

NewEvangelists.org

new
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New Evangelists Monthly #9

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Forward

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

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

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In God We Forget [at A Spiritual Journey]

Today is the Memorial of Saint Pius X, Pope. The Gospel parable came from Matthew 20. Jesus told the disciples that the Kingdom of God is like a landowner who hired laborers for his vineyard all day long. Some started working early in the morning, some later in the morning, some at noon, some after noon, and some in the last hour. In the evening, all received the same pay. Naturally, the ones hired earlier grumbled and one of them questioned the landowner. And he replied, "My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my money? Are you envious because I am generous?"

The lesson here is that I must not compare myself with others nor let anything about others bother me. I am to be happy with all what the Lord has given me ~ I already have him who awaits me in heaven! *Yes, in God, I can forget everything else.*

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2013/08/in-god-we-forget.html>
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Wrapping 'Summer Love' into a New School Year

I'll admit it's work, but I love it.

I love camping.... the dust clouds and the cicadas' rhythmic swell and the sun leaking into the thin tent nylon in the early morning, insistent.



Our rusty old camp grill and the Coleman torch that scatters just a bit of an ethereal Hey-summer-we-survived-this-year's-algebra-and-ancient-history-and-disappointments-and-triumphs-and-we're-back-to-settle-in-your-scheduleless -rustic-August glow.

The whispers of

“Did you SEE that one?”

as a midnight meteor arcs across black velvet sky, centuries old pine trees framing. And the hushed,

“Hey can you find Cassiopeia up there?”

The clink of the backgammon dice on a rainy day and the splash of dockjumping and King of the Hill on a scorched, sunny one.



The glassy lake reflecting pines and the lemon yellow and ivory lily pad flowers arching heaven.....

The greeting of those we know from years past with hugs and catching up on our year, how all the kids have grown so.

The connect the dots pattern of mosquito bites we all bear and the roasted to perfection s'mores. The pungent aroma of a campfire through hair and sweatshirts.

And nothing says

'summer'

like that smell.



[Click here](#)

to read the rest of my August column at Catholic Mom.com



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I'd love to stay in touch regularly!

Until next time,

~Chris

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2013/08/paddle-boats-pleiades-pike-old-growth.html>
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What are your spiritual gifts? Has the Holy Spirit ever surprised you with the grace to serve in a way you never imagined? Or taken your natural talent and empowered you to use it to honor God?

For me, writing was about personal fulfillment, if not fame. The Holy Spirit transformed my desires, helping me surrender that natural talent to the Lord. So my inherited talent became a charism dedicated to building up the Body of Christ for the glory of God.

The change happened after I filled out a questionnaire revealing my [charisms of the Holy Spirit](#). My spiritual life flourished, directing my natural talents more outward than inward.

Other gifts teetered on the line between “mine” and “God’s.” My gift of administration, defined as providing the planning and coordination needed to accomplish good things, was not exclusively directed outward. I could accept the grace to seek the good of all involved in a ministry or project, or just as easily use this gift to get my way without consulting or honoring God.

I scored high on discernment, the ability to sense the spiritual struggles of others. But my low score on mercy equaled a very judgmental Christian, without the impetus for practical acts of compassion to relieve their distress.

The Lord develops new charisms to enhance the ones we have. I seek the charism of wisdom, that is, remarkable insight and creative solutions, to ensure my writing conveys God’s love effectively and consistently. The Holy Spirit surprises me with illuminating perception far beyond my ideas. I wrote about this in [Holy Spirit Sandwich](#).

Many of our charisms complement those of others when we tag-team our strengths and weaknesses. When the remodeling of the parish classrooms took longer than expected, our religious education teachers taught home classes. I’m not a teacher but I do have the gift of hospitality. A teacher without a place to teach, came to our home and taught the teens, including mine. I set out refreshments every week instead of driving a carpool. Much more fun.

Those with the charism of encouragement need to support those in pastoral ministry trying to build Christian community. Intercessory prayer is essential to back up every other ministry, especially missionaries and those with charisms of healing and celibacy.

When the charismatic evangelist teams up with an on-fire music ministry to present a new discipleship program to the parishioners, the synergy is dynamic. Yet a healing mass needs soft music to undergird the prayers of those with the charism of healing.

Those with the charism of service, defined as personally doing whatever it takes to solve the problem and meet the need, are essential to leadership. They are the ones God chooses to direct the overall efforts of a group to make the vision of a better future a reality. Servants and leaders roll up their sleeves and work together to serve the Lord.

So how can the Holy Spirit transform your natural talents into charisms? Give you new ways to honor him?

Pray for the answer only you can hear. He may surprise you.

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This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/the-surprising-charisms-of-the-holy-spirit/>
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A place of refreshment, light, and peace [at Messy Wife, Blessed Life]



Of all the names for heaven (paradise, life everlasting, kingdom come...), this one is my favorite. The first time I ever remember truly *hearing* this phrase was when David and I were writing the Prayers of the Faithful for our wedding. It's never left my mind since.

Refreshment, light, and peace. Separated from the suffering and busyness of the world, our needs are but few. But one really: unity with God, our Creator, our Father. And in Him, we are complete. All the darkness and suffering passes away and we are left with just peace.

Today, Catholics celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In her assumption to heaven, we are reminded that if we, like the Mother of Christ, answer the callings of the Lord and follow His Son, we too will rest someday with him in a place of refreshment, light, and peace.

Father in heaven,
all creation rightly gives you praise,
for all life and all holiness come from you.
In the plan of your wisdom
she who bore the Christ in her womb
was raised body and soul in glory to be with him in heaven.
May we follow her example in reflecting your holiness
and join in her hymn of endless love and praise.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Mandi

This contribution is available at <http://www.messywife.com/2013/08/a-place-of-refreshment-light-and-peace.html>
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Do we trust more in the power of God or the devil? [at joy of nine9]



Mary Crushes Satan

We cannot allow fear of the devil and deception to be stronger than our trust in God's Mercy and Grace. Fear freezes us, often preventing the inner spiritual journey that leads to fullness of life in Christ.

As Catholics, we are often leery of personal revelation. Of course we should be cautious but what are we so worried about? The Church protects us with the gift of confession, the mystical tradition of the Church, spiritual direction and encourages us to study the bible. All these tools act as personal sign posts and safe guards. Like all Christians, Catholics have received the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth.

Why don't we, as Catholics, give the Holy Spirit permission to do His job? The Holy Spirit is our inner Companion who leads us; we do not live in fear of spiritual revelations. Many of God the Father's children are so afraid that the devil will lead them astray, they do not even listen to His interior whispers of love. Surely we trust more in God the Almighty, ruler of heaven and earth than a mere fallen angel?

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all the truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to

come.” John 16:13

What a conundrum in the Body of Christ. I cannot help feeling sorry for our Lord as I observe the discord between His children. Catholics mistrust revelations of other Christians and Protestants often think that Catholics are open to the occult by praying to Mary and the Saints. They even wonder if we are saved! Let’s not behave like arrogant Pharisees but humbly trust solely in God to lead and teach us as His children and leave condemnation to the Evil One.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH III. THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which **make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit.**

The seven *gifts* of the Holy Spirit are **wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.** They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David.¹⁰⁹ They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the **faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.**

Let your good spirit lead me on a level path. For **all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God . . .** If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

Often Christians must simply acknowledge that we cannot intellectually grasp all heavenly mysteries. We choose to continue our walk in, with, and through the Holy Spirit, trusting in God without fear of making a mistake. We cannot allow fear of the devil and deception to be stronger than our **trust in God’s Mercy and Grace.** Fear freezes us, often preventing the inner spiritual journey that leads to fullness of life in Christ. Trust me, I know what fear can do to a person. Now I realize that God the Father will bring me into the light; He will lead me into all truth.

I once attended a retreat where a Madonna House priest, actually Archbishop Raya, the Archbishop of Lebanon, said something like this:

Don’t be afraid of making mistakes because Jesus will wash you clean and then tell you to go play again. He does not say, “Stand in the corner and don’t you *dare* get dirty again.” Just like a mother, he bathes a dirty child and then tells him to go outside and play again.

Trust more in God’s power to guide than the Devil’s to deceive.

*Our fear of deception
and the devil must
never overwhelm our
trust in the power
of God's forgiveness
and guidance*



This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanuneau.wordpress.com/2013/08/19/do-we-trust-more-in-the-power-of-god-or-the-devil/>
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K.I.T. [at Martin Family Moments]



One of my favorite movies ever even though Heather Graham is in it.

Ahhhhh! Life is so crazy right now. I was so looking forward to the start of the school year after a pretty nauseating and exhausting summer, but now that it's here, I can barely keep afloat.

With a new school year comes tons of school meetings (both at work and at my kid's school), the busiest two weeks of work in a long time, the start of soccer season, and the hunt for what-to-do-with-Maggie-while-we-have-to-be-at-work-and-the-boys-start-school-but-Maggie-doesn't-start-until-next-week. *Answer-she's with the baby at the nanny's house.* Oh daycare costs for two is so not fun.

So we had uniforms to size and sort (thank God for hand-me-downs and generous siblings and friends), lunches to pack, backpacks to clean or buy, soccer balls and shin pads and cleats to purchase or locate, orientations to attend, book sales to run, huge payrolls to stress over, budgets to plan and execute, CCD talks to write (Phil), grad classes to study (again, Phil), and the rest of life to contend with. Oh, I also have this little problem where I am dizzy/light-headed/breathless all the time. And this morning, I awoke to find Maggie hanging over the toilet saying she felt sick. I asked her to flush what was mellowing in there so she could at least stare at a clean bowl. Then I went to try and find just one outfit that still fits before I have to pull out the old maternity clothes at 10 weeks. Yes, this is my life.

But I'm not complaining. Ok, yes I *was* complaining, but I'm not now. Because this *is* my life. This is our life. This is the life we signed up for when we got married and vowed to accept children lovingly (not easily! not for kicks and giggles!) and God blessed us with these five, soon to be six, little lovies to care for.

And this is the life we signed up for when we both decided it was best for our family to have full-time working parents (because, as it turns out, being able to afford a roof over our heads and put food on the table IS best for the family).

And this is the life we choose every.single.sports.season when I giddily sign up my babies for the sports they so love to play, then later crack under the pressure of 4 games and 3 practices each week!

This is also the life we choose when we continue to be open to life even though it makes for a sick Momma and exhausted Dad who has to pick up all my slack.

But, you know what else?

This is the life we hoped for back when we were engaged and would daydream about our future.

Six kids in 12 years of marriage? Yes, please!

A loving marriage where both spouses are loyal to each other and the Church's teachings? How did we get so lucky?

A crazy, loud, messy house full of little people who are half me and half Phil and 100% unique and pretty much the best people we know? Where can we sign up?

And so, we're keeping it together. Maybe just barely on most days, but it's working. Because this is our life, these were our dreams that became our reality and you know what? This is **the good** life.

Colleen

This contribution is available at <http://martinfamilymoments.blogspot.com/2013/08/kit.html>
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Tori Harris: Music Missionary {August's Dreamer in the Spotlight} [at A Dreamer's Wife]



I am really excited to feature this month's Dreamer in the Spotlight – Catholic musician, **Tori Harris**! This “music missionary for a new generation of faithful” is definitely using her gifts for God and inspiring others to do the same!

Over the weekend, Tori found time to answer some questions in the midst of speaking and singing at [Immaculee Ilibagiza's](#) “Treasures of our Faith” retreat. (Side note: If you haven't read Immaculee's book, [Left to Tell](#), about her experience during the Rwanda genocide, please do. It is a life-altering read!)

1. You released your beautiful EP, *Adoremus*, earlier this year. What does the rest of 2013 have in store for you and your music?

Thank you so much! This year has been such a whirlwind of blessings and surprises. It seems that everything is moving so quickly, it's hard to keep up. I've got a few big media events happening in the Fall. National Worship Leader Magazine is featuring my song, “Face to Face” on their songDISCOVERY disk, I'll be interviewed on Catholic TV at least 3 times, and there is a bunch of radio lining up. This summer I took a leap of faith and began playing music full-time, so, by the grace of God I'll continue to stay on the road with a heavy tour schedule and this Fall, the hope is to take a few weeks off to go back into the studio and start putting

together the next project. Over the past 2 years I've had the honor of writing with some **INCREDIBLE** songwriters and I can't wait to give these songs some legs and watch how they do on a CD. But ultimately, providence determines what I'm doing and where the music is going. So, the hope is to do these things, but the reality is that, at all times, God is in control and I can only do that which He permits.

2. Since beginning your journey of pursuing Christian music for the New Evangelization, do you have a favorite "God-moment" that stands out?

That's a hard question because there have been so many. One that really continues to teach and speak to me was this Easter. At the time I was really struggling to financially stay afloat and still do music, but I had a bunch of shows lined up and my only opportunity to earn money would be through CD and merchandise sales. I didn't have any money for merchandise, so we charged the credit card. All in all, the expenses totaled about \$2000. I had no plan for how I was going to pay off the debt, I was just confident that this was an investment I needed to make. A week later, just as I finish praying with my mom on the phone about where the money is going to come from, I met some friends for lunch. When I walked into the restaurant, there was a check for \$2000 sitting on my plate. The wife of the couple looked at me and said, "Now what you see before you isn't a gift from me, but from the Holy Spirit. I don't know why you need this money, but I'm certain you need it. Jesus wants you to have it." I held my composure through the lunch, but as soon as I got back to my car I wept for about 30 minutes. To be loved so lavishly by Christ touches one of the deepest longings of the human heart – and my God loves each of His creatures that much and more.



Tori Harris/Courtesy of toriestories.com

3. I love your [guest post on Ryan Eggenberger.com](#) where you shared your story of facing fear and discovering God's purpose for you. Please elaborate on how you use fear and insecurity to guide you.

When I talk to young people I find myself repeating, “the battlefield for the soul is fought in the mind.” Extraordinary circumstances aside, the devil most often attacks us through our thoughts, especially the thoughts and stories we tell ourselves. Scripture is very clear that the emotions of fear, doubt, insecurity and anxiety are birthed in Hell and thus NOT from Heaven. When you apply this knowledge to the fact that the devil attacks that which is most Holy and most good – you quickly realize that if you are feeling doubt, fear, anxiety or insecurity, that you are likely in thought or action, doing something very good and very holy. You see, our God is SO good. He desires to pour into us the deepest desires of our heart. He has organized the universe very intentionally and very exactly so that He can present to us our hearts deepest desire. The devil knows this and can’t stop it. He can’t change the universe... but he can cloud our thoughts with lies. Lies of fear, insecurity, anxiety and doubt. When the devil does this, it isn’t the universe that ceases to move, but us. We cease to move. And when we cease to act, we cease to have faith, because what is faith but our RESPONSE to love. I’m learning again and again, that fear is affirmation that I’m doing something right, that I MUST keep moving. And every time I recognize it and walk forward, stepping into the fear, I watch as God’s perfect love casts it out, and another part of my soul heals, and I am able to know love just a little more intimately.

4. I read on your website that you give a 40-minute talk titled “Discerning God’s Call in Your Life.” What advice do you have for those of us who are searching for our passion and purpose?

I’ll give you discernment cliff notes:

- 1. Make a list of all the things you’re insecure about, all the things you’re afraid of. (I’ll never be thin enough, No one will ever marry me and I’ll end up alone, the ladies at church judge me and don’t want to spend any time with me)*
- 2. Make a list of your hearts deepest desires. (This is the most difficult of all the steps. If you feel stupid, dumb, afraid and hope no one ever sees this list, then you’re doing it right)*
- 3. Go through the second list, your heart’s deepest desires, and ask yourself “do any of these desires violate God’s law?” If it violates God’s law scratch it off the list.*
- 4. Compare the two lists. If you see any parallels (For example, I am insecure about my singing voice and my deepest desire to stand on stage at Church and cantor) then prioritize those desires first*
- 5. Act. Face your fear, step into your insecurity, and act. Follow the desire. Just do it.*
- 6. Marvel at what God does next. Because what He will do will change your heart and life forever.*

In the words of St. Teresa of Avila, “if you become only what God intended you to be, then you will set the world on fire” – I think it’s about time we had more souls setting the world on fire.



Photo by Joy Williams/Courtesy of toriestories.com

5. Do you have any favorite songs, verses, books, or movies that inspire and motivate you?

Good art and culture always inspire. The book that changed my life was “Abandonment to Divine Providence” by Jean Pierre de Caussade. I read and re-read that book and every time, the truth it contains etches itself more intimately upon my heart. If you’re afraid of making a radical change in your life, this is the book that will give you the courage to leave everything you know, take up your cross and follow Christ.

Thanks, Tori, for taking the time to share your journey and your wisdom with us! Great stuff!



For more, be sure to...

This contribution is available at <http://adreamerswife.com/2013/08/30/tori-harris-music-missionary-augusts-dreamer-in-the-spotlight/>
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Guilt No More! [at Inadequate Disciple]

A few weeks ago I was assisting with video taping the testimony of a woman that aborted her second child. I'll have the link to this video below. She had been raised Catholic, actually in a Catholic orphanage, so she knew that abortion was the killing of a baby, and she had not been deceived that what was being aborted was pregnancy tissue, so she knew even as she drove there, waited in the waiting room and laid on the steel table as the procedure was done, that she was having her unborn baby killed. She just thought there wasn't any other way. She was divorced from her husband and she could barely support the first child they had together.

She mentioned there were no crisis pregnancy centers then, back in 1973. There were no sidewalk counselors. She wishes now that there were.

She says how her friends and even her ex-husband tried to cheer her up, from what followed: a very long lasting depression. She would go out with friends drinking and such but essentially every night finished the same way,

for 20 years,

with her crying herself to sleep.

Not everyone with guilt from sin cries themselves to sleep, but there are some who do know this prison of guilt, sadness, and sorrow.

Some of us let our minds be taken back to our failings, when we hurt others, or simply repeated the first sin in the garden, believing a lie that we could know good from evil, and think and do what was pleasing, or expedient for the god of self rather than surrendering to the will of God, and falling at his feet as Mary did (see John 11:32), but instead deliberately choosing to do or to enable sin to happen. Sin that caused pain for others, including

[the pain of the Savior during his passion](#)

There was something I learned at some point and then was rather clearly written about by St. Ignatius in his teachings on the discernment of spirits. Dwelling in guilt is a state encouraged by evil spirits that want to keep us from the peace and joy, and abundant life that are Christ's gift to us. He has already won the victory, and already suffered the penalty of our sins. We can and should feel sorrow and regret for our sins and failings, but we should refuse to let them distract us from the goodness and love, the forgiveness and mercy, the healing that Christ wills for us.

- If something keeps us from rejoicing in our salvation (see Psalm 51:12) due to Christ's

obedience and love,

- If something keeps us from knowing the freedom that comes from surrendering our hearts daily and throughout the day to the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit,
- If something keeps us from the confident trust that no matter how badly we screwed up, how hurtful and damaging and far reaching the effects are from our sin, the **truth is** we are loved, and blessed,

then that something is not from God!

That something is being orchestrated by those fallen spirits that followed Lucifer out of heaven and are at war with the children of God as described in Revelation 12. That something is keeping us from a fuller experience of the love of God so necessary for us to grow in faith and to bear fruit for our Lord and King.

Yes, we are weak, we are selfish, we are proud in our intellectual myopia and encouraged by the secular, moral relativism of our peers and society. Yes, we have been given much, the Gospel has been read to us and hopefully preached to us in words and by the example of those God puts into our lives, and yet we sinned and continue to sin.

But the thing I am trying to get those of you to know, those of you like Maria in the video to know, is

how much Jesus truly loves you.

He suffered not just out of obedience but to pay the price for my sin and yours, no matter how serious, how grave, how undoable, how awful that sin and its effects are.

Maria said at one point in filming the video that she still feels the guilt from the abortion. I asked her does she mean guilt or regret, because I think that is a key part of her testimony. She agreed it was regret now, not the guilt that imprisoned her for so many years. She went on to explain that when she responded to an altar call the counselor told her all her sins were forgiven. Her question was whether the sin of abortion had been forgiven. And the counselor told her, "All of your sins." This sin of her abortion had been confessed many times, but she still had that question if it had been forgiven.

Now, she believed God forgave her, but it was still many more years before she forgave herself. She still regrets the abortion as she thinks about how that baby is the missing sibling in her older daughter's and younger daughter's lives and the missing aunt or uncle to her grandchildren. They needed that person in their lives and they are missing out because she had the baby killed.

So, the regret lingers and surfaces. Still, she is free now. What does that mean? She describes it as finally accepting that Christ's sacrifice was to bear the guilt of her sin, and accepting and believing and trusting in his love meant forgiving herself too. She says the door to leave her prison was open the entire time, but it was years after responding to the altar call that she finally

walked through that door and accepted the healing.

Only this past year did she begin speaking about her abortion. She told the leader of our Pro-life club at school, and then was asked by him to tell her testimony in the high school chapel. She then began attending our Saturday "Witness for Life" visits to two abortion clinics in the Chicago area. Her granddaughter, that she is raising as her own child, comes with her. You'll see her in the video too.

- Are you prone to experience guilt for your past sins and do you want to be free of it?
- What is keeping you in that prison of guilt and shame?
- Do you want to be free of it?

Recently I noticed a verse reference written in my daughter's yearbook by a friend. I wonder if her friend wrote it there because she knows we are Catholic, and she is taught that Catholics, just like Martin Luther, are paralyzed in their guilt. This is why they use the word "Liberty" in the naming of their schools and churches. The verse really provokes much thought:

¹²*as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.*

(Psalm 103:12)

First thing that hits me is this is in the OT - the Old Testament. It isn't Ephesians or Romans or Galatians. This is back during the time of King David. Yet here is God saying he removes our transgressions from us. Now, in the light of Salvation History, we know he does this through God becoming incarnate of the Virgin after she was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, and then as the Lamb of God, (prefigured by the sacrificing of unblemished lambs exemplified in the sacrifice of Abel, later the sacrifice of Abraham in place of Isaac, by all the Israelites the night of the Passover, and then established for the Israelites by Moses at the command of God) suffered torture, persecution, bore the punishment in his soul for our sins as he hung powerless on the cross, and died.

You know what? God wants us free. He loves us and wants us to walk out of the prison of guilt, and jump into his arms like St. Therese described so beautifully:

The depth of her spirituality, of which she said, "my way is all confidence and love," has inspired many believers. In the face of her littleness and nothingness, she trusted in God to be her sanctity. She wanted to go to heaven by an entirely new little way. "I wanted to find an elevator that would raise me to Jesus." The elevator, she wrote, would be the arms of Jesus lifting her in all her littleness. (Guy Gaucher, *The Spiritual Journey of Therese of Lisieux*, p.2)

God taught me more about this through my youngest two children. My daughter will misbehave in some way, and it soon becomes a battle of wills. She stays entrenched in it, gets angry and pouty, and will not accept a hug or anything to try to bring it to a quicker and happier end.

Eventually,

usually after she gets a nap, or some other means of a longer timeout, she does accept the hug, and all is better.

My son, on the other hand, as soon as he does something he knows is wrong and he shouldn't have done -- could be hurting me, his sister, wrecking something in the house, he very soon, almost immediately, realizes what this has done to our relationship, and gets very sorrowful and wants a hug and kiss.

Now some of you may be saying my younger son has me wrapped around his finger, but let's get back to my point! He is very confident in my love for him, and my forgiveness when he comes running into my arms.

That is what I think Jesus meant about becoming like children, and is the core of St. Therese's spirituality, that she learned as a child jumping on her earthly father's lap, "Fortunately I could go home every evening and then I cheered up. I used to jump on Father's knee and tell him what marks I had had, and when he kissed me all my troubles were forgotten...I needed this sort of encouragement so much."

2

He called a child, whom he put among them,

3

and said,

"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

(Matthew 18:2-3)

So if the devil, the evil spirits want to keep you from jumping into Jesus's arms, and thanking him for his victory over evil, over sin, and for bearing our guilt, do you want to do what they want, or do you want to walk out the door of the prison of guilt that has been open for you all this time?

Walk through, and experience the lightness and joy that are yours, because of the love of your God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

My words are not as helpful as meditating on scripture. As Jesus so perfectly put it:

"If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will make you free."

(John 8:31-32)

So let's start now, and please join me in committing to read the Bible

every day!

This is what Billy Graham would say when looking into the TV camera during his crusades, right after leading people in the sinner's prayer. "Read your Bible every day!"

Please pray to the Holy Spirit, and slowly read and absorb the love and truth in Psalm 103 below.

Here's quick prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Come Holy Spirit! Come at the most powerful intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your well-beloved spouse.

¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

¹³As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

¹⁴For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.

¹⁵As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field;

¹⁶for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.

¹⁷But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children,

¹⁸to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

¹⁹The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

²⁰Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word.

²¹Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will.

²²Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul.
(Psalm 103)

Receive the unfathomable compassion, and mercy, and blessings of our God---Sovereign, Holy, and Loving! This means forgiving yourself too! Wouldn't it grieve our Lord whose compassion and sacrifice of the Lamb of God have made you free? Jump into his arms, just like the beloved child that you are.

When you-know-who encourages you to indulge in guilt, tell him, as Jesus did:

²³“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

(Matthew 16:23)

I think

[Mary's recent post](#)

at the Beautiful Gate also helps us learn the true humility, and peace that comes from trusting that the Holy Spirit is working on us according to God's will and timing.

Here is the video testimony:

This contribution is available at <http://inadequatedisciple.blogspot.com/2013/08/guilt-no-more.html>
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The Truth Hurts... [at Em's Estuary]

especially when it SMACKS you in the face.

Well, I believe in not giving up. I believe in doing what you say you will do. I believe in picking yourself up after tragedy, putting the pieces together AND moving on.

But I am human. I am a procrastinator. I have good intentions. I take on too much. Sometimes I honestly think I take things on knowing they are too hard or too impossible. It's a really bad habit.

Anyway – last evening God “high fived me in the face” with the truth. (That is a silly way to say smacked... but sometimes people need to be high-fived in the face – FOR REELZ (Um – I don't talk slang so pardon my ignorance of silly speak).)

I am reading a book called [Kisses from Katie](#). It is a fantastic book about flat out listening to and following God's plan for your life. She was 18 when she started the journey. I'm trying NOT to compare myself. And yes, I've gotten it right from time to time, but I can't help but feel I need to listen to and follow His instructions more. Sigh...

In her book, she references the Bible verse in Luke Chapter 12 that states “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.” and of course, it was the end of our Gospel passage today – **SMACK**. It is not the first time I have read that passage or heard it. But it is the first time I GOT IT! Sadly... lol

I complain about things – finances, situations, weight, wanting to vacation in a lavish spot, why can't things go right... blah blah blah... and truly – when I look around I have so much. No – I don't always complain. I'm making a point! I have been given much. I need to step up to the carrying out of what God wants to entrust me with. I'm fighting Him and I don't know why!

In her book she says “*Remember, God will never give you more than you can handle*”. People repeat this frequently; I heard it when I was growing up and I hear it now. It is meant to be a source of encouragement, and it would be if I believed it were true. But I don't. I believe that God totally, absolutely, intentionally gives us more than we can handle. Because this is when we surrender to Him and He takes over, proving Himself by doing the impossible in our lives.” She goes on to say, “I have learned to accept it, even ask for it, this “more than I can handle.” Because in these times, God shows Himself victorious. He reminds me that all of this life requires more of Him and less of me. God does give us more than we can handle. Not maliciously, but intentionally, in love, that His glory may be displayed, that we may have no doubt of who is in control, that people may see His grace and faithfulness shining through our lives. And as I surrender these situations to Him, watch Him take over and do the impossible, I am filled with joy and peace — so much more than I can handle.”

At the point she writes that, she is 20. Just turned 20. By the time I turned 20 I was lost mentally and emotionally. crippled, a believer – definitely not living my life the right way. If I compare myself to her, I may as well jump off a high rise. Truly – the comparison is embarrassing. That said – from reading her book, I know that if we met, she'd accept me for who I am and love me anyway – because she truly is a woman of God.

I remember hearing that as a child, a young adult, etc... and thinking – if strife builds character, I have it to sell. Or “well I wish God didn't think I could handle so much!” Sigh. I missed His point.

I have been through so much in my life, seen so many things, been beaten and abused mentally, physically, sexually... abandoned and used by a few people frankly... I was promiscuous, self-loathing, and frankly just did not live my life right because of it. I was not taught how for starters. And the people who tried to teach me, I turned away from. Because not living right is WAY EASIER than living right with God and His morals, laws, etc.

But that is not the point of this blog post anyway. I was minding my own business a few weeks ago when I got an email inviting me to join a book club at Church. I'm fairly disenchanted with our Parish, but I know, in my heart of hearts, they do the best they can. That said – I do sincerely cherish the friendships I have made there. Once again, I digress... back to the point (squirrel!!!). The first book on the list is Kisses from Katie (link above) and it is about how this young girl leaves her comfy American life to live and work in an Orphanage in Uganda (I am halfway through the book and if anything ever happens to my family, I am calling her and moving there – just so you will know where to find me.) and miracle after miracle happen because SHE doesn't get in the way of God's plan.

What's that you say? Um – yes, GET OUT OF THE WAY OF GOD'S PLAN! That is what I am saying. For years, I have been trying to lose weight and rectify our finances – half-heartedly and apparently not with God. Marque and I are scared to death of making new friends. We've been so hurt by people – um, because we let the wrong people in. I believe we are doing well in this area now though (just so the few friends I have – who mean the world to me, understand it is not about them).

I have spent so much time in the back and forth of situations – homeschooling, Christopher's Asperger's, my family, etc... that I never really listened to what God wanted me to do. I am a classic over-analyzer and although I am happy to meet others and help, I don't trust easily. I just never realized that I had not put my trust, my life, my home, my everything 100% in God's capable hands. And I aim to fix that.

I try not to think back on what I didn't do that He wanted me to. I can't go back... I know too that I have done a lot that HE wanted me to in many instances. But my problem is, it is clear, that He needs to be an even bigger focus and I have not truly let HIM all the way in. The realization is overwhelmingly sad for me. But I have no time for sadness because He and I (with the help of our Blessed Mother and a plethora of Saints) are going to fix it. I know this in my heart. As I open myself up more to my Faith, His Church; as I let Him peel back the layers and knock

down the walls, I am a better person, wife, mom, friend.

If you are struggling with this, I am praying for you. And I hope you will pray for me.

READ and LISTEN — PRAY and LISTEN — STUDY and LISTEN

Edited to add, I left a big part out. So, Katie keeps a journal and here is what she says God said to her one night when she was struggling with His plan (yes, she struggled, she's human).

“It’s okay to be human. I created you, I understand. Do not be afraid; do not be terrified. I am the Lord your God and I will go with you wherever you go. I will never leave nor forsake you (see Deuteronomy 31:6). Remember that my Word says you would be hard pressed on every side, but never crushed; perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but never abandoned, discouraged but never destroyed (see 2 Corinthians 4:8-9). When you try to save your own life, your own desires, you will lose. But when you decide to put aside your desires, to lose your life for me, you will find it (see Matthew 16:25).

There is more that He told her that night, but you need to read the book....

And read the book – it will change your life. Seriously – for me – hater of all bugs and crawly creatures, hater of “not having a plan” – for me to say I’d move to Uganda to help this Katie is a great testimony.

Anyway – I needed the Smack and I am glad for it. And if you need the smack to – there is no need to thank Me, thank God. He made me write this anyway... I tell you it’s the truth!

Love, Hugs & Blessings,
Em

This contribution is available at <http://emilysestuary.wordpress.com/2013/08/11/the-truth-hurts/>
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On Having Babies [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]

I must start this post,

Just to clarify, so no one gets too excited here,

I am *not* pregnant.

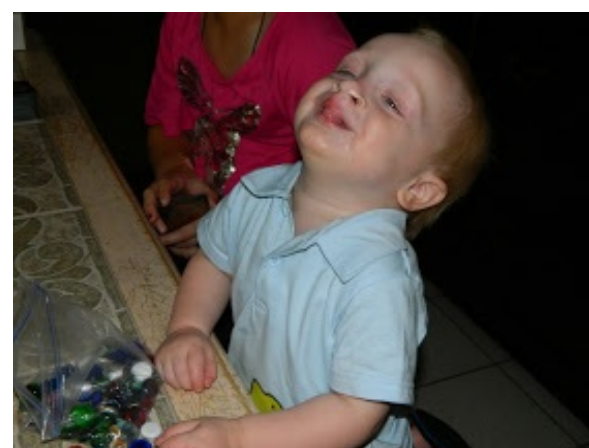
(at this time)



This is an issue I've been wanting to write about for quite some time.

Tom and I are, and always have been,

open to life.



What that really means

is we are open to accepting Gods gift of life

We use no artificial means to prevent God's will.



NFP, or Natural Family Planning, is used

to somewhat prevent in times of

[struggle](#)

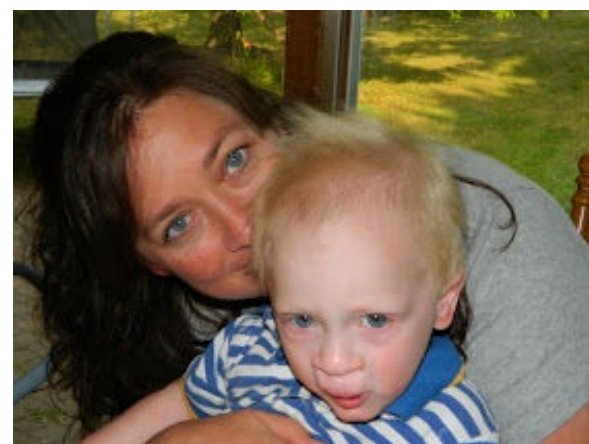
, or recovery from C-sections,

of course, from years of experience,

I know my body very well.

I know when I'm ovulating,

I know the baby days



And I know the non-baby days.

That's really what NFP is,

getting to know your body

the way God made it.

Like God made the woman's body to want to

make babies during the baby days.

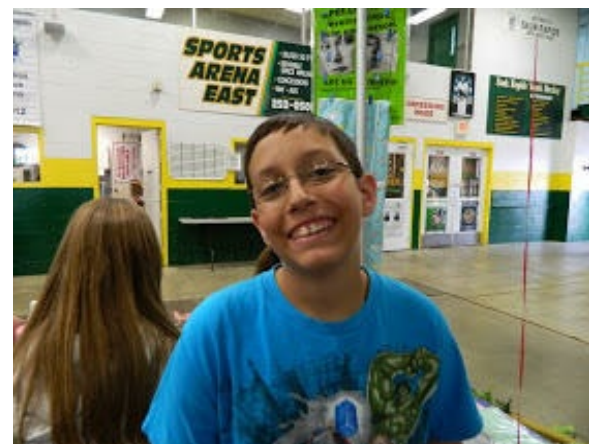
(NFP is also used to achieve pregnancy-in knowing those baby days)



When we were first married, we struggled with infertility.

For the first 3 years, we were childless.

(except for my daycare children)



I, still, to this day have no idea why that happened,

except for us to be able to empathize with other childless couples

to some extent.

Maybe it was not for us,

for the couple that had their womb blessed after hearing about us.

Or the couples that heard about the womb blessing and conceived after that.



Gods will is a mystery most often

and maybe it should stay that way, we do not need to know the "why's"

Being open to Gods will

takes complete trust.

Complete trust.

That's not easy to do in today's world.

I mean who are we to say

"no way God, we do not want children, we do not

want the gifts You have for us, we know better for our lives."?

Complete trust means not worrying about what *we want*,

or what *we think* is best for us.



(working the pro life booth at the county fair this summer)

I am at an age now,
(almost 44)
where I've had 6 beautiful children,
plus one in heaven.

We are constantly in progress with our faith, our marriage and our family



I'm torn right now.
There's a sadness in the possibility of Simeon being our last baby.
a sadness of the loss of future babies not conceived.
Because we already love that baby.
We love God's will for our lives.

I love children and love each new personality God gives us.
I have those *baby feelings*, or *baby wantings*, or *baby fever*.

God puts those feelings there for a reason.
I know it is a gift.

Every time I count my kids, when going places or whatever

I think, "Someone is missing..."
6 doesn't seem that many



On Sunday, during Mass, Simeon
crawled up on the pew and was standing to get something out of the
church bag, when I caught out of the corner of my eye,
the woman behind us, probably in her 50's,
(I'm guessing her kids are grown now,
and she is in between her own kids and grandchildren),
reach
and ever so slyly,
rub Simeon's soft arm.

It was such a touching moment.

My baby was a gift to her, even for just a moment.

A gift from God to me,
and a gift from God to others.



My babies are a gift to us, always.

As in I cannot even fathom to imagine life without any one of them.

I am torn, because, although, I have that *baby fever*,

I am also getting older. (like how I added the "er")

I catch myself thinking about life without babies.

No more high chair taking up so much room in the kitchen,

No more baby toys and baby car thingy's all over the living room.

No more changing table.

And it's expensive, having kids,

not necessarily babies, but kids?

We spend a small fortune on yogurt alone.

Money is tight.

God always provides, He really does,

there might not be extra, but there is enough.



And then there is my body
After 6 C-sections, that tummy...and



If we have another baby,
there goes 2 years of my life
2 more years of giving my body
(I'm realistic here, folks, my body goes to pot)
Carrying a baby, nursing a baby,
hard things, yes.

Really, what's 2 more years?

The years go so quickly (once they are gone)

And it is ever so rewarding and filled with blessings at the same time.

And where is the trust?

Complete Trust.

Psalm 12- Lo, children [are] an heritage of the LORD: [and] the fruit of the womb [is his] reward.



So I am in the middle,
not knowing if we will ever conceive again,
and the fears that go along with that.

And
kind of looking forward to the next stage of aging.



I think that is being open.

Open to whatever God wants of us.

So if God wishes to give us another precious little soul to love, we would be ever so **Thankful**.



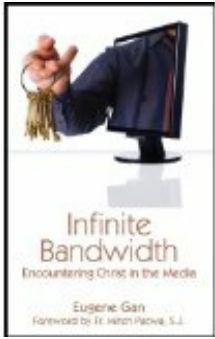
And if that is not God's plan for us,
then, well,
we are ever so **Thankful** for that too.

Genesis 1:28 - And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

This contribution is available at <http://makemeasaint.blogspot.com/2013/08/on-having-babies.html>
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Am I a Criminal Now??? [at Charlotte's Web]



I preview books through interlibrary loan before forking out cash. It's saved me a lot of money, but now and then there's one I really must OWN! Eugene Gan, a prof at Franciscan University, has written a small, lucid, powerfully effective book about our relationship to the ocean of media (or swamp?) around us: **Infinite Bandwidth**.

But... I have a confession to make.

I actually got so absorbed in this book I forgot I was reading a copy I did not own! Can you go to hell for marking up a book (not just underlining, but STARS and snarky comments like, "as if anyone in the Church is listening", cross-references like "GKC would love this!", red ink: "THIS is the art of teaching!!!" and even personal memos: "add this to files: education, art, media, beauty")?

Will ya'll please pray the Cardinal Stafford Library doesn't throw me in jail?!?!?

Anyway, for my act of reparation, I'm offering to buy several copies if the St. Lawrence Center (or somebody....want to help??) will get a group together to study this book. Seriously, the whole way through it I wanted to be discussing it with people. This is a book that asks great questions, and we should be chewing on it together to find our own answers.

This contribution is available at <http://www.charlotteweb.org/am-i-a-criminal-now/>
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Dear Sweet Frustrated Friend [at The Veil of Chastity]

Dear Sweet Frustrated Friend,

After posting your [“Dear Future Husband”](#) Letter last week, it is obvious from the comments and support from other single girls that you are **not alone** in your frustration. With all that support and cyber love, you might be feeling slightly less frustrated but it is understandable if you still feel alone.

I am not sure there is anything I can say to ease your suffering. Yes, I believe you are suffering because to be without something we are **made for** is a suffering.

Could marriage actually be a need?

I used to feel guilty about my pain and hurt over not being married. I wasn't sure I had it in proper perspective given all the suffering going on in the world. Was my singleness a suffering? Was marriage something I *needed* or just something I *wanted*? If it was *just* a want, was I justified in my pain over not having it? The Lord is my Shepherd, after all, and I shall not want, right?

Then someone asked me why I felt guilty for wanting to be married? They said, *“Of course your feelings of hurt are justified. You don't have to feel guilty for wanting something you were made for as a woman.”*

Made For Marriage?

Some folks may read this blog and think that I put too high of a value on marriage to the point of relegating it to the supernatural level. But, when I read The Catechism, I see that Spousal Love is something we were **made for**:

*“...The vocation to marriage is **written in the very nature of man and woman** as they came from the hand of the Creator....”*

*“...Holy Scripture affirms that man and woman were **created for one another**: “It is not good that the man should be alone...”*

Our bodies cry out for Spousal Love. In [this post](#), I wrote:

*“...I am not a theologian but from a Catholic perspective we know that our bodies are made to glorify God. The purpose of marriage and of our fertility is to glorify God. Not being able to fulfill this purpose is, I think, **a special kind of suffering**.*

The shape, form and intricate design of our bodies reveal this strong link to our fertility and

*femininity. Our bodies are **oriented toward marital love**.... to bonding and babies. I could be wrong but I think that [God weeps over delayed and missed marriage vocations](#) in a unique way. I feel confident that the plight of the single person is not hidden from Him nor has their cause passed out of His notice...”*

Even though we are made for marriage, it is written into our very nature and our bodies cry out for Spousal Love, there is, unfortunately, a real possibility that some will have to live with this need unmet. This is why I believe that delayed marriages and missed marriages are a suffering.

Despair

As you know, the enemy will whisper to you that God is stingy and that God is not in control. The enemy will try to convince you to take your vocation into your own hands and make it happen at any cost. Even the cost of your soul. You will be tempted to compromise and accept lame offers from guys. You will be tempted to chase guys.

It sounds like you are already walking with God and waiting on Him to act on your behalf. You are doing your part. The challenge will be to not give in to despair.

What Do I Recommend?

1. Recognize and accept that you have an unmet need
2. Be honest with God about your feelings. He can take it.
3. Continue to Immerse yourself in the Sacraments (the fount of Grace) and in Sacred Scripture
4. Find your mission outside of your career (unless your career includes this mission)
5. Realize that God is our only Hope

Your Future Husband

I know you are frustrated that he has not found you yet. But, have you considered that he is suffering too and in need of healing? That he would love to hold you and share his day with you? That he wants nothing more than to find you and hold those babies you are hoping for?

Pray for him that he will not give in to despair and that his body and soul will be protected from porn and fornication. He needs your prayers now as much as he will need them when you are married.

Today is the feast day of [St. Monica](#). Your future husband may be away from the Lord and, similar to [St. Augustine](#), greatly in need of prayer. Your prayers for him and an **offering of your sufferings for him** are a powerful combination.

Be Ready

”...I think this letter is written to a ghost, and it’s a real shame because I’ve been working on myself for you. I’ve been trying to turn my vices into virtues, take my faults and reform them into blessings, and make my areas of weakness stronger. For what? Apparently for nothing, and that really peeves me....”

I think what you wrote above is understandable. It is easy to wonder if it is all for nothing. You and I have chatted this week about all the things you are doing to grow closer to the Lord and turn your vices into virtues. It reminded me of the parable of the 10 Virgins and the Lamp Oil and how it applies to our singleness. We must always be ready. In a New York minute, everything can change.

I know you are having trouble believing your husband exists. I cannot tell you if he does or not. If he doesn’t then, the 5 recommendations above are critical to fighting off despair. The Lord will provide **the much-needed grace** proper to heal your suffering. If your husband does exist, then, it is a matter of waiting.....patiently.....for the Lord to act. He is our only Hope.

Recommended Posts:

I went back and found the following posts which I hope will provide encouragement and support:

[Dear God, What Do You want from me?](#)

[Hope](#)

[There Is No Formula](#)

[Do Men Need Help?](#)

[He Will Rule Over You](#)

[Fantasy Relationships](#)

[I Knew](#)

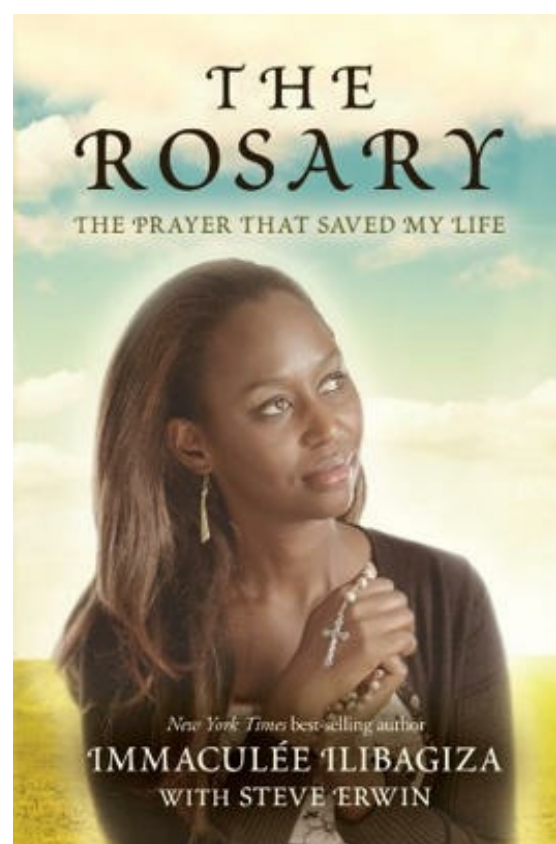
[He Is Not The One](#)

[Merge Your Body And Soul](#)

[Myth # 3: There Is Something Wrong With Me](#)

God love and bless you, my sweet friend. Cindy

Review - The Rosary: The Prayer That Saved My Life [at This That and the Other Thing]



About the Book:

Immaculée Ilibagiza believes that praying the rosary spared her from being slaughtered during the horrific 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which her family and more than a million other innocent men, women, and children were brutally murdered.

Nearly two decades later, Immaculée continues to pray the rosary every day and marvels at how she is constantly renewed and richly rewarded by this glorious prayer. It has helped her in every possible way, from strengthening her faith to changing heartache into happiness and landing her a dream job . . . and that's just for starters. She has witnessed—and been the recipient of—the rosary's ability to create miracles so often that she vowed to share its blessings with as many people as she could.

In these pages, Immaculée reveals how the rosary's abundant benefits can be reaped by each and every one of us, regardless of our religious affiliations. In this moving and uplifting book, the New York Times best-selling author recounts her personal experience of discovering the power and the beauty of the ancient beads—and shows all of us how to enrich our own lives by exploring and embracing the mysteries, secrets, and promises of the prayer that indeed saved her life.

My Comments:

I have a confession: I don't really like to pray the Rosary. I rarely choose to say it. I've tried different times--a daily Rosary has been a Lenten resolution in the past, I've read books about the Rosary, I've bought Rosary tapes for the car, but the fact of the matter remains, it has never become a meaningful or pleasant prayer for me. That being said, I don't have any problem with those who do say the rosary and like some other things that other people like and I don't, I've wondered what I'm missing. With that in mind when

[The Rosary: The Prayer That Saved My Life](#)

became available on NetGalley I requested a copy.

The author of this book, Immaculée Ilibagiza was a child in Rwanda during the genocide. She lost all her family except one brother. She survived because a Protestant pastor hid her and some others in his bathroom. She remained there for months and during that time her prayers included the Rosary. She takes us through each mystery and tells us about the images she saw as she prayed those mysteries while hiding and about how she related what she imagined to her current situation. I will say that it was moving. She sat with the Blessed Mother and watched the soldiers crucify Jesus. She was there at the Nativity. She watched Mary being crowned Queen of heaven. Maybe that's my problem with the rosary--I'm a word person, not an image person. I could write a report about how the crucifixion process killed Jesus, but I just can't draw that type of picture in my mind. I don't "see" it. I read this book over four weeks and was moved by Immaculée Ilibagiza's meditations. I think Rosary lovers would be even more moved. Grade: B+

This contribution is available at <http://ranthisthat.blogspot.com/2013/08/review-rosary-prayer-that-saved-my-life.html>

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Conversion - Event or Process? [at A Grateful Convert]



As a child, I bounced around several Christian denominations, but made a conscious decision to live for Christ during my pre-teen years. In fact, I did this a few times, as there were countless opportunities to do so. In my travels, there were frequent altar calls and other invitations to accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior. In all sincerity, I made that choice in my heart.

Through the years, the invitations to accept Christ continued, since sermons were often focused on reaching the unchurched or nominal Christians. At one point a friend of mine went through a “rededication” ceremony. He had been a rebellious teenager, so when I inquired about this, he said it was exactly what it sounded like: he rededicated his life to Jesus, after repenting from his sins.

Around this time, my dad (who happened to be a Presbyterian minister), read a Catholic magazine called *New Covenant*. Through a seemingly random confluence of circumstances, this led to me enrolling at Franciscan University of Steubenville at age 16. This served to add a dimension to my thinking about the decision for Christ, since baptism was presented as a singularly important event.

Through my experiences at Franciscan ([read that story here](#)), I eventually experienced that event, being baptized at age 25 and entering the Catholic Church.

Conversion events are important. In a sense, they represent a new beginning.

I was born into a faithful Christian family, and in some sense my own conversion was inevitable. Dad was a Presbyterian minister, Mom was an enthusiastic minister’s wife who led bible studies and encouraged anyone facing troubles. Together, they were missionaries in Nigeria, loving parents, and to this day are terrific people. In what would prove to be a deeply ironic decision, they decided not to baptize me as an infant, so I could make the decision about faith for myself.

I decided to become Catholic. Within a year, they did too.

Since that time, I have pondered my first conversion *event* (the original decision for Christ) and *process*, which involves a new beginning every day, and lasts a lifetime. Let’s face it, although we may desire to live a Christian life upon an affirmative decision to accept Jesus as our savior, the decision itself does not necessarily confer a spontaneous ability to do so.

Every journey has a beginning, and it's often the most difficult part. But how can we *continue* our journey, grow in our faith and come "further up and further in," in the immortal words of C.S. Lewis? This applies not only to recent converts, but to all of us who have a need for continuous conversion, a desire to embrace our Christian faith more deeply through all of life's circumstances.

We know it doesn't always come easily. We have all heard stories, or know examples, of Christians whose growth in faith halted shortly after accepting Christ. Although these individuals might initially desire the gift of faith, their lives might be structurally opposed in some ways to Christianity. This is beautifully illustrated in the parable of the seed sprouting quickly but then withering in the scorching sun.

Converts, including those to Catholicism, bring their own set of challenges. Much like immigrants to a new country, it takes time to learn the language, become culturally aware, and grow sensitive to the nuances of the faith. The richness, depth, beauty, and history of Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular, are vast, and we have varying abilities to assimilate into this new way of life and allow ourselves to be transformed.

In my personal experience, I've come to a greater appreciation for the events and the process. In a sense, conversion is a series of faithful, determined, and loving decisions to follow Jesus Christ with our entire lives. The foggy prayer first thing in the morning to offer our day to God. Biting one's tongue rather than issuing a sharp reply to a colleague or family member. Being understanding rather than judgmental about a friend's difficult situation. They're all mini-events. And they're all part of the process.

No matter who we are, growth in faith demands ongoing conversion, and that process is full of events. Each event, as good and sincere as it may be, is another beginning, a continuation of our growth in holiness. Authentic, ongoing conversion consists of both events and process – giving the gift of ourselves, our days and our lives, just as Jesus modeled for us.

So make that decision for Christ today, whether it's an altar call, a sinner's prayer, or going to confession. Our Lord will lead the process, directing all our paths to Him.

This contribution is available at <http://gratefulconvert.com/conversion-event-or-process/>
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St. Joseph and Eucharistic Prayers I, II, and III [at Catholic By Grace]



I met John in 1996, just a year after the failure of my non-sacramental marriage. I was treading water, spiritually, financially and emotionally. The future loomed before me. I had a teaching degree, but no job. I had three children (seven, nine, and eleven). My only option was to live in my parents' basement and see if I could gain some ground by working on a master's degree.

Grace has a way of showing up when we are at the end of ourselves. And that's what happened in graduate school. That's where I met John. Eventually, we married and began rebuilding a family out of the ashes.

I look back over the years now and realize just what a gift John has been in my life. Like so many other step-fathers (and step-mothers), he has taken on a responsibility he did not have to accept. He has become a father to my children and given them the most normal childhood one can possibly have when their biological parents are not both under the same roof.

Daily, John has picked up this unique cross and carried it with a very steady hand. In many ways, he has been my St. Joseph. He could have married a woman without children, a woman without a non-sacramental marriage in her past. He could have remained unmarried and spent his salary on himself rather than on orthodontia bills and school clothes. Instead, he has given his entire life to making a family where there was very little hope for a normal future. He has offered advice and meted out discipline, always carefully weighing in the balance the fact that he is not the biological father, and yet he is a father. He is a St. Joseph in this family. And I know that Our Lord's beloved foster father, the real St. Joseph, must be interceding on John's behalf.

Blended families need St. Joseph. We need someone to carry our burdens to the Lord and intercede for our children. We need someone to pick up the pieces when we are at the end of

ourselves. We need a saint who is given to the mission of helping the family to endure the present age and triumph in its effort to raise saints for the Kingdom of God. St. Joseph is that saint. As Pope John Paul II said, "Saint Joseph was a just man, a tireless worker, the upright guardian of those entrusted to his care."

He is a patron saint for every family and most especially for every step-parent and non-traditional family that is trying very hard to create a home following their own cataclysmic familial event.

In June of 2013, in his first decree of a liturgical nature, Pope Francis announced that St. Joseph would be added to Eucharistic prayers II, III, and IV. I believe Pope Francis understands that we are living in an age of blended families, single-parent families, and step-parenting, and that we desperately need St. Joseph's intercession. May God bless the step-parents and all blended families!

This contribution is available at <http://catholicbygrace.blogspot.com/2013/08/st-joseph-and-eucharistic-prayers-i-ii.html>

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The Joys of Repeating Myself [at The Back of the World]

“Mr. M, can I go to the bathroom?”

“I don’t know, can you?”

My twelve-year-old student rolls his eyes, tries to hide his smile from me, and makes a second attempt:

“MAY I go to the bathroom?!”

There was, I was told, a list circulating around my old school called “\$#@% Mr. M says,” and this little dialogue topped the list. I can’t tell you how many thousands of times I’ve said this over the course of my still-somewhat-short teaching career.

The joke has a bit of life-cycle in the course of a student’s 7th grade year...At first, there’s surprise: “did he really just ask me if I can go to the bathroom?!” Then, there is annoyance: “Why does he say that EVERY SINGLE TIME?!” Then, there is bemused acceptance. Finally, by the end of the year, the student gets to the point where he is terribly disappointed if I forget to say it: it has become a beloved part of the routine, a defining aspect of the student-teacher give-and-take.

G.K. Chesterton once said:

“All the towering materialism which dominates the modern mind rests ultimately upon one assumption; a false assumption. It is supposed that if a thing goes on repeating itself it is probably dead; a piece of clockwork. People feel that if the universe was personal it would vary; if the sun were alive it would dance. This is a fallacy even in relation to known fact. For the variation in human affairs is generally brought into them, not by life, but by death; by the dying down or breaking off of their strength or desire. A man varies his movements because of some slight element of failure or fatigue. He gets into an omnibus because he is tired of walking; or he walks because he is tired of sitting still. But if his life and joy were so gigantic that he never tired of going to Islington, he might go to Islington as regularly as the Thames goes to Sheerness. The very speed and ecstasy of his life would have the stillness of death. The sun rises every morning. I do not rise every morning; but the variation is due not to my activity, but to my inaction. Now, to put the matter in a popular phrase, it might be true that the sun rises regularly because he never gets tired of rising. His routine might be due, not to a lifelessness, but to a rush of life.”

I used to think that the Catholic practice of repeating prayers was dull and annoying, if not outright sinful. “Why would you say the same thing to God over and over again? Don’t you have a real relationship with Him?!”

But now, though, as I've practiced devotions like the Rosary and the Jesus Prayer, I've realized that there's a beautiful depth and nuance to repeating myself. Saying the same, familiar prayers has become a beloved part of my relationship with God. I find that I would be terribly disappointed if someone told me I couldn't say the Our Father or the Hail Mary; some part of my life with God would feel like it was sick or fatigued.

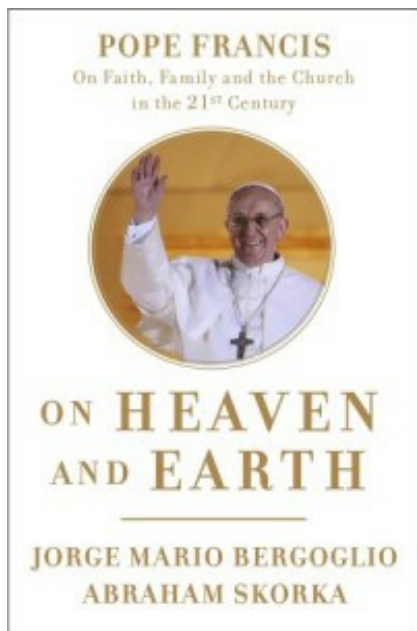
I have learned the supreme joy of repeating myself, and of delighting in the routine. And yes, you may go to the bathroom now...



This contribution is available at <http://backoftheworld.com/2013/08/27/the-joys-of-repeating-myself/>
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Book Review: On Heaven and Earth by Pope Francis [at The Koala Bear Writer]



Shortly after the cardinals went into conclave this spring to elect a new pope, I went into labour. When we finally came out of new baby daze to look at the world after

[Jade's birth](#)

, we found out we had a new pope: Francis, formerly Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Brazil. Thus for us, Jade's birth and Pope Francis' election are connected. So when I saw a book by the pope, I thought it would be a great way to get to know more about our new spiritual leader.

[On Heaven and Earth: Pope Francis on Faith, Family and the Church in the Twenty-first Century](#)

was actually written before Pope Francis was Pope Francis.

Originally published in 2010 in Argentina, *On Heaven and Earth* is a conversation between Pope Francis and Rabbi Abraham Skorka.

Both men have worked to establish inter-religious dialogue in South America and this book is a unique view of that dialogue and their faiths.

In the first few chapters, I found the back-and-forth between two authors or narrators annoying. I wanted to get to know Pope Francis, not Rabbi Skorka. As I got further into the book, however, I found the dialogue more interesting. Instead of looking at this as just a Catholic book, I saw it as a way to learn more not only about Catholicism but also about Judaism.

Pope Francis and Skorka provide an interesting and readable comparison of two of today's oldest religions.

The two men begin the book with big questions like "On God" and "On the Devil" and then move through "Prayer" and "Religious Leaders" to topics of concern in today's society such as "Euthanasia," "Abortion," and "Divorce." Each demonstrated profound respect for the other, showing how we can agree and disagree on various matters. I found myself making bookmarks in several places on my Kobo as various portions stood out to me in addressing issues that I've seen or heard of lately.

For example, Pope Francis says, "Religion has a right to give an opinion as long as it is in service to the people. If someone asks my advice, I have the right to give it to them. The religious minister, at times, draws attention to certain points of private or public life because he is the parishioners' guide. However, he does not have the right to force anything on anyone's private life. If God, in creation, ran the risk of making us free, who am I to get involved?"

Later, on the topic of women and ordination, he adds that "... in Christianity the High Priest is Jesus, a male. In the theologically grounded tradition the priesthood passes through man. The woman has another function in Christianity, reflected in the figure of Mary. It is the figure that embraces society, the figure that contains it, the mother of the community. The woman has the gift of maternity, of tenderness; if all these riches are not integrated, a religious community not only transforms in a chauvinist society, but also into one that is austere, hard, and hardly sacred.

The fact that a woman cannot exercise the priesthood does not make her less than the male
."

If you are curious about either

[Catholicism](#)

or Judaism (or both), I recommend

On Heaven and Earth.

This book does provide a glimpse into the views and beliefs of our new pope and makes me excited for what he will accomplish during his papacy.

I'm linking up with [Essential Fridays](#) this week.

This contribution is available at <http://www.thekoalabearwriter.com/2013/08/on-heaven-and-earth-by-pope-francis.html>

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Should Catholics be on Google Plus? [at St. Joseph's Vanguard]



Those who I've circled and those who've circled me

[Google Plus](#), or G+ for short, is Google's version of facebook. But what's the state of G+ in terms of Catholic usage?

[I joined G+](#) right when Google rolled it out. I was interested to see how it worked and also hoped it would provide a good competitor to facebook. The idea of circles was intriguing, allowing me to create a "Family and Close Friends" circle where I could share family photos with just that group of people, rather than the whole world.

Executive Summary for the [tl;dr](#) folks: Google Plus remains for Catholics much less popular than facebook. Most Catholics using it are of a techy bent, so if you are interested in that Catholic niche, it would be a good social network to join. Otherwise, you are not missing out on a big evangelization outlet by not being on G+, since relatively few Catholics are on it.

What You Find on G+

It's interesting how technologies and platforms lend themselves better to some things over others. In the case of G+, animated GIFs are displayed inline, so they are very popular, bringing back a good ol' web trend from the late 90s.

Along with the animated GIFs, numerous people share cute cat pictures and memes, as well as clips and photos from favorite TV shows. Especially popular are sci-fi shows like Dr. Who, but Star Trek and Star Wars and similar movies are also common.

Google also "pushes" content to your stream. For example, if a particular news story is hot at the moment, or liked by many people, G+ may show that story in your stream. You have the option of muting it (which hides it), or even going to the originator of the story and blocking them, something

I've done numerous times for various reasons.

But what about the Catholics on G+?

They're an interesting group. A lot of techy and nerdy types; lots of young Catholics who work in their dioceses' evangelization or new media offices. But rather than using the network strictly along those lines, they are also sharing funny GIFs, music, or stories from their personal interests.

Some of my most prolific Catholic friends on G+ include [Ashley Collins](#), [Thomas Sanjuro](#), [Joyce Donahue](#), [Lisa Josephsdatter](#), [Ryan Ostendorf](#), [Brad West](#), [Jason Pascucci](#), and [Fr. Cory Sticha](#). (You can also [add me to your circles](#).)

Many Catholics have set up automated postings to G+ from their blogs, though this is less effective, since most regular G+ers know who is really active on the site vs. just pushing their content to it.

Greg Willits, the popular Catholic evangelist, made [a small faux pas](#) when he swung over to G+, said he'd been ignoring the network for months and (not seeing much activity in his stream) "didn't miss much." The regulars like me licked our wounds but did our best to explain to him the chicken-and-egg nature of G+ being a ghost town.

This leads us to....

Circles

In facebook, friendship is mutual. If you friend someone, and they accept, then you see their stuff and they see yours. In G+, much like twitter, you "circle" people, which means you want to see their updates in your stream. They can circle you back, or not, and if they do they will see your updates.

You can also push updates to your circles. This is what I did when I made a Family circle. I added my family members, both those who use G+ and those who don't, and then shared family photos with just that circle. You can check a box at the bottom of the post to tell G+ to email the update notification to your circle, which is helpful for those not on G+. The only problem is, most of my family isn't very tech savvy and didn't understand that the email was telling them that I shared photos with them that they could go and see. Fail. So now I just manually email photos out to my family, which is lame in a sort of 2006 kind of way.

Differences

G+ has a different "feel" than facebook. It's hard to explain, but I feel like I know people on facebook pretty well, even strangers whom I've never met in person. On G+ it feels like they are still strangers, just ones I happen to read updates from. Maybe it's the content they share on G+ vs. facebook? Maybe it's the nature of facebook, which feels more private while G+ feels more

public?

Facebook makes it easy to “hide” a friend’s updates. Perhaps they post too frequently or you vehemently disagree with them on almost every issue and don’t want to see their propaganda. Whatever the case, you can just hide them, but remain friends. On G+, you really need to uncircle them if you don’t want to see their updates. Theoretically they could find out that you did that, but it is not easy to do so, so there’s no big backlash there.

Conclusion: You are not missing out on much in terms of evangelization if you are not on G+. There just hasn’t been that critical mass of people there, at least not yet. In spite of being in over 500 people’s circles, and circling almost 1,000 people, my stream is not hard to manage, mainly because most of those 1,000 people are not active on the site. They joined, maybe posted a few updates, then got bored.

That said, I hope you will join so that more neat people will be on there, making it a better avenue for Catholics to share their faith!

This contribution is available at <http://www.devinrose.heroicvirtuecreations.com/blog/2013/08/02/should-catholics-be-on-google-plus/>
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The Dictatorship of Niceness [at Catholic Gray Matters]

Pope Benedict XVI famously castigated the “dictatorship of relativism” that afflicts modernity: the notion that truth is changing and dependent on the moral whims of a given society. He might have added another dictatorship that is equally dangerous: namely, a “dictatorship of niceness” which demands silence in the face of moral evil, lest the pricking of conscience become too strong for the sinner to bear. The two dictatorships are related, and militate in tandem against the Christian lifestyle.

For relativism is the notion that truth is mutable and can be changed to suit changing circumstances – and moral truths are the most painful truths of all. It is painful to be told we are in the wrong or committing evil. It is painful for a mother to be told that she killed her unborn child. It is painful to tell someone that they are risking the fires of Hell if they consciously reject the truths of Catholicism. But such pains are necessary, if human beings are to grow or if society is to advance; problems must be faced before they become destructive, even at the cost of causing incredible pain.

But our age does not like pain, and flees all forms of suffering. We must never inform the populace of the [handiwork of Kermit Gosnell](#), because [that might cause pain to those who have chosen abortion](#). To escape the pain and responsibility that comes with the passage of time, Americans choose the sterile knife of the plastic surgeon over the painful dignity of graceful aging. And anyone who dares claim that marriage is between a man and a woman must be silenced or be labeled a supporter of “hate,” lest pain be caused to those engaging in same-sex relationships. In the modern world, the only people who are “wrong” are those who believe in immutable right and wrong, and would defend truth even at the cost of making others uncomfortable.

So it should come as no surprise that when we have an aversion to pain in all its myriad forms, salutary and otherwise, we perpetually wrap ourselves in mindless entertainments, our [children in the electronic cocoons](#) of television and video games, and our most intimate relationships in rubber and “protective” chemicals. Better a bright and shining fantasia than the harsh and rugged glory of reality; better the candy-coated suicide pill of transitory delight than the bitter medicine of salutary service. Thus, it is no surprise that we are saddled with a celebrity culture in which the manic doings of superstars enthrall viewers but deaden them to real news. Looming crises like horrific budgets, a government potentially spying on Americans, and the [plight of the impoverished](#) are ignored, in favor of 24/7 coverage of the latest outrageous comment made by yet another attention seeker.

Pope Francis has proven to be a master at gently but firmly pricking consciences, of challenging his flock to throw off the chains of ease for the great adventure of service to God and neighbor. Voices like his are necessary antidotes to the dictatorship of niceness that threatens to smother all Christians in the straitjacket of mindless slavery to passing pleasure.

This contribution is available at <http://catholicgraymatters.com/2013/08/the-dictatorship-of-niceness/>
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How can a chemist believe in transubstantiation?

[Catholic Free Press](#)



“I only wish that Catholics would really cherish the word ‘is’ even though science cannot say anything about it.” Those are the words of Fr. Stanley Jaki, priest and physicist, during a lecture given at St. John’s University on

February 20, 2003. I didn't read that until recently, but it just so happens that this lecture was given on my thirty-fourth birthday, a time when I was rethinking the meaning of life. A year later, pregnant with our second daughter, I decided to become Catholic, and during those days I pondered the meaning of that little word, as a chemist, a mother, and a convert. Christ said, "This is my body." I believed it because if that is not true, then what Christ said is not true, and there is no hope for redemption.

But how can a chemist believe that bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, even when they still look, taste, and smell like bread and wine? Easy. The mastery of chemistry demands that you believe things exist and change in ways invisible to the unaided eye. I've never seen an atom; I don't know what protons and neutrons look like; I've never watched electrons orbit. I can only visualize the formation of covalent or ionic bonds as they are made and broken while matter and energy are conserved for all time. Yet, I know that every physical substance in existence is made of these things, be it bread or blood or my great-great-great grandmother's earthly body. Atoms or subatomic particles do not determine what a substance is. God, who made everything, does.

Like any physical science, chemistry is, admittedly, limited to physical properties, but as a mother it was naturally intuitive that science doesn't have the final say about what something is. I knew my children, even in the womb, were more than lumps of matter, and as their bodies changed, I knew it was still the same child. Even more, I had no difficulty accepting that while appearances remained the same, the substance could be changed, for I believed it of myself. I believed that the grace of Christ would transform *me* — same physical body, new creature.

By the way, I named that daughter Grace. I wasn't received into the Church for two more years, but we have never missed a Sunday Mass since her birth because even when I wasn't in full Communion, I wanted to be in His presence. Cherish it? I sure do Fr. Jaki.

This contribution is available at <http://stacytrasancos.com/how-can-a-chemist-believe-in-transubstantiation/>
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Bear One Another's Burdens [at Suffering With Joy]

August 8, 2013

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2)



French peasant women tilling soil circa 1917-1920, public domain photo image enhanced

When participating in Sunday Snippets this past week, I came across Michael's post at "To Love and Truth" titled [Listening to God's Soft Whisper](#). One great thing about the Catholic blogging world is the opportunity to participate in spiritual observations of others, and this post really made me think. The post began:

We often thank God for sending a particular person into our life. God blessed us through that person. It is easy to see God's action in those He sends into our life in response to our prayer. **It is more difficult to be the person who God sends in response to someone else's prayer.** [My emphasis.]

I am often very conscious of my own needs, aware of the constant pressure points against body, mind, and soul, preoccupied with my own problems, worries, hopes, etc. Sometimes this can cause me to close off others, to be blind to their needs. Yet Jesus expects us to bear one another's burdens, and in fact not to be anxious over what we shall eat or wear, or anything else because our Father takes care of all our needs (Matt. 6:25-32).

Forgetting of self to be present to others implies being open to God's call to be the person He sends to someone else in need. If we are to be God's gift to someone else, we must constantly be corresponding with His grace to grow in the direction He wills, a scary thought when you come right down to it. We all know how fragile and imperfect we are if we're honest with ourselves, and how we neglect to follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in us.

To be a gift to others means that we must be constantly growing in virtue because, as Father

Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene writes in #267 of *Divine Intimacy*,

Bearing one another's burdens also means enduring the faults of others calmly and kindly. [How often are our sins and faults the cause of our burdens? Don't we regularly shoot ourselves in the foot and thus need someone else's help? We want others to bear with us calmly, patiently, and kindly. We must be prepared to do the same to our neighbor.]

Charity always believes in the good will of others, even though it may be accompanied by faults; it always hopes in the good which it knows how to discover in every creature, although it may be eclipsed by many deficiencies. What is more important, charity supports everything, never finding any burden too heavy....Charity feels that it must stoop with love to take up the burdens of others, particularly those burdens which all avoid because they are troublesome.

We must not shy away from God's call to be His gift to someone else through false humility or aversion, or weariness of mind, body, and spirit, but rather embrace it as another opportunity for our sanctification and that of the ones in need. His grace always comes along with the task. The task is always a challenge to trust in Him and stay close to Him, a daily adventure never ending but always fruitful unless we say "no" and walk away.

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.)

This contribution is available at <http://www.sufferingwithjoy.com/2013/08/08/bear-one-anothers-burdens/>
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My Re-version Story: From the Beginning [at Footprints on My Heart]

I've been pondering for a while whether or not to share my story in this space. I've alluded to it many a time, most specifically

[in this post](#)

, but never ventured out into fuller detail. Within 24 hours of deciding to share a bit more of it,

[Amanda posted her conversion story link-up](#)

and that may or may not have finally persuaded me {let's be honest: it's much easier to share when others are sharing too}. Please note that this is probably

not the complete story

as some things are far too personal for even a personal blog. I am telling my story in 5 parts, so please come back to read the rest!



With a homeschool friend, age 10.

In previous tellings, I have likened my story to St. Augustine's. Though not nearly as dramatic as

his, it is arguably just as serious because of the way sin works. My story starts when I was a mere girl of 10 years. My grandfather had passed away the year before {shortly after 9/11} and a very dear friend of mine had recently moved out of the country with her military family. Nonetheless, I grew up surrounded by love and the warmth of a practicing, devout Roman Catholic Family.

Religious Education was strongly incorporated into our homeschool curricula, as well as more formally on Sundays with several other families who had children our ages. We attended Mass almost daily, sang in choirs {including the homeschool choir on First Fridays} and prayed the rosary once a month with the homeschool group and then on family outings {e.g. field trips to DC, our annual Christmas tree outing, or family vacations}. Catholicism was a big part of our lives.

I spent my days primarily in sweatpants or jeans and, despite my wardrobe choices, blissfully enjoyed this season of girlhood with dolls and barbies, dress up and makeup. I missed my Grandpop dearly {I had been so upset at his funeral that I did not go forward to receive Communion, even though I had received my first Communion 1 1/2 years prior} and, despite the added stress of Granny's advanced Alzheimer's now being my Mom's responsibility, second only to her six children, life really was blissfully sweet from my perspective. I became accustomed to visiting my Granny in the Assisted Living home, taught myself how to play guitar, and enjoyed miscellaneous other activities with my siblings. Our family was still quite young and activities were done largely together. Life was pretty good.

[Check back in a couple of days for part 2!](#)

This contribution is available at <http://totus2usmaria.blogspot.com/2013/08/my-re-version-story-from-beginning.html>
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Mary Crafts [at Equipping Catholic Families]



Mother Mary certainly sees our trials and challenges. She is the ultimate model of motherhood with her prayerful, gentle way to cope with life's adventures. Perhaps if we pray more incessantly for her guidance and her intercession, we can better follow her example bringing more peace and Faith into our homes.

Easier said than done! Back to the [Prompt Me to Pray prayer!](#)

As usual, when I'm hoping to cultivate a deeper devotion to our Faith in our kids, I look to **hands-on crafts and activities** to channel their creativity. I also like to have the finished Catholic creations visible around the house, reinforcing our priorities with our hand-made treasures.

As much as the kids...sometimes, I just have to **make** something with felt, or paint or concrete!**how about some Mary-inspired crafts!**



Years ago, we gave our [TY dolls makeovers to become Saints](#). The simple, modest clothing and special accessories could dignify almost any kind of doll into a holy hero.

We have even been known to make our own [Holy Hero Felt Friends](#). We have a similar tutorial from when we made [Our Family Leprechaun](#), just leave out all the green felt, if you're making



most other Saints or Bible figures!

We have actually made TWO [wooden painted saints](#) in honor of Mother Mary. One shows her holding little Jesus, while this one shows her as our Queen, appropriate for the Feast Day coming up on August 22!





Just recently, I posted a tutorial for a [Garden Stone Mosaic](#) we made over 12 years ago!

And finally, our most popular **Catholic Craft Kit: [Spiritual Bouquet of Prayer Petal Flowers](#)** gets kids praying the Rosary! With each decade of prayers, they construct a cute and colorful flower that can be given away as a Spiritual Bouquet! The craft kit also includes templates for a giant wall garland, so that you can decorate a whole room (even classroom!) with all 20 Mysteries of the Rosary as a vine of flowers!



The new [Revolving Rosary](#) will help your family devotion to the Rosary as well...one decade a day!



Catholic Bloggers Collective

We are a group of Catholic Bloggers sharing posts on the same theme, once a month.

Nancy from www.dosmallthingswithlove.com

Jennifer from <http://www.catholicinspired.com>

Monica from <http://www.equippingcatholicfamilies.com> and <http://www.iblogjesus.com>

Melody from <http://mamaslittleditty.blogspot.com/>

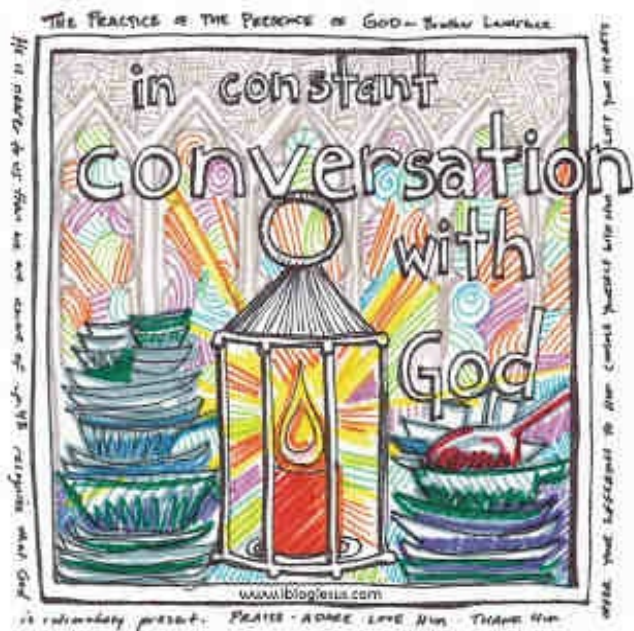
Susanna from <http://livingwithladyphilosophy.blogspot.com>

Ginny from <http://randomactsofmomness.com/>

This contribution is available at <http://www.equippingcatholicfamilies.com/2013/08/mary-crafts.html>
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The Prompt-Me-to-Pray Prayer [at i blog Jesus]

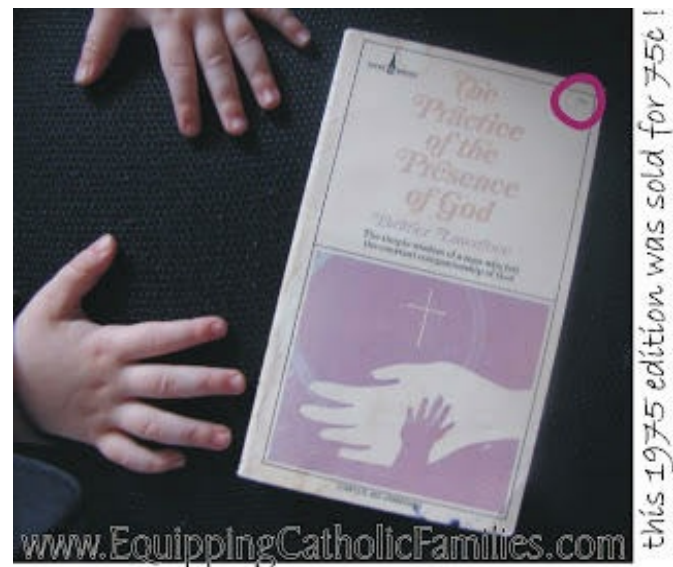


I have written about [Br Lawrence's Practice of the Presence of God](#) before. I think it's a simple yet profound way to deepen our relationship with Jesus, do small things with great love like St Therese and to grow in virtue while we live out our Faith more consciously. I know I'd like to carry out my vocation as Mom...graciously, with more patience and love, but I inevitably become unravelled, and caught up in my often self-inflicted pressures of family life.

The tasks set out for me in my vocation as a Mom, if carried out with love, are supposed to catapult me to holiness! This is the ***Mom's School of Holiness***. I'm not sure where I have read this, but my friend Fr. Roger tells me this all the time.

I get flustered by the needs and demands of my family and the general chaos can be overwhelming. I'd like to carry out all my tasks prayerfully...with grace and patience and gentleness, but I know...and I know my kids would agree....I just can't pull that off. Even if I could *get it all done*....grace and patience and gentleness slip away pretty fast!

Cooking, cleaning, training, managing, driving, shopping and never-ending laundry can be tedious, thankless and frustrating.



I've had a problem with [practicing the Presence of God](#), ever since I read my doggy-eared paperback discovered at a used book store...almost 20 years ago. And back then, I wasn't even a Mom yet!

I usually forget the most important part of **practicing the Presence of God: prayer.**

I do pray...but Brother Lawrence prayed *continuously* while he went about his simple duties. He was **in constant conversation with God!**

Everything is better when I remember: I just can't do everything all on my own!

I know I need to ask for help from my husband AND my kids *before* I enter the realm of I'll-just-resentfully-do-it-myself...but the MOST important help I need to request...is from **Jesus and His Mother Mary**. Mary knows how to get it all done...connected constantly to her Son.

The problem is that I get so overwhelmed... that I forget to ask. I forget to pray.

But here's my idea: what if I **pray each day asking for Jesus and Mother Mary to help me to remember to rely on Him and ask for His Help** when things start getting tense? I have on occasion asked Him for a reminder to get myself to weekday Mass or Confession....and I must say...He's very reliable! I will inevitably be prompted to prepare to go to Church, just in time, with minimal neglect of my Mom duties.

Isn't this a great idea? It's a big deal to truly unite our efforts with Jesus and call out to Him, relying on His Strength, not ours....but some of us need to take a step back and ask for help **before** it gets to the crunch. We need to ask for reminders and prompts **to remember to call on Him** and I think Jesus (and Mary!) will be more than happy to help us out.

I have found asking for His reminder to pray and call out to Him...has helped me increase my prayer and carry out my vocation with a little bit more patience and calm. I think that this is a big deal...especially having everyone home for summer!

I find that I am remembering to pray more often. A quick little prayer goes a long way to help focus and stay calm. I think **as long as I remember to keep asking** for His reminders....I could make practicing the Presence of God... **a habit!**

Imagine the possibilities...of being in constant conversation with God!

Jesus, I trust in You. You want me to draw closer to You, praying more, engaging more, asking for help instead of struggling on my own. Please remind me to call out to You and look to Mother Mary as my model. Please prompt me, remind me and guide me. Jesus, be my strength, I trust in You. All I need to do is to remember to ask.

This contribution is available at <http://www.iblogjesus.com/2013/07/the-prompt-me-prayer.html>
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St. Roch - A Special Saint for Dogs and Dog Lovers [at The Hill Country Hermit]

Just around the corner, on August 16, will be the feast day of a special saint, St. Roch (pronounced "roak" or "rock"). This gentle man lived in medieval France, abandoned a life of wealth, went on a pilgrimage to Rome (in Italy he is known as San Rocco [ROW-koe]), and along the way ministered to people who had come down with the plague (miracles of healings were often attributed to him). After tending to others, Roch contracted the plague himself. Prepared to die, he retreated to a secluded shelter. To his great surprise, one day a dog appeared with a loaf of bread. The dog began to visit Roch/Rocco each day, bringing him bread and comfort. Miraculously, Roch recovered.

If you have been thinking of getting a dog, August 16 might be a good day to visit a nearby animal shelter and rescue an abandoned one ... in honor of this saint and his kind dog. If it is not the right time for you to own a dog, but you have a fondness for dogs, consider volunteering for or at an animal shelter. Contact your local shelter to see what their needs are. Many would greatly appreciate someone just coming in to help walk or groom the dogs that they work so hard to find homes for.



There is only one church in Texas named after Saint Roch

(located in between San Antonio and Houston)

1600 Frelsburg Rd.

Alleyton, TX 78935

979-732-3460



A Stained Glass Window of St. Roch
from St. Roch Church in Alleyton, TX

This contribution is available at <http://www.theresadoyle-nelson.blogspot.com/2013/08/st-roch-special-saint-for-dogs-and-dog.html>
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Pope Francis Makes Me Ashamed [at Can We Cana? A Community to Support Catholic Marriages]



I didn't feel ashamed when he said that

[atheists can go to heaven](#)

. I didn't feel ashamed when he said

[gays are okay](#)

. But I felt ashamed when Pope Francis said

[this](#)

:

"We cannot become starched Christians, too polite, who speak of theology calmly over tea."

Because that's me. Substitute coffee for tea, and I would happily sit and sip a tasty beverage while chatting about theology all day long.

Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict didn't make me feel ashamed of myself. I could understand most of what they wrote, so I figured that made me pretty smart. I don't remember them ever saying that being smart and knowing theology just wasn't good enough. I don't remember them saying, as Pope Francis did, that we must go out and

[touch the poor](#)

, touch them with our own hands:

“Do you give alms?”

“They tell me, ‘Yes, Father.’”

“And when you give alms do you look in the eyes of the people you give them to?”

“Oh, I don’t know, I don’t notice.”

“Look, he has not met the people. He threw the alms and left. When he gives the alms, does his hand touch (the hand of the poor) or does he toss the coin?”

“No, you throw the coin. And you have not touched, and if you did not touch him, you did not meet him.”

Pope Francis makes me confront the ugly fear I have of the poor, the sad and dying, the criminal -- the "other." I never wanted to practice criminal law after graduating from law school, because I didn't want to be near criminals. If I defended them and they were dissatisfied with the defense, I reasoned, they would kill me. If I prosecuted them and sent them to jail, they would have someone else kill me.

Pope Francis' courage shows me how mistaken I am in my fear. Pope Francis might have looked afraid when greeting the thousands waiting in Vatican Square to shout his name as the new pope. But he has gone to

[the prisons and the slums and the streets](#)

without fear.

Pope Francis has destroyed my fantasy that Jesus' call to visit those in prison applies only to those wrongly imprisoned, like political prisoners or people jailed for their Christian beliefs. Pope Francis has wrecked my certainty that I have satisfied my obligation to feed the hungry and clothe the naked by feeding my own children and clothing their nakedness. He has undermined my self-satisfaction in the amount of money we tithe. There are more people to serve. There is more work to do.

Pope Francis makes me ashamed because he makes me realize that I am not half as good a Christian as I think I am. But that is not a reason for despair. It's a call to action.

This contribution is available at <http://canwecana.blogspot.com/2013/08/pope-francis-makes-me-ashamed.html>
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Who will liberate me from myself? [at Catholic Deacon]

Yesterday in recommending N.T. Wright's book

[*Simply Jesus*](#)

, I mentioned that Wright was correct to point out that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, for most people living in technologically advanced Western societies today "to imagine what it's like to live within a long story" in the way the Jews of Jesus' day did. Wright also noted that perhaps the only thing analogous in our day is the widespread and dubious belief in "progress." Artur, writing on

[*Cosmos the in Lost*](#)

over the weekend, in his

[response](#)

to Rachel Held Evans' piece

["Why millennials are leaving the church,"](#)

noted another factor, which is really just an effect of the cause, namely that "recent studies suggest millennials remember much less than senior citizens."

As I make very slow progress re-reading

[the first volume of Von Balthasar's theological aesthetics](#)

(a mix between savoring and being plain lazy), in a section on "The Spirit and the Senses," which comprises part of the larger section on the subjective experience of faith, he draws attention to Romano's Guardini's

The Senses and Religious Knowledge

, published in 1950. The point of Guardini's that Balthasar seeks to get across is the former's insistence "that the capacity of spiritual knowledge has 'largely been lost' to man in the course of cultural history." This has happened, according Balthasar's reading of Guardini, because we no longer truly see. He offers as evidence for this the poetry of Rilke, described by Guardini as an "activity without image."

Guardini's point, at least as grasped by Balthasar, is that human life is no longer shaped "in accordance with nature's great images" which are rendered "alien and insubstantial" to us

"because of technology." Quoting Guardini, Balthasar notes- "We no longer exist in images. Concepts have taken the place of images that can be contemplated." Lest someone is tempted to argue that the "virtual world," which happens in "cyber space," is image-driven, consider this, which is also part of Guardini's more than sixty year-old insight: "Machines have taken the place of embodied images, and segments of time the place of living rhythms" (

Seeing the Form

389-390), which does more than an adequate job of explaining the displacement of the natural world from the center of human consciousness aided and abetted by virtual reality.

As for progress, Von Balthasar observes, "There is talk of progress" and, turning again to Guardini, notes, "but whoever looks beneath the surface knows what nonsense that is. Truly, if he follows this road man can only become sick because his interior being can...[ellipsis in original] live only on images," real images of what is substantial, what exists in the actual world, what is created by God. Guardini also noted, "This dislocation into abstract conceptuality and sensualistic corporeality must be overcome so that the living human reality can again emerge" (390). Here, I believe, Guardini is pointing us to our need to recover the

analogia entis

(i.e., "the analogy of being"), which constitutes the heart of traditional Catholic epistemology, arising as it does from our worship, which itself has been grossly denuded, thus contributing to our spiritual stupidity (the good news about stupidity, as one of my better professors once informed a class of his I was in, is that it is remediable) and blindness.



Anna Karina as Marianne in Godard's *Pierrot le fou*

Thirty-three years after the publication of

The Senses and Religious Knowledge

, Walker Percy's book

[*Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book*](#)

was published. It can accurately be noted that Percy re-verified Guardini's insight. Writing about that strange modern discovery: the atomic "self," specifically about its tendency to become bored (a concept on which Heidegger notably expounded), Percy, commenting on his observation as to "Why the Self is the only Object in the Cosmos which Gets Bored," asks,

Is it because there is a special sense in which for the past two or three hundred years the self has perceived itself as a leftover which cannot be accounted for by its own objective view of the world and that in spite of an ever heightened self-consciousness, increased leisure, ever more access to cultural and recreational facilities, ever more instruction on self-help, self-growth, self-enrichment, the self feels ever more imprisoned in itself - no, worse than imprisoned because a prisoner at least knows he is imprisoned and sets store by the freedom awaiting him and the world to be open, when in fact the self is not and it is not - a state of affairs which has to be called something besides imprisonment - e.g., boredom. Boredom is the self being stuffed with itself

I read Percy's chapter on boredom Sunday night and this morning read this passage from the book of the prophet Isaiah in Wright's book, which, in turn, takes it from

[the fourth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel](#)

, which is Jesus revealing His Messiahship:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me

Because he has appointed me

To tell the poor the good news

He has sent me to announce release to the prisoners

And sight to the blind

To set the wounded victims free

To announce the year of God's special favor... Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your own hearing."

In pointing you to what you can read about Jesus that is useful because it is credible, I would be remiss if I didn't also recommend Benedict XVI's Jesus trilogy, to which Wright's book can serve as prolegomena:

[Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives](#)

;

[Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration](#)

;

[Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance Into Jerusalem To The Resurrection](#)

. Since we are in Year C of the three-year Sunday lectionary cycle, which focuses on the Gospel According to St. Luke, I also recommend reading

[this Gospel](#)

. If you're looking for a good companion volume to St. Luke's Gospel, I recommend the late Fr. Gene LaVerdiere's

[Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of Eucharist according to Luke.](#)

Read Walker Percy, whose work, apart from

[The Moviegoer](#)

, which I read years ago, I have only discovered this year, at any time. He is good for what ails the so-called post-modern, that is, the bored, alienated, spiritually stupid self. Our point of reflection is,

How much does being spiritually stupid contribute to boredom and alienation?

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2013/08/who-will-liberate-me-from-myself.html>
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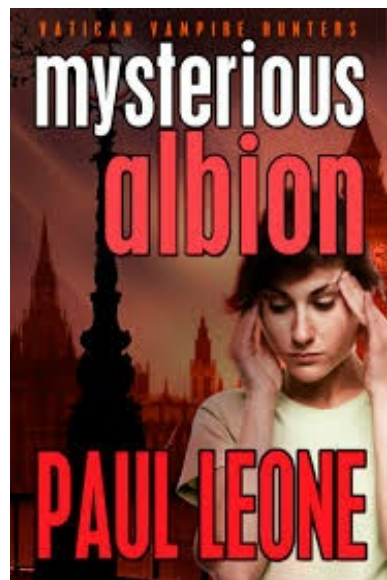
What We're Reading Wednesday - Vol 3 [at Revolution of Love Blog]

I'm linking up with Jessica over at Housewifespice.com for [What We're Reading Wednesday](#).

Before I read the featured book of this post, I saw the trailer for the upcoming movie **City of Bones (The Mortal Instruments)**. I was intrigued with the idea of supernatural demon hunters and a seemingly ordinary girl who could see the invisible hunters and the demonic activity that other normal humans could not. I decided to read the book and see if it was any good.

I will admit that I enjoyed the adventure and suspense of hunting down demons but there were too many negative points to make it worth it. I debated between giving it one or two stars on [GoodReads](#) because there were moments I was swiping the screen in a hurry to see what would happen next and other times I was rolling my eyes at the writing.

From a Catholic point of view, there were definite problems, most notably, that the characters are fighting a war of good vs evil with demons, yet God is viewed as non-existent at worst or disinterested at best. I also hated the plot twist at the end, so all in all, it was a let down.



The following week I read a positive review from [The Curt Jester/Jeff Miller](#) about [Mysterious Albion \(Vatican Vampire Hunters\) \(Volume 1\)](#) by Paul Leone. Vatican Vampire Hunters?? Wow, sign me up! (To read, not to hunt.)

Here is the Amazon description:

Lucy Manning just wanted an ordinary life. But surviving a vicious vampire attack has put the

young American in the middle of a holy war between a secret society of vampire hunters loyal to the Catholic Church—and an ancient and powerful vampire queen who has awakened from a long slumber with dreams of blood and conquest in her demonic mind.

Lucy may not want to do battle with a ruthless, eternal evil, but evil has other ideas....

While other vampire books may make vampires seem attractive, there is no mistake that in this book vampires are evil and closer to being demonic. Lucy's world is turned upside down when her friend is attacked by a vampire and Lucy barely escapes. Lucy is eventually recruited into a secret society of vampire hunters operating unofficially for the Catholic Church. She goes from an inexperienced novice to a skillful hunter fighting a devastating war.

I enjoyed the description of British locations and culture and I loved the suspense and the battle scenes and the integration of the Catholic faith. However, it was not the slightest bit "preachy." On the contrary, it seems completely natural, even for non-religious people, that when you are dealing with evil/demonic creatures, the Catholic Church provides the big guns.

The only negatives were a few plot aspects that seemed confusing (ie. Why was a vampire killed with holy water at the beginning of the story but holy water wasn't used on any of the others?) and there is a bit of language. Lucy can be praying to God in one scene and then dropping some f-bombs in a battle scene. So be forewarned if you're sensitive to that.

I still gave the book 5 stars because I couldn't put it down while I was reading it and now that I'm done I can't wait for book 2.



Bobbi 😊

This contribution is available at <http://www.revolutionoflove.com/blog/what-were-reading-wednesday-vol-3/>
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Hagiography and the Cause for My Canonization [at Forget The Roads]



A few years back, a classmate of my daughter's was killed in a car accident. That was when my daughter learned the meaning of the word "hagiography." According to the dictionary, hagiography is "idealizing or idolizing biography." According to my daughter, the idealizing and idolizing that went on when the boy died was nearly unbearable, as everyone at their school suddenly claimed him as their dearest friend and spiritual next-of-kin. My daughter remembered the boy (who had marched with her in the drum corps of the school's band and whom she counted among her friends) as foul-mouthed and impious, as well as energetic, funny and good-natured. Yet after his reputation had been hagiographically bleached, it shone like the sun. The boy had purportedly never done anything objectionable. My daughter said it was nauseating.

A lot of people find hagiography nauseating, particularly when employed in a discussion of Catholic saints. Reading Alban Butler's *The Lives of the Saints* will cause them to gag as they wallow through all the extravagant praise and wanton hyperbole:

In the person of St. Lewis IX. were eminently united the qualities which form a great king, and a perfect hero, no less than those which make up the character of a wonderful saint. Endowed with all qualifications for government, he excelled equally in the arts of peace and in those of war; and

his courage, intrepidity, and greatness of mind received from his virtue the highest lustre; for ambition, or a view to his own glory, had no share in his great enterprises, his only motive in them being religion, zeal for the glory of God, or the good of his subjects. Though the two crusades in which he was engaged, were attended with ill success, he is certainly to be ranked among the most valiant princes, and understood war the best of any general of the age in which he lived; in the most dangerous battles which he fought he beat the enemy, how much soever superior to him in numbers and strength: and his afflictions set his piety and virtue in the brightest light.

Where are the warts?? people want to know. The truth lies in the warts!!

Because that's what life is really all about – the warts. After all, look at the New Testament! It is brutally honest about the failings of the followers of Christ: Thomas' unbelief, Peter's cowardice, the apostles' overall spiritual dimwittedness. My gosh, thinking about my own life – warts galore. It seems that everything about me, as well as about everyone of my acquaintance, is either objectionable or tragicomic. We bumble and stumble our way through just about everything. Consider my ten years of Catholic experience. It has not been marked by “courage, intrepidity and greatness of mind” – not even remotely. Looking back, I note no marks of distinction whatsoever.

As a Protestant-turned-Catholic, I had a lot to learn when I first started attending Mass 10 years ago – all that standing up, and sitting down, and kneeling, and genuflecting, and blessing oneself with the sign of the Cross, all those responses, new hymns, new accoutrements, new faces. That last part, the new faces, was hard for me as a socially challenged individual – all those strangers to get to know, some stranger than others. One thing I quickly learned as a Catholic neophyte was that most of the men in the parish would either be named Jim or Joe. To be sure, there's the occasional Ken or Brian, but chances are those guys are converts like me. No, real Catholic men are named Jim or Joe; the trick is figuring out which is which. Like the last time I went to confession – two men were standing in the foyer talking. One of them kindly introduced himself; he was Jim. The other man I recognized as someone I knew by sight from Adoration and holy days of obligation, the kind of guy you can always count on to be there. He introduced himself as Joe. Now, how was I going to keep that straight? (And sure enough, the next time I saw Jim, I called him Joe....) Anyway, after some chit-chat which left Jim singing “Just Walk Away, Renée,” I proceeded to the Adoration chapel which connects to the confessional. As usual, there had been no stampede to the sacrament, so I went on in, made my confession, and received the grace to go out and get it right this time. Back in the chapel, I knelt before the Tabernacle to pray. It suddenly dawned on me that this was my chance to do something I have long desired to do – prostrate myself before Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Joe (the one I had just been introduced to in the foyer) had done that last Holy Thursday, and I had longed to imitate him, but I was wearing a skirt at the time and after pondering the logistics of lying down on the floor in a ladylike and unrevealing manner without calling undue attention to myself... well, I had just continued to kneel. But now, in the empty Adoration chapel, here was my chance. Not only was I wearing pants, not only was the chapel empty so that I would distract no one, but our church is blessed with 120-year-old wood floors that creak like nobody's business. When you're in the chapel you can hear folks coming from a mile away, so I'd have a good chance to get up off the floor before anyone saw me (I have

a horror of calling attention to myself in the presence of the Eucharist – if the Host is indeed the Creator of the Universe, God forbid that someone should enter into His presence and then be distracted by me or anyone else). It was now or never, so I proceeded to lie face down in the middle of the aisle and thank God for His mercy and His grace poured out in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

And in less than 10 seconds, two of the light-footedest men God ever created entered the chapel.

So there I am, lying face down in the middle of the aisle in the Adoration chapel, my nose mashed into the carpet, thinking to myself that it's truly a mercy that in this day and age this is probably one of the few places left in America where two men can find a middle-aged woman lying face down on the floor, and not dial 911.

They seated themselves. I righted myself, genuflected, and left the chapel as discreetly as I knew how. I recognized neither man, although I can say with certainty that there is a good chance that one or both of them was named Jim or Joe.

So, how's that little incident going to look when they open the cause for my canonization? Seriously, there will have to be a MAJOR rewrite of the facts, something along the lines of "And as St. Renée lay prostrate before her Lord in the Tabernacle, two strangers entered the chapel. Stricken by the obvious intensity of her devotion, they were at once convicted of their sins, and henceforth were moved to lead lives of notable piety."

Something like that. After all, that's how hagiography works, isn't it? Religious cryotherapy is applied to the warts in the saint's life, smoothing out the rough edges and making saints appear a breed apart from everyday folk like you and me. Let's face it, goobs and doofuses don't get canonized. Hagiographers get paid not to talk about the crankiness, the fender-bender (*seriously, officer, I did not see that tree!*), the break-up with the fiancé, the hammer and the bad language, the mind-wandering during Mass, the social contretemps, the bouts of depression, or any neglect of the niceties. Hagiographers blather instead about the saintly characteristics which the person under discussion purportedly possessed: the zeal, the piety, the courage, the intrepidity, and the greatness of mind.

Yadda, yadda, yadda...
The truth is in the warts!!

Well, no, actually the truth is in the truth, warts and all. To make saints sound as if they never got distracted during prayer (ask St. Teresa of Avila) or spoke sharply to someone (St. Jerome wanders into my mind) is to do them a disservice. Yet, far from being a crock, hagiography is actually *good* in that it offers us **another perspective** on the lives of the saints, a necessary perspective on the truth.

Take the example of soon-to-be St. John Paul the Great. It was revealed after his death that the pope would spend all night lying on the bare floor with his arms outstretched, fasting and praying

before the ordination of bishops. Sounds saintly, right? Think about how this played out in real life. John Paul would first lie down in bed, shifting from one side to the other, to make it look like he had slept there – wouldn't want people to talk.... The bed was comfortable, and the thought crossed his mind that he was getting kind of old for the self-mortification stuff. He pulled himself out of bed and onto the cold floor, which got colder after a half an hour had passed. He prayed, and prayed, and realized that he had dozed off. He prayed some more. The floor was awfully drafty, and he began to think idly about perhaps doing some remodeling to cut down on heating costs. Realizing that his mind had wandered, he also realized that he had to go to the bathroom. He wasn't getting any younger, and neither was his prostate. My goodness, his legs were stiff as he arose from the floor. When he returned from the bathroom, his soft bed called to him. He knelt beside the bed. Why was he doing this? Was it really going to make a difference? All-night vigil or no all-night vigil, those bishops would be ordained tomorrow. If he showed up bleary-eyed and haggard, there would be no end of talk in the media about how ill he looked and whether or not he should consider resigning....

He lay back down on the floor, stretching his arms out to form a living cross. Hour One was behind him; only seven more hours left to pray for those men he was ordaining.

So what's the truth? Is it the old guy lying uncomfortably on the floor all night, getting up for periodic bathroom breaks? Is it the saint imitating His Lord's all-night prayer vigil before He announces His choice of apostles the next morning (Lk 6:12-14)?

Yes.

And that's why hagiography isn't to be discounted out of hand. *A supernatural reality underlies all that a Christian does when he is not conformed to this world, but is being transformed by the renewing of his mind.* Remember the words of the angel to Daniel the prophet, who had prayed and fasted for 3 weeks:

He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future."

Had the angel not disclosed the behind-the-scenes supernatural struggle, Daniel would have gone on fasting and praying, thinking, "Gee, this sure is getting old. I wonder if any of this really makes a difference. Who do I think I am, anyway, that God should take special notice of me and my prayers?" This dual reality, the natural and the supernatural, is the warp and woof of a Christian's life – both the "who do I think I am?" and the "Oh. That's who I am." *Both are real, and both are*

worthy of contemplation. You prayed for me, and through your prayers you obtained graces for me that I would not have obtained otherwise. Yes, you forgot my name and had to pray for “that woman with the blog about off-roading,” but God knew who you meant! Two realities – you are a fallible, foible-ridden human, and you are a co-heir with Christ = one truth.

So, yeah, the warts are true and deserve a mention. The writers of the New Testament realized that and pulled no punches – doubting Thomas, cowardly Peter, disappointing disciples. But remember, when speaking of the irritating, inept but determined children of God clinging to His promises like drowning rats, the New Testament also confesses: *The world is not worthy of them.*

And that’s true, too.

Which bodes well for the cause for the canonization of this messy bumpkin. I hope the iconographers remember to depict St. Renée in profile, with her nose still a little mashed from the carpet. Warts and all.

On the memorial of St. Narcisa de Jesús Martillo Morán

Deo omnis gloria!

This contribution is available at <http://forgettheroads.com/2013/08/30/hagiography-and-the-cause-for-my-canonization/%20>
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5 Books Every Catholic Student in College Needs on Their Bookshelf

As students enter their freshman year or return to their respective universities, I think there are **5 books that every Catholic student in college needs on their bookshelf**. You might be asking yourself, are there really only 5 books, Tom? With all the great books in the world, you're only picking five of them? For this post, let's say that these are the *first* five books a Catholic student in college should own.

These books can help a student when they face persecution from non-Catholics on what Catholics believe. As I told my high school students at Savio two years ago, once you make the Sign of the Cross in the university dining hall or food court, someone is going to ask you – why did you do that and what does it mean? Trust me, this will happen before you know it!

Defending the Catholic faith is called Apologetics. It's not about apologizing for being Catholic, although some may want that from you. The word apologetics comes from the Greek term, *apologia*, which means to defend. Mary, a former student of mine from the Savio Class of 2012 and now in her second year of college explains what she encountered during her first year of university life,

“It was usually always to other Christians, not atheists or people of other religions. I was in a Christian sorority and the non-denominational, Baptist, or Protestant girls just couldn't wrap their minds around the Catholic faith and my beliefs... The Christians girls I knew so desperately wanted me to be “saved” and asked me if I would ever be baptized if I felt that was what God was calling me to do. I had to explain I had already been baptized and “saved”... One belief the girls *never understood* was my devotion to Mary. They kept on saying, “Jesus is enough, we don't need Mary... those were the most frustrating conversations, when I had to tell people over and over again.”



With that being said, let's now turn to the **5 books** every Catholic student in college should have

on their bookshelf -

1. [***The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.***](#) Most non-Catholics believe that Catholics don't read the Holy Bible. It is a terrible assumption and one that needs to be corrected immediately. The Catholic Church compiled the books of the Bible in the 4th century. It's because of the Church that we have the Canon. As Catholics, we have 73 books in the Bible. We did not add books to the Bible; the Protestant Reformers subtracted them. The Sacred Scriptures (along with Sacred Tradition) are held in high-esteem for Catholics. Throughout Holy Mass/Divine Liturgy, there are hundreds of Scripture passages. Read the Bible, know the Bible, and live the Bible...always through the eyes of the Catholic Church.

2. [***The Catechism of the Catholic Church.***](#) The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) is one of the greatest works of Catholic theology in recent memory. It is divided into four parts: The Profession of Faith, The Celebration of the Christian Mystery, Life in Christ, and Christian Prayer. The CCC is the tool for the New Evangelization! Developed by Blessed John Paul II and a Commission of Cardinals and Bishops in 1986, it was promulgated on October 11, 1992. The CCC is the *menu guide* to the Catholic faith. Every Catholic should own a copy and read it!

3. [***Butler's Lives of the Saints/Introduction to Mary.***](#) Although these are essentially two books, I am counting them as one at this time since Mary and the Saints are so closely united. **First**, during their own life times, the Saints read the Lives of the Saints for the same reason we need to read them. They found their lives to be important as well as examples of how to live a holy life while on this earth. The Saints are our brothers and sisters in Christ who are now in the presence of God eternally.

Second, the book, *Introduction to Mary*, is a fantastic read. One of the major arguments that most non-Catholics can't understand is the Catholic Church's love for the Blessed Virgin Mary. Chapter 10 will help you immensely! As you read from Mary's testimony above, she encountered this argument the most out of everything. It was written to be a high school textbook, so it's relatively easy to comprehend.

4. [***Praying in the Presence of Our Lord.***](#) Most of the books I have presented so far will provide valuable information, however this book, written by one of today's living saints, Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., will give you words and encouragement to make the time to attend Eucharistic Adoration at your local Newman Center/Catholic Center. It's small enough to fit into your back pocket or a small purse. Fr. Groeschel gives you great prayers for Eucharistic Adoration as well as some writings from the saints on the Holy Eucharist. Prayer is our conversation with God – you must talk to him everyday!

5. [***Man's Search For Meaning.***](#) The only book in the list that is not specifically Catholic. Written by Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search For Meaning* is a life-changing book. It will help you grow as a human being and to always remember there is *hope* even in the most desperate of situations. You can't read this book soon enough! Reading this during the your college years will assist as you leave college and enter the working world.

As college students, I would encourage you to get involved in the Newman Center/Catholic Center at your university. It will help you to grow in your faith. It should also provide the avenue to establish good, healthy, and holy friendships for your college years. See the website, the [Newman Connection](#) for a list of centers at universities in the country.

Please feel free to suggest other books as well in the ComBox.

This blog post is dedicated to the St. Dominic Savio Catholic High School Classes of 2012, 2013, and 2014. I always enjoyed teaching “y’all.” Your faith life and understanding of Church teaching always gave me great hope.

This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2013/08/21/5-books-every-catholic-student-in-college-needs-on-their-bookshelf/>

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10 Quotes about the Rosary [at IgnitumToday]



I really love everything about the Rosary. It is quite refreshing to read what other giants of the Holy Catholic Faith have to say about this priceless devotion.

Quote #1

“The Rosary is the most beautiful and the most rich in graces of all prayers; it is the prayer that touches most the Heart of the Mother of God...and if you wish peace to reign in your homes, recite the family Rosary.” Pope Saint Pius X

Quote #2

“Go to the Madonna. Love her! Always say the Rosary. Say it well. Say it as often as you can! Be souls of prayer. Never tire of praying, it is what is essential. Prayer shakes the Heart of God, it obtains necessary graces!” St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina

Quote #3

“You always leave the Rosary for later, and you end up not saying it at all because you are sleepy. If there is no other time, say it in the street without letting anybody notice it. It will, moreover, help you to have presence of God.” St. Josemaria Escriva

Quote #4

“Among all the devotions approved by the Church none has been so favored by so many miracles as the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary” Pope Blessed Pius IX

Quote #5

“The Rosary is a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight and to keep oneself from sin...If you desire peace in your hearts, in your homes, and in your country, assemble each evening to recite the Rosary. Let not even one day pass without saying it, no matter how burdened you may be with many cares and labors.” Pope Pius XI

Quote #6

“One day, through the Rosary and the Scapular, Our Lady will save the world.” St. Dominic

Quote #7

“The greatest method of praying is to pray the Rosary.” St. Francis de Sales

Quote #8

“The rosary is the book of the blind, where souls see and there enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known; it is the book of the simple, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the book of the aged, whose eyes close upon the shadow of this world, and open on the substance of the next. The power of the rosary is beyond description.” Archbishop Fulton Sheen

Quote #9

“The Rosary is the most excellent form of prayer and the most efficacious means of attaining eternal life. It is the remedy for all our evils, the root of all our blessings. There is no more excellent way of praying.” Pope Leo XIII

Quote #10

“No one can live continually in sin and continue to say the Rosary: either they will give up sin or they will give up the Rosary” Bishop Hugh Doyle

You can learn more about the Rosary by reading my booklet [Let's talk about the Rosary](#).

This contribution is available at <http://www.ignitumtoday.com/2013/08/29/10-quotes-about-the-rosary/>
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What Catholics Believe - Sunday observance [at Catholicism and Adventism]



The Resurrection of Christ

This post forms part of the [What Catholics Believe series](#).

Catholics (and most other Christians) believe Sunday is a special day to be celebrated, because it is the day Jesus rose from the dead.

The Jews kept the Sabbath on Saturday, and this is reflected in the 10 Commandments. However, only [the moral code](#) of the Old Testament is applicable to Christians – we don't need to sacrifice animals, keep Passover, Yom Kippur, or the Sabbath, and we are free from the dietary restrictions as well.

St Paul explicitly stated that the Sabbath is not necessary for Christians – [Col 2:14-17](#), [Gal 4:10-11](#). He said that whichever day we keep, we honour God by doing so – [Romans 14:5-6](#). The same passage in Romans permits us to eat whatever we wish – obviously within reason.

The 10 Commandments were the words of the Old Covenant (Deut 4:13, Exod 34:28) and the Sabbath was its sign (Exod 31:13-18, Lev 24:8), and the Old Covenant pointed to a better New Covenant. The mediators of the Old Covenant were Moses and the Levitical priesthood.

The New Covenant law is greater (cf. the Sermon on the Mount) than the Old Covenant law. It has Jesus himself as its (our) mediator. The New Covenant is Christ's blood shed for us at Calvary – Luke 22:20 [KJV] “Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” Every Sunday, celebrating the Resurrection of Christ, we take part

in the New Covenant.

Just as the Sabbath looked back to the old creation that turned to sin, and also to the exodus from Egypt as a symbol of our freedom from slavery to sin, so Sunday looks to the new creation that we become in Christ, who freed us from slavery to sin in a far more fundamental way than the exodus. As we say at Mass, “Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life: Lord Jesus, come in glory!”

But Jesus kept the Sabbath! Why don't we follow his example?

Well, not everything Jesus did is applicable under the New Covenant. Remember, Jesus lived under the Old Covenant, and obeyed the Old Covenant law perfectly. If we had to do everything Jesus did, we would have the following list to comply with:

Keep the Passover (lamb and all) – Luke 2:41-42, Luke 22:8, Matt 26:17-19

Keep the Feast of Tabernacles – John 7

Keep Hannukah – John 10:22

Be circumcised – Luke 2:21

Sacrifice birds – Matt 8:4 – here Jesus commanded a man to go and offer the sacrifice that Moses commanded – see Leviticus 14, where God tells Moses how to offer such a sacrifice.

Clearly Jesus lived under the Old Covenant, and not everything he did is applicable to us.

So when did Sunday observance begin?

The first evidence of Sunday observance by Christians can be found in the Bible – [Acts 20:7](#) as a single event, and [1 Cor 16:2](#) as a repeating event.

Several important texts highlight the relevance of Sunday for Christians, which, although not an explicit command, nevertheless points to Sunday's importance given the lack need to keep Saturday holy. Bob Stanley has them listed on his page “[Sabbath or Sunday?](#)“, and I've quoted his list here -

1. Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, Lk 24:1-12
2. Christ appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and celebrated the Eucharist on Sunday, Lk 24:13
3. Jesus appeared to the disciples behind closed doors, Jn 20:19
4. Jesus appeared to the disciples with Thomas one week later, Jn 20:26 NAB
5. Jesus opened the minds of the Apostles to the Scriptures, Lk 24:45
6. The Apostles received their 'Great Commission' to go and teach all nations, Mt 28:1-20.
7. The Apostles were given the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins, Jn 20:19-23.
8. Jesus told the Apostles to wait in the city until they were to be clothed with power from on high, Lk 24:49.
9. On the seventh Sunday after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles,

Acts 2:1-4.

10. Immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter gave a powerful address on the Gospel resulting in 3000 conversions, Acts 2:41.
11. The Apostles met for the Holy Eucharist on the 'first' day, Acts 20:7.
12. The Apostles set the 'first' day of the week for the Churches to take up the collections, 1Cor 16:1-2.

The early Christians recorded in their writings that they kept Sunday, and not the Sabbath in the way of the Jews. Three of the earliest records of Sunday observance after the New Testament are:

Ignatius of Antioch, 107 AD: *let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days of the week.*

- Epistle to the Magnesians, chp 9. Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 62-63.

The Epistle of Barnabas, 70-120 AD: *Wherefore we Christians keep the eighth day for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven.*

- The Epistle of Barnabas, section 15, 100 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 147

Justin Martyr, 150 AD: *But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day of the week and Jesus our saviour on the same day rose from the dead.*

- First apology of Justin, Ch 68

[See more quotes from the early Christians here.](#)

The history of Sunday observance among Christians is clear – Sabbath keeping stopped, and Sunday observance began with the earliest of Christians. Exactly how it was observed by Christians has changed with time. Early on there was less focus on resting from work. The focus was on gathering together for the Eucharist. However, the Eucharist was celebrated daily – and still is in Catholic churches around the world. There probably isn't a moment of the day when, somewhere, the Mass is not being said. That means that there is also Mass on Saturday. In the early Church, many Christians had a special fast on Saturdays, because it was the day on which Jesus was in the tomb. [Socrates' Ecclesiastical History records some of the variations on how the Sabbath fast was practised](#), or not practised. This passage is often misquoted by Adventists and other Sabbath keepers as if it supported Christian Sabbath observance in the Jewish way. But Socrates is clear that the Christians believed that we were not bound to the Sabbath, and such variation therefore was permitted and tolerated. Later, however, in keeping with Matt 16:19 and 18:18, for our benefit the Church laid down specific guidelines on how to observe Sunday. Even so, today there are still a wide variety of practices between all the different rites of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and some still have the Sabbath fast. However, none of them teach that we are bound to the Old Covenant Sabbath as taught by Adventists.

Official Catholic teaching is often misrepresented by Adventists, who need to have the papacy and/or the Catholic Church held responsible for changing the law of God. This is one of the most

foundational teachings of their denomination, and if it were to collapse they would lose a significant piece of what makes them unique. It would mean their prophetess, Ellen White, had failed. Adventist identity depends, to a large extent, on their demonising the Catholic Church. This makes it hard to reach them when they come preaching their doctrines.

There are many examples on the internet of this sort of misrepresentation. I've dealt with such cases [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#). In short, they take statements by Catholics and remove all context, and use them to pretend that the Catholic Church acknowledges that they changed the Sabbath to Sunday apart from any decisions by the Apostles. They rarely actually acknowledge official Catholic teaching.

For example, they will quote the [Catechism of the Council of Trent](#), which states:

But the Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday.



The Synaxis of the holy and the most praiseworthy Twelve Apostles

What does that mean to Catholics? I've gone into some [more detail here](#), but in short, it goes like this:

Catholics believe that the Catholic Church is the original Church established by Jesus and led by the Apostles. Therefore, to Catholics, the Apostles themselves were Catholic. To Catholics, if the Apostles did something, then we can say that the Catholic Church did that thing. Most Protestants would disagree, but please try to understand how we talk. All I ask is that when you read Catholic texts written by Catholics, you try to understand what we are saying, instead of applying your own definitions for these words to something we have written.

So, when the Catechism of the Council of Trent states “*But the Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday*”, it could mean 1) the

Catholic Church after the Apostles began Sunday observance, or 2) it could mean that the Catholic Church in the persons of the Apostles began Sunday observance.

Which one is it? Adventists will only quote the one sentence. However, several paragraphs previously, what the Catechism means is clearly explained:

The Jewish Sabbath Changed To Sunday By The Apostles

The Apostles therefore resolved to consecrate the first day of the week to the divine worship, and called it the Lord's day. St. John in the Apocalypse makes mention of the Lord's day; and the Apostle commands collections to be made on the first day of the week, that is, according to the interpretation of St. Chrysostom, on the Lord's day. From all this we learn that even then the Lord's day was kept holy in the Church.

So, an official statement from the Catholic Church – we believe the Apostles made the change. Any paragraph later on in the text needs to take that into account. Unfortunately Adventists are often not willing to acknowledge that – you can see [the vacillations of one commentator on my blog here](#).

Another official Catholic source is [Pope John Paul II](#):

[Dies Domini, 21](#): It was for this reason that, from Apostolic times, “the first day after the Sabbath”, the first day of the week, began to shape the rhythm of life for Christ's disciples (cf. 1 Cor 16:2). “The first day after the Sabbath” was also the day upon which the faithful of Troas were gathered “for the breaking of bread”, when Paul bade them farewell and miraculously restored the young Eutychus to life (cf. Acts 20:7-12). The Book of Revelation gives evidence of the practice of calling the first day of the week “the Lord's Day” (1:10). This would now be a characteristic distinguishing Christians from the world around them. As early as the beginning of the second century, it was noted by Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, in his report on the Christian practice “of gathering together on a set day before sunrise and singing among themselves a hymn to Christ as to a god”.(19) And when Christians spoke of the “Lord's Day”, they did so giving to this term the full sense of the Easter proclamation: “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:11; cf. Acts 2:36; 1 Cor 12:3). Thus Christ was given the same title which the Septuagint used to translate what in the revelation of the Old Testament was the unutterable name of God: YHWH.



Pope St Sylvester I

Lastly, Adventists turn to Pope Sylvester I, and claim that he fulfills Ellen White’s claim that a pope changed the Sabbath to Sunday. I’ve dealt with that claim in more detail [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#), but in short what happened is this:

The local [Council of Laodicea](#) decreed the following:

Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord’s Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ. (Canon 29)

It is uncertain whether Pope Sylvester was even involved. It is uncertain whether or not the council was held during his lifetime, and even if it was, it is uncertain whether or not he was involved with the council.

What the council did was simply to recommend resting, if possible, on Sunday, and condemned the Judaisers who wanted to rest on Saturday. It is far from clear whether or not these particular people felt bound to the Sabbath as a biblical command; they were likely amongst those discussed by Socrates, which I mentioned above. It was simply a case of putting a local dispute to rest. Sunday observance was well established at the time, as the Christian writers of the era attest – going back to the beginning, Christian writers had referred to Sunday as the Lord’s Day.

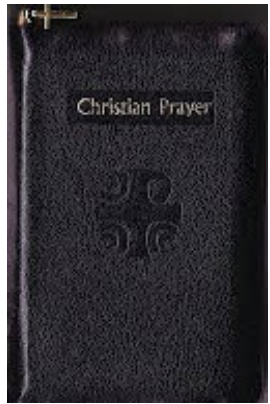
So, to sum up, we have seen what the official teaching of the Catholic Church is regarding the origins of Sunday observance. We have seen some of the biblical evidence for Sunday observance and against the idea that the Sabbath is a biblical requirement for Christians, and we have seen that the early Christians confirmed in their own words that they kept Sunday.

Further material on this topic:

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Hymns from the Liturgy of the Hours (ICEL-1975) [at ~ Breviary Hymns ~]



Thematic Index

of the hymns found in the Liturgy of the Hours (1975) approved by the Episcopal Conferences of the Antilles, Bangladesh, Burma, Canada, of the Pacific CEPAC (Fiji Islands, Rarotanga, Samoa and Takelau, Tonga), Ghana, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua, New Guinea and The Solomons, The Phillipines, Rhodesia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, and the United States of America for use in their Dioceses and Confirmed by the Apostolic See. The following is based upon the 'Liturgical Guide for Hymns' starting on page 1502 of the single volume 'Christian Prayer: Liturgy of the Hours', 1976, Catholic Book Publishing Company. Related:

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and

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Am I Dumb Because I Have Eight Kids? [at 8 Kids And A Business]

Also posted at Catholic Insight Magazine



Photo courtesy of wikimedia commons

The Guardian U.K. recently published an article entitled [Should we care that smart women aren't having kids?](#) The piece was based on the work of Satoshi Kanazawa, a London School of Economics psychologist who conducted research on the link between intelligence and maternal urges and wrote the book *The Intelligence Paradox* based on his findings. He concluded that the higher the woman's IQ, the less likely she is to have babies. According to his research, maternal urges decrease 25% for every extra 15 IQ points above average intelligence. The decrease is due to a conscious choice made by the women to not have babies. He is critical of voluntary childlessness as indicated in the chapter called "Why intelligent people are the ultimate losers in life". Predictably, the journalist who wrote the article, Ms. Sadhbh Walshe, isn't enamored with either Satoshi Kanazawa or his book, choosing to defend voluntary childlessness.

Women who choose that way of life would be lauded by the likes of Simone de Beauvoir and Elisabeth Badinter, both of whom believed that having babies suppresses women. "As long as the family and the myth of the family and the myth of maternity and the maternal instinct are not destroyed, women will still be oppressed", De Beauvoir wrote in the article "*Sex, Society and*

the Female Dilemma” (Sunday Review, June 14,1975). Elizabeth Badinter, the author of *The Myth of Motherhood*, views pregnancy as “suffocating”.

On the other hand, Alice von Hildebrand gets to the heart of the matter in a January 26, 2012 interview entitled “*Made for Love*” for plough.com. She points out that Satan has fooled women into believing that we are inferior if we have children. She observes that society no longer treasures the gift of maternity and the feminist movement looks down on motherhood.

How tragic that voluntarily childless women have got it all wrong. In fact, nothing challenges your grey matter like motherhood whether you are a stay-at-home or working mom with one child or a dozen. Even the quietest, most unassuming woman can become a formidable force when called upon to advocate for her children at school, in the doctor’s office, in life. Moms multi-task, prioritize, improvise, negotiate, conduct research and problem-solve as we juggle professional, volunteer and personal responsibilities. And that takes brains.

In his 1995 Apostolic Letter: *The Dignity and Vocation of Women*, Bl. John-Paul II writes about the “feminine genius” and points out that a mother develops a special sense, an intuition, not just towards her children but towards people in general. “...the mother accepts and loves as a person the child she is carrying in her womb. This unique contact with the new human being developing within her gives rise to an attitude towards human beings – not only towards her own child, but every human being – which profoundly marks the woman’s personality. It is commonly thought that *women* are more capable than men of paying attention *to another person*, and that motherhood develops this predisposition even more”. Married women who are unable to have children as well as consecrated and single women can become spiritual mothers. Spiritual motherhood takes on many different forms, “express[ing] itself as concern for people, especially the most needy: the sick, the handicapped, the abandoned, orphans, the elderly, children, young people, the imprisoned and, in general, people on the edges of society.” But women who choose to remain childless deny themselves the opportunity to develop their maternal intelligence and therefore, don’t fully develop all aspects of their intellect.

A truly bright, vibrant woman successfully integrates all facets of who she is created to be and lives her life to the best of her ability with grace, generosity, compassion, intelligence and humility. She doesn’t need to deny a part of herself in order to develop another. She embraces the entirety of who she is.

So, am I dumb because I have eight kids? Well, actually, I think having eight kids makes me quite smart.

Photo courtesy of wikimedia commons

Deo Gratias

You Didn't Waste Your Time [at Working to be Worthy]

Regret. Maybe you poured yourself into a job that was a dead end. Maybe you were in a long-term relationship that ended poorly. Maybe you spent thousands of dollars on an education that doesn't seem useful or applicable in your present life.

You look back at that time and shake your head, wishing you had made different choices. You spent time, energy, and money, and for what? You have nothing to show for it except frustration, heartache, and perhaps an overwhelming amount of debt. If you could visit your younger self, you would say, "No! That is going to be pointless. Do it a different way. Listen to the advice of so-and-so who has a better plan."

What a waste. Or is it?

I have my Master's degree in school psychology. I haven't been employed as a school psychologist since earning that degree. I used my education for the year I worked in social services (educational advocate for kids in foster care), but I haven't brought home a pay check in over two years. I have no plans to return to employment. It would be easy to look at the three years and roughly \$10,000 I spent on that degree and see it as a waste of resources.



Better than a paycheck

I know better. I grew significantly during those three years. I learned about how the education system works, about my classmates from widely varied backgrounds, and about myself. My relationship with my husband deepened during that time, as we dated, got engaged, and got married. I learned more about living independently, both financially and emotionally.

I thought when I chose grad school over seeking employment with a BA that I was following what God wanted. I still think so. Even if I was wrong, though, it would not have been a waste. God takes all our experiences and uses them to shape us into who we are. Whether your regret is relational, professional, or something else altogether, let it go.

It wasn't a waste. You would not be

you

without that experience.

Maybe as a result, you've been motivated to learn something new. Maybe you turned to God or brought your faith to a new level. Maybe you learned that, in fact, you

can

live without that person. Move forward with your life. Let go of the bitterness and anger that have been following you.

That experience wasn't a waste. Holding onto regret will be.

This contribution is available at <http://workingtobeworthy.blogspot.com/2013/08/you-didnt-waste-your-time.html>
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Spiritual Practices: Night Prayer [at From the Pulpit of My Life]



Night Prayer

For the Christian who centers his or her day on God, the last act before sleeping is Night Prayer. When we were children our parents called it Bedtime Prayer.

Through Night Prayer we dedicate the time we normally sleep to God. Also, we remind ourselves that one day we will die and rise, just as Jesus did. We entrust this time of unconsciousness to Him. As Psalm 15 says, "I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel, who even at night directs my heart." Many holy men and women have learned God's Will at night through dreams and visions.

St. Joseph, for example, was assured that it would be okay for him to take Mary as his wife. He also learned that he should leave Bethlehem and flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus.

Examination of Conscience

Part of Night Prayer is a brief examination of conscience, a silent time for reviewing the day. This is to recall the times one did not live up to God's commandments, God's standards for good Christian conduct. As penitents we consider our faults and failings so as to make amends. We express our sorrow to God and ask for His mercy and forgiveness. I posted one version of an examination of conscience

[here](#)

. There are other ways of doing it.

Scripture Readings from Liturgy of the Hours

The main feature of all the hours of the Liturgy are the psalms. This is true of Night Prayer as well. Besides the psalms there is a weekly cycle of seven short scripture readings for Night Prayer that consist of just a few verses.

I am presenting them here, because, for those who don't do the Liturgy of the Hours, these are well worth reading and meditating upon before going to sleep.

Sunday Vigil

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest. (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

Sunday

They shall see the Lord face to face and bear his name on their foreheads. The night shall be no more. They will need no light from lamps or the sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever. (Revelation 22:4-5)

Monday

God has destined us for acquiring salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us, that all of us, whether awake or asleep, together might live with him. (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)

Tuesday

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith. (1 Peter 5:8a)

Wednesday

If you are angry, let it be without sin. the sun must not go down on your wrath; do not give the devil a chance to work on you. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Thursday

May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness. May he preserve you whole and entire, spirit, soul, and body, irreproachable at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Friday

You are in our midst, O Lord, your name we bear: do not forsake us, O Lord, our God!(

Jeremiah 14:9a)

Conclusion of Night Prayer

Every Night Prayer ends with a little blessing and a prayer in honor of Mary.

Blessing

May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death. Amen

Prayer in Honor of Mary

The Hail Mary (Ave Maria) or the Hail Holy Queen (Salve Regina) are commonly prayed as the final prayers.

There are two websites where you can access the entire texts of Night Prayer,

[here](#)

and

[here](#)

.

This contribution is available at <http://fromthepulpitofmylife.blogspot.com/2013/08/spiritual-practices-night-prayer.html>
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Organic Catechesis [at Smaller Mannhattans]



Angel Oak

Fellow blogger Ruth Curcuru (who uses the handle

[RAnn](#)

) commented on a

[recent catechetical post](#)

, observing that the current catechetical model takes "a topic-based approach that uses scripture as a resource, rather than a scripture study approach." Her remark clarified something about my own catechetical worldview that has always been rather vague to me.

I understand my task as a catechist is to teach Catholicism evangelically. If you count time in Adult Ed & RCIA, I've been at it since 1998. Even in that first year of Adult Ed, I was using the Bible in the classroom; but it took 11 years, 8 of them teaching 6th-graders, until I truly noticed how comprehensively the Bible had revised how I thought about catechesis.

I started blogging in October of 2008. I was 51 years old, and annoyed with half-formed thoughts that never coalesced into anything definitive. Blogging would give this non-writer an easy, non-word-processing format for writing stuff down for my own benefit. October 2008 was also the second month of my 5th year of teaching 6th grade. Soon I was writing about catechism class; I hadn't expected to. On October 26, I posted about

[using Bible stories to teach textbook content.](#)

I closed with:

"The teacher's manual has both Bible and Catechism references for each chapter which are valuable, but mostly for a 180-day academic year. I'm thinking that there may be a way to teach the required content better over 30 classes by mining selected stories one at a time, and applying those lessons to the subject matter in the book. At this point it's just an idea."

Teaching the textbook's topics with the Bible was just great. I had no explicit plan, but the more I used the Bible, the easier it was to teach within the 30-class-max Sunday School format. In May 2009, I

[posted a list](#)

of all the Bible stories I remembered using that year. I was surprised at how many there were, but they were still individual, unintegrated stories coordinated with particular subject matter. During the following 2009-10 year, I started to figure out that using Scripture as an adjunct to the textbook was not the most effective way to be teaching the kids. I was constantly jumping around in the Bible in order to align with the textbook. Maybe it would be better to align the curriculum to the Bible, and thus be able to take advantage of its intrinsic structure and Big Picture of Salvation History. In other words, I needed a new catechetical paradigm. To maximize the teaching potential of Scripture I had to drop the existing textbook curriculum. When the 2010-2011 year began, I had a whole new approved curriculum based on following the path that had been worn over 2000 years ago. It is

so easy

to teach Catholicism this way. It's as though the Bible had been cleverly designed for this very purpose. As

[Sherry Weddell](#)

would say: It Is Normal.

That gets me back to Ruth's comment. My Sunday-Schoolers don't learn topically anymore; instead they are doing Scripture Study.

That never occurred to me until today;

I always thought in terms of 'Teaching Catholicism from the Bible'; but never 'Teaching the Bible Which is Catholic'. So they are learning their Catholic Faith not just in its details, but in its Big Picture- which coincidentally is confluent with the Bible in its details, and in its Big Picture. Catholicism and Scripture are organically fused. The kids' Bible Study is inseparable from their Catholic Study. They thrive together, like parents and children. Or like anything that lives and grows: where should I plant a new tree in my yard? Wherever it would naturally grow best on its own. Does the Church grow best when the faithful are fully engaged with Scripture? Surely she must. So here's a New Evangelism concept for the existing term "Organic Catechesis:" the whole

Faith; the whole Bible; the whole time.

*

[Angel Oak](#)

, only slightly younger than the Church herself.

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On this particular trip to Ocean Isle Beach, we attended St. Brendan's twice: once on Sunday, and once on Thursday the 15th of August for the Feast of the Assumption.



I usually lug my camera case into church when we're travelling so I can take some photos before and/or after Mass. On Sunday I left it at the beach house, figuring I would bring it the next time when it would likely be less crowded. (Technically, Mass should have been *equally* crowded being a Holy Day of Obligation and all, but unfortunately the Feast of the Assumption is largely ignored. I should know. We have ignored it on occasion, I'm sorry to say.) On Sunday evening I discovered that the humidity had temporarily disabled my camera, so on Thursday I resorted to taking my church photos with my phone.



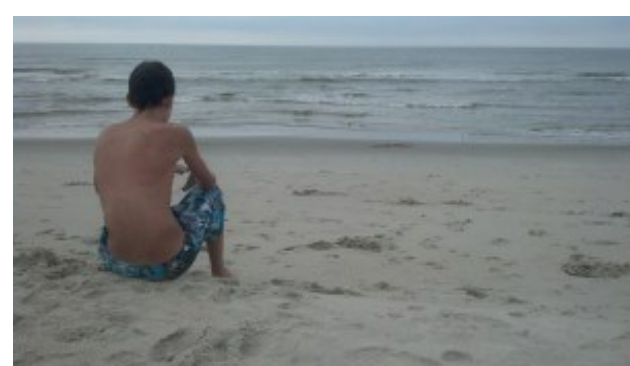


There is a wonderful little [farmers' market](#) just up the road from Saint Brendan's (Good ol' US 17, my local friends!), and our tradition when we vacation at Ocean Isle is to stop by on Sunday after Mass for our fruits and vegetables for the week. This year the boys begged us to PLEASE take them back to the beach house so they wouldn't have to wait for me while I took FOREVER to wander aimlessly around for some pointless vegetables they wouldn't want to eat anyway. We flatly refused, and grudgingly they accompanied Joe and I into the store. Soon they forgot they didn't want to be there, because they managed to add some bags of candy, some bottles of ultra-sweet ginger beer, and one bottle of extra-hot hot sauce (mostly for Joe and Curly). And on Assumption Day, I will say that everyone was quite patient while I took my sweet time getting photos of the church!



Dinner Thursday was at [The Giggling Mackerel](#), and Friday was our last vacation day. We spent the morning on the beach, and the afternoon in Southport where we browsed some antique shops, went to a showing of *Percy Jackson's Sea of Monsters*, and a had wonderful dinner by the water.

I have a feeling we'll visit Saint Brendan's again in the not-too-distant future.



Happy Sunday! Now get thee to church!

This contribution is available at <http://eatingslowly.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/get-thee-to-church-saint-brendan-the-navigator-shalotte-north-carolina/>

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The Church is Not Coca Cola [at Ten Thousand Places]

...In Brazil, the Catholic Church has lost a number of the faithful in these recent years. Is the Charismatic Renewal movement one possible way for ensuring that the faithful do not go to the Pentecostal Church or other pentecostal churches? Many thanks for your presence and many thanks for being with us.

It is very true what you are saying about the fall in numbers of the faithful: it is true, it is true. The statistics are there. We spoke with the Brazilian bishops about the problem at a meeting held yesterday... You asked about the Charismatic Renewal movement... the movement, with good leaders, has made great progress. Now I think that this movement does much good for the Church, overall.

In Buenos Aires, I met frequently with them and once a year I celebrated a Mass with all of them in the Cathedral. I have always supported them, after I was converted, after I saw the good they were doing. Because at this time in the Church – and here I'll make my answer a little more general – I believe that the movements are necessary. The movements are a grace of the Spirit. “But how can you control a movement which is so free?” The Church is free, too! The Holy Spirit does what he wants. He is the one who creates harmony, but I do believe that the movements are a grace, those movements which have the spirit of the Church.

Consequently I don't think that the Charismatic Renewal movement merely prevents some people from passing over to pentecostal denominations. No! It is also a service to the Church herself! It renews us. Everyone seeks his own movement, according to his own charism, where the Holy Spirit draws him or her.

Press conference on plane returning from WYD Rio

Reflection – I'm loving this press conference so much that I want to just keep at it for the rest of the week or so. Pope Francis is good at the spontaneous back and forth stuff, and makes so many good points in these answers.

Here we see his general attitude towards the charismatic dimension of the Church. The Charismatic Renewal itself, yes, but also the whole movement of the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of individual members of the Body of Christ, causing new movements and communities and ways of being Church to spring up continually as the genius of God meets the ingenuity of human beings. Madonna House is part of that charismatic movement in the church, even if we are not a 'Charismatic' community per se.

Too often the charismatic element of Christianity is set in opposition to the institutional element, as if the Holy Spirit pits one way He moves in the Church against another. Because the institutional Church is the Church founded by Christ in the Spirit, right? All of that 'calling of twelve men who he named apostles' who promptly after Pentecost went forth and established churches with leadership structures in every city they went to—it's all right there in the Bible, folks.

So the Holy Spirit is not contradicting Himself, pitting one divine action against another. That would be incoherent. But there is no question that 'charism' and 'institution' operate in a creative tension where each serves the other, not without difficulty and stress, since we are all sinful human beings, but nonetheless.

Institutions can become lifeless and mechanical, and so God stirs up people like Francis or Dominic or Dorothy Day or Catherine Doherty to rejuvenate them. Charisms can be chaotic or (since they reside by definition in flawed individuals) corrupted by personal ambition or sin; the institutional church is tasked with the (often thankless) job of ensuring that all charisms are tested and kept within the communion of and service to the whole Church.

I love it that Pope Francis also says that this is not just about getting fallen away Catholics to come back to the Church. Yes, of course we want that (why wouldn't we?), but the Church is not a corporation trying to market itself with a jazzy new ad campaign or new 'messaging.' The Church is not the New Coke. We are trying to be faithful and responsive to the action of the Holy Spirit, not 'to get our people back', but because being faithful and responsive to the Spirit is the Church's sole *raison d'être* in this world.

Our first obligation is obedience to God, not pandering to the whims and fancies and fashions of

man. We want people to come back to the Church, not because we're trying to bolster our membership roles, but for their sake, for their salvation. The charismatic movements in the Church, be they huge phenomena like the Charismatic Renewal or tiny little seeds like Madonna House, if they are genuine, are about nothing else except the call to personal holiness which is personal surrender to God's will, and a life poured out in love and service to God's people in the communion of God's Church.

This contribution is available at <http://frdenis.blogspot.ca/2013/08/the-church-is-not-coca-cola.html>
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He is Leaving... [at The Fisk Files]



This man is our priest. And, he's leaving.

I hoped this day would never come, but really knew at the back of my mind that it was likely. It has come, and we're a bit sad.

Father came to our tiny little town in 2009, and we were his first parish. He entered the priesthood after a stint with the Marine Corps and a degree from the University of Texas (not every one can be an Aggie). We have never had anyone like him. Not only did he get our finances back in order and fix the heating and cooling in our old church, but he brought Truth to its parishioners.

NFP? Never mentioned before in St. Francis Xavier Parish until he arrived. Now it is being taught. A ministry for the sick? He established one. Latin in our Masses? He introduced it. A reverence for Christ and His Church unlike we've seen before. He epitomized it.

He is real, and his love for his vocation is ever apparent. He was our shepherd, and he brought us into his fold, but not without picking up our crosses. Strict? Yes. But Truthful? Always.

While we go to Mass not for the music or the homily, not for the appearance or "feel good" moments, he was able to enrich our family with an even greater devotion to our faith. Why? Because every thing that came from his mouth in Mass breathed Truth...sometimes difficult to hear...but always embedded with love.

He baptized our children, heard our confessions and challenged us to grow. He supported our desire to homeschool and encouraged our hope for a large family. He was our priest and will forever be our friend and mentor.

In the end, it really is all about Jesus. However, we couldn't have asked for a better messenger.
And, I trust our next will be just what we need.

This contribution is available at <http://www.thefiskfiles.com/2013/08/he-is-leaving.html>
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The Isolation of Self-Imposed Martyrdom [at The Pitter Patter Diaries]

It's not well known that there are more martyrs being made in the current day than in generations before us, though with the current situation in the Middle East it may be more easy to believe. No question it is a grand and glorious thing to sacrifice one's life for Christ, but **what of the self-imposed martyrdom** exhibited by some? You know the ones I mean. (Myself!)



Mary magnifying the Lord, not sighing upon her fate presumably.

We (read:I) are the ones that, upon learning that the Hubbers will be gone two nights one week and then a couple more days the next week, acquiesce to his request to go out with a friend, all the while thinking "that's nice that you get to go out whenever you want." **You roll your eyes to heaven, sighing a saintly martyr's sigh, and say, "of course you can go, dear"** though you secretly want to say "what??" Never mind the infinite demands he makes that you take time to see your friends, even if they are sometimes last minute, and well, we know how hard it is to line anything up with moms last minute, right? Nevertheless, he demands you go, but you make your excuses. You couldn't possibly find anyone to go with - it's too last minute. You're too tired. There is too much to do at home - you couldn't possibly leave. You feel guilty for leaving the kids with the husband who has worked hard all day/week and probably just wants to unwind (because you are a mindreader and know that this is what he is really thinking even if he did tell you to go. He couldn't possibly have missed time with the kids and be looking forward to it, could he?). **These are the games the devil plays.**

This self-imposed martyrdom leaves us isolated. We allow our friendships to be put on a back burner, losing many of them in the process, and rightly so. We are not being friends. We start to talk in terms of "when the kids are older" or "when the kids go to school" (though the homeschooling mom doesn't get that chance). **We put off our relationships, our spiritual growth, our dreams and our passions because our first responsibility is our family.**

While it is true that our primary vocation is as wife and mother if that is what the Lord has called us to, we are still women called into relationship with one another. **We do not thrive in isolation.** Not in isolation of each other, not in isolation of God. Our husbands know this, even if we are introverts. They encourage us, but we take up that martyr's banner and use our family as our crutch to avoid extending ourselves to one another. We are so often overextended at home, we can't believe that adding more relationship to the mix will be life giving, especially if we are introverts. Yet, that isolation of the self-imposed martyr is the furthest away from glorifying God. **We make an idol of ourselves** and our importance to our family. We deprive ourselves of the beauty that exists in banding together with others who might be able to provide us some comfort or solidarity as fellow women, wives and mothers. We, as a result, end up not being of helpful to anyone, family or God.

Perhaps it is time to put down the banner of a false, self-imposed martyrdom (because while parenting involves a whole heaping load of self-denial and surrender, **parenthood does not equal martyrdom really**, and it is a bit of an insult to the real martyrs). It is time to ask for what we need instead of glancing toward heaven saying "see what I mean?" regarding our well meaning and loving husbands. We cannot read their minds, so next time they offer to take the kids and send you out, by all means confirm that they mean what they say, but go! And if there is something you (read:I) want to do, by all means, ask. He does, and so should you.

This contribution is available at <http://www.thepitterpatterdiaries.com/2013/08/the-isolation-of-self-imposed-martyrdom.html>
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Crisis Pregnancy Common Sense by Jeannie W. French [at TASTE and SEE]

This makes so much sense that I like to post it every now and then.

**The answer to a
crisis pregnancy
is to eliminate
the crisis,
*not the child.***

—Jeannie W. French
Founder, National Women's
Coalition for Life

Of course, it demands that our society, our world, you and me, do a better job with helping pregnant women and their children in crisis, both before and after birth. Post birth is a long-term demand, and we need to pray and learn how be more effective in all these arenas.

Here are some crisis pregnancy organizations near me that I like:

[Spring House of Berlin, MA](#)
[House of Worcester, MA](#)

[Birthright International of Marlborough, MA](#)
[Visitation](#)

Each and every one of us!

Good Wishes in Christ,

Kathleen

image - http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lohfjrDkL51qkubsbo1_500.jpg

This contribution is available at <http://tasteandsee2.blogspot.com/2013/08/crisis-pregnancy-common-sense-by.html>

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Top 10 Sunday Activities for Catholics [at A Catholic Life]

In the Catholic life, Sunday is much more than just the day of obligatory Mass attendance. Sunday is the high point of the week. It is the holiest day of the week and a day characterized not by servile work, errands, or temporal concerns. Sunday is a day dedicated to the Lord and to Him alone. As such, Sunday has always occupied in the minds and actions of Catholics a special place.

Here are the top 10 activities for Catholics on Sunday:



1. Attend Holy Mass

Nothing is as holy as the august sacrifice of the Holy Mass. While Mass attendance is obligatory under pain of mortal sin to all Catholics, this obligation should be accepted with joy and enthusiasm. Sunday Eucharist should be the high point of our week. The days leading up to Sunday should be days of spiritual preparation to receive on our tongues and in our bodies the true Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Redeemer and Divine Lord. The days immediately following Sunday should be occasions of thanksgiving and praise in recognition of this supreme gift. How many of us fail in adequate Thanksgiving after Mass? How many of us fail in proper Thanksgivings for the days following our Holy Communions?

Make it an effort to attend Mass with joy and reverence. Even go to more than one Mass on a given Sunday from time to time. Perhaps you, like me, sometimes go to an 8 AM Sunday Low Mass and then go down the road to separate parish at 10 AM for a High (or Solemn High) Mass.



2. Pray the Divine Office

If you are like most Catholics, you have little time to pray the Divine Office during the work week. If this is you, make an effort to pray Lauds, Vespers, and Compline each Sunday as a family. Pray Lauds before going to Mass. Pray Vespers before Sunday dinner. And pray Compline after the Family Rosary in the evening before bed.

The Divine Office is the official prayer of the Church. Unite your family with the Liturgical Year and pray the Divine Office on Sundays (and other holy days of obligation).

Not sure where to begin? There are various

[online resources](#)

and

[numerous printed copies of the Divine Office](#)

. For newcomers, I recommend praying the 1962 or 1955 breviaries in English.

3. Family Rosary

Perhaps no Sunday activity is as cherished as the family Rosary. As the axiom goes, “The Family that prays together stays together.” Families have a responsibility – as the domestic Church – to foster a sense of holiness and religion amongst their members. The family Rosary should be a time of regular devotion – at least weekly if daily Rosary as a family is not possible.

For those families who have members that have fallen from the Faith, this is a sure means to help them return to the Church. Beseech our Lady to send them the graces necessary to save their souls. Invite family members to the Rosary. Indeed, the family that prays together does stay together.



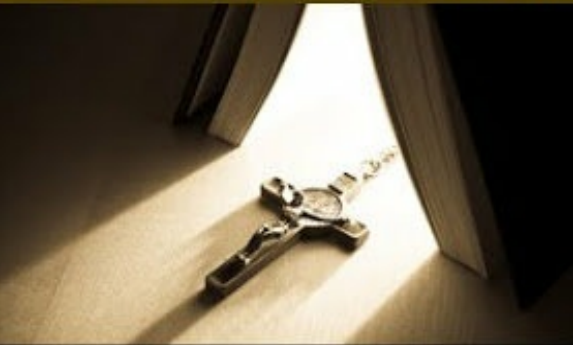
4. Charitable Works

Sunday is a day most appropriate for charity. Our Lord was accosted by the Pharisees for performing miracles (e.g. works of charity) on the Sabbath. Nowadays, to those who claim that Sunday is not a day most appropriate for charity, we remind them of the Lord's words: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" (Luke 14:5). Shall we let those who have fallen in sin or despair remain there without aiding them?

The means by which we are able to serve others is bountiful. From soup kitchens to visiting the elderly in nursing homes to visiting those in prison to distributing food to the homeless in inner-city streets, the amount of charitable venues for Catholics is numerous. Yet in all of these venues, charity is done neither for our gain nor for a tax donation nor for the "feel good" mentality of doing what is right. Rather, charity is done because we are children of God intent on serving others as our Master and Lord has commanded us to do (cf. John 13: 34-35).

Therefore, all of our charity should, if at all possible, be done with an authentically Catholic organization. In instances when we do not – or cannot – perform charity with a Catholic organization, we must ensure that we are not aligning ourselves with so called "charities" who oppose and work to undermine the Holy Church. Just a few of these examples are [UNICEF](#), [the March of Dimes](#), [Susan G Komen](#), The Girl Scouts (who support abortion), the Boy Scouts (who support homosexual marriage), the Salvation Army (which is a protestant denomination), and many others.

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5. Teach/Learn Catechism

No other day should be as treasured for the passing on or the learning of the Faith than Sunday. By the virtue of the Fourth Commandment we are forbidden from performing servile work (i.e. the work typical of a servant) on Sundays. We are also forbidden from commanding those us under our charge to perform such works. Parents may not force their children to mow the lawn (and they should actually forbid such an activity on Sunday!). Homeowners may not paint their rooms or work on household labors or even command their contractors or hired help to work on Sunday to accomplish a goal. Rather, we should ask those under our charge to refrain from all such labors on the Holy Day.

What are we to do with our time besides prayer and charity? We are to study and transit the Faith. Studying is a discipline of the mind and all forms of intellectual study whether they be studying the catechism, learning Kepler's laws of the universe, understanding history, practicing Latin, learning a musical instrument, et cetera are *permissible* on Sunday. They are even encouraged.



6. Apostolates and Ecclesial Organizations

Sunday is the chief day of the week for those of us in ecclesial or apostolic organizations to meet, plan, and engage in our ministries. Those of us in the Holy Name Society, the St. Stephen's Guild for Altar Servers, the Third (3rd) Orders, prayer groups, Bible studies, Confraternity meetings, and the like should strive to meet on Sundays. These activities are extensions of charity (e.g. prayer groups) or learning (e.g. Bible studies) and are encouraged on Sundays.

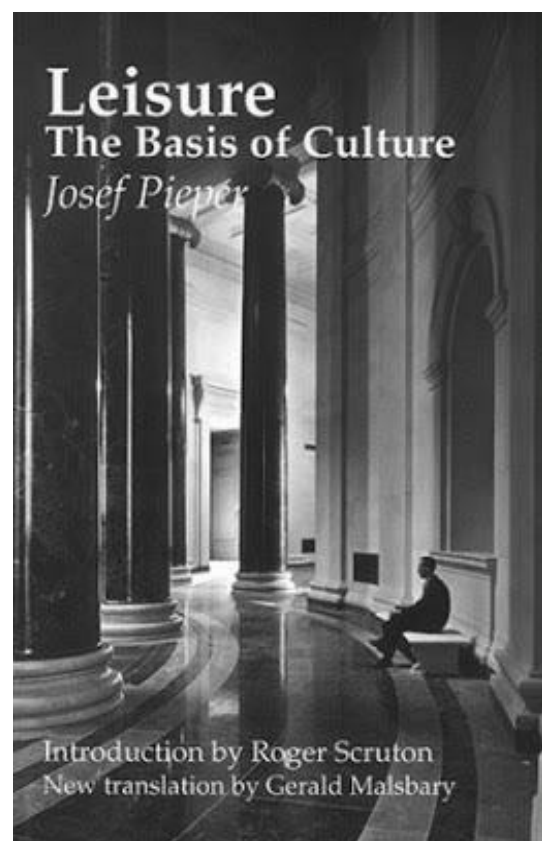
For me, my monthly meeting of the [Militia Sanctae Mariae](#) is always on the last Sunday of the month. In our meetings we pray the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, discuss our readings from the past month, review our formation process, discuss Catholic action and recruitment, and participate in the Chapter of Faults. This is just one example of many such organizations.

7. Leisure

Leisure is often viewed as a “do-nothing” state. Far be it. Leisure is not idleness or laziness. Leisure is the reason for which we were created and as the philosopher Josef Pieper affirmed, the very reason why we labor.

In his book, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, Pieper makes the claim that the reconstruction of Western Culture demands a rebirth of the notion of leisure. Leisure is distinctive from the state of inactivity or acedia, because it is based in festival and an affirmation of the world for what the

world truly is (i.e. a creation). This takes place most distinctively in the festival which is founded on the concept of worship, which is recognition that man is dependent on God. What then does it mean to be at leisure, and what is the “act” that is most appropriate to leisure? Contemplation.



The modern world has lost much of what is contained in the notion of leisure. It is strictly opposed to what the ancients called acedia. The worker type, who finds his very meaning in the usefulness he serves to society, can only identify leisure with a sense of idleness and inactivity. Acedia is precisely this lack of doing, but the notion goes deeper still. Acedia is fundamentally a despair of ever accomplishing that which one is meant to be. It is a giving up in the effort to be who one is. This can lurk behind even in the most physically satisfying of exertions.

In order to understand leisure then, Pieper asks what is diametrically opposed to acedia. The modern man would have us believe that it is the industriousness of the worker contributing to the good of the society. But if acedia is fundamentally a denial of man's existence as man, then its opposite must be a fundamental affirmation of who man is. Pieper turns to Thomas for the startling statement that acedia, so often understood as the man who fails to do any work, is not a resting per se, but is a very sin against the command of rest. Acedia then is a restlessness that is opposed to the very spirit of leisure.

After this contrast, Pieper attempts to provide a concept of leisure to the reader. Leisure then, in the first place is a stillness of spirit, an opening of the mind to receive. It is secondly, opposed to the idea of work as effort, for it takes place in a sense of celebration, of approval of the world. The highest expression of this celebration is the festival. Thirdly, leisure must be understood as opposed to the concept of break-from-work. A break is meant to afford man the ability to continue working. The break is fundamentally for the sake of work. Leisure, though truly refreshing, derives this freshness from the very fact that it is for its own sake. It is only accidental that man is better able to work after being at-leisure. Leisure is not about making the worker a better functionary, but about making him more human. In participating in leisure, something of the human is left behind and a spark of the divine is achieved.

Leisure is found first and foremost in worship (i.e. in the Holy Mass) but there are various other means of Leisure in which we can rightfully participate on Sunday. Examples include the other points on this list.

8. Authentic Family Time

The image of the “couch potato” father who watches sports on the television but who never leaves the couch to play with his children should never actualize itself in a Catholic home. Sundays are a family day. Go on a picnic. Play football in the back yard. Visit a park and go on a nature hike in the afternoon after Mass. With the busyness of modern life, authentic family time without the presence of cell phones, tablets, and computers is quickly disappearing. Family time should be free of distractions (e.g. emails, phone calls, and temporal concerns). Visit your elderly parents. Play with your young children. Invite in your neighbors for dinner. Sunday is the paramount day to engage in authentic and heartfelt family fun. Do not neglect this day and enslave Sunday to consumerism. Sundays should not be spent at the Mall or the store, since our purchases cause others to have to work on Sundays. Engage in activities that do not force others to labor.

9. Hobbies

There is nothing wrong with using part of our Sundays to engage in our personal pastimes. Do you like to read? Do you enjoy cooking or playing tennis? Do you enjoy biking? Sunday is a day to engage in these joys. Recall that the monks will typically take an afternoon stroll each week only on Sundays. Sundays are suitable for the pursuit of our hobbies (so long as they do not constitute

servile work or force others to work).

10. Sunday Dinner

And finally last, but not least, we come to the last item on our list: Sunday Dinner. As eloquently put by [Regina Magazine](#):

Sunday dinner is arguably the bedrock of Roman life. After Mass, Romans take a *passeggiata* (stroll), to prepare for a civilized afternoon of great food and lively talk. No trips to the Mall. No working out at the gym. Sunday dinner is sacrosanct – as it should be for all Catholics. This is because our *relationships* mean more to us than our ‘me time.’ It also teaches our children how to enjoy the best things in life – carefully prepared food, beautifully served with the give-and-take of conversation and laughter, begun with a Catholic thanks to God for His gifts.

Invite your friends, family, and neighbors. Let’s take back the sacredness of Sunday dinner as a meal in honor of our Lord’s resurrection.

Conclusion

What of these activities do you do? What are you going to do differently? Do you have any other suggestions?

This contribution is available at <http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2013/08/top-10-sunday-activities-for-catholics.html>
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When child-friendly church goes too far

The sun did not shine. It was too wet to play.

This clip caught our eyes, but could such a thing be?

Making church speak to children is great, but really?

This, I think, goes too far—though it's not in my Church.

But I have to admit that my stomach did lurch.

“I know some good games we could play,” said the “Cat,”

“We could make our own church,” said fake Cat in the Hat.

“We could wear silly wigs and bless bread and wine, too.

And we'd tell children church is such fun—like the zoo.

Look at me, look at me, look at me now!

It is gauche and absurd for a priest to meow!

I can stand at the altar while wearing a hat.

But that is not all I can do," said the Cat.

"I can stand on a ball on the tip of my toes,

And balance God's Word on my long crooked nose."

That is what the priest said. Then he fell on his head.

He fell right off the altar and onto the floor.

Then the priest thought of something he hadn't before.

Maybe Eucharist doesn't mean more told in rhyme.

Maybe God doesn't call priests to act, dance, and mime.

The fact God became man and died on a wood cross

Doesn't need lots of fluff, lots of glitz, lots of sauce.

If you're truly the Church founded by Christ himself,

You can put all your Seussian rhymes on the shelf.

If you're looking for something that speaks to the youth?

Start with what Jesus gave us and lived out: The Truth.

What are your thoughts? Is this child-friendly or going too far?

8/6/2013 11:01:57 AM

By [Rita Buettner](#)

This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2013/08/06/when-child-friendly-church-goes-too-far>

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Lord, I am not worthy...

August 27, 2013 By [crossini4774](#) [8 Comments](#)



Christ with the Host by San Leocadio (photo credit: Wikimedia Commons).

***Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.***

This response at Mass seems to me to sum up the whole spiritual life. It provides wonderful material for meditation.

I am not worthy

On my own, I cannot please God. I can only vaguely know His character. He had to reveal Himself to me through Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the teaching authority of the Church. He gave me parents who were loving enough to have me baptized and teach me the faith. He continues to show me His design for my life. All this is a pure gift which I could not merit.

But I have found the Christian life to be a constant battle. I fall every day. I repent, make resolutions to be good, then sin again. God's purity is so beyond me. His holiness is a burning fire that I would never dare approach.

Except...

He says the word

He calls me to Himself, though He knows all my failings. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened," He says (Matthew 11:28). My ears perk up, for I am burdened by my sins.

He says, "Take this, **all of you**, and eat of it." I have done what the Church requires, confessing any serious sins beforehand. He speaks these words **to me**. Who am I to protest my unworthiness any longer?

And I am healed

"I have not come to call the righteous," He said, "but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him" (John 3:17).

He does not call me because I am like Him, He calls me because I need Him. He calls me because I am not righteous, because I am weak.

It only takes a word, a touch, a glance from Him to be healed completely. It only takes opening my heart to His love to be transformed into love.

And so I come, and love Him.

Connie Rossini

This contribution is available at <http://contemplativehomeschool.wordpress.com/2013/08/27/lord-i-am-not-worthy/>
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Psalm 139 [at Journey to Wisdom]

The readings for the last week of August have featured Psalm 139, a Psalm that I love. It is especially valuable since the Gospel has been Matthew 23 where Jesus declares “

woe to you scribes and Pharisees

”, and the first reading has included Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians in which he explains his motives for his ministry.

The contrasts could not be more stark, Paul is firm in his proclaiming the Good News; he is seeking to please God and not men. So he endures the rejection of many and the frailty of the communities that he is ministering to with love and with honesty. He allows the Lord to search his heart, to probe his motives so that he does not try to accomplish God’s work through deception, through flattery, or that he is not merely seeking praise and attention from other men. His love and his motivation are from God, with whom he draws his strength from an ongoing and intimate relationship.



The Pharisees use the law to bolster themselves, to solidify their power,

“neglecting the weightier things of the law: Judgment, mercy and fidelity.”

Jesus' words cut like a knife through the exterior delusions of sanctity to reveal that they are filled with “

evildoing and hypocrisy

.” They are not motivated by love of God, though they claim they are, and may even believe they are.

Admittedly, I am inclined to think of all of the “Pharisees” that I could hurl Matthew 23 at, but

listening to

[Sister Anne Shields'](#)

reflections on these passages cut me short on that little (hypocritical) indulgence. "You can't judge that (hypocrisy) in others, you can only judge it in yourself." I need to allow Him to examine me, to probe me, to reveal the wounds and the darkness that ever so subtly corrupt my intentions to serve Him. Only when I submit to His judgment - His diagnosis of the pathological conditions in my soul, if you will - can I receive His mercy and healing and have the obstacles to my own fidelity removed. Only then can the disparity of "intentions of the heart and our external thoughts, words and actions" begin to be unified and whole.

This is why praying Psalm 139 is so wonderful. We are drawn deep into the mystery of God, who loves us; who is ever renewing - in spite of the darkness that is revealed, in spite of the hypocrisies, wounds and fears that are so deeply hidden in the dark interiors of our soul.

I have reflected on this

[Psalm](#)

before, and I don't think that I can express how it speaks to me any better than I did then:

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! Repent, for the powers that would enslave you have no power over Him. Repent, for God has never left you; though it may be too dark for you to see Him, He sees you. His hand is upon you! Do not be too proud to allow Him to show you your darkest sins, they are not dark to Him. He knows what they have done to you. Do not be afraid to reveal your most depraved desires or your most wretched fears, he is greater and stronger than any of them. He can retrieve you from the Sheol in your soul that imprisons you. Do not be afraid of the chaos sin has stirred up, for His Spirit is with you, encircling you and His mighty wind blows over the dark and formless wastelands in each of our souls, reforming and renewing them. Repent, for the kingdom is at hand! His light will illuminate the way.

In allowing the Lord to probe and examine me what is still amazing is how often I operate -

even in the good things that I do, like going to Mass, or volunteering my time -

out of corrupted motives. The genesis of the motive may well have been pure, but somewhere in my wounded heart it is altered. I really do not like to have these things revealed. Yet, if I do not allow God to penetrate and probe those motives, I can be easily diverted from the whole Truth.

Look at our culture. Look at how quickly we can be diverted from even the most basic concepts of human dignity by cloaking our reasons for supporting evil in works of charity, or words of equality. Abortion anyone? Same-sex "marriage"? When we lose touch with the transcendent,

yet powerfully intimate presence of God, individually and collectively as a culture, we lose touch with the One who can direct our passions authentically, with strength and love. Look at

[Miley Cyrus,](#)

look at how quickly an inborn desire to be known and loved by God is corrupted into a vulgar and debased just-look-at-me desire! When you witness that type of debauchery in action, you begin to understand what the Psalmist says:

"Do I not hate those who hate you?"

169:21

But the the Pharisees go wrong here, not because there is nothing to hate in those who pursue corruption and evil doing, but because they seem to

love to hate it

, out of a corrupted sense of honor. How easily hatred of evil becomes prideful! How easy it is for our motives to be corrupted! We must be careful to allow the Lord to shine His light on our hatred. So that we hate the evil and destruction that is done to the souls around us; so we feel tremendous sorrow because of it; so that His love fills us and flows outward to those who have been so damaged by this fallen world; our own love and charity could not possibly be enough.

Immediately following His dire "

Woes"

to the Pharisees Jesus expresses His deep sorrow at the destruction that will be wrought upon Jerusalem, and for all those who wander away from the

road of eternity

. Those who have chosen to hate God's ways.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but you were unwilling!" Matthew 23:37

For all the Miley Cyrus' in the world, each of us must allow the Lord to probe us, heal us and fill us with His perfect love; so that we can truly pray for these souls, and without hypocrisy proclaim God's law and cry out to those who dwell in darkness. We need to be like Paul, so we can authentically and lovingly minister in the depraved and weak world that we live in. Because even those who are so horrifically deformed and corrupted by evil can be touched by His light is an authentic way. Even they can be re-formed in His mighty spirit. Even Miley and praise God, even

me.

God, examine me and know my heart, test me and know my concerns. Make sure that I am not on my way to ruin and guide me on the road of eternity." Psalm 139 New Jerusalem Bible

Peace and Grace to everyone!

Heidi

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2013/08/psalm-139.html>
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Thoughts on Mark Ruffalo's open letter regarding abortion

Last weekend, at an abortion rights rally outside a clinic in Jackson, Mississippi, somebody read an open letter aloud, written by actor Mark Ruffalo. Ruffalo, who is the Hulk in

The Avengers

, is for the right to choose abortion, which - according to the letter - is what his mother did. Below are excerpts of the letter (in italics), plus my commentary:

* * *

What happened to my mother was a relic of an America that was not free nor equal nor very kind. My mother's illegal abortion marked a time in America that we have worked long and hard to leave behind. It was a time when women were seen as second rate citizens who were not smart enough, nor responsible enough, nor capable enough to make decisions about their lives.

Women (and men) are created able to be smart, responsible, and capable enough to make good decisions. I agree with what Ruffalo implies: a woman in whose womb there is a baby can (and should) make a responsible choice. What I haven't heard from Ruffalo yet, or much at all in this conversation, is an important reminder:

Couples capable of making good decisions after conception can make good decisions before conception, too.

So why don't they? Probably because pro-choice people and pro-life people define "good decisions" differently. Because we live in a culture that still thinks we can have our cake and eat it, too. Because contraception.

It was a time that deserved to be left behind, and leave it behind we did, or so it seemed. We made abortion and a woman's ability to be her own master a Right. That Right was codified into law. That law was the law of the land for decades. My own mother fought to make herself more than a possession; she lived her life as a mother who chose when she would have children, and a wife who could earn a living if she so chose. I want my daughters to enjoy that same choice. I don't want to turn back the hands of time to when women shuttled across state lines in the thick of night to resolve an unwanted pregnancy, in a cheap hotel room just south of the state line. Where a transaction of \$600 cash becomes the worth of a young woman's life.

I admire Ruffalo's compassion for people who are in the toughest imaginable spots. I get how he hopes his daughters have a choice. But I am not as interested in whether it is legal to choose. (If

abortion were outlawed entirely,

[it would be a Band-Aid anyway](#)

, for a wound way bigger than that.)

If I have kids, my hope is not that they can choose. My hope is that they don't have to make that choice.

That they will choose chastity. That pregnancy, before or after a marriage, is regarded as a miracle instead of as a disease.

There was no mistake us making Abortion legal and available on demand. That was what we call progress. Just like it was no mistake that we abolished institutional racism in this country around the same time. The easy thing to do is lay low, but then are we who we say we are? Do we actually stand for anything, if what we do stand for is under attack and we say nothing? There is nothing to be ashamed of here except to allow a radical and recessive group of people to bully and intimidate our mothers and sisters and daughters for exercising their right of choice.

Bullying or intimidating people who have had or are considering abortions is egregious. It's unloving and Jesus wouldn't do it. So stop it.

To this I would add it is also egregious to bully people who have made another choice: not to have sex.

It is also egregious to intimidate them. To tell them they are virgins because "I can't tell if you're a man or a woman," to encourage them to compromise because "no guy will wait that long to have sex." (And yes, people have said both to me.)

I invite you to find your voice and let it be known that you stand for abortion rights and the dignity of a woman to be the master of her own life and body. I invite you to search your soul and ask yourself if you actually stand for what you say you stand for.

Our bodies are temples. Dwelling places of God. We have been given a human nature, which - according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church - "has not been totally corrupted." It is only wounded. Which means we indeed can learn self-mastery, in chastity, which - far more than any movement I have encountered - promotes the dignity of all human life.

- - -

Click

[here](#)

to read Ruffalo's letter in full.

Click

[here](#)

to read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 'cause it's relevant.

This contribution is available at <http://www.arleenspenceley.com/2013/08/thoughts-on-mark-ruffalos-open-letter.html>

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The Jeans-Wearing Rule [at Sue Elvis Writes]



I'm going to write about something a little controversial (which is very unlike me) but it's something I've been thinking about for a while. No doubt, some readers will disagree with my opinions but that's okay. We can have a friendly discussion, can't we?

I want to talk about jeans. I guess that will lead us into the whole modesty issue. Am I brave enough to continue? Here goes...

I have seen a few articles online that have titles such as *Rules for Modest Dressing*. The rules consist of a comprehensive list of dos and don'ts that are aimed at teenage daughters in particular. I admire a mother who takes the time to ponder carefully what she wants for her daughters. It's a mother's responsibility to pass onto her children what she believes is right. And writing rules is a reflection of a very caring mother. Obviously there are many mothers who agree, because the number of congratulatory comments for such posts are enormous: *You care, so you make rules. I admire that!*

I used to have a set of similar dress rules for my daughters. Well, actually the rules really only applied to my eldest daughter Felicity as she is seven years older than my second daughter Imogen. Dress codes don't seem to affect little girls as much as teenage ones.

I decided that jeans were not appropriate dress and so I wouldn't let Felicity wear them. I told her my reasons: they were immodest and unfeminine. She was a girl, therefore she couldn't wear pants. Nice and simple. No arguments allowed.

Actually I wasn't being entirely truthful. The reason I didn't want Felicity to wear jeans was because none of my friends let their daughters wear them. I wanted to be accepted by these women and so I adopted their standards. I let myself be swayed by others' opinions – adult peer pressure – but when I thought about it, they were right, weren't they?

Felicity did not think I was right. I spent a lot of time trying to make her abide by the rules, rules she couldn't see the value of. Rules can be made, but they need to be policed, and that can result in a lot of time and energy and conflict. And rules can lead to deception and loss of trust. I have heard of young girls changing into their jeans when away from home, hoping their mothers will never find out.

But rules are worth the trouble, you might say. They were made in the best interest of your child. She needed to be guided in what is right and what is wrong. A parent has to be strong enough to make unpopular decisions, and stand by them.

Or does she? I suppose it depends on whether the reason behind the rule is valid. And [are rules the only way](#) of ensuring our children act in an appropriate manner?

Jeans...When I was a teenager and young mother I wore them all the time. Are they immodest? I guess it depends on the cut. Perfectly modest jeans can be found, I'm sure. Are they unfeminine? I don't think they are as feminine as a pretty skirt. Is it a crime to be unfeminine? I don't suppose it is. Is the issue of jeans worth fighting over? No.

I haven't worn jeans for a very long time. These days [I am a skirt girl](#). I like the soft feel of them and the comfort. I always felt rather restricted inside my stiff denim jeans. And yes, I do like to feel feminine.

Do I want my girls to be feminine? I guess I do. But they have free choice in the matter. As long as my children are doing nothing wrong, I can't force my preferences on them. I don't have the right to control them. To me, jeans-wearing is not an issue worthy of a rule. It's not like it has been written into the Code of Canon Law or anything. And it's not as if skirt-wearing makes us better people.

So we have no rules about jeans. Actually we have no rules about modesty either. I have never seen the need to write any. (Dare I confess I generally [don't make rules](#) about anything?) All children, boys included, have always dressed modestly. Why make rules? Instead we have always talked about dressing appropriately:

“Do you think this skirt is good enough for Mass?”

“You might be more comfortable in cargo pants. You'll be climbing off and on equipment all day.”

“Have you seen my track pants? I need them for running.”

"I want to look special. It's an important occasion."

"I need to find my swim shorts. I don't feel right wearing my swimmers without them."

So what do my girls choose to wear? The daughter who was not allowed to wear jeans prefers jeans (as far as I know!) The girls who never experienced 'the jeans rule' wear skirts. They won't go anywhere near a pair of jeans.

The other day a friend gave me a bag of odds and ends she thought might come in handy for the younger girls. Included in the bag was a pair of jeans.

“Hey Sophie! These might fit you,” I said, handing the jeans to my second youngest daughter.

“But Mum! They’re jeans. I hate jeans,” said Sophie screwing up her face.

“Just try them on,” I encouraged. “You never know when a pair of jeans might come in handy.”

Sophie went off to her bedroom, obviously under protest, trailing the jeans behind her. A few minutes later she appeared with jeans-clad legs and a tortured look on her face.

“They fit perfectly!” I smiled.

I guess there’s no rule that says a girl has to wear jeans!

These days many of my girls’ friends wear jeans. My daughters in their pretty skirts are the odd ones out.

“Wouldn’t you like to dress like everyone else?” I ask.

“No! Not if it means wearing jeans,” four feminine voices reply.

There are probably people who look at my daughters and feel sorry for them. *Poor girls! Their*

mother insists on being old fashioned and doesn't allow them to wear jeans! Others might congratulate me on being a caring mother who insists on her girls dressing as girls. I told you this was a controversial topic.

The truth of the matter is my girls love wearing skirts, and really I see no reason to dissuade them from their preference. As I said, [I'm a skirt girl](#) too.

Would Felicity have been a skirt girl too if I hadn't made any dress rules? What if I hadn't banned jeans? Can rules actually push children in the direction we don't want them to go?

Not that it matters. I love all my five daughters, whatever they choose to wear.

Imogen walks by and I say, "Would you like to read my latest post?"

When she finishes reading, I'm struck by a funny thought: "Do you realise I've written a defence for jeans-wearing and none of you wear jeans?" We both laugh.

"You should have written a post about how jeans-wearing is wrong," says Imogen. "You could have pointed at your daughters: They know they have to follow the rules!" We both laugh again.

It's good to laugh. Why fight over something that really isn't very important at all?

This contribution is available at <http://www.sueelviswrites.com/2013/08/the-jeans-wearing-rule.html>
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8.29.13

The Culture of Death Under the Guise of Medical Jargon

There has been a lot of talk as of late regarding the abortion industry, and many fruitful discussions have come forth. There have been legislative moves to reduce late term abortions, as happened recently in Texas, there have been more campaigns to educate the public on the truth of the industry, and there has been a very vocal shift in the voice for life in our country. All of these things are amazing happenings in the fight for life, but another more ‘hidden’ aspect of the industry comes to mind that hits close to home.

What came to mind was my own pregnancy. Upon learning we were pregnant again, of course we were excited, happy and very much looking forward to meeting our new little one. When our mid-term ultrasound confirmed our daughter had a very serious brain problem, of course other emotions set in. Fear. Anxiety. Even a twinge of sadness or disappointment. But that is to be expected. The happiness and love surrounding our daughter were still there – just now with a few extra things attached we hadn’t anticipated. This is when I first encountered the hidden abortion agenda.



Looking at Meagan’s scan – and seeing all black (fluid) instead of brain tissue.

Thankfully, due in large part to communication with other families, I pretty much knew termination (the code word for abortion) would be brought up at our specialists’ appointment. So I was prepared for it (so I thought). But what I wasn’t prepared for was the persistence. The persuasiveness. The emphasis on how terrible life would be for her. When we told the specialist we were keeping our daughter, we were sent to a “meeting” with the genetic counselor. Ask me

what I learned about my genetic background or that of my husband's... and your guess would be as good as mine. Because I learned nothing. I like to refer to this meeting as the "termination meeting." Where, once again, I got to hear from some woman who thought she knew better than I how terrible "poor little Meagan's" life would be. For us. For our older girls.

Even though we knew our decision on life before we even found out about our daughter's condition, it was amazing (in a disbelieving sort of way) at the way in which our daughter was suddenly reduced to a list of medical terminology. Fluid in the brain. Hydrocephalus. Developmentally delayed. Probable seizures. Possible in utero death. And I could go on. Why when we walked in to the doctor office was our baby, well, a "baby" with anticipation to find out whether that baby was a boy or girl? Even further personalizing the pregnancy and our child? But when something was found 'wrong' with her, why did it turn from personalizing her life to listing it on a medical chart and downplaying her humanity?

I don't really have the full answer, as I can only speak from my experience. But I truly believe after going through this with our daughter, and hearing countless other stories of mothers in a similar situation as I found myself in, that this is the true hidden corner of the abortion industry. We know about the early abortions. We know about the convenience abortions. We know about the forced or coerced abortions. We know all of these aspects of abortion have so tactfully been painted with flowery language and new age feminism...but abortion for medical reasons has taken this guise to a whole new level.

Once a child is found to have a problem, or a condition, or a disease or deformity, it becomes very easy to disguise the talk of abortion with devastating medical lingo. Finding out about a child with needs is a highly emotional time for most parents, and for some these emotions unfortunately play into their decision to terminate their child's life. They are sold lies of despair, discouragement, and often confusion. I remember distinctly going home and Googling every term I had heard in my appointment. Even though I knew our daughter was ours no matter what, I spent hours upon hours reading, worrying and obsessing over every medical term the doctor had thrown at us. Even in my steadfastness for life, my mind was still distracted by the multitude of new terminology I had heard in one sitting. The more I look back now, the more I realize that her personhood was slowly stripped away in that one appointment. My daughter was reduced to a rambling of medical jargon. Her life was disregarded, categorized, and put on trial all within the constraints of an hour.

Close your eyes. Picture a child in your head. She is about 2 years old..brown hair...hazel eyes. But also know she has congenital hydrocephalus, agenesis of the corpus collosum, absent septum pellucidum, partial seizures, absence seizures, Chiari malformation, inguinal hernia, craniosynostosis, vision issues, failure to thrive, has a g-tube, cannot walk, cannot crawl, and is just learning to sit on her own. She has had 10 hospital stays and 5 surgeries, 3 of which were brain surgeries. What does your picture look like? Now open your eyes and see her for yourself.



I hope my story can touch at least one person – and help them through that trying time of finding out the child they expect isn't exactly what situation they expect. It's ok to take in the medical knowledge. It is important for us – so we know all we can and learn everything possible to become their greatest advocates. But – be careful to not get lost in those terms. The winding path of medical diagnoses is only a path that will lead us to confusion and despair. If we focus on that, there is no hope, but our children are the hope of the world. God gives us children to look to the future. We have to hold on to that hope for these special children. No matter what labels are attached to them, they are still God's gifts to us. We can't let a list of words form a false picture that clouds the beauty of the true portrait. We need to not let them get lost in the new culture of death that is presented to us in the guise of medical jargon. We need to not let our labels define our children – but let our children instead show us who they are meant to be. We need to remember more than any label, the most important one is that they are made in the image of God – and with Him, no trial is impossible.



Molly is a cradle Catholic, wife, and mother of 5 girls. Mostly a stay at home mom, she also spends her time volunteering at the parish school and church, teaching flute part time, and tending to the special needs of their youngest daughter, who was born with severe congenital Hydrocephalus. You can follow their journey at <http://pricelesslittlepearl.blogspot.com>. Molly has always loved writing, so the opportunity to contribute to this blog and combine that love with the passion she has for her Catholic faith has been a welcomed opportunity.

[« Family Time! Catholic Sistas Now on Podcast! »](#)

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicsistas.com/2013/08/29/culture-death-guise-medical-jargon/>
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SHIFT

Most of us are bound and determined not to be Saints.

Oh sure, we're generally good people.

We don't wake up and declare, "I refuse to be holy today. Sorry, God."

We just don't start each day with the conviction to practice virtue either.

Because the fact is...sanctity is hard.

(Especially when we're already inclined to be mediocre in our faith.)

It's so much easier to stop thinking about the *work* we'll need to do to imitate Jesus and to start thinking about shortcuts.

You know, like what other people can do to help our holiness.

The big excuse

“If my spouse was more prayerful/submissive/radical/humble/servant-hearted/lovable, I’d be a better person.”

Or...

“If I lived in an authentic Christian culture, piety would be a piece of cake.”

Or...

“If my parish offered the Latin Mass, was staffed by a FSSP priest, held Confession 7 days a week, and had only zealous Catholics running the parish programs then, by golly, I could be canonized tomorrow!”

Adam did it with Eve. The Israelites did it with Moses. I’ve done it and you’ve done it.

We stop aiming for the Lord and start blaming it on others.

Soon we start living our lives convinced that the faults and successes of people, societies or programs actually determine our own holiness.

Have you heard the term for it? *Idolatry*.

No, it’s not of golden calves or marble statues. But I think it may be of something even worse:

Our own ideas.

Isn’t it ironic?

Like all idol worship, the more we love our ideas about how things “should be” in order to make sanctity easier, the less we actually do to cooperate with God’s plan to make us Saints.

A frequent idolater, I spent weeks not long ago consumed with finding The Ultimate Catholic Community in the United States.

The criteria was simple: it only had to have the Holiest Spiritual Directors, Most Vibrant Parish Ministries, Greatest Number of Vocations, Friendliest Moms, and Largest Homeschool Groups in the entire nation.

Embarrassingly large chunks of time were lost to me forever as I compulsively meandered through Catholic websites and forums, daydreaming about all the possible **great** things I could do and be IF ONLY I went to that One Perfect Church in that One Perfect Town.

Of course back in my *life*, I did nothing for my parish. I did little for the people in need around me. I hardly did anything for my own soul.

What did I do instead?

Lamented. Grumbled. Fretted.

“How can I go to Confession frequently if it’s *only* offered for an hour on Saturdays while my husband works? There’s no one to watch my little kids! My gosh, this is just...unreasonable! I *can’t* be radical about my spiritual life with these kinds of difficulties. In fact, it’s impossible! I... I give up.”

My idolatry, which demanded so much of others, had paralyzed me.

The truth is, it paralyzes all of us.

Evaluate the truth

If we are to be truly Great, we need to let go of our narrow ideas about what is “necessary” in order for us to be who we ought to be.

Saintly spouses are helpful, Christian societies are good and thriving parishes are the goal.

But God doesn’t need any of them to make you a Saint.

In fact, looking at the rosters of the men, women and children who have been raised to the altars I think He actually *prefers* to raise up Saints out of the most unsuitable situations.

All He needs is someone who is free.

Free to cooperate with the sufficiency of His grace. Free to do the hard, intentional work of daily death to self.

But this freedom can be found only when Jesus is King of our hearts. Not some comparatively pitiful ideas about our surroundings that we have erected in His place.

So, it’s time we ask ourselves...

Are we free, *really* free, to be Great?

Or are we shackled to the gods of What Seems Good To Us?

This contribution is available at <http://thetransformblog.wordpress.com/2013/09/05/why-catholics-wont-be-saints/>
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Preparing your adolescent for a trip to the doctor [at Kitchen table chats with a Catholic Matriarch]

[My most recent post for the Truth & Charity Forum is up.](#)

In this post I take a look at the latest statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics with regards to emergency contraception. Bottom line is they are for it. Any girl. Any Age. No cost. No parents. This policy joins their recently released statement that states homosexuality must be accepted and supported and there should be no attempt to encourage abstinence education for any adolescents because it would marginalize homosexual teens. Add to this the resolution passed by the American Academy of Family Physicians in support of the redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples. And of course there is always the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology who has never met an abortion or hormonal contraception method it didn't like. The truth is that American professional medical associations have shed their advocacy for sound medical practice and become shills for the liberal sexual agenda. Anything that might put a crimp in someone's sexual expression is bad, no matter the consequences of that sexual expression.

So what is a parent to do? Ideally, you find a doctor that respects your values and your role as a parent. If the doctor is treating you like an adversary instead of an equal partner in the health of your child, run away fast. However, in these days of managed care, the choice of physicians is often severely limited or nonexistent. As a military family we have no choice in who provides our health care. When the kids got to that adolescent stage, there was always the "time alone" with the doctor at their sports physical visits. As a physician, I know this time is necessary. But as the mom of my children, I also know that I have their best interests at heart, the culture does not support our family values, and I do not need another person in a position of authority undercutting our parental influence and undermining our faith.

Think I am being paranoid? My experience is that numerous practitioners make erroneous assumptions about my children. They ask my thirteen-year-old daughter if she has a boyfriend or my thirteen-year-old son if he has a girlfriend. If they answer "no" then they proceed with questions to determine if they have same-sex attractions. Did these medical professionals ever consider that not every middle schooler is chomping at the bit to have an exclusive romantic relationship? A female physician fussed at my high school daughter for wearing a sports bra because it didn't enhance her bust. This woman wanted to see my daughter in something more Playtex--you know--"lifts and separates!" My daughter's choice was not a body-image issue. It was a matter of comfort. This same physician scolded me when I didn't jump at the chance to have my daughter receive the HPV vaccine. I said I wanted to wait until after it was in use a few years so I could assess the safety profile. She scoffed because the meningitis vaccine I was agreeing to was newer than the HPV vaccine. Why wasn't I waiting on that one? Because the results of foregoing the meningitis vaccine could be deadly while the

[results of skipping the HPV vaccine are minimal.](#)

It was a simple risk-benefit analysis. Then there are the offers of contraception in spite of the fact that my child denies any sexual activity. "You know I can get you birth control. Your mother never needs to know." I know about these exchanges because my children told me about these exchanges.

I think the most successful approach is to prepare my child for these questions with words like this:

The doctor does not know you and does not know our family. He/she cannot tell who has a good relationship with parents and who doesn't. They don't know who is making good choices and who is making bad choices. So they treat everyone like they have a dysfunctional family and are making choices that are incompatible with our family values. Adolescents who are in these situations have special medical needs and the doctors do not want to miss helping these teens because they failed to ask. The fact that they ask you these questions does not mean they think these questions actually apply to you. If they do more than just ask questions and try to convince you to do something that makes you uncomfortable, tell them you are not interested and tell them you want me back in the room. (As an aside--I have friends who reported physicians/PA's/nurse practitioners that tried to browbeat their daughters into accepting a prescription for contraceptives or who have suggested to their non-sexually active teens that they try masturbation) Because these health care professionals often see young people in trouble because of bad choices, they sometimes forget that lots of young people make the same good choices you make.

I have taken care of the teens from the dysfunctional families as well as the teens who are making poor choices. I know that it is difficult to get important health information when their parents are in the room. But I do not do this teen any favors if I then normalize the risky choices and enable them to continue. I also do not help the situation when I marginalize parents. By and large, even the most imperfect parent loves and cares for his/her child more than any health professional ever can. Part of the job of providing health care to adolescents is also enabling constructive ways for parents to express this love. As a parent, you should demand such a level of cooperation.

This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2013/08/preparing-your-adolescent-for-trip-to.html>

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The Gospel of the Kingdom: Living Out The Word! [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

The Gospel of the Kingdom: Living Out The Word!

(In other words, Letting Christ Live Through us!)



Let Christ Be Your KING! Obey His Word!

(The Psalmist says:) “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”. (Ps 119:9-11)

“Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.” (Ps. 119:104-107)

(Jesus says:) “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” (Matt. 7:24-27)

“As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, “Blessed is the mother

who gave you birth and nursed you.” He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” (Luke 11:27-28)

My Fellow Pilgrims in Christ,

It should be evident to you by now in your walk with the Lord just how essential the Word of Life is to your calling to follow Him. Jesus told His Disciples: **“Without Me you can do nothing” (Jn.15:5)** – and, since Jesus IS THE LIVING WORD of God made flesh, this truth may also be stated as: **“Without the Word of God you can do nothing (of spiritual value“).**

Unfortunately, many who call themselves ‘Christians’ today, are not faithful to that truth and have watered down the Word or deviate from it entirely in order to please our modern “politically correct ” society. However, we who still honor the Word of God as it needs to be honored, must do more than merely state our position about the TRUTH of the WORD – we must “live it out” daily! If we do not live out the Word in our lives we are building our “houses” on sand and, as Jesus said, **“The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”**



We cannot, in fact, call ourselves Disciples of Christ, without living out the Word of God in every moment of our lives. Jesus said, **“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me (John 8:28).**

As His disciples we must also be able to sincerely state, ” I do nothing of myself, I only do what the Father, through the Holy Spirit, tells me to do”. In order to be, at this stage of discipleship, we must be in a day-to-day personal relationship with Jesus and guided by the Word every minute of our lives. The moment we start to deviate from what Jesus or the Father tells us through His Word we will stumble in our walk with Him and open ourselves to the deception and destruction of our souls by the enemy of our souls – Satan, the Father of Lies.

When we do stumble, for we all do, and we are yoked to Jesus, He will quickly pick us up and help us recover with minimal impact (1 Jn. 1:9). What we need to understand is that as fallible human beings we cannot attempt to accomplish this level commitment to “Live Out the Word” on our own. If we are truly yoked to Jesus, then, It is only through His Spirit in us that He accomplishes this, in us and through us. It is not of ourselves, so that no man may boast but rather it

is of Grace through Faith in the Spirit of Christ that is in us!



Obstacles to living the Word

What obstacles, then, still hinder us? Why do we find it so difficult to live out the Word in our lives and thus truly be His disciples?

Sadly, my brethren, the answer is that the human “self” in us is the major obstacle to true discipleship. Even when we “try” to follow Him, without realizing it, we are doing the very opposite — just because it is our “self” that is doing the “trying”. Now, don’t condemn yourself. Jesus did not come to condemn us He came to set us free from these foibles of ours. He came to bring us to the “Truth”, so that through understanding the Truth, in the Spirit, we could be set free to follow Him as a New Creation in Him and through Him!. His inspired Word is the “Truth” for He is the Word made flesh – and He and He alone can set us free so that the will of the Father may be accomplished through our lives – the only condition being, that we must deny our “old selves” and thus take up our cross DAILY in order to follow Him (Matt. 16:24).

Now, here is the hard part to understand. All of our lives we have been trained and taught to accomplish things in life out of our own self-directed efforts. In the world around us we are taught from early youth that we can do anything we set our sights on “through performance, ambition and hard work”. It is in fact the primary driving factor in most of the developing world and beyond. Because of this cultural conditioning we all grew up in, we injected these same ideals into the practice of our religion. It was thus natural for us to think that the best way we could honor God is by doing something “for” Him “through performance, ambition and hard work”. The problem is that when we enter into this type of self-directed effort we diminish its spiritual value because we derive our own personal glory from what we are doing, even though it is for a noble cause.

The “Good News of the Kingdom” or “Gospel” that Jesus proclaimed, however, was a Heaven-shaking pronouncement that was essentially telling all mankind that the Father was introducing to us a new way of living our humanity that would truly bring Him the Honor and Glory He desires from us, His children. Jesus termed this New Way of Living out our lives as, “the Kingdom of God” or “the Kingdom of Heaven”. He further told us that our entry into this “Kingdom” was to begin in the “heart” of each of those who believed in Him and His proclamation, He further said, that what God, the Father wanted was for us to enter into a relationship with Him, through belief in

Jesus, so that we could be filled with His Spirit and, that through that infilling, His Spirit would work in us and through us to accomplish His will here on earth as it is in Heaven by living out His Word! In this way by, yielding to Him and His Spirit, it would be that He, the Godhead, would work through us to bring forth His Kingdom, instead of us trying to do “for” Him, that which, as humans, is really out of our reach.

The “Good News of the Kingdom” Jesus proclaimed, was essentially telling us that the Father, being aware of our human incapacity to fully satisfy His desires to bring Him Honor and Worship, was bringing forth, through the sacrifice of His Son, a new epoch for Humanity wherein He Himself, in the person of His Son, would enter into us so that as His partners He would work in us and through us to bring forth His Kingdom in this world! Praised be His Holy Name!

That is why when His disciples asked Him about how to pray, He told them that the foundational prayer of discipleship (the “Our Father”) is to first acknowledge the Father for who He is and then to submit to Him by asking for Him to Reign over us so that through our obedience to Him (and His Word) His Will would be done by us and through us in this world (as it is in Heaven).

All that is required of us is to submit to “His Kingdom” or “His Reign” over us and to believe the Gospel, repenting in Faith, and yielding our “old selves” totally to Him so that He could give us a “New Self” through which His Spirit could operate in this world. In this way, the impediment of the “old self” “trying to do things for God” would be taken out of the way and a “New self”, conformed to the image of Christ would be placed in us, empowering us to do His Will, and only His Will, here on earth (as it is in Heaven).

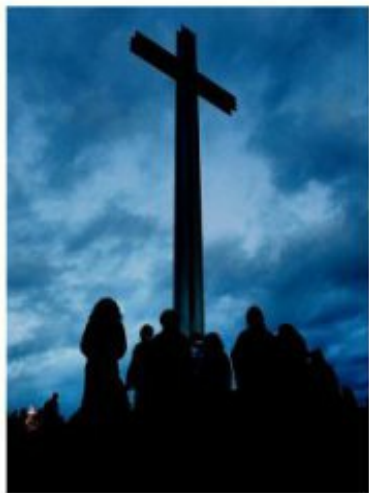
Of course, yielding to Him, as King, involves yoking ourselves, spiritually, to Christ (Matt.11:28-30), so that the Spirit of Christ in us would bring all Honor and Glory to the Father through living out His Word in our lives. This is what the process of “discipleship” is intended to accomplish in us, so that, through obedience to His Word the renewal of our mind to be conformed to the mind of Christ (Rom. 8:29) would proceed and so that we become truly single-minded in devoting our all to Christ as a living sacrifice to the Father for the Glory of His Name!



Go into all the world ...

Our problem as “Christians” today, is that, although we are all called to be Christ’s disciples, we have not all been fully successful in yielding to the Spirit and denying our “old selves” so that the Spirit of Christ can be released in us. Instead we live out our lives with one foot in the flesh and the other in the spirit. This is what St. James termed, a “dual-minded man” (James. 1:7; 4:8). Yes,

the “Good News” is sometimes not fully realized by us because it is “bad news” for our “old man” in the flesh, who doesn’t want to hear it. That is why the call to discipleship is being made again to all believing Christians – so that, with the help of the Holy Spirit we can truly assess whether we are being conformed to the world or to Christ. We are either in one state or the other – we cannot do both and be His disciples!



We are Crucified with HIM

Remember, our “old man has been crucified with Christ and no longer has any power over us but it is up to us to affirm the freedom from sin that Christ won for us on the cross – it is up to us to renounce sin, which no longer has power over us and to put on the “New Man” in Christ so that He and He alone may live in us and through us so that yielded to Him in this manner He may bring forth His Kingdom in us and through us to the Glory of the Father!

This, brethren, is the Gospel of the Kingdom that Christ asked us to preach and which I, again, proclaim to you today so that you may assess your walk with Him. Examine yourselves and crucify, therefore, your “old man” of the flesh and put on the “New Man” you are in Christ Jesus by surrendering yourself to Him as your King, Your Lord, and your Savior; obeying His Word and following the leadings of His Spirit! Praised be His Holy Name!

Here are Paul the Apostle’s words exhorting us regarding this matter:

“...do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life [right now, in this world]. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him [and, indeed, are alive in Him], knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died

to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” (Rom 6:3-11)

Ask yourself now: Am I ready to strive for spiritual growth in Christ to the level that the apostle Paul set for himself?

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.” (Gal. 2:20)

Also understand just what this striving entails as depicted by Paul’s exhortation to the Romans:

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled, not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” (Rom. 8:5-11)

“For the love of Christ urges us on (controls us), because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.” (2Cor. 5:14-15)

Are you ready, no longer to live for yourself but for Him who died and was raised for you? Pray about it.

If you would like to ask the Holy Spirit to help you rededicate yourself to Jesus so that you may be truly live out the inspired Word in faithfulness to the Gospel of the Kingdom, I refer you to the “Prayer Of Commitment” (see link below).

If your motives are sincere, you CAN BE SURE that the Holy Spirit will work in you to bring you fully into the Kingdom, where Jesus will comfort and strengthen you personally and you will continue in His Rest!

Blessed Be the Name of the Lord!

Your Fellow Pilgrim in Christ Jesus ... Bartimaeus

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Recommended Links...

[The Prayer of Commitment](#)

[Cast Your Net on the Other Side!](#)

[Sweet Yoke of Love](#)

[Regarding Spiritual Growth](#)

This contribution is available at <http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2013/08/28/%c2%a7-the-gospel-of-the-kingdom-living-out-the-word/>
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Thoughts from the Hunger Games [at Rediscovering Glory]

The first thing that stood out to be about the Hunger Games was the love that Peeta has for Katniss. It is a remarkable love. I found myself in awe of a love like that. That kind of love is the real deal and it is so appealing.

However instead of imagining a man like Peeta who would love me like that. I realized that I am loved like that. Actually I am loved with a more perfect love than that.

Peeta has a self-sacrificing love. Peeta knows that he loves Katniss. Therefore he decides that he must save her life although he must die in order to do that.

This gave me a tangible look at what God's love for me is like. It is a love that never runs out. It is a love that is willing to give no matter the cost. Peeta is like Jesus in that he is willing to sacrifice so much for the sake of his beloved.

With that said I read the Hunger Games with a certain horror. I know that many of the sentiments that the characters have are present in many people. I know that people are capable of such evil and that thought is chilling.

But with all of that I was struck by the kindness shown by the players of that horrible game. There is the relationship between Rue and Katniss. Rue saves Katniss's life. Then Thresh who was from Rue's district saves Katniss's life. There is also the relationship between Peeta and Katniss. They help each other. In the midst of all of this suffering and mess people helped each other. Not despite the suffering they were going through but because of it.

God's love is shown even in the most desperate of situations. The players showed kindness to each other. That is hard in that sort of situation. It is so easy to freak out and adopt an every man for himself attitude.

There are so many things about the games that are hard.

But Peeta reveals the hardest thing. He says

"As bad as it makes you feel you're going to have to do some killing, because in the arena, you only get one wish. And it's very costly."

"It costs your life," says Caesar (the interviewer)

"Oh, no. It costs a lot more than your life. To murder innocent people?"

It costs everything you are

."

(All quotes taken directly from

Mockingjay

)

In a book where killing innocent people is commonplace this line is shocking. It is shocking because it is true.

When you take an innocent human life you kill a part of yourself. Because it is a fundamental rejection of who God made you.

One of the things about this line that I find awesome is that it is put in a book where killing is so common. You have to kill to survive. However it is clear that in doing so you kill a part of yourself.

In a scenario where killing is easily justified as self-defense, the truth that by killing innocent people, you will be destroyed is so important. It proves that the taking of human life is never justified.

Furthermore you will harm

yourself

when you do this and you will take more from yourself than from the person you killed.

Katniss reiterates this when talking to Gale who says he is willing to kill others for the sake of their cause. However she knows that Gale does not understand the effects. She says "I don't know how to tell him about the aftermath of killing a person. About how they never leave you." What she really means is that your guilty conscience never leaves you.

She knows that actions have consequences. Hurting another person does have consequences not just for them but for you as well.

Later Katniss finds out Gale and Beetee's plan. They plan two bombs, one to go off first and then after people have rushed to the aid of the wounded a second bomb goes off. The second bomb kills them all. Katniss objects to this cruelty because Gale and Beetee are putting themselves on the same level as President Snow.

Katniss knows that to stoop to that level is wrong. In doing so they are putting themselves on the same level of evil that they are trying to fight.

Katniss and Peeta are the only ones who realize this. Katniss says

"I think that Peeta was onto something about us destroying one another and letting some decent species take over. Because something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children's lives to settle its differences. You can spin it any way you like. Snow thought that the Hunger Games were an efficient means of control. Coin thought the parachutes would expedite the war. But in the end, who does it benefit? No one. The truth is,

it benefits no one to live in a world where these things happen.

"

At the end of the book Katniss talks about how she deals with it on the really bad days "That's when I make a list in my head of every act of goodness I've seen someone do."

With that the book ends. There are powerful things to learn from this story about evil, sin and about the value of human life.

Human life is attacked right now. There are many things in this story that relate to that.

One of them is that the end never justifies the means. Killing innocent people is never ok. Not for any reason ever. But Katniss takes it a step further. A society that kills innocent people benefits no one. I think about abortion that way. We all know it is wrong. But we forget just how toxic it is to live in a culture where that is ok.

It is hard to fight it and we can never stoop to the level of those who are for it. That would defeat the purpose. That is why the person who shot George Tiller hurt the pro-life cause so much. We would never stoop to the level that would bomb abortion mills so that babies would no longer die there. In doing so we could hurt innocent human lives and that is exactly what we are trying to stop. It is about the dignity of all people no matter what they have done.

In recognizing the dignity of all people we realize the beauty in the world. Think of Abby Johnson who worked in an abortion mill but genuinely cared about helping women. Even before her conversion we could admire her for wanting to help women. She was misguided in how to do that and that is very sad.

It is so easy to be saddened by all of these things and to get bogged down in them. Katniss reveals how to deal with all of this. Instead of focusing on the bad she focuses on the good. In doing so we can recognize and rejoice in all that God has done without being upset about what we want him to do next.

My prayer for you is that you may recognize the good things that

are

happening in your life no matter what mess surrounds them!

This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.com/2013/08/thoughts-from-hunger-games.html>
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CF Adventuring Looks Like ... [at CF Family]



Reed Lakes trail a few days ago.

... anyone's Alaskan adventuring, with a few extra health chores. I get a little nervous when they pack up the ropes, metal spike-y things, and D rings and they get a lot of pleasure in telling me how they're not really going to tell me exactly how it went. It probably has something to do with how dangerously close to death they got. Boys.

While I love to hike and my big girl loves adventure, her breathless chattering of awesomeness usually involves animal sightings and scientific discoveries (And while bears, moose, wolves, and dead things are dangerous, we like big guns so she doesn't think it's life-threatening.)



Two days of this backcountry.

Not so boys. I used to think that Rees was so nuts because of the life-shortening aspect of CF ~ that he wanted to compress as much adventure as possible in his life because who knew when that Sweet Chariot would swing low. With five sons now, I know better. They are nuts, period. They are a pile of running, throwing, jumping dirt that hand me dandelion bouquets and hug me goodbye (sweat and dirt and all). They like

[crazy stories](#)

and they like

[crazy trips.](#)

They also really like

[baby sisters](#)

and their mommies because boys are also wonderful. Ken and I want them to test their mettle in the brain AND brawn department (Hunting is particularly good for both.). Half the reason we have a backyard hobby farm is for them to do gross, demanding chores for the family.



Some pass between glaciers they traversed (I'd rather not know the details!)

I'm glad our CF doctor isn't big on machinery for daily care, so that Rees can toss his hand-held devices into a backpack and do scary things. He does occasionally skip nebulizers, hooking it up in the car, using the battery for power as soon as he gets there (Although the new

[TOBI podhaler](#)

is an exciting hand-held discovery for backcountry, as well.). So off he goes, and off they all go, for dangerous adventures. Sometimes I join them; sometimes I stay home to make cinnamon rolls and good coffee for (most) of the near-death stories.

Today they're all home, though, and I'm glad.

Love, A

(

[Post #3\)](#)

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The Bell [at The Crooked Halo]

I KNOW WHO I AM

I am God's child (John 1:12)

I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)

I am united with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17)

I am bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

I am a saint (set apart for God). (Eph. 1:1)

I am a personal witness of Christ. (Acts 1:8)

I am the salt & light of the earth (Matt 5:13-14)

I am a member of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27)

I am free forever from condemnation (Rom. 8: 1-2)

I am a citizen of Heaven. I am significant (Phil 3 :20)

I am free from any charge against me (Rom. 8:31 -34)

I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Cor. 5:17-21)

I have access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18)

I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6)

I cannot be separated from the love of God (Rom 8:35-39)

I am established, anointed, sealed by God (2 Cor. 1:21-22)

I am assured all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28)

I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16)

I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Eph.. 3: 12)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)

I am the branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15: 1-5)

I am God's temple (1 Cor. 3: 16). I am complete in Christ (Col. 2: 10)

I am hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3) I have been justified (Rom5:1)

I am God's co-worker (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1) I am God's workmanship (Eph 2:10)

I am confident that the good works God has begun in me will be perfected (Phil1:5)

I have been redeemed and forgiven (Col 1:14).I have been adopted as God's child (Eph 1:5)

I belong to God

Do you know

Who you are?

The sound of a bell can be joyous, wistful, mournful or even frightening. Christmas bells herald the coming of our Saviour. Bells ring to honor the dead. Church bells once tolled to warn townsfolk of an enemy attack. I liken bells to chimes and the wistful whistle of a traveling train... sounds I adore... finding them comforting and soul-touching.

As a Catholic there is great meaning in bells. The Angelus, a devotion in memory of the Incarnation, is accompanied by the ringing of church bells at 6 am, noon, & 6 pm. The Angelus bell is a call to prayer and to spread good-will to everyone on Earth. When the Angelus bell peals, work stops and our hearts open to the mystery of The Word Made Flesh. In gratitude we bow our heads and pray.



The Angelus by Jean Francois Millet

There is no sound more beautiful than the Sanctus Bells. At Mass, just before the Consecration when multitudes of angels are on the Altar, a server rings a small bell three times indicating to worshipers to join with the angels in praising God with the words, "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord..." The first time the bells are rung, the priest prays to the Holy Spirit to change the gifts of bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord. The second time is when he raises and presents the Body of Christ to the worshipers and finally when the same is done to the Precious Blood of Jesus in the chalice. The ringing of bells during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has a profound effect...there is no denying that when they are heard, all are aware that something supernatural is taking place.

Did you know the Sanctus Bells are baptized? This special blessing consists of: washing the bells with holy water, then anointing the exterior with the oil of the sick and the interior with chrism. A censer of burning incense is placed under each bell and prayers are recited along with a Sacred Scripture reading. The beautiful Blessing below is prayed over the bell.

We praise you, Lord, Father all-holy. To a world wounded and divided by sin you sent your only Son. He gave His life for His sheep, to gather them into one fold and to guide and feed them as their One Shepherd.

May Your people hasten to Your church when they hear the call of this bell.

May they persevere in the teaching of the apostles, in steadfast fellowship, in unceasing prayer, and in the breaking of the bread. May they remain ever one in mind and heart to the glory of Your name.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

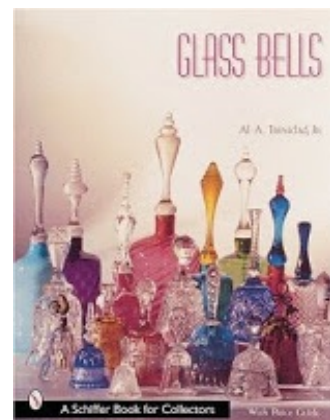
The bells are then sprinkled with holy water and incensed.

To curse by bell, book & candle is a solemn form of excommunication used in the Catholic Church that entails: the bell being tolled, specific readings from the Book of Offices, and three candles being extinguished with a certain ceremony.

Bells are common in other religious denominations. Methodists are known for their lovely "bell choir". Is there a more fitting way to "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praise"?

Psalm 98:4.

Did You Know? The bell is a percussion instrument and an idiophone. Historically bells are associated with the concept of peace and freedom (the Liberty Bell). The study of bells is called, campanology. The 17th century phrase, Saved By The Bell, came about because of the fear of premature burial. To avoid this, a string attached to a bell could be rung by the interred person should he revive after burial. It is, also, a boxing term for a last minute intervention. A parishioner friend of mine is so enamored with bells that he has written several books on the subject. see amazon [A.A. Jr. Trinidad's Glass Bells](#)



My Fostoria Bell

Even Hollywood gives a nod to the bell: "The Bells of St. Mary", the faith-based movie, "Ring The Bell", "Bell, Book & Candle" (James Stewart & Kim Novak). Bells were

significant in "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and who could forget that famous line from "It's A Wonderful Life"... "Every time a bell rings an angel get his wings." Bells are, well, Bella!

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! - See more at: <http://www.adoremus.org/0305SantusBells.html#sthash.5jNdNSLw.dpuf>

A small, rectangular button with a light gray background and a thin border. The word "Pin it" is written in a red, cursive font.

This contribution is available at <http://crookedhalocatholicblog.blogspot.com/2013/08/the-bell.html>
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Why I Don't Need A Pro-Life Bumper Sticker On My Van



I open the van doors and a soccer ball, an empty Burger King cup, and a purple tennis shoe fall on the asphalt parking lot. I scramble after the rolling ball and when I bend over to pick it up, my swollen belly heavy with child gets in the way. Once I've secured the athletic equipment, I turn back to the van and to the children steaming out of our large and noticeable 15-passenger ride.

“Who left the soccer ball in here?” I ask to no one in particular.

A chorus of “I don't know” and “It wasn't me” echoes back. I sigh and shove the stray goods under the seats of the van. My van is cleaner than my house, which isn't saying much considering random items dart at me when the doors are opened.

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- See more at: <http://www.integratedcatholiclife.org/2013/08/duggan-why-i-dont-need-a-pro-life-bumper-sticker/#sthash.nBtGPPN9.dpuf>

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This contribution is available at <http://www.colleenduggan.net/2013/08/why-i-dont-need-pro-life-bumper-sticker.html>

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Question: God of the Old vs. God of the New? [at Quidquid Est, Est!]

And we're back!

Sheila (who blogs at <http://agiftuniverse.blogspot.com/>) asks: “Why is the God of the Old Testament so different from the God of the New? One minute it’s the flood, fire and brimstone, and the next it’s ‘God does not desire the death of the wicked.’ One minute it’s ‘sacrifice these animals in this way,’ and the next it’s ‘I desire mercy not sacrifice.’”

This is a question which troubled the Church in the early days. It boils down to the apparent contradiction between the harshness of God in the Old Testament and the gentleness and love of Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus is supposed to be God, right? Well, then why does He pretty much contradict what God said to the Israelites?

There are three basic ways of approaching this question.

The first is that the Old Testament and the New Testament tell the story of two different gods, one harsh and evil (that would be the Old Testament) and one good (Jesus in the New Testament). This was the belief of the Gnostics, whom [we've discussed before](#). Typical monotheists don't like the idea of having two co-eternal, equally powerful deities, one pure good, the other pure evil. Besides, Gnostics had a whole bunch of other beliefs that made their argument rather unpleasant. As discussed in the post on Gnostics and my reflections on the phrase “I believe in one God” from the Creed, belief in multiple gods doesn't work. So we don't have two gods fighting.

The second idea is worse than the first. There isn't agreement between the two parts of the Bible on the most important point, that of the nature of God. How, then, can we trust the Bible? We can't. Therefore, it's a bunch of [insert preferred insulting word]. While we're at it, we can't even know if God exists. He must not, since if God did exist, and was good, we wouldn't be in the mess we're in. God must be made up.

Clearly this idea has problems too, the main one being that it rejects the existence of God. While we don't have time to get into the arguments for the existence of God, let's leave it at this: Something can't come from nothing. This is discussed in greater detail in my earlier post on belief in God, mentioned above. It's one thing to read the Bible and decide that God is mean, cruel, and terrifying; it's another to claim it is entirely made up. Many of the arguments that Jews and Christians invented God stem from the arguers preconceived ideas that all religions are inventions of people. The widespread use of this argument is surprising, since it's hard to argue using a source (the Bible) that the arguer has claimed to be unreliable.

But there is a better way. . .

The third idea is that maybe, just maybe, we need to look at the Bible as a WHOLE, searching for points of continuity rather than disunity. When that happens, a remarkable image appears. God is not a vicious “god monster,” as one atheist wrote; rather, He is a loving parent, a loving Father, wanting the best for His children.

Let’s start with the Old Testament.

We first meet God in the first verse of Genesis, the first book in the Bible: “In the beginning, when God created the Heavens and the Earth, the Earth was a formless wasteland and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters” (Gen 1:1-2). God is Creator, and in the course of creation makes everything good. The first Creation account uses the statement “God saw that it was good” as a refrain, showing that ALL of creation, mankind especially, is good. Thus God creates everything. Why did He create? Not because He was lonely, but out of love, for it is better to exist than not exist. In that sense, because He created all things and is the origin of all that is good and whole, God is called Father.

The rest of the Old Testament tells the story of God as Father to the human race. Like any father, God faces rebellious children. This rebellion started with Adam and Eve, the first humans, who rejected God’s instruction to avoid eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (on a related, though not strictly theological note, the comedian Bill Cosby has a [hilarious standup routine](#) where he compares the Fall of Adam and Eve to “brain-damaged” children). From then on, God had to play that most unfortunate role of parents: Disciplinarian. Now, I don’t have children yet, but I do teach them (or at least teenagers, who are sometimes more childish than children), and I hate having to be the disciplinarian. You tell students to do something, and to avoid doing this other thing, and before you know, they have done the very thing you told them not to do, and have somehow forgotten what they were supposed to do. So it was with the people of God.

Trace the story of Salvation History and you can see this. Adam and Eve are kicked out of the Garden of Eden, and have two sons: Cain and Abel. Both are supposed to offer sacrifice to God, and they do, but Cain’s is half-hearted; without giving his heart to God, his sacrifice is moot. When God prefers Abel’s sacrifice to Cain’s (Abel was righteous, and therefore gave his best to God), Cain kills Abel. He is exiled from the family, and he starts his own, each generation separating themselves more and more from God, eventually becoming the “men” mentioned in Genesis prior to Noah’s Flood (Gen. 6:1-4). Meanwhile, God’s blessing bestowed upon Adam at creation is passed down to Seth (born after Abel’s murder), from whom Noah is born. Noah listens to God, while the rest of mankind doesn’t (Genesis notes regarding the men of that time: “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”), and as a result God wipes out the rest of the human race. It was not out of some evilness on God’s part that he wiped out everyone but Noah. The other people of that age were so evil that they had no room in their hearts for God, for any goodness. Hence Noah and his family are spared. The often used metaphor of cutting off limbs to prevent the spread of disease is apt here: in order to save

mankind, Noah and his family needed to be protected from the evil that infected man.

Such was God's plan. But, as is often the case with God and men, God's will is contingent (for more on this, see Dr. William Marshner's [lecture series on Predestination](#) from the [Institute of Catholic Culture](#)), and man fallen human nature rejects what God had planned. No sooner had Noah and his family descended from the ark than sin appears again in mankind's story. A drunken, passed out Noah is unable to prevent his son Ham from having relations with Noah's wife (Ham's mother). The biblical phrase "And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father" (Gen. 9:22) refers to this sin (see Leviticus 18). A curse comes down not only on Ham but on Ham's son, Canaan, who would be the fruit of the incestuous relationship. Why the curse on the son? Often in the Old Testament, when some curse falls upon the descendent of an evil person while the evil person gets off free, there is more to the curse. Deacon Sabatino Carnazzo at the Institute of Catholic Culture explains in an [audio lecture](#) that Ham, by having sexual relations with his mother, shows that he was trying to take over the family, for in those days one took control of a family or kingdom by having relations with the mother. Ham, as the youngest of the sons, would not hold a place of authority in the family. He wanted to control Noah and the whole family, and his son Canaan would allow him to do just that. The curse that made Canaan the slave of the other brothers ruined Ham's hopes to rule.

Similar stories abound throughout the Old Testament. Whenever the Lord establishes a chain of command or sets up some regulations, people rebel or try to usurp the authority of the legitimate leaders. Why the elaborate laws of Leviticus? The Israelites had been led out of Egypt, and therefore shown the power of God over the false gods of the Egyptians. But when Moses was up on the mountain talking to God, the people got impatient and had Aaron, Moses' brother, set up a golden calf for them, their attempt to continue the Egyptian pagan worship they had partaken of while slaves in Egypt. As a result, the original laws and plans that God had given Moses were nixed, and thus God gave the Israelites the ENTIRE book of Leviticus. Everything is specified, particularly how the people are to worship, how they are to live, how they are to interact with each other. There is nothing, NOTHING, left out, or at least nothing that the Israelites might need. Hence the heavy burden of the Law the Israelites bore throughout their history. Yet even with these rules, the people managed to mess things up. Hence the "wrath of God" flaring up every once in a while.

Again, think like a parent. God laid out the rules for the Israelites, but they couldn't listen, so he clarified it, and clarified it, and clarified it. Soon there were hundreds of laws, and still the people turned from God. Even the priests and scribes began abusing their position among the people. It was why God spoke through prophets, condemning the empty sacrifices and prayers of the priests, who were more concerned with outward rituals than internal devotion. Jesus frequently quoted these passages. In fact, most references to the merciful, loving God from the New Testament are connected with Old Testament prophecies. "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice," though spoken by Jesus to the Pharisees who complained about Jesus dining with sinners, comes from the prophet Hosea. The New Testament passage follows the calling of Matthew by Jesus. Our Lord says, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those

who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:12-13). We should follow our Lord's instructions. The prophecy in Hosea reads as follows:

Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets,
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,
and my judgment goes forth as the light.

For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.

But at Adam they transgressed the covenant;
there they dealt faithlessly with me. (Hosea 6:5-7)

The story of Salvation History is as follows:

- 1) God lovingly gathers His people to Him, and makes a covenant with them.
- 2) The people follow God for a while, until they get distracted like Doug the dog from *Up*. They usually start worshipping some false god, usually influenced by their pagan neighbors, and there are usually women involved.
- 3) God sends/allows some horrible thing to happen to His people (natural disasters/enslavement/conquest by an enemy).
- 4) God sends a prophet, calling the people to repent.
- 5) The people cry out to God, saying they are sorry for their sins (or they reject the prophet, often beating or killing him).
- 6) God lovingly gathers His people to Him, and makes a covenant with them (or, if they rejected the prophet, worse things happen to them. Do you know what happened to the lost tribes of Israel?)

Viewing the Old Testament from this perspective changes everything. No longer is it a chronicle of a wrathful god against an innocent people. It is a story of a loving Father who time and again offers His hand to His children, only for them to run away. But when the children find themselves in danger, in pain, or trapped by evil, they call out to their Father, and He answers and helps them. It is our story too.

Now look at the New Testament. How does the story of Jesus fit with the story of the Old

Testament? It's not a mystery; Jesus explains it in a parable:

One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority." He answered them, "I also will ask you a question; now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?" And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet." So they answered that they did not know whence it was. And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country for a long while. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, that they should give him some of the fruit of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent another servant; him also they beat and treated shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent yet a third; this one they wounded and cast out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will respect him.' But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' And they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others."

When they heard this, they said, "God forbid!" But he looked at them and said, "What then is this that is written:

'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner'?

Every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on any one it will crush him." The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them.
(Luke 20:1-19)

Jesus, of course, is the Son. What's more shocking is that the people listening to the parable KNOW that Jesus is the Son. Jesus ends the parable by saying, "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them [the tenants]? He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others." In other words, God will give the blessing, the special place of the Israelites as the chosen people of God, to all the nations, rather than the Israelites. The scribes and priests know this is what Jesus means, for they respond, "God forbid!" But they do what Jesus prophesied anyway. Did they recognize that they were fulfilling the prophecies of the death of the Messiah? The Scriptures do not say, though we can imagine many a heavy heart the night of Good Friday as more than one mouth uttered, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The Bible is all one story. God's wrath and Jesus' love are the same, just as a parent who

punishes does so out of love, for the benefit of the child. How will the child know that what he has done is wrong if he is not told so, or punished when he has done wrong? So also with the Israelites.

So also with us.

The difference between God's portrayal in the Old Testament and His portrayal in the New is one of perspective. Frequently the Old Testament tells the story of God having to punish His unruly children. The New Testament provides a view of Him reaching out His hand to us, so that we can take the hand of Jesus and walk with Him into eternal life. Recall what Adam and Eve would do before the Fall. They would walk with God. When Adam heard God walking in the garden after Adam had sinned, he hid. There is a story from the Eastern Church fathers that, when Christ went down to bring from Hell (not Hell proper, but what is sometimes called the "Limbo of the Just") the Old Testament heroic men and women who had been waiting for their chance to enter Heaven, Adam was the first to meet Christ. Adam, the story goes, heard the footsteps of Our Lord, recognized them as the footsteps from the garden, and rather than hiding, ran to meet his Lord, to walk with Him again.

A story, yes, but a beautiful one. We too should run to Him, so we too can walk with our Lord.

Now, Sheila, this is only a brief look at this question. Unfathomable numbers of words address this issue in much greater detail, and with much more finesse. Hopefully I have at least turned you in the right direction.

For more information:

Carnazzo, Sabatino. ["Swords and Serpents: A Study of Salvation History."](#) – Describes the whole Bible as one big book (in just 6 hours!). Shows how God has worked throughout Salvation History.

_____. ["Genesis: In the Beginning."](#) – In-depth examination of the book of Genesis, with particular attention paid to the first few chapters of the book.

Carroll, Warren H. *A History of Christendom*. Volume I. *The Founding of Christendom*. Front Royal, VA: ChristendomCollege Press, 1985. – Traces God's hand in human history, drawing from Biblical and pagan histories, from Genesis through the ascension of Constantine to the Roman imperial throne.

[Catholic Answers Live, April 11, 2011 \(with Timothy Gray\)](#) – Radio show, the first half of the show deals directly with this topic.

Marshner, William. ["Are You Saved? The Catholic Doctrine of Predestination"](#) – Discusses the details of God's will in history and in our lives and how our choices can affect God's contingent will.

Olson, Carl E., “The ‘Angry God’ and the ‘Loving God’: Can We Reconcile How God is Portrayed in the Old and New Testaments?” Catholic Answers Vol. 27, No. 2 (May/June 2013), p. 12–14. – Print only. Includes a short discussion of the classic example of “Angry God,” that of the war against the Canaanites.

This contribution is available at <http://guidquidestest.wordpress.com/2013/08/17/question-god-of-the-old-vs-god-of-the-new/>
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God Is Always With Us, Isn't He? [at Harvesting The Fruits Of Contemplation]



((St. Agatha's, Canastota, NY)

(Photography©Michael Seagriff)

We believe that God is always with us, don't we? Isn't He? Or do we believe that, only when things are going well? How often do we thank God for His blessings when our lives seem to be on the right track and our burdens light? Do we take Him for granted during those satisfying times?

What happens when we feel abandoned by God? How do we react when times are hard and challenging, when our daily crosses seem too heavy to bear? Do we accept them and thank God for sending them? Or like Gideon in today's first reading, do we doubt God's presence among us by asking "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?"

Gideon doubted God's presence among His people and asked for a sign before he did as God had asked of him.

God gave him a sign.

In the midst of our daily struggles will we too ask for a sign before we accept God's will for us? Or will we become willing cross bearers because we believe, as Saint Claude de Colombiere taught, that "(apart from sin) *nothing happens to us in life unless God wills it.*"?

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2013/08/god-is-always-with-us-isnt-he.html>

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Are Soulmates Real? [at Captive the Heart: A Sprightly Wedding Blog For the Catholic Bride]



I'm such a huge dork. I might be wrong, but it seems like everyone besides me has been over *Napoleon Dynamite* since, you know, 2006 or so. I still watch it sometimes, and I still crack up. Do you remember Uncle Rico's line about his dream of "making millions of dollars and living in a big ol' mansion somewhere, soaking it up in a hot tub with my soul mate?"

Ridiculous. But anyway, I've been thinking about that lately. Have you seen this article floating around, "[My Husband Is Not My Soulmate?](#)" A friend of mine asked my opinion on it a few days ago, and I realized there's something so...indescribable to me about the whole thing. I feel like I agree *and* I disagree, and am having the darndest time putting into words why.

I get the point of the article, I think. Hannah is saying that her real, live, flesh-and-blood husband is so much more fulfilling than the idealized, guitar-strumming man she imagined as a teenager.

She's saying that being his wife involves an intentional, self-giving love that she's happy to pour out to him; it's not a fairy tale. "My marriage," she says, "is not based on a set of choices over which I had no control. It is based on a daily choice to love this man, this husband that I chose out of many people that I could have chosen to love." Amen. I totally get that.

Hannah got me wondering, though, if there really is a such thing as a soulmate for everyone called to marriage. She's wise, I think, to point out that Scripture as evidence tends to come up short, but where to go from there? My instinct says (and feel free to debate me on this) that vocationally speaking, and within the sacramental nature of vocations in the Church, that for a man and woman disposed to the graces of the sacrament of marriage, in which their relationship is literally transformed, the person you marry *does* become your path to Heaven, and hopefully, a fulfillment of your heart. Grace builds on nature, you know?

At the same time, Andrew and I have had a few conversations where we wonder if we could've married other people. I told my friend that we usually conclude there are probably good, holy people out there whom we'd feel fulfilled by, but that neither of us can imagine being quite as fulfilled, or understood, or as free with anyone else. I love my husband so deeply and feel so seen

and so loved by him that I really can't imagine anything else. The other thing, or person really, that makes me tend to think there is such a thing as soulmates, is John Paul II. His writings are all about the immense dignity, value, and unrepeatability of every human person. So, if every person is completely unique and unrepeatable, wouldn't it make sense that the person the Lord intends him or her to enter into marriage with (assuming the person is called to marriage) is *someone*, not just *anyone*?

My thoughts are still coming together on this, and I'd love to hear yours. Read the article if you haven't, and tell me what you think! Do you believe in soulmates? Do you think the permanent nature of the sacraments of vocation has a bearing on who you choose as your spouse?

A handwritten signature in blue ink. It features a stylized cross symbol on the left, followed by the name "Stephanie" written in a cursive script.

This contribution is available at <http://captivetheheart.blogspot.com/2013/08/are-soulmates-real.html>
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Just don't say it: chewed gum, spit cups, and duct tape [at Worthy of Agape]

I know, I've written about this topic [before](#), but it bears repeating, especially when I constantly see how damaging these ideas are to women, young and old.

You are not the chewed up gum that is stuck to the sidewalk and trampled on.

You are not the spit water in the cup that everyone has spit in after swishing water around in their mouth while eating an Oreo.

You are not the duct tape or the post-it note that no longer sticks.

Let me make this point perfectly clear:

Your worth is NOT solely dependent on your purity.

You are worthy because God finds you worthy, period. It doesn't matter what you've done, how many times you've sinned, or who you were with five minutes ago. ***God finds you worthy.***

I get it. On one level those metaphors and visual aids make sense. Having sex with someone who isn't your husband is like spitting in a cup and then passing that cup on to someone else. Having sex with someone who you aren't married to is like chewing gum, letting someone else chew that gum, then spit it on the sidewalk and letting everyone else walk across it. Having sex outside of marriage is like using duct tape or post-it notes over and over again, they eventually stop sticking.



worthyofagape.com But here's the problem with all of those metaphors: they tell people (and especially girls) that their value and worth in life is based solely on their sexual purity. Those metaphors say that once your stick is gone or your cup has been spit in you have no purpose, no value, and no worth. How damning is that? Where is the charity, the mercy, and the

forgiveness in that? These metaphors we use incite fear and shame where we should be stirring up respect and appreciation for the beauty and wonder of our sexuality. In fact, I'll go so far as to say that these metaphors open the door for Satan to pile shame and ideas of worthlessness into our hearts – as if we even needed to let the door be open any more for him.

Whether someone was raped, blurred the lines of purity without having sex, or freely gave away their virginity, these metaphors strip girls (because these metaphors are more often aimed at girls than they are guys...and I'm a girl, so I'm writing from that perspective) of the value they have beyond their virginity. What does that leave us with? Girls who aren't virgins are worthless. They are have no purpose and no value because their gum has lost its taste, their clear water is no longer refreshing and satisfying, and their tape no longer sticks. Our worth has to go beyond our use as a sexual object. Our use is more than how "refreshing" and "satisfying" our water is, how "tasty" our gum is, and how "sticky" our tape is. Do you see how those words tie our worth to our goodness as an object as opposed to as a person? We are more than refreshing, satisfying, tasty, and sticky, because God says so, each and every day, *no matter what*. Our value as women (and I'm going to go ahead and speak for *all* women here) goes well beyond sex and our sexual history. Can it be a factor in future relationships? Of course, but does it damn us to a realm where we are unseen, unsought, unpursued, unworthy, and unlovable? **NO WAY**. I've said it before and I'll say it again: God loves you and finds you worthy just as you are. He makes all things new. He can make the gum regain its flavor, the water become clear (hello, baptism and confession anyone?), and the tape sticky again.

When the metaphors fail, how about we try a giant dose of the love and mercy He shows to each one of us every single moment of our lives? How about we try approaching sex with a sense of reverence and awe (as He intended it), instead of a sense of fear and shame? At the end of the day it isn't about how dirty your spit cup is, how chewed up your gum is, or how sticky your duct tape is. At the end of the day it is about our heart and how clean we are allowing Him to make it, it is about love, mercy and holiness, not judgement and shame.

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

He's not telling you that you are a nasty spit cup, chewed up gum, or useless duct tape. Do you know what He does tell you?

*“You are all fair, my love; **there is no flaw in you.**” – Song of Songs 4:7*

This contribution is available at <http://worthyofagape.com/2013/08/21/just-dont-say-it-chewed-gum-spit-cups-and-duct-tape/>
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Into the Desert: A journey through the eyes of a Catholic priest and Army chaplain



I was happy to find a shrine to my patron saint! (Click on photo for larger image.)

From a Madaba website:

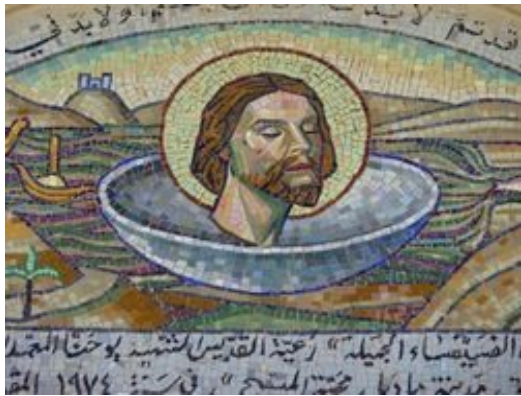
Patron of Madaba and Jordan

On December 7, 1967, the Vatican recognized the historic Catholic Church in Madaba, belonging to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as a Shrine of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist and urged visitors and pilgrims to visit the sacred site.



Does this crest look familiar? Yes, it's Bl. John Paul II from his visit to the shrine.

كنيسة ومزار قطع رأس يوحنا المعمدان
 رعية اللاتين تأسست عام 1880 م
 The Shrine Of The Beheading Of Saint John The Baptist
 Patron Of Madaba And Jordan
 Pilgrimage and tourist site
 The Visitor can see:
 A beautiful historic Church - The Shrine of The Beheading Of Saint John The Baptist
 Acropolis rooms, ruins and tunnels - Moabite Well - Museum of ancient Madaba
 Model of Madaba at the 6th century - Tent of Ruth - Madaba Old House
 Panoramic view of Madaba from the Bell Tower.
 Open at 9:00 am - 7:00 pm (summer time) & at 9:00 am - 5:00 pm (winter time)
 Visitors Welcome



Mosaic above the front door.



Looks like St Joseph..



Let's go downstairs into the "acropolis".







Note: In case you were wondering just a replica head...



The beautiful sanctuary (back upstairs).



Close up of the altar mosaic. It's a traditional symbol of a pelican feeding its young with her own blood - a symbol of Christ's own sacrifice for us, hence the symbol for the Eucharist.

From the [Patheos blog site](#): (see the link for more info. on this subject) In St. Thomas Aquinas' *Adoro te Devote*, we sing:

*Pie Pellicane, Iesu Domine,
Me immundum munda tuo sanguine.*

Cuius una stilla salvum facere

Totum mundum quit ab omni scelere. **Translation:**

Lord Jesus, good Pelican, [or "pious"]

wash me clean with your blood,
one drop of which can free
the entire world of all its sins.



Notice the Roman missal, those words are not English but arabic. As usual the Mass is celebrated in the vernacular language, therefore, arabic in Madaba.



Traditional confessional



"Bless me Father, for I have sinned..." How long since that last confession???

More to come... come back after confession. ;-)

This contribution is available at <http://soldierofchrist.net/1/post/2013/08/shrine-of-the-beheading-of-st-john-the-baptist.html>
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Cross 2 Ross '13 {Day 2: Copper Creek to Whatcom Camp} [at Glimpse of Peace]



Day 2 departure for an 11 mile trek to Whatcom Camp from the rocky shores of Copper Creek

Day 2 began with an early wake up call at 6AM,

but one devout Scout arose each morning half an hour earlier than the crew for quiet prayer, an inspiration to all of us and surely a link to great aid and grace from above in our daily trials. Community prayer before our daily departures and grace before meals punctuated our daily routine, and we enjoyed ample opportunity for prayer and meditation during the day-long treks. With the grandeur of creation all around us, our thoughts turned to God quite naturally along the way; severe physical challenges also brought a desire to seek help from above. Knowing that many at home were lifting us in prayer gave me great solace in trials and extra endurance to push through the pain.



Joseph, Caleb and Peter enjoy a second (or third?) round trip crossing of the Chilliwack River

aboard the cable car.

Our second day on the long trail toward Ross Lake offered a recess of sorts.

After a short and relatively easy three mile hike we reached the cable car crossing of the Chilliwack River. A ladder's climb to the take-off spot required careful negotiation with loaded packs and hiking poles. Team effort allowed for the safe crossing of all our crew, our gear and a few extra round trips just for the fun of it. Extra long stops at the center point offered those of us without height phobias to extend our view enjoyment and relax in something resembling a chair for a few extra minutes. Bouncing was highly discouraged, but oh-so tempting for some lofty travelers.



Peter, powering the cable car over the Chilliwack River with his dad as the sole passenger.



Cable car passenger, treated to a long view-stop right in the middle of the expanse.



Science in motion



Without time constraints, some of us could have spent hours at the cable car crossing.



Joy riding high above the river, hoping to spot spawning salmon (which hadn't reached this area just yet).



Peter and Joseph ~ happy repeat customers



Perhaps a view of Whatcom Glacier through the clouds

A calculated move to reach Whatcom Camp on day 2

rather than stopping at the lower elevation Graybeal Camp meant that a ridiculously strenuous climb to reach Whatcom came in the final miles at the end of a long day's trek. Another ground wasp attack left Zachary with 3 hits below the knee and subsequently, those of us in the caboose 'sprinted' up a set of three switchbacks to avoid further injuries. Zachary doubled back to carry my pack on the breakneck uphill race to beat the wasps. Successfully avoiding a second onslaught, we stopped to administer first aid to Zac's stings on along steep trail in a light mist.



Tim navigates through a giant slide site, attempting to stay on the 'trail'

The final miles of uphill trudging into camp

seemed to take forever; the trail endless and brutally steep. We nearly unanimously recall this particular section of the 50 miles as the most difficult of all.

Reports of high bear activity were confirmed within minutes of our arrival when Enoch met a couple at the water hole who indicated that a bear had been spotted in our campsite a few hours earlier. A good place for bears to visit indeed, as the blueberries were bountiful. We kept a clean camp, and took extra precautions with hanging our food and scented stuff before dusk.



First aid stop for sting relief on the steep Brush Creek Trail leading to Whatcom Camp.



Zachary sets up the kitchen, perched under Noah's Tarp at Whatcom Camp.



Judah, Enoch, and Peter set up camp at a rainy Whatcom Camp.



Judah, Enoch, Tim and Peter work together to hang the food out of bears' reach at Whatcom Camp.



About 40-50 pounds of crew food, hanging safely out of bears' reach for the night
Forgetting the strenuous day's journey

, a few Scouts ventured out after dinner for an evening stroll to find a nearby lake armed with map, compass and camera. The lake remained elusive, but the hikers found plenty of extra adventure and sweeping views from lofty heights at nearly sundown. By the time we called it quits, the moon offered tremendous illumination over Whatcom Peak across the way from camp. Outrageous beauty, well worth the cost of such a difficult end-of-the-day ascent to camp.



Can you spot Joseph in red and Caleb in orange on their evening stroll?



Peter and Enoch enjoy the evening's entertainment: watching Joseph and Caleb scamper on the rock face.

This contribution is available at <http://glimpseofpeace.blogspot.com/2013/08/cross-2-ross-13-day-2-copper-creek-to.html>

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Not in scripture: everyone goes to heaven? [at Convert Journal]



Universalism is the heretical belief that all are eventually saved. This is not just the *hope* that everyone will be saved, but that they **ARE** saved. Nor should this be confused with redemption, which was purchased with our Lord's blood on the cross. Christ died for all, every person without exception, but sadly not every person accepts His offer, His gift, His sacrifice for their salvation. Loving us as He does, He has granted us free will and does not *force* us to accept Him.

If universalism were true, you are saved regardless how you live your life. Salvation is in no way contingent on faith. Were a person an unrepentant mass murdering, torturing, Satan worshiper – heaven still awaits them.

Universalists conflate God's will that all are saved and the merits of His Son with individual salvation. Holy scripture speaks frequently of the reality of hell and the many who choose to go there by rejecting God's grace. Let's see what it would look like if universalism were true. *Not in scripture* are words shown in ~~strike-through~~. Words shown in **bold** actually are in scripture.

The narrow gate.

Enter through ~~any~~ **the narrow** gate; for the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to ~~eternal life~~ **destruction**, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow the gate and constricted the road that ~~also~~ leads to life. And those who find it are few.

Someone asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" He answered them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough ~~so they will be let in~~. After the master of the house has arisen and locked the door, then will you stand outside knocking and saying, "Lord, open the door for us." He will say to you in reply, "I do not know where you are from ~~but welcome friend~~." And you will say, "We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets." Then he will say to you, "~~all are welcome~~ **I do not know where [you] are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!**"

And there will be ~~universal joy~~ **wailing and grinding of teeth** when you see Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves ~~among them~~ **cast out.**

On discipleship.

~~Not~~ everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, ~~but only~~ the one who does the will of my Father in heaven ~~and the one who does not.~~

The witness of the prophets.

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the Israelites were like the sand of the sea, ~~all~~ **only a remnant** will be saved; for decisively and quickly will the Lord ~~will welcome all mankind~~ **execute sentence upon the earth.**”

As foretold in Psalms.

The LORD is revealed in ~~his unconditional mercy~~ **making judgments**: by the deeds they do ~~or fail to do, all are saved~~ **the wicked are trapped.**

Reproach to the unrepentant.

Then he began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum: ‘Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld.’”

“For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

~~“Just kidding.”~~

The rich man and Lazarus.

When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and ~~also from that place~~ **from the netherworld, where he was in torment**, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.

The above verses scratch only the surface of this topic. There are far too many to include them all here. The bottom line: hell is real and those who consign themselves there do so **forever.**

The specific word of God notwithstanding, sometimes folks read Holy Scripture as if certain words and phrases have been removed – or as if others have been added. I am here to help!

I call this series [not in scripture](#). These are Bible quotes with a twist: words and phrases not actually present are shown with ~~strike-through~~. Scripture simply does not say that! Conversely, words that are actually in scripture (but sometimes overlooked) are shown in **bold**.

This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2013/08/not-in-scripture-everyone-goes-to-heaven/>

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Circumcision and Abortion [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

Yes, and I also don't understand how some people can feel pity for abused animals, supporting shelters with their time and money, and then be so vicious in their response to those who are trying to "save the baby humans." I love animals, too, but... ~ Rosemary in Ohio

Rosemary, to that I say with sad bewilderment, "God have mercy on us."

"...one of the least of these..." This is very good, valid connection between Matthew 25:44-46 and abortion support.

"...one of the least of these..." This is very good, valid connection between Matthew 25:44-46 and abortion support.

Thanks for commenting, George. Would that ALL Christians would agree with the connection, and the very dire warning of our Lord, in this matter.

Richard, the absolute lack of any compassion whatsoever toward the unborn child, as well as any concern for the welfare of women victimized by abortion is deeply disturbing. There is an absolute blackout of research connecting abortion to high suicide and depression rates as well as increases in breast cancer and future miscarriage. Add to that the vicious reaction to someone like yourself who is simply trying to present a reasonable premise, and one wonders that there is more to this than simple difference of opinion. I truly believe abortion is diabolical. People who bring feces and jars of urine to threaten lawmakers...as in Texas recently, have surrendered a huge chunk of their dignity as human beings. May God help them to see the LIGHT. Bless you for at least trying to reason with them.

Patricia, your use of the word, 'diabolical' is accurate. I call it also demonic, Satanic, and otherwise rooted in the lake of fire where Satan and those who serve him will reside forever.

I know those are very strong words (I suppose they can be considered that way), but I am astounded that people have no trouble calling (for example) Hitler's policies of genocide 'evil' but at the same time think the genocide of innocent babies of all races is simply a woman's 'choice.'

Evil has blinded our eyes. And even Christians -- Catholic and Protestants -- share a huge part of the blood already spilt around the world.

How those who name Christ as their Lord can vote for people and policies that kill babies is

something God will certainly judge in eternity, and also in the here-and-now -- or we know nothing of God's holiness and judgment.

I'm pro-life and against infant circumcision. The need for circumcision was done away with in Christ. What about this don't you understand?

Thank you for your comment, Anonymous. I think you missed the point of my post. I was not trying to address the benefits or disadvantages of circumcision, but rather to demonstrate the irrational and, frankly, evil position of pro-abortionists.

Again, thanks for reading my post and commenting.

Yesterday we did Lifechain out on the main shopping drag. Got a couple of middle fingers which is the usual. This year we also got a 20 something man yelling, "Let's kill some more babies, woo!"

People can't stand a sign of contradiction, starting with Cain.

It is scary how blatantly evil people are becoming. To say, "Let's kill more babies, wo!" makes for a very chilling realization. Such an attitude is nothing less than Satanic.

This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2013/09/circumcision-and-abortion.html>

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Catholics believe the Pope can never be wrong. Right? If you look at some of the corrupt Popes throughout history, you'll know that this simply cannot be true.

What then is Papal Infallibility?

First, let's talk about **Apostolic Succession**. Catholics, believe the original authority given by Christ to his apostles has been preserved and passed down from Bishop to Bishop throughout the ages. Because of this direct line, the Pope traces his authority back to Peter, whom Christ appointed to lead His Church.

Because of Apostolic Succession, the Pope cannot err when he is 1) **exercising his role as the leader of the Church** AND 2) **defining a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church**.

The first requirement means anything outside his official role as Pope (i.e. his personal life) is not subject to Papal Infallibility. The second part is much more restricting: only in issues of Church **dogma** is he incapable of error. Dogmas are the *most serious and essential Church teachings* – in fact, most Church teaching are *not* dogma. If you know anything about Catholicism, new teachings are rare, new dogma even more so. Indeed, these instances are so uncommon that the vast majority of Popes have never had an occasion in which Papal Infallibility applied.

The Church does not put a stamp of approval on the romantic dalliances or greedy schemes of the medieval Popes. She doesn't approve of misstatements by modern Popes. She simply teaches that **in the most serious of religious matters, she will not allow a Shepherd to lead his flock astray**.

Before commenting, [please read the guidelines for this series](#). And, check out the rest of the series [here](#).

Catholic 101 posts are designed to be short snippets of our faith. Please consider emailing this to one person who might be seeking an answer.

This is a guest post from Mandi. Mandi is a 20-something wife and mother who takes her Catholic faith seriously. She shares the joys and challenges of marriage, parenting, and Catholic womanhood at [Messy Wife, Blessed Life](#). When she's not blogging, she's probably wrangling a toddler, selling [Lilla Rose hair accessories](#), playing word games, or moving cross country.

This contribution is available at <http://callherhappy.com/catholic-101-papal-infallibility/>
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Let the Children Come to Me



How could we look at these images of Pope Francis with the children and not see Jesus? He reflects Christ's love most beautifully when he is with the children. In the images below you will see Pope Francis kissing a little boy and the look on the little boy's face is just priceless. And, the photo of Pope Francis reaching for the little boy that is being handed to him says it all. An encounter between two very different people. The innocence of the little boy who seems to be just absorbing the moment that he is in and Pope Francis who is bursting into a huge smile just at the sight of him. The way Pope Francis looks at the little boy is enough to make you want to cry right there. This little boy's life is so precious. You can see it in the Pope's eyes when he reaches for him. There are some things that just can't be faked and these photos portray in an instant, what would take a thousand words to describe. Jesus Christ himself must have been a great deal like this.

The gospel reading today says "The little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."



How beautiful! How awesome is Christ's love! The innocence of the children touched him and he touched them back, with love. How much we could learn from this simple encounter and exchange of love. If the people in heaven are like these little children, we will be so blessed to be there with them too. What joy children can bring to the adults in their lives, if only we could only see them like Christ does. Children are so precious and are made in God's very own image. Their innocence and the purity of their lives are worth protecting

from the very moment they are conceived, and indeed for the rest of their lives as well. No wonder Christ said in another scripture verse in the bible “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe (in me) to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.” Mark 9:42

In the first reading today Joshua told the people to “choose this day whom you will serve”. Then he said “but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” The very best thing you can do with your life besides love God and worship Him, is to love your family and teach your children to love Jesus too. Sometimes parents believe they are raising their children in the faith, by bringing their children to mass each week and enrolling them in Catholic schools and religious education classes. Parents also think they are setting a good example by going to mass each week, going to confession regularly, attending the holy days of obligation and participating in the life of the church. Maybe they bring their children to volunteer in parish ministries like delivering food baskets to the poor or visiting the residents in a nursing home too. Parents may teach their children to pray bedtime prayers and the rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet and practice other religious observances at home too. But, if children do not feel like they are loved, our religious practices have little meaning. We should never assume they know that we love them just because we hug them and kiss them, tell them we love them and do many things for them.



Being overly permissive or overly strict are both damaging to a child. Jesus is both just and merciful. He isn't one or the other, He is both. Hopefully, we are striving throughout our lives to imitate the Lord Jesus more and more as time goes on.

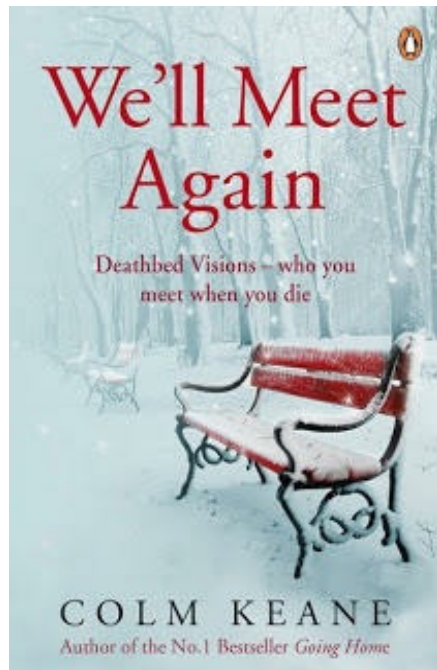
One last thing. Sometimes parents have such high expectations of a child, that when a child does something that they know is going to let their parents down, they can't go to them and tell them. When a child, teenager or young adult finds themselves in serious trouble, they should know deep down inside that their parents will always love them, even when they fail to live up to their expectations. Our children need to know that they can always come to us and talk to us without fear of our anger or rejection. This is hard for parents to do sometimes, to set aside the behavior and just love the child, but sometimes there can be serious consequences for our children if they feel like they can't talk to us for fear of letting us down.

We know we can always talk to Jesus in prayer, trusting him and loving him and we know that we are able to tell him everything, especially in confession. We are not afraid to tell Jesus our sins in confession because we are assured of his forgiveness, his mercy and his healing love. In this way too, we should strive to imitate Christ in our relationships with our children.

This contribution is available at <http://www.acatholic.org/let-the-children-come-to-me/>
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Sunday's Christian Book Review



We'll Meet Again: Deathbed Visions - Who You Meet When You Die

by Colm Keane

Rating: (3.5/5)

(

[Kindle US](#)

) - (

[Kindle Canada](#)

) - (

[Kindle UK](#)

)

Jun 27, 2012,

[Penguin Ireland](#)

, 175 pgs

Age: 18+

"We do not die alone. That is the remarkable conclusion of We'll Meet Again, an extraordinary new book examining deathbed visions that will resonate with readers who have been mesmerised by the experiences recounted in books like [Proof of Heaven](#) and Embraced by the Light.

While there are many accounts of near death experiences - and We'll Meet Again includes more of these - far fewer are the accounts of the behaviour of the dying in their final days and hours. Now, award-winning journalist Colm Keane, author of the chart-topping accounts of near death experiences, Going Home and The Distant Shore, has written one of the most challenging studies ever compiled on this fascinating theme.

Those who have accompanied the dying, and closely observed what they have said and done, give us a fascinating account of what happens as we die. Dead parents, children, brothers, sisters and close friends are among those who return to meet us. Sometimes we see beautiful landscapes. Less commonly, we see well-known religious figures. Colm Keane also examines the scientific response to the prevalence of these visions.

Colm himself sat by his teenage son's deathbed as he died, and experienced the extraordinary light and peace that came into the room after his son had passed. In We'll Meet Again he talks to others who have been in his shoes and the book features a riveting collection of 70 real-life stories."

Received a review copy from the publisher through Netgalley.

I have been reading a lot lately on the topic of near-death experiences and people who come back to tell what they experienced in Heaven. When the publisher offered me an ecopy of this title (it is only available on ebook) to review I was intrigued as it visited that topic but branched out mainly onto deathbed visions and other experiences of the dying and also those of friends and relatives of those who had recently died. While the book did not state it had any Christian content I was hoping to find some by the nature of the topic and the fact that all subjects interviewed for this book were Irish. While the author makes a point of noting that these experiences are found among all peoples, regardless of creed, sex, age, or heritage I was pleasantly surprised to find the majority of the accounts were given by Catholics, of varying degrees of practice. Their religion was never mentioned but the accounts would mention going to Mass, saying the Rosary, praying to the saints, etc. Also while not all accounts were given by Christians almost all of them were, if not Catholic, then another denomination, so I was pleased the book proved to be what I was hoping for.

Divided into sections on deathbed visions, near-death experiences and other visitations which don't fit the other two categories such as relatives being visited the moment a loved one dies across the country or on the other side of the world, the book contains a diverse selection of accounts yet they all have one thing in common, all the participants are Irish born. Keane has written two previous books on the topic of deathbed visitations and he lets us know this book is

the result of an accumulation of significant accounts which didn't fit into his other books, simply because he ran out of space or because they didn't fit the specific theme of those other two books.

As such, what we get here is account after account which starts off truly fascinating but by its nature starts to become monotonous as the same but different experiences are recounted over and over. My favourite section was the one where my personal interests lie, the near-death experiences, but I did enjoy reading the whole book until at a point in each section, repetition bred a certain monotony. I'd recommend reading in small doses to avoid this. The accounts are written in the words of the participant or the one recounting the event for another so one gets a certain feel for each individual case and I truly believed some while having doubts about others. All the information that I've read on this topic, that there is an afterlife, a Heaven and that we will meet our loved ones again was confirmed by these accounts; there was no new information, merely a atmosphere that so many experiencing the same thing cannot be wrong. I also enjoyed the last chapter in which Keane takes all the common scientific "explanations" for death and near death phenomena and scientifically (or by reason) refutes them. A short and interesting read for those interested in the topic.

This contribution is available at <http://back-to-books.blogspot.ca/2013/08/272-well-meet-again-deathbed-visions.html>

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Time to answer a call - God's timing is perfect [at Making It In Vermont]

Our portable phone broke a couple of years ago and we never replaced it. The biggest issue with that besides being tethered to our kitchen by a cord that rendered me incapable of getting away from my gaggle of kids, was no caller ID. That meant that I had to answer every call. Admittedly I eventually began to hang up if the person didn't talk immediately – a good indicator that it's a computer generated phone call/telemarketer. However I didn't learn that technique until some time after the very nice woman at St. Jude got me to sign up last August to organize a walk to raise funds for their childhood cancer/research hospital.

I was in my first weeks of pregnancy with ~G and I had just had an “abnormal ultrasound” a little unnerving, but my faith felt strong as I waited for my 19 week ultrasound for more information. I couldn't ignore the crazy timing of that call from St. Jude (a hospital dedicated to helping sick children) and though I wanted to say no, God was telling me to say yes. We set up the date for the walk for the last weekend of October 2012.

Well morning sickness devoured my ambition for the rest of August, and then September turned into October (when we had another [questionable ultrasound](#)) and I hadn't done anything about the walk. I didn't answer calls by the nice St. Jude lady (yes that means I hung up on her when I heard her voice at the other end of the line) and generally tried not to think about it. By the time the date for the walk came around we had received [~G's Down syndrome diagnosis](#).

There is something unsettling about getting a call from a children's cancer hospital when you are pregnant, and I'll be honest, it's still unsettling... Children with Down syndrome have a higher risk of getting leukemia than the general public, and actually in a few days I need to get ~G's blood tested, just to make sure he's doing ok and will continue to do so throughout his childhood.

So as much as I would love to just ignore the caller ID, it is now time to answer that nice woman from St. Jude somehow.

This is what I have planned. For anyone who remembers my journey to begin painting again it all started [here](#). Well it has taken me about a year and a half to complete this next painting. I started it [here](#) with my fourth son ~R. I chose to paint the Lily of the Valley that bloom in early spring in the garden beside our front porch.



Lilies of the Valley, signed and hung on the shed for photographing with ~G having a nice nap on mommy.

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ~Luke 12: 27-31

I am selling my *Lilies of the Valley* painting to the highest bidder and donating all profits to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

I know many of you have mentioned wanting one of my paintings and well, here's your chance. With 6 young boys at home, it's pretty certain that I'm on the once or twice a year at best plan for getting a painting complete...

Here's the link to [bid on the *Lilies of the Valley* painting](#) with more photos, dimensions, shipping, etc. the auction will run for one week from Tuesday to Tuesday, August 20th- 27th, 2013.

If bidding on the painting isn't your thing, I am also asking for donations of \$5, \$10, \$15 or more to support St. Jude in their mission ... to find cures for **children with cancer** and other life-threatening diseases through research and treatment. And **no family ever pays St. Jude for anything.**

Here is the link to donate even just \$5, \$10, or more at my [St. Jude fundraiser page](#).

Thanks for helping me answer that call.

Love to you all!

~Lisa

Read about how actor Danny Thomas started St. Jude's here: [Danny's Promise](#)

This contribution is available at <http://www.makingitinvermont.com/2013/08/time-to-answer-a-call/>
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He Has Been Waiting All Along [at The Breadbox Letters]



Yesterday I again wrestled myself into prayer. I'm ashamed to admit how long it took me to get there, but finally I struggled through the day's distractions to find myself in front of an open Bible. I looked at the page only to see what seemed like a spattering of random words. What, whenever, surpassing, things, count, that, for.

This was worse than usual.

Meanwhile, a charming collection of junk mail had stacked up on my table. Brightly colored pizza coupons. A sale flier for... what is that, candles? A catalog of, oh my goodness: books. I tried to concentrate. I tried to pray. I batted away stray thoughts that buzzed around like flies. I repented. I expressed sorrow. I thought of how many meaningless things persistently shout for my attention. I felt sad. I felt hopeless. I felt defeated. I felt

interrupted.

Right in the middle of my self-beating, even as I realized that I'm not a person of discipline and routine and likely never will be, I had a sudden sense of something I cannot describe. A kind of warmth. Amazing warmth. If I could paint a picture of it, I'd show Jesus looking over at me with a tender, loving smile. As if He were actually.... pleased!

If I could put words in His mouth (and really, it was almost as if I "heard" these), they would be

"you have no idea how much you love Me."

No, that was not a typo. It wasn't "you have no idea how much I love you" (although I'm totally sure that is the case), but "you have no idea how much YOU love ME."

How astonishing. Could that possibly be true? In the midst of my distractions and laziness and aridity, when my prayers are dry as dust?! Oh surely not! And yet - at the moment I felt this, I also had a strong sense of peace. It was as if a veil lifted, and in an instant I could see oh, so much at once.

The "much" started with, of all things, blogs. I thought of this one, specifically, and of how I'd originally considered this as the blog wherein I could ramble about any and every random thought that crossed my mind. Yet only once, in the nearly two years since I started writing here, can I recall doing a post that didn't lead toward or speak of or include God. Only once. It's not that I set out from the beginning to do this (I realized); it's that I write (or quote) what is truly on my mind.

Even though I've felt dry, lazy, and unspeakably distracted, I have made up my mind to come to Jesus and wrestle my way to Him. How tender of Him to let me know that He is smiling on my little efforts. How generous of Him to give me a glimpse of how much I really do love Him. It's good to know the truth of it (and yes, I believe it is truth) that I love Him more than I realize. If I hadn't gone through the motions once again, I would never have been in a position to see this.

He loves me beyond all imagining. And I, distracted as I am, love Him. I want to please Him. By His grace (and His grace alone) I am growing, at least a little, in virtue.

He has been waiting for me to

[go through the motions](#)

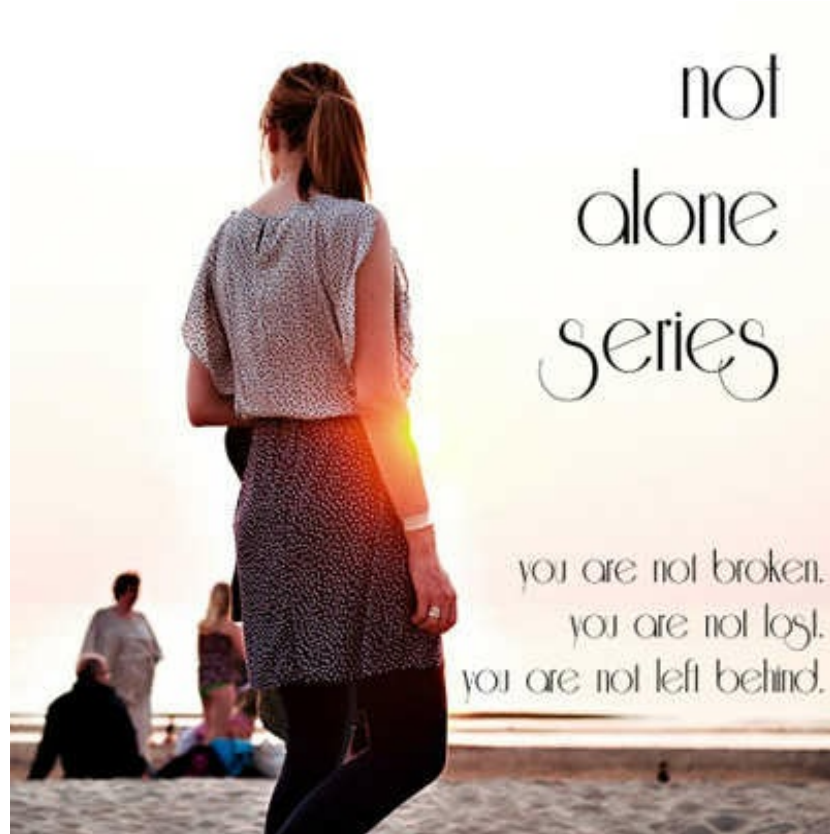
. He has been waiting all along.

This contribution is available at <http://thebreadboxletters.blogspot.com/2013/08/he-has-been-waiting-all-along.html>
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Not Alone Series: Envy and Singlehood [at Beth Anne's Best]

I've been seeing several of the blogs I follow blog in this Not Alone Series link-up. When I first saw it I thought I'd join in as I'm also single and struggle with it most days but I would forget about it or didn't know what to say about that weeks topic or let's be honest just got lazy. When I saw this weeks topic was Envy I thought I really need to write about this weeks topic because I REALLY struggle with this and need to get it all out there! I'm not sure I have much advice but I'll do my best...so here goes nothing!



In this day and age I feel like it's SO much EASIER to see "Envy" and be Envious of others. Between the cute photos and announcements on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs and other social media websites everything is sooo in our face. I'm currently reading this book called [101 Secrets for Your Twenties by Paul Angone](#) and even if you aren't in your twenties I think this book has a TON of advice that will help singles or anyone really. There are two secrets that I really stand by when it comes to envy. They are secrets #22 and #35.

#22 The grass is always greener on the other side until you get there and realize it's because of all the manure.

PAUL ANGONE
101 SECRETS FOR YOUR TWENTIES

#35 Obsessive Comparison Disorder is the smallpox of our generation.

PAUL ANGONE
101 SECRETS FOR YOUR TWENTIES

The thing about all this obsessive sharing and things we see is that all we see is the “good stuff” the outside of the story. Like [Amanda said in her post](#) we see the pretty flowers that your friends husband sent her but we didn't see the 3 hour fight they had the night before about who didn't pay the electric bill and they had no power when it was 100 degrees in their house last night. Because of how open and public facebook is we are CONSTANTLY comparing our lives to the “lives” we see on Facebook. I laugh at some of the details in [Paul's book about facebook](#):

Don't ever, ever check [Facebook](#) when you're:

A. Depressed

B. Drinking.

C. Depressed and Drinking.

D. Unemployed.

E. Anytime after 9:17 pm.

F. Struggling with being *blessed with singleness* while all your friends seem to be blessed with 2.4 kids and that blazing white-picket-fence shining with the glory of Jesus Christ himself.

This is so true. I've checked facebook during all these times and it would never end well but sometimes I'll go into a facebook group and see something so inspiring it makes everything okay again.

There's so many things I can say about envy and singlehood. I've started at this post for the last couple of days and deleted a lot of things that I wrote as it just made me look pathetic or ended with me just crying. I've been a some-what emotional mess this week. I could go on and on about all the things I wish I had that I didn't and all the things that I have that I wish I didn't but really

that wouldn't help me or you and if you are single and reading this I'm sure you struggle with the same things so you can just read my mind on that aspect.

I think Envy is something everyone deals with no matter what phase of life you are at. I think it helps when we become envious of someone else to just write it all down. Just write what we are feeling and how it makes us feel etc. etc. I know everyone says it but writing is really healing for a lot of people. When someone first told me this and that I should write down my feelings I thought they were crazy and couldn't imagine what they were talking about. Yes I have a blog but some days blogging was so light-hearted and sometimes I struggled with this whole blogging thing. But then after writing about how I was feeling a few times it really did help. It doesn't have to be long or grammatical correct (no one is going to grade you on it). It can be two sentences before you go to bed. I use evernote for mine and if I'm out and about I'll pull it up on my phone and jot things down. Find out what works for you because God made you just the way you are and for whatever reason he blessed us with this period of singleness for reasons that we won't ever understand until years down the line and we'll think back and it'll feel like it was such a short period of our lives.

This made me think of something I heard at mass last week. The priest talked about how retirement is about 10-20 years of our lives. If you think about it that isn't very long. Say you live to be 80. That is only 13-25% of your life (less than half) and if you think about it most people the last 5ish years of their life are ill and can't do very much. So if your "singleness" is 20 years of your 80 year life that is still less than half of your life. So we still have a lot of living to do that we need not take for granted.

Thanks for [Jen](#) and [Morgan](#) for hosting this series! Next week is "challenge week" and I am looking forward to seeing what that means!

This contribution is available at <http://bethannesbest.com/not-alone-series-envy-and-singlehood/>
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Songs [at One Arrow Alone]

This morning I was driving home from Mass and listening to the radio. They played a song by a Dutch songwriter, Herman van Veen, born in 1945. He sang about a little girl overtaking him on a bicycle. It was a simple song, touching somehow.

There are more such songs, about children just born, the village of one's youth, the familiar town pub where everyone had fun together. Good songs about memories that allow for some healthy nostalgia, for looking back with gratitude. But such songs seem to be fading from the cultural landscape. We are fast replacing them by an incessant harping on the same theme: romance, love found or lost or hunted for at a party.

Have we lost interest in everything else? That would be bad. The world is full of interesting things which welcome our attention, though without clamoring for it. Songs indicate what is meaningful to us, and if we cannot find meaning or value in the ordinary things, they become indifferent or even hostile. In that cold world, we look all the more for refuge, for warmth – which, the songs tell us, can be found in romance.

But Eros is a volatile and unstable thing, a flighty sort of love, a boy god with wings more fluttery than Apollo's. We cannot burden him with the whole load of our longing; he cannot carry it, and he has no place to put it. Eros does not build houses.

In

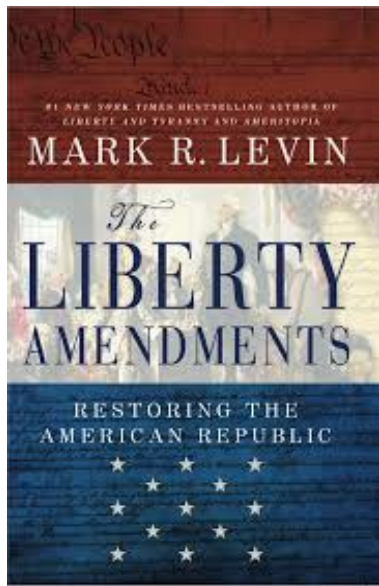
The Four Loves

, C.S. Lewis juxtaposes Eros with Affection. 'Affection,' he writes, 'is responsible for nine-tenths of whatever solid and durable happiness there is in our lives.' True! So when simple affection goes out of our songs, nine-tenths of our solid and durable happiness goes with it.

Nevertheless, as the poet sings, 'I'm in if you're down to get down tonight'. 'Coz it's always a good time. So says the poet. And the poet never lies.

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I remember driving to work the day after Obamacare passed. I thought about the obnoxious Hillary Clinton pushing nationalized health care nearly 20 years earlier, and how widely -- and rightly -- derided she and her pure federal power grab were then. I thought about this immense bill, read by nobody, containing God-knows-what, being ramrodded through Congress with little or no deliberation and without regard to what the American people thought about it. I thought about the unconstitutionality, and even anti-constitutionality of this bill that purports to give the federal government sway over every crack and crevice of our lives, far beyond its constitutionally enumerated powers. Driving through downtown Boise, I looked around at the shops and restaurants and other little businesses that line Main Street, and the people walking or biking or driving to work. Everything *looked* the same as before. But it was *not* the same. The country was not the same. The realization lay like a dead darkness on the heart. A line had been crossed. We had been edging closer and closer to that line for at least the last century, until the Reagan Era, when we retreated from it for a while; but then, after Reagan left office, we hurtled back toward it. Now, on March 24, 2010, we had crossed it. We had crossed over into territory that looked like the America we had grown up in, but really was not.

Of course, even the America that my Generation X grew up in was nothing like as free as the one the previous generation grew up in, which was nothing like as free as the one the generation before knew. Thanks to the New Deal and the Great Society, the burgeoning administrative state was already going full bore by the time Generation X came along. Now, as GenXers approach middle age, the statists no longer even bother with the rhetoric of liberty. After decades of pushing

abortion and contraceptives, breaking up the family, clearing the way for us to indulge our lusts without restraint, and training schoolkids in veiled Marxist ideology and the Marxist version of history, they consider it safe to proceed openly with their takeover of our lives, without caring what we think about it. This is the judgment we have brought upon ourselves for scorning the laws of God and man, unmooring ourselves from our Christian and constitutional roots.

In other words, we had it coming. But does that mean we should just give up, resign ourselves to the punishment, and let our nation be destroyed? By no means. Indeed, we have a *duty* to try to extricate ourselves from our current predicament, exhausting every lawful means available short of violence. Mark Levin's new book, *The Liberty Amendments: Restoring the American Republic*, points out a solution that our Founding Fathers left us, foreseeing a day when the federal government would get to be too big for its britches.

Article V of the U.S. Constitution contains procedures for amending the Constitution. It provides (emphasis added):

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, **or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments**, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth Section of the first Article [dealing with powers denied to Congress]; and that no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate.

Levin proposes a convention, called by two thirds of the states, for the purpose of proposing amendments to the Constitution. This means of amending the Constitution has been attempted, without success, on numerous occasions, and currently lies dormant. But the Framers included it, precisely so that the States could have recourse against a federal government run amuck. The Article V convention is not a constitutional convention that makes the whole Constitution up for grabs: the Constitution itself does not provide for its own abolition. But then, the Constitution is effectively already up for grabs, and has been for decades. Large swathes of it, such as the Ninth and Tenth Amendments, have been completely laid waste; other parts, such as the Commerce Clause, have been distorted beyond all reason and sense until they are wholly alien to what the Framers intended. The point of Levin's plan is to restore the Constitution as a guarantor of liberty instead of the curtailer of it that the statists have made it; to breathe life back into its now dead letters; and, above all, to restore the sovereignty of the States, and rescue them from their current status as mere vestigial appendages of the federal government.

Levin is careful to point out that his plan is not meant to be a panacea, or definitive. His plan does not address important social and moral issues that could, and should, be the subject of proposed amendments to the Constitution, such as the legal personhood of the unborn and the definition of marriage. Instead, though not incompatible with the foregoing, it focuses on systemic, root problems that have overthrown the Framers' carefully constructed system of checks and balances and led to the consolidation of tyrannical power in Washington and the diminution of individual liberty. In broad outline, he proposes the following amendments:

-- Term limits on members of Congress

-- The repeal of the Seventeenth Amendment (popular election of Senators)

-- Term limits on Justices of the Supreme Court and supermajority legislative overrides of Supreme Court decisions

-- Restrictions on federal spending

-- Restrictions on federal taxation

-- Restrictions on the federal bureaucracy

-- Restrictions on Congress' power to regulate commerce

-- A requirement of compensation for regulatory takings

-- Authority for the States directly to amend the Constitution

-- A State check on acts of Congress

-- A voter fraud amendment

Levin makes no bones about how difficult and time-consuming it will be to get a State amendment convention going; nor does he ignore the problem of blue States. But, fortunately, the level of society where the process must start is also that which is most accessible to us: first ourselves, then our families and friends, then our local communities. A huge part of the strategy of totalitarians is the isolation and atomization of individuals: to keep us at each other's throats by means of imaginary grievances; to abolish long-standing mores and traditions; and to remove any and all institutions -- family, Church, local government, State government -- that stand as a buffer between centralized government and the individual. We need to begin the work of restoring these. People who live in liberal-dominated wastelands like Detroit have got to decide they are tired of living in a hell-hole, and then do something about it; those of us whose cities do not yet look like Detroit need to decide we don't want to see ourselves heading in that direction, and do something to avoid it. When we have turfed the liberal bums out of our local and state governments, and replaced them with politicians who revere the rule of law and the Constitution, the momentum toward a convention will grow. We should not be deterred from having recourse to this method of amending the Constitution merely by the fact that it has never been done before, or by the fear of a runaway convention. The reality right now is that we already have a runaway federal government, and something has got to be done about it, before it destroys us.

On the eve of the Battle of the Bulge, [General George S. Patton said](#) there are three ways men get what they want: planning, working and praying. Some of us have been praying, and there needs to be a lot more of that going on. Levin's book gives us a pretty good start on the planning. Now is the time to start working.

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