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new  
evangelists  
monthly

*March*  
*2014*

# New Evangelists Monthly #15

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# Forward

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

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

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

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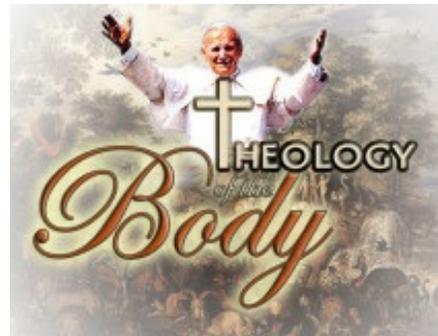
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## These Beautiful Bones [at The Veil of Chastity]

I received Emily's book in the mail back in October and I have been slowly making my way through it. The reason it took me a while to get through it is because it is a book to be savored and meditated upon. Plus, it took me a while to expand my understanding of the *Theology of The Body*, as the back cover says, "to beyond the bedroom."

**Ohhh, I Get It!**



*"Emily reveals layers of depth and richness that many of us never knew were there."*

*Jen Fulwiler*

I have been reading about **Blessed Pope John Paul II's *Theology of The Body (T.O.B)*** for quite some time but to be honest, I was never able to *understand* it beyond a certain level. I knew it went deep but I was only able to comprehend it in a limited way.

Why? Because our beloved soon-to-be-a-Saint Pope was so holy and brilliant. His experience (Poland ~ wow), prayer life, education and understanding of our anthropology formed him into this holy man and allowed him to peer into this mystery and deliver it to us as a gift at the right time. And, wow did we need it!

So, let's say the depth of **T.O.B** is a 10. Before reading Emily's book, I probably had reached maybe a 3, at best. Now, I might be a 6. This is quite an improvement considering my limited experience, my lackluster prayer life, my unrelated education and zero insight into anthropology.

But, Emily breaks it all down for us! She, being as smart as she is, brilliantly makes his teachings accessible and applicable to us all. Even she admits that his T.O.B. teachings are '*profound and complex*' and difficult for her to understand. Whew, I thought it was just me! But, her book left me saying, "**Ohhh, I get it!**"

### **Beyond The Bedroom**

*"T.O.B is an anthropology not a sexology."*

The subtitle of her book is **“An Everyday Theology of The Body.”** Emily shows us how to apply the **T.O.B** everyday, everywhere and in everything we do. She shows us that **T.O.B** was *“never intended to be ‘just’ about sex.”*

As the back of the book says, **T.O.B.** teaches us about *“everyday moments in life, helping you discover **how** to let **grace enter** into those moments and make them something **extraordinary.**”*

This is good news for everyone but especially for singles! As a single, young Catholic herself, Emily gives all of us (married and unmarried), as Scott Hahn said, *“graceful guidance in living out the physical side of being spiritual.”*

### **What Makes Us Beautiful?**



*“For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks into the **heart.**”*

1 Samuel 16:7

Emily opens the book with a description of the [Capuchin Bone Church in Rome, Italy](#). I was not sure what this had to do with being beautiful but after I ‘got it’ I realized it was a superb analogy and fitting introduction.

She then goes into the history of our culture of **Modernism** and how it has confused us into thinking that *‘only that which is measurable is real’* and that we (rather than God) are the center of the universe. She explains why [Humanae Vitae](#) was not well received at first but how 45 years later it can clearly be described as **prophetic**.

As Emily describes, *“When the body is seen as mere matter, anything goes...The body, however, isn’t mere matter.....man is a union of body and soul...”*

Emily connects the dots between these beautiful bones of ours and our souls. The body *“expresses the person...It reveals the living soul...making visible the invisible.”* She explains to us how

our longings to know ourselves, God and Truth are common struggles and that yes, we can in fact obtain this knowledge. She explains how *“our bodies reveal God to the world.”*

Emily shows us how a **“Sacramental world view”** is the answer to attaining this knowledge and to healing that which ails us. A [Sacramental life](#) imparts grace to us and **makes visible to us the invisible**. It is our grace-filled souls that make us **beautiful** and holy....even the most plain and imperfect ‘body’ which does not measure up to our crazy Modernistic world.....is made beautiful through this supernatural power ([superabundance](#)) available to all of us.

## **A Sacramental World View**

*“...matter is a vehicle for grace.” Emily Stimpson*

The Sacraments of the Church are the most powerful vehicles for grace but we can also tap into grace in every moment. Emily shows us the way and explains exactly what a Sacramental world view is. I cannot do it justice without sharing the entirety of the book with you. Emily weaves her wisdom throughout the book describing how grace is available to us when we work, play, serve, host, eat and do laundry.

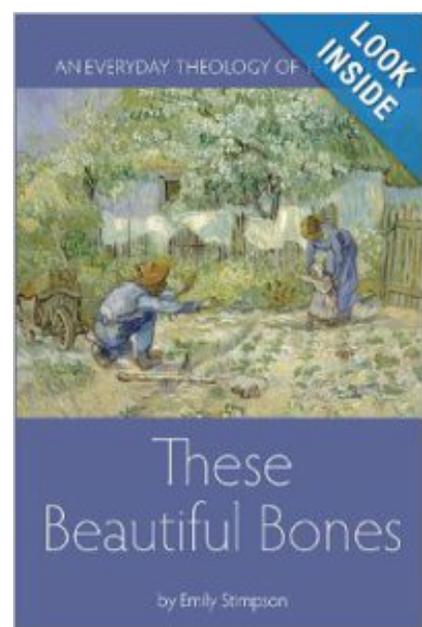
## **My Favorite Chapters**

Chapter 7 and 9 were my favorite chapters! Chapter 7 is about the gift of food. It is both convicting (are you a picky eater like me?) and balanced (gluttony, fasting, temperance, gratitude). I think she is trying to say that the way we eat is a reflection of how we make love and show love..... Do we rush? Are we mindful and attentive? Are we disordered in any way? Selfish? Okay, moving on to *Chapter 9!*

I was reading Chapter 9 during Eucharistic Adoration and I found myself jotting down ten changes I need to make in my life in order to reduce the distractions in my life and increase my attentiveness and receptivity. I also knelt at the altar and thanked God for Emily. Oh so convicting in so many good ways!

Earlier in the book she discusses **receptivity** and how it *“requires more of us than just practicing hospitality. It also requires we **Practice Attentiveness**. That means looking into people’s eyes when they speak to us, paying heed to what their gestures and facial expressions communicate, and listening carefully to all they say.”* As my friend Carolyn says, *“it is important to be **intentional**.”*

## **The Cover**



When the book arrived I sent Emily a note letting her know that the cover is absolutely gorgeous. You have to *feel* this book! Sure you can get the Kindle version but I recommend the soft cover version! You will marvel over its beauty, its softness, the chosen colors, the portrait and the embossed letters. Really, I am not exaggerating! You will also want to highlight the best parts within the book to reflect back upon later.

## Emily



Everyone knows how I feel about Emily. She is lovely in her every word and gesture. Her writings are brilliant and inspiring. I am constantly spotlighting her in my 7QTs. You can read more of her good stuff [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#). You can buy her book, [These Beautiful Bones](#) through Amazon as well as her other book, [The Catholic Girl's Survival Guide for the Single Years: The Nuts and Bolts of Staying Sane and Happy While Waiting for Mr. Right](#). And, you can become her [facebook friend](#). Even I, a big nobody, am her friend!

Have you read her book? If so, what was your favorite part? What impact did it have on you?

God love and bless your **beautiful bones**!

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This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2014/02/03/these-beautiful-bones-by-emily-stimpson/>  
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## To Forgive [at Camino La Mancha]



**For = on behalf of/Give = surrender**

**Forgiveness is a necessary and humbling,  
yet cleansing spiritual exercise.**

**To forgive, it is first necessary to examine my own heart,  
not the heart of the neighbor or brother**

**Jesus requires my soul to forgive.**

**A review of the Ten Commandments, as found in Exodus 20:2-17,  
is a beautiful scriptural guide.**

**The good counsel of a holy priest is, as well, a blessed gift. This helps to develop a spiritually  
sound conscience ~**

**or, as we say in Catholic "lingo", a well formed conscience.**

**Without indulging in "scrupulosity",**

**which is so often self pity in disguise,**

**my own thoughts, motives, words and actions**

**must be as clear to me**

**as the clear water coursing over the river's stones.**

### **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**1) I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.**

**2) Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.**

- 3) Thou shalt keep holy the Lord's day.**
- 4) Honor thy father and thy mother.**
- 5) Thou shalt not kill.**
- 6) Thou shalt not commit adultery.**
- 7) Thou shalt not steal.**
- 8) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**
- 9) Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.**
- 10) Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.**

Praises be to Jesus forever!

**May the Holy Spirit of our Lord assist me, as, on behalf of the salvation of my soul and the soul of my neighbor, I surrender to our Eternal Father's Holy Will.**

**May my every motive, thought, word and action glorify our Almighty Father.**

**May I imitate the Blessed Virgin Mary as I heartily strive to obey our Savior Jesus Christ.**

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# 7 DIY Lenten Crafts & Books ~ Wreaths, Crown of Thorns, Mercy Crosses, Crucifixion Art, Books [at Campfires and Cleats]

*Keep LOVE in LENT Blog Link-Up 2014!*

*We'll be sharing tips, stories and experiences that will help us focus on*

*Lenten sacrifices, prayer and good deeds*

*and how to carry them out with*

*LOVE instead of a GRUMBLE.*

*Are you a Christian blogger who'd like to share Lenten ideas?*

*You're welcome to join in!*

*Please scroll to the linky at*

*the bottom of my post and visit the other hostesses' too,  
so that you can join in if you'd like!*

Enjoy painting while you read one of our Lenten book picks below!



~ 2 ~Lenten Wreaths

Here's a simple, no-frills but extremely lovely decoration to remind and instill

in us all to

"PRAY, FAST, GIVE ALMS"



Above, are the items needed to create the wreath.

Again, all were purchased at The Dollar Tree.

As you can see, you start with a

simple wreath (about 10 inches in diameter), purple ribbon  
( I picked up dark and light shades for my kids to choose.) and purple card stock.

About to wrap the ribbon around wreath:



Adding letters to the card stock "mini banners."

And here, affixing the card stock "mini banners" so they hang from the center.



And hanging from the door inside of our most lived in room, so that we can enjoy it often:



### ~ 3 ~ Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy Crosses



We began with simple foam cross cut outs as well as a package of foam-y flower



stickers. : Easy and time saving during a busy week. Both items obtained at The Dollar Tree. Love The Dollar Tree, don't you?



The kids glued a cross on each of two pieces of pastel card stock. They then wrote key words from the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, after an in depth discussion of ways that, as a family, we could endeavor to accomplish as many of the Works as possible during Lent.

And of course, during Ordinary Time as well.

There's a great explanation of the Works of Mercy at [this site.](#)

Every time they/we accomplish a Work of Mercy, they'll stick a flower on the cross; by Easter, hopefully, the crosses will be covered!

Not an artistically challenging project for either of my kids, as they are 11 and almost 14, BUT the faith and the service meaning behind the project is, of course, of utmost import and will serve as a tangible and visual reminder of living the way of the Cross this season.



 ~ 4 ~ **Play Dough Crown of Thorns**

Step 1: Create 3 strands with any colors of play dough.



Step 2: Braid



Step 3: Form crown



Step 4: Add "thorns" (toothpicks)

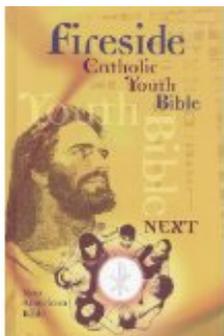


Completed crowns:

We'll be removing "thorns," representative of our sacrifices, symbolically easing Christ's suffering by doing so, throughout these 45 days. Since Lent has only been underway for a couple of days now; there's still time do this with your kids if you have not as of yet. ~:)

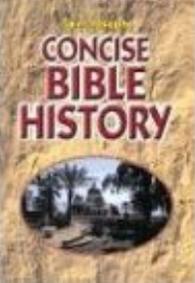
~ 5 ~ **Books we've come to live in and love during Lent** [Amon's Adventure](#) continues the story began during Advent with the same beloved characters in [Tabitha's Travels](#), [Jotham's Journey](#) and [Bartholomew Passage](#). This is a family favorite that sweeps us back to the time surrounding Jesus's Crucifixion and provide a front row seat people, the events, the circumstances, the injustices, the betrayals and the loyalties.

~ 6 ~ **Our favorite Bible** [The Fireside Catholic Youth Bible](#) I've mentioned this Bible numerous times here in liturgical season activity (it's also well read and referred to during advent [as we create our Jesse](#)



[Tree](#) )  
to reinforce settings, Biblical figures.

We read also very frequently the [Concise Bible History](#) to clarify and



~ 7 ~ **Resurrection Eggs**

A dozen bright and colorful plastic eggs, each containing an item which symbolizes Jesus's life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension are perfect for every age. Honestly, my kids' level of understanding at their ages is beyond the symbolism conveyed through each; yet each time we sit and talk "Lent," they still enjoy the discovery within each egg as well as reading the corresponding scripture verses in our Bible. Symbols include a purple cloth, a piece of wood representing the cross, dice, coins and of course one empty egg representative of the resurrection.



Please visit

*for more QTs!*  ~ Also, friends a reflection of mine on the Lenten season, giving up and failing: [The Dark Night of the Soul: Why a Failing Lent Really Isn't](#)



For my previous "Artful Friday" posts,

you might like to click below.....

They're all here if you'd like to dust off something from the archives:

( knitting, winter crafts, the theater and piano)

And, my son's popular guest posts on crafting rocket balloons,

both of which include instructional videos:

I hope you get a chance to click over and enjoy one of his posts!



Now it's your turn!

Here's what we ask of those joining the Keep Love in Lent carnival:

1. **Link your post** right here between

Monday March 3 and Monday March 10

2. **Copy and paste the hostesses' blog names/links** to the bottom of your post so that your readers, who may also blog, can join in the fun and link up.

3. **Please follow your hostesses' blogs and like our fb pages.** As a courtesy, we ask all who participate in the Keep Love in Lent link up to click to all of the hostesses and follow us. We also encourage this so that you don't miss updates about the Lenten carnival! And besides, we'd love to stay in touch regularly!

4. **Mandatory Follow Frenzy~**

Visit, enjoy, be inspired by and comment on the blogs in your "group!" The Keep Love in Lent carnival is not a link and run event...sorry, folks! A requirement of participation is our follow frenzy.

**Here's how it works:**

\* Once the linky closes on 3/10/14, the admins of the Keep Love linky will email ALL who've linked. We will provide you with info regarding the "group" to which you are "assigned."

\* You are asked to visit the blogs in your group ( there will be approx 10-12 ) and leave meaningful comments within a given time frame. In this way, traffic to all blogs is increased **and** we all benefit from each others' work!

~ And that's IT for the participation guidelines.~



Friends, as always,

thank you for stopping over and  
spending some of your precious time here at my home on the web!

Don't forget to subscribe to Campfires and Cleats

by scrolling to the *subscribe* button at the top left sidebar.

I'd love to stay in touch regularly.

Until next time,

Thanks to [Plumrose Lane](#) for the lovely post dividers!  
Linky opens March 3rd~~

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This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2014/02/7-diy-lenten-crafts-books-wreaths-crown.html>

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What keeps us trying to focus our minds on the Lord and turn our hearts toward his? The joy of knowing he transforms us to reflect his presence and glory until we mirror God himself. *“Look to him that you may be radiant with joy,”* (Psalm 34:6).

This radiant joy creeps into our lives as we develop an intimate relationship with the Lord in prayer. Like the early Christians, God created us to display the presence of God in our happiness and joy so that the world will see something is different.

We are radiant with joy because God loves us. This transformation comes through the indwelling presence of God himself. These moments of radiant joy help us cultivate the habit of practicing the presence of God.

God’s presence dwells within us from our formation in the womb and then removes our original sin at our baptism. That sacrament eventually opens the door to the Eucharist where we receive him ever more fully. Jesus calls us into a relationship with him through our baptism and shares his dynamic presence with us through every sacrament.

The grace, glory, and presence of God come through this relationship with him. The pure in heart experience God’s presence as his grace floods their spirits. When we sin we refuse to glorify God, for sin deprives us of his glory and hides his presence. Obedience, surrender, and humility keep us in God’s presence as we depend on our Father for everything. How does this work?

If I am God’s beloved child and he is the center of my life, then I want to live every moment in his presence, in his will. He surprises me with hidden gifts, which I often don’t recognize. He unlocks better ways for me to react to emotional hot buttons, ways I hesitate to accept. He begins to break the sinful patterns I want to ignore but he wants to expel.

If I act out like a rebellious child, I walk away from his will and his presence, his loving relationship with me. Then I easily give into temptation to assert my will, defend my stance, or let

loose my outrage.

When I choose to live out my life in his presence, I don't need to confront others or defend myself. I needn't overreact to what anyone insists is the truth but in fact is a carefully phrased lie. I needn't fear discovering my weaknesses while cradled in the strong arms of his loving presence. I know the Truth and he is my Way and my Life.

When I am aware of living in God's presence, he helps me develop confidence. Not confidence in myself, but in him, yet based on who I am in him. I'm far from living consistently in his presence, but as our relationship grows I'm working toward choosing to mirror his compassionate, non-judgmental presence in my life in the way I look and walk and talk.

We can look forward to heaven for our ultimate joy while knowing he dwells with us most actively in the present tense of our lives. He is the healer of the past, provider of the future, and God of the present. We can live right here, right now with the Lord, undaunted by the hurts of the past or fears about the future. When we stay awake to his continual presence, calling on him in every situation, he will meet us and join hearts with us. We become radiant with joy.

Does your relationship with God bring you the radiant joy of his presence?

(© 2014 Nancy H C Ward)

(Photo by Nancy Ward taken above Calvary Hill Cemetery, Dallas, TX)

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This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/the-radiant-joy-of-gods-presence/>  
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# THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE: Crucible for the Saints [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

by Susan Fox

*“What you don't understand is I'd catch a grenade for ya; throw my hand on a blade for ya; I'd jump in front of a train for ya. You know I'd do anything for ya. Oh, oh, oh, oh, I would go through all this pain, take a bullet straight through my brain. Yes, I would die for you, baby. But you won't do the same ....” (Grenade by Bruno Mars)*

*“But will ya change a diaper for her? Will ya clean up vomit off the wall for her? Will ya wash the dishes?” (Susan Fox)*



The homeless man scarfed down my husband's dinner leaning over the garbage can right in front of us. He was expressing his gratitude.

He didn't speak. He didn't have to.

Larry had carefully eaten only half his dinner of Chile Colorado, rice and beans at the Old Town

Mexican Café in San Diego. There was nothing finer than food from this restaurant in Larry's mind, and Chile Colorado was his favorite dish. He had hoped to eat the rest for breakfast.

Then as we were taking turns taking pictures in front of the restaurant, Larry noticed a homeless man digging in the garbage can for food.

I didn't see the exchange, but eventually it dawned on me that my husband's leftovers were now in the hands of the dark curly-haired man standing over the garbage can in front of me. He was frantically eating them.

Without lifting a finger, I had participated in a tremendous act of charity. I was married to the man who gave up -- the rest of his dinner.

*“And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband.” (1Cor 7:13-14)*

Though St. Paul in the quote above referred to mixed marriages between a believer and an unbeliever, how much more so is the believing spouse sanctified by acts of charity done by the other believing spouse?

My husband stuffs information into my head before every blog post and then congratulates himself because his wife is shortening his time in Purgatory when she writes.

Holy Marriage is a mystery.

The Catholic Church regards marriage and family life as one of the “most precious of human values.” Yet witness the difficulty Christians encounter in trying to explain why the Church is not able to endorse same-sex "marriage." Simply put, “same-sex marriage” is a misnomer in the

language of the Church, because no union can be a marriage if it is intrinsically (by created structure) closed to new life.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops invites us to look at the issue from the point of view of the child of such a marriage. “Our own experience informs us. We all have a desire to know, be connected with, and loved by our own mother and father regardless of our relationship with them. This experience of God's plan for creation has been stamped into our very nature.”

“Rather than merely biological artifacts, moms, dads and siblings are part of our identity. Every person has a right to be part of a family, to be born to a mother and father united in marriage,”  
(Donum Vitae )

The [Pursuit of Truth](#) website further explains the matter: “a specific choice needs to be made by each of the spouses to invite Christ to be the center, the pinnacle, and the anchor of their union.”



And why should they build their marriage on the Rock, who is Jesus Christ? On Oct. 17, 1989, at 5:04 p.m. I cowered under my desk at the San Francisco Examiner Building in San Francisco, while the earth shook to the tune of 6.9 on the Richter scale. 63 people died, including a woman from my parish in Alameda, who was buried in the collapse of the Cypress Street Viaduct. Thousands of people were rendered homeless. I was a business reporter, so shortly afterwards I was near the epicenter of the quake walking through a multi-million dollar house with an insurance adjuster to do a story for my paper. The house was built half on rock and half on sand. The part on rock was perfectly solid and untouched by the quake, but when we walked into the rooms built on sand I could touch the wall and it would sway -- a multi-million dollar house rendered useless by the movement of the earth.

The Catholic Church neither favors "homosexual" nor "heterosexual" marriage. That's right, we refuse to discuss marriage in "heterosexual" terms or to define people according to their sexuality. The Catholic Church defines people according to their relationship to a Divine Person so they can live life in its fullness -- anchored in an eternal and infinite God. Holy Marriage has Christ, the Rock, at its center.

And you guessed it! That means when the earth moves, the marriage anchored in Christ doesn't sway like that portion of the house built on sand at the epicenter of the Quake of '89. Marriage has an enduring permanence about it, and that is only possible if the spouses wholeheartedly put Christ at the center of their own self-embraced identity.

“Thus, a Holy Marriage will exhibit the virtue of chastity, because our desire for chastity increases the more and more we actually look to Christ first and foremost for our fulfillment.” ([www.pursuitoftruth.ca](http://www.pursuitoftruth.ca))

And Lawrence Fox would put that this way: “Marriage is like going into a candy store. Everything you ever wanted is in there, but you find out you can’t have everything at once.” So you have to practice chastity.

The problem is that modern man doesn’t understand the purpose of sex. How many times have I heard it said that marriage is an emotional feeling of love? That definition completely opens the door for someone else to define their same-sex relationship as marriage because they love each other, right?

But feelings are notoriously unstable. What happens when your feelings change? Obviously, you get a divorce, weeping, “I don’t love you any more!” And relationships between people of the same sex are short-lived and often include other parties by mutual consent. The “feeling of love” is the wrong foundation in which to enter a permanent relationship with another person.



Everything has to be used according to its proper purpose. The eye is for seeing. It is not for tasting. Hold a brownie up to your eye. Can you taste it? No, but you can see it! Stop trying to taste the brownie with your eye. Put it in your mouth. Yum.

If you think man is only a material creature with no spirit, it's easy to believe sex is a play toy that can be used with multiple persons of both the same and opposite sex. But people who try this lifestyle experience enormous personal suffering and emotional pain – as well as sickness -- because they have not understood the nature of man nor the purpose of sex.

Man was created by God in His image and likeness to **give back** to God and neighbor the Love we receive from God. We are body/spirit creatures who can express love in multiple dimensions – in language, looking, prayer and touching. The Church recognizes that the human person can express its vocation to love in only two specific ways: chaste marriage and celibacy, which is the mastery of chastity for a single person.

That concept of man has been entirely swept away by a tidal wave of free sex, contraception, same sex experimentation, divorce, abortion and pornography.

There probably isn't a television program or a romance novel written today in which sex is not celebrated outside marriage, and having sex before marriage without making any demands on your partner is not regarded as a virtue. The most deviant sexual relations are glorified in "romance" novels sold in Costco Stores where the whole family shops.

That is a vile deception and sure route to unhappiness. But our children are being exposed to that thinking in their schools, all the social media, on television, in the homes of their friends, and at

the doctor's office.

Sexuality is not a purely biological function. It concerns the innermost being of the human person. "It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death," according to Pope John Paul II (*Familiaris Consortio*), who asserted that total physical self-giving is a lie if it is not a sign and fruit of total personal self-giving. We are persons. Even the neurochemistry of our brains bonds us to previous and current relationships regardless of our specific choices. You can't just give your body and assume that "no one is getting hurt."

Therefore, "the only "place" in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage," Pope John Paul said, adding that marriage is the "covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God Himself."

So the true purpose of sex is self-giving, including a life-long commitment and openness to new human life, only physically possible between two people of the opposite sex. And its proper place is marriage. Get the difference? The world thinks sex is a play toy. But its real purpose is self-giving. Take the brownie out of your eye. Put it in your mouth. The stable family is the cradle of civilization.

Everything else – pornography, free love, adultery, strip dancing, and every other form of unchaste activity – is an attempt to enjoy the goods of marriage outside marriage. There is undoubtedly pleasure in these activities, but like my mother used to say, "Susan, there's a time and a place for everything." Life-long committed marriage open to life is the place for sex. A sacrifice today will be a sure investment for the stability of your family in the future.

In my door-to-door work in the Legion of Mary, I met a young man who was living with his girlfriend. They had just had a baby and she was suffering from an extremely severe case of Post-Partum Depression. I spent an hour and a half trying to convince him to marry her because he told me he loved her, he loved the baby, and he didn't want to ever lose her or the baby. But it was very hard for him to come to that decision because he was probably going through one of the worst ordeals of what should have been his married life.

Meanwhile his future wife was in the process of becoming embittered and angry against him because he couldn't say, "I love you, I give myself to you completely -- even when you are suffering from a condition resulting from the birth of our child." And his child's life was in

terrible jeopardy. He was born in that part of the house built on sand, not on the Rock. Even if the parents married now, the fact that they cohabitated before marriage made their eventual divorce 50 percent more likely.

And that baby's tragic circumstance is becoming increasingly more common. Today more than 50 percent of births to women under 30 occur outside marriage. That means more children growing up in poverty, without a father and a greater chance of abuse and emotional distress from an unstable home.

Because we had no prior sexual relationships before our marriage, when Lawrence and I married, there was a real single-hearted devotion that developed between the two of us. Thus we were no longer two, but one flesh.

This single-hearted devotion is a safe and secure place to be when you have a miscarriage, suffer financial difficulties, get depressed or do something stupid. There's never the issue of "I'll marry her when she isn't so upset all the time. I'll marry her when I have enough money. I'll marry her when everything's perfect." That's the key to insecurity, fights and utter misery because the nature of the marriage covenant is "for better or for worse" and things are absolutely guaranteed never to be perfect.

But there are many different kinds of marriages. Not every married man and woman has physical children, yet every fruitful marriage will be expressed in motherhood and fatherhood. Sterility does not cancel openness to new life and the structural design to achieve it.

Lawrence and I have close friends, who suffer the tragedy of infertility. So they got training to teach Natural Family Planning, which is both a means to delay birth and a vital means of achieving birth for infertile couples. They were about to embark on their new ministry, and I ran into them after Mass, and without thinking, I announced, "You will become mother and father to many children." In fact, each baby born as a fruit of their ministry would be their child. What a wonderful married vocation! Countless human beings enter the world because of a sterile couple's shared and married commitment to teach Natural Family Planning.

Every holy marriage embraces the cross. No one will find the cross in a relationship based only on "a feeling of love." Some day, you will have to clean up your kid's vomit on the wall, or sleep in the hospital room with your sick spouse because a male nurse scared her, and where will that "feeling of love" be then? Those experiences are unpleasant.



But for 29 years my mother's marriage bed WAS her cross. For my stepfather was emotionally abusive. He didn't do it on purpose, but because he was mentally ill. In the 1970s, I came home from graduate school and had my mother weeping in my arms because "Hutch was so mean to me." She always was a strong woman. This was very unusual.

"Mom," I said, "You have to get counseling." So she did. The priest psychologist had her outline my stepfather's behavior and then gave her a diagnosis. Though there were drugs for his condition, we both knew if we tried to get him to the doctor the roof would blow off the house.

Technically speaking, my mother could have gotten a Catholic annulment. But with typical Mom logic, she said, "Hutch didn't know he was ill when he married me, and so I can't abandon him." And so she freely embraced an incredible life of physical, emotional and mental suffering until she died in 2001. Her last confession was in my dining room. I was in the back bedroom, but I heard the sobs, and the words, "Hutch, Hutch, Hutch."

The physical suffering came from her health, but having my Dad as her guardian in such trying circumstances made her health issues worse. She was sitting in the chair in her living room one time, one leg amputated and great pain in the other. And I said, “Mom, you know all this suffering will probably save Hutch.” With great passion, she said, “I dearly hope so. Oh God, I hope so.”

And so it did. Mom’s marriage to Hutch exemplified St. Paul’s quote above about the unbelieving spouse being sanctified by the believing spouse. Mom even had a vision of that some years earlier. She saw Hutch following her up to Communion. He was not Catholic.

As far as we knew, Dad was never baptized. In fact, he was somewhat anti-Catholic. When Mom was sick, the local Legion of Mary president – her best friend – visited. And he shouted at her, and threw her off the property. At that stage of his life, he couldn’t stand the Legion of Mary.

But Dad drove Mom to take Communion to the Sick, and drove her to the nursing home to visit the sick. Heck, he even drove her to the trailer park to take communion to a woman who had been a prostitute and was dying of AIDs.

He was deaf as a doornail, but he also went to Church with Mom every Sunday and sat in the very back. One time, I was giving communion to Mom in the hospital and I looked up and surprised such a look of longing on my stepfather’s face as he looked at the Holy Eucharist. “My goodness,” I thought, “he knows it’s Jesus. And he wants Him!”

So Mom died on the Feast of St. Peter and Paul in 2001, and Dad continued to attend Mass on Sunday – deaf as a doornail. The Legion of Mary president he threw out of the house previously? She got ill, and while she was in the hospital my stepfather went to visit her. She was terrified. But Dad was oblivious. He simply wanted to visit the sick like Mom had done.

I said to him, “Dad, why don’t you become Catholic so you can get the sacraments too?” He answered, “Susan, I do not qualify.” I weakly tried to tell him a priest could change that. But inside my heart, I thought, “Congratulations Dad. Jesus died on the cross for every member of the human race except you.”

I sent two priests to him to ask him to be baptized. But one taught him the Rosary and the other simply invited him to Mass. He was in the nursing home now, so the invitation to Mass was good because he went to Mass every Sunday in the nursing home, including the week he died. He couldn't hear a thing. He wouldn't wear hearing aids. But he knew the Real Presence and he desired Him. That is what the Catholic Church calls Baptism by desire.

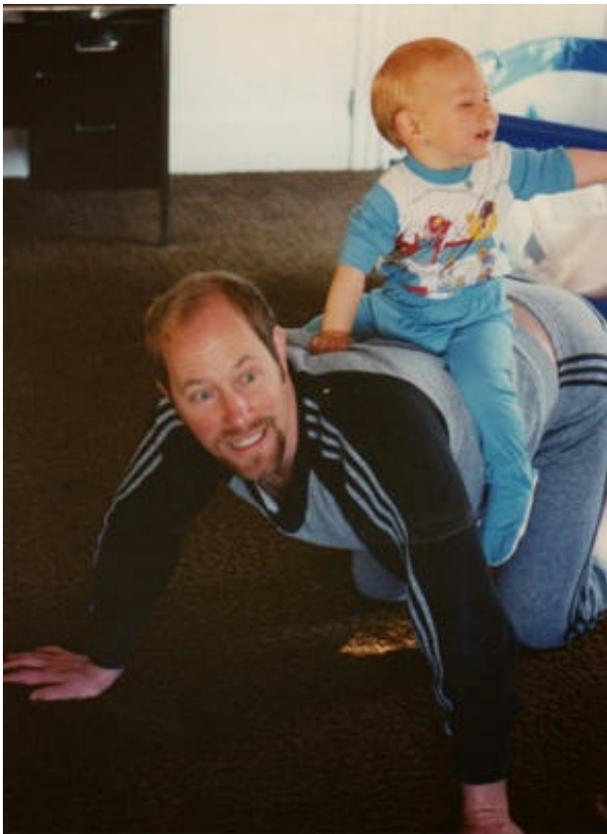
I lived in Arizona when he died in Washington State. But the Lord permitted me to say the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for him just before he died, which means he received all the graces necessary for salvation. I had no knowledge his condition had taken a turn for the worse, as my stepbrother didn't tell me until after Dad was dead.

The Mass readings on the day he died told me the outcome: "Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you." For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed." (Gal 3:6-9) Because he died with the faith of Abraham, Dad will live in the bosom of Abraham (an image for heaven), sealed by the Holy Spirit.

My stepfather was literally sanctified by his marriage. Holy marriage is supposed to be a crucible, a training ground for saints.

The Catholic Church is full of stories of marriages that sanctified both spouses and children. I think of St. Theresa of Lisieux. Both her parents have been declared blessed by the Catholic Church.

St. Theresa herself understood she came from a family, and she owed her holiness to her parents, Blessed Louis and Zélie Martin. She embroidered a picture of her family with roses symbolizing each family member on a priest's vestment. The two big full mature roses were her parents. The smaller roses – she and her three sisters. And she sewed two little buds because her mother had two miscarriages. Even the little buds count. What a holy family life!



I was in my Aqua Zumba class today with an elderly married couple. He was tall and thin. She was short and stout. No one would call them beautiful. But when they looked at each other, it was like the sun came out from behind the clouds. Why they were both beautiful! And each looked at the other as if they beheld gold.

Lawrence spoke to me this week from the San Diego Airport. We had just been there together two weeks ago. “I can’t believe how empty this airport seems without you,” he said.

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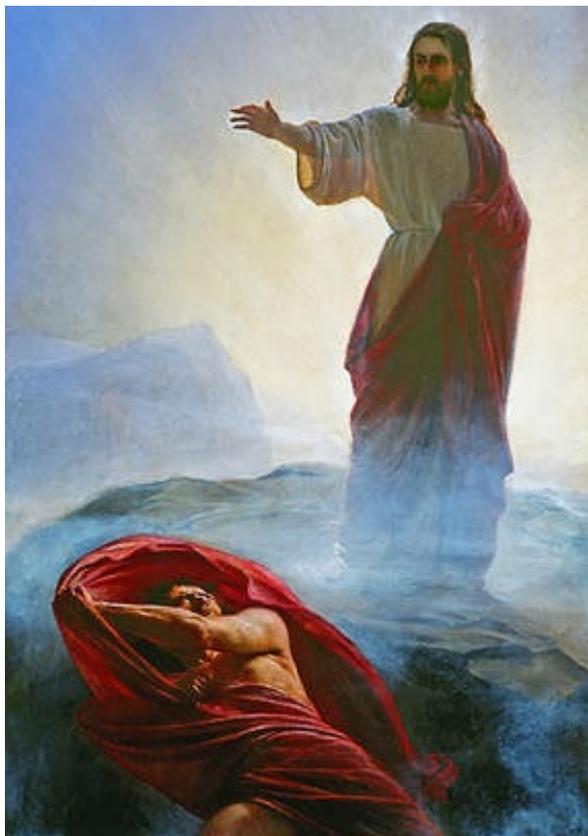
## Speaking of Crosses [at A Spiritual Journey]

What makes a cross? Most crosses we endure and suffer are caused by our lack of perfection ~ we distrust and disobey God, are selfish and not loving enough. God does not want us to be afraid or anxious so that we may have peace, but we don't listen and make everything (including ourselves) even more complicated, worsening our burden. The rest of the crosses are those inflicted upon us or given to us by God ~ here we must see them as blessings that can benefit us spiritually. It's in our willingness to carry our cross and follow Jesus that we receive strength and joy. In conclusion, all self-created crosses can be eliminated and the rest, lightly carried with God's help.

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## Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? [at The Cloistered Heart]



Recently I read something touting a "politically correct" (but warned against in Scripture) lifestyle as being something Jesus would applaud. I immediately thought: "Oh, *really?*" Just who, I asked, is this Jesus of whom the writer is speaking? It's definitely not the Jesus quoted and taught about in Scripture and 2,000 years of the Church. The real Christ clearly taught against what the author was endorsing. This is extremely important. Nothing in our lives could be *more* important. For those of us who want to respond to the world through the ["grillwork"](#) of God's will, a knowledge of the real Jesus is critical. If I am going to see the world through Scripture and the teachings of the Church, I must have a working knowledge of what these are. I cannot make them up for myself. And certainly I can't invent my own Jesus, one who will approve of everything I do.. even sin. The real Jesus loves me; He genuinely loves me. He cares enough about me to correct my missteps. He doesn't overlook the cliffs I'm blindly frolicking about on; He's not afraid of warning me about them lest He interrupt my fun. He is upset when I (often unknowingly) entertain temptations coming from the enemy of my soul *"We can make the mistake of trying to make hard truths so palatable,"* [writes Dan Burke at Roman Catholic Spiritual Direction](#), *"that we end up presenting half-truths or even worse, untruths (implied or actual)... Yes, we can and must say "come as you are"; but we must also proclaim that the God of Love who meets us where we are, loves us too much to leave us there. He calls us to union with Him where we will find the Truth that sets us free to know and live an abundant life in Him."*

How do I get to know the real Jesus?

I open Scripture and read about Him.

For those who aren't accustomed to doing this, I suggest beginning with the Gospel of John... reading straight through, taking it slowly and prayerfully (definitely prayerfully).

And however does a layperson get to know the teachings of the church? Ah, we have such a gift in the Official Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is clearly laid out and indexed. I don't read it straight through - but when I want to look up what the Church teaches on a subject, I check the index. It is accessible, clear, and easy to understand.

*"When someone comes preaching another Jesus than the One we preached, or when you receive a different spirit than the one you have received, or a gospel other than the one you accepted, you seem to endure it quite well." (2 Corinthians 11:4)*

May such a thing never be said of us.

*Painting: Carl Heinrich Bloch, Jesus Tempted*

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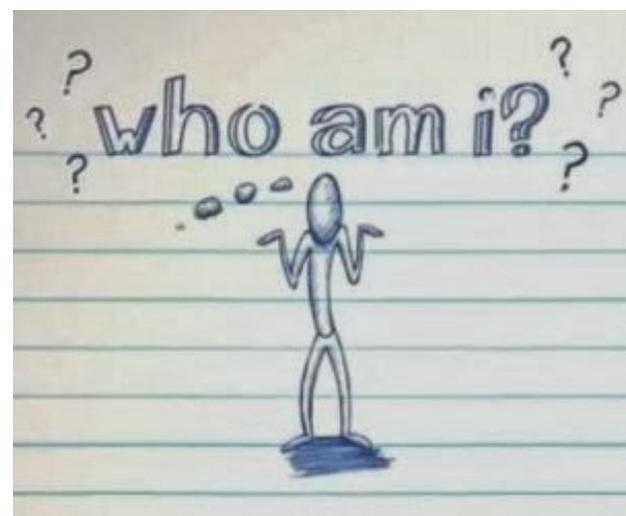
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# Knowing Your True Identity [at For Such a Time as This]

I spent the past weekend at a retreat for women called ‘Beloved’. It happens twice a year at the [Sion Community in Brentwood](#), and although I can’t say any more about it so as not to ruin it for any future attendees, I can STRONGLY recommend it. If it was up to me, every woman would have the chance to experience such an incredible encounter with Jesus! Over the course of the retreat I came to realise something so important, and it’s really on my heart to share it with you. I pray that what you read will be a blessing to you, and that those of you who can relate to it will find freedom in the revelation...

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For several years as a teenager, amidst a lethal combination of anorexia and depression, I self-harmed. Twice I wrote (or rather cut) the word ‘FAT’ into myself. In doing so, I physically branded myself with the identity that I saw whenever I looked in the mirror. The identity that my warped perception convinced me was reality. Yet now, **by the grace of God alone**, I don’t have a single scar, no matter how deep the scissors went into my skin.



What I realised over the weekend was that this is no fluke occurrence. God removed the label I had given myself and replaced it with my true **identity** as His beloved daughter, and His Son’s beloved bride. He wiped away the lies I had been brainwashed into believing, and in their place poured out His unending stream of affirmation and adoration. ‘You are altogether beautiful my

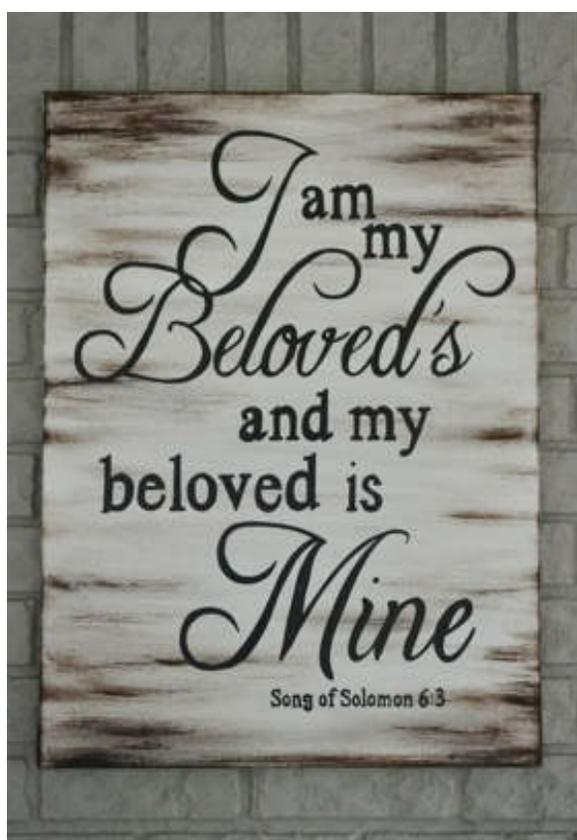
love, there is **no flaw in you**' (Song of Songs 4:7). NO flaw... Not a single scar.

### **“What a ravishing young woman!”**

A lovely lady paid me a lovely compliment. I laughed awkwardly. Then I was reminded of [Fran's beautiful post](#) explaining that compliments stem from God's own selfless love, and suddenly I was able to see those words as what they truly reflected: GOD's view of me! In fact, he's even told me that himself: 'You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride' (Song of Songs 4:9). He's telling YOU the same thing, if only you could break free of the sound-proof box you're imprisoned in – the affliction that all women suffer from to some extent – and listen. We are the creation of an infallible God. He doesn't make mistakes, and His view of us is never wrong.

Somewhere along the way, from the fall of Eve to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we have lost sight of what it truly means to be a woman, and have suffered deeply as a result. We struggle to see ourselves as the beautiful people God created us to be (or we don't allow ourselves to). When did 'she loves herself' stop being an acknowledgement of a close relationship with God and start being a criticism?

We are so intensely fearful of being seen as self-righteous or arrogant that we go so far the other way that we end up out of touch with reality and vulnerable to deep-rooted false beliefs about ourselves. We are happier to believe the lies and degradation thrown at us like lumps of mud than risk being rejected by the world if we step out into the light of Christ and embrace our glorious femininity. I hope and pray that you will join me in determining that **THAT STOPS TODAY!**



Our **TRUE** identity is not the one which is forced on us by the culture we live in, or even the one placed on us by our own insecurity, it is the identity given to us in the beginning by our loving Father. The same Father whose heart overflows with unbridled love and passion at the mere thought of us. At the mere thought of YOU. How much more fulfilling could our lives be if only we could allow ourselves to receive just a fraction of that love, and believe just a sentence of His description of us?

**‘I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.’** (Song of Songs 6:3)

And so today I challenge you to be brave enough to listen to the affirmation God is offering you personally. Close your eyes, and let yourself **really hear** the voice of Jesus telling you:

**You are my BELOVED.**

**You are MY beloved.**

**You ARE my beloved.**

**YOU are my beloved.**

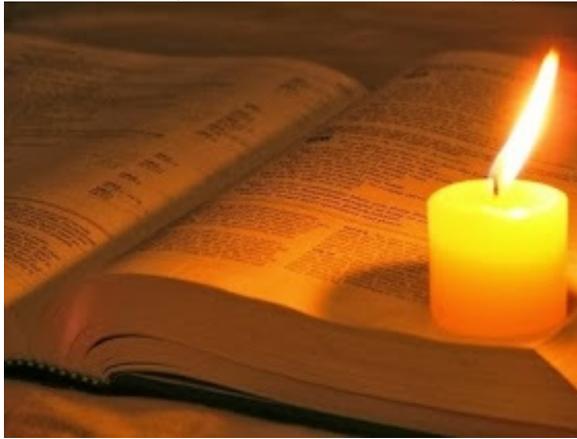
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# A First In Effective Evangelization [at Sacred Sharings For The Soul]

**"Now when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument to announce to you the mystery of God. I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have while I was with you was knowledge of Jesus, and of him as the crucified Christ. I came among you in weakness, in fear and great trembling and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit, so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)**



In learning about the lives of countless saints and people of faith who have made the largest impact throughout the history and life of our Church, we come to recognize their lowliness and their humility as an undeniable virtue that made them 'superheroes' of faith.

It was a humble desire to completely rid oneself of all things worldly; a disregard for honor and praise, and a discomfort with personal glory and merit. This shared humble witness that we find in the lives of our Salvation history is something that we must recall and strive to imitate if we are to be effective servants of God in the Church.

If we desire to share the faith with others effectively, we must first recognize the importance of being deeply rooted in our Lord who first desires us and calls us toward Himself. We are sent forth on a mission, not for our own glory but to share the glory of God. Should we attain any worldly merit on account of His work it is to Him and for Him alone that the glory belongs.

Today's second reading from St. Paul presents us with a man overwhelmed by the greatness of Our Father and a willingness to be obedient to the call he had received through Christ to share the message of the Gospel with others. He did not come forth with 'brilliance of oratory' and yet, when he spoke people responded with faith. It was in losing himself and surrendering his life to God that his works were fruitful and his speech divine. St. Paul was a witness to the transforming power of our Lord.

"I came among you in weakness, in fear and great trembling". St. Paul came forth as a witness with his human frailty and brokenness, recognizing his human nature as one among others. By recognizing his ordinary place among them, St. Paul attributed to leading many toward the extraordinary power of our Lord. He came in the Spirit of Christ not to establish great things, but to point toward Eternal Greatness. To evangelize effectively we must remember that everything begins with our Lord through our surrender to Him, onward to others, and always for the glory of God.

It is not in the establishment of great things that we are successful in sharing the Gospel and beauty of the Church, it is by rooting ourselves in what has already been established by Christ Himself. (CC)

**"Do you wish to rise? Begin by descending. You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds? Lay first the foundation of humility?" (St. Augustine)**

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## Some thoughts about Lent 2014 [at A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars]

Driving along in town to pick up our daughter in the new Catholic high school I got to thinking about Ash Wednesday and what it means to be repentant. The ancients would put on sack cloths, roll around in ashes and walk through town to prove that they are a sorry sinner. Since doing that in modern times would cause quite a serious reaction, what can I do this year that would be different and more in keeping with my personal relationship with God. Surprised one afternoon while carpooling; I always ask the kids 2 questions after they're settled in and we are on the road home: "What was the best thing that happened and what was the worst thing that happened to you today." I give them the choice of which question they want first, but they have to have an answer for both. This day I asked the kids what they were doing for Lent. They all said what they were giving up, candy, chocolate, soda, etc., then I said, "OK that's your physical sacrifice, what about your spiritual sacrifice? What are you going to do to help get closer to Jesus? I don't remember the specifics, but they were not surprised or taken back by my question, they knew what I was talking about and knew they needed to do something spiritually as well. It got them thinking about a different kind of sacrifice, one that made them step out of their comfort zone, it made them think about others for a change.



In the past, I dreaded Lent, especially right after Christmas thinking about this dark season of sin and penance, it certainly was not a fun time to look forward to. During advent we are waiting, preparing a place in our lives for Jesus, appreciating the

amazing gift of the incarnation to redeem the world. It's a miracle, a gift, the promised answer to prayers of old! During Lent, the time is spent as a time of examination, reevaluation, and sin. Pain, sorrow, torture and death consume the readings and the Friday stations of the cross are times of great sadness and remorse. Definitely, Christmas is more fun and pleasurable to live through!

OK, so here we are again with Lent upon us and there is no getting away from it. Absolutely, anyone can get through it without fasting, surely there are those who do not pay any attention to this solemn time of year, but what do they gain? Without a time of looking inward into our deepest of deep selves and working out some problem areas that we don't think we need to change any other time of the year, we would not make any progress with our relationship with God...or each other for that fact! If we didn't stop to ask that classic question that made Mayor Koch, of NYC famous: "How am I doing?" there would be no reason to search within ourselves and find the answer.

So in recent years, I have come to welcome this season as a good time, as I stop to roll up my sleeves in the face of my sinful ways. Each year is a new opportunity; I may still be working on the same issues, though, but still taking time to chisel away a small part of the ways that hurt our Lord and stain my soul. Each year a smaller part of what makes me build walls melts away in prayer and mortification. Each year, I get a chance to tell God I am so sorry and I want to change. Each year, I get a chance to do this all over again, but each year I am that much closer to God.

What am I going to do different this year? Meditation seems to be the buzz word along with the Divine Mercy chaplet and the Jesus prayer. Making time for Jesus in these prayers and quiet time along with the mantra, "Eat to live, not live to eat." No snacking and drinking nothing but water...save on cup of coffee in the morning only. Physical and spiritual fasting, check!

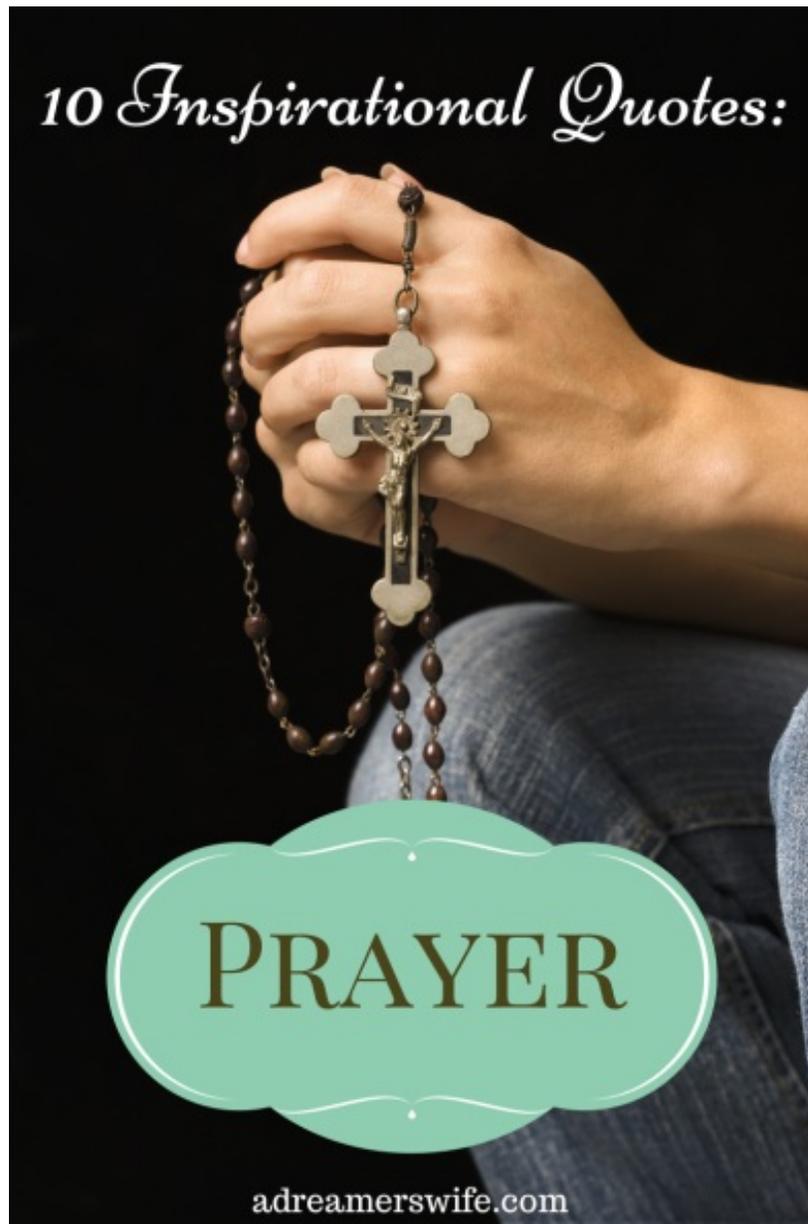
How about you? Care to share?? I'm interested!!

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## 10 Inspirational Quotes about Prayer [at A Dreamer's Wife]

I've really been focusing a lot on improving my prayer life lately – it's definitely one of [my main goals](#) for this year. I've been reading some great books, including *Prayer Primer*, by Fr. Thomas Dubay, and I've been coming across some great words of wisdom about what prayer is and what it does for us. I thought I'd share!



1. *“The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.”* -Soren Kirkegaard
2. *“The best thing each of us can do for those we love is to become a saint, a man or woman of deep prayer.”* -Thomas Dubay, S.M.
3. *“To pray well one must live well.”* -St. Augustine

4. ***“I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us, and we change things.” -Mother Teresa***
5. ***“Prayer is a mother who conceives and nourishes all virtues.” -St. Catherine of Siena***
6. ***“Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.” -Matthew 21:22***
7. ***“A soul which gives itself to prayer, either much or little, should on no account be kept within narrow bounds.” -St. Teresa of Avila***
8. ***“Don’t pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A man is powerful on his knees.” -Corrie Ten Boom***
9. ***“Prayer is not an old woman’s idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action.” -Mahatma Gandhi***
10. ***“If you ever want to be holy, to know God, to live His will, then the number one thing that you are going to have to do is pray. PERIOD! Nothing else matters.” -Fr. Larry Richards***

~

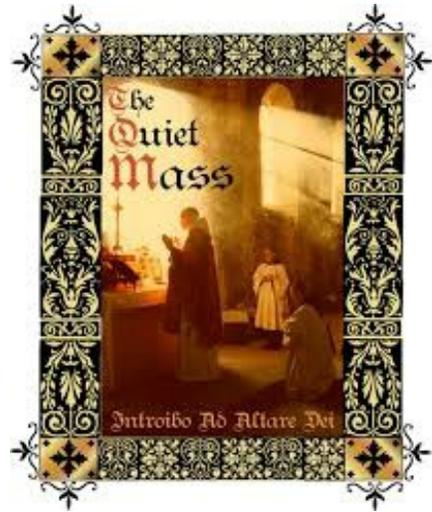
Do you have a favorite quote about prayer? If so, please share below!

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This contribution is available at <http://adreamerswife.com/2014/02/12/10-inspirational-quotes-about-prayer/>  
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## Never been to a Latin Mass? [at Linen on the Hedgerow]



You are in for a disappointment.

I mean, I do believe that sometimes those of us who adhere to the EF Mass really ramp it up too much.

We rave and rant about how mystical, reverent and inspirational it is and then - for the first time visitor it's so-ooo quiet.

And the priest has his back to the congregation so you feel just a little bit...er....ignored?

You came expecting the Latin, of course, but you have no idea when to stand, kneel or genuflect...and you just know that everyone is looking at you, waiting to see you make some fundamental mistake like sitting down when the rest of the congregation stand.

You come away bewildered and asking yourself what all the fuss was about.

Next week it'll be back to the jolly old Ordinary Form, so much easier, and it's all in English (unless you happen to go to a Tagalog/Polish/Chinese/Urdu/Swahili Mass).

So let's dispel some myths.

First, don't feel unwanted just because there are no greeters on hand to give you a leery smile and an even leerier hug before you enter the church.



We at the traditional end of the Faith just happen to believe that you are grown up and should be treated like one, we are confident that you can find a pew in the church without some

ereep

good soul guiding you to your seat.

Next, don't worry about everyone watching you - we are all so intently devout (ahem) that we would not notice if Noddy and Big Ears marched in to Mass.

And as for sitting, kneeling and standing.....do nothing until you feel that you know what is what - and that may take quite a few visits.

Just sit and watch and pray.

You don't even have to follow the prayers of the Mass, you may pray to yourself or just meditate and soak up all that is taking place.

But, if you feel that the above advice is just a bit too laid back, here are a few key essentials that you may like to observe:-

1. Genuflect before entering your pew and, again on leaving when Mass has finished (not when you go up to receive Holy Communion or return).
2. Wear a mantilla, hat or scarf (if you are a woman) and if you wish to do so - it's a personal choice and no one will condemn you for going bareheaded.
3. Receive Holy Communion kneeling (if you are able, by all means stand if you are infirm) and by mouth. If you have not done this before just close your eyes and open your mouth reasonably wide with your tongue resting on your lower lip. The priest is adept at placing the Host gently on your tongue.

And that's just about it, really.

But don't expect to love the old Mass immediately. It takes time to establish itself in the hearts,

minds and souls of those who have not experienced reverence, piety and peace in church before.

But there is one other effect from attending a Latin Mass that our old priest always emphasized when he sat round the dining table after a meal.

"The Latin Mass" he would say: "Brings special graces to those who attend"

And he was right.

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This contribution is available at <http://linenonthehedgerow.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/never-been-to-latin-mass.html>

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# The Presentation [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on January 31, 2014 · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)

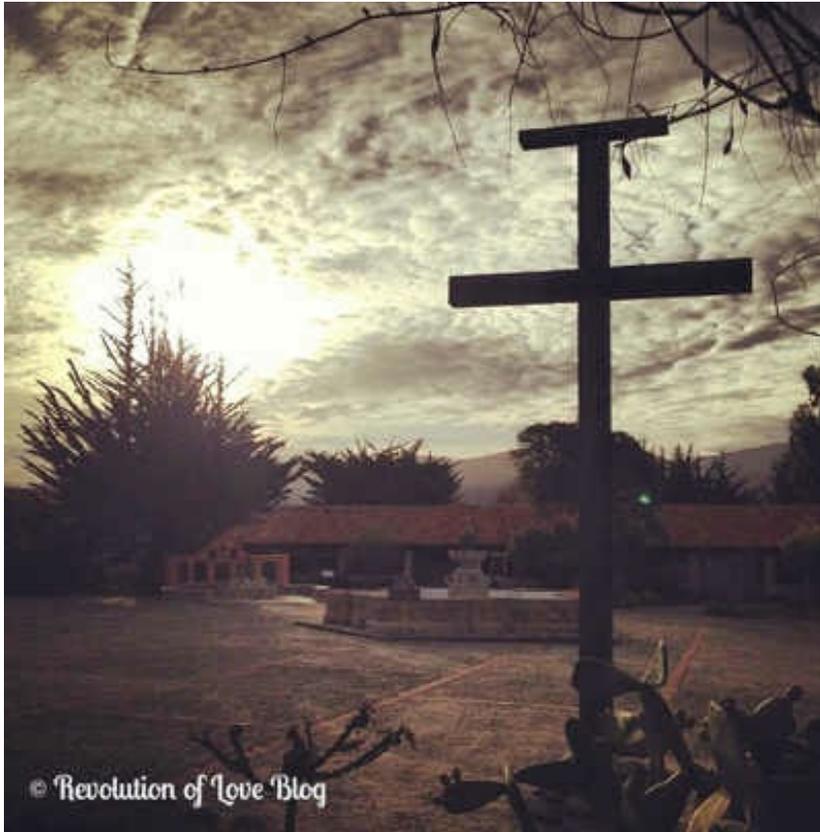


8×8” oil paint on gessoed artist board; contact the artist for purchase information.

One of the most ancient Feastday celebrations in the Catholic Church falls on February 2nd. The “Feast of the Presentation” has been celebrated since the early 4th century, so it is no wonder that it has a few names and traditions attached. The Scriptures tell us that forty days after Jesus’ birth, he was taken by Mary and Joseph to the temple for consecration as Firstborn, according to Jewish custom. He was recognized by the aged Simeon as “The Light to the Nations,” and daily the Church prays the canticle that erupted from Simeon’s heart. In the centuries that followed, the blessing of candles for homes began on this day, hence the name “Candlemas Day.” And since the Jewish mother completed her confinement after the birth of the baby, this day has also been called the Feast of the Purification...a yearly reminder of Mary’s unique gift of holiness on behalf of our redemption.

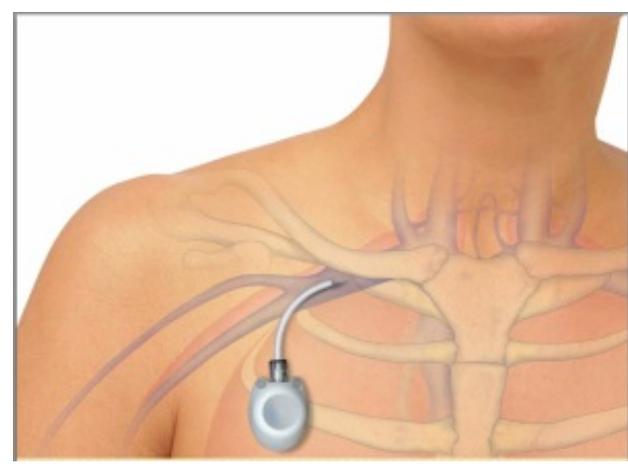


## Embracing the Cross [at Revolution of Love Blog]



Today is Day 3 of my participation in Jen's and I am rethinking my decision to participate because right now I am exhausted and I am too tired to think. LOL. There is a rain storm outside and we are thanking God for it since this is only the third time we have gotten rain all winter. I forgot what it sounded like to have the rain pounding and the wind shake the windows. On nights like this Brian always wants to watch a mystery for movie night so I am sure he will want to tonight too.

Speaking of my sweet man, today Brian had his outpatient surgery to put a port in his chest for his chemo treatments, which start March 10th. (If you are squeamish or afraid of needles this may be TMI.) Basically, the port is small medical device inserted beneath the skin. A catheter connects the port to a vein and it is used to inject the chemo or draw blood. It looks like this. Just picture it under the skin.



## [Source](#)

Thankfully the whole process only took about 3 hours and he was back home resting by late this afternoon. After the procedure I helped him get dressed and as I was kneeling on the floor putting on his socks and shoes for him, I looked up at him and he smiled at me and my heart was filled with love. I know I am selfish and I complain a lot and I get bent out of shape when things don't go my way, but in that moment, I was happy to be on the floor helping him dress. It was my little way of telling him that I loved him and that I appreciated all the love he gives to me and the kids. And that we value every moment that he is here with us. Yeah, a lot to say over a pair of socks but the grace must have been flowing. 😊

This whole fight with cancer is something that we never wanted. However, in the last month there have been emotional and spiritual things revealed to us – as individuals and as a couple that have brought us closer to God and closer to each other. I know Brian has been through a lot this past month and physically the cancer had weakened him and made him sick, but he has fought bravely and grown stronger physically and spiritually. When I was talking to him this morning before his surgery he was joking around with me and I saw a look of happiness and playfulness that had been missing for awhile. I can see God working in him and I pray and hope and trust that God will continue to strengthen Brian and heal him.

But isn't that how God so often works. Something terrible happens and suffering is endured but when we trust in God, we allow him to do amazing things. He can take the ugly and make something beautiful. He can lift us up off the floor and help us to walk once again. He can take our weakness and make us strong. He can take our doubt and replace it with faith. He can perform miracles. It is not easy since it requires us to first kiss the cross but with it comes the embrace of the resurrection.

Once again, thanks for the continued prayers. Please keep them coming. Brian is ready to watch that mystery movie so time to sign off. 😊

*Bobbi 😊*

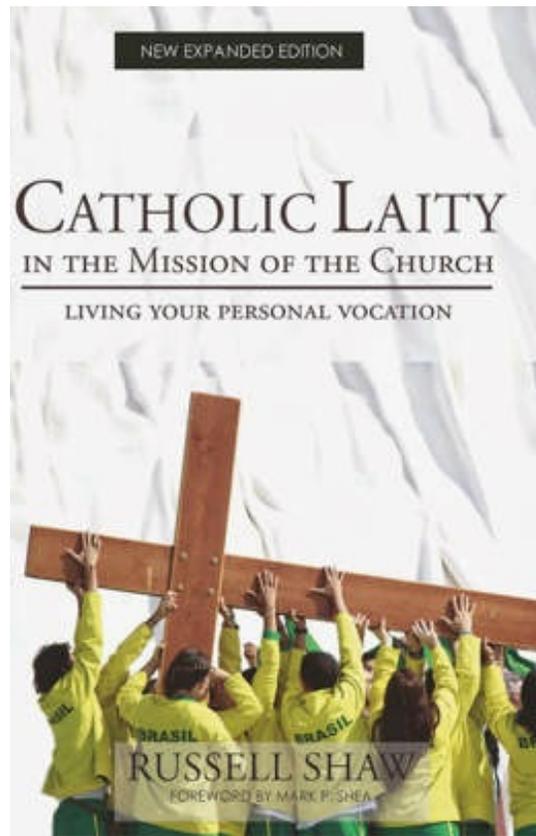
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This contribution is available at <http://www.revolutionoflove.com/blog/day-3-of-7-an-update-on-brian-22614-embracing-the-cross/>

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## Not the Fist, the Fingers [at Smaller Mannhattans]



I was given a review copy of *Catholic Laity in the Mission of the Church: Living Out Your Lay Vocation* by Russell Shaw. I looked at the cover: a blob of faceless people dressed the same, doing no-skill-no-brains heavy lifting, participating serf-like in yet another Hidebound Church Ritual. As my mother-in-law says: Oh Dear. I anticipated the usual disembodied dull platitudes and tiresome restatements of the obvious. Fortunately I read the book anyway, and was pleasantly surprised. I thought it was the opposite of the cover. It's about each lay person as a uniquely-gifted individual, not all of us en masse.

The book kicks off with a history of the laity, the clergy, and their relationship, from Acts of the Apostles to the end of the 19th century. Huh- I didn't even know the laity *had* a history. Turns out we do, and it bears directly on what our roles may be today. Moving on to the 20th century, you'll be familiar with Catholic Action, the Catholic Worker movement, and Opus Dei. They're included not so much to explain what they are, but to show how they fit into a 2000-year-old stream of non-clergy doing their own thing. I like that.

Vatican 2 is treated at length, both in its specific attention to encouraging the laity to Get Out There Without Waitin' for Faddah an' Sistah t'Tell Ya What t'Do; and the difference between what V2 asked the laity to do, and what the laity's actually done so far. Apparently lay Catholics are still too much beholden to the clergy, which I understand completely, having been born in 1957. It wasn't that the Church didn't say, "Y'all lay folks got your own charisms, go use 'em." It did. But the people were thinking in terms of doing stuff within the established system, and following the initiatives of that system; and the Church didn't argue. Even today the typical Catholic has yet to jump on the chance to

[figure out his or her unique gifts](#)

, and then act on them without necessarily seeking the Church's approval, guidance, or control. But that was still V2's message.

So what's the problem? We could rattle off a few, but I would not have included *clericalism* among them. You know, what Pope Francis talks about every Tuesday. Shaw writes: "Clericalism....assumes that clerics not only are, but are meant to be the active, dominant elite in the Church, and lay people the passive, subservient mass." Careful attention is given to clericalism; how it curbs the laity's initiative and sense of responsibility; and how to minimize its effects. (Shaw wrote this book in 2005. Francis must have read it.)

That's the first half of the book, thematically if not physically. The second half discusses how the laity can get on with it:

1. Taking the idea of lay vocation seriously. That is, every lay person is called by God to Do Something, no less than Faddah or Sistah. God called you. Yes, you. Get on with it.
2. Figuring out your vocation and the charisms you received at Confirmation. So you can get on with it.
3. Taking responsibility for the Church.

4. Evangelizing the World wherever you find yourself. Get on with it. You could die tomorrow. OK, that's me talking, not the book, but a sense of urgency is a good thing.

If you're already on the New Evangelization Express, doing the Intentional Disciple Thing, you probably don't *need* to read this book. But you'll profit from its broad and deep scope if you do read it. If you're on the fence, or behind the fence, then yes, you need to read this book.

Get fired up about Jesus and His Church.

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This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2014/02/book-review-7-are-you-dead-yet-no.html>  
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## Not all men are bullets

A phone call is jarring when in it, your friend divulges the discovery she made of her husband's infidelity. Of her boyfriend's big lie. Of her crush's double life. Or of his *wife*.

Whatever the breach of trust, the result -- at first, at least -- is devastating. **One person's choice pulls the path out from under somebody else, somebody who didn't sign up for this.** Somebody who promised to be true to him even in bad times after he promised infidelity would never be the source of them.

Until it was.

"Until death," as it turns out, is often code for "until I change my mind" -- fidelity often only upheld when not inconvenient. She picks him as husband and intertwines her world with his, but has to peg him, when he leaves her, as a bullet.

***You really dodged a bullet.***

Fidelity is too often breached, too treated as impossible. I've received too many jarring phone calls.

This isn't a blame game. **Relationships are systemic, and most marriages that end probably shouldn't have started.** But I've met enough women who are so disheartened by the men who used to walk life beside them to share this with all men on women's behalf:

**Some of us are giving up on you.**

Which doesn't mean good single men will be single forever. It means women need good single men now more than ever.

We need you to step up and stand out.

To teach your brothers (biological or otherwise) how to make good choices.

To teach them to treat women first as sisters.

We need our male friends and our brothers and our dads to do what they say they are going to do. We need to meet men who use forethought before they pursue us, who pursue God before they pursue us. We need men whose choices inspire us to say "they *do* exist" (and not "is this some kind of a joke?").

We need to know that men exist who want to love a woman like Christ loves the church. Who know love is a choice.

We need to know that not all men are bullets.

Because I *know* you aren't, but I know a lot of ladies who need good men to prove it.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.arleenspenceley.com/2014/02/not-all-men-are-bullets.html>  
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## Beautiful, Blessed Day [at Footprints on My Heart]

For no real reason, February is my least favorite month of the year. The holidays are over, the groundhog usually sees its shadow and the winter days drag on. I begin counting down the days to Spring and greet each colder day with growing dismay, wistfully wishing the merriment of Spring.

This year, I determined not to drag my feet and hang my head for 28 days of the year. I ran across a joy dare on [Ann Voskamp's](#) and decided to put it into practice.

It worked!

Not two weeks into it and I plumb forgot completely about it, simply went about my days still wishing for warmer weather and still feeling anxious about academics, but still smiling both inside and out.

And then came today. Beautiful, blessed **today**.

It began with observing in a 2nd grade classroom at a Catholic school. Goodness knows the children (and even the teachers) are perfectly clueless about the stress I feel about completing this semester (I often find myself chanting the Little Blue Engine's line: *I think I can, I think I can, I think I can*); I was caught entirely by surprised when, during morning prayers, the students (who all wanted to know whether or not I'm married) went around the room sharing prayer intentions and one sweet girl prayed for me! What a gift her prayer for me was in that moment and, truthfully, for this entire semester. I'm quite sure I will not soon forger her prayer.

The beauty continued throughout the morning as I stayed and observed the everyday of the classroom. When my time there was over, I bade farewell until the next time, stopped for a brief visit with the preschool classroom where I'd been the past few weeks and enjoyed some *hilarious* conversation with the teachers (seriously, these ladies enjoy their job wayyyyyyy too much! \*smiles\*) and returned home for an hour and a bit, during which time I was able to kick off

my boots and put up my feet before heading out to destination number next: my work.

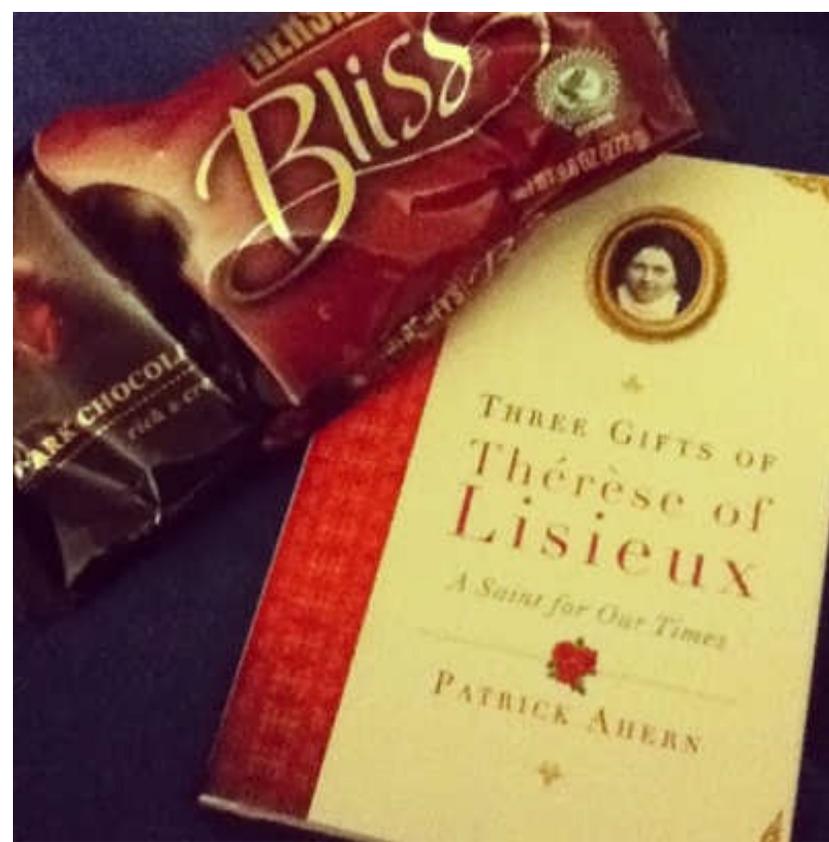
I have *finally* determined a topic for my [curriculum](#) and was able to touch base and update my supervising teacher (one of the teachers I already work with) on the goings-on in my own world of academia. Having those logistics basically finalized gives me a few more minutes to breathe; that added to the hilarious, completely over-her-head joke that one of our 3 year olds unknowingly told just as we were all leaving preschool that sent us into peels of laughter and my spirits were absolutely soaring as I skipped my way to my awaiting car, ready to drive 10 minutes to the nearest Catholic Church which, happily, has an evening Mass at a time that allows me to do a holy hour between getting off work and Mass beginning. Have I ever mentioned that being Catholic is pretty awesome?

I sat down in the row of chairs nearest the tabernacle and began reading a truly awesome book, which incidentally was released only earlier this month. Did you know I'm a devotee of St. Thérèse of Lisieux? A book review is coming when I finish it... expect very high, positive, enthusiastic (you get the point) remarks.

Mass was completely *beautiful*. Every Mass is, but sometimes it hits me in a unique way that the Eucharist is *Jesus*. Today was one such day: as I received Him, my first thought was, "Hi, Jesus!" And when I thought His Name again, it blew me away that this is truly *Him*.

**His real presence. Wow!**

And when I finally arrived home for the evening 12 hours after I first left the house (don't feel bad for me, though, because - remember - I got to come home for an hour around lunch. So, really, I only had an 11 hour day today), I ate a delicious dinner, popped some Bliss(ful) dark chocolate in my mouth, and settled down to read some more.



Is there a better way to end such a beautiful day?

For some irrational reason, February is my least favorite month of the year. For so many *beautiful* reasons, February 25, 2014 has been my favorite day this year. (with my [first step into a Catholic Montessori classroom](#) being a very close second.)

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This contribution is available at <http://totus2usmaria.blogspot.com/2014/02/beautiful-blessed-day.html>  
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2.10.14

# Loving God when Our Children Suffer [at Catholic Sistas]

No comments

Allison is a 40-something mother of seven, living in Alaska, accepted into the Church (together with her husband, thank God) in 2004. She spends her days homeschooling and packaging meat that her menfolk hunt and bring home. She cannot garden to save her life but picks wild blueberries like a champ. She has been published in an edition of Chicken Soup for the Soul and keeps a blog at [www.northerncffamily.blogspot.com](http://www.northerncffamily.blogspot.com), writing about living out the Faith with children with cystic fibrosis.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicsistas.com/2014/02/10/loving-god-children-suffer/>  
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## Why Different Images / Statues of Mary? [at Mama Mary]



Our Lady of Lourdes, France.



Our Lady of Remedies (Virgen de los Remedios) of Odlot, the Philippines.



Our Lady of La Salette in La Salette, France.



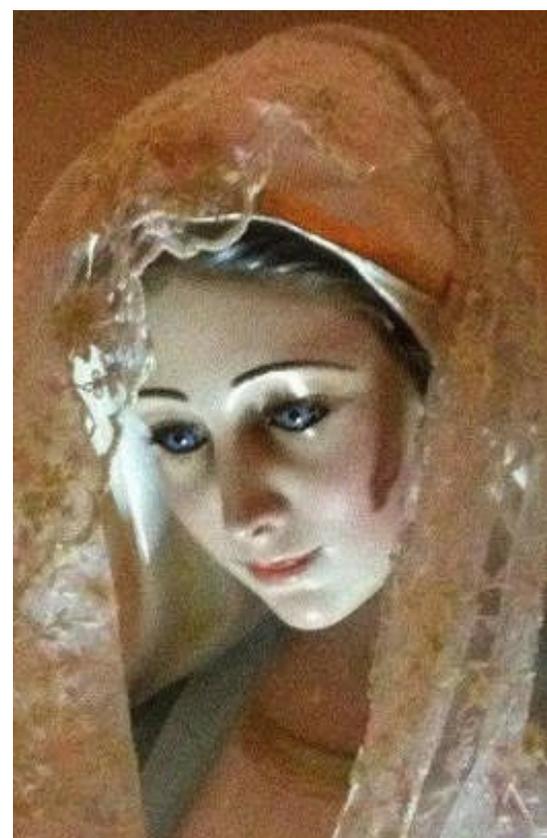
Our Lady of Fatima in Our Lady of Sorrows Basilica, Chicago, USA.

When I was in College a friend of mine challenged me to answer why there is not one standard statue or image of the Virgin Mary, instead of the various images and statues. He said to me, “Why is there not the same statue of Jesus and Mary at every Catholic Church?” He brought to my

attention that every single Catholic Church one visits, one is likely to see a different version of the images and statues of Our Lord Jesus Christ and Our Lady. At that time of the challenge, I had no ready and robust answer to give him. He was a good friend of mine in the University. He wasn't Catholic and we both studied Information Technology together. Now after so many years, I think I have an answer to his challenge and question.

The REASON why we have no one standard image or statue of Our Lord or Our Lady is the same reason we have no one translation of the Scriptures. Images/Statues like words are all part of a living language. Yes, images are part of our language and language is hard to translate and/or communicate perfectly. The Bible has hundreds of translations all attempting to communicate the same message, although some communicate them more perfectly than others. So, the various work of arts (languages of the eyes) also have ones that communicate the persons of Our Lord and Our Lady better than others.

Recently, I have been researching on images, statues and icons. I have noticed that some current works of art of Our Lady depicts her with some modern feminine appeal (I don't want to use the word sexy). An example of this is below I think:



I would like to read your thoughts on this. Thank you.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.mamamary3.com/different-mary/>  
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# Trust on Facebook Status Updates: Or Why I don't play Status Games [at The Radar Report]

I've been seeing more and more games going around on Facebook where someone will say something with the hopes people will "like" or comment on their status and they will be sucked in to the game where they will also "be required" to post a similar status on their page.

What does this do? In my opinion, it devalues the honesty of everyone who participates. If we, as Christians, are called to not lie, what does it say when we post something for the world to see that is not true. (I avoid Facebook on April Fool's Day. I don't know how many times I've seen engagement announcements, pregnancy announcements and the like with "April Fools!" tacked to the end. To their credit, they DO have a disclaimer on them.)

I'm mainly talking about the status updates saying people are moving, won money on a scratch-off, or the one going around recently where you could choose from a number of statements ranging from that you forgot to wear underwear today, you voted for Obama in the last presidential election, the number of relationships you have been in with a very high number attached, and several others.



Image courtesy of freedigitalphotos.net

I had a non-Christian friend post on Facebook she was no longer going to play these games because she did it once, and she felt that it made people not trust what she was saying. She said if she posted something she wanted everyone to know it was the truth and not second guess it.

I love her thinking. Shouldn't we as Christians take the same attitude? I know I want to be known as someone that if I say something, it's honest. I don't want people to read my Facebook status and think, "Oh, that might be a game."

Besides, there's so many more interesting things in the world to post than something that isn't true. Some of my best Facebook status updates sound like that have to be made up, but they are true. I once had a grasshopper knock down a panel to a light. I was in the hospital and my roommate was rambling about homeschooling and said Chuck Norris had a great homes school program. They sound made up, but they weren't.

Next time you're tempted to participate in one of these status games, why not find something really interesting (and true) to post instead? It's unique AND honest! Plus, everyone will learn something cool about you! What could be better than that?

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This contribution is available at <http://jenndiggy.blogspot.com/2014/02/trust-on-facebook-status-updates-or-why.html>

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# Setting up a Home Altar [at Splendor in the Home]

When we got married, one of the first things Tom insisted on was that we create a home altar. I had seen such things at the homes of a few Catholic families we knew, but never really understood how they were "used," or why they had decided to dedicate a specific area of their house for one. I resisted for a while, not wanting to sacrifice any space in our tiny little duplex towards something that I felt we would never actually use. Tom won out in the end, though, and we set up a little altar. I'm glad he insisted on it, because I've seen the graces that the altar has brought to our family and our prayer life.

## So What is the Purpose of a Home Altar?

1. It provides a location for prayer in your home. A gathering place for the family to come together. The home can truly become the "Domestic Church."

2. It can serve as a focal point - or focusing point - in the house/room. When you pass by, it's a subtle reminder that your home life is to be centered around God. It calls your mind to prayer.

"As we have altars and shrines in our churches, so a Catholic family would do well to keep a simple but dignified shrine in the home. It would be an appropriate symbol to all members that their lives belong to God; that religion and prayer are not merely a Sunday affair, and that the Christian home is a holy place." (Francis X. Weiser, S.J., *The Year of the Lord in the Christian Home*)

3. It a great place to live out the Liturgical year (especially if you remember to change some of the colors, images, etc. to correspond with the various seasons and feast of the Church).

"Thus the pulsing life of Christ's love and grace, radiating from the visual representation, will imbue our children with the sweet and solid spirit of piety based on the liturgy of the Church. There will be no need of elaborate explanations; for what the children see at the shrine will impress their hearts and minds more eloquently than a flood of words could do." (*ibid.*)

4. It can serve as a statement to all who enter your home as guests that your household is one that strives to have God at the center.

5. This one is objectively less important, but it's one of my favorite parts of

*our*

altar: it provides storage! We keep many of our holy cards, medals, Rosaries, extra scapulars, and

prayer books inside. It is always easy to find what we need for our personal devotions, or to change the items we placed out on top as the liturgical season changes.

## **Creating a Home Altar**

Your altar can really be as simple or elaborate as you like, as long as it is conducive to prayer. The most basic requirements are just: a surface, and some sort of prayer aid(s) to place on it.

### Finding a good surface

We used to have an old-fashioned console-style record player (which didn't work anymore) as our altar. When we moved into our current place, we replaced it with a nice \$40 cabinet off Craigslist which has plenty of storage inside for all our "prayer stuff." Other possible surfaces for your altar are almost endless. Any sort of tabletop, a shelf, a mantle, a radiator cover....maybe just not on top of the television, as that doesn't seem to be very conducive to reflection and prayer!

### What kinds of objects might go on an altar?

You probably have many things around your house already...a crucifix, images, icons, statues, candles, holy water, Rosaries, prayer cards, flowers, prayer books, incense, blessed objects, relics(!) ...anything that might lift your heart to God or help you to pray. Many people like to put down an altar cloth or linen of some sort. If you like, you could even find/make some in different colors, and switch them with the liturgical season, as they do at Mass.

### Where should the altar be located in the home?

I'd say ideally in a common area such as a family room. But you also want it to be functional, so it's best to be in a place where the family will actually be able to comfortably gather around for prayer. This might end up being a bedroom or the dining room or some other part of the house. (Bonus points if you can orient it on an eastern wall!)

## **Our Altar**



Pretty simple. I change out the cloth occasionally (I have a nice little stash of lace and embroidered cloths collected over the years from flea markets/thrift stores). At this point, I really just switch them as a way to change things up, and allow me to wash the dust off the old one - I don't yet have cloths in the appropriate liturgical colors. Anytime I get fresh roses (which is not often enough!) I hang a few upside-down to dry, and replace the most discolored ones in the little brass vases. St. Gerard is out on our altar now, since he is the patron of expectant mothers. The painting above cost me \$1 at a church flea market. If your family has not yet

[enthroned the Sacred Heart](#)

in your home, I strongly recommend it!



And the cabinet below holds almost everything we need for family prayers.



When we have a special intention we'd like to pray for, we light one of the large votives seen on the right, and leave it burning for several days on the altar, carrying our intentions up to Heaven.

## Some More Resources

### Do you have a home altar?

I'd love to hear what you place on it and how you use it! (feel free to include links to pictures or posts if you have them)

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This contribution is available at <http://ourordinarylifeextraordinary.blogspot.com/2014/02/setting-up-home-altar.html>

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# POPE FRANCIS: A MODERNIST HERETIC? Articles Causing an Uproar [at joy of nine9]



Since I wrote this article on Catholic Stand in support of Pope Francis a few months ago, it has been read 3,155 times with 85 comments, many from outraged traditionalists. Another article, which proclaims that the pope is dismantling Catholicism, has over 10,000 reads. Just as Christ shocked and upset the starchy traditional religious, so too does Pope Francis. Some of the 85 comments ring with the clarity of the truth and I would encourage anyone interested to read the comments of James and Wsquared who are well read in theology, Church pronouncements and have studied both Pope Benedict and Pope John Paul 11. These two commentators are intelligent, warm men of deep faith, seeing through all the media drama to the heart of a man, priest, bishop, cardinal and now pope who lives a vibrant life in Christ

Why do Faithful American Catholics Label Pope Francis: A Modernist Heretic?

<http://catholicstand.com/pope-francis-modernist-heretic/>

Every time Pope Francis speaks, the papers are filled with sensational headlines; he does not emphasize many of the popular, hot issues like abortion and homosexuality, issues which often simply serve to divide voters into an *us* and *them* mentality. When did these issues become the *only* issue that concerns the Church? Yet when the pope reminds us that our life in Christ is so much more, vocal advocates become extremely angry, denouncing the pope as the anti-pope.

How ridiculous! Why such a strong reaction?

Perhaps many Americans do not like this South American because Catholics in America were taught that God loves capitalism and that Greed is Good. Pope Francis has made some pretty negative remarks about the freebooter capitalism that has flourished since the 1990's and that will make him very unpopular with the freebooters in the US. Some of his comments about greed, avarice, and freebooter capitalism have not even shown up in the mainstream media in Canada or

the States.

I am baffled by all the negative reactions to Pope Francis. Personally I think that Pope Francis is just too joyful as he lives out his simple, his down-to earth spirituality and humble solidarity with the poor and this irritates many traditionalists. Jesus and St. Francis of Assisi also irritated the Pharisees of their eras; those pure proponents of tradition dislike anyone who challenges their lifestyle.

From the [\*Catechism of the Catholic Church\*](#):

The Catholic wisdom of the people... provides reasons for joy and humor even in the midst of a very hard life. §1676

The vocation of humanity is to show forth the image of God and to be transformed into the image of the Father's only Son. This vocation takes a personal form since each of us is called to enter into the divine beatitude; it also concerns the human community as a whole. §1877

It seems to me that Pope Francis was appointed by God to remind the Church to come back to the basics, to our foundation in Christ. The pope desires to bring us into a balance in our spiritual life. Our first love, our focus is to allow God to love us, love Him in return and treat others with the same mercy and forgiveness as we receive from Christ. When a Catholic focuses solely on the evils of one issue, he is in danger of becoming angry, resorting to fighting his way, without Love.

*36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"*

*37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." [a] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [b] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:36-40*

Many pro-lifers are so focused on one issue that they have forgotten who they are as believers, as children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, companions of the Holy Spirit.

Rather than attacking the Pope Francis, lobbyists should ask themselves, why they are reacting so vehemently. Perhaps Pope Francis is convicting them of their own shortcomings. Rather than taking the log out of their own eyes, they are searching for a speck of dust in the pope's eyes. Yet here is a man who lives simply and joyfully, a man who lives out the gospel in real tangible ways.

***Lord, forgive our arrogance and our presumption***

***that sets us up as judges. Turn our eyes to you, oh God***

***and have mercy on us.***

[heretic-articles-causing-an-uproar/](#)

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# Destroying Christianity in Ukraine: European Union | URGENT

## Opening Prayer

**In the Name of The Father, The Son, and of The Holy Spirit: (x3)**

**Brothers and sisters in Ukraine: we join you in sincere prayer, that our sufferings may be jointly offered to the Lord – that we may be unified to Our Lord Jesus Christ upon His Most Holy Cross, by which All of Death and Darkness was defeated. To You O Lord, we commend our spirits, for Your Eternal Reward, of which we are unworthy to partake on our own accord. We continue to pray that greater truth may become known, and that peace will arise out of darkness. Lord have mercy on us all. Amen.**

**Out of our love for you – our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are at the cusp of a potential massive social uprising, please be aware of the dangers of becoming too close with the European Union.**

## Here is why:

Your future children and children's children will be put at great risk of hostility directed towards them as Christians if Ukraine enters deeper relationship with the rest of the European Union. This may be difficult to accept, especially since the alternative at this time appears to be a deeper connection with Russia, which has historically been responsible for much suppression of Ukrainian people. **This is not to suggest that Ukraine should unify with Russia.**



Three Ukrainian priest/monks from Kiev stood between protesters and soldiers last week, refusing to take sides and preserving peace.

However, be it known that the European Union, along with the United States and all other “Westernized” nations have all embraced (to varying degrees) the poisonous way of thinking that **we should self-identify and define ourselves according to our sexual attractions and or inclinations.** Be it known that the social climate that has been created as a result of this, has imposed shame on Catholic and Orthodox Christians for resisting this way of labeling people. Where the Atheist regime decimated and forced Christianity underground by threat of physical torture (which was carried out in horrendous ways), this new world-wide movement will do even

worse - **it will twist the minds of your youth, to make them desire to reject Christianity.** Instead of an outside force suppressing your Christian nation, it will be your children and your children's children who will be the oppressors. This is the fast-approaching state of North and South America, along with other "westernized" nations.

Be it especially known that in these countries, Christian youth are rapidly abandoning their Catholic and Orthodox faiths because they have been taught by the culture that their Churches are hateful and bigoted. The culture does not invite questioning, but rather relies on indoctrination – motivated by heartfelt stories designed to win over the hearts of the listeners. This strategy has worked well, and today we have entire nations supporting this way of thinking – the way of thinking that embeds the idea "as something proper" that we should self-identify and define ourselves according to our sexual attractions and or inclinations. **Editor's Note: Only a few days after this article was written, LifeSite News reported this [THIS ALARMING ANNOUNCEMENT](#).**

This way of thinking leaves no room for people to recognize *non-specifically chosen sexual attractions and inclinations* to be considered distinct from *the identities we specifically choose to embrace*. In this way, this way of thinking embeds a falsehood, yet promotes the idea that just because you experience a particular attractions, it should define "who you are" as a person. The shift in our cultural climate has brought people to embrace this on a more wide-spread level, has led to an increased hostility to **all** orthodox Christians in the western world. **We are telling you from our first-hand experience, that unless you take pro-active measures to prevent that ideology from spreading, it will decimate Christianity where you are as well.**



Our culture now promotes the glorification of the demonic – and this is greatly influencing our youth.

Within two generations, the people who become invested in the "westernized" culture promoted by the European Union, will not only become de-Christianized, but will also become hostile towards Christianity altogether. **THIS HAS ALREADY OCCURRED IN THE WESTERN**

**WORLD.** People will call themselves Christians while demonstrating an irreverence for all that is Holy, including all of the Sacraments – namely The Sacrament of Marriage. Your country will degenerate into what we have in America – self-proclaimed Christians who are advancing the work of the Evil One. In addition to that, there will be legions of people who will renounce their faith and who will take pride in their choice to reject Jesus Christ and His One Holy Apostolic Church (the wholeness of the authentic orthodox catholic Orthodox-Catholic Church).

People of Ukraine, I write to you from a place where Christianity has been all but burned to the ground. Indeed it is springing forth new life in those who have clung onto truth and the Wisdom of the Holy Apostolic Churches, but the result will be even greater suffering as other ideologies fill the void that Christianity once occupied. For that reason, I sincerely pray you to heed this warning – joining the European Union will transform the social climate in an incremental way. This will primarily be done through the insertion of elements into the educational system that will be sure to undermine Christianity, and which will especially undermine the role of the parents in the formation of youth.

This occurred in recent memory as anyone who lived through Nazi power will be able to attest. Children will turn in their parents, if their parents disagree with what is being taught by the state. Children will be raised to self-identify and define themselves according to their sexual attractions and or inclinations, and they will seek fulfillment within that form of self-concept – and they will begin to attack **all orthodox Christianity** for shining the light of Truth.

Generations will be deceived, but the Truth of Jesus Christ unchanging – but there are dark forces at work in this world, and we must pray.

*Letter continued below video...*

***NOTE: The physical torture being inflicted on the people of Ukraine far surpasses what you will see in this video (Argentina and Brazil). It is a different type of torture- it is an affront by a legion of darkness, roiling in self-glory and desire for god-like status. However, like the physical violence inflicted under the Solviet Union and other times of persecution (including what is happening today), it too is a direct encounter with dark forces which have become manifest in the hearts of humankind.***

***WARNING: THIS VIDEO CONTAINS GRAPHIC WORSHIP OF SEXUALITY. PLEASE PRAY BEFORE AND AFTER VIEWING, AND PLEASE PRAY FOR ALL PERSONS AFFLICTED WITH THE DEMONIC.***

*To view the same video with an urgent message from the author, please contact the author (see below).*

We are on the cusp of that here in North America – but you, and all of Ukraine, still have an opportunity to prevent this from occurring. However, unless your people become educated about what is at stake, and about the tactics of the new ideology that is spreading to destroy Christianity, your people (who will be immersed in the life of the culture) will not realize the magnitude of destruction of Christianity until it is long beyond repair.

Though it might be a bitter situation to embrace, the further you distance yourselves from the European Union, the better off your country will be in the long run, as within the European Union, your children will be brainwashed into believing that Christianity is something that should be abandoned. **This is a guarantee that I make to you, for as long as the European Union is on its current trajectory.**

I implore you to pray and fast, in hopes that you may grow in humility and submission, even at the expense of earthly suffering. Your children are at stake. In America, we are already suffering because of generations of short-sightedness.

### **Closing Prayer**

**In the Name of The Father, The Son, and of The Holy Spirit: (x3)**

**Lord have mercy on us all as we strive to keep our eye on the Eternal Reward, and our hearts in constant gratitude for the fullness of self-sacrifice that was made, freely, by You, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, King of the Universe, to Whom all of creation will bend at the knee. Give us the strength to pray for all afflicted by that which is evil, and give us the strength to suffer for the Glory of Your Most Holy Name.**

**Amen.**

Yours in Christ,  
<Name withheld>

PS: If you are not sure what to pray, start [here](#) and don't stop.

***Editor's Note:*** The author of this post can be contacted via our common email: [info@pursuitoftruth.ca](mailto:info@pursuitoftruth.ca). The author has also authorized the copying of this article in full.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.pursuitoftruth.ca/2014/01/29/dear-brothers-sisters-christ-ukraine-urgent/>  
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# Olivia and the Little Way [at String of Pearls]

I told you in

[a previous WWRW post](#)

that I was reading

*Olivia and the Little Way*

, and that I would try to get a review done as soon as possible. Well, here it is! (I don't know why it took me so long to read this extraordinary Catholic novel (one that's targeted at the pre-teen audience, but is really for readers of any age, if you ask me), but I'm sure glad I finally did. I can't recommend it highly enough!



If only Nancy Carabio Belanger's award-winning novel for young readers, *Olivia and the Little Way*, had been available to me when I was in middle school or junior high—how I would have benefited from the beautiful messages that are woven into each and every page! During those sometimes awful formative years, when so many of the influences on young people are not exactly good ones, it would have been incredibly beneficial for me to read about Olivia Thomas' introduction to and growing friendship with one of the greatest saints of the Catholic Church: St. Therese of Lisieux, also known as the "Little Flower," the beloved saint who taught the "Little Way of Spiritual Childhood."

As a young girl, I remember vividly wanting to be good (and of course failing routinely, as we all do); but I don't remember going about the business of my daily life with the *specific goal* of *becoming a saint* always in the forefront of my mind. I suppose I sometimes felt as St. Therese herself felt: "when I have compared myself with the saints, I have always found that there is the same difference between the saints and me as there is between a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds and a humble grain of sand trodden underfoot by passers-by." Well let me tell you, Belanger's outstanding book definitely reminds the reader of the all-important goal of achieving sainthood; but it also reminds her that *one need not go through life's trials alone*, because there are friends in Heaven to whom she can turn for help. And one of these powerful friends is dear St. Therese, who herself felt she had "to look for some means of going to Heaven by a little way which is very short and very straight."

The novel's heroine Olivia Thomas is the oldest child in a Catholic family, with two younger siblings. Her family is getting ready to move from Texas, where she has lived her whole life, to Michigan. On the cusp of entering fifth grade, Olivia is not thrilled about the idea of leaving all of her friends behind and becoming the dreaded "new girl" in school; but at least there is one huge plus to look forward to: Olivia will now live close to her beloved grandmother, with whom she has always spent part of her summer vacations. Before Olivia heads back home from her grandmother's house to spend the rest of her last summer in Texas, her grandmother gives her a very special gift: a St. Therese chaplet. She also begins to talk to her granddaughter about her favorite saint and to tell stories about the amazing ways St. Therese of Lisieux has interceded for her. As time goes on, Olivia begins to build her own special relationship with St. Therese.

As Olivia navigates the obstacles to sainthood that abound as a middle-schooler (especially one who is trying desperately to fit in at her new Catholic school), she finds many opportunities to call on her special new Heavenly friend for assistance and encouragement. It's hard to befriend the class outsiders when it means the "cool girls" might decide to lump you with them, and it's hard to fight the kind of peer pressure that makes you embarrassed to stand out in any way; but with the help of St. Therese, Olivia learns to stick up for the underdogs while at the same time praying for and exhibiting compassion for the big wigs who act uncharitably toward others, knowing that sometimes love can help to turn lives around. Olivia perseveres in practicing the "Little Way," even when it is extremely difficult and she's not sure that her efforts are bearing any fruit. She makes mistakes along the way; but as she struggles along, it is touching to read about how she yearns for that visible sign—that promised shower of roses from Heaven—that will prove her new patron has been listening to her prayers. What's also very touching is that other characters in the book (ones you might not expect) are inspired to turn to St. Therese as well. Ultimately, the book shows that though we are all sinners and far from perfect, we are all souls worthy of love, understanding, and forgiveness.

Surely, Belanger's sweet, entertaining, and inspiring novel *Olivia and the Little Way* would have been the perfect book for me to read in my girlhood years; but it was incredibly beneficial for me to read it *now*, and I'm in my mid-fifties! I've found that in the aftermath of reading this little gem, which is aimed at young adult readers but is certainly an enjoyable read for any adult as well, I

have been energized anew with the desire to do every small thing with great love, to imitate St. Therese's "Little Way" to the best of my ability, just as Olivia learns to do in the course of the story.

If you have an impressionable young reader in your house, she should read this book. If you're an adult who never got to know St. Therese very well when you were young, you should read this book. If you want to be inspired to win souls for Jesus through small but important acts of love and self-sacrifice, you should read this book. And afterwards, you should read the sequel, *Olivia's Gift*. (That's what I'm going to do!)

On her blog, Nancy Carabio Belanger (who has a deep devotion to St. Therese of Lisieux) states that this is her mission: **"to fill the bookshelves of pre-teens with books that celebrate our Catholic faith, modesty, the gift of life, and a wholesome childhood."** *Olivia and the Little Way* does all of those things, and does them while introducing the reader to a saint whom we should all get to know better. Bravo, Nancy Carabio Belanger—mission accomplished!

Okay, now you can head on over to

[Jessica's](#)

to see what's keeping everyone else up way past their bedtimes, reading by flashlight under the covers so Mom and Dad won't catch them...you know the drill.

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This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2014/02/www-olivia-and-little-way.html>  
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# Out of Gas [at Forget The Roads]



Back when my husband and I lived in Taiwan, we had the privilege of living next door to a very nice man who also happened to be a real-life nuclear physicist. He didn't speak English, and my Chinese didn't extend much beyond "Hi, how are you?" and "What's for lunch?" so he and I didn't talk a lot, but he was a good neighbor, and obviously no slouch in the Brains Department. That's why I will never forget the morning when he knocked on our door, asking my husband to come look at his car which was cranking, but wouldn't start. My husband didn't have to be asked twice; he immediately followed our neighbor and set to work determining the problem. The two men discussed the possible causes of the car's failure to start. As my husband opened the hood and then sat down in the car to turn the key in the ignition, the nuclear physicist suggested several mechanical scenarios which would require repairs. He was clearly worried. It was then that my husband looked up at our neighbor and uttered the Chinese equivalent of the phrase, "Dude, you're out of gas."

And so he was. He was one seriously embarrassed nuclear physicist.

I mention this because I recently reread [Russ Rentler's conversion story](#). By way of introduction if you don't know Russ, he's a medical doctor specializing in Geriatrics. He's also a revert to the Catholic faith after decades spent in Evangelicalism. In his conversion story he admits:

I was embarrassed that as a relatively bright person with the ability to obtain a medical degree, I had never considered reading history and instead based my understanding of Church history from a 16-year-old "Bible Scholar" thirty years earlier. How could I be "so smart" and yet be so close-minded about something so important as my faith?

Call it the "Nuclear Physicist phenomenon," if you will. Even very bright people overlook the obvious sometimes, NOT because they're stupid. But why then?

I don't consider myself a total idiot, yet for 45 years I believed that every Evangelical church I attended was preaching the same Gospel that the first Christians preached. It never occurred to me to question this, despite the fact that I attended churches that taught that you could never lose your salvation, and churches that taught that you most certainly could lose your salvation. Now, really, you'd think that it would have dawned on me that the two were mutually exclusive, that the first Christians must have believed one or the other, and that, ergo, some of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century churches I was attending had strayed from the Faith once delivered!

But it didn't. Conflicting doctrines are the status quo in Protestantism, and having been raised a Protestant, it was business as usual as far as I was concerned. Of course different denominations believe opposing doctrines. [Why would anybody have a problem with that?](#) As long as you can "prove" your beliefs from Scripture....

Think of it as a blind spot in your visual field. A blind spot is a naturally occurring phenomenon, and it doesn't mean that you're blind. There's just one tiny little area in which you can't see. We all focus on certain things, and while we're focused like that, we can't see what's in our blind spot. We need to step back and look around – in doing that we may discover things that were right under our nose all along.

Inherent in the practice of "proving" one's beliefs from Scripture are certain obvious drawbacks. The fact that non-Christian groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses can "prove" straight from the Bible that Jesus was created by God (Col 1:15, Heb 1:5, Rev 3:14), is inherently inferior to God (Jn 14:1, 28, Jn 17:3, 1 Tim 2:5), and therefore under no circumstances should be considered or referred to as "God" (1 Cor 8:6) should tell you something. An old joke warns Evangelicals that quite a few flaky doctrines can be "proved" from Scripture, such as the fact that Jesus is not with believers when they fly in airplanes – Matthew 28:20, "LOW, I am with you always!"

As a Protestant I laughed at that joke. Ironically, when I first heard it I was attending a missionary conference with representatives from 50-some Protestant denominations present, some teaching that you can lose your salvation and some that you can't, some teaching that baptism actually regenerates and some that baptism is merely a symbol, some teaching that speaking in tongues is what real Christians do and some that speaking in tongues is at best goofy and at worst demonic. I don't think that one single person in that auditorium understood that the joke was on us.

Evangelical believers in sola Scriptura are taught that their beliefs must come straight from Scripture, and that Scripture must be used to interpret Scripture; in other words, they are taught to focus steadily on Scripture, and Scripture only. Glancing at the historical record, at the extrabiblical writings of the early Christians, just to see how one's own modern-day beliefs line up with those of the people taught by the apostles themselves, is the spiritual equivalent of ceasing to focus single-mindedly on an object and taking a moment to look around the room. In doing so, something that may have been right in front of us, yet hidden in our blind spot, jumps out at us. *How could I not have noticed that?* – we ask ourselves. It was when I stepped back and looked around the history of Christianity that I realized that the Catholic Church was right there in front of me in that Bible that I had been so focused upon.

So, no, you don't have to be an idiot to not realize that your Christian beliefs just don't add up. You may be excelling in your profession. You may have earned a Ph.D. You may be a nuclear physicist.

But at the same time, your belief system may be out of gas.

On the memorial of St. Isabelle of France

*Deo omnis gloria!*

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This contribution is available at <http://forgettheroads.com/2014/02/26/out-of-gas/>  
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# The Cure for "Double Yoke Syndrome" [at The Beautiful Gate]

The food we feed our minds and the things we tell ourselves make a great deal of difference in whether our cross feels light or heavy. Half the problem with feeling

[doubly yoked](#)

is

[what we believe about ourselves and others](#)

mixed with what we may not believe nor trust about God. I joked around in my last post about people feeling doubly yoked but there's a great deal of truth mixed in with my rather lame attempts at humor. Many people

**do**

feel overwhelmed and weighed down but the truth is that feeling heavily burdened is often the result of a lack of hope.

Despair is the heaviest thing in the whole universe. Even a little bit is hard to carry.

What we believe or disbelieve about ourselves can leave us locked into patterns of living that make it more difficult to respond to God's freely given grace. If we don't believe that we, or others, or even a situation, can change we have the tendency to slam the door on grace. Very often there are hidden areas of hopelessness in our lives that God yearns to touch deeply with his grace but because of the things we believe about ourselves and others we keep the door closed through our own hardness of heart. A strong and stubborn belief can be a hard obstacle to remove. It can be done but we have to ask God to open up these painful wounded areas to hope. As in "Lord, please pour your hope into this area. I have difficulty believing I can/she can/he can change and I hand it over to you. Touch this part of my life with your grace. May the light of hope cast its rays on the dark corners of my heart and may your love be the balm that heals this brokenness within me. "

Basically, when we don't trust fully in God or his word, we end up with hidden areas of despair in our hearts. We discount grace. We believe in a cheap grace that is not powerful enough to effect change in ourselves or others.

Hope is a "power" virtue and a "living" virtue. Without hope touching every aspect of our lives parts of us crumble and die inside. The easiest way to destroy someone? Strip them of their hope. Anyone who has ever lived in a state of despair can understand the debilitating effects of a lack of hope. Hope grows things... hope nourishes faith and love and brings about their full flowering.

Those of you who are gardeners have probably heard of "companion planting". This is when we group certain plants together to increase their strength and ability to survive and bear fruit. The same is true in the garden of your heart: faith, hope and charity work together to nourish the soul. These are virtues that God has infused in our hearts. Here on earth, they work in tandem. Strip one away and the others begin to fail. When virtues fail like this we leave space in our hearts for the Seven Deadly Sins to set in. They are the "weeds" in our gardens and if not removed tend to take over the whole thing.

When I began praying for hope to light up all the areas in my life I felt hopeless about I began to see huge changes in my life. It doesn't matter the size of the issues you are despairing over, large or small He wants to open these areas to the light of hope.

"

*For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe, plans to give you a future full of hope." Jer. 29:11*

"

*And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." Rom 5:5*

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This contribution is available at <http://openingthefloodgatesofmercy.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-cure-for-double-yoke-syndrome-part-1.html>

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# My new patron saint [at crucesignatiblog]



Learning about new saints is a fun little pursuit of mine. I try to learn a good deal about the saints because while their lives were not perfect examples, they show us how to rise above the cultural and secular expectations and become holy. That is my ideal.

Anyways, my latest “find” is the Canadian nun and mystic known as Blessed Dina Belanger. You can read her whole story [here](#) (the site I have linked to is devoted to the stories of mystics and is faithful to the Magisterium). I find her story interesting for a number of reasons:

## **1. She was Canadian, like me.**

There aren't a lot of saints (or beatified persons) who were born and raised in Canada, so I find the stories familiar, in a way. When they mention the cold of a winter night or a city in a nearby province, I can sort of see the story playing out in my mind. It becomes familiar in that way and I don't forget it.

## **2. She had a temper, also like me.**

Just getting it out there: I had an *awful* temper when I was younger. As a baby I would scream for quite a long time without quitting, and as I got older (being the oldest) I got a little spoiled. So now I also have a holy person that I can relate to in this respect.

## **3. She chose “death rather than defilement”.**

When she was admitted to the Sodality of Our Lady she took the motto “Death rather than defilement”. This shows what a strong will she had, just like many of the other young saints of the Catholic Church. And finally...

#### 4. She was a pianist.

There have been many saints and holy people who have played an instrument or sung a good deal during their life, but I think Bl. Dina Belanger is different. She didn't just play piano for a few years. She persevered and became a very accomplished pianist (I can say this as a pianist who has read about her credentials. St. Cecilia is invoked as the patron saint of musicians, but I think that if she is ever canonised, Bl. Dina Belanger ought to be the patron saint of pianists. Just my two cents.



So may God bless you and Blessed Dina Belanger pray for you!

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This contribution is available at <http://crucesignatiblog.wordpress.com/2014/02/27/my-new-patron-saint/>  
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# Outside of the Church There is No Salvation [at Veritas Lux Mea]



As much as I try to avoid it, I have this knack for getting myself involved in Protestant – Catholic debates. I don't enjoy the debating...the constant sparring...the hours of time that it saps as I try to give a defence for my Catholic faith – especially when it is with people whom I love, and consider as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Yet, even as I try to steer clear of the debates, I am always reminded that if I remain silent when I should say something, I will have to give an account for it when I stand before the Lord at the Final Judgement. And so, I take up the mantle, often reluctantly, but pray that in some small way, God is using me to plant seeds in the hearts of those that I enter into discussions with.

An interesting thing that I have noticed a few times in these debates is that just when you seem to be making some progress, the Protestant debater will seek to divert the subject by randomly introducing an argument based on the Catholic Church's position of "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" – outside of the Church there is no salvation.

## The basis of the argument

Their argument usually follows this sort of logic:

- A – Catholics say that outside of the Church there is no salvation

- B – Catholics say that the Catholic Church is the only true Church established by Christ
- C – Catholics also say that non-Catholic Christians are still Christian and can be saved

Therefore, they argue, that if A and B are right, then C must be false...or else, if A and C are right, then B must be false.

### **The solution to the argument**

Whilst these arguments sound plausible on the surface level, all they really do is betray that the Protestant arguing these things does not understand what the Catholic Church actually teaches regarding these things.

So, what DOES the Catholic Church mean when she says that “outside of the Church there is no salvation”?

Before looking at the Church’s teaching specifically, it would be worthwhile to be reminded of the reason that the Church has established this teaching.

### **Why does the Church teach “Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus”?**

The basis for the Church’s teaching is that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and that no man comes to the Father but by Him (Jn 14:6). In other words, the foundation of the Church’s teaching is that outside of Christ there is no salvation. But the Church doesn’t stop there, because Christ didn’t stop there.

Jesus emphatically taught that He would establish and build His Church – not just for convenience’s sake; but also for the sake that His Body would continue His work of salvation in the world after His Ascension into Heaven. St. Paul developed this doctrine by proclaiming that the Church is nothing less than the Body of Christ, and Jesus Christ is her Head. In this way, St. Paul reminds us that Christ and His Church are inseparably ONE. You cannot be IN Christ if you are not IN His Body, the Church.

And this is one reason why the New Testament constantly reminds us that baptism is necessary for salvation – because baptism is the “door” by which we enter the Church – it is through baptism that we are born again into the family of God (which is another image that St. Paul uses for the Church in 1 Tim 3:15).

So, the reason that the Church teaches “extra Ecclesiam nulla salus” is because she is inseparably united to Christ, and outside of Christ there is no salvation.

### **What does the Church mean when she teaches “Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus”?**

Now that we’ve established WHY the Church teaches this truth, it still doesn’t shed any light on

the apparent contradiction whereby Catholics can consider non-Catholic Christians to be brothers in Christ.

Let's start by saying what the Church does NOT mean – “extra Ecclesiam nulla salus” does NOT mean that only those people who are visibly members of the Catholic Church will be saved. And this is where most Protestants get unstuck. Yes – it is true that the Catholic Church is the one true Church established by Christ. But that doesn't mean that only Catholics will be saved.

The first thing to understand is that [it is through the Sacrament of Baptism that we are united to Christ](#) (Rom 6:3-4). Because baptism can be performed by anyone, the Catholic Church accepts that many Protestants have been validly baptised. And because the Catholic Church IS the Body of Christ, all those who have been baptised into Christ are part of the Catholic Church - even though they may not accept or acknowledge this. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it:

“All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church.” – CCC # 818b

All those who have been baptised into Christ are, by virtue of their baptism, united to the Catholic Church. However, because they are not in FULL communion with the Church, that union is imperfect. The Council Fathers at Vatican II affirmed this when they said:

“The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honoured with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter.” – Lumen Gentium # 15

“Men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church - whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church - do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion.” – Unitatis Redintegratio # 3

To restate it – all who have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ...and because of Christ's inseparable union with His Church, all who have been baptised into Christ have been baptised into the Catholic Church. In the case of our Protestant brethren, the union is not perfect – but it is still a union nonetheless.

This is why it is possible to affirm that outside of the Church there is no salvation – and at the same time to affirm that those who are not in perfect union with the Catholic Church can indeed be saved. The apparent contradiction is resolved when we see that even Protestants are included “within the Church” by virtue of their baptism.

That doesn't mean that we don't have to work towards unity. The very fact that Christianity is divided is a scandal to the world, and a hindrance to the Gospel. Which is why Vatican II also

issued the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) as part of the understanding that all Christians, and ESPECIALLY Catholics, should be compelled by the love of Christ to do what we can to foster unity with our separated brethren and pray that all Christians may one day be united together again in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

### **The argument from “Anathemas”**

Another complaint that frequently emerges is the anathemas that the Catholic Church has pronounced over her 2,000 year history...particularly those that arose during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. For example, the Council of Trent said that:

“If any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema.” – Fourth Session

In other words, the Council of Trent condemned as anathema those who don't accept the books that many Protestants today call the “Apocrypha”.

Most Protestants today don't accept the Catholic Canon of the Old Testament – therefore, the argument goes, that they must be anathema. But they see this as a contradiction – how can they be considered as Christian and anathema at the same time?

### **How do the Anathemas fit into the Church's teaching of *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*?**

We have established what the Church means when she says that outside of the Church there is no salvation – and that Protestants are not “outside of the Church”. But how should we understand the anathemas in light of this? And do these two thoughts contradict one another?

The first thing to bear in mind is that the anathemas must be understood in the context of the time they were pronounced. Anathemas are usually issued by the Church to counter heresies that were being battled at that specific time in history. For example, the anathemas of the Council of Trent were pronounced to address the heresies that had emerged as a result of the Protestant Reformation.

The next thing to remember is that the Catholic Church does not claim to have binding authority over non-Catholics. So the anathemas of the Council of Trent were aimed at Catholics who had become Protestants and were subsequently teaching against the doctrines of the Church. They were Catholics who willingly rejected the Church's teaching – and so the Church had the duty to declare the anathemas as part of her Divine duty of protecting and shepherding God's Flock.

That's an important point to grasp – when the anathemas were pronounced, they were pronounced over Catholics who willingly rejected the faith that they once held to be true. So, for Protestants today, living in the 21st century, the Church's position is that they cannot be blamed for the schism that arose in the 16th century. As such, the Church considers Protestants today as brothers in Christ

– and not anathema.

Here’s what the Catechism has to say on the matter:

“In fact, in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church - for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. The ruptures that wound the unity of Christ's Body - here we must distinguish heresy, apostasy, and schism - do not occur without human sin:

Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes. Where there is virtue, however, there also are harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers.” – CCC # 817

“However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers ... All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church.” – CCC # 818

“Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements. Christ's Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him, and are in themselves calls to ‘Catholic unity’.” – CCC # 819

Thus, whilst the anathemas could be considered as binding upon men like Martin Luther and John Calvin, who knew better when they willingly rejected their Catholic faith; they cannot be held as binding upon those, those who through no fault of their own, are found in congregations which follow Luther’s and Calvin’s teachings – because they cannot be held responsible for the sin of schism that men like Luther and Calvin were guilty of.

### **Do Protestants need to become Catholic?**

When presented with the above explanation of the Catholic Church’s position, Protestants, without conceding the argument, may sometimes accept that it is at least a logical and reasonable response. But, the usual comeback is then “OK – so I actually don’t need to become Catholic in order to be saved”.

Strictly speaking, that is true – but it is also a cop-out because it indicates that the person making such a statement seems to be more concerned about comfort than he is about truth.

Not only that, but because he has been presented with the truth, he has also been presented with the opportunity to seek out that truth. And to ignore that opportunity would be unwise in light of the Lord's words that "to whom much has been given, much will be required" (Lk 12:48).

This sort of thinking is also dangerous in that a person may end up becoming fully convinced of the truthfulness of the Catholic faith, and yet still choose to remain outside of full communion with the Catholic Church. A conscious rejection of truth is a conscious rejection of Christ, because Jesus Christ is Himself THE Truth. In this way, such a person, by their conscious decision to reject truth, ends up separating himself from Christ.

### **Why is this so important?**

It is important for a number of reasons.

Firstly, because truth is absolute and truth really does matter. Jesus Christ is the Truth, and as lovers of Christ, Christians must continue to seek the truth in Christ until they have found it in all its fullness.

Related to this, the second reason is that misconceptions are a hindrance to the pursuit of truth. So, it is necessary that misconceptions be cleared up.

Thirdly, because the divisions that exist within Christianity are a scandal to the world and it is the duty of all Christians to strive in love for the unity that Christ Himself desired and prayed for. Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism summed it up nicely:

"The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature." – Unitatis Redintegratio # 1

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This contribution is available at <http://justingridveritasluxmea.blogspot.com.au/2014/02/outside-of-church-there-is-no-salvation.html>

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## **I am a Witness [at Quiet Consecration]**

God has blessed me with some remarkable people to watch.

Two of them are young, professional women who honored me with a request to sponsor them in our 12 Step program.

Those who follow my blog know that I have the utmost respect for the program which gave me the strength to recover from a seemingly hopeless life AND allowed me to cooperate with the grace that eventually lead me home to The Catholic Church. I honor the Traditions of that fellowship by only saying that it was the appropriate 12 step program that gave me a life that is, today, second to none. Even with its trials, its tribulations and the occasional bout of self pity, I believe my life is fabulous and is a tremendous testimony to the Love of God.

The best part of my life is that I get to share it with others today and the two women I am working with now are examples of how I receive the blessings normally bestowed only upon women who have given birth. For me, to be able to watch them grow and gain insight into their own reactions to life and how to align their will with the Will of the Creator is proof positive that one does not have to have given birth to someone to be their Mom.

One of them has done this HUGE LEAP towards emotional maturity that has me amazed. Seriously amazed. She has come to some conclusions and taken some action in the last 24 hours that can only mean she is cooperating with the Grace of a Loving God. She is starting to clean house, firmly and lovingly, and I am astonished because this kind of courage did not come to ME until I had been sober for about 5 years.

And I am so grateful! You see, a parent wants a child to do better than they have in their life. No good parent is ever jealous of their own child, or holds their child back or in any way inhibits their child's growth.

Shoot, if we do that we miss the opportunity to see our family move up in the world. And we also miss out on chances to embarrass them later in large social gatherings when we show up and they have to explain us to their sophisticated friends (Yes, that's Leslie. I know she is 84 and wearing a Ramones T shirt and holding a Go Niners sign but I really love her so shut up).

I have had such a great week. The soldier is home (I know because I saw him for 10 minutes and then all his stuff arrived and is in my garage). It is raining. I got to go see BB King on Tuesday night and he rocked the house down. It is raining. I went to confession. It is raining. tonight I get to do something for my Mom and tomorrow I get to go speak to young adult Catholics on the importance of Lent.

Maybe I will wear my Ramones T shirt.

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## Lousy Parents and the Case for Unkempt Souls [at New Evangelizers]

Around St. Blog's recently, we've looking at the "What's wrong with catechesis?" problem, and the refrain that is not news to anyone is, "What do we do with these parents?" You know the ones . . . they drop their kid off for 2nd grade sacramental prep, plan an extravagant 1st Communion party, and turn back up every Christmas and Easter until it's time for the 1st communicant's wedding. Or some similar story — there are many variations on the Very Bad Catholic theme.

The answer to the parent-problem is simple: Evangelize them. Mom or Dad (or Grandma or Grandpa) has darkened the doors of Church, and so what if they're just there for the poinsettias or the white dress, run with it! Welcome them, share the Gospel with them, and bend over backward to make it possible for them to take another step forward in their faith. They might or might not choose to accept that invitation, but we can at least eliminate as many excuses as possible.

Meanwhile, we need to talk about my garden.

Several years ago, I read [Margaret Rose Realy's](#) excellent book on creating prayer gardens, [A Garden of Visible Prayer](#). I like to garden and I like to pray . . . or at the very least, if I'm going to try to like to pray, a nice garden is one place I'm likely to do it. Reading her book was just what I needed. I followed the instructions and created a quiet corner of my yard that I think of as my "prayer garden."

Now I'll let you in on a secret: "Liking" something and "being good at it" are two different things. I like to sing, but I'm not good at it. I like to paint, but I'm not good at it. I like to garden, but I'm not good at.

On a warm winter afternoon recently, I settled into the plastic lawn chair in my "prayer garden" to pray the Rosary. I looked around, and smiled contentedly, and blessed Margaret once again for writing such a helpful book, one that truly changed my life for the good. But here's what I was looking at:

- Dead chrysanthemum stalks begging to be pruned three months ago.
- Monstrously leggy Franken-rosemary, fruit of an attempt to propagate from cuttings.
- Falling-down wire fencing that the dog slips behind so she can lounge on the lavender, now artfully-crushed.
- A second lawn chair sitting randomly in the middle of the space, because someone forgot to put it away.

I'm ahead of the game, though, because at least the lawn chair isn't knocked over.

I love this garden.

It is a garden so dreadful it could never be shown on one of those HGTV reality shows, because people would think the “before” picture had been faked. But I love it.

Why do I love it? Because I made it. Because I know what it’s supposed to be. I can look at dead mums’ stalks and see next year’s flowers. I can sit in a wobbly plastic lawn chair, slightly broken — wobbling because it’s perched where the dog dug up a mole and I never got around to refilling the hole — and survey my crazy unkempt corner of quiet, and see what’s there beneath all the ragged edges.

This is how God sees us. Not because He’s a lousy gardener, but because we’re lousy gardeners. He gives each of us free will, and He gives each of us a share in the work of the Kingdom of Heaven. And He lets us do that work, even though it means we’re going to forget this, and fail at that, and try the other random Bright Idea! that totally, completely, will not succeed, ever.

Like wind-sown cone-flowers popping up in the strangest places, could-be disciples sprout up all over our parishes. Leggy, awkward, ill-mannered — never where, or how, or when we want them. Sure, they’re blocking the path to the hose . . . but they aren’t weeds.

I don’t propose that we settle for a shoddy Church. I propose we fill in our parish mole-holes, clean up our broken fences, and get that lawn chair back where it belongs. But when we see that straggly-rosemary of a sacrament-seeking parent, or that dead-stalk-mum of the cranky old cantor who can’t hold a tune . . . see the beautiful work that’s coming.

It’s an unkempt soul. It’s not pretty. It needs some pruning, some fertilizing, some watering — and it may never be that spectacular display from the garden catalog. So what? It’s the one that God put in your parish garden, and it belongs there.

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## **Jennifer Fitz**

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## Praise, pride and envy [at Kitchen table chats]



This is one of my favorite Family Circus cartoons and has been recirculating on Facebook lately. I think it is appropriate to consider the implications of this caption in light of the interesting discussions spawned by

[this post](#)

and the

[WaPo](#)

article that inspired it.

I seem to be in the minority of WaPo readers who believe that it is okay to have a pizza party with music to reward the students who made straight A's. Most of those opposed to this reward view the party as exclusionary to those who didn't make straight A's and therefore should be avoided. My argument is any reward is exclusionary. That is the point. We honor those who stand out on any given set of criteria. We exclude from honors those who don't. If an award is not exclusionary, it becomes meaningless.

If one reads the comments on the WaPo site, a great many comments begin with the phrase, "My child will never win this award because....." and you can fill in the blank with an assorted menu of phrases. He has a learning disability. She focuses on dance so she doesn't have the time to make straight A's. And of course there are those who don't see why we are honoring those driven "over-achievers". Making straight A's must be a sign of some sort of psychological pathology and we are hurting children by reinforcing it.

Which brings me to the cartoon above. All of these viewpoints are grounded in envy. My child will not get this award so I do not want anyone to get this award. They think that praising one child takes away from another. But this is not an end sum game. Honoring one child for getting straight A's does not take away from the recognition for athletic ability, artistic ability, character development, or improved performance.

Yes, some of the students who do not get to go to the dance will be disappointed. The job of parents is not to shield our children from disappointment. It is to help them learn from that disappointment. You didn't make straight A's. Why? What would it take to make straight A's? Is the effort required worth the reward of this dance? Is making straight A's within your reach? If not, what is a suitable alternative goal. I will never be an Olympic athlete. That doesn't mean I think we should not hand out Gold Medals to those who are. Instead of shooting for the Olympics, I will try to get myself in good physical condition for the benefit of my health and I will cheer and clap loudly for those who are Olympians.

Let me tell you what happens to those students whose parents always told them that those who reach the highest level of achievement really don't deserve to be honored because they must have some unfair advantage. They show up in my college class and tell me their poor performance is due to their work schedule, the demands of being a single parent, their marital stress, etc and I should give them a grade higher than the one they earned because they have these challenges. Every semester I am confronted with at least one student who tells me this. I respond to them that it is unfair to assume that their challenges are somehow greater than those of their classmates and deserving of special consideration. I cannot change grades based on hardship stories.

These students then become adults who look at someone making more money than they do and whine, "That's not fair!" No matter that the other person is smarter, more talented, works harder, or is just luckier. Every inequality is an injustice.

We need to teach our children to be gracious winners. Those who excel academically should be encouraged to help those who do not. Those who excel athletically should help those who do not. Those who excel socially should help those who do not. But we also need to teach our children to be gracious when they come in second, third, fourth, or don't place at all. It is very sad when pride prevents the appreciation of excellence in others. Humility is not the same thing as humiliation.

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This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2014/02/praise-pride-and-envy.html>  
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# The Other Side of the Door [at The Encouragement of Scripture]

*The last seven words (statements, actually) of Jesus as He hung on Golgotha's cross are among the most encouraging of all Scripture. Here is the fourth of the seven:*

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*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)*

As our home Bible study wound to a close, a young mother ran out to her car for a package she'd forgotten. She left her two-year-old daughter with half a dozen adults in the living room. But when Berea saw Mommy leave, her face froze with panic. She ran as quickly as her little legs could carry her and stretched in vain for the doorknob. Her screams brimmed with terror, as if she believed Mommy would never to return from the other side of the door.

One of the other women lifted Berea into her arms and tried to calm her. But it was no use. The toddler wanted no one but Mommy. And mommy was gone.

A few moments later, Berea's mother returned. When she opened the door she lifted Berea into her arms, rubbed her back and spoke tenderly into her ear. The child quickly quieted down. Mommy had returned.

Some theorize Jesus cried out, *My God, My God, why have your forsaken Me?*, only to draw attention to Psalm 22 in which the psalmist prophesied of Christ's crucifixion nearly a thousand years before it happened (see Psalm 22:11-18). When Jesus quoted the first line of the psalm, they say, it was to demonstrate His fulfillment of that prophecy.

I think there was another, far more significant reason.

St. Luke tells us that while Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, imploring the Father to take the cup He was about to drink from His hands, Jesus' sweat *'became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground'* (Luke 22:44) . Bloody sweat is a rare, but well-documented physical phenomena called (*hematidrosis*) known to occur in some people suffering extreme stress. Jesus dreaded the crucifixion not only because of the physical pain He'd suffer, but He also knew what it would mean when He took upon Himself the sins of the world. The prophet Isaiah is only one of many Old Testament prophets to speak about the results of sin: *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear* (Isaiah 59:2).

Separation. From God.

The Holy Spirit says this about Jesus: *"Though He was in the form of God . . . . [He] emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness"* (Philippians 2:6-7). And so, being fully God and fully Man, Jesus experienced all the frailty of humanity – hunger, thirst, pain, cold, heat . . . . And now He was about to experience in our place what He in His deity could never experience.

Separation from the Father.

St. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: *[The Father] made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him* (2 Corinthians 5:21). And in his letter to the church at Galatia, he added: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us* (Galatians 3:13).

As the most holy Lord Jesus hung between heaven and earth, He did not simply take our collective sins on Himself, but actually *became Sin – became Sin* – so you and I who are "in Christ," you and I who trust Him as our redeemer, our reconciler, our savior, could become the very righteousness of God.

Oh! Think of it!

Jesus, who knew the incomprehensible intimacy of the Triune Godhead, for the *first time* in eternity was separated from His Father. For that one moment – oh, but for the eternal God that moment must have seemed forever – for that one moment the Father turned away from Him who had become Sin.

No wonder He cried out, *My God, My God. Why have You forsaken Me!*, for in some mysterious and inexplicable way known only to the Holy Trinity, Jesus was suddenly on the other side of the door. Suddenly separated from His Father. Suddenly alone.

*That* is the fathomless horror our sin caused Him. Your sin. My sin. And, for anyone who cares to see, *that* is also the irrefutable evidence of the matchless love the Son has for the sinner – you and me – so we would not have to be forever separated from God, forever on the other side of the door.

Thank you. Oh! Thank you, Jesus.

*Father of mercy, like the prodigal son I return to You and say: "I have sinned against you and am no longer worthy to be called your son." Christ Jesus, Savior of the world, I pray with the repentant thief to whom You promised Paradise: "Lord, remember me in Your kingdom." Holy Spirit, fountain of love, I call on You with trust: "Purify my heart, and help me to walk as a child of light. —Author unknown*

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This contribution is available at <http://theencouragementofscripture.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-other-side-of-door.html>

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There has been a shortage of priestly vocations in this nation for some time. There are a number of reasons for this crisis (well beyond the scope of this simple article) but one screams to be addressed: the failure of some priests to make the Eucharist the source and center of their daily lives – an issue addressed many times by Blessed John Paul II.

We do not need priests who believe their success rests in political activism and community organizing and who tickle our ears with platitudes and half-truths while withholding the spiritual Truth we need to live eternally. We need courageous priests, real men, other Christs, **holy priests**, who teach, live, defend, explain and love **all** the Truths of our Faith – men who would rather die than see a single person under their pastoral care lose their soul.

It is said of St. Dominic that his zeal for the salvation of souls was so great he could not sleep and would cry out to the Lord he loved and served, “Lord, what will become of sinners?” St. John Marie Vianney, the patron saint of all priests, certainly shared Dominic’s zeal, as have other priests, not small in number, whom many of us have been blessed to know. But should not every priest share that same zeal?

Priestly holiness and zeal for the salvation of souls can be nurtured and sustained in only one place - before the Blessed Sacrament and preferably on one’s knees. What a different country and Church we might now be had more priests heeded the advice of Venerable Fulton J. Sheen to make a daily Holy Hour! Unless and until the Eucharist is the source and center of every priest’s daily

life, we will neither have the number of holy priests we need nor the requisite zeal for the salvation of all souls.



Thank God He still places in our midst, men who see this need and dedicate their lives to doing something about it. One such group is the Benedictine Monks of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar located at Silverstream Priory in Stamullen, Ireland.

They are in their own words “an embryonic community of monks, under the Rule of St Benedict, who intercede for the sanctification of priests by ‘persevering with one mind in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus’ (Acts 1:14) and in adoration and reparation before the Eucharistic Face of Christ.”

These men are an unambiguous witness and voice that God is using today to reach His priests. The writings in *Vultus Christi* are directed to their brother priests. They are blunt, powerful, and life changing. They are exactly the frank invitation to Eucharistic Adoration that everyone, and most especially our priests, needs to read and accept.

Would you consider copying the reflection below and sharing it with your pastor? Oh, oh. He’s asking me to do something...

**The Secret of My Saints**

You could have come sooner.  
I was waiting for you.  
I am always waiting for you:  
I wait for all My priests in the Sacrament of My Love,  
but they make little of Me,  
and of the fact that I wait for them day and night.

If only they knew what awaits them in My presence :  
the plenitude of mercy,  
and rivers of living water to cleanse them,  
to reinvigorate their priesthood,  
and to sanctify them.

This was the secret of my saints,  
of the holy friends whom I have made known to you : [Dom Marmion](#), the [Curé of Ars](#), [Saint Peter Julian Eymard](#), [Saint Gaetano Catanoso](#), [Dom Vandeur](#), [Father Marie-Joseph Cassant](#),  
all of these, priests according to My Heart.  
And there are so many others also  
who knew how to live between the altar and the tabernacle,  
that is, between their offering of the Holy Sacrifice  
and My abiding presence.

This is what I am asking of you.  
You are a priest adorer now;  
do not forget this  
This is the call that I addressed to you,  
and, with the call, I always give the grace to correspond to it.  
Accustom yourself to giving me the best of your time.  
Your first duty now is to abide before Me  
for those of my priests who pass before Me without stopping;  
without even bowing to adore Me,;  
without taking the time to make the genuflection  
that bespeaks the faith of the Church  
and the love of every believing soul.

Here in my presence I will fill you,  
not only for yourself,  
but also for all those to whom  
it will be given you to transmit my messages of love and of mercy.  
I want also that you should speak to them of My solitude in the tabernacle.  
Certain sophisticated minds will laugh at this.  
They forget that I am not there like some inanimate object.  
It is my Heart that waits for you in the tabernacle;  
it is my gaze that, full of tenderness,

fixes itself, from the tabernacle, on those who draw near to it.

I am not there for my own sake.  
I am there to feed you  
and to fill you with the joys of My presence.  
I am He who understands every man's loneliness,  
especially the loneliness of my priests.  
I want to share their solitude  
so that they will not be alone with themselves,  
but alone with Me.

There I shall speak to their hearts as I am speaking to you.  
I am ablaze to be for each one of my priests  
the Friend whom they seek,  
the Friend with whom they can share everything,  
the Friend to whom they can tell everything,  
the Friend who will weep over their sins  
without, for a moment, ceasing to love them.

It is in the Eucharist that I wait for them  
as physician and as remedy.  
If they are sick in their body  
or in their soul,  
let them seek me out,  
and I will heal them of the evil that afflicts them.

Many priests do not have a real and practical faith  
in my Eucharistic presence.  
Do they not know that the Eucharist  
encloses within itself all the merits of My Passion?  
Let them recover the faith of their childhood.  
Let them come to find Me there where I am waiting for them  
and I, for my part, will work miracles of grace and holiness in them.

What I want above all else  
is that My priests be saints,  
and for this do I offer them My presence in the Eucharist.  
Yes, this is the great secret of priestly holiness.  
You must tell them this,  
you must repeat what I am saying to you,  
so that souls may be comforted by it  
and stimulated to seek holiness.

My Heart thirsts for the love of saints.

To those who come to Me, I will give love and holiness.  
And in this shall my Father be glorified.  
And this shall be wrought by the intimate action of my Spirit.  
Where I am present in the Sacrament of My Love,  
there also is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son.

It is by the Holy Spirit that my Eucharistic presence  
is my glorious presence to the Father in heaven,  
and it is by the Holy Spirit that my Eucharistic presence  
touches the souls who adore Me to unite them to Me,  
and to bear them up even before My Father's face.

For now, this is enough.  
You did well to consecrate this Monday and all Mondays to the Holy Spirit.  
This was not a useless thing.  
I welcome such gestures and I ratify them in heaven.  
Be faithful to this, and you will see great things.

From *In Sinu Iesu*, The Journal of A Priest  
Entry for October 29, 2007

(Used with permission)

[The Benedictine Monks of Perpetual Adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar are worthy and in need of your prayerful and financial support. You can find out more about them [here](#). Be sure to visit Father Mark's blog at [Vultus Christi](#) regularly. I have no formal, financial or other connection to this community. As a Lay Dominican, I have been blessed to be part of an Order that also treasures the Eucharist. I heard this call to "intercede for the sanctification of" all priests and wanted to invite your participation as well.]



## The Chastisement [at V for Victory!]



**Put not your trust in princes: in the children of men, in whom there is no salvation.**

Psalm 145:2-3

A reminder that today is the one-year anniversary of Benedict XVI's abdication inspired some reflections on the wild ride we have had since that day, both in the Church and in secular society.

For those with eyes to see, it should be clear that we are under chastisement. Events are accelerating. Everything we had taken for granted up to now, from bedrock institutions to moral principles, is disintegrating. The capital of Christian civilization, built up over two thousand years, is nearly all frittered away. The enemies of everything we held dear now have the upper hand, and they are busily engaged in destroying. The unthinkable daily morphs into the commonplace. One is more and more conscious of being an outsider, even among family and friends, as one is unable to join them in embracing socialism and homosexual unions and abortion and hatred of the Catholic Church, and a host of imaginary "rights", the pursuit of which is costing us our authentic rights.

A chastisement is meant to make us straighten up and start flying right. But at the moment, too many people like what's going on. There are a few who recognize the evil for what it is and deliberately choose it; many more, probably most, are deluded by the pursuit of their own comfort coupled with blindness to supernatural realities. They think this is victory for the good guys. They think things are finally going the way they should. They look at wholesale destruction and

see creation. They look at murder and see mercy. They look at oppression and see liberation. They look at lies and see the truth -- whatever truth they find most convenient.

To too many people -- even many Catholics, including priests and bishops and religious -- what is happening does not look like divine punishment. Since too many of us do not see this as punishment, not enough of us are straightening up. That is why I fear we are in for something far worse than what we have seen up to now.

Who knows what form it will take? Very likely, something that will hit us precisely where we are most complacent. We have grown decadent in our wealth: even the poor in America have color televisions, cars, air conditioning and more than enough to eat. And, for most of America's existence, she has enjoyed freedom from foreign invasion. A dozen years after 9/11, we have sunk back into apathy. Now that the United States is an oligarchy run by persons friendly to her enemies, perhaps it is only a question of time before our economy plunges into the abyss and the scourge of war lashes us in our own streets.

So, do we just give up and crawl back into our caves? The time will come when that won't be an option. But there is in any case no neutral ground: we have set before us life and death, and we must stretch out our hand to one of them. We must choose life.

Should we pursue political remedies? Of course. I have advocated previously in this space for Mark Levin's proposed constitutional amendment convention, which the Founding Fathers had the foresight to provide for for times just like these. But that is not going to be enough. The chastisement will not be taken away until the reasons for it have ended. Those reasons are in our own hearts, and our hearts need to be changed. We need sorrow for our sins and purpose of amendment. We need to do good and avoid evil. We must be holy as God is holy. For that, we need sanctifying grace. I fear many people -- many Catholics -- are living without sanctifying grace. I fear -- and it is horrible to consider -- that many are dying without sanctifying grace.

God is under no obligation to give us what we need to be holy if we don't ask for it, so we must pray, especially the Rosary. The Rosary was given to us precisely for our times. We must pray the Rosary not only for ourselves but for others. It is the best thing we can do. The time is coming, and may already be here, when it will be the only thing we can do.

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This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-chastisement.html>  
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# My Lenten Plans [at A Catholic Heart For Home]

Ash Wednesday is just a week away.

Everyone has already started talking about what they are giving up for Lent. A friend even asked me two weeks ago what my plans were for Lent.

So what are my plans?

My goal is to emerge at Easter looking more like Christ. To grow in love for God. To grow in love for neighbour. That last one is going to be hard because I know a few "neighbours" who get on my last nerve but I need to figure out how to act and react in a loving way.

I need to figure out and work on what hinders me from looking more like Christ. What keeps people from seeing Christ in me. Also what keeps me from loving God more.

With that being said how I am going to achieve that. First by not getting myself over committed. I am going to start seeing what everyone else is doing and it's going to sound great and I'm going to think maybe I should try that or this and just maybe I can fit that in somewhere. I'm letting myself know right now that I can't. Don't get me wrong there just might be something that I discover that I would love and be able to do but I have to let myself be okay right now that it's okay if I can't.

The only thing I ever really give up for Lent is meat, I don't eat it on Fridays anyhow. I do not eat meat throughout the whole of the Lenten season, not even on Sundays. Even though I do it every year it's hard, I am a carnivore so beans do not cut it. I don't really like to cook fish so I'm bored and irritated before the end of week two.

I'm still giving up meat but I am also giving up the bad attitude I have about it. Every time I feel the "I need meat" bad attitude coming on I am going offer up a prayer for someone. I'm going to be praying a lot. I am also going to pray for someone with every meal I prepare. Baking is my joy, preparing fish and vegetarian meals are not.

I'm not big on giving up stuff for Lent because I prefer to add things to my life. It has work out in the past that some of these things stick beyond Easter Sunday. I attend Daily Mass, I prayed the Liturgy of the Hours for years, I listen to Catholic radio and I don't eat meat on Fridays.

This year I want to pray the Angelus at least once a day, preferably at noon but sometimes that may not always work so 6 in the evenings if I miss noon.

I want to start going to confession every 2 weeks. I go monthly now and every two weeks is going to mean going on a Saturday which I have always hated. However my goal is to work on what hinders me from looking like Christ so I got to suck it up, besides I went last Saturday and it wasn't

that bad. I just need to always get there early.

Station of The Cross on Fridays. My friend's parish has it in the evenings with Mass to follow, so a group of us usually go then go out to dinner after. Great way to encourage each other and to be encouraged.

I'm going to do a daily challenge jar. I use the Magnificat Lenten Companion every year and they usually have a daily penance or activity but I want something that is specific and personal to me. In that jar I will also be adding prayer requests so feel free to leave a comment with your name or request if you would like me to pray for you.

The only thing I am still up in the air about is what book am I going to read. I have a few suggestions

[Dating God: Live and Love the Way of St Francis](#)

,

[Change Our Hearts: Daily Meditations for Lent](#)

,

[Stories of Jesus: 40 Days of Prayer and Reflection](#)

,

[My Sisters the Saints: A Spiritual Memoir](#)

. I have a week to choose a book but I'm the person who goes into a bookstore, spends 2 hours trying to decide between two books and leaves with six.

So what are everyone else's Lenten plans?

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This contribution is available at <http://acatholicheartforhome.blogspot.com/2014/02/my-lenten-plans.html>  
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## **Do not be alarmed when these situations come, but put on the armour of grace and let go a volley of arrows tipped with love and self-sacrifice... [at The Pelianito Journal Blog]**

**Matthew 5:22 “But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool!’ you will be liable to the hell of fire.”**

*“My children, never has it been more important that you set a guard over your thoughts and words. What you utter has ramifications in the spiritual realm. Remain pure. Do not give the devil a foothold. Words spoken in anger invoke the enemy; words spoken in love, peace, forgiveness, and fellowship drive him away. Always remember who your true enemy is—not the one who has injured you, but the enemy of souls. It is only when you bless your detractors and do good to those who injure you that you truly defeat evil. Then do not be alarmed when these situations come, but put on the armour of grace and let go a volley of arrows tipped with love and self-sacrifice. Yes, these are the weapons most feared by the enemy. Remain steadfast, and pure. Forgive always. Do not focus on what is earthly but focus on defeating the enemy. See all these situations as strategic battles and be glad of the opportunity to defeat the enemy one arrow at a time. Children—love! This is no mere platitude, no sugary sentiment, but a strong weapon in the spiritual battle raging all around. Children—love!”*

Jesus, beloved, show us how to love with your own Heart and that of our Mother. We are weak in love, but you are infinitely strong. Therefore we place all our trust in you. Love in us. Tip our arrows with your love. Lord Jesus we surrender to the invincible power of love. Work in us and through us! Save souls! Amen.

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This contribution is available at <http://pelianito.stblogs.com/2014/02/23/do-not-be-alarmed-when-these-situations-come-but-put-on-the-armour-of-grace-and-let-go-a-volley-of-arrows-tipped-with-love-and-self-sacrifice/>

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# God, of Thy Pity, Unto Us Thy Children / Aures Ad Nostras Deitatis Preces [at Breviary Hymns]



*God, of Thy Pity, Unto Us Thy Children*

is a translation by

[Alan G. McDougall](#)

(1895-1964) of the Latin hymn:

*Aures Ad Nostras Deitatis Preces*

. It was first published in 1916 as part of his collection of 29 translations:

[Pange Lingua - Breviary Hymns of Old Verses with an English Rendering](#)

. Of

*Aures Ad Nostras Deitatis Preces*

, the book adds this comment: "Found in ante-Tridentine Roman Breviaries, this hymn has now been superseded by

*O sol salutes, intimis*

. It's loss is much to be regretted, as it is one of the most beautiful examples of mediaeval hymnody."

*God, of Thy Pity, Unto Us Thy Children*

is set to the the 1630 German tune:

## Herzliebster Jesu

by the Lutheran minister,

## Johann Heermann

(1585-1647) and adapted by

## Johann Crüger

(1598-1662). In the Divine Office (1974) it is used as an optional hymn for Lent.

Tune: Herzliebster Jesu

GOD, OF THY PITY, UNTO US THY CHILDREN tr. by Alan G. McDougall, 1916 (Public Domain)\*

1. God, of thy pity, unto us thy children

Bend down thine ear in thine own lovingkindness,

And all thy people's prayers and vows ascending

Hear, we beseech thee.

2. Look down in mercy from thy seat of glory.

Pour on our souls the radiance of thy presence,

Drive from our weary hearts the shades of darkness,

Lightening our footsteps.

3. Free us from sin by might of thy great loving,

Cleanse thou the sordid, loose the fettered spirit,

Spare every sinner, raise with thine own right hand

All who have fallen.

4. Reft of thy guiding we are lost in darkness,

Drowned in the great wide sea of sin we perish,

But we are led by thy strong hand to climb the

## Ascents of Heaven

5. Christ, very light and goodness, life of all things,

Joy of the whole world, infinite in kindness,

Who by the crimson flowing of thy life-blood

From death hast saved us,

6. Grant to our souls a holy fount of weeping,

Grant to us strength to aid us in our fasting,

And all the thousand hosts of evil banish

Far from thy people.

## AURES AD NOSTRAS DEITATIS PRECES\*

1. Aures Ad Nostras Deitatis Preces

Deus inclina pietate sola,

Supplicum uota suscipe precamur

Famuli tui.

2. Respice clemens solio de sancto.

Vultu sereno lampades illustra,

Lumine tuo tenebras repelle

Pectore nostro.

3. Crimina laxa pietate multa

Ablue sordes, uincula disrunpe,

Parce peccatis, releua iacentes

Dextera tua.

4. Te sine tetro mergimur profundo,

Labimur alta sceleris sub unda;

Brachio tuo trahimur ad clara

Sidera coeli.

5. Christe lux uera bonitas et uita

Gaudium mundi pietas immensa

Qui nos a morte roseo salvasti

Sanguine tuo.

6. Inere tuum petimus amorem

Mentibus nostris fidei refunde

Lumen aeternum charitatis auge

Dilectionem.

7. Tu nobis dona fontem lacrymarum

Ieiuniorum fortia ministra,

Uitia carnis millia retunde

Framea tua.

\*Reprinted from pages 18-19 from

**[Pange Lingua - Breviary Hymns of Old Verses with an English Rendering](#)**

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## The Praying Catholic [at The Paper Gryphon]

The study of prayer, praying, and the numerous ways to go about doing so can be extensive. Great tomes have been dedicated to the subject. Over the years, great theologians and secular minds alike have made profound realizations concerning the necessity for prayer. The importance of prayer can be found numerous times through out the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments:



*If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land (NRSV, 2 Chronicles 7:14).*

*Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God (NRSV, Luke 6:12).*

It is because of the considerable role of prayer in the life of a Christian disciple that we must understand the various methods to do so.

Reading the Bible is not always recognized as the prayer that it is. However, approaching scripture in a spiritual manner is very much praying. Ninth century Carthusian monk, Guigo II, called it *lectio divina*, the divine reading. According to Guigo's concept of *lectio divina*, reading the Bible “should trigger meditation (“thinking” about what the text means), which in turn should lead to the response of prayer (speaking in our own words in response to meditative reading), and finally prayer should lead us to a kind of contemplation in which we rest silently in the presence of God.

Another form of prayer is to let one's actions reflect a cognizance of God's omnipresence and omniscience. This consciousness of God's presence will lead to making ordinary life a prayer. Our unwavering knowledge and remembrance of God will lead us to both thank Him for His blessings, and beg forgiveness on the occasion of our sin. This mindfulness serves to inform every facet of our lives.

With the insurgence of New Age spirituality it is easy to forget that meditation has played a large role in Christian prayer. Prior to the inception of Christianity the ancient Hebrews meditated: “I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit (NRSV, Psalm 77:6), “I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds” (NRSV, Psalm 77:12). It must be noted that Christian meditation is not an occasion for deliberate thoughtlessness in search of one's self; it is, instead, an opportunity to reflect on some deep sense of self in relation to God. Through meditation we hope to be in the presence of God, and allow that closeness to then come to a greater appreciation for Him, His gifts, and the whole of His creation.

As a disciples of Christ it is important that our actions reflect our fidelity to Him and His teachings. What we do in our daily lives is seen by those around us, and is therefore a testimony to our faith. This too is a form of prayer. These actions are the direct result of God's presence in our lives, and corollary to other forms of prayer. Every time we offer prayers for others, express thanks and gratitude, or ask forgiveness of our trespasses, we are living prayer in action.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.thepapergryphon.com/2014/02/the-praying-catholic.html>  
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## Ananias [at Bible Meditations]



Paul, also called Saul of Tarsus, headed to Damascus to persecute Christians. On the way, he was blinded following an encounter with the risen Christ and had a conversion experience, but Ananias didn't know that.

When God called Ananias, he responded, "Here I am, Lord." So far, so good. Then God asked him to go to Saul, lay hands on him, and heal him of his blindness. If we read between the lines in Acts 9, it's clear that Ananias' response was, "Lord, are you sure you know what you're doing? I've heard about this Saul, and he came here to persecute your followers." Whether Ananias was reluctant to put such a threat to Christianity back in commission, or for his own personal safety, or both, he still remained open to God's guidance.

God revealed to Ananias His plan to empower Saul to share the Good News with Gentiles as well as Jews. It took three days before Ananias went to Saul, but he did go. I can relate to his hesitancy, but I also suspect God was using that time. Both Saul and Ananias were both learning to see with the eyes of faith. When he entered the house where Saul was staying, Ananias greeted him as "Brother Saul." What a change of heart! As Ananias placed his hands on Saul and restored his sight, Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit.

We can take heart from Ananias. It's okay to face our doubts and fears and reason them out with God (or with a trusted spiritual guide.) God will meet us at our roadblocks and either remove them or enable us to overcome them. The Lord may be inviting us to reach out to someone today. Maybe it's someone we might not think needs our help, or someone we even find threatening. It might be the perfectly dressed soccer mom whose kids always sit still at church while ours fidget and squirm. It might be the sullen teen with the dark eye makeup and darker scowl that our daughter befriended. Maybe it's the colleague at work that is a little too charming or the pastor who seems so full of wisdom we suspect he has all the answers to life.

Who might need our understanding and help today? It might be the one we least expect.

Adapted from, “Fools, Liars, Cheaters, and Other Bible Heroes.”

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This contribution is available at <http://www.biblemeditations.net/archives/1749>  
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## Saint Joseph Feast Day Celebration! [at A Slice of Smith Life]



Last month our homeschool group made

[these decorative breads](#)

to prepare for the

[St. Joseph](#)

celebration that we had today. Saint Joseph is the the foster-father of Jesus and St. Joseph's feast day is celebrated each year on March 19th. For the past 8 years our homeschool group has celebrated this special feast day and it is a blessed time to have our families and friends come together to honor the man who was called by God to raise Jesus here on earth.

It is a tradition to prepare a St. Joseph altar in a home where the decorative breads, food, and desserts are placed. The altar has 3 levels to symbolize the Blessed Trinity-the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Here are a couple of pictures from our altar today at the host families home:



Behind the Easter lily plant is the rest of the altar which had many types of food and breads. Here are pictures from the backside of the altar. The altar has the 3 levels to symbolize the Blessed Trinity.



In the background behind the breads that spell "ST. JOSEPH" there is a carpenter square that belonged to our friend's father who has passed on. St. Joseph was a carpenter and a hard working man who provided so much for his holy family. At the feet of the St. Joseph statue there is an old rolling pin that once belonged to my friend's aunt. The aunt used the rolling pin to make food for the St. Joseph altars in Louisiana.

## **A History of the Altar**

*The people of Sicily prayed. For too long there had been no rain to nourish the crops that sustained life for most on the island. The dried out wheat stalks cracked beneath the feet of the poor farmers as they walked through the barren fields. Only a sea of dust and withered vines remained from what had once been row upon row of brightly colored fruits and vegetables. And so the people prayed. They pleaded to St. Joseph, their patron, for relief from the terrible famine that gripped the island. At last the skies opened, sending down the life-giving water. The people rejoiced! Some time later, to show their gratitude, they prepared a table with a special assortment of foods they had harvested. After paying honor to St. Joseph, they distributed the food to the less fortunate. The first St. Joseph Altar set up on the Island of Sicily was a small one, of course. But as time went on and the tradition took hold, the flamboyant nature and creative spirit of the Italians caused the altars to grow larger and more ornate. Today, the artistic quality of breads, cookies and pastries, which are baked in such shapes as chalices, staffs and pyramids, often rivals the exquisite flavor of these food offerings. Though Sicilian immigrants introduced the custom to America, the celebration is not confined to any nationality. Rather, it has become a public event which its devoted participants embrace for a host of private and personal reasons. The feast is alternately a source of petition and thanksgiving.*



The homeschool family that hosted today's St. Joseph celebration told a little bit of history of St. Joseph's Feast Day by displaying this map to show where Sicily is located. Our friend's great

grandparents (their wedding photo is in the above picture) were from Italy and when they moved to Louisiana they started the St. Joseph altar tradition in the state of Louisiana. The dish in front of the framed photo is a plate of fava beans and during the famine in Sicily, families lived off of these types of beans until the famine ended.

During the Middle Ages, people would abstain from eating meat throughout the entire season of Lent. (Now Catholics abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and every Friday during Lent). In the past, people would eat local grown vegetables, bread, seafood. Since St. Joseph's Feast Day falls during Lent each year, our altars have all meatless dishes just like the altars had so long ago: pastas, fruit, bread, vegetable dishes, salads, pastries, cookies. Also, St. Joseph's Feast Day is a

### [Solemnity](#)

, or a celebration of a holy day, so anyone who gave up certain foods (like sweets) can partake in all the goodies for this special day!

Before we enjoyed all the feasting and fellowship, our homeschool group invited a local priest to give a blessing and everyone prayed a

### [Litany of St. Joseph](#)

. It is interesting to note that our priest friend is Polish and he had never celebrated St. Joseph's feast day himself. He was very happy to take part in such a wonderful celebration that our homeschool group opened up to our families, friends, and community.

Here are some traditional dishes on St. Joseph altars that everyone today enjoyed eating:



My Dad makes this dish each year,

### ["pasta con Mudica"](#)

, which is a dish with pasta and breadcrumbs. The breadcrumbs symbolize the sawdust in St. Joseph's carpenter shop. In the background a family made a vegetable lasagna.



In the background the colored cookies are fig cookies or

[cuccidatas](#)

. These are very popular Italian cookies. These are a labor of love made by my friend's mother who is from Louisiana. Thank you Mrs. J! As always the cuccidatas were so delicious and beautiful! The cookies in the front of the photos are seed cookies. These are also delicious!



Here are some non-traditional St. Joseph Fig Newton cookies that some of our upper elementary children carved to decorate the St. Joseph altar. :) Someone carved a fish, chalice and a cross in the cookie.



This was a beautiful cross cake made with Italy's flag colors. This cake was made by a 4th grade boy in our group. Great job A.S. !



I made these Cappuccino Bon Bons (I renamed them Cappuccino Cakes). I got the recipe out of the

[Country Italian Cookbook](#)



A family made a beautiful crown of thorns out of pretzels and melted chocolate. All the young

children loved this sweet and symbolic treat!

We were blessed to share this special feast day with my parents who attend each year. My father's grandparents are from Sicily. My father's grandmother's cousin (got all that?) had a daughter who had polio and she was very sick. The family prayed for

### [St. Joseph's protection and intercession](#)

and the parents of the sick girl vowed to honor St. Joseph in a special way if their daughter got well. The young girl did get well and her parent's began the tradition of St. Joseph Altars in East Boston where my father is from. This couple kept the tradition of the altars going for 28 years.

My father has many fond memories of celebrating St. Joseph's Feast Day with his family and here are some photos of their altars:



My father is the young boy on the left closest to the altar. He is standing beside his fraternal twin brother. Also, pictured are my father's parents and his sister. The altar in this photo is much more elaborate than ours today, but oh so beautiful! Don't you think?



Here is a close-up of the St. Joseph Altar. It is difficult to see here, but hanging around the altar

are decorative breads. On the altar there are various statues, including the Holy Infant Child and candles.



This is my now deceased grandfather (my father's father) placing an angel statue on the altar.

This was a long post, but a very special one to write. Thank you for reading about St. Joseph's Feast Day! It was another wonderful celebration to honor St. Joseph and we are grateful for all the family and friends who came together to remember who God called to be the leader of the Holy Family!





We had over 60 adults and children celebrate this blessed day!

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This contribution is available at <http://asliceofsmithlife.blogspot.com/2011/03/saint-joseph-feast-day-celebration.html>

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## Sirach [at Journey to Wisdom]

Before deciding which of this Sunday's reading's I would share my thought's on, I came across this observation by Dr. Yoran Hazony, in his book,

### The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture

. Although he was writing within the context of the prophet Jeremiah's frustration with the obstinacy of the Jewish people's refusal to change their ways, even with the Babylonian army on the march, Hazony's remark spoke directly to me. He wrote that, "man is unique of God's creatures in that he can freely choose to value that which will gain him little or nothing, and to devote his life to its pursuit." And that thought brought me to Sirach 15:15-20:

<i>can keep the commandments will.</i>	<i>There are set before you fire and water;</i>	<i>"If you choose, you it is loyalty to do his</i>
<i>whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand.</i>	<i>whichever he chooses shall be given him.</i>	<i>to Before you are life and death</i>
<i>Immense is the wisdom of the Lord seeing.</i>	<i>The eyes of God see all he has made;</i>	<i>he is mighty in power and all- he</i>
<i>understands man's every deed. sin;</i>	<i>No man does he command to to none does he give strength to lies."</i>	

The choice, as it is laid out by Sirach, sounds like a no-brainer. If we trust in God, we will live; we can choose between life and death, good and evil. Sounds easy enough. Then why can it be so hard for me? And why does Sirach keep pounding on the matter of choice: "If you choose (v.15)...to which you choose (v.16)...whichever he choose shall be given to him (v.17)?"

For me, free will has often been a blessing and a curse. The filmmaker/actor Jean Renoir, as a character in one of his own movies, says, "

*The terrible thing about life, monsieur, is that everyone has his reasons."*

Well, Amen to that, brother! For nearly 20 years I abused alcohol. And I was so thankful that I never hurt anyone. But I was wrong about that. I hurt my parents, embarrassed myself and gave a terrible example to others. It's amazing how I tried to deceive myself and refused to see the sadness my actions were bringing into the lives of others. I'd simply laugh it off by saying,

**"It seemed like a good idea at the time."**

Now, it reminds me of the final verse from the Book of Judges, a verse that tries to sum up the horrendous violence, depravity and death that permeated the Promised Land: "...everyone did what

they thought best."(Jgs.21:25b)

I have seen the way to evil and a spiritual death, and I know the way that leads to emptiness, sadness and depression. But I am also blessed to know the way to life, to wisdom and to God. And God will not force me to take one path or the other. He trusts me. That's an empowering and a frightening thought. He has given me free will. And he knows that the way to a spiritual death can be appealing and attractive, and even a lot more fun than the path to him. And still he trusts me.

There was a hit song in the late 1960's by a British rock group, the Animals. The song was, "It's My Life and I'll do what I Want." The title encapsulated my attitude as a clueless 17-year old, and the attitude of a large segment of society then, and for many, even now. Since then I've learned the hard way, through many false roads taken, that what I do with my life, with my choices, affects many, many people, some whom I've never met. And the consequences of some of my choices have hurt people I truly love. That was a hard, but necessary lesson to learn.

Sirach is reminding me, some 2300 years after he either wrote, or recited to a scribe, that I am responsible for the choices I make, and that their consequences often reach farther than I can imagine, both for me and for others. Once asked by a reporter if he wanted to send a message to his village, Mahatma Gandhi, sitting in a train slowly departing the station, jotted on a piece of scrap paper

**: "My life is my message**

." So is mine. What message am I sending?

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## He gave, and He took away [at Walk By Faith]

Last week was one of *those* weeks. Absolutely everything seemed to be spiraling out of control. By late Wednesday night, I was finally lying in bed, pondering the events of the past few days. Boy was I frustrated with God. I spent a good fifteen minutes laying it all out with Him. I even brought up things that happened years ago that still caused me pain. I fell asleep in the middle of this, much like a toddler child crying in her father's arms until she falls asleep.

The next morning in holy hour, I brought my bad attitude with me. I sat there grumbling with God for giving me these trials. As I was writing in my journal, I realized how, well, stupid I sounded. I'm not saying the things that were on my heart were stupid. Pain, confusion, and fear are very real. What *was* stupid was how I was responding to these events.

Something I've struggled with, especially now that I'm a missionary, is why I still have to deal with trials. After all, I think in my prideful brain, if I desire nothing more to serve God, and I'm doing just that in my work every day, then why would He let me have to struggle?

I felt God calling me to read from scripture, and so I opened my bible the book of Job. He was a man with great wealth, with a large, happy family. Job was also fiercely in love with God. In the book, Satan tells God that of *course* Job loves Him- after all, God has given Job a prosperous life. The devil is convinced that if God allows him to take away Job's wealth and family, Job will surely turn away from the Lord. And so, God, in his infinite wisdom that we cannot comprehend, allows Satan to remove those blessings. Job's sons die, and his wealth is quickly eradicated. Yet, through it all, Job remains steadfast in his faith and trust in God.

In Job chapter one, he states, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" These words hit me like a semi truck. All I have is God's. *All*. I knew my possessions were all his. After all, I fundraise my whole salary as a missionary, and it's totally dependent upon Him. As I read these words from Job, I finally realized what the idea of everything belonging to God truly means. It means any blessing is from Him, even my health, friendships, and family. These are all on loan to me. If He wills it, He can allow suffering (not cause suffering, this is a key difference). God has the power to give me as much or as little as he desires, but neither indicates that he loves any me more or any less. Everything the Lord places in my path is an opportunity to grow closer to Him.

Certainly, He can place abundant blessings to help me grow toward Him. It's beautiful to look back in times when He shielded me from so much pain and anguish because He knew I was not ready for those challenges.

Sometimes, though (well, all the time), I really need to grow in virtue. What's the best way to grow in virtue? To be challenged.

God loves to speak to me in analogies, and I loved his response to my whining. To grow stronger, an athlete must weight lift. She must go through the pain and discomfort of hang cleans and squats. Not only that, but to strengthen her muscles, the muscle fibers must actually tear first, before growing stronger. There will be days when she will not even want to step foot in the gym, because she knows a hard day is ahead of her. And yet, there she is, on her third set of dead lifts.

This is a beautiful analogy of virtue. I must allow God the opportunity to place heavy burdens on my back. If there is no opposition to virtue, if there is no weight upon me, how can I expect to grow in it? More than that, I must allow God the opportunity to tear me down and show me my faults.

Let's be honest- no one wants to see their faults. God is just getting started at showing me how to grow into the saint he is calling me to be. I need the core, my virtue 'muscles', to be stripped raw so I can rebuild with an even stronger foundation.

So, back to my original frustration. I *was* growing closer to God without all of these trials, so why in the world would He continue to test me? Because God isn't calling me (or anyone) to mediocrity. He's calling me to be a saint. Truly, I can only come to heaven bearing a heavy cross. Not because God is some cruel jester looking for ways to smite me, but because He loves me. He knows my weaknesses, and He wants to help me to be the person He is calling me to be. Yes, that might be uncomfortable. Yes, I'm going to have to see the parts of my heart that aren't so perfect. But when I look back, *every single time* that he's presented me with a huge challenge, I've grown closer to Him.

We can rest assured that any cross is worth it. Our time on earth is short. Eternity with God is worth every struggle we face. Saint Paul tells us that the trials of this life are nothing compared to the joy that is coming (Rom 8:18-19). I'm not saying it's not painful, and that some people seem to be struck with so much more pain than others. Just know that God can transform any struggle and sorrow.

Abandoning myself completely to God is a challenge I face every day. The second I think, "Look, God, I gave you everything!" He shows me that that isn't completely true. It's not always fun to see the areas I lack in faith, but it is always worth it.

Strive to be uncomfortable. Abandon yourself to God. Give Him permission to give and take away.

**Luke 22:42**

"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."

God bless,

Catie

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# Living and Praying Through Jesus' Passion [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

## *Living and Praying through Jesus' Passion*



### Jesus Condemned

My dear fellow Pilgrims in Christ,

The last week of Lent is the most highlighted period in our annual Christian devotions – - as it justly should be, mainly because in this period we are led to focus on the last climactic, episode in the Life of our Lord and Savior, Yeshua Ha Mashiach (Jesus the Anointed Messiah), the Son of the Living God. It is highlighted in our devotions so that in our prayers and meditations we may put ourselves in Jesus' place and, thus immerse ourselves in the humiliation, pain, and suffering He endured for our sakes, so that our souls are opened to an inner appreciation of the Father's infinite love for all of us and for each of us, personally.

During this tragic and yet monumental time-line, which we call the "Passion of Christ", the Love of God for humanity was demonstrated in such a tragic yet undeniable, observable, and historical manner that no amount of denial by any religious or secular authority can surmount it! It encompasses Jesus' triumphant return to Jerusalem, and His ensuing arrest, trial, passion, crucifixion, death and resurrection, and is, in essence, the period where we see the all-encompassing magnificence of the Love of the Father, manifested through the self-sacrifice of His Son, who as the image of the Father, gave himself totally, body, soul and spirit to become the atoning sacrifice for the sins of all humanity from the very beginning of the race until the end of this age. It is culminated by the last words of Jesus to the Father as He hung on the cross ...



It is finished!

***“It is Finished!”*** (John 19:30)

and

***“Into Your Hands I commit my Spirit”***. (Luke 23:46)

.  
. .  
. .  
. .

“Finished”, in the sense, that the work of redemption for which He was sent was complete and He relinquishes even His Spirit into the hands of the Father.

Here, by the enthronement of our King on the Cross, the Good News of The Kingdom and the basis for our Salvation is clearly established – The Good News, that, through the substitutionary sacrifice of His Son, the Father has reconciled all of humanity to Himself holding nothing against them, so that out of untarnished and pure gratitude and love we may, through Faith, freely turn to Him and receive the reconciliation with the Father that He offers – eternal life in Him. And, what is theologically shocking, is that we receive this free gift of eternal life without any effort on our part through merely believing in His Son and, in faith, accepting Him for who He is- The Son of the Living God and our personal Lord and Savior!

***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”*** (John 3: 16-17)

Here, in this last week of Lent, we memorialize Jesus and His sacrifice for us through our devotions and prayers as He accomplishes the will of the Father so completely that there is no doubt in His Promise to us, when he said,

***“I am the Way, The Truth, and The Life. No man Comes to the Father but by Me!”*** (John 14:6)

“The Way” being the way into the Tabernacle through sacrifice and water, “The Truth” being the Lampstand and the Bread upon entering the Holy place in the Tabernacle and “The Life”, being the Life of God which was On the Mercy Seat over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy Of Holies. Because of His Death and resurrection He, of course has become the author of the New Covenant which brings us from death into eternal life.

### **Living and Praying the Passion**

In order to permit the Holy Spirit to work through us this Lent and deepen our relationship to Jesus, I propose that we focus on the “Way of the Cross” or what we Catholics term, “the Stations of the Cross”. I want all of you to know that this devotion is not only practiced by Catholics but also by Anglican and Orthodox Churches as well as some protestant and evangelical churches. Of course, because of differing theological issues, there are some differences but the intent of the devotions is the same: to live out the Passion of Christ in a group prayer that will draw us closer to Jesus by meditating on the events and circumstances of His passion.

(Note: In order to inform all who are interested I am including summary of the “Station” taken from the the Wikipedia post on thus subject. You will see from this post just how ecumenical this devotion is becoming. After the summary from Wikipedia I am providing links to both Catholic and Protestant versions of this devotions for your prayer and discernment.)

### ***Be Reconciled to God!***

In conclusion, brothers and sisters, let me be very clear about the intent of drawing your attention to the Passion of Christ. I am doing this not to bring guilt upon you but to gain your release from all the self-guilt that you are bearing. For by comprehending the price that was paid by Jesus for all of our sins we are brought to faith in how Father God HAS RECONCILED us to Himself through the death of His Son. It is only now up to us, out of gratitude, to receive, in Faith, this eternal reconciliation that is freely available to us in and through Christ Jesus! A reconciliation that is effected when we accept Jesus into our hearts as Lord and Savior!

This is the GOOD NEWS that St. Paul so eloquently proclaimed and which I now quote to you:

***‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We***



The Stations of the Cross originated in pilgrimages to Jerusalem. A desire to reproduce the holy places in other lands seems to have manifested itself at quite an early date. At the monastery of Santo Stefano at Bologna a group of connected chapels was constructed as early as the 5th century, by St. Petronius, Bishop of Bologna, which was intended to represent the more important shrines of Jerusalem, and in consequence, this monastery became familiarly known as “Hierusalem.” These may perhaps be regarded as the germ from which the Stations afterwards developed, though it is tolerably certain that nothing that we have before about the 15th century can strictly be called a Way of the Cross in the modern sense. Although several travelers who visited the Holy Land during the twelfth, thirteenth, and 14th centuries (e.g. Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, Burchard of Mount Sion, James of Verona),[3] mention a “Via Sacra,” i.e., a settled route along which pilgrims were conducted, there is nothing in their accounts to identify this with the Way of the Cross, as we understand it.[citation needed] The devotion of the Via Dolorosa, for which there have been a number of variant routes in Jerusalem, was probably developed by the Franciscans after they were granted administration of the Christian holy places in Jerusalem in 1342.

The earliest use of the word “stations,” as applied to the accustomed halting-places in the Via Sacra at Jerusalem, occurs in the narrative of an English pilgrim, William Wey, who visited the Holy Land in the mid-15th century, and described pilgrims following the footsteps of Christ to the cross. In 1521 a book called Geystlich Strass was printed with illustrations of the stations in the Holy Land.[3]

During the 15th and 16th centuries the Franciscans began to build a series of outdoor shrines in Europe to duplicate their counterparts in the Holy Land. The number of stations varied between seven and thirty; seven was common. These were usually placed, often in small buildings, along the approach to a church, as in a set of 1490 by Adam Kraft, leading to the Johanneskirche in Nuremberg.[4] A number of rural examples were established as attractions in their own right, usually on attractive wooded hills. These include the Sacro Monte di Domodossola (1657) and Sacro Monte di Belmonte (1712), and form part of the Sacri Monti of Piedmont and Lombardy World Heritage Site, together with other examples on different devotional themes. In these the sculptures are often approaching life-size and very elaborate. In 1686, in answer to their petition, Pope Innocent XI granted to the Franciscans the right to erect stations within their churches. In 1731, Pope Clement XII extended to all churches the right to have the stations, provided that a Franciscan father erected them, with the consent of the local bishop. At the same time the number was fixed at fourteen. In 1857, the bishops of England were allowed to erect the stations by themselves, without the intervention of a Franciscan priest, and in 1862 this right was extended to bishops throughout the church.[5]

### ***Spiritual significance***

The object of the Stations is to help the faithful to make a spiritual pilgrimage of prayer, through

meditating upon the chief scenes of Christ's sufferings and death. It has become one of the most popular devotions for Roman Catholics, and is often performed in a spirit of reparation for the sufferings and insults that Jesus endured during His Passion.[6]

In his encyclical letter, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, on reparations, Pope Pius XI called Acts of Reparation to Jesus Christ a duty for Catholics and referred to them as "some sort of compensation to be rendered for the injury" with respect to the sufferings of Jesus.[7] Pope John Paul II referred to Acts of Reparation as the "unceasing effort to stand beside the endless crosses on which the Son of God continues to be crucified".[8]

### ***The Stations (Traditional form)***

The early set of seven scenes was usually numbers 2,3,4,6,7, and 14 from the list below.[9] The standard set from the 17th to 20th centuries has consisted of 14 pictures or sculptures depicting the following scenes:

1. Jesus is condemned to death
2. Jesus carries his cross
3. Jesus falls the first time
4. Jesus meets his mother
5. Simon or Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry the cross
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
7. Jesus falls the second time
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls the third time
10. Jesus' clothes are taken away
11. Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross
12. Jesus dies on the cross
13. Jesus is taken down from the cross (Deposition or Lamentation)
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb.

Although not traditionally part of the Stations, the Resurrection of Jesus is sometimes included as a fifteenth station.[10][11]

### ***Scriptural Way of the Cross***

#### ***Main article: Scriptural Way of the Cross***

Out of the fourteen traditional Stations of the Cross, only eight have clear scriptural foundation. Stations 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9 are not specifically attested to in the gospels (in particular, no evidence exists of station 6 ever being known before medieval times) and Station 13 (representing Jesus's body being taken down off the cross and laid in the arms of His mother Mary) seems to embellish the gospels' record, which states that Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus down from the cross and buried him. To provide a version of this devotion more closely aligned with the biblical accounts, Pope John Paul II introduced a new form of devotion, called the Scriptural Way of the Cross on

Good Friday 1991. He celebrated that form many times but not exclusively at the Colosseum in Rome.[12][13] In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI approved this set of stations for meditation and public celebration: They follow this sequence:

1. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane,
2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested,
3. Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin,
4. Jesus is denied by Peter,
5. Jesus is judged by Pilate,
6. Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns,
7. Jesus takes up his cross,
8. Jesus is helped by Simon to carry his cross,
9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem,
10. Jesus is crucified,
11. Jesus promises his kingdom to the repentant thief,
12. Jesus entrusts Mary and John to each other,
13. Jesus dies on the cross,
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb.

### *Modern Usage*

The devotion may be conducted personally by the faithful, making their way from one station to another and saying the prayers, or by having an officiating celebrant move from cross to cross while the faithful make the responses. The stations themselves must consist of, at the very least, fourteen wooden crosses, pictures alone do not suffice, and they must be blessed by someone with the authority to erect stations.[14][dubious – discuss]

In the Roman Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II led an annual public prayer of the Stations of the Cross at the Roman Colosseum on Good Friday. Originally, the Pope himself carried the cross from station to station, but in his last years when age and infirmity limited his strength, John Paul presided over the celebration from a stage on the Palatine Hill, while others carried the cross. Just days prior to his death in 2005, Pope John Paul II observed the Stations of the Cross from his private chapel. Each year a different person is invited to write the meditation texts for the Stations. Past composers of the Papal Stations include several non-Catholics. The Pope himself wrote the texts for the Great Jubilee in 2000 and used the traditional Stations.

Station 5: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross, Good Friday procession 2011 at Ulm, Germany.

The celebration of the Stations of the Cross is especially common on the Fridays of Lent, especially Good Friday. Community celebrations are usually accompanied by various songs and prayers. Particularly common as musical accompaniment is the Stabat Mater. At the end of each

station the Adoramus Te is sometimes sung. The Alleluia is also sung, except during Lent.

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He Is Risen!

Structurally, Mel Gibson's 2004 film, *The Passion of the Christ*, follows the Stations of the Cross. [15] The fourteenth and last station, the Burial, is not prominently depicted (compared to the other thirteen) but it is implied since the last shot before credit titles is Jesus resurrected and about to leave the tomb.

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<http://www.aodonline.org/aodonline-sqlimages/stationsofthecross/stations.pdf>. Retrieved 2012-02-13. "In some contemporary Stations of the Cross, a fifteenth station has been added to



[\*Praying as Jesus Prayed \(Part 1\)\*](#)

[\*Praying as Jesus Prayed \(Part 2\)\*](#)

[\*I Stand at the Door and Knock\*](#)

[\*Receiving The Holy Spirit\*](#)

[\*Growing in The Spirit\*](#)

[\*Jesus the Source of Living water and Us\*](#)

[\*Christ In Us The Hope of Glory\*](#)

**<>Vienes Santo PPS Download (in Spanish):**

[\*Viernes Santo \(Sp.\) Good Friday.pps — 1.8 meg\*](#) 

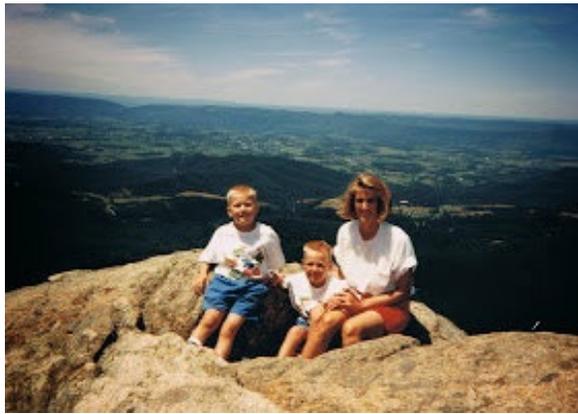
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## Tithing Our First Energies To Family [at The Hill Country Hermit]



I recently dropped a Bible Study class. It was hard to do. I really love Bible Studies, the facilitator was very well-prepared, and the group was wonderful. So, why did I drop it? Well, it seemed that every Tuesday, whenever I would spend my morning at Bible Study, something else would get dropped. Like supper (as in a homemade supper), or my son's basketball game, or a lunch date with one of my older sons, or.....

The bottom line is that I can't do it all and must prioritize. I do wish I had an extra day or two each week to get involved in more things, but I don't. And, when I look back on my life, it is the moments when I put my family first that bring back the warmest memories ... the most contented and satisfied memories.

So, Bible Study is on the back burner for a while anyways. Maybe it will work out another time. For now, however, I will have to embrace more heartily the Scripture readings at mass and maybe carve out some one-on-one time with my Bible at home ... for I still have a lot of family stuff to do.



Others may have a different population control agenda. Margaret Sanger, esteemed founder of [Planned Parenthood](#) certainly did. Her racist plans, underlying Planned Parenthood, put the efforts of the KKK to shame (to which she appeared as a featured speaker). Surprised? See [LifeNews.com](#) or [BlackGenocide.org](#). Suffice to say, Sanger's [Negro Project](#) has been a [complete success](#). Liberal Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg [spoke of Roe v. Wade](#) acknowledging "Frankly I had thought that at the time Roe was decided, there was concern about population growth and particularly growth in *populations that we don't want to have too many of.*"

Somehow, the obvious truth is unconvincing to those who champion this (non-existent) "right" to take innocent human life. It is confusing to us (me at least) why they can't see it. It is almost like they are surrounded by some sort of bubble which filters-out the truth (or if you prefer, scales cover their eyes).

Trent Horn at *Catholic Answers* has [an interesting take](#) on this. He argues that the numbers are simply overwhelming. In essence, people can not internalize the impact. This makes sense to me as it also explains why people can not understand the scope of the budget deficit. Trent urges that we make it more personal by showing individual impact.

Two examples quickly come to my mind. First, Abby Johnson (an ex-director of a [Planned Parenthood](#) facility) tells the story of Hillary Clinton's White House lunch with Blessed Mother Theresa. Hillary asked Mother why she thought that we had not had a woman president. I'll let Abby tell the story:

I'll conclude with the difficult story Judy Cozzens. Judy was pregnant with their second child but went into premature labor in the 5th month. The labor was stopped, but the doctor had devastating news: "You're carrying a deformed fetus and you need to not continue with the pregnancy." Judy didn't understand, so the doctor was more blunt: "You're carrying a freak, and you shouldn't continue with this pregnancy."

A FREAK. How crushing that news must have been.

The next step would be to schedule the "procedure" to take care of "it". Judy and her husband Jack are faithful Catholics and understand abortion, any abortion, is intrinsic evil. That is, it is NEVER justified to take an innocent life – even if some consider that life should be discarded. They would have their "freak" if that is what God gave them. The doctor walked away. (The story of Judy and Jack's trial is [here](#).)

Today that "freak" is His Excellency Andrew Cozzens, Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

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# Practicing the Spiritual Works of Mercy Through the Theology of the Body [at Plot Line and Sinker]



Photo Copyright James Hrkach

[My latest post](#)

at Catholic Mom speaks of how we can practice the Spiritual Works of Mercy with a Theology of the Body focus.

According to the Catholic encyclopedia, **mercy** is “*a virtue influencing one’s will to have compassion for, and, if possible, to alleviate another’s misfortune.*” The spiritual works of mercy are one way Catholics can show charity and compassion to others. Since my husband and I teach Natural Family Planning, we have always tried to practice the spiritual works of mercy through our NFP ministry. Many Catholics do not understand the Church’s teachings on sexuality. Mother Teresa once said, “*If you judge someone, you have no time to love them,*” Sharing the truth with charity and without judgment is extremely important.

## **Admonish the Sinner and Instruct the Ignorant**

I often find myself in conversations about these intimate topics with acquaintances and relatives. For example, while I was attending a First Penance meeting with one of my sons, the instructor handed out a “Examination of Conscience” pamphlet. On page three, under “Thou Shall Not Kill,” sterilization was listed correctly as a mortal sin. The woman next to me gasped and whispered, “I thought the Church changed her teaching on this. I had my tubes tied and didn’t know it was wrong.” I then gently said, “The Church has never changed this teaching. Birth control and sterilization have always been considered mortal sins.” The woman glanced away, then turned back to me, tears in her eyes. I patted her shoulder, then said, “You know, if you didn’t realize it

was wrong, then it's not a mortal sin." I pointed out the section in the "Examination of Conscience" pamphlet which stated that all three of these conditions need to be in place for mortal sin: it must be 1) serious matter, 2) the person must know it is serious and then 3) freely commit it. I strongly encouraged her to seek spiritual direction from a faithful priest. When she left the meeting, she thanked me.

### **Counsel the Doubtful and Comfort the Sorrowful**

A few years ago, when we were speaking at the local marriage prep course on "Sexual Honesty Within Marriage," we talked about the importance of keeping the marital embrace free, total, faithful and "fruitful." During the last part of the talk, we explained that contraception removes the fruitful aspect from the marital act. All of a sudden, a young woman rushed out of the meeting room, in tears. James and I continued our talk while one of the other host couples followed her, but we were concerned. After the talk, I immediately went to speak to the woman. I learned that she was the mother of a 13-year-old daughter from a teenage relationship. The young woman shared that she was currently in remission from terminal cancer. Because of the aggressive treatment, her doctors told that she would not have any more children. She told me that it upset her to hear the suggestion that her marriage might not be "fruitful" since she and her fiancé would never have children. (Of course, we didn't say that in our talk, but this is how she interpreted it). She admitted that she had mistakenly thought she had already dealt with the fact that she and her future husband would not be having children together. But our talk seemed to bring her sadness and regret to the surface. She then sobbed and I embraced her as she released emotions that had obviously been pent up for a while. When she stopped crying, I explained that fruitfulness was much more than giving birth to children. We discussed adoption. We talked about the fruitfulness of being a good example as well as other ways she and her husband could be 'fruitful' in their marriage. After the course finished that evening, she came up to me, hugged me and thanked me for being so "kind."

### **Bear Wrongs Patiently, Forgive all Injuries**

Bearing wrongs patiently has never been something I have done well. And the following example shows that not everyone I "admonish" or "instruct" has been open to the information.

Ten years ago, a woman called for NFP counseling. She and her husband had taken an NFP class years earlier. Her husband, she said, had made an appointment for a vasectomy and he had indicated the decision was not up for debate. After using NFP for many years, he no longer had any patience for the abstinence it entailed. The wife sounded like she was crying. "What can I do to stop him?" I spoke with her, then sent her information on the moral, spiritual and physical implications of sterilization. I encouraged her to seek spiritual direction from a faithful priest I knew in the area. Four different times we spoke on the phone, her tone frantic and desperate. Finally, she stopped calling. I continued to pray for this couple. Some months later, she called to inform me that her husband had indeed gone through with the vasectomy and they were now 'very happy.' She wanted me to know that, although she knew I didn't agree with 'their' decision, she had come to accept it and that it had been the 'right' thing for them.

Admittedly, I have no idea what happened in between her frantic calls and the vasectomy. I suspect she never called the faithful priest I recommended. However, I calmly responded, "But

sterilization is against the fifth commandment as well as the sixth, it separates a couple...it causes an increase in prostate cancer, it – ” She cut me off by angrily telling me that she only called to inform me, not to hear what the Church teaches, that she already knew that. Her husband then got on the phone and yelled at me, his tone sharp, accusing me of trying to “sabotage” his marriage. I listened, heart pounding, as he screamed at me over the phone. It took a lot of self-control not to hang up nor respond to his verbal abuse. I prayed and waited until he stopped yelling, although by that point, I was nearly in tears and my hands were trembling. Then I said, my voice breaking, “I will pray for you and I wish you both well...goodbye.” My hands shaking, I hung up the phone and cried. I forgave them long ago for their verbal abuse, and I have prayed for them from time to time, but I’ve always wondered how they are doing.

### **Pray for the Living and the Dead**

Prayer is so powerful, more powerful than any of us can ever imagine. Even if you’re not comfortable speaking up, you can always pray for anyone at anytime. Praying for others is an important part of the spiritual works of mercy. I pray daily that more couples can discover the joy of following the Church’s teachings on sexuality by learning NFP: to be chaste before marriage, to be generous and open to life within marriage. I pray for all the student couples to whom we have taught NFP over the years. I pray for the engaged couples who have listened to our testimony and talks at marriage prep courses. I offer up many prayers for relatives and friends who have chosen to lead alternate lifestyles, and those deceased ancestors and relatives who were not faithful to the Catholic Church’s beautiful teachings of sexuality.

Practicing the spiritual works of mercy through the Theology of the Body is **an ideal way to show charity and compassion** to others. It’s not always easy to do. However, I know that, for me, it is the right thing to do, even if the person or persons are not open to the message. The truth is, we never know when a seed of truth will be planted and someone will experience a change of heart.

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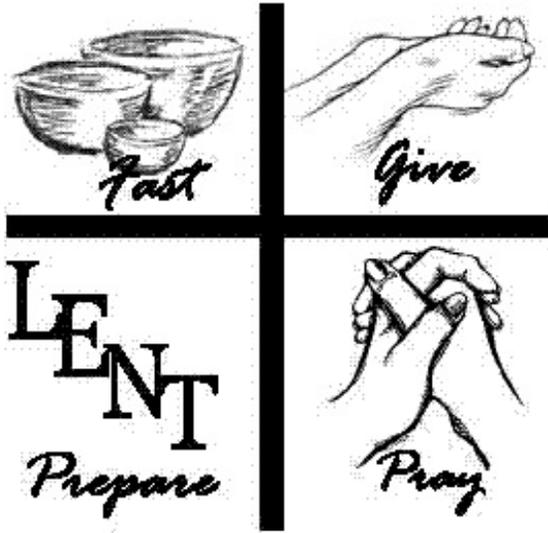
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# Oh Lent!!! [at Living the Faith]



Oh Lent!  
Springing my dirty feet  
As I laid my belly  
At the side of the river

With sponge  
Glittering as silver chains  
She scrub my little feet  
Deep in the face  
of the streams  
Set in the eyes  
Of the mid-day sun

What a feeling  
Of joy and hope  
To be rattle by the  
Torch of fire in the  
Miner's flame

The heart kindle  
In white of snow  
By the close side  
At the river of life

Photo: [jesuitinstitute.org](http://jesuitinstitute.org)

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## Thanks be to God for Pope Benedict XVI [at Justin's Corner]



Today marks one year since His Holiness Benedict XVI formally resigned from the papacy. Contrary to the negative and prejudiced viewpoints of some, I think he did a fine job as pope. He had to govern the Church during difficult times, he had many challenges to face and many responsibilities to carry out, but he met the challenges head-on and carried out his responsibilities with dedication and perseverance. He successfully carried the baton passed to him by the great Blessed John Paul II, smoothly transitioning the Church into the post-John Paul era. A great intellectual pontiff who was also humble and approachable, he built on the foundations John Paul laid for the modern papacy, carrying forward what he had begun. In the course of his eight-year pontificate, the first full pontificate of the twenty-first century, Benedict visited some two dozen foreign countries, attended three World Youth Days (Cologne 2005, Sydney 2008, Madrid 2011), gave the Church three encyclicals (God Is Love, Saved by Hope and Charity in Truth), persistently denounced violence in God's name as contrary to both faith and reason, warned us of the dangers of radical secularism and a world without God, challenged us to a renewal of faith and evangelization, squarely addressed the Church's sexual abuse problem with courage and compassion for the victims, oversaw the successful implementation of the new Roman Missal commissioned by John Paul II, helped to clarify and implement properly the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, undertook the reform of the papacy and the Roman Curia, improved the Church's relations with our separated Orthodox brethren, and established a special ordinariate for Anglicans wishing to retain their liturgical traditions while reuniting fully with the Church--to name just a portion of his accomplishments.

I think sometimes we fail to appreciate the significance of Benedict XVI's papacy. True, he was not perfect, and he made some mistakes, but I think most of these mistakes can be attributed to the fact that communication was not his greatest strength; he did not always make clear why he was doing this or that, which often led to misunderstandings that were amplified by the secular media. But that aside, I think it's fair to say his papacy was a remarkable success, and that history will ultimately pass a favorable judgment on his reign. Benedict XVI deserves our heartfelt gratitude for his service to the Church as the 264th Successor of Peter. Thank you, Your Holiness! You are

in our prayers and our hearts as you continue to serve the Church in the role of Pope Emeritus.

In commemoration of his wise and courageous resignation one year ago today, here are a few excerpts from his final Wednesday audience address attended by some 200,000 pilgrims and viewed by millions around the world on TV on February 27, 2013:

"I feel that I carry everyone in prayer, in a present that is God's, where I recall every meeting, every trip, every pastoral visit. I gather everyone in prayer to entrust them to the Lord, so that we may have full knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and so that we may comport ourselves in a manner worthy of Him, of His love, bearing fruit in every good work (cf. Col 1:9-10).

"At this time, I feel great trust, because I know, all of us know, that the Word of the truth of the Gospel is the strength of the Church, it is its life. The Gospel purifies and renews, it bears fruit, wherever the community of believers listens and receives the grace of God in truth and lives in charity. This is my trust, this is my joy...

"I always knew that the Lord is in the boat, and I always knew that the boat of the Church is not mine, not ours, but it is His. And He will not let her sink, it is He who leads it, certainly also through the men he has chosen, because so He has willed it. This was and is a certainty, that nothing can obscure. And that is why today my heart is filled with gratitude to God because He has never left me or the Church without His consolation, His light, His love...

"I would like to invite everyone to renew their firm trust in the Lord, to trust like children in the arms of God, certain that those arms support us always and are what allow us to walk every day, even when fatigued. I would like everyone to feel loved by that God who gave his Son for us and has shown us his boundless love. I want everyone to feel the joy of being Christian. A beautiful prayer to be recited daily in the morning says: "I adore you, my God, I love you with all my heart. Thank you for having created me, for having made me Christian..." Yes, we are happy for the gift of faith; it is the most precious thing, that no one can take from us! We thank God for this every day, with prayer and with a coherent Christian life. God loves us, but expects that we too love Him!...

"I would like to thank from my heart all the many people around the world who in recent weeks have sent me touching tokens of attention, friendship and prayer. Yes, the Pope is never alone, now I experience this again in so great a way that it touches my heart. The Pope belongs to everyone and many people feel very close to him...Here one can touch firsthand what the Church is - not an organization, not an association for religious or humanitarian purposes, but a living body, a community of brothers and sisters in the Body of Jesus Christ, who unites us all. To experience the Church in this way and to be able almost to touch with your hands the power of its truth and its love, is a source of joy, in a time when many speak of its decline. But we see how the Church is alive today!....

"I will not return to private life, to a life of travel, meetings, receptions, conferences and so on. I

am not abandoning the cross, but remain in a new way with the Crucified Lord. I no longer carry the power of the office for the government of the Church, but in the service of prayer I remain, so to speak, within St. Peter's bounds. St. Benedict, whose name I bear as Pope, will be for me a great example in this. He showed us the way to a life which, active or passive, belongs wholly to the work of God...

"I thank each and everyone for the respect and understanding with which you have accepted this important decision. I will continue to accompany the journey of the Church through prayer and reflection, with the dedication to the Lord and to His Spouse, with which I have tried to live every day until now and with which I want to live forever...

"Let us invoke the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of God and of the Church, that she accompany each of us and the whole ecclesial community; we entrust ourselves to Her, with deep confidence.

"Dear friends! God guides His Church, he sustains her always, and especially in difficult times. Let us never lose this vision of faith, which is the only true vision of the Church and the world. In our heart, in the heart of each of you, may there always be the joyous certainty that the Lord is near us, he does not abandon us, he is near us and surrounds us with his love. Thank you!"

Thanks be to God for Pope Benedict XVI!

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This contribution is available at <http://justins-corner.blogspot.com/2014/02/thanks-be-to-god-for-pope-benedict-xvi.html>

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# Icon of the Savior Not Made by Hands [at Suffering With Joy]

February 24, 2014

A few weeks ago I began a search for an icon of the face of Christ that would speak compellingly to people in great distress since I am meeting so many of them in my life right now. I thought that if they had an image of Jesus that they could look at, perhaps their hearts would calm and they could begin to find peace. I also wanted a prayer to put on the back. After a few days devoted to this task and rejecting image after image, I found the following icon at a Russian site. It is late 19<sup>th</sup> century, held in a private collection and the writer unknown. The icon type is “Icon of the Savior Not Made by Hands”, a most intriguing title.

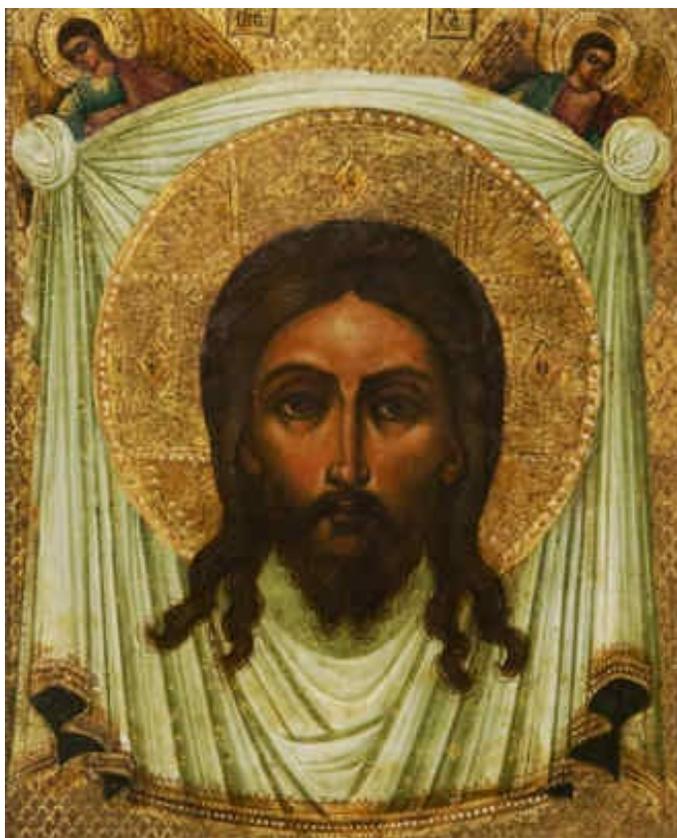


Image of the Savior Not Made by Hands

## Legend

This is one of the oldest image types of the Eastern Church and has been written many times over the centuries. Via Wikipedia and research from other sources:

According to the legend, the fame of Jesus’s miracles had spread throughout the region and into Syria as related by Matt. 4:24. King [Abgar of Edessa](#), though not having seen Jesus but believing

in him, desired to be cured of leprosy, according to some accounts. He could not travel into Roman territory because of a treaty with Caesar, so he sent his court painter, Ananias, to find Jesus, give him the letter, and paint His portrait. Ananias was unable to get near enough to Jesus to render an image because of the crowds, but Jesus called Him over and gave him a letter for Abgar declining his invitation but praising his faith and promising to send one of His disciples to him. Along with the letter went a likeness of Jesus said to have been formed by Our Lord wiping his face with a towel. Upon beholding it, Abgar was healed. This legend was first recorded in the early fourth century by [Eusebius of Caesarea](#), who said that he had transcribed and translated the actual letter in the Syriac chancery documents of the king of Edessa. The apostle “[Thaddaeus](#)“, known as “Addai” in Syriac, went to Edessa after Pentecost, was welcomed by Abgar, preached the Gospel and healed many.

Wiki: The first record of the existence of a physical image in the ancient city of [Edessa](#) (now [Urfa](#)) was in [Evagrius Scholasticus](#), writing about 600, who reports a portrait of Christ of divine origin which effected the miraculous aid in the defense of Edessa against the Persians in 544. The image was moved to Constantinople in the 10th century. The cloth disappeared from Constantinople during the [Fourth Crusade](#) [Sack of Constantinople] in 1204.

Many versions of this legend exist with some variation, but one thing is sure. This icon type is of very early origin and is still venerated today.

### **Why this particular icon?**

When I saw this image for the first time I was spellbound by the eyes. In many renditions, the writer has Christ looking to the side. In this work, He gazes directly at the viewer with eyes full of love, mercy, gentleness and compassion. Although the icon portrays the risen Christ, the shadows of His passion and death are somehow communicated as well. The message from Matt. 11:28, “Come to me all ye who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest” reaches out to the viewer. I thought this icon would draw people to Him and that He would then be able to work His miracles of peace in their hearts.

### **Prayer on the back**

The great folks at [Catholic Prayer Cards](#) had a beautiful prayer, “Jesus Help Me”, but it needed a few additions for my purposes. I found many versions of this prayer at both Catholic and Protestant sites, and with the help of a few readers, created this version for the back of the card.

### **Jesus Help Me, Thou Who Died for Me**

In every need let me come to Thee with humble trust saying, Jesus help me.

In all my confusion, doubts, and temptations, Jesus help me.

In the hours of loneliness, abandonment, weariness and trials, Jesus help me.

In the failure of my plans and hopes, Jesus help me.

In disappointments, troubles and sorrows, Jesus help me.

When others fail me, betray me, and when I am in devastating pain, Thy grace alone can assist me. Jesus help me.

When I throw myself on Thy tender love and mercy as Savior, Jesus help me.

When I feel impatient, hopeless, and my cross is overwhelming, Jesus help me.

When I struggle to forgive, Jesus help me.

When I am ill, and my head and hands cannot do their work, Jesus help me.

In the good Thou wouldst have me do; in the pleasures I seek, Jesus help me.

In the care I have for loved ones and friends, Jesus help me.

O Agonizing Jesus, strip me of all intemperance in the use of life's comforts and pleasures.

Always, always, in joys or sorrows, in falls and shortcomings, Jesus help me, and never forsake me. Amen.

A couple of other bloggers shared this project with me. If you want to have some printed to give away, please contact me through the contact form at this blog and I will give you the information you need.

[V. Praised be Jesus Christ!](#)

R. Now and forever!

(Click on the link above to read why I end my posts this way.)

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This contribution is available at <http://www.sufferingwithjoy.com/2014/02/24/icon-of-the-savior-not-made-by-hands/>

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## Communing with History [at One Arrow Alone]

Substance metaphysics, that much-maligned, apparently ‘static’ conception of thought, can lead us to a deeper appreciation of phenomena, an understanding of how all aspects of a being tensely coexist in one singular point.

The Eucharist sheds light on this. It is not simply the Body and Blood of Christ, but it is (in the traditional phrase) his ‘Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity’ – that is, all there is to Him. When the bread is broken, Christ is not divided: his Person resides completely in every part of the sacrament, just as, before, every part of the bread was equally completely bread. It is not the matter but the

*being*

that is changed; and the being is unbreakable, indivisible.

It is indivisible even through time. During Mass on Christmas Day, it occurred to me that Christ in the sacrament was not only the crucified Christ, but also the infant Christ, the child Christ, the risen Christ, the Christ in Heaven now. All the phases of the unending life of the Messiah belong to one Being, and that Being is among us.

Substance metaphysics sheds light also on our own life. I was reminded of the final chapter in

*The Great Divorce*

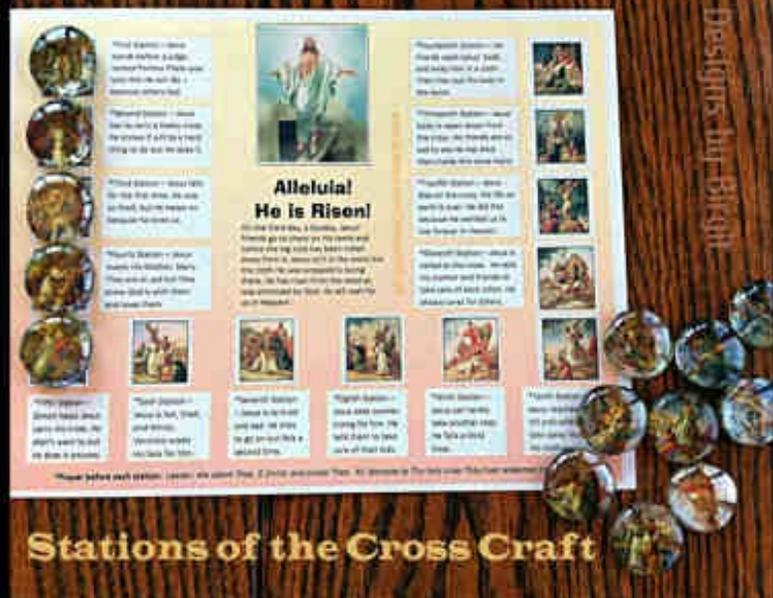
, the vision of the chessmen moving on the board of Time, watched by the unmoving souls whom they represent; and also of a striking passage in the Benedicto-Franciscan encyclical:

*This trustworthy truth of God is, as the Bible makes clear, his own faithful presence throughout history, his ability to hold together times and ages, and to gather into one the scattered strands of our lives.*

(

*Lumen Fidei*

, 23)



With Lent fast approaching, I've resurrected a couple of past Lenten crafts for kids from previous years. The

[EGG-traordinary Rosary Craft](#)

and

[Lenten Journey for Kids](#)

can be found in my most recent posts. This year I decided to create an easy to do (and use) Stations of the Cross craft for kids. There are several different ways you can use this craft, once it's completed. It could even be taken to church as a devotional tool for littles.

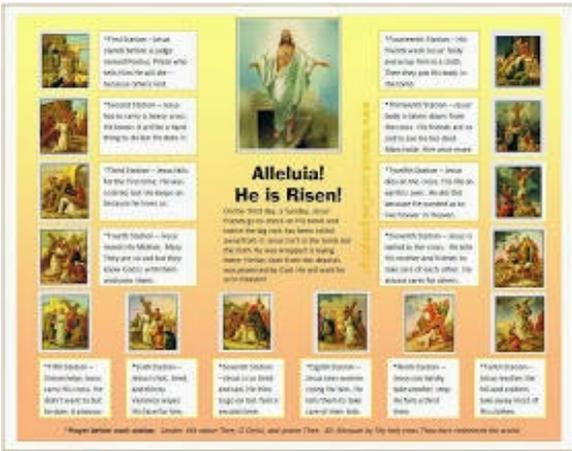
## Stations of the Cross Craft Materials

- Stations of the Cross Stickers (mine came from Autum and were purchased from my local Catholic Goods Store). If you can't find them, you can print out the [prayer sheet](#) and cut from there.
- Mod Podge or other adhesive
- Rounded, flat bottomed glass 'jewels'
- Prayer sheet - can be downloaded [here](#).



## Stations of the Cross Construction

- Trace outline of glass jewel onto each sticker and cut out.
- Using Mod Podge or spray adhesive and stick picture for each station onto bottom of a jewel.
- After they are dry, coat the bottom of each jewel with Mod Podge for a protective coating.
- Optional: use a hot glue gun to affix a magnet to the bottom of each Station.



## Using the Stations of the Cross Craft

- Give a brief explanation of the Stations of the Cross to your child(ren).
- Begin with the Sign of the Cross.
- As each Station is announced, say "**Leader:** *We adore Thee, O Christ, and praise Thee. All: Because by Thy holy cross Thou hast redeemed the world*". Genuflect when saying this prayer, if possible.
- Read the description next to each station as you come to it.
- Instruct your child to place the corresponding jewel onto the appropriate square. In this way,

the child will have a way to participate in 'traveling' the Way of the Cross with Jesus.

- You might want to add a personalized comment to help your child(ren) understand how the trials of Jesus are relevant to your family and all people. You could come up with dialog for each one or some general ideas. E.g. See how mean they were to Jesus? How do you think He felt? How do you think we should treat others? If someone is mean to us, what should we do?
- Optional - laminate the prayer sheet.
- Optional - using Mod Podge or other adhesive, stick prayer sheet onto a metal cookie sheet and add magnets to the underside of the Stations of the Cross jewels. This would allow this prayer tool to be a travel activity.
- Optional - adhere magnets to the underside of the jewels and place the prayer sheet on the refrigerator for an alternate magnetic version.

+ + +

### **Useful Links:**

Some interesting history about the Stations of the Cross can be found here:

<http://credidimus.wordpress.com/2009/04/26/stations-of-the-cross/>

A devotional aid for praying the Rosary with young children:

<http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2014/02/egg-straordinary-rosary-project-for-lent.html>

A booklet for your child - to encourage good Lenten practices:

<http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2012/02/my-lenten-journey-for-kids.html>

Print out the Stations of the Cross Craft Prayer Sheet

<http://tiny.cc/t9hybx>

Designs by Birgit is a proud participant in the Keep Love in Lent linkup hosted by the following blogs. Please visit them for some awesome posts and an opportunity to link your own blog post.

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This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2014/02/stations-of-cross-craft-and-devotional.html>

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# Mary's Memories - The Sorrowful Mysteries [at His UnEnding Love]



## **The Agony in the Garden**

I felt my heart begin to break when I knew Jesus and His Apostles had left for the Garden. The Apostles were uneasy. They sensed that My Son was sorrowful. He had warned them that He would be killed, but they did not believe. I fell to my knees with the other women and we began to pray. Jesus began to suffer in the Garden. He felt the weight of sin on his shoulders and satan was there to tempt Him again. Jesus was sorrowful beyond words. I could feel His sorrow in my heart. How he could bear the weight I do not know. I've never known such sorrow. He asked His Father to let this cup pass, but the Father withdrew. Jesus accepted His cup for love of us. His soul was at peace, but He knew what was to come. When they came to arrest Him, My Jesus identified Himself to the soldiers of the temple. They began to beat Him. When Peter tried to stop this by cutting off the ear of the soldier, Jesus reminded Peter that this what was meant to be. Jesus healed the soldier's ear. The other soldiers were stunned. My Son was beaten and taken to both Herod and Pilate. My Jesus, My Beautiful Son! My heart weeps. My heart weeps when I see You. My precious Child. I love You!

## **The Scourging at the Pillar.**

How could I look? Jesus did not look like Himself. His beautiful face was swollen and bruised. His eye was swollen shut. When asked about the charges, Jesus would not answer. Pilate tried to

calm the crowds. He knew that Jesus did not do anything wrong, but he was afraid. He ordered Jesus to be scourged. My Son! My Son! You are the Son of God, but they do not know You! These are the people who were cheering You and calling You the Messiah. Now they are calling for your death. My Son! I am here. I hear the whips as they strike Your flesh. I feel the whips as they rip into Your flesh. I see the blood flow from Your skin. Your flesh is hanging in shreds, and they continue to beat You. The sear of the air on Your wounds brings tears to My eyes. My Son, how do You bear this pain? They want to kill You. Pilate did not order that. My God! My God! Protect Your Son! I am weak. How much more weak are You, My beautiful Child? At last, the beatings have stopped and the soldiers are giving You back Your clothing that is soaked with your blood. You can barely walk. You lost so much blood! If they only knew how much You loved them! I see You looking at me. I am here, My Son! I am here. Be strong! I am here.

### **The Crowning with Thorns**

I didn't realize they could find new ways to torture You. Now, they are mocking You? They are laughing at You and calling You the King of the Jews? My Son, You are a King. You will not show them, but You continue to pray for them and forgive them. My Son, You are My God, too.

Does Your love know an end? Your love for us is unending. I am with You as you walk this road. I am here. What is that in the soldier's hand? Is that supposed to be a crown? I thought the mocking and the spitting were enough, now they are going to crown You with thorns? How can they torture Love? Oh, my Jesus! I don't know that I can bear this! They have pulled Your clothes away. The bleeding has started again. Oh, your most precious blood hits the ground! They are giving you a purple robe? Oh, My Son! They mock You even more! They laugh. They don't know. Yet, you pray for them, and You have forgiven them. My Jesus, Your love is beyond all measure. I die each time they harm You. I must forgive them as You have forgiven them. My Jesus! My Son! I am here with You.

### **The Carrying of the Cross**

They have condemned You to die. Pilate was afraid of the crowd. They screamed for Your death and asked for Barabbas. You who have done no wrong. You who are Love. They screamed for Your death, and Pilate gave in. His wife warned Pilate to have nothing to do with You. She knows You. She loves You. I see her in the window weeping as Pilate condemns you to death. Pilate has washed his hands of You. He is turning You over to be killed. They drag You through the streets. You are so weak. How can You walk? Your body has been beaten and you've lost so much blood. My Dearest Son! They have condemned Love! They have condemned Love! I must forgive as You forgive. Now, I must watch You die. How can You carry the cross? John will get me closer to You. You must know that I am here with You! I will help You with Your cross. John will get me closer to You. Oh, Jesus, My Son, my heart breaks as I see Your disfigured face. I see Your flesh hanging from Your body. I see Your blood soaked garments. I see Your eyes, and You see mine. I cannot get close enough to help You. John will take care of me. Have no worries. I forgive as You have forgiven. My beautiful Son. You are love, and they hate You. They do not realize what they are doing. The soldiers have forced Simeon to help You. He does

not understand the great graces You have given Him. He knows that You will die. You know that You will die. Even as the torture continues, You forgive. My Jesus, My Son, My God! I love You.

## **The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus**

My Son, My Son. The nails have pierced Your Hands and Feet. The soldiers have allowed us to be closer to You now. There is no turning back. The soldiers continue to mock You. They are even casting lots for Your clothes which are stained with Your most precious blood. The Jewish leaders are screaming at You. They want You to prove You are God and come off the cross by yourself. My Jesus! How do you bear this pain? I am not sure I can bear this pain, yet You bear this without complaint. My Son, I do forgive them. You have forgiven them. You have promised one thief that he will join You in Paradise today. The other, You have offered the chance for forgiveness. He has refused You. My heart continues to break. I kiss Your feet. They are so cold and blue. You are shivering in the cold. You've asked for something to drink, but they give you a drink to numb Your pain. You refuse that. You are willing to take the pain of sin completely on You. My Son! My Son! My heart is broken. Yet, You are still my strength. Your breath is so shallow now. Your pain is so great. I dare not touch You for fear of causing You pain. I see Your eyes as You hang on that cross. I must touch You. It's almost the third hour now. I see Your eyes closing. I hear You call out to Your Father. Jesus, He has not abandoned You, even if He did, I will not, but He has not abandoned You. You are one with Him. He feels Your pain, and He weeps. My Jesus! You have died. My heart breaks for love of You. The earth has quaked. The temple is greatly damaged. My Son, You are truly dead! Your body is cold and is beginning to stiffen. My Jesus! We will lay You to rest soon. Come back! Come back! I need You. My tears are like cold rain drops. The rain has been falling. Your body is washed. Your Father has washed His Son's Body. You lay here in my arms. I do not want to let You go. John reminds me that he is now my son and that I am his mother. We must go. Once the Sabbath has passed, Your body will be prepared for death. There is very little time now. John touches my arm. We must leave. He weeps as I do. You are love. Your mission is finished. My heart is broken.

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This contribution is available at <http://hisunendinglov.blogspot.com/2014/02/marys-memories-sorrowful-mysteries.html>

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## Called, Not Comfortable [at The Backs of People's Heads and Baby Faces]



There is a great deal of talk about discernment these days. I suppose there has always been, but maybe I'm noticing it more lately because I've been trying to discern my next steps. The thing that troubles me about it is that when I talk to someone about my discernment process, they always tell me that I'll be "more comfortable" or "happier" when I follow God's will for my life.

That can't possibly be true of all callings.

**I think the call to holiness is the most *uncomfortable* path we could choose.**

Think about it:

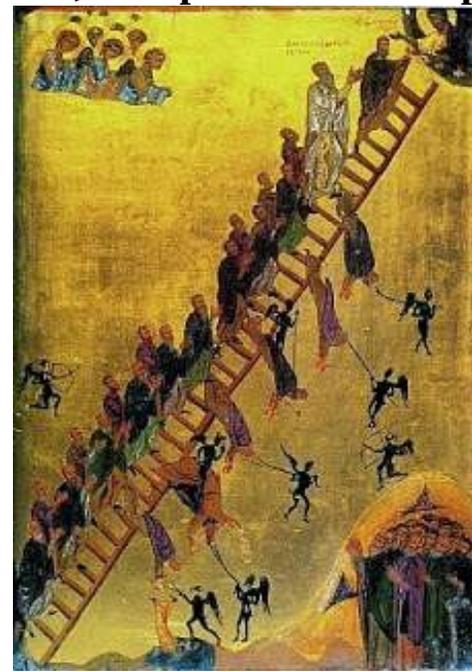
- Jesus wept tears of blood during His agony in the garden. Not a comfortable place to be.
- Jonah was not happy to be called to Nineveh. And even after he got them to repent he wasn't happy.
- Noah was an old man. Do you think he wanted to build an ark?
- Moses did not want to go back to Egypt. And he certainly wasn't comfortable with the idea of talking to Pharaoh.
- Paul spoke of working out his salvation in "fear and trembling".
- Peter actually tried to leave Rome before his martyrdom.
- And speaking of martyrs...

Well, you get the idea.

The bible is full of stories of people who followed God's will and were very uncomfortable about their mission. But, if we are to be purified and tested like gold in a furnace, you have to believe that it's not going to be an easy process. And it won't be safe either.

That sure doesn't sound very hopeful or joyful, does it?

## **But, God promises His help.**



The way of holiness is narrow and hard. It's easy to fall into the ditches on either side. But that's because we continually try to rely on ourselves. We get into trouble when we don't trust God. When Moses struck the rock twice to draw water, he was punished for his lack of reliance on the mercy of God.

It's the same with us. Our peace is found in our reliance on the providence of God. When we take our eyes off of Him and look down into the chasm that has opened up at our side, that's when we grow dizzy and fall. If we keep our eyes fixed on God, He will not let us fall.

For he commands his angels with regard to you,  
to guard you wherever you go.

With their hands they shall support you,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.

## **God does not promise temporal comfort.**

He promises eternal life and peace. Not peace as in the absence of war or turmoil. Peace in the sense that you belong to Him and He is guarding your path so you come straight to Him.

There is a peace in doing God's will, especially if I don't fight with Him about it (and I am a fighter). There is a sense of resignation about it, but there is joy in that resignation. I haven't found the words to describe it, only to know that there is a state in my heart of absolute peace - even if what I am about to face is awful.

Sometimes we have to go where we do not want to be. Sometimes we have to say things that are

hard to say. Sometimes we have to stay where it is uncomfortable.

**Always, we must go where we are sent.**

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This contribution is available at <http://peoplesheadsandbabyfaces.blogspot.com/2014/02/called-not-comfortable.html>

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# A Pocketful of Change and a Root Beer [at Peace Garden Mama]

## Thursdays don't generally

get much attention on my blog, but this week is special. It's "7 for 7" - seven posts in seven days. It's all in preparation for what will be mostly silence here for the 40 days of Lent. This week is my indulgence of words, you might say, as I explain

[here](#)

I wanted my Thursday post to be lighthearted -- just a little something to make your day. So I thought of thoughtfulness as a theme, and that brought to mind something I'd shared this weekend with my Facebook friends.

Sunday night, I'd taken my two youngest boys out for "coffee." No one actually had coffee. I had tea, and they had hot chocolate and root beer.



I had some paperwork to do and knew it might be something of a risk to attempt it at a small table with three drinks plus water and a son who isn't known for his grace. Sure enough, not too far into our stay we had a root beer explosion, and it was all over my papers. The falling root beer bottle had knocked over my cup of tea to make it doubly drippy. It was a grand mess.

## **We got it all cleaned up**

and my son -- the spiller -- decided he wanted to buy a root beer to replace the one he'd spilled, and he thought that just maybe he had enough change to get the job done. He laid out his coins on the table -- \$2 in nickels, dimes and pennies. He then cajoled his older brother to come with him to the counter to make his purchase.

A few minutes after they tromped off to said counter, our youngest came dancing back to the table with a huge grin on his face and two crisp dollar bills in his hands.

I'd seen the cops come in but hadn't noticed them up at the counter. Apparently, after Nick had made his purchase with his coin collection, one of the police officers had replenished the money he'd lost on the root beer with two new dollar bills. Our little guy was in heaven to say the least.

"Here, you forgot your root beer." It was the barista, who'd come to find our thirsty boy. In all his excitement, he'd failed to bring his purchase back to our table.

## **What was fun for me**

in all of this, aside from the heart-warming elements of knowing a cop had made my son's day, was watching others' reactions. It caused a bit of a stir in the quiet, evening atmosphere of the shop. The two gals near us, around college age, had huge grins on their faces as they watched all this play out (we weren't exactly quiet as mice), and the barista, too, seemed to be getting a kick out of the whole thing and her part in it.

Generosity is an alive thing. From the initial acting out of a kind thought, something heartening happens and spreads, and onlookers, if any, can't help but feel lighter as well.

"Did you thank him?" I asked my son.

"Um, I think so."

"Well I want to make sure. Go back and tell him thank you, just to make sure."

So he did. Better to be safe than sorry, or as a friend once told me, to err on the side of love.

## **But I especially loved**

it when my son decided to share his "reward" with his older brother, who had come away from the scene with empty hands. It didn't happen right off, but eventually, the moment of recognition came: if older brother had not accompanied him to the counter, he may never have found the courage to approach the counter in the first place. It was definitely a team effort and the result was divided in two.

My sharing this on Facebook elicited some great responses. The "random act of kindness" moment

grew beyond the coffee shop as readers delighted in the act of one kind police officer to a young boy.

People want to hear about surprises, to be reminded that good still exists in the world, and that at bottom, our good hearts have not left us. Also, policemen aren't our enemies. They're there to help us, and on occasion, make a kid's day.

**Q4U: Have you been the recipient of an act of random kindness lately? I'd love to hear about it!**

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/02/thoughtful-thursdays-7-for-7-pocketful.html>

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## The Fog [at The Fisk Files]

I know not every part of Winter is enjoyable. However, neither are all parts of the other seasons. What I do love are the days when it's cold enough to have a fire going, the shorter days that allow for the family to all be in the house together much earlier in the evenings, and the slower pace of life on the ranch.

I also believe it has a certain beauty, especially on the days like this, where a layer of ice coats every thing perfectly and fog hugs the horizon.





It makes the animals stand out and their unique colors more appreciated...



and creates a stillness that I believe magnificent.



There is something about these rare days of beauty that make me truly stop and see the tiniest of details surrounding us...

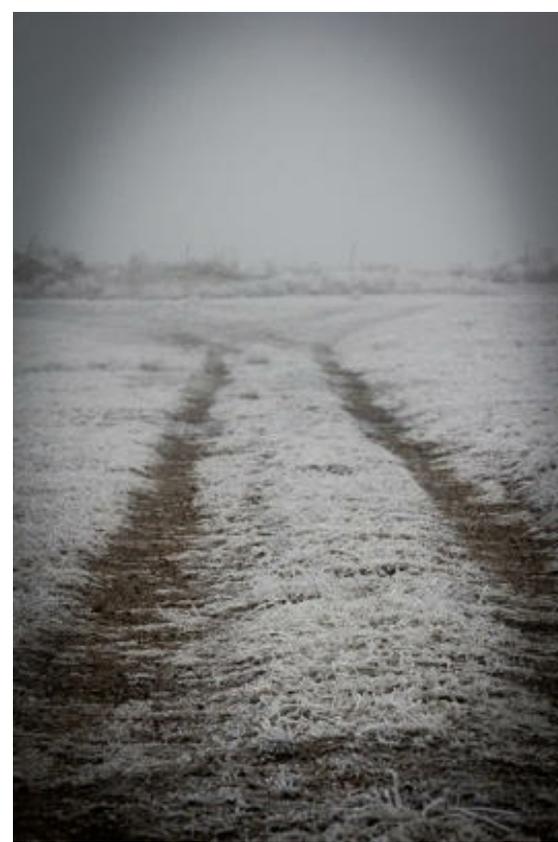


...while appreciating His hand in everything.



...and a few more scenes from our surroundings.







Sometimes the fog in life can keep us from seeing its beauty. Other times, it only enhances it. Here's to hoping there's a little fog in your life today.

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## All You Need Is Love [at Raising Angels]

When I was a kid, I loved Valentine's Day. Decorating the card boxes, cutting out hearts, gluing, glittering, addressing my own cards...it was all wonderfully magical at the elementary level. In middle school and high school it was relatively fun. I still exchanged Valentine's with my friends and there was always the hope that I might get one from an actual boy.

As I got into college and decided not to date anyone for a while, Valentine's Day lost a little of its luster. My mom, of course, managed to make it special for me and I often chose to do something fun with my other single friends. The older I got, the less enamored I was with the day.

And then came Nelson. He was an over-the-top romantic as well as an over-the-top gift giver. Combining those two qualities with the day itself was a total win for me. I was in love and truthfully, that was all I needed. The gifts and celebrations were just icing on the cake.

Sometime along the way in our marriage, we changed the way we celebrated. It was one of those seasons when flowers, jewelry, and candy seemed entirely too trite for the love we shared. We decided that instead of giving each other gifts, we would do something together to commemorate the day. Some years we splurged on a night at a local bed and breakfast, other years the splurge was dressing up for a nice evening out.

This year Valentine's Day fell the day after our Icepocalypse, as we southerners refereed to it, as well as three months post birth of our fifth child, and the flooding and catastrophic disorganization that ensued in our home. In other words, I had nothing. There were no heart-shaped pancakes for breakfast, nothing red at lunch. My idea for dinner was for Nelson to pick up some sushi.

Not my best year.

Of course, this was magnified by the power of Instagram and Facebook to make me feel like a loser as I viewed photos of everyone else's banners, flowers, etc. I don't usually let that stuff get to

me, but between the hormones and lack of sleep I'm getting lately, it was enough to prevent me from feeling the love.

I was in that moment when I got a text from a dear friend who said she had a strong sense that God wanted her to tell me He loved me. Totally out of the blue - right in the middle of me seeing the tenth picture of kids holding up their magnificent homemade Valentines (my kids totally did the boxed card with Starbursts this year). I was so glad she had the courage to send that to me. She was right on the money and just like that, I was feeling the love again.

I got up, made some sweet homemade cookies for my kids and started feeling just fine about take home sushi. Then the doorbell rang and it was the furniture company returning my bed - the one the flood repair guys broke and I hadn't slept on in over a month. I took a picture, sent it to Nelson with the message, "Happy Valentine's Day!" Done.

Until...I got a text from my brother, whose power was still out. He was worried that their house was too cold for their baby and could they stay another night. Y'all, their house was 47 degrees. I didn't hesitate. I sent a text to Nelson that there was a change of plans since neither of them eat sushi. Luckily, I had a large package of beautiful pork chops, which happen to be one of Nelson's favorites. My parent's power was still out so we asked them to join us too.

That night, as the 12 of us sat around the table enjoying a candle light dinner, the thought occurred to me that this is what Valentine's Day is all about. If we are going to celebrate love, why not do it in the truest sense of the word? Don't get me wrong, I'm not throwing in the towel on romantic dinners for two, flowers, or chocolates. Those things are wonderful, but they're not love.

Love is knowing someone well enough to complete each other's sentences. Love is holding the crying baby and washing the dishes. Love is sacrificing the one free hour you have to make red and white swirled cookies for your kids.



*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*

When this is the love you have, it truly is all you really need.

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This contribution is available at <http://raisingangels.blogspot.com/2014/02/all-you-need-is-love.html>  
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# Two Women You Probably Haven't Heard About During Black History Month [at Leaven For The Loaf]

*This post was originally published on Leaven for the Loaf on February 28, 2013.*

Meet Mildred Jefferson and Alveda King. Either of these gifted women could have lived a quietly successful life. They chose to stand up for the right to life instead, which pretty much put an end to any hope for “quiet.”



*Dr. Mildred Jefferson (photo courtesy Massachusetts Citizens for Life)*

I met **Dr. Mildred Jefferson** a couple of times, when she came to New Hampshire to testify in Concord on pro-life bills. She was petite, with a radiant smile, and she always dressed with elegance and simplicity and a hat to match. She looked quite unthreatening until she sat down and began to speak. Only then would everyone in the room realize what a powerhouse she was.

Born in 1926, she earned her bachelor's degree at the age of 16, and went on to become the first black woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School. She was made of stern stuff. This served her well in her years as a surgeon, and even more so as she became outspoken in her defense of life and her opposition to abortion. She helped to found Massachusetts Citizens for Life in the early 1970s and later served as president of the National Right to Life Committee. From about 1970 until her death in 2010, she was a nonstop pro-life advocate.

Both times when I heard her testify, I listened to her describe the medical facts about abortion, its effects on women, and the development of the preborn child. Both times, I was indignant to the point of anger as some of our state representatives dismissed her medical experience and judgment as being somehow “ideological.” I never heard Dr. Jefferson raise her voice or utter an impatient word in reply. She knew someone with medical credentials had to go on record, even if some of the reps didn't want to hear her. She did the same thing in State Houses all over the country. To this day, I am in awe of her energy, intelligence, and persistence.



*Dr. Alveda King (Facebook photo)*

Dr. **Alveda King** grew up in the civil rights movement, and her [biography](#) says “she sees the prolife movement as a continuation of the civil rights struggle.” She is the niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Her doctorate, like his, is non-medical.) She is based in Georgia, although her work takes her all over the country. She is currently working with Priests for Life as pastoral associate and director of African-American outreach. A post-abortive woman herself, she is part of the Silent No More Awareness Campaign, which encourages women who regret their abortions to speak up about the emotional and physical consequences they have endured.

I haven’t met her yet. I hope I will someday, just so I can thank her for what she’s doing.

This is all too brief a sketch of two women who deserve much more attention. They’re not in history books — not yet, anyway.

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This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2014/02/12/encore-two-women-you-probably-havent-heard-about-during-black-history-month/>  
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## Pick Me Up!

“Pick me up! Carry me!” Parents so often hear this request – almost as much as requests for food!



My kids are a little too big to carry around regularly these days – although they still get occasional piggy back rides. But I fondly remember the days when I carried them around in my arms. I say fondly now, because I remember at the time thinking, “If I could just put them down for a minute, I could get this or that done. I shouldn’t have to hold them every minute of the day!” But now that I physically can’t carry them, I remember the snuggling more than the obstruction to productivity. Sometimes both the children and I wish that I could still pick them up – for comfort, for some special connection, for fun. But on those occasions, I just sit down and pull them into my lap instead. Yes, even my nearly tween 95-pound son gets pulled into my lap from time-to-time, with only minimal objection! It makes them feel loved and loving. It helps them know that someone cares for them and loves them so deeply. I can imagine that when my children are all grown with children of their own and hurts and trials come their way, I would deeply wish that I could fix it by picking them up and holding them.



In God’s eyes, though, we are still children – His children. And He can still pick us up. When life gets to be too heavy, when our legs are too tired and we have a long way to go, we can ask our Father, “Pick me up! Please carry me! I can’t do this on my own.” And He, with His infinite love, patience and mercy, is just waiting for that request. He has nothing else He wants to do but hold us and love all of our fears and anxieties away. His comforting arms are all we need to carry us through all of our life struggles. And His strength will be more than enough to keep us from sadness and despair. While he carries us we can lean in close, put our

head on His shoulder and feel beloved of our Father.

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This contribution is available at <http://busycatholicmoms.com/sample-page/pick-me-up/>  
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# Afraid of Celebrating the Good [at Martin Family Moments]

[Jessica wrote a beautiful post](#)

about why she doesn't regularly post her baby bump photos. Of course, being an

[occasional baby bump photo sharer](#)

kind of gal, I was intrigued. Her reasoning for not showing pregnant photos of herself is because she is very sensitive to the fact that other women (even her sisters) have such struggles with infertility that she doesn't want to hurt them. A very noble and compassionate outlook, indeed.

But, I have to say I don't feel the same way as Jessica (can we still be friends?). I understand her point of view, and I appreciate it, yet I think it's okay to celebrate the good things in life, like new babies or loving marriages or happy children or a successful career without feeling guilt that someone reading may not have those blessings in their life.

Are we not allowed to be thankful and joyful in what is good in our lives? Perhaps, only if we do so in private? I know that misery loves company, and I can see it so clearly in social media when a mom of many littles complains about how hard her day is, or a wife implies that her husband is driving her crazy. We sympathize with them, we might even empathize with them. We feel like they let us in on a little secret in their life and it draws us closer together. So sharing the bad can be good, but does that mean sharing the good is bad?



We all have our own hangups and sensitivities, we're human. I know I am overly sensitive when someone says they had a "panic attack" using the dirty public restroom or shopping in a crowded store. After having

[real panic attacks](#)

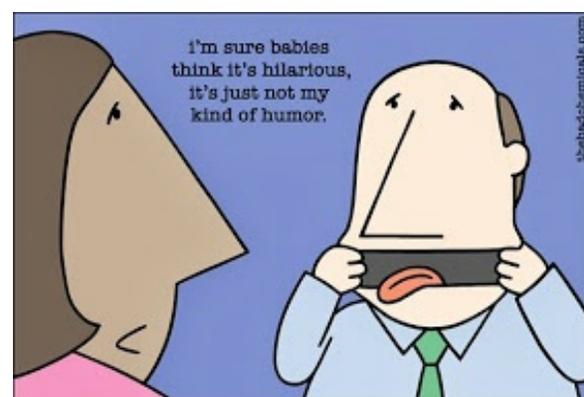
that sent me to the hospital, I don't like when people equate being nervous or stressed to having an

actual panic attack. To me, it's like saying they broke their arm when in fact they just bruised it.

But, like I said, I'm overly sensitive to this phrase, because it affected my life so deeply. This is why I can understand that someone who is suffering from one of the greatest crosses I can imagine, infertility, may be sensitive to seeing pregnancy photos or baby news all the time. While we should always try to be nice and courteous and loving, we are still probably going to offend someone who is suffering. You show me photos from your vacation? I'm sad because we can't afford to take one. You write about homeschooling victories? I'm feeling guilty because I have to work. You pin handmade decorations, and I berate myself for not being crafty or having a beautiful house.

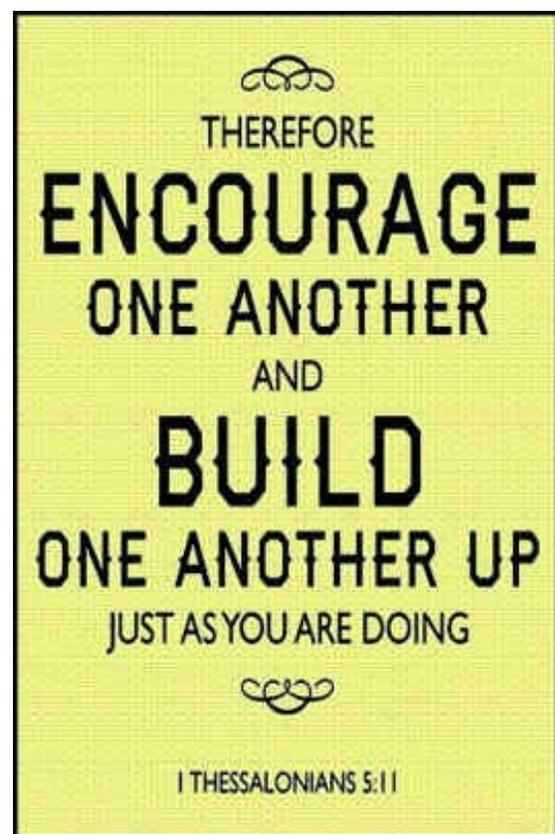
So what's the answer?

I think the answer is knowing who you are dealing with and in what capacity. The problem with blogs, Facebook, twitter, or any other social media is that you never know who is reading and who might be sensitive to what you are writing. This is simple in real life. I would never sit face to face with a friend and brag about how romantic my husband is if I know she is going through a divorce. That would just be rubbing salt in her wound. However, if I wanted to write about my husband's romantic gestures as part of my online scrapbook, even if I knew that same friend reads it, I think that would be okay. They aren't stuck in a conversation with me, they are free to read or not read, and I wouldn't be the wiser. It's like my husband says in his role as a Catholic high school teacher "I would never teach a theology class about the immorality of abortion in the same way that I would talk to a woman frightened and alone and considering an abortion." You have to know your audience.



And when authors don't always "know" our exact audience, and readers don't always "know" the author, that's when we have to realize that it's okay for people to talk about their life, spread their joy, and understand they aren't doing it AT us. They aren't trying to make us feel bad. If we could

give everyone a little benefit of the doubt and try and overcome our own fallen nature then maybe selfishness and jealousy and materialism would eventually be sins of our past. Maybe we could see their happiness and feel their joy and truly be excited for them, without turning it back onto ourselves and comparing what we don't have. As Blessed Pope John Paul II said "Do not abandon yourself to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song."



In a world where spouse- bashing is a typical conversation, and babies are treated as commodities, and horrible news stories are being reported daily, I think the world could use a little more celebrating. A little more of the good stuff. So, this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.



Colleen

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This contribution is available at <http://martinfamilymoments.blogspot.com/2014/02/afraid-of-celebrating-good.html>  
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## Thankful for Everyday Life [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



**Thankful** for Valentine Art!

This is just hearts cut out of sponges and dipped in red paint  
and some homemade pink paint,  
and of course there is GLITTER!  
(everywhere)

We have a St Valentine Party planned for Friday

We'll have 23 kiddos here, I can't wait

I have Minute to Win it games planned this year

(I'll try to post about it)



**Thankful** for TOM.

He is the best husband to me

and

the best father to these kiddos.

He is always playing cards with the kids



The kids and have gotten used to him being around every day all day

and when he goes back to work, we are really really going to miss him!



**Thankful** Speech went wonderful!

She Loved Little Red!

She said he's so fun to play with!

(Duh!!)

He is a great kid to play with and he's so smart!

She said he's way ahead in all other areas,

and right now, he's not that far behind in speech.

Now, she is from the PUBLIC school district

and Yes, I know that the bar is not set high,

but I'll take it!

She is actually only assessing him this month,

Next week we will meet his actual teacher and the following week

we will meet his speech teacher.



**Thankful** oh, what's not to be **thankful** about this little guy?



And of course his sidekick!



**Thankful** for Science projects

Here they are smelling herbs and spices...

HE did not take it serious, and SHE did

Yes, there are several arguments during Science!

I just tell them, no one gets to pick their lab partner.

(hahaha)



**Thankful** He LOVES puzzles



**Thankful** for big brothers

Oh, gosh, they have a special relationship.

They just like the same things and it is so special and fun to see.



**Thankful** for reading moments like this while I'm teaching others.



**Thankful** I have a ton of these *Little Critter* books!

(handed down from my little brother)



Fun, very fattening, new recipe found for Sunday brunch!

## **Cinnamon French Toast**

- 1/4 cup Butter, melted
- 2 cans refrigerated cinnamon rolls with icing
- 6 Eggs
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 1 cup Fisher Chopped Pecans (or not, I did half with nuts half w/o)
- 1 cup maple syrup

Heat oven to 375°F.

Pour melted butter into ungreased 13x9-inch glass baking dish.

Separate both cans of dough into 16 rolls; set icing aside.

Cut each roll into 8 pieces;

place pieces over butter in dish.

In medium bowl, beat eggs.

Beat in cream, cinnamon and vanilla until well blended;

gently pour over roll pieces.

Sprinkle with pecans; drizzle with 1 cup syrup.

Bake 20 to 28 minutes or until golden brown.

Cool 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, microwave icing 10 to 15 seconds or until thin enough to drizzle.

Drizzle icing over top; sprinkle with powdered sugar

It's a really sweet breakfast, we had fresh strawberries with it and no extra syrup

but the recipe called for more syrup drizzled over each piece.



**Thankful** this little girl did not swallow her tooth!

She lost another tooth!

(yes, she's only 4!!)

Last summer, she fell out of the van and hit the cement driveway  
knocking out her 2 bottom teeth.

Having nothing blocking their way, her permanent teeth came in

Now, she has lost another, and we did not even know it was loose!

(the top space is a natural space between her teeth, ever hear of Lauren Hutton?)



My dad always loved her split, she is quite beautiful  
(he also has a split)



Oh, my.

The 2 little girls came to me in the morning

"The tooth Fairy forgot to come!!"

OH, Dang!

(as her sister explains that the tooth fairy always forgets)

"Quick go hide!"

"I'll get your sister out of the bedroom, if she's awake!"

(see the tricky time here folks?)

All is better.

She then brings me the money and says,

"Can I buy a dolly now?"

She's too young to be losing her teeth.



**Thankful** for little fingers playing Legos, Oh, it is adorable



Look at those little hands.

(you're welcome)

And you're welcome again.



**Thankful** for a grandma that knows how to do everything SEWING.

Sorry Anne! (my beautiful MIL)

I can only sew straight lines...on a machine.



The girls love it though!



**Thankful** for piles of books!

We got this set...like 20 of *The Beaconstreet Girls*

for 17 bucks!



**Thankful** these two loved, I mean *loved* peanut butter English muffins!

(Toast the English muffin, butter it and then peanut butter it)

I used to have these when I was a kid!

**NO ONE else liked them.**

My kids are weird.



**Thankful** we had some of our Catholic homeschool families over

after the First Friday Mass last week for soup, sledding and the Divine Mercy chaplet!

(we had 47 people here, including us)

(click for the recipe)

and drinks.

Everyone brought something to share



(Patty's picture, not mine)

The soup was wonderful!!



Our drink station, which later was full of desserts too!





Sarah and I go way back, to pre children!!

We've gone to a Blogger's Tea together a few years ago,

And sometimes I see her mama around town,

but I had not met her children!

Oh, my! Talk about wonderful kids!

And her two little girls, my heart tugs for another so badly when seeing them.



Look at these two littles looking at each other!

They are about a month apart in age.

**So Thankful** for old friends and new friends.

It was awesome seeing Sarah again, but next time,  
I hope we get more time to talk!



Oh, my goodness black eyes on babies!

Oh, yes, she got a black eye here.

(she ran into our table!--poor baby!)



Sarah didn't really want to get her 2 year pictures done this month anyway.



OK, that's a little gruesome, although, true.

I had a hard time finding "St Valentine's" images,

almost all leaving out the "Saint" part.

To find out the truth, go

[HERE](#)

I prefer my little toddler love book about St Valentine

It explains that couples in love were not allowed to be married

Valentine was a holy priest and married them in secret.

He was imprisoned and a guard brought his blind daughter

to visit Valentine and he taught her and healed her of her blindness.

He sent her and/or others notes signing them,

"From your Valentine"

(his name)

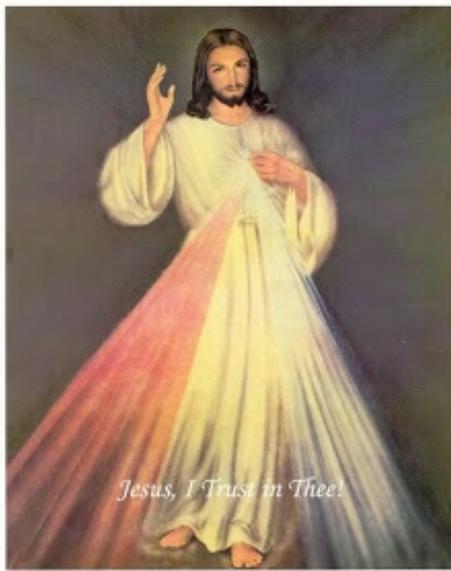
That is how Valentine's day started.



See? No "Saint"

But, isn't it pretty?

Then, I decided, that February is the month of LOVE



Jesus is LOVE

Jesus is Divine Mercy=LOVE

Happy St Valentine's Day

I hope your day is filled with red and pink and lots of sweet things!

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This contribution is available at <http://makemeasaint.blogspot.com/2014/02/thankful-for-everyday-life.html>  
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# Is there a magic bullet to holiness? [at Contemplative Homeschool]



I don't know about you, but I'm always looking for a magic bullet to bring me closer to God. Let's be honest: the Christian life can be a slog. Day in, day out, struggling against sin and making little measurable progress. I'm always looking for the secret to help me reach sanctity faster. But is there one?

St. Therese asked herself this same question. She sought a fast way to climb the ladder to Heaven, as it were. The Little Way of Spiritual Childhood was her discovery. She said that if she made herself little, Jesus could lift her up in His arms. His arms would be her elevator to help her advance quickly.

## Why am I still not a saint?

But there is a catch. As much as we might think the Little Way means Jesus does all the work for us, we still have to strive against ourselves. The Little Way is not magic. We can't just say a few words and be instant saints.

This is challenging. When I first committed myself to daily mental prayer, I thought I had found the magic bullet. After all, St. John of the Cross said that people who devote themselves to prayer “very soon” enter the dark night of the senses and the illuminative way.

But I have been praying faithfully for over twenty years now, and I’m still not there. What gives?

Last year I discovered St. Therese’s doctrine of trust. Well, really rediscovered it, because I had heard it many times. I just hadn’t lived it well. I thought trust was the thing that would make me an instant saint. It hasn’t happened yet.

I’m now realizing that I need to get back to detachment as well. John and Therese both assume detachment in their doctrines. And detachment is decidedly not magic. It’s hard work.

## **The Christian life is a marriage of God and the soul**

God is too good to make me a saint without my participation. He respects me too much. He gave me a mind and a heart so that I could use them to come close to Him. He made them good, they were damaged by sin, and He redeemed them on the cross. Now He wants to sanctify them completely.

As parents, we know that our goal is to help our children grow into self-sufficient adults. We can’t do everything for them. And God does not do everything for us. And yet, in one way, He does.

God gives us the will to follow Him. He gives us the strength. He forgives us when we fail. He carries us when we can’t carry ourselves. Then He rewards us as though we’ve done it all.

But He will not tolerate our laziness. He won’t accept our excuses for not trying. He will not overlook unrepentant sin. He will not pry away our attachments against our will.

God wants to form a partnership with us. He wants us to be His Bride. God and the soul must work together. In other words, God will only sanctify as much of my heart and mind that I willingly give Him.

So, I must struggle against sin, peacefully, in His joy and love. I must be willing to accept His forgiveness. I must be willing to follow His lead. And I must be willing to wait, no matter how long it takes.

Love is better than magic.

*Connie Rossini*

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## The Joy in the Desert [at Dancing in the Rain]

What is joy? The catechism offers several explanations, sources of and impediments to joy; however, there isn't a definition, at least one that I could find, of what or who it actually is. Mother Teresa's definition below is awesome and one I've started to intentionally pray.

As we approach Lent, what is your disposition? Are you a glum Catholic counting the cost of sacrifice? Are you counting down the days until you can get on facebook, eat chocolate, check your phone whenever you want, text while driving, or break an intentional time of silence? We do not go to the desert for the sake of the desert. We go knowing it is the path from exile to freedom. We go in imitation of Christ.

I love to travel and if you asked me ten places I'd love to go. I can guarantee the desert ain't in the top 50. That being said, I have to come to love the journey through the desert of the spiritual life. I love it not because it's where I want to end up. Nor do I love it because it's easy or comfortable. It's neither. But if we let it, it is transformative, life giving, and beautiful.

In the beauty of the desert I have learned it is in enveloping darkness that the Light shines most brightly. It is in the resounding silence that we hear whispers that echo. It is in the emptying and stripping from harsh conditions that we cling to Our Protection, Our Lord and Lady. It is in the midst of the coldness where we hover around the fire of the Holy Spirit and it is in the midst of this unknown territory where we come to depend on our guides, the Holy Family and saints. Joy is the proclamation in the wilderness that the desert yields abundant fruit.

As we journey this Easter along to the way of the Cross, let us remember we embrace the cross because it leads to new life. "Pier Giorgio was not afraid to die because he knew that death is, 'a very simple path,' as he once said, 'between life and Life, which must in any case never frighten us.'" (Blessed Pier Giorgio: An Ordinary Christian, 100). It has been said that making a good Lent can be a storehouse of graces for the year. Let us let Him make us new and whole. Let us become joyful apostles who live bold hope and joyful courage.

Let us dare to dance in the desert.

Dance, then, wherever you may be

Shining in the dark, I will follow you

*We can Trust Our God. He knows what He's doing.*

*How do you wait for Heaven?*

*“Joy is prayer – Joy is strength – Joy is love – Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls. God loves a cheerful giver. She gives most who gives with joy. The best way to show our gratitude to God and the people is to accept everything with joy. A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love. Never let anything so fill you with sorrow as to make you forget the joy of Christ Risen.*

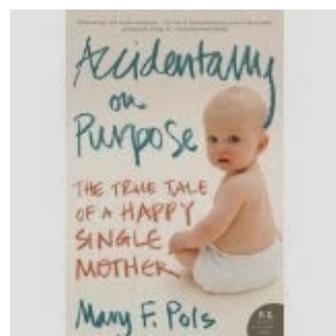
*We all long for heaven where God is, but we have it in our power to be in heaven with him right now – to be happy with him at this very moment. But being happy with him now means: loving as he loves, helping as he helps, giving as he gives, serving as he serves, rescuing as he rescues, being with him twenty-four hours, touching him in his distressing disguise.” Mother Teresa*

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# Unmarried and Pregnant Accidentally on Purpose [at Can We Cana?]

*You should use Grammarly's [plagiarism detection software](#) because they're giving me a \$50 Amazon gift card to say so!!! (Ahem.) You should use Grammarly's [plagiarism detection software](#) because a real wordsmith produces, rather than pilfers, his prose. (We now return to our regular programming.)*



Part mommy memoir and part single woman's lament,

*Accidentally on Purpose: The True Tale of a Happy Single Mother*

is an intimate look at one woman's choice to keep the baby she conceived on a one-night stand. Written by journalist Mary Pols and published by HarperCollins, the book did so well that it spawned a one-season CBS series starring Jenna Elfman.

What is the source of the book's appeal? At 39 years old, the author Mary faced the all-too-common question of why she stayed single while her friends and siblings made it to the altar. When Mary became unexpectedly pregnant, her reaction was to keep the baby, but not the father. The father, despite his washboard abs, lacked ambition and, as he quietly confided, had no "J-O-B." Scarred by his parents' divorce, he had little hope in his own future. Nonetheless, he badly wanted Mary to keep the baby and was willing to help her as much as he could. They ultimately stumbled their way to a co-parenting arrangement that suited them both.

The book taps into a cultural zeitgeist of wish-fulfillment. Over 40 with no husband and no children? You, too, can get pregnant (even if it's on a one-night-stand with a man more than 10 years your junior), and everything will be fine. You'll have a baby and an involved father who won't control you or burden you. You can have your happy ending without the responsibilities of marriage or heartbreak of divorce. The target audience for this macabre modern fairy tale is huge. According to

, about 40% of people over the age of 35 are unmarried. Moreover, the

[most recent data](#)

pegs the number of single parent households at over 14 million. There are a lot of unmarried almost 40-year-olds and a lot of single parents who want to hear that everything will be okay.

The book is the author's way of coming to terms with a turbulent and difficult period of her life. In convincing herself that everything turned out for the best, she succeeds half-way in convincing us. What could have been a tale of whiny self-justification instead touches on a nationwide problem of well-educated, professional women in their 40s who are childless and unmarried -- not by choice.

You can't help wondering why this woman who presents herself so attractively in words hasn't gotten married when she claims that's what she wants for herself. It's tempting to blame her habit of premarital sex, but many people who have sex before marriage go on to get married anyway. It's tempting to blame her focus on career, but careerwomen get married, too. More than these two things, what seeps through the narrative is her attitude of objectifying men and finding them good enough for sex, perhaps, but not much else.

The author relates the following conversation with herself:

"I should probably stop sleeping with beautiful young guys," the sensible me told myself. "But I like sleeping with beautiful young guys," I said back. "Yes, but it's not the path to settling down."

She asked the father of her child for a friendship, and then a friendship with sexual benefits, but wouldn't sign a lease with him because she considered him a rent risk. The clear message she sent him was that he was only good for one thing. She sums it up succinctly, "of course, I was using him."

Nevertheless, when faced with a situation in which many would choose abortion, these two imperfect parents chose life. The author Mary grew up as the youngest child of Catholic parents who were "pro-choice only in theory." Her parents, who had seven children, "didn't have a problem so much with using birth control, just a problem with making it work." Mary's story proves that even a Catholicism that doesn't play by the rulebook can bring some good into the world, and that good is a new human being with a face and a name. Mary's relationship with her son seems far more pure and selfless than her relationship with the father.

The story ends in the middle, so to speak, while the child is still a toddler. I can't help wondering if the story's epilogue isn't as painfully messy as its beginning and its middle. How will the author's son feel about the circumstances of his birth and about his parents' choices? They may not

have been able to give him a stable home with two married parents, but they gave him what they could -- they gave him life. And with life, there's hope. Not such a bad fairy tale ending, after all.

*Content Advisory: Explicit sexual content, some drug use. Not for everyone.*

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## Physical Prayer [at Working to be Worthy]

-1-

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength." How do you love with strength? What is physical prayer?

-2-

One possibility is dedicating the entirety of your day to the Lord. Whatever you do with your day becomes an act of prayer. Service done to others becomes service of God. It allows life to become love, offering back to God all he has given to us.

-3-

Another possibility is an offering of exertion. When, if left to yourself, you would quit, continuing can be an offering of prayer. I first did this in high school. At that time, I knew a little girl who had Tourette's Syndrome. When her tics got overwhelming, or the stares from her peers began to bother her too much, she wanted to run. At age seven, she could easily run for twenty minutes. I often ran with her.

-4-

In high school, I ran cross country and track. Most of the time, I loved it. But there were days when I just couldn't get motivated. I just wanted to walk. Those days, I ran for that little girl. I pretended she was next to me, urging me to keep up (which often happened when we ran together!). I offered the discomfort of running as an act of prayer, praying for her body to cooperate with her wishes.

-5-

Since just after Christmas, I've been part of a winter running club. On really cold days, my husband and I stay home. But even when it's a balmy 35 degrees, as tonight, there are times I just want to stop. I keep going, though, offering my effort on behalf of others for whom I pray.

-6-

I only offer my runs as prayer, though, when I'm at the end of my own motivation. Offering my run when my primary motivations are my own good health seems like being on a diet and calling it fasting. It is only when I am empty of my own reserves that I am able to offer myself to God.

-7-

It occurred to me on tonight's run, slogging up the final hill, that the same applies to any act of prayer. Only when I am completely humbled before my God am I able to love with all that I am.

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## Shared Tears [at The Road Home]

This post is late in coming, for lots of reasons, but it is important. Last weekend, The Man and I had the opportunity to speak to a group of NFP Teachers about infertility. We are also teachers, and we are working on being trained to teach teachers, but this was the first time this presentation had been given.

Oh, we also got to go to Texas and missed the latest round of snow - 13" was waiting for us when we arrived home.

This part (well, the Texas part, not so much the snow part) is important because as we got ready to go the day before, I could feel the tension starting. I was nervous and I could tell The Man was nervous. I tried my best to not snap at him and start a fight (as I'm soooooo good at doing), and we made it to Houston fight-free. Nothing short of miraculous there.

Just before our presentation we did very Rebecca and The Man type things - I rearranged my stuff and made sure that everything I might need was perfectly organized (like tissues and my notes) and The Man went out for a quiet walk alone. (Later I found out he found a statue of Mary and spent some time with her. I love this man.)

As we started, The Man read this quote from Pope Benedict XVI, that has come to mean so very much to me:

*The Church pays much attention to the suffering of infertile couples, it cares for them and, because of this, encourages medical research. The science, nevertheless, is not always able to respond to the desires of many couples. I would like again to remind the spouses who experience infertility that their vocation to marriage is not frustrated because of this. The husband and wife, because of their baptismal and matrimonial vocations themselves, are always called to work together with God in creating a new humanity. The vocation to love, in fact, is a vocation to the gift of self and this is a possibility that cannot be impeded by any organic condition. Therefore, where science cannot find an answer, the answer that brings light comes from Christ.*

And then we just started to share about what infertility is like,

*really*

like. I honestly barely remember the words I said, they just came out, along with a lot of tears. Way more tears than I ever shed in public. I promised myself that I would honor Joe and Cinda's request to share authentically and not allow myself to be all "business".

But what I do remember is this: looking around a room and seeing a room full of others who will

hopefully never a day in their life know the pain of infertility, 2 of them holding babies,

## sharing my tears

. There were a couple of others present who have experienced infertility and I had to steer clear of their eye contact, I knew the tears that were streaming down my face would only give way to the "really ugly" cry if I locked eyes with someone who "gets it."

It wasn't only the tears though. It was that not a single person leaned away from us. Or acted visibly uncomfortable. No, they leaned in. They sought my eyes. They were willing to see the pain, willing to sit in it. Willing to love through it.

Infertility is so isolating. The invisibility of it only makes it worse in so many ways.

But so often, whether it's infertility or something else, what causes us pain causes others to be uncomfortable. We want to "fix" and to "cheer up" and to "make better", when what we most need is just someone to sit with us and be comfortable doing so. For just over an hour last Saturday, many people sat with us and were comfortable doing so, and in that we were comforted.

We were given positive feedback, and I'm hopeful that what we did say will somehow help another infertile couple.

But. I am quite confident that we received much more than we gave.

Joe and Cinda, I know you read here and to anyone else who was there last weekend who might be reading here, from the bottom of our hearts we say thank-you for all that you gave us, and for loving us. We are grateful.

 Rebecca

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## Lectio Divina [at Treasures of the Church]

"Oh, how I love Thy Law! It is my meditation all the day." So sung King David, and so should we sing at all times in our fervor for the Lord's Word. Many ways are there for us to be soaked in Scripture in order to "swim in the Law of the Lord" (in the beautiful phrase of St. Seraphim), and one of these is the way known as lectio divina, the divine reading. A great guide of this practice is Guigo II, a Carthusian prior. Let us learn from him how the Law of the Lord can always be our delight.

Guigo shows us four degrees for entering into the inner chamber of the Word: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. We can even see these in the Psalms: "Make me understand the way of Thy precepts, and I will meditate on Thy wondrous works...I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy Law is my delight." Guigo's words show us how these verses are a lamp for our path into the Scriptures: "Reading is the careful study of the Scriptures, concentrating all one's powers on it. Meditation is the busy application of the mind to seek with the help of one's own reason for knowledge of hidden truth. Prayer is the heart's devoted turning to God to drive away evil and obtain what is good. Contemplation is when the mind is in some sort lifted up to God and held above itself, so that it tastes the joys of everlasting sweetness....Reading seeks for the sweetness of a blessed life, meditation perceives it, prayer asks for it, contemplation tastes it."

How else can we understand these four degrees, which Guigo calls "a ladder for monks by which they are lifted up from earth to heaven"? By the image of our consuming the Word of the Lord, just as we consume the Word in the Eucharist. "Reading, as it were, puts food whole into the mouth, meditation chews it and breaks it up, prayer extracts its flavor, contemplation is the sweetness itself which gladdens and refreshes." Thus we read a verse of Scripture and bring it into our minds; then we delve into the Word, "digging for treasure," seeing the ever-deeper layers of beauty and holiness, until we are in full sight of the treasure of the Spirit that we wish to obtain; then we pray and "beg for the treasure we long for, which is the sweetness of contemplation"; and then, if the Lord so wills it, He floods us with His grace and love, the same graces we asked Him for after learning of them in His Word, "the treasure house of divinity," as St. Ephraim says. Emphasis must be maintained on the fact that the contemplation is not our own work: "a man will not experience this sweetness while reading or meditating 'unless it happened to be given him from above.'" Thus too only occurs if we pour out our longing to the Lord as the ointment that flowed from the broken alabaster. Occasionally the Lord may bestow His grace upon those turned away from Him, as He did with St. Paul, but His typical manner is to give to those on fire for Him the gift of partaking in His divine energies. "We ought not to presume" that God will grace us as He did Paul, "for this would be like tempting God"; instead, "we should do our part, which is to read and meditate on the law of God, and pray to Him to help our weakness and to look kindly on our infirmities."

These four degrees act as a ladder, for we must ascend through them sequentially; yet they are all

of importance, for all are needed for the fullness of this grace experienced. Lacking the others, each one is not enough: "reading without meditation is sterile, meditation without reading is liable to error, prayer without meditation is lukewarm, meditation without prayer is unfruitful, prayer when it is fervent wins contemplation, but to obtain it without prayer would be rare, even miraculous." Always should we climb the ladder in its plenitude, at least as far as we can (for we cannot force the Lord to give us the blessings of contemplation, as we can never win in a struggle with the Lord; if Jacob the strong could not even win in his wrestle with an angel, how much less can we win in a wrestle with the Lord Himself). As Photina, the Samaritan woman, heard the words of Christ, meditated on them in her heart, beseeched Him for His living water, and received the Spirit in abundance, so should we be, always reading, meditating, and praying, so that we can be prepared and yearning for the contemplation given by God, for "the reading of Holy Scripture is the opening of Heaven," as St. John Chrysostom writes.

In this way, may we follow the counsel of Guigo and of King David in soaking in Scripture, ascending "from strength to strength" and "from glory to glory" along this four-runged ladder to Heaven. May we do this constantly, following the precept of Joseph the Solitary: "Toil at reading the Scriptures more than at anything else: for in prayer the mind frequently wanders, but in reading even a wandering mind is recollected." Through the Spirit we receive from our *lectio divina*, may we act on the words of David: "Seven times a day I praise Thee for Thy righteous ordinances." Thus may we come to ever more be filled with the Holy Spirit in our union with Jesus Christ the Son, ever praising the all-glorious Father unto the ages of ages.

*"O God, make my mind worthy  
to find delight in understanding  
the dispensation of Your beloved Son.  
O Lord, take away the veil of passions  
that lies over my mind,  
and let Your holy light shine into my heart,  
so that my mind may enter  
into the interior of the outward ink-written text,  
and that with the enlightened eye of my soul  
I may behold the sacred mysteries  
that are hidden in Your Gospel.*

*And by Your grace, Lord,*

*grant that the thought of You*

*shall not depart from my heart*

*by night or by day.*

*Amen."*

*--Joseph Hazzaya's prayer before reading the Scriptures*

*Nota Bene: The quotes from Guigo II are from his work*

*Scala Claustralium*

*(Ladder of Monks)*

*, as found in the volume*

*The Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations,*

*translated by Edmund Colledge, O.S.A. and James Walsh, S.J., published by Image Books (Garden City, NY, 1978). The prayer by Joseph Hazzaya (the Visionary) is found in*

*The Wisdom of the Pearlers: An Anthology of Syriac Christian Mysticism*

*by Brian E. Colless, #216 in the Cistercian Studies series, published by Cistercian Publications (Kalamazoo, MI, 2008).*

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## Why I Left Facebook [at Em's Estuary]

About ten minutes ago, I had a full-blown panic attack. I deactivated my FaceBook Account. I announced it weeks ago. I mean to do it. It's a good thing...

I've not really been participating in 7 Quick Take Fridays this year. I am concentrating on Wrapping up my Homeschool Weeks on Friday. But since we are scurrying to end the quarter, there really is NOTHING great to tell there. I am still linking up with Kris and the gang at Weird, Unsocialized Homeschoolers (link is below).

My student did have toe surgery (so I got that going for me). You can find the bandaged picture in yesterday's Small Success Thursday post where one of my successes was not passing out as my child announced he could see them cutting deep into his toe but couldn't feel it. BLARG!

Back to FB. It had become my "squirrel", my drug of choice. SERIOUSLY an addiction. Most of my real life friends are elsewhere due to our Military life. I have a few good friends locally, but they work and the moms I know have many kids... and, well homeschooling one child is rewarding but isolating. I'm giving a bunch of excuses, but the bottom line is this...

I prayed and prayed about why I wasn't finding time to exercise and why I was so behind on this and why I couldn't remember anything. The Holy Spirit gave a clear answer – FACEBOOK! And then I started paying attention – in bed, next to my hubby – on FB. Talking to friends over coffee, not knowing at all what they were saying. It's rude. When did I become so rude? GEEZ. I started letting people and things get to me. I let my home go. I ignored my child. That is no good.

Let me give you an example of the Holy Spirit. Even last night, I was saying to myself – surely I don't REALLY have to leave FB. And then I picked up the Magnificat:

Here is the Gospel that I read last night:

### ***Mark 9:41-50***

*New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (NRSVCE)*

*41 For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.*

### ***Temptations to Sin***

*42 "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, [\[a\]](#) it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you*

were thrown into the sea. 43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, [b] to the unquenchable fire. [c] 45 And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. [d] [e] 47 And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, [f] 48 where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

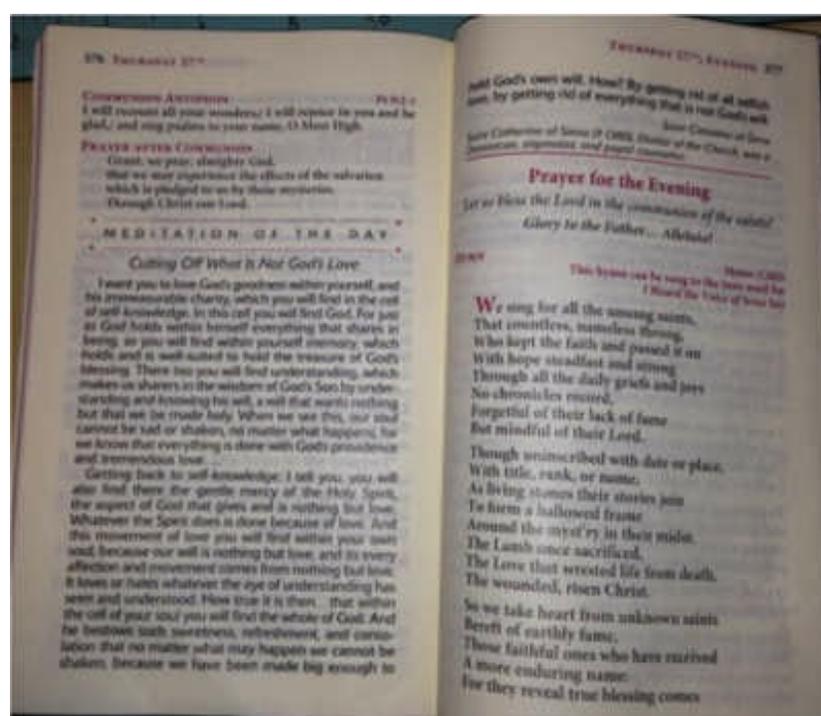
49 “For everyone will be salted with fire. [g] 50 Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? [h] Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

And then, the Meditation of the Day was about cutting off what is NOT God’s Love. People FaceBook is NOT God’s love. Always having to defend a conservative, pro-life viewpoint. Wanting groups to be Catholic and getting flack for it because people think it is discriminatory. Weeding through vulgarities other people post – this is NOT God’s love (in my humble opinion). Now – in today’s world, if you have a small business, you almost have to be on social networks.

And let’s be honest, CLEARLY I had NO SELF CONTROL! Sigh. Let me get back on topic – the last line of the Meditation was:

... because we have been made big enough to hold God’s own will. How? By getting rid of all selfish love, by getting rid of everything that is NOT God’s will. This was written by Saint Catherine of Sienna.

Here is the Meditation in it’s entirety. Think that was a message much??? Yep!



I am linking up with .

And now, onto my Quick Takes Post.... I've decided to write a 7QTF post about what I'm going to do with my spare time now.

7. I am going to blog more on both of my blogs. My craft blog is so neglected and people, I'm a great card maker. I need to tap back into that fun that I miss so much.
6. I am going to get small tasks done and keep a neater, more organized home. I have things to sell, things to go through, things to paint, etc. Sitting and waiting for me.
5. I am going to read more and write more book reviews. I've got several that are late. Plus, I want to finish the several books I've started (some in my mind, but some are on paper... one since 1992). Oh – I did write a book review that I posted super early this morning. Check it out [Genius Under Construction](#).
4. I am going to exercise daily (even if it is just a walking DVD). My son needs this and so do I.
3. A friend of mine challenged me to do something every day in Lent that is for my family and helps us reconnect. It's hard because my hubby will be out of country most of Lent, but I shall come up with something.
2. I am going to be a better friend to my real life friends. I'm going to meet them for coffee and look them in the eyes. I'm going to call people when I say I'm going to. I'm going to write letters and just be PRESENT!
1. I am going to draw closer to our Lord through the Holy Spirit and our Blessed Mother. I'm even going to go to Adoration. I've never been and I need to change that.

Since I easily spent 8-10 hours/day on FaceBook alone (if you add up all the cumulative moments, that is not an exaggeration, I plan on reading before bed and sleeping better.

I come from a long line of addicts. And people – I've got to kick this. I may never get to go back... I'm just not sure right now. I'm serious.

Pray for me – because I know me, and I am weak and I'm libel to have several panic attacks. But I know that people have my email. They have my blog address. And they will contact me. right? Right? RIGHT? !!

haha

Oh – and for all intents and purposes, this is also my weekly wrap up Post. And what a WRAP! Check out all the Homeschool Wrap Up Posts at the [Weekly Wrap Up!](#)

Ya'll have a great Friday.

Love, Hugs & Blessings,

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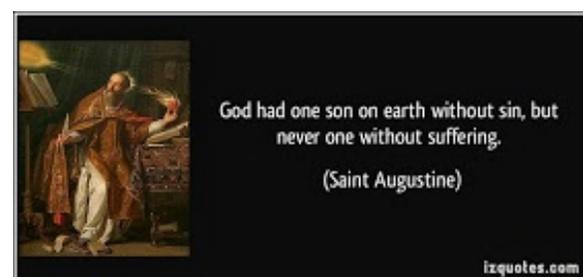
# The Struggle [at A Still Small Voice]

"Suffering is a great favor. Remember that everything soon comes to an end. . .

and take courage. Think of how our gain is eternal."

St. Teresa of Avila

It's no surprise to every human being that there have been, is and will be struggles connected with this life. No one can magically become exempt from suffering. So it's real and it's everywhere. We know, we go through it and we see it.



Let's take a moment and realize that suffering is not bad in ways that we assume it to be. Sufferings can be offered up as sacrifice. Sacrifice can be offered up to God, because of His Son who paid the ultimate sacrifice. How beautiful it is that we are able to suffer, but suffer with meaning and suffering as to gain. Jesus did not come to suffer so that we may never know pain or spiritual drought on this earth, rather He came to show us

**how**

to suffer and for

**Whom**

. Yes - Jesus did come to defeat death and sin so that on this earth we may come to know, love and serve Our God and having within it eternal gain for all who seek Him. He came so that we may not suffer

eternally

the fires of hell. He came so that Scripture may be fulfilled with all scriptural prophesies. He came so that we may have hope once more. He came so that we may be able to know Love and to love Love in an extremely personal way.

**It's okay to suffer!**

Get this - it's even acceptable to desire to suffer.

*Sooooooooo*

many saints have stated how much suffering (for Christ) benefits one soul and even thousands of souls if you offer it up.

These are just quotes from some beautiful saints on suffering:

- "I desire to suffer always and not to die. I should add: this is not my will, it is my inclination. It is sweet to think of Jesus; but it is sweeter to do His will."

- Bl. Mary of Jesus Crucified

- "If God sends you many sufferings, it is a sign that He has great plans for you and certainly wants to make you a saint."

- St. Ignatius Loyola (He brings everything to the table, no holding back.)

- "Blessed be he, Who came into the world for no other purpose than to suffer."

- St. Teresa of Avila

- "For Jesus Christ I am prepared to suffer still more."

- St. Maximilian Kolbe

- "If you really want to love Jesus, first learn to suffer, because suffering teaches you to love."

- St. Gemma Galgani

There are many more beautiful things said about suffering, but just with these that I have provided, I really ask that you take the time and come to try to understand where these

*people*

are coming from. All of these quotes are so powerful and I wish I could come to

fully

understand what is meant by all (God willing).

Some may come to ask, why do we have to suffer to love or even love to suffer? First, you don't have to do any of these things. It's a choice given to you to make. When you come to understand what love is, then you will know that the ultimate act of love was that act where Jesus hung there, sinless, for our sake. For Zoë's sins, He was crucified, so that Zoë may be able to live with Him in

His Father's Kingdom. He died so that we may have life with Him! He suffered so that we may take courage and not to give up, to know that with suffering comes gain in ways unimaginable. That sacrifice is the epitome of love, and if that isn't LOVE then I honestly can't tell you why I stayed past 4 am to write poorly about this topic.

Suffering for the sake of other's and for the sake of a greater cause can only indicate that you love what you are suffering for. That you are willing to sacrifice your Saturday night to drive your daughter to her friend's house, that you are willing to answer your best friends phone call at 1 am, that you are willing to stick with your husband who just got diagnosed with alzheimers, that you are willing to feed your cat when you really just don't feel like it, that you are willing to go visit your elderly grandma, that you are willing to play a game with your brothers. . . all indicate

### **that you are willing**

to do another's will besides your own whenever your comfort is being compromised. Even if it's the smallest thing you could possibly do - it all pays tribute to the sacrifice jar (equally or even more so than the "big" sacrifices).

Getting on a personal level here, I have come to greatly appreciate suffering and came to a realization that without suffering I would not be where I am today and know what I've come to gain in knowledge this moment. Sometimes I even yearn for those moments where I can lift up all my sufferings to Christ so that I may be able to offer it up for an even greater cause. Not that I don't enjoy those times where I feel like I'm on cloud 14, I thank God for those times of pure bliss as much as I thank Him for those times where I suffer. I've stated before that suffering doesn't last forever so thank God that He is giving you moments to grow in ways uniquely offered by suffering. Now a lot of times when I am suffering it's hard to think of the bigger picture and not to sulk in my suckiness because I'm not perfect and I don't have this suffering thing completely figured out. I'm just sharing what I've experienced so far.

### **It's not easy!**

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.'"

(Matthew 16:24-25)

In the words of an infamous rap I once wrote, "No He never said it's gunna be easy, rather He said you gotta loose your life and then see what I see." (If you want to experience the full blown Z-masta then you have to ask in person. I only perform on Holy Days of Obligation.)

Anything worth doing will be difficult. That's just a matter of fact and suffering for Christ is most definitely worth doing. Suffering in it's form does not scream out "HEY, COME WITH ME, I'M PLEASURABLE." Like I've stated above, some people assume that suffering is a bad thing. If

people even thought of suffering as unpleasant then why would we not think of this love, this sacrifice, to be ultimately difficult?

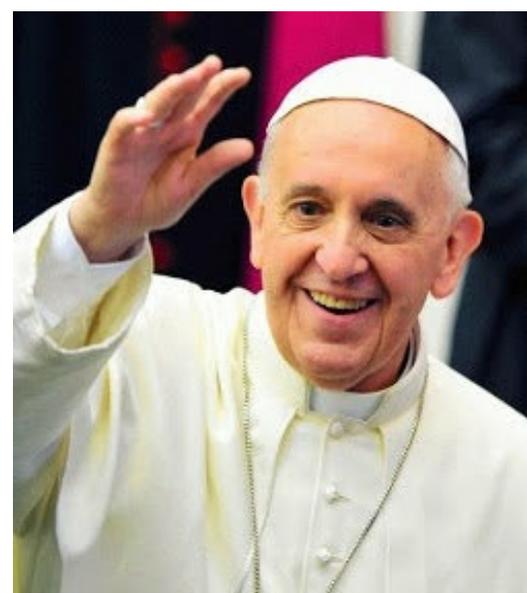
**BUT...**

Even though it isn't easy, we are promised eternal gain. Take courage! Holiness is not capable of supporting sadness. We have the opportunity to take all that's hard and all that's difficult and give it to the One who can make that into something even

more

*Do not become saddened*

. I cannot say enough times that even though it's not easy DOESN'T MEAN IT'S NOT WORTH IT. Be joyful that you (me), of such sinfulness, can contribute to eternal acts by means of suffering.



***There is no sadness in holiness! - Papa Frankie***

Be joyful brothers and sisters, for we have a reason to hope, to love, and to have faith in all of our suffering - look towards our Crucified Lord, the perfect example of suffering made glorious.



God bless and Mary protect.

**OFFER IT UP! :D**

*"Dear heavenly Father, praise be given to your holy name for your forbearance and mercy.*

*You have dealt gently with your children in love.*

*You have been patient with me in my humanness and stubbornness.*

*Lord, through the work of your Spirit,*

*prompt me to be more jubilant in hope,*

*more patient in times of trouble,*

*and more consistent in my prayer life.*

*Teach me, Lord, to wait with faith and expectancy,  
and may my trials be seen as times for growth in grace.*

*Through Christ our Lord, I pray."*

*Amen*

*+JMJ.T+*

"We also rejoice in our sufferings,  
because we know that suffering produces perseverance;  
perseverance, character;  
and character, hope."

- Romans 5:3-4

^Relevant song, I must say.^

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# Talking vocations with a Jesuit (and a kindergartener) [at Catholic Review]

Last week I met a Jesuit who lives in Manhattan. Fr. Fred Pellegrini is a vocation promoter who was visiting Loyola University Maryland, and we ended up sitting down to talk.

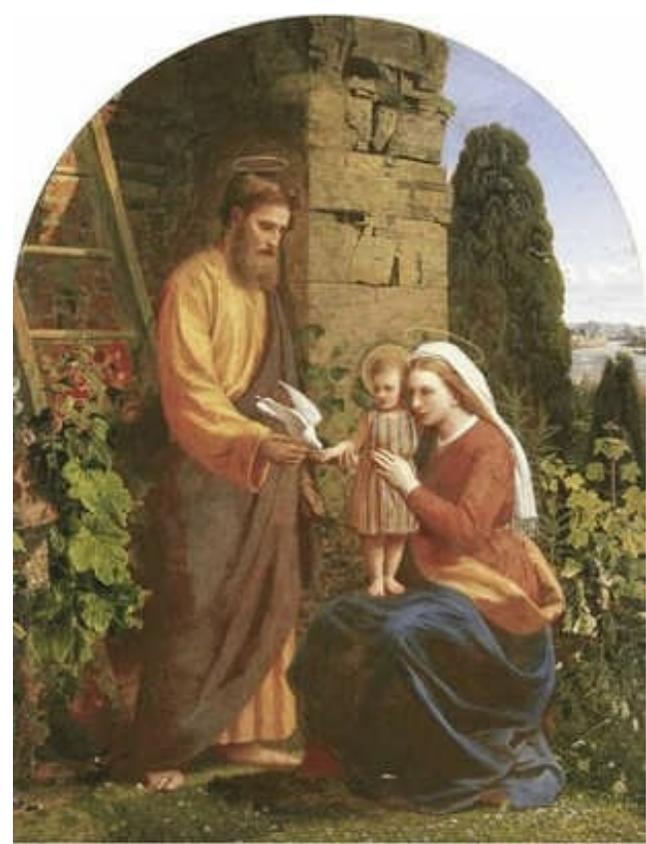
“Your vocation isn’t your career,” Fr. Pellegrini told me. “It’s about something much deeper within yourself. You might be a bus driver, and you want to be the best bus driver you can be, but your vocation might be to be a husband and a father.”



I’ve heard that before, but it always surprises me. Grandchildren are absolutely wonderful. But my mother’s uncle was a Jesuit priest. And growing up, I always felt it was an honor to have a priest in our family. So it’s hard for me to see having a child who’s a priest as anything but a positive.

I asked my new Jesuit friend what I should do as a parent to promote vocations in our home. We should just let our children know it's an option, he said.

We do try to do that.



John and I have mentioned to our sons that they might find God wants them to be priests. We also talk about how they might like to be astronauts or farmers or construction workers or teachers or firefighters or scientists. But being a priest is definitely one of the options we've discussed, probably because our boys respect and talk about the priests they see in action at Mass.

At 6, however, the biggest obstacle for Leo is that a priest can't be married.

"I don't want to be a priest because I don't want to be alone," he told his father the other day, "but I will always be a Christian."

I suspect even men who have outgrown their booster seats would have something similar to say.

Still, as I sat there listening to Fr. Pellegrini, full of joy and on fire with enthusiasm for his vocation, I realized I had a question.

“What do you love about being a Jesuit?” I asked him. He didn’t even need to stop to think.

“I get to be the best possible version of myself,” he said, “and I get to talk about Jesus.”

No wonder he’s so happy.

*What are you doing to promote vocations in your home and your community?*

2/24/2014 10:31:16 PM

By

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This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2014/02/24/talking-vocations-with-a-jesuit-and-a-kindergartener>

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## Be Opened [at bukas palad]



Homily / 4th week / Ordinary Time / Friday / Sts Cyril and Methodius

Readings: 1 Kings 11.29-32; 12.19 / Psalm 81 (R/v 11a and 9 a) / Mark 7.31-37

*Ephphata! Be opened!*

Jesus speaks these words to the deaf man with the speech impediment. They are words of healing. They are also words of new beginnings; the man can hear and he can speak.

We are familiar with this scene. We call it a miracle. We call Jesus the miracle healer.

But could there something more in today's gospel passage for us who live in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, and are today perhaps more focused on celebrating Valentine's Day than remembering Sts Cyril and Methodius? Do Jesus' words "Be Opened" have something for our Christian life on this day when many are perhaps exchanging romantic fancies with the one they love, or the one they hope to love? Maybe some of us here are partaking of these exchanges too.

To fall in love or to be in love is really about being open to another, isn't it? Consider the following ways love challenges different people to be open:

“It’s about opening myself to her so that I can laugh and cry, pray and play in her company.”

“It’s about opening his heart so that he can receive my love, even as I desire to open myself to receive his love.”

“It’s about opening ourselves to one another so that we can both share life together, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, all the days of our one life.”

Be opened. I'd to think that this is what Valentine's Day is also premised upon. Openness to hear the one we love say, "I love you too." Openness to dare to give some roses or chocolates with a scribbled, "Will you be my Valentine?" Openness to the possibility of something wonderful beginning, or perhaps, not at all.

A wise monk once taught me that the gift of being in love opens us up. It opens us up to those we love and those who love us--our beloved: be they spouse, children or family members; be they friends, classmates or work colleagues, even confreres in religious life. Love, he added, opens us up to look into their souls. And there, to find the source of love, not just our beloved's but ours too.

The man Jesus cures by opening his ears and mouth must have been looking into Jesus' eyes. Though the passage doesn't say this, the manner Mark has Jesus standing in front of him suggests this likelihood. What could the man have seen as he looked into Jesus' eyes? Perhaps, the surprising beauty of the love of God deep within Jesus' soul--deep and desiring that this man deserves not just physical healing but the gift of life to the full.

Isn't this what you and I will also discover to see if we really look through the eyes of our beloved and into the depths of their love for us? Not so much that we are loved by them in our present times. But that we are loved by God before all time. By God who says: "you are wonderfully made; you are my beloved, and in you I am well pleased; you are always with me till the end of time."

Isn't God's love the surprise we will also find in the heart of our hoped for Valentines? That in the giddy, crazy feelings of a new friendship blossoming between two, there is the deeper, richer love of God. The love of God that assures that this is a new beginning, pregnant with possibilities only God can give. All we need do is to let go, let God lead and not be afraid. Or, if regrettably our love is turned down, that God's greater love is a friend's consolation that says, "you are mine."

And isn't God's faithful and merciful love what we will see anew as we remember those we had first loved in gratitude, or recall those we had to let go with some regret, or summon to mind those we had unfortunately hurt with some remorse?

Perhaps, the honest truth of why we want to look for love, to fall in love, and to stay in love is that we want to experience something of the divine goodness, truth and beauty of love. Something that when we fail to love each other well and true remains a bright hope that draws us onward to living fully, not merely existing daily. What we want in love is something of God.

And it is in the sight and through the words of the one who loves us, as well as in their walking with us and in their holding us, that we can find God in our lives. And let's also be honest: we want to do this for them too, especially on a day like today, don't we?

My friends, the good news today is that we will always find God in the ones we love.

But we must first dare to open ourselves to them, like the deaf man did to Jesus once. For it is through them--and often in their repeated challenge for us to look deep into their souls--that we will find him there, the Lord God who says:

*Ephphata! Be opened!*

*Preached at Boston College, School of Theology and Ministry, Brighton.*

photo: still from Spike Jonze's film, *Her* (2013)

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