

NewEvangelists.org

new
evangelists
monthly

October
2013

New Evangelists Monthly #10

October 2013

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

New Evangelists Monthly - October 2013

- [Forward](#)
...about this eBook
- [My Critique and Review of Michael Voris' Freemasonry Expose](#)
by David L. Gray
- [An Enclosure Door for Me](#)
The Cloistered Heart by Nancy Shuman
- [High Expectations](#)
FranciscanMom by Barbara Szyszkiewicz
- [Sexual Attraction](#)
The Veil of Chastity by Cindy Hurla
- [Tradition must not become an empty shell.](#)
Catholic Deacon by Deacon Scott Dodge
- [Essential Literature for Catholics](#)
Messy Wife, Blessed Life by Mandi R
- [The Cellarer](#)
Suffering With Joy by Barbara Schoeneberger
- [There's Nothing New Under the Sun](#)
Martin Family Moments by Colleen Martin
- [Faith Like A Mustard Seed](#)
Peace Garden Mama by Roxane Salonen
- [Mr. Holier Than Thunderbolt Catholic versus Mrs. Barest Minimum Catholic](#)
Written by the Finger of God by Anabelle Hazard
- [Fighting Demons While You Sleep](#)
Contemplative Homeschool by Connie Rossini
- [How To Be A Crazy \(for Christ\) Catholic](#)
8 Kids and A Business by Terry McDermott
- [Envy, the No-win Sin](#)
New Evangelizers by Patti Armstrong
- [Lord, my heart is not proud](#)
Journey to Wisdom by Heidi Knofczynski
- [The Evangelical Counsel of Poverty for Laity](#)
Naru Hodo by Marie
- [Praying and Fasting for Peace](#)
Hermano Juancito by John Donaghy

- [**Pope Francis and Catholic Bloggers**](#)
mommynovenas by Lora Goulet
- [**Mary is in my Heart? Help!**](#)
joy of nine9 by Melanie Jean Juneau
- [**Safeguarding Our Soul**](#)
A Spiritual Journey by David Wong
- [**The Flat-Tire Fallacy**](#)
Forget The Roads by Renee Lin
- [**God's Protection in our Journey Towards New Life**](#)
Catholic & Crunchy by Stacy Cash
- [**Modesty**](#)
Our Heavenly Homestead by Maria Campbell
- [**Jesus of Nazareth**](#)
Flow Chart to Surrender by Julie
- [**High School Seminary \(Christ the King Admits Peter\)**](#)
Glimpse of Peace by Bridget Adams
- [**A Surprising Way to Heal!**](#)
Chatty Catholic Doll by Charlotte Ostermann
- [**Follow His Promptings!**](#)
Harvesting the Fruits of Contemplation by Michael Seagriff
- [**Beauty in the City**](#)
Footprints on My Heart by Sarah Maurer
- [**Multiple Canons: A Serious Consequence of Vatican II**](#)
A Catholic Life by Matthew P
- [**Praying the Stations with Mary the Mother of Jesus**](#)
Back to Books by Nicola Mansfield
- [**Jesus, the Word of God and the Bible**](#)
Catholic by Delali
- [**Home Organization Response**](#)
CF Family by Allison Howell
- [**Daily Devotionals for Catholic Moms**](#)
Revolution of Love Blog by Bobbi
- [**Detering the Devil**](#)
Busy Catholic Moms by Shannon Vandaveer
- [**Effective Intercessory Prayer**](#)
Working to be Worthy by Liana Eisenman-Wolford

- [**Create Your Own Pilgrimage**](#)
The Hill Country Hermit by Theresa Doyle-Nelson
- [**Fulton Sheen, Bad Math Grades and American Exceptionalism**](#)
The Back of the World by Ryan McLaughlin
- [**iPhone vs. uBaby**](#)
Romancing Reilly by Martha Reilly
- [**The 103 Point Question**](#)
Mercy Me! I've got work to do by Lara Patangan
- [**3 Lessons and 2 Tips from Audrey Assad**](#)
by Arleen Spenceley
- [**Convert Spotlight: Contemplating Christian**](#)
Convert Journal by George Sipe
- [**Do you know the name of your Guardian Angel?**](#)
JOY Alive in Our Hearts by Nancy Ward
- [**Protesting the Legal Holocaust ~ Respect for Life**](#)
Campfires and Cleats by Chris Capolino
- [**Atchison Blue: My Review**](#)
This That and the Other Thing by Ruth Curcuru
- [**Poorly Catechized World Misunderstands Pope Francis**](#)
Christ's Faithful Witness by Lawrence and Susan Fox
- [**Facepalming Pope Francis**](#)
Blog of a Country Priest by Fr. John Corrigan
- [**Grief and Love, and How Love Grows**](#)
Sue Elvis Writes by Sue Elvis
- [**Sex, NFP, Manicheism, Oh My!**](#)
Catholic Cravings by Laura McAlister
- [**St. Michael**](#)
The Crooked Halo by Nanette Carey
- [**O Jesu Thou the Virgins' Crown**](#)
Breviary Hymns by Kevin Shaw
- [**Homily: An Elephant, or Two**](#)
bukas palad by Deacon Adrian Danker
- [**How I Am Commemorating Nine-Eleven**](#)
From the Pulpit of My Life by Ruth Ann Pilney
- [**What Pope Francis is REALLY saying. Really.**](#)
Transform! by Erika Reece
- [**The Morality Trap, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Trust God**](#)

- [**What He Wants**](#)
The Road Home by Rebecca Royse
- [**Cleaning Toilets & God's Mercy**](#)
Rediscovering Glory by Emily Hartung
- [**Mortified Mondays**](#)
Catholic Fit Mom for Life by Cecilia Escobedo
- [**No Safe Place**](#)
One Arrow Alone by Eli Stok
- [**Filling in the Backstory**](#)
by Melanie Rigney
- [**Body and Soul**](#)
Notlukewarm by Deanna Babineau
- [**Things a\(n\) \(Infertile\) Woman Should Never Say**](#)
This Cross I Embrace by Amy
- [**Into Deep Water**](#)
worthy of Agape by Amanda Mortus
- [**The Church's Dance**](#)
TheOrant by Billy Kangas
- [**Stupid Atheists**](#)
Cum Lazaro
- [**Never a Clear Head**](#)
Ranting Catholic Mom by Suzanne Carl
- [**Organ donation requires strong ethical principles.**](#)
Kitchen table chats with a Catholic Matriarch by Denise Hunnell
- [**Every Time A Bell Rings, An Angel Gets His Wings**](#)
by Tom Perna
- [**Did Kuma's Corner go too far with their Ghost burger?**](#)
ChicagoNow by Pam Spano
- [**What Makes a Good Wife?**](#)
Em's Estuary by Emily Davis
- [**95 Best Catholic Movies to Rent For Your Family**](#)
A Catholic Moment by Laura Kazlas
- [**Remembering Our Wedding Day**](#)
by Rita Buettner
- [**Blessed**](#)
follow and believe by Morgan McFarlin

- **[The Culture of "Heresy"](#)**
Eastern Christian Books by Adam DeVille
- **[The Troops of St. George](#)**
Dulcius Ex Asperis by Liam Ferguson
- **[The Word Is What Brings Us to Life](#)**
Bartimaeus' Quiet Place by Bartimaeus Timeo
- **[The 'Angel' in Uniform](#)**
The Catholic Homemaker by Steve and Confe Tee

Forward

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

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

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

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

NewEvangelists.org

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

My Critique and Review of Michael Voris' Freemasonry Exposé

On September 21, 2013 [Church Militant TV](#) published this Faith Based Investigation (FBI) documentary (using that term loosely) about the Masonic Order ([PDF Script of Shooting](#)). Church Militant TV has been producing exposé videos like this since 2010. Back then their apostolate was called Real Catholic TV, and this video series was called C.I.A. for Catholic Investigative Agency. My initial impression of this series when it was called C.I.A. was favorable. Of the fifteen videos that they have produced I think I may have watched three of them all of the way through, and snippets of most of them.

Having been a Freemason, this exposé piqued my interest a great deal, and I watched it all the way through; taking notes along the way. I do recommend this video for Catholics, but only starting at the 59:41 minute mark when, the host, Michael Voris, transitions into talking about the 'Dangers of Freemasonry'. Before that point and beyond that particular topic the information presented is really nothing more than a shoddy and unnecessary overreach, being presented as irrefutable facts. The material presented before and after the 'Dangers of Freemasonry' portion is definitely interesting and scandalous and scary, but beyond the veil there's nothing there but the sweet aroma of cotton candy. If he had just stuck with that portion about the dangers of Freemasonry Church Militant TV would have hit a home run.

There were just too many clear fallacies made that could have been avoided, such as blanket statements, straw men, post hoc, red-herrings, scare tactics, inconsistent treatment, and arguing from weak authority. Obviously, many of these were errors that probably 99% of the people who watch this video won't notice, but that doesn't dismiss or validate poor research, especially when it is representative of Catholics.

Strawman

An informal fallacy based on misrepresentation of an opponent's position. To "attack a straw man" is to create the illusion of having refuted a proposition by substituting a superficially similar yet weaker proposition and refuting it, without ever having actually refuted the original position.

It seems that this production was overly influenced by book published in 1885 entitled, *Grand Orient Freemasonry Unmasked: as the Secret Power Behind Communism* by Monsignor George F. Dillon ([download here](#)). Similar to many books of its genre

and time, it is filled with plots and opinions and prophecies and blanket statements and blaming Voltaire for everything, and all presented as fact. In fact, there are many facts in the book, but it's also the type of book that if you footnoted more than once in an academic paper, everyone would laugh at you.

Another person that seems to have influenced this production was former Freemason turned Catholic apologist [John Salza](#), whose work in the field of Freemasonry I've long been a critic of. While I appreciate his effort, his limited exposure to Freemasonry seems to consistently leave him open to making false blanket statements about the Masonic Order that I don't believe are very helpful. And, like Voris, Salza also seems to get himself distracted with what is picayune and scandalous, rather than focusing on serving up the main course.

That being said, because of its errors, what this video presents is an opportunity to help Catholics learn how to present a case against Freemasonry, without having to resort to the smell of cotton candy. It will also be helpful to list some of the common false statements about Freemasonry that we hear in this video, so that if you do have the opportunity to minister to a Freemason, you won't sound stupid and easy to be dismissed.

For a more concise treatment, without any cotton candy vapor, about why Catholics cannot be Freemasons, just read my article [Catholicism and Freemasonry – a Match Not Made in Heaven](#), and listen to my radio interview on [God's Praises Tell](#).

19 ISSUES OF INACCURACY OR QUESTIONABLE CONTENT IN THE VIDEO :

1. **(Voris)** says that the Scottish Rite has 33 degrees or steps. **FALSE** - Actually, the Scottish Rite has 33 degrees, but they only work 29 of those Degrees in most parts of the world, beginning at the Fourth Degree. Voris falsely suggests the Scottish Rite is some sort of Masonic progression or ascension, while the truth of the matter is that the Scottish Rite is a completely independent rite from Craft Freemasonry. The three degrees that they almost never confer are not identical to the three degrees in the Craft Lodge. It should also be noted that the York Rite is very popular throughout the Masonic world as well.
2. **(Salza)** says that Freemasonry has its own Bible. **FALSE** - The fact is that the Bible used on the majority of altars throughout the world is a Protestant Bible. While Bible printed for Lodge use may have a glossary that is more attuned to people, places, and things found in Scripture that relate to the Masonic Rituals, the sacred texts are not altered in any way.
3. **(Salza)** statements about what the Landmarks of Freemasonry consist of **is not very accurate**. I just did a quick google and found [this old article of mine](#) when I was a Freemason, talking about the brief history of Masonic Landmarks and exposing Freemason Albert Mackey as a possible plagiarist. Read that for a quick commentary on what Masonic Landmarks actually are.
4. **(Voris)** statements that Albert Pike and Albert Mackey are irrefutable or infallible definers of Freemasonry just **isn't true**. He is correct that some Grand Lodges recommend their work, but they also don't recommend some of their work. Mackey is actually just a reference source for some things on the Lodge level, while Pike is more of a reference source for some things

in the Scottish Rite. Mackey and Pike are not comparable to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. In the Masonic world these men are as reliable as any other opinion, but are usually given a more respectable nod simply because of their antiquity and volume of scholarship.

5. **(Voris)** says that Freemasonry doesn't have a final/ultimate authority like the Catholic Church has in the Roman Pontiff. **FALSE** - On the Lodge level that supreme authority is the Grand Master of the jurisdiction. In the Scottish Rite the supreme authority is the Sovereign Grand Commander of the jurisdiction. In the houses of the York Rite, whoever is the highest elected officer in that particular Grand body is the ultimate authority.
6. **(Voris)** His segment on the origin and history of Freemason is **decent**, except where he relies too much on Monsignor Dillon. It should also be noted that even scholarly Freemasons don't agree 100% on 100% of the history of Freemasonry.
7. **(Voris)** His segment on Illuminism is from Monsignor Dillon's book as well. It's an interesting read. I love books from that time of this genre!
8. **(Voris)** Throughout the video he will drop names and say that Freemasons were responsible for this treason or this plot or this war. I have nothing to disagree with those claims, but the hearer should be careful **not to fall into a non-sequitur fallacy here**. In other words, just because men, who happened to be also Freemasons, did such and such, it doesn't necessarily follow that the entire Masonic Order was in on it as well. We as Catholics should know better not to use those arguments, because they are used against us all the time.
9. **(Voris)** says that Freemasonry only allows men in its ranks. **FALSE** - There are many women who are Freemasons. Despite the fact that the Grand Lodges that descend from the United Grand Lodge of England do not recognize those Grand Lodges that have women members as being regular/legitimate, it doesn't mean that they don't exist.
10. **(Voris)** mentions [The Permanent Instruction of the Alta Vendita](#) – This was a Carbonari document. The Carbonari was an Italian secret revolutionary society whose founders were reported to be Freemasons, but the **Carbonari was not a Masonic group**.
11. **(Voris)** repeatedly says that men are solicited to become Freemasons. **TRUE/FALSE** This could happen, but almost universally it is a rule that soliciting a man to become a Freemason is against the Masonic law. New members are supposed to come to the Order on their own freewill and accord. The most a Freemason might say to someone who he thinks might be a good fit is 'Have you ever thought about becoming a Freemason', but that is not an invitation – it's a question that the inquirer hopes leads to further investigation or conversation.
12. **(Voris)** says that after man is solicited he is requested to go to the lodge and appear before the Master's board. **FALSE** - I don't know where they got this from, but it is another blanket statement that doesn't apply universally.
13. **(Voris)** say that candidate is required to strip down to his underwear and to remove all personal items. **FALSE** - This is another blanket statement that doesn't apply universally. Moreover, according to the ancient rituals, the only items, other than clothing, that the candidate is required to removed are metal items.
14. **(Voris)** in commenting on the First Degree ritual says that as long as the candidate professes some kind of deity or supreme being his answer will be accepted. **FALSE** - Almost universally, the candidate must say the name of a deity of a monotheistic religion. Monotheistic doesn't include Buddhism or the great mystical frog as Voris said.

15. **(Voriss)** in commenting on the First Degree ritual says that the candidate walks around while repeating the phrase, “I am here of my own will and accord.” **FALSE** – I’ve witnessed the First Degree performed in many different Masonic jurisdictions throughout the world, and I have read several different First Degree initiation rituals and I have no knowledge of this. I don’t deny that it may be in use somewhere, but it is not universal.
16. **(Voriss)** says that Freemasons call their god the ‘Great Architect of the Universe’. **FALSE** - I read in Monsignor George F. Dillon’s book where he said the same thing. The almost universal name would be the ‘Grand Architect of the Universe’ (GAOTU).
17. **(Voriss)** says that Shriners are an organization of high level Freemasons. **FALSE**.
18. **(Voriss)** says that Shriners must first be a Third Degree Master Mason. **FALSE** - Blanket statement. Moreover the Shrine is primarily a North American phenomenon.
19. After the segment on the Dangers of Freemasonry **(Voriss)** dips again into Monsignor George F. Dillon’s book and starts stringing together more gunpowder plots. He’s talking about the Council on Foreign Relations, The Bilderberg Group, the United Nations, and etc. I don’t know if that stuff is true or not, but it’s interesting.

This contribution is available at <http://www.davidlgray.info/blog/2013/09/critique-michael-voriss-freemasonry/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

An Enclosure Door for Me [at The Cloistered Heart]



Sometimes I feel world-weary. Tired of putting up, not just with my own failings, but with the shameless acceptance of sin that's dancing proudly all around. I don't have to look far to find it. In fact, I don't have to "find" it at all. It leers from newcasts and taunts from TV screens and celebrates its own rebellion, unashamed.

It seems that evil is marching right out of the shadows, where once it lay hidden. It boldly kills, lies, cheats, distorts, perverts, abuses, and mocks the holiness of God.

And, having written that last paragraph, I know why I'm feeling weary. Evil is mocking God.

It's trying to convince us that God isn't there, He doesn't care, and we can do whatever we want with our bodies and babies and friends and enemies and world. The world is ours, evil tells us; we are thoroughly in control.

If enough people do/say/believe/practice/ignore a behavior (we're "told"), it must be fine. Again and again, the love and truth and mercy of God are shunned and rejected. Can you imagine loving someone so much that you would take a beating for them? Be nailed to a Cross and die for them? And then can you imagine having your loved one laugh in your face, spit on you, mock you, say they hate you? It happens to Jesus every day.

Wouldn't it be nice, I sometimes think, to walk through an enclosure door and leave the wicked

world behind. To go where people live for the Lord Who died for them; where they accept His love and forgiveness, where they recognize sin for what it is, where they return love for Love.

I know it's not that simple; of course it's not. But it does represent an ideal. And for those of us not called to such a life, it can (I think) have something to say.

I cannot walk away from the world, nor should I. I can't flee from the mockery and rebellion. To walk away from the world would be walking away from my vocation, for "in the world" is where my call lies. While I can limit a great deal of the garbage that tries to find an entrance into my mind, I can't eliminate all of it. And that is why I appreciate the

[analogy of the cloistered heart](#)

, and the visual imagery of the

[grille](#)

, and the door through which

I

am invited to walk.

The doorway for a cloistered heart is the door of total surrender to God.

As I've written before, sometimes I imagine myself standing before a physical door. I consider. I vacillate. I want a print-out of all that will be asked of me before I give God and His will an unqualified "yes." I'm second-guessing, halting, looking back. Then I stick one foot forward...

"Jesus, I give You my whole heart and my whole will. They once rebelled against You, but now I dedicate them completely to you...Receive me, and make me faithful until death." (St. Alphonsus Liguori).

Yes, I am world-weary. But there's a cloister *I* can live in; there is grillwork *I* can look through. There is an enclosure door for me. *William Paxton painting, public domain***Text © 2013 Nancy Shuman. All Rights Reserved.**

[thecloisteredheart.org](http://www.thecloisteredheart.org)

This contribution is available at <http://www.thecloisteredheart.org/2013/09/an-enclosure-door-for-me.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

High Expectations [at FranciscanMom]

Yesterday, as I waited for Little Brother's coach to arrive at soccer practice, a mom whose son is new to the team parked next to me. We chatted a little about the schedule for the first game and when our boys would be starting school.

When I mentioned that Little Brother attends Catholic school, she commented that she'd grown up next door to one of the teachers from an area Catholic school that closed 7 years ago.

"Even though she was Catholic, she really wasn't friendly at all," this mom said of her former neighbor.

I don't think this mom meant her comment as a slight toward Catholics. On the contrary: the implication was that Catholics should live by high standards when it comes to how we treat others. Since the mom I met last night had such high expectations of Catholics, this probably means that most of the Catholics she has encountered do live by these ideals. At least, I hope so!

- Are we welcoming and helpful to newcomers?
- Do we anticipate the needs of others?
- Do we show concern for others?

We don't have to be the most outgoing people in the world to evangelize by treating our neighbors as we would want to be treated.

This contribution is available at <http://franciscanmom.com/2013/09/05/high-expectations/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Sexual Attraction [at The Veil of Chastity]

[Last week](#) I promised to talk about sexual attraction! As you may have guessed, I do feel it is an important component when considering a man for marriage, primarily for this reason:

*“...you will be sleeping with this man and sharing the marital embrace with him for the rest of your life! He will **know** if you are not sexually attracted to him!”*

So, if sexual attraction is important, what can you *reasonably* expect when considering a man’s offer of marriage? Why does it seem that the men you are sexually attracted to are not the men who are pursuing you for marriage? Finally, does our idea of sexual attraction change over time and if so, *how* does this happen?

What Can You Expect?

I love Elisabeth Elliot’s book, *Passion and Purity*. In Chapter 6 of the book, she tells us about a young pretty girl who is determined to marry a ‘*handsome and wealthy*’ man. I cannot do the story justice so I am going to let you read the [super-short 3-page chapter \(page 42-44\)](#) for yourself.

Elisabeth: “*What if God chose for you a man who is homely and poor?*”

Pretty Girl: “*Oh, but He wouldn’t!*”

Elisabeth: “*Why not?*”

Pretty Girl: “*Because He loves me.*”



The Snakes Reasoning

Ah, the snake’s reasoning. I remember reading this chapter when I was single and thinking that sexual attraction *may* be something I will have to do **without**. *If* I get a husband at all, I thought, I should just be grateful and not complain about the lack of sexual attraction. Based on my experience, I was sure that *if* God had a man for me, he was going to be someone I was only marginally attracted to.

You see, the men to whom I was sexually attracted were not the ones proposing marriage to me. Yet, it seemed that I could easily capture the interest and attention of the ones I did **not** find sexually attractive. The negative effect was two-fold for me:

Self-Doubt: If only I was more attractive, I could capture the interests of the men I was attracted to.

Guilt: If only I wasn't so picky, I could accept the ones that were attracted to me.

Change My Heart/Change My Vision

When I see photos of the 20-year-old Gregg, I have to be honest and say that he was not my type (sorry Gregg). He was into his career in the rock band, away from his faith and living under the influence of the culture. He was just beginning to be pruned and healed by God. Like everyone, he had some things to work out.

I also needed pruning and healing. God needed to first change my heart and teach me what was important. Then, He changed my vision so that when Gregg and I finally met, I could **see** Gregg the way I needed to see him. God had to first **form** Gregg into the man he needed to be. The only way God was able to heal both of us was through time, suffering, healing, pruning and experience. By the time we met at 37, I was **very** attracted to Gregg physically, spiritually, emotionally and intellectually. My vision had truly changed.

How Our Vision Changes

My original approach to discussing Sexual Attraction was to try to convince you to examine what you are looking for in a husband and then figure out what to trade-off. But, when I look at my own experience, I really did not have to trade-off anything.

I sincerely believe that God has to change our vision through His healing grace. It is not something that we can do for ourselves although we are required to participate in the process.

Healing

When you read this it might look like I am saying that you are single because you need to be pruned and healed. Please don't misunderstand me. I have no idea what is causing the delay in your vocation.

Yet, it is easy to see a trend in the culture that causes delayed marriage and it is these same trends (the hook-up culture, contraception, cohabitation, abortion, divorce) which are causing the wounds. These are the wounds that need to be healed in all of us. And, that healing takes time.

Remember God our Father is committed to healing you. He designed sex and wants you to have a healthy sexual relationship with your husband. God knows exactly how to heal you. I want to encourage you that God is "*working all things for good.*" Let go of the self-doubt and the guilt and instead embrace the healing. Participate and trust in the process.

Pruning

Did you see [this post by Arleen Spenceley](#) where she interviewed Audrey Assad? I loved what Audrey said about ‘sanctification’ and ‘tilling the ground’ in her tips for singles. She accurately described what I mean by ‘pruning.’

Arleen Spenceley: What’s one tip for readers who are single?

Audrey Assad: *Single life is just as much a path to holiness as marriage is, so don’t miss the occasions of sanctification while they’re still there! Enjoy it as much as you can, and seize the opportunities for holiness that exist in your current state in life.*

Arleen Spenceley: And a second tip for singles?

Audrey Assad: *If you’re called to marriage, you’ll be a better and more whole spouse if you **till the ground** of your heart during your single years.*

Time, Chastity and Superabundance

We all need to be pruned and healed of our ideas of what we want in marriage when it comes to sexual attraction. If this is a stumbling block for you, I want to encourage you that a man whom you might not be attracted to at 20 years old, may be very attractive to you when he is 25 or 30 or even 37. But, you must commit to staying out of the culture’s traps which will wound you in the meantime.

I am firm believer that God will [supernaturally infuse](#) all that is needed in this department, as long as [Chastity](#) is present prior to and after marriage. A lack of Chastity will keep your eyes from seeing a person with eyes of love and attraction. Unchaste behavior causes more wounds and delays the much-needed healing. Chastity, however, leads to wholeness and an ordered life. It allows you to see clearly and it allows for [the veil to be lifted](#) at the right time and with the right person.

Till The Ground

What qualities are you attracted to in a man? Are you able to **see** sexual attractiveness in a man based on him displaying these qualities and virtues?

Generosity, HUMILITY, consideration, a good conversationalist, a good listener, a practice of faith, intellect, personal cleanliness, authentic masculinity, a sense of purpose, kindness, the way he looks at you, a desire to make you happy

If not, keep praying and living the **Sacramental** life. Accept the pruning and healing that comes from the single life. Let God ‘till the ground’ of your heart. Trust that God knows exactly what He is doing in preparing you for your vocation. Keep [praying for your husband](#); that he will be pruned and healed so that he can see in you what he needs to see.

God love and bless you!

This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2013/09/25/sexual-attraction/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Tradition must not become an empty shell. [at Catholic Deacon]

Most days driving home, or to the Cathedral, after work I listen to a local radio program on a Christian station in which two Evangelical pastors discuss the Bible book-by-book. A few weeks ago, as they were making their way through 1 Corinthians, they began to discuss the role of tradition in the life of the Christian Church. The more temperate and learned of the two exhibited what I think was a very balanced and even good grasp of tradition. He began by frankly admitting that tradition is inevitable and even valuable in the life of churches, even in their fairly large non-denominational denomination in which most view anything called "tradition" with great suspicion, or even contempt.

What prompted the discussion on tradition was the second verse of the chapter the two hosts were discussing:

[the eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians](#)

, in which the apostle wrote- "I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions, just as I handed them on to you." The trouble with any specific tradition, the pastor noted, is that it becomes perfunctory, performative, and, frankly, empty when it loses its connection with the reason it was deemed valuable enough to hand on in the first place; it becomes an end instead of a means.

Keep in mind that "tradition" comes from the Latin word

tradere

, which is a verb meaning the act of handing on. It also has a noun form-

traditio

- which is the content of what is handed on. The Greek word Paul used,

paradosis

, which, at root, means surrender, giving up, or giving over, can also be used to refer both to the act of handing on, the "giving over," and, logically, also to what is given over.



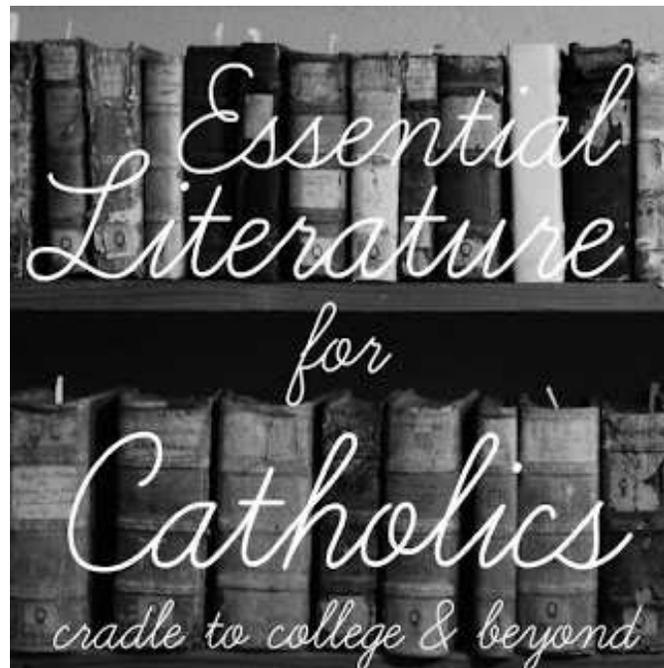
As Catholics we have many, many traditions and customs. As my example I will use a little custom- making the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads, over our lips, and hearts after the deacon, or, in his absence, the priest, prior to reading the Gospel passage for that day, says, "A reading from the holy Gospel according to [insert canonical Gospel here]." A non-Catholic, or someone in the process of becoming Catholic, will often ask, "What are you doing?," followed by, "Why do you do that?" Of course, this custom is nowhere called for in the rubrics and is not, at least to my knowledge, a universal practice. It is widespread, it seems, throughout the United States. I wonder how many people know, or say, any prayer connected with that gesture, such as, "May the word of the Lord be written in mind, be on my lips, and in my heart." I also wonder how many people realize that the reason for doing this, apart from asking the Lord to open us up to receive his word, is to remind ourselves to listen to what we are about to hear.

I won't presume to provide a guess, but I have no hesitation about giving an anecdotal answer based on my experience working with those who are in the period of inquiry as their first step towards becoming Catholic. Typically, when they ask Catholics these things, the person they ask simply does not know, they just do it. How many of our traditions seem to outsiders to have become, or, in the lives of many of the faithful, have actually become, disconnected from the reason(s) we do them, or any reason whatsoever? Perhaps asked a bit more directly, how many people have ever had someone help them, even if only by way of explaining it, make the connection in the first place?

Of course, the "tradition" to which St. Paul was mainly referring in 1 Corinthians 11 was that of the Eucharist. So, to round this out, here's something I posted almost seven years ago:

["Our concern is that He should remain present."](#)

Essential Literature for Catholics [at Messy Wife, Blessed Life]



This post may contain affiliate links and/or sponsored content. Click to see Disclosure Policy.

Twentieth-century Catholic author Flannery O'Connor wrote, “. . . the chief difference between a novelist who is an orthodox Christian and the novelist who is merely a naturalist is that the Christian novelist lives in a larger universe. He believes that the natural world contains the supernatural. And this doesn't mean that his obligation to portray the natural is less; it means it is greater.”

If this is so, then **Catholic fiction isn't necessarily a story about Catholic people, or one that takes place in a monastery, or that ends with a tidy moral. On the contrary, it should engage and challenge faith, but all with an utmost respect for reality--that is, God's reality--and in a way that is tasteful, not sanitized.** More importantly, it should be beautiful, since all beauty points to its Creator. God is love. God is truth. God is beauty. That which is written to be truly beautiful, and not by materialist standards or according to fads, must be true.

However, **beauty is not synonymous with quaint or pretty**, and there is all sorts of beauty in the world. Wildflowers on the mountainside contains beauty, but so does the snowstorm that bends the trees in two and threatens the life of the shepherd. Sublime beauty reminds us of the vastness of God; so the hawk swooping in for the kill is awful, *awe-full*--inspiring awe--and is likewise beautiful, though perhaps not recommended for the fainthearted.

In short, Catholic fiction can be known by looking for works where Truth meets Beauty, like the two intersecting lines of the Cross.

That said, almost any artistic literary endeavor before the time of Christ, as well as a good deal after, contain natural and supernatural encounters with Beauty; though some are removed from the full revolution of Christ and His Church. Of those many, I recommend the following for Catholic reading--from cradle to college, and beyond.

The original story of a boy's favorite stuffed bear, his toy and forest companions, and their adventures is poised to prep the Catholic imagination--not to mention all-together humorous and thoroughly entertaining, for readers of all ages. It had me rolling with laughter at parts like this:

"Christopher Robin [. . .] just said it had an 'x.'"

"It isn't their necks I mind,' said Piglet earnestly. 'It's their teeth.'"

It's also full of the nonsensical common sense of children. Delicious bits of wisdom, like the following:

"Well," said Pooh, "what I like best," and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn't know what it was called."

and

When you are a Bear of Very Little Brain, and you Think of Things, you find sometimes that a Thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it.

and

Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.

and

"There's the South Pole," said Christopher Robin, "and I expect there's an East Pole and a

West Pole, though people don't like talking about them."

And plenty of lines to cuddle up to with your little one:

"Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. "Pooh?" he whispered.

"Yes, Piglet?"

"Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's hand. "I just wanted to be sure of you."

Fairy Tales

Classic fairy tales are essential reading for every Catholic household (Disney versions are not acceptable substitutes!). G.K. Chesterton wrote, "Fairy tales do not tell children that dragons exist; children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be killed." They ought to be right up on the bookshelf with your children's Bible stories.

George MacDonald first showed the famous Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis, that the imagination could be "baptized," and that unnamed truths of existence could be expressed to almost-understanding in the beatific visions of fantasy and fairy tale. All of his books are highly recommended, but for younger readers, start out with the Curdie books. I read these aloud at tea time to three homeschooled sisters I tutored, and the books brought up opportunities for discussion in which even the youngest one, at age seven, could partake--

the richness of characterization, plot, and diction challenge little ones in the truths of faith and morals in a way that would not be nearly as successful if put to them in stale moralizing

.

You've encountered these in some way, even if you haven't read them--if not, do so at once!

The Narnia series is essential reading for any Catholic

, no matter what age.

These two stories, along with the various other supplemental works relating to Middle Earth, are so saturated with Catholicism that it goes unnoticed by most uninformed readers. In them,

the imagination encounters great truths about suffering and sacrifice--the heart of Christianity--and many other things besides

. These stories are bursting with Beauty, with a capital B, such as my favorite passage of the entire series:

There, peeping among the cloud-wrack above a dark tower high up in the mountains, Sam saw a white star twinkle for a while. The beauty of it smote his heart, as he looked up out of the forsaken land, and hope returned to him. For like a shaft, clear and cold, the thought pierced him that in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.

This long poem by G.K. Chesterton gives a fictionalized account of King Alfred the Great at the Battle of the White Horse, when the war-savvy Vikings were defeated and driven back from Christian Britain. Bright adolescents who need a challenge and young teens will enjoy the traditional poetry forms of rhyme and meter in a context that is far from prim.

You might have heard this popular quote from it:

The great Gaels of Ireland are the men that God made mad,
For all their wars are merry, and all their songs are sad.

***The Ballad of the White Horse* is about faith in times of despair, obedience to the will of God, and the singular trait unique to Christianity--its ability to survive against against all odds and be resurrected, like its Master.**

The men of the East may spell the stars,
And times and triumphs mark,
But the men signed of the cross of Christ
Go gaily in the dark.

For older teens and and young adults, *Frankenstein* is a study on the sublime and questions the nature of being. **In an age when all sorts of ethical standards are being pushed by science in the name of progress, Shelley's horror story holds man accountable when he crosses paths with the mystery of God and creation.**

A short read, and you'll be happy to get all those mobs-of-villagers-bearing-torches references.

Like

Frankenstein

,
The Picture of Dorian Gray

deals with scary themes; it shows how

sin corrupts the nature of man and what it does to a soul its fed too long on

.

The Complete Works of Flannery O'Connor

Now the veritable patron saint of aspiring Catholic writers, Flannery O'Connor's stories, like Wilde's, bring the fallen world into sharp contrast so that we can no longer view it in willing ignorance. Her human characters are not spared harsh scrutiny--but **before the story ends, each protagonist is given a jarring, overpowering gift of grace.**

Dante is probably one of the three greatest writers of all time, along with Homer and Shakespeare, and

his works are steeped in Catholic truth

. His books are readily available in translation.

A must for every library,

***Brideshead Revisited* is the crowning glory of Catholic literature in the twentieth century**

. Don't let a movie substitute for the real deal (the Catholic parts are often downplayed or cut entirely and the sinful actions of the characters magnified for Hollywood spectacle).

C.S. Lewis's Space-Science Trilogy

Read all three books to get the full effect:

[*Out of the Silent Planet*](#)

,
[*Perelandra*](#)

, and

[*That Hideous Strength*](#)

. Not only are these engaging as science-fiction,

they transcend genre to become commentary on modern heresies and very clearly present a celestial working of *The Theology of the Body*

. Especially the last two. From

THS

“The male you could have escaped, for it exists only on the biological level. But the masculine none of us can escape. What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. You had better agree with your adversary quickly.”

“You mean I shall have to become a Christian?” said Jane.

“It looks like it,” said the Director.

This re-telling of the myth of Psyche and Cupid is probably Lewis's greatest theological work.

His synchronization of myth with Christian truth is so seamless you'd swear that God had planned it.

Like most all of Lewis's works (but especially this one), it will have you crying during the last pages, and so grateful for the experience.

When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the center of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying

over and over, you'll not talk about the joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?

I put this one last--the most advanced reading, as it takes a practiced ear to understand the Elizabethan and patience to look up allusions.

Shakespeare's characters are so fundamentally mortal that their relevance will never expire. As long as there are men and women in a fallen world, Shakespeare's plays will tell truths about humanity and touch them deeply.

Joseph Pearce makes a thoroughly convincing case for Shakespeare being a secret Catholic (during a time in Reformation England when being so would have been punishable by death).

Hamlet

is the generally considered by scholars to be the best of the best. And while it is a tragedy, as so many of these books are, one cannot help but to walk away from it a better person.

After all, we were not meant for this world. Our happiness is with Another, in another place.
And

it is those tales and stories that point heavenward, to our true home, that bring us the most happiness and satisfaction for reading them

“Death opens a door out of a little, dark room (that's all the life we have known before it) into a great, real place where the true sun shines and we shall meet.”--C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*

For Further Reading

I highly recommend visiting [Tuscany Press](#)

for quality Catholic fiction in the tradition of the great Catholic literary lights. Tuscany is devoted to publishing art without sacrificing either truth or beauty.

You can read my own short story contribution, "The Debt," in the [2012 Tuscany Prize for Catholic Fiction: Collected Short Stories](#).

Or click on any of the links below for resources on art, literature, and the Catholic imagination.

Christie blogs at [Everything to Someone](#). Head over there to see her beautiful photography, read more literary recommendations, and follow her day-to-day musings as a mother and bibliophile.

Mandi

This contribution is available at <http://www.messywife.com/2013/09/quest-post-essential-literature-for.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The Cellarer [at Suffering With Joy]

September 18, 2013



Monk Feeding the Poor by Louis Gaillet

A central figure in the life of a Benedictine monastery is the cellarer. Hmmm. What does that have to do with me? I'm not a monk or nun and what the heck is a cellarer anyway? In Chapter 31 of his holy rule, St. Benedict clearly defines what kind of man the cellarer should be, and light bulbs went on when I read this section of a document that guided the lives of many beginning over 1600 years ago. I should care and it does have a lot to do with me and everyone else today who calls himself Christian. How?

The cellarer, called the "steward", is the monk charged by the Abbot with the whole administration of all temporal things at the monastery. He is the one everybody must go to for food, clothing, tools, supplies, etc. Obviously, this is a person of power because he has authority over the distribution of earthly goods necessary to daily living, not unlike the head of a family today, the pastor of a parish, the boss at work, etc. In a way, most of us are cellarers because most of us have some charge of earthly goods in relation to others. We have now leapt from the 400s into the 21st century.

Attributes of the cellarer

As cellarer of the monastery let there be chosen from the community one who is wise, of mature character, sober, not a great eater, not haughty, not excitable, not offensive, not slow, not wasteful, **but a God-fearing man who may be like a father to the whole community.**

How many of us can claim all of these attributes? They don't depend on age, but on humility and self control and placing God at the center of our lives. At about this time I want to prostrate myself before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and knock my head on the floor like the Asians did when coming before their emperors, physically demonstrating their lowliness in the face of a person with the highest dignity in their culture. I have not been a good cellarer a large part of my life.

Let him have charge of everything. He shall do nothing without the Abbot's orders, but keep to his instructions. **Let him not vex the brethren.** If any brother happens to make some unreasonable demand of him, **instead of vexing the brother with a contemptuous refusal he should humbly give the reason for denying the improper request.**

No doubt all of us have run into people who glory in the control they have over things, and seem to take perverse pleasure in telling others "no" to any request, and not in a kindly manner. The one asking may truly not realize he is asking something unreasonable, or he may be trying to manipulate the steward, but in any case, St. Benedict tells us if we are in the position of steward we must be humble in our communication and not put the other person down. Certainly we should not be yelling and screaming and arguing with him no matter how irrational he may be.

Moms and dads often have to deal with whiny kids afflicted with the "gimmies" as my Mom called them. We might be tempted to impatience and growl at them, but what if we instead, by deed, taught our children to be generous and giving rather than demanding and taking. I don't mean giving in to whiny children here. I'm talking about formation of the mind and heart that cuts down on the "gimmie" behavior.

One Christmas I collected toys from my contacts to give to a family living in the projects in Dallas. I was truly edified when one family asked their children to give their favorite toy away.

Let him keep guard over his own soul, mindful always of the Apostle's saying that "he who has ministered well acquires for himself a good standing" (1 Tim. 3:13).

Keeping guard over one's soul means doing our duty to God in worship, striving with His grace to develop virtue, spending our time constructively rather than in dissipation of all kinds, and developing our relationship with God every day so that we become more attached to Him than to anything or anyone else.

Let him take the greatest care of the sick, of children, of guests and of the poor, knowing without doubt that he will have to render an account for all these on the Day of Judgment.

Yes, let's not be short sighted about the implications of Whom we are serving. In all, it is the Person of Christ. Sometimes He shows up with a runny nose, a fever, not smelling very good, has annoying habits and appears at times that are inconvenient to us. St. Benedict is reminding us of what Jesus said in Matthew 25: 34-46.

Let him regard all the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as if they were the

sacred vessels of the altar. Let him not think that he may neglect anything. He should be neither a miser nor a prodigal and squanderer of the monastery's substance, but should do all things with measure and in accordance with the Abbot's instructions.

We can see in these two paragraphs that St. Benedict treats first of persons and then of things. All monastery goods, and all goods that we have, are to be held precious. Why? Because everything from small to great belongs to God. He is letting us be in charge of these things to meet our needs.

The family cellarer

Father G. A. Simon in his commentary on this section of the rule, notes some things that apply to the family too, which Pope John Paul II referred to as "the domestic church". In fact, every family can be likened to a little monastery that would be all the healthier and happier if influenced by St. Benedict's rule. No doubt there would be a lot less fighting over money, over what's "mine" and what's "yours", a lot less rivalry for power, and a lot more kindness.

The monastery is *par excellence* the house of God. This is why, according to [Cassian](#), the religious look on everything that enters there as a holy thing, consecrated to God, which must be neither abused nor misused.

To a lesser degree, yet very really, the goods entrusted to all Christians by Providence should be regarded as God's goods. The one who possesses is the steward and, to use the monastic expression, the cellarer of God. **If he is the head of a family, he should know that he has no right to squander goods which are more the property of his dependents, whose well-being they assure, than they are his own.** According to the Church's traditional doctrine, **the individual exists much less for himself than for the family of which he is constituted the head, the guardian, and the protector.** And he is also God's steward with respect to the orphans, the poor, the sick. He must not fail to come to their aid according to his means. He who performs no charity fails in his religious duties.

In this commentary we have a perfect description of what a father should be and how he should act. If the mother is the head of the family for whatever reason, this applies to her. Here is a prescription for unselfishness and the practice of orienting ourselves to the common good of the household. Moreover, we have an example of living the first Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5: 3).

Again and again I am struck by how the Christian being a good steward fulfills many admonitions of the Gospel, and how great and precious the Holy Rule of St. Benedict is in this regard. Imagine what could happen in our souls and in our families if we concentrated on being good cellarers for just one year. Imagine what could become of this impoverished world, this consumerist-throw away society if we all developed the habits St. Benedict admonishes in chapter 31.

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/2013/09/18/the-cellarer/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

There's Nothing New Under the Sun [at Martin Family Moments]

The other day I was reading a magazine article on little ideas to improve your health. As I was reading, I realized that the Catholic Church had already implemented that her followers take up these healthy habits a long, long time ago. For example:

1. Fasting.

There are 1

[oads of books available](#)

now that say fasting is the new way to lose weight. Our bodies were meant to fast, they claim, just as they had to back when we were hunters and gatherers that had times of plenty (Me kill da big buffalo for you dear) and times of famine (Chew on dis tree bark to curb your hunger). Fasting can help you lose weight and improve your health, say it's supporters. Well do you know who the biggest supporter of fasting is? The Catholic Church!

I'm jealous that your religion has a built-in weight-loss program.



someecards

When people have an inordinate attachment to any physical pleasure, the Church recommends fasting to learn how to control our urges. We fast during Lent to prepare our bodies, hearts, and minds for the amazing things that are about to happen in our liturgical year. Jesus himself fasted for 40 days to prepare Himself for His ministry. We are all about intermittent fasting, yo!

2. No Meat Once a Week.

This one is something I see all the time in magazines about healthier eating. "Just replace your meat meals with vegetarian meals once a week!" "Try

Meatless Mondays

!" "Be kind to animals!" Their selling points may differ, but meatless enthusiasts claim eating more fruits and veggies and less animal products is better for your body and the earth. Well guess who jumped on the no-meat-train a very long time ago? It's those darn Catholics again! Yup, Catholics should abstain from eating meat on all Fridays as a form of penance to honor Jesus' death on Good Friday. Meatless Mondays? Let's bring back Meatless Fridays.

3. Communication, Talking Things Out.

I have a theory that the rise in popularity of therapists/psychiatrists/psychologists is directly related to the decline of Confession and spiritual direction. We Catholics are so lucky that we can talk to priests about our problems, ask for and receive forgiveness for our sins, and leave feeling like a brand new person. It is so therapeutic to be able to talk to an understanding soul and feel at peace when you are done.



Of course, there are times when a medical doctor is needed in addition to a "spiritual doctor", and we are lucky to have access to both.

4. Treating Yourself.



The Catholic Church isn't all about restrictions and abstinence. Oh no! Do you know how many Feast days we celebrate each year? Me neither because there are so many! Feast days are a great excuse to plan a fancier dinner or bake a sweet dessert. And while doctors are

[recommending vacations](#)

to help people's stress levels, the Fourth Commandment has been telling us to take a day off each week to go to Mass and spend time with loved ones and relax! How's that for treating yourself right?

5. Forgiveness.

Letting go of grudges and bitterness can make way for compassion, kindness and peace. Forgiveness can lead to:

- Healthier relationships
- Greater spiritual and psychological well-being
- Less anxiety, stress and hostility
- Lower blood pressure
- Fewer symptoms of depression
- Lower risk of alcohol and substance abuse

Jesus himself asked God to forgive his torturers, claiming they knew not what they were doing. And shouldn't we be living in Christ's example? But another reason to forgive others is so that God can forgive us if when we sin - "And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us".

6. Role Models and Super Heroes.



This is one of my favorite things about the Catholic Church. While the world tries to sell you on Disney actresses as role models that end up being the exact opposite of what you want your daughter to grow up like, the Church teaches us about real men and women with diverse backgrounds and personalities who overcame it all to become Saints.



You want an excellent example of how to live as a career woman and mother? Read about St. Gianna. Do you need inspiration from someone who has led a life of sin but turns it all around? Try St. Augustine. Maybe you need advice from a mom who has watched her child make poor choices but finally wised up? St. Monica's your gal.

Taking from the example of Apple:



Catholics can say "You got problems? We've got a Saint for that!"

7. Having Families.

Did you know that

[having a spouse](#)

makes you healthier? And

[having children](#)

also improves your life? These things can reduce the risks of cancers, increase happiness, help you live longer, etc. Guess who is the biggest supporter of marriage and procreation? Yup, the good old Catholic Church. We're not just trying to take over the world, we're trying to make it a better place ;)

8. Karma.

We've all heard that what goes around comes around. The secular world describes it as karma.



WHAT GOES AROUND COMES BACK AROUND...

The Bible teaches us to "love our neighbor as we love ourselves" which is the Catholic interpretation of karma, I suppose. Whereas karma can be viewed negatively (You just stole my boyfriend! Watch out for that karma!), the Golden Rule is a positive way to live (I won't steal

your boyfriend because I don't want anyone taking MY man). See, it's much nicer ;)

9. Money.

Paying off debt is a good thing. It's also a million dollar business for some people who are experts in the field. People are desperate to find ways to save money, pay off debts, and increase their incomes. But, we don't need fancy plans or highly paid speakers to tell us how to live a financially healthy life. All one has to do is read Pope Benedict's *Light of the World*, where he says that people living in debt are people "living in untruth", or read the

[hundreds of passages](#)

about money in the Bible, or open the Catechism to see what it says

[about working](#)

and earning an income. Work hard, spend wisely, save soundly, and grow in your love of poverty, because God loves the poor!

10. Healthy Sex Lives.

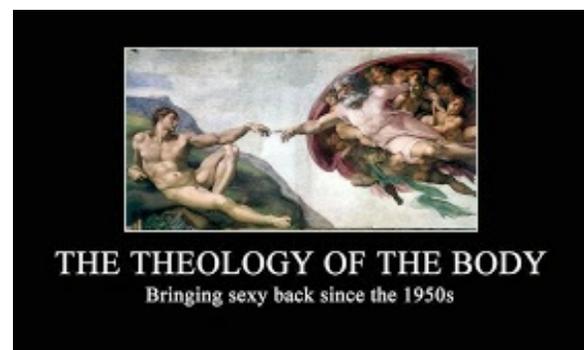
I can't even begin to tell you how many magazine articles I see proclaiming to give all the secrets to an amazing sex life.



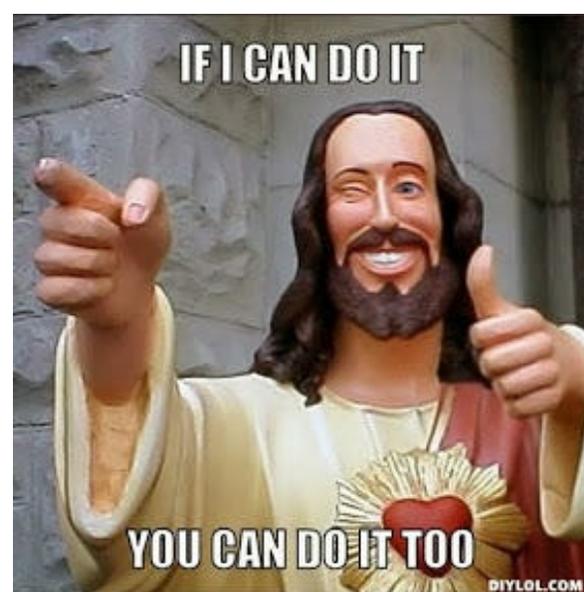
And they couldn't be more wrong. They are almost all focused on a selfish love, on getting what you want, and not on giving love to another.

Well, the world may not be in the know yet, but we Catholics all realize the way to have a healthy and fulfilling sex life is to have a committed partner who puts us first. You can't get more committed than marriage with a vow of "until death do us part" and you can't get more selflessly loved than by a spouse who is following the teachings of John Paul II's

[Theology of the Body](#)



So there you have it. The best way to live a healthy life is to live a life in full communion with the teachings of the Catholic Church. And remember...



:)

Colleen

This contribution is available at <http://www.martinfamilymoments.blogspot.com/2013/09/theres-nothing-new-under-son.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

Faith Like A Mustard Seed [at Peace Garden Mama]

It was one of those evenings

when I'd found myself needing a distraction, which led to a perusal through the Facebook trail. You know how it goes. You see something interesting, and before long, you're far from where you began.

The photo caught my eye immediately, and then I had to catch my breath. It was a family photo from a reunion, but I found it absolutely brilliant.



Family Reunion (*click on photo to enlarge*)

And not only brilliant because of the way the family had obviously thought it all out beforehand, but, well, to be honest, I was transfixed by the beauty of it all -- of seeing this big bustling family in all its glory, in all those colors, parceled out by T-shirts with each family "pod" or branch having chosen its own distinguishing color.

This moment in time, which had to have been tricky to capture, became a breathtaking bouquet of people, each connected in some way to the two sitting on stools in the middle -- the ones who'd started it all.

I don't know that I've met

the matriarch or patriarch of this stunning brood, though I do know several of their children (one of whom graciously gave me permission to share this piece of their family history). But I'm captivated by this visual and what it says to me: "Trust in God and He will lead you to life in abundance."

It didn't escape me that the main couple chose yellow for their T-shirt color. Yellow, like mustard, or a mustard seed. Or, as Jesus said in Matthew 17:20, "I assure you that if you have faith as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this hill, 'Go from here to there!' and it will go. You could do anything."

Anything, like help create a big beautiful family from the simple but profound words, "I do" and a loving God to guide.

Jesus wanted us to know that it only takes a wee bit of faith to create a big, bounteous life. When this mustard-seed couple married all those years ago, they couldn't have fathomed how their family would expand. They simply stepped out in faith, leaned hard on God, and this was the result.

Some in our world would

see this as a negative, and say this couple has been selfish. But that would be unfair and wholly untrue. Rather, they have been selfless. Think of how many things they have sacrificed through the years in order to help bring all these souls into the world.

The really cool thing for me is that, though I don't know every single person in this photo, I do know a fair number of them. Several, I met back in college. I once witnessed one of the couples falling in love when I walked into a room at a retreat and accidentally glimpsed them sneaking in a quick kiss. Several have been in Bible studies with me. We've shared pregnancies. Another has a child in my son's class and they've played soccer together. One teaches and brings kids on mission trips to other countries.

There have been many crossing through the years, and I can say with confidence that this is a family with a beautiful, generous collective soul.

I know that there has been hardship in this family, too. One of the mothers has battled and overcome cancer. One couple lost a child in infancy. There have been heartaches woven into this picture of love, but there has been so much joy, too, because this is a family that has followed the mustard-seed model that Jesus presented. They have stepped out in faith, and God has delivered in a prolific way.

Along with inspiring me in

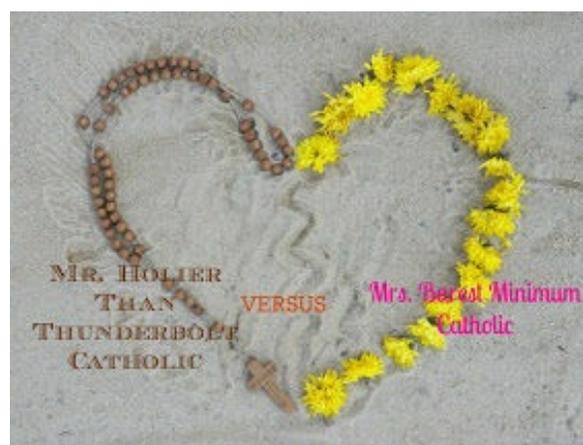
terms of sheer numbers and the color, this visual also says something else to me: hope. It says, "Hang on, trust, lean it, let go, and hope for what is possible through God and God alone. Give Him your life and He will bring life to yours in ways you could never have imagined."

Whether it's through our family or in the other ways we move about the world, the application is the same. We don't have to be big, nor does our faith. God can work with just a small amount, and even with that speck of faith, mountains and hearts can be moved, and the world can become a little more colorful and beautiful than before.

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2013/09/faith-family-fridays-faith-like-mustard.html>

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

Mr. Holier Than Thunderbolt Catholic versus Mrs. Barest Minimum Catholic [at Written by the Finger of God]



From where I sit, the online bickering between opinionated Catholics looks like a juicy scene straight out of divorce court. Care to see the eye view from a lawyer's imagination? (Note: All characters are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.)

The first party, Mr. 'Holier than Thunderbolt Catholic' thinks of everything in terms of "shoulds" and "oughts." He sounds like a regular mandamus petition:

"I don't care if you're pope, but anyone who attends a Mass with Liturgical abuses/wears a skirt above the ankle/ is Charismatic/ lets her children reads Harry Potter/ get vaccines/doesn't breastfeed/ doesn't spank her children {insert more} is an evil sinner or heretic who will be struck down by thunderbolts and doomed to eternal damnation!" Points finger for emphasis. May pound judge's gavel if carried away.

The opposing party, Mrs. 'Barest Minimum Catholic', likes to go surfing by what the Church requires as the foundation for her faith life. The defense brief is:

"Duuude, I'm not required by Canon law to vote for the other party/abstain on non-Lent

Fridays/go to Confession more than once a year/veil at Mass/attend Latin Mass/receive Communion on the tongue/believe in private revelation/pray the rosary/use sacramentals/listen to St. Pio/have a dozen children/ homeschool my children {insert more}. You can't *make* me ride your mondo zealotry wave. It's all rippin' good in the comfort zone of my board." Cross arms over chest, flash 'hang loose' sign.

To wade knee deep into controversy, read the rest at [Catholic Stand](#).

+AMDG+

This contribution is available at <http://www.anabellehazard.blogspot.com/2013/10/mr-holier-than-thunderbolt-catholic.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

HTTP/1.1 200 OK Date: Sun, 03 Nov 2013 21:54:19 GMT Server: Apache Expires: Thu, 19 Nov 1981 08:52:00 GMT Cache-Control: no-store, no-cache, must-revalidate, post-check=0, pre-check=0 Pragma: no-cache X-Pingback: http://contemplativehomeschool.com/xmlrpc.php Link: ; rel=shortlink Set-Cookie: PHPSESSID=qc14v9bqmslebbcghra6fflc07; path=/ Vary: Accept-Encoding Transfer-Encoding: chunked Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 \n\n

You are here:

[Home](#)

/

[Virtue](#)

/ Fighting demons while you sleep

\n\n

Fighting demons while you sleep

September 27, 2013 By [crossini4774](#) [26 Comments](#)



Orthodox Bulgarian icon of St. George fighting the dragon (photo credit: Wikipedia).

I used to have spiritual warfare dreams. For what seemed like hours, I would dream that a demon was trying to attack me. To repel him, I had to say, “In the name of Jesus, be gone!” Then he would leave—and be back a few minutes later. Over and over I did battle with demons. I would awake exhausted.

Spiritual warfare in daily life

I don’t usually have such dreams any more. But some days I feel like they’ve become my waking reality. Life as a homeschool mom can be trying. I must overcome constant temptations. One moment, three kids ask me for help at once. The next, “J” spills juice on the floor I just mopped. Then two others get in a fight, and one talks back when I discipline him. All during math class.

Now none of these situations is major. But when you barely have time to breathe between one and the next, you get exhausted. You discipline in anger instead of love. You yell at the toddler for acting like a toddler. You argue with your older son.

Or maybe you don’t. But I often do.

St. John Vianney and the devil

Have you heard the story about St. John Vianney? The devil used to harass him so much it became routine. One night when he was trying to sleep, his bed was bouncing around like crazy. He peeked under the bed and saw the devil. His response? “Oh, it’s just you again.” Then the saint went to sleep.

Should we fear the devil? Should we fear temptation? We can’t conquer demons on our own. They are fallen angels, much more powerful than mere humans. But we have the Holy Trinity living in our hearts. Christ conquered the devil on the cross. The devil hates it when we remind him of this. We have the power to rebuke him in Jesus’ name.

Fighting demons by humility

In homeschool, we have been reading a swath of passages in the *Golden Children’s Bible* that speak about our power over the devil. In the midst of them, the disciples argue about who is the greatest. Then Jesus takes a little child and says that we must become like children in order to be great. Why is this passage placed where it is?

Because humility conquers the devil.

Pride turned Lucifer into Satan. Pride was the original sin. The devil can neither stand nor understand humility. He can’t do anything with it.

I feel disrespected when my hard work is undone, as though I’m a slave instead of a mother. This is pride. I yell at my kids, because I think a display of “power” will make them behave. I should

be humbly using the authority God gave me. I argue, because I feel attacked and become irrational. If I were humble, I would triumph over my temptations.

Humility brings peace

I must open my heart to grace in these moments, acknowledging that I don't have the strength on my own to do God's will. I must offer Him my weakness and accept His strength in return.

The Holy Spirit works silently in my heart. He doesn't make a show. But He can slay all my dragons while I remain at peace.

You might even say that He fights my demons while I sleep.

Connie Rossini

Filed Under: [Virtue](#) Tagged With: [Catholic](#), [Devil](#), [Holy Spirit](#), [homeschool](#), [Humility](#), [John Vianney](#), [Sleeping](#)

This contribution is available at <http://contemplativehomeschool.wordpress.com/2013/09/27/fighting-demons-while-you-sleep/>

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

| [Contents](#) |

How To Be A Crazy (for Christ) Catholic [at 8 Kids and A Business]

Posted at [Catholic Insight](#)



Do you make the Sign of the Cross and bow your head in prayer when you're eating at a restaurant? On Ash Wednesday do you walk into work after lunch with smudged ashes on your forehead? When asked by your colleagues what you did on the weekend do you say you went to Mass? Do you speak out in defense of the Catholic Church? Ever held up a sign that said "Abortion is Murder" on a busy street corner? Refused a work assignment because it goes against Catholic teaching? Said no to artificial contraception? No to same-sex 'marriage'? Have a big family? Go to confession regularly? Continue to learn as much as you can about the Catholic Faith?

If you said "yes" to any of the above, then in the eyes of the world, you're crazy. Your way of life makes you different from those around you and at some point you will be the object of criticism and scorn.

The history of the Church includes many examples of crazy people, men and women who chose a counter-cultural life. St. Gianna Beretta Molla gave up her life so that her baby may live. St. Maximilian Kolbe volunteered to be put to death in order that a married man may live. St. Junipero Serra gave up a successful career as a university professor and became a missionary. Martyrs refused to renounce their faith and died for it. There are countless unknown people who live unworldly lives: married couples who accept children lovingly from God; men and women who give up the possibility of marriage and family to live a consecrated life in service to God and His Church; people from all walks of life who daily try to put God first.

A friend gave a homily in which he pointed out that Jesus called his followers to do crazy things.

Seventy disciples were sent out “like lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3) without sandals and other personal belongings. Today, He continues His call to craziness. How many of us embrace the call?

My friend explained in his homily: “... in the eyes of the world, we are not really crazy. In many ways, the Church has stopped appearing crazy to our society. The Church is seen merely as just another institution, just another community. But once the Church is seen as just another institution, once we stop appearing as crazy, the Church will become irrelevant – because the Church is not just another institution. Every other institution in society is focused on this world. The Church is totally directed away from this world, towards eternal life, towards the kingdom of God. Yes, we live in this world. The Church is in this world, and we must take care of things in this world, but our focus must always be away from this world and towards eternal life. The Church must be primarily concerned with the salvation of souls, giving birth to eternal life in her members. It is why one the deepest images of the Church is being a mother – the Church is like a mother, nourishing that eternal life in her children. The Prophet Isaiah described this image so beautifully – Jerusalem, the Holy City, the Church, is like a mother nursing her child, feeding her child.”

While my friend was vacationing in California, he had the privilege of celebrating Mass at [Our Lady of Peace Shrine](#), a parish in the city of Santa Clara. This is what he said:

” I would call this a very active parish, but not in the way we usually think. It is active not because they have lots of groups and lots of activities, and lots of ministries. It is an active parish because at all hours of the day and night there are people in the church praying and adoring the Blessed Sacrament (they have perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, on the main altar). It is an active parish because there are many people going to confession. Confessions are heard throughout all the Masses during the week and on Sundays, and the lines are always long. And there is a deep devotion to Our Blessed Mother in the parish. The Rosary is prayed in the church every hour. There is a shrine to Our Lady on the parish grounds and people are constantly going up to pray.

Consequently, the parish produces vocations. When I was there, I met 3 seminarians from the parish and they have had others. Why is this so? Because it is a parish that is very much centered on eternal life. The people are praying, going to confession, entrusting themselves to Our Lady. They are concerned with the salvation of their souls, not with worldly measures of success. And the mentality is to trust Jesus and Our Lady; don’t worry about having meetings, making an action plan, acting like an institution. Focus on Jesus in the Eucharist, keep Our Lady front and centre, and you will see the results.

Some would call that parish crazy: ‘oh, that parish is crazy, people are always praying, they’re always praying to Our Lady, they kiss her statue. Crazy parish.’

That is how we want to be. We want the world to see us as different, to call us crazy. If the world does not call us crazy, something is wrong – we are not really following Jesus, we are not fully living our Christian faith. When we decide to trust Jesus – to really trust Him fully –

He will call us to do something the world will not like; we might not even like it. We will think it is crazy; the world will think it is crazy, the world will not like us. But that is where the greatest blessings come from, that is when the most powerful graces will come, and that is how the vocations will come. That is how the Church must live in the world. That is how Our Lord lived in the world – He was hated, He was crucified.”

The world needs crazy because crazy is the light of Christ. Crazy is putting God first, focusing on the crucifix and its message of self-sacrificing, merciful love; crazy is kneeling to adore what the world sees as a piece of unleavened bread but we know is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus; crazy is taking our Faith out of the church pews and living it at work, in our homes, on the street, in the world.

So go out into the world today and be a crazy fool for Christ.

Photo credit: [GlasgowAmateur](#) / [Foter](#) / [CC BY-SA](#)

Deo Gratias

This contribution is available at <http://8kidsandabusiness.wordpress.com/2013/09/03/how-to-be-a-crazy-for-christ-catholic/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Envy, the No-win Sin [at New Evangelizers]

Let's play the "What if..." game.

What if you just lost your job while your co-worker received a promotion and a big raise? Would you be happy for him?

What if a parent that was often critical of your children found out that her child was just caught for cheating? Would you feel the slightest bit of satisfaction?

What if your child dropped out of school while a friend's child was just awarded a four-year scholarship to a prestigious university? Does the news make you feel sick with envy?

What if you just learned your spouse was having an adulterous affair and a friend calls to share that her husband just surprised her by planning a second honeymoon to Hawaii. Would you share her happiness?

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

In the Christian world, this is where the rubber meets the road. **Going to Mass and praying is easy compared to mustering up the love for those that tempt us to envy.** It's as if someone has punched us in the stomach. They did not do it intentionally, but they did it just the same.

When someone's success makes our failure feel bigger, the temptation is to feel envy and to even desire his or her failure. Misery truly does love company. No one understands our suffering like a fellow sufferer and no one can deepen our pain like someone who has great success in the place we feel loss.

For example, someone with an abusive, unloving spouse could best find comfort in a fellow betrayed spouse. On the contrary, if the abused spouse has to sit next to a person with a publicly adoring husband or wife, a new seating arrangement might be necessary before nausea sets in. Then if, down the road, the adoring husband or wife was found out to be having an affair, the abused spouse would be tempted to feel some level of satisfaction. This is where the sin of envy lies.

Jesus told us to love our neighbor as ourselves. **If we cannot love those whose success is greater than ours, then we are not loving them as ourselves.** And if we rejoice in their failure, again, that is not love but sin.

Please! you might be thinking. *Am I supposed to be a saint?* Yeah, actually you are. But how on earth can we muster such love? From earth, we don't, but from heaven, we can. It will take prayer and an iron will, because it ain't easy. Yet, if we succeed, we truly follow Christ and in

the end, the reward is ours.

“Give and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” (Luke 6:38)

What does this have to do with envy? It’s about giving love even when it’s hard so that we may receive love in return. We may be helpless to change the circumstances that cause us pain, but God never wants us to wallow in it.

Loss and failure cause us sadness. But if we rejoice or desire failure for others, then we have sinned. Instead, we should force ourselves to pray twice; once for the person who experienced the success and once for ourselves for help not to be envious. By praying for the person with the success, we are taking a step to protect ourselves against envy.

You may think, *That person is already experiencing success, do they even need our prayers?* Yes, everyone needs prayers. By saying prayers for a person tempting us to envy, we are giving a truly Christian love that might at that point, take every ounce of energy to muster up.

By loving others under such difficult circumstances, it will be returned. **Love always comes back to us; if not from the world, from God.** For the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.

Jealousy and Envy

There is a difference between jealousy and envy. They are often used in the same way, but are two different things. **Jealousy is the feeling that someone has something that rightfully belongs to us.** Thus, a person might feel jealous that a sibling seems to be getting favored treatment. In sports, there might be jealousy that a fellow teammate viewed as an equal or lesser, is being given more playing time.

With jealousy, on some level, the person feels something was taken from him. If an attractive person is flirting with our partner, we are apt to feel jealous because our partner belongs to us.

Envy, on the other hand, is when a person has a desire for something that someone else has. Not in a shared-goal sort of way but in an angry way—they have what we want so we feel angry inside. There is a feeling of ill-will at the success or good fortune of another. Envy tempts us to bitterness. In the end, it is a sin with no earthly reward.

For instance, a person who steals has sinned, but his incentive to do so is the goods he has taken. A person lies in an attempt to benefit in some way. With envy, there is no reward. Don’t misunderstand me and think that some sins are okay because a reward is involved. My point is that there is even greater incentive to ward against such sin because all the way around, we come up empty. With jealousy there is the perceived feeling that something is being taken from us.

With envy, we got nothin' and knew it all along.

To me, envy is the granddaddy of them all to overcome. Loving God, going to Mass, not taking His name in vain, not killing, stealing or lying or committing adultery....these involve choices. But **envy has a mind of its own.**

Envy pops up in a place where we hurt or feel insecure in some way. We don't want to feel bad about ourselves. We want to succeed. So watching another's success in an area where we are falling short seems to cut us to some degree. If our pain is deep the cut is equally as deep.

In reality, it's probably not so much that we don't want others to succeed. We just don't want them to succeed while we fail. We don't want their child to be the honor student with the scholarship while ours is arrested for breaking and entering. If our child was doing well, then it would not hurt us to hear about the success of their child. Instead, we might be kindred spirits and celebrate together. But without our own reason to celebrate, it's harder to be happy for others.

Prayer and Perspective

It's not our fault if the pain comes and we are tempted to envy. It is our fault if we wallow in it. There is great incentive to overcome it because in doing so, we overcome the pain it causes us. But how can we overcome something we did not cause and do not want? **It's a matter of prayer and perspective.**

It's good to keep in mind that God has our lives in His hands. Who are we to argue with our lot in life? We must realize that doing so is a lack of faith and us telling God that we know better. And we also can only know what is happening on the outside of most people's lives and in the present. How often do we look at a family that seems to have it all only to later learn of some tragedy that befalls them? Or they are dealing with something very painful that they keep hidden from the world. Stop looking at the things we want in their lives because a life does not just come with good stuff, but crosses too. Do we also wish for their crosses? We should never want to trade lives with anyone for their crosses would not be suited for us anymore than the rest of their lives.

Sure, someone may have gotten the promotion we wanted, but stop and think a moment. Could offering up this disappointment lead to the salvation of someone in your family or even your own?

God knows what we need and don't need. **Adjust your perspective and pray through your weaknesses.** Those pangs of jealousy and envy spring from your own pain, so offer up the whole thing and force yourself to pray for the very people causing your pain. Of course it's not an easy thing to do. *They already have what I want and I'm suppose to give them my prayers too?* Well, it's a great idea.

You'll ultimately relieve your own pain through the grace of God and in the end, your generous spirit will come back to you because God cannot be outdone in generosity.



Patti Maguire Armstrong

Patti Maguire Armstrong and her husband have ten children. She currently works as a communications specialist with Teresa Tomeo Communications and worked in the fields of social work and public administration before staying home. Patti is an award-winning writer, speaker and was managing editor and co-author of Ascension Press's Amazing Grace Series. She has appeared on EWTN, and Catholic TV as well as radio stations across the country. Her latest books, *Big Hearted: Inspiring Stories from Everyday Families* (Scepter Publishers) and *Dear God I Don't Get It* (for children from Liguori Publications), will be released in Spring 2013. To read more visit Patti's [blog](#) and [website](#). Follow her on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook at her author page](#).

This contribution is available at <http://newevangelizers.com/blog/2013/08/21/envy-the-no-win-sin/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Lord, my heart is not proud [at Journey to Wisdom]

[Psalm 131](#) : Receiving the Kingdom like a child

LORD, my heart is not proud;

I do not busy myself with great matters,

with things too sublime for me.

Rather, I have stilled my soul,

Like a weaned child to its mother,

Israel, hope in the LORD,



Sometimes I read this Psalm 131 and I feel great peace and trust. Sometimes I think, yeah, easy for King David to say, he has the Lord's blessing, he is King and loved by his people. He accomplished great things, and pursued great marvels. I am nothing like that, but I want, I want, I want. And that is when I take my eyes off of the Lord and focus on myself. But in His great patience He waits, and soon I return, realizing that in all he did, King David had a heart for God. Only in resting with Him and then receiving His grace will I truly be able to see that my wants all are fulfilled in Him. Even in my daily tasks, like feeding a little two-year old boy lunch and putting him down for a nap, if it is done with a heart for the Lord, it is truly a task great and marvelous that is laid out just for me.

Childlike faith is the key. Humbly accepting the tasks that God has laid before you, not without zeal or passion, but without grasping at honor and earthly glory (and running back to His mercy when you realize that those desires have crept into your motivation for serving God). All reward is sought from the Father.

And God places examples of this childlike faith before our eyes all the time; because He is a Father, and He knows we need encouragement. Last fall as I was waiting for my preschool daughter's dance class to start I was entranced by a vision of childlike discipleship.

My daughter and another little girl were busy running, leaping and twirling around the gymnasium where the class was to be held, when the baby brother of my daughter's friend, who was crawling around the floor, shot a glance at his mother, and then with great determination, began to stand. All at once his mother and the two little girls were cheering him on. He was wobbly, and he was not really sure what to do, but he had his eyes fixed on his mother who held out her arms encouraging him to take a step. Which he did, to the cheers and clapping, twirling and jumping of

the little girls. But he was all about his mother, his eyes were sparkling and determined as he focus on her and took another wobbly step in her direction.

The girls continued to demonstrate their proficiency at bipedal movement all around him, but it did not distract him from his task. He was not overcome with prideful self-awareness at his shaky steps while they twirled around him, he was progressing in the task appropriate to him at his age and physical development. He did not measure his achievement by theirs, he took encouragement from their cheers but directed his full attention to his mother who received him with joy and love as he fell into her arms. His smile was ecstatic!

It felt for a moment like a vision from heaven. As I read this psalm I recalled this vision, and I also thought of the distracted and distorted wants that are often revealed in my heart. Only when one stops grasping at things that are, at that moment, too sublime, or lets go of a self conscious awareness of the abilities of those around them, and simply focuses on the Father, can he or she proceed in the Spirit in task that was placed before them at that moment and take joy in the love of the Father, not worrying about what those around are called to do, or whether anyone notices what is being accomplished.

This is the only way to really progress authentically in the Spirit in the unique way God has intended for you and you alone. It is the only way to proceed without soul-killing pride and self-consciousness blunting your zeal and diverting your passion. But, when you focus on the one who will sustain you in all things, when you rest in Him receive His grace and then respond in His Spirit your passion will be tremendous, your zeal will be contagious and your reward will be great, for it will be from Him in whom all desires are fulfilled.

How do you receive and then allow the Lord's grace to flow through you? Do you accept His yoke through yielding to His Spirit in prayer? Do you respond to the Lord's promptings, seeking forgiveness when you fail and when you succeed do you seek approval and greatness from God alone? When we do we can proceed in the Spirit in great matters or in small matters with His peace, because it is in Him whom we trust will give us all that we could ever hope for, always falling into His arms for refreshment.

Oh Lord, my heart is not proud.....

Peace and Grace to all,

Heidi

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2013/09/lord-my-heart-is-not-proud.html>

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

The Evangelical Counsel of Poverty for Laity [at Naru Hodo]

As I mentioned in my post-of-intention, I have been contemplating what living the evangelical counsels actually entails for a lay person. No, not really "for a lay person," but for me. I've been mulling over what the Lord has been teaching me about poverty, chastity, and obedience. Of course, He seems to teach me most things without my realizing what it is about until much later when I get a word to package the lesson in, and I say (guess what)....

naru hodo

!

And then I often find much later, when I am in a more practical stage of life where I am actually required to make choices and decisions based on the lessons I have been taught, that I read something I wrote, and I suddenly realize it was meant to be carried out very concretely, not just in the realm of "having wisdom." Sometimes that's a bit of a bummer... But it is then valuable to realize that pretty words have all their value in being applied.

So, yeah, that's my warm up for why I'm writing this.

Here's what the

[OCDS Constitutions](#)

have to say about poverty:

By the promise of poverty the Secular Carmelite expresses the desire to live in accordance with the Gospel and its values. In evangelical poverty there is a wealth of generosity, self-denial, and interior liberty and a dependence on Him who “Though rich, yet for our sake, became poor” (2 Co 8:9), and who “emptied Himself” (Ph 2:7), to be at the service of His brothers and sisters. The promise of poverty seeks an evangelical use of the goods of this world and of personal talents, as well as the exercise of personal responsibilities in society, in family, and work, confidently placing all in the hands of God. It also implies a commitment to the cause of justice so that the world itself responds to God’s plan. In combination with these, evangelical poverty recognizes personal limitations and surrenders them to God with confidence in His goodness and fidelity.

Now, here's what I have been learning.

I've always had a thin line to walk about this business of denying oneself, and of poverty of spirit. I think that is because to counter each of the evangelical counsels, the devil throws out a different pack a lies to distort God's image and make Him look hateful. By desiring us to have poverty of

spirit God is not communicating

You are nothing

, but rather

You are mine

. And that is not in some violently possessive way. In being God's, we are made completely free -- not possessed by things or goods.

One of my biggest struggles has been poverty in my thinking. I can remember right where I was sitting when the Lord impressed on me that I had a big need to meditate more on Scripture. Actually, that message came through to me more than once. At first I tried just randomly reading a book of Scripture, but soon drifted away from that. Slowly I moved back towards praying the Liturgy of the Hours, which I've done in fits and starts since the day I decided to become a Catholic. I discovered that the more I did that, the more my meditation started picking up steam. Now I simply can't believe how beautiful and packed with meaning it is (because I remember how boring it felt when I first started).

But my point is there that it is very natural for me to ruminate and reason and just sit and think (sometimes quite unreasonably!). Poverty of spirit in terms of thinking, for me means allowing the Word of God to so fill my mind that when I ponder a situation or person or event, I can let Him infill my own thoughts, rather than being carried away simply by my inclinations, my reactions, my emotions, my mood, or the state of my indigestion.

And so with any good or gift that comes to me. I can receive it, not accepting lies about it or worrying or getting defensive over attacks on the said good, but I hold it in an open hand, offering it. I place it entirely in the presence/at the disposal of God. If I have it, that's good. If I don't have it, that's good too. It is my place to make anything I am or have available to God. It is God's action to create the dynamic that makes for poverty of spirit. He will wedge one into the place where one's offering turns into a sacrifice.

For me this has happened when I have been in the midst of change I completely did not understand. My own thoughts turning over events only found pain. In those moments, turning to Scripture to delve into God's thoughts, to repeat His promises, His commands, the history of how He interacted with His people -- all this sunk down into the crevasses formed by my own soul splitting open. In this way, God was able to float out more things in me that bore no resemblance to Him. It stung, like death always does. Sometimes we really do prefer the general anesthesia of our dullness to either real life or real death. But along with that sting of death, one finds oneself looking into the face of the Savior, the Redeemer, the One with all the power, the One who speaks those powerful words that seem at the time to only have terrible power. We know that He holds in His hands all that we lack. And we only feel that lack. But we know that as long as we are with Him, He has all we need. If we trust, we know that at the right time it will be ours.

That is the blessed state of poverty: feeling our lack keenly, but knowing we are with the One who holds all we need. This is the state of the anawim, or Mary who rejoices in God her Savior who has done to her great things. Poor, yet possessing everything, because He is Everything.

This contribution is available at <http://lift-up-your-hearts.blogspot.com/2013/09/the-evangelical-counsel-of-poverty-for.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

Praying and Fasting for Peace [at Hermano Juancito]

Pope Francis has asked us to pray and fast today for peace – in Syria and throughout the world.

I am not a historian but I don't know of any precedents, of any popes who asked the church to fast for peace – and against a specific war.

Pope John Paul II spoke strongly against the Iraq war and was largely ignored by the US, including many of the US bishops. (See the strong

[blog entry](#)

of Bishop Robert Lynch.) Pope John XXIII worked behind the scenes to prevent the Cuban missile crisis from escalating into war.

But what pope has done this – calling for a day of prayer and fasting and setting aside several hours for public prayer for peace.

In their 1963 pastoral letter on peace,

The Challenge of Peace

, ¶ 298, the US bishops asked Catholics to devote Friday as a day of prayer and fasting for peace, as a sign of conversion:

As a tangible sign of our need and desire to do penance we, for the cause of peace, commit ourselves to fast and abstinence on each Friday of the year. We call upon our people voluntarily to do penance on Friday by eating less food and by abstaining from meat. This return to a traditional practice of penance, once well observed in the U.S. Church, should be accompanied by works of charity and service toward our neighbors. Every Friday should be a day significantly devoted to prayer, penance, and almsgiving for peace.

But a pope asking all the world's Catholics to join in prayer and fasting seems altogether new. The response of leaders of other religions has been very heartening.

But the message of Pope Francis is stronger than much of what we Catholics hear from our religious leaders. In his September 1 Angelus message, he said:

I wish to make add my voice to the cry which rises up with increasing anguish from every part of the world, from every people, from the heart of each person, from the one great family which is humanity: it is the cry for peace! It is a cry which declares with force: we want a peaceful world, we want to be men and women of peace, and we want in our society, torn

apart by divisions and conflict, that peace break out! War never again! Never again war!
Peace is a precious gift, which must be promoted and protected....

There is a judgment of God and of history upon our actions which are inescapable! Never has the use of violence brought peace in its wake. War begets war; violence begets violence....

I repeat forcefully: it is neither a culture of confrontation nor a culture of conflict which builds harmony within and between peoples, but rather a culture of encounter and a culture of dialogue; this is the only way to peace. May the plea for peace rise up and touch the heart of everyone so that they may lay down their weapons and be let themselves be led by the desire for peace.

To this end, brothers and sisters, I have decided to proclaim for the whole Church on 7 September next, the vigil of the birth of Mary, Queen of Peace, a day of fasting and prayer for peace in Syria, the Middle East, and throughout the world, and I also invite each person, including our fellow Christians, followers of other religions and all men of good will, to participate, in whatever way they can, in this initiative.

In one way Pope Francis echoes the eloquent plea of Pope Paul VI at the UN in 1965:

No more war, war never again. It is peace, peace which must guide the destinies of peoples and of all mankind.

The words of Pope Francis echo the plea for peace that Pope John Paul II made at Drogheda, Ireland, in 1979:

I proclaim, with the conviction of my faith in Christ and with an awareness of my mission, that violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy of man. Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings. Violence is a crime against humanity, for it destroys the very fabric of society....

To all of you who are listening I say: do not believe in violence; do not support violence. It is not the Christian way. It is not the way of the Catholic Church. Believe in peace and forgiveness and love; for they are of Christ.

But this pope, named after the peacemaker Francis, is not only talking about peace. He is asking all of us to begin the process of conversion that leads to peace.

And so as we empty our lives of food today may our hearts be opened to all those in need, all those suffering from violence, war, and injustice. And may the hearts of all of us be opened.

Thomas Merton is a good guide for what our prayer should be today. As he wrote in "The Root of

War is Fear” in

New Seeds of Contemplation

in the early 1960s:

When I pray for peace, I pray not only that the enemies of my country may cease to want war, but above all that my own country will cease to do the things that make war inevitable. In other words, when I pray for peace I am not just praying that the Russians will give up without a struggle and let us have our own way. I am praying that both we and the Russians may somehow be restored to sanity and learn how to work out our problems, as best we can, together, instead of preparing for global suicide. ...

So instead of loving what you think is peace, love other men and love God above all. And instead of hating the people you think are warmakers, hate the appetites and the disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed -- but hate these things in yourself, not in the other.

And so today, I'll try to fast as I go out to two sector meetings in distant villages and then spend the night in Dulce Nombre to prepare for the parish feast day on Sunday, September 8.

This contribution is available at <http://hermanajuancito.blogspot.com/2013/09/praying-and-fasting-for-peace.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

Pope Francis and Catholic Bloggers [at mommynovenas]

Demeaning commentaries about statements made by Our dear Pope Francis again highlight centuries old, widespread anti Catholic sentiment. Loving support of our Pontiff by faithful Catholic bloggers has been inspiring. Our Blessed Mother's influence is evident in Catholic bloggers' generous encouragement and support of one another. We Catholics are so often confronted with opposition to every aspect of our faith.

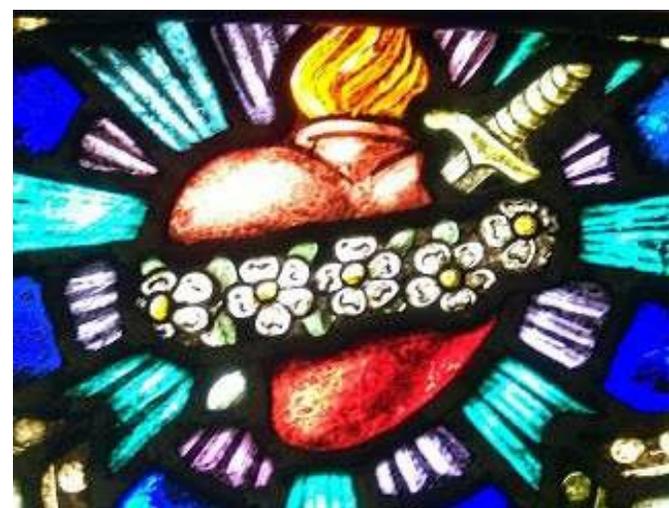


Our traditions, moral teaching and liturgy are scripture based yet we are accused of idolatry and bondage to superstitious ritual. In an atmosphere where misrepresentation and inaccurate generalizations abound, it is comforting to read the thoughtfully presented work of faithful Catholics.



I am not a trained journalist. I'm simply overwhelmed with joy at the beautiful love Our Eternal Father has bestowed upon us through Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Experienced Catholic writers

have encouraged and supported my efforts to share my experience of the Catholic Faith. Thank you so much. A grateful revert to the Catholic faith, I am humbled by those who have welcomed my participation in sharing the beauty and truth of Holy Mother Church through the evangelistic tool of blogging. It is a great honor to join in supporting Pope Francis as he leads us on our journey to Christ. Supernaturally united through Holy Mass, the Eucharist, Rosaries and the Liturgy of the Hours~our Scripture prayers, we offer our love and prayers to Jesus for our querido Papa Francisco.



This contribution is available at <http://mommynovenasdelora.blogspot.com/2013/09/pope-francis-and-catholic-bloggers.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Mary is in my Heart? Help! [at joy of nine9]

What would be the absolute worst thing that could happen to a nice Protestant girl?

Why Mary, the Blessed Virgin, would do a little interior house cleaning, then make a home for herself in the poor girl's heart, that's what! If that was not bad enough, this perplexed young woman's belief system would stay staunchly anti-Catholic for oh, about another 10 years, even though she had converted to Catholicism. I mean what choice did she have? Nobody but the Catholic Church even wants someone who craves the Eucharist and has a relationship with the Mother of Christ.

Obviously this young woman was and is me. God has a peculiar sense of humor and now I can look back and laugh at my dilemma. At the time, though I was shook up. As Pope Francis said at the Easter Vigil, God delights in shaking us up, or as I like to say, ripping the rug from underneath us. Nope, God will not stay in a nice, neat little box of our own making. Just when we think we have Him all figured out, He pulls another fast one on us. Thank goodness; life is never boring when you give God permission to work in your life.

I was reluctant to turn to Mary, I couldn't help but feel like a heretic somehow turning from Jesus as my only Savior. Yet over and over, God only offered healing and peace when I turned to His Mother. Finally a wonderful priest from Madonna House, the Director General of Priests. Fr. Bob Pelton, smiled at me compassionately and said something like this:

“Melanie, why don't you relax for a few months and stop tormenting yourself with guilt? Simply relax into the bosom of the Church and Her teachings and allow your relationship to Mary grow naturally, without fighting everything with your intellect? Trust in your own heart as well.”

Even now, some 30 years later, tears are welling up and I could weep with relief all over again as I write these words. Somehow I was given the grace to lay down my logic, reasoning and Protestant theology and simply throw my self into the arms of my Spiritual Mother.

Actually, we really do not have a clue what we are saying “yes” to in the beginning of our Christian walk. At our wedding, 34 years ago, I sensed these words within my heart:

“I will change the way the two of you work and play, the way you walk and talk, the way you laugh and cry, everything about you, so that you will reflect the glory of my Father in Heaven.”

Foolishly we thought that this was a *nice* word from God! Little did we know that 34 years later we would still be being turned inside out. I agree whole heartedly with Pope Francis, God does seem to delight in shaking us out from our narrow little lives. I could not live any other way.

Thank-you God for not listening to my opinions or plans for my life.

Thank-you for the grace to give You permission to take over and make me yours.

This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com/2013/09/21/mary-is-in-my-heart-help/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Safeguarding Our Soul [at A Spiritual Journey]

Our soul is the most precious part of us. To safeguard it, we must give it to God because whatever belongs to him will be safe. If you do not belong to God, you probably have already sold part, if not all, of your soul to the devil. I do not mean to sound harsh, but God and the devil are really the only ones trying to capture your soul.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2013/09/safeguarding-our-soul.html>

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

\n\n

The Flat-Tire Fallacy [at Forget The Roads]



My daughter and my son were baptized at ages 10 and 8, respectively. Up until that point we had all been Protestant, and the children were educated at the Christian Academy connected with the Baptist megachurch that we attended. Like all schools, it had its good points and its bad points. Some of the teachers were superb, others less so. I was mightily pleased with the teachers in the lower grades, but one event in my daughter's first grade class really, really upset me. I overheard the teacher telling a frightened little girl that "God will never let anything bad happen to you."

That child was being introduced to the flat-tire fallacy, various versions of which so many Evangelical Christians buy into. God is good, right? *Right!* God is omnipotent, right? *Right!* Ergo, our perfectly good and thoroughly omnipotent God will never allow anything bad happen to one of His children! As a Christian, it has been *promised* to me that I will never fall victim to a scam, fail a class or get more than mildly constipated. All of my problems will be resolved to my satisfaction, and I will never, ever get a flat tire.

One version of this fallacy has developed into an entire theological outlook known as "Health and Wealth." I have never been personally acquainted with any Health and Wealthers; although raised as an adherent of the flat-tire fallacy, I didn't go *that* far. I knew that many Christians did not enjoy a privileged, upper-class lifestyle, and I could not be convinced that that was the result of a lack of faith. I did not sit around waiting for God to rig the lottery for me, nor did I believe that every gravely ill person would be restored to health if they refused to accept their illness on religious grounds. I clung to the words of Isaiah 43:2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you." This I understood to mean that, yes, I would have troubles, but they would be *manageable*. Since dying, from my Protestant perspective, meant going straight to Heaven to spend an eternity with God, it didn't really scare me, but I found it hard

to believe that an omnipotent, loving God would allow me to suffer any serious pain for more than a day or two....

Travel was an eye-opener. After college I visited many foreign countries, and encountered Christians who had far less than I did, and yet far more. Their lack of possessions freed them from the worry over the possible loss of possessions. I began to realize that my perspective on this subject was based on self-centeredness (generally not listed as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit). The loss of possessions was not an evil to be avoided. In fact, it might turn out to be kind of a good thing....

Despite my evolving understanding of suffering in the Christian life, I did not entirely abandon the flat-tire fallacy. While by this point I understood that God might allow a little rain to fall into my existence, I believed that the amount of rain would be carefully limited. For example, while I might experience financial difficulties, nothing as drastic as a homeless shelter loomed in my future. That was back when I still watched TV, and I watched the news in horror one evening as a dear woman recounted with a huge smile how grateful she was that when she lost her home, the homeless shelter took her in.

I turned off the TV and sat there, frozen. *Could God allow His children to lose their homes?* For some reason, homelessness, to me, was the dividing line between what I would accept from God's hand and what I certainly would not accept. I was convinced, as was everyone else I knew, *that God would never allow anything truly bad to happen to me.*

And then it hit me: Define "bad."

I had quite a broad definition of the word "bad." "Bad" in my book meant inconvenient, unanticipated, unpleasant, unlovely, unlucky, unhelpful, uncouth, unattractive and unbearable all rolled into one smelly package. "Bad" was whatever I didn't like, or whatever I thought I wouldn't like – kind of the metaphysical equivalent of Brussels sprouts. "Bad" was basically any change to my admittedly pretty-desirable status quo. In my foolishness I thought I had tied God's hands; He couldn't allow anything to happen to me without me screaming bloody murder.

The flat-tire fallacy at its worst can have serious consequences. Try explaining to a flat-tirer that she contracted intestinal parasites while on a missions trip – *we prayed for health and safety! How could God let this happen??* The first-grade teacher telling the little girl that God will never allow her to suffer was undoubtedly just trying to quiet the child, but the comforting message was laced with spiritual arsenic. It is all too easy to abandon one's faith when suffering comes along, *if one has been taught that suffering, for the Christian, is an impossibility.*

Catholics traditionally have been preserved from the flat-tire fallacy by the concept of "offering it up," i.e., the teaching that our suffering can and should be voluntarily united to the suffering of Christ, à la Colossians 1:24.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in

Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church.

This verse remains obscure in a Protestant context; it really isn't easily reconciled with most Protestant soteriologies, and is seldom discussed. I taught a Bible study at an Evangelical college in Taiwan in the 1980s, and my students asked me to explain that verse. Stymied, I searched through every Bible commentary in the library. Being Protestant commentaries, they simply had no explanation for the theological implications of that verse. Had I been Catholic at the time, John Paul II could have straightened me out:

One can say that with the Passion of Christ all human suffering has found itself in a new situation....

The Redeemer suffered in place of man and for man. Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ.

The texts of the New Testament express this concept in many places. In the Second Letter to the Corinthians the Apostle writes: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus".

Saint Paul speaks of various sufferings and, in particular, of those in which the first Christians became sharers "for the sake of Christ." These sufferings enable the recipients of that Letter to share in the work of the Redemption, accomplished through the suffering and death of the Redeemer. The eloquence of the Cross and death is, however, completed by the eloquence of the Resurrection. Man finds in the Resurrection a completely new light, which helps him to go forward through the thick darkness of humiliations, doubts, hopelessness and persecution. Therefore the Apostle will also write in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: "For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too". Elsewhere he addresses to his recipients words of encouragement: "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ". And in the Letter to the Romans he writes: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship".

The very participation in Christ's suffering finds, in these apostolic expressions, as it were a twofold dimension. If one becomes a sharer in the sufferings of Christ, this happens because Christ has opened His suffering to man, because He Himself in His redemptive suffering has become, in a certain sense, a sharer in all human sufferings. Man, discovering through faith the redemptive

suffering of Christ, also discovers in it his own sufferings; he rediscovers them, through faith, enriched with a new content and new meaning.

This discovery caused Saint Paul to write particularly strong words in the Letter to the Galatians: “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”. Faith enables the author of these words to know that love which led Christ to the Cross. And if He loved us in this way, suffering and dying, then with this suffering and death of His He lives in the one whom He loved in this way; He lives in the man: in Paul. And living in him-to the degree that Paul, conscious of this through faith, responds to His love with love-Christ also becomes in a particular way united to the man, to Paul, through the Cross. This union caused Paul to write, in the same Letter to the Galatians, other words as well, no less strong: “But far be it from me to glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”.

In the Letter to the Colossians we read the words which constitute as it were the final stage of the spiritual journey in relation to suffering: “**Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church**“. And in another Letter he asks his readers: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?”.

The next time you get a flat tire – and you *will* get a flat tire – *remind yourself of the truth* – God promised He would be with us always, **and He is**, to the point of being physically present, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist that we receive at each Mass. He cannot not love us, and He cannot not care for us. Flat tires have something in common with all other “bad” things: they are opportunities. We can, as Job’s wife urged, “curse God” and begin to die spiritually, or we can bless the Name of the Lord and grow in Christ, uniting our sufferings to His. As Blessed John Paul put it, “Man, discovering through faith the redemptive suffering of Christ, also discovers in it his own sufferings; he rediscovers them, through faith, enriched with a new content and new meaning.” Translation: *A flat tire doesn’t mean the end of the road!*

A flat tire can take you places you never thought you could go – with God at the wheel.

On the memorial of St. Gabriel-Taurin Dufresse

Deo omnis gloria!

Photo credits: A flat automobile tire by Ildar Sagdejev/Wikimedia Commons

God's Protection in our Journey Towards New Life [at Catholic & Crunchy]

I know there are some non-Catholics who read my blog and do not agree with and/or do not understand the Church's teaching on artificial reproductive technology. Please know that this blog is for myself, for my future children, and is a very honest account of my faith, beliefs, and experiences. I don't want to hesitate in sharing things that I find to be important and emotional for me, even if it may be a tough topic to read about.

Trying to get pregnant with lots of medical issues hindering us was really, really hard. It was much more emotional for the experience to be so intensely medicalized than I expected, rather than what you always think it will be.... just getting pregnant through the union of you and your spouse. I can't even imagine the experience for couples who dealt with it, who ARE dealing with it, for much, much longer. They have our prayers every week when we pray a rosary for couples struggling with infertility (by the way, 5 pregnant so far!!! God is so good! Let me know if you have someone you'd like me to pray for by name.). We got a small taste of what that's like, and it is so incredibly hard. It was hard on me feeling like my body was broken and failing me... failing us. It was hard being poked and prodded and having to constantly rearrange my work schedule to go to the doctor. It was hard on Steven trying to find the right way to support me and seeing the toll that it took on me. It was hard on him knowing there wasn't a whole lot he could do. It was hard on both of us trying to take care of ourselves and each other in ways we never had.

We had to work really hard on our connection during that time, both physically and emotionally. Steven was such a rock for me and the experience, as tough as it was, really strengthened us and further bonded us. For that, I'm thankful. We had to take turns encouraging the other, praying for the other, and just holding the other person in a tight hug when there were no words. We grew even deeper in our faith as we did what was in our human power, but knew that ultimately it was not up to us. Honestly, I felt God every second of the way and I'm so grateful for that. I can't imagine getting through it if I had felt a void. I prayed for hope and peace and He answered in a big, big way. We reached out to the communion of saints for intercession and we asked for God's will, not ours, to be done. That was tough but empowering. We upped our Mass attendance to include some daily Mass and that was an experience that has still remained powerful for us... the experience of the sacrifice of Jesus in the middle of a rough week. It helped to refocus us. Basically, we could not have done this on our own.

My faith in the medical community was strengthened by this experience. To know there are so many doctors out there, the numbers growing all the time!, who want to work to restore fertility instead of bypass it is so amazing to me. To learn about Naprotechnology and just how woman focused and woman centered it is made me feel so valued as a woman. To experience a doctor who shares my faith and has the exact same goals as I do, to create new life by working

with

by body, helped me restore my faith in the medical field after years and years of being offered only the pill. Our eyes have been opened to a relatively new and beautiful field of healthcare, to which we are so, so appreciative. We may have never had Penny without it.

I am most sincerely thankful for the wisdom of the Church. I have always agreed with the Church's stance on IUI and IVF, but never thought

too much

about it until we were dealing with infertility issues. Even then, I knew it was not an option, and not just because the Church told me so. It just did not feel right for us. The Church in Her wisdom protected at least one part of our experience and, to us, the most important part. Our journey to conceiving may have had many medical bumps in the road, but our baby is a product of the love we have together expressed in the most intimately physical way. I am forever thankful to the Church for preserving that for us. It has strengthened my relationship with God, my relationship with my husband, my relationship with Penny, and my understanding of our faith and values. Fifteen little weeks with Penny and look what this experience has done for us already! New life is powerful.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicandcrunchy.com/2013/09/gods-protection-in-our-journey-towards.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

Modesty [at Our Heavenly Homestead]

After a recent outing with the family to some local high school homecoming activities I had the following conversation with my 7-year-old daughter while brushing her hair:

7-year-old: *"Mom, weren't those girls with the crowns pretty?"*

Me: *"They were. What did you think made them pretty?"*

7-year-old: *"Well, I liked their hair mostly. I like the one that had a flower in her hair and kind of liked their dresses but don't you think some of those dresses were way too short? I think they should have been more like down to here.(shows me with her flattened hand just below her knee) Even the cheerleaders had really short skirts! And I don't think they needed to wear those crazy shoes! It looked like they were hard to walk in and way too tall."*

Me: *"Yeah, I would agree. I think they were beautiful girls but would have been even more beautiful if they looked comfortable in a dress that fit them better and was more modest."*

7-year-old: *"I like to be comfortable too. I am never going to wear shoes like those."*

At that point we got distracted with her brushing her teeth and getting ready for bed so that's where the conversation ended for the night. This is not the first conversation on this topic we have had and it certainly will not be the last.

I had to wonder though, did young girls who think that dressing that way makes them look beautiful ever think like my 7-year-old? Will she someday be persuaded by society to think that she has to have a shorter skirt, a lower neckline, a tighter dress in order to look her best and feel beautiful? My heart is heavy just thinking of it.

Don't get me wrong, I know full-well that we will have conversations and disagreements about clothing for many years to come. I am so thankful that we are having those conversations already and that so far she sees the differences.

I remember being that high school girl though. I remember tanning beds, bikinis, pushing the limits with what I could leave the house wearing, comparing bodies with my best friend and arguing over who had the "poochiest tummy." I remember feeling like I was only pretty when I was made up, hair done, perfect outfit, etc. Looking back at the athletic, toned, tanned body that I had then makes me sick to think that I didn't realize that I was beautiful and that I was in fact good enough.

I also remember thinking that if people did not like what I wore than that was their problem. I remember thinking, like I imagine many girls think right now, that if boys are too perverted to be able to look at me without undressing me with their eyes or without lustful thoughts than they had

an issue, not me.

However, I also remember the attention that I would get when my clothing did push the limits. I remember feeling pretty and being looked at in *that* way.

And I see that in the eyes of so many girls who immediately turn to the side and strike “the pose” any time a camera is aimed their direction. I see right through their cliché comments on social media about how they don’t care what people think about them, yet they constantly post provocative pictures of themselves in various degrees of dress, hungering for the comments to start pouring in to validate their beauty.

I see through all that because I was that girl, minus social media-thank God!

Then I had a son and a daughter.

Not only do I now understand that my own choices in clothing and how I present myself affects my kids, but I see even more now how what they see from other people affects and forms their perception of beauty.

Talk about crazy mixed messages.

Thankfully, I had enough older siblings and people around me that cared enough about me to call my attention to how I looked and helped me to see how the way you dress says so much about you. No, it doesn’t define you, but it gives a huge impression. For right or wrong, the way you dress and carry yourself will make other people think and feel a certain way about you. **Even if those things are not true of who you are.**

I was also blessed, although I didn’t think of it that way at the time, with parents who were not afraid to “be the bad guy” and say NO to buying me clothes that were less than appropriate. After all, it was their money and they had the final say on what was purchased, no matter what, it’s the way we were raised.

I have also come to understand that men struggle too. In this over-sexualized, anything-goes, society that we have allowed to take over, men are constantly berated with temptation to sin. Even if girls don’t intend to be looked at lustfully, boys/men will naturally be attracted and will be tempted to think all sorts of unmentionables. Does that give them permission to act on their thoughts? Absolutely not. But it does make it more difficult for them to maintain self-control. I understand now that the way I dress directly affects everyone around me.

So as I contemplate how clothing styles have changed, I can’t help but pray that my dear 7-year-old holds onto this girlish innocence and true knowledge that she is beautiful because God made her exactly the way she is supposed to be and that she is fearfully and wonderfully made in His image. I pray that she stands firm against the “latest style” if it contradicts her standards and that she always know that her body is a temple, to be cared for and respected. I pray that she always

believes as she does now, that her body is a gift to keep wrapped up and only unwrapped by one other person if she is called to a vocation of marriage.

Not only do I pray for her but I also pray that my son will grow to respect women because of who they are on the inside. I pray that he will be able to fight the temptation to gawk at scantily clad girls and the desire to objectify them as society so wrongly tells him to do. I pray that he will help the girls/women in his life to feel appreciated, loved, and adored, not because of how much skin they show, but because of how important they are in the eyes of Our Lord.

I also pray for my husband, that he will continue to be the example of a true man for his daughter to hold out for as she contemplates a suitable husband. I pray that he continues to be that example for my son as he teaches him to be polite, be chivalrous, be respectful of the women that he encounters in his life.

I pray that both my husband and I are able to raise our kids with a true knowledge deep within them of their beauty and their worth that can only be found when they realize that they are the child of a King. I pray that if, or when, that time comes that our daughter wants to dress in a way that will send the wrong messages that we will have the wisdom and the courage to help her understand that **we love her too much to allow her to portray herself that way and to let other people objectify her.**

~~~~~

As a side note, I am curious about the fact that the same said school's dress code states:

*In addition, clothing that calls undo attention to anatomical details may not be worn. Examples include but are not limited to mini-skirts shorter than finger tip length, short shorts, bare midriff tops, tube tops, backless tops, open mesh clothing without proper clothing underneath, sagging pants, shirts with the sides cut out, or clothing with holes in inappropriate places.*

It makes me wonder if this dress code is just plain not enforced or if it somehow only applies to school hours. We saw an example of nearly everything listed above at that event, on school property, by students who were representing the school. If I was a parent of a student at that school I would certainly be inquiring about the lack of dress code enforcement at school events where many little eyes are wide open.

For more great perspective on this topic I encourage you to read this father's letter to his son: [Seeing a Woman](#)

**“God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance.**

**The LORD looks into the heart.” 1 Samuel 16: 7**

In case you're curious, here's a little picture collage of Yours Truly, back in the day!



This contribution is available at <http://www.ourheavenlyhomestead.com/2013/10/modesty/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Jesus of Nazareth [at Flow Chart to Surrender]

I'm thinking of taking some classes soon, and one of the required textbooks is Pope Benedict's

### [Jesus of Nazareth](#)

. I'm re-reading it now to help prepare for class.

In the forward, he puts forth a good motivation for the book. There's a wide disconnect between the various versions of Jesus we might encounter from scholarship.

The gap between the "historical Jesus" and the "Christ of faith" grew wider and the two visibly fell apart. But what can faith in Jesus as the Christ possibly mean, in Jesus as the Son of the living God, if the man Jesus was so completely different from the picture that the Evangelists painted of him and that the Church, on the evidence of the Gospels, takes as the basis of her preaching?

As historical-critical scholarship advanced, it led to finer and finer distinctions between layers of tradition in the Gospels, beneath which the real object of faith - the figure of Jesus - became increasingly obscured and blurred. At the same time, though, the reconstructions of Jesus (who could only be discovered by going behind the traditions and sources used by the Evangelists) became more and more incompatible with one another: at one end of the spectrum, Jesus was the anti-Roman revolutionary working - though finally failing - to overthrow the ruling powers; at the other end, he was the meek moral teacher who approves everything and unaccountably comes to grief. If you read a number of these reconstructions one after the other, you see at once that far from uncovering an icon that has become obscured over time, they are much more like photographs of their authors and the ideals they hold.

Since then there has been growing skepticism about these portrayals of Jesus, but the figure of Jesus himself has for that very reason receded even further into the distance.

All these attempts have produced a common result: the impression that we have very little certain knowledge of Jesus and that only at a later stage did faith in his divinity shape the image we have of him. This impression has by now penetrated deeply into the minds of the Christian people at large. This is a dramatic situation for faith, because its point of reference is being placed in doubt: Intimate friendship with Jesus, on which everything depends, is in danger of clutching at thin air.

Pope Benedict makes the point in the third paragraph there that if we are led into these various theories, we lose sight of Jesus as our Savior. We don't think we have much knowledge of Him at all. We spend time pondering all the different versions of Jesus, and I myself feel a lot more comfortable with the version of the 60's era hippie who is more than happy to let me do what I

want. That isn't Jesus though.

Time and time again, the people of Israel found something "better" than God. This usually took the form of other gods, which they followed and worshipped and which led them away from the true God who created the Universe and all that is in it. I find it is still easy to do this, especially with our new "gods" of atheism telling us so many lies about ourselves, our world, and our Creator. I hate to be a conspiracy theorist, but where do these lies come from? Maybe the father of lies.

Go pick up your Bible and read one of the Gospels. Don't just skim through it because you've heard it over and over again at Mass. Read it anew. Don't try to put Jesus in some 21st century mold. He's God. Get to know Him. I highly recommend this book as well for that purpose.

---

This contribution is available at <http://flowcharttosurrender.blogspot.com/2013/09/jesus-of-nazareth.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## High School Seminary (Christ the King Admits Peter) [at Glimpse of Peace]



*Peter hauls his gear to his new room at school.*

### **Peter's big day finally arrived on September 4th**

, after months of discerning, wondering, praying and waiting ~ the day he officially entered grade 8 at the Benedictine High School Seminary in BC. A packed schedule on move-in day included time for hauling and unpacking gear, community Midday Prayer in the Westminster Abbey Church, a shared potluck lunch in the dining hall, parent orientation sessions, book store stop, and many opportunities to visit with the parents of Peter's fellow seminarians and with the holy monks who will be Peter's teachers.



*Peter unpacks his belongings while Tim and Joseph visit with a brother.*

### **Consistent with every other visit to the Benedictine Monastery,**

our family was warmly greeted by the monks and shown outstanding, genuine Christian hospitality throughout the day. Peter set right to work unloading his crates and settling into his new space,

quite independently and without need of suggestions or assistance. Gathered together in the foyer, a group of new 'monastery moms' like me shared the bittersweet experience of move-in day with long time monastery moms and dads. One couple, parents to four sons currently living under St. Benedict's roof (one a professed Benedictine Monk and teacher), and the dad a graduate of the seminary himself, offered abundant insight, wisdom and love for the rest of us in our various stages of coming to terms with the impending good-byes.



*The high school seminarians, together at midday prayer*



*Peter enjoys the company of his new friends at the family potluck luncheon on orientation day.*



*Father Abbot demonstrates true Benedictine hospitality, greeting parents and students, leading prayer and sharing a meal.*

**Abundant insight and loving direction for parents flowed freely**

in the orientation session following lunch. Father Peter, Seminary Rector, gave an inspired talk on the mission of the school, beginning with a focus on the Benedictine charism of unity and community modeled after the Holy Trinity. Father Peter brilliantly witnessed to the core teaching within the seminary, the central themes underlying all aspects of the formation offered there: that each one is a beloved son of God, a loving Father who delights in each one; that becoming a good

son/brother/student is to become a fit dwelling place for God; that the beginning and end of all male development is rooted in learning to be ever more like Jesus, life giver and lover.



*Father Abbot addresses the families before leading prayer prior to lunch, with Father Peter, Rector.*

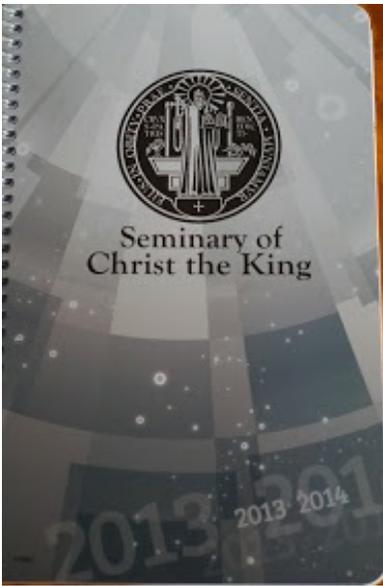
### **Father Abbot's words for the parents**

advanced the concepts touched upon by Father Peter, highlighting the areas of liturgical formation, prayer, and spiritual direction as keys to aiding the boys in their search for Truth, for an ever deepening relationship with Jesus Christ.

*Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth. - John 17:17*



*Peter shows Tim his desk in the study hall classroom.*

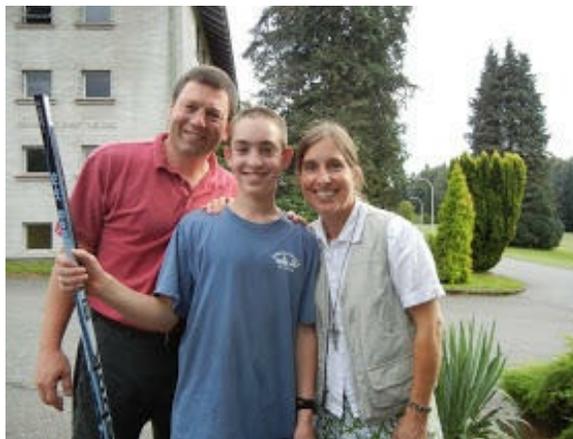


**The hour of our departure coincided with**

Peter's transition from his first game of roller hockey to Evening Prayer and supper. Time for our blessings, hugs, and a few parting words passed in a flash, and Peter set out for the locker room, hockey stick in hand, with a glance over his shoulder to call out cheerfully, "

*See you in October*

!"



*One last photo together before leaving Peter in the care of St. Benedict and heading back home to the US.*

---

This contribution is available at <http://glimpseofpeace.blogspot.com/2013/09/high-school-seminary-christ-king-admits.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## A Surprising Way to Heal! [at Chatty Catholic Doll]



Two paths of mine converged recently: I've been working on the [50 Million Names](#) project to see to it that aborted babies are given names and honored by prayer and gestures of love, and I recently prepared for a talk about [helping women heal](#) from interior 'dis-integration'. Into this mix, in God's timely fashion, came the book *Healing the Family Tree*, by Dr. Kenneth McAll, a devout Anglican psychiatrist who writes about hundreds of cases in which an emotional or physical illness was cured through the release of spiritual bondage.

His awareness developed as he looked for the roots of illness that baffled all physical and psychological approaches and, finally, began to look backward from the patient into the family history for clues to seemingly incurable problems. In many cases, an instance of abortion, miscarriage, or other 'loss' of an unnamed child was found to be at the root of the symptoms. In others, some unquiet spirit within the patient's blood line cried out for healing prayer. In fewer, outright oppression by evil spirits was involved.

In every case, the patient and the bondage was taken before Jesus Christ in prayer, and the Eucharist received with the intention of release for both patient and relative. I did some research and discovered that McAll's work had influenced many, many people, including Catholics, to take more seriously the work of consciously praying for the dead, and for the living affected by generational sin, or bondage to dead relatives in unresolved need of acknowledgement, forgiveness, and other release.

McAll quotes Scripture, St. John Chrysostom, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Augustine, Church fathers, the Eastern Orthodox tradition in support of praying not to, but for the dead. He refers to the many Anglicans who are nowadays convinced "that there exists – and that there is an absolute need for – an intermediate stage of purification between death and resurrection" from which the dead may appeal to the living for prayer. Of course, Catholics have already acknowledged Purgatory's existence (which Anglican author C.S. Lewis termed a 'hopeful doctrine') and are already instructed to pray for the souls there. I'm sure I don't pray enough for them!

What struck me about McAll's work is that I had never much thought about my own family history. Though I had done some praying for near relations, I began to pray about whether there were any

souls in our tree, or any needs within my living family , for which such prayer should be offered. Using a prayer from Catholic priest Father John Hampsch, I headed for Our Lord in the Eucharist and began to pray. I was surprised as a number of ‘needs’ surfaced very clearly.

For example, I had once used birth control pills, and realized that there are probably children I’ve ‘lost’ without even realizing conception had occurred. My husband’s grandmother died during an abortion, and that child was never named or mourned. I have two adult sons living non-Christian lives, who may have fathered children now ‘lost’ to us. A father I know of died without reconciliation with his children, and without Sacramental burial.

A number of other souls came to mind as I prayed, and I believe that, through the prayer united to the Eucharist, release and healing was poured out on our family and friends in ways that I may not ever be fully aware of in this life. I’ll be giving names (in December, at 50MillionNames.org) for several babies in honor of these persons for whom I prayed. I offer [Fr. Hampsch’s prayer, here](#), as a gift to anyone else who may feel led to discern her own family’s need for healing in this way. God bless you!

P.S. [Here is some more help](#) from Fr. Hampsch, a Claretian priest, on such healing prayer.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.chattycatholicdoll.com/a-surprising-way-to-heal/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Follow His Promptings! [at Harvesting the Fruits of Contemplation]



*(Image from Biblebios.com)*

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

I stopped in Church for a visit, intending to spend some time in the Presence of our Lord, to pray the rosary and recite the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Midway through my recitation of the rosary, a woman came in quietly and almost unnoticeably. She sat in the very last pew, knelt down and pulled out her rosary beads. I did not know who she was.

We were just two simple souls drawn to the silent sacredness that palpably fills this holy place.

Shortly after finishing my rosary and as I was about to begin the Divine Mercy Chaplet, another woman entered the Church in tears, wailing in obvious despair.

I do not think she even knew two other people were there.

She walked toward the sanctuary, entered a pew not far from the tabernacle, knelt down and cried ever more loudly. Her heaving shoulders evidenced the depth of her sorrow and despair. Her loud painful wailing shattered the sacred silence and penetrated the center of my heart.

“Dear God,” I prayed, “please, please help this poor woman!” I remained standing in the back of the Church, looking at and praying for her.

I “sensed” I should go put my hands on her shoulder and comfort her. “No,” I told myself. “I couldn’t do that. That’s not me. I would not know what to say.” The urging and prompting persisted - “Go, put your hands on her shoulder and comfort her.” I found myself walking toward her, begging God to give me the words to say. When my hand touched her shoulder, she jumped, startled that I was there. I looked into her tear filled painful eyes and asked if I could help her in some way. She wailed ever louder.

In between her sobs, she told me her name was Janet (not her real name), that her husband of 47 years had died about 4 months ago, that they had actually gotten married in this parish in 1971, that she was on her way to another city and was prompted to stop in this Church. She didn’t know why. Janet felt she could not go on without her husband; she wanted to die.

“Your husband wouldn’t want you to do that. He would want you to recognize in this most difficult of times how much God loves you. It was this loving comforting healing God who drew you here today.” Where did those words come from?

I “knew” I had to pray aloud. I don’t recall the exact words I said or how long I prayed

but I prayed audibly in a manner that I have not been able to pray for some time and with a conviction that did not originate with me. Over time, the sobbing became less frequent. She held my hand. She wanted to and was able to speak.

Janet asked me if I was a priest. “No Ma’am,” I am just a parishioner here. “Would you like me to see if Father is in the rectory?” I asked. “No.” She talked and I just listened.

After a short while, the other woman who had been in the rear of the Church praying the rosary joined us. We introduced ourselves and with “Janet’s” permission I told our new visitor what she had shared with me. There was an immediate and comforting connection Rebecca (also not her

real name)established with Janet –

a few years earlier Rebecca had been exactly where Janet was now.

I felt it was time for me to leave but before doing so, I invited Janet to stop in our Adoration Chapel, to gaze upon the God who loved her, exposed in a monstrance blessed by the late John Paul II the Sunday before he died and given to this small little parish in the middle of no where. I found myself assuring her, with a level of faith and certainty I have rarely found in my life, that I “knew” He had a special gift He wanted to give her if she would come in for a visit. Rebecca had the same conviction.

I told Janet and Rebecca I would be praying for them and asked them to pray for me.

But here is the “rest of the story.” Ordinarily, I would not have been in the Church at that time of day. I usually go there in the morning. I wasn’t planning to go that day until after 3 PM. But inexplicably I went at 1:30 PM instead. I later found out that Rebecca also had no specific plan to visit the Church that day at that time. She too responded to a silent prompting.

Obviously Rebecca and I now realize that God wanted us to be there at that time for that woman.

What if either or both of us had ignored His promptings that day? Would Janet have stopped there? Would someone else have been there for God to use to touch this suffering soul and point her to Him? We will never know.

God does not expect “big’ things from us – just our obedience and trust.

We have to get out of your comfort zone!

With God’s grace I am going to be less reluctant to follow His promptings in the future.

How about you?

---

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2013/09/monday-musings-follow-his-promptings.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Beauty in the City [at Footprints on My Heart]



Labor Day in DC, 2012

I classify myself as a city girl because I grew up in a busy suburban area. It doesn't compare to New York or L.A., but it's certainly not country either. As I grew up here, **I failed to see the beauty underneath the hustle and bustle of the place.** Instead, I saw the urgency of people needing to get from one place to the other and I wistfully imagined I could live somewhere that had a slower pace to life...

**My maternal grandparents retired to Arkansas and lived on a mountain with over 80 acres of land.** Though there are no shortage of exotic bugs there {during my youth, I honestly thought stick bugs were only some animated creature from *A Bug's Life* until one fell on my head while I was standing by my grandparents' garage}, **I positively loved the trees and hiking with my family through the acres upon acres of wooded land.** The nearest Super Wal-Mart was 20 minutes away and the next door neighbors were around a mile away. There were no train whistles to be heard, no marching bands in the distance... Nothing to worry about except rattle snakes and poisonous spiders.

Then there are my paternal grandparents. They still live in the same house in which my Daddy was raised on Long Island, NY and I've learned to love it as much as he. **I've been able to share the places of his childhood memories and make memories of my own there.** The bay is literally in their backyard and water skiers are frequently seen on the weekends. The main road is rather small and the closest city is either New York {2 hours} or a ferry ride across the Sound to

Connecticut. One of my favorite ways to spend an afternoon is to sit on Grandpa's boat or lay down on the nearby empty beach with a good book to enjoy for hours.

But when vacations were over we would return to plain old life in the busy and urgent DC area.

During my childhood, these places were my perceptions of beauty, not the air of urgency in our area. **But beauty never stays hidden forever.** And before long, God began to reveal Himself to me through the beauty in the city.



reflection in a creek near our house

**First, I saw the nature.** How blessed we are to have birds and squirrels, foxes and deer here!

Cloudless blue skies fill me with such joy; the sun, so strong and bright I can't even look at it, enables me to enjoy everything else around me through sight. I began to look forward to daily early morning walks to the nearby cemetery to pray the rosary while watching the sun rise over the hills decorated with bouquets of flowers. I noticed the *beauty of each breath* I took throughout the day and finally began to **appreciate the beauty of my own life.**

And then finally

**I noticed the pinnacle of beauty in creation: people.**

Here, life is fast paced and busy. There's usually a strong hint of urgency and don't even get me started about driving behaviors...

**But people are beautiful.**

I noticed the beauty of a friendly conversation and even in silent communication:

*sometimes a smile is all it takes to wish someone well.*

I love to people watch. It's so wild to think that every person who passes you by is

[unique and beautiful](#)

,  
*unrepeatable*

,  
**precious**

,  
**loved by God**

, and

made in His image and likeness

. I find myself wanting to get to know them... If only we could take the time to sit down with someone and learn about them. Not factual information like what their major is, where they were born, and what the craziest thing they've ever done is, but

**really get to know them.** *What makes them happiest? Why does a particular sighting, color, or object fill them with such excitement?*

{is it connected with a pleasant experience in childhood?}

*What is their favorite childhood memory, or who is their favorite person in all the world*

{and why}?

[Every person has a story to tell.](#)

And that includes each person you see on the street.

Our area is filled with people busily trying to get from one place to the next. But what would happen if we observed just one person who actually

**took the time to enjoy life**

?

My posts here will be becoming less frequent what with the demands of a full-time academic schedule, but I leave you {and me} with a little challenge: a couple of weeks ago, I experienced a particularly difficult few days. Looking back, I realize with confidence that the highlight of those few days was the holy hour I made in the midst of them.

### **Make time for God and enjoy the gifts He's given you in creation**

. The nature, the sky, birds, fish, even squirrels are here for our enjoyment as God's gifts to us:

**enjoy them.**

*"If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy."*

BL. TERESA OF CALCUTTA

---

This contribution is available at <http://totus2usmaria.blogspot.com/2013/09/beauty-in-city.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Multiple Canons: A Serious Consequence of Vatican II [at A Catholic Life]



The Roman Canon had been untouched since the 7th Century

For those unfamiliar with the Traditionalist movement (and even those who think they know Traditional Catholics), the common accusation applied to the Traditionalist is being a man too attached to earthly traditions. The Traditionalist is a modern day Pharisee. He cares for beautiful vestments, golden chalices, and ritual but he cares little (or at least less) for his neighbor and for the poor. He is viewed as an enemy of the authentic teachings of Christ and is personified in the story of the rich man (cf. Matthew 19:16-26 ) and in the parable of the two men who enter the temple to pray (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

Yet, this straw man depiction of the Traditionalist is entirely off point. The Traditionalist's end goal is not found in ornate vestments or mysterious rituals. The Traditionalist is concerned with giving to God the utmost glory and the first of all things (cf Matthew 6:33). And as such, our Lord is deserving of the most ornate of vestments and the most opulent of chalices. It is not the Traditionalist – no! – it is the Lord to whom the honor is given.

Even those familiar with the Traditional Movement, but those who are not traditionalists, will at least know of the Traditionalist's arguments against the changes in the Liturgy. They will have heard the Traditionalist lament the omission of kneeling in the Nicene Creed; the change of “pro multis” to “for all”; and the changes in the Rites of Confirmation, Ordination, and the Eucharist.

Yet few people realize – and few Traditionalists lament as loudly as they do the aforementioned issues – the grave consequences of introducing multiple canons into the Holy Liturgy.

Since all time the Roman Canon had be recited by the priest silently. The priest – in imitation of Moses – ascends to a place where the Faithful cannot venture. It is in this holy place – at the altar of God – where the priest confects the Holy Eucharist and offers to the Eternal Father the Precious Blood of His Divine and Only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Blessed Trinity. This is a task of the priest alone to accomplish – the people present can offer nothing other than marvel at the mystery.

Silence is not a foreign concept to Catholics. Catholics should be familiar with the story of Elijah who heard God in the small whisper:

And he said to him: Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord: and behold the Lord passeth, and a great and strong wind before the Lord over throwing the mountains, and breaking the rocks in pieces: the Lord is not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake: the Lord is not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire: the Lord is not in the fire, and after the fire a whistling of a gentle air. And when Elias heard it, he covered his face with his mantle, and coming forth stood in the entering in of the cave, and behold a voice unto him, saying: What dost thou here, Elias? And he answered. (1 Kings 19:11-13)

Yet the Novus Ordo brought about four Eucharistic Prayers recited in the vernacular and recited loudly. Gone was the sense of mystery. Gone was the priest entering the holy place to pray for the people. The Novus Ordo Liturgy has succumbed to the vision of Martin Luther - the priest is no longer seen as an *alter Christus*.

The Canon is an ancient prayer. It is for Catholics the prayer of utmost importance in the Liturgy since it is by the prayers of the Canon that the greatest miracle in the world takes place on the altar.

Since the seventh century [the Traditional] Canon has remained unchanged. It is to St. Gregory I (590-604) the great organiser of all the Roman Liturgy, that tradition ascribes its final revision and arrangement. ([Catholic Encyclopedia](#))



*In the Ambrosian Rite, during the Canon the priest will stretch out his arms in the shape of a Cross*

Yet, despite the sacredness of the Canon, the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council saw the elimination of one unified Canon and the creation of multiple canons. In fact, even in our world today, priests freely use their own ad lib words during the Canon and potentially (if not always) invalidate the Sacrifice of the Mass upon the altar. This is for the Traditionalist a grave and utmost serious situation.

In the 1970 and 1975 Latin editions of the Roman Missal, there are four Eucharistic Prayers (these may be augmented in the third *editio typica* which is due out this fall). In more recent American editions of the Roman Missal, in addition to the four already mentioned, there are five others included in the appendix: two for Reconciliation and three for Masses with children. Thus for the last twenty-five years, the Roman rite has had the experience of many Eucharistic Prayers.

This was not always so, however. For some 1600 years previously, the Roman rite knew only one Eucharistic Prayer: the Roman canon.

In the average parish today, Eucharistic Prayer II is the one most frequently used, even on Sunday. Eucharistic Prayer III is also used quite often, especially on Sundays and feast days. The fourth Eucharistic prayer is hardly ever used; in part because it is long, in part because in some places in the U.S. it has been unofficially banned because of its frequent use of the word "man". The first Eucharistic Prayer, the Roman canon, which had been used exclusively in the Roman rite for well over a millennium and a half, nowadays is used almost never. As an Italian liturgical scholar puts it: "its use today is so minimal as to be statistically irrelevant".

This is a radical change in the Roman liturgy. Why aren't more people aware of the enormity of this change? Perhaps since the canon used to be said silently, its contents and merits were known to priests, to be sure, but not to most of the laity. Hence when the Eucharistic Prayer began to be said aloud in the vernacular, with four to choose from -- and the Roman canon chosen rarely, if ever -- the average layman did not realize that 1600 years of tradition had suddenly vanished like a lost civilization, leaving few traces behind, and those of interest only to archaeologists and tourists.

### **What serious theological implications does this have for a Catholic?**

In the Eucharistic Prayers, moreover, the repeated petitions to God that He accept the Sacrifice have also been suppressed; thus, there is no longer any clear distinction between Divine and human sacrifice.

...

In Eucharistic Prayer IV the Church--as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic--is abased by eliminating the Roman Canon's petition for all orthodox believers who keep the Catholic and Apostolic faith. These are now merely all who seek you with a sincere heart. The Memento of the Dead in the Canon, moreover, is offered not as before for those who are gone before us with the sign of faith, but merely for those who have died in the peace of Christ. To this group--with further detriment to the notion of the Church's unity and visibility--Eucharistic Prayer IV adds the great crowd of "all the dead whose faith is known to You alone." None of the three new Eucharistic Prayers, moreover, alludes to a suffering state for those who have died; none allows the priest to make special Mementos for the dead. All this necessarily undermines faith in the propitiatory and redemptive nature of the sacrifice.

...

In the Preface for Eucharistic Prayer II--and this is unprecedented--the various angelic hierarchies have disappeared. Also suppressed, in the third prayer of the old Canon, is the memory of the holy Pontiffs and Martyrs on whom the Church in Rome was founded; without a doubt, these were the saints who handed down the apostolic tradition finally completed under Pope St. Gregory as the Roman Mass.

...

## Chapter VII The Alienation of the Orthodox

The Apostolic Constitution explicitly mentions the riches of piety and doctrine the Novus Ordo supposedly borrows from the Eastern Churches. But the result is so removed from, and indeed opposed to the spirit of the Eastern liturgies that it can only leave the faithful in those rites revolted and horrified. What do these ecumenical borrowings amount to? Basically, to introducing multiple texts for the Eucharistic Prayer (the anaphora)--none of which approaches their Eastern counterparts' complexity or beauty--and to permitting Communion Under Both Species and the use of deacons. Against this, the New Order of Mass appears to have been deliberately shorn of every element where the Roman liturgy came closest to the Eastern Rites. [53] At the same time, by abandoning its unmistakable and immemorial Roman character, the Novus Ordo cast off what was spiritually precious of its own. In place of this are elements which bring the new rite closer to certain Protestant liturgies, not even those closest to Catholicism. At the same time, these new elements degrade the Roman liturgy and further alienate it from the East, as did the reforms which preceded the Novus Ordo. In compensation, the new liturgy will delight all those groups hovering on the verge of apostasy who, during a spiritual crisis without precedent, now wreak havoc in the Church by poisoning Her organism and by undermining Her unity in doctrine, worship, morals and discipline.



And so the Traditionalist must fight on – not concerned at the slanders used against him. Men may accuse him of “intolerance,” “lack of charity,” or “exaggerated concern with the externals,” but the Traditionalist will fight on so that in all the Masses of the world the Holy Eucharist may be lawfully consecrated and offered to the Eternal Father in the most fitting, righteous, and worthy manner possible.

In the bull *Quo Primum* Pope St. Pius V declared: "By this present Constitution, which will be valid henceforth, now, and forever, We order and enjoin that nothing must be added to Our recently published Missal, nothing omitted from it, nor anything whatsoever be changed within it." And he concluded: "No one whosoever is permitted to alter this notice of Our permission, statute, ordinance, command, precept, grant, indult, declaration, will, decree, and prohibition. Should anyone dare to contravene it, let him know that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul."

---

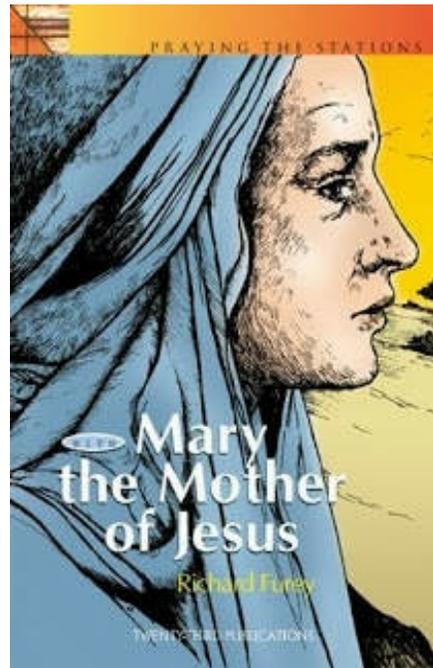
This contribution is available at <http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2013/09/multiple-canons-serious-consequence-of.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Sunday's Christian Book Review

Catholic Edition



### **Praying the Stations with Mary the Mother of Jesus**

by Richard Furey

Rating: (5/5)

Age:18+

*"This bestselling way of the cross follows Jesus on his journey to Calvary through the eyes of his mother, Mary. With a mother's love and also with deep faith, she accompanies him and invites readers to follow him as well—with love and deep faith."*

Borrowed a Copy from my local parish.

This is an absolutely beautiful spiritual way to pray the fifteen stations of the cross, or to simply pray and devote your prayers to one of the sorrowful passions made on the way of the Cross. This booklet is used in my Church whenever we hold Stations of the Cross, usually followed by Benediction. So in my head when I read this I hear the voices of the people who read their parts (our Deacon and his wife) which brings the whole thing so perfectly to life for me. I honestly can't imagine a more genuine way to reflect the passion of Christ than through the eyes of Mary as she followed along, witnessed and accepted what she knew had to be. For each station there first is a paragraph, somewhat poetic but really prose; however as you continue through the book you notice the poetic pattern being followed. These first words are from Mary's mouth, what she is seeing, thinking, feeling at each station as Jesus is condemned, takes his cross and eventually dies upon the cross, through the 15 stations. This is read aloud to the congregation. Some quotes:

"My pain for him was unbearable. I wanted to take the cross from him and carry it myself. But I knew it had to be, so I walked on silently."

"Our eyes met, mine full of tears and anguish, his full of pain ... then his eyes said to me, "Courage! There is a purpose for this."

The second paragraph is for the congregation to read aloud together. This is in our repentant, sinners' voices as we connect with Mary's experience and what Jesus is suffering for us at each station. We pray to Jesus at these times asking for forgiveness. Some quotes from the second paragraphs:

"Lord Jesus, I beg you to forgive me for the many times I have added more weight to your cross by closing my eyes to the pain and loneliness of my neighbor."

"Lord in my own way I too have stripped you. I have taken away the good name of another by foolish talk ... by my prejudice. Jesus, there are so many ways I have offended you through the hurt I have caused others. Help me to see you in other people."

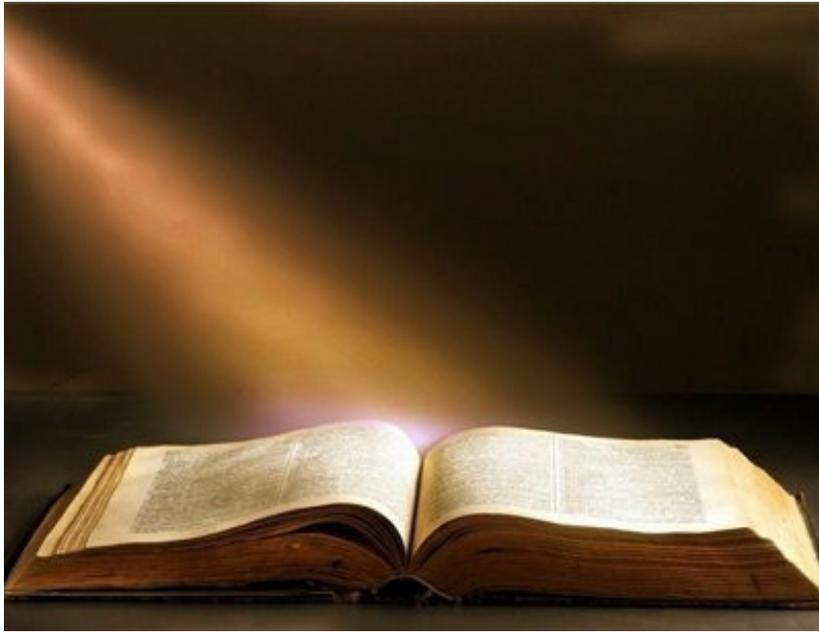
All the words in this booklet are beautiful and I always weep whether I am participating in the Stations with my Church family or silently by myself.

---

This contribution is available at <http://back-to-books.blogspot.ca/2013/09/300-praying-stations-with-mary-mother.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Jesus, the Word of God and the Bible [at Catholic]



Ten quick points for all Christians to note carefully.

1. Jesus is the Word of God become flesh.
2. The Bible is part of the Word of God.
3. Jesus is not the Bible and the Bible is not Jesus.
4. Jesus as the Word of God is truly God and is worthy of worship.
5. The Bible which is part of the Word of God is not God and cannot be worshipped.
6. Jesus as the Word of God existed before His incarnation.
7. The Bible as part of the Word of God was written by men from different cultures and time period under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.
8. Jesus is the One who saves and not the Bible.
9. Jesus as the Word of God is infallible.
10. The Bible as part of the Word of God is inerrant but can be used for fallible and infallible purposes.

## References

*Jesus Christ as the Word of God is documented in the Gospel of John chapter 1.*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John 1:14)

*Jesus as true God worthy of worship is documented in the writings of Saint John and other parts of the New Testament.*

Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:26-28)

Then one of the elders said to me, “Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints; and they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth.” Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, “To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:5-14)

Inerrant means, “free from error.” Biblical inerrancy is the doctrine that the Bible is accurate and totally free from error.

---

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Home Organization Response [at CF Family]

I recently read a post on home organization from which I gleaned a few good ideas (brown wrapping paper with ribbons and clear, over-the-door shoe holders), but overall, it was far too rich for my blood. After 23 years of small houses and our now nine-person family, I've become a great organizational hack. So if you, like me, do not have a linen closet, a laundry room, a mud room, a garage\*, or a smart phone; can neither travel with your children nor hire a carpenter; and the thought of a \$62. bra (which would keep us in potatoes for months) gives you hives, not joy . . . maybe you'll like some of my ideas.



Here's where Ken and I keep much of our clothing (under the futon where we sleep) because there's no closet in the den. Since there's no closet, no marvelous organizing ideas.



This is right next to the futon, four of those things from Walmart, filled with Addie's clothing, DVDs, and my unmentionables. Closet, I guess.



This is my "linen closet" downstairs\*\* that holds a few books, extra TP, and four towels (Very important to keep on top of the laundry, with only four towels!).



My laundry room is a piece of the hall with a small counter and shelves. Not big enough for sorting or folding, so I dump laundry onto the futon ~



~ and I'm not sure why the baby's up there, but we usually fold in the afternoon with a short DVD, then the kids trot around and put it all away. Perfectly, of course.



One of the ideas was to sync your calendar with your smart phone. Don't have one, so I sync my calendar with my steel trap of a brain.



This table bench Ken built himself. We cannot hire a carpenter and he is not one, but we want stuff, so he picked up [a DIY book](#) and tried. Viola! Three or four kids sit on this at our table and it opens up for me to toss pots and pans ~



~ which they wanted to illustrate better for this post!



Our vacations do not involve restaurants, hotels, or attractions, so a travel journal is unnecessary. We use tents, sleeping bags, hot dogs, marshmallows, and porta-potties (because I require some civility in the middle of the night). And look at the double duty this \$20 beaut can handle: morning coffee cart!

\*This is the [summer of the garage](#) so by the new year, we will have a garage to organize and Rees will move out into the efficiency apartment on the side.

\*\*Ken did build another shelf-thing in the upstairs bathroom along the back wall. It's a rectangle box with doors that I put more towels in (the ones too crummy for the nicer bathroom!). I could not locate the camera at the time of this writing to show you (I guess I don't have much of a steel-trap brain...).

Happy weekend ~ laugh with me!

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.northerncffamily.blogspot.com/2013/09/home-organization-response.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

# Daily Devotionals for Catholic Moms [at Revolution of Love Blog]

I'm linking this post up with Housewifespice's [What We're Reading Wednesday](#). 😊

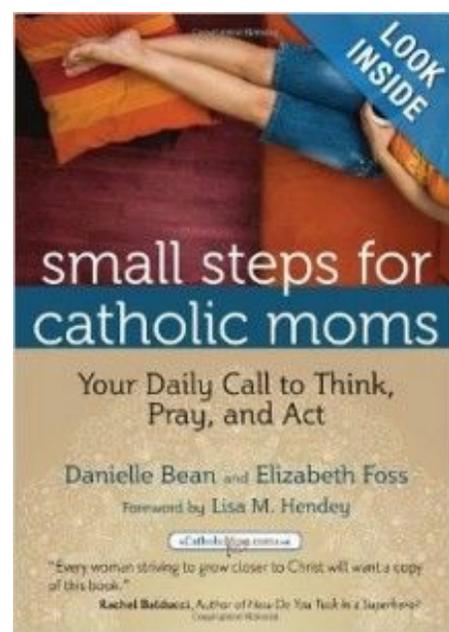
\*\*\*



How are you at morning devotionals and prayer time? Frankly, it is an area where I've always struggled. Brian has a contemplative nature. He loves moments of quiet when he can spend time alone with God. I am the opposite. I love noise. I cannot be in a quiet room. (Maybe it's because I grew up with 10 other people in our home.) I usually always have the stereo playing or the TV on... although I could do with less of the rambunctious boys' LOUDNESS. 😊 Needless to say, quiet time in prayer is not something that comes easily to me and probably many people. We have to work at it.

Lately, however, all this working on being more disciplined has meshed into my spiritual life as well. I finally tweaked my schedule so I have a 15 minute block of quiet time for prayer in the morning. That time is pretty constant, so it's rare that I have to miss it. I begin with a short prayer, read out of my devotional book and then talk to God and journal my thoughts. (Writing things out always help me think things through.)

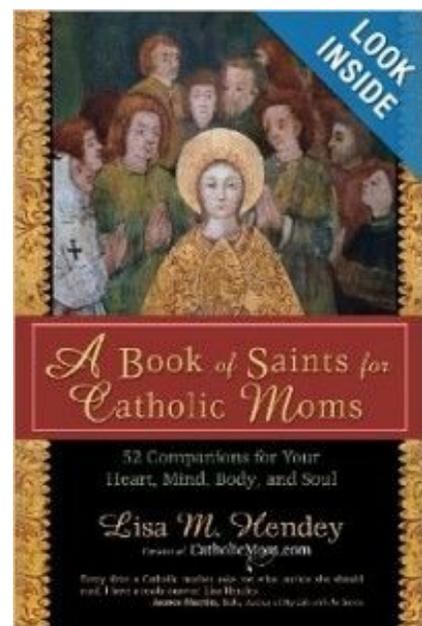
There are many lovely devotional books out there, but I need something very simple...short and sweet. I don't like flowery words and deep theological discussions go over my head. I need something that speak to me right where I am...in the middle of dishes, diapers and dirty laundry. That's why I love reading these two books.



**[Small Steps for Catholic Moms: Your Daily Call to Think, Pray, and Act](#)** is a daily devotional. Each month is dedicated to a specific virtue. (For example, this month is Diligence.) Each day has three elements – A quote or Scripture, a brief prayer and and Act you can do to put your faith into practice. It is perfect for moms who are short on time but it is “meaty” enough that you can also spend more time meditating on the quote. The prayer in the book can be used as an opening line to God and you continue to converse with God for as long as you’d like. For moms who are well developed in their prayer life and want something a little longer, I’d recommend pairing it with a spiritual book that deals with that month’s virtue.

I have a copy of the original Small Steps and friends have wanted to buy a copy but it was out of print for awhile. Thankfully it back in print with a new cover and **[available for purchase](#)**.

My other favorite book is the newer book from Lisa Heney (of CatholicMom.com.)



**[A Book of Saints for Catholic Moms: 52 Companions for Your Heart, Mind, Body, and Soul](#)** is also a daily devotional. It is divided up into 52 weeks. Each week focuses on one saint. There is a

brief biography, lessons we can learn from the saint, traditions of their patronage, two saint-inspired activities (one for mom and one for your children), a weekly prayer to say as a family and one or two questions to ponder. There is also a scripture verse for each day of the week to mediate on. This book rocks. It is rich with information and the prayers are beautiful.

When I first started reading it, I was torn about trading in one book for the other but I have found that both work well for me. I use the Saint Book at the beginning of the week. On Mon, Tues, Wed I read through the chapter and meditate on the lessons etc. By Thursday I only have the daily scripture/prayer left, which is short, so from Thurs to Sun I pair that with the daily devotion of the Small Steps book. I also ask the ‘saint of the week’ to pray for me. Working with both books has worked fine for me.

A last note, although these are geared towards moms, a single person (or even a dad) could read them just as well, particularly the saint book. On days when you are given a task that has to do with your spouse or children you could apply it to a co-worker, a friend or family member instead.

Finally, because I love these books so much, I am giving a copy away on the blog! To enter just leave a comment and tell me which book you’d rather win – **Small Steps for Catholic Moms** or a **Book of Saints for Catholic Moms**. Want an extra entries? – Like [RoL on Facebook](#). (Just leave a comment letting me know you did or have already) and/or tweet about this give-away. 😊 I’ll pick a winner in two weeks on October 8th. Good luck!

(For next week’s post, I’ll let you know which Catholic books for women my Mom’s Group will be reading for our book studies.)

Have a great day.

Bobbi 😊

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.revolutionoflove.com/blog/daily-devotionals-for-catholic-moms-a-give-away/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Detering the Devil [at Busy Catholic Moms]

Have you ever had a really good day where things are starting to fall into place, no one is screaming or fussing, and you think to yourself – I can do this! And then on that very same day, everything falls apart! Fighting ensues. You realize that you forgot to pick up an all-important class snack for your kindergartener and dinner is burning!

Sometimes, when this happens (which is all too often in our household, by the way), I wonder why everything went wrong. After much thought and prayer about these things, I've come to conclude that it's not the Job Syndrome, where God loves me so much he wants to test my faith, like he did with Job. But rather it's the devil trying to pull me away from God. I know that this sounds a little supernatural, but if we believe in our Guardian Angels, don't we too have to believe in the enemy



of God?

I think that it is the devil trying to get to us, picking away at us in little ways. Because when a lot of little things go wrong, they build up and make us lose control, or at least lose perspective! I am starting to realize that the devil likes to mess with me more than just a little bit. Let me give you a few examples:

You have just barely gotten everyone out the door to the soccer games with all the correct gear. You are going to be just exactly on time and everyone, although rushed, is calm. That's when we get stopped by a train on the way there. And in the middle of the train passing, it actually stops and goes backwards! True story!

Or when you have just finished mopping the floor and you are basking in its shine. That is when your dear child, who hasn't had any major spills all week, drops an entire popcycle on the floor and it splatters in many directions, sharing its sticky sweetness with every corner of your formerly clean kitchen. (I call this the 30-minute Syndrome – please let me have a clean floor for 30 minutes!) Never fails!

My most recent example is when I was going to pick up a babysitter on an evening where my husband and I had an obligation to attend. Traffic was so thick that I was definitely running behind schedule. When I finally got to her street, I realized it was blocked by construction. So I worked my way around to come from the other direction only to find it was blocked too! As I wove my way through a maze of cul-de-sacs and circling streets, I just shook my head in disbelief that I couldn't get to her. Then after the evening was over, and I had three sleeping children in bed, I took the sitter back home. While she led me to her home, I realized as I left that I was totally lost – in complete confusion about which way was home – and it was dark out! So I got out my GPS, told it to take me home and it calculated satellites for almost 5 minutes! No kidding! When the screen finally did come up, I saw the map for a brief millisecond and then the whole GPS went black. No display at all.

At that point, I actually laughed. The devil was messing with me so much, I had to see the humor in it! So many things had gone wrong that evening, it was ridiculous! I told him to quit messing with me and leave me alone. And then after a prayer to my angels for guidance in the dark, quite literally, I saw a young couple taking their dog for a walk. So I pulled over, and asked for directions out of the area. They were really kind, when they could have been apprehensive about approaching a car at night, and directed me out. And as I followed their advice through a neighborhood I'd never seen before, I unbelievably came out right next to my own neighborhood!

Later on, I thought about how the devil was definitely not subtle in trying to unnerve me that night. And since then, when things go wrong, I actually laugh and say out loud – don't mess with me! I am a child of God and you can't touch me!

But the devil does affect us in a spiritual battle every day. He wants to separate us from the love of God, and he does it by directing our attention to our problems. His tools include deception, confusion, accusation, low self-esteem, and miscommunications. He will whisper to us how that other mom has it all under control, all figured out, while we ourselves are struggling. He will tell us how we aren't worthy of God's love and forgiveness, causing us to hold on to those sins. He will put thoughts in our head that are obviously not of God. He will cause division and strife in our relationships. He can tear apart friendships through misunderstanding and blindness. And he relishes and rejoices at our failings and our sufferings. He is delighted that he has caused such chaos to direct our hearts and minds away from God.

In those situations, the best thing we can do is recognize him in our daily life – see how he tries to pick at us. And to fight it – to fight him – we can pray! Pray without ceasing, with prayer and petition, with thanksgiving. And God will answer our prayers. In fact, he is waiting to answer our prayers. He wants us to feel His presence more fully. He wants to pour His loving mercy and all His graces upon us!

How is the devil messing with you in your life? How can you fight back?



# Effective Intercessory Prayer [at Working to be Worthy]

*With thanks to Fr. Peter Adu Boahen Nkansah for sharing this with me.*

-1-

There are times in life that I've struggled in my prayer life. I continue to go through the motions, believing that the desire to please God does in fact please him (see

*Thoughts in Solitude*

by Thomas Merton), but I am praying from a distance. I question the effectiveness of my intercessory prayer as I am distracted, full of doubt, and simultaneously prideful. If I cannot fully enter into dialogue with God, the fault is my own that I don't hear His answers. What can be done to open myself to effective prayer?

-2-

## **Meditate**

Good things take time. There is undoubtedly value in short prayers throughout the day, but those are only part of a complete prayer life. Setting aside time to simply

*be*

in the presence of God is a necessary component of effective prayer. Ideally, this would involve regular Eucharistic Adoration, but even carving out 30+ minutes each day brings one to a place to hear what God speaks.

-3-

## **Read Scripture**

"All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Reading, reflecting on, and internalizing Scripture familiarizes us with God's Word. Through this Word, all that exists was created. It is this Word that became flesh, bearing our weakness. To recognize and follow God's voice in prayer, we must know his Word.

-4-

## **Fortify yourself**

Prayer is our weapon against the enemy. We must not enter battle carelessly, but rather put on the armor of God (

[Eph. 6:10-17](#)

). Equip yourself with truth, righteousness, and the gospel of peace. One cannot effectively intercede for others while being spiritually vulnerable. Do what is necessary to strengthen your shield of faith that you may protect yourself and others.

-5-

### **Do no harm**

Sin distances us from God. Powerful prayer comes from a heart humbled and seeking first the kingdom of God. To pray effectively, be reconciled to others (

[Mt. 5:23-24](#)

,

[Rom. 12:18](#)

) then go and sin no more. To pray for some while injuring others is an ineffective way to build up the body of Christ.

-6-

### **Fast**

If the previous four are in order, we can approach the discipline of fasting. Fasting without a solid prayer life becomes haphazard, an exercise in physical perseverance, or a vain display of piety. To fast, have a plan. Perhaps 6AM to noon, praying every hour. Or 6AM to 6PM, praying at the conclusion of the fast. If possible, fast, pray, and break the fast in community - not to prove how religious you are, but to gather in the name of Jesus, to assemble the army of saints militant. The spiritual emptying through fasting and the celebration of breaking bread find meaning in community.

-7-

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

St. Alphonsus Ligouri, patron of vocations, pray for us.

All you holy men and women, pray for us.

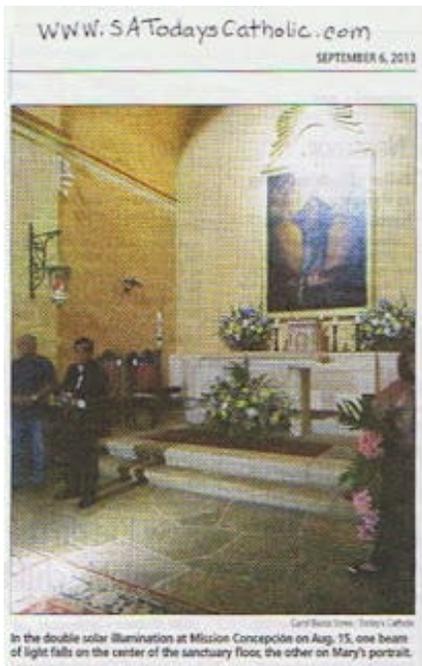
*7 Quick Takes is hosted at [Conversion Diary](#)*

---

This contribution is available at <http://workingtobeworthy.blogspot.com/2013/09/effective-intercessory-prayer.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Create Your Own Pilgrimage [at The Hill Country Hermit]



## A Double Solar Illumination at Mission Concepción

You really don't have to travel to Europe to make a religious pilgrimage. You really don't even have to go out of state, or away from your hometown! A hike to your local church or a nature hike could just as easily be a holy experience. As long as your trek is focused on God, you can count it as a pilgrimage.

Most American cities have lots of beautiful churches that can be very inspiring to explore. Mapping out a few and then hiking from one to another could make an awesome pilgrimage! And you wouldn't even have to book a flight.

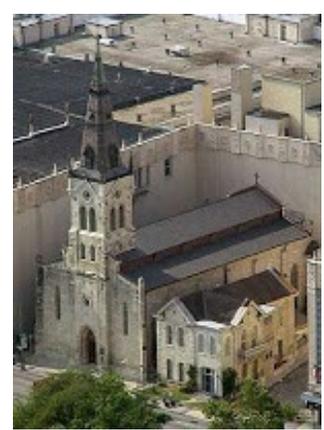
If you don't live too far from San Antonio, hiking to the churches listed below would be a wonderful (and exhausting!) pilgrimage. Although it is only about a 12 mile stretch, spreading the pilgrimage out over a few days might make it more of a medieval-ish adventure! Use the addresses below and an online map to plan out a walking route connecting these religious and historical sites ...



231 W. Commerce Street  
San Antonio, TX 78205



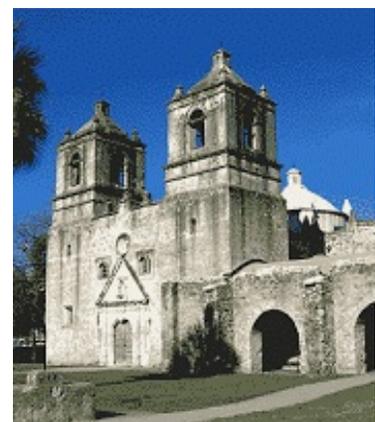
202 North St. Mary's Street  
San Antonio, TX 78205



623 East Commerce Street  
San Antonio, TX 78205



300 Alamo Plaza  
San Antonio, Texas 78205





---

This contribution is available at <http://www.theresadoyle-nelson.blogspot.com/2013/09/create-your-own-pilgrimage.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

# Fulton Sheen, Bad Math Grades and American Exceptionalism [at The Back of the World]

Bruce Springsteen belts out rock anthems about it. Vladimir Putin recently called us out on it. Reinhold Niebuhr warned us that we would suffer greatly for it.

“It” is our attitude: we Americans think we’re exceptional.

We want to be millionaires in our twenties, we want to marry a supermodel at 30, we want to have the perfect 2.5 children shortly thereafter, we want to retire at 45 and live an undying youth on a private Caribbean island until our painless death at age 92.

And more than anything we want to do what we want with no consequences. Our *Ego*, in the classical sense of the word, is truly what’s in the driving seat.

We want to sleep with perfect strangers, but not take care of the offspring. We want to eat, drink, and be merry, and to never put on any weight. We want to bomb the hell out of any nation that stands in our way, and to have our enemies weep with gratitude for our assaults.

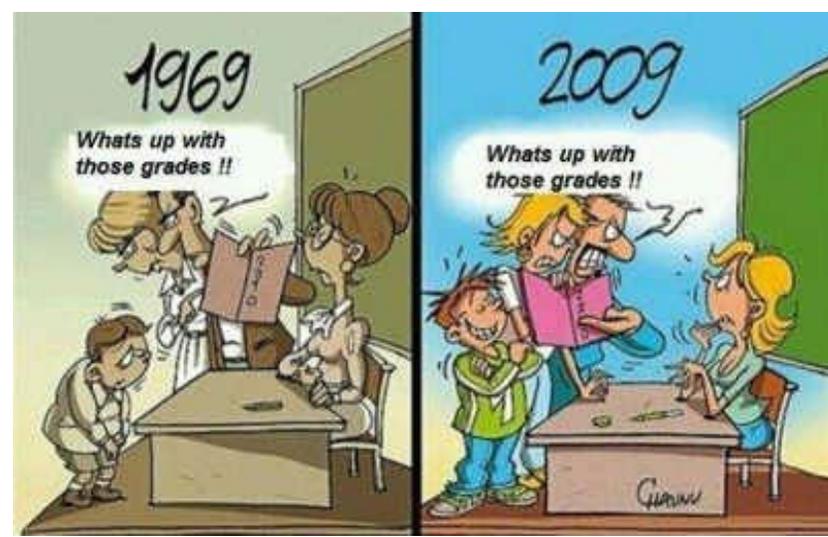
In other words, we want “freedom” to mean “no one can ever tell me what to do!”

In the car today, I popped in a CD that I got recently of a speech that Bl. Fulton Sheen gave on abortion. In his talk, the Archbishop speaks about the underlying philosophy that changed the laws of our nation to allow for abortion. He speaks of the philosophy that refuses to accept any limits on my behavior, and when it came to power in this nation:

When, I wonder, did we in America ever get into this idea that freedom means having no boundaries and no limits? You know I think it began on the 6th of August 1945 at 8:15 am, when we dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. That blotted out boundaries. The boundary of America that was the aid of nations, and the nations that were helped. It blotted out the boundary between life and death for the victims of nuclear incineration. Among them even the living were dead. It blotted out the boundary between the civilian and the military. And somehow or other, from that day on in our American life, we say we want no limits and no boundaries...

\*\*\*

There’s a cartoon from a few years back that pretty succinctly summarizes an experience that anyone who is a teacher in these United States has probably experienced:



You see, American Exceptionalism isn't just the province of Beltway politicians and party boy who want to copulate with everything that moves. It has trickled down into even the most respectable of middle class families.

“There are no limits on me or my offspring! You cannot tell my child that he is less than perfect! MY CHILD will go on and on to ever greater glory and dominion, because I WILL oppose anyone that dares to give him a B+...”

I can't tell you how deeply sad I am when a parent calls me to complain about their child's B+. To me, that says to the child that he is the center of the universe, that he ought to be his own little god, and he should place no limits on himself or his behavior. We're raising a generation of potential Trumans, who may well stop at **nothing** to get what they want.

\*\*\*

There can be only one real antidote to American Exceptionalism: we will have to go to church and die.

In the Tridentine liturgy, three things would be incensed before the Consecration: the Bread, the Wine, and the People. You see, the Mass is a holy sacrifice, and it has always been the case, in Judeo-Christian sacrificial rites, that what was to be offered to God was to be incensed.

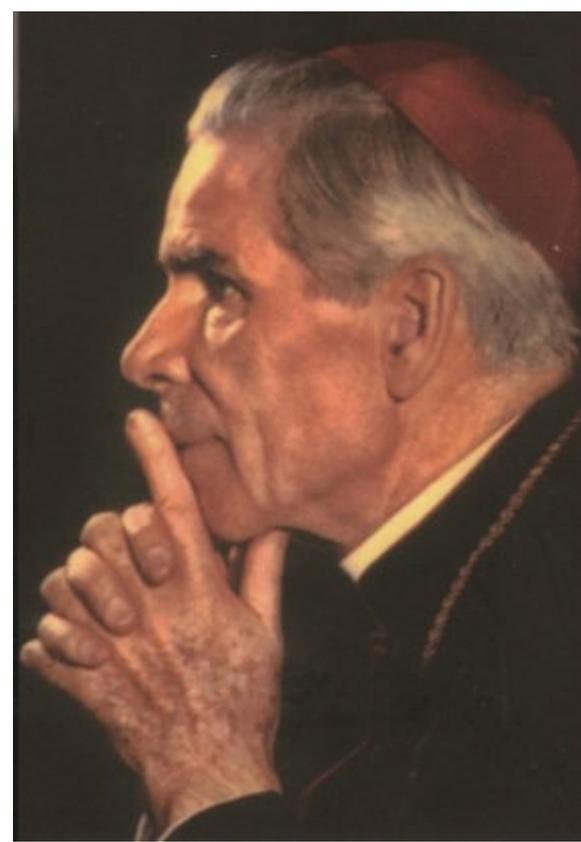
Yes, that's right: at Mass, you are a part of the sacrifice.

When we come to Church, we are offered the Flesh and Blood of the One “who did not count equality with God as something to be grasped.” It is Jesus, the only one who is truly Exceptional, who gave His life for us on the Cross. We, in turn, offer our bodies as living sacrifices in the most Exceptional of ways: by consuming “true God from true God.”

And then we are sent out. *ITE, MISSA EST!* “Go, it is the dismissal.” The very word “Mass” comes from the way we are sent out after being sacrificed. We go out into the world, not to lord over the gentiles with our power and might, but to be servants, to give our lives away in love to

our neighbors, to be the husband of one wife, to love and accept all the children that God will bless us with, to be sober-minded and temperate in all things, to seek justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

And *that* is truly exceptional...



---

This contribution is available at <http://backoftheworld.com/2013/09/28/death-at-a-mass-fulton-sheen-bad-math-grades-and-american-exceptionalism/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

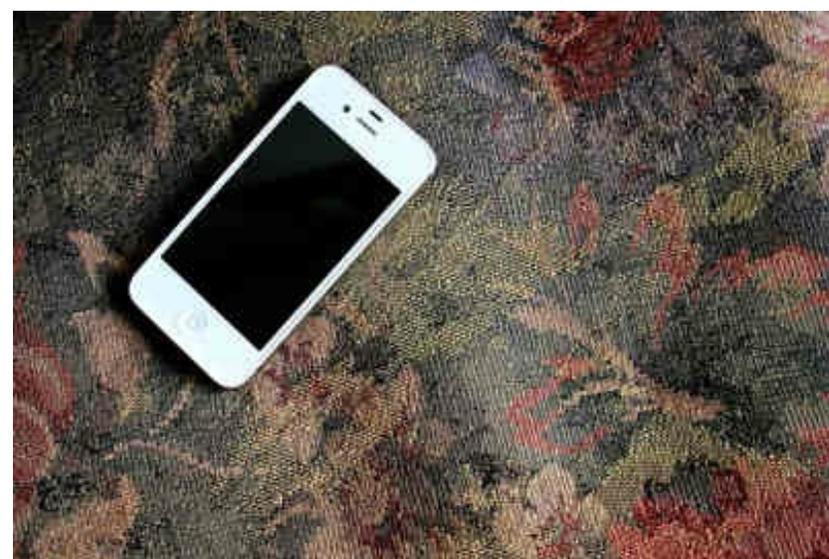
## iPhone vs. uBaby [at Romancing Reilly]

About this time last year I got my first smartphone. It was a Kyocera (I think). Jacob and I reasoned that since we weren't having internet in our apartment (which lasted one semester) then it would be our source for checking e-mails once we got home. We had a wistful idea of being internet free when we came home from school and work, leaving us to evening dinner conversations, reading our Wall Street Journal, and delving into the next novel we were reading together ...

HA!

Let me repeat: HA!

Jacob's ridiculous load of academics and work soon proved that my husband's work was never done. Evenings were a time to *continue* working, and once the hardcore thesis crunch rolled around it became evident that we needed to get legitimate internet.



Also about this time a year ago we cancelled our Verizon plan and moved over to the month to month option with Virgin Mobile. At the beginning of the summer, Virgin Mobile was having a

sale on their iPhone 4's since they were moving out the old to make room for the new. Jacob's phone plan wasn't a data plan but it was only a few dollars more to bump him up to one, and my smartphone was starting to freeze up and threaten to implode before very long. Thus we converted to the iPhone.

We love Apple products. We really do. And I also really appreciate having a smartphone. Living in a big city with traffic and highways that make your head spin made me really want the GPS capacity of a smartphone. Furthermore, it is really really nice to be able to look up the doctor's number or access your e-mail while running errands to confirm the appointment time for this, that, and the other.

And another handy dandy feature is that I *loooooove* the mobile banking. Depositing checks (cheques?) via my phone is a huge help and removes one more errand from my list of necessary outings.

(I like outings, but not bank ones. I like fun outings ... but it could be argued that putting money *into* the bank *is* fun.)

Finally, my real love for the smartphone is this -- its camera and sharing feature. I have now filled Instagram with over 400 pictures of our little cutie-patootie (the obligation of every smartphone-carrying-doting parent, right?). Furthermore, the grandparents (and aunts and uncles and Godparents) get daily (or twice or thrice daily) updates. Pictures! Collages! Videos! You name it, they're getting it.

So aaaaall that being said, I've had to re-evalute my relationship with my smartphone.

Just recently I removed practically all those apps that weren't pertinent to the pro-smartphone reasons I just listed above. No more Pinterest. No more bloglovin. No more Facebook. No more Words With Friends. No more, no more, no more...

Yes I do still have my e-mail, Google maps, my bank app, the Baby Monitor App (oh yeah), the

White Noise App, and the Map my Walk App, oh, and the token Catholic app -- Laudate, on the phone, but practically everything else that I would be tempted to spend time on is gone (okay, okay, I *do* still have Instagram but I'm really trying to not spend tons of time on there ...).

Jacob also did the same thing recently. However, though we have many of the same reasons for cleaning out the smartphone, my primary reason is due to something that's been bugging me since shortly after Sebastian was born and came home.

I know we have to be realistic about life, just like how Jacob and I had to realize that we needed internet for the sake of Jacob's work and for the sake of allowing him to be *home* at least *some* of the time. However, I realized that in this instance, my being realistic was to take the final step and say "no phone."

I began noticing in those early weeks that as I would sit and nurse Sebastian and sit ... and sit ... and continue to nurse ... and nurse ... I began more and more to idle away the time on the phone. The first week or so, the phone was only to take a few pictures or to stay in touch with Jacob while he was away, but otherwise my phone was on silent and forgotten about. I would stare at my son's face as he nursed, and I would just study and memorize every feature of his perfect, tiny little face.

But as the days wore on and I began doing the same thing every. single. day. I began more and more to keep the phone near me as I began to plug myself into the ever available plethora of social media. I don't know at what point I started to feel wrong about it, but something started to nudge me. Sebastian was (and still is) growing and changing so rapidly that he was practically a new baby every morning we woke up. One day I looked down and realized that it wasn't a newborn I was feeding but a baby ... there's a difference.

I also wondered why I couldn't finish any of our books for Book Club but I somehow managed to pin hundreds of new tips, outfits, hair ideas, recipes, etc. into my assorted Pinterest boards (if you're curious I have over 2,600 pins); I managed to read this and that blog; I managed to creep on this person on Facebook; I managed to so on and so forth (you get the idea). I also stopped reading the Wall Street Journal. Sure life changes with a baby, but there's still plenty of time to sit still (when you have one child at least), and my "stillness time" was becoming one big black hole of social media.

I began *trying* to leave my phone. I would do it for one nursing session, but it's like an addiction. Before I knew it I'd be back at it.

This went on all summer, and the interior nudging continued.



The guilt really began to settle in, though, as Sebastian began to really clue into the world around him beyond just dinner and mom's face. He started watching the phone. Then as he became more active, I'd bounce him a little longer saying, "Just a minute, just a minute" not even looking at him but finishing up whatever it was that was somehow more important than my little boy. I found myself realizing that he'd be staring at me but I wouldn't be staring back. The guilt really set in when I caught the tail end of a few smiles that I had missed because of reading someone's status on the Facebook feed.

Then he started reaching for the phone.

"If mom's so smitten with that white box, then I want it."

Sure, I stick the white box in his face a lot for pictures and videos, but if you put it down right

afterwards it's done. It's over.

Or not...



But the one more outfit to pin, the one more Instagram to like, the one more blog article to read ... it never ends.

It's hard for me to be temperate in this way. I know there are plenty of people with babies and kids and smartphones and they don't have this problem, but I'm not one of them. I've always been drawn to the visual. My parents would always make fun of me because if we were in a restaurant where there was a TV my eyes couldn't keep away from the screen.

Recently, Sebastian's been a bit of a demanding sleeper, meaning he wants only to sleep while he's nursing. I'll get him down for his nap or bedtime, but often times he's crying out for me just ten minutes later and I'll have to go lay back down. I know there are tons of methods out there and what not, but I'm not asking for advice on that right now because I'm figuring it out.

But this demand of Sebastian's meant I would sometimes be next to him during his entire nap, and guess what? The phone would be in my hand.

It's actually really embarrassing to admit that my wrists began to hurt from the angle at which I held the phone above my head and moved my thumb all over the screen for what would seem like hours on end.

Jacob recently mentioned that he had deleted most of his non-necessary apps because the distraction was too great when there was such a work load for school to be had. When I heard this I knew I had to take the same step. I certainly am not having to read 1,000 pages a week, but I do have an obligation to my son ... and to our home.

The times Sebastian slept peacefully enough without me should have been opportunities to get health forms filled out, the kitchen cleaned, the laundry put away, a thank you card written, a book read, etc., etc., but instead I would just idle away on the phone.

Yes. I'm still blogging. Yes I still have my Pinterest and Facebook accounts, but these things are all left for the laptop in the evening when I find myself alone while Jacob is studying and Sebastian is asleep. I don't have anything against social media in itself, but I've realized the danger of it when I cannot use it for a good and it becomes all consuming.

This is a tune that's been sung since the internet was invented (by Al Gore, right? Or was it his dad?), but it's struck a chord in me this time that sings not so pleasant.

Scrolling back through my 400+ Instagram pictures, I see how quickly and drastically Sebastian has changed in a matter of weeks ... *days!* I don't want this time with him lost to something that has so little value. I don't want to stop reading the Wall Street Journal, and I want to finish a Book Club book, damn it!

I haven't had a perfect streak in my new resolve, by any means. My phone is still usually fairly close by since Jacob and I stay in close contact through the day, but I leave it in the other room more frequently now. I don't have those apps to tempt me, although I may find myself sending more texts or maybe even taking more selfies (is that even a possibility?).

No, I haven't been totally phone-free, but I sure have been better and am going to keep trying. There are too many of these faces that I don't want to miss and quite frankly, I think I'd rather be cooking than pinning.



---

This contribution is available at <http://romancingreilly.blogspot.com/2013/09/iphone-vs-ubaby.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## The 103 Point Question [at Mercy Me! I've got work to do]

I planned to write about comforting the sorrowful and I am sorry to say, I just don't feel like it. Inevitably it would have to be sad, and I just scored a 103 point word on my Words With Friends game so I am feeling too smug for sad.

Ah, but that's the thing about sorrow, it can be sneaky and come along in a moment and eclipse the sunniest (or smuggest) of days.

A few weeks ago, I was going to lunch with my mom and my boys when I learned that a friend of mine's mother died unexpectedly. I was stunned and momentarily speechless. Tears of deep sorrow began to spill onto the sidewalk outside of the restaurant. Of course, I didn't want to cry in front of my children and knew a public lunch was no longer an option. So I headed back to my car to wait for my mom and children to get take out when a man stopped and asked if he could talk to me.

Of course, I was skeptical. I have seen enough *Dateline* and *20/20* to know that "can I talk to you for a minute?" really means "I would like to chop you up into tiny pieces and put you in my freezer."

Unbeknownst to me, he had seen my reaction to this unexpected death. "I saw how upset you got back there," he said. "Is everything okay? Is there something I could do for you? "

Now, isn't that the 103-point question?

What can I do to comfort the sorrowful?

I felt horrible that my friend's mom had died. I saw her regularly and she was dear to me. I would miss her, but my sincere sorrow was insignificant compared to what my friend must have felt losing her mother. I badly wanted to do something to ease her pain. I hated how helpless I felt knowing her loss was profound and (even worse) permanent.

I hugged her, held her hand, tried to make her laugh, listened and baked her banana bread. She asked for prayers and I prayed. She asked me for a lawyer to look into some possible malpractice by her mother's doctor. I told my husband who is an attorney, to find her the best. I even called the lawyer for her because she was so overwhelmed. It wasn't what I would think of as far as comforting someone, but it was what she needed.

This past week, a family friend died. While I can't say it was unexpected, as she had been ill for some time, it was no doubt sad. So once again, I was faced with that 103-point question – how do I comfort the sorrowful?

In this case, I was asked to help write the eulogy that my friend had drafted. She was understandably overwhelmed and obviously wanted to do justice to her loved one. I remember when I was tasked with writing my uncle's eulogy when he passed away unexpectedly, I didn't want to do it. I was sad and shocked. My heart ached and I didn't want the assignment of writing a biography. Yet, in the end it was such an honor to comfort my aunt and cousins with my carefully chosen words.

Still, I knew the pressure my friend felt, and I wanted to help. Her words of thanksgiving and praise for my efforts were such a comfort to me because they meant I had done something for her when I badly wanted to do whatever I could to ease her heartache. It somehow made *me* feel better.

You see, sorrow is a spectrum and we all fall into different places on the continuum depending on the situation. It is indeed a helpless feeling when someone we care about is sad. I think most of us genuinely want to do something—anything to ease some of the burden of sorrow. I don't know if that is inherent in us or if it's just because we know how horribly painful some of our losses have been and can't stand the thought of someone else going through the same thing.

As much as I want life to be joyful for all of us, it's not. None of us are going to get through this world unscathed. There are no doubt great joys on earth, simple pleasures, cherished moments and genuine love. But there is also death, devastation, disease and despair.

This isn't heaven. I think we sometimes feel so entitled to goodness that we forget that we are not here for our own pleasure, pursuits and passions, but to serve God. We can't just skip ahead to the good stuff of eternal life. That happens in God's time, not ours.

For our part, I think we have to choose joy every chance we get. I think we have to seek joy in the small things and share joy with people in our lives.

Life is hard. At times, it's hell. It's at these times, when joy feels the farthest away that we inadvertently rely on it the most. Joy fills our memories and comforts us; it offers glimpses of hope and reminds us of love's power to endure. Ultimately, comforting the sorrowful isn't about sadness as much as it's about sharing the joy of God's love.

When sorrow comes, we have to be there for one another—in whatever capacity is required of us. We have to pull each other through the darkness until the pivotal day that we no longer know the world's sorrows and bask in the warm glow of God's perpetual light.

Thankfully, that man who came up to me wasn't an axe murderer. He was a stranger who saw someone hurting and offered compassion. I have since run into him again, and while I was embarrassed to acknowledge my vulnerability that day, I was happy to have the chance to thank him for his incredible kindness. He seemed grateful for my words, just as I felt gratitude for being able to comfort those dear to me over the past few weeks.

So the answer to the 103-point question, how can I comfort the sorrowful, can be answered in one word — love. When I think about the answer, the point value escalates exponentially.

Now that's something to feel smug about.

Categories: [Spiritual Works of Mercy](#) | Tags: [catholic](#), [comfort](#), [death](#), [friendship](#), [God](#), [grief](#), [Jesus](#), [joy](#), [life](#), [love](#), [Sadness](#), [sorrow](#) | [Permalink](#).

I am using my 40th birthday as an impetus to embark on mid-life mission to perform spiritual and corporal works of mercy— that unlike aging promise to defy gravity.

---

This contribution is available at <http://mercyme40.wordpress.com/2013/09/10/the-103-point-question/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## 3 Lessons and 2 Tips from Audrey Assad



Audrey Assad

**3 Lessons and 2 Tips** is a series of interviews in which some of my favorite people (and probably some of yours) share three lessons they've learned by being married, plus two tips for single people.

This edition features Audrey Assad, "an independent singer, musician, and songwriter" who is soon to perform live in my neck of the woods. The show is sponsored by

[Spirit FM](#)

at 6 p.m. November 2 at Northeast Presbyterian Church, 4400 Shore Acres Blvd NE, in St. Pete, Fla. Seats are limited to 150. Order them now

[here](#)

(and perhaps I'll see you there!).

Audrey "has a great passion for extolling the peculiarities and joys of the Sacrament (of marriage). She now makes music for the Church which that Sacrament so vividly illuminates." I am grateful for the time she took to chat about what she's learned by being married:

**AS: How did you meet your husband?AA:**

I met my husband William at a youth conference in Tucson, AZ. I was there singing background vocals with Matt Maher, and William (who was a friend of Matt's) was working on production

crew. We didn't really "connect" romantically till a year later, though. We were married in February 2011 in Phoenix, AZ.

**AS: What's the first lesson you've learned by being married?AA:**

Marriage is a path to holiness first and foremost. It is a way to encounter Christ, to follow Him, and to unite ourselves to Him.

**AS: And the second lesson?AA:**

No matter how prepared you are by counseling or reading books, every marriage is unique and special and has its own ups and downs. You're married to a specific person with a specific history and a specific worldview. So it's important to stay flexible!

**AS: And the third lesson?AA:**

A sense of humor is crucial to getting through those crappy days we all experience. It's easy to take frustrations out on the person who is closest to you. It's good to learn to laugh together when things are annoying.

**AS: What's one tip for readers who are single?AA:**

Single life is just as much a path to holiness as marriage is, so don't miss the occasions of sanctification while they're still there! Enjoy it as much as you can, and seize the opportunities for holiness that exist in your current state in life.

**AS: And a second tip for singles?AA:**

If you're called to marriage, you'll be a better and more whole spouse if you till the ground of your heart during your single years.

-----

**Connect with Audrey Assad:**

Click

[here](#)

to visit her website,

[here](#)

to follow her on Twitter, and

[here](#)

to like her on Facebook.

Click

[here](#)

to read all the posts in this series.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.arleenspenceley.com/2013/09/3-lessons-and-2-tips-from-audrey-assad.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Convert Spotlight: Contemplating Christian [at Convert Journal]



“K” blogs as the *Contemplating Christian* and is a 2006 convert (which she describes as ending her “protest” against the Catholic Church). Prior to her confirmation, she was a member of a “large independent Bible Church” but the community of her youth was ELCA Lutheran. Growing-up Lutheran, K was exposed to liturgical worship noting “I found myself missing the liturgy of my youth, missing weekly communion (the Bible church did a Communion service about four times a year).”

Returning as a Lutheran was not an option. K continues “I thought about returning to the Lutheran church, but they’d strayed so far from their theological roots as to be unrecognizable. The Episcopal church was similarly apostate, but at least they seemed (at the time) to be working with the more orthodox factions of the church as opposed to running utterly roughshod over them like the ELCA.” (For background on what she is referring to on ELCA Lutherans, see my 2010 piece [Protestantism trainwreck](#). Of course, the Episcopal community is now at least as bad – see my recent [Elsewhere: the Episcopal experiment](#).)

K’s story is insightful and well written, so let’s jump in...

The pastor of this church is an excellent speaker. He is engaging, well-educated, funny, self-deprecating, and culturally savvy. The church buys airtime on the Howard Stern Show and other non-traditional, worldly venues and produces a short spot in which the pastor addresses some life problem that almost anyone (regardless of religion or lack thereof) can relate to, using examples from Scripture to offer solutions. Thousands of unchurched people visit this congregation each year thanks to their willingness to reach out through worldly means. In fact, the church’s motto is “Impacting Secular (insert our metro area here) for Jesus Christ.”

This megachurch is big for a reason – one reason. It’s really all about the pastor. If, God

forbid, he died tomorrow, I don't believe for a second the church would ever be the same again. In many ways, it is a cult of personality. And this is a feature common to many protestant churches. In my 24 years as a protestant, I saw countless pastors come and go, and entire churches live or die by their popularity.

Pastors and the churches they lead can be popular for a number of reasons. Some water down the gospel to make it palatable to people whose very lifestyle is one of sin (pro-aborts, gay activists, etc.). Some take a hard line on everything and attract people who need structure and rules. Some are more like social clubs than houses of worship. And some are the real deal – places where people can go and be challenged and supported, and grow closer to God.

The church I mentioned above was the real deal in many ways. Our pastor was never afraid to take an unpopular position for the sake of Truth. Week after week, he offered practical, realistic ways to apply the gospel to our everyday lives in an inspirational way. And he was committed to the church in a way that many pastors aren't — he promised (or “threatened,” as he likes to say) to stay with that church until he died or we threw him out, whichever came first. All in all, his church was a good place to be, and I happily grew in my faith there for five years.

So why did I start looking for something different?

Well, there were issues at the megachurch. I won't share them in detail because in the end, they're not relevant to my conversion story. Some were financial, some were legalistic, and a few were doctrinal. But the main thing that pushed me out the door was, ironically, the very same thing that had ushered me in five years earlier – the life application teaching.

Don't get me wrong – life application teaching is wonderful. Necessary, even. How do we know how to live the Christian life unless we are taught? But is its proper place the main worship service on Sunday morning? We once did an excellent series on The Da Vinci Code – twelve weeks” worth of debunking its myths and lies. It was timely and interesting, but I couldn't help feeling its proper place was a seminar or a Sunday School class, not a Sanctuary of the Lord. Same with the series on finances, and the series on workplace evangelism . . . these things were tremendously helpful, but I didn't come away feeling like I'd just worshiped the Lord of Lords.

Later, K discusses church options with her husband...

“It's not the same thing!” I protested. “The beliefs are totally different.” I explained the major differences in a nutshell (the authority of the Pope, the Marian doctrines, purgatory, consubstantiation vs. transubstantiation) and he nodded thoughtfully. I added emphatically, “I'm just not comfortable with the Catholic Church's beliefs!”

And then, in what was almost a throwaway line for my husband, he said the words that would eat at me for the next three weeks: “Why do you have to be comfortable with the church's

beliefs?” Again, all I could think was, “Ouch.”

Why, indeed? I realized that instead of trying to shape my theology to match God’s, I was searching for a church to fit my theology. A theology carefully honed over a whopping eleven years. In between classes, work, dating, marriage, and a child. That’s the stuff of theological legend, right there . . . or maybe not.

That struck a chord with me! In [my own story](#), I wrote “reflecting back now I see my whole approach was wrong. I was shopping for a church that fit my beliefs.” Indeed!

K then begins checking the claims of the Church with a more open mind and heart...

With my Bible in one hand and my mouse in the other, I began to fact check everything. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that after a couple of hours of this, I was a convert, in mind if not yet in body.

As I read the scriptures with the mind of a Catholic, they came alive like never before. Thinking of Peter as the first Pope shed so much light on the dynamics of so many relationships in the New Testament. I noticed things I’d studiously ignored for years, like Jesus giving to the apostles the ability to forgive sins on earth so they’d be forgiven in heaven. I could go on and on, but I’d rather send you to [Scripture Catholic](#) to see for yourself. It’s truly eye opening if you’ve never seriously considered Catholic theology before.

At any rate, literally overnight I became a Catholic. In the days to come, I found myself reading protestant arguments on different forums and mentally picking them apart only to find that they fell short every time when put up against the Catholic teaching. That’s not to say there haven’t been plenty of debates won by protestants against Catholics, but I started to recognize that on these occasions, it was due to a lack of knowledge on the Catholic’s part, not a failure of the theology itself.

I also found a site with a lot of writings by the Early Church Fathers, people who knew and worked with the apostles themselves. To my surprise, these men were unarguably Catholic. (Present-day Catholic, not some kind of imaginary “early Catholic” of the type that was good enough to put together the Bible, but not good enough to hold the fullness of the truth for all generations.)

Even after my husband returned home, I kept all of this to myself for a few days, considering I had recently firmly proclaimed my opposition to all things Catholic. I didn’t want him to think I was flaky, or worse, schizophrenic. But as the desire to pursue this path grew inside of me, I sat my husband down over dinner and said, “Honey, I have a dilemma. While you were out of town, I did a lot of reading and praying, and I think God showed me that the Catholic Church is true.”

These are some highlights from K’s complete story which is at [What happened? \(Or, how I turned](#)

[my back on a lifetime of protestant teaching and learned to love the Catholic Church\).](#)

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2013/09/convert-spotlight-contemplating-christian/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |



Years ago a Bible study friend of mine talked about going shopping with Lenore. Who was Lenore? Her guardian angel. How did she know her name? She asked her.

So I began to ask my guardian angel what her name was. After several years with no results, I started calling her Grace. If she didn't like that name, she could tell me what to call her.

Months went by with Grace and I doing things together. Mostly I called on her because of electrical storms, traffic jams or nightmares. Sometimes I remembered her when I was joyful. She watched over me when I slept.

As I recuperated from injuries from a traffic accident, I couldn't fulfill my responsibilities and I needed her. Early one morning after a difficult night, I tried to put myself in the presence of God by surrendering all my concerns, my pain, my unachieved goals and desires. In my weakness, the Holy Spirit gave me many graces. I received insights about several ministry projects, including new ways to use our website for evangelism. I sought guidance on a manuscript about joy that I was writing, but nothing came about that. While I was in this listening position that God sometimes puts me in, I heard distinctly in my mind, "Her name is Joy." I hadn't even asked!

Immediately I thought of my dear friend Joy who is in heaven. I wonder if she had anything to do with answering my prayer about my angel's name? How dear it is call my guardian angel by her name. Even though I know that humans don't become angels when they go to heaven, I felt both of them watching over me.

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, a characteristic of God and sign of his presence in our lives. God is love, the first fruit. Joy, the second fruit, arises from the love of God within us. Joy leads us to peace and to the other fruits of the Spirit as each fruit creates the next one. Love creates joy and joy makes us patient. Patience produces kindness; kindness leads to generosity. Generosity helps us to be faithful to God. That faithfulness makes us gentle and then we can master self-control.

My guardian angel Joy, as my heavenly liaison, connects me to God's love and leads me to peace, at least when I cooperate. When I resist Joy by doubting God's love, peace doesn't come my way.

When I'm sad and can't find Joy anywhere, I can call her into my world by singing praise songs to God, even when I don't feel like it. Soon "I've got that Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy down in my heart!"

---

This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/do-you-know-the-name-of-your-guardian-angel/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Protesting the Legal Holocaust ~ Respect for Life [at Campfires and Cleats]

~Hi there friends~~!

Welcome to my home on the web

AND to the Catholic Bloggers' Pro-Life Carnival!  
Thanks for stopping in to spend some time here.....

I am honored to be a part of this month's team of Catholic bloggers  
writing with a Pro-life focus.

Nancy of [Do Small Things With Love](#) is the creator and organizer of the series..Go Nancy!....

She's compiled a few of the photos which appear  
in the posts of the contributing bloggers:



Beautiful, no?

In the posts that I share here,  
I discuss our parish trip to DC for The March for Life 2013  
and the Respect Life video that my son created and for which he received  
an honor at the diocesan level.  
I hope that you'll have a chance to visit all of  
the pro life posts of these bloggers,

who wrote for this month's collective:

The post links are below.....



Thank you for visiting, friends!  
If you enjoyed your visit here today,  
please subscribe to Campfires and Cleats by scrolling to  
the box at the top left.

Until next time,

~Chris



Friends, my son's video at link#5 is n-o-w working....!

Thanks to those who informed it was broken.

BUT the URL below has been changed.

[Please click here](#) to get to the post with the [Pro Life Video at #5](#)

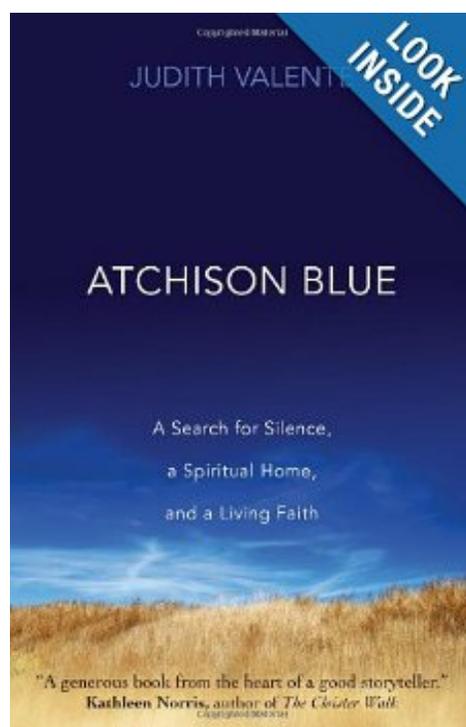
\*\*\*\*\*

---

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2013/09/pro-life-blog-carnival.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Atchison Blue: My Review [at This That and the Other Thing]



## About the Book:

In this meditative spiritual memoir, Judith Valente, celebrated PBS religion journalist and celebrated poet, invites readers along on her transformative pilgrimages to Mount St. Scholastica monastery in Atchison, Kansas. The Benedictine sisters who invited Valente presented her with a view of monastic life and wisdom that brought spiritual healing to her fast-paced life--and promises to do the same for her readers.

The first time Judith Valente arrived at Mount St. Scholastica monastery, she came prepared to teach a course on poetry and the soul. Instead, she found herself the student, taking lessons from the Benedictine sisters in the healing nature of silence, how to cultivate habits of mindful living, and the freeing reality that conversion is a lifelong process.

With the heart of a poet and the eye of a journalist, she tells how her many visits and interviews with the Benedictine sisters forced her to confront aspects of her own life that needed healing--a journey that will invite readers to healing of their own. A beautiful and heartfelt work that crosses *The Cloister Walk* with *Tuesdays with Morrie*, *Atchison Blue* will resonate with readers of Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Mary Gordon, and Anne Lamott.

## My Comments:

I think a great word to describe our modern world is "busy". We go from the time we get up in the morning until the time we go to bed at night (and we usually go to bed later than we should).

Judith was like most of us; busy most of the time, but she met the sisters at Mount St. Scholastica and learned slow down and appreciate both the people in her life and God's creation. We learn about the life of the sisters and how Judith was able to learn from that life, even though she make her living as a journalist. Theses ladies are not contemplatives who pray all day, but working women who have learned to integrate prayer, work, and play in a way many of us would do well to imitate.

I want to share a little of the wisdom with you (realizing that the final copy may be different than the digital ARC I had).

People who are all about action might never find God. And those who are only interested in contemplation might never build the kingdom of God.

Death is the price we pay to be reunited with those who have gone before us in faith.

I'd like to thank the publisher for making a review copy available via NetGalley. Grade: B

You can read more about the Benedictine Sister

[at their website.](#)

---

This contribution is available at <http://rannthisthat.blogspot.com/2013/09/atchison-blue-my-review.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Poorly Catechized World Misunderstands Pope Francis [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

by Susan Fox



photo by telegraph.co.uk

So begins a fascinating interview with Pope Francis published on Sept. 19. The interview rocked the world, with some claiming the pope is a “flaming liberal” and will take the Church to the left, while orthodox Catholics feel betrayed.

Both sides are wrong. The interview has to be taken in the context of the relativistic world we inhabit. He was trying to give us a strategy for converting the world. He was not pulling back from our positions against abortion, birth control and gay marriage.

“I see the Church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds. ... And you have to start from the ground up,” the Pope said in the interview.

He is right! In the context of evangelization, one has to focus on the person and the basic message of Catholicism, not on the hot button issues of the day. I have 30 years of door-to-door evangelization under my belt, and I quickly learned that arguing the issues of abortion, contraception and gay marriage – even defending the church in the priestly sexual abuse scandal – would never win any converts.

Early in my volunteer labor, I visited an elderly single woman who was lapsed from the Catholic faith. She was lonely and wanted attention. Did I give her that? No, I was eager to change her mind (this was 30 years ago). So when I asked her why she left the Church, and she answered because of its position on contraception, alarm bells should have gone off in my head. She was not living with anyone. She was too old to have children. That couldn't possibly be the reason she was away from the Church. But instead -- in my enthusiasm -- I began to tell her the wonders of Natural Family Planning. Wrong choice! She naturally ended the interview there.

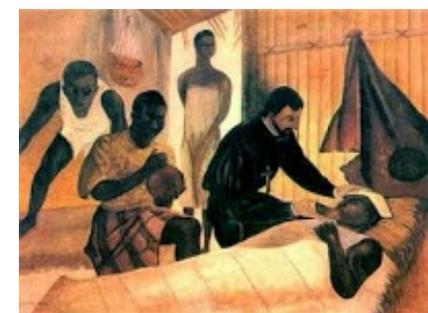
As the years passed, I learned NOT to explain the Church's position on any of these hot button issues unless somebody



*"I got to know the people, where they hurt and why they hurt. And this method proved the most effective in bringing people into the church."*

asked me to! Instead I got to know the people, where they hurt and why they hurt. And this method proved the most effective in bringing people into the church. I learned to look for the good things they were already doing, and emphasize this.

St. Peter Claver is an excellent model for this type of evangelization. During his 40 years of meeting and greeting the Negro slaves that poured into Columbia through the port of Cartagena during the 1600s, he baptized and instructed 300,000 slaves!



St. Peter Claver ministering

to the slaves

He didn't waste time arguing the issue of slavery. He marched onto the slave ships, ministered to the naked and ill-treated passengers, brought them food, clothing, tobacco and brandy, and by gentle words and gestures he calmed their fears and after these needs were met, he proclaimed the gospel. After they were baptized, they were still slaves, but they had received the greatest treasure on earth – an intimate relationship with God Himself.

Peter Faber, one of the first companions to St. Ignatius of Loyola, particularly impressed Pope Francis, according to his interview with Father Antonio Spadaro, S.J., because of “(his) dialogue with all -- even the most remote and even with his opponents.” Sometimes we find our pastors hiding in the rectory when the neediest (not in a material sense) in their parish live right across the street. Lay Catholics too sometimes know how to hide in the Church, taking up jobs there, but never reaching out to strangers.

The pope also said he admired Faber's being available and fully present to others immediately. So the pope admires evangelists that are available and fully present to everyone -- even their enemies. I admire this also.

The secular media was also fascinated by the fact that Pope Francis said he was a sinner. They felt this was the first time a pope admitted such. Apparently, they were asleep during their childhood Sunday Bible classes when St. Peter, the first pope, told Jesus, “Depart from me. I am a sinful man.”

The pope – as a sinful man – identified with St. Matthew, the tax collector sitting in the Custom House holding onto his money when Jesus came by, and said “Follow me.” Going to the Church of St. Louis of France in Rome, the pope often contemplated the painting of “The Calling of St. Matthew,” by Caravaggio.

“That finger of Jesus, pointing at Matthew. That's me. I feel like him. Like Matthew.” the pope said. “It is the gesture of



St. Matthew wonders,  
"Who me?"

Matthew that strikes me: he holds on to his money as if to say, 'No, not me! No, this money is mine.' Here, this is me, a sinner on whom the Lord has turned his gaze. And this is what I said when they asked me if I would accept my election as pontiff: 'I am a sinner, but I trust in the infinite mercy and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I accept in a spirit of penance.'

Ironically, Jesus went to the apostle Matthew's home after they met and had dinner. The Pharisees saw this and asked why Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus responded, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

That was the whole purpose and theme of the pope's interview with Fr. Spadaro. The pope's words about the "Church as a field hospital" eerily echo Jesus' own words in the Gospel of Matthew. "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Yet this so poorly catechized world has chosen to interpret the pope's remarks about loving sinners as if we also must love their sins -- an illogical conclusion.

One liberal writer reading Pope Francis' remarks about papal infallibility concludes that the pope believes the people who support gay marriage and contraception are infallible. The pope said, "All the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of belief, and the people display this infallibility in believing, through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together. This is what I understand today as the 'thinking with the church' of which St. Ignatius

speaks. When the dialogue among the people and the bishops and the pope goes down this road and is genuine, then it is assisted by the Holy Spirit. We should not even think, therefore, that ‘thinking with the church’ means only thinking with the hierarchy of the church.”

What the pope is saying is nothing new. The smallest person in the Catholic Church uniting his mind and heart with the deposit of faith handed down to us from the apostles (the mind of the church) is infallible. But the smallest person uniting his mind and heart with the thinking of the world (pro-abortion, contraception and gay marriage) is just a plain old fool.

So then Pope Francis says, “We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. The teaching of the church is clear, and I am a son of the church, but it is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time.”

That is exactly what I am talking about – that our evangelization need not fixate on our differences with others, but rather on the gospel. But the liberal writer I am looking at sees these remarks as a grudging acceptance of the Church’s official positions on abortion, contraception and gay marriage. And he bases it on the pope’s use of the term, “son of the church.” He thinks that is not a defense of doctrine, simply acquiescence.

People with such infantile knowledge of the Catholic Church should not under any circumstances write about it. The term “Son of the Church” means docile, absolute, childlike obedience. To the best of my knowledge St. Teresa of Avila coined it, or at least she used it to describe herself in her later life. She said, “I am the Child of the Church.”

Imagine this. The elderly and sick Saint Teresa wants to go start one last convent in a big city and then rest. Her confessor, whom she has vowed to obey as if his is the Voice of the Church, orders her instead to start numerous small convents all over Spain. If you ever watched the movie, it is really something. She is being carried around from convent to convent in a bed because she is so very ill. And she obeys even this onerous order from a priest who is hanging around Paris getting adored because he is her spiritual director. (Near the end of her life, he gives his orders by letter and never sees her in person.) She – an elderly and sick nun – starts several small convents. She obeys at great personal cost. She is obedient unto death.

Today, St. Teresa of Avila is one of the incorruptibles. That is, her body doesn't decay. But she is unique among this class of saints, because her body is not only incorrupt; you can arrange it in any position you want including standing up. Now this is a message from God: St. Teresa of Avila is and was a daughter of the Church. She is still wholly obedient – even in her dead body.



Now we have a pope describing himself as a “Son of the Church.” What do you think? Is he only giving grudging obedience? Or is he onboard the speeding train with his whole heart, thinking with the “mind of the Church,” thinking with the Catholic people, priests and bishops, who have faithfully followed the Good Shepherd for the last 2,000 years?

*The original and complete interview with Pope Francis can be found at [A Big Heart, Open to God](#)*

---

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2013/09/poorly-catechized-world-misunderstands.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

# Facepalming Pope Francis



Perhaps you are aware of Pope Francis' 'controversial' interview, published a few days ago. It has elicited some sensational headlines in the mainstream press. Here's a few examples:

- *The New York Times*: Pope Says Church Is 'Obsessed' With Gays, Abortion and Birth Control
- *The Independent*: Pope Francis: Church's 'obsession' with gays, abortion and contraception means it risks 'falling like a house of cards'
- *The Age*: Pope bluntly faults church's focus on gays and abortion

This coverage, which is widespread and typical, is not only misleading, but also flat out wrong. If you want to know what Pope Francis *really* said, [America Magazine has the complete and official translation](#). Next best (and faster to read) are good commentaries: if you don't mind polemics, you can't go past [Father Zuhlsdorf](#); if thoughtful exposition is more your thing, I recommend [Robert Moynihan](#).

But, quite apart from correcting the record, I think there were lots of faithful Catholics, all over the world, facepalming Pope Francis last week.



FACEPALM

When words fail to describe the dismay, there is always Facepalm.

There are other times too, when Pope Francis could be facepalmed. Remember when he said that gay priests are a-okay?



**\*FACE PALM\***

because words cannot describe how stupid what you just said was.

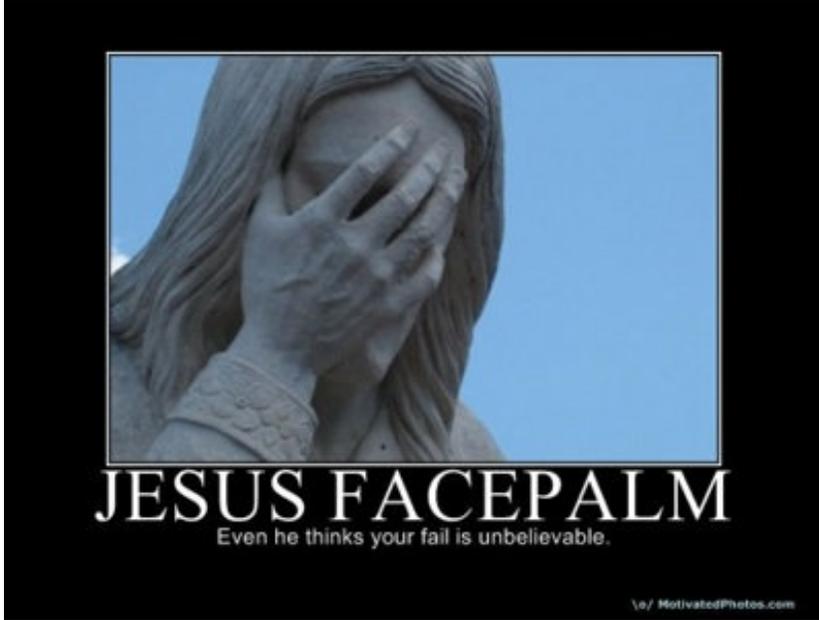
But Francis has nothing on his predecessor, who was the king of facepalms. Remember when Pope Benedict said that gay marriage is a greater threat to mankind than global warming?



**FACEPALM**

Even this bear thinks that's ridiculous.

Remember when he said that female ordination is a crime in the same realm as clergy abuse? And when he said that Mohammed was evil and inhuman?



Of course, *neither* pope said *any* of these things — it's just the way the press reported it. But come on popes! Can't you get media savvy? Someone in your press office should see these things coming!

Actually, I think Pope Francis *is* media savvy. He knows his words will be twisted, in the same way that Pope Benedict's words were twisted. But he's crafting his words so that they get twisted in a more constructive way. In a way that at least has some semblance with the Gospel.

*The anchoress* has a great post illustrating this point: [Francis confounds the Associated Press](#).

And *Egregious Twaddle* has crafted [a parable demonstrating the same](#):

Hear this!

A pope went out to give an interview. And as he talked, some of his words fell to the media, and those birds gobbled them up before they could even be heard.

Others of his words fell to those who didn't understand his context. They received his message with joy, but the first time it occurred to them how difficult it would be to live by those words, their enthusiasm withered like seedlings in a drought.

Have faith in Pope Francis. He knows what he is about.

---

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

## Grief and Love, and How Love Grows [at Sue Elvis Writes]



It is difficult to understand why God would allow a young, very much loved child to die. Why would He not answer the prayers of his family and cure him of his illness? What good can possibly result from his death? I read a heart-rending reflection by a father who was pondering such questions. He couldn't come up with any answers.

"There is only one positive thing I can see: My son will never be in my position. He will never have to undergo the sorrow of watching someone die."

What if someone close to me hasn't got long to live? How can I watch that person die? I imagine sitting by his side. How can I bear to witness his last suffering? I will go to pieces and be a crying mess. I can already feel the lump in my throat. Tears are threatening to seep from my eyes, so I thrust the thought away. My mind says, *Enough! Don't think about that too deeply.* It really is too painful to contemplate such a scene.

I heard a beautiful story of a son who spent days by the side of his dying mother. She had slipped into a state where she couldn't recognise those around her. But each day the son kept vigil, and on her last night when she struggled to breathe, he climbed into bed beside her and held her close

within his arms. He stayed there, suffering with his mother, until her last moment of life.

Of course, I have already watched someone die: my son Thomas. I had always thought I'd be frightened of witnessing a death and holding a dead body. I also thought I would be unable to bear the emotional pain. During Thomas' pregnancy, whenever I imagined him dying, my mind froze. I couldn't dwell on this probable scene for very long because I knew I'd start to despair.

But when the time came, I forgot my fear. I held Thomas in my arms after the doctors stopped treating him in the NICU, and there was no question of me abandoning him. Difficult though it was, I wanted to be with my son as he passed from this life to the next. Of course I cried with grief but I didn't go to pieces. I coped.

I think again of that man who had to witness the death of his son. It is true the child will never know the agony of sitting by a loved one's side and watching him die. He will never know the pain of ongoing grief. Thomas will never know those pains either. But they both must know how difficult it is for anyone to endure such sufferings. I'm sure they are very grateful we stayed with them until the last moment and longer. They must know just how much we love them.

It all really comes down to love. That same love that causes us so much pain that we are tempted to run away, also gives us the strength to stay. Love overcomes all our fears. It helps us do things we don't want to do. Love enables us to hold onto the dying, embracing them closely. It encourages us to stay by their sides whispering comforting words and praying for their souls, until the very last moment. Love never lets us forget them. I guess it's the cause of our grief.

I think again about the possibility of having to watch a loved one die, and again my heart is gripped with fear. *Don't think of the future. Live in the present moment*, I tell myself. And I shall, because if sorrow does arrive, and a loved one needs me once again to keep him company during his last moments, I know God will be there and afterwards with His strength and His love. I also know that I have to do what I hope someone else will do for me.

Of course, witnessing the death of a loved one is only the beginning. The bereaved father thought he'd have to cope with an endless, meaningless grief. And yes, grief never really does disappear. But is it meaningless? Death might seem to result only in pain for those left behind, but I know

that's not true. Suffering results in extraordinary graces. It has incredible value.

I have been thinking about something my dear friend [Patricia](#) said to me: Hearts that have had to accommodate huge grief, now also have room for so much more love. I keep tossing that thought around my mind.

Room for so much more love? We all have to love and love some more, until we love like God. That's our mission in life.

Could it be... we grieve because we love, but love grows and grows because of grief?

I know I haven't expressed my thoughts very well. I'm still pondering. I'm still tossing Patricia's words around my mind.

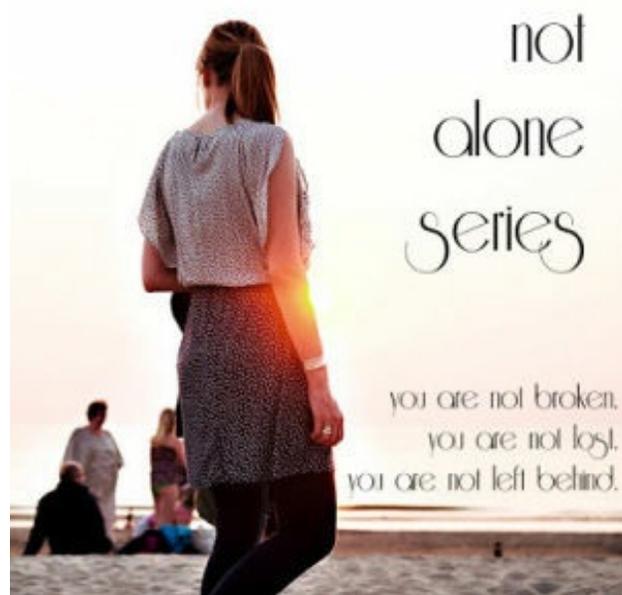
*Thank you, Patricia.*

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.sueelviswrites.com/2013/09/grief-and-love-and-how-love-grows.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Sex, NFP, Manicheism, Oh My! [at Catholic Cravings]



This post is going to be awkward.

*AWKWARD.*

You have been warned...

Why so awkward, you ask? Because nothing makes people more awkward than women's bodies, particularly how women's bodies do that thing where we start bleeding once a month.

I mean, we women find it weird enough so I can only imagine what all the poor men of the world are thinking. *Oh don't mind me, darling, I'm just bleeding out the lining of my uterus because I'm **not** growing a human being inside me at the moment! Also, this will make me (even more) moody, irritable, and teary and I will triple my consumption of chocolate. But don't worry, it's completely normal!*



It's weird.

It's also completely normal and healthy and if we don't have our periods, something has gone wrong. Also, if no women did we wouldn't have life on this planet so there's that.

On that note, NFP anyone?

NFP stands for Natural Family Planning and covers several methods of determining a woman's natural fertility for the purposes of planning a family. If you seeking to conceive, you try to have sex during fertile times but if you know that now would be a really bad time to have a child, you do it at infertile times.

Yeah... it's something like that.

The difference between  
NFP and the  
rhythm method?

It's called science.

#iuseNFP

somee cards  
user card

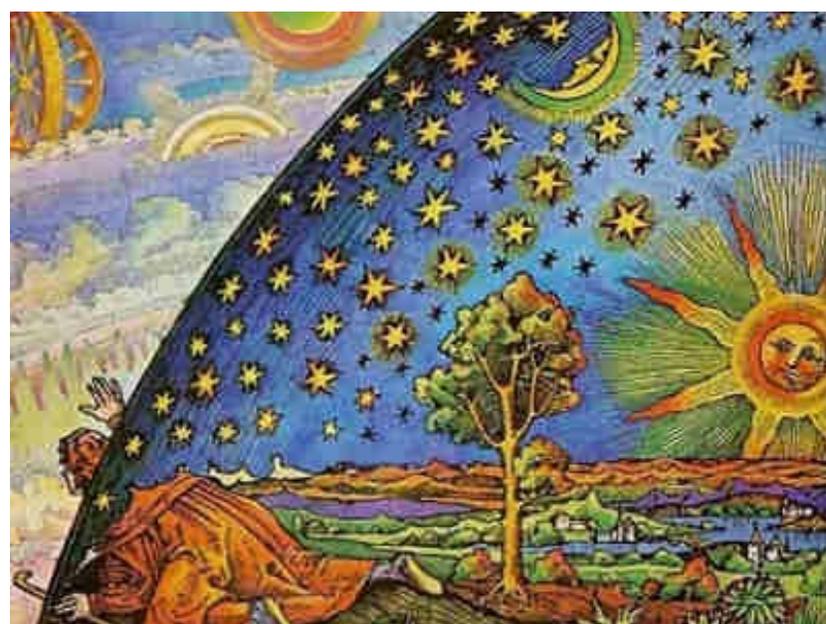


Honestly, I don't know much about it. I'm not sure I really want to know much about it. **My body and I have, at best, an ambivalent relationship. She drives me around and I try to not get too annoyed at her when she breaks down.**

***Ooookay, I just compared my body to a car... Something has gone seriously wrong here. Because my body isn't a car. It isn't merely a vehicle or a vessel. It isn't a thing out there as opposed to the real me which is in here.***

That would be Step One on the road to dualism, Gnosticism and Manicheism. Those heresies all viewed the body as degraded and all matter as evil. When that happens, two things happen: we begin to simultaneously indulge our bodies and to despise them.

Is that ringing any bells?



A heresy that hates bodies but also indulges them? A society where eating disorders are endemic and where billions is spent on makeup, diets, gyms, and plastic surgery? But also a society where

indulging our appetites for food, alcohol, drugs and sex is completely normal? (It's not like what you do with your body, particularly sexually, actually matters – don't be such a prude!) **Yeah, that's us, isn't it? A culture that makes an idol of the human body and in the process, degrades it to a thing to be used for self-gratification.**

But what does that have to do with NFP and the Catholic Church being all medieval about not allowing contraception?

In a word: *EVERYTHING*.

The Church teaches that such dualism – and its consequences of body-hate and body-worship – is wrong. Instead, we *are* our bodies just as we are our souls. Our bodies matter and the way we treat them has a profound impact on us as persons. As such, the Church also teaches that all forms of contraception are sinful because **sex is a union of a man and a woman as whole persons**. A woman's fertility is as much a part of her as anything else.

**Sex is that act which says 'I love you and I want to give myself *completely* to you'. Contraception is that act which says 'I love you and I want to have sex with you but I don't want to deal with that icky thing you do where you start growing new human beings as a direct, healthy and normal result of us having sex. Eww.'**



That's why contraception is fundamentally dualistic. It severs the spiritual from the bodily by ignoring the good, natural, and right processes of the human body, particularly the woman's body. **Like all dualisms, contraception rejects the female body as good (by stopping it doing what it's supposed to) and at the same time, treats it as purely there for pleasure.**

That's ultimately what it comes down to. We want the pleasure of sex without the results of sex (i.e. human beings!) and we don't want to have to deal with the complex reality that a woman's fertility is as much a part of her as her fierce mind, her tender heart, or her sexy ankles (that's right, I know what you 19th Century gents are going crazy over!)



#iuseNFP...

Because I only  
take medicine  
when something  
is wrong.

Call me crazy (actually don't, I get called crazy often enough) but **I think men who don't use contraception are loving their *whole* wives. And I think women who don't use contraception are loving their *whole* selves.**

This is why I want to learn more about this NFP charting business. Because no woman should refer to herself (or let herself be referred to!) as a car like I did without even realising it. That's messed up. Like ten different types of messed up. No, make that Fifty Shades of messed up. (Yep, I went there.)

I deserve better than that.

**I deserve to understand my body as the beautiful and complex creation it is.**

I deserve to honour my body, not to hate it or indulge it, because my body and my fertility and **yes, my weird, stupendous ability to make new human beings, is as much *me* as anything else.**

*I deserve to love my body.*

**[Check out the other posts on NFP and charting et al at Follow and Believe!](#)**

+JMJ+

---

This contribution is available at <http://catholiccravings.com/2013/09/25/sex-nfp-manicheism-oh-my-not-alone-series/>

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

## St. Michael [at The Crooked Halo]



St. Michael is a familiar religious figure. He is the Archangel whose name means, "Who Is Like God?" This phrase was his battle cry during the war between Satan and his dark angels and Michael and the holy angels. He is the leader of the forces of heaven in their triumph over the powers of hell. His Feast Day is **September 29th** & he is the patron of mariners, paratroopers, police, grocers, and sickness. It is wise to call upon him each day to shield and protect us from the arrows of Satan.

I came across an interesting story of a Marine wounded in Korea in 1950 and an amazing encounter on the battlefield. It was confirmed by Fr. Walter Muldy, a U.S. Navy chaplain, as well as the outfit commander. It is written in letter form to the young soldier's mother.

### **Dear Mom,**

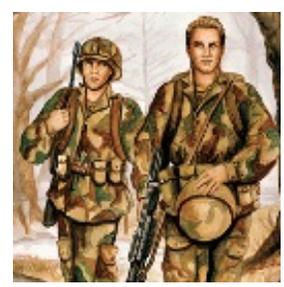
I am writing to you from a hospital bed. Don't worry, Mom, I am okay. I was wounded, but the doctor says that I will be up in no time.

But that's not what I have to tell you, Mom. Something happened to me that I don't dare tell anyone else for fear of their disbelief. But I have to tell you, the one person I can confide in, though even you may find it hard to believe.

You remember the prayer to Saint Michael that you taught me to pray when I was little: "Michael, Michael of the morning..."? Before I left home for Korea, you urged me to remember this prayer before any confrontation with the enemy. But you really didn't have to remind me, Mom. I have always prayed it, and when I got to Korea, I sometimes said it a couple of times a day while marching or resting.

Well, one day, we were told to move forward to scout for Commies. It was a really cold day. As I was walking along, I perceived another fellow walking beside me, and I looked to see who it was. He was a big fellow, a Marine about 6'4" and built proportionally. Funny, but I didn't know him, and I thought I knew everyone in my unit. I was glad to have the company and broke the silence between us:

"Chilly today, isn't it?" Then I chuckled because suddenly it seemed absurd to talk about the weather when we were advancing to meet the enemy.



He chuckled too, softly.

“I thought I knew everyone in my outfit,” I continued, “but I have never seen you before.”

“No,” he agreed, “I have just joined. The name is Michael.”

“Really?! That’s mine, too.”

“I know,” the Marine said, “Michael, Michael of the morning....”

Mom, I was really surprised that he knew about my prayer, but I had taught it to many of the other guys, so I supposed that the newcomer must have picked it up from someone else. As a matter of fact, it had gotten around to the extent that some of the fellows were calling me “Saint Michael.”

Then, out of the blue, Michael said, “There’s going to be trouble ahead.”

I wondered how he could know that. I was breathing hard from the march, and my breath hit the cold air like dense clouds of fog. Michael seemed to be in top shape because I couldn’t see his breath at all. Just then, it started to snow heavily, and soon it was so dense I could no longer hear or see the rest of my outfit. I got a little scared and yelled, “Michael!” Then I felt his strong hand on my shoulder and heard his voice in my ear, “It’s going to clear up soon.”

It did clear up, suddenly. And then, just a short distance ahead of us, like so many dreadful realities, were seven Commies, looking rather comical in their funny hats. But there was nothing funny about them now; their guns were steady and pointed straight in our directions. “Down, Michael!!” I yelled as I dove for cover. Even as I was hitting the ground, I looked up and saw Michael still standing, as if paralyzed by fear, or so I thought at the time. Bullets were spurting all over the place, and Mom, there was no way those Commies could have missed at that short distance. I jumped up to pull him down, and then I was hit. The pain was like a hot fire in my chest, and as I fell, my head swooned and I remember thinking, “I must be dying...” Someone was laying me down, strong arms were holding me and laying me gently on the snow. Through the daze, I opened my eyes, and the sun seemed to blaze in my eyes. Michael was standing still, and there was a terrible splendor in his face. Suddenly, he seemed to grow, like the sun, the splendor increasing intensely around him like the wings of an angel. As I slipped into unconsciousness, I saw that Michael held a sword in his hand, and it flashed like a million lights.

Later on, when I woke up, the rest of the guys came to see me with the sergeant. “How did you do it, son?” he asked me.

“Where’s Michael?” I asked in reply.

“Michael who?” The sergeant seemed puzzled.

“Michael, the big Marine walking with me, right up to the last moment. I saw him there as I fell.”

“Son,” the sergeant said gravely, “you’re the only Michael in my unit. I hand-picked all you fellows, and there’s only one Michael. You. And son, you weren’t walking with anyone. I was watching you because you were too far off from us, and I was worried. Now tell me, son,” he repeated, “how did you do it?”

It was the second time he had asked me that, and I found it irritating.

“How did I do what?” “How did you kill those seven Commies? There wasn’t a single bullet fired from your rifle.” “What?” “Come on, son. They were strewn all around you, each one killed by a sword stroke.”

And that, Mom, is the end of my story. It may have been the pain, or the blazing sun, or the chilling cold. I don’t know, Mom, but there is one thing I am sure about. It happened.

**Love your son, Michael**

**Michael, Michael of the morning,  
Fresh chord of Heaven adorning,  
Keep me safe today,  
And in time of temptation  
Drive the devil away.  
Amen.**

**St. Michael Defend Us!**

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray: and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

 Pin it

---

This contribution is available at <http://crookedhalocatholicblog.blogspot.com/2013/09/st-michael-soldiers-miracle.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## O Jesu Thou the Virgins' Crown [at Breviary Hymns]



Adoring All Thy Chosen Brides

### [O Jesu Thou the Virgins' Crown](#)

is a translation of the 4th century Latin hymn,

### [Jesu Corona Virginum](#)

(see 2nd video) attributed to

### [St. Ambrose of Milan](#)

(c.340-397). In the Roman Breviary it is traditionally sung at Vespers and Lauds in the Common of Virgins. In the 19th century a dozen or so English translations were written, among them: the 1854 work

### [O Jesu Thou the Virgins' Crown](#)

by Anglican priest, scholar and prolific hymn-writer,

### [John M. Neale](#)

(1818-1866). It is sung to the tune,

## St. Bernard

by

## William Henry Monk

(1823-1889). An alternative tune is

## Tallis' Canon

, as featured in the 1st video.

Tune: Tallis' Canon

O JESU, THOU THE VIRGIN'S CROWN by John M. Neale

1. O Jesu, the virgins' Crown, do Thou

Accept us as in prayer we bow,

Born of that virgin whom alone

The mother and the maid we own.

2. Amongst the lilies Thou dost feed,

And thither choirs of virgins lead,

Adorning all Thy chosen brides

With glorious gifts Thy love provides.

3. And whither, Lord, Thy footsteps wend,

The virgins still with praise attend;

For Thee they pour their sweetest song,

And after Thee rejoicing throng.

4. O gracious Lord, we Thee implore

Thy grace on every sense to pour;

From all pollution keep us free,

And make us pure in heart for Thee.

5. All praise to God the Father be,

All praise, Eternal Son, to Thee,

Whom with the Spirit we adore

For ever and for evermore.

Sung by the

[Benedictine Nuns at the Abbey of Regina Laudis](#)

from the album,

[Women in Chant](#)

JESU CORONA VIRGINUM by St. Ambrose (Public Domain)

1. Jesu corona Virginum,

quem Mater illa concipit

quae sola Virgo parturit,

haec vota clemens accipe.

2. Qui pascis inter lilia,

septus choreis Virginum

sponsas decorans gloria,

sponsisque reddens praemia.

3. Quocumque pergis, virgines

sequuntur, atque laudibus

post te canentes cursitant

hymnosque dulces personant.

4. Te deprecamur largius

nostris adauge sensibus

nescire prorsus omnia,

corruptionis vulnera.

5. Virtus, honor, laus, gloria,

Deo Patri cum Filio,

Sancto simul Paraclito

In saeculorum saecula.

---

This contribution is available at <http://kpshaw.blogspot.ca/2013/09/o-jesu-thou-virgins-crown.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Homily: An Elephant, or Two [at bukas palad]



Year C / 26th Week / Sunday

Readings: Amos 6.1a, 4-7/ Psalm 146 (R/v 1b) / Timothy 6.11-16 / Luke 16.19-31

There is an elephant in the room.

This is a phrase in the English Language we call a metaphoric idiom.

It means that there is an obvious truth that is being ignored.

It also suggests that there is an obvious problem

or risk no one wants to discuss.

I would like to suggest that there is indeed an elephant, or two,  
present in all our lives.

It is one that we often shy away from talking about honestly,  
let alone engage truthfully.

Almost all of us often run away from it,  
or we try hard to ignore it as best as we can, like it is not there.

Sometimes, we cleverly talk about this elephant  
through another person's experience of it.

We are however being challenged to confront this elephant  
this morning through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus  
in our gospel reading from Luke.

I believe most of us know this parable well.

We are familiar with its story.

And we are even more familiar with its moral teaching:

beware the dangers of wealth and power.

The rich man lives an entitled life; he excludes the poor like Lazarus.

He surrounds himself with walls of disinterest

and so, he does not care to feed the needy,

nor to hospitably reach out to welcome them,

or even more, to make his wealth a commonwealth for all.

Our sympathetic Christian hearts

are most understandably in solidarity with Lazarus,

and so, we cheer with the outcome of this parable:

the rich man in death is banished  
from an afterlife of bountiful goodness  
that Lazarus now shares with Abraham.

He is separated from the heavenly  
as he is cast into the netherworld to live his afterlife.

I don't think our moral Christian sensibility  
has any difficulty in judging this reversal  
between the fortune and status of the rich man and Lazarus  
to be right and just.

In fact, I am sure, we judge the rich man a sinner for his selfishness.

What divides the rich man from Lazarus at the end of the parable is,  
as Abraham declares, a chasm that cannot be crossed.

But the irony of this is that there was an earlier chasm  
that the rich man could have crossed  
and so saved his life by reaching out to Lazarus.

Jesus tells this parable to effect a change.

He tells this to the Pharisees to challenge them

to more honestly embrace the Jewish Law of loving God and loving neighbor.

This morning he is seriously challenging us

to cross the different chasms

that divide us from the Lazaruses in our world

and in this way, to save our souls.

Yet, we often don't think of these chasms as divisions we create, do we?

We are quick, clever, even shrewd enough

in identifying these chasms, these divisions,

these obstacles that prevent us from helping another,

as society's fault, as faults others have made.

Yes, there are continuing gaps in education, in economic opportunities,

in the justice system, in access to healthy food and clean water,

and in racial and gender equality .

And yes, these are socially constructed,

structurally part of the realities we inhabit.

But haven't we also seen some chasms that divide

that the people around us have created?

Chasms like telling one's children in fear

to keep away from classmates who have two daddies or two mommies?

Or, like joking insensitively

about another whose skin color or gender is different?

Chasms too like refusing to celebrate in jealousy

the good fortune of a neighbor or a work colleague?

Or, like distancing oneself in self-preservation

when it is obvious a family member is about to make the wrong choice?

Sisters and brothers, if we are honest enough,

you and I will have to admit that we too are guilty

of creating similar chasms that divide?

What might some of these be in your life?

Worse still, we are guilty too of refusing, more often than not,

to bridge these chasms

when another says, "Help me, please,"

or, when one's suffering eyes cry out, "Will you not accept me?"

or when somebody pleads, "Hold me and keep me from falling."

We can justify that these divides we create do protect us;

they can assure us our happiness;

they will allow us to live the kind of lives we want.

Some will even argue that without them as firewalls

-- to use computer language --

we will not be able to survive the world well.

But these very chasms are in fact the elephant, or two, in our lives.

The elephants in the room of our lives

that we don't want to admit to, to talk about,

or even to want to change at times.

If we dare to reflect on these self-created chasms

with eyes of faith, however,

we will find ourselves needing to admit that they our own selfish ways

of being like the rich man.

They not only divide us from others;

they numb us to another's need for life.

The greater tragedy we create with these chasms we put in place is this:

we are not locking out those in need from our lives

as we are paradoxically are locking ourselves out of heaven.

Our refusal to bridge any kind of chasm that separates and divide

is our rejection of the life-saving opportunities

these ones in need offer us for salvation.

These ones who we want to ignore, to shut out, to turn a blind eye to  
are in fact like life-lines God throws out to save us  
from floundering even more into sin.

Finally, I cannot help but think of how timely today's parable is for us all.

Nine months after New Year's Day,  
when we consciously or unconsciously  
resolved in one way or another to amend our lives,  
today's parable is a wake up call.

It must wake us up to the reality  
that this reversal the rich man and Lazarus experience  
can be our own self-punishment on judgment day,  
for failing to live well our Christian lives,  
which Jesus exemplifies, is really to give life to others.

Indeed, the grace of honestly engaging  
the elephant, or two, of our self-created chasms  
that divide us from others, and more so, from God,  
is that we can more honestly grapple with that either/or reality  
of choosing between being selfish and being selfless.

And so to try to answer the question, “What if this parable is true for me?”

might be the most helpful good news we can contemplate on today.

Doing so can safeguard us

from squandering the opportunities

God will indeed continue to offer us,

through the many Lazaruses we will meet,

to save ourselves for the good life with God eternally.

*preached at Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Parish, Dorchester, Boston*

---

This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.com/2013/09/homily-elephant-or-two.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# How I Am Commemorating Nine-Eleven [at From the Pulpit of My Life]



Is there anyone who doesn't yearn for peace? I cannot think of anything that could unite people more than the desire for peace.

Peace begins with me, with my decision to be a peaceful person. I have to choose peace. I have to demonstrate peace. So, to commemorate 9-11, I will choose peace today, both within and without.

May God be praised.

---

This contribution is available at <http://fromthepulpitofmylife.blogspot.com/2013/09/how-i-am-commemorating-nine-eleven.html>

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

Pope Francis has said a lot since taking hold of Peter's keys.

His remarks about gays, atheists, and other hot-button topics have kept everyone (and I mean *everyone*) talking.



A favorite headline among Catholic bloggers is now, “Did Pope Francis Really Say \_\_\_\_\_? 10 Things to Know!”

But some of the things — arguably the most important things — are rarely mentioned at all.

The evils of clericalism.

Solidarity with the poor.

And perhaps most significant: *the obligation to be a missionary of the Gospel.*

Since his election in March, Francis has beat the mission drum again and again in his homilies, interviews and letters.

If we've paid any attention at all, it has been impossible to miss.

Below is just a sampling of what our Argentine Pope has said in recent months.

In the [World Mission Day message](#) written on May 19:

“The Second Vatican Council emphasized in a special way how **the missionary task, that of broadening the boundaries of faith, belongs to every baptized person** and all Christian communities...Each community is therefore challenged, and invited to make its own, the mandate entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles, to be his “witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) and **this, not as a secondary aspect of Christian life, but as its essential aspect.**”

On July 7 at the Sunday [Angelus](#):

**“Everyone must be a missionary, everyone can hear that call of Jesus and go forth and proclaim the Kingdom!”**

In [Rio de Janeiro](#) at the end of July:

“Jesus did not say: “go, if you would like to, if you have the time”, but he said: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Sharing the experience of faith, bearing witness to the faith, proclaiming the Gospel: **this is a command that the Lord entrusts to the whole Church, and that includes you.**”

On September 14 in a [letter](#) to the Archbishop of Santa Fé, Argentina:

**“[This] is what Jesus wants today: missionary disciples!”**

The call isn't going away. In fact, Pope Francis only seems to be getting warmed up.

Like his predecessors, he sees that the paramount issue of the day is that all Catholics take the task of evangelization seriously.

In Blessed Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Redemptoris missio*, it was stated in no uncertain terms:

As the second millennium after Christ's coming draws to an end, an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that **we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service**. It is the Spirit who impels us to proclaim the great works of God: “For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9: 16)

In the name of the whole Church, **I sense an urgent duty** to repeat this cry of St. Paul. From the beginning of my Pontificate I have chosen to travel to the ends of the earth in order to show this missionary concern. My direct contact with peoples who do not know Christ has convinced me even more of the *urgency of missionary activity*, a subject to which I am devoting the present encyclical...

**No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.**

Pope Benedict XVI's message for World Mission Day 2012 was as firm:

**All the components of the large mosaic of the Church must feel strongly called into question by the mandate of the Lord to preach the Gospel**, so that Christ may be proclaimed everywhere. We pastors, men and women religious **and all the faithful in Christ**, should follow in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, who, as “a prisoner for Christ

Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles” (Eph 3:1), worked, suffered and struggled to bring the Gospel among the Gentiles (cf. Col 1:24-29), **sparing no energy, time or means** to make the Message of Christ known.

For those of us paying attention, the Church’s priority is clear.

So, instead of worrying about what the pope is “really” saying, let’s start talking about what we already know.

And that is this: Christ must be proclaimed to the ends of the earth by those who love him.

We have work to do.

• • •

**“I see the dawning of a new missionary age, which will become a radiant day bearing an abundant harvest, if all Christians...respond with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time.”**

**- Blessed John Paul II**

---

This contribution is available at <http://thetransformblog.wordpress.com/2013/10/06/what-pope-francis-is-really-saying-really/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# The Morality Trap, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Trust God [at An Auditor and a Gentleman]



Sir Nigel don't care!

When I was in the ludicrously informal process of RCIA at my local parish, and indeed, long long before, I used to frequent a particular website, a forum for Catholics, which I won't directly link to because I am about to be not very nice to it, and I don't want to direct an angry mob of three or four people, or expose myself to some sort of weird liability problems. Not that I don't doubt they'd notice, or that they'd care, but them's the breaks.

In the beginning, the website was actually pretty useful - I have a problem with depth-first searches for things, so when I started looking at denominations, I went "Okay, let's learn everything Catholicism has to offer". And the website's extensive forum system was perfect for that. I could ask any question, from the most fundamental to the most inauspicious, and get answers, usually at least half-way thought out, which were at worst tangentially relevant. It was a useful tool, and it's where I found about half of the reading list in my Blogger account - ultimately, the community there is what convinced me to become Catholic.

However, as fora go, this particular one was hard-right Traditionalist with a capital T. That's fine. Traditions are good, and the logical reduction of strong faith in a doctrine is a traditional enforcement of the same. However, that sort of environment is not good for a person in my circumstance. I'm a centrist by European standards, but over here in North America I lean left, at

least in terms of social policy. You take a guy with unpopular opinions like that and put him in an environment where his default mental state is "student, here to learn", and it leads to some unhealthy places.

I've been on Fora pretty much my entire adult and subadult life. The vagaries of conversing anonymously on the internet are nothing new to me, but... when you're in an anonymous state, you can espouse any belief without threat of exposure or concern for actually believing it, and that was the trap I was falling into on this forum. AS it always happens for me, the account became a character, posting things, on occasion, to just conform with the Trad masses, to avoid the inevitable string of "corrections".

A big part of this website was discussion on whether or not action X or precept Y was moral. A baited question if ever there was one, but Catholics by nature are moral absolutists in doctrine, so it was easy to get mired in the idea that, for example, yes, Harry Potter is all bad all the time. That was where I spent most of my time, when I wasn't sticking my neck out in the chain-letter-like group prayer threads, which were genuinely the most enjoyable and most genuine part about that website.

Moral discussion is bad territory for me. I wouldn't say I am a relativist, for even I have a few doctrinal no-spots that no amount of justification can leverage. I am, however, for lack of a better word, Liberal. I have learned this silly aspect of relationships called Trusting Other People, a subset of which is Parents Trust Their Children, and by extension, I trust the hypothetical children I am yet to father to be able to distinguish between reality (

*A Brief History of Time*)

and fiction

*(Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone).*

I'm not the sort, however, who believes magic is inherently bad in anything - I've done my share of fantasy roleplaying, thrown my share of imaginary fireballs, and I know enough to know you've got your arcane magic (Ouija Board looks an awful lot like 1st-Level Wiz/Sor spell "Augur") and your Divine Magic (Transmute Wine to Blood). A bit of a satirical way to look at it perhaps, but one group can't make claims of the supernatural while damning another group for doing so.

It was that sort of nit-picky morality that made me mad, and between external pressure, and pounding my forehead on the desk with the eighteenth discussion of how magic in the work of Tolkein and Lewis was okay, but Terry Brooks should go do terrible things to his digestive anatomy, that I realized the whole website was a place of extreme cognitive dissonance and that I needed to take one massive step backward.

Which I did, thankfully, and for a time, I lapsed as a Catholic, if full truth could be told. Not being in a place where I had to defend my liberal theology put me in a place where I didn't feel a need

to. So I started putting aside the things I "didn't believe". No more confession... but that horridly awkward feeling of "I shouldn't be here right now" in Mass eventually meant no more mass. No more mass because not needing nightly prayers, became not needing any prayer at all.

And I lived that way for about a year. I'd be lying, actually, if I said it was a bad year - a few roadblocks aside, the last year's been pretty good to me. Then, it started coming back - that missing-something feeling. So I started praying again. Started reading more of the bible and less of the fora. My copy of the

### *Catechism*

is so aggressively dog-eared it makes me want to puke, but I'm out of book-darts and those little postit flags are just so... tacky.

I still don't like confession... but I can't say I don't believe in it. It's therapeutic, for one thing. Can be for anyone. So this week, I might go back. When I do, it won't be with a laundry list of the things I

### *might*

have done wrong. It will be with the things that genuinely were.

I trust God enough to inspire me to talk about whatever I need to talk about.

---

This contribution is available at <http://auditorandgentleman.blogspot.com/2013/09/the-morality-trap-or-how-i-learned-to.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## What He Wants [at The Road Home]

I procrastinated an entire month, and I got to go on another roller coaster in the process, but tomorrow morning an e-mail is going to Dr. D. and the FCP who does cycle reviews to begin the process of re-starting medical treatment.

I also have my next appointment with Fr. D. and will be following up on some of our last conversation in which he really challenged me (as usual, so I'm not gonna lie, I'm a little nervous. In a good way, but still.)

It is appropriate that these two things will happen on the same day. When I went in to see him last month, I had our "plan" and laid it out:

We were going to schedule an appointment with Dr. D. and give this all one more try. For 6 months we'd do whatever she suggested and go "all in", so to speak, as it relates to TTC. This seemed reasonable to me, knowing that at the end of the 6 months we'd be celebrating our 10th anniversary, I will turn 35 in the middle of the 6 months, and we'd be closer to 4 years than 3 of TTC. Then, if at the end of those 6 months we had not yet conceived, I felt like I would be able to say enough was enough and move on - either to living life as 2 or considering adoption or foster care.

I was very intense about this plan, both when I presented it to The Man and asked him to pray about it and when I shared it with Fr. D. I could feel myself gearing up for the 6 months.

And then, Fr. D asked "why does it have to be so intense?" "Why does it have to be all or nothing?" "Why 6 months?" I shared my reasons and quickly realized I was missing something. He pointed out that even during this medical break, the emotions have still been there. The roller coaster has still gone on, why did I think it would go away.

From there, he referenced my running and said why does it have to be a sprint? Why can't I approach it as a marathon, trusting my doctor, doing things one step at a time and not being so intense about it? He admitted he wasn't even sure it was possible, but was asking me why I thought it wasn't.

I was silent. I had no answer. I had never thought about it that way. I didn't like it, but I was willing to consider it.

Could I pursue treatment, take my meds, give myself shots, chart meticulously and not let it become all consuming? Could I do it with balance and a sense of peace?

I said I wasn't sure, but I was willing to think and pray about it. (And I half-jokingly asked if he was willing to meet with me every Monday for the next 15 years.)

When I told The Man of Fr. D's suggestion, he smiled and said "please tell Fr. D. 'thank-you'." Ah, my ever-calm, ever patient husband.

But something just wasn't sitting right. I was feeling it in my gut and I couldn't put my finger on it. I emailed a friend and she put the "it" into words when she said this:

*I can see the tremendous emotional death that would have to come in order to {do this}.*

Yep. That's "it."

And as I've spent the last few weeks reflecting on this, wondering if it is even possible. Knowing that just saying that sentence won't get me anywhere because isn't taking up our cross about death? So, what is it that makes me want to run from this; that makes me want to just say "I reflected on this, it's impossible, so let's just focus on white knuckling through the next 6 months and then dealing with the outcome." (And believe me, I know that won't go over well at all with Fr. D.)

The conclusion I've come to is this: first it's the cyclical nature of infertility. It's that there is never really enough time to grieve one cycle before having to start the next. It is that life goes on around me, while I stand in my own little storm that is invisible to everyone around me. There is nothing linear, just "move on" about infertility. Yes, as time passes there is change and hopefully growth, but this most recent failed cycle was as heart breaking as the first, maybe even more. While things get easier in some ways, they just get harder in others, and it can depend on the minute of the day without much indication of how it will go.

Also, with treatment, comes hope. Hope for healing. Hope for getting the "right" combination. And all at the same time, the understanding that it's really all up to God. Which is why stopping treatment doesn't make the roller coaster stop. I learned this very painful lesson just last week.

It is this hope that, in order to do this peacefully and not white knuckled, also leads straight to the cross.

Because it's the hopes for all the dreams I've dreamed for years, years before even TTC, that are crushed each cycle. That are not realized. So it is those hopes I must figure out how to have peacefully and not white knuckled. Because, frankly, I white knuckle those too. The intensity with which I allow myself to feel them during the 2ww each cycle, while it gives life to me in so many ways, it is as all consuming as CD1 and as the "fertile" time.

Today's Gospel really hit this point home for me. In order to fully take up my cross and follow Him, I must hate my own life; I must renounce all of my possessions. My hopes and dreams for a child are certainly possessions, if not in a physical sense, certainly in an emotional, spiritual sense. To truly say

*Fiat*

, to say

*be it done unto me according to Thy Word,*

and mean it, I have to let go. Let go, and let God.

So, tomorrow, I will ask Fr. D to help me begin this process of letting go of these dreams. These dreams that I cling to. That I white knuckle each cycle. The hopes and dreams I rarely speak of and yet are as prized a possession of anything tangible that I have, truly, more prized. If I am to make it through the next however many cycles and years, with or without treatment I realize I have to let go of everything, of my obsessive need to control treatment, of the intense pressure I place on myself while managing meds, of the extreme hopes I place on treatment cycles, and, perhaps most importantly, of all that I want.

I must only want what He wants.



---

This contribution is available at <http://theroadhomewv.blogspot.com/2013/09/what-he-wants.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## **Cleaning Toilets & God's Mercy [at Rediscovering Glory]**

I recently got a job here at college doing custodial work. So basically I get to clean bathrooms etc. It might not be the most glamorous job but it works for me.

Sometimes there is not a lot of work to do around the hall (where I clean). But other days it can get really messy. Surprisingly, the messy days are my favorite days to clean. In fact I do not like cleaning the other days because I feel that what I am doing does not make any difference.

On the other hand those days when it is really messy. I feel that I am doing something great. I am cleaning all of that yuck out and making it sparkling clean. People appreciate that, I appreciate it. It makes me feel that what I do actually makes a difference.

I realized that is kind of the attitude that God has about us. When I have some small sins on my soul, it is easy to go to confession. I trust that God in his mercy will forgive me.

But when I have sinned a lot. I do not want to go to confession at all. In fact I sit there and think "Oh no, God cannot forgive me for this one..."

Only I have it all wrong! God still wants me to go to confession on the days when I have some little sins. He wants me to get rid of those.

However it is when I have sinned the most that I most need God's mercy and compassion. That is when I really need to go to confession. That is when Jesus is begging me to come receive the sacrament of confession.

Because of my doubt and my sin those times when I most need confession are the times when I least want to go. It's as if I rush to the E.R. when I stub my toe but when I cut off my fingers I sit at home "Just to see how it goes."

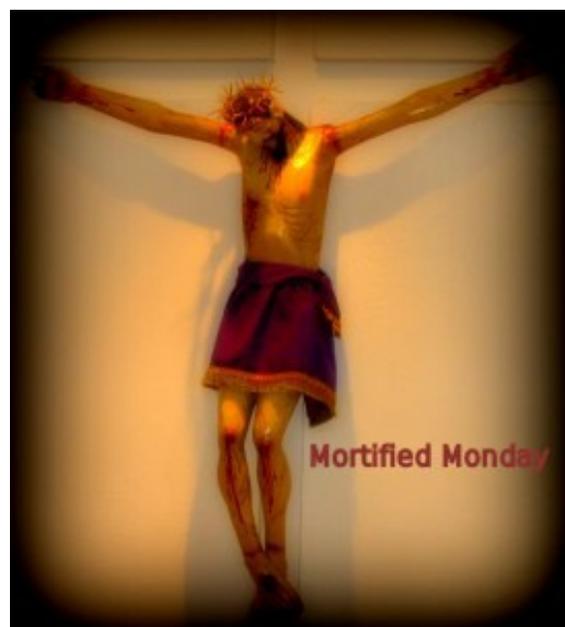
That is not the way it is supposed to be. In fact the longer I sit there with my fingers cut off and wounds open the more likely it is that they will get infected. The same thing happens with my sin. The longer I let it sit there the worse it gets.

Basically I realized this, the more messier you are, the more sinful you are, the more eager God is to have you back. That is what His mercy means and that is why no matter what I have done I go to confession anyway.

Just for the record I did stub my toe and go to the E.R. , it hurt a lot!



## Mortified Mondays [at Catholic Fit Mom for Life]



Monday lets discuss Mortification and how we can mortified ourselves to become the women, wife, mom that God is calling us to.

Some points on mortification through the eyes of a saint: St. Josemaria Escriva (it's no surprise, I am bringing him into the post since he is my favorite, well one of them.)

### [From the Way:](#)

If you don't deny yourself you will never be a soul of prayer.

Paradox: to live we must die.

Where there is no self-denial, there is no virtue.

Choose mortifications that don't mortify others.

### [From the Furrow:](#)

A day without mortification is a day lost, because if we have not denied ourselves, we have not lived the holocaust

A spirit of mortification, rather than being just an outward show of Love, arises as one of its consequences. If you fail in one of these little proofs, acknowledge that your love for the Love is wavering.

Care in little things requires constant mortification. It is a way to make life more agreeable for

others.

These are powerful thoughts on how we can view mortification and make it a part of who we are. Push yourself beyond your wildest dream. To be fit mom , we must also look beyond our physical body but also our soul and mind.

This aspect, I want to work hard on my soul! Yesterday's Gospel, Jesus says to us that if can not be trusted with the little things; how can be trust with the bigger things.

Well, I feel that mortification is the little things so when big things happen to us, we can be trusted by Jesus Christ.

It is like working out, you are not going to start with a twenty pound weights , we start small, with five or so. Well, let's do the same with our mortification. We are not going to start with up at 5 am and rosary in our knees ( only if you already doing that, please keep going!). We might start off with no coffee( yeah that is a big one, huh), or not checking our email 20 times a day or being on time, etc.

You get the point. But we must start and that is the key.

So think of something small that you want to work on this whole week until next Monday. Write it somewhere or if you do not want others to see, give yourself a key word or picture for it and then post that picture as a reminder on your door, lamp, etc. Just do it.

If you would like, leave a comment with what you will do this week and that way now the whole world knows and you have some accountability here.

Speaking of accountability, I am going to start with my coffee, I know crazy but then I am a Cuban, we are know for our craziness. But instead of my two cups, I am going down to one this week. I will try every time I think about having my second cup for priests in our Catholic Church that need us to be more daring in doing spiritual things for them. They need us in more than just prayers but also fasting and mortification; small or big but they need it!

When you make up your mind to be more mortified, your interior life will improve and you will be much more fruitful.

Without mortification there is no happiness on earth. St. Josemaria Escriva

With the Love of Christ,

Mama Cecilia



## No Safe Place [at One Arrow Alone]

There are many sex sites on the Internet. This is a well-known fact. A lesser-known fact is that over a quarter of these sites are hosted in a tiny corner of northwestern Europe called the Netherlands: about 187 million, or eleven for every inhabitant. In this remarkable enterprise we are surpassed only by the United States, which, as all will agree, is no fair competition.

We seem to have taken somewhat of a fancy to libertinism. The theme of our film festival this year was 'Nude'. It was on the journal.

Talking about journal: Facebook alerted me to something called the 'SchoolTV weekly journal', which seems to be a program aimed at children aged 10-12 and watched every week in many schools. They have added an element to it: an excited nurse lecturing children about sexuality. In the first four episodes, she has already given a demonstration of French kissing with a classroom skeleton, and declared anyone abnormal who does not consider homosexuality normal. When she did the latter, she seemed to be in quite a temper. So schoolchildren had better prepare to face the Authority's outbursts of wrath if they have inherited ungood opinions.

Then there was the action taken by the environmental party's youth movement ('Dwars', which can mean 'Athwart' or 'Defiant'), not too long ago. They put up rather graphic and provocative billboards not only in some major cities, but also in some towns in our Bible belt. The billboards all

bared

bore the message 'Sex is nice – Let's talk about it.' In an interview, the initiator explained that he specifically targeted the Christian towns because homosexuality was not accepted there and people avoided talking about sex generally, so he wanted to get the conversation going. It's interesting to see how homosexuality is mentioned in connection with an apparently unrelated issue. Perhaps there is truth in R.R. Reno's

[argument](#)

that it is the symbol of libertinism in general.

What does this all mean? And how do you protect children from this moral toxicity in the air? In a world where young ones at the threshold of puberty can browse YouTube and stumble on Miley Cyrus?

Once in a while there is a gleam of dawn. Mr. Van der Staaij, the surprisingly sympathetic leader of the Dutch Reformed party, has started a conversation of his own. He suggested that advertisements for the site Second Love, a dating site for people desirous of adulterous affairs,

should be accompanied by a warning that cheating damages kids. And he walked into the lion's mouth – a secular TV debate show – to defend it. With honour and integrity.

*Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.*

---

This contribution is available at <http://turgonian.blogspot.nl/2013/09/no-safe-place.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Filling in the Backstory

*Note: On Fridays, you can find me at [Your Daily Tripod](#), owned by my friend TonyD. A longer version of the post below appears there.*

The Gospels move along at a pretty fast clip, focusing on Jesus's ministry with only the occasional reference to what the apostles might have been thinking or doing when they weren't with him. A novel I've been reading for a while now, [Between the Savior and the Sea](#) by [Bob Rice](#) of Franciscan University, attempts to fill in what was going on in the background. And sometimes, Rice's thoughts on those gaps offer up some fascinating opportunities for meditation.

Take, for example, the novel's run-up to the scene in which Jesus presses the apostles about who



people say he is. The apostles have been debating for some time just who this leader of theirs is. From the sea, Simon has heard the word “Messiah,” but he's not brave enough to say it. For his part, Jesus is becoming increasingly frustrated with the apostles' lack of understanding of just about everything, despite all the hints he's given them. Then when Jesus asks, “But who do you say that I am?” and Simon summons up the courage to say it out loud, it's beautiful:

*Jesus turned and Simon did not know what to expect. He looked as surprised as the others. Then Jesus bowed his head and put his hands together over his mouth as if in prayer. He opened his arms wide and looked radiantly into the sun as if to say: thank you.*

There's something humanizing and inspiring in thinking about the internal relationships of the apostles. There's something that resonates within our souls to know that even those who walked with Christ didn't always understand. And there's something indescribably joyous about Rice's depiction of thankfulness when finally, finally someone gets it. Perhaps the same thing happens in heaven when we experience our own moments, however fleeting, of enlightenment.

---

This contribution is available at <http://melanierigney.com/blog/catholicism/filling-in-the-backstory/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Body and Soul [at Notlukewarm]



Have you ever experienced spiritual dryness in your soul? You pray, go to Mass, read scripture and it all seems pointless. St. Ignatius calls this desolation. This has been my state for the last two weeks and somehow, it was triggered by my body.

In the past, my go to stress reliever or problem solver was food first and then God. Since making a very conscious decision to stop and changing my habits it has been working. Until I reached a weight loss plateau coupled with a shoulder injury and my will to keep moving forward left me. My prayer now is simply asking to have the strength to continue on the right path and keep moving forward; knowing that if I do things will improve. I know I do not want to go back to my old habits but they seem so comforting right now. It's one thing to sacrifice and see rewards but to sacrifice and not see rewards is a bit depressing.

My body and soul are in sync which would be great if they were in consolation but I sit here in desolation. St. Ignatius advises that in desolation one should keep following whatever plan was made before desolation. I am taking his advice knowing that consolation will come again.

---

This contribution is available at <http://notlukewarm.blogspot.com/2013/09/body-and-soul.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

# Things a(n) (Infertile) Woman Should Never Say [at This Cross I Embrace]

*In this 2nd post, I do feel it prudent to post the same introduction I posted in the [first post](#). (That's a lot of post.) Please read it carefully, and remember that the takeaway message is the bolded, italicized alternate title at the end of this paragraph. You may wonder why I didn't just entitle my posts by that alternate title. It was a purposeful decision. I wanted you to approach this post from a totally different perspective than you approached the first one. If you are an Infertile woman, read it as one. If you are not, read it as a person who will benefit from the advice being given to one.*

Now, this is different than what other

## **infertility blogs**

and articles have done in the past. I am taking the position of "These are some things that many (infertile) women say, and here's why they shouldn't say them,

in general"

- bearing in mind, of course, that a majority of our population does have normal fertility and these comments can cut those women like a knife when they hear them. However, this is not just a "What Not to Say to A Fertile" blog post. Instead, this post is just a good, common sense "

## ***What Not to Say to Anybody***

" post. Methinks, anyway.

### **1) I am Surrounded by Fertile-Myrtles.**



a) What does that even mean? When I hear this, I envision swarms of child-toting pregnant women encircling you... to request babysitting and money for a pregnancy test, I presume.

b) Yes, I get what you are implying here, but you are focusing  
*too much*

on what you don't have. It only seems like you are surrounded because your focus goes directly to them. At the end of the day, would you be able to tell me exactly how many lonely single women crossed your path? I didn't think so. Yes, it's a hard cross to carry, but try not to let it define you. Statements like this one not only play up the tendency to self-pity that we all are prone to, but they diminish the crosses of others - yes, even those of normal fertility.

## 2) **I am just barren.**



a) No. You're not. Guess what? If you have a uterus and ovaries, you are not barren. And even

if you don't, you probably shouldn't make this statement. Why? Because it does nothing but exacerbate your self-pity to a level of depression and despondency, and that is not where you should be headed with this cross.

b) Trust me, the stroking of your own self-pity is truly not necessary. There is fertile and there is infertile/subfertile. Barring the fact that the only women who can truly say they are barren are those with no reproductive organs or those who are well past menopause, the only thing this statement does is further alienate you from women of both normal fertility

*and*

infertility. It does not degrade you to a level below all women everywhere, because the moment you utter it, (as you're well aware), other women with primary infertility will jump right on that bandwagon with you.

*Usually these comments are said in the very context of a conversation about infertility, and generally speaking, involve someone (either present or not) who is known to have normal fertility. And so I ask - WHY in the world would you find it appropriate to make these statements*

other than

*to make it known that your cross is heavier than another's? Is that compassion? I believe it's the opposite.3) **You should be grateful for what you have***

.



a) This one's a classic, meant to remind us all to be thankful and remember our blessings, daily. That, in and of itself, is praiseworthy, and in general, a helpful reminder. But the words here, and the tone in which they are often said, are not loving. I \*

*should*

\* be grateful?? Right away, it implies that I'm not grateful - congratulations, I'm already on the

defensive. Not only do you imply I'm ungrateful, but by the mere fact that you are the wise one uttering this reminder to your ungrateful friend, it's an assumption that you, on the other hand, know what gratitude is all about. You may as well say, "Wow, you are so incredibly selfish and ungrateful, while I live in a state of constant gratitude." Or here's one even easier:

"I am holier than thou."

b) You've also just added an incredible sense of guilt into the mind and heart of the person you're talking to. Part of the human struggle is commiseration. It's natural to seek out solace in a friend; not to wallow in self-pity, of course, but to help each other carry the cross. I imagine it would be quite a different story if Simon of Cyrene had said to Jesus, "You should be grateful you can still walk!" instead of stepping up to carry the cross with him.

#### 4) I hate being infertile.



a) This may very well be true. No doubt it is, if you're saying it - why else would you say it? (*Note rhetoric.*) But keep in mind that your audience may not be as like-minded as you'd like to believe. Even if you're sitting amongst other infertile women, you don't know their stories, what lead to their infertility, how definite their infertility may be, how long they've been infertile compared to you, how they view their own infertility, etc. Additionally, you don't know what lies ahead of you in your own life. This is a very difficult comment to "take back" if something wonderful should happen, such as... you were actually early and unknowingly pregnant at the time you said it! ;)

b) What is "infertile" anyway? It's a cross like no other which begs us to go deeper into our pain in order to find the love and joy only Christ can provide. So really think about that. Would you say, "I hate helping Jesus carry His cross," or "I hate being a child of God?" (*If you would, I'm not touching those, suffice to say, I don't think this blog post will help you.*) The discomforts associated with infertility are real, and I do not mean to take away your need to commiserate. But

I caution you to choose your words wisely. Perhaps, "I hate negative pregnancy tests!" or "Ugh, I am so sad and hopeless right now!" would be nicer for all involved, including any future children that may be a result of your infertility.

## 5) Just wait until you're married!!

a) For what, exactly? So I can be as knowledgeable, all-powerful, selfless, sanctified, scrupulous, principled, and just on the whole awesome as you are? Or so that I won't want a husband anymore? Or so that I will suddenly be included in the only group (wives) that holds the monopoly on being busy, worrying for loved ones, having financial struggles, losing sleep, stressing out, and being stretched thin?

b) Um. Some people are already waiting. And they may wait a lifetime. They don't need your reminder.

While you may be trying to evoke this image:

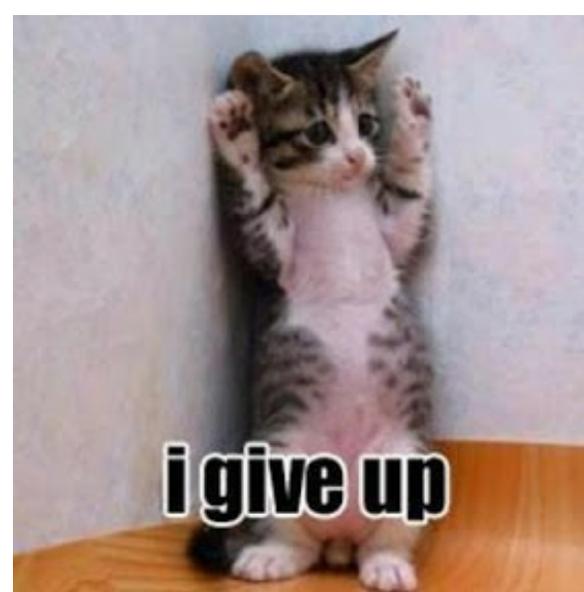


I guarantee, some are seeing, and yearning for, this image:



6)

**You can't even imagine... (fill in the blank, anything about your infertility or your childless status)**



a) Another cliché. We all say it. But we shouldn't. And here's why: Sometimes, it's true. And sometimes, that truth stings the soul. The person you're telling that they *cannot even imagine*

how hard it is to not be able to get pregnant, or to be spending thousands of dollars trying to become pregnant, or to have cycles that are long and irregular, or to have no money left for adoption... yeah, they may not be able to imagine it. But the irony is,

*a part of them wishes they could*

. Or at the very least, that they could do something to alleviate your pain - but you are making it abundantly clear that they cannot. It's hurtful to those who have not experienced what you have, but it's also condescending. While they cannot know the exact scenario you're describing to them, everybody knows pain. Everybody. And while no two crosses are alike,

### **carrying our crosses**

we have in common. Pointing out that someone cannot empathize with you does not help them to sympathize with you, and we should all be working on the latter.

b) There is no need to say those words, to anybody, ever. People will know when they cannot imagine your predicament without your needing to tell them. I think at the base, this is yet another example of our pride in wanting others to know just how badly we suffer, how our hurts are worse than someone else's, etc. in an effort to seek consolation.

*O Master, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console.*

The examples above are not restricted to infertile women, hence the parenthetical "infertile." But since they were a little more specific to that category, I do feel the need to give a disclaimer that the explanations given for each example

can be universal

.

You may have picked up right away that the explanations for each example are almost identical to the explanations given in the

[first post](#)

- solely a pre-fix of "in-" was added in most cases, and #3? #3 wasn't changed AT ALL.

The point, my dear sisters in Christ, whether single, religious, widowed, married, separated, divorced, with children, without children, fertile, or infertile - there are things that would be best for us to

**think**

about before saying in a way that does not help us progress in our journey. Not only do the things we say have the potential to be hurtful to another sister, but equally as important, they can have a tendency to make us much too self-involved, much too "whoa is me!" and much too oblivious to the pain and sorrow of another. Our stories are not black and white, and only Christ knows what is in our hearts, and in our past. Most of us struggle on a daily basis to heal wounds from the past, and prevent wounds in the future - not realizing that all we can really do is stay in the moment, live

for the moment, love in the moment.

I urge you, if you haven't done so already, go back and read the first, or second post - whichever one is most outside your comfort zone. Bring with you a new perspective as you re-read.

Understand that the suggestions are meant to bring us all closer to holiness, not to ostracize, embarrass, or belittle you, no matter what your stage in life or your cross to carry. In thinking about the things you shouldn't say (not to any particular person in any particular situation - just in general) - try to imagine what NOT saying those things would look like in your life. A change of attitude may be necessary to accomplish this. By merely not saying these examples, you are not changing your heart from feeling them. So imagine what that change might look like. I bet there's a sense of peace, mixed with a bit of anticipation and excitement... because that's how I feel imagining it in my own life. I have a ton of work to do in this department, admittedly. But I can't wait to start.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.thiscrossiembrace.blogspot.com/2013/09/things-infertile-woman-should-never-say.html>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Into Deep Water [at worthy of Agape]

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon,  
“Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”

Simon said in reply,

“Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing,  
but at your command I will lower the nets.”

Luke 5:4-5

Simon was a fisherman by trade. He knew what He was doing, and yet he worked all night and caught nothing. But at the word of Jesus, Simon goes out into deep water and lowers his nets. Who was this rabbi, this Jewish prophet to tell Simon, a master fisherman, how to get a good catch? We know now that He was and is the Son of God, but Simon didn't know that yet.



*Put out into  
deep water...  
...and lower  
your nets.*

*Luke 5:4*

How I wish that I could have the faith of Simon.

Imagine the scene: he's been fishing all day and he's tired. *Then* Jesus wants to go out off the shore in Simon's boat and preach to the crowds. Do you imagine Jesus to be a brief preacher? Hardly. Yet Simon stays awake and listens. Then *after* the preaching, Jesus asks more of Simon. *Put out into deep water*. As much as Jesus is telling Simon about how to grab a good catch, He is telling Simon and each one of us so much more. *Go out into deep water*. These waters that we spend the majority of our lives in are so shallow. We trust God here, and with trust God with this or that, but beyond that we are not willing to go. Simon responds with love where we often respond with bitterness. Who is this God to tell us to go into deeper waters? Who is He to tell us how to live our lives, avoid pain, find joy, and persevere? God, don't you see we've been working hard and yet we catch nothing? Why should we trust you in deeper waters when we come up so empty in these shallow streams?

## *Put out into deep water...*

In deep waters His glory shines. It wouldn't have been all that miraculous if Simon had walked on shallow water, but the deep water he walked on showed God's glory. Trusting Him in the shallow water proves nothing, to us or to Him. We become like the pagans and the tax collectors who [love only those who love them back](#) when we only trust in shallow water. Trusting Him, following Him to the deep water puts us on shaky ground and challenges us to trust. We trust even though we are tired, we trust even though we've tried before and our nets have come up empty. We believe that somehow, some way, He knows better than we do. He sees something in these deep waters that we cannot.

## *...and lower your nets.*

It isn't enough to merely follow Him to the deep waters and sit in the boat. He calls us out of the boat. He asks us to lower our nets. Following Him out to the deep waters, rowing the boat in the middle of the night was tough enough, but now He asks us to lower our nets and keep working? What is He thinking? He sees our trust in following Him to the deep waters and asks us to lower our nets so that His glory can shine. We lower our nets and find that we caught nothing in the shallow water because there wasn't anything but sand, silt and washed up riff-raff to catch. In the depths of His love, we lower our nets and they fill, and they fill quickly. Our catch is so huge that we have to call over to other boats for help, for fear of capsizing our own boat. In the shallow water we gain a shallow, dismal catch. But in the deep water our catch is bigger than we can manage on our own. We catch His love, His glory, and His wonder.

Our trust, then, is two-fold: going out into the deep, uncharted waters **and** lowering our nets.

You call me out upon the waters  
The great unknown where feet may fail  
And there I find You in the mystery  
In oceans deep  
My faith will stand

And I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise  
My soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours and You are mine

Your grace abounds in deepest waters  
Your sovereign hand  
Will be my guide  
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me  
You've never failed and You won't start now...

**Spirit, lead me where my trust is without borders  
Let me walk upon the waters  
Wherever You would call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Savior**

“Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)”, Hillsong United

---

This contribution is available at <http://worthyofagape.com/2013/09/30/into-deep-water/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## The Church's Dance [at TheOrant]



**Gregory Palamas once wrote that heaven would be akin to a dance without end before the throne of God (*On the divine Energies*, 76). This image is powerful, one can imagine the Church adorned in wedding garments joyfully being led into the dance of the life of God. Each step in rhythm with grace and love, each measure drawing us into the embrace of the unfathomable mystery. Such a vision is in many ways too wonderful for words, but for inquiring minds the question may naturally be raised, "What will the music of heaven sound like."**

**This article seeks to posit the thesis that the music has already begun, and that the themes that will make up the eternal symphony have already begun to find their place in the scores of our lives. This heavenly music is found in the life of the Church as they liturgically hear and proclaim that paschal mystery; that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is **for you**.**

**How does the Church remember the life and death of Jesus?**

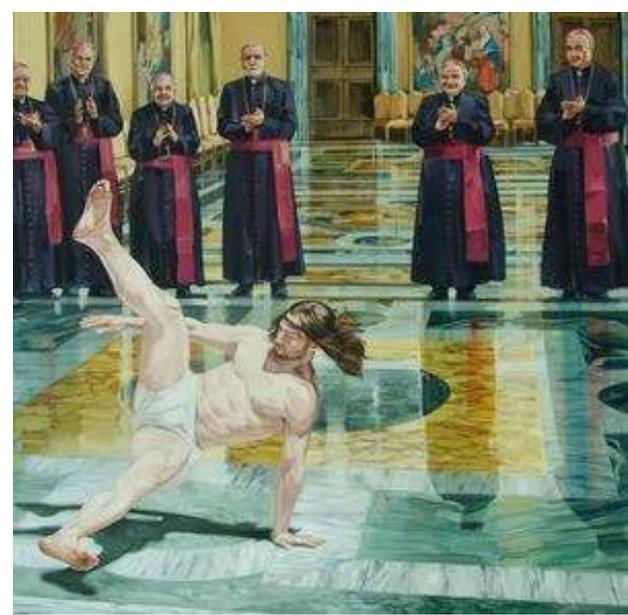


When I was first starting out in my work a youth minister in a Lutheran Church we talked a *lot* about the act of proclaiming "The Gospel." That is we told people that Jesus had lived, died, and rose for them, not just as some point in history, but in a way that still relevant. The whole life of Jesus is an act of salvation that we are called to share with people for their lives *today*. *Today* Christ is born for them. *Today* Christ is killed for them. *Today* Christ is raised for them. Our hope was that by hearing this message people would be given the gift of faith and would come to a saving trust in Jesus.

One of the key insights I had as I became a Catholic was that once faith has arisen the proclamation of the life of Jesus does not cease. It must be proclaimed again and again, and not *just* proclaimed but embodied. Each day Christ is Born for us and in us, each day we live with him and die with him, each day we are raised again. We participate in this most powerfully as the church comes together to celebrate the Eucharist in obedience to Christ's command to "do this in remembrance" of me. This is more than a *remembrance* of the historical past but becomes a *re-memberance* in the present as we affirm again and again our place as *members* of Christ's Body. The truths we know through the proclaiming of the Gospel are established and deepened in our lives and heart in the liturgical remembrance, and in my celebration Christ is present *for me* with a tangibility so particular and tangible that I can taste it as I partake in the Eucharist. The sacraments are the Gospel proclaimed again and again, driving the mystery of Christ deeper and deeper into my life and transforming my heart.

This *re-memberance* becomes a foil for the whole Christian life. It is the very music that the we will dance to as we dance without end before the throne of God. In other words Jesus is the music of eternity, and the liturgy is the place where the Church comes together to dance to the rhythms of his grace. The liturgy is a participation in the life of heaven for it is a participation in Christ.

**The history of the liturgy as an improvisational dancing**



If one were to accept my thesis that the liturgy is the place where the church dances to the melody of Jesus Christ himself, then it opens up a whole new set of lenses through which the history of the liturgy can be seen. Each development is a natural evolution of the dance as it encounters new cultures, places, and times, which bring with them their own dance steps. The melody is deepened, the dance becomes a improvisatory promenade of peculiar people from poles apart. In the liturgy we join hands with Christians from fourth century Jerusalem, ninth century Rome, thirteenth century Bavaria, and twenty-first century Colombia, each place and time helping to form, and reform, the dance with their own particular genius and style. The music is a form of call and response. God calls us in the person of Christ, and the Church responds by embodying Christ in their own time and culture throughout history.

Some of the early dance moves took the form of *Biblical Typology*. The first language that was given to the church was that of the scriptures. They began to communicate the reality of the saving action of Christ in terms of the types and symbols that were seen in the Hebrew Bible. The Red Sea no longer simply referred to the saving action of God in the exodus, but was a symbol that found its competition in the saving action of God and its continuing significance in the sacramental life of the church.

The practice of Gathering on Sunday was also an early way of improvising. They would gather together to meet on the day of resurrection. This move also incorporated the Palestinian culture and the Jewish scriptural tradition. Sunday was traditionally seen as the first day of creation, with the resurrection the church began to see Sunday as a sign of God's new work in Christ of restoring the whole world to relationship with God. This "eighth day" became a way of expressing the new reality of Jesus in the familiar language of Judaism.

As the church continued to grow and develop in different places it would incorporate the culture and symbolic language. Just as the Jews before had endowed the cyclical solar and lunar cycles with the flashpoints of historical significance in their self-understanding (the equinoxes became Sukkot and Passover; the solstices became Chanukah and Shavuot) the Church began to incorporate major liturgical celebrations around the natural rhythms of the solar and lunar year.

(Christmas and Easter). This functioned powerfully in the process of making the liturgy something that all cultures could understand and dance with. Nearly all cultures have an acute awareness to the rhythms of the sun and the moon. Their signs in the sky helped function as a metronome that helped translate the song of Christ across continents with a shared language. Soon the year itself became a way of communicating the song of Christ in the dance of the church.

### **Saints as exemplars of dancers across culture and time**



Even before the Church learned to dance through the years and months it learned to dance with the saints. Early on the church would gather round the graves of Christians who had given up their lives as the ultimate *response* to the *call* of God. Although originally regional observances, these memorials slowly made their way into the larger life of the church and began to fill in the gaps of the year so that each day was given its own space to turn-a-rug in a way that connected to the dancing church in far reaching times and places. Eventually the life of the global church was being enriched by responsorial movements of people in every time and place. No matter who you were, within the life of the church, one could find people who danced with Jesus in your language and culture.



Occasionally the church would go seem to develop two left feet. The *call* of God's saving work of Christ might seem to get lost, or perhaps the *response* of the people would be drowned out. Sometimes the melody was muffled by my emphasis on the cult of the saints. Although saints originally functioned as lampstands to hold up the light of Christ, as piety surrounding them increased they could become so admired that they became distractions, taking the focus away from the light itself. This same tendency could emerge in private devotions, which could sometimes

become endowed with superstition or an overly inwardly spirituality which resulted in a rupture within the gathered community and the church's mission to the world. Sometimes culture itself could drown out the melody. As Christianity became more accepted in more places the call of the cross would get lost. There was no longer a *cost* to the faith but rather an earthly *advantage* to becoming Christian.

Whenever the *call* of God in Christ seemed to get lost, the Church would assert it again by bringing the focus back on the saving event of Jesus. The calendar would get cleared of superfluous additions and renewed emphasis would be placed on the high moments of Paschal joy (Sundays, Easter, Christmas, etc).



When the *response* of the church would get drowned out by the culture, or an overall complacency would come into the Church, periods of penance would enter as ways of reminding the Church of its vocation to be the body of Christ given for the life of the world. Lent emerged and evolved into a period for the church to be united in submitting its life more fully to the path of discipleship and the way of the cross. In the west *ember days* developed, using the rough outlines of pre-existing cultural practices and transforming them into opportunities for fasting and orientation toward Christ. Advent also emerged as a way to remind the Church of their eschatological destiny and uniting them in their present asceticism with their historical place in the history of salvation.

## Challenges today



The image that Gregory painted of our life with God as an eternal dance has been an image that has captured the hearts of many of the faithful for centuries. My reflections in this article have sought to look at the history of liturgical developments as a natural part of that dance. Although there

certainly have been missteps and divisions over the course of time I think as a whole each community of faith has learned to dance to the music of Jesus in beautiful ways. Today offers its own challenges as well. The liturgy is not the possession of the historian, but of the people of God, and every generation must proclaim it anew for their own time. As Robert Taft states:

*There is no ideal model of Christian feast or calendar which we must "discover" and to which we must "return." Rather, it is up to each generation to do what the Apostolic Church did in the very composition of the New Testament: apply the mystery and meaning of Christ to the Sitz im Leben of today. A liturgy is successful not because of its fidelity to some past ideal, but because it builds up the Body of Christ into a spiritual temple and priesthood by forwarding the aim of Christian life: the love and service of God and neighbor; death to self in order to live for others as did Christ. (Beyond East and West, 27)*

Today the Church faces a new string of Challenges. Religious communities are coming together in new and unexpected ways. Different liturgical traditions are intermingling and Christians are encountering cultures that don't dance in quite the same ways they are used to. This presents both great challenges and opportunities. The western world is increasingly approaching religion as irrelevant and, in some cases, an enemy to be done away with. If we can learn to weave new responses to the song of Christ we may be able to sing the paschal mystery in such a way that the world may once again have ears to hear. We can also reject this opportunity; we can become entrenched in *our* way of dancing, not open to paths for unity.

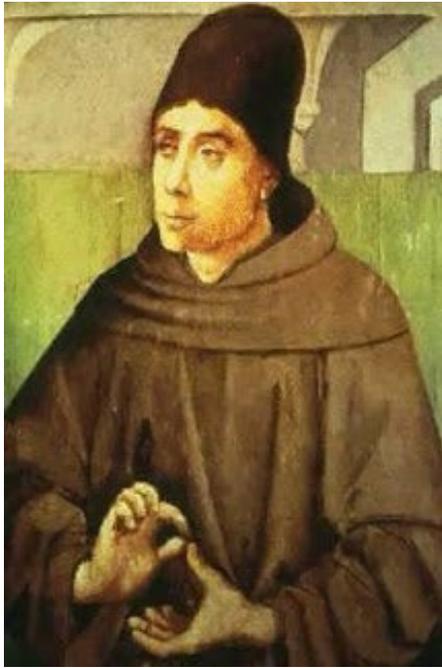
These are just a few of the innumerable challenges that will impact the Church as it continues to struggle with how to dance to the melody of Christ. I have great hope we will be able to take up the standard. After all it is a task that is not done by us alone but is an effort taken up by hands from all ages and times, for liturgy is truly a dance of all the saints in Christ throughout all generations both living and dead.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.theorant.com/2013/10/the-churchs-dance.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Stupid Atheists [at Cum Lazaro]



*Some Catholics are dunces, but are some Brights dull? [A while back](#),*

I managed to irritate a 44 year old atheist computer geek by suggesting (as he read it) that some atheists were dumb. (Ironically, in view of his protestations of smartness, he'd misread what I said -which was (in essence) that some types of atheism betray the sort of stupidity characteristic of smart but immature and narrowly educated young men- but put that aside.)

Putting away the sniping here, why should the suggestion that some atheists are not intelligent be regarded as such an insult? Certainly, I'm quite happy to accept that some Catholics aren't intelligent: indeed, I positively glorify in that fact. When I was becoming a Catholic, one of my wife's family declared that the only people in her family who were Catholics were the servants. Quite apart from the factual oddities here (Mrs L is hardly blue blooded) I remember thinking that this was as good a reason as any for going ahead: what sort of Christianity wasn't for the servant and the master, the bright and the stupid? Whatever else is clear from the New Testament, it is perfectly clear that you don't enter the Kingdom of Heaven via diplomas and a healthy bank balance.

The only entry ticket for Catholicism is being human. It starts from conception and ends with the death rattle. You can be mentally disabled or a genius: it doesn't matter. How you contribute to the Body of Christ will be affected by your talents, but there is a place for everyone.

Atheists, at least of the New Atheism variety, seem heavily invested in their (individually) being smart.

[Dennett's adoption](#)

of the 'Bright' label is the most obvious symptom of this, as is the obvious smarting of the 'smart' commenter at my jibe. But behind this is the foundational illusion of New Atheism: they are out to free people from the tyranny of religion so they can think for themselves. That's fine if you're a public school educated Oxford academic (well,

[you'd think so](#)

anyway) but what of those less well endowed? And frankly that's really all of us at some time: no one is smart throughout their life; no one is completely master of all fields of knowledge. New Atheists seem compelled to pretend to a greater knowledge than they actually have; Catholics sooner or later admit that we fall back on faith and authority. We are,

[as MacInyre puts it](#)

, 'dependent, rational animals'.

New Atheism really seems to substitute a new, rather ill-imagined authority structure for old, rather more thoughtful ones. As a Catholic, there is a very explicit authority structure on which I rely: its very explicitness allows me to assess and critically engage with it. New Atheists have a very inexplicit authority structure, but one which is just as real: a set of slogans; a set of heroes; a set of holy writs.

So what should stupid atheists do? Is there any room in the Bright new tomorrow for the fool or even the slightly below average intellectually? Or is the solution a final one: that when you are a suboptimum child, you are aborted? When you are disabled, you are euthanized? And when you can no longer read even

*The God Delusion*

with complete understanding, you ask nurse for the final remedy for all cognitive failure?

---

This contribution is available at <http://cumlazaro.blogspot.com/2013/09/stupid-atheists.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Never a Clear Head [at Ranting Catholic Mom]

I could really care less which bureaucrats are or are not being paid. I do think we could pay China by sending the entire Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, the NSA the IRS and OSHA to them. We could include all of the union leadership, everyone who has ever worked for the Obama administration, all of the Democrats and most of the Republicans in office.

Or maybe we could just shut down all of those offices and send them the money we save.

I'm not writing much these days because I'm working an extra job. I'm working an extra job because since 2008 the economy has been tinkered to death by the same bureaucrats who are refusing to talk to each other, but are more than willing to spout nasty ad hominem attacks. These are people who are paid ridiculous salaries to surround themselves with people who are paid ridiculous salaries who do nothing but bitch, whine and bitch some more.

When a good man, like Ted Cruz, takes a stand, the bottom-feeders of the fifth estate decide to only show us clips of him reading a Dr. Seuss book to his daughters. No mention of the serious thought he put into his arguments. No analysis of his valid points.

And then I try to find some sanity in the Catholic press, only to see that the Pope is talking. What he actually said has been distorted and parsed to the point that one wonders if he ever really spoke to anyone in the first place.

Where oh where are the problem solvers? Where are the truth speakers? Where is the level head?

---

This contribution is available at <http://rantingcatholicmom.blogspot.com/2013/10/never-clear-head.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

# Organ donation requires strong ethical principles. [at Kitchen table chats with a Catholic Matriarch]

[My latest article for Zenit](#)

has been published. In it, I look at the compromise of ethical principles for organ donation when the procurement system moves to "presumed consent". Under this policy, everyone is considered an organ donor unless they have actively taken themselves out of consideration. The state claims it owns your bodily organs and has the right to control their use for the common good. You are only borrowing them during your lifetime.

One of the key criterion for ethical organ donation programs is that donors must be fully informed and freely give their consent to be a donor. Removing the need for free and informed consent opens the door to abuses. This becomes more relevant as a utilitarian philosophy seeps into health care policy and practices.

Organ donation is a supremely generous, life-giving and virtuous act when done under strict ethical guidelines. Once the ethics breaks down, it quickly degenerates into a dehumanizing work of evil.

---

This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2013/09/organ-donation-requires-strong-ethical.html>

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

# Every Time A Bell Rings, An Angel Gets His Wings

Someone once asked St. Thomas Aquinas, how many angels he thought there were in the heavens. His reply, “lots.” Now that’s not a humorous reply, but think about the stars in the sky or the fish in the sea. If God can create that beauty here on earth, imagine what He can do in the Heavenly realm. Many people have opinions on who angels are and are not. Let’s first understand what the angels are not, then we will discuss what the Catholic Church teaches about the angels.



First, angels are not chubby and baby-faced. They are warriors in an army (*stratia in the Greek*) who would and have fought for God. There was a great battle in Heaven before the world was created (read *Revelation 12:7-12*). Remember what Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew when the Temple guards come to arrest him – “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (26:53). A legion at that time consisted of 5,300 men. That means Jesus could have had 63,600 sword-wielding angel warriors fighting for him. Talk about bringing the HAMMER!

Second, when we pass from this life into the next life, we do not become angels. Sorry to break the news to those who thought they would become angels. We are saints in Heaven, because we are saints here on earth. On earth, we are the saints militant. In Purgatory, we are the saints suffering (purgation). In Heaven, we are the saints triumphant.

I know that Hollywood always portrays us as going to Heaven and getting a “pair of wings”, but in reality, we don’t get wings. Angels are God’s creatures, but different than humans. Angels don’t have wings, since they don’t have bodies. They can move from place-to- place by just thinking. In artistic paintings and statues, angels are portrayed as having wings and look male and female, however, this is only the case because it helps us relate to them better and to understand their powerful intellect.

Now that some of those assumptions are cleared up, let’s talk about the angels and who they are in

God's divine plan, since today is the [Feast of the Guardian Angels](#). The angels are neither male nor female. Since they are pure spirits, they do not possess the bodily traits of gender (read *Heb* 1:13-14, CCC 328, CCC 330), even though in the Scriptures angels appear as males as in the cases of Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.



The Greek word, *angelos*, is defined as *angel*. Angels are pure created spirits who have superior intellects and firm wills. God created the angels good, but some chose to disobey God and were banished from heaven, as I stated above. There are [nine choirs of angels](#): seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominions, virtues, powers, principalities, archangels, and angels. We know they exist because they are spoken about in the Holy Scriptures (public revelation). Please read *Psalms* 34:7 and 90:11, *Job* 33:23-24, *Zechariah* 1:12; *Tobit* 12:12 *Matthew* 18:10, and *Luke* 16:22.

Guardian angels are created heavenly spirits who help and guard those to whom they have been assigned. All of us have a guardian angel and even some people have two or more angels that protect them. The additional angels are not family members that once lived here on earth. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraph 336 states, “From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession...already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.”

Jesus said when talking about children, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father.” Even though the Jewish Tradition (except for the Sadducees) and Catholic Tradition had a devotion to the angels, it was not until the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Pope Clement X officially declared the devotion to the guardian angels as valid.



Theologians believe that all human beings have a guardian angel – baptized or non-baptized. It is also believed that guardian angels don't get a new assignment when our life is through. They enter into the heavenly kingdom with us. St. Basil the Great said, "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life."

Some might ask if they would enter into Hell. I would speculate they do not, since Hell is completely devoid of God and his goodness. Once a soul is in Hell, there is no leaving. It's a choice to be there. While here on earth, our guardian angels never leave us, even if we tell them to do so. I experienced this before where people said to their guardian angels – you go and pray before Jesus in Adoration while I study or do something else. This is nonsense and should be avoided.

The guardian angels primary position is to act as a mediator between God and man. St. Thomas Aquinas said, "The angels work together for the benefit of us all." The amount of angels is gigantic and the scriptures speak of them as "a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand" (read *Dan 7:10*; *Ps 67:18*), just as St. Thomas Aquinas said, "there are lots." In Marian Theology, one of the titles for the Blessed Mother is Queen of the Angels. Mary is the Queen of all rational creatures, along with men, the angels are included.

The [Guardian Angel prayer](#) is a prayer that many children are first taught by their parents as they go to sleep for the night. It is a simple prayer, but one we should all know.



In his sermon on the Feast of the Guardian Angels, St. John Vianney, once said, “Our Guardian Angels are our most faithful friends, because they are with us day and night, always and everywhere. We ought often to invoke them.”

In a letter to his spiritual daughter, St. Padre Pio said, “Know, O Raffaolina, that this good Angel prays for you; offers to God all the good works you accomplish; your holy and pure desires. In the hours when you seem to be alone and abandoned, do not complain of not having a friendly soul to whom you can unburden yourself and in whom you can confide your sorrows. For pity’s sake, do not forget this invisible companion, always present to listen to you, always ready to console you.”

*On this day of the Guardian Angels, let us pray that our relationship with them who watch over us perpetually can grow and strengthen through the assistance of Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother. Amen.*

---

This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2013/10/02/every-time-a-bell-rings-an-angel-gets-his-wings/>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Did Kuma's Corner go too far with their Ghost burger? [at ChicagoNow]



The Ghost Burger at Kuma's Corner by Abel Uribe / Chicago Tribune / October 2, 2013

Did [Kuma's Corner](#) go too far with their Ghost burger? The popular northwest side restaurant, known for naming their burgers for heavy metal bands, named its newest burger, The Ghost B.C., after a Swedish band. The *10-ounce burger topped with a red wine reduction and an **unconsecrated communion wafer*** was featured in the [Chicago Tribune](#) yesterday.

I posted the article on my [Facebook](#) page and you can read the responses to that [here](#). I agreed with my readers that even though the wafer is unconsecrated, Kuma's is mocking the Catholic church.

So what else is new?

It's sad that this doesn't surprise me anymore, but it just doesn't. Whenever I read anything like this, I'm almost shrugging my shoulders because it's just another incident in a long line of Catholic church bashing. Apparently it's still trendy and perfectly acceptable to do that.

Yesterday afternoon I began to wonder where they got the communion wafers. It's not like you can stop in [Jewel](#) and pick up a package. [Resurrection Catholic church](#) is 2 1/2 blocks south of Kuma's, but I doubt seriously that any of the priests there would let Kuma's borrow unconsecrated wafers like a cup of sugar.

Will there be a Jewish, Lutheran, Episcopalian or (gasp!) Muslim burger? Probably not.

I've resigned myself to the fact that making fun of the Catholic church will never stop and though,

as some of my readers suggested, we should pray for all involved, I just can't. I think Kuma's has chosen their path.

***UPDATE: I emailed Kuma's this morning and asked where they got their wafers. This was their response:***

Thank you for the interesting words you have sent us. We will review your correspondence when we can.

***UPDATE: In response to the uproar about their burger, Kuma's had this on their Facebook page:***

In standing with our policy of supporting charity and Chicago at large, we have made a \$1500 dollar donation to the Catholic Charities of the Chicago Archdiocese as we understand that they share our mentality of serving anyone in need from any walk of life.

***Please join me and other Catholics (and some not-so-Catholics!) on my [Facebook](#) page and on [Twitter](#).***

***Do you have Gmail? If so, make sure you go into your "promotions" box and drag one of my emails over to your "primary" box. That way, you'll never miss one of my posts! ;-)***

***Type your email address in the box and click the "create subscription" button. My list is completely spam free, and you can opt out at any time. A free blessing is included!***

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.chicagonow.com/being-catholic-really/2013/10/did-kumas-corner-go-too-far-with-their-ghost-burger/>

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

| [Contents](#) |

# What Makes a Good Wife? [at Em's Estuary]

Hi all,

Happy Sunday!

Before I give my thoughts on the subject, I want to point you to the Bible. There are many guides in the Bible and in our Faith to show us what we need to do in order to Honor our Husbands and be a good/capable wife. One of my favorites is Ode to A Capable Wife in Proverbs:

## Proverbs 31:10-31 – Ode to a Capable Wife

<sup>10</sup> A capable wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. <sup>11</sup> The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. <sup>12</sup> She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. <sup>13</sup> She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands. <sup>14</sup> She is like the ships of the merchant, she brings her food from far away. <sup>15</sup> She rises while it is still night and provides food for her household and tasks for her servant-girls. <sup>16</sup> She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard. <sup>17</sup> She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong. <sup>18</sup> She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night. <sup>19</sup> She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. <sup>20</sup> She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy. <sup>21</sup> She is not afraid for her household when it snows, for all her household are clothed in crimson. <sup>22</sup> She makes herself coverings; her clothing is fine linen and purple. <sup>23</sup> Her husband is known in the city gates, taking his seat among the elders of the land. <sup>24</sup> She makes linen garments and sells them; she supplies the merchant with sashes. <sup>25</sup> Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. <sup>26</sup> She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. <sup>27</sup> She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. <sup>28</sup> Her children rise up and call her happy; her husband too, and he praises her: <sup>29</sup> “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” <sup>30</sup> Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. <sup>31</sup> Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates.

Another is [Ephesians 5:22-24](#). Look that one up. And then look up your husband’s responsibility too in the next few verses.

...but I am not talking about them today, I’m talking about us wives and how we manage to do all that God, our Father has called us to do in this most blessed vocation of wife.

Why am I writing this post? Because I think sometimes we need a reminder. Just look at TV

Shows, Commercials and listen to comments from friends. We need to remind one another that we have good husbands AND to cherish/respect them. *The Devil is strong, but God is stronger ~ Pope Francis.* We must turn to our Faith, guided by our blessed Mother and all the Saints at our avail and get right-minded about what our jobs are.

**My husband's job** – work all day. Come home and be a good dad/husband. He also does all yard work and garbage with the help of our son. If I am having a bad day, he is quick to get up and help me. He is the Spiritual Leader of our family. He pitches in with sports for Christopher and is involved in Scouting

**My job** – budget, cleaning, meal plan/cooking (except grilling), teacher, taxi driver, nurse, comforter, etc. He calls me Chief Home Officer or Home-06. He was in the military too long. We must have titles. lol

My life is NOTHING without my husband. He is my best friend and I depend on him. I was the most stubborn, “I don't need anyone” kind of hurting person when he and I met. He and I have that in common. There was a time in our marriage where I thought I could leave. But God said ***“no, you promised to love, honor and obey! Get back in there and work on it. Do not let the devil win! Don't let him steal the joy I have promised you!”***

Let me give you a “keepin it real” example. Finances are strained. We are weary some days... But – My husband works hard. Sometimes in offices, sometimes in warehouses, on bases all over the world. He knows our struggles. Why then do I disrespect this man who loves us and cares for us? I don't know. But when it happens, I cringe. My fuse is short. I pray!

In the last few months I have been a part of several conversations and have seen several situations/and instances where I was stunned by other Christian wives/moms who are in need of reality checks in this department, including one who, shall we say, signaled her husband with her middle finger as he walked across my kitchen. It was behind his back and I just sat with my mouth open. I am hopeful the children didn't see it. I pretended that I didn't see it.

Edited to add: I remember a decade ago when my brother in law had come off of a long weekend at the firehouse (he's a fire/paramedic). Instead of giving him a chance to breathe, she handed him the children and went to her mothers for the day. WHAT? I see examples of this sometimes still and I don't understand how/why women don't see that their husbands work hard and need downtime too. I will never forget how beaten down my BIL seemed many times. And how his “Christian” wife could treat him that way. I've never forgotten it. And yes, I do know how hard it is to be with children all the time... my husband travels a lot and spent the better part of two years in Iraq. And I guarantee I had NO TIME to myself.

We are called to be LIGHT.... and if one of us is not “ON” and acting right, our family's LIGHT is diminished. We must also help our friends who are overwhelmed and frustrated so that they have the time to be good wives/mothers.

I am a good wife. But here is what I am working on:

- Backing him/not demeaning him in front of our child.
- Intimacy/Physicality. We are overweight/tired and I'm menopausal. And that is all I need to say about that. But sometimes couples forget to cuddle and smooch and things and I just thought it was worth mentioning.
- Listening to him and not just unloading my day. I tell you most of the time I have no idea what he is truly talking about with work – but ya'll it is important that I care – and I do.

### **Here's the thing...**

*Wives are to cherish their husband's hearts.* Are you doing it? If you go down the list in the first passage, where can you improve? We are to uplift the fathers of our children. And moms – our children are watching. Our girls learn how to be a wife/mother from us. And our boys – they learn what kind of woman they want their wife/mother of their children to emanate.

Our families look to us. They all look to us, the way we look to our Mother Mary, the Mother of our Lord. We look to her for comfort and guidance and we are to love and live in her example. I know I am failing a lot. I am a realist. I know I succeed a lot. I have my list of things I need to do – I'm not picking on anyone. Or I don't intend to.

A friend of mine suggested these two helpful things 1 – [Peaceful Wife's Blog](#) and 2 -[The Surrendered Wife](#), a book by Laura Doyle.

I would LOVE to hear from you. I would love to know how you changed your marriage when you realized you were not really the wife you wanted to be and what you are working on now.

Awaiting your great advice!

Love, Hugs & Blessings,

Emily

---

This contribution is available at <http://emilysestuary.wordpress.com/2013/09/08/unsolicited-advice-what-makes-a-good-wife/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |



## 95 Best Catholic Movies

### To Rent For Your Family

All of these movies can be rented online at Netflix or ordered on Amazon and other sites may offer them as well.

Be sure to print this list and keep handy for the long winter months ahead!

[Print a list of the movies here.](#)

For Greater Glory (2012)

October Baby (2011)

The 13th Day: The True Story of Fatima (2009)

Pope Benedict XVI: A Love Affair With The Truth (2008)

The Way (2010)

No Greater Love (2009)

St. Guiseppe Moscati (2007)

A Walk to Beautiful (2007)

The Rite (2011)

Saint Rita (2004)

John Bosco (2004)

The Miracle of Marcelino (1955)

Joan of Arc (1999)

Bella (2006)

The Scarlet and The Black (1983)

Clare & Francis (2007)

Molokai: The Story of Father Damien (1999)

Au Revoir Les Enfants (1987)

Confession (2005)

Saint Patrick: The Irish Legend (2000)

Great Souls: Mother Teresa (2002)

One Night With The King (2006)

Padre Pio: The Priest Who Bore The Wounds of Christ (2007)

Therese (1986)

Sheen Gems: The Best of Fulton Sheen (2005)

Faustina (1995)

Boys Town (1938)

St. Teresa of Avila (2008)

Jonah: a Veggie Tales Movie (2002)

Les Miserables 1(978)

Saint John in Exile (1988)

The Passion of The Christ (2004)

Archbishop Fulton Sheen: Love is Truth (2007)

Mary, Mother of Jesus (1999)

Quo Vadis (1951)

Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story (1996)

Henry V (1989)

Ben Hur (1959)

The Robe (1953)

The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima (1952)

The Ten Commandments (1956)

Lilies of The Field (1963)

In The Presence of Our Lord (2007)

A Man For All Seasons (1966)

The Song of Bernadette (1943)

Padre Pio: Miracle Man (2000)

Not of This World (1999)

The Son (2002)

Mother Teresa (2003)

Diary of a Country Priest (1951)

The Jeweler's Shop (1988)

The Cheese Nun (2002)

The Reluctant Saint (1962)

One Man's Hero (1999)

Babette's Feast (1987)

Shoes of The Fisherman (1986)

Pope John Paul II (1984)

The Greatest Story Ever Told (1965)

Monsieur Vincent (1948)

The Miracle Maker: the Story of Jesus (2000)

The Passion of Joann of Arc (1928)

The Agony and the Ecstasy (1965)

Celebration of Catholicism (2005)

Dead Man Walking (1995)

The Hoodlum Priest (1961)

Sister Act (1992)

Pope John Paul II (1984)

The Keys of the Kingdom (1944)

I Confess (1953)

The Trouble With Angels (1956)

Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1972)

Joan of Arc (1948)

Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison (1957)

Padre Pio: Between Heaven & Earth (2000)

The Bells of St. Mary's (1945)

The Fourth Wiseman (1985)

The Miracle of The Bells (1948)

Brother Orchid (1940)

The Flowers of St. Francis (1950)

Barabbas (1962)

The Gospel of John (2003)

Francis of Assisi (1961)

Archbishop Fulton Sheen:

Love is Truth (2007)

Love is Faith (2007)

Love is Hope (2007)

Love is Eternal (2007)

Angels (2006)

Good Friday Special (2006)

The Decalogue (1987)

The Silver Chalice (1954)

Abraham (1994)

The Gospel According to Saint Matthew (1966)

When in Rome (1952)

A.D. (1985)

Francesco (1989)

Demetrius and the Gladiators (1954)

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.acatholic.org/95-best-catholic-movies-to-rent-for-your-family/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Remembering our wedding day

Nine years ago today I woke up thrilled and absolutely ready to marry John.



It was a magnificent day—sunny and clear. And I knew by the end of the day I would be Mrs. John Buettner. I couldn't wait.



As impatient as I was for our life together to begin, though, I was also determined to take mental snapshots throughout the day. And it's good that I did because the "real" photographer did a terrible job. The only photos I have from the day were taken by my sister-in-law

[Katie Beyer](#)

, my friend Marcy, and a few other friends, and I will always be grateful to them.



*My talented friend Sarah made our gorgeous, delicious cake.*

Still, even after nine years, I remember so much about that day.



I remember leaving my parents' home that morning with my father.



I recall how long that aisle at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen looked when he and I started walking in. I don't remember what we thought of that made us start laughing, but I know we laughed most of our way up the aisle. It's a long aisle.

Then my father lifted (or threw?) my veil...



...and my hand was in John's.



We prayed and sang and held hands during the most beautiful wedding Mass we could ever have imagined—with Fr. Lawrence Adamczyk celebrating and Fr. Thomas Pietrantonio, OFM, concelebrating.



I wish I had Fr. Larry's wedding homily online so I could share it with you. It was amazing and written just for us, the first couple he married. We listened closely to every word he said.



I remember receiving the Eucharist together and marveling at how we had been joined as a couple forever.



Then we were off to the reception, with minimal posed photos because I just wanted to enjoy the day. And we did.



My main memory of the day is looking at my husband—my husband!—again and again and realizing we were reflecting each other's joy.



I was never a girl who dreamed about her wedding day or worried much about the details. (My mother bought the bridesmaid dresses for \$8 a piece at Value City before John even proposed, and then called me at work to tell me what she had done.)



*Dancing with my father*

Our wedding day was perfect—a celebration of us centered around the Mass, and marking the day that would begin so many more days together.



That day, as I danced in my gown, I could never have known that by our ninth anniversary we would have traveled to the other side of the world twice to adopt our sons, or that we would be homeowners for the second time.

We've had a few surprises along the way. And there will be more. What a blessing that we will face them together.



9/25/2013 12:00:00 AM

By [Rita Buettner](#)

---

This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2013/09/25/remembering-our-wedding-day>

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

| [Contents](#) |

## Blessed [at follow and believe]

I couldn't help but overhear a young girl (college aged) talking in a coffeeshop the other day about her entire faith life journey.

She was telling her friend about how her family jumped from church to church and how she struggled to ever find a place where she felt at home. Her family would choose different churches based on what they were looking for at that point in their lives but when they would outgrow a church, they'd move on.

It sounded like she had finally found a faith community that she loved, but there was so much hurt in her voice when she spoke of her past. That restlessness. That searching for "the right fit".

I sat there trying not to eavesdrop. Trying to pretend like I was actually working on work rather than listening to her story.

As I knelt in Adoration last night, I couldn't help but remember this conversation. It's times like these that I'm reminded of how grateful for the Truth of the Catholic Church. I feel so blessed to have been raised in the Church.

While I've had my own search for Truth and belonging, I always knew deep down that I could go to the Church for answers to my endless questions.

Thank you Jesus for your Church.  
And *thank you* for your love.

---

This contribution is available at <http://follow-and-believe.blogspot.com/2013/09/blessed.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## The Culture of "Heresy" [at Eastern Christian Books]

It has been fashionable in academic circles for decades to sneer at the concept of heresy and to always put that term and its cognates in scare quotes, seeing heresy merely as some crude will-to-power over political enemies. When confronted with this, I always think of a 1932 essay by the great English writer Evelyn Waugh denouncing the fashion for refusing to condemn anything: "there are still things worth fighting

*against*

."

Equally fashionable, however, particularly in so-called traditionalist circles, is the condemnation of anyone and everyone as "heretical" who does not hew to your own sanctimonious ideology masquerading as theology, Church history, "holy Tradition," etc. These people are constantly cherry-picking what they like, ignoring what they don't, and turning everything into "confessional propaganda" (Taft) and "soteriological exclusivism" (Hryniewicz) with which to bludgeon everyone else.

And then there is the third group which I often find among my students, who know nothing about

*Dogmengeschichte*

and who therefore assume that doctrine and creeds are not terribly important, and certainly not worth fighting over (they are utterly baffled, and not a little disdainful, when reading about conflict at and after ecumenical councils, especially Chalcedon). Creeds, they assume, must merely have "fallen from heaven one year during Good Friday luncheon" (to use another Waugh line from his uproarious historical novel

[\*Helena\*](#)).

All three groups err--the first by neglect, the second by excess, the third by ignorance. The first group ignores the very real danger, as Richard Weaver famously put it, that

[\*Ideas Have Consequences\*](#).

To have erred in defining the nature of Christ or some other matter could potentially have been fatal to the whole Christian enterprise. But fatal for human relations, and certainly for Christian unity, is the impulse to damn people whose positions you scarcely understand, whom you tendentiously and self-righteously caricature and anathematize in hysterical-polemical modes that may prove, upon sober reconsideration, to have been grossly misleading. That, surely, is what many Eastern Christians have done with Chalcedon. We have spent hundreds of years condemning

each other in our hymnody and hagiography when careful examination by competent scholars today has revealed that much of the split was based on linguistic misapprehension and misunderstanding, as Kenneth Yossa's indispensable book

[\*Common Heritage, Divided Communion: The Declines and Advances of Inter-Orthodox Relations from Chalcedon to Chambésy\*](#)

makes clear (as I noted

[here](#)

).

These thoughts were brought to mind in two ways: first in reading the newly translated

[\*Icons and the Name of God\*](#)

by Sergius Bulgakov (whom some, of course, infamously rushed to condemn as heretic early in the 20th century). I'm giving a lecture next year with a colleague (a specialist in Western Renaissance religious art, especially in Italy) on iconoclasm East and West and thus was led to read Bulgakov, who carefully lays out the arguments of the iconoclasts and rightly notes that they were a lot more intellectually sophisticated and theologically compelling than we often give them credit for. The same can and has been said about the so-called Arians in the Nicene period, whose arguments, as Khaled Anatolios's

[splendid book](#)

makes clear, were far from the hoary stereotypes Byzantine hymnody conjures up--even if they were, indeed, still

*wrong.*

(To be clear: I do believe, in fact, that heresy exists, and needs to be condemned, but the nature of the condemnation must proceed very carefully and usually only after a long period of very careful and painstaking consideration once passions have cooled so that we do not end up boxing ourselves in with condemnations that we later realize were based not on what someone actually said but on what their enemies (or, worse, their so-called friends!) tendentiously and maliciously claimed they said. As Evagrius, Origen, Augustine, and Bulgakov, inter alia, can tell you, that's a sure-fire way to slander someone and in so doing, no glory is brought to the Truth Himself. Such "condemnations," moreover, are not the province of individual apologists or bloggers, but of the Church herself only through her conciliar organs. Such condemnations, finally, must always be presented graciously in merciful and medicinal terms with a view to bringing the wayward back, not to shunning them forever. Why people who gleefully engage in such shunning and shrill condemnations think theirs a productive strategy is a great mystery to me

Such antics

only

serve to poison relations, drive people in the opposite direction, and ensure that no reconciliation takes place. Surely 1600 years after Chalcedon, the breach still not completely healed, we realize that?)

I was, in the second instance, put in mind of these thoughts upon receipt of a new book published at the end of September: Andrew P. Roach and James R. Simpson, eds.,

[\*Heresy and the Making of European Culture: Medieval and Modern Perspectives\* \(Ashgate, 2013\), 440pp.](#)

About this book we are told:

Scholars and analysts seeking to illuminate the extraordinary creativity and innovation evident in European medieval cultures and their afterlives have thus far neglected the important role of religious heresy. The papers collected here - reflecting the disciplines of history, literature, theology, philosophy, economics and law - examine the intellectual and social investments characteristic of both deliberate religious dissent such as the Cathars of Languedoc, the Balkan Bogomils, the Hussites of Bohemia and those who knowingly or unknowingly bent or broke the rules, creating their own 'unofficial orthodoxies'. Attempts to understand, police and eradicate all these, through methods such as the Inquisition, required no less ingenuity. The ambivalent dynamic evident in the tensions between coercion and dissent is still recognisable and productive in the world today.

We are given the table of contents and note that the first article is by one of Orthodoxy's leading theologians in the anglophone world and the rest of the volume does not ignore Orthodoxy either:

Introduction, Andrew P. Roach and James R. Simpson; Part I The Wheat and The Tares: **The rebaptism of heretics in the Orthodox canonical tradition, Kallistos Ware**; Heresy and political legitimacy in Al-Andalus, Maribel Fierro; The burning of heretical books, Alexander Murray; Lombard religiosities reconsidered: 'Arianism', syncretism and the transition to Catholic Christianity, Marilyn Dunn. Part II Inventing Heresies: Perceptions of heresy in historiographical and hagiographical sources of Aquitaine and the Loire Valley during the high Middle Ages, Julien Bellabre; The Bogomils' folk heritage: false friend or neglected source?, Maja Angelovska-Panova and Andrew P. Roach. Part III Approaching Literary and Narrative Sources: Why God keeps sending his angels: domestic disturbance and Joseph's doubts about Mary in Chester and York, Judith R. Anderson; Vernacular poetry and the spiritual Franciscans of the Languedoc: the poems of Ramon de Cornet, Catherine Léglu; Heretic Hussites: Oswald von Wolkenstein's 'Song of Hell' ('Durch Toren Weis'),

Sieglinde Hartmann; Dogging Cornwall's 'secret freaks': Bérout on the limits of European orthodoxy, James R. Simpson. Part IV Law and the Inquisition: 'Heresy' in Quercy in the 1240s: authorities and audiences, Claire Taylor; **Heresy, orthodoxy and the interaction between canon and civil law in Theodore Balsamon's commentaries, Peter Petkoff**; Fighting clergy, church councils and the contexts of law: the cutting edge of orthodoxy or the ambiguous limits of legitimacy?, Daniel Gerrard; 'Famosus est et satis publicum': factionalism and the limits of doctrine in the case against Meister Eckhart, Alessandra Beccarisi; The Inquisition in medieval Bohemia: national and international contexts, Eva Doležalová; Clerical illegitimacy in the diocese of Sodor: exception or rule in the late medieval Church?, Sarah Thomas. Part V Heresy, Place and Community: Learning by doing: coping with Inquisitors in medieval Languedoc, James Given; **Travels and studies of Stephen of Siwnik (c. 685-735): re-defining Armenian orthodoxy under Islamic rule, Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev**; Catharism and heresy in Milan, Faye Taylor; Church reform and witch-hunting in the diocese of Lausanne: the example of Bishop George of Saluzzo, Georg Modestin. Part VI Distant Mirrors: Heresies, Orthodoxies and Modernities: Between medieval and modern beholding: Heidegger, Deleuze and the Duns Scotus affair, Philip Tonner; Heresy and its afterlives in Communist-era Poland, John M. Bates; Not just price: scholastic economic theology and fair trade, Robert I. Mochrie; Index.

---

This contribution is available at <http://easternchristianbooks.blogspot.com/2013/10/the-culture-of-heresy.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## The Troops of St. George [at Dulcius Ex Asperis]

About a week and a half ago, I wrote about Trail Life USA, the organization that I think will replace the Boy Scouts of America in the next decade as Evangelicals disassociate from the national scouting organization in favor of becoming Trail Men. I've been watching that organization with interest through their website and social media. There's a lot of energy in that movement with troops forming nationwide.

I've always said that, if you're a secular organization in this country, once you get the Evangelicals seriously working against you, you're through. My maternal grandparents were hardcore, intensely faithful Southern Baptists in their lifetimes, so I know what type of people the Boy Scouts have crossed. The scouts won't likely get the better end of it.

That being said, I have also been following a new Catholic scouting movement founded by Dr. Taylor Marshall, a philosophy professor and academic dean at the College of St. Thomas More in Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Marshall is also a prominent Catholic writer and speaker and has quite a following. Naturally, I had never heard of him before the Boy Scouts debacle caused him to launch the Scouts of St. George as a Catholic alternative to the BSA.

However, obviously thousands of people had heard of him, because when he launched the new organization hoping for 20 troops, he was quickly presented with about 150 from the United States and countries around the world. It hasn't been as smooth as the Trail Life launch. For starters, most of it is happening online and there hasn't been a physical convention planned. Secondly, I think Marshall quickly found himself overwhelmed but, by God's grace, has continued. And, finally, about the time things were starting to gel, he received a cease and desist letter from the Boy Scouts of America telling him that using the word "scouts" was going to get him sued.

While there were numerous organizations in the early Twentieth Century that used the name "scouts", the BSA eventually emerged as the dominant organization and, over time, claimed sole right to use the name among boys' outdoors adventure organizations. And, frankly, for now they have the resources to go to court while Marshall and his organization do not. So, he switched everything to the "Troops of St. George" pending a final decision on a new name.

My view of the BSA threatening suits against Marshall and also Trail Life is that it's better to let the BSA keep the name and symbols, and for the new organizations to take the boys. Boys can be trail men, rangers, troopers, crusaders, sentinels, corpsmen or any of the several names that have been suggested in Marshall's online forum. Give the boys a uniform, some cool patches and some outdoor fun and they won't care that it's not the uniform of the BSA or that they aren't "scouts".

For my part, I finally had to have the conversation with my 10-year-old son that I had been avoiding. Back in May, as he was finishing up Webelos, I started him at the Boy Scout troop at our

church confident that there would be no policy change. He was in the troop just long enough to make a couple of friends and it was heart-wrenching to have to pull him out. However, at a parent meeting at the church, it was clear that the parents involved in that troop either didn't care about the morality involved or thought the decision could be circumvented at the local level. The former, I was glad to get my son away from. The latter, I have some sympathy with, but think they will ultimately be disappointed.

I should note that the troop at my church isn't Catholic, it just uses the facilities. The troop came over from a Lutheran church and has a Lutheran scoutmaster who falls into the group that thinks the national decision can be circumvented. I feel kind of sorry for him. He's very invested in the scouting movement and I understand his reluctance to chuck it all for another organization.

In my conversation with my son, I explained the situation at his level. The Boy Scouts, who once upheld Christian teaching and values, no longer were going to do so. They were going to admit boys who wanted to marry other boys which, as he knows, "is crazy" because boys cannot have babies with other boys. He's a smart kid. He understood that saying you are "morally straight" without acting "morally straight" isn't following Christ. And, he took it quite well when I told him that sometimes when you are following Christ, your friends won't go with you.

When I told him about the two alternative organizations and that other boys had had to leave without making Eagle after having spent years working on it, he was amazed at their sacrifice and understood that he was lucky he had only been a few weeks into it. And, when I told him about the Troops of St. George and how other fathers and I were working to launch a troop locally, I couldn't keep him seated. Even though, without my even saying anything, he understood that the dragon was a metaphor for the Devil, he immediately jumped up and started beating back the dragon with a long chain of beads he had been playing with.

Providing him and other boys of the diocese with an organization that can be fun and inspire them to dream of heroic deeds will make the sacrifices worthwhile. Because, while I had hoped to find a ready-made alternative organization to just send him to, the Holy Spirit helped me to see that I was going have to man up and help provide the leadership in Troop 9, Greater Tulsa Area. Our scoutmasters are called captains, and I will be co-captaining the new troop with another father.

Pray for us. We go to the field next month for our first camp out. Prior to that, we have some significant organizational hurdles to clear, and we need to attract enough boys and their fathers to make it a fun organization.

Our Lady and St. George, pray for us!

---

This contribution is available at <http://liamferguson.blogspot.com/2013/09/the-troops-of-st-george.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

# The Word Is What Brings Us to Life [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

*His Word Is What Brings Our Spirit To Life!*

*.... Because His Word IS LIFE!*



*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” (John 1:1-5)*



*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psa. 119:105)*



horizons that Christ has opened to us all, I to wish to freely share what the Lord has given me to see, with those spiritually hungry souls who, though seeking, have not yet encountered the Lover of their souls in a personal and spiritual way.

It is my purpose that my testimony here be considered a witness to the work the Word of God accomplished in me by reviving my spirit to hear His Voice and reactivating my spiritual life in Christ Jesus. Praised be His Holy Name!

### ***My Background in Brief***

***“For indeed the good news came to [me] just as to [every one else]; but the message [I] heard did not benefit [me], because [I] did not receive it in faith as those others who listened [with their hearts]. “ (Heb. 4:2 )***

I was just such a person, I had heard the Word, but, because of the hardness of my heart, I had not received it in Faith so that I could understand the Word spiritually and thus permit it to have its effect in me.

I was brought up in a Catholic home, exposed to and taught all of the basic tenets of Christianity from elementary school through college and compliant with the basic traditions of the Church, of which I am still a member. Yet, even though I knew a lot about Jesus, the scriptures, and even a smattering of theology, I not only did not know Jesus personally in the spirit, I did not even think such a thing was possible for normal people (I thought it was only for the “Saints”). I did not even know what “in the spirit” meant much less getting to know Jesus personally!

I was spiritually blind and handicapped but I did not know it!

Now don't get me wrong, I was not in denial about Jesus or my faith, it is just that all that I knew about Jesus and His Church was in my head instead of my heart. I was not in rebellion against what I had learned or the theology of it, I just really did not understand that the whole meaning of being “Christian” is not merely to be immersed intellectually and socially by practice into a religious culture but to be united in Spirit with Christ, in the spirit. United, to such a degree that you come to a personal awareness that He is in you and you in Him! And, that through that communion with Him, you are empowered by Him to Be His Envoy to the world and proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom to those all around you! Praised be His Holy Name!

In the state of spiritual blindness I was in, I had become co-dependent on the religious culture I was nurtured in. Instead of the culture leading me to encounter Jesus in the Spirit, as it rightly should, and lead me to place my total dependence on Him, I had become overly attached and comfortable with the religious ambience in which I was brought up and in which I was living – so comfortable, that I avoided anything that might bring me out of my comfort zone. Like a pre-emergent butterfly in its cocoon, I was so attached to the cocoon that I was afraid to stretch out my spiritual wings and fly into the hands of my Master!

And that, my brethren, brings up a point I wish to make clear: the obstacles and hindrances I had in entering in to the Kingdom were mainly of my own making and my own undoing. I was comfortable because, I was using my religious compliance as a fig leaf to ease my conscience regarding the fact that I had made a god out of my career and my family was suffering for it. Also, because of my engineering education, I was very focused on the world of science around me and the ability of man's intellect to assess what is real and what is not. I tended to view and filter everything religious that I read and thought, through these glasses of intellectual human skepticism and pride.

Because of these personal foibles, I filtered out the spiritual message of the Gospel and the Word of God although I was presented it every Sunday when I went to Mass. I was essentially like the rocky or weedy ground that the seed of the Word fell upon but was unable to establish roots ( see the parable of the Sower, Matt.13:18-23 )

### ***How the Word of God Revived Me Spiritually***

Now I know that many of you may have been graced by God to be the "good Soil" into which the "seed" was planted and thus avoided this challenge of faith that I and many others have faced. But for me, I was in a state of spiritual apathy and ignorance that prevented me from truly experiencing the energy, life, and dynamics of the living waters that Jesus was offering to sate my thirst. It required a transformation or transition that I would never have entered on my own, had not the Lord unexpectedly shaken up my life and opened up my heart with His Word so that I could truly experience Him and His Love!

It was this personal conversion experience that brought me to understand that there is a spiritual reality accessible to all Christians – a reality that cannot be attained through mere study and intellectual understanding of scripture and theology. This reality was sometimes termed by Jesus as "The Kingdom of God" and the Good News that He proclaimed was that this spiritual Kingdom is "at hand", for all who believe, right where they are, as they come to faith and repentance. The problem we have is that we have to accept His Reign over us by believing in His Son and acting in obedience to His Word and His Promises in order to enter into His Kingdom (Jn. 3:16)! If we don't believe in His Lordship and His Promises, then how can He be King over us? If we don't have faith in His Word how can we claim to be submitted to Him as Lord?

Through my conversion experience, the Lord gave me the faith to enter into His Kingdom and placed in me a strong call to reach out to those, who like me, were spiritually hungry but unaware of how to open the door to Christ and let Him come into their hearts to sup together with Him beginning an eternal and life-giving relationship with Him. All because the Holy Spirit opened my heart to hear His Word and obey its call on my life. Praised be His Holy Name!

Please refer to my previous Post, [\*\*\*"I Stand At the Door and Knock"\*\*\*](#). to understand that Jesus is, in fact, knocking at your door to sup with you, "in the spirit".

The understanding the Lord gave me when I opened the door of my heart was focused on getting



***I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.” (Rev.2::20)***

***Jesus: “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge [through relationship with God]; you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.” (Luke 11:52)***

***Peter: “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge [derived from relationship] of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (1 Ptr.1:2-4)***

**<> *Reproduction - Bringing Forth Fruit (through the Word)***

***Jesus: “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (Jn. 15:-6)***

***Paul: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Rom. 8:28-30)***

***Paul: “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)***

**<> *Representation - We are His Envoys (through the Word)***

***Jesus: "And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mk. 16:15-16)***

***Jesus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:19-20)***

**<> *Reconciliation and Reaffirmation of Divine Fellowship and Sustenance (through the Word)***

***[John's Witness] That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 Jn. 1:1-3)***

***We write this to make our joy complete. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. (1Jn. 1:4-10)***

***[Jesus' Witness] “No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (Jn 6:46-51)***

***Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.” (Jn. 6:53-58)***

***[ Paul's Witness] When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and***



## The 'Angel' in Uniform [at The Catholic Homemaker]

When someone provides or render assistance to our immediate need, we sometimes call that person an *angel in disguise*.



On our way to an appreciation party last weekend, we heard this sound as a signal that we're losing air in one of our tires (Steve knew it because the alarm is blinking in front of him). Before leaving the city, we knew that a screw is stuck to one of it. But we thought that since the screw is at the middle maybe we can manage to be at the park and will just call for assistance once we're at the place. Obviously, we didn't get there on time. We had a flat tire. We moved over to the side and called for help. The sad part is, the person on the line advised us to wait for service will come in 45 minutes or more! So instead of sulking for the delay, we get out of the car and took some photos of the incident. (We did it fast and remained in our seats).

After a while, Steve saw a truck coming and thought help came faster as expected. But it's not the assistance we are waiting for.

It's the Safety Service Patrol (SSP).

We just learned that day that SSP is a federally funded program (with [State Farm](#) as official sponsor) that provides rapid response to roadway incidents, provides safety in highly congested areas, and assists with the State police with the clearing of incidents and control of traffic around incident scenes. They also ensures that travel lanes are clear of roadway debris and provides

assistance to disabled motorists "free of charge."

It took us 15 minutes or less before Norm came over to help. Norm is the guy on patrol that time. He asked what's the problem and told us he was there to help. He's a great guy with a warm smile making our worries disappear. After telling Steve to call back the company to where we asked for assistance, he started pulling out gadgets and other paraphernalia needed. And it's amazing that it only took him 5 minutes to finish his work! He knows his craft well.

Steve tried giving Norm a tip as a gesture of saying thank you for the big help he did (if not because of him, we will not able to come on time that day). But he didn't accept the offer. He said that they are doing this service for free.



While driving to the park, Steve jokingly said that for the first time he felt good for the taxes he's paying. It's all worth it.

It dawned on me, many of us complain about many things -- the government, the politicians, the tax deduction etc -- we miss looking on the people who are honest in their work and the good service they make. I believe that goodness and kindness are still so much available out there, just like what this guy did to us. Yes, it's part of his work, that's a given. But it's also remarkable witnessing such admirable service and kindness that day. Because when you extend a hand and fill in someone's need, you become an angel to their eyes.

Thank you, Norm. We appreciate your help that day.



This is Norm Hamilton, the 'angel' in uniform.

Note: Safety Service Patrol can help by: \* changing a flat tire \* jump-starting the car \* making small safety repairs \* calling a tow truck or safety service

There are no fees for this service and drivers do not accept tips. When SSP finds a disabled vehicle on the roadside, they will stop to provide assistance or they will be notified by the State Police who receive information from stranded motorists who call 911.

The SSP does not have a phone number. If you breakdown in the highway: contact your roadside assistance provider or call 911 to alert the police. They will ask if there's an available SSP truck in the area to send to your location or they will dispatch a tow truck on your behalf.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.thecatholicmaker.com/2013/09/the-angel-in-uniform.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |