're all followers of Christ. And we have bigger battles to fight than which

of us has the fullness of truth. We should be grateful they have the truth at all, and go kick some evil butt together. In the end, none of us are that important. God is the one who is important. He is our master, and we are His children, His servants, His disciples.

If we focus on God and that which pleases Him, rather than that which pleases us, we are definitely beginning to understand discipline. True discipline acts out of love rather than competition. It acts out of selflessness rather than selfishness. It creates rather than destroys. And it is the disciplined who change hearts. It is the disciplined who find their own hearts changed in the process. And that, my brothers and sisters, is what Lent is all about.

This Lent, try to focus on your own discipline. Learn the craft God has for you. And learn more about the beliefs of other Christian churches. You cannot expect to have dialogue with them if all you see are their heresies. Look at those truths they retain. You may be surprised at the things they have that we have lost. (Like good liturgy. . .) Look at why they believe what they believe. Only then can you explain your beliefs to them.

We are a family. And if we don't stand by each other, who will stand by us?

-E.G. Norton

This contribution is available at <http://trenchcoatintrospective.wordpress.com/2013/03/11/lent-week-four-finding-discipline-and-brotherhood/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

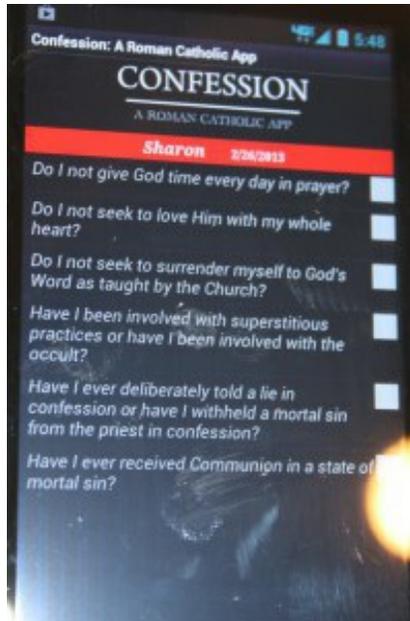
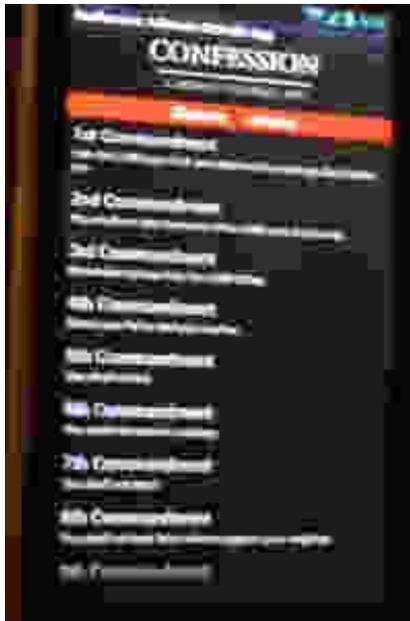
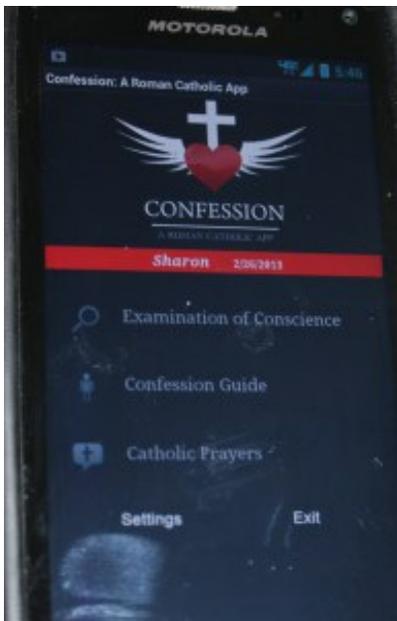
| [Contents](#) |

I've had this post on my computer since February 10, the day before [Pope Benedict announced his resignation](#). In the last few days we've heard quite a bit about God's mercy and forgiveness from our new Holy Father, Pope Francis. Since it snowed again last night, and I've been given another day off, I figured I'd better share it with you now...



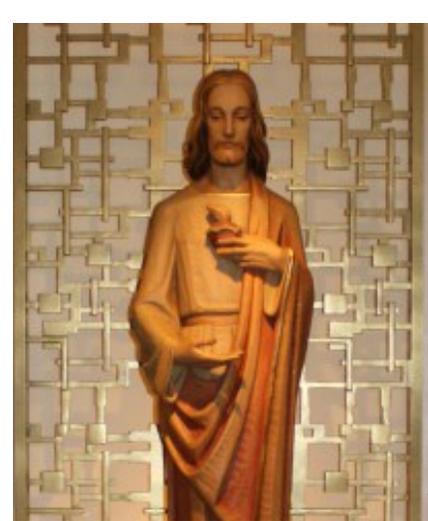
At the Life Is Very Good rally on January 25, where youths from the Arlington as well as other dioceses around the country gathered before the March for Life (see my post about that amazing day [here](#)), there were lots of priests from churches in our area in attendance. At least two of them were priests that I knew from when they served at my parish. During the rally, from early in the morning until right before the Mass, priests were available to hear confessions. Now, I don't go to confession as often as I like (at the beginning of 2012 I made a resolution to go to confession once a month. That lasted about two months), and I normally average about four to five months between confessions. At first I reasoned to myself, *Okay, I went to confession during Advent, so that's what—two months? I'm still good to go for a little while. I think I'll skip it.* Well, it just so happens that I have the confession app on my phone, and I pulled it up anyway, just to look at. Maybe to reassure myself that I really *didn't* need to go to confession.

Do you have the confession app?



Once you've logged in, you are taken to the first page, and you are given a few choices. In the Examination of Conscience, there is a list of all ten commandments. When you click on each one, it presents you with questions related to that particular commandment. I've shown you the ones for the first commandment, "I am the LORD your God; you shall not have strange gods before me."

You can check the "sins" that are relevant in your situation. Once you've gone through the commandments and pondered each one, you can go to the Confession Guide, which is pretty much a "cheat sheet" with the procedure for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a list of the sins you selected, and the Act of Contrition. (You would think that this would make things run more smoothly in the confessional; as you'll find out, it doesn't for me.) It is quite helpful for examining my conscience, though, and usually once I've done that I leave my phone turned off.



Whether it was my conscience, my guardian angel, or Jesus himself, I don't know; but I was prompted to get up and stand in the line of youths for a waiting priest. I knew deep down that it's *always* a good idea to go to confession whenever you have a chance. Who was to say the bus wouldn't crash on the way home? Besides, there was no good reason *not* to go. I would be confessing the same sins I always do, but so what? I've found that the more often I receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the easier it is not to commit those sins—and it always helps me re-ignite my relationship with Jesus, and I want to spend more time with him in prayer. The more I receive the Sacraments, the deeper my desire for Jesus, the happier I am, and the better my relationships are with the people around me. Win-win.

Anyway, I stood in the line, phone in hand. There were people handing out confession "cheat-sheets," step-by-step guides to confession, (no doubt the Act of Contrition was printed on it as well), and I politely declined one. *I've got this*, I thought. *I've done this so many times over the last seventeen-plus years; I know how this works.* (Can you see where this is going?) When it was my turn, I sat down next to a nice young priest I had never seen before (no screens here; all the confessions were face-to-face) and he waited patiently while I pulled up my confession app and typed in my password. "Sorry," I mumbled. "Just have to pull up my app here...Okay. Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It's been—" My phone said 7 weeks. *7 weeks? How does it know that? I was thinking two months...that's close enough, right?*

"...uh, about two months since my last confession." Click. Now I was staring at a list of sins I had checked off in the examination of conscience. *Did I really click on all of those? These aren't left over from the last time, are they?* Suddenly the list became a blur; I switched off the

screen and mumbled the sins that I could remember off the top of my head.

“For these and all my sins I am sorry.”



By the way, for years, I never said this part. I would just say, “And that’s all I can think of.” (Ugh.) I don’t know why I never thought to say out loud that I was actually *sorry*; of course I was, isn’t that why we go to confession? Even though in my religious education classes I had taught, I handed out “How To Make A Good Confession” papers and briefly gone over it with the kids every time I would take them to the church for the sacrament (usually during Advent and Lent). Finally about a year or so ago, I was in the confessional and had finished listing my sins and I heard Father say, “And I assume you’re sorry for these sins, *right??*”

“Oh, yes, of course.”

Chuck. “Good. I was just making sure.”

I felt like a bonehead.

So anyhow, I’d finished listing my sins, and the priest started to say something—I don’t remember what; maybe offering prayers, maybe to tell me my penance— and I interrupted him. “Oh, and yelling at my kids. Forgot that one.” (If you’re a parent and don’t commit this sin on a regular basis, you’re a saint. I want to know your secret.)

Father sighed (I think he might have shaken his head a little bit). “Now pray the Act of Contrition.” *Act of Contrition...Act of Contrition...* I’d said it many times, taught it to my kids and my CCD students... *now how does that go?*

“I’m sorry, Father, I forgot it.” I could feel my face burning. Why on earth didn’t I take that darn cheat sheet when it was offered to me?? Patiently he began to recite the prayer, and I joined in. He granted me absolution, told me what prayers to say for penance, and sent me on my way. At one point he put his hand on my head, which made me giggle. I imagine that God might have been giggling too—not at my stupidity, but because He loves me. (Have you ever seen a small child say or do something that makes you laugh? If they ask you why you’re laughing you can only answer, “Because I love you.”)



As I walked back to my seat in the arena, I was reminded of what G.K. Chesterton is credited with saying: “Anything worth doing is worth doing badly.” (My mother and I laughed together at this just recently when we were talking about our boys and the less-than-exemplary thank you notes they write.) I stumbled through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Jesus in His infinite love and goodness forgives me and loves me, warts and all (pardon the cliché). And the next time I go to confession? I’ll leave my phone in my purse and use a cheat sheet.

“Let’s not forget that God never gets tired of forgiving so let’s never get tired of asking for forgiveness.”—Pope Francis [\(source\)](#)

This contribution is available at <http://eatingslowly.wordpress.com/2013/03/18/in-which-i-make-a-good-confession-badly/>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Why "The Bachelor" Sean Lowe's marriage isn't doomed [at Arleen Spenceley]

The blogosphere has been abuzz about all the sex

The Bachelor

isn't having.

This started when America discovered that Sean Lowe, this season's star of ABC's *The Bachelor*, is a "born again virgin" - somebody who is saving sex from now on for marriage. And Lowe's marriage, according to blogger Mary Fischer, is doomed because of it.

His nonmarital abstinence is "pretty much a major buzz kill," she wrote. Not sleeping with the people you date is a big risk, she implied, and Lowe should have premarital sex for the sake of his marriage.

"If two people don't have good sexual chemistry and aren't at all compatible between the sheets, then odds are good there will be some other aspect of their lives where they don't mesh, which will lead to a whole host of problems that potentially could have been avoided if only they'd done the deed beforehand," Fischer wrote. "Seriously, how bad would it suck to finally give in to temptation on your wedding night only to find that your spouse doesn't exactly know how to (ahem) press your buttons? Talk about ruining the big moment entirely."

To which I write this:

- **Odds are good that characteristics of a successful relationship far more fundamental than "good sex" are missing if a couple is unwilling to work for compatibility** between the sheets if compatibility between the sheets isn't intuitive.
- **Working for compatibility requires patience.** Chastity, "a decision to die to self and to selflessly love (or to die trying)," is great practice.
- How bad would it suck if wedding night sex was about "giving in to temptation?"
- **That your brand new spouse doesn't know how to "press your buttons" isn't a problem** if you and he or she are willing to communicate, to learn, and to practice.
- **The big moment isn't what happens in bed on your wedding night. It's what happens on**

the altar at your wedding.

And if Lowe agrees, his marriage isn't doomed because of it.

Click

[here](#)

to read what Fischer wrote about Sean Lowe's doomed marriage.

This contribution is available at <http://www.arleenspenceley.com/2013/03/why-bachelor-sean-lowes-marriage-isnt.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

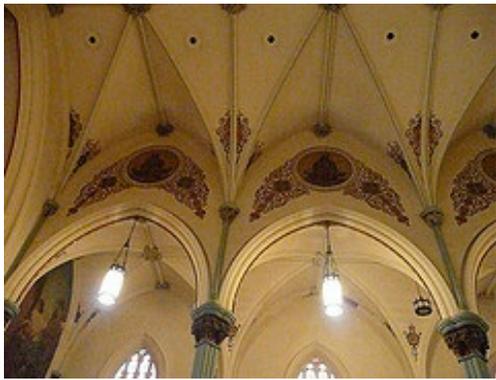
| [Contents](#) |

Confession Is Scary: NOT! [at Rambling Follower]

I wish friends who are not Catholic or friends and family who left the Church years ago could have been with me tonight at

[my parish](#)

. I wish I could have taken photographs of what I saw, but because it was evening, my cell phone camera would not cooperate. Instead, my words will have to suffice.



My parish hosted a Lenten Penance Service, on this the Tuesday of Holy Week. Five priests, all affiliated with the parish, attended, along with maybe 200 or 300 people of every possible walk of life. The vast majority of folks were under 30, with middle aged people and elderly folks sprinkled in. Our sons were the only teenagers I saw there. We all sang, we listened to the Gospel reading about the Prodigal Son, we listened to an

[Examination of Conscience](#)

, and then all said the

[Act of Contrition](#)

together. Then, one by one, we each went to Confession. The whole process took my family more than two hours and I have never felt so uplifted by this sacrament, nor so well-prepared for Easter.

Popular images of the Sacrament of Confession include a darkened confessional with a stoic priest on the other side of a screen, listening without speaking and then doling out penances.



Yes, we have a confessional like that at the parish. Our pastor, Father Tom Odorizzi, C.O. did hear confessions in the confessional - behind a screen if you like, or sitting in a chair next to him. Because I am 50, I am not accustomed to face-to-face confessions. I find them distracting. So tonight I headed to the confessional and yes, knelt behind the screen, and talked about the places in my life where I have fallen short. I had a conversation with Father Tom, who advised me to how to seek God's guidance to continue my heart's conversion.

While I chose the tradition form of confession, most folks did not. At four different points in the church, a priest sat in a chair with a chair beside him, in plain sight to all, hearing confessions. The folks on line - at least 40 in each line - kept a respectable distance so as not to overhear the conversation. People on line chatted with one another, prayed rosaries, read books or just stared out into space. One friend of ours, stuck at a line's end, ended up hanging out with us, yukking it up with us and an elderly couple - parishioners for 57 years - with whom we struck up a conversation.

I had never "watched" a confession before. But while I could not and would not listen, I watched a couple tonight. The penitent sat down in the chair and was greeted by a smiling priest. They conversed for about 10 minutes. At the end, the priest gave a blessing and in some cases hugged the penitent. The penitent invariably walked away with a big smile.

It was truly a privilege - so humbling and so beautiful - to see so many people seeking and receiving grace and reconciling themselves with Christ. How graced we are to have these five men helping to lead us to Christ.

Was the evening scary? Is Confession creepy? Nope. What I experienced was joy-filled, loving, life-affirming.



This contribution is available at <http://ramblingfollower.blogspot.com/2013/03/confession-is-scary-not.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Good Friday [at City of God]

I am not going to complain about anything today. I am not going to cry and whine over what has become of me. I am not going to sit around and calculate all that I have lost. Why? Well... a couple thousand years ago....

Someone died for me today.



It is so hard to wrap my brain around it all. Someone died so that I might live forever? Wow- that was really selfless of Him. Oh wait-- it was the Son of God? Wow. The first thing my mind thinks when I think of this is- "I can never possibly repay this debt." Then I think-- "Well, I at least have to TRY to repay it."

In today's overly dramatic culture to say that you would die for someone has kind of become the standard for those you really love. People say- "I would die for my spouse, my children, my family, my best friends." And maybe they would. I don't know. I'd like to think that I could or would die for my loved ones if it was necessary. BUT- It is hard to think about dying for Jack when, honestly, I don't even know that I am going to let him watch his DVR'd shows ahead of mine tonight.

Truly, the odds that any of us will have the opportunity to die for someone in our lives are probably pretty slim. It has almost become meaningless to say that you would die for someone b/c you will probably never have that chance. So we can all say that we will die for our loved ones, and then sit back and breathe easy, b/c we will most likely never have to make good on that statement.

Sooo... I am pretty sure that this is where the idea of "dying to oneself" comes in. Since I will probably never be able to die for Jack I should put him first in other areas and die to my own wants. Well, now... that is different!! That is something we can actually, physically do. That changes everything! You don't hear people going around saying- "I will always let my husband

watch his DVR'd shows first. I will die to my own wants." OR- "I will get up at 6 am, before my children, so that I will be more prepared for them that day. This means I will go to bed at 10 pm instead of staying up and reading blogs. I will die to my own wants." Oh my. No. No. NO. To do this is real. This is a real sacrifice.

But then we look at the crucifix. We are to imitate Christ. I will most likely never have the opportunity to decide if I can/will die for someone. Can I not die to myself? Can I not crucify my selfishness for the sake of others? This is the way I must try to repay this debt. By living how Christ lived. Can I put other's wants and needs ahead of my own? Can I give my life for others in the areas of time, service, desires, and control?

This is a difficult cross to bear- b/c it is a realistic one.

Prayers of adoration and thanksgiving for Christ's sacrifice on Good Friday.

***Because of his affliction
he shall see the light in fullness of days;
through his suffering, my servant shall justify many,
and their guilt he shall bear.
Therefore I will give him his portion among the great,
and he shall divide the spoils with the mighty,
because he surrendered himself to death
and was counted among the wicked;
and he shall take away the sins of many,
and win pardon for their offenses. Isaiah 53:11-12***

This contribution is available at <http://www.letusbuildthecityofgod.com/2013/03/good-friday.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

I THOUGHT YOUR NAME WAS RICHARD... [at catholicboyrichard (Stephen Francis)]



My confirmation at St Olaf Catholic Church, April 15, 2006—Minneapolis, MN

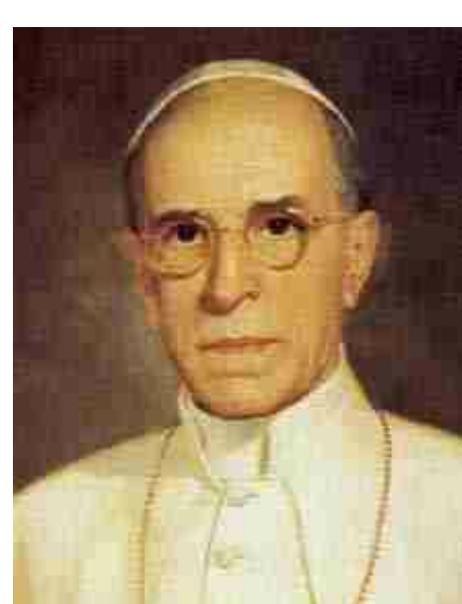
It is me. The new me. The me who, 7 years ago this last Easter Vigil, received the fullness of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation, just a few months after turning 50 years of age (I am 57 now). The me who had been raised Roman Catholic, left for what became a 35 year journey into the charismatic side of the Evangelical world, 20 within the [Assemblies of God](#) or similar groups and the other 15 a much wider variety of spiritual explorations, and who, at age 49, was inexplicably (even to me) drawn back to a Church I had nearly, but never totally, forgotten.

I will not re-hash that time period here for this post, but suffice it to say much good came from it as well as much unneeded struggle. On the positive, at the time I left [Rome](#) the average Catholic was not taught or encouraged to spend much time reading Sacred Scripture. In saying that, I need to clarify that [Venerable Pope Pius XII](#), who was Pontiff at the time of my birth in 1955, wrote a beautiful Encyclical on this and did indeed ask the Faithful of the world to do exactly that. Please see:

<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius12/P12DIVIN.HTM>

for a copy of this powerful set of words. I think though that the typical pre-Vatican II family, such as ours, went out and purchased a Bible and it mostly sat on the shelf, or was read occasionally

during Lent, and that done with no real Bible study aids or direction in how to do so. We did and do hear the Word of God proclaimed each and every time we attended Mass, and even then it tends to be more read or shared from the pulpit than in many “Sola Scriptura” denominations, but if one was to ask the street Catholic of those years to tell you the where or when something occurred (for instance which book of the Old Testament included the story of Jonah and the whale) they would probably look at you blankly and say “go ask Sister Leola.”



Pope Pius XII called Pastor Angelicus, was the most Marian Pope in Church history. Bäumer, *Marienlexikon* (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

Which brings me to another topic of its own—“who was Sister Leola?” She was in the very last group of nuns in our small rural community that actually looked, in manner of dress at least, like [the Blessed Virgin Mary](#) who she represented and was proud to do so. None of this half-habited, mid-calf with panty hose and make up look for her. You knew she was a woman of God, and you did not mess with her. *Ever*. But Sister Leola had a good heart (and a slightly lazy eye which gave the effect of never quite knowing if she was watching you or someone else when she spoke or taught Catechism classes—a tool I later realized was actually very handy because we as children always thought she “might” be looking straight at us but were never sure!) and was the person I purchased my first Bible from (which I still have incidentally) for \$1.00 saved from my paper route. I was in 6th grade, and Vatican II had just ended a mere 3 years earlier. With that had also come an era when the Faithful were once again exhorted even more so to read Sacred Scripture, and she wanted us as near-junior high students to begin doing so. She may have seemed old-fashioned to most of us by the “summer of love” next year following, but she had a vision far beyond her eye problems for helping those under her care and tutelage to stay true to the Lord and the Church.



Sister Leola??? Maybe...

So yes, we did own and read the Bible, but it was sporadic and without much guidance. Entering my 7th and 8th grade years, I began attending an Assemblies of God youth group, and each of them owned their own [Bibles](#) and brought them to church, so I proudly began to carry mine as well. And to read it. And to study it, book by book, lesson by lesson. That is what my years of [Protestantism](#) did for me, and it was huge, believe me. Now, when I go to Mass I never leave my Missal at home, as I have retained the practice of following along during each and every reading, and even occasionally taking a note or two. And I check each and every reference, even though they are not announced from the podium (or ambo if you prefer). Again, a gift from my Protestant years. Stories I heard as a young Catholic child now make sense in a way that others without that background very possibly miss. And yes, I know that Jonah was and is its own book, and that the “whale” was actually a “great fish.”

That is what I owe to Protestantism, but even more I owe to those years an understanding of the concept of “receiving Jesus” in a personal way. At this juncture I might bring the ire and irk of some of my Catholic sisters and brothers, but the Eucharist is not where that occurs primarily. Heretic you say? Not at all. I realize and fully accept that our [Lord Jesus Christ](#) as received in [Holy Communion](#) is the “source and summit” of the Christian Faith. But what good is a “source and summit” if you have little or no faith to walk in before or after? I think much of the lack of passion seen today in our Catholic Church towards living the Faith on a daily basis is due to getting the “cart before the horse” if you will. We are taught to reverence Jesus in the Eucharist, as well we should, but many, and certainly not all, are also under the mistaken impression that, since they were baptized and receive the Sacraments they are therefore “okay” with God. The idea of daily [Bible reading](#) seems more than tedious, and prayer happens only when narrowly swerving to

miss a passing car on the freeway or during tornado weather.

My Protestant friends might say, "see, you Catholics are not 'really' Christians," and sometimes that may be the case at least in practical if not technical terms, but that is not actually the issue here. Every single Mass offers the same basic components as the most fervent evangelical service. First we ask Christ to forgive our sins, then we listen to the Word, and a short commentary on it, and immediately after we profess our Faith with more detail than the "sinner's prayer" generally ever has. After that we pray for one another and finally we culminate by obeying Jesus in going to the altar (yes, an altar call!) and receive Him personally in the consecrated host and chalice. So the message of receiving Jesus personally and then living for Him throughout the week is there, and solidly so. But why did I, and so many others, miss it, or at least miss the element of a living relationship that attempts to make Jesus the center of our lives?

I would contend it is because we are challenged in a vague sort of way to follow Him, but not personally at times. "We" are told that "we all should" live right, love God and neighbor, and to do better this next week than last. But often we are not told how that looks on a daily basis. And "we" tend to think, as I once did even growing up, that, as one older Irish Catholic woman once told me regarding daily Mass, "I don't want to be too religious, you know." Now she would never have missed Mass on a Sunday, and most likely had lived a long and faithful life with her husband before he died. She probably had never even heard of pornography, and her swearing was likely at a minimum—at least usually. She, in reality, was a [Catholic Christian](#) who loved our Lord, and understood what it meant to live in a "state of grace." But yet she also probably lived, perhaps her whole life, largely on her terms. Novenas and fasting were for the nuns and priests, and daily Rosaries for the fanatics and very bored. She had Jesus, and He was indeed her best friend. She was not overly mean to people (unless they really deserved it of course!) and even then she didn't really "hate" them. Too much anyway. But like many of us, she called upon Him on an "as needed" basis, and it never perhaps once occurred to her that the joy of Christianity was in the very "religiosity" she was happily avoiding.

That was the state to a large extent of the pre-Vatican II Catholic layperson. To those who wish for those "good old days" when the Mass was in Latin and coming to a distant Jesus was a constant battle need to realize that there was a down side to that era too. And many of us who eventually moved into a more radical discipleship did not find it in the Eucharist (although it was, as I said before, there all along but we sadly did not, as the disciples on the Emmaus road did, "recognize Him in the breaking of the bread"). He did not seem handily or easily accessible to us very frankly. And conversely we did not know we needed to avail ourselves to Him daily either. Thus came the appeal of a "personal Savior" who was and is beyond all Sacraments or ritual. But in accepting that side of Jesus we rejected another. What I and so many others did not realize, did not even fathom for whatever reason, was that such a choice was a false dichotomy to begin with. The Jesus of the Sacraments was and is the Jesus of the daily bread, including the mundane kind. Not only in the Eucharist but before and after. The one we should be praying to "without ceasing," and who would be there immediately if we did so. My Protestant and particularly evangelical/charismatic friends "got" this. That is why the Bible meant so much to them. It was

God's Word, immediate and fresh. As the Psalms tell us mercy "new every morning." By and large the Catholic people I knew did not. And many still do not.

Most, at least the ones I knew, were in the dubious category of that cradle Catholic woman mentioned above, who were faithfully Catholic but did not want to be "too" anything. She knew the rules and followed them, but Jesus was not her life and livelihood. Did I say He was her best friend? I think so still. But He was the kind of "best friend" who had long ago moved away to another city, or at least to the far side of town, and meanwhile she had to live here primarily without Him by her side or involved in her daily life and decisions. She missed the best in doing so, and did not seemingly have any idea that the Church had lovingly provided ways for her to stay close to Him constantly, starting yes with the Sacraments, but then continuing onward by making our very lives a Sacramental one. In short, knowing Him personally and fully.

So back to why I am "Stephen Francis." Seven years ago this Easter weekend (I write this on Easter Monday of 2013), I found out what the fullness of the Holy Spirit actually meant. When Father Mark laid his hands on me, done so by the authority of the Archbishop, a successor to the first Apostles who had his authority from Rome and the Holy Father (at that time Pope Benedict XVI), I was connected to the early Church and sealed as a Catholic Christian. Confirmation is considered to be one of the "Sacraments of Initiation" and that is why. The other day I read somewhere online that "Confirmation is of the devil." Not just cold but dangerous words, I would suggest. I may not have seen my need for it until age 50, but I never once thought it was demonic! That article on the other hand was. I just thought, and still do, that many receiving it miss its potential impact due to reasons already mentioned. But the reality is there if we just look with the eyes of Faith. It is there in fact even if we do not, but unfortunately many think of it as "graduation" rather than a new beginning. It was never meant as such. Ephesians tells us that we were "sealed by the Holy Spirit," and Confirmation ensures this to be true. Gifts of the Holy Spirit will begin to flow from us, with or without our knowledge or understanding of them (although that very understanding is part of the sevenfold gift of the Spirit in fact), but those gifts flow from a Spirit-filled life—one that is God-centered and "other" centered instead of all about "me." If that does not occur after being confirmed, it is not because we need yet another Sacrament, called in some circles "the baptism in the Holy Spirit." Please understand I believe charismatic gifts can occur, and do at times, but they are not the *sign* of having received this sealing. And one of the reasons we often choose a new name at Confirmation is exactly to make that sign real and relevant to us. It is a new, fresh beginning on a deeper level of our baptism into Christ. An extension of it if you will. Can one get to heaven without being confirmed? Yes indeed. But who would want to? It, not "tongues," is the true and full outpouring of Pentecost for today. And the very lifeline to living out our baptism, which is the Sacrament of initial faith in Christ—and yes, as a personal and living Savior. The third Sacrament of Initiation, as we who are Catholic refer to this trio, Holy Communion or the Eucharist, if received in faith and reverence, then assists in what St Paul told to St Timothy, which is to "stir up" the gifts within us already received at baptism and Confirmation. And the Bible and our study of it fits in like a glove because, before every Eucharist, there is an exposition of the Word of God, first Old Testament, then Psalms (talk about praise and worship time!) and finally the Epistles and the Gospel. These each prepare us as fertile

soil and, if listened to attentively, “break up the fallow ground” in anticipation of receiving the living water of the Spirit in what seem to be earthly elements of bread and wine. He (for the Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead just as Jesus is) then drenches us and points us right back to Jesus the Christ, who is the “author and finisher” of our Faith—and yes the “source and summit.” And that is what Mass is all about, or should be. Every Sunday. And weekdays too.

So (for the third time then) why am I “Stephen Francis?” It is the common, although not universal, practice to receive a new name at Confirmation. Unlike our baptismal name, (in my case Richard Gerard) our Confirmation name is one we ourselves choose, or hopefully God chooses for us but through our own prayers and seeking for guidance in the matter. It is the “new start” to our “new start” of being baptized initially into the Lord Jesus Christ. And new it is. Even at age 50. It is the signature on the marriage certificate of our nuptials with God the Son.

Originally I was to have been confirmed at age 15, and after much prayer had chosen to take the name “Stephen,” after St Stephen the first or proto-martyr. But when I returned to the Church, for various reasons (written elsewhere on this blog—please see:

<http://catholicboyrichard.com/2011/11/12/my-friend-and-patron-st-francis-of-assis/>

for that amazing story) I strongly sensed that St Francis of Assisi was to be my new patron saint. Yet Stephen was my original choice. Then one day it hit me—and the Holy Fathers John Paul I and II had done so as first and second in Papal history, that perhaps I too could take a **double name** as they had done for their Papacies. Permission was granted and I became Stephen Francis. One represented my original (pre-Protestant detour) saint of choice for this Sacrament, and the other the one who I believe was strongly instrumental in bringing me back home—again see the above listed link for that portion of the story. I later learned that they were both Deacons of the Church, and while Francis was not martyred, he was the first recorded saint (after possibly the Apostle St Paul) to have received the “stigmata.” This gift was also given to a modern saint, St Padre Pio, who did many miracles during his lifetime and beyond, including one for my family (again listed in my post on St Francis)—and who himself was a Capuchin Franciscan priest.

He (Francis) wanted this gift precisely so he would be, in a sense, a martyr for God, and to understand what Christ had gone through on the Cross for him and for us all. We think of St Francis as somehow merrily tripping lover of animals and flowers, and certainly he was at times just that. But he was a serious and tenacious man of God to the death as well. Again so was St Stephen. Both died young (we do not know Stephen’s exact age but just as a guess I am thinking perhaps around 30 or so) and St Francis was 44. Both died for Christ, but more importantly lived for Him, and in neither case did life or death matter to them—only Jesus and Him crucified in their lives. So actually they had much in common.

EWTN's Rome bureau chief Joan Lewis, brings you both



What I did not know until this weekend, and it was during “Joan’s Rome,” a short little 3 minute vignette program on EWTN done by a woman who has been a major and accomplished Vatican correspondent (but who somehow reminds me at times of the religious version of a gossip columnist as well), and in any case this lovely and intelligent woman was sharing something I had never known or even heard before—and it was no gossip either for that matter. In Assisi, people still flock to see the Basilica where St Francis is buried. But few know that, nestled in the trees or bushes nearby, is the small ancient Church of St Stephen. Yes, St Stephen the martyr! It was there that Francis, not yet a saint, was baptized as a child, attended Mass growing up, and whose bells rang out his death on October 3, 1226. In fact it is said that, upon his death, these bells rang spontaneously, telling the village of Assisi and the world that an amazing saint had just been granted entrance into heaven. Whether that part is totally factual is irrelevant, of course, but does show the high regard in Assisi and worldwide for St Francis. But before Francis was Stephen!!! And Stephen may well have been some part of his inspiration to be a deacon. And I knew nothing of the “Stephen/Francis” connection until seeing this clip on EWTN mere days ago. I had even debated whether it should be “Stephen Francis” or “Francis Stephen” but finally decided to go with the first combination as it better reflected the chronology of my journey back. Even now it gives me the chills to realize that these two saints, Stephen and Francis, **chose me too**. And Jesus chose both of them for a form of martyrdom and death to self. And, like me, both were called to be celibate and single.



San Stefano Assisi—Photography by Kenny Kim

I have much to live up to.

PS—And did I fail to mention that our new Holy Father, just in time for Easter, just happens to have taken the name Pope Francis, the first and only??? Nothing is by accident... Saints Stephen and Francis, the dynamic diaconate team, please pray for us!!!

0.000000 0.000000

This contribution is available at <http://catholicboyrichard.com/2013/04/02/i-thought-your-name-was-richard-so-who-is-stephen-francis/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Martha Or Mary: On Choosing The Better Part [at Colleen Duggan]



Last year, in preparation for Easter Sunday, I spent one entire morning making lists: the menu, the shopping list, the clothing list, and a list of basket items. I printed out recipes and made mental notes of what services we would attend during the Triduum. I checked my bins of Easter decorations, taking stock of what I could use and what items still needed to be purchased.

While my original intention was to plan a beautiful celebration to honor the Risen Lord, my focus drifted as I made menus and managed children. Lost in my visions of Easter morning “perfection”, I pushed Jesus’ scourging at the pillar from my mind. I forgot about the Crucifixion in favor of more worldly endeavors like decorating cookies and coordinating matching outfits.

Later, when my lists were organized and complete, I loaded kids into the van and off we went to eliminate a few items from the to-do. I don’t know what caused it; perhaps it was my attachment to my agenda coupled with annoying kid behavior, but at some point someone did something to upset someone else and I started yelling.

Read the rest

[here](#)

Have a Blessed Holy Week and see you on the flip side.

This contribution is available at <http://www.colleenduggan.net/2013/03/martha-or-mary-on-choosing-better-part.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The Great Hidden Cross of Motherhood [at In Holy Company]

There was a time in my life when I was a pretty confident person. Not in the super vain, I'm-so-amazing sort of way, but in the God-has-given-me-great-gifts sort of way. And I was aware enough of my weaknesses to keep humility as well as to seek help from those who had strengths in those areas of my weakness. It took me a long time to get there, but it was a good place to be.

Then I had children.

As parents are painfully aware, children don't come with an instruction manual. Whether the children you care for are your own biological children, adopted, foster or even grandchildren, **there are no individualized how-to steps that came with your child.** Of course the self help section of Barnes and Noble would like you to think there is, and while some of these tools can be helpful, they are not foolproof. I have only been a mom for nine years, but I do know that much of parenthood can be likened to a hazy, dense fog that you stumble through in the hopes that somehow, some way you are responding to and loving your child for who they are. That you are giving them the tools they need to really succeed in life. That you are treating them and teaching them how you would want them to treat others.



But let's face it. Sometimes that dense fog seems like a brick wall. That no matter what issue you are encountering with your child, the tricks up your sleeve are not working. There is frustration, confusion, sometimes anger, maybe sadness, and overall, a great feeling of **insecurity** as a parent.

I think mothers in their own unique way especially feel the weight of this burden.

It doesn't matter if it is made evident at a school parent-teacher conference, or in casual discussion at mommy's group, or at the grocery store from a random stranger or even by extended family members. But it is a terrible feeling when you are given the impression that *every other* mother out there has the answer. And *you* don't. You are left to fumble for answers for this child that has been entrusted to you. For the one whom you would give heaven and earth. For the one whom you are learning the intricacies of their unique and individual person hood.

Therein lies the problem of the parenting self-help section. Or the advice from the well-intentioned old lady at the grocery store. Or the fellow mom at play group. And yes even family members. **Your child is an individual.** One of the very unique, and subtle details of my youngest son's make up is that his second toe is shorter than both his big toe and his third middle toe. I bet even our closest relatives and friends don't know that.



This is the detailed level of how unique each child is, and how uniquely we must learn to respond to our child's needs. **Even in the greatest times of uncertainty, or even parental failing, we must retain without fail that we are *irreplaceable* in our child's life.** I am *the* mom my children have. Despite my failings, and inadequacy, I am the one there to kiss away their tears, hug their hurts, and whisper "I love you" into their ear.

My discipline system may not look like yours. My routine may not like like yours, or my education system, or my meal planning, or anything else. But in a way that is unique to each of my children, **I am present to them, learning with and from them, and loving them unconditionally.**

It can be easy to complain about kids. It is hard to raise them. And we have all complained from time to time. But when we hear some other mom express fear, concern, and frustration, it is most likely from the hidden place of insecurity. **When we hear a fellow mom express their insecurity, let's be there for her in a way that really matters.** Listen. Show empathy. Pray. Relate to what she is going through. Offer her a break. Or a word of encouragement and strength. Not a solution to her problem, but an affirmation of her unique gift of self to her children. We are fragile when we feel broken and insecure, and it is our priestly duty to serve our fellow moms with great love.

None of us grew up with perfect parents. We all look back and say, "I'm going to do it a little differently." And surely our children will say the same. But looking back over the years, I can say, I have the best mom. And the best dad. You don't. I do. And you would most likely say the same to me. My parents are the best because they are the best *for me*. We had our rough moments though the years, and I have already had many rough moments with my own children, but hopefully they will be able to look back and say that **I am the best mom.**

This is where mothers must try to lay down their cross of insecurity. As people of faith we are invited to pick up the mantle of peace that both Mary our Mother and her Son Jesus want us to robe ourselves in. It is not an easy cross to lay at the feet of Jesus. But I trust that there is great peace in doing so.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. -John 14:27

This contribution is available at <http://inholycompany.com/?p=163>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Parable of the Unforgiving Servant [at Washed, Sanctified and Justified...]

Matthew Chapter 18:21-35

**Peter approached Jesus and asked him,
“Lord, if my brother sins against me,
how often must I forgive him?
As many as seven times?”**

St. Peter came to Jesus with a question of forgiveness. He wanted to know how many times one should forgive his brother.

Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.

Jesus said, there is no limit to how many times you must forgive your brethren.

Then He told Peter a parable.

That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.

**Since he had no way of paying it back,
his master ordered him to be sold,
along with his wife, his children, and all his property,
in payment of the debt.**

There was a man who owed the King a great deal of money which he could not repay. So the King ordered the man be apprehended, he and his family. He also ordered that he and his family be sold off in payment of the debt.

**At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said,
‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’
Moved with compassion the master of that servant
let him go and forgave him the loan.**

At this the man fell to the floor and begged for mercy, promising that he would repay the King in time. The King was touched by this pleading and forgave the entire debt.

When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount.

He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt.

Upon leaving the King's presence, the man observed a person who owed him money. He immediately grabbed the person, choking him and demanded to be paid. The person begged for mercy and time to pay him back. But the man would have none of it and had the person thrown in jail.

Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair.

Other people saw the whole thing and went and reported to the King.

His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt.

Upon learning this, the King had the man seized to whom he had originally forgiven the debt. And he said to him, "I forgave you more than you could ever repay. Shouldn't you have learned from my example and forgiven your brother as I forgave you? But since you did not, then you will be cast into jail until you can repay the debt you owe." And this time, he was handed over to torturers until he should pay back the whole debt.

So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

Jesus concluded the lesson saying, "this is what will happen to you if you don't forgive your brothers from your heart."

The King is God of course. And we, Christians, are the debtors who stand before the Throne of God in the Sacraments, begging God's forgiveness. And He lavishly forgives us all our sins. Washing them away in the waters of Baptism and in Confession, Confirmation, Eucharist, and Anointing.

But if we who have been thus forgiven turn around and hold grudges against our neighbors who have asked us their forgiveness and who perhaps do not have the ability to make amends. Then you can forget that you ever washed your sins away in the waters of grace provided by the Holy Spirit. You will be surprised to find yourself besieged by the devil and his angels after God refuses you entrance into the heavenly Jerusalem.

This contribution is available at <http://washedsanctifiedandjustified.blogspot.com/2013/03/parable-of-unforgiving-servant.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The Marriage Issue: It's About the Kids [at Peace Garden Mama]

I've been fasting

from creating new blog posts throughout Lent to focus on other writing and pursuits. It's been a productive, healthy break, but an issue has come up now that I feel important enough to merit breaking my fast a few days early.

It surrounds a topic that will be discussed today before the U.S. Supreme Court: California's Proposition 8 (the ban on redefining marriage) and arguments on the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage for federal government benefits.

There are many words that could help complete the picture of what is at stake, but a real visual is worth a thousand of them.

This...is what's at stake

:



morguefile.com

Namely, marriage as we have known it throughout many ages, cultures, societies and religions; marriage as it is in truth -- the union of one man and one woman and any children born from that union.

We are, through these decisions, facing the possible demise of

the only civil institution that unites children with their mothers and fathers

. And most of us are completely unaware of this fact.

Many erroneously believe it is about something else -- adoption or homosexual unions or who is most fit to parent or who has the greatest capacity to love, or any number of related topics. But it is not. It is about the possible ending of the only civil institution that unites kids with their moms and dads.

And that's serious; serious

enough for me to come out of the closet of safety and say, "Take another look at this issue. Let's have a discussion. Let's talk respectfully, if you feel you can." This is important. Our richest treasure and resource -- our children -- stand to lose if we don't wake up.

Back in November I first broached the topic after reading a booklet that had come across my desk. You can read about that

[here](#)

.

The book I introduced, "Getting the Marriage Conversation Right: A Guide for Effective Dialogue," by Bill May would be worth the brief read. In simple, clear terms it educates and offers tools.

Everyone, I would hope, can at least agree on this: the family in our society is in crisis.

Consider just a few related statistics:

- 71 percent of poor families with children are unmarried.
- A child is 11 times more likely to be abused in a home with a mother and boyfriend, and 4 times more likely in one that includes a co-habiting mother and father, compared to those who live in a home with both a mother and father.
- In fatherless homes, children are twice as likely to be arrested for a juvenile crime, treated for emotional and behavioral problems, and suspended or expelled from school.

Our children are paying the price, as will their children next.

So the question is,

can we afford to eliminate the only civil institution that unites children with their mothers and fathers?

I have heard this issue being referred to as a civil rights or human rights issue, and I would agree. But marriage isn't the right of anyone. Children, however, have a right to be brought up in a marriage between their mother and father. Children are not rights, either. They are gifts.

As Roger Scruton said in his essay from "The Meaning of Marriage," "Take away marriage and you expose children to the risk of coming into the world as strangers, untutored by fathers or abandoned by mothers; a condition of abandonment in which they may remain for the rest of their lives."

Are we ready for that kind of world? We're already close. But there's still time to wake up and make the right choice; the choice for the common good of all.

I know I've been awoken. I hope others will be, too.

May God be with us we look at the reality of this issue, and the consequences of possibly redefining marriage in the coming days, and may light prevail over all men and women of good will

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-marriage-issue-its-about-kids.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

An Interview with Author Mike Aquilina [at Catholic Book Blogger]



I am currently reading *Faith of Our Fathers: Why the Early Christians Still Matter and Always Will* by Mike Aquilina. This is an incredibly informative book and I am learning a LOT from it. My review of this book will be posted in the coming days.

Today I decided to contact Mr. Aquilina and share my thoughts on this book with him. During our email exchange Mike graciously agreed to answer a few questions for an interview that I could share with my readers. If you are reading this Mike, I sincerely appreciate the time you spent with me today. I also encourage everyone to visit his website and check out some of the multiple books he has written.

www.mikeaquilina.com

Q: What inspired you to start writing books?

A: It wasn't so much inspiration as invitation. When I was young, an elderly scholar asked me to help him write a memoir. I accepted the invitation, and I got hooked. A few years later, Bob Lockwood at Our Sunday Visitor asked me to consider writing books for the Catholic press.

Q: How many hours of research went into writing *Faith of Our Fathers*?

A: My life, really. Studying the Fathers isn't something I've done on the clock. It's something I've done compulsively for decades now.

Q: You seem to have become an authority on the Early Christians with a growing volume of books on the subject. In addition to the four books you recommend in *Faith of Our Fathers*, what further reading would you suggest for those just starting their journey into the Early Fathers?

A: Read the Fathers! Start with the Apostolic Fathers. I like the new translations by Kenneth Howell. Get to know these men and then proceed to the next generations — Justin and the Apologists, Perpetua's diary, Irenaeus and Hippolytus. Read them chronologically, and you'll see a story unfolding.

Q: Of all the books you have written, what was the most enjoyable to write and why?

A: Probably *The Fathers of the Church*, because it required an encounter with each of the Fathers, his works and his historical background. But I also loved *Signs and Mysteries*, my study of ancient Christian art, because it was my chance to work with an outstanding contemporary artist. All of my co-authored books — with Christopher Bailey, Scott Hahn, David Scott, Cardinal Wuerl, Dion DiMucci, Fr. Kris Stubna, Fr. Juan Velez, Ken Ogorek — have been a joy because my co-authors have been good friends and companions.

Q: For those interested in your books in particular, what titles would you recommend they put near the top of their “to read” list?

A: *The Fathers of the Church*, *The Mass of the Early Christians*, *Roots of the Faith*, and *Signs and Mysteries*. In each of these I tried to open windows on the ancient world.

Q: In closing, this is a blog about reading books. What is currently on your bookshelf to read?

A: James Papandrea’s *Reading the Early Church Fathers* and *Trinity 101*; Peter Leithart’s *Defending Constantine*; and Joseph Carola’s *Augustine of Hippo*.

Thanks again Mike and I look forward to reading and reviewing another of your books in the near future!

This contribution is available at <http://catholicbookblogger.com/2013/04/02/an-interview-with-author-mike-aquilina/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Christ Has Risen, Alleluia! The Easter Triduum Revisited [at Prints of Grace]



Holy Thursday

The Mass was one of my grandma’s favorites of the year. The last time she joined us at St. Michael’s was for a Mass on Holy Thursday. It was quite moving when someone went and brought my grandma down to have her feet washed without any of us asking.

Being involved in

[Christ Renews His Parish \(CRHP\)](#)

[Cursillo](#)

, and an Easter Triduum veteran, I’ve participated in the washing of the feet a number of times. One of the most meaningful experiences I had was at Richmond Hill when I was on a Cursillo team overnight retreat. The “rectora” ahead of the weekend and her “archangel” came and washed the feet of each team member, and there wasn’t a dry eye in the room. Both women are very loving, compassionate—true Christian servants—and we were all overwhelmed by the incredible love they expressed through such a seemingly simple act.

This year is the

[thirteenth Easter Triduum](#)

Kevin and I have celebrated since our first one together in Roanoke back in 2000 when Kevin

drove over 500 miles to spend four days going to church with me, and after the Triduum plus, was named by Fr. Remi Sojka “the patron saint of boyfriends.” It was during that weekend Kevin began participating in the Sacraments and going to Mass on his own back in Rochester.



It has become my tradition to attend the Holy Thursday Mass each year, and for the past few years, I have stayed afterwards in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as part of my observance of the Triduum. At our parish, they hold Adoration from the end of the Holy Thursday service when they process in with the ciborium filled with the Eucharist that will be used for the Good Friday service into the chapel until midnight that evening. Lately, I haven't been as good about doing Adoration regularly or setting aside adequate time for prayer, so I was looking forward to my time in “the classroom of silence” as

[Matthew Kelly](#)

refers to it.

[“Stay with Me”](#)

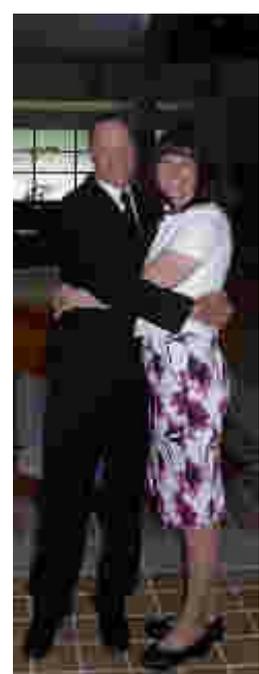
is a song that I often associate with my time in Adoration, especially on Holy Thursday as I think of Jesus' disciples falling asleep when He was praying so hard He sweat blood in the Garden of Gethsemane knowing the suffering He was about to undertake for our sins.

In the past, sometimes our beloved brother-in-Christ John Baab, the woman who is the go-to person for all things liturgical at our parish, Alison Eichler, and I would be the only three left at church come midnight. I was really excited that there were a number of people who stayed the entire time keeping vigil with the Blessed Sacrament this Holy Thursday.



I had a special role to play in the Good Friday service this year. Our brother John and another seminarian from our parish Henry were serving throughout the Triduum since they were in town for Holy Week. Knowing that Kevin and I are very supportive of religious vocations and have been close with John on his journey, Alison asked that I would be the third cross-bearer when we brought in a wooden cross for all to venerate. Interestingly enough, I was worried about it being too heavy for me as those at some parishes are quite heavy and require a number of strong people, usually males, to move from one location to another. Fortunately this cross was relatively light, and I felt quite comfortable in my role of following after the priest guiding us and the two seminarians holding the cross beams. Kevin and I have been quite grateful that John has helped us carry our crosses, and we are eager to support him however we can, so my role seemed quite appropriate.

It was beautiful to watch people come up and venerate the cross. I think my favorite was when someone would come up carrying a small child, and the child would reach out and want to touch the cross and some even kissed it.



The past couple years, Kevin, John, and I have watched the movie

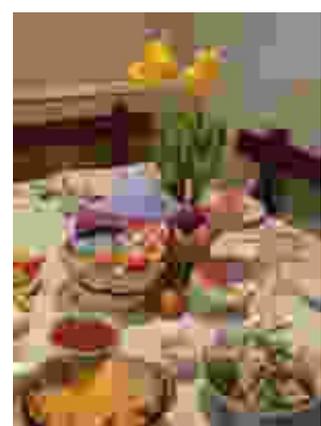
The Passion

some time between Holy Thursday and the Easter Vigil. Saturday we watched it just before getting ready to go to church for the vigil. I was deeply struck by the suffering Christ willingly accepted in order to reconcile us with God the Father. I found myself praying throughout for those who are currently in agony in mind, body, and/or spirit, especially those who are tempted to lose hope in the Lord, in eternal life, in God's mercy...

Kevin volunteered to serve as a Eucharistic Minister, as he often does whenever we attend Mass at our home parish, which reminded us of the first time he ever served which was on Easter Sunday at Church of the Epiphany where we were married.

The vigil was quite beautiful, as it always is. The many Old Testament readings that map out the beginning of Creation in the Bible and hit the highlights of our journey of trusting in God, the wonderful choir, music selections, and impressive instrument section were all glorious. I'm always struck by the power and majesty of the Easter Vigil Mass, which is the pinnacle of all Masses. Several people were Baptized, received their First Holy Communion and were Confirmed during the liturgy.

Witnessing so many of the Sacraments in one Mass with Kevin on the thirteenth anniversary of our first Triduum together and his return to the Catholic faith in which he was raised serves as a poignant reminder of the power of prayer and the Truth that nothing is impossible with God.



Kevin and I didn't have anything planned for today except a homemade family dinner this evening. My mom set a very joyful table, made a delicious meal, and helped us really celebrate Easter this evening. John joined us, and we had a really nice evening breaking bread together and discussing the Catholic faith and what we enjoyed most about this particular Triduum.

My mom's always made holidays fun and festive. This one was no exception. She even had put together an Easter basket of goodies for Kevin and me.

Lord, thank You for the gift of Your Son, who by His Passion, death, and resurrection, reconciled us with You, so that we might bask in Your love and spend eternity in Your Presence. Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://printsofgrace.blogspot.com/2013/03/christ-has-risen-alleluia-easter.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Just for a Moment... Step into My Shoes [at Sue Elvis Writes]



Imagine if you opened your front door and found me standing outside, my children huddled behind my pregnant body. Tears are running down my face and I say, “There’s something wrong with my baby! The doctor doesn’t think he’ll live after birth.” What would you do? What would you say?

This is exactly what happened to my friend Sarah. What did she say? Actually, I can’t remember exactly. I do know Sarah's words were just right, because soon I found myself on her sofa, a cup of tea in my hand, telling her the whole story.

I’m sure Sarah didn’t say, “You’re having a bad day!” That would have been such an understatement.

She didn’t say, “You poor thing!” Sympathy isn’t very helpful. I didn’t want to be pitied.

Even though I ended up with a cup of tea, Sarah didn’t say, “A cup of tea will make you feel better.” I wish it could have been that easy.

Nor did she say, “It will be okay.” How could she have known that?”

Or “God never tests us beyond our strength.” Although this was true, I still had to face the suffering ahead.

What Sarah probably said was, “You’re frightened,” because that’s exactly how I was feeling. Her words opened up the floodgates. All my fears came flowing out, along with my tears.

Sarah showed me empathy. She placed herself for a moment in my shoes, and imagined how I was feeling, and then she reflected this back to me. This skill is so important when we are trying to communicate with other people. When we know we have been understood, we open up and start to share. We feel safe. Rapport has been established between the speaker and the listener.

Now we don’t have to keep empathy packed away, waiting for one of those huge stress-filled moments of life, in order to use it. We can use it all the time.

Andy comes home from work and starts to tell me about his day: “How frustrating! You worked so hard and everything went wrong.”

Imogen gets a cold and can’t sing: “I guess you’re very disappointed. I know you were looking forward to that concert so much.”

Gemma-Rose looks grumpy: "It must be so frustrating being the youngest sometimes."

Standing in someone else’s shoes? It seems to me that some people don’t even try to do this. If they did, they might avoid saying so many hurtful words. “How could she have said that? It’s obvious she has never had a similar experience!” She hasn’t even tried to imagine what it would be like.

I wonder why some people don’t make the necessary effort. Could they be so self-centred, it hasn’t

occurred to them to try and put themselves in another's place? Or could it be that there are some situations we just don't want to get too close to? We don't want to imagine what it would be like to lose a baby, a husband, a job... We don't really want to know. Those things don't belong in our world. If we let them in, we are admitting they might happen to us.

Sometimes we get empathy wrong, despite our efforts. We fail to understand how another person is feeling. I think this is okay though. We have tried, which is much better than saying nothing at all. For example, I might say, "You sound disappointed" and my friend might reply, "Not disappointed exactly. I'm worried more than anything." Even if we have failed to find the correct emotion, we have still opened up an opportunity for the speaker to share her feelings.

I really love it when I hit the nail on the head as far as feelings go. I reflect back a feeling and someone says, "Yes! That's exactly how I feel!" Have you ever experienced moments like that? They're magic moments. I understand. And I know it's so good to feel understood. A connection has been made. The conversation continues...

There are some situations where we can't find any words at all.

Two weeks after Thomas died, we attended a picnic with a number of other families. I sat silently amongst the chatting women. No one said a word directly to me, but every now and then someone would glance quickly my way, without attempting to make eye contact. I felt so alone and isolated in my grief, so outside the group, even though I was sitting within it.

Tears were threatening to spill from my eyes when another friend arrived. Carol came straight up to me and said, "Sue, I don't know what to say, but I can't remain silent as if nothing happened." She touched my arm and looked into my eyes, and then I did cry. But that was okay. I was allowed to. Someone understood that my pain was beyond words.

Beyond words? But not beyond a touch of the arm, a loving hug. Sometimes a close long hug is the best form of empathy there is.

Please share your own thoughts on empathy. I'd love to hear them!

This contribution is available at <http://www.sueelviswrites.com/2013/03/just-for-moment-step-into-my-shoes.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Be Not Afraid: The Sex Post [at Captive the Heart: A Sprightly Wedding Blog For the Catholic Bride]

Today's post has been on my heart for a while, but I think I'm just now finding the right words. I've gotten a few emails recently asking about preparing for your wedding night, specifically when it comes to nerves and inexperience. It seems to me that among our generation, there's plenty of talk about sex in a general sense, both in the Church and in the culture, but not a lot of discussion about, well, the nitty gritty of lovin'. I've stumbled across a few Catholic sex blogs here and there, with well-intentioned advice, yet in my opinion (and it's just my opinion, mind you), they leave something to be desired. They sometimes link to sources that are problematic or not credible, and the tone can strike me as lofty and elevated at a time when just getting real might be more effective.

So, this is my very, very humble attempt to do something a little different. I just want to share my heart with you. Mostly due to grace, my husband and I were virgins at the altar, and though we weren't nervous, there were still plenty of things that prepared us along the way and that we found out at the beginning of our marriage, things that I hope help you in whatever small way I can offer.

Pray.

Maybe this is an obvious one, but really bring your wedding night to prayer, especially if you're feeling shy or apprehensive. Ask the Lord to cast out your fear. Ask Him to bring parts of your heart to light that might need healing or re-orienting. It's different for everyone, but when I consider it, the thing that brought me completely joyful anticipation and no fear at all was studying John Paul II's Theology Of the Body. Some of the late, great Pope's basic ideas are these: our sexuality is who we are and how we are created as men and women, and the fall caused the disordered view of sex that has caused some so much heartache. But, when we strive to love purely, holding nothing back and desiring nothing but to revere, not to use, the other person, we can get back a piece of the Garden as it was meant to be. No shame. Married love is only a tiny image of the amazing divine love of the Trinity. Incredible, isn't it? This only scratches the surface, and there are plenty of resources out there that explain TOB far better than I can (Christopher West and Jason and Crystalina Evert have some wonderful books on it). I really have come to believe that viewing marriage and love through this lens has tremendous power to heal many wounds and to help one approach sex with joy and trembling, in the best way.

But, don't take yourselves too seriously.

All of the prayer and the theological stuff is wonderful, but it's seriously okay if that's not what's running through your head every second--I mean, it's your wedding night! What I'm trying to say is that there's definitely a "head" aspect of sex that sees the bigger divine picture. It's certainly noble and worth contemplating, but don't forget that there's the "heart" aspect, too--the more earthly,

sensory, and emotional experience. That's such a good thing! Just because we're not in Heaven yet doesn't mean that our time on Earth should be joyless. God created sex, and if everything of Him is inherently good, then of course sex is good. The body is good. Pleasure is good. Enjoy each other's beauty! He rejoices in a husband and wife delighting in one another, so don't put too much pressure on yourself to see your first night together as just singing choirs and flapping angel wings. Yes; a spiritual reality is taking place, but remember to find a balance so you can be present in the earthly one, too.

Be patient with each other.

Just like it takes time to build emotional, spiritual, and physical intimacy at the beginning of your relationship, it also takes time, we discovered, to adjust to sexual intimacy. It makes so much sense to me in hindsight. Magazines and the culture can make it seem like if you're attracted to each other, then--bam!--your sex life will instantly be blissfully simple and complication-free. We've learned that it's so important, though, to talk honestly as you learn one another in a new way. In my opinion, vulnerability and honest communication are what simplify things, and the natural attraction you already feel will follow. It's okay, and good, in fact, to talk about what feels good, what you like, what hurts or isn't comfortable, and even what turns you on (physically or otherwise). Honesty is sexy, right?

Try not to view sex in terms of rules

. Someone told me she felt really strange going from being unmarried one day, when abstinence is a priority, to being married the next, when it's suddenly not. I can definitely understand the anxiety--it can seem like there's not much difference between unmarried and married than just some words and a big party. If you're feeling this way, I'd encourage you to pray about seeing sexuality as more than a set of rules. True; abstinence ends in marriage, but chastity doesn't. It's not a rule; it's a path to true freedom. Chastity is all about purity in your thoughts, words, and actions and about ordering sexual desire properly so that you aren't enslaved to it. So, it's natural that marriage brings a different approach to desire, but as long as purity and respect are present, sexual desire is nothing more or less than a new expression of the same love that's always been there.

Another word about rules

: You and I both know the Church requires that every marital embrace be both unitive and open to life (though not necessarily resulting in a new life each time). That said, I know how tricky it feels to navigate a new sense of freedom when it comes to married love and certain acts. There can be questions of, "Is this okay?" "Is that?" and "Did we mess up?" While it's true every sexual act requires that (it's about to get graphic up in here) the husband climax inside his wife's vagina (oh yes she did), you might be surprised to find there are few other rules about what's permissible. So long as both individuals feel that their dignity is being honored, and so long as the climax rule is upheld, very little is off limits. Be open to new things, talk about them, and pray together. Additionally, while sexual morality is certainly important and while I'd never profess to know the

state of someone's soul, I'd encourage you not to get too caught up in scrupulosity about certain acts or premature climax, particularly in the beginning. If your intentions are pure and are coming from a state of innocence, then trusting your husband and giving him the benefit of the doubt should foster an understanding that things finishing prematurely are unintentional. In my opinion, the sense of purity that's still there in situations like these means that this wouldn't be a serious issue of culpability.

It's okay to take things slow.

If you're abstaining for NFP reasons or even if you just don't feel ready, there's no requirement that you have to go all the way on your first night. When you're experiencing each other intimately for the first time, there's still so much that's new and special to discover about your spouse, and it should feel like a moment to savor, not to rush. A few ladies I know, myself included, needed to abstain on our wedding nights, but we've agreed they were still wonderful and beautiful and gave us even more to look forward to.

By the way, I highly recommend the book

Holy Sex

by Dr. Gregory Popcak, which discusses the nature of sex in a theological, but approachable, voice and includes extensive sections on the more technical, physical details of lovemaking in a reverent way.

What if you're bringing something different to your marriage? If you've had sex before, or if you've been hurt in some way, know that there's nothing,

nothing

, that the Father's mercy and the graces of the sacrament can't ultimately heal. Since that's different from my experience, I've asked my friend Rebecca to share her story of healing and how it shaped her wedding night and her relationship with her husband. Look for it in a few weeks!

Until then, consider this an invitation. Maybe this was helpful to you, or maybe it sounds crazy. Either way, tell me what you think! I love hearing from you and would absolutely welcome your thoughts. And if you feel like some girl talk, you can email me anytime at

stephanie.captivetheheart@gmail.com

.

 Stephanie

This contribution is available at <http://captiveheart.blogspot.com/2013/03/be-not-afraid-sex-post.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The Power of Words - A Lesson from Proverbs for Kids [at Sole Searching]

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

~Matthew 12:34

This is the last verse from scripture that I read the other night, at the close of a very long, loud, crazy day. The words hit me hard as internally I wrestled wearily with the rising temperature between the boys. I know that at some point every parent deals with fighting siblings, and exchanges of heated, unkind words, but for whatever reason, that day, I felt like I was the only one in the world who had to deal with such things. *Oh the things we tell ourselves....*

The verse from Matthew played over and over in my mind as I shifted from side to side trying to find a peaceful place to fall into slumber. But, my mind refused to rest, as thoughts of how to handle the all-too-frequent unrest between 5 masculine personalities kept me awake. So, then, the game of making mental lists began: *Research effects of barometric pressure and food dyes on attitudes and emotions. Check Pinterest for creative punishments, incentives for good behavior and printable charts to keep track of everything.....*

An hour later, what should have been my first resort became my last. Prayer.

What can I do, Lord? Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks?? More like shrieks!! Your kids are driving me crazy, Lord! I need a little help here. The constant conflict collisions are beating up my heart and my house. This isn't normal, this isn't them. I don't understand what's going on. Please, give me something, anything that I can do or say to get them back on a brotherly track.



KIDS

The
POWER
of **WORDS**

- Lessons from Proverbs -

The next morning, rising before the rest of the tribe, I was very motivated to come up with and to share a tangible lesson on the power of words with the boys. Over the weekend, on my long run, I had listened to a [podcast](#) from [Focus on the Family](#) on [family communication](#). Recalling bits and pieces of it, I soon wrote out a lesson, one that I know for certain was Divinely inspired, as it was way too early (before coffee even!) in the day for me to come up with any great ideas on my own. *Here is the scripture-based teaching that I shared with the boys last week on the power of words to hurt or to heal, to inspire or to injure, to bring gladness or gloom to the heart. I hope that you don't have a need for it in your home, but if you should, may it be as helpful to you and your children as it has been to us...*

Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth Speaks:

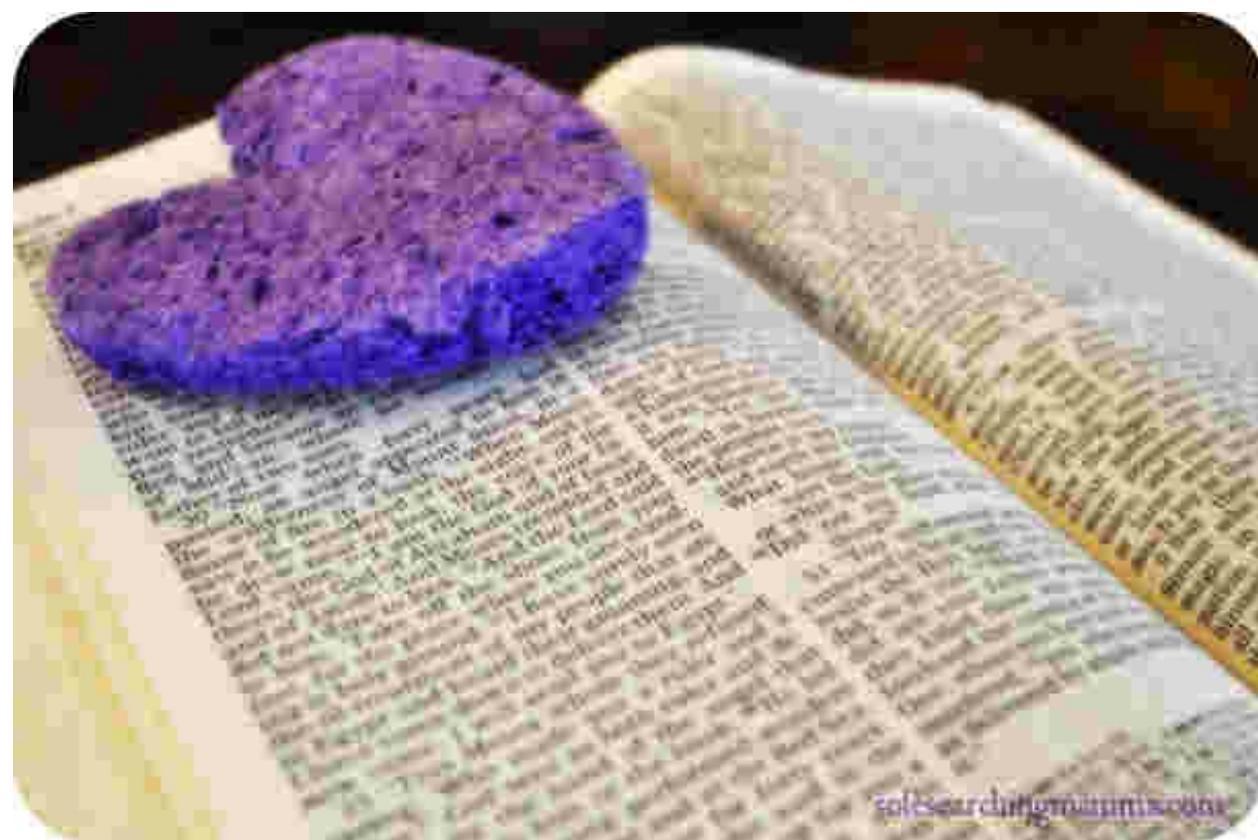
A Lesson on the Power of Words



ITEMS YOU WILL NEED:

- * 2 white, medium-sized bowls
- * 1 can of clear soda, any flavor and maraschino cherries if you have them
- * 2-3 sweet, yet nourishing foods such as honey or maple syrup
- * Vinegar
- * 2-3 foods that are sour, bitter and/or hot such as pickles, jalapenos and coffee
- * One dry sponge, cut into a heart shape
- * Lined paper and pencils for the kids to write with
- * Bible

1. Set out the two bowls (preferably white, to make the differences between the mixtures more visible), and use the bowls to separate the foods (sweets in one, bitter/sour in the other) as pictured above.



2. Open the bible to Matthew 12:34, and set the heart-shaped sponge on top. Read the verse to the children, then ask them to explain what they think it means.



3. After reading the verse, set the two bowls of food in front of the kids. Then, give each child a piece of paper and ask them draw a vertical line down the center of the page creating two columns, one for the sweet and one for the sour/bitter/hot. In each column, have the kids write words that describe the contents in each bowl. They may describe not only the flavor, but also the feeling of the food in the mouth (hot, painful, sour, sweet, bubbly, yummy etc.).





5. Next, tell the children that they are going to make a mixture in each bowl using the ingredients that you've provided, keeping separate the sweet from the sour/bitter. *In the sweet bowl, place **ONLY** the cherries and the soda, **NOT** the honey or other sweets you may have chosen. This will be important when you begin the biblical teaching.*

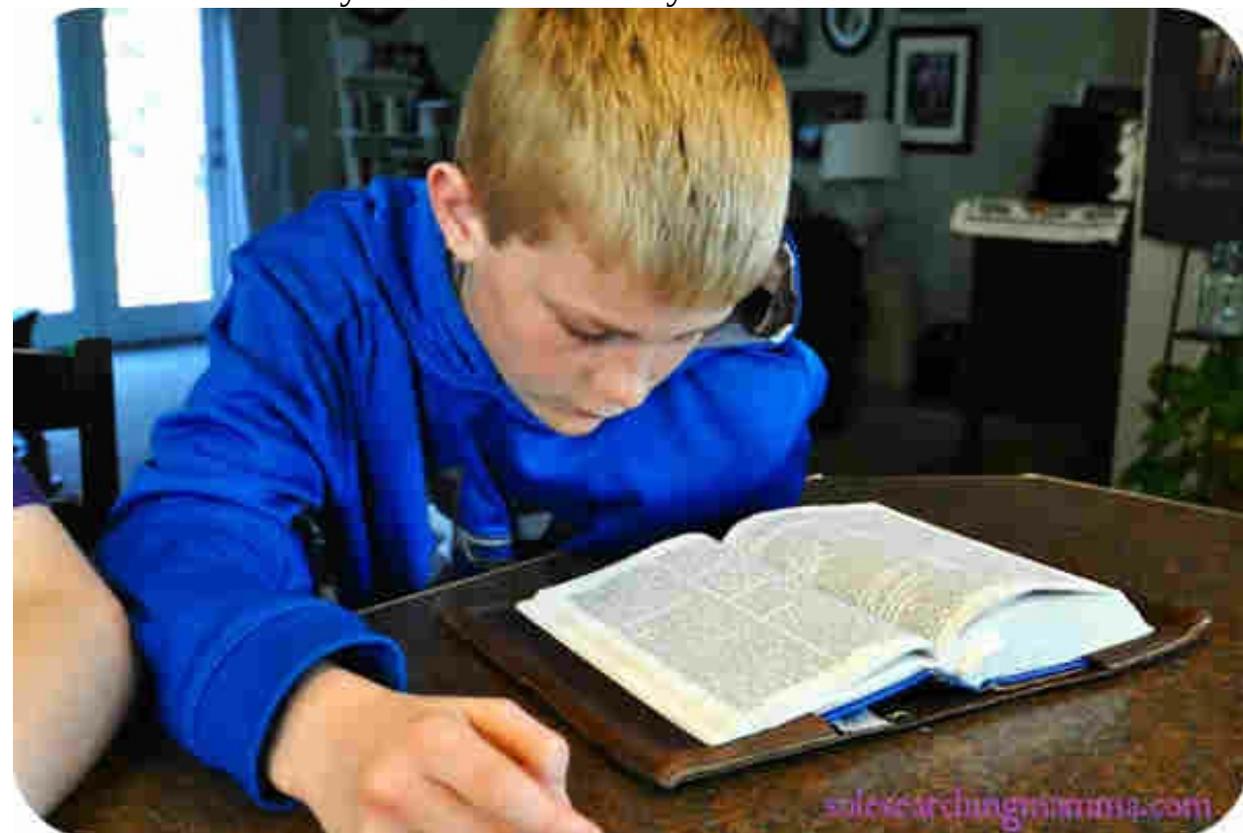




6. The children will begin to freely express their reactions to both mixtures, which will be very entertaining! Crinkled noses display feelings of being grossed out over the crazy sour potion, it's pungent odor and unappealing appearance. Soon, they will move away from the sour, hot and bitter mixture, and move toward a more enjoyable experience of the delicious smell of the sweet, bubbly soda with cherries. This is the foundation you hope to create to demonstrate the point that our words can be like these two mixtures.



7. After the mixing is over, hand one of the children the sponge that you have cut out. Explain that each day, when we wake up, our heart is like a dry sponge that will naturally soak up whatever it first comes into contact with. Will it soak up sweet, life-giving, kind words, or it will it be cast into hot, sour, bitter, and negative words? What are our conversations within the family like? Which mixture do my words most closely resemble?



8. Next, explain to the children that now you are going to look to the scriptures to see what God has to say about the importance of the words we speak. Using your list of Proverbs (see below), allow the children to take turns reading one passage at a time out loud, and sharing what they think

the verse means.

9. After you are finished reading, direct the children back to their papers with the two columns. Have them consider which words would go in the sweet/sour/bitter column, and which words would go in the sweet column. (For example, "I hate you" or "You are stupid" and "I love you" or "Great job!" respectively.)

10. Next, ask the kids if there are any words that they regret saying? Words that they would like to take back, or be forgiven of? Then, read this passage from Acts 7:59-60 (the words of St. Stephen as he was being stoned to death.):

And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." and, he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

11. Give the children an opportunity to share what lesson they can learn from St. Stephen about forgiveness. His words of forgiveness and love were very powerful, even more powerful than the stones that brought him to his death! While positive words of love and encouragement are sweet like the soda, so are the words "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you!"

12. Finally, give the children a few minutes to write down their own positive phrases that they want to make a resolution to practice. (A couple of my boys wrote: "How can I help?", "Are you okay?" and "I love you!" One even wrote: "Who cares about being right, let's just get over it and be friends!")



Passages From Proverbs:

(There are many, many more, these are just the few that I chose!)

A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but cruel words crush the spirit. 15:4

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. 18:21

There is one whose rash words would deeply as a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. 12:18

Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. 16:24

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. 15:1

Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him. 29:20

The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. 15:2

Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. 17:27

Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends. 17:9

This contribution is available at <http://www.solesearchingmamma.com/2013/03/out-of-abundance-of-heart-mouth-shrieks.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Which comes first—Easter or the eggs?

We just spent a fantastic, exhausting weekend visiting with my sister and her family out of town.



We dyed a few eggs.



We celebrated my niece's sixth birthday, singing to her at least three times. We fasted on Friday, feasted on birthday cake on Saturday, and the cousins played nonstop from dawn to dusk all weekend.



And Leo and Daniel, who adore their cousins and their extensive collection of books and toys, savored every waking moment and collapsed into bed every night.

When we planned to spend Easter weekend away from home, I had worried that we might lose track of reflecting on Jesus' suffering, death, and rising with all the fun chaos. But John and I decided we would go and make the best of it—and let the children enjoy their cousins.

And they certainly did.

This morning—after the six children marched down the steps to dig into their Easter baskets—it was time to say goodbye. On our way home John and I took two tired, happy, overstimulated, and candy-fed boys to Mass at a lovely stone church in Westchester County, N.Y.

It felt so good to sing “Alleluia.” Daniel was squirmy, but he also looked around the church and then asked, “Where is Jesus dying on the cross?”

I missed some of the priest’s homily as we juggled the boys on our laps, but one moment I will remember was that when the priest said, “And then Jesus rose again,” Leo bolted up on my lap and whispered loudly, “What?”

At 5, Leo knows that is the reason for Easter. Really, he

[does](#)

. But for children there is this sense that everything is new. It’s why they can read

The Little Engine That Could

1,000 times and still be just as excited when the train reaches the top of the mountain for the thousandth time.

It’s why every time 3-year-old Daniel watches Lightning McQueen speed around the track, he’s on the edge of the couch.

I should try to find that same sense of discovery in rejoicing over Jesus’ resurrection every Easter.

After Mass, we climbed into our car and headed for home.

On our way down the New Jersey Turnpike, we stopped at a rest area to eat lunch. Afterward, as we were walking to our car, with the wind whipping around us, and the cars speeding past on the highway, Daniel—who is always looking for a reason to run—yelled, “Run for your lives!”

Then Leo yelled it, too.

I laughed. “How many lives do we have, anyway?” I said.

And Leo got serious.

“Actually, Mama, we have two lives,” he said. “We have the one when we are born, and then when we die and go to heaven, we have another one when we rise again.”

I was so astonished that after we climbed into the car, I asked him to tell his father what he had just said. And he did.

Maybe the reason for Easter didn’t get lost in the piles of jellybeans and plastic grass after all.



Alleluia! He is risen!

3/31/2013 10:27:12 PM

By [Rita Buettner](#)

This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2013/03/31/which-comes-first-easter-or-the-eggs>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Holy Thursday {Do WHAT in memory of You, Jesus?} [at Glimpse of Peace]



Now we leave Lent and enter the Sacred Triduum

liturgy which begins with Holy Thursday's Mass of the Lord's Last Supper and concludes with the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection. On Holy Thursday, Jesus

[instituted the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Mass](#)

and the priesthood. Although it's not a holy day of obligation, we wouldn't miss this Mass for the world. Let me try to put this into perspective:

{Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection} = the culmination of the entire liturgical year

Followed by 8 days of celebrating the Resurrection {Octave of Easter}

Followed by 50 days of Easter Season leading us to Pentecost!

You might ask: Why not just skip ahead to the joy of the Resurrection at Easter? Buy some candy, fill some cute little baskets and get ready to party! But let's get real: *what sense does the Resurrection make without the Crucifixion? And what sense does the Crucifixion make without*

the Last Supper?



Dr. Scott Hahn is a shining star, but Jesus' True Presence, veiled in the Holy Tabernacle, is exponentially brighter!

I recently had the pleasure of attending a few lectures on the Eucharist

given by

[Dr. Scott Hahn](#)

, a former Catholic-basher, and successful protestant pastor, whose quest for Biblical truth led him to the place he

LEAST

expected to find it. Dr. Hahn himself says that

a Catholic

was the "

last thing on earth I ever planned to be

." And: "I would have been in the hospital with broken ribs from my laughter..." at the idea of becoming Catholic.

I was inspired to hear Dr. Hahn:

The Eucharist is the key that unlocks the Gospel."

The devout Jews witnessing Jesus' crucifixion would not have called it a sacrifice, they would have called it an execution.

In order to make sense of the events of Friday, one must to go back to Thursday...

Jesus' Jewish apostles were very familiar with the Passover ritual. Clearly, Jesus stepped outside the box when he broke with the established and well known tradition and instituted the New Covenant (New Testament).

Jesus gave clear instructions: "DO this in memory of me..."

Jesus did not say '*write* this in memory of me.'

Jesus did not say '*read* this in memory of me.'

**The New Testament was a sacrament LONG before it became known as a document~
*according to the document!***

The New Testament (collected books of the Bible) never refers to itself as such, rather when the apostles and followers of Jesus referred to the "New Testament," they were speaking of the Eucharist!

Food for thought

on this Holy Thursday!

[More Scott Hahn on YouTube](#)

This contribution is available at <http://glimpseofpeace.blogspot.com/2013/03/holy-thursday-do-what-in-memory-of-you.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Heroes [at AJ's life in FOCUS]

9 days ago I arrived at the airport in Milwaukee, and one of the first things I saw after getting off the plane was a little boy sitting on his dad's shoulders wearing a cape. As they turned the corner and faced me I saw the boy was also wearing a mask. I couldn't help but smile and laugh a little and I thought back to my cape wearing days. My grandma made my younger brother and I Batman capes, the Batman sign outlined in different colored paint so we could tell the two apart. Much like the little boy I saw at the airport, my brother and I had no shame in where we would wear those capes. I think there was a short amount of time I actually thought I was Batman.

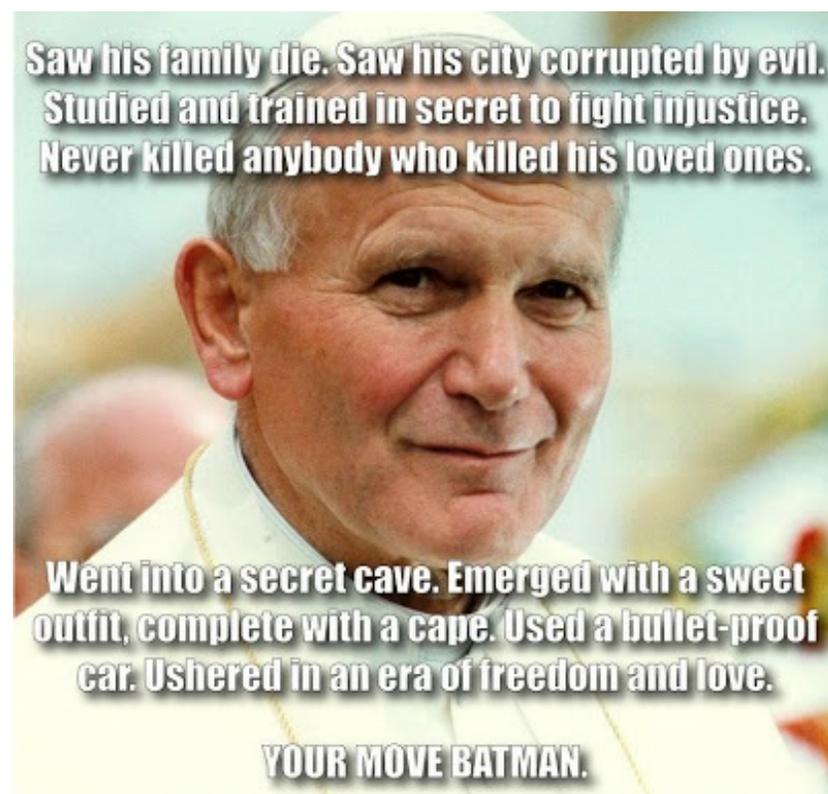
If you really break it down, isn't our interest with super heroes kind of bizarre? Grown men dressed in tights, wearing masks and capes are adored... huh? Their stories compel us, motivate and inspire us. We idolize and hold these made up characters that run around in tights and capes in such high regard, kids dress up like them, heck even adults do sometimes. We remember "facts" about them, we talk about them as if they are real people, we talk as if we know them personally. We *believe* in these made up people. Don't get me wrong I loved the Avengers and I've waited in line more than once to watch a superhero movie at the midnight showing, but isn't there more we can hope in and for? Obviously I would answer yes, Jesus gives us that hope, but what about men we can look to who are living today or who have lived in the last century? Who are the men whose character exemplifies that of Christ, who are truly heroic?



I believe there are many men who fit that description who are currently in Rome about to enter the Conclave, not to be confused with the Bat Cave. These men who are gathered from across the world will meet to play a huge role in the future of the Catholic Church and the world. These

Cardinals are merely men who have committed their lives to Jesus Christ in an extraordinary way – as a Roman Catholic priest. The Cardinals have been called on in a special way because of their holiness – their love of the Lord. They assist the Pope in the governance of the Church. Their primary role is to come together as the College of Cardinals to elect the next Pope. Everything about the life of a holy priest is heroic. They sacrifice their wants and often their own good so that they may serve others, they live to serve, they exemplify and radiate Christ. Most of them have had incredible internal struggles of discernment – of whether or not to pursue the priesthood. The men that answer that call are heroic. Yet to a good part of our culture they're useless, frowned upon, even hated. Those words I used to describe priests above are the same words that come to mind when we think of super heroes: sacrifice, service, struggle, adversity – but priests don't get that credit. In the picture above I'm not trying to make a prediction here but I had to include Cardinal Dolan's self titled "Batman pose".

I came across this photo this past week on a Catholic Facebook page. He is a hero of mine and I would guess that people across the world are storming heaven asking for his prayers as the Cardinals begin to meet and select the next Pope. This man lived in a way that was an incredible example of Jesus Christ. His story is incredible and this meme captures the beauty and triumph of his life:



Batman went to the Bat Cave as Bruce Wayne and left as Batman, Clark Kent went into a phone booth and appeared as Superman. 115 Cardinals are entering the Sistine Chapel for the Conclave, one of them will emerge after white smoke pours out of the most watched chimney in the world

with a new name and new garb and he will be introduced to the world. He will be the Vicar of Christ on this planet, the leader of the Catholic Church, Papa - Pope. Our world, literally our WORLD, every news station- will stop to look and listen to this man as he makes his first remarks as Holy Father. No, that's not a movie or a fictional character I'm talking about, it is real life and it is absolutely heroic.

Let's pray for the Cardinals and especially for that man whom who will soon represent Christ in a way that very well could affect the course of history. Let's be heroes, let's be Saints!

This contribution is available at <http://ajgarciavc.blogspot.com/2013/03/heroes.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Reflection: On Pope Benedict's Resignation (part 2) [at Quidquid Est, Est!]



Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

After much reflection, and after much reading (and much putting off), I have compiled some thoughts on the end of Pope Benedict XVI's papacy. The man has been a giant, in his own small way: quiet in demeanor, yet able to move a crowd of thousands to cheers (I've seen it happen myself). He is the first pope of my adult life, having become Supreme Pontiff in 2005, my freshman year of college. I remember when I heard of his election: I was working in the college's kitchen, as students ran out of the building and through the trees to the large TV in the school's gym. I watched them run, and I couldn't leave, but someone shouted to me as they left, "There's white smoke." The cardinals had elected a new pope!

Thus was my first interaction with Benedict XVI.

During the ensuing years, I came to love this man. I helped at a summer conference about him at Christendom College, shook his hand TWICE at two separate Wednesday audiences, and have looked forward eagerly for his encyclicals and books, especially his three volumes about Jesus.

Then came the morning of February 11, 2013. Pope Benedict, I heard, was soon stepping down as pope.

I must say, I did not believe the reports that the pope was resigning. I had heard rumors for years, both with Bl. John Paul II and Pope Benedict, and had not put much credence in them. Few popes in the Church's history have resigned (as I'll discuss below), the most recent one, as many news stations have reported, being Gregory XII in 1415 (his resignation helped end one of the greatest scandals in Western Christendom: The Great Western Schism). Benedict's resignation, though, struck me as odd and unbelievable at first. As the day stretched on, and I took advantage of my breaks from teaching to read the news develop over internet, including the Holy Father's words on resigning, I began to come to a startling conclusion. Well, for me it was startling.

The Conclusion: I wasn't surprised.

I wasn't. I read the pope's words, and then read some comments, and I, like several other Catholic writers (several of which are linked to below in the For Further Reading), recalled the quiet teaching moment in 2009 when Pope Benedict put his pallium, the symbol of his authority as an archbishop, on the tomb of Pope St. Celestine V (Peter Celestine), another pope who resigned from the papal throne. What was he saying? One finds the answer in his book-length interview with Peter Seewald, *Light of the World* (p. 29-30):

[Question, Seewald]: The great majority of these [sex abuse] cases took place decades ago. Nevertheless they burden your pontificate now in particular. Have you thought of resigning?

[Response, Benedict]: When the danger is great one must not run away. For that reason, now is certainly not the time to resign. Precisely at a time like this one must stand fast and endure the difficult situation. That is my view. One can resign at a peaceful moment or when one simply cannot go on. But one must not run away from danger and say that someone else should do it.

[Note the circumstances Benedict rejects as times to resign: "When the danger is great," that is, during a great crisis where fortitude is needed, when the Church needs a warrior pope, one to face the forces of Hell and shout, "I am Peter! I am the Rock, and you shall not prevail against us!"]

[Question]: Is it possible then to imagine a situation in which you would consider a resignation by the Pope appropriate?

[Response]: Yes. If a Pope clearly realizes that he is no longer physically, psychologically, and spiritually capable of handling the duties of his office, then he has a right and, under some circumstances, also an obligation to resign.

Benedict clearly supported papal resignation, under certain circumstances. His requirements for resignation mentioned here are very similar to the resignation announcement he gave earlier this month. In his announcement to the cardinals (and to the world), he said, "After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an

advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry.”

In resigning, he is merely following his own teaching, his own philosophy, his own papalogy.

What of these earlier resigning popes? News reports, secular and Catholic, noted the historical importance of this event because the last pope to resign was Pope Gregory XII (mentioned above). What is the history of papal resignations? Is there a papal resignation similar to that of Benedict?

First let's look at a list of papal resignations:

The earliest papal resignation was that of Pope St. Pontian, who resigned on September 28, 235. He stepped down after being sentenced to the Roman mines on Sardinia, which was the not-so-fun Roman way of killing someone slowly, working them to death mining salt in the hot, Mediterranean sun. Pontian did die in exile on the island (reconciling the Church's first antipope, St. Hippolytus, while he was out there). Those were dangerous times (Pontian's successor, Pope St. Anterus, died a martyr a mere forty days after his election as pope), and Pontian's decision to resign to ensure the presence of a visible head for the Church remains a highly prudent decision.

Following Pontian, several popes, according to various sources, resigned, including Pope Liberius (died 366, the first pope NOT declared a saint by the Church), Pope Benedict V (who, in 964, abdicated under pressure from the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I), and Pope John XVIII (died in 1009, though not before resigning in July of that year).

Perhaps the most confusing case of papal resignation, however, is that of Pope Benedict IX. He's the Grover Cleveland of popes; he reigned as pope THREE separate times. Benedict was elected in October of 1032; he was twenty years old, one of, if not the, youngest popes. Struggle ensued due to his hedonistic lifestyle. The people of Rome kicked him out because of his debauchery, put their own antipope (who styled himself Sylvester III) on the papal throne, but were thwarted by Benedict when he returned to remove his rival. He resigned in 1045, bribed to do so by another priest, who became Pope Gregory VI after Benedict resigned. Soon after this, Benedict came to regret his resignation, so he attempted to put himself up as pope against Pope Gregory (making himself an antipope). The Holy Roman Emperor Henry III got involved and had both Benedict IX and Sylvester III (who still claimed to be pope) deposed; he also convinced Pope Gregory to resign, leaving the papal throne open for Pope Clement II. Benedict was determined to keep the papacy, and following Clement's death in October 1047, he took back the papal throne. He remained there for less than a year; troops sent by the Holy Roman Emperor drove him out of Rome for good, allowing for the election of Pope Damasus II.

Confused? Depressed? For the latter, don't worry, because Benedict was supposed to have repented of his sins later, living out the rest of his life in a monastery. As far as confusion is concerned, this is only slightly less confusing than the Great Western Schism, which we will discuss later.

The first official, canonical papal resignation was Pope St. Celestine V, mentioned earlier. The Catholic cardinals (all ten of them) had elected Celestine (his baptismal name was Peter) as pope in March of 1294, a compromise move, as these same cardinals had dragged out the papal conclave for over two years.

Imagine that, for a moment. Two years without a pope. Many Catholics worry how the Church will function during the few weeks in which we will struggle without a pope; imagine two years as a flock without a shepherd. It is no wonder that Pope Celestine accepted the papal office, the last hope against schism.

Celestine was eighty years old when he became pope. His pontiff was short, a mere ten months, as the political intrigues that corrupted the Church wore at him. He asked his advisors if he could resign. They were torn; the last pope to resign had been Benedict IX, and there was a mess following that abdication. The majority of these canon lawyers said, yes, of course the pope can resign. Celestine made his decision, and on December 13, 1294, he resigned. His successor, Pope Boniface VIII, had him placed in prison, an assurance that Peter Celestine would not go back on his abdication; the last thing the Church needed was a former pope acting as an antipope again.

Much chaos came in the ensuing centuries following Pope St. Celestine's short reign. One sees several scandals erupt through the Church: The Avignon Papacy (started by Boniface's successor Clement V) and the Great Western Schism (wherein THREE men claimed to be pope, though only one was the real pope).

The Great Western Schism provided the circumstances for the most recent papal resignation prior to that of Benedict XVI, namely that of Gregory XII. Following the return of the papacy to Rome, the reigning pontiff (Urban VI) fell out of favor with the cardinals who elected him (that tends to happen when the pope publicly yells at cardinals; Urban VI was not known for his people skills). Most of the cardinals regrouped and held another election in 1378, selecting a man they claimed to be the new pope. Never before in Church history had the cardinals set up an antipope against the pope they had elected earlier. This antipope set up his residence in Avignon, and soon Europe erupted into confused convulsions. Europe's princes sided with either the true pope or the Avignon antipope. Matters worsened when a group of cardinals met in Pisa in 1409, hoping that, by meeting in council, they would elect someone to be pope. They did elect someone. Thus the three men claiming to be pope. Matters worsened until finally the Hungarian King Sigismund (later Holy Roman Emperor) called the bishops of the Church to meet at a council in Constance (in modern-day Germany). He invited all of the papal claimants to the council. The true pope was Gregory XII. He saw the disaster threatening the Church, and he acted: He offered to resign the papacy, leaving the See of Peter vacant, placing in the council's hands the task of electing a pope to unite Christendom. He requested that the other two papal claimants, the two antipopes, do the same, that is, resign and abdicate their positions. After some intrigue, all three claimants relinquished their authority (or what authority they thought they had, in the case of the antipopes), and the Council of Constance elected Martin V as pope. The Council was only able to do this, in this unique situation, because Pope Gregory had declared they could. The Council did not have authority over the reigning pontiff. Only after the pope resigned could the successor be elected.

Thus Pope Gregory XII resigned to preserve the unity of the Church in a time of crisis.

How does all of this compare to Pope Benedict's resignation? He resigned in a time of peace for the Church. Oh sure, the Church faces dangers and enemies in every age, and this age is no exception. But in the case of Pope Benedict, there was not a great crisis facing the Church. There isn't a violent persecution where pope after pope is led to their deaths, or a scandal where Christendom itself is rent asunder. Nor did Benedict XVI resign for selfish reasons like Benedict IX. He resigned because he could not continue. He resigned because, as he said in the announcement that shocked the world this past February 11, he did not have the strength for the "adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry." In this regard, he most closely resembles Pope St. Celestine V, who resigned because he too did not have the strength to deal with the rigors of the papacy.

As I write this, the Church has entered a period of emptiness. It is an emptiness mixed with excitement for me, as I tear up to say goodbye to a most worthy successor of St. Peter. I will miss him. I already miss him. But at the same time I look forward to the conclave, the meeting of cardinals, and the puffs of white smoke, and the ringing of church bells, to signal the election of a new pope, a new captain in the barque of St. Peter.

Of course, the Pope Emeritus remains in my prayers, as do the cardinals who have already begun to descend on Rome to vote for the next pope. Holy Spirit, guide them, keep them safe, and do not let the Evil One tempt them away from God's Will.

For Further Reading:

Kirsch, Johann Peter. "Pope St. Pontian." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12229b.htm>. – There's not a whole lot we know about this pope, but this article sums it up nicely.

Mann, Horace. "Pope Benedict IX." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 2. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02429a.htm>. – Makes sense out of the confusion caused by Pope Benedict IX's reign.

Shahan, Thomas. "Council of Constance." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 4. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04288a.htm>. – Details what led up to the Council and what occurred during it.

Mirus, Jeff. "Benedict: Far from the First Pope to Resign." *Catholic Culture*. <http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/otc.cfm?id=1055>. – Dr. Jeffery Mirus, a Church Historian (and co-founder of ChristendomCollege) takes a look at the historical record of popes who resigned.

The Pope Benedict XVI Fan Club, <http://www.popebenedictxvifanclub.com/index.html> – Has pretty much EVERYTHING by or about Pope Benedict on the web. Have at it!

Prudlo, Donald S. “Pope Benedict’s Resignation in Historical Context.” *Crisis Magazine*. <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2013/pope-benedicts-resignation-in-historical-context> – A reflection on Benedict’s resignation not only in light of his historical predecessors, but also in light of the saints-to-be discussed at the canonization consistory where he announced he would retire.

Carroll, Warren H. *A History of Christendom*. Vol. 3. *The Glory of Christendom*. Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1993. – Chapters 8-12 give, in great detail, the historical context of the papacies of Pope St. Celestine V, the Avignon Papacy, the Great Western Schism, and the Council of Constance.

Moynihan, Robert. “The Scandal of Secularism: Pope Benedict XVI & Pope Celestine V” Institute of Catholic Culture (August 29, 2010). <http://www.instituteofcatholicculture.org/the-scandal-of-secularism-pope-benedict-xvi-pope-celestine-v/> – It was in this lecture that I first heard of the connection between Pope Benedict and Pope Celestine V.

Looking towards the future.

Smith, Bartholomew. “From Sede Vacante to Habemus Papam: How the Empty Chair of Peter Gets Filled.” Theology on Tap: Arlington Diocese (January 16, 2012). http://arlingtondiocese.org/podcasts/2012-01tot_podcast/tot_2012-01-16.mp3 – Fascinating talk about what happens in a papal conclave from the former secretary of the senior cardinal at the conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI.

This contribution is available at <http://quidquidestest.wordpress.com/2013/02/28/reflection-on-pope-benedicts-resignation-part-2/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Social Justice Catholic vs. Pro-life Catholic: A False Dichotomy [at The Syrophoenician Woman]

I even fell into it myself. We were having a discussion yesterday in my Bible study about everything that was wrong in the Church and the new Pope. I said, "Church leaders in the southern hemisphere tend to be more involved in social justice issues tempered with being very socially conservative."

I almost smacked myself.

It drives me nuts when other people do it. I hate it when comparisons are made between the social justice Catholics and the orthodox Catholics. As if you have to be one or the other, you can't be both. But isn't

real

Catholicism both? If one really understood the Church and tried to live out her teachings, you'd

have

to be both.

Let me illustrate using our new Pope:



And the Pope on the bus goes...

When Pope Francis was the Archbishop in Buenos Aires, he refused to live in the Bishop's palace.

[He lived in an ordinary apartment with an elderly Bishop that he helped take care of.](#)

I imagine this like the

[65.7 million caregivers](#)

in the US looking out for older family members. He used public transportation instead of a chauffeur. He took the Jesuit vow of poverty seriously.

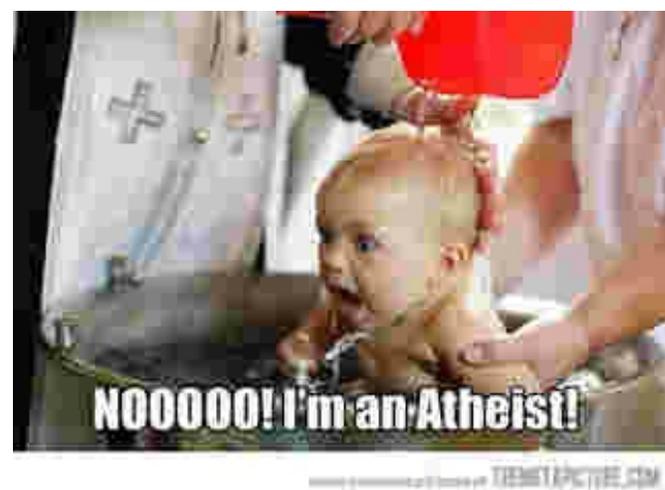
Pope Francis has said that

[abortion of a child conceived in the rape of a mentally handicapped woman is wrong.](#) *Rape*

?

Mentally handicapped

? While what he said is absolutely correct, the hypothetical situation he used is one of the worst I could think of. This simply illustrates his orthodoxy in pro-life matters.



The same lips that made that statement also chastised priests for refusing to baptize children born out-of-wedlock. He said essentially that

[these women sacrificed bringing these unplanned children into the world; They should not have to go door to door to find a priest willing to baptize the child.](#)

One of the biggest pro-choice complaints is that pro-lifers seem to be willing to go to the ends of the earth to protect the child in the womb but won't lift a finger to help a child already born. This Pope,

[chosen from the ends of the world](#)

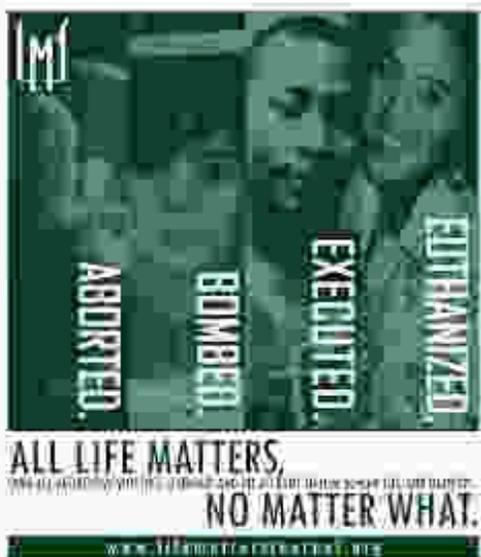
, clearly cares for children born and unborn

and

has an understanding of what women with unplanned pregnancies go through.

So, here we go: A Pope that talks the talk and walks the walk, going above and beyond the call of duty to truly live out the Gospel in his everyday life. The more I learn about him, the more I think he is exactly what the Church today needs. A perfect synthesis of the "social justice Catholic" and the "pro-life Catholic." The Cardinals seem to have done a wonderful job. And, note to reader: smack me if you ever hear me pit these two against each other ever again.

BE CONSISTENT.



This contribution is available at <http://syrophoenicianwoman.blogspot.com/2013/03/social-justice-catholic-vs-pro-life.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The Oddity of Weekday Mass [at Little House in Chicago]

My morning takes place firmly in the twenty-first century.

A cell phone alarm wakes me up. I eat Special K cereal for breakfast. I commute to work on the metro and spend the morning on the computer, using Word, Chrome and Entourage.

Then noon time rolls around.

Down the busy street I go and wait for the light to change so I can cross at the intersection. Around the corner and cross the street again. This time I shamelessly jaywalk because I'm running late, and there are no cars coming.

Up the steps and into the vast, dark, marble-paneled hall. Kneel for a moment to the tiny gold box in the corner. Step into the pew just in time for the first reading.

I'm only there for half an hour. In that time, I hear ancient Hebrew texts, telling stories of a hot, sandy, rocky land many thousands of miles away, and of the people who lived in them millenia ago. Nothing like my cold, windy urban jungle.

I see enacted before me the Sacrifice at Calvary. In a stunning instance of time travel, I am present at the side of Mary and St. John, witnessing His bloody and painful death in an unbloody and peaceful form. It's enough to take my breath away.



I eat His flesh, living and real. I drink His blood, a strangely vampirical act, yet mystically sacred. How is it possible that I have become a Tabernacle for His living body? Walking back to my pew, kneeling quietly to pray, I carry Him inside of me. There is another soul present in my body, like a mother bearing an unborn child. Two people reside within my one flesh, Him and I. Would that He would reside there always.

And then - it's over. I go outside and walk back to work, waiting for the traffic light like any normal modern woman. They don't know, the people passing by me on the sidewalk, that I'm not just me. That He is with me too. That I have spent time at Calvary today. That I have paid a visit across an endless space and time to a certain Friday afternoon in 33 A.D.

What a funny thing it is to be a Catholic.

This contribution is available at <http://littlehouseinchicago.blogspot.com/2011/11/oddtiy-of-weekday-mass.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Holy Thursday and Foot Washing - Misunderstanding What Catholics Do [at Designs by Birgit]

So here we are again - Holy Week. A most splendid - *the* most splendid week of the year! Yes, Christmas brings us the infant God made man, but during this week He fulfills that purpose for which he was conceived of the Virgin Mary. Holy Week, however, comes replete with painful awareness of how many Catholics (including clergy) simply don't *choose* to follow the instructions ([rubrics](#) anyone?) that clearly give priests the **black** - exact words to say - and the **red** - exact instructions for what they (and we, the faithful) are to do. Now before someone says, "*but if it's not expressly forbidden, we can **add** to the things we can do*", here's a word: **NO!**

Let's take some secular examples.

1) a prima ballerina decides that she will enhance the carefully crafted choreography of Swan Lake and just add some cutsie little steps here and there - at her pleasure.

2) a legal secretary decides that her boss' brief needs a bit of enhancement and throws in a few things she's learned at night school.

3) a sou chef takes the recipe of his master and tweaks it just a bit.

Pow! All heck would surely break out. Not just because the servant hadn't done what the master intended but also because the resulting chaos would affect everyone involved.

And so it is with the

optional

rite of Foot Washing - Mandatum (command) - on Holy Thursday. The rubrics are clear -

men

(viri) are to have their feet washed -

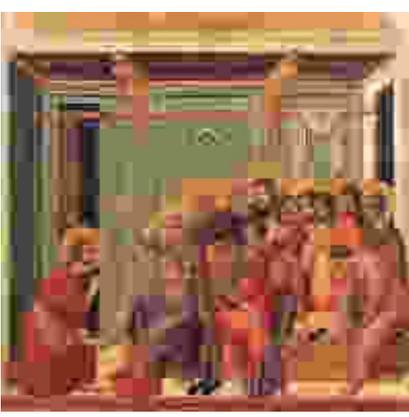
twelve

, if you want to follow Jesus' lead. Why twelve and why men, you might ask? Well, because a

secondary

function of our remembrance of that day (aside from the - very important - institution of the Eucharist!), is the institution of the priesthood, initiated with the twelve apostles. Can women become priests? Contrary to liberal wishes the answer has irrevocably been given by Pope John Paul II -

never!



As has been pointed out by [Fr. Z](#), "let it be remembered that the Church's legislation allows for the washing of the feet of only men. **MEN = VIRI = MEN**. Not manish women or any other critter. Even if some claim to have received permission to wash the feet of women, and even if the claims were true, those permissions would in no way change the law for the rest of the world. Period. Furthermore, I have never seen a letter or a copy of a letter from the Congregation in Rome granting such a permission. I doubt anyone else has either".

Canon lawyer,

[Dr. Edward Peters](#)

has written about it thoroughly and shares the wording of the rubric with us - along with emphasis of the Latin, in which it was written. The word

man

(viri) can only be interpreted one way, and it's not mankind (or humankind).

I'd rather just see this optional rite done away with altogether. Why oh why does the focus always have to be on 'us' (the people)? Holy Thursday is about the institution of the

priesthood

. It is about the institution of the

Eucharist

. And yet, here we are again. With our self congratulatory songs, choirs up front so that we may focus away from everything that we should be focusing on - Jesus, present to us as food at the foot of the cross! I'm so very frustrated and it takes away my

[right to worship in the way Mass was intended](#)

* (complete with thorough instructions). I've seen even babies' feet washed, mostly women's feet washed, and commemorative towels given out as 'door prizes' for those women and men who participated. I'm beyond frustrated by this lack of saying the black and doing the red!

Rant over...

May we all celebrate a holy, Holy Thursday! Happy Holy Week!



The Last Supper - the reason for Holy Thursday!

*From Redemptionis Sacramentum (Latin, “The Sacrament of Redemption”).

"It is the right of the Christian people themselves that their diocesan bishop should take care to prevent the occurrence of abuses in ecclesiastical discipline, especially as regards the ministry of the word, the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals, the worship of God, and devotion to the saints (24)."

This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2013/03/holy-thursday-and-foot-washing.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The World Does Not Understand Humility [at V for Victory!]



Fr. Zuhlsdorf expresses beautifully and concisely what I have been struggling to put into words on the subject of humility, which the world does not understand:

Fr. Blake beautifully addresses false humility, and the special dangers it poses for clergy:

Aquinas also sheds some light on humility in the [Summa Theologica](#). A little taste:

Humility restrains the appetite from aiming at great things against right reason: while magnanimity urges the mind to great things in accord with right reason.

Humility ceases to be humility when it causes us to look with satisfaction upon ourselves, or to seek notice and praise from others.

Pope Francis, whom the liberals appear to misunderstand as grossly as they do Bl. John XXIII, has been jettisoning the trappings of the papacy during the first days of his reign. The liberals are jumping up and down for joy over it, believing that it heralds a new Age of Aquarius without the medieval Benedictine trappings, and that *finally*, we have a Pope centered on humility. I don't

know Pope Francis' reasons for doing what he is doing; nor am I out to explore his motivations, or impute any particular motivations to him. Rather, the point here is that neither the world, nor those who think with the mind of the world, get what humility is all about.

The world is constantly being taken in by hucksters because it equates humility with a no-frills lifestyle. This, without more, can't be humility. Gandhi, with his loincloth and his round spectacles, is held up in the world as a model of humility, yet it was said to have cost a fortune to keep him living in poverty. False asceticism is an old trick to lend credibility to lies, worked to great effect by enemies of the Church from the Albigensians to the Communists. Then there are the proud poor who lead a no-frills lifestyle only because they lack the resources for screaming opulence.

On the other hand, there are those who live in opulence who (a) would give it up in a heartbeat, if they were not prevented by the duties of their position or state in life, and (b) are perfectly willing to be misjudged and take all kinds of grief for not giving it up. Such is Pope Emeritus Benedict. Consider the absolute nonsense he put up with during his eight years as Pope: the carping about "triumphalism" and "trying to turn the clock back"; the whining about the old vestments and regalia that he took out of mothballs; the incessant braying about his beautification of the liturgy; the idiotic stories about Prada attire. Here was a man who had wanted nothing more than to retire to a quiet life of study and prayer, but who suddenly found himself thrust onto the Throne of Peter. Being a man of duty, he conformed himself to his new situation and uncomplainingly accepted all that went with it without taking any notice of the criticism. He was willing to ignore what others thought of him, and to be misunderstood, in order to reconnect us with the sacred things of our past, and to lift our minds and our hearts out of mediocrity. In the end, Benedict gave up all his purported luxury and wealth, of his own accord, and without looking back.

We should study and reflect true humility, and genuine exemplars of it, lest, like the world, we be taken in by hucksters.

This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-world-does-not-understand-humility.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Enemies and.....genuine what??? [at A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars]

We all have them, they stick out in our minds like a sore thumb. We avoid them, we block them from our Facebook pages, phones, and make sure they know that we know that they know they are on the "list" that folks rarely get off. Yes, everybody has at least one of these varmints and they seem to be as much of an eye sore as the neighbor's overflowing trash set out a day or 2 early. When you discover them in the grocery store, you duck over to the next aisle and remain aware of their presence, then breathe a sigh of relief if you managed to check out without running into them. A nemesis to be true and they are hard to shake. There are moments in the day when they creep into your thoughts; the cursed event that spurred the disdain and those old feelings would rush back to the present as if it just happened over lunch. Sigh, and that's just a made up version, Rick Bragg-style, the real version is even more severe.

Now that it's Lent, we are given a task....or are called to task on this forgiveness thing. I've always heard the saying to keep your friends close and your enemies closer. Never really got that part and then when someone tells me that I'm supposed to pray for these lost and foreboding souls, well that is a totally new concept that I'm not quite ready to grasp, much less embrace. I don't know, call me stubborn, call me a bonehead, but when somebody crosses me; well there is a line to be sure. Isn't that a fact for everybody? Doesn't everybody have a line that once crossed is a declaration of war?

Last night, I was reading the meditation from my Magnificat after saying my evening prayers. Written by the late Monsignor Roman Guardini about Forgiveness. In this rather long and too to the point meditation, he talks about the things we are to overcome to forgive; I mean REALLY forgive. The sense of hostility we have and the righteous indignation that grips our egos, negates "genuine" forgiveness. As creatures, we are so "ordered that the preservation of the one depends on the destruction of the other." So we do all the things I list above and then some in order to protect ourselves from the enemy. BUT to forgive, as Christ tells us to forgive, we must relinquish these defense shields and let go of the fear and "risk defenselessness" toward this individual...hoping that in so doing we can rise to a higher level than ground zero in our hearts.

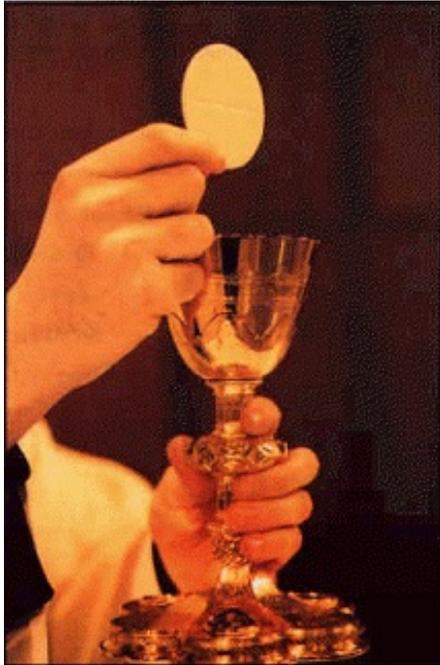
"But the crux of the matter is forgiveness, a profound and weighty thing."

Courage and a deep sense of intimate security is needed for this genuine forgiveness to take place. In the end, if with prayer and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, we can achieve forgiveness, real and genuine forgiveness; we can be the pardoner who is actually stronger than the fear-ridden hater."

You Are Enough [at This Cross I Embrace]

These three words have been flooding my mind, body, and soul every time I am about to receive Communion lately.

"You are enough."



And in those moments, right before I bow before the living Christ in the Eucharist, I fully believe them.

It's all of the moments preceding, and all of the moments following, where I get into trouble.

I remember so vividly

[an evening years ago](#)

, when we were still living at our old place, attending the old parish, sitting in Adoration on Holy Thursday, and feeling overwhelmed by the same thoughts: YOU

ARE

ENOUGH! I felt it - I knew it. No matter what happened in my life, I had Jesus, and He was all I needed.

But living that reality - especially when faced with pregnancy and birth announcements at the end of a cycle, or adoption announcements at the block wall of our inadoption- that is so much more difficult.

I suppose this makes sense. Isn't everything easier in the physical presence of Jesus? Ahhhh, I missed my calling as a janitor at a Perpetual Adoration chapel.

This Lent has not neglected its promises for increasing challenges and trials. We are in the midst of more uncertainty now, in many different ways. And I struggle to remember that my only true desire should rest in knowing that He is enough. Oh, how badly I struggle. My heart aches. I am human. I want what I want. And I want God to give it to me. How awful does that sound??

Now, out of the presence of the Eucharist, all I can manage to pray is "Help me to always know that You are enough." As I cramp. And spot. And ache. And cry. Help me, Lord. Help me to know...

This contribution is available at <http://thiscrossiembrace.blogspot.com/2013/03/you-are-enough.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

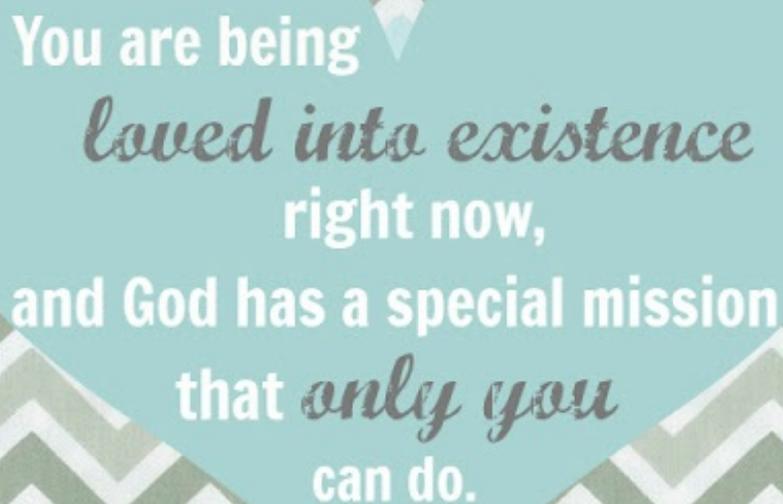
Getting Out of a Spiritual Slump [at Savor His Goodness]

Have you ever felt lethargic about your spiritual life? Have you ever lost the energy to go to church, read your Bible, or spend time in prayer? Ever just not really cared? Have you ever wondered why it all even matters when people who are not faithful seem to have good lives (Psalm 73)?

If so, you are not alone. Most people have been there at some point in their lives, as sloth ("lethargy for spiritual things") is considered a deadly sin. Sadly, 70% of Catholics do not go to mass on a regular basis, which is evidence of the prevalence of sloth in our society.

It can be a really, really tough sin to overcome. Father Barron said that [pride](#), [envy](#), and [anger](#) often result in a collapse that leads you back to God. However, sloth can make you stay right where you are without anything big to bring you back to God.

What is the antidote to sloth? Father Barron said it's **zeal**. It's having a sense of God's presence, an excitement about your faith, and an attitude that you want the Lord to send you wherever he wants you to go. One of the things I just love about Father Barron is the fact that he keeps reminding us in his videos over and over and over again that we are **so loved by God**. He constantly tells us that in this very moment of life we are being loved into existence. Not only that, but God has a special plan for us, and he wants his love to flow through us so we can accomplish something big that only we can do! A unique plan for every person.



You are being
loved into existence
right now,
and God has a special mission
that *only you*
can do.

Just reflecting on that is so encouraging! Read through the following quotes. It's hard to not be filled with zeal for God, your faith, and your life when you reflect on these truths!

*"The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. **Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:** The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. **For if man exists, it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence.** He cannot live fully according to the truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creation."*

-CCC 27

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you."

- Jeremiah 1:5

"For I know the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope."

-Jeremiah 29:11

Father Barron said we need to work hard to determine what God's mission is for our lives. Here are some great practical tips he gave that are helpful for overcoming a spiritual slump:

1. Pray - We have to pray by not only asking for God to reveal his will for our lives, but also be open and ready to for his answer. *"When you call me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord, and I will change your lot. (Jeremiah 29:12-13)*

2. Read Scripture - Don't just read it to read though. Read it and ask the question - what do you want me to do, Lord? Again, be prepared for an answer!

3. Spiritual Direction - Find a spiritual director who will guide and advise you through your struggles.

4. Mass - Go to mass! That is the heart of our faith as Catholics. Just put yourself in the presence of God and pray.

5. Practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy on a regular basis. The corporal work are feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, burying the dead, and giving alms. The spiritual works of mercy are instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, advising, counseling the doubtful, comforting the sorrowful,

forgiving, bearing wrongs patiently, and praying for the living and the dead. If you pick some of these and start practicing those on a regular basis, God will show you where you are meant to be in this world. He will highlight your strengths and help you to see his plan more clearly. Thomas and I also feel like sometimes you really just have to fake it til you make it. Make yourself go to daily mass. Make yourself read the Bible even when you feel like there are a million other things you'd rather be doing. Even if you are just doing it halfheartedly, God will meet you where you are and will bring you what you need. Whenever I make myself go to Bible study when I don't feel like going, God sends me a message that really encourages me, and I end up being so glad that I made myself go. Also, just remember that ultimately we will not be satisfied unless we live out our lives to glorify God. No matter what you try to fill your time with, fulfillment comes from him alone.

“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.”

-St. Augustine

What do you do to get yourself out of a spiritual rut? What makes you feel full of zeal?

This contribution is available at <http://catholiccookiejar.blogspot.com/2013/03/getting-out-of-spiritual-slump.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Six Interesting Things to Know about Pope Francis [at Marge Fenelon]



Around every corner, it seems, appears another wonderful and interesting fact, testimony, or anecdote about our new Pope. Bit by bit, we're unraveling a picture of who Pope Francis is, where he's from, and what he stands for. That can give us clues as to where he's headed in his term as the 266th Successor of St. Peter. I think you'll agree with me that the rest of the world outside of Argentina is discovering him to be a truly amazing person.

I've gathered six of the most interesting items from today's tidbit harvest. They're fun facts, certainly, but pause a moment after each one and really think about the implications behind each one. That'll keep your mind (and heart) busy for a good long time. Enjoy!

1. Black shoes. The Pope has declined the red shoes customary of his office (although there were a number of them in various sizes readied for the new Pope in the Room of Tears) in favor of a pair of simple black shoes, a gift from Argentinian friends. The story behind the shoes, *Vatican Radio reported*, is that the then-cardinal's friends saw that his shoes were in poor condition and bought him a new pair as he prepared to leave for the Conclave. Those are the shoes he wears today as Pope.
2. No mozzetta. Popes usually wear the papal mozzetta, a short elbow-length cape that covers the shoulders and is buttoned over the breast. Not Pope Francis. He prefers his plain, white cassock.
3. A Volkswagon. The Pope declined the prescribed Mercedes and motorcade and instead travels with minimal escort in a Volkswagon.
4. An unadorned silver pectoral cross. Pope Francis declined to use one of the bejeweled pectoral crosses from the Papal Sacristy that were set out for whoever would emerge from the Conclave as Pope. Rather, he chose to retain the simple silver cross he wore into his election.

5. An unadorned silver ring. Along with his silver cross, Pope Francis chose to retain his usual, unadorned silver ring with it.

6. A low-key miter. At yesterday's first Mass, the Pope declined using a miter from the Vatican collection (most of which are very ornate) in favor of his preferred one from home. It's a low-key headpiece trimmed and lined in brown: the traditional color associated with the Franciscans.

I have no doubt we'll continue to learn intriguing and admirable tidbits about our new Pope in the weeks ahead. I'm looking forward to it, because each new piece I uncover only serves to increase my admiration and respect for him.

Next is a video, courtesy of [Rome Reports](#), of our Holy Father entering the Papal apartments for the first time. The Prefect of the Papal Household, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, unties the red ribbon sealing the door, hands the Pope the silver key, and escorts him on a tour of his new dwelling. This is worth watching, not only because of our interest in the new Pope, but also because it's rare look inside the Papal Apartments. Notice the facial expressions of Pope Francis. Is he hesitant? Overwhelmed? Overwrought with emotion? Regardless, it's not the face on one accustomed to finery and privilege.

Below is the full text of Pope Francis' address to the Cardinals this morning, courtesy of [Zenit.org](#). Eloquent, powerful words for such a humble, simple man. He's nobody's fool and a true leader. As always, the Pope's words to the Cardinals are meant for us, too.

Brother Cardinals,

This time dedicated to the Conclave has been full of meaning not only for the College of Cardinals, but also for all the faithful. In these days we have felt almost physically the affection and solidarity of the universal Church, as well as the attention of many people who, despite not sharing our faith, look with respect and admiration to the Church and the Holy See. From every corner of the Earth, a fervent and choral prayer of the Christian people was raised up for the new Pope, and my first encounter with the crowd gathered in St. Peter's square was full of emotion. With that evocative image of prayerful and joyful people still etched in my mind, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the bishops, priests, consecrated persons, young people, families and the elderly for their spiritual closeness, so touching and fervent.

I feel the need to express my most vivid and deep gratitude to all of you, venerable and dear brother Cardinals, for the solicitous collaboration in guiding the Church during the Vacant

See. I address a cordial greeting to each of you, beginning with the Dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, whom I thank for his expressions of devotion and for the fervent well-wishes he addressed to me in your name. With him I would like to thank the Lord Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church, for his thoughtful work in this delicate transitional phase, and also the most dear Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, who was our leader in the Conclave, many thanks! My thoughts go with particular affection to the venerable Cardinals who, due to age or disease, assured us of their participation and their love for the Church through the offering of suffering and prayer. And allow me to tell you that the day before yesterday, Cardinal Mejia had a heart attack: he has been hospitalized at Pius XI. But it seems his health is stable, and he has sent us his regards.

Also deserving of my gratitude are those who, in various roles, have worked actively in preparing and carrying out the Conclave, ensuring the safety and tranquillity of the Cardinals in this period that is so important for the life of the Church.

With great affection and profound gratitude, my thought goes also to my venerable predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, who during these years of his Pontificate has enriched and invigorated the Church with his teachings, his kindness, his leadership, his faith, his humility and his meekness. They will remain a spiritual heritage for everyone! The Petrine ministry, lived with total dedication, had in him a skillful and humble interpreter, whose gaze was always fixed on Christ, the risen Christ, present and alive in the Eucharist. Our fervent prayers will accompany him always, as will our ceaseless remembrance and our undying and affectionate gratitude. We feel that Benedict XVI has lit a flame in the depths of our hearts: it will continue to blaze because it will be fueled by his prayer, which will support the Church on her spiritual and missionary journey.

Dear brother Cardinals, our meeting is meant to be somewhat of an extension of the intense ecclesial communion experienced during this period. Animated by a deep sense of responsibility and supported by a great love for Christ and for the Church, we have prayed together, fraternally sharing our feelings, our experiences and reflections. In this climate of great cordiality, our reciprocal knowledge and mutual opening were thus increased; and this is good, because we are brothers. Someone told me: the Cardinals are the Holy Father's priests. That community, that friendship, that closeness will do us all good. And this knowledge and this mutual opening have facilitated our docility to the action of the Holy Spirit. He, the Paraclete, is the Supreme protagonist of every initiative and expression of faith. This is strange, it makes me think: the Paraclete accounts for all the differences in the churches, and seems to be an apostle of Babel. But on the other hand, He is the One who creates unity from these differences, not in "equality", but in harmony. I recall that Church Father who described Him thus: "Ipse harmonia est". The Paraclete who gives each of us different charisms, unites us in this community of the Church, that worships the Father, Son and Him, the Holy Spirit.

Starting right from the authentic collegial affection that joins the College of Cardinals, I express my willingness to serve the Gospel with renewed love, helping the Church to become more and more in Christ and with Christ, the fruitful vine of the Lord. Stimulated also by the

celebration of the Year of Faith, all together, Shepherds and faithful, we will strive to respond faithfully to our mission of always: bringing Jesus Christ to mankind and leading men to the encounter with Jesus Christ the Way, Truth and Life, truly present in the Church and at the same time, in every man. Such an encounter leads to becoming new men in the mystery of Grace, arousing in the soul that Christian joy which constitutes the hundredfold given by Christ to those who welcome Him into their lives.

As Pope Benedict XVI reminded us so many times in his teachings and, most recently, with that courageous and humble gesture, it is Christ who leads the Church through his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church with His vivifying and unifying force: of many, it forms a single body, the Mystical Body of Christ. Let us never give in to that pessimism, that bitterness which the devil offers us every day. Let us not give in to pessimism and discouragement; we have that firm confidence which the Holy Spirit gives the Church, with his mighty breath, the courage to persevere and to seek new ways to evangelize, to bring the Gospel to the ends of the Earth (cf. Acts 1:8). The Christian truth is appealing and persuasive because it responds to the profound needs of human existence, announcing convincingly that Christ is the only Savior of the whole man and of all men. This announcement is still valid today, as it was at the beginning of Christianity, when the first great missionary expansion of the Gospel was carried out.

Dear Brothers, courage! Half of us are elderly: old age is – as I love to say — the seat of the wisdom of life. The old have the wisdom of having walked in life, like the elderly Simeon, the aged Anna in the temple. And it was precisely that wisdom that made them recognize Jesus. We offer this wisdom to the young: like good wine, which over the years becomes better, we give to young people the wisdom of life. I am reminded of what a German poet said of old age: “Es ist ruhig, das Alter, und fromm”: it is the time of tranquility and of prayer. And also of giving young people this wisdom. You will now go back to your sees to continue your ministry, enriched by the experience of these days, so full of faith and ecclesial communion. This unique and incomparable experience has enabled us to grasp deeply the whole beauty of the ecclesial reality, which is a reflection of the splendor of the risen Christ: one day we will look upon that beautiful face of the Risen Christ!

To the powerful intercession of Mary, our Mother, Mother of the Church, I entrust my ministry and your ministry. Under her motherly gaze, may each of us walk joyfully, obedient to the voice of her divine Son, strengthening unity, persevering together in prayer and witnessing to genuine faith in the continuous presence of the Lord. With these sentiments – they are real! – with these sentiments, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to your collaborators and to the persons entrusted to your pastoral care.

[Translation by Peter Waymel]

The Look [at The Spiritual Workout]



Peter's Denial by Carl Bloch

*After arresting him they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest; Peter was following at a distance. They lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter sat down with them. When a maid saw him seated in the light, she looked intently at him and said, "This man too was with him." But he denied it saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A short while later someone else saw him and said, "You too are one of them"; but Peter answered, "My friend, I am not." About an hour later, still another insisted, "Assuredly, this man too was with him, for he also is a Galilean." But Peter said, "My friend, I do not know what you are talking about." Just as he was saying this, the cock crowed, **and the Lord turned and looked at Peter**; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly. (Luke 22: 54-62)*

How did Jesus look at Peter? What was on his face that made Peter realize that he had denied Christ? What did Jesus' expression say that made Peter go out and weep bitterly?

Jesus could have looked at Peter with a smug face that said, "

I told you so!

"

He could have looked at Peter with anger. "

How could you deny me, after everything I've taught you, everything I've done for you!?!?

"

Christ could have looked at Peter with hurt and sadness, where his eyes said it all: "

All I ever asked from you was to follow me, and you can't even do that when I need you the most...

"

Jesus could have looked at Peter in any of those ways, and I'm sure any of these would have made Peter shed some tears.

But these looks don't belong on the face of Jesus that Peter knew, that we all know.

I think Jesus looked at Peter with

love

. His eyes said,

"I forgive you. I am with you to the end. I still love you, no matter what you do."

And that kind of expression - that look of

love

, even when

we feel unworthy of being loved

- is what made Peter weep.

Wouldn't you?

This contribution is available at <http://spiritualworkoutblog.blogspot.com/2013/03/the-look.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Love at home [at Finding Former Glory]

I can't stop looking at this picture:



{image from CNN}

For anyone who doesn't know the story - Part of the Holy Thursday liturgy is the humble act of the washing of the feet (just as Jesus washed the feet of His disciples at the Last Supper). Pope Francis chose to go to a juvenile detention facility and wash - and kiss - the kids' feet.

Wow.

Talk about living our faith, and about an example of love!

What does this have to do with home renovation? Well, you already know that I've been focusing on not just the physical characteristics of our home. Tonight at Mass, as I was praying, the phrase "show her love" became forefront in my mind - a message, I believe ties to my primary role as a mother. To show Anna love - both by loving her directly, and by showing her what loving others looks like. True, humble, selfless love. I certainly have a ways to go, but I am so inspired by Pope Francis' loving example, and desire to show this love here within our home and to the world!

The Church Doesn't Love Women? [at Catholic & Crunchy]

Yes, I'm taking the bait. I don't know why I do this to myself. Usually I try to blog about harmless things like frugality and eco friendly cleaning. But every now and again, I try to blog about faith and, even less often than that, I try to tackle a subject that is near and dear to my heart, yet controversial. Don't worry. After this post, I will self medicate with some chocolate and swear never to blog about faith again. And that should last at least a week or so. I do apologize for an underlying level of snark. I don't mean to be snarky, but my writing sometimes comes across that way (especially after I spend month being bombarded with comments about how the Church doesn't respect women).

There is a huge misunderstanding by non-Catholics and by many Catholics as well that, because the Church doesn't allow women's ordination, the church doesn't love or respect women. Some people seem to think the pope has the option to say women can be ordained. We all heard about that with the recent conclave. News sites

love

to speculate on what the pope will change. As if the Church has ever changed. As if the Church will ever change. But it might take the world another 2,000 years to get that. As often happens, well meaning non-Catholics (and even misunderstood Catholics) don't know about

[*in persona Christi*](#)

which, in very plain terms, says that Jesus instituted the priesthood and the priest acts

in the person of Christ

during the Eucharistic rite. Jesus being a man, and choosing only men to carry on his mission, means that only men can act in persona Christi.

Now, I know a lot of people will come back with, "But Jesus lived in a very patriarchal time! Of course he didn't choose a woman then. But times have changed!". And here is my response. You do realize that Jesus was about as counter cultural as counter cultural gets, right? If he wanted female priesthood, I have no doubt he would have instituted it. He certainly didn't let the time he lived in dictate anything else he did (remember the woman at the well?), so why would we think this is any different? I also have people ask me if it bothers me. It honestly doesn't for the simple fact that I understand the love the Church has for women. I don't feel like less, but I do recognize that I have a different role. It's sort of like feminism versus new feminism. The first says that women can do anything men can do, and men are often portrayed as not needed or useless. The second says that men and women are equally valuable, but have somewhat different roles. Women are so valued in the Church, and I do not take it personally that my role is

different

. Clearly, only women can have babies. I don't hear people asking if the pope is going to change it so men can have babies, even though that was also instituted by God. The next time someone asks me if I hope the pope changes the Church's stance on women's ordination, I do believe I will say that first I want the Church to change her stance on women giving birth.

So beyond that... wait, there is a beyond? YES! Lots of people can NOT see beyond the point of women's ordination. So everything else that the church does and believes is totally ignored because we don't have female priests. You know how I talked about different roles? The roles of being a sister and a nun are so needed and highly valued in the Church. Sisters teach so many of our children, are often passionate about affecting change in their communities, and nuns spend their entire lives praying for US, for you and me and everyone else! If those things are not huge levels of responsibility that the Church entrusts to women, I'm not sure what would 'count'. (And yes, I do realize men can do similar things, but the title of 'sister' and 'nun' are obviously reserved for women.) And for women who don't feel called to become a sister or nun, there are so many ministries inside our parishes that we can join. If you belong to a small parish without much opportunity to get involved, create something, talk to your priest, or see what your neighboring parish is offering. My parish is pretty small and there are still between 5-10 women's ministries and groups! Think about becoming an NFP instructor (yes, yes I will address NFP below). Instructors are always needed and the Church is dying for us to know and understand our bodies! I'm not an instructor, but I would imagine that the ministry of teaching NFP is pretty powerful... helping people to create, plan, and space their families and children as well as monitor their health in a totally natural, great for the body and soul way.

But back to women and the Church. Take Mary. Wow. She is seriously the most loved woman in the world. We do not worship her, but we do love, adore, and honor her. Have you counted the number of approved Marian apparitions? I haven't, but I know there are a lot! Mary comes to us in so many different ways and the Church LOVES her. Check out all the shrines and churches dedicated to her! She is such a beautiful example of how powerful a woman in the Church can be. We are not expected to sit back and let men run the show while we twiddle our thumbs. She bore the Savior of the World and in a time when women were not empowered like we are today. We are called to be spiritual mothers in our families, workplaces, and communities. This is a role that

only we can do!

Along similar lines, I have heard a lot of criticism against natural family planning. I've heard people say that it is a way for Catholic pews to get filled and money to be put in the basket (implying that it doesn't work and everyone who uses NFP will have large families). I've heard people say that it is a way to keep women barefoot and out of the workforce (again the large family implication that a woman will get pregnant by accident enough times that she won't be able to afford childcare). I've heard it all. And guess what? I shared similar negative feelings about NFP before I bothered to learn exactly what it is, what it is about, and the Church teaching behind it. After we took classes in NFP, we discovered quite a few issues I was having. Here is a crazy

tidbit of information: Did you know that many mainstream doctors will let a woman miscarry

three

times before doing a simple progesterone level check? Thanks to the Church's teaching on NFP, I learned that I have low progesterone before we were even married! And thanks to the Church's teaching, I am not waiting on pregnancy to correct it. I have a doctor who is working on treating it NOW. But even if I wasn't working to correct it now, we would know that going into a pregnancy, would have the blood test done immediately, and would treat with progesterone injections. The Church loves women so much that she wants women to know their bodies, know the biology, know the science, know and treat (rather than mask) any issues. She also wants us to know how to space our children if we need to without putting class one carcinogens into our bodies. She wants our men to respect us, to accept all of us- yes, e

ven our fertility

, and to have open lines of communication about what is right for our families. I wasn't getting any of that from the secular world, who supposedly loves women.

I'm not saying that there is nothing good about how the secular world views and treats women. What I

am

saying is that the Church loves, protects, and values us

so

highly, but the secular world seems to have completely missed that. I know this is a pipe dream, but I wish that the media would talk to Catholic women who are fully living the faith and following the teachings. I am in multiple groups with those women (some groups as small as 25, some as large as over 1,000) and yes, it can be challenging, but it is so worth it and the satisfaction level is very high. I honestly never understood my worth before reverting back to the Church and really learning what it means to be Catholic. I sold myself short constantly. I know the people in the Church aren't perfect (which is very different from saying the Church isn't perfect... because she is), but I do hope that non-Catholics and Catholics who recognize that they have more to learn and understand would come to the source.... the Catechism, church documents, and women in the Church living it out daily, and hear the challenges and rewards from us. Ask us your tough questions and, if we don't know the answer, we will find it for you! Ask us how NFP affects our marriage; ask us how we feel as women of the church; ask our husbands and families if we seem 'oppressed' by the Church. Again, this comes from someone who was on the other side and made a lot of judgments and excuses, so I know what that's like. I just wish that years sooner I had taken someone aside and asked questions. I wish that I hadn't gotten my information on the church from secular sources who don't at all understand the Church. If you don't already, get to know the

Church a little more. I think she'll surprise you :).

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicandcrunchy.com/2013/03/the-church-doesnt-love-women.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Saint Patrick Holy Trinity Shamrocks [at Tercets]

As I was thinking about what to do and whether to post for Saint Patrick's Day, I found a post linked up at Lacy's [First Friday Link up for March](#) that reminded me about an art project I did as a child. Alicia at [Through My "I"s](#) posted about her [crayon resist art project](#) for Saint Valentine's Day. Thank you, Alicia, for inspiring my Holy Trinity Crayon Resist Art Shamrocks!



I thought crayon resist with watercolors would be a great way to highlight Saint Patrick's metaphor for the Holy Trinity. I used a fat white crayon to draw a shamrock on card stock, and a thin white crayon to write "God" (in Spanish) in the middle and each part of the Holy Trinity on the leaves. My older daughter wrote the words herself, but I wrote them for my youngest. She had so much fun watercolor painting and watching the letters appear!

An easy and quick way to do this is to use a wide brush and long strokes, but for kids who want to "find" the letters, painting little by little works too. Who says shamrocks only come in green?



Another way to make a trinity shamrock that does not involve painting is to cut one out of green construction paper and write the words with a crayon or marker. Here is the one we made last year. I used a pencil to draw three hearts together with their points touching, added the stem and cut it out.



You can read about many more activities to teach The Most Holy Trinity at my [Trinity Link up](#). My daughters had so much fun with the watercolors that they wanted to watercolor Saint Patrick, too. I printed [the Saint Patrick coloring page](#) drawn by Vee ([Paper Dali](#)) on cardstock, and they painted him yesterday. Vee's post also includes a Unit Study with other ideas for learning about Saint Patrick and additional Irish saints.



We are also currently making an [angel puppet to dramatize The Annunciation](#), so we used the crayon resist with watercolors technique to paint some angel wings, although we forgot to “resist” the angel’s gown. Check back in a few days to see the results! My girls are enjoying crayon resist, especially the water coloring part, so I’m thinking we’ll make some [decorated Easter egg cards](#) next month. Did you know you can do [crayon resist on actual boiled eggs and cascarones](#) (egg shells) before painting them? We like to write names on our cascarones; check back in a few weeks to find out why.

This contribution is available at <http://tercets.blogspot.com/2012/03/saint-patrick-holy-trinity-shamrocks.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Table of Contents

Forward	8
A Parable About Sola Fide	9
Trembling at Confession	12
Indeed, He is Doing a New (Yet Familiar) Thing	14
Dear Teenage Girl	17
Worrying is NOT a "Mom Thing"	21
Grabbing the Ropes	26
Want to Promote Theology of the Body? Read and Recommend a TOB Novel!	28
We Are Not in the Lost and Found - Aleteia	30
Imitating the Pilgrim Witness of Jesus and Pope Francis	33
Tradition, Scripture....and experience?	38
Our Lady of Fatima and the Communion of Saints	40
Smart Kids	43
How Great It Is To See You. Please Come Back!	46
7 Quick Takes (Vol. 34): Mercy for Parents	48
Duality of Being Christian	50
The Church is Ahead of the Mathematicians on Ecumenical Dialogue	51
Why Are You Still Sleeping? A Palm Sunday Reflection	54
Out of Ashes Beauty Will Rise: Our Infertility Story (Part 1)	59
@Patron of Compulsive Disorders	64
There Is No Greater Love...	67
Promise of Lent	70
The David L. Gray Show	72
Defending The Catholic Church	73
Will the Next Pope Be the Antichrist? The Last Pope? Is The End Near? and other burning questions	76
Eric Metaxas Stops in Nashville on Bonhoeffer Tour	83
High Tech Confession	84

Freedom for Me but not for Thee!!!	91
Jesus meets his Disciples 2nd Sunday of Easter	93
Popes among us	96
Pope Francis: The Wisdom of Old Age	98
What is it About?	101
Papal Transfixion	103
Don't shut Him out	106
An End to Lent and an Easter Beginning	109
An Emmaus Walk On Easter Sunday	115
Sic Transit Gloria Mundi	117
Resurrection - how did St John believe before the others?	120
Six Components of Liberal Catholicism that Seek to Destroy the Church: Part 2	124
Review: Love in a Broken Vessel	130
Habemus Papam	133
Who's In Charge Here?	139
St. Patrick's Day Poetry	140
Lent, Week Four: Finding Discipline and Brotherhood	143
In Which I Make A Good Confession Badly	145
Why "The Bachelor" Sean Lowe's marriage isn't doomed	149
Confession Is Scary: NOT!	151
Good Friday	154
I THOUGHT YOUR NAME WAS RICHARD...so who is "Stephen Francis???"	156
Martha Or Mary: On Choosing The Better Part	164
The Great Hidden Cross of Motherhood	166
Parable of the Unforgiving Servant	169
The Marriage Issue: It's About the Kids	172
An Interview with Author Mike Aquilina	175
Christ Has Risen, Alleluia! The Easter Triduum Revisited	177
Just for a Moment... Step into My Shoes	182

On Modesty and Evangelization: 5 Lies We Tell Our Daughters	186
Be Not Afraid: The Sex Post	187
The Power of Words - A Lesson from Proverbs for Kids	191
Which comes first -- Easter or the eggs?	202
Holy Thursday {Do WHAT in memory of You, Jesus?}	205
Heroes	208
Reflection: On Pope Benedict's Resignation (part 2)	211
Social Justice Catholic vs. Pro-life Catholic: A False Dichotomy	217
The Oddity of Weekday Mass	220
Holy Thursday and Foot Washing - Misunderstanding What Catholics Do	222
The World Does Not Understand Humility	225
Enemies and.....genuine what???	227
You Are Enough	229
Getting Out of a Spiritual Slump	231
Six Interesting Things to Know about Pope Francis	234
The Look	239
Love at home	241
The Church Doesn't Love Women?	242
Saint Patrick Holy Trinity Shamrocks	246