

NewEvangelists.org

new
evangelists
monthly

August
2013

New Evangelists Monthly #8

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Forward

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

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

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.

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“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Mt 7:7-8)

In her book, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, Sherry Weddell compares the last threshold to intentional discipleship to “dating with a purpose.” When you know that a personal relationship with God is possible and you are exploring that possibility for yourself, it’s like serious dating that can lead to marriage. Is this person the one for me? Is this the one who loves me, the one I can give my life to? Is this the one I love and want to spend my life with? Is this relationship what I need?

This quest for a new relationship with Jesus will take you far beyond whatever prayer life you have now. It will change your approach to everything and everyone in your life. Even your attitude toward yourself.

Answering God’s call to drop your nets begins by not holding them so tightly and visualizing letting go of what you control. Pretty scary until you realize that Jesus can be trusted with everything in your life. When you give your life to him, boat, net and anchor, he commissions you as steward of your gifts and talents, possessions and relationships.

Look for committed Christians you can befriend and see how they manage their lives. Don’t look for perfection, but the loving service they enjoy giving others, you included. You can trust them with the questions burning in your heart about what a deep friendship with Jesus looks like. How does it change the way they spend their time, their money, their leisure? What spiritual practices work for them and their families? Mass and Sunday dinner together? Rosary? Adoration? Singing praise songs in the carpool? Neighborhood Bible studies? Vacationing with other families who love Jesus? Frequent confession?

They struggle with the same issues you do. Don’t be afraid to ask them to share their triumphs and

failures. Ask them how they developed their relationship with Jesus. You may hear some initially depressing stories that end victoriously as Jesus rescues them and brings them into his kingdom. When their needs could only be met by him, he proved his unconditional love. You can trust him to do the same for you.

They are praying for you along your journey. Try out some of the practices you see working for others. Consistent Mass and personal prayer time are the basic two spiritual practices to help you in your mission. There are as many ways to relate to God as there are people.

Like any decision to further a relationship, it's ultimately between you and that person. For this relationship to blossom into a permanent arrangement you have to get alone with that person and sort out your passions and misgivings, good intentions and hopes. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. Ask this companion-presence, who is with you always, for the courage to take the next step.

God gave you free will and will not violate that gift. He will love you whether or not you commit your life to him right now. He will give you future chances to accept his overwhelming love if you are not quite ready. But every day he will pursue you because he created you to love him and live with him forever. Every day is another day to live in a close relationship with the source of life.

He's already popped the question and waits for your answer. End the dating game and get on with the purpose of your life: intimacy with him.

What is the next thing you need to do to make a decision to follow Jesus?

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Two Spiritual Flaws [at A Spiritual Journey]

To not want to be a saint is to not want to love God to the utmost. To not believe that you can be a saint is to not believe that all things are possible with God. Both are serious spiritual flaws.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2013/07/two-spiritual-flaws.html>
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Not All Heroes Wear Capes [at Campfires and Cleats]

Hello there! Welcome, new readers clicking over from the [Hot Summer Nights](#) series, as well as returning visitors, to my spot on the web!

I am very, very happy that you're here and quite honored

to be participating in

this awesome blog series that

is so graciously organizing.

Marriage.

One of the greatest gifts we've been given.

Yet, sometimes,

one of the things we take most for granted.....



~As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.~

One of my favorite Biblical passages. We all know it. A simple, beautiful verse. Joshua. A path of service and generosity of spirit? It clearly assigns value to these. Yet when this path is chosen on a “full time” scale, it is denigrated by our current culture of materialism, self centeredness and mothers seeking fulfillment within careers outside their homes.

Being a Catholic woman is my value, my worth. And quite simply, I am blessed.

Titles? Awards? Pay increases? No, not any more. Those are in the past. It's all much greater

than that now. It's largely unseen. And unnoticed.

I don't look to be fulfilled by looking beyond my home. It all happens here. Everything important, and unimportant. And I'm thankful for the glimmer of humility bestowed upon me by our Lord that I see it.

While I steer the boys' academics daily, orchestrate the minutiae of their social calendars and sports schedules and manage the home keeping in its entirety, my husband is the power behind it all. His encouragement at home, his dedication at work, well, cliché as it sounds, he makes our family journey possible. His quiet willingness to carry the burden of our family's financial necessities? Recognizing this treasure is the most valuable gift.



*A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even tempered.
Proverbs 17:27*

On a recent Sunday, my husband opened the magazine section of our New York newspaper, eager to reach the article detailing "family day trips" to one of our travel destinations this summer. Initially assuming that the story might supplement the wealth of information I have been gathering for our westward journey, he was consequently quite dismayed to discover that the piece was not in the slightest a family vacation guide, but more a pseudo ad for a Mom-and-Dad-can-relax-on-the-beach-we'll-take-the-kids-off-your-hands-and-keep-them-busy-beading-swimming-boating-playing-with-lanyard-for-a-full-day-so-you-don't-feel-guilty-because-they're-having-fun-too 'camps.'

"Who in the world would buy into THIS?? This isn't a *family* trip....this is glorified daycare!"

He *gets* that our kids' lives, our lives, are passing as a car speeds down the highway. Trees and telephone wires a blur. These precious, fleeting days? He wants to be *with* them, not just with them:

He sends regrets to a family wedding rather than hire a babysitter for our children.

He holds the consequences for undesirable behavior even though it makes him the most unpopular person around.

He prefers family-movie-night-based-on-that-novel-we-just-finished to let's-go-out-with-another-couple-night.

He is gratified and proud from behind the scenes when the bat cracks the ball, the basketball is sunk, the square roots are learned, the scripts are memorized, the chords are mastered and the curtain calls are taken.

And when attempts fail, he is there with the shoulder, the eraser, the net.

He'd love nothing more than just a little quiet after an endless day at work. But "Daddy, guess what?" trumps his downtime.

He witnesses, as coach as well as Dad, as his child reaches down to help a fallen opposing team member from a muddy soccer field rather than scoring that goal, easily within his grasp.

Because he's modeled for his son the score that really matters.

And no, this is not the All Rainbows and Unicorns All The Time Channel. We, too, have bottomless laundry baskets, short tempers, volunteer commitments which impose on family time, algebra, science research and Latin grammar that require review. We too, occasionally place pizza orders out of desperation, wondering h-o-w it got to be 6:00 pm. And we show up at the little league field feeling pretty darn together, to find that we have given our son his uniform from *last year* for his weekly game. Yeah. Way to go.

But we pray for patience and for focus on what matters, rather than getting bogged in the mire of what doesn't. Alongside the man who keeps his family going.

Daddy: A word. whispered-with-reverence and full of hope. Daddies are building cathedrals, really. Of both defining moments and the ordinary, which will weave themselves into the brightest of snapshots in their children's tapestry of memories.



I am gratefully linking this to the Link up Blitz.

And to the First Friday link party for the

[Making a Living Writing](#)

site (Not that I've ever actually made any money writing....

but I'm keeping the dream alive!)

Curriculum, teacher resources, kid lit from preschool to middle school....

ongoing throughout August 2013...

Also, if you enjoyed this post,

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Until next time,

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2013/07/not-all-heroes-wear-capes-hot-summer.html>
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Six Components of Liberal Catholicism that Seek to Destroy the Church: Part 3: Separation of Church and State [at A Catholic Life]

We often hear of the phrase "separation of Church and State" spoken of with words of elation. On the contrary, a Catholic must understand that the separation of Church and State is a modern assault on the Dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingship which we all universally celebrate. Perhaps no other modern idea is so falsely praised as is this erroneous one.

We can learn much by reading the noble words of Cardinal Pie:



"

The main error, the capital crime of this century is the pretension of withdrawing public society from the government and the law of God..

The principle laid at the basis of the whole modern social structure is atheism of the law and of the institutions. Let it be disguised under the names of abstention, neutrality, incompetence or even equal protection, let us even go to the length of denying it by some legislative dispositions for details or by accidental and secondary acts: the principle of the emancipation of the human society from the religious order remains at the bottom of things; it is the essence of what is called the new era." (Cardinal Pie, Pastoral Works, vol. VII, pp. 3, 100)

"The time has not come for Jesus Christ to reign? Well, then the time has not come for governments to last." (Cardinal Pie, meeting with Emperor Napoleon III)

"Jesus Christ has been constituted the King of kings. Yes, and the true glory, the true nobility of kings, ever since the preaching of the Gospel, is to be the lieutenants of Jesus Christ on earth. Would per chance the kings have been less great since the cross glitters on top of their diadems? Would the throne have been less famous, less secure since kingship is an emanation, a participation of the kingship of Jesus Christ?

"

Jesus Christ has been constituted king, and the true dignity, the true liberty, the true emancipation of modern nations is to have the right to be governed in a Christian manner.

Would per chance the nations have been falling from their glory? Would their fate have been less noble, less happy since the scepters to which they obey are bound to submit to the scepter of Jesus? Let us repeat it, my brethren: Christianity does not reach its full development, its full maturity, where it does not take on a social character. Such is what Bossuet expressed in this way : 'Christ does not reign if his Church is not mistress, if the peoples cease to pay to Jesus Christ, to his doctrine, to his law, a national homage.' When the Christianity of a country is reduced to the bare proportions of the domestic life, when Christianity is no longer the soul of public life, of public power, of public institutions, then Jesus Christ deals with this country in the manner he is there dealt with. He continues to give his grace and his blessings to the individuals who serve him, but he abandons the institutions, the powers which do not serve him; and the institutions, the kings, the nations become like shifting sand in the desert, they fall away like the autumn leaves which are gone with the wind." (Cardinal Pie, Works, vol. II, pp.259–60)

The Social and Political Doctrine of the Church (i.e. Doctrine of the Two Swords) was well understood by Catholic princes. The Union between Church and State, between the Priesthood and the Empire, was never stronger than during the Carolingian Dynasty, the second Frankish ruling dynasty (751-987 A.D.), founded by Pepin the Short, but named after his son, Charlemagne (Charles the Great). This Union and cooperation between the Church and Christian Princes continued during the Ottonian Saxon Dynasty (936-1024 A.D.), ruled successively by Otto I, Otto II, Otto III, and (Saint) Henry II. Pope Leo III restored the Western Roman Empire, when he crowned Charlemagne Roman Emperor on Christmas Day, in 800 A.D. In 962 A.D, Pope John XII restored the Roman Empire again, when he crowned Otto I Emperor. The actual term "Holy Roman Empire" dates from 1254 A.D.

The Doctrine of the Two Swords teaches us that Christ, being both God and man, is King of the Universe, and as such, His Kingship, which includes both individual souls, as well the whole of society, should be officially recognized by all nations. Accordingly, His Spouse, Holy Mother Church, is Queen, while the Sovereign Pontiff exercises that Kingship on His behalf. He does so in two ways:]

1. He exercises a Direct Power in the Spiritual Field, by means of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy(bishops and priests);

2. He may apply an Indirect Power in the Temporal Field, which is entrusted to lay people, particularly to the natural leaders of men, such as emperors, kings, knights, heads of state, political leaders, magistrates, chiefs of tribes, heads of families. The Hierarchy doctrinally guide these natural leaders, but will admonish them, and even condemn them, if necessary, as they did to erring princes in past ages. By this Authority, and because Catholic leaders once respected this Indirect Power, past popes were able to depose the two above mentioned German Roman Emperors. This power was last used by Pope St Pius V, when he excommunicated Queen Elizabeth Ist, thereby relieving the English of all allegiance to her.

Bishop Williamson declares similar sentiments on the necessity of the primacy of the Catholic religion. We conclude with this words from January 14, 2012:

Number CCXXXV (235)

14 January 2012

STATE RELIGION III

To claim that States need not profess or protect the Catholic religion is a classic liberal error, and one of the major errors of Vatican II. Liberalism said, so to speak, “Let us not attack Catholicism head on, but let us divide and rule. Let us divide the individual man from society by pretending that man is not a social animal, and then we can pretend that religion is purely an individual affair. This will enable us to take over society, and once we have made it liberal, we can turn it back on the individual as a mighty weapon to liberalize him too, because of course man is a social animal !” “ If any individual then wants not to be liberal, he will have great difficulty in resisting his society that we have liberalized.” “ Not so ?” “ Look around !” “ Then let us answer three more objections to the doctrine that, for the salvation of souls, every State should be Catholic.

Your Excellency, Our Lord himself said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (Mt. XXII, 21). Here Our Lord is clearly separating Church from State. Therefore no State should get involved in Catholicism or any other religion Answer, no, Our Lord is not here separating Church from State !” He is making the common sense

distinction between what the individual owes to the State (taxes, etc.) and what he owes to God (worship). Our Lord is absolutely not saying that the temporal State owes nothing to the eternal God. In fact the State, as being the collective temporal authority of a collection of human beings, owes to God in its acts of authority what they owe to him as social beings, namely the social observance of his natural law, and to that Church which natural reason on its own can see to be true, as much social recognition and promotion as will not get in the way of the salvation of souls.

But discerning which is the true religion is something for the individual to do. How then can the State as State be obliged in principle to be Catholic ? Answer, the State is nothing but the moral (i.e. non-material) association in a political body of a greater or lesser number of physical (i.e. material) human beings. But every one of these human beings, merely by the upright use of his natural reason, whether or not he has the supernatural virtue of the Faith, is capable of discerning that God exists, that Jesus Christ is God, and that the Catholic Church is the one Church founded by Jesus Christ. If then any given State does not discern which is the true religion, that is not because its citizens cannot discern, but because for a variety of reasons they will not, or do not want to do so, by making an upright use of their God-given reason. In fact they can discern, and before God they will all bear a greater or lesser responsibility, perfectly measured by him according to their circumstances, for failing to do so.

But, your Excellency, if you insist on every State's obligation to be Catholic, you are merely going to make a lot of martyrs for evil. It is for the glory of God and the eternal salvation of souls that every State should be Catholic. To men therefore too ignorant or corrupt for this truth to do anything but alienate them, one may, without minimising the principle, hesitate to proclaim it, but that does not make it any less true. True principles are no less true for sometimes requiring in practice a measure of prudence in the way they are to be told. Surely readers of this "Commentary" can be told the whole truth !

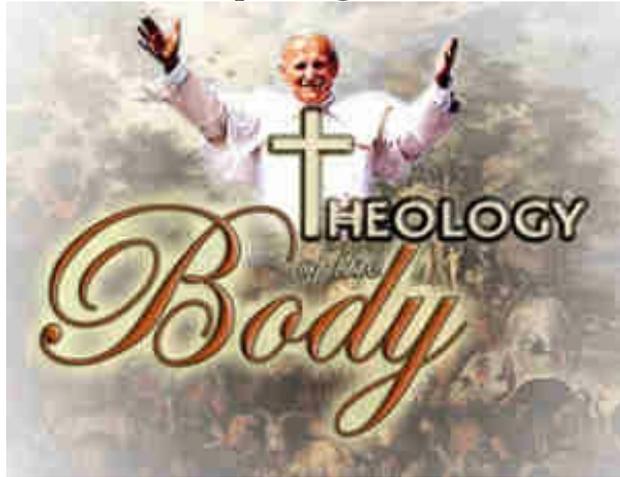
Kyrie eleison.

This contribution is available at <http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2013/07/six-components-of-liberal-catholicism.html>
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Theology of the Body in a Nutshell [at Plot Line and Sinker]

To continue the celebration of NFP Awareness Week, I'm reposting an article I wrote last year,



entitled “Theology of the Body in a Nutshell.”

If we look at the **four components of God’s love for us (free, total, faithful, fruitful)** and compare God’s love to marital love, we can discover how to live the Sacrament of marriage as the ultimate expression of spousal love.

Free: We need to be able love our spouse freely. If we ask for conditions, that’s not love. If we force our spouse to do something, that’s not love. If we cannot say no to our sexual urges, then we are not free.

Total: The love for our spouse must be total. We can’t say, “Well, I’ll give you everything, honey, except for my fertility.” Total means total. (Re: CCC 1643).

Faithful: Obviously, faithfulness means we must only have intercourse with our spouse and no other. But if we want to be truly faithful to our spouse, we must be faithful in word, action and thought.

Fruitful: Marital relations **must be fruitful**, open to children, each and every time. That doesn’t mean we will conceive (or want to conceive) a child with every marital embrace. It just means we need to be open.

Birth control, in fact, destroys all four of the essential components (free, total, faithful, fruitful). Birth control violates not only God’s plan in fruitfulness, but it also encourages an “I can’t say no” mentality to sex. When an action, device, medication or operation is purposefully used to remove fertility, a couple cannot give themselves totally, no matter how much they love each other. Contraception says, “I give all of myself to my spouse – **except** my fertility.”

Natural Family Planning allows a couple **to love each other as God loves: freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully**. Couples using NFP chart the wife’s cycle and, if avoiding pregnancy,

they abstain in the fertile time. If they are planning a pregnancy, they engage in relations during the fertile time. They are not using devices; they are fully giving of themselves and they are open to children with each and every act of marital relations.

NFP allows us to love our spouse as God loves us: freely, with no reservation, faithfully and open to children. Marriage can be a holy vocation when a couple loves as God loves: freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully.

Want to live the highest expression of your marital love? Use NFP and be open to life.

For more information about the Theology of the Body:

<http://thetheologyofthebody.com>

For more information on NFP:

www.ccli.org

www.woomb.org

www.creightonmodel.com

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This is An Adventure! [at Chatty Catholic Doll]



50 MILLION NAMES
VIOLENCE IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY!

Unique, unrepeatable babies!

Beautiful **Healing** **Positive** **Exciting** **Hopeful** **Joyful**

These are words that describe a new pro-life project: **50 Million Names**. We're creating an online memorial site where you can register names for babies lost to abortion. You may not know them, but God does, and we believe He wants to knit us together with these children as we give names to lift them from the obscurity of statistics to the dignity of personhood.

Through these names, we can honor each child as an individual and offer our prayers in unity with his specific intentions – for his relatives, for his abortionist, for our country, and for an end to abortion. Each name will be accompanied by a gesture you choose. Namers can be creative about honoring each child with a concrete gesture that will send ripples of blessings into the world in that child's name. You might offer a prayer, light a candle, release a balloon, bake bread for a neighbor, make a donation, plant a tree, give hours of service, or write a song. Whatever you do will be a legacy of love for one dear baby who was robbed of his chance to be a wellspring of grace in this world.

We are in Phase Two of getting this project ready to launch before March for Life in January. A Catholic firm has agreed not only to create our logo and site, but to **DONATE** thousands of dollars worth of Social Media infrastructure and management to this apostolate!!!! They are convinced that **50 Million Names** is going to have a major impact for good in this country's pro-life movement and in helping build a culture of life. Catholic teens are planning to help build momentum at home and at the March for Life.

We need your prayer support, your financial help, your encouragement, your help letting others know this opportunity is coming soon. May we add your name to a list of those interested in following the progress? The first circle of supporters is made up of the pioneers – the ones who get that it can be an adventure with Christ just to get in on a project that is **beautiful, healing, positive, exciting, hopeful, and joyful!** Please pray about helping. We are praying for you.

50,000,000 THANKS for whatever you can do!

Donations may be made payable to The Joy Foundation, P.O. Box 1502, Lawrence, KS 66044 *
Questions? Call Charlotte Ostermann: 785.863.2233, or email [charoster 'at' yahoo 'dot com'](mailto:charoster@yahoo.com) *
Sneak peak at the site under construction: 50MillionNames.com * Your questions help us build our
FAQ page – THANKS!

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The Compulsion of Lustful Vice [at St. Joseph's Vanguard]



Jesus said, “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin,” and no one knows that more than I, who once was enslaved to lust through pornography. I was a slave because I could not control my desires; they controlled me.

The habit of lust wore deep ruts in my soul, ones that the wheels of my interior car could not escape from on their own. It took God’s grace for those ruts to be filled in, slowly, over the course of years. Then it took more years for the habit of purity to take root and grow into a towering oak tree, one that could not easily be cut down.

I want to explain to women especially how powerful this compulsion to lust is in men, especially in those of us who were addicted to pornography for years, even from the early teens. I knew it was wrong; I wanted to stop doing it, but I couldn’t. Even once I became a Christian, the desire to look lustfully at women and be impure with myself was stronger than my nascent virtue.

But that virtue, that starts as a little sapling, has God’s grace to give it resilience and spring in its stem. Every time lust smashed it down, it righted itself again and kept growing. Leaves were ripped off; it grew more to replace them. This was through God’s grace of repentance, confession, and forgiveness, through the Eucharist, and through those human helps that Christ offers to us: friendship, prudence about being alone with computer access, and so on.

It can be devastating for a woman to discover that her husband looked lustfully at other women via pornography and was impure with himself. It feels like an awful betrayal, and while it is a betrayal, I would caution against excessive over-reaction to it. The power of the compulsion caused by the evil habits is incredibly strong; it is thus not that your husband is personally attacking you, but this vice which compels him to lust. The common enemy is not your husband, but the vice. And you, along with God, are his greatest ally in overcoming this sin.

There are tons of faithful Catholic men, the majority most likely, who struggle with this sin. They are good husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles, friends, but they are still fighting this difficult fight. If your husband doesn't struggle with this sin, rejoice, for he is the exception, not the rule. But if your husband does struggle with it, take heart, because he can and will conquer this evil and grow strong in the virtue of purity. God can overcome anything, and He gives grace to every man to resist this temptation.

For men, always remember that God will forgive you. Go to confession, as many humiliating times as it takes. Go to Mass often, for the Church teaches that the Eucharist strengthens us against mortal sin. Learn about the theology of the body; study and meditate on God's beautiful plan for you and your spouse, consider the man you want to be for your daughters and your sons.

For women, be patient with your husband. Do not despair. Do not over-react. He will know how hurt you are by it; how betrayed you feel. He needs to ask for your forgiveness, and you need to forgive him. This may need to be done every week, or every month, or every so often. Pray for him; encourage him in it; work together to find ways to minimize the temptations he may face.

God set me free from this sin, and he can set you free as well. It took years for me, and blessedly they were before I met Katie, but that is not the case for many couples. Christ is faithful and will set you free to love. God bless!

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I Am The 51-Year-Old Who Wrote To The 14-Year-Old [at TASTE and SEE]



Warning: Graphic language in title of article

I read this article today:

[I'm The 14-Year-Old Who Wrote The "Jesus Isn't A Dick So Keep Him Out of My Vagina" Sign In Texas And Was Labeled A "Whore" By Strangers Online](#)

Then I wrote to the author:

Dear Tuesday,

You write, "I know someone who has had a few abortions. She now says that abortion is bad and she fights against a woman's right to choose." Listen to her. She knows what she's talking about.

As for the mother's right to choose, she has always had the right and always will -- to choose to engage in sex. That is where the choice begins. She knows the consequences before she engages, and if she wants to be seen as a mature woman, she should either accept the consequences of her decision by giving birth to her baby if she becomes pregnant, or she should not engage in sex at all.

I am praying for you, Tuesday. I am sure a lot of other people are too. I am hopeful that you will eventually have a conversion (hopefully before you have any abortions yourself) and realize the primary fight of ProLifers is for the baby's right to life. The woman already has one.

Just remember that someone honored your right to life and brought you to where you are today.

Would you really want to go back in time and ask your mother to consider aborting you? Peace.

image - <http://www.mdrtl.org/aboutus.html>

This contribution is available at <http://www.tasteandsee2.blogspot.com/2013/07/i-am-51-year-old-who-wrote-to-14-year.html>

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Christmas in July [at Forget The Roads]



Around this time of year many people’s thoughts turn to Christmas, if only to breathe a sigh of relief that five months still remain between them and figuring out what to get for Aunt Martha. Stores have “Christmas in July” sales to drum up business, and at this time of year my daughter, when she was younger, would always beg to be allowed to play Christmas carols. It’s been 7 months since the Big Day, and in the summer heat many hearts look back, remembering the joy that accompanies the celebration of the “miracle of Christmas.”

As we all know, the “miracle of Christmas” is supposedly the birth of the God-man. Close, but no cigar. The “miracle of Christmas” actually took place 9 months prior, at the Annunciation, for when Mary gave her “yes” to God, *the Incarnation began*. The so-called “miracle of Christmas” *is the Incarnation*.

Catholics dwell on the Incarnation (literally, the “enfleshment”) all year round. *But why?* With every recitation of the Nicene Creed we recall the moment when “for us men and for our salvation He came down from Heaven, and by the power of the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became Man.” In the Apostles’ Creed we do mention His birth, but only for the purpose of highlighting the fact that His mother was a virgin. That Jesus was born was no great surprise – He grew inside the womb of His mother for 9 months; birth is the expected outcome. *It was His Incarnation that deserved to make headlines*. As an Evangelical I was steeped in the life of

Christ, His sacrifice on the Cross, His triumph o'er the grave and His soon-coming again (heavy emphasis on that last part). The Incarnation was a theological concept that I was familiar with, but it really didn't play any kind of role in my daily Christian scheme of things. Yes, the second Person of the Trinity became a Man – how else could He have offered up His Life on the Cross to save me? End of story.

As a Catholic, I now realize that the answer to the question of the Incarnation is not just “Jesus became a Man so He could die on the Cross to save me.” Not by a long shot. The Incarnation is the beginning of the story of my redemption, the middle of the story, and the ongoing, never-ending story to which I as an Evangelical never gave a second thought. The theology of the Incarnation is the underpinning of all things Christian.



Take the story of the Good Samaritan, for example, a story exceedingly familiar to Evangelicals. We preached on it and taught it to our children. I could have recited it in my sleep. A man was travelling and got mugged. As he lay by the side of the road expiring, a priest came along. The priest knew, of course, that it was important for him to help his fellow man. He also knew that by touching the poor wretch that he would be rendered ritually unclean. He passed by. A Levite also came along and neglected to render assistance for the same reason. A non-Jew, a heretic, that is to say, a Samaritan, then came along and did what the priest and the Levite should have done, putting the man on his donkey and transporting him to safety at a nearby inn. He even paid for the man's care, promising to recompense the innkeeper for any expenditures he incurred. The story teaches us that our “neighbor” is anyone in need. End of story.

But one day, as a Catholic, I was confronted with St. Augustine's take on this story, beginning with the words, “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; Adam himself is meant.”

Whoa – that's a different way of looking at it!

Yet from an Incarnational point of view, *that's a very appropriate way of looking at it.* For here we find the rationale for the Catholic emphasis on the Incarnation as it relates to Jesus' odd statement:

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

As an Evangelical, that was something of a stumper for me. What did Jesus mean by that? Obviously, Jesus didn't mean that He saw the Father being born in a manger, preaching the Gospel to men, eating with tax collectors and sinners, healing blind Bartimaeus.... Yet, what did He mean? *And did it have any implications for the way I lived my life?*

St. Augustine got it. He approached the story of the Good Samaritan not from my Evangelical "go out and help your neighbor – Jesus said so" understanding of the parable, but from the Incarnational "*here's why you are helping your neighbor*" point of view – **because "Adam himself is meant."**

According to St. Augustine, an alternate reading of the parable begins with God, Who comes upon fallen man lying by the side of the road. He binds man's wounds, takes him to the Inn (which symbolizes the Church) and instructs those who work there to take care of this man, promising to compensate them for their expenditures when He returns. And it is in light of that Incarnational reading that we understand why we love our neighbor – ***because God loved us first, and as His body we do what He is doing.***

And how could we not? For as Augustine explains in another context:

All men are one man in Christ, and the unity of Christians constitutes but one man. Let us rejoice and give thanks. Not only are we to become Christians, but we are to become Christ. My brothers, do you understand the grace of God that is given us? Wonder, rejoice, for we are Christ! *If He is the Head, and we are the members, then together He and we are the whole man.*

Jesus became Man so that man might become a part of His body. As a part of His body, you love as He loves, and lovingly do the works that He does, even as He does the works that His Father does. Jesus' eyes are always seeking the lost, and His ears listening for their cries that His feet might hasten to where they have fallen, His hands raising them from the dirt and His arms embracing them, His shoulders bearing them until they grow strong enough to walk on their own. Got that? **That's you and me** – His eyes, His ears, His feet, His hands, His arms, His shoulders. As St. Paul told the Corinthians, "*You are not your own!*" There is simply no other way to be a member of the Body. The judgment stories that Jesus tells emphasize this fact: there will be people who flaunt their faith ("Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord!'") and even their miracles ("Did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?") Yet **Jesus fails to recognize those who are clearly not members of His body, doing what He is doing.** Waving in His face His supposed "Lordship" in their lives and the miracles they have worked in His Name but independent of Him is to no avail – "*I don't know*

who you are!” is His answer to them.

So my Evangelical understanding that I had to love God above all things and my neighbor as myself was correct – as far as it went. But lacking an Incarnational insight into the situation, I did not understand that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us **so that** I, a creature of flesh, could be made a member of His body, *and as a member I can do nothing of myself; I can only do what He is doing.*

Through me, Jesus would tenderly raise the dying man from the side of the road and carry him to the Inn where he could be brought back to life. That the Second Person of the Trinity was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became Man is far from being the mere flashpoint of the ongoing, never-ending story of my life as a partaker of the divine nature. The Incarnation means more than I ever could have guessed, for it is the key that unlocks the mystery of all those “works” that we Protestants avoided like the plague, the works upon which the Church insists, the works on which the churches in the book of Revelation are judged (Rev 2:2, 2:9, 2:13, 2:19, 3:1, 3:8, 3:15), the works which distinguish the sheep from the goats (Mt 25:33), the works by which a man is justified (James 2:24).

To paraphrase St. Augustine, what could be a better sign of how much God loves us than the Son of God deigning to share our nature? At Christmas we celebrate just one small (*but glorious!*) glimpse into what the Father is doing through the Incarnation of His beloved Son. And it is something to **CELEBRATE**, in December or even in July.

On the memorial of St. James the Greater

Deo omnis gloria!

This contribution is available at <http://forgettheroads.com/2013/07/25/christmas-in-july/>
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Sexual Self-Determination Is the New Self-Evident Truth [at Can We Cana? A Community to Support Catholic Marriages]



On this July 4, one truth could not be more evident. Sexual self-determination is fast becoming the most important legal right in the nation. Whether the issue is same-sex marriage or nation-wide health insurance coverage for abortion and contraception, the scales of justice are now tipped in favor of an individual's right to choose with whom to have sex, in what family arrangements, with what contraception, and disposing of any resulting pregnancy however they wish.

This development seems reasonable. What could be more personal or private than sexual choice? But it comes at an expense. Legal niceties aside, what the U.S. Supreme Court did in its recent decisions on the

[federal Defense of Marriage Act and California's Proposition 8](#)

was to choose between two competing classes of rights -- sexual rights and religious rights. In siding with same-sex marriage and against traditional marriage, the Supreme Court elevated sexual rights to a more important level. This is clear from Justice Kennedy's majority opinion in the Windsor case, where he characterizes the religious and moral arguments behind DOMA as illegitimate and discriminatory.

The new supremacy of sexual freedom is equally clear from the on-going fight over the implementation of the Health and Human Services regulations, which require nearly all health insurance plans to cover abortion and contraception, with limited exceptions. So, on July 2, the U.S. Catholic bishops joined with Southern Baptist, Jewish, and Mormon leaders to call for greater conscience rights protections under the HHS regulations. At stake is whether the government will allow its citizens to act on their religious beliefs in their daily lives. If someone can act a certain way based on sexual preference, why can't someone act a different way based on religious preference?

Whether the majority of Americans agree with the religious view in question shouldn't matter in

deciding to grant conscience protection. Why would a religious view need protection from government encroachment unless it was unpopular and disagreeable? As the

[July 2 joint letter](#)

states:

Many of the signatories on this letter do not hold doctrinal objections to the use of contraception. Yet we stand united in protest to this mandate Whether or not we agree with the particular conscientious objection is beside the point. HHS continues to deny many Americans the freedom to manifest their beliefs through practice and observance in their daily lives.

Decades ago, the Supreme Court found a right to abortion in part stemming from the unstated right to privacy existing in the penumbra of the Ninth Amendment. Days ago, the Supreme Court stopped just short of finding a right to same-sex marriage in the penumbra of the Fifth Amendment. But there is no need to search for penumbras when it comes to religious rights. The Constitution states clearly that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." To protect sexual freedom at the expense of religious freedom turns the Constitution on its head.

This contribution is available at http://canwecana.blogspot.com/2013/07/sexual-self-determination-is-new-self_3.html

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Andrew & Anna's Courtship Story [at Footprints On My Heart]

I am so excited to finally share the story of how my sister, Anna, met her handsome husband-to-be, Andrew. After announcing [their engagement](#), I knew I wanted them to tell their story and am so excited it's finally here! I've personally learned so much and have been so inspired by their example; I am thrilled to share their witness with you today. Anna and Andrew are to be married on November 9, 2013. Please keep them in your prayers!



Andrew: I remember seeing Anna for the first time at the Adoration Chapel at Our Lady of Angels a few months after I committed to a 5:00 a.m. holy hour. I don't know when it was though—sometime in the late summer or early fall of 2009. I remember praying at least once, “Why can't I meet anybody who wakes up early to make a holy hour?” I love telling people that we spiritually stalked each other a year before we met.

Anna: I signed up for a weekly 5:00 a.m. holy hour shortly after moving to Woodbridge in August of 2009, and I noticed that Andrew was also there each Tuesday morning. I remember one morning at Adoration I was praying about my vocation and a quote popped into my head from a talk I'd heard: “If you're looking for a spouse, run towards Christ, and then look around and see who's running with you.” Picture this: when that quote came to mind I was sitting in the chapel with Christ in front of me and Andrew sitting right across the aisle... I immediately noticed him, but my response was “no, not him God, I don't even know him.”

I was honestly was a little relieved when he stopped showing up that November. I figured I didn't have to worry about him anymore.



Andrew: Even though our holy hour encounters ended when I moved a little closer to Washington in November 2009, I stayed involved with the Woodbridge Catholic Young Adult Group. Thus, we met formally in the summer of 2010 when Anna joined the group. Not long after, as the group discussed the Seven Sacraments, Anna caught my attention with a great talk on the Eucharist. She introduced me to the *Adoro te Devote*, the great prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas. Then we ended up on the leadership team together. I joined her at a midnight holy hour on New Year's Eve and asked her out to see *South Pacific* at the Kennedy Center. She said she already seen it. I awkwardly tried to ask her out for dinner, likely made a fool out of myself, and let the matter drop and kind of pretended it never happened. Me, overthinking just about everything, questioned the prudence of dating someone in the leadership of the young adult group. I used the excuse that it would create drama.

Anna: In my defense, it was about 2:30 a.m. when he asked me out (after holy hour, midnight Mass, and a game night with other young adults) and I wasn't thinking well on my feet. Plus I was kind of surprised to be invited to the very same show I had just seen literally two or three days earlier with my family. I definitely liked him at this point and was half expecting him to ask me out, but given the situation I got kind of flustered and when he switched to asking about dinner I just said maybe. I expected him to try again, but when he didn't after a couple weeks I figured I had lost my chance and we continued our friendship as if nothing had happened. In hindsight though, I'm glad we ended up with an extra few months before we started dating, as we really got to know each other well and had a strong friendship to build on later.

Andrew: That's not to say I didn't notice her. Anytime I was joking around at a leadership meeting, I noticed her trying to stifle a laugh. During a research trip/vacation to Philadelphia, we emailed back and forth and at her suggestion, I made a visit to the Shrine of St. Rita. She did scold me at one point for checking my email on my phone instead of enjoying myself. I'd be lying if I said the scolding didn't put a smile on my face.

Nonetheless, I got a bit tunnel-visioned in my Lenten penance and then, it was May 2011. I was

getting these impulses to ask her out again. Naturally, I took it to prayer; the thoughts of asking her out grew stronger. “Ok, fine,” I prayed, “I’ll try asking her out but if this one doesn’t work out, you’re going to have to come up with another plan because I’m done with this dating thing.”

The opportunity came up toward the end of May. One of the regular young adult events was the monthly “First Friday Fun”—an evening Mass followed by some activity. For June 2011, we were playing mini golf a few miles down the road from me. I knew Anna had started a new job that was closer to me than her place. I fired off a friendly email and asked her if she’d like to stop by for dinner and carpool to the mini golf place since parking is always a catastrophe. We both planned to go to Mass before work. Somewhat to my surprise, she said yes.



Anna: He initially asked if I’d like to carpool in person at a young adults group meeting. He didn’t mention dinner or say anything else at the time since we were part of a larger conversation, but I caught a look in his eye and wasn’t surprised when he followed up by email a few days later and offered to make me dinner before the mini golf trip. It was a casual dinner with good food and then we met up with the rest of the group.

Andrew: Through the month of June, we went to dinners and started spending time together. She taught me a great card game that she learned from her grandmother called “Kings in the Corner.” We got to know each other better. I had dated before, but never really clicked with anyone on a spiritual level. I wanted any relationship to revolve around vocational discernment. Marriage is a call from God. I wanted to be with someone who I could help grow spiritually, and who could help me grow as well. The more I got to know Anna, the more I was convinced that she was who I was looking for.

Anna: I was a bit stressed with moving that month, and Andrew was a wonderful support and listened to my venting more than once. He even took a day off from work to help me move, which

also gave him a chance to meet my family. Sometime around then my parents also gave a talk on marriage for the young adults group which helped me to see the beauty of the married vocation and desire to discern it more fully with Andrew. I was praying about our relationship throughout that month and had the sense that God was drawing us together. Plus my sister was starting to nag me and ask when we would make it official.

Andrew: I asked her if she wanted to go up to the city for a surprise on July 3, 2011. The surprise was the rehearsal of the Capitol Fourth concert. This is the concert broadcast on PBS every Fourth of July. The rehearsal is missing just a couple things: the crowds and the fireworks. We went to dinner on Capitol Hill and walked down to the gate, only to be turned away—severe storms were rolling in. We debated a few moments on what to do—characteristically, neither of us were being decisive. We decided, ultimately, to head to shelter. We entered the parking garage of the Rayburn House Office Building just in time. It started pouring rain! We ended up playing cards on a picnic blanket on the garage floor. It was certainly a surprise, though not what I planned. Eventually we went home and watched a movie on St. Damien of Molokai that I had from Netflix, had a good discussion on dating, and we were official.



Anna: As part of that discussion he asked me: “true or false, dating is to marriage as seminary is to priesthood.” I said true. So we began our relationship with the understanding that we both saw it as a time of discernment and formation for marriage.

Andrew: We got into a routine of going to Mass together, praying together (particularly the Liturgy of the Hours), hiking, cooking, and so forth. We also took the advice of a couple we knew and started reading to each other. Since we both saw dating as discernment, we started with Venerable Fulton Sheen’s *Three to Get Married* and a book called *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts*.

At some point, we both realized that the marriage thing wasn’t an “if,” but a “when.” Anna said she wanted to be surprised by a proposal, but didn’t want to be caught completely off guard. I gave her fair warning that I was going to talk with her dad. I contacted Anna’s sister, Susie, who was

living in Fredericksburg, and tried to arrange a dinner with her without raising Anna's suspicions that I was the one making arrangements. We settled on May 4. On the way, I asked Anna if we could stop at the Adoration Chapel for Evening Prayer and some quiet time, since I had just gotten through a busy day at work.

Anna: I was a little suspicious, but I didn't think he'd had time to get a ring, so I kept telling myself it wouldn't be that day.

Andrew: On the way down, Anna told me about the homily that morning at Mass. The priest (who is doing our marriage prep) talked about the connection between marriage and the Eucharist. After we prayed Evening Prayer, I whispered to Anna, "Speaking of marriage and the Eucharist, there's another reason I wanted to stop here." I don't remember exactly what I said, but I'm fairly certain I told her I love her and want to serve her as her husband. I got down on one knee (as best I could between two pews) and asked her to marry me. I was overjoyed when she said yes. I look forward now to a lifetime of adventures and misadventures, but most of all, to all the years that I will spend living a life loving and serving her.



Anna: It was simple but beautiful, and I can't think of a better location. We prayed Evening Prayer quietly, and then I saw him slip his hand in his pocket and realized that it really was happening. I believe he told me that he wanted to propose in the presence of Christ since he wants Christ to be at the center of our marriage. He pulled out a beautiful ring with a diamond that has been in his family since 1943 and two sapphires, which are my birthstone and a lifelong favorite of mine. As we left the chapel, our joy was overflowing in giggles which we were both trying to stifle until we got outside. I look forward to spending the rest of my life at Andrew's side, journeying together through life, sharing our joys and supporting each other through our struggles and continuing to grow in love for each other.



Photo Credit: Susie M {Maid of Honor, sister of the bride}

This contribution is available at <http://totus2usmaria.blogspot.com/2013/07/andrew-annas-courtship-story.html>
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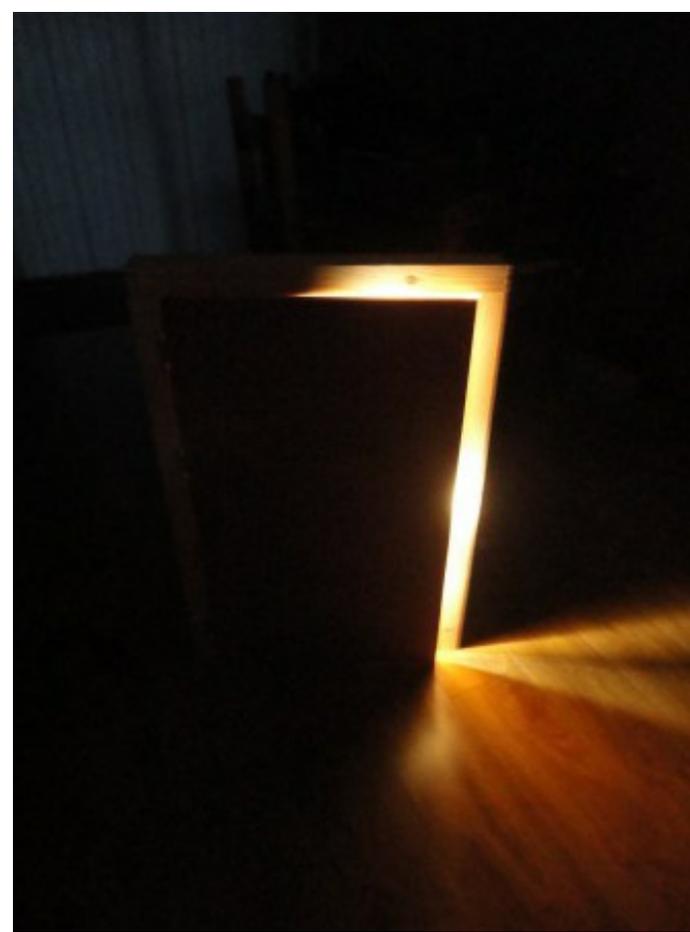
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Session 8: The Third Threshold: Openness

When I speak with someone who is curious about the faith, I realize my revelations about the spiritual life in the Mystical Body of Christ are like speaking about a foreign country. Psychologically speaking, a person needs to hear a completely new concept at least three times before it even begins to register. Sharing about spiritual reality is like helping God make new electrical connections in their brains and this does not happen quickly. They have existed on surface, physical reality with God-filtered glasses on; the life in Christ that I share with them is completely alien. They have no reference point.

That said, slowly sharing my conversion story, epiphanies and inexplicable miracles in my life tickles their curiosity and opens their spirit to the Holy Spirit. I always remind myself that it is the Holy Spirit who knocks on the door of their heart, I am simply an open window, a landing strip, an antenna that connects the power of God to the earth.



As an intercessor, I stand in the gap for the curious by surrounding them with the saints and angels. I always hide them in the heart of God to protect the seeker from the wiles of the Evil One and the lies of secular society. Just like St. Thérèse of Lisieux, I know that all the hearts Jesus has connected to mine are lifted up when I lift my heart up to God the Father. A beam of Light shines on them when I pray.

When my inner life is dry, The Holy Spirit always rises up with joy and love. While a visitor is in my kitchen sipping tea or snags me after Mass, God never fails to manifest His Presence for the other's sake. I do not fake a warm smile, joy literally bubbles up from deep within my spirit. I have learned how to live in the Spirit, not my mind or my emotions, at least when God needs to use a handy body with ears and a mouth. I also watch their body language, never overwhelming them with too much detail at first.

My tips for evangelizing?

- Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Laugh and keep a sense of humour.
- Remember, you're just the donkey.
- God does the real work.

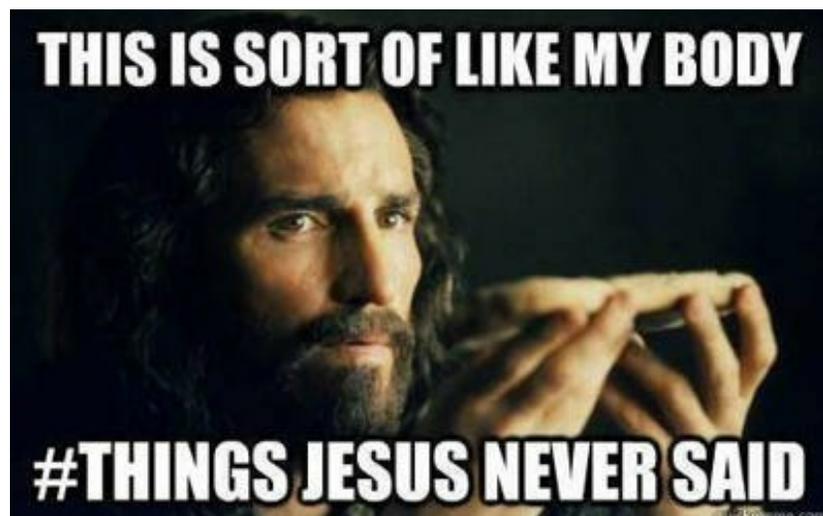


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In Search of New Testament Christianity... [at The Back of the World]



If you aren't following "Things Jesus Never Said" on Facebook, you really ought to be...

When I was a kid, going to non-denominational Evangelical churches with my family, "the New Testament church" was a refrain that was constantly on our lips. "We want to get back to the book of Acts, and to really be the New Testament church!" Generally speaking, this was assumed to mean absolute minimalism in both worship and doctrine: clearly, the earliest Christians were all about just singing a few simple worship songs, hearing a basic Bible teaching, and hanging out together, right? In our minds, the ragtag bunch of disciples we see in the New Testament didn't go for any of the later "add-ons" to the faith, and to get back to that apostolic purity we had to get rid of all the complications that Catholics (or heck, even the more "denominational" Protestants) had inserted centuries later.

But then I grew up, read the actual history of "the New Testament church," and discovered, to my surprise, that those guys were pretty gosh-darn Catholic.

Bl. John Henry Newman famously said that "to be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant." I certainly found that to be true in my experience: the more I read about the first centuries after Christ, the more I had difficulty in believing what I had been taught as a child. One by one, I discovered that "Catholic add-ons"—which I was told had been invented either during the reign of Constantine or in the Middle Ages—had, in fact, been believed by "the New Testament church." I learned that those ragtag, minimalist disciples running around the ancient Roman Empire had actually taught beliefs about the Virgin Mary, apostolic succession, the communion of saints, and much more that would be quite at home in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The one doctrine, though, that stood out most in this regard was the early Church's belief about the Eucharist. **Just a few years after the Lord's Resurrection, and still a couple of centuries**

before Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Apostolic Fathers were absolutely adamant that in Holy Communion, we receive the actual, literal, Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Take, for instance, the words of Justin Martyr, writing in the year 155 AD:

“The food that has been made the Eucharist by the prayer of His word, and which nourishes our flesh and blood by assimilation, is both the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”

Or, to go even earlier, take the words of Ignatius, who was the leader of the church at Antioch (which, as the book of Acts tells us, was where the disciples were first called “Christians”). He offers these words of rebuke for those who do not believe in the Real Presence in about the year 107 AD:

“From the Eucharist and prayer they hold aloof, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ.”

A while later, Theodore of Mopsuestia, a bishop born in Antioch around the year 350 AD, anticipated the arrival of the the “Things Jesus Never Said” memes by about 1,600 years when he said:

“He did not say ‘This is the symbol of My Body, and this, of My Blood,’ but, what is set before us, but that it is transformed by the Eucharistic action into Flesh and Blood.”

And passages like these from the early Church Fathers are just way too numerous to list here...

So I’ve had to conclude that it’s not that the non-denominational Evangelical church steered me wrong in my youth by telling me to go in search of the “New Testament church”...it’s just that they we failed to notice that all those ragtag, Acts chapter 2 type disciples could be found kneeling at the Communion rail of the local Catholic parish...

This contribution is available at <http://backoftheworld.com/2013/07/01/in-search-of-new-testament-christianity/>
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Milan Kundera on memory and conscience [at Catholic Deacon]

In my post

["Memory and Morality: God remembers all,"](#)

I wrote about the central role that memory plays in the works of Milan Kundera, literary works that I cherish and to which I return time and again. Kundera certainly grasps the necessity of remembering in order for there to be truth. Nonetheless, he also grasps that human beings are, due to our limited nature, forgetful creatures. In this he would not differ with Pope St. John Paul II, who insisted that the purification of memory consisted first and foremost in remembering accurately and not evading evil episodes, or even trying to tidy them up, or explain them away. After all, to forgive can never mean to forget, at least not entirely. To do so would wipe away the significance of forgiveness itself!

In his second encyclical,

[Spe salvi](#)

, on the theological virtue of hope, Pope Benedict XVI noted something of tremendous importance: "justice and grace—must be seen in their correct inner relationship. Grace does not cancel out justice. It does not make wrong into right. It is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that whatever someone has done on earth ends up being of equal value. Dostoevsky, for example, was right to protest against this kind of Heaven and this kind of grace in his novel

The Brothers Karamazov

. Evildoers, in the end, do not sit at table at the eternal banquet beside their victims without distinction, as though nothing had happened" (this also serves to remind me that I need to re-read Derrida's "On Forgiveness," something I read last fall on an airplane and prompted many thoughts).

Reading from the same book of Kundera's essays,

[Encounter](#)

, last night I read something that helped me to tie up a loose end concerning memory and the gap between believing and not believing in God. The essay that contained the clarification is entitled "The Total Rejection of Heritage, or

[Iannis Xenakis](#)

(a text published in 1980 with two interventions from 2008)." The enlightenment comes from Kundera's first 2008 intervention, when, remarks on his initial response to re-reading his essay on what the musci of Xenakis meant to him after the 1968 Soviet invasion of his native Czechoslovakia:

Reading my old text, seeing the phrases "my nation had just gotten a death sentence" and "the catastrophe that had struck my country...and whose consequences will be felt for centuries," I felt a spontaneous urge to obliterate them, since these days they can only seem absurd. Then I got a grip on myself. And I even found it rather disturbing that my memory should think to censor itself. Such are the Splendors and Miseries of memory: it is proud of its ability to keep truthful track of the logical sequence of past events; but when it comes to how we experienced them at the time, memory feels no obligation to truth...



Russian tanks roll through Prague, Spring 1968

... if we we forget our state of mind back then, there is no way to understand anything

Of course, his desire to revise what he wrote in 1980 clearly arose, in 2008, from the fact that Czechoslovakia no longer existed, there is the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, neither of which are under either Soviet or communist domination. In other words, he was tempted to see his 1980 observations as incorrect, inaccurate, in need of revision, or obliteration. He realized that such a revision is a gross violation of conscience, what happened in the interim notwithstanding. It also reminded him of the transitory nature of all earthly things. Does this not reveal the beauty of Eastern Christian response to someone's death, "May his memory be eternal"?

Update:

Just this morning, as I resumed my initial reading of Pope Francis' and Pope Benedict's collaborative encyclical,

[*Lumen Fidei*](#)

, I was struck by this (which, in my view, is pure Ratzinger)-

"The question of truth is really a question of memory, deep memory, for it deals with something prior to ourselves and can succeed in uniting us in a way that transcends our petty and limited individual consciousness"

(par. 25).

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2013/07/milan-kundera-on-memory-and-conscience.html>

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Delusional dissidents [at Convert Journal]



This is far from a new topic for me. I have touched upon it in [Catholics and politics](#), [women priests](#), [only Catholics go to heaven?](#), [Catholic obedience](#), [some leave the Church](#) and [public sinners](#).

As a convert, I think a lot about others like myself who realize (or at least suspect) that their Christian community is not in full accord with our Lord's true teaching. We discover that it is NOT a matter of opinion, that there is truth and that it is knowable. We find that Jesus actually DID institute a Church for the purpose of preserving and teaching that truth until He comes again. When by the grace of God we are led to the Catholic Church, we know that we are home at last.

It is difficult then, to understand Catholic dissidents. "Cradle Catholics" (typically) to which faith has been given as a birthright, yet who walk away from it. Why do they do it? The Bible warns:

If we sin deliberately **after receiving knowledge of the truth**, there no longer remains sacrifice for sins but a fearful prospect of judgment and a flaming fire that is going to consume the adversaries.

This is a very serious, very blunt warning. The [Catechism](#) puts it this way:

How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers? Re-formulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body:

Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. **Hence they could not be saved**

who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.

That is trying to “re-formulate” the concept (*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*) “positively.” There really is no nice way to warn of eternal damnation.

There seems to be different classes of dissidents, among whom are:

- *lapsed Catholics*: these are people who no longer honor the precepts of the faith. Often they attend no worship service of any kind (yet still consider themselves Catholic). Some have joined Protestant communities or other religions (these no longer consider themselves Catholic).
- *active dissidents*: these are people who are active in the Church and consider themselves to be faithful Catholics but are not. They reject Christ’s teaching, infallibly interpreted by His Church, in favor of their own sinful preferences. [Liberal Catholic politicians](#) are the best example of this.
- *independent parishes*: these are like the active dissidents, but who have broken away into schismatic groups.

It is that third group (“independent” parishes) that I want to look at here. It is important to keep the scale of this in perspective. Estimates vary, but there is on the order of 300,000 Catholic parishes worldwide. The number of these self-described “independent” parishes appears to be on the order of dozens (excluding the SSPX, schismatic but quite the opposite of the groups referenced here). Probably the sum total of parishioners in such schismatic groups would compare to a single, large Catholic parish such as mine here in the Atlanta area.

Yet, they get showered with the media attention and acceptance they desperately seek. The mainstream media is always in favor of attacking the Church however it can in hopes of diminishing her influence. To wit, [a recent article](#) in the *New Haven Register* caught my attention. It has been picked-up and spread by various media outlets (as its content so appeals to them).

When I read the article, I was taken aback by it. The only word that popped into my mind to describe them is “delusional” (*adj*: 1. having false or unrealistic beliefs or opinions; 2. maintaining fixed false beliefs even when confronted with facts). Consider:

- They have separated themselves from the authority of the Church, given to her directly and explicitly by our Lord.
- They think that they have all 7 sacraments. Lacking validly ordained priests, they do not. The only sacrament they validly offer is baptism. This is 1 less than any protestant community has. This is because as baptized Catholics, they are subject to canon law and their marriages outside of the Church are invalid by defect of form.
- The article asserts that they have the “feel” of a Catholic “service.” So do Anglicans, but they do not claim to be Catholic. Our faith is about truth, not how we “feel.”
- They embrace all the liberal sins: “re-marriage,” female priests, gay priests, re-married

female gay priests, and so on. The article doesn't mention abortion or contraception, but it is a safe bet that they strongly support a woman's "right to choose" (the destruction of her unborn child).

- This entire parish is objectively living in a state of mortal sin (if for no other reason than not fulfilling their Mass obligation). Their women ordination involved "priests" have excommunicated themselves *latae sententiae*.

The article notes that "all are welcome" by this group. Ditto the real Catholic Church. The difference is the real Church wants you to turn away from sin and turn to God. People turn to this group "because they've found their church no longer meets their needs" (to sin).

One couple notes that they "were really looking for a church that was all-inclusive in the world, because Jesus loved everybody." That is the universal Church – the Catholic Church. The difference is understanding love. Jesus was clear that we are to repent of our sins and to sin no more, not do whatever we are tempted to – which rejects His love. There is more in the article, but you get the idea.

The Catechism describes groups like this as (at least) incredulous and schismatic:

Incredulity is the neglect of revealed truth or the willful refusal to assent to it. "*Heresy* is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same; *apostasy* is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; *schism* is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him."

So how will they be judged? We never go there, thank God! Such judgment is His alone and in His mercy He may make allowances for genuine ignorance. However the Catechism warns:

Ignorance can often be imputed to personal responsibility. This is the case when a man "takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin." In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits.

The bottom line: do not be confused by these few groups or the common media coverage of them. Instead, pray for their return to God on His terms over prideful, arrogant viewpoints more in line with consumerism and politics than the Glory of God.

This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2013/07/delusional-dissidents/>
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God's Will be done... [at Flow Chart to Surrender]

I posted about some exams and my future for 2014

[here](#)

. You can see there I failed them then. I took them again this past weekend. While I performed much better, I still failed.

I consider them to be a success though, as I prayed throughout the exams. Remembering that God's will should be done and not mine is a far more important task than passing some tests to pursue my goals.

Something happened after the test I did not expect. On my way out, I felt somewhat compelled to go speak to a man I'd just seen fail. His wife was still testing. I'd overheard him say they were both unemployed and had seven kids. I had no idea why I wanted to talk to him, only that I should. And the only thing I could think to say when I got there was, "Are you a Christian?"

If you don't know me, you don't know that I would normally have a bit of a longer transition there. I just didn't know what else to say and out it sprang. He said yes, and so I told him the quote from the

[post](#)

in June in which I shared my failure with you all. "God has not called me to be successful; He has called me to be faithful." We had a lovely and encouraging chat, and both of us were a lot less disheartened by the end of it.

Do not for a moment think I came up with this on my own. I was far too tired, and honestly disappointed, for my introvert brain to think up a grand plan to go speak with some complete stranger about God. By the time I got to my car I'd realized that I

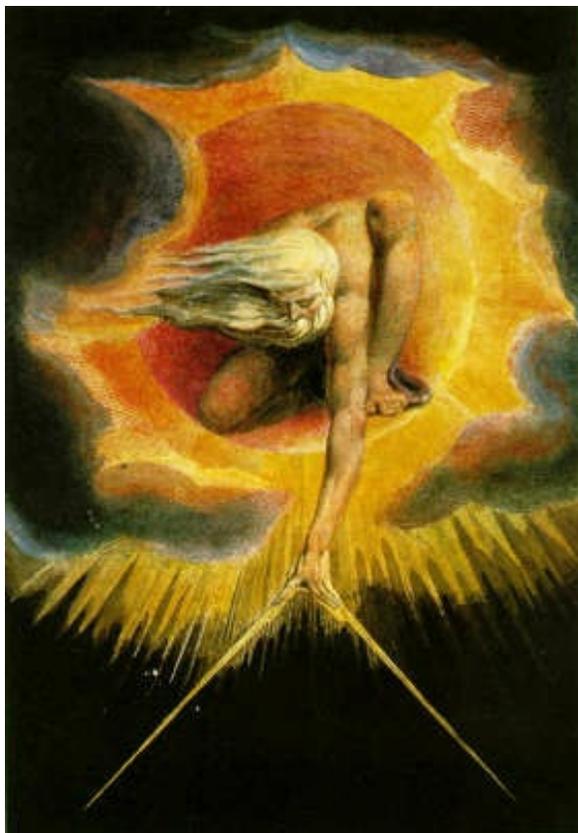
had

prayed for God's will to be done on that day. In my short-sighted little mind, I'd limited that prayer to the test itself, to the time I was engaged in the activity I thought was important. God's will was bigger than the few moments of my test.

This is true during every moment of our entire lives. Our scope is so limited we may only see what is before us, and maybe not even that. But God sees it ALL.

The Lord is King [at Journey to Wisdom]

What does it take to awaken awe and wonder of the Lord? What keeps you from running to all the petty little idols surrounding us that promise so much, but rob you of your eternal inheritance?



The Lord is king, let the earth rejoice, let all the coastlands be glad. Cloud and darkness are his raiment; his throne, justice and right. A fire prepares his path; it burns up his foes on every side. His lightnings light up the world, the earth trembles at the sight. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord of all the earth. The skies proclaim his justice; all peoples see his glory. Let those who serve idols be ashamed, those who boast of their worthless gods. All you spirits worship him. Psalm 97:1-7

That is part of Psalm 97 and according to my Divine Office app this psalm foretells of worldwide salvation and that all nations will believe in Christ. One of the things that I love about praying the

[Divine Office](#)

is how they help to stir up awe. Even when my personal prayer is dry, the Psalms that are prayed in the Office always lift up my heart with wonder, if even for just a moment. I cannot ponder them enough.

As our contemporary culture continues to embrace materialistic philosophical views of the world, I love being reminded, “

the earth rejoices and the coastlands are glad.”

I love how the phrase: ‘c

loud and darkness are his raiment

‘increases my wonder for the mystery that is Our Lord. It both establishes God’s absolute authority over all, and reveals how the shabby materialistic philosophies are blind to the great transcendent dignity of man.

To reduce our humanity to biological chance goes against everything that we are naturally oriented to. The ancients pagans were much wiser than we are in our present technologically advanced age when they saw divinity in the sun, the moon and the stars. They may have missed the mark in their worship, but our lot in life with everything around us reduced to only what can be quantified and measured is so much more demeaning to our true nature. We are no less blood thirsty than those who sacrificed humans on altars to false gods -- we sacrifice our children in abortion for petty comforts.

In the movie

[The 13th Day](#)

, which tells of the appearance of Mary to three children in Fatima, Portugal in 1917, there is a scene near the end in which the sun appears to be falling down upon the earth and all the people gathered at the site to witness the promised miracle are screaming and running for their lives. Where are they running to if the sun is falling from the heavens? But an elderly woman, who seemed angrily doubtful just before the beginning of the apparition, fell to her knees exclaiming “God, how great is your power!” It sends chills down my spine and brings tears to my eyes.

It is fitting that this revelation was brought by Mary, whose humility enabled her to be the Theotokos: God bearer. God has created us to receive His power, we must begin to have an inkling of the magnitude of that gift, and the humility to empty ourselves of vain materialistic idols so that we can be awakened to His mighty presence. That is your inheritance.



Peace and Grace to all Heidi Knofczynski

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2013/07/the-lord-is-king.html>
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When in Confession, Disclose Your OCD [at Bear Wrongs Patiently]

I happened to notice that someone visited my site via the Google search "in confession should I say I have OCD". I wanted to answer that, in case anyone else has that same question (mainly OCD folks like me).

The answer: YES. Assuming you do actually have it. ;-)

It doesn't have to be a long soliloquy, Father will ask you to elaborate if he needs you to. Whenever a new priest is hearing my confession, I always

always

start it with "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. I have obsessive-compulsive disorder. It has been X days/weeks/whatever since my last Confession." I've noticed some priests give me a blank look if I say "OCD" (and yes, I confess face-to-face). Obsessive-compulsive disorder makes it very obvious.

Why do I tell them this? It helps them determine culpability as well as appropriate penances. The last time I went to Confession, I lucked out because that confessor has a PhD in psychology. He was very good about telling me my penance in a way that left zero room for scrupulosity. Had I not told him about the OCD, I think it would have been different.

Greg learned the hard way about not disclosing conditions like OCD. He has horrible short term memory due to the burst aneurysm he had when he was 18. A recent Confession (not with Dr. Father) resulted in him having a penance that required him to remember to say prayers daily. I helped him along but it was hard on him and he was frustrated. It came up in conversation with Fr. Anonymous, who was

shocked

that Greg doesn't tell his confessors about his memory problems. In the future, he will (he now has a card that says "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. I have short-term memory loss. It has been...." so he DOES remember!).

When I get to the point that my confessor remembers I have OCD (such as with Fr. Anonymous or

[Fr. Severson](#)

), I don't need to explain. I hope.

So please, random Googler, disclose your OCD, your anxiety, your depression, your memory problems, your addictions, problems from your medications, etc to your confessor. It all falls into the seal of confession, so it won't go into the parish bulletin the next week; and they can help you with culpability and penances, as well as offer encouragement or even tell you to go to a psychiatrist (such as what happened with me, once the confessor realized we weren't dealing with 'the blues'). Don't give them your life story, of course. But let them know that you have circumstances that can play into culpability or penance or whatnot.

This contribution is available at <http://catholicmomathome.blogspot.com/2013/07/when-in-confession-disclose-your-ocd.html>

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My Journey to God (Part I) - From Darkness to Light [at Revolution of Love Blog]

This is Day 6 of Jen's .

(I originally wrote this years ago but this is the first time posting it on the blog.)

* * *



I could feel my feet sink into the damp sand as the waves nipped at my toes. I looked over my shoulder and saw my footprints being swept away by the ocean waves. Whenever I'm near the ocean I'm always reminded of the mercy of God – farther and vaster than the eye can imagine, more powerful than the crashing surf upon the rocks, yet as gentle as a lapping wave at your feet.

As I continue to walk, each footstep recalls a memory – some filled with joy and some with deep remorse. I wish I could say that I have always tried to follow God and live his commandments but it was a dark road that led me away from God. It started out innocently enough, but the real turning point took place after high school. I had moved with my family to a new town and made new friends. Previously, I had always been basically a “good” girl and had never gotten into major trouble. I was active in my church and in youth ministry but had a vague sort of love for God. As long as I felt “warm and fuzzy” inside with the knowledge that Jesus loved me, then I figured that I was a faithful Catholic.

Frankly, without a real relationship with Christ, with no solid foundation of prayer, no frequent sacramental life or an understanding of my faith, it was understandable that my rebellious side was

fed a steady diet of discontent. I didn't want to turn my back on God completely, because I still believed He existed, but I was bored. I was attracted to my new friends because they were "alternative" (when such a word existed) and they had a seductive edginess in their attitudes – as well as their clothes and music – that I liked. I started dating a dark and poetic agnostic and everything slowly spiraled down.



I wasn't used to the life that my friends lived. There was such a casualness and acceptance about drinking, drugs, body piercing, sexual experimentation, homosexuality, the occult, and the like, that eventually nothing seemed to shock me anymore because my friends were all into it. I kept my distance for awhile, still having the fear of God in me, but the enticement of sin was more than I could handle. I began to care less about God and my family. I was tired of rules and restrictions and feeling guilty all the time, so I ignored God all together.

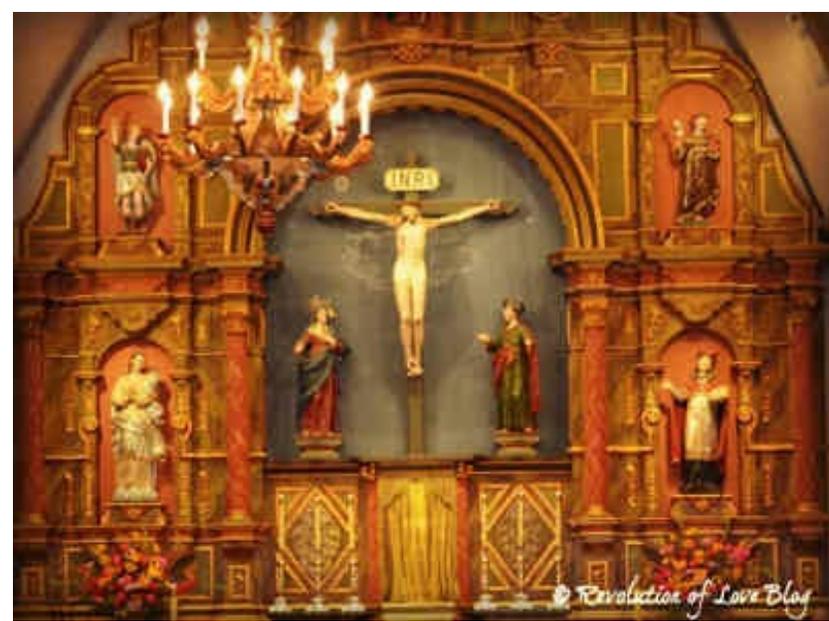
The months drifted by as I got more involved with my boyfriend and the scene. I considered myself much more loving and "Christian" because I accepted people for who they were and didn't care or try to change them from the sinful lives they led. If my conscience dared to try and challenge me, I would just turn on my music louder and allow the voice of angst and anger to take over me with painful pleasure. I didn't care about morals and values anymore because it was my own life and I could do as I pleased...but something was wrong with this road I was traveling.



My feelings of freedom and independence began to suffocate me and chain me down. I was slowly losing my self-respect and was swiftly gaining self-hatred and feelings of worthlessness. Everything that was once so enticing was now only adding to my depression. I thought I could change things myself by getting out of the scene and breaking up with my boyfriend. My problems were far from solved when I had to deal with an obsessive ex who wouldn't let me go, but even harder, I had to deal with the realization of what I had let my life become. My parents and family were agonizing over me and they only knew a small portion of what my life was. Sadly, I was deceptive and covered my tracks well, but I also knew that there was Someone who witnessed my every moment.

I tried praying and going back to church but I was left empty. I had gotten so far from God that I was too ashamed to face Him without barriers and masks. I couldn't handle the guilt of knowing that I had God's love but I didn't want it. I had thrown it back in His face so I could embrace sin. I couldn't bear to ask for forgiveness AGAIN knowing that I'd most likely return to my sinful ways once more. So I walked through the days in a masquerade, pretending that everything was okay. At night, screaming voices in my head echoed anger and pain and refused to let me sleep. I didn't know how much more I could take until this desperate, hopeless feeling would consume me.

I tried not to spend too much time with my family, especially my mom; one look at her was a prick of my conscience and I hated it. I avoided any discussions of Godly things but found myself trying to listen behind closed doors to what was being said. I'd hear lively conversations about God's love, Jesus' mercy, the Spirit's strength, and the Blessed Mother's holy example. A part of me was disgusted and cynical about anything religious yet, I didn't want to admit that another part of me was intrigued and longed to be that on fire about my faith. It meant very little to me and now it seemed farther to me than ever but the longing for something more in my life nagged at me; the cynical walls started to shake as hope tried to take root.



As night once again approached, for some odd reason, my mind started thinking about the religious conversation I had overheard. My mind's eye pictured the scene of the crucifixion and I zeroed in on one figure, the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross. She seemed such a complete contrast to Mary Magdalene, whom I could relate to more. Childhood words flashed through my mind that the Virgin Mary was our heavenly Mother. I thought to myself that she must hate me because I sent her Son to the cross. I pictured her with tears in her eyes pleading with me, "He died for you...He died for you...He died for you." The words echoed in my mind and a sudden wave of awareness swept over me that Jesus not only died on the cross because of my sins, He died on the cross to forgive and truly love me. It wasn't some pretty little cliché you hear in church or Sunday school; it was REALITY.

Crumbled on the floor, it was more than I could bear. I sobbed uncontrollably because I knew my life was nothing without Jesus. All the bitterness, hatred, and cynicism were being washed away as I cried out to God not just with words but with my whole being. My soul ached for Jesus' love and forgiveness. I realized that God never left me; it was I that walked away. God didn't stop loving me when I allowed sin to tear me apart; rather, He waited for me so He could take my broken life and put it back together with His loving mercy. I rested my head on my pillow and for the first time in my life that nagging voice that usually said, "It won't last; you'll be back to your old ways in no time," was gone. I closed my eyes knowing that my life would remain forever changed.



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The next morning I knew I had gone through some kind of conversion because my attitude and thoughts were different. I had accepted Jesus into my life in a way that I never had before. I decided to make a clean break from everything of my past life, including old friends, habits, attitudes, and even my music. Some things were harder than others to let go of but God, in His mercy, brought into my life new Christian friends. They not only became a part of my life but introduced me to the Christian underground (in other words, not mainstream) world of alternative music and 'zines (self-produced mini-magazines, the forerunner to blogs. 😊). I was elated to meet people who looked like my old friends on the outside but who were, so different on the inside.

More importantly, by their example I was constantly encouraged to love Jesus and serve Him. However, one thing bothered me, I wondered why I had found the spirit of God so alive amongst these new Christian friends and the love of God so lacking among the Catholics I knew. Although I knew my family loved God and were very close to Jesus, I couldn't be a Catholic simply because my family was. Besides, Catholicism never really appealed to me with all its traditions and rituals; it seemed so complicated, whereas a simple "bible-based" Christianity pleased my carefree spirit that wanted to worship God in my own way.

I didn't want to make a hasty or emotional decision so I prayed with a sincere heart and asked God to reveal His truth to me. If I came to realize that it meant leaving Catholicism, then I would. I knew that as long as I was open to God and didn't build walls of resistance, He'd show me the answer. I grabbed my Bible and the writings of Catholics and anti-Catholics. I wanted to hear both sides of the story. As I studied it bothered me that what the Catholic Church taught seemed to differ from what the Catholics I knew were doing. My view of the Church was being tainted by people who didn't even follow the Church in the first place. As I puzzled over this notion, God brought into my life on-fire Catholics who had a deep relationship with Christ, who actually understood

what Catholicism was about, and who lived their faith with a pure love for God. It shed a different light on things but I needed to find out more.



I began reading Scriptures more, not just taking a few passages here and there to prove a point, but I tried to look at Scripture as a whole, in order to get the fullness of God's word. I also looked into the history of the early Church and the writings of the Church fathers. It baffled me that they were so....well, Catholic. I never knew that they defended the Catholic belief that the Eucharist is not symbolic but actually the Body and Blood of Christ. I didn't know that they understood the Church to have hierarchical authority given by Christ, with Peter as the first pope and the following bishops of Rome to be his successors. I didn't even know that for almost 400 years there was no Bible, as we know it; it was the Catholic Church, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who prayed and infallibly decided which books were to be included and excluded in the canon that we now read. I was awestruck.

The more I learned, the more I felt drawn to Catholicism and instead of walking away, I embraced it. My views of the Mass, the sacraments, even the Blessed Mother were radically changed when I opened my heart in prayer. The more my relationship grew with the Lord and the more I studied, the more I understood the meaning and purpose of these gifts. What once seemed like meaningless, ritualistic, "excess baggage" I now saw as sources of God's grace. The Church I was ready to leave actually deepened my love of Christ because I realized that I was deceived by the bad example of a few people (religious included) who labeled themselves as Catholic but who were far from it.



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As I continued to learn and study I shared with a few close Christian friends my growing convictions about the Church. They didn't fully understand but they accepted me and my beliefs. My own heart was settled and I left it at that. In the meantime I got more involved with the Christian underground. I started doing my own zine called "handmaid" featuring the music scene and life from a Christian perspective. Later I started writing for a Christian music/skateboarding magazine. I loved my work and felt I was reaching out to many others but something was bothering me. As I was putting together one of the issues I realized that I was getting too caught up in all the fun and busyness of going to shows, interviewing bands, and doing the zine. I started it all with the intention of serving God and spreading His word but I was finding that I was beginning to serve myself and my pride.

Then my mom uttered an alarming sentence, "God may be calling you to the religious life."

To be continued – [My Journey to God \(Part 2\) - Me? A Nun?!](#)

Bobbi ☺

Monday Musings - So When Can We Expect to Hear Humane Vitae Preached at Sunday Masses? [at Harvesting The Fruits Of Contemplation]



(Image from Biblebios.com)

If God used Balaam's donkey to get that prophet's attention, I guess he can use me to get yours. May these periodic postings on the second and fourth Mondays of each month (God willing) generate fruitful discussion and faithful change.

I recently read a short but interesting article written by Father Michael Orsi. It is entitled

How Same-Sex Marriage Won

. You can read his article

[here at Catholic Exchange](#)

.

As I am wont to do, I simply passed it along to several social media sites with the same question I posed in today's post. That's all I did. What a stir it created.

I did not have time to join the on-going and often troublesome discussion but did forward another relevant piece I discovered on

Homiletic & Pastoral Review (HP&R),

entitled

Celebrating "Humanae Vitae" 45 Years Later.

You can find this excellent article by the well respected editor of

HP&R

and Jesuit, David Vincent Melconi, S.J.,

[by clicking here](#)

Maybe I am naïve but I was caught off-guard by the nature of the discussion these two articles sparked. Reading some of the comments became excruciatingly painful - a hard but valuable lesson learned by this wannabe evangelizer.

Even though you have not read the discussion to which I have been referring, I think you will understand the thrust of it by reading what follows:

Since I initiated this discussion, let me offer my final comments as we bring this discussion to a merciful conclusion.

There have been so many twists and turns from the initial orientation of this discussion, I could not possibly respond to all that has been raised – save for expressing sadness and disappointment for the pain that denial of God’s Truth causes His Most Precious and Sacred Heart and for the times we have failed to be as charitable as we should have been in responding to the multiple issues raised herein.

The sinfulness of contraception did not begin with the issuance of

Humanae Vitae

. No matter how many bishops, priests, theologians or lay people challenge the authenticity of Pope Paul VI’s courageous encyclical, contraception is and always has been an “intrinsic evil” and “grave sin” - not just for Catholics but for all human beings. This fundamental and vital Truth and its eternal implications must be preached from all our pulpits. I suspect that will not happen unless and until we return to the primary mission of our Church – not alleviating the physical, material, emotional and addictive behaviors of the poor, oppressed and marginalized (all worthy efforts for sure) but the salvation of souls.

I started this thread just to bring attention to the on-going failure in many parishes to teach God’s

Truth in its entirety. No one can seriously question that our hesitancy, reluctance, and/or fear to teach, defend and promote the fullness of God's Truth has contributed to the increase in sexual immorality, the decay of our secular society, and widespread dissent from the Truths of our Catholic Faith.

I am not a theologian. I am a simple sinful Catholic man. I am not a conservative Catholic or a liberal/progressive Catholic. There are no such animals.

This means I accept and must accept “

all

the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because God has revealed them who can neither deceive nor be deceived” – not just the ones I like. I must give my assent to all of them – those I do not particularly care for, those I do not fully understand, and those that I find extremely difficult to practice and live. Picking and choosing from among the Truths of our Faith is not an option for me or for anyone claiming to be Catholic.

I must reject, as all Catholics must, any promptings or inclinations of my conscience that suggest I can act in “opposition to the moral law and Magisterium of the Catholic Church”. None of those types of promptings could possibly originate with God. A properly formed conscience will not substitute a falsehood for the Truth – no matter how difficult or burdensome living that Truth may be.

I can not let my feelings dictate whether or not I will comply with the Truths of my Faith. I must let those Truths dictate how I will act.

I must not let “pastoral” concerns cause me to dilute or dissent from Church teaching.

When the Catechism of the Catholic Church, for example, declares certain conduct to be “intrinsically evil” or “disordered” or “gravely wrong”, I don't question that teaching. No Catholic can. I try to comport myself with it. I do not look for “loopholes” or try to persuade a majority of other people to pressure the Church to change its teaching on faith and morals – something it can never and will never do. I humble myself, accept all of its teachings, pray for the grace and strength to live them and seek God's forgiveness when I don't. To do otherwise is not to

be Catholic.

Remember the large numbers of Jesus' early disciples who rejected His Eucharistic instruction as being "too hard" and who stopped following Him? He told them the Truth; they rejected It. Recall then that Jesus let them go. He did not beg them to return. He did not alter this teaching in an attempt to be "pastoral".

Truth is not determined by a majority vote or by individuals or groups of individuals (no matter how numerous) claiming the right to reject as untrue what the Church teaches as Truth. They have no such authority.

We can "dialogue" until the cow jumps over the moon but not one iota of the Truth will ever change. Authored by God and implanted within the hearts of all human beings, God's Truth, as promulgated and protected by His one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, is unalterable and everlasting – no matter how many or how frequently or how loudly others may disagree.

The greatest act of love, and among the more difficult things to do, is to share God's Truth with someone who is objectively living in a manner inconsistent with God's law. The uncharitable and sinful thing to do is to remain silent or, even worse, to encourage that individual to persist in such conduct.

Tragically, those who dissent from Church teaching may succeed in misleading others to do so as well, but neither they nor those who follow them will ever succeed in changing one jot of God's eternal and everlasting Truth.

May all we do lead to the salvation of souls, ours and those we know, love and serve.

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2013/07/monday-musings-so-when-can-we-expect-to.html>

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A Family on a Mission {July's Dreamer in the Spotlight: Melissa Seilhan} [at A Dreamer's Wife]



I stumbled upon Melissa Seilhan's blog, [For Better or Worse](#), a couple months ago and immediately started going through several of her posts about her family's journey to be missionaries! Talk about trusting in God! I knew that I had to feature her and her family!

Fortunately, Melissa agreed to answer some questions and share more about her experiences, faith, and blessings!

Several years ago, a friend gave me a book to read called [Go, You Are Sent!](#) by Genie Summers. The book tells the story of her husband's overnight conversion from Atheist to devout Catholic and how they then sold everything to become missionaries for the Lord. Genie and her husband Frank later founded Family Missions Company to train other lay Catholics to do what they did. I read the book cover to cover in no time and longed for that kind of "blind" faith and simplistic lifestyle. My husband thought it was just plain crazy, but God had planted a seed and would later lead us right to Family Missions Company's door.

2. What are some of the ways that God has let you and your family know that this journey is His will?

After reading the book, we began cleaning out our lives and began living more simply and more devoutly than before. I began homeschooling our kids a year or so later, and we began to do more corporal works of mercy in our local community and began reading about the lives of the saints. We began to have a missionary heart without knowing what exactly what was happening. That's when God began sending Family Missions Company into our lives repeatedly. Everywhere we went we'd run into someone with FMC or someone that would tell about us something about this organization. We found out that FMC was the host of a very popular Middle School summer camp called Faith Camp and that they owned the retreat center that would be used for our parish youth retreat.

After my husband made a Cursillo, sitting next to an FMC missionary ALL weekend, we decided to check out their Wednesday night prayer meeting that we had been invited to several times before. After going a few times, our kids begged us to go on a mission trip. We eventually signed up to go on FMC's Pentecost Trip to Mexico for a week instead of taking a family vacation that year. While there, we all began to feel the call to become full time missionaries.

As we began to pray about it after returning home, God continually confirmed this call through scripture like Luke 18:22 and Matthew 19:2. We'd open the Bible to similar passages over and over again. We'd go to Mass and the homilies we'd hear would confirm exactly what we'd just prayed about. Our daily meditation books and apps would constantly be about "Following Him and Proclaiming the Gospel to All Nations." Passages that we had read and heard at Mass our whole lives began to jump out at us in a new way. We realized that "selling everything, giving to the poor, and following Him" was not just a suggestion or something for His apostles to do way back then. It was what He was literally calling us to do right now in this age.

Once we knew that we were indeed being called, we began to ask "How?" Then we began to get the scriptures about "trusting God to care for all your needs" in our personal prayer time, in our meditation books and apps, at prayer meetings—just about everywhere. But even though we knew what we were being asked, we still hesitated and wanted more signs and bigger signs. That's when someone randomly offered to buy our house and land without it even being for sale. After the initial shock wore off, we chalked it up to "coincidence." So, He sent several more people the next week to randomly tell us they'd be interested in buying our house if we ever decided to sell it. That's when we called our pastor!

We spent the next year continuing to pray personally and as a family for God to show us the path we needed to take. We sought spiritual direction from two other priests besides our pastor. The signs and wonders continued to appear and things just kept falling into place too perfectly to be anything else but God's work.

3. Last summer, you wrote a personal post on your blog about how [using the "pill" nearly destroyed your marriage](#). That obviously took a lot of courage to share. How did that time in your life influence you and your husband's decision to become foster parents?(Congratulations on the [adoption of your son!](#))

That was the hardest blog I've ever written. It took several months to be able to actually click "Publish." But I knew it was something that the Holy Spirit had been prompting me to write for a long time. The "pill" and later my husband's vasectomy caused numerous problems in our marriage. We had both wanted a large family with lots of kids, but listened to the "world" and not our hearts when making several medical decisions when we faced difficult times. Even though we had confessed our sins and received absolution numerous times, we still had not forgiven ourselves even though God had. We constantly prayed for healing and for some way to feel whole again.

Like the recent signs leading us to missions, the Holy Spirit led us to become foster parents with numerous signs—people, books, movies, newspapers, and even a giant billboard. The more

we prayed about it, the more signs He sent. But the one thing that kept holding us back from fostering were all the horror stories of these “bad” kids coming into your home and exposing your kids to who knows what. But God never stopped calling us, and we never stopped praying about the call. As we took the foster parent classes, we had to constantly remind ourselves that He knew what we could handle and what our three kids could handle. We just had to trust in Him completely.

4. What advice do you have for others who are trying to discern God’s calling for their life?

Be open! So many times in our lives we miss the opportunities that God puts in our path because we have made our own plans and are so set to follow our plan that we can’t see what he’s laying out in front of us. I used to be a major control freak. I like to have everything planned out and on the calendar ahead of time. I like to know all the details ahead of time before I make my decision. This does not work if you are following the promptings of the Holy Spirit! I have found that what I have planned usually is NOT what He has planned for me. This is very scary for me, but I had to learn to trust and be open to whatever is set before me at the moment.

We need to constantly pray for God’s will in our lives, not for Him to give us what we want or what we think we need. I promise that His plan is always so much better in the end even if it’s a lot harder than your plan. That’s one thing we’ve learned. He never asks us to do anything easy or comfortable. Everything seems hard and nearly impossible at first, but keep praying. And when you pray for His will, ask for signs and wonders. He is always faithful and will send them. You just have to have an open mind and heart to see them. They can be found in the strangest places—a commercial, an ad, social media status, random people. And if you’re stubborn like us, He may even send you a billboard of your very own.

Also, find a spiritual director, preferably a priest/pastor, that you can trust. Go to them, talk to them, have them pray for you, with you, and over you. And pray for them. Ask the Holy Spirit to give them the words that He wants you to hear. Many times our priests gave us the answers before we even asked the questions. If you are truly open to His will, He will not only reveal it to you, but give you what you need to follow it.

5. Do you have a favorite verse, song, or book that you turn to for inspiration and hope?

I have several favorites of each. The verse that really helped us change the way we viewed the world and the way we lived our life, the one that eventually led us to where we are now, is Romans 12:2. “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” The less we conformed to the world, the better we were able to see His will.

But the verse that we rely on heavily lately is Philippians 4:13. “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” We cannot follow His will without His strength, and if He is calling you to something, He will not only give you the strength you need, but everything else you need also. My

first “go to” song when life gets tough is “Lay It Down” by Needtobreathe. I’ve cried myself to sleep playing that song over and over at night. I play it softly when I just need some peace about something. And I blare it when I’m excited to be able to give it to God and be done with it! The other song that I go to often is Matt Maher’s “Lord, I Need You.” I could sing that all day and sometimes do.

Thanks, Melissa! You and your family are such an inspiration to all of us! I look forward to seeing how God continues to use you and bless you!

This contribution is available at <http://adreamerswife.com/2013/07/26/a-family-on-a-mission-julys-dreamer-in-the-spotlight-melissa-seilhan/>
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Maybe There's a Bigger Lesson Here [at Blessed Are the Feet]

I admit it, I spent a good portion of the morning sucked in by the internet response to the answers Pope Francis gave to journalists during his plane flight to Rome. And if you know me in the slightest, you know I am eager to defend Francis from those who begin to attack him and his statements without having any firsthand knowledge of what he actually said.

Most of the reasonable responses I read today admitted that there had not been a full English translation of the interview released. That sent me hunting for the Spanish version, the direct notes of one of the journalists who did the interview.

[This is the one I read in full.](#)

First of all, I was struck by the fact that she said even what she had published there was a small part of the 80 minute conversation and that it would take hours of work for her to get the entirety of her notes published.

Then, reading the entire published text in Spanish, I was stunned with how little the tone of the interview came through in the snippets I was reading in English. And then at how much of the sentiment behind what he was saying was lost in the translation to English even when it was a quality translation. And there were plenty that were not that great. You can see my comments on the topic

[here at Elizabeth Scalia's very good post](#)

. Then I felt compelled to post this on Facebook:

Friends, just so you know, you are getting terribly done half-translations of much of what Pope Francis says. I would urge you to wait to respond to things until you have the chance to read a few variations of the translation and see the full text. I just read the full Spanish version of the Pope's interview in route to Rome, it doesn't say what people are saying it says. Also, let's try to remember, Francis allowed the journalists to ask him questions, no-holds-barred, and he responded sincerely. He did not choose the topic of conversation.

I had to extricate myself from the online conversations to go about my daily business, and as I did, I began thinking about this whole language issue we have with Francis as Pope. It is one we have not really ever faced as the English-speaking church. John Paul II was really the first pope of the media generation, when we began to have access to his words and thoughts right away. And he was extremely effective at communicating in English. Benedict followed and was equally adept at expressing himself in our language.

We no longer have that luxury with Francis. And that leaves us with a little bit of a difficulty I think we are all beginning to see clearly. We are not going to have first access to his thoughts and words. If we are going to be people of integrity, we will have to wait for quality translations of

the full text of his interviews and conversations appear. Or we're going to have to learn to speak Spanish. (Well you are. I already do. Don't be jealous. The Holy Spirit is responsible.) And then, even in that, we will be lacking because it is hard to for a direct translation, no matter how well done, to capture the nuances of another language. So we run into a quandary that we really can't solve. We can read a direct translation and possibly lose a lot in the sentiment department (which seems to be key in understanding Francis) or we can look for faithful native Spanish speakers to paraphrase the meaning behind the words for us, which seems a little risky when it comes to the Pope.

It is easy for your brain to start to wonder why the college of cardinals didn't consider this glitch when they elected Cardinal Bergoglio pope. I mean, given the battle the Church in the U.S. is facing, didn't they think about how important it would be for us to understand this new pope and what he was saying? And did they even think about our *blogs*? I mean, we are going to end up a full three or four hours behind the Spanish speakers (if we use sense and wait to read what he truly said) in being able to analyze, form opinions and react to what the pope said! And then, we won't even be able to trust that we really got what he said.

And then it occurred to me that perhaps there is a lesson even bigger in this whole conundrum Pope Francis creates for the only-English speaking U.S. Church that just integrity in our reactions to him. Maybe the college of cardinals and the rest of the Church are smiling a bit smugly as we begin to realize that the Church does not consider our responses, reactions, thoughts, opinions and blogs a top priority. Maybe they are all hoping we'll begin to realize that we do not have first rights to the daily goings-on in the Church and that our perspective isn't all that important in the grand scheme of things.

That might make you think: "But, wait, doesn't the Vatican know what we're up against? Don't they see the battles the Church in the U.S. is fighting? Don't they know how much we need to be connected and have access to information? We want to stay faithful! And we are under attack." I thought that, really I did. For a minute, I could even see it as valid. I mean, we have a pervasive culture of death threatening to beat down our collective front door, round up our kids for brainwashing and throw us subversive Christian types into the dungeon.

But then I began to think about some other things I know a little bit about too. And I realized something. You know what guys? We are not the only ones facing a battle. And it might be time that we begin to recognize that and respect our brothers and sisters all over the world who are battling too. And I think Pope Francis is trying to help us open our eyes. I mean, I don't think he's sitting at home fervently practicing English on Rosetta Stone, worried about our angst over not being able to understand him. Instead, he's smiling and hugging and kissing and embracing and loving and talking. Off the cuff and in his native language. And he's letting us wait. And maybe learn something about how much bigger the Church is than our narrow perspective allows us to see. Yes it is very hard and even dangerous to be a pro-life, anti-contraception, pro-marriage faithful Catholic in the U.S. today. Yes, our legal system is becoming increasingly hostile to our beliefs and even our rights. Yes, that means all the rest of our institutional systems are following suit. And, yes, as Catholics, we rely heavily on the fact that we have the support of a magisterium composed of 2000 years of collective wisdom to guide us, so it is important for us to understand its current spokesman.

But do you think we are the only ones? Do you think our battles are in any way more significant

than those being fought all over the world by faithful Catholics? Have you read on any U.S. Catholic publication that in the last few weeks, Costa Rica's governing body ACCIDENTALLY passed a law legalizing same sex marriages and now the president refuses to veto it even at their request (don't ask me how that happens, just know it's not that surprising really when you live here)? That the only government in the world that declares that it is based on the Catholic faith is being sued by an international human rights court to reimburse families who were not allowed to use in vitro fertilization to conceive? That there is an abortion rights group scouring up young girls off the streets who get pregnant before twelve and pushing for the government to make it not only legal but mandatory that they get an abortion? Did you know that the Costa Rican educational system is mounting a new sex education campaign in its schools that is completely contradictory to the Catholic beliefs that more than 90% of its residents profess? And that Costa Rican parents do not have the legal right to opt out and educate their children at home?

And Costa Rica is hardly alone in its battle. All over Central and South America similar battles are taking place. Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay all recently passes legislation on these issues contrary to our beliefs. In all these places, Catholics are battling an increasingly invasive culture of death. Not to mention that many of them are battling just to survive the day, to put a roof over their families' heads and food in their bellies. So a lot of times they don't even realize what is happening until it is too late. And that doesn't even take into consideration that they are daily bombarded by the influence of world humanitarian organizations preaching to them that the answer to all their problems is to stop conceiving children, to sterilize themselves, and to turn their kids over to the state to educate them on sexuality and relationships.

My fellow U.S. Catholics, think for just a moment what it might be like to try to protect a culture of life on the continent of Africa, where poverty and starvation and AIDS and orphaned children and infant mortality rates sky high make contraception and abortion seem logical solutions. And where refusing the agenda of international aid organizations means turning away help that literally keeps people alive daily. Try explaining that stance over and over again to hostile agencies and to the people you are charged to shepherd and to love.

What about Asia? A culture sharing the many of the same issues as Africa as well as the openly hostile cultural influence of Islam and living in the shadow of China's population control policies. Think about what it would be like to earnestly desire to live your Church's teachings in that climate.

And all those eyes, not just our American ones, are on Pope Francis. Waiting for his leadership. Waiting for the word of tender mercy that will give them strength to keep battling on in the face of tremendous adversity. Looking for the light of hope and the love of Christ to say, "You are not alone. Your Church walks with you. And we will fight at your side."

And while I can't be certain because I only speak English and Spanish, I can say that I that I have not yet found an explosive reaction to Pope Francis' words (or dancing cardinals for that matter) in any other language. Sure, there are some overly enthusiastic news reports making it look like he's totally changing the Church's position on things. I mean, we're talking about places were there never really were any standards of ethical journalism to violate. We can't be too surprised about that.

So, here's what I'm getting at. I think there is definitely a lesson here about having the integrity to wait until you are sure about what the Pope said before you say he said it and offer an opinion (a

lesson I humbly admit I learned this week when I re-posted the whole saints in tennis shoes thing on Facebook without verifying it). But I think there might be a bigger lesson for U.S. Catholics in Francis' pontificate. And that is that he's not talking to you.

I mean, not only you. And he really doesn't care all that much how quickly you get access to a good translation of his words. Nor does he care that much what you then do with them when it comes to forming opinions and analyzing them. It really only matters if in the end you are faithful. And that's not between you and Him. That's Jesus' job. Because Francis' flock, my friends, is so much bigger than just us. And it is so, so needy. So step back a minute, slow down, in the wise words of Ms. Scalia, exhale. And stop talking about the Church as if the U.S. version of it were the be all and end all. Because it's not.

And I think Pope Francis is going to keep reminding us of that over and over again. In Spanish. Without apology. Let's hope we figure out how to understand what he really means. I think it so ironic that this all came about on the feast of [St. Martha](#), if only to drive home the point that maybe it's time for us U.S. Catholics to stop rushing around busying ourselves with our own opinions and just sit at our shepherd's feet for a while and learn to listen.

This contribution is available at <http://colleen-fromthefield.blogspot.com/2013/07/maybe-theres-bigger-lesson-here.html>

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Leonie! ~ A Movie About the Hidden Sister of St. Therese [at The Hill Country Hermit]

I've been wanting to see this movie for so long. Finally, I learned from Maureen at

ThereseOfLisieux.org

that it is available from

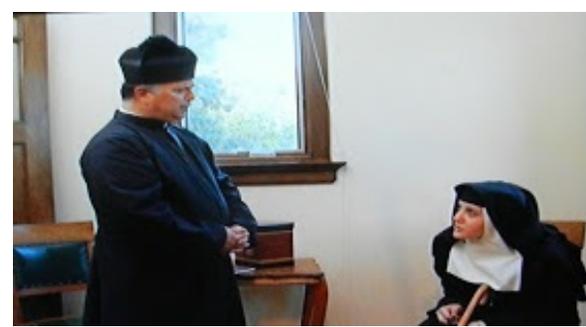
[Ignatius Press](#)

, so ordered it right away! I have thought much about this sister ... this middle sister of St. Thérèse's family ... who even though she was Thérèse's Confirmation Sponsor, is very often overlooked in literature on her famous sister, St. Thérèse

If you have a difficult child, feel like the odd one out in your family, or struggle with your vocation, you would probably appreciate this movie. Don't expect famous actors or a high cost production. However, do expect a heartwarming story - a true story - that shares the life of a sister of the famous saint, St. Thérèse of Lisieux. It will give you hope, courage, and inspiration that with prayer and trust in God, all will be well. Despite the difficulties that life presents.



After a troubled and difficult childhood, little Léonie made a handful of attempts to enter religious life, but struggled to fit in and keep up with the rules. Plus, her health was not the best. Finally, at the age of 35, she became a Visitation Nun in Caen, France and chose "Sister Francois-Thérèse" for her religious name. St. Thérèse had already died, and Léonie's three remaining sisters were in the Carmelite Convent in Lisieux. The photo above is from the movie and illustrates a celebration that took place at the Visitation Monastery in 1925 when Léonie's younger sister (by 10 years), Thérèse, was canonized a saint. The actress playing Léonie is at the bottom left of the photo ... in real life, Léonie was 62 years old by this time and hunched over from poor health.



As the world came to know and love St. Thérèse, some became curious about Léonie as well. However, Sr. Françoise-Thérèse wanted to remain hidden and obscure. The scene above from the movie shares of a funny (and true) incident when Léonie was serving as the portress of the convent and a priest came to the door asking to see the sister of St. Thérèse (not realizing that he was speaking to her!). Léonie dodged the priest by telling him that the Mother Superior would have to be asked, and added that meeting Sr. Françoise-Thérèse (Léonie) would really not be worth his effort. The priest was astonished to find out later that the nun he was speaking to was Léonie herself!

This contribution is available at <http://www.theresadoyle-nelson.blogspot.com/2013/07/leonie-movie-about-hidden-sister-of.html>
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Unmistakable Fervor: Servant of God Augustine Tolton [at V for Victory!]



The face of an angel: Servant of God Augustine Tolton (1854-1897).

He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. Luke 1:52

Augustine Tolton began life on a Missouri plantation as the son of Catholic slaves and the property of Catholic slaveholders, five years before the last slave ship landed on the shores of the United States. After the Civil War began, his father escaped to join the Union Army; years would pass before the family learned that he had died soon afterward. His mother, who had been taken away from her parents as a teenager, feared that her own three children would be taken from her, so she spirited them away to Quincy, Illinois in 1862.

Amid trials and tribulations, and the death of his older brother, Charley, Augustine and his family made a life for themselves in the black district of Quincy. Augustine found a friend and protector in the pastor of his local parish, Fr. Peter McGirr, who saw to it that the devout boy got a good Catholic education. It was Fr. McGirr who discussed with him the possibility of his having a priestly vocation. Augustine found more friends among priests and religious, and distinguished himself by his devotion, his diligence in his daily responsibilities at work and school, and his zeal for souls. However, being black, he could not get into any seminaries in the United States.

Eventually, armed with his determination to become a priest and the help of his priestly patrons, Augustine secured a place as a seminarian at the Collegium Urbanum de Propaganda Fide

in Rome. On April 26, 1886, Holy Saturday, Augustine Tolton became Father Augustine Tolton, and celebrated his first Mass the next day, Easter Sunday, at St. Peter's Basilica. The man who had begun his life as the legal property of men, and taken himself away from his human masters at the age of eight, now gave himself, body and soul, to his Divine Master and His Church.

At the time Fr. Tolton attended seminary at the Propaganda, part of the deal was that a seminarian had to promise, under oath, to work in any mission field in the world where the Church might send him. Young Augustine expected to be sent to Africa, and even studied the languages and cultures of the various parts of Africa where he might be sent. However, the day before his ordination to the priesthood, he was given the startling news that instead, he was to be sent back to his home diocese. Remembering his escape from slavery and the bad treatment he had received at home on account of his negritude, Augustine received this news with disappointment and misgivings.

But Fr. Tolton put away his apprehension and returned home to Quincy, Illinois. There he rejoined his friends and benefactors from the old days and built up a parish and Catholic school for blacks, St. Joseph's. Although the school was for black children, both whites and blacks attended the church, and the white parishioners helped keep both running with their contributions. Sunday after Sunday, his church was packed.

Unfortunately, racism again reared its ugly head in the person of the dean of the Diocese who, as head of another parish in Quincy, was jealous of the white parishioners who flocked to Fr. Tolton for the Sacraments and for spiritual advice, and with many dollars to contribute to the black apostolate. This priest made life miserable for Fr. Tolton, and succeeded in getting his ministry restricted to only black Catholics.

Eventually, after several appeals to Rome, Fr. Tolton was able to secure permission to move to the Archdiocese of Chicago, where, with financial assistance from Mother Katherine (now St. Katherine) Drexel, he began work on the city's first black parish. Once he had suitable lodgings, he brought his mother and younger sister to live with him. His mother served as housekeeper, sacristan and chorister and was known in the parish as Mother Tolton. Fr. Theodore Warning, a priest of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, spent the summer of 1896 with Fr. Tolton while he attended a summer session at the University of Chicago, and gives us a glimpse of his private life:

They lived in a poorly furnished but very clean house. The meals were simple affairs. Father Tolton, his mother and I sat at a table having an oil cloth cover. A kerosene lamp stood in the middle. On the wall directly behind Father Tolton's place hung a large black

rosary. As soon as the evening meal was over, Father Tolton would rise and take the beads from the nail. He kissed the large crucifix reverently. We all knelt on the bare floor while the Negro priest, in a low voice, led the prayers with deliberate slowness and with unmistakable fervor.

Fr. Tolton worked hard to minister to his flock: celebrating Mass and the Sacraments; making the rounds of his parish, visiting tenements and hovels; giving religious instruction. He was still a young man, but the hard work sapped his strength. His parishioners noticed that his hands shook when distributing Holy Communion, and that he had to sit down to preach on Sundays.

On Friday, July 9, 1897, walking from the train station to the rectory in 104-degree heat, Fr. Tolton collapsed in the street and was rushed to the hospital with heat stroke and uremia. Later that evening, having received his last Sacraments and surrounded by his mother, his sister, the hospital chaplain and several Sisters of Mercy, Fr. Augustine Tolton passed away. He was 43 years old. In accordance with his wishes, he was given a solemn Requiem Mass at St. Peter's in Quincy, Illinois, the parish of his youth, and buried in the priests' cemetery there. An immense crowd attended the funeral. The monument over his grave reads:

Rev. Augustine Tolton

The First Colored Priest in the United States

Born in Brush Creek, Ralls County, Missouri

April 1, 1854

Ordained in Rome, Italy, April 24, 1886

Died July 9, 1897

Requiescat in Pace

Fr. Tolton was not in fact the *first* black American to become a Catholic priest: the Healy brothers ([James Augustine](#), ordained in 1854, and [Patrick Francis](#), ordained in 1864) were the sons of an Irish father and a mulatto mother, and technically born as slaves. But, whereas the Healy brothers were widely known as Irish, Fr. Tolton was the first recognizably black American to be ordained to the Catholic priesthood and serve as a priest in the United States. On February 24, 2011, Francis Cardinal George issued his [edict opening the cause](#) for the canonization of Fr. Augustine Tolton; on February 13, 2012, the Congregation for Causes of Saints granted Fr. Tolton the title

"Servant of God."

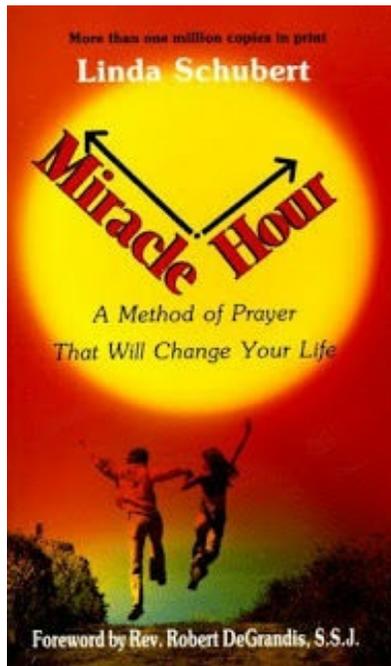
But Fr. Tolton deserves recognition not merely because he was black and an escaped slave. Fr. Augustine Tolton was practiced in virtues and great holiness: he was a man of devotion, fidelity to the duties of his state in life, zeal for souls, gratitude for benefits received, love for his flock, patience in suffering and immense self-sacrifice. If he is raised to the altar, it will be, and should be, on those grounds.

The Catholic Church deplores a double slavery – that of the mind and that of the body. She endeavors to free us of both. I was a poor slave boy but the priests of the Church did not disdain me. It was through the influence of one of them that I became what I am tonight. I must now give praise to that son of the Emerald Isle, Father Peter McGirr, pastor of St. Peter's Church in Quincy, who promised me that I would be educated and who kept his word. It was the priests of the Church who taught me to pray and to forgive my persecutors... it was through the direction of a Sister of Notre Dame, Sister Herlinde, that I learned to interpret the Ten Commandments; and then I also beheld for the first time the glimmering light of truth and the majesty of the Church. In this Church we do not have to fight for our rights because we are black. She had colored saints – Augustine, Benedict the Moor, Monica. The Church is broad and liberal. She is the Church for our people.

This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2013/07/unmistakable-fervor-servant-of-god.html>
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Miracle Hour: A Method of Prayer That Will Change Your Life by Linda Schubert [at Back to Books]



Miracle Hour: A Method of Prayer That Will Change Your Life

by Linda Schubert. Foreword by Rev. Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J.

Rating: (4.5/5)

(

[Kindle](#)

) - print copy available from publisher below

1991, Self-published, 33 pgs

Current publisher:

[Miracles of the Heart](#)

Nihil obstat; Imprimatur

Age: 18+

"A method of prayer that will change your life. A simple format for a daily hour of prayer. Provides a clear format for prayer to help you focus your time. Includes suggestions for specific prayers of praise, intercession and surrender. Available in English and in

Spanish. If you wish to buy this as a digital download, its available in 21 languages."

A friend moved into a retirement home and gifted me a lot of religious books and booklets including this.

I talk to God all the time and have no trouble saying my prayers but I have a hard time when I want to ask for something for myself also in maintaining a regular prayer time. My prayer life has peaks and valleys This little booklet presents a truly wonderful way on how to pray including everything a prayerful life should include. The book proposes a one hour prayer time divided into 12 units of 5 minutes each. It is easy enough to tailor to yourself and make it fit your lifestyle. I don't think the whole hour at one time would be mandatory but I do think the components and the 5 minute durations are the key to this system. I was very inspired reading this little book and actually turned my reading of it into a prayer session. The book is written by a Catholic and has an Imprimatur, but it was also written at the height of the Charismatic Renewal. I'm a Traditionalist so I was uncomfortable with just a tiny bit of the text. The book is also not written to Catholics specifically but to all Christians and then at certain points it will say "for the Catholic". Truly a special little gem to have on hand that will only invigorate anyone's prayer time. I will be holding onto this and am carrying it in my purse for the time being to see how it has an affect on me. Among other things your prayer time will include, praise, worship, repentance, forgiveness, spiritual warfare and listening to God.

This contribution is available at <http://back-to-books.blogspot.ca/2013/07/205-miracle-hour-method-of-prayer-that.html>

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Without a doubt

One of the many surprises of motherhood has been discovering that I am expected to be a dictionary.

This afternoon as we were driving and listening to a recording of *Mercy Watson Goes for a Ride*, I was asked to define a few words. I hesitated for a moment on “careen,” but Leo was satisfied with my explanation.

A few minutes later, though, he was ready with his next question.

“Mama,” he said, “what does ‘without a doubt’ mean?”

“It means something is absolutely true,” I told him. And then I gave him examples.

“Without a doubt, it is raining.”

“Without a doubt, we are sitting in traffic on the beltway again.”

“Without a doubt, the Incredibles are superheroes.”

“Without a doubt, we are going to have a good time when we go to the beach.”

Leo listened and then he stopped me. He wanted to take a turn.

“Without a doubt, we are a family,” he said. “Without a doubt, God made us to love each other.”

Then he and his brother were back to listening to the story, with occasional breaks to banter about whose turn it was to hold which stuffed Angry Bird.

I just sat there, inching along the beltway, thinking how amazing it is that these two boys who were born in China have become my sons.

God knew what He was doing when he brought us together.

Without a doubt.



7/12/2013 10:30:11 PM

By [Rita Buettner](#)

This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2013/07/12/without-a-doubt>
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Pray to The Lord of the Harvest (Part 2) [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

Pray to the Lord of the Harvest (Part 2)



“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matt. 36-38)

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In my previous article with this title, I mentioned that waves of spiritual darkness are enveloping this world and that we need not to despair but to understand that this is also a time of harvest that the Lord is using to separate the wheat from the chaff. The peoples of the world are feeling harassed and helpless spiritually, sensing the need for a Shepherd and Savior. As our Chief Shepherd, Jesus is telling us to Pray to the Father to send out workers (disciples) into the Harvest to proclaim to them the Good News of the Cross and the arrival of the Shepherd they have been seeking! To that end, we need to pray that the Lord help us to make more “lay disciples” to help in the Harvest, by bringing more disciples to the front lines, freely proclaiming the Good News of the Cross of Christ to the whole world.

I also tried to make it clear that one of the reasons we don't have more “lay disciples” is because our modern religious culture has not adequately provided for the making of lay disciples and, instead, it (our modern religious culture) prefers to place the laity in a role as “stewards of time, talent, and treasure” to help maintain the religious infrastructure of the church, thus “placing the cart before the horse”. In one case, a high ranking clergyman responding to a question as to what exactly was the role of the laity in the church, responded by saying that the laity's only roles were to : “pay, pray, and obey”.

In this second article I wish to point out that due to this tradition of lay disenfranchisement, most the laity do not even know that they are called to the same discipleship as the clergy, and, even

worse, they are not even sure as to what true discipleship entails and how they may enter into such a calling. I have, in all my previous articles on this topic, tried to inform my readers, about just what discipleship entails and its cost to those who respond to the call.

In summarizing my position in this matter, I will first begin by telling you that discipleship is NOT a self-willed program where we enlist in a variety of religiously commandeered activities or efforts to do something for God and His people, the church. It is also NOT merely the scheduling ourselves to participate in pietistic devotions and scripted group prayers as if somehow, our attempts at establishing our own “holiness” will enhance our standing as “disciples”.

No, dear family of God, true discipleship is NOT our work! It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us to conform us to the image of the Son! As such it is a spiritual work accomplished by the Spirit in us, so that the Spirit of Christ that is in us may manifest itself through us to bring forth fruit for the Kingdom to the Glory of the Father! It is the process whereby the world is crucified to us and we to the world (Gal. 6:14). The end result being, that it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us and through us! (Gal. 2:20)

Our only part in entering into true discipleship is cooperating with the Spirit through a decision of our will to surrender ALL of our selves to the Father and placing His will above ours in all that we do in our lives from that point on! When Jesus was asking His followers to follow Him, He was not asking them to perform works of religious piety – He was asking them to place themselves under the Reign of the Father, as He himself was, so that the Father Himself could use them (and us) to manifest His Kingdom in this World for His Glory, not ours! That, of course, is what we are praying when we say, what we call the “Lord’s Prayer” (Matt. 6:9-13) but, is in fact, the “Disciple’s Prayer” of commitment and surrender to the Father’s Will. The sad part of this is that for today’s Christians the meaning of this prayer has been culturally obscured so that is merely repeated pietistically supposedly to honor the Father and ask for His sustenance and forgiveness.

No, it is more than that! It is a prayer of consecration where we are saying to the Father, that, in honoring Him as Creator and Father, we also recognize that, through His Sons’ Sacrifice on the Cross, we acknowledge that He has accepted us as His “children”, and therefore, because of faith in Him and His Love, we gratefully place our lives ENTIRELY under His Command (Kingdom) so that HIS WILL (and NOT ours) may be manifested on Earth as it is in Heaven!

The Apostle Paul similarly re-states what this entrance to “true discipleship” involves in his epistle to the Romans, where he states: ***“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect”*** (Rom. 12:1-2)

So, unless you have made such a serious and intentional consecration of your self to God the Father, so that you yield your will completely to His in all things in your life, you are NOT a true disciple of Christ. This level of consecration of self to the Father is what Jesus did at His baptism

and if you are truly “following” Him, it is a consecration that you must make also. Understand however, that, this decision must flow out of your personal and intimate relationship with Jesus or it will NOT be considered sincere. Remember what Jesus told those who said to him that they had done many mighty works in His Name. He told them: “... **depart from me you workers of iniquity I never knew you**” (Matt. 7:23). For a deep intimate relationship with our Lord and Master must, of necessity, be at the core of our discipleship or else we are just deceiving ourselves.



Francis accepts his call to Lay Discipleship

Now, this consecration is merely the point at which the Holy Spirit can begin the process of conforming you to the image of the Son. The spiritual transformation involved will encompass your entire lifetime! This transformation is NOT your work or your effort, it is only accomplished by the Spirit in you and through you as you immerse yourself in the Word of God and activate that Word in you by acting on it and speaking it. In this way you let the Word rule in your life to bring the transformation about! All you need to do is cooperate through your obedience in Love to let “His Kingdom Come” into you and through you!

It must also be clear that every believer is called to make such a commitment but is NOT obliged to do so! In order for your dedication to be truly an act of Agape Love, your choice must be totally free and you must be acutely aware about its cost in order to make that decision without coercion. Because of this freedom, your salvation is NOT contingent on what you choose. That is why the Lord told his disciples that “many are called (to be disciples) but few are chosen”. If you sense the call of the Lord in your spirit and respond to this call by consecrating yourself as a “living sacrifice” then you have been chosen if you respond positively to His Call.

This call to discipleship is for ALL believers NOT just the clergy or religious. Unfortunately, due to the current culture, the laity are often not taught this and, mainly for that reason, we do not have all the workers that are needed for the Harvest at hand!

the whole Church? From the years one thousand to fifteen hundred, the theme was time and again reform, reform, reform. From the reforms of the Avignon papacy to the Gregorian reforms, to the Council of Trent, the Church struggled to come to terms with the new realities of emerging lay men and women in a changing world, but in terms of structure it also resisted. This new reality was not welcomed by Church leaders. To be equal to the constant challenges by the royal courts of Europe, the papacy in its view could not allow itself to be weakened by lay influences. In the centuries to follow, the results of this irony would be cataclysmic. Because of its rigidity the Church would be ever altered by the Protestant Reformation and what is called the Counter Reformation that followed.

Although the role of the lay person was not central to any of the Protestant reform movements at the beginning of the sixteenth century there is little doubt that the role of the lay person was greatly enhanced by these movements. Luther's central issues of justification, good works, grace, as well as John Calvin's views on women in the church and in society opened to thoughtful Catholics the prospect for new possible roles in the Church. Discipleship could be seen as something broader than simply one's loyalty to the Church. It was once again seen as sharing in Christ's mission of salvation to the world. Like Paul, one could be a disciple by being a tent maker, a non-cleric. The message was by baptism into Christ and sharing in the Eucharist of Christ we are disciples of Christ. We do not become disciples by virtue of ordination.

It cannot be said either that lay persons were a central focus of the Council of Trent (1545-1573), but they were affected. The bishops of the council hoped to enhance the lay person by focusing on better trained and more deeply spiritual clergy, something of a holy trickle down theory. The results were mixed. The council was further hampered by a continually defensive leadership and the fear of Protestant taint if a gospel rather than an ecclesiastical approach to the issues of lay men and women were adopted.

Yet the world continued to turn. Locked out of ecclesiastical power, lay men and women advanced in the secular world. Through the American and French revolutions they redefined western civilization. The concepts of unalienable rights, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, government of the people, even freedom of religion, empowered every citizen. The divine right of kings had given way to the divine right of the common man. From now on it is the citizen who is the foundation of civil power, not the king or the emperor. Still the Church remained negative and defensive. This was true for many reasons. For one, there were strong anticlerical sentiments in the revolutionary movements. Also the Church was still connected to the falling nobility, not the emerging citizen. But now the old order was fading. Except for the Church, monarchical rule was by and large dead.

But even within the Church progress was made, no matter how grudgingly and indirect. By the nineteenth century Catholic lay groups and Catholic Action had become essential parts of the Church. As women advanced in the civil world they also advanced in the Church in fields of education, health, administration, and social welfare. Yes, in terms of status, the lay person was still on the bottom rung of the Church ladder. Yes, loyalty to the institution still largely defined lay discipleship. And yes, right up to today the Church is more understood as the hierarchical

We have done our best to credit our sources. Please forgive us if we have overlooked any.

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This contribution is available at <http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2013/07/10/%c2%a7-pray-to-the-lord-of-the-harvest-part-2/>
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Natural Law, Marriage, and the Normality of Ignorance [at Naru Hodo]

I almost interjected myself into a homily yesterday.

It wasn't actually in response to the homily itself, but in response to the reaction of the congregation.

Let me start the story at the beginning.

It was the 4th of July, and I was attending Mass at Once-In-a-Blue-Moon parish. The deacon there preached along the lines of the closing of the Fortnight for Freedom. His basic theme was on understanding and addressing well the cultural times in which we live.

He told a story of speaking with a 30-something woman about sexual morality. She dismissed his rejection of sex outside of marriage as being merely a product of his toeing the Catholic line. He explained that one could passionately hold this position based purely on reason, with no reference to faith or religion. And then he detailed how:

When a man and woman engage in sex, he explained, it often happens that a child is conceived. It is justice for this child to be born and raised into a stable, peaceful environment. The biggest part of that stability comes through a relationship with its parents which remains constant and reliable throughout the childhood and further, throughout life. The best way to accomplish that is for these parents to be already committed to each other for life before the child comes on the scene.

Then the deacon went on to say that this woman with whom he was talking responded with: "That's a compelling argument. I've never heard anyone explain it like that to me before."

And at that point, I heard audible gasps from people seated behind me.

In the next breath, the deacon made reference to how this woman's rejection of Catholic teaching had come from her ignorance. Then I heard, on the other side of me, audible chuckling, as if to say "Boy howdy, that's right. Ignorant."

That was when I fought the urge to stand up and turn this into a round table discussion. (As you can see, I opted for a blog post.)

Much of what I'm going to say has to do with a generational divide, as the people I was surrounded with were a few decades my senior.

First, to respond to the gaspers. Normally I feel like the most naive person in any group, but I just cannot wrap my head around someone being shocked that the natural law view on marriage is

entirely absent from the landscape of the mind. I am on the older end of Gen-X, but it seems that anyone of my generation or younger has had this common sense view of marriage either blotted out or made murky by either personal or sympathetic experience, and by consistent cultural messaging.

Sex equals babies? Says who. Since when. Certainly not since the 60s! In April, 1967, seven months before I was born, the first law was passed in the US to legalize abortion in some cases. And three decades before that contraception went from illegal to holding a prominent place in medical training.

And what about a two-parent family being an aspect of justice to children? Divorce rates shot through the roof in the late 60s as well. How many 30-somethings can you even find who were born and have lived their whole lives with their parents married to each other? When you have entire generations riddled through with divorced or separated parents, with many of these offspring able to reason that their lives were better off that way, how do you expect the same people to have any concept of the justice that was actually due them? Are not people more likely to assure themselves that they turned out OK, despite their parents' problems?

You can only possess what you experience. When you grow up in an environment where parents did not self-sacrificially lay down their lives for one another and give themselves to provide stability for their own vulnerable offspring, how the hell do kids learn that this is even how life should work?

They don't.

The only hope is if they see it happening that way for other people. That's called the witness of Christian family. (In reality, it takes more than tacit witness. The witness needs to be wedded to words of testimony of encountering Christ and an explicit call to likewise follow Him in conversion.)

I can remember as a late teen meeting the family of a Lutheran pastor I knew. My friend and I knew his son, and one day we had lunch with them after church on Sunday. I wanted to stay there all day and suck in their life. It was so wonderful. Two parents, kids, a dining room table, a meal together, everyone talked and joked. The poor pastor had to actually hand me a map with driving directions back home as a hint to get me to leave. I didn't even know, really, what I was hungry for, but I saw that these folks had it.

From my childhood into my adult years, I misunderstood marriage as not a means for partnering with a man to give life to the vulnerable among us, but as finally finding someone who loved me. As a kid I met a friend of my grandmother's who told me she had been married at age 15. I thought that was perfect. I also wanted to have 12 kids. Then, surely, I would finally be loved. Oh, I didn't think about it explicitly that way, but I realize now that's what it meant to me. The older I got (more and more frantic that I was "old" and single), the Lord had to reveal to me that my desire for "marriage" was actually at cross purposes with my following Him. I was a very hard sell when it came to believing that His love was the love I needed. Somehow I thought that meant no human

being would ever love me. I had no idea that I couldn't give love to anyone unless I let His love flood me first. You can only possess what you experience, and you can only give what you possess.

All human beings are essentially walking, gaping needs-for-love. But perhaps my generation (and younger) experiences this more starkly than the folks who were raised in a time and place when natural law values and basic decency and love were more common.

Now to address that chuckler: Yes, the woman the deacon spoke of is ignorant. But this sort of ignorance of heart should make us double over in pain and weep. On a broad scale, we no longer understand what it means to be human, in the image and likeness of God. Marriage is thought of now as a source of pleasure for people, in whatever way and for whatever duration they agree to. This ignorance is deeply rooted in the family experience of most young people. This was my ignorance, too, but I was able to abide in a moral straitjacket that kept me from debauchery, even though I didn't understand God's loving purpose in natural law restrictions. God was gracious and merciful to me, but I can tell you that straitjackets are not comfortable. As the ignorance of the culture becomes deeper, I doubt that many would endure them for long.

We who call ourselves Christians have a dire responsibility to live dripping with God's love. That means we need to seriously turn our hearts to God on a daily basis and expand our relationship with Him to the extent that His love and His way, His disciplines, fill our hearts and lives. Forget brownie points. God wants YOU. Then, we have a responsibility to live the nitty gritty of our relationships with the determined action to do good. That's what love is. Open your heart and put it into the way you serve your family, your friends, the people in your life. We also need to repent of how we have been selfish, self-centered, unwilling to work, unwilling to give ourselves to others, unwilling to follow disciplines of prayer and spiritual growth.

We are the signs of God's reality to our culture. Let us be wise, courageous, and clear about who we are.

This contribution is available at <http://lift-up-your-hearts.blogspot.com/2013/07/natural-law-marriage-and-normality-of.html>
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To Behold [at La Dolce Vita ... the sweet life with three sons]

And God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good.

~Genesis 1:31

Once upon a time, not too long ago, my sister and I were having a serious discussion on the following: losing weight, gaining weight, the benefits of this exercise program over that one, and the never-ending quest to be skinnier, fitter, and wrinkle free. Truthfully, it's a discussion we've had millions of times over the years.

"When does this ever end?" I eventually asked. "I mean, are we going to be worried about this stuff when we're ninety-nine years old? What is the magical age when we can be comfortable with who we are and sit in our bathing suits at the beach and not obsess about our thighs?"

My sister didn't have an answer and, quite frankly, neither did I.

Later that day I took stock. I spend an inordinate amount of time being dissatisfied with what I weigh, how I look, what outfit I'm wearing, and whether or not I am having a good hair day. As part of my quest to be a better me, I exercise (a lot) and eat healthy meals (almost all the time).

But it's one thing to try and be a better me, and it's another thing to try and be a better me and *still*

be dissatisfied with the image staring back at me in the mirror. And what I see (and can't get past) are curves. I have hippy hips and a busty bust. I also have a small waist that connects the two, and when you have hippy hips and a busty bust with a small waist in-between ... well, there will be curves. I am sure there is even a physics formula to back this up.

With my sister's conversation still in my mind, I pulled out a few photo albums and purposely flipped to photos of vacations in which I remembered feeling frumpy or fat. I turned to our recent trip to New Orleans this past March. My husband and I had a great time -- a fantastic time! But I remembered not feeling at peace with my body. Prior to the trip I had some vascular surgery done and I was still wearing compression hose from my ankles to my thighs (which limited my wardrobe), I still had swelling in my left leg, and because of the surgeries I hadn't been to the gym in almost three weeks. But as I was looking at a photo of that trip, I realized what an idiot I was. I mean, I looked fine. Really, what in the heck had I been fretting about? And, more importantly, why couldn't I see that then?



Me, looking in the mirror in New Orleans and not seeing what I see now.

The truth is, when we look in the mirror we are not kind to ourselves. We perceive ourselves much, much differently than other people perceive us and, quite frankly, other people are often much, much kinder.

Last fall my husband and I attended a marriage retreat and, during one of the sessions, they illustrated this very point. Scattered around the room were chairs arranged into groups of three. We were told to go sit in a chair, but the caveat was we couldn't sit in the same grouping as our spouse. As it turned out, I ended up in a group with two men ... both of them strangers. We were then given instructions to take 15 minutes and jot down complimentary things you notice about the two people in your group. Since we couldn't speak, it had to be physical characteristics. Then, at the end of the time period we were to share our compliments with each other.

Compliment two men? Strangers? And have them compliment me? I wanted to die on the spot. This was so out of my comfort zone, but the fifteen minutes started and I was under pressure because those two gentlemen began writing and writing.

In the end, here's is some of what those two gentlemen said about me (and I am sharing this simply to make a point):

-You have warm eyes that sparkle when you smile.

-You have an engaging presence which invites conversation.

-You have pretty brown hair with a feminine cut.

-You exude a calm, collected exterior.

-You have a genuine smile with a nice, authentic laugh.

-You have a feminine stature with a cute petite frame.

Boy did I feel all warm and tingly, but to hide my embarrassment I jokingly asked them to read that last one again. Seriously, talk about a morale booster! Of course, within the framework of the marriage retreat the purpose of this assignment was to teach us to not only accept compliments, but to step back and see what others see in us. But the exercise took on a deeper meaning for me because, during this time, the

[Dove Real Beauty Sketches](#)

video was floating around the Internet. The video shows how women perceive themselves versus how others perceive them and, amazingly, sitting there with those two gentlemen I felt as if I had just participated in the very same experiment.

Did they really see all that in me? The sparkly eyes? The authentic laugh and genuine smile? The calm, collected exterior? The (eh-hem) feminine stature? Did they really? Because if I were to look in the mirror this would have been my list:

-My eyes look tired.

-I tend to be reserved, which sometimes comes off as snobby.

-My brown hair has a mind of its own.

-I need to chill and just quit worrying.

-I laugh too much to cover up my insecurities.

-You are curvy, and you will never, ever be petite.

But just like in the Dove experiment, I can see how my opinion of myself can be so skewered. And so, so wrong. Hasn't my husband been telling me for years that he loves my curves (

Who wants to hug a broom handle

? he once asked). Hasn't my sister told me again and again that my curves give me a proportional shape? Doesn't Timothy like to sit next to me on the couch and twirl his finger in my hair as he tells me it's pretty and soft?

It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. There are several layers to this saying, but let's focus on the word

behold

. To behold something is to see or observe a thing or a person which is especially remarkable or

impressive; in other words, to BEHOLD something or someone is not the same thing as LOOKING or SEEING. To behold is to appreciate all that is good, beautiful, meaningful and pure. To behold is to find the perfect in the imperfect.

Back to the conversation with my sister. I know we'll probably have that same conversation again, but I am finally able to acknowledge the fact that I am hardest on myself ... and maybe that's a good place to start. I don't have all the answers, but I do know that I am going to stop comparing myself to others (there will

always

be someone cuter, smarter, skinnier, more talented, etc.), I'm going to start listening to my family and close friends (in the end, it is their opinion that matters most), and I'm going to BEHOLD those around me.

And this includes the person I see in the mirror.



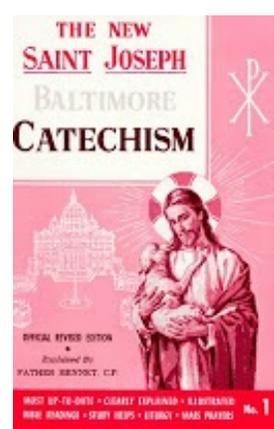
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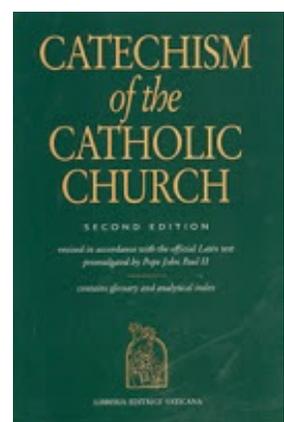
There Is No Substitute [at Smaller Manhattans]



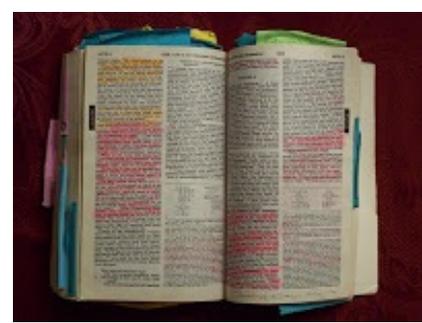
good guess, but wrong



wrong again- sorry



still wrong



that's it

Among all the Christian churches, the Catholic Church has the most to gain from a Bible-literate membership, given that the Bible is a Catholic book. Yet the Catholic Church must have the most Bible-

illiterate

flock on the planet. Of course the Church is well-aware: at least since Vatican 2, she has been exhorting a billion or so of her sheep to just pick it up and read the thing:

"The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, to learn by frequent reading of the Catechism the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). "For ignorance of the Catechism is ignorance of Christ." Just kidding. Here ya go: "The sacred synod also earnestly and especially urges all the Christian faithful, especially Religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). "For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." [St. Jerome] Therefore, they should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through the liturgy, rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading, or through instructions suitable for the purpose and other aids which, in our time, with approval and active support of the shepherds of the Church, are commendably spread everywhere." [*Dei Verbum*, 1965] Umm...yes! We should all "gladly" do as the Church asks. But as Pork said, "Askin' ain't gettin'," and who knows that better than the Catholic Church? Regardless, being a catechist I focus on the "instruction" bit of that long last sentence.

Catechetical Sunday is coming up in September along with the start of most RCIA programs. In response, I've been looking at catechetical/ RCIA stuff such as

[this](#)

; and

[this](#)

; and

[this](#)

; and

[these](#)

. And once again I draw this conclusion:

Institutional Catechesis continues to make inadequate use of the Bible.

By that I mean the Catholic catechetical system has had 48 years since

Dei Verbum

to raise its Scriptural game to an appropriate level; and is still nowhere near doing so. And what level would be appropriate? Well, maybe the level of our fellow Christians (and especially the Fundiegelicals who comprise the majority of Christians where I live), who were making maximum pedagogical use of Scripture long before there was a Vatican 2. Around here (and I assume elsewhere) Catholics of all ages are way behind their Christian peers in following the recommendation of the Catholic Church "

to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ." That would be a good joke if it were funny. And BTW, hearing the divine Scriptures read aloud at Sunday Mass ain't the same as "frequent reading of the divine Scriptures." Now as to catechetical materials, I speak only of my own experience. Most of my religious instruction was via the Baltimore Catechism (B.C.). It was an excellent system to keep one Catholic in a culture that was already Catholic. It worked just fine in the South Louisiana of my childhood; it was a disaster in Upstate South Carolina. Either way, rote-memorization catechesis was an outmoded and soon-to-be obsolete method of faith-formation. I know some Catholics are fond of the B.C., and suggest it should be tried again. My opinion is that catechesis must be more about thinking, and less about memorizing; the B.C. is DOA in the 21st century. And in that respect I like the catechetical series my parish uses, *Faith and Life* by Ignatius Press. It expects the 6th-graders to think, and it's way Bible. Yet at the same time, *it ain't Bible-enough*. I expect a child who goes through the whole K-8 series will come out with a comprehensive grasp of Catholicism; but only a fragmented and separate grasp of the Bible. It's still the old problem: the Faith (and the Catechism) is here, and the Bible is over there. That's wrong: Faith and Scripture are part of a single entity, the way a man and wife form a marriage, fused and complementary in all respects. Jesus is the Word made Flesh; the Bible is the Word Written Down. That's how catechesis *should* be understood, but that's not how it *is* understood. Part of the problem is that the old Baltimore Catechism has been replaced by the CCC, which instead of supporting the Bible, shunts the Bible to the side as the B.C. used to. In other words, the Bible currently serves as a resource to add depth to the CCC and the textbook, but it should be the other way around. When the Baltimore Catechism was rightfully retired, there was the chance to pick up the Bible; but the new Catechism has been picked up instead. That's a mistake. The Catholic's primary faith book is the Bible: not the Catechism, and not a textbook. The

CCC and textbooks are the handmaids of Scripture; the framework of catechesis, and what happens in the Catholic classroom should reflect that. Catechetically, the Bible should come first, supported by the CCC and the textbook. Put another way, catechesis needs a new paradigm.

Catholic theologian and author R.R. Reno recently wrote, "...we...should do more to create a platform for the reconstruction of a biblically-informed culture..." Indeed we should: Reno anticipates the benefits of the New Evangelization. But if Catholics going through the Church's educational systems can't explain their faith and morals scripturally to their friends and neighbors, Reno can fuhgeddaboutit.

This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2013/07/there-is-no-substitute.html>
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The Fiat Currency of "Gay Marriage" [at Dulcius Ex Asperis]

By now, the torrent of news stories, Facebook posts and Tweets have run their course on the Supreme Court's decision that has all but established gay "marriage" in the United States. As I had pretty strong feelings at the time of the ruling, I postponed writing about it. When I address controversial issues, I like to present my more considered opinions and not simply flame the opposition, which I have found to be uncharitable and largely ineffective anyway.

Of course, the risk I run is that this topic has already exhausted you, my readers. If you're plugged into the 24-hour news cycle, you are probably much further along and somewhere in the midst of the latest plane crash story or the latest Obamacare malfunction. Still, as I know that at least some have taken my early invitation to treat this blog as a respite from the rapid-fire, back-and-forth argument of the news and social media sites, I now offer my more considered analysis.

First, it should be noted that there is no such thing as "gay marriage" no matter where you live or what your legislative, judicial or executive branches might have proclaimed. A marriage simply cannot be effected between two men or two women. No politician or judge (although the two terms are becoming nearly synonymous) can create that which isn't and cannot be.

What they can do, through a willingly abused and dishonest judiciary, and a handful of state legislatures, is issue the same governmental rights and benefits to same-sex couples that real married couples have, heretofore, held exclusively. They can also create documents in MS Word or some other program with the words "marriage certificate" on top and give those pieces of paper to whomever they please. But, they can't actually create a marriage.



Because, the truth is, government has never created a marriage. Marriages have only ever been created when a man and a woman pledge themselves to each other for life before God for the purposes of mutual care and the procreation of children. The marriage certificate has just been the government's recognition that this relationship, mostly because of the children expected to issue from it, was a special one that deserved society's care and attention. It is the relationship between the man and the woman and what it gives to society that gives the document meaning, not vice versa.

Although an imperfect comparison, one could draw a parallel to money

The type of money most of us carry around in our pockets and which the modern economy is predicated upon is called fiat money. The currency notes, themselves, are worthless. You can't eat them, You can't (very successfully) clothe yourself in them. They won't patch your roof, or run your car if you stuff the bills into the gas tank. Fiat money is only worth anything in that it is a representation of the wealth the nation possesses in things that people can actually consume. Put more simply, money is only worth what it is able to buy. If tomorrow it no longer bought gas, food and shelter it would be just so much paper. It is the stuff, not the money, that has value.



Mostly, "gay marriage" is government-issued worthless paper. Since there's no marriage underlying the certificate, it represents nothing of real value, and is only of any worth so long as the government has laws or court decisions that require everyone to at least, minimally, recognize it for what the government says it is. Government printing presses have never created wealth and they have also never created a marriage

and never will no matter how many judges sign at the bottom.

True, government-issued marriage certificates do grant some economic concessions to those same-sex couples who have obtained them or will obtain them, but these economic concessions, as any truly married couple will tell you, are not significant enough to constitute, or even sustain, a marriage of themselves.

Representing nothing of real value, however, does not mean that no damage is done by handing out marriage certificates to whomever wants one. What government recognition of marriages that aren't really marriages does do is devalue real marriage in the eyes of society. Now that civil marriage is on the verge of being whatever anyone wants it to be, it is closer than ever before to being nothing at all

—and saying you're married, even if you really are and are bringing forth children that will ensure the continuance of human society, will exact no unique obligation from that society.

Like a government that prints money in an effort to increase wealth without increasing the country's stock of real goods and services but only succeeds in creating an inflation that makes its money worthless, so too will giving a marriage certificate to any combination of people who wants one make it completely worthless. A civil marriage certificate will be like the German mark in the

1920s or the Mexican peso in the 1980s. Sure you want just one? No, please, have a trillion. If you spend it right away you can have a sandwich. Or, in the case of marriage, you sure you want just one certificate to just one person? Here, have ten marriage certificates and use them one at a time or all at once, it doesn't really matter.

Of course, what militant homosexuals want

—

at least the ones who truly believe they should be recognized as married and not the ones who are simply using this as a vehicle to destroy marriage altogether

—

is the real thing. They want to equate their government-issued marriage certificates to a real marriage between a man and a woman. However, while, initially, some of the same respect may be transferred because of the linguistic association with real marriage, in the long run, and in reality, it will be seen as the legal fiction that it is. It will be something like the difference between a dollar backed by gold and a dollar that is nothing more than a federal reserve note. The first dollar guaranteed a certain amount of gold to the bearer. The second was called by American economist John Exeter an "I owe you nothing". Real marriages will still be real marriages with or without the certificate the same way that gold will always be gold or food and fuel will always be food and fuel. Gay marriages will never be anything more than the certificate but will devalue the real thin

g by pretending to be the real thing while delivering nothing in exchange—only better than counterfeit currency because they are printed by the government.

Still, I think if we are honest, we'll admit that much of the devaluing of civil marriage has been done by heterosexuals. "I owe you nothing" is certainly understood if not spoken in many modern marriage vows. With our acquiescence over a period of decades, the state marriage contract has gone from an almost unbreakable agreement to the most worthless of contracts.

And, this is where the comparison of marriage to money breaks down. The government readily enforces its monetary system with a powerful national bank, the Federal Reserve, and with its judicial system. If you're found to be seriously messing with the government's fiat currency (say by printing it yourself or refusing to recognize it as legal tender or creating an alternative monetary system) then you can have your real possessions taken away from you and find yourself in prison for a long time. The state takes money very seriously. And, breaking business contracts—contracts within that monetary system—inevitably has financial consequences.

The government, however, no longer takes marriage seriously and has largely withdrawn the institutional support marriage once had. In the past, the state disallowed all but a few divorces, made the divorces it granted exceptionally difficult to get, and enforced laws against adultery,

cohabitation and bigamy which directly devalued marriage. It also outlawed contraception, fornication, sodomy and pornography which indirectly attacked marriage.

Today, it allows or tolerates all of those things and none of the vows men and women take in a marriage ceremony mean anything to the state. You can't even have confidence that you will receive the few benefits a marriage promises because government-issued marriage certificates exert little legal force even within the system that guarantees them. A contract for cell phone service has greater hold on its parties than does the marriage contract. Unless there are children involved, one can walk out of a marriage almost as easily as one walked into it. And, while there have been some reforms that have placed more emphasis on children in divorce, the true need of a child for both a mother and father in the same home is given no consideration at all.

So, as it turns out, the government has been issuing devalued certificates for quite some time. If we stop and reflect on it, no one fighting to keep marriage between one man and one woman is solely fighting to keep marriage the way it is. We are fighting to make marriage what it was, to reconstruct the underlying value of the marriage certificate. And, we will probably lose because most heterosexuals don't really want real marriage. They don't want the lifetime commitment or the open-ended commitment to children. They want to come and go as they please and shift the consequences of their actions to an already-bloated government. They

want

the marriage certificate to be worthless.

For the longest time, I wondered how liberals (and some conservatives) could so easily capitulate on such an important issue. Finally, it occurred to me that, for all the expressions of equality, love being paramount no matter who loves whom, etc., liberals realize more than conservatives the current value of the marriage certificate. Having spent years hyper-inflating the currency to cover just about any arrangement between a man and a woman, they are just as willing to give a handful of worthless paper to homosexuals as well.

Surprisingly, that makes me feel sorry for same-sex couples who genuinely want to be married and think that the state's recognition on paper will make it real. Better for them and for society to tell them the truth—first about what marriage really is and second of the state's near total lack of commitment to its own paper—than to give them nothing while pretending to give them everything. Once they figure it out, they won't care about having a marriage certificate any more than a majority of heterosexuals do now and they'll be back to where they were before the drive for "marriage equality" ever began.

This contribution is available at <http://liamferguson.blogspot.com/2013/07/the-fiat-currency-of-gay-marriage.html>

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Spiritual Practices: Retreat IV, Beauty [at From the Pulpit of My Life]

Since Sunday I have posted a series about going on a retreat to spend "quality time" with God. This is the 4th post in the series.

God is Beauty. What speaks as eloquently of God as beautiful surroundings?

The retreat center environment, both inside and out, was inviting and breathtakingly beautiful. I took some photos. These which I've posted barely touch on everything that is on the retreat campus, but they give a little taste of my experience rather than the whole feast.



Path to Mary's Grove

Behind the stand of trees and across the bridge is a lovely area with a statue of Our Lady and a labyrinth. The path looks so inviting. It made me curious to see where it led.



Entering Mary's Grove

This is where the path led! In this area is the statue of Our Lady and the labyrinth. I spent time most evenings, the cooler time of day, in the area. It was a prayerful, peaceful atmosphere.



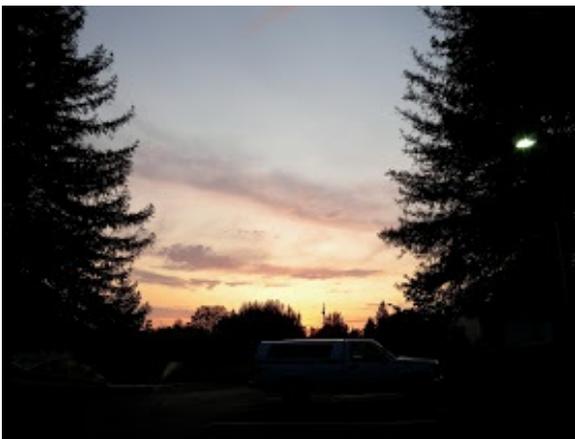
Entrance to labyrinth

Every evening I walked the labyrinth path, praying, meditating, quietly singing sometimes. It was a private place, at least at the times I was there.



Another view of retreat center from inside Mary's Grove

This photo was taken near sunset. Through the trees, is the statue of Mary. In the far distance one can see the red tile roof of the retreat center.



A beautiful sunset seen from the parking lot near Mary's Grove

There were groves of tall fir trees all over the retreat center campus. In this photo they frame one

of the sunsets I watched after walking the labyrinth and relaxing on one of the chairs in the grove.



This is the area that I was able to view from the chapel.

As the shadows indicate, this photo was taken close to noontime. I was looking at this scene from a different perspective when I wrote my letter to God. (See post II.)



Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes and path leading to Way of the Cross

This lovely area is behind the scene in the previous photo. At the far left is a path and stairs to the grotto. Not visible in this photo is a statue of Saint Bernadette facing the grotto and kneeling in prayer.



Jesus meets his mother Mary on His way to Calvary

Walking the Stations of the Cross is something I did while on my retreat. It was a time to remember the events leading up to Jesus' death. One can walk right up close to the sculptured figures and look at them from different angles. I examined the expressions on their faces and tried to imagine their thoughts or what they might have said.

Appreciation of beauty is definitely part of the retreat that I experienced. Beauty helped me raise my mind and heart to God, the source of all beauty.

This contribution is available at <http://fromthepulpitofmylife.blogspot.com/2013/07/spiritual-practices-retreat-iv-beauty.html>

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A kitchen table chat in Canada and thoughts about cohabitation [at Kitchen table chats with a Catholic Matriarch]

Yesterday I was privileged to be a guest on the Canadian Radio Teopoli with Fr. Bill Trusz. We chatted for an hour about the assaults on marriage, much as I had outlined in my latest

[HLI Truth & Charity forum article.](#)

You can listen to the interview

[here](#)

by clicking on the "listen to previous shows" button then clicking on the July 17 show.

I was very happy to once again cover the ground demonstrating that the current push to redefine marriage is only the latest in a continuum of assaults on marriage. We also talked about what we can do to stem the tide of marital perversions. The most important thing we can do is to joyfully and faithfully live our married lives. We need to project an infectious glee so that those around us say, "I want whatever they have." And what we have are marriages based on God's natural law.

"Preach the Gospel always. Use words if necessary." This quote is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. The challenge is to discern when words are necessary. Friends and relatives are cohabitating. These couples often fully intend to get married and sees no problem with jumping the gun and moving in together now that they are engaged. They do not recognize how they are making a mockery of marriage by living as if they are married without the benefit of the sacrament. I often keep silent. I do pray for them a lot. I pray that the priests who are doing their marriage preparations have the courage to address the moral peril of their choices. I pray that the parents can look past the pretty white dress and the grand celebration to the real meaning of the matrimony and counsel them accordingly. And I pray that they see the damage they do to their marriage by cohabitating first. Those who cohabit before marriage significantly increase their risk of divorce. Marriage is about so much more than just loving each other. It is about loving each other in the service of God. Flouting His law is no way to serve Him. Why debase the beginning of your marriage with sin?

After all that I trust the Holy Spirit to enlighten them and pray that their hearts are open to receive wisdom.

Some may think that is a wimpy way to go. I can use my words with my own children. I can offer my words to readers. But sometimes, my words are wholly inadequate and would only sound like scolding in a setting where I have no standing to scold. Prayer is powerful. Imagine what would happen if we all joined our voices in earnest prayer for those couples who choose to cohabit. In

the words of Pope Leo XIII, written in his encyclical

[Arcanum](#)

:

We well know that none should be excluded from Our charity, We commend, venerable brothers, to your fidelity and piety those unhappy persons who, carried away by the heat of passion, and being utterly indifferent to their salvation, live wickedly together without the bond of lawful marriage. Let your utmost care be exercised in bringing such persons back to their duty; and, both by your own efforts and by those of good men who will consent to help you, strive by every means that they may see how wrongly they have acted; that they may do penance; and that they may be induced to enter into a lawful marriage according to the Catholic rite.

This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2013/07/a-kitchen-table-chat-in-canada-and.html>

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Pseudomen, Succubi, and the Power of Womanhood [at The Trenchcoat Introspective]



What if I actually LIKE being in the kitchen? (via Tumblr)

I want to be allowed to be a woman.

There. I've said it. The greatest desire of my heart is to settle down and raise up a passel of Little Introspectives, to lead them to God, and to teach them the skills they need to survive in the world. I want to run a household. I want to can things and sew my own clothes and pack lunches and have dinner waiting for my future husband when he gets home.

But I feel that in our culture, this is not something I'm allowed to want, because being a housewife is "degrading" to women. Let's think about that, shall we?

Post-feminist sensibilities dictate that traditional female gender roles are oppressive and put women lower in the social order than men. We have to be "as good as men", and that presents us with two options: to become manlier or to use our sexuality as a weapon.

But that's stupid. Women are already as good as men. We're just different, and that's nothing to be afraid of.

Classical feminism presented us with the concept that men and women are equal. Equality is a

valuable sentiment. Men and women *are* equal in the eyes of God. But equality should never be mistaken for equivalency. Men and women were created with different strengths, different weaknesses, and – to put it bluntly – different parts. We are complimentary beings, but we are not congruent.

The trouble with our post-feminist culture is that we have embraced the idea that gender is fluid. And we have been told that the best way for women to earn respect in “a man’s world” is to learn to play dirty with the guys. We are encouraged to be just as gruff, just as crass, just as forceful as men. We are presented with outfits that minimize the feminine form and make us more homogenized. And we are told that this will finally get us the respect we deserve.



Oh, yes. But you still have to wear heels. (via Vogue)

We have been lied to.

The truth is that women can never win this game. Men will always beat us at being men unless we make them more feminine (oh, wait. That’s happening too!) or if we completely sacrifice what makes us truly powerful: our feminine genius. I have seen firsthand where this route gets us. It leads to nothing but anger and bitterness.

So what about the other path? If we cannot be powerful by “embracing our masculine side,” surely our power lies in those very parts that make us feminine! Let us dress provocatively and beat the men at their own game by leading them around by their hormones! This must be the best way!



What's that? Miley can't hear you over all this EMPOWERMENT! (via 100.3 Jack FM)

It saddens and pains me to see so many women fall into this trap. And yet, why not? Our media is saturated by the allure of the succubus. If we are the weaker sex, our power must lie in our sexuality.

Well, this is actually rather true. But not in the way our culture tends to think of it.

I like to think of feminine sexuality as a loaded gun. Now, any idiot can wave a revolver around and think that it makes her look tough and in control. But a true gunfighter knows that a gun on the hip is more intimidating than a gun in the hand. Once you've pulled your gun, the mystery is gone. If you aren't going to fire it right away, it becomes obvious that you have no confidence – and this makes you look weak, not powerful. But if you leave your gun holstered while an idiot is waving his gun at you, if you look him in the eyes and let him know that you aren't intimidated by his posturing ... well, that's confidence. And confidence is scary as hell to people who have none.

It's really all in how you carry yourself. Womanhood is powerful, but not because we have this ability to turn men into drooling idiots by hiking our skirts up and our shirts down. This really does nothing but take our power away from us.

True feminine power lies in mystery, in love, and in faith.

Feminine power lies in mystery because a woman who acts like a lady gives nothing away. She keeps her own counsel, and she carries herself with grace and the power of hidden things. She values herself too much to stoop to profanity, and is too cunning to reveal her motivation to those who would strip her of it. She is powerful because she is not an open book. She cannot be caged because she cannot be predicted.

Feminine power lies in love because a woman who acts like a lady is made of love. She goes through immense pain to bring about new humans, and what is childbirth but a sacrifice of love? Her instincts are to nurture, to protect, and to cherish. And this does not make her weak. Women are warriors of love. We have an inner strength and power that springs from our nurturing instincts and makes us a force to be reckoned with if someone we love is threatened. This is not a

masculine trait. It is deeply rooted in our femininity, and we need to own it.

Feminine power lies in faith because a woman who acts like a lady knows where her limits are. She has complete mastery over herself because she recognizes that she does not have mastery over anything. She allows herself to be the tool of God because He will never let her fall without picking her back up. She embraces hope in a brighter future and actively works towards this future. She can do anything because she knows she can do nothing on her own.

Sisters, isn't it time that we stopped trading our power in for cheap knockoffs? Isn't it time that we say no to a culture that wants to make us weak by telling us we have to become something we were not designed to be?

Womanhood is dignity incarnate. Why do we let ourselves be stripped of our dignity by a culture that does nothing but degrade us? We are not men. We are not succubi.

We are women. We are strong, we are beautiful, we are intelligent, and we need to start sticking up for ourselves.

Long live womanhood!

-E.G. Norton

This contribution is available at <http://trenchcoatintrospective.wordpress.com/2013/07/02/pseudomen-succubi-and-the-power-of-womanhood/>

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Fr Amin Abboud, RIP



Prayer request. A good man died today — suddenly and at a young age. Fr Amin Abboud was a priest, a registered medical doctor, and a PhD in moral philosophy.

I'm not sure of his age, but he wasn't old! I first got to know him when I was at university, long before either of us were priests. He was ordained to the priesthood on 27 May 2006, and died on 18 July 2013.

Fr Amin was writing a book on Peter Singer which [Connor Court](#) was due to publish soon I think. Here's an article he wrote last year on the subject: [No honour in gong for infanticide backer](#).



Ordained to the diaconate





Concelebrating Mass with the Pope

Pray for him! *Requiescat in pace.*

UPDATE

In the comments below, Robert links to [a news article on the Sydney Archdiocese website](#). It reports that Fr Amin died while on his annual retreat. I maintain he died too young of course, but what a blessed way to go!

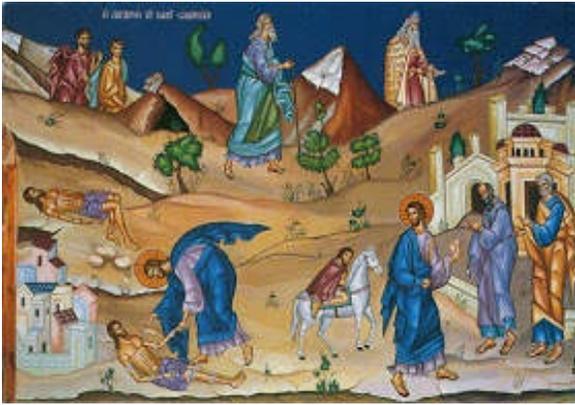
Fr Amin would have spent the last few weeks preparing for his retreat, contemplating where he is in the spiritual life, where he is in his service to God, and resolving to renew and deepen his friendship with our Lord.

He may well have prepared a shortlist of items he would raise with our Lord, knowing that the retreat is in fact a unique opportunity for *the Lord* to raise some points with *him*, in an environment which lends itself to attentive listening.

The annual retreat is an intimate meeting with our Friend and Master, analogous to that face to face meeting we will each encounter at the moment of death. In Fr Amin's case, the analogy has become the reality.

I guess we should be prepared to meet our maker any time, and live every day like it's our last. Preparing for and entering into a retreat just focuses that. I can't imagine a better preparation for a sudden and unexpected death. Blessed be God, and God bless Fr Amin.

The Good Samaritan and the Cross [at Veritas Lux Mea]



In the Gospel Reading for today (Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C), we heard the parable of the Good Samaritan:

There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said,
“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”
Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law?
How do you read it?”
He said in reply,
“You shall love the Lord, your God,
with all your heart,
with all your being,
with all your strength,
and with all your mind,

and your neighbor as yourself.”

He replied to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.”

But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus replied,

“A man fell victim to robbers

as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.

They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead.

A priest happened to be going down that road,

but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

Likewise a Levite came to the place,

and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him

was moved with compassion at the sight.

He approached the victim,

poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them.

Then he lifted him up on his own animal,

took him to an inn, and cared for him.

The next day he took out two silver coins

and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction,

‘Take care of him.

If you spend more than what I have given you,

I shall repay you on my way back.’

Which of these three, in your opinion,

was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?”

He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.”

Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (Lk 10:25-37)

Jesus spoke the parable in answer to a conversation that He was having with one of the scholars of the Torah, who was concerned about what he ought to do to inherit eternal life.

[Incidentally, contrary to Luther’s notion of “Sola Fide”, when the man asked Jesus the question, He did NOT answer by saying: “Silly man...don’t you know that you can’t DO anything to inherit eternal life...you are saved by faith alone”. Rather, Jesus’ response to this man is evidence that we are not saved by faith alone; but rather that we are saved by faith AND works].

After correctly answering that the way to inherit eternal life is through love of God and neighbour, the man asked Jesus “Who is my neighbour?” Jesus answered his question through the parable of the Good Samaritan; and then instructed the man to go and do the same.

As I was listening to the Gospel Reading in the Mass this morning, I looked up at the Crucifix and it occurred to me that the parable of the Good Samaritan is ultimately a parable of the Cross.

We see that it is a parable of the Cross of Christ when we realise that the man attacked by the robbers is an image of fallen mankind. We have been mortally wounded by sin and left destitute on the side of the spiritual highway to die in our trespasses and sins. But it is Christ who, like a Samaritan (despised and rejected by men – Isa 53:3), comes to our aid, heals our wounds, and pays our way with His own Blood. In this way, He shows His love for His Heavenly Father by resigning Himself to the Father’s will (Lk 22:42). In the selfsame act of obedience, He also shows His love for us – made His neighbours through the Incarnation – in that He laid down His life for us (Jn 15:13).

But Christ’s Cross is not the only one that is referred to in this parable. We see a glimpse of another cross in Jesus’ words “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37). The second cross is our own, which Jesus tells to pick up daily if we want to be His disciples (Matt 16:24). In taking up our own cross every day, we show our love for God and our neighbour by denying ourselves and giving ourselves instead to God’s will, and sacrificially giving ourselves to the service of others – firstly those closest to us (our families, our fellow-parishioners, and our work colleagues); and also to others that God might place in our path every day.

So, as we hear the parable of the Good Samaritan, may our desire be to imitate our Good Shepherd in loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and loving our neighbour as ourselves. We do this when we unite ourselves with Him in His Crucifixion – when we die to ourselves and live for God and our neighbour.

This contribution is available at <http://justingridveritasluxmea.blogspot.com.au/2013/07/the-good-samaritan-and-cross.html>

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Our God of Reversals [at The One True Faith]



Carravaggio's Doubting Thomas

Today is the Feast of Saint Thomas, the Apostle. Sometimes he's called Didymis, or the Doubting Apostle, or Apostle to India. All of his names are friendly, showing much love and devotion. Of course! Who has never doubted? Everyone can identify with sometimes having doubts in their faith. And everyone loves the story of Jesus telling Thomas to stick his finger in his nail wounds, and his hand in his side wound. Ew-w-w-w

No wonder Thomas said "No thanks." Just seeing is believing. Thomas is so very much like us.

Think of the lesson of the story of doubting Thomas. Because of Thomas' doubt, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." That's us!!! \0/ \0/ \0/

Another lesson is the fact that Jesus shamed Thomas, and because of Thomas "epiphany", Thomas' faith is solidified. His faith grows exponentially. Thomas goes on to be a missionary to the East. India's Christians venerate him. I vaguely remember that there are a few Christians in Tibet (yes) and they trace their history to St. Thomas, too. (I'm too lazy to do a google search and prove this to you.)

Another interesting story revolves around Thomas being the only apostle not being present to see the resurrected Jesus, and the death of Mary. Thomas was the only witness to see Mary assumed into heaven (making up for his being left out of seeing the resurrected Jesus). The other apostles were miraculously transported to Mary's death bed and were present with her. Thomas missed out, again. However, Thomas was later transported to her tomb, where he saw her assumption, into heaven. As Mary ascended, she dropped her girdle (belt) to Thomas.

Here's the big reversal. (God does this continually.) Thomas now tells the other apostles that Mary was assumed up to heaven. They doubt. Not until the apostles see Mary's empty tomb and her very own girdle (belt), do they believe. (Come on guys, put your hands inside the tomb, and finger this girdle. Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.)



The story continues. Thomas' receiving of Mary's girdle, is often depicted in art. Thomas' doubting is reduced to a metaphorical knot in the Bavarian painting, Mary Undoer of Knots.* For some reason, this famous painting by the German, Johann Georg Melchior Schmidtner (1700) became the poster for the devotion, Mary Undoer of Knots. Many Catholics venerate this image. One famous pilgrim was so taken by the image that he brought it to his own country. I'm talking about Jorge Bergoglio who later became Pope Francis I. Archbishop Bergoglio promoted her veneration in Latin America. The devotion attracts people with small problems. Archbishop Bergoglio had the image engraved on a chalice he presented to Pope Benedict XVI. And a similar chalice was presented to Bergoglio, when he became pope, by the Argentine people.

Here's the thread: doubting Thomas, doubting apostles, all tied up in Mary's girdle (belt). God can do anything. Undoing knots is easy, especially when compared to changing doubters into believers.

Virgin Mary, Mother of fair love, Mother who never refuses to come to the aid of a child in need, Mother whose hands never cease to serve your beloved children because they are moved by the divine love and immense mercy that exists in your heart, cast your compassionate eyes upon me and see the snarl of knots that exist in my life. You know very well how desperate I am, my pain and how I am bound by these knots. Mary, Mother to whom God entrusted the undoing of the knots in the lives of his children, I entrust into your hands the ribbon of my life. No one, not even the Evil One himself, can take it away from your precious care. In your hands there is no knot that cannot be undone. Powerful Mother, by your grace and intercessory power with Your Son and My Liberator, Jesus, take into your hands today this knot...I beg you to undo it for the glory of God, once for all, You are my hope. O my Lady, you are the only consolation God gives me, the fortification of my feeble strength, the enrichment of my destitution and with Christ the freedom from my chains. Hear my plea. Keep me, guide me, protect me, o safe refuge!

Mary, Undoer of Knots, pray for me



St. Thomas Cross

*

The concept of Mary untying knots is derived from a work by St. [Irenaeus](#) of Lyons, *[Adversus haereses](#)* (*Against Heresies*). In Book III, Chapter 22, he presents a parallel between Eve and Mary, describing how "the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith. h/t https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_the_Apostle

This contribution is available at <http://theonetruefaith-faith.blogspot.com/2013/07/our-god-of-reversals.html>
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Five Favorites

Hosted at MoxieWife.com

Have you seen [Hallie's weekly link-up](#) at Moxie Wife, "Five Favorites?" The idea is (I think) to post a little something about five of your favorite things from the previous week. Well, obviously I'm slightly behind in that regard, since these are from Memorial Day Weekend, but at the risk of bending the rules just a little—next time my five favorites will be something from the previous week, I PROMISE!—I've decided to jump in today with five things that stood out in my mind and stirred my emotions at this year's Indianapolis 500. (Some of you already know we're racing fans, and we try to attend at least one Indy Car race every year. This year we decided to go for THE BIG ONE.) And they weren't necessarily my five *favorite* moments, although some of them were; and a couple of them made me sad—again, I might be bending the rules. My apologies. Here they are, in the order that they happened, more or less:

–1–

We had to wait in line at the gate for a little while to get in (Did I tell you that the Indy 500 is [the most heavily attended](#) one-day sporting event in the world?) and the street preachers took full advantage of their opportunity to evangelize. As a Catholic and a Christian, I am all for standing in the street telling others about Jesus. What made me cringe was the way in which these well-meaning folks were doing their preaching. Using megaphones, they were yelling things like, **"If you DIED TODAY, would you go to HEAVEN or HELL? You'd better think about that because if you don't REPENT NOW you are sure to spend ETERNITY IN HELL FIRE! The only way to escape ETERNAL DAMNATION is to accept JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL LORD AND SAVIOR! You may be enjoying yourselves today, with all your drinkin' and your cussin', and your partyin',"**—and there was plenty of that going on; see #4—"but you'll be AWFULLY SAD when the LORD comes to collect his children and YOU are thrown into the PIT OF FIRE, from which there is NO ESCAPE!!!"

I wanted to cry. I wanted to confront them. I wanted to shout at them, *"Do you really think you will win people over to Christ this way? You're just turning people off, my friend! How about telling us that Jesus loves us more than we can imagine? That He made us and loves us enough to die on the Cross for us? That He longs to be with us forever and ever??"* I said these things out loud—not loud enough for the megaphone-wielding preachers to hear, but perhaps someone heard me.

(Which reminds me of my favorite thing about Catholicism: That Jesus loves us so much not only did He die for our sins and wants us to be with Him in Heaven, but he gave himself to us in the Eucharist. We can receive Him, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, any time we want.)

–2–

Shortly before the start of the race, thirty-nine runners who were unable to finish the Boston Marathon before the bombs went off had the opportunity to run the half mile or so from Turn 4 to the finish line. It was an extremely moving moment, and I might have shed a tear or two.



–3–

This:

I think it was when Jim Nabors started singing that it finally dawned on me, **“HOLY CRAP I’M AT THE INDYFREAKINAPOLIS 500!!”**

–4–

One thing I was surprised to see that weekend—especially Saturday evening as we made our way back [from Mass](#) to our car parked near the speedway, and again before *and* after the race on Sunday—was the vast number of people whose sole purpose for being there seemed to be to get as hammered as possible. There were throngs of people camping in tents and RVs in lots reserved for that purpose right beside the track—which might have been very convenient for us, and we even considered renting an RV and camping there rather than staying in a hotel across town. My advice to anyone planning to attend a future Indianapolis 500: *Go for the hotel*. As far away from the speedway as you can stand it. And if you have small children, wait until they’re older, or leave them with relatives. We’ve attended quite a few Indy car races, starting when the kids were pretty young, and the crowds at those events have been (for the most part) orderly, polite, and subdued. Very family-friendly. People go to Indy Car races to enjoy the racing; and although you’ll see a few intoxicated people, there really is very little drunken revelry going on. We see many families, out together to enjoy a day of racing. People who have been to NASCAR races—Joe included—tell me that *those* crowds are generally larger and rowdier, and that bringing small children to them

might not be such a great idea. Joe said that the Indy 500 crowd reminded him of the ones at the NASCAR race in Richmond, only bigger. We saw people playing drinking games literally *in the middle of the street*. It was CRAZY.

After the race was over (fast-forwarding a little bit) and we were exiting the speedway and walking through the crowds of people, there was a man walking in front of us carrying a little girl. She looked to be about four or five years old. The guy was covered in tattoos (nothing wrong with that of course; I know lots of wonderful people who have them) and he had a cigarette hanging from his mouth right next to the girl's face. He was screaming at some friends of his, cursing at them for dropping all the beer and spilling it or some such thing. I looked at the girl and smiled at her. She looked at me but didn't smile back. I wondered what life must be for that little girl at home. Was this her Dad? Is this the kind of behavior this beautiful child (not to mention her Mom, and her siblings if she has any) puts up with on a daily basis? I felt a little guilty for not saying anything to the man—even, "You have a beautiful daughter!" would have been nice. Instead I said a little prayer for her and for her family.

BUT, do you know what I loved? Once we found our seats, the fans around us were pretty much like the ones at all the other races we've been to—polite, sober, just enjoying some good racing. (There is a section in the infield called the Snake Pit, and I'm told that's where all the partiers go.) The cars were fast, there was excitement in the air—THIS is what being a race fan is all about.

–5–



The end of the race. When Dario Franchitti crashed with two laps to go and everyone realized that Tony Kanaan would be the winner, everyone went nuts. People were standing on their seats, jumping up and down, screaming and yelling. Some people cried. I got a little teary myself. Tony has been Curly's favorite driver since he was little (here he is with Curly in 2009),



and I think I can safely say he's become our family's favorite driver, too. It was great to be there when Tony finally got his elusive Indy 500 win.

Head on over to [Moxie Wife](#) and see what other bloggers love!

P.S. I fired up my computer tonight to finish this post and learned via Facebook that Thomas Peters, a Catholic and pro-life blogger and activist, was seriously injured yesterday in a swimming accident and is in critical condition (more details [here.](#)) Please join me in praying for him.

This contribution is available at <http://eatingslowly.wordpress.com/2013/07/17/five-favorites-volume-one-the-indy-500-edition/>

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Modesty Discovered [at The Veil of Chastity]

Many thanks to the **Guest Author** for this beautiful and powerful testimony!

I'm 18 years old, a rising sophomore in college, and a few weeks ago, I threw out many of my dresses, most of my shorts, and all but one swim suit.

Wait, what?

I am fairly recent “re-vert” to Catholicism, and I went to confession (for the first time in 10 years) and started attending mass again about six months ago. Since then, I have been on fire about my faith (About as on fire as anyone who just realized life is infinitely more special than they ever knew!) I read anything I can get my hands on, attend daily mass, attend adoration at least weekly, confession every two weeks...I'm all in, for the most part.

But there was something I kept skipping over as I learned more about my faith.

Modesty.

Modesty, especially modesty of dress, is a touchy subject for girls today. We have been taught that clothing is about expression, that our bodies should be bared while we are still young and beautiful, that we have no responsibility for men's eyes that wander. I bought into these explanations.

Since I was very young, my family has put my self-worth and importance on how I look. It had something to do with the fact nearly all of my extended family is overweight, and I have never struggled with my own weight. I spent my life receiving compliments such as “you are so thin!”, and “what a beautiful girl,” from well-meaning relatives.

My mother has struggled with her weight and appearance her entire life, even though to me her heart makes her the most beautiful woman in the world. But, I believe she encouraged my way of dress because she never got to dress that way herself. I wore bikinis, short skirts, half-shirts, you name it from age 10 or possibly younger. At one time I owned over 30 swimsuits, and only one was anything close to modest. I could wear anything I wanted, and frequently got in trouble at school for broken dress codes.

“Respecting myself” came to mean showing off what I was given to me. My mother thought it was good. It made sense. It was natural. After all, God created us naked, right? And that is just how I lived my life.

They say if you find yourself justifying an action again and again, it is probably sin. And that is certainly the story of my journey to modesty. As I came back to the Church, I began to feel a

discomfort about my clothing choices. But I was stubborn. *Extremely* stubborn.

But God knows our hearts, and he knew mine. He knew exactly how much of a push I needed, and he gave me what I needed to change.

First, he introduced me to nuns. I had never met a nun. I thought they would be sad, strict, unhappy women who would pass judgment on me. Instead, they were some of the happiest people I'd ever met. By chance, I got into a conversation with one sister about what her habit meant to her, since some nuns are abandoning the practice of wearing a habit at all. She explained,

“My habit does a ministry that I cannot. If someone looks at me across the street, they see me and think of God, even if we never exchange a word.”

Huh, I thought. *Well that must only work for nuns!* And I ignored, again, the pull on my heart to something greater.

So God nudged me again. During a confession, a priest asked me to meditate on this question: If you really loved the Lord with your whole heart and your whole life, what would that look like? And although he hadn't been asking about the way I dressed, it came to mind first in my meditation. *Hmm...I would probably choose to dress in a way that made my mysterious and beautiful self...well, a mystery!* But I was again, able to justify my actions to myself. It seemed stupid to change something so “minor” when there are so many greater evils in the world.

God then started offering me little nudges. My spiritual reading mentioned modesty in passing. I heard someone speak on the origin of the bikini. I spoke to a young man in seminary about how difficult it was to have immodestly dressed women all over ads and the streets. I saw a study from Princeton University that showed that when young men looked at photos of scantily clad women, the part of their brains associated with *tool use* were used, almost exclusively. Tool use!

It was swimming in a bikini in a friend's pool when it suddenly hit me. No, I didn't suddenly feel self-conscious. No, I didn't see a vision or hear a voice. All of the sudden it just hit me. *What I was doing was wrong.*

Why shouldn't people see God when they look at single girls? Why shouldn't they see God when they look at me? Why shouldn't I glorify the Lord in *everything* I do, even clothing choices? Why am I not worth keeping a mystery? Why do I feel this is what I have to offer the world? Why won't I recognize that I am above a *tool*? I am wondrously made, and my wardrobe needed a makeover that helped me show it.

After the realization came the questions. Should I start immediately? Will people think I'm faking it, or being dramatic? How will I explain this to my mom? And, as I feel I am called to marriage, how will I attract my *husband*?

Changing My Ways

When I finally made my choice, I ended up sharing it with my mother first. And because she is my mother and she loves me, she made sure I was sound in my decisions by presenting some common anti-modesty arguments.

1. *Don't let anyone make you too modest. People are overly prudish about things. Sometimes values are changed because of pressure from Christians with puritanical values.* Can anyone “make you modest”? Although someone may require you to dress modestly, modesty is a personal choice. It involves more than just clothes, and it is not something that can be forced, only instilled or realized. And since when are shorts that come closer to the knee or one-piece swimsuits or jackets worn over strapless dresses and shirts *puritanical* instead of just a bit more covered up?

2. *You said you have been dressing differently, and for most people your age the way dress represents your autonomy/uniqueness. I have always admired your style.* Yes. My new clothing that covers my body does represent me, although that me might be better than before! It says, “Hello! I am beautiful on the inside, so beautiful that I don't have to show the whole outside to just anyone! I have more to offer!”

3. *The way things look is not as important as how they are and feeling valued and worthwhile for the uniquely beautiful person God created you to be.* I agree with so much of this argument. The way things look is *not* as important as they are! I could say it right back! The only problem is that your clothing is not just a “look.” it is an “are”, or an *action that you take every single day*. Every morning I dress myself, and now I choose clothing that respects me and others. That is how things are. And ironically, nothing helps me feel more ‘valued’ than the realization that I am more than a body!

4. *I am just asking you to reflect on how your dress might be perceived by those around in all situations. People you might be led to reach to may not be able to relate to someone they perceive as “dressing like a nun.”* By this logic, you should dress like a prostitute to do ministry to prostitutes. Why would you dress like the world, when you have something so much **more** to offer them? Something mysterious, something worth covering up.

5. *You are great the way you are! We love you how you are.* This part of the argument hurts. It says “We love you how you are! ...as long as how you are never changes and is rooted in how you look.” But why would you want to stay ‘how you are’ when there are bigger and better things in store for you?

I have faith my mother will see the value in my decision in time, as long as I can show her by my life. Taking action to speak how I felt about these arguments was not comfortable or easy. But I wasn't created for comfort. I was created for greatness.

The Fruits of Modesty

I also had a big hang-up on modesty because I feel I am called to marriage. I'm sure

others can understand this. How will you attract a man if you aren't dressing a certain way? How can you possibly get a boyfriend?

Well, the first realization is that *God created your future husband to desire a modest wife*. That means he won't have to look around your modesty to see you are the woman for him, he will love and admire you *for* it. If that is too far away from home to really hit you, try this: do you want to marry a man who chooses who to date based on their exposed skin? Or would you rather have a man that knows and loves who you are in your heart?

Even in the times where I thought I didn't *deserve* the church-going, non-drinking, respectful, hilarious, and handsome man of my dreams, I prayed for him. And God is faithful. His plan for us is infinitely higher than our own. But in order to receive what we ask him for, we must create room for it in our own lives. And the way to create room for a faithful Catholic husband in your future is to start dressing like his future wife *now!* In fact, in a study on modesty by The Rebelution, 95.4% of men surveyed agreed that modesty was an important quality for their future wife.

The reality is, the church-going Catholic man isn't looking at the women in miniskirts for his future wife. He can already see what they are offering, and it isn't what his heart desires! But a girl who is modest catches his attention. He sees that there is more to find out, and that is refreshing in today's "show me" society.

It's Not My Problem!

This is perhaps the most troubling of the arguments and rationalizations behind the issue of modesty in dress. Guys should take control of their own eyes, and it just isn't our problem as women.

Yes, it is your problem. The "guys" you are talking about so generally are your brothers, your uncles, your fathers, your close friends, and your future spouse. Even the guys that aren't any of those things are still your brothers in Christ, and you have a call to *love* them as you love yourself.

Love is an action. Love is an act of sacrifice. Modesty is an active way to say to your brothers in Christ *"Hey! This is difficult for me. Something it involves spending a little more money, searching a little longer for clothes, dealing with the reactions of others, and separating myself from what media and culture is telling me to wear. I am making a sacrifice for you, because I love you and care about you, and I want you to get to heaven!"*

Final Word

Modesty was not easy for me. It wasn't something I grew up with, or something I was taught in my religious education. It was something God helped me discover when I sought out the truth. I know it is a difficult attachment, one that is ingrained in society. The world tells us modesty is outdated,

unnecessary, and holding us back. But, as Jesus tells us, we are not of this world because He has chosen us out of it.

This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2013/07/01/modesty-discovered/>
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A Legacy of Faith [at Daily Grace]



Mom has always had an insight as to what was really important in life and what wasn't. One of her insights is to appreciate time well spent with those you hold dear, she calls it "making memories". She says, "Later on in life Hun, it will be your memories that you look back on. Those memories can bring you great joy, even on a sorrowful day. So try and live each day as if you were making a wonderful memory."

Mom is always right.

I recently lost my dad to cancer, and though my heart aches for him, I now understand why people call this time a "celebration of life". So many friends, relatives and acquaintances have either, gathered together with us, called or written, all wanting to share the wonderful memories they have of their time spent with him.

Though their personal experiences with dad were all a little different, they all held a common thread. You see, they all mentioned that dad took the time to listen to them and that every time he gave any particular comment or piece of advice it brought them back to the realization of the love God had for each one of them.

Dad's life was based on faith, and deeply rooted in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his love for our Blessed Mother. He had a zeal to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and to share Our Lady's messages from Medjugore. This was his legacy to me, to my family, and to all whose lives he touched.

Last July, around this time, dad made his Consecration to Jesus through Mary, and though I had done this in the past, I renewed my consecration with him on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, a memory I will never forget.

While doing a little studying up on St. Louis de Montfort during this time, I learned that he was brought up in France, in the northwest of the country called Brittany, which is known for his Celtic roots.

The Celtic warriors were notorious for their fighting spirit. Often they would wear nothing but

blue battle paint, working themselves into a blood-thirsty frenzy and rushing into combat....These fierce fighting men, despite their lack of discipline, armor, and order, were extremely effective in battle because of their unmatched passion and ferocity.¹

St. Louis's dad, Jean Grignon, a descendent of these warrior, must have had some of this passion, for nobody wanted to mess with him either, and he passed this passion on to his son. But Louis channeled his fiery passion into laboring for the greater Glory of God. He too had a zeal, a remarkable zeal that has brought, and continues to bring people to Jesus through Mary.² This was his legacy to us all.

Have you ever wondered about what type of legacy you were going to leave behind, or what others would remember about you after you were gone? Well, I can't honestly say that I ever had before now.

I will be renewing my Consecration to Jesus through Mary this month, and I just wanted to introduce you to a wonderful book that has been out for a short while called "[33 Days to Morning Glory: A Do-it-Yourself Retreat In Preparation for Marian Consecration](#)". This book explains Marian Consecration in a way I can relate to like I never have before. Many people who have gone through the preparation for this consecration say that it has changed their lives. I believe it does too.

A life lived for Jesus through Mary...now that's a legacy of faith to pass on!

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Ask and you shall receive...

My summer reading list has brought up lots of questions inside me, but mostly it has underlined what I have felt since I was about 20 years old; life is grey. Not one thing is black and white. Everything is shade upon shade upon shade of grey. At 20 that was a paralyzing realization. At 41 it is a truth I am reminded of many times a day.

My compass, my road map through the ambiguity and many angledness of life is God. So today sitting on the front porch in the oppressive heat, enjoying a little shade and a welcome breeze while holding our 5 month old son G I said to Kevin, “God’s got our back right?” My brain had been swirling with conflicting thoughts lately and I was looking to affirm our collective faith. I backed it up with the statement: “God’s got us right where he wants us.” Of course that elicited a “Yeah, he’s got us by the cojones.” sort of joke from Kevin. It was a small, searching, and in the end, silly moment, but just sharing our faith out loud made my own feel stronger...

As if on cue 7 year old C and 5 year old R came around to the porch from the sandbox announcing that they had made me a cake. It consisted of a shaped mound of sand with a day lily flower and a rock on it. It was very pretty I must say. They were so excited because the rock which they found (*see note below*) had my name painted on it and a flower that matched the day lily. C showed me how when you turned the rock over it had what looked like a time written on it.





The sweet innocence of this unexpected gift was the perfect answer to the question I had just asked Kevin. And the *time* painted on the back of the rock was actually a verse. I looked it up and shared it with C: *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” Matthew 18:20*

God is with us and he loves us. I heard it loud and clear today. Nothing grey or murky about it.

~Lisa

(I have been on a cleaning spree lately determined to get our house in order. I had tossed the rock outside about an hour before the boys “found” it. It had been made as a prayer rock years ago when I was on the steering team for my local Mothers of Preschoolers group. Someone else kept it and used it as a reminder to pray for me during the year and I had a rock with another team members name on it and prayed for her. I was given my rock at the end of that year. Anyway, in a rash moment of cleaning frenziness, I threw it out the back door into a pile of other rocks. It has now made it back inside and onto the window sill in the kitchen.)

This contribution is available at <http://www.makingitinvermont.com/2013/07/ask-and-you-shall-recvie/>
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Entrusted with So Much [at My Spare Oom]

It is late...

I am typing, my fingers moving over keys slick and dark as ebony...forming words about my Modest Monday posts, explaining why I dress the way I do...how I do my best to dress for God. To dress with God's standards.

And then somehow I am led to Ann's blog,

[which is dear and familiar](#)

...and drink in her words with her beautiful music, and then...

Then I find

[Katie's blog](#)

. The humble yet profound writing of a beautiful 24 year-old woman who moved to Uganda after graduating homeschool high school. Uganda, where she is now the mother to 13 adopted children.

Where she daily pours out the love of Christ. And washes His poor, whether it is their dusty feet with clean water...or their dusty hearts with His saving grace and Word.

And I am reminded...we are entrusted with

so much.

I am entrusted with so much.

I am blessed beyond belief to attend a university, to continue my pursuit of knowledge. To have a family that loves and supports me. Friends that encourage me. A faith community that stretches across the world - one that is universal.

And I am left humbled and breathless with

how much God has entrusted to me.

I am the eldest of six children - and whether I realize it or not, I am the living example of how they should be, how they should interact with my parents, with others, with the world. If I fail, they will think it is all right for them to fail also. If I speak in haste or anger, they will feel comfortable speaking in haste or anger. Because if the oldest child does and does, why should the younger ones not?

After all...don't we all learn by imitation?

I am entrusted with so much.

I am returning to college as a sophomore, as an experienced and older student. One to whom freshmen will turn worried eyes and ask where this or that building is, ask if they will fail their first test, or what to do when something heart-gripping comes up and they cannot go to their parents for help because they are at college and learning independence the hard way...and because home is far away.

I am entrusted with the hearts that will live alongside of me in my hall - the girls who I will see on a daily basis, cry, laugh, study, worry, and breathe the same air with. I am there to serve. To support. To be their shoulder to cry on. Their safe. Their home away from home. To be the love of Christ to them.

I am entrusted with so much.

I am a writer - both through blogging, fiction, and academically. I write because of the God-placed urge on my heart: the urge to share, to encourage, to create beauty...to glorify Him. And I can use my gift for His good. Whether it's Modest Monday, posts like these where I share my heart, or fictional scenes where characters fight for goodness and truth and love, I have a responsibility and task as a writer. I have a voice, a gift, an ability to share.

I am entrusted with so much.

I am a member of my church community at college - I am part of the family that rejoices and grieves and prays with each other on a weekly and even daily basis. I have been Awakened and am now a part of a family within a family, charged with a purpose to pray and love my fellow brother and sister students who have not yet made the Awakening retreat...who have not yet experienced God's earthshattering, barrier-breaking love that floods one's soul during that very special weekend.

More than that, I am a witness for my beloved Faith - for my identity as a Roman Catholic, for my very being - on a Baptist campus. I - like all of us - a modern-day Apostle...a Christian who is scrutinized carefully and critically. My behavior, my appearance, my very personality, and my speech both unintentionally and intentionally shape others' perception of the Catholic Faith, of the living breathing Catholic Church. Of my God - our God. The God who is everyone's God. Everything I say and do is a reflection of Him, even when I am tired and not thinking about it.

The very way I live my life speaks or doesn't speak of Him. I am entrusted with so much.

I am simultaneously awed, overcome with emotion, filled with joy, daunted at the responsibility,

and so afraid I cannot accomplish all that I have been entrusted with.

I am not the Son of Man. I cannot do it all. I cannot save the world.

But, I was not made to. WE were not made to.

Here in the quiet, as I type with a heart full and an ache deep within, all I know - all that is my living, breathing reality - is that God did not make us to be

Him

. He made us to be

like

Him. To love unconditionally - to love and serve those in our lives...to shine for Him. He made each of us capable for what He has entrusted us with.

And then...and then, friends...when each of us loves and serves and carries out what we have been entrusted with, we make a difference in the lives around us.

And those lives, and each of our lives, bound up and caught in the messy place we call 'Home' between Heaven and Hell - they come together and form something beautiful. If we each try and continue each day, even on the days when we are exhausted and broken down, that love grows and abounds like nothing else in this universe.

And we're breathless at God's might and majesty, because we are all so unflinchingly aware of our failings and our messiness and our cracks. We're not a perfect people. We are not perfect Children. But oh, we are the Children that He loves. We are the Children He has chosen - and entrusted with great things and many hearts.

Because the beautiful thing is, when we make a difference in others' hearts, in their lives, each of our efforts are added together....and one by one, whether child or adult, senior or teenager, priest or college student....

Together we change the world. Not alone.

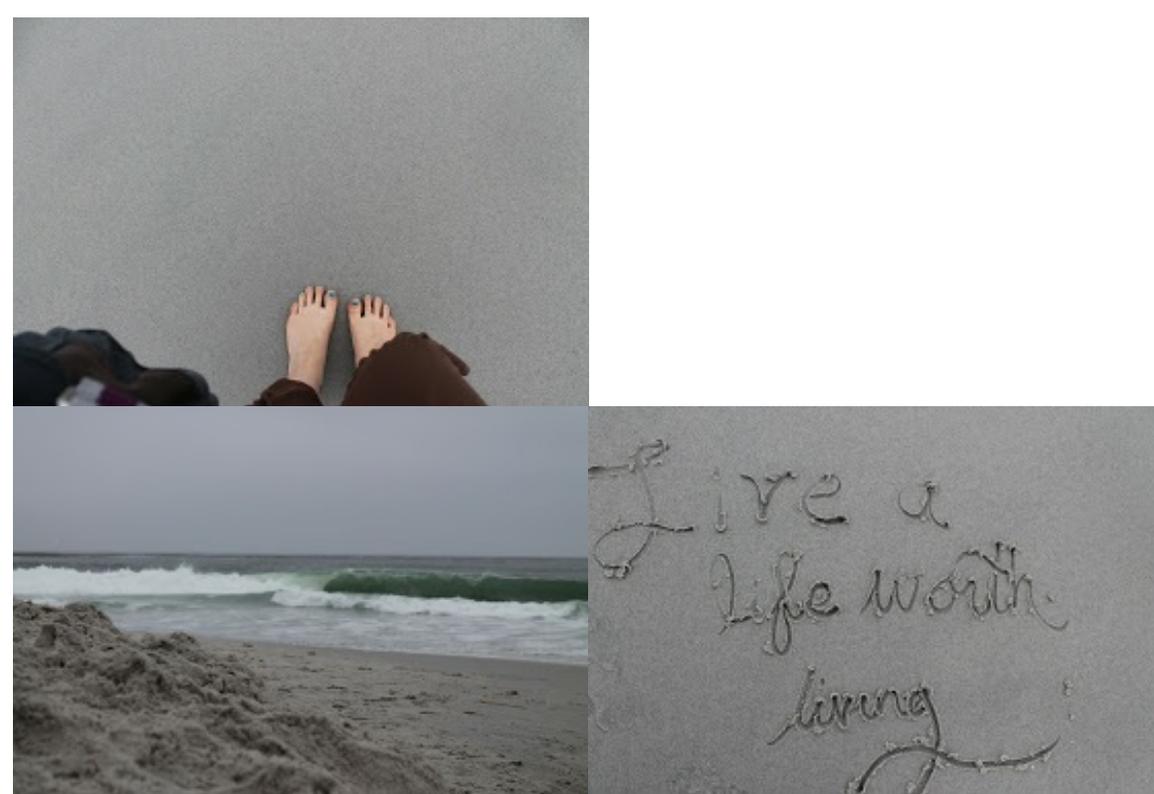
That is not what we were entrusted with. That is what One Man was entrusted with.

And because He loved and because He served, he changed the world forever. He changed us. Changed us with His Blood, His Body, His saving grace.

And we pour it back out to one another, that life-giving water of grace and life. We're all parched - we're all feeling drained and dry. We all need life-giving love. We have God's love - His heavenly grace.

The rest - the earthly manifestation of our Creator's flood of love - starts with you and me.

With what we have been entrusted with.



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Overcoming Anorexia [at Rediscovering Glory]

When I was about 12 years old, I was anorexic. I remember it all way to clearly. There was this pair of capris that were too tight on me...I put them on and I was determined that one day they would be loose. I was convinced that I was overweight even though I really was not.

But I thought that I was fat and weight loss became my obsession. I would wake up early in the morning to jump-rope and ride my bike around and around my house. I would only drink that horrible thing that was any drink that contained calories if I was shaking from my exercise regime. I tried to eat less and less. Every time I did eat I would feel horribly guilty and I would make sure and work out to make up for it. I made up all these things for myself like I could only eat standing up and walking around. All of this was to fuel my weight loss obsession.

It was so bad that my grandfather bought me and ice cream cone and I ate it...and then I worked out obsessively to make up for eating it. I would refuse to go on sleepovers for fear that I would miss my morning workout.

Looking back I see how enslaved I was.

But I was obsessed with my weight and I had even planned a way to get away with it in the eyes of my parents. You see, I had timed everything so perfectly that when I started to lose weight my Mom had just had a new baby. I figured that because of that she would not notice what I was doing. But she did. One day she pulled at the loose fabric of those capris and was shocked that I had lost so much weight.

She made me a doctor appointment and I got put on drugs to make me really hungry. Even then, I still hated eating. I remember going all day without food and then binge eating in the late afternoon because of my appetite. I became worried about my behavior only when the doctor told me that what I was doing could develop into an eating disorder. Well that got my attention because an eating disorder could make me fat-and I thought that was the worst thing that could ever happen.

I share all of this because I think people need to know and understand. Eating disorders really do exist and they can wreck havoc on your body. Not to mention your soul and your self-worth. I hope that no one reading this knows what it is like to go through this. I would never want to wish that suffering on another person. It is important to be understand anorexia because many people do suffer from it.

The good news is that I am no longer anorexic. It is something that I still struggle with on occasion and it was difficult to be overcome. Sometimes I still struggle with bulimia. But through a long process I have overcome my anorexia with a lot of help from God.

One of the biggest things that helped me was when I finally stopped obsessing about my weight.

Instead I decided to be healthy. I just made a promise to myself to never again weigh myself. I was enslaved to the scale for too long. But that change from looking at a scale is a big one. Now I am no longer concerned with a number. Instead I am concerned with being healthy, with being the best version of me that I can possibly be. I try to eat really healthy as in lots of fruits and veggies. As well as not a lot of sugary foods. My downfall is soft drinks and coffee with lots of sugar. I also try to exercise everyday since that is practically the only way I will actually do it is if I make it a daily habit. So I do online workout videos, I am trying to run regularly and sometimes I do yoga. So I have found that simply striving to be healthy makes me feel so much better than constantly dieting.

The healthy eating helps but I think the cause of anorexia is the devil. He tells lies. Lies that I firmly believed for years of my life. I believed that I was not enough and that if I could at least control my weight then

everything

would be perfect. He told me the lie that I was not loveable and so I hated myself. So I tried to make myself better by controlling my weight. But it was never enough.

Looking back I can see just how distorted my body image had become. I was to the point where I had a

fear

of eating. I was obsessed with controlling my weight. It was such a dark time in my life. I thought and I felt that I was so ugly. I could not bear to look at myself. I am sure you have heard of people who are consumed with themselves. Well, I was consumed with hating myself.

For years even after I stopped being anorexic I was still so unhappy with my body. I wanted to lose weight but I was angry with myself for no longer having what I thought was self-control to avoid eating. Still I was at a healthy weight and fairly active but my hatred of myself had not gone away.

In time I learned that I was a daughter of God. That I was made in his image and likeness and he loved me very much. I learned that hating myself was a sin not against myself but against God. How could I hate myself when he had made me a certain way for a reason. When I realized that God loved me. I knew that I had to look at myself the way he looked at me.

That is hard, very hard. Because when I sin, when I mess up I get mad at myself. But is that how God sees me? When we mess up he is waiting with open arms for us to come back to him. I even got mad at myself for abusing my body by not eating.

Knowing that I was a daughter of God. Knowing that in my heart I mean, not just as something that I know in my head-that changed my life.

That is not to say that my life is now perfect. I still struggle with food and when I am stressed I sometimes binge eat.

The crazy thing about all of this is that the answer to my problem was Jesus. Finding my identity in him enabled me to love myself and that made all the difference.

The only thing I did to overcome my anorexia was to accept God's love for me and allow that to shape the way I viewed myself. The truth of that is what set me free.

My prayer for you is that you will know that you are so very loved and it is a love that will

transform

your life.

This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.com/2013/07/overcoming-anorexia.html>
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Why Mass Cannot Disappoint, Even When I Don't Like the Music, the Homilist or the Architecture [at Rambling Follower]

My family and I were out of town this weekend, dropping our older son off at a camp where he is working as a CIT, or a counselor in training. I had this idea we were going to stumble into an unfamiliar Catholic church and emerge spiritually uplifted by the pastor, the liturgy, the music and so on. Well, that didn't happen. And you know what? None of that matters.



That's because, in the end, it isn't about me. Thank God for that.

The church itself was not my style. It was a church in the round. I couldn't even find the tabernacle. We had hoped to sit, unobtrusively, in the back. Instead, this morning we entered a jammed church, complete with a cry room, where cheerful ushers gestured us toward the front. Up we went.

The cantor was an odd looking man in a poorly fitting suit. He sang loudly and off key. The homilist was a visiting priest who was, in his own words "here to beg for money." He went on, with slightly offensive jokes and a put down of his former order, and the money begging. His charity sounded dubious (and when I looked it up later, it is). As he kept talking, I found myself distracted by the altar servers' shoes: all the girls were wearing ballet slippers. I started wondering if that was part of their dress code.

So the Mass was not meeting my expectations. But then I realized, as the priest was consecrating

the Eucharist, that all those details that were annoying me so much are irrelevancies.

We are here, broken travelers, to worship and to be privileged with a foretaste of heaven in the consecrated bread and wine. And that is so much more than enough, so much more than any of us deserve.

As we walked up for Communion we sang "Servant Song. The lyrics reminded me why we all are called into being.

What do you want of me Lord?

Where do You want me to serve You?

Where can I sing Your praises? I am Your song.

Jesus, Jesus, You are the Lord.

Jesus, Jesus, You are the way.

I hear You call my name Lord, and I am moved within me.

Your Spirit stirs my deepest self. Sing Your songs in me.

Jesus, Jesus, You are my Lord.

Jesus, Jesus, You are the way.

Above, below and around me.

Before, behind and all through me.

Your Spirit burns deep within me.

Fire my life with Your love.

Jesus, Jesus, be the warmth of my heart.

Jesus, Jesus, You are the way.

You are the light in my darkness.

You are my strength when I'm weary.

You give me sight when I'm blinded.

Come see for me.

Jesus, Jesus, You are my light.
Jesus, Jesus, You are the way.

This contribution is available at <http://ramblingfollower.blogspot.com/2013/07/why-mass-cannot-disappoint-even-when-i.html>
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I Use NFP... [at The Fisk Files]

It's National NFP Awareness Week.

I think it's apparent from some previous posts that Jeremy and I use Natural Family Planning. Specifically, I use the Billings Ovulation Method. And, I teach it too!

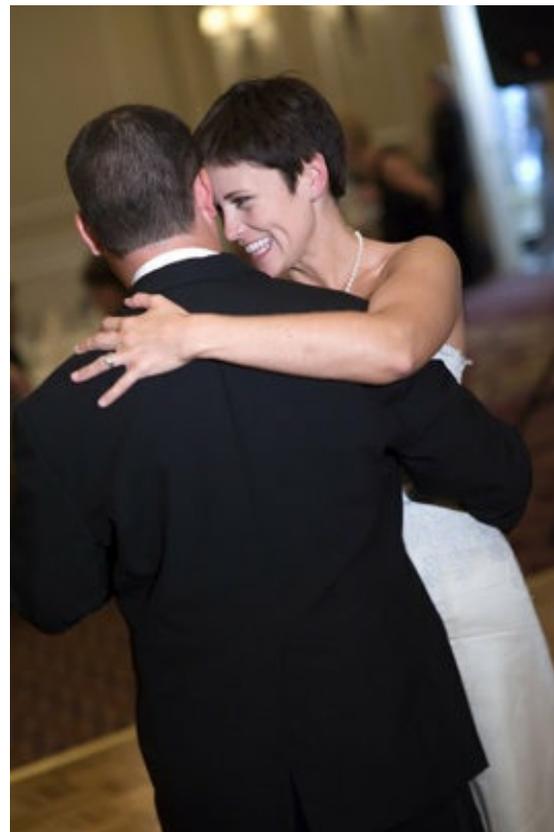
For some, that may seem obvious. Sure, she's Catholic. Of course, she had three kids in less than 2.5 years. Believe it or not, NFP has "worked" for us. Some may think that three kids that close in age means that we failed at NFP...that it was just too difficult to abstain. Would it be too hard to believe that each of those babies was "planned" - would it seem that we had lost our minds?

Maybe we have.

Though, this is what we have gained:

A love unlike any other.

When we were married, we knew that we would always be open to life. The Church has forever taught that marital love is a total, self-giving love...a love which includes one's fertility. NFP demands discipline, responsibility and communication. In return, it offers a closeness to one's spouse built upon a foundation of selflessness and faith.

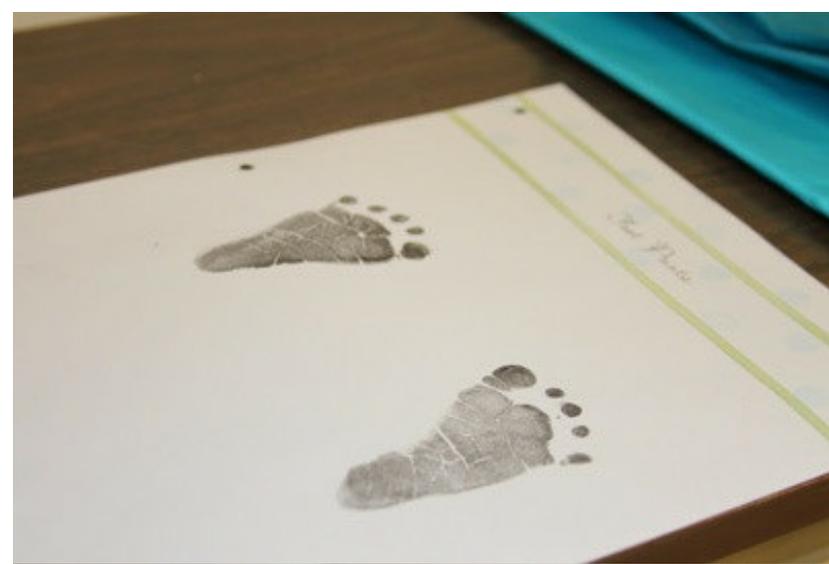


A deep love for children.

I have always loved babies. But, I never knew I could love them as much as I do now. It's a love so vulnerable and so deep that it hurts as much as it fills my heart with joy. I cannot deliver a baby without immediately desiring another.



A trust in His will. Will three be the most kids we will have? Will we have ten? Only He knows. However, we're open to whatever is in store, knowing He knows us so much better than we know ourselves. In fact, our family's "completeness" will always be led by Him.



This (and two more like him).

The Church's call to complete, total, full and faithful love has resulted in me being called Mom and Jeremy, Dad. Miracles, they are. Gifts that only an openness to life allows.



So, for the days in which it might seem we've lost our minds, we know that beyond NFP being natural, free, healthy and effective, it is also life-changing...life-giving.

A burden? Actually, a blessing in every sense imaginable!

This contribution is available at <http://www.thefiskfiles.com/2013/07/i-use-nfp.html>
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Should I Veil? A Debate Between Me & My Brain

The following is a completely accurate transcript of the conversation between me and my brain...

[Disclaimer: This is actually me just thinking aloud because I like thinking about stuff. It is not a manifesto, nor a judgment on anyone for anything. I don't think covering your head makes you a better person. I'm well aware that mantillas are a fairly modern incarnation for head coverings at Mass but women's millinery fashion is always changing and a veil has distinct advantages, i.e. I can scrunch it up and put it in my handbag and it won't give me (as bad) hat hair. I also love jeans, Vatican II, Beyonce, praise-and-worship music, skirts that may a little too short and being a feminist daughter in a long line of strong women which means that I don't think what I do or don't wear defines me in *any* way. Ok, now that's off my chest... End rant, I mean, end disclaimer.]

Brain: Hey Laura

Me: Hey there brain, what's up? You come to trouble me about something again?

B: I was just wondering, do you cover your head before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament?

M: Um, I wear like a berety/beanie thingy... sometimes, mostly when I go to the Latin Mass. That counts right?

B: Totally, but do you wear it out of reverence for Christ or because it's the middle of winter and you're so cold you'd wear a balaclava if you could?

M: ... Mainly because it's cold? I don't know... Honestly, I haven't decided...

B: Well, I think you should wear a veil at Mass. It's a beautiful, traditional Catholic devotion for women that expresses reverence for God, specifically in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. What's not to love?

M: Me wear a veil? You have got to be kidding me.

B: Nope, entirely serious.

M: But *I* can't wear one of those. It's just so weird!

B: Laura, you're at Mass.... You're already eating a 2,000 year old man who is also fully God under the form of a thin wheaten wafer... On the weirdness scale of 1 to Eucharist, veiling is averaging – at most – a 2½. Plus, it's so pretty!

M: That's not a reason.

B: Maybe it should be. You know some men are jealous of women wearing veils, right? Probably not because they're so pretty (though you never know!) but because it's a sign of devotion and humility. They've told you as much. I don't know if you were paying attention in that conversation but I, your brain, certainly was.

M: I was paying attention... then. Now, I'm just thinking about the Catholic men I know with mantillas on...

B: You are so childish.

M: It's hilarious!

M: hehe!

M: *giggles more*

B: Are you done yet?

M: Almost... lol.

M: Ok, now I'm done.



B: It's a good point though. Men in mantillas seems so wrong precisely because it's such a powerful feminine symbol, dating back centuries and centuries. I'm sure you remember St Paul commended the Corinthian women for "*maintain[ing] the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.*" (1 Co 11:2) That tradition was for women to veil their heads while praying or prophesying.

M: But why? Why would he say that? 1 Corinthians is a confusing enough letter without all that headcovering stuff.

B: Well, the reason St Paul gives – and remember this is your brain talking so it could well be wrong – is that it is a sign of authority whereby the woman/wife expresses her relation to the man/husband as being between Christ and the Church, where Christ is the head of the Church, and analogously, the husband the head of the wife. As Christ gives His life for the Church and the Church submits to Christ, so the husband sacrifices for the wife and the wife submits to the husband. Both you see, are dying to themselves to love the other. By veiling therefore, the woman sums up the entire history of redemption as the nuptial union culminating in the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, and affirms her place salvation history by imaging the loving submission of the Church to Christ, and of Christ to His Father.

M: Woah, that's dense. (Wait, was I just impressed by my own brain... awkward.) But isn't there something there about the angels?

B: **sigh** You had to bring that up... didn't you? Yes, St Paul says women should be veiled "because of the angels" (1 Co 11:10). He's probably just talking about glorifying God before the heavenly hosts.

M: It's cool actually that the one place you are guaranteed to find angels is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But still, it's a confusing passage and isn't it just a culturally-bound norm anyway?

B: Yes it is, but until fifty years ago, it was still the norm for women attending Mass. It's even in the 1917 Code of Canon Law that women should cover their heads at Mass.

M: And traditions like that *are* incredibly important for strengthening and passing on the faith. I suppose what was once a part of ancient near Eastern culture has also become part of our Catholic culture. But isn't it passé now? Isn't it harking back to a time when women were considered inferior?

B: It doesn't need to be! I mean, you know that men and women are completely equal, but in marriage and life more generally, we reflect different aspects of mystery of God's love – but that doesn't make us unequal! In fact, you could argue just the opposite. As Catholics, we veil that which is sacred. Alice von Hildebrand wrote that,

Far from indicating inferiority, the veil points to sacredness. While we do cover what is ugly or decaying, we also veil what is sacred, mysterious, and sublime. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he covered his face to hide the glow that was apparent because God had deigned to speak with him: Moses' body reflected the depth and mystery of his experience. Every woman carries within herself a secret most sacred, mysterious, and sublime. This secret is life. Eve means "the mother of the living." In the mystery of the female body, human life finds its beginning...

All women have this capacity, in our nature, to bear life. After the Blessed Sacrament who is Life and God Himself, you could say that the most sacred thing around is a woman's body which the ground in which new life, in the image of God, is created.

M: Seriously? I haven't heard that one before... (Also brain, how did you end reading Alice von Hildebrand without me noticing?) I have another problem though. She seems to say that women veil because they're extra special, but that isn't what the Church Fathers say.

B: Really?

M: Yeah, really. Veiling isn't about dignity, that's just a revisionist smokescreen. It's actually just repressive. That right – it's repressive! St Augustine said that women should cover their heads because their thoughts are lower than men's, and Tertullian because otherwise we'd incite lust in the fallen angels. They all go on and on and on about how it's a sign of subordination because women are, by our very nature, inferior and subject. Well, I want no part of that, thank you very much!

B: Did it occur to you that maybe they were wrong? Just because they were good and holy men (for the most part), doesn't mean they were right about everything. Our understanding develops and grows, purified through changing cultures. It's like the ordination of women, isn't it? Sure, some of the reasons for not ordaining women (they are evil temptresses/deformed men etc.) have been dreadful, but it doesn't mean you turn around and start ordaining women – or that you abandon headcoverings. No, you keep seeking the Truth, and what is good and honourable, and for some better reasons if need be!



Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato, *The Virgin in Prayer*, c. 1650 (National Gallery, London)

M: Maybe... But how can they suddenly turn around and say what was a symbol of woman's subjugation is not a symbol of woman's dignity? That's just dodgy.

B: Maybe the two are closer than you think...

M: You are full of it, you know that? Fine, go on. Tell me, how are they connected?

B: Ok, bear with me here. In the Fall, the God-given unity between man and woman was shattered. From then on, our relationship has been distorted by sin as we abandoned complementarity for competition. It's a fact of history that men, both at an individual and societal level, have exercised power over women. For women, the Christian gospel is in many ways the restoration of our true dignity. For we were treated as lesser than men but Christ says that the last shall be first, and we were accounted as servants and property but Christ says that "*whoever would be great among you must be your servant.*" (Mk 10:43) Christ shows us that true greatness lies in servanthood, and true dignity in submission, by offering up His life for us. As women, we get to embody that! So maybe it's not so much that the Church Fathers were wrong that the veil is a sign of authority, but they were wrong to think this made women any lesser. They kind of lost the gospel logic there.

M: It's true... and I guess the perfect example of this, particularly in the context of veiling, is Mary. She is perfectly humble, modest and submissive – and for that very reason is exalted above all creatures, even above the angels! By obeying the Word of God, she becomes the Queen of Heaven.

B: Exactly, maybe veiling is a deliberate imitation of her humility?

M: But how can it be imitation of humility? It's literally a bit of fabric – it's not like it actually hides anything.

B: Yeah but like all forms of clothing, a veil or hat has both a practical and a symbolic value. In this case, it's the symbolic that's particularly important. It's not so much that no one will look at you if you're veiled (let's be honest, plenty of veils or hats are kind of flimsy), but it's a *symbol* of humility. And symbols matter. In this case, veiling represents set-apartness, modesty, purity and a uniquely feminine reverence before our Lord.

M: I think it helps to think of it as a symbol. And maybe it can be a sacramental reminder to of what it means to be a woman, just like Holy Water is a sacramental reminder of Baptism. As you put it on, it's a reminder not only to imitate Mary but to be like the woman of Proverbs 31, clothed with “*strength and dignity*” (Pr 31:25), and to “*adorn [ourselves] modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel... by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion.*” (1 Ti 2:9) I mean, the act of covering itself is a reminder that our beauty comes not from what we wear but from within, from “*the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.*” (1 Pe 3:4) I kind of like that... but wait, isn't it like showing off?

B: Is that what you think when you see a woman veiled? Oh look at her, she thinks she's so holy and hoity-toity and all that?

M: No! I think, *ooooooh pretty!* And then I think, oh that's right, we are in the presence of Christ – that's why she's veiled.

B: So seeing other women makes you think of Christ and His holy presence?

M: I guess so. I can't really argue that's a problem, can I? If a veil reminds both the wearer and the viewer of the majesty, holiness and awesome mercy of our Lord Jesus, that's got to be a good thing!

B: Couldn't have said it better myself.



No one mantillas like the Spanish

M: I suppose it is appealing too, if only on an intuitive level. I mean, every girl's favourite part of dressing up is always the veil, isn't it? Whether it's your mum's old First Holy Communion veil or a white pillowcase, it *always* rocks. But I think that's what I'm afraid of... it almost feels too right.

B: Come again?

M: I'm not sure if this makes sense but... It seems so beautiful and holy and womanly and pure and humble, and I don't think I deserve that. When it comes down to it, I'm freaking out not because I think veiling is somehow degrading but because I feel so unworthy. Who am I to veil myself as a sign of humility and holiness? I'm neither of those things!

B: ...

M: Brain?

B: Just a moment, I'm going to have to refer you upstairs. I'm afraid deep-seated feelings of shame and unworthiness are beyond my jurisdiction. You can't argue someone into believing they are beloved.

M: True dat.

B: In the meantime, why don't you read this great post on chapel veils by [Fide et Literis](#)? Or you could think about [how women veil for the pope](#), so why not for Christ?

M: Thanks brain, will do! But just so you know, I haven't decided yet... I need to talk to upstairs first. The last thing I want to do is go around covering my head just because my head told me to.

B: Good idea, much better to speak to the actual Head of the Body. I hear He's got a soft spot for you anyway...

M: Yeah, He's the best.

And here ends the transcript of just another bizarre internal dialogue between Laura and her brain.

+JMJ+

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- <http://francisphilip.wordpress.com> Francis Philip
- <http://emiliacgreen626.wordpress.com> meridianbride
- <http://flowersandbreezes.wordpress.com> sheenmeem
- <http://theyellowranger.wordpress.com> theyellowranger
- <http://lifealight.wordpress.com> Khushbo
- <http://hxreport.wordpress.com> michealdebarra
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- <http://humbleinsights.wordpress.com> Abundance
- pryan51
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- <http://simplyjet.wordpress.com> *twdyen*
- <http://foodpeopleloveandstuff.wordpress.com> *White Pearl*
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Idol Worship? [at cathOolic Ministry]



My uncle who is not a Catholic asked these questions on a Facebook group that I run after seeing the above photo.

Was this statue of Jesus made out of Cement? Can it be called idol worshipping? If yes, why? If no, why?

Well, some non-Catholic think it is a graven image aka idol and so accuse the Catholic Church of idol worship (idolatry). This is understandable from their point of view respectfully, however, the Church's understanding of the Torah (the Laws in the Old Testament) is this:

Jesus (Yeshua of Nazareth) is HamMashiach (the Messiah or Anointed One prophesied in the days of old). Most Jews still reject this view because according to them Jesus does not fulfil their understanding of what the Messiah should be i.e. One having an earthly military might to free them as against the Christian understanding that Jesus Himself demonstrated that He would destroy the temple and rebuild it in 3 days signifying His 3 days death and resurrection from the tomb for the salvation of souls.

Once the Incarnation or the manifestation of the Promise One aka the Messiah who is Christ Jesus is established, we move on to His claim and demonstration that He is not only man but God as well. We human beings have been understood to be gods, sons of the Most High as the ancient Jews believed. Jesus also reminded the Jews of His days about this. However, Jesus is not just a

god, as we humans are because we are made in the IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD. Jesus is really God. The God, the Creator in human flesh.

We have to consider the fact that before the Incarnation of Jesus, God has not revealed Himself or more specifically, God has not become flesh and so He prohibited the Jews, His chosen people, not to make a graven image aka idol of Him since no one has seen Him before. God warned the Jews of old because of the examples of their neighbours who made all forms of idols and considered them as gods. Most of these neighbours of the Jews did not have an understanding of the Godhead and even if some did, like some Greeks say, Plato or Socrates, they had some faulty understanding of it.

God gave his prophet Moshe aka Moses in the English language Ha Torah (The Laws) which prohibited making of any graven image of God who no one has seen nor can SEE AND LIVE. Not even Moses or any of the great prophets ever saw God.

The first Commandment specifically prohibited the making of this graven images or what you would call an idol, whether an idol of God whom they haven't seen or of any other thing in Heaven or on Earth or under the Sea.

Later in the building of the Temple of God in Jerusalem and also the MAKING OF THE ARK OF COVENANT, God commanded the use of graven images of Angels (Cherubim) among others. Even the Ark itself is something graven. But God is God and when He gives instruction we OBEY because HE IS ALL WISDOM and is always for our best. Did God break the Law? No! God who prohibited the making of graven images as a guard against idolatry (THAT IS THE WORSHIPPING OF ANY OTHER CREATURE OR BEING APART FROM HIMSELF WHO IS NOT A CREATURE BUT THE CREATOR) requested for the making of a graven image for HIS PURPOSE.

During the exodus of the Jews from North Africa (Egypt), in the desert, the Jews offended God and were being bitten by snakes. A remedy that God gave them after the intercession of Moses was to make a graven image of a snake on a pole (that actually signified Jesus on His Cross). All those who looked with faith upon the pole did not die from the snake bite.

What we see in the Philippines of the Statue of Jesus is indeed a graven image but like that permitted in the ARK OF THE COVENANT, this is also permitted for use in worship. THE STATUTE is not the object of worship but a reflective index pointing to THE GOD WHO BECAME MAN AND CAN BE CAPTURED ON PHONE IF PHONES WERE AROUND AT HIS DAYS HERE ON EARTH.

I shall have a book on this matter and all the issues would be looked at critically and dealt with. Thank you. Hope this helps a bit.

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For years I've understood that the textbook was just a tool and not the end-all of the catechetical lesson. One of the challenges today is to equip volunteer catechists to go beyond the textbook, i.e., not relying on the textbook as a crutch which they have to teach from in order to convey the content of the chapter. Although I have some ideas on what we need to do about that, I want to share a few things that seem to be essential in this Ministry of the Word and the Proclamation of the Good News of Christ and His Church today. These are some things needed for Catechesis in the Third Millennium:

1. We need a holistic approach to catechesis.

As many have been saying, we need to do more than pass on content – we need to see our catechesis as initiating people into the Christian Life. Much has been said about this, especially in the last number of years. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that it's not a victory to get through the 30 chapters of the textbook. It's a victory if over the course of a year we have helped those we catechize be inspired, grow in hunger for being in communion with Jesus Christ and desire to continue that friendship they have with Him.

2. We need to help Catechists see that what they are transmitting is something that is unified.

Textbooks, among other resources, can have a tendency to compartmentalize the content of the Faith. At times for the sake of order this is understandable and necessary. However, too often we struggle to catechize seeing that the faith is unified not just a set of various truths. For example, in the 3 part of the Catechism in the second paragraph of that section it expresses this truth I'm speaking of beautifully:

The Symbol of the faith confesses the greatness of God's gifts to man in his work of creation, and even more in redemption and sanctification. What faith confesses, the sacraments communicate: by the sacraments of rebirth, Christians have become "children of God,"² "partakers of the divine nature."³ Coming to see in the faith their new dignity, Christians are

called to lead henceforth a life “worthy of the gospel of Christ.”⁴ They are made capable of doing so by the grace of Christ and the gifts of his Spirit, which they receive through the sacraments and through prayer. (Paragraph 1692)

Even in the 3 part of the Catechism it has not “moved on” from the first two parts to now cover the 3 part (although it does cover the Christian Life lived out and what we believe about that). But it does so in a unified manner helping the believer see that the faith is intricately woven together as a unified whole. Catechesis today needs to keep this in mind and make positive strides in helping others see the unity of the Catholic Faith.

3. We need to root our Catechesis in the Holy Trinity.

Yes, I’m sure we all have heard that the Trinity is the central mystery of the faith and how as the Catechism says: “It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them” (#234).

If what we are teaching does not relate to one of the persons of the Trinity then we should not be teaching it. As stated above regarding the unity of the faith we have to show those we catechize that God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit is revealing Himself to us and inviting us to community with Him. When you have a moment take a look at Ephesians 1:3-14 which conveys beautifully the Trinity’s Mission. Our catechesis should always be linked with the Trinity.

4. We need to present the faith today as a compelling story — of God’s loving plan.

The Good News is a story to be told, a story to be celebrated, a story to be lived and a story to be in communion with. It is not romanticizing to say that it is a love story because it truly is, but it is a love story that has tragedy, hope, love and joy which are all a part of the human condition. We have a tendency in catechesis to present the faith as a lot of great truths but can struggle to help those we catechize see that it’s more a story we are a part of than a number of great truths that happened in the past. The more we can show others that what we are proclaiming and teaching is all part of a beautiful story of God’s plan and purpose for creation then we help others see just how compelling God and his ways are.

5. We need to put people in contact with Jesus (in relationship with Him).

If we begin and end each catechetical session with a brief prayer lasting no more than 30 seconds then it is not likely that we are able to allow for the proper setting to help those we catechize come into contact with Jesus. We need to have more prayer in our catechesis, more time in front of the Blessed Sacrament, more time of silence and reflection (as challenging as all this can be). I

recently heard a story about how two priests had devoted much time to being present to the First Communion class by stopping by the classes to talk with the 2nd graders and how they also were present at the parent meetings. Even so, after First Communion none of the parents brought their children to Mass. One of the things the priests discovered is that they never took to time to take them to the church and have direct contact with Jesus. They did not take them into the church to show them how this is where the Christian community gathers to celebrate, proclaim and encounter God. Therefore, helping find more opportunities of putting people in contact with Jesus Christ is essential for fruitful discipleship.

6. The Catechism needs to be better utilized in elementary catechesis

When Blessed Pope John Paul II spoke of the Catechism as a reference text he did not intend for it to merely be something we use as one among many resources. Textbook publishers have a tendency to site the Catechism as a reference or a way to show that the teaching in a particular chapter is linked to a teaching in the Catechism. Although this is a great first step to what we had 20 years ago it lacks something significant. The Catechism is the essential Deposit of Faith which the Church guards as a most important and vital treasure to the universal Church. The Catechism helps articulate the beauty of the Faith. The Catechism shows how the Faith is organic and unified. The Catechism threads the faith together in a way that we can see just how unified and simple the faith is. When I say simple, I mean that at the heart of the Deposit of Faith we see the simple Gospel Message that God so loved the world that he gave his only son that we may not perish but have eternal life (Cf. John 3:16). The Catechism conveys the simplicity of God's plan accomplished through Creation, through His relationship with us, through sending His Son to redeem us and sending the Holy Spirit to sanctify the world and prepare us for the world to come. Therefore, the Catechism needs to be used more fully in equipping catechists in their ministry of catechesis.

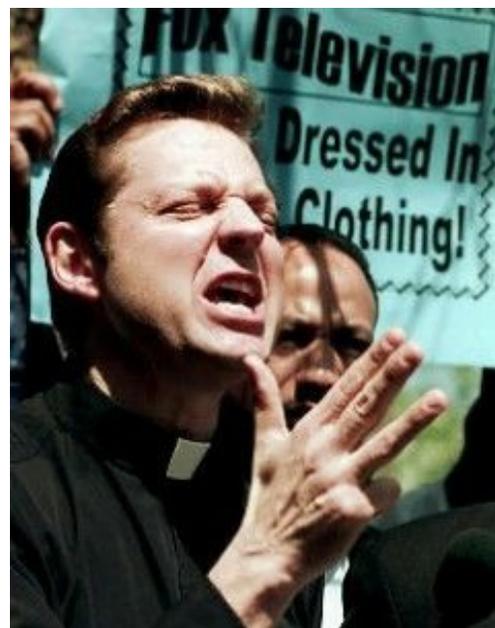
These are 6 things I see as vital to Catechesis in the 21st Century. May God our heavenly and gracious Father direct us and lead us to greater renewal and communion with Himself.

What do you see as things that are needed for Catechesis in the 21st Century?

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Father Pfleger Has Really Lost His Mind Again! [at DavidLGray.INFO]

by [David L. Gray](#)



Ok, let us just go ahead set aside the fact that

[Father Michael Pfleger](#)

of St. Sabina Church in Chicago, Illinois pals around with Barack Obama – the Abortion and Gay Marriage President. Let us place on the back burner for a moment the fact that Pfleger not only campaigned voraciously for Obama in 2008, but was also a member of the 2008 Catholics for Obama Committee and an adviser for the Obama campaign. Let us place in the back of our minds the memory of Fr. Pfleger twice

[allowing Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan](#)

to lecture from the pulpit of St. Sabina. Yeah, while we're at it we'll go ahead and lay aside for now the memory of Fr. Mike supporting so many pro-abortion politicians over the decades, and even of him inviting singer Harry Belafonte to speak at the Sunday Mass where he

proceeded to criticize President George W. Bush for threatening a "woman's right to abortion" with his pro-life policies.

If we are going to lay aside all the evil, I suppose we can also go right ahead and lay aside the good of Fr. Pfleger as well. This 1975 ordained priest has been out in the forefront of the fight for social equality and justice. He's held anti-drug campaigns, outreach to prostitutes, and a number of

other projects in an attempt to bring awareness to issues and improvement to lives of those in his sphere of interest. Let's forget about the [Racial Justice Lifetime Achievement Award](#) his Diocese gave him in 2010 in recognition of his life of service in pursuit of dismantling racism, injustice and inequalities on behalf of African Americans and all people of color.

Ok. Your heads clear? Are we working off of a clean slate now? Good, because I don't want you to hold anyone's past against them. I fully believe and bear personal witness to the redeeming and transformative grace of God.

Father Pfleger Has Lost His Mind ... Again! This dude not only asked Christians to pray for George Zimmerman to be convicted, but after the trial had concluded he actually compared the stupidly provoked (self-defense) shooting of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman to the [1955 murder of Emmett Till](#) and the acquittal of the men who later confessed that they actually did kill him. There are no similarities to these cases whatsoever, and for a priest to pray for his will to be done, rather than for truth and justice to meet is demonic. For a priest to then continue the racial demagoguery that the mainstream media ([beginning with NBC editing Zimmermans 911 call](#)) fabricated about this case is ignorant. But to compare an innocent boy's slaying, who the only thing he did wrong was not realize that he couldn't behave in Money, Mississippi as he could in Chicago to the events ([Zimmerman's version](#)) that lead to Trayvon Martin's death is race baiting and beneath the dignity of the priesthood.

By what right does a Catholic priest have to continue to press God's children towards anger, feeling victimized, hatred, unforgiveness, hopelessness, and, perhaps, violence? We are use to people who look like us (Jesse and Al – for example) pimping the community into victims and prostitutes looking for the next handout, but Fr. Pfleger has crossed the line ... Again! He needs to quit pimping his worthless goods that add no spiritual value to anyone's life! Lifetime Racial Justice Award? Really? This priest serves as a great injustice to all! Pray for this priest!

Share Your Thoughts and/or Perspective

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Surprise Gifts [at Martin Family Moments]

I always misspell the word surprise. I write suprise instead. It actually is surprising that I can't spell it correctly because 1) I love surprises, and 2) I was runner up in my 2nd grade spelling bee. But then again, I've been told I have a wee bit of a Boston accent, and so I must want to write it how I say it.

OK, so this thought keeps going through my head about how babies are gifts. I mean, they really are blessings from God:

Psalm 127:3-5

Behold, children are a gift of the Lord,

The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.

How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;
They will not be ashamed
When they speak with their enemies in the gate.

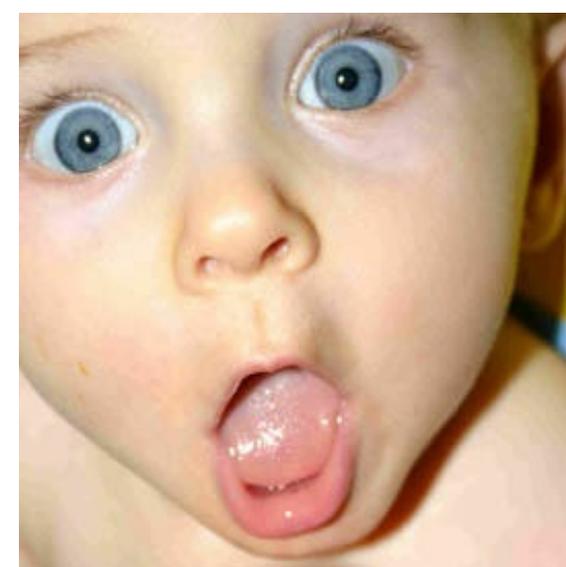
And we shouldn't take gifts for granted. Just because it's my birthday (it's not) I don't expect a gift from anyone, but I'm most definitely happy to receive one. Even if every single year on my birthday my friend has given me a gift, I still shouldn't expect it. It's a present, a surprise, not a payment of a debt owed to me.

A few months ago, I was blog hopping, and can't remember exactly where I saw it, but I read a comment about how crazy it is that married couples who are happily married and having sex without using contraception can still be surprised when they find out they are pregnant.

I completely disagree.

It's not crazy at all.

We have been surprised with 4 out of 5 of our children. The one that wasn't a complete "surprise" was Eamon, whom we tried to conceive, were told by the doctor that I wasn't pregnant, and then found out a couple weeks later that I was indeed pregnant, but the blood test had been taken too early to tell. So even though his conception was "planned" there was still an element of surprise involved with how we found out.



Say what???

There have been months in our marriage that we have tried to get pregnant and it didn't happen, even though all signs pointed to what should have been a success. There have also been times when we found out a baby was coming, and couldn't have been more shocked (hellooooo, Maggie!).

So how can we be surprised when the marital act leads to a baby? Isn't it like the old song says...First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes an openness to new life with one's spouse (they dropped this line in the refrain because it didn't rhyme), then comes a baby in the baby carriage?

Nope.

Precisely because children are blessings, they can never be expected or demanded from God. They are always a gift, and therefore they are always a surprise. I don't care how long or hard a couple tries to get pregnant, once everything lines up right and that new baby is conceived, it's still a miracle. Still a surprise. Don't we all get that exciting thrill of the unexpected when we hear a baby announcement?



OMG! She's married and loves her husband, but she's having a baby?!?!?!?

Every day I get in my car and drive, knowing that the only way to get into a car accident is to actually be in a car. But I don't get in a car accident every day. Getting in an accident would be an unusual event. I don't want to relate getting pregnant to getting in an accident, but it's good to show that just because you know what might cause something, and you do it anyway, doesn't mean that it will definitely happen. Especially if you are driving carefully, and watching the signs, and it seems like green lights all the way.



The surprise gifts are never-ending in our house. So thoughtful.

This post is not an announcement. But it's so funny that every time my current baby turns two, I really want another little one if I don't have one already. Xander will be two in a couple weeks, and I keep asking Phil to remind me of all the reasons we are waiting, then trying to convince him otherwise. I guess what I'm saying is that *you* all shouldn't be surprised if and when we get surprised with a gift of another Baby Martin anytime soon.

:)

Colleen

This contribution is available at <http://martinfamilymoments.blogspot.com/2013/07/surprise-gifts.html>
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Never Ready [at worthy of Agape]

It was a slow realization, like a veil being lifted, slowly raised so my eyes and heart could see. The irony of it was, I was slowly coming to realize that I wasn't ready for that veil to be lifted, I wasn't ready for marriage. What hurt perhaps more was the realization that not only have I never been ready for marriage, I don't think I'll ever be ready for marriage. As I clutched my rosary in my hand and meditated on the sorrowful mysteries for what seemed like the thousandth time, I knew I wasn't ready for marriage. As I meditated on all He did for His Bride and contemplated how marriage would ask the same sacrifice of me, I succumbed to a painfully honest truth: I will never be ready for marriage.

Slowly, as slowly as the realization came to me, I began to see all the things I'd never have: the beautiful wedding, my daddy walking me down the aisle, the husband-to-be watching me walk towards him with tears in his eyes as he beheld me. I clung tighter to my rosary and to the Hail Marys now feverishly being recited as I fought back tears of my own. This agony in the garden was becoming my own as I begged God to let this cup pass from me. I felt the scourging at the pillar as my hopes and dreams of marriage were dashed into the ground with the truth that I'd never be ready for the vocation that I felt made for. I felt the thorns in my head in the place where I have so desperately longed for a veil to one day be placed. I felt the weight of this cross on my back, the cross of knowing that I don't know how to love like He can, and therefore will never be true marriage material. Finally, I joined Him on the cross as I admitted, as much to myself as to Him, that there is no way I'll ever be ready for marriage.



I've written before about my love for the sorrowful mysteries: how they relate to [singlehood](#), [relationships](#), and how [each](#) and [every](#) one [of](#) them [relates](#) to [me](#). I sometimes laugh now at how people can say the rosary is boring, because each time I pray it I find some nugget of wisdom I'd missed before. I fell in love with the sorrowful mysteries first. In college I always went to confession on Tuesdays and my confessor *always* gave me a rosary as my penance, so it didn't take long for me to memorize the mysteries. As I journey down this road of life trying to figure out just where God is calling me, I realized, slowly but surely, by meditating on the sorrowful mysteries that I'll never be ready for marriage. I think of the love Christ showed His Bride as His Passion took place and I can't help but ask myself: **Can I**

love someone like that? Christ married His Bride on the day He died, after suffering for her (and suffering isn't strong enough of a word to describe what Christ went through). If I truly believe that marriage is my vocation ([and I do, by the way](#)), then why not imitate the perfect marriage: that of Christ's to His Bride, the Church? Isn't that what we are called to, to imitate His perfect love? [Jesus tells us](#), "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." God is love and His love is perfect, and Jesus tells us to be perfect, and therefore to love perfectly, just as our heavenly Father does.

To say that this is a tough pill to swallow is the understatement of a lifetime. I look at Jesus and I see His love poured out, in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the scourging, in the crowning, the carrying of the cross, and dying upon it, and I wonder how I ever for a second thought that I could be ready for marriage. If I want a [crucifixion type love](#), then I have to be willing to give that love in return. Am I willing to love someone in such a radical way as to endure agony, scourging, a crown of thorns, the weight of the cross, and death for them? In my human weakness, I can't help but say no. **But**, and this is a BIG but, with Him, by His grace, **I can**. The reality is that none of us are ever ready for marriage, and I have no doubt my married friends will agree, but we get married and learn along the way. Christ's agony in the garden shows us that the Father had to prepare Him for His Passion – and God the Father will do the same for us if we let Him. In our humanity we aren't ready for marriage, not a marriage like Christ's, not the marriage that Christ calls us to. Dare I say that if Jesus had *only* been fully human (and not also fully divine) then He wouldn't or couldn't have suffered and died as He did. It was His divinity, and the grace of God the Father flowing through Him that allowed Him to suffer as He did for His Bride. The only way I or anyone else will ever be ready for marriage is if we learn to deeply, radically, and profoundly allow His love to flow through us. We become a tabernacle when we receive Him in the Eucharist. We become [a branch that depends on the vine for life itself](#) because we know that without Him we can do nothing.

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5 reasons not to give your child an Ipad

August 2, 2013 By [crossini4774](#) [20 Comments](#)

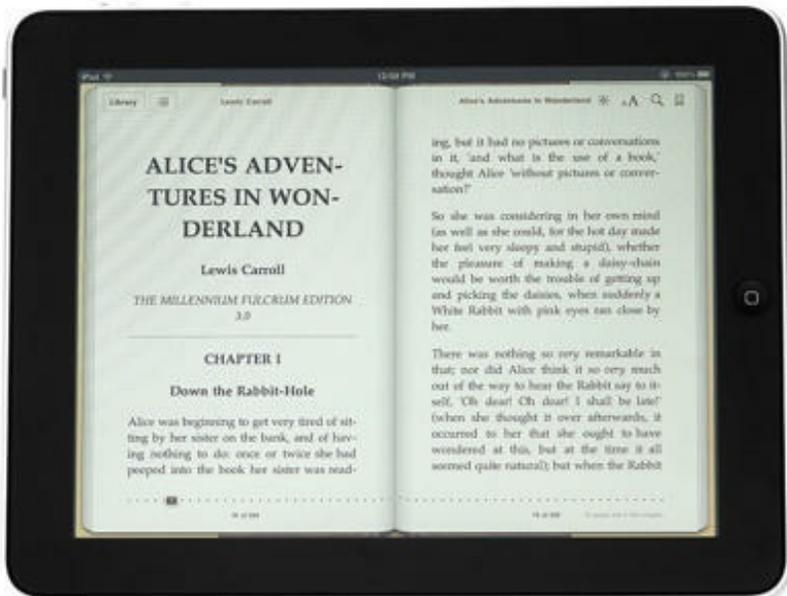


Photo credit: Wikipedia.

Are your kids begging you to buy them a tablet, Wii, or smartphone? Here are 5 reasons you should say no, in reverse order of importance.

5. All your friends and neighbors regret they gave in.

Have you talked to any parent who has said, “I’m so glad we bought our son video games?” or, “I wish our daughter spent more time texting?” Although this may not be true of our society as a whole, every relative, homeschool parent, and friend I have discussed the subject with tells me, “Don’t do it.”

4. Kids with more screen time are less healthy.

The more time kids spend with digital devices, the less time they are running around or getting fresh air. Instead of playing virtual ball, your kids should be outside with a real bat.

3. They will read less often.

Whether reading ebooks is as beneficial to kids’ education and reading levels as print books is still being debated. But in general, the more digital devices a child uses, the less time he spends reading. After all, there are only so many hours in a day. Kids who are bored would traditionally pick up a book to pass the time. Now they pick up a tablet.

2. It will harm their ability to relate to others.

Life is about relationships, not activities. Children need to be engaging others in conversation, and working and playing with others. Don’t let machines be their best friends.

1. They won’t be able to practice mental prayer.

This is vitally important! Too much sensory stimulation, whether from TV, loud music, or the internet, damages kids’ ability to concentrate. If you are constantly distracted, how can you spend half an hour in quiet time with God? Mental prayer is the key to holiness. Don’t deprive your kids of it for the sake of keeping up with their peers!

Connie Rossini

Filed Under: [Parenting](#) Tagged With: [Catholic](#), [Digital Devices](#), [homeschool](#), [Mental prayer](#), [Reading](#)

Trackbacks

1. [...] week I wrote about limiting kids’ access to digital media. (Some people, such as children with autism, rely on digital media to function at their best; I am [...])
-

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Infinite Goodness Stoops Over Man [at Little Steps Along The Way]

"Man's wickedness may accumulate sin upon sin, evil upon evil, but overall, God's goodness will remain unchangeable. The shadow of evil will not mar it; instead, God who is always benevolent, will bend over the evil to change it into good, and to draw a greater good from it. Thus, infinite Goodness stooped over man, the sinner, and made an immensely superior good come from Adam's fall: the redemption of the world through the Incarnation of His only-begotten Son. This is the distinctive characteristic of God's goodness: to will the good, only the good, even to the point of drawing good from evil. " Section 232, **Divine Intimacy**

God with His infinite Goodness stoops over us as we suffer in our brokenness here on earth. It's not so hard to acknowledge this truth intellectually, but it's much more difficult to remember the transformative nature of God's goodness in the midst of one's own suffering.

Yet clinging to this truth brings some small comfort, for in the midst of darkness there is a light of hope in remembering that our Good God is stooping over us in our misery and that He will draw good out of even the most awful circumstances. Nothing is wasted, there need be no pointless suffering. God's goodness is unchangeable, even though we don't always see it at the present moment.

Faith tells us: God is Good. Faith tells us: "All things work together for good..." Romans 8:28.

And so we believe, we hope, we trust.

This contribution is available at <http://www.littlestepsalongtheway.com/2013/07/infinite-goodness-stoops-over-man.html>

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Worst Haircuts and other Great Photos [at Working to be Worthy]

They show up on Facebook all the time. Most awkward pregnancy photos, worst tattoo spelling errors, most embarrassing family photos. They are often touted as "Top Twenty" or something else indicating these are the best. I have clicked to see many of them because they're intended to be funny, then felt... less. Less compassionate, less genuine. I have less human dignity.

Some time within the past month, I decided to stop. There are enough

[uplifting](#)

,

[high-quality](#)

, and

[funny](#)

articles and blog posts out there for me to spend the rest of my life reading them. Why should I settle for what happens to pop up on Facebook when it is inane and often degrading?

Reading ought to be an act of homage to the God of all truth. ... Reading gives God more glory when we get more out of it, when it is a more deeply vital act not only of our intelligence but of our whole personality, absorbed and refreshed in thought, meditation, prayer, or even in the contemplation of God.

from Thoughts in Solitude by Thomas Merton

It's not easy. Curiosity can be a strong motivator. But I believe life can be better than that.



Another story from my newsfeed. Much better.

This contribution is available at http://workingtobeworthy.blogspot.com/2013/07/worst-haircuts-and-other-great-photos_1.html

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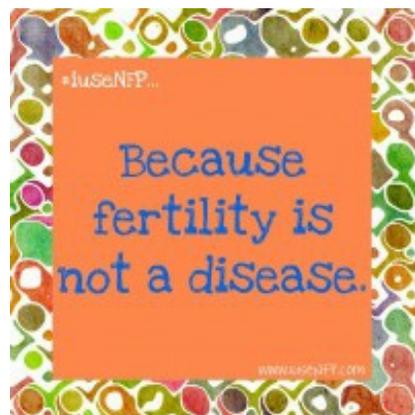
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Fertility is Not a Disease [at Tercets]

During Natural Family Planning Awareness Week, I encourage you to learn more about your fertility. A new website with this aim has just launched, and this is the perfect time to tell you about it. [IuseNFP](#) already has a wealth of information, including instructional resources, statistics, personal stories, graphics with promotional messages, and more.

Here is a phrase from their mission statement: “Through the use of NFP we desire that men and women see themselves as equal partners with the responsibility to prudently manage their family, to recognize their bodies as deserving of the respect which only NFP promotes, and gain self knowledge which will lead to greater overall physical and emotional health.” Seriously, what other fertility program offers all of that?

This new website aims to educate everyone about Natural Family Planning from “a non-religious, non-sectarian” perspective. If you are looking for resources about NFP from a Catholic perspective regarding marriage and family, you can find information and links [at this post](#).



I chose to highlight the button above because in the women’s studies course I teach I strive to counter the idea that women’s body processes are diseases. Modern medicine sees menstruation, pregnancy, lactation, and menopause as “conditions” that require “fixing,” usually in the form of pharmaceuticals or surgery. Known as medicalization, this attitude has convinced women that doctors and pharmacists know more about their bodies than women ever could, and that the working details of their fertility should remain mysterious.

Among causing other problems, such as a high maternal death rate when giving birth (the U.S. has the highest rate in the developed world), the medicalization of a women's fertility also discourages interest in Natural Family Planning, a low cost, organic, health promoting method of fertility control based on science. When you learn how your fertility works, and see the signs of hormone cycles acting in your body, you participate in your own healthcare. You can be confident that you are healthy when your body is working as it should.

On the other hand, pharmaceutical contraceptives discourage knowledge of the fertility inherent to women's bodies, and cause side effects that negatively impact women's health, all at a monthly cost. In addition, contraceptives are meant to stop your fertility from working as it should, causing a hormonal imbalance that can take up to a year to return to normal. There is also evidence that the contraceptive hormones not used by the body pass through the urine into the water supply, thus exposing many more people as well as animals and plants to artificial reproductive hormones, with negative consequences that we are only beginning to understand.

In a world where organic food, farming, and living are gaining more advocates, Natural Family Planning should be included in our efforts to live naturally and greener. For those of us who believe that fertility is not an illness, this moment is the perfect time to share our knowledge of NFP with others. Learn more about your fertility, and share what you have learned with others interested in a healthy lifestyle.

This contribution is available at <http://tercets.blogspot.com/2012/07/fertility-is-not-disease.html>
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60 Years of Marriage [at Ranting Catholic Mom]

On Thursday, August 1, 2013, my parents celebrated 60 years of marriage. I don't pretend to know all that has passed between them in those years. One can never truly know the depth and breadth of a marriage from the outside, even as a child of the couple. But as a witness to 50 years of their lives together, I will share my observations in the hope that the lessons I've learned from Mom and Dad will strengthen others in their vocation as married people, as those lessons have strengthened my marriage.

First I should tell you that my husband really loves my parents. Both of his parents are deceased. But I have the feeling that he is in many ways closer to my parents than he ever was to his own. His parents divorced when he was very young. That divorce colored his young life in dark shades. There was one thing we agreed when we were married, the d-word, that is divorce, was not allowed to be said between us.

The wonderful Maggie Smith, as the Dowager Countess of Downton Abbey, once said, "Marriage is a long business, and there is no getting out of it for our kind of people." When she said that line, I thought I was hearing my parents. In a culture that so disparages marriage that we cannot seem to make half of them stick, and we have to accept any sexual arrangement of adults as the equivalent of marriage, my parents appear in my minds eye as icons of what marriage really is.

I'm not canonizing them by saying this. There were some arguments between them that were really quite frightening to us as children. It was the 70's, and families were falling apart all around them. But difficult as it was, they stuck it out. As I look back on those times, and my own experiences, I realize now that I have frequently heard divorced couples say that they were surprised by the dissolution of their marriage. They never fought or argued. Maybe a good fight would have saved the marriage. In order to have a real fight, you have to have something worth fighting for.

Another key to the longevity of their marriage was that they had an efficient separation of duties. Mom ran the house and Dad was the provider and adviser. Running a household with 12 children and remaining sane is a monumental task. My Mom could put the fear of God in us if we slacked off in our studies or in our daily chores. I am constantly amazed by the memory of how clean and orderly our home was. I could tell tales of long Saturdays I spent ironing pleats into uniform skirts, or Sunday mornings making what seemed like an endless array of bacon and pancakes, but the minutia only serves to make real what was intangible but deeply felt. We were well fed, well clothed, well educated and well loved. Our participation in the duties of our home was an extension of Mom's love for us.

Dinner was always at 6:00 sharp. Dad would call if he was going to be later than 5:30. Upon arriving home, he and Mom would each have a glass of wine, and go into their bedroom so that

Dad could change out of his suit into more casual attire, and they could talk about their days. The door was shut. This conversation was not to be disturbed. Once a week they would dress up for each other and go out to dinner. Dad took care of Mom with these outings. It was a break and a release for both of them.

Over the dinner table, we would talk as a family about current events or what we were learning in school. I remember my eldest brother Tom taking a psychology class at Creighton Prep, and Dad correcting any misinterpretations of Freud, Jung, or Skinner that Tom brought home. Dad was a practicing psychiatrist until January of this year. He loves teaching us, and loved teaching the young residents who followed him on his rounds. He recently received the American Psychiatric Association's Teacher of the Year Award. That accolade stands as a much appreciated achievement of his 56 years of practice. I loved to get up early to make coffee and eggs for my Dad before he left for work in the morning. Service to others was an essential lesson of our home.

Finally, during the 70's and 80's it was common for parents to stop 'forcing' their children to go to Mass with them. That never happened in our home. We were up like clockwork, taking turns in the bathrooms and dressing in our best clothes. Ties and belts were required for the boys. Never was a tennis shoe allowed. Girls wore dresses with stockings, shoulders covered at all times. We sat down to a large brunch after Sunday Mass, and television was not allowed unless we watched something as a family. Mom made sure the laundry was done on Saturday, because those machines were not to be used on a Sunday.

So there you have it. The outline of how to reach 60 years of marriage as I have observed it through my parents. Duty to God and family is first. Love each other, and express that love in the ways you serve each other. Arguments and fights are a part of life. If it's worth having, it is worth fighting for. Be consistent in your behavior because routines are the mortar that connect the bricks of family life. Marriage truly is a long business. But the fruits of the labor are many and wonderful.

By the way, the picture is of my husband, Doug, and I.



Monks and Platypus {Anomalies} [at Glimpse of Peace]



Mary Lake at Westminster Abbey, Mission, BC, Canada

After collecting Peter and a friend from another live-in weekend

at the Benedictine Monastery's high school seminary in BC, a long and boring border wait was followed by a bizarre exchange with the customs guard in the booth.

We suffered the usual stern exchange

once our ID documents were in his possession, including, "Where do you live?" and "Why were you in Canada?" I answered, "The boys were at the monastery in Mission for a weekend visit," which launched a series of strange follow up questions:

"What is that? Church of England? *Roman Catholic*? Orthodox? Protestant?"

"It's Catholic, Benedictine, the religious order founded by Saint Benedict."

"So do they walk around in floor-length sackcloth whipping themselves all day?"

"No. They do wear habits, which are full length, black garments with hoods."

"So did they beat their hands with rulers?"

I turned around and asked the boys, "Did the monks beat your hands with rulers?"

"No."

"The boys got to swim and play roller hockey, they had prayer time and talks. They have a great time up there. The monks are very holy," I added.

"I think God has a sense of humor."

"I hope so."

"Otherwise why would he have created the platypus?"

"Now why does everyone always pick on the poor platypus?"

"I'm not picking on the platypus..."

"The platypus is an anomaly, that's why people pick on the platypus," said Peter's wise friend.

Indeed.

Anomalies do seem to invite being singled out, don't they?



Seminary of Christ the King; Monastery of Westminster Abbey, Mission, BC, Canada

This contribution is available at <http://glimpseofpeace.blogspot.com/2013/07/monks-and-platypus-anomalies.html>
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Order Please [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



When you bring order into your life your time will multiply, and then you will be able to give God more glory, by working more in his service.

www.facebook.com/IAmACatholicHeart

- St. Josemaria Escriva

The Way, Guidance, Chapter 2, # 80

I, believe it or not, am not a scheduled person.

I think it is because of a few reasons.

I like to go with the flow,

take things as they come and deal with those things

I think when I have a schedule, then, well,

I am faced with failure and I don't like that.

I'm kind of a perfectionist

(I know, if you saw my floor and house you would not think so)

Hey, I live with non perfectionists who do not care about the floor

or if they left their socks all over the house.

I know also, that we need to practice a summer schedule before school starts, so we can *master* it!

You'd think a perfectionist would *love* a schedule, right?

You'd think a perfectionist would be able to follow a schedule *perfectly, right?*

Well, read this:

WHAT DO DEMONS DO WITH THEIR TIME?



Answer: In the world of demons, like that of people, some do one thing and others do different things. Demons, of course, cannot build houses, grow food, construct machines, nor do any of the things human beings spend so much time on. Most of the time, demons

occupy themselves with going deeper into the world of knowledge, in having relationships among themselves, and in tempting people.

The intellectual world is such a vast world that the demons occupy themselves in it completely like us, in a university, for example, there can be hundreds of professors with each one specializing in some branch of knowledge. Hundreds of professors and deans work hours daily in a university and all this work and activity produces just one thing: knowledge. The same thing happens in the world of the angelic spirits.

Relationships among pure spirits may not seem important, but the demons have real, complex social relationships. These relationships are not based merely on knowledge but also on the pleasure of communicating with one another and helping each other tempt humans. -Fr. Jose Antonio Portea, exorcist

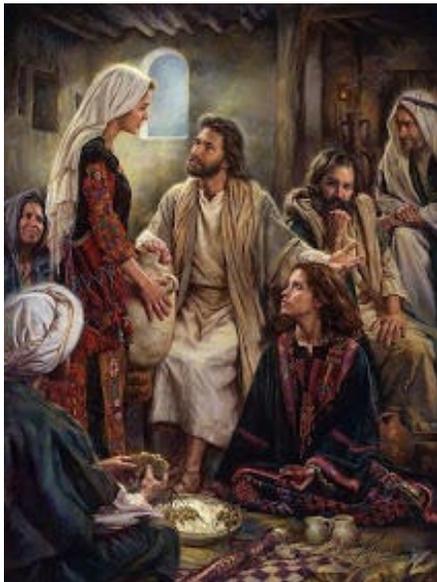


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REDISCOVERING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH AS WE GROW IN GOD.

Just as the Demons know our weaknesses,

God knows our strengths



Being a Martha, in our busy world can be hard,

But Jesus calls us Martha's to come and sit by Him,

to put Him first.

(Luke 10:38-42)

Oh, we can still take care of what needs taking care of,

but we need to balance it by putting Him first.

Have you prayed today?

(that's rhetorical for me)

Do we stop everything and pray?

No computers, TV, I-pads, radios, whatever is making it loud for us?



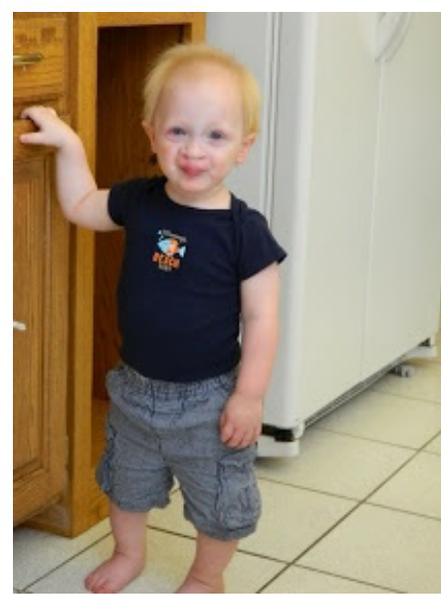
Is there quiet in our lives anymore?

Can there be order?



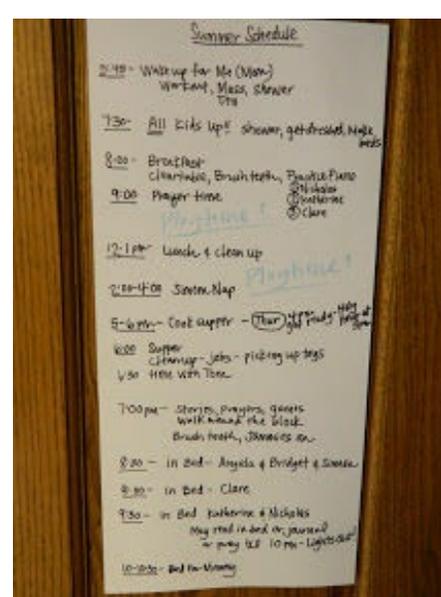
I interrupt this post for a little cuteness...

"I want a cracker!"



"Oh, you have the camera?"

See? This post has interruptions, just like life, scheduled or not!



(School work will be added in those playtime areas)

I had been praying about a schedule for quite a while, and finally decided I needed more help.

So, I asked Tom to help me.

It was fun to write it out with him.

We need to tweak it a little when school starts

like the kids will need to get up earlier, 6:30 or 7am

And

We need to do "bed checks" at 10pm to make sure the big kids

are actually in bed.

I will have 5 kids in school.

Yes, Sweetie Pie will be in preschool!!!

I need to be orderly in order to run this family.

It's just not working *going with the flow!*

God has blessed my life with 6 living children and I need to take this vocation seriously, to do my best.

Is sleeping in til everyone is up doing my best?

No, although, I love to do that,

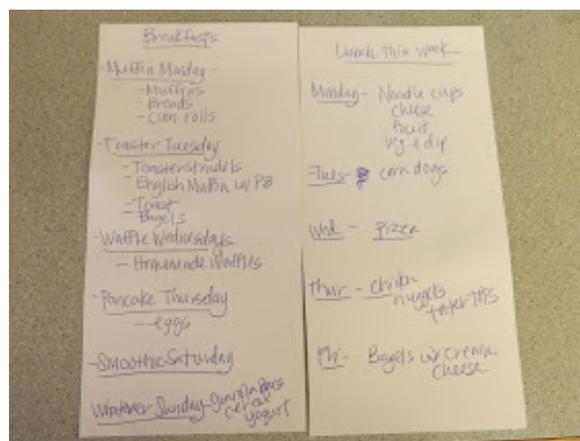
I hate how the rest of the day goes,

It's not what God wants or expects of me.

He wants me to be happy and for our kids to be happy.

He wants me to do my best

I believe following a schedule will help me with that



(Breakfasts will stay the same each week, each day,

Lunches I plan with the kiddos and they pick each week, except Wednesday is always pizza)

Oh, and

(there is always fruit and veggies with each meal, I just didn't write it down)

Following a schedule requires a few other things to be orderly,

like meals need to be planned

This past week was our first week trying this out

As I said, it needs some tweaking.

Like, I decided the kids might need to do

quicker easier breakfasts, you know,

granola bars. yogurt, or cereal

Baking and preparing each day just takes too long

It's OK in the summer, but when school starts,

well, how do you do it?

What do your kids eat for breakfast?

Do you cook every morning for them?

Of course it is summer and we need to make allowances,

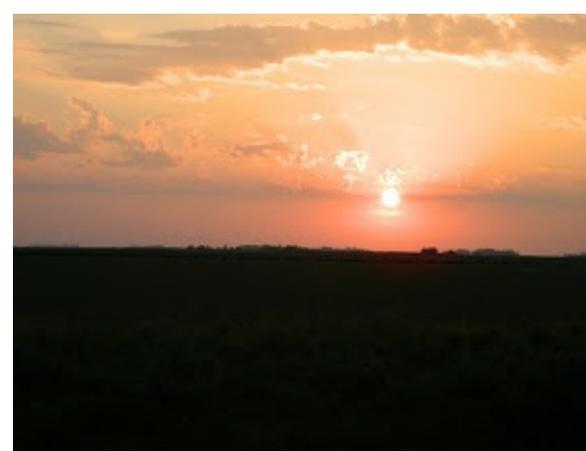
that pool keeps calling us...

I'm trying to not be a slave to the schedule





I'm trying to still be easy going and carefree
but the perfectionist in me, struggles with this,
because maybe it's not on the schedule.



At the end of the day,
I still wish there were about 2-4 more hours left to
do what I did not get to do.

I know God has a plan, and that He gave us 24 hours
in each day for a reason.

No more
no less.

I know, if I put God first, as He told Martha,

that things will all fall into place.

So I keep trying.

What about you?

Do you schedule your day?

Do you have any tips?

This contribution is available at <http://makemeasaint.blogspot.com/2013/07/order-please.html>
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Homage to My Daddy in Heaven [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! [Aramaic word for Daddy] Father! (Galatians 4:6)

Sing to God, sing praises to His name; Lift up a song for Him . . . whose name is the Lord, and exult before Him. A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows is God in His holy habitation. God makes a home for the lonely (Psalm 68:4-6)

I call Him Lord so often I sometimes forget He’s my heavenly Daddy. I’m sorry when that happens. ‘Lord’ conjures for me a more distant relationship than the intimate bond ‘Daddy’ invokes.

In prayer last week, that intimacy stirred thoughts once again of my earthly father. Those who’ve followed my blogs for a while know Albert left me and my sister in 1954. I was four, Andrea was not yet two. He wouldn’t keep out of other women’s beds, so Mom finally told him to pack his valise.

Andrea and I rarely saw him afterward. Three, maybe four times over the next decade and a half. Then, in 1968, when I was eighteen, I asked Mom to set a meeting with him at my paternal grandparents’ apartment. I wanted to know his side of the story. I wanted to know why he left me and Andrea.

My mind’s eye still sees him as he sat in the wing-backed chair in front of the living room window. I sat cross-legged on the carpet a few feet from him. Andrea and Mom sat on the sofa to my left, my grandmother on the flowered upholstered chair to the right of the couch. My grandfather softly drummed his fingers on the dining room table to my right.

“Why did you leave?”

Albert hardly hesitated. He looked me in the eyes and said, “Because I wanted to.”

That was 45 years ago. His words remain as chilling as if he spoke them last month.

I don’t know why that memory recently resurfaced while I was in prayer. I forgave Albert in November 2011 for what he’d done to me. The Lord had interrupted my prayer time and asked if I would forgive Albert. His question caught me by surprise, and I wasn’t quite sure how to respond. Would I forgive Al for casting me aside like a piece of trash? More to the point, *could* I forgive him?

“I’d like to,” I finally answered.

What happened next still warms me to think of it. The memory of Albert saying what he did remained – and yet remains – chiseled in my mind, but the memory then took a sudden and extraordinary turn. I was no longer sitting on the carpet. Instead, my heavenly *Daddy* was sitting on the carpet and *I* was sitting in His lap. His arms encircled me and I snuggled deep into His embrace. His warmth surrounded me. I could hear His heart beat, feel His breath on my hair. A great sense of quiet washed over me. I knew I was at home, at home in His arms.

Home. Oh, the security, serenity, the love and hope that word arouses within me.

Albert’s words, “Because I wanted to” no longer stung as they had in 1968 because now, in 2011, I could snuggle deeper into Daddy’s embrace. Albert’s cruelty dissipated like a mist burned away by the sun as my Daddy held me yet closer – because He understood how those words ripped a hole in me. I remember as I write this how – as this scene unfolded in my memory – I broke into a grin, looked him in the eyes and said without hesitation: “I forgive you.”

Why shouldn’t I forgive the man? How could I *not* forgive the man? I was sitting in my real Daddy’s lap. Albert was never my father. He only impregnated my mother. He was no more my father than if he had raped her and she conceived. But my Daddy in heaven – oh, my Daddy has never left me, no matter how many reasons I gave Him in my life to do so. And even when I didn’t know it He was there, all the time, His arm around my shoulder, whispering encouragement to a young boy, who became a teenager, and then became a young man who would one day become the man at 63 who joyfully lifts his hands in worship of his Daddy in heaven.

Sitting in my heavenly Father’s arms, how could Albert’s cavalier rejection hurt me? I could feel only sympathy for the man who missed a lifetime of opportunities to be my earthly daddy.

Is it any wonder why I am so in love with my Daddy who art in heaven?

This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2013/07/homage-to-my-daddy-in-heaven.html>

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"Culture of Encounter = Culture of the Good Samaritan", Pope Francis' Wisdom [at The Alternate Path]



“And who is my neighbor?”

What allowed the Samaritan to be neighbor to the man who fell victim to the robbers on the road to Jericho? What enabled him to encounter this man in his need? We are told that the priest and the Levite hurried by on the other side, possibly absorbed in their own concerns (too busy to be bothered) or out of a desire to remain ritually pure. Whatever the reason, they chose to remain unengaged and removed and, by doing so, fell short of what it means to love ones neighbor as Christ here teaches.

In contrast to the first two we are told that the Samaritan was “moved with compassion at the sight.” Maybe he was a man acquainted with his own infirmity; maybe he was someone who knew by experience what it meant to be hurt and victimized. Whatever the reason, the Samaritan allowed his heart to be touched by this man in his need. This is what it means to be “moved with compassion”. The Samaritan chose not to hurry by. He chose to put whatever other cares he had at that moment on hold and encounter this man in his need. The Samaritan made the choice to be neighbor.

Maybe the proper question is not, “And who is my neighbor?” Maybe the proper question is, “How do I become neighbor?” Maybe the proper prayer is, “Lord, teach me how to be neighbor.”

Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, is doing his best I believe to lead us as Church to the proper question and the proper prayer. He is calling us as Church to the “Culture of Encounter” which, in essence, is the culture of the Good Samaritan. Whether in visiting poor migrants on the tiny island

or Lampedusa, washing the feet of prisoners on Holy Thursday, inviting the poor for a meal at the Vatican or challenging economic systems that deny the dignity of people and corrupt the earth; the Holy Father is calling us to take notice, to see the ones lying on the side of the road who are in need. He is inviting us to be moved with compassion because he knows that this is what it means to be disciple and this is what it means to be Church and it is this type of Church that the world needs. To paraphrase the Holy Father, “A Church closed in on itself; a Church that hurries by too busy to be bothered; is a sick and weak Church.”

What does it mean to be a Church that notices, to be a Church living the gospel culture of encounter? It means a lot.

Parishes cannot be closed in, islands unto themselves. Parishes must truly become centers of evangelization! The focus of the parish must become outward looking in all aspects. This is quite the shift, at least in the United States, where parishes have historically served as centers of religious and ethnic unity. Maybe inward looking meetings and committees need to give way to the work of authentic ministry to and in the world? Maybe time and energy spent on in-house church squabbles on all levels needs to be recognized as time and energy wasted when there is a world outside in need? Is there place for the central focus of liturgy, prayer and community? Certainly, and these aspects are essential and truly at the heart of Church but the energies that naturally flow from these essential aspects of church must then be channeled out into the world if they are to remain authentic, true and life-giving! The energy of a river needs to flow forward! When it becomes stymied then it becomes morose and dark, much like a swamp.

Bishops, priests, religious and deacons cannot remain content to stay within the church walls – whatever form these may take. This is more than just going outside, it means letting go of knowledge and expertise, which equates to letting go of power. In the church, we know how things operate. We have the answers. “You want to get married? Here, this is the marriage preparation process and what you have to do.” “You want to learn about the Church? Here, this is the program for you.” Therefore, to step outside means to let go of power and to accept the risk of being vulnerable. But, there is such a great multitude outside of the Church’s walls who just want us to come and be with them. They do not expect us to know all the answers; they do not even want that. They just want to be noticed and for us to be willing to meet their vulnerability in our own vulnerability. This is the oil and wine that helps to bring healing and helps to bandage deep wounds.

There is another part to his equation though. Parishes and dioceses need to give their bishops,

priests, religious and deacons the freedom they need to do this. A gilded cage may be gilded but it is still a cage! At the heart of every vocation to serve in the Church is the call to be a missionary who goes out into the world. This is not a denial of the pastoral needs of the community but a healthy counter-balance that is essential, I believe, to the health and well-being of any vocation to serve. For a community to so demand and absorb the energy and focus of the one who serves that he or she cannot even imagine the missionary dimension of vocation is a huge disservice both to the one who serves and to the needs of our world.

The laity must step up but not in a “how the world does business” way, but in how we are all called by Christ to “do business” way. It is no longer permissible for the laity to say, “Oh, proclaiming the Gospel; that is the job of the ones who make the vows to do that.” Today, the Gospel must be proclaimed by all Christians; therefore, all Christians must be intimately familiar with and formed by the Gospel. The Gospel calls all persons to discipleship and therefore, all members of the Church must have their thoughts, actions and attitudes challenged, purified and enlightened by the Gospel. The laity in the Church can just as easily hurry by on the other side of the road as the priest and Levite did, but this does not lead to being neighbor. The primary encounter for any Christian before all else is our encounter with Christ in the Gospel. This is the encounter which must continuously guide and enliven all aspects of the life of discipleship and all members of the Church must continuously and daily seek this encounter. Every day, personal time must be spent with Scripture, particularly time with the gospels.
How do I become neighbor?

Lord, teach me how to be neighbor.

This contribution is available at <http://thealternatepath.blogspot.com/2013/07/culture-of-encounter-culture-of-good.html>
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Abba, Father [at Suffering With Joy]

July 23, 2013

*And he said, **Abba, Father**, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. (Mark 14:36)*



Digital oil painting by Barb from photo by Michelle M. from freedigitalphotos.com

“Abba”, that beautiful Aramaic word spoken by a baby as his first word for “father”, has an equivalent in every language. In English it is “daddy”. In Korean it is “Appa”. In Italian, “babbino”, “papá”, “papino”. In all languages it expresses childlike innocence, trust, intimacy, and affection. In pre-Christian times “Abba” grew from solely a baby’s expression to mean “dear father”, an expression grown children would use to address their fathers.

When Jesus cried out these words during His agony in the garden, He spoke for all mankind, first as a Jew and secondly as a Gentile, as Mark wrote first the Aramaic word and then the Greek for “father”. Abba is for all of us. St. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 8:15:

*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you **a slave again to fear**, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, “**Abba, Father.**“*

By this we know that **Jesus means for all of us to have that same relationship with His Father that He does, the child with the strong and loving protector and provider who watches over us with the greatest of care.** This is His will for us.

Two things follow from this:

1. Not developing this child-with-daddy loving relationship is contrary to God's will, and
2. Having this relationship means docility and surrender on our part.

Maybe we need to refocus on our relationship with the Father. Perhaps we might ask ourselves:

- How often do our lives seem to spin out of control?
- Are we just giving up and giving in to the pressures of this world or others because that is all we see at the moment?
- Have we taken ourselves out from under the strong wings of our Abba and are acting as if everything depends on us, not giving Him a second thought?
- Have we forgotten that our destiny is heaven and become caught up in daily struggles as if now is the only place we will ever be and our personal power is all there is?
- Do we walk in constant fear of those we perceive as being stronger than we, forgetting that our Abba is the strongest of all?
- Do we expect to understand everything about what is happening to us right now, or are we willing to wait in serenity until God sees fit to show us?
- Do we understand that we must be patient with Him, trusting Him to place everything in order in His time for our good and the good of others?
- Do we recognize His mercy in our lives? When will we learn to say to God, "I don't get it Lord, but I'll follow You anyway."?

Because Jesus told us to address His Father the same as He, "Abba, Father" we can accept the words beautifully written by Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene from *Divine Intimacy* meditation #249:

Our hope, our confidence in God can never be excessive or exaggerated, because it is founded on God's mercy which has no limits. If we sincerely try to do everything we can to please God, we need not fear that our hope in Him can be too great. His helpful power and His desire for our good, for our sanctification, infinitely exceed our most ardent hopes. This blind, unlimited hope is so pleasing to God that the more hope we have, the more He overwhelms us with favors: "the more the soul hopes, the more it attains" (J.C. *AS III*, 7,2).

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, making this thought her own said: "We can never have too much confidence in the good God who is so powerful and so merciful. We obtain from Him as much as we hope for" (*St*, 12).

Let us not, then, hide behind an excuse that our earthly fathers have been absent or disappointing, perhaps cruel and neglectful, and so we must live as if we are victims making excuses for our sins

and abuse of ourselves and others. Instead, let us claim what Jesus has given us, what He intends for us: sonship with the perfect Father in an eternal happiness that does not have to wait for death, but that we can begin here and now in this world, step by wobbly step as a child of our Abba.

Want to subscribe to posts by email? Visit the third box in the sidebar.

[V. Praised be Jesus Christ!](#)

R. Now and forever!

(Click on the link above to read why I end my posts this way.)

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Immortal, Invisible [at ~ Breviary Hymns ~]



Unresting, Unhasting, and Silent as Light

[Immortal, Invisible, God](#)

was written by the Scottish poet and clergyman,

[Walter C. Smith](#)

(1824-1908). It was first published in 1867 as part of his collection:

[Hymns of Christ and the Christian Life](#)

. Smith was a prominent pastor in the

[Free Church of Scotland](#)

and was elected it's moderator in 1893. He was well known for his poetry, and published a number of volumes.

[Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise](#)

is sung to the tune:

[St. Denio](#)

, a Welsh ballad of unknown authorship first published in 1839 as part of the collection

Canaidau y Cyssegr

, edited by

John Roberts

(1807-1876). In the Divine Office it is used with the Office of Readings.

Tune: St. Denio

IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, GOD ONLY WISE by Walter C. Smith, 1876 (Public Domain)

1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,

In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.

2. Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,

Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;

Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above

Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

3. To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small;

In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;

We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,

And wither and perish—but naught changeth Thee.

4. Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,

Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;

But of all Thy rich graces this grace, Lord, impart

Take the veil from our faces, the vile from our heart.

5. All laud we would render; O help us to see

'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee,

And so let Thy glory, Almighty, impart,

Through Christ in His story, Thy Christ to the heart.

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Old Treasures and New [at One Arrow Alone]

In living (though aging) memory, Catholic children in the Netherlands were afraid to receive Communion if they had accidentally swallowed something. I remember refreshments still being consumed just before the Bishop arrived (late) to celebrate Mass at a formation centre for priests, deacons and pastoral workers.

After the Second World War, Catholics declined to rent cheap apartments because it would entail living under one roof with people of the opposite sex and not of the same family. More recently, a cohabitating man with two children approached the Bishop to ask about becoming a deacon, and was surprised to hear that he should marry (though quite ready to do so). No one had ever told him.

Casuistry, according to Fr. Cessario O.P., ‘came to a screeching (though unpublicized) end about fifty years ago’. Many strictures went with it. Few people would want all of them back. On the other hand, to what degree can a priest rely on the old moral theology, if so much of it was too narrow to be applicable now? To what degree can he rely on pre-Tridentine moral theology? What thoughtful person will sort out overly lax and overly fussy from right judgments about human choices – not merely as a series of judgments *ad hoc*, but referring back to first principles about the human person, virtue, intellect and will? Speaking not only about the recognizable human virtues, but also the resilient-yet-fragile divine secrets which we call the supernatural virtues?

And equally importantly: now the supporting institutions and mindsets have all collapsed, who will be brave, wise and loud enough to proclaim to all God’s people where the kingdom of charity draws its outer boundaries?

Every scribe who has been trained (instructed) for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.

The Purpose of Life [at A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars]

Over the past year at the Pillar household, we have been contemplating the middle child's college career. Taking tests, keeping up impeccable grades and recording all the service projects and community service work she has been doing. But the biggest question I have been asking her is, "What do you want to do with your life?" What is her vocation? Actually when you get right down to it, what is ANYBODY's vocation, purpose in life?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church has your answer!

To know, love, and serve God with all our hearts, mind and souls. Now that doesn't sound too hard does it? Well over the past several months, since November exactly, I have been keeping up with reading the catechism in a year. This has been an eye-opener at times, to be sure. Filled with pages of great teachings and explanations, lots of things that I have known, but forgotten refreshes me everyday. The section on the Ten Commandments is just one more very telling place.

The first commandment: "You shall Love the Lord Your God with all your Heart, with all Your Soul, and with all your Mind"

This embraces the three theological virtues: faith, love, and hope. Through communication with God, we express our conviction in the belief "of a constant, unchangeable Being, always the same, faithful and just, without any evil." CCC 2086

Faith: "Our duty toward God is to believe in Him and to bear witness to Him."(

CCC 2087) Anything short of that causes a deviation of morals. The first commandment calls us to protect and nourish our faith with prudence and vigilance and to reject anything opposed to it. Such as:

- -voluntary doubt, refusing to believe what is disclosed,
- -Involuntary doubt, hesitation, anxiety in overcoming doubt, which can lead to spiritual blindness if not overcome.
- -Incredulity, neglecting the revealed truth,
- -apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith, and finally;
- -schism which is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff and those of the Church.

Hope: the first commandment is also concerned with sins against hope, namely:

- Despair: ceasing to have hope in the future and his personal salvation. Contrary to God's goodness.
- Presumption: man's dependence on his own capacity OR dependence on God's mercy and justice without obtaining His forgiveness, without conversion and glory without merit.

Charity: the first commandment enjoins us to love God above everything and all creatures for him and because of him. Sins against God's charity are:

- - Indifference: which neglects or refuses to reflect on divine charity.
- - Ingratitude: fails or refuses to acknowledge divine charity and return him love
- -Luke warmth: hesitation or negligence in responding to divine love or a refusal to give oneself over to the prompting of charity.
- -Acedia or spiritual sloth: the complete refusal of joy that comes from God and to be obstinate to His divine goodness.
- Hatred of God, wow, this one is a doozy, comes from pride. Totally denial to the point that anger becomes hatred cursing and blaming God for inflicting punishment and sin.

CCC2095 tells us "The theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity (love) inform and give life to the moral virtues. Thus charity leads us to render to God what we as creatures owe him in all justice. The virtue of religion disposes us to have this attitude."

How can we do this? Through daily Adoration, prayer, and sacrifice.

Furthermore, CCC2104 tells us, "All men (and women) are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, and to embrace it and hold on to it as they come to know it."

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3 Lessons and 2 Tips from Brandon Vogt [at Arleen Spenceley]



Brandon Vogt

3 Lessons and 2 Tips is a new series of interviews in which some of my favorite people (and probably some of yours) share three lessons they've learned by being married, plus two tips for single people.

This edition features Brandon Vogt, Catholic blogger and author of *The Church and New Media*, who has been married since May 17, 2008. He and his his wife have three children.

AS: How did you meet your wife?BV:

My wife and I grew up in the same town and we met in high school. We were juniors together when we started dating, (and) we were in band together. We both played clarinet, (and) depending on who tells the story, either I was ahead of her or she was ahead of me and we would challenge each other, back and forth. What started as competitive relationship eventually blossomed into a loving relationship.

AS: What's the first lesson you've learned by being married?BV:

The necessity of dying to self. I've found that the more I die to my own desires to serve the desires of my wife and my children, paradoxically, their desires become my own. Once I die to myself and

my own desires, those desires are resurrected in new forms in the rest of my family. I have had to learn to that to be a great husband means to be a selfless husband.

AS: And the second lesson?BV:

To remain calm. Especially when you have young kids, lots of days things get out of control. Kids are screaming. They're misbehaving. It seems like your breaking point. It's easy for husbands and wives to take it out on each other, but we know that's totally counterproductive. It ultimately damages your relationship. The best way to serve your family is as a united husband and wife. I have to remind myself that this, too, shall pass. All frustrations will ultimately pass.

AS: And the third lesson?BV:

To ground yourself in the Lord. We've found that in our marriage, the strongest periods are the times when we are both seeking the Lord, individually and together. There are weeks and months when we've just grown leaps and bounds in our relationships with the Lord; we pray together, discuss our spiritual lives, read the Bible together. Other times, there's a lull. When our spiritual lives are firing together on all cylinders, it's quite evident. When there's a lull, when spiritual matters are ignored and we become ambivalent, that evidences itself through little flare ups, bickering, little problems here and there. When we are spiritually attuned together, our relationship flourishes. When we're not, our unity breaks down.

AS: What's one tip for readers who are single?BV:

One thing I heard a lot as a single is that when you're single, you should be preparing yourself for marriage. It's good advice, but I'd add (a caveat): Catholic sexual teaching has held for centuries (that) everyone is called to get married, but not everyone is called to marry a human being. Some people are called to marry God, either through the priesthood, or through the religious life, or through a consecrated community. Develop your relationship with God now because the way you relate to the Lord will influence your marriage, whether that's a human marriage or a divine marriage.

AS: And a second tip for singles?BV:

Find a community. Whenever you're single, it's a rare point in your life where you can easily move in and out of a community. When you're married, you're in a community that you're going to be in for the rest of your life, (whether that's a) religious community, or (a community with your) spouse and kids. To prepare yourself for perpetual community, develop the skills to live in community with others. Find ways to enter into other types of small community now, whether that be small groups at your parish, local sports teams, groups of friends at work. Commit yourself to at least some form of community and learn how to live a communal life.

Connect with Brandon Vogt:

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The Elvis Presley Connection [at Sue Elvis Writes]



I was a teenager when Elvis Presley died. I remember the day I heard the news. The sun shone between my gaudy orange curtains, onto my bed where I had thrown myself, after a trying day at school, and I thought, “Wow! Elvis Presley is dead!” Not that I felt very sad or anything. The big headline news didn’t really affect me that way. I wasn’t an Elvis fan. He was just someone famous. But still... I rolled the news around in my mind, and concluded that fame doesn't protect anyone from death.

So Elvis died and was buried, and that might have been the end of Elvis Presley, as far as I was concerned. Except it wasn’t. A year or so later, we moved house, I went to a new school and met my own Elvis: Andy Elvis. By the time we graduated I knew one day I was going to be an Elvis too. What I didn't know was how closely Elvis Presley was going to follow me through all the years of our married life.

“Pardon? How do you spell that?”

“Elvis. E.L.V.I.S. You know, like Elvis Presley.”

“Any relation to Elvis Presley?” someone asks with a grin.

“Sue Elvis? Is that your real name?”

The other day my application to join an online forum for Catholic writers was rejected. I sat staring at the rejection email feeling a little hurt and sorry for myself. I tried to understand why I wasn't wanted. I'd provided too little information about myself, apparently, but what can one say in 100 characters? I must have mentioned my name. Did the moderator not believe it was my real name? Did she think it was made up and I am a troll or spammer, trying to worm my way into the group?

These thoughts started me thinking about pen names. Wouldn't 'Sue Elvis' make a wonderful pseudonym? It's short and catchy and of course, has that famous connection. I think if I am ever famous I will use the name Sue Elvis. And if I am never to be well known, I will still use it. It's my name.

“Sue Elvis is dead.” I guess the day will arrive when someone will say those words. Famous or not, we will all eventually meet in the cemetery. Hopefully, we'll all meet in Heaven too.

I don't suppose we'll chat about best selling songs or books or blogs. By that time, it won't matter much if we'd been famous on earth or not. Elvis Presley and I will meet on equal terms. Of course we'll still have the name connection.

Last week Andy and I celebrated our wedding anniversary. I've been Sue Elvis for thirty whole years. That's a long time. Thirty years of being married to my best friend. Thirty years of love and blessings. Thirty years of Elvis Presley comments.

Thirty years? I guess I must be a little older than thirty by now. In fact, I have outlived Elvis Presley by quite a few years.

Becoming an Elvis? Acquiring the Elvis Presley connection? Marrying Andy? It was the best thing I ever did.

Happy Anniversary, Andy Elvis.

This contribution is available at <http://www.sueelviswrites.com/2013/07/the-elvis-presley-connection.html>
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