

NewEvangelists.org

new  
evangelists  
monthly

*May*  
*2014*

# New Evangelists Monthly #17

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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.

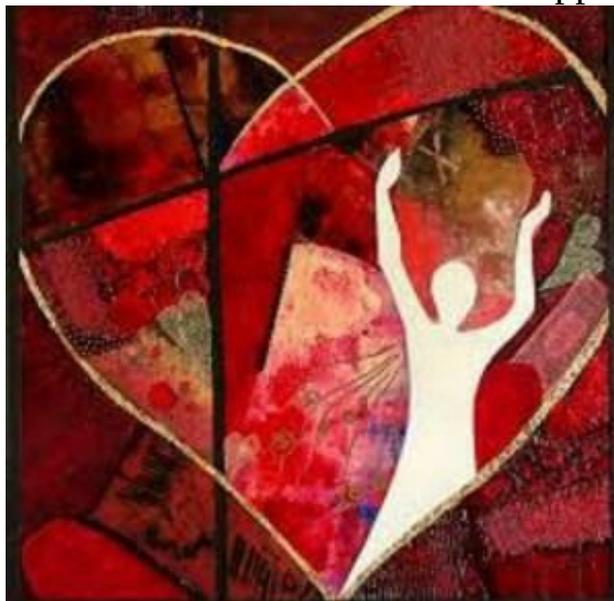
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## It is Not a Fairytale [at joy of nine9]

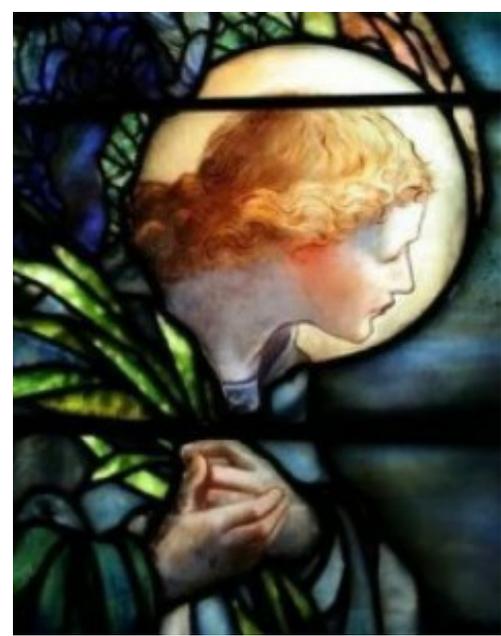
Twenty-five years ago, my husband discovered a book at a Trappist monastery that changed our



lives, called “*Guidelines to Mystical Prayer*” by a British Carmelite nun, Ruth Burrows. She describes Petra, a woman who lives only by faith without any experiences of God, and Claire, a “light on” nun who experiences mystical encounters. Both women know with absolute clarity that their core identity has shifted from ego-centric to Christ-centric. The Spirit of Jesus lives in them and they live surrounded by the Holy Spirit, plugged into the universal God.

We poured over this book, reading it again and again, soaking in every nuance, digging out every morsel, every detail which described this new life. My husband and I were filled with an exuberant joy because we finally we realized that our deepest longings could be fulfilled, that a simple spiritual life was real, was possible.

I saw a similar epiphany in a brilliant young friend who was a confirmed atheist, although when I asked what he had read on spirituality or Christianity he simply replied, “The library”! We were praying while Davin relaxed on the margins of the group when he suddenly started to laugh. Our eyes popped open in surprise. The quiet, subdued young man was beaming.



*“I’m hot all over, especially inside my chest. It is like a glowing, warm, golden mist that’s all around me, inside of me...but it was there all the time; I just couldn’t feel it or see it. It’s like all of a sudden I am plugged into a circuit board of power that has been here the whole time. God is real. He exists. I can’t believe it. Why did I not see something all around me, in my face? Oh and I feel this energy flowing between everyone in this room and connecting to me as well, like electrical currents, like invisible bands or cords. I want to jump up and down and start yelling on the top of my voice that God exists and He is right here.”*

We have all read of saints who claim to live in mystical union with Christ. The image that comes to mind is of a medieval monk, morose and miserable, wearing a hair shirt and living on bread and water. However I discovered that the claims of saints are not bogus but true and furthermore that it is completely realistic that I expect that I too will live joyfully in the Resurrection. The accounts of the saints might be couched in fanciful, archaic language but they are not allegories or fairytales. This Resurrected life is not a for a select few because humans are wired for a life lived in and through a mystical connection to God.

It is true.

It is really true

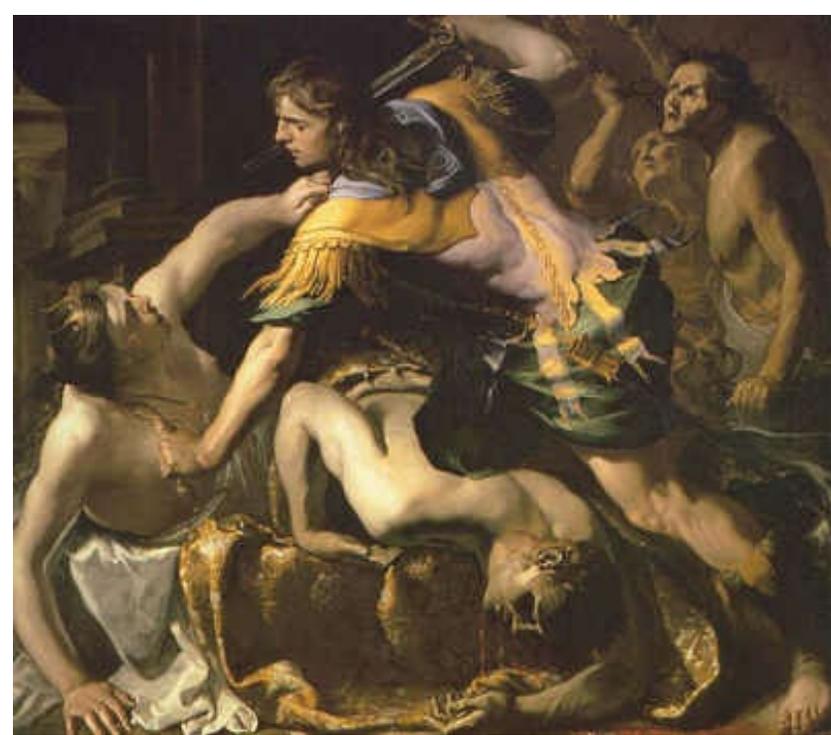
It is not an allegory.

It is not a life for only a select few because humans are wired for a life lived in and through a mystical connection to God their Father

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This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanuneau.wordpress.com/2014/04/26/it-is-not-a-fairytale/>  
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# Somebody's Worst Nightmare [at Forget The Roads]



The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ tends to be viewed in a predominantly positive light. Seriously, what's not to love? It's the story of the spotless Lamb of God, unjustly condemned, abandoned by His friends, tormented, mocked, tortured and executed with common criminals, hastily entombed because of the approaching Sabbath, with the incredible plot twist of the defeat of sin and death when He rises on the third day! *Who saw that coming?* The story of the Resurrection is the ultimate saga of the triumph of Good over Evil; it is the mother of all feel-good narratives. **God wins!!** But in our excitement over this happily-ever-after we forget that, for certain people, the Resurrection of the Man they crucified would, of course, have looked an awful lot like their worst nightmare....

First of all, there were the people who crucified Him. Imagine yourself as a Pharisee standing at the foot of the Cross, mocking this dying Man with the words, "He saved others – let him save himself!" Or say you were just a face in the crowd outside Pilate's residence, one of those who rejected the offer to set Jesus free in favor of the release of an insurrectionist. Or you could have been one of those soldiers who bent your knee before Him only to mock Him, just to make His impending death that much less bearable. Then of course there were those who let Him be crucified. It's true that they certainly didn't will it or work towards it, but when He could have used a friend or two, those people evaporated like the dew before the desert sun – people He should have been able to count on, people who had literally promised Him, "Lord, I would never betray You."

If this had been scripted in Hollywood, what happened next would have followed a very predictable narrative. Movies have made popular lines such as “I will look for you, I will find you, and I will kill you,” and “I will have my vengeance, in this life or the next.” King Herod was familiar with that plotline; years earlier when he had heard about Jesus and His popularity with the crowds, his guilty conscience whispered to him in the night, warning him that surely this man was John the Baptist (whom he had killed) risen from the dead to have revenge upon him (Mt 14:1-2). It’s the way of the world: mess with me, and I will do everything in my power to make you wish you had never been born. We can only imagine what it must have been like to sit cowering in the Upper Room when Jesus, the Crucified One, walked – quite literally – through the door.

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst....

*Peace be with you*” (Jn 20:19-23).

This is forgiveness, and this is to be the new order. This forgiveness that Jesus offers His friends is so important, so necessary, that it is the first thing of which He assures them. He then commissions these forgiven ones to assure that His forgiveness reaches all mankind:

“Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”

Mercy is *that central* to Jesus’ being; reconciliation is *that crucial*. Out of love for us, He gave His representatives the authority to forgive sins in His name, and He did it right out of the gate. Let the importance of that not be lost on us next time we are tempted to put off confession. Divine Mercy is the most original plot twist of all time.

# On Monday within the Octave of Easter

*Deo omnis gloria!*

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This contribution is available at <http://forgettheroads.com/2014/04/21/somebodys-worst-nightmare/>  
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## Weekends with Chesterton [at Campfires and Cleats]

Five minutes on "writer."

No editing, no over thinking.~~

Go:

*We are all failures.*

*At least the best of us are.*

Words credited to JM Barrie, writer. Simply, a writer. A man whose genius brought us sparkling words, some of the most beautiful of our language some hundred years ago.

Have you read [the original script](#) penned by this master of words? No, not *that* version. Please, no. <gasp> Green clad, blondish flying imp, mini fairy, croc eschewing captain. No. Please, not the version which destroyed his. Have you read this gem of a script, performed Christmas Day, 1904, London.

Beauty? Awe? Stealth mastery of the language? It's all there. Right there in print and it's the quintessence of perfection in writing. Like nothing I've ever read, felt, been swept away by.

Not character development, plot, setting. Here's the gem: dozens of pages of stage directions before act 1 even opens. Descriptions of furniture placement, characters' social standing, lighting spilling from the nursery, shadow angle at window, wow. life altering experience for me to read as we readied our kids for the stage production of this theatrical piece. Just awe. Just jaw dropping.

And yet, *failure*? To read these words, this thought by a man whose creative genius parlays the ordinary word into sheer elegance to me, is, well, humbling. It's frightening, maddening. And aren't these the feelings that creep, that wrap, that beg to be noticed as we writers attempt our art in the margins of our lives, as we craft our posts, our poems, our days? As we write our stories?

The things that are most important to us are the things that are mostly hidden, that we mostly think we're not good at, that we mostly feel like failures around. Am I right? These cathedrals we're building as Moms, these words we craft around these lives, the capture of the crazy and the everyday, the moments?

Mommas, wives..... they are beautiful words. They are gripping, they are powerful, they are dignified, they are sumptuous, they are you. If one who's considered a master of the language, felt

defeated, failed, well, let that be our ammo. When we feel creatively bankrupt, when we think there's nothing to remember and jot on those tough days, no. There is. We live it, we write it, we remember, we are graced by the words that recall the blessed lives we are given, the blessed souls we are charged with. By the Author of all. He has faith in *us*.

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This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2014/04/five-minute-friday-writer-weekends-with.html>  
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## Lord, Fill Me With Your Joy [at His UnEnding Love]



Lord, fill me with Your joy,

For I am nothing without You.

When life wears me down,

And desperate tears flow,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When Your blessings poured forth are bitter,

The nights are long and sleepless,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

Remind me I serve You only,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When endurance reaches the bitter end,

When the cross becomes too heavy,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When others reach out and see You in me,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When the summit of my pain is reached,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When I seek and find you not,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When prayer is empty, without words,

The boulder blocks Your tomb,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

In flowers, snow, rain, and worms,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

In sorrow, pain, loneliness, and grief,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When I fall hard and scrape my knees,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When I have sinned and You have forgiven me,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When life is bleak and all seems lost,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

When I am weak and death is near,

Lord, fill me with Your joy.

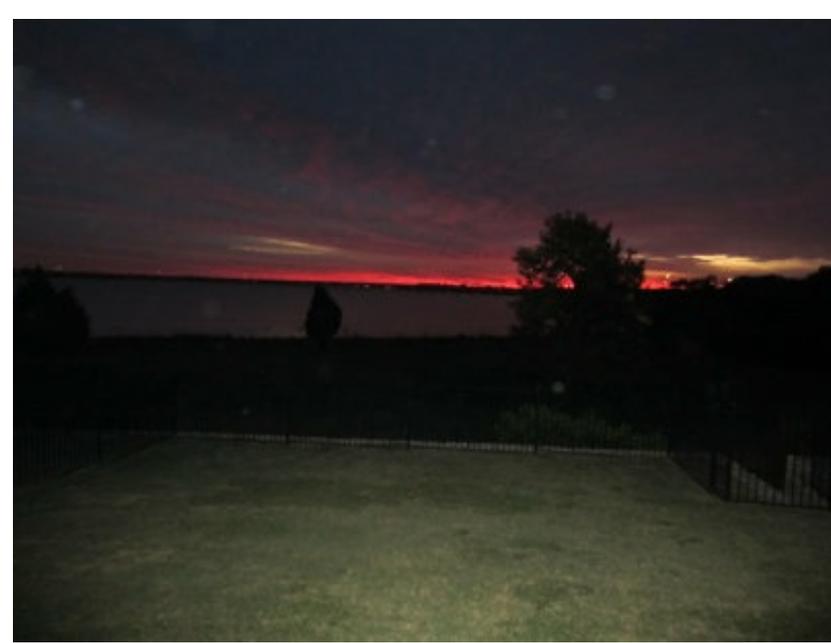
# I am Yours!

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This contribution is available at <http://hisunendinglov.blogspot.com/2014/04/lord-fill-me-with-your-joy.html>  
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# Easter Sunrise Storm [at JOY Alive in our hearts]



Remembering Easter Sunrise Services we celebrated years ago, my husband and I decided to have our own sunrise prayer time before going to Mass later. From the family room, we looked out over the lake with no visible sunrise. Just dark clouds with a little glow of light behind them.

As we prayed the morning prayer from the *Magnificat*, the sky got ever darker. Our prayers were interrupted by a telephone call from the emergency services warning us of coming thunderstorms and hail.

The wind blew the darkest clouds towards us from across the lake where some of my friends were celebrating Protestant Sunrise Services. Then the rain came with a vengeance. I visualized their scurrying to the safety of covered pavilions, shops and cars. It didn't last long. As we cooked breakfast, light hail danced outside on our patio.

Our God is full of surprises. His ways are not our ways. This storm was more like the first Good Friday than the first Easter. Will we ever learn not to depend on our plans or our vision of a special time such as Easter morning? It's not the weather that makes Easter the most glorious day of the year. It's not the new clothes, the hidden eggs, the honey hams and festive turkeys. It's the joy in our hearts as we celebrate Mass in a church decked in glorious flowers instead of the purple veils.

As the priest elevates the host and wine at the consecration, we are raised up as part of humanity that Jesus sanctified through his incarnation. He redeemed all of us through his passion and death. He changed human nature forever by clothing it with his divine nature. So the Easter joy in our

hearts is not only celebrating our personal victories during Lent, completing our own way of the Cross, but our divine calling to be victorious over death as he was.

He is risen in our hearts! He has risen indeed.

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## W is For "Who Will I Be?" [at Loved As If]

A howling beast lives within me though I may look much like a lamb. She longs to sit in the public square bellowing: "See my wounds! They did this to me! Evil people hurt me! Took everything from me! Shredded me! Look at what they've done!" The beast longs to attract passersby. She grasps their garments, tries to convince them to chorus her lament. She is filthy, angry, hungry to control so that she will be forever safe. I don't like her. I don't want to be her. But if not her, who will I be? I can't lock the beast away. Once, I may have been just a lost lamb. Now, I am also beast. Answers will always include her. If I cannot find something of value through the beast, I will find nothing at all. The wounds that have shredded me must also be the fountains from which healing comes.

So much was torn away from me. I have so little left. But I want to have something. I want to be something. I want the tatters of my soul, of my identity to grow into something worth having. I want the beast to be transformed into something beautiful. So I offer the tiny bit I have as a young child offers weeds to his mother. I'm not a child. I know what weeds are — not much. I tell God, "I'm sorry I have only anger and hurt and terror to give You. I wish I had more. I wish I was brave and everything You have created me to be. But all I am is a shredded soul and Yours."

He asks me, "Will you be an occasion for heaven to rejoice over the repentance of a lost sinner?"

"Huh?" He must be joking. Can the victim, lamb and beast, help those who wounded her? Perhaps. Perhaps not. God asks for my cooperation but doesn't reveal the results; ours is a strictly "need to know" relationship. I do know, being an occasion isn't just about those who wounded me. Sometimes it's about allowing God to take my shreds and use them for someone else: another victim, another abuser, another who might choose evil but instead chooses the hard road of fighting their beasts. Being an occasion places something in my hands that I can give passersby. Their beasts may be tamer than mine. Then again, I may be much stronger, may have been given more aide. All that matters is I can let God do as He pleases with my shredded soul, no matter how much it hurts. This is worth more than my ease, my comfort, my life. This is really belonging to the Love of my life.

So I will be an occasion for repentance. And that makes me an occasion for hope. My beast's howl may actually become a song of joy, a thing of great beauty.

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This contribution is available at <http://lovedasif.com/2014/04/26/w-is-for-who-will-i-be/>  
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## Blooming Tulips [at Busy Catholic Moms]

This is my favorite season of the year. I love watching each of the flowers bloom in their turn – the daffodils and crocuses peeking up first. Then the green starting to fill in the trees – the white of the pear, the pink of the cherry. Forsythia turning yellow right around Eastertime. But my favorite spring flower has always been the tulip. Probably, this is because my mother planted what I remember as a hundred tulips in front of our house when I was a child. I was always delighted by their beautiful colors and delicate petals.

Last fall, we had a difficult time with lots of uncertainties, but let's face it, when is not life full of difficult uncertainties?! I had just purchased a bunch of new tulips and didn't really feel like planting them all – my heart just wasn't in it. After letting them sit on the workbench for a few days and looking at them every time I walked through the garage, I decided to go ahead and plant them. It was a windy, cool fall day and I was on my knees with nearly a winter coat on digging holes in the dirt. I got them all planted, walked away and forgot all about them.

Over the winter, they were tucked beneath their layer of mulch. With only moisture from snow to feed them, I imagine them digging deep to reach moist soil – extending their roots and spreading out into the ground. All winter, they grew and dug in without anyone knowing.

Then as the weather began to warm and the spring rains came, little bits of green began to poke above the ground. I was delighted, as is anyone ready for the thaw after the freeze, and watched them closely. Our tulips are very susceptible to rabbits. One year I found the tulips actually just chopped down – not eaten, but just cut from the stem by little bunny teeth. I was so frustrated that I wanted to hunt those little bunnies down and throw them out of the yard! So I was anxious that



they would actually make it to blooming this spring.

But make it they did and now I have beautiful tulips in all of my flower beds – purples, pinks, yellows and whites. And their beauty made me begin thinking about my own spiritual life.

In times of difficulty, in my own personal winter, when I am not receiving much moisture and rain (or hope and peace), I have to dig down. Unbeknownst to anyone else, I have to draw closer to the eternal Source of healing water. I have to spread out my roots and hold firmly on to Him.

Even unseen, I can grow spiritually during my winter under the snow. And then when the springtime comes, when the weather begins to warm and rains shower down that hope and peace, I can begin to bloom, but only because my roots already are firmly held on to Him. And in those occasions that my blooms are cut down by the trials and tribulations of this life, my bulb still remains under the surface of the soil, ready to grow again in the future with faith and love.

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This contribution is available at <http://busycatholicmoms.com/sample-page/blooming-tulips/>  
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## Bless the Lord in a Strip Shopping Mall [at Rambling Follower]

One of my wonderful parish priests gigged me about my morning tweet, which was this:



"Parking lots and strip malls bless the Lord? LOL! " he tweeted back.

I admit it's odd and whimsical to juxtapose a morning prayer with a shot from our family van of the parking lot where I prayed as I sipped my Dunkin' Donuts latte light before I headed north onto an interstate toward my teaching job.

The thing is, as I tweeted back to my priest, I liked the way Beauty in the form of a magnificent predawn sky imposed itself upon a quotidian New Jersey scene. And so yes, Father Jeff, Bless the Lord from a parking lot.

“Sometimes I need

only to stand

wherever I am

to be blessed.”

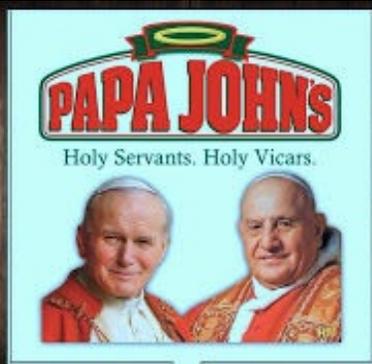
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This contribution is available at <http://ramblingfollower.blogspot.com/2014/04/somerset-nj-bless-lord-in-strip.html>

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# The Gifts of Pope St. John Paul II and Pope St. John XXIII to the Church [at Can We Cana?]



Yesterday on Divine Mercy Sunday, two beloved Popes were canonized in St. Peter's Square -- Pope John Paul II and Pope John XXIII. Both popes believed firmly in ushering the Church into the modern world, Pope John XXIII by calling the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II by working tirelessly to implement those conciliar reforms in a way that did justice to the Church's past and her present. But Pope St. John Paul II will always be closer to my heart.

When I began contemplating conversion to Catholicism in the late 1990s, Pope John Paul II had already reigned for more than 20 years. The JP II generation was on fire with love for Christ and his Church. They were passionately devout, fiercely intelligent, and quoted passages from the original documents of Vatican II with the same fluency an evangelical might cite Scripture. John Paul II's

## [Theology of the Body](#)

(or TOB), with its message that our bodies and sex itself were glorious gifts from God, was just becoming the rage. Steeped in this environment and surrounded by these deeply inspiring people, who wouldn't want to become Catholic?

I entered the Catholic Church on the same day as the party celebrating my engagement to Manny, a cradle Catholic of the JP II generation. The day after our wedding in April 2000 was the first Divine Mercy Sunday. Pope John Paul II had just canonized the Polish nun, St. Faustina, who began the Divine Mercy devotion. Saints almost never have feast days on Sundays, since the day of Our Lord's resurrection is considered feast enough. But for Pope John Paul II, the message of God's mercy to a despairing world was so crucial that it deserved to be proclaimed on the first Sunday after Easter Sunday, year after year.

Three years after Manny and I married, John Paul II celebrated the 25th anniversary of his election to the papacy. The young Catholics of New York City were not about to let that pass without throwing a huge party. Our friend

[Peter McFadden](#)

, who had founded a Love & Responsibility group to study John Paul's book of the same name, engineered it all. In Fr. George Rutler's beautiful Manhattan parish, we gathered to celebrate a Mass with Renaissance polyphony, Gregorian chant, and exquisite organ music. Afterwards in nearby Bryant Park, we tried to make it into the Guinness Book of World Records by having a cake with the most number of candles. Unfortunately, the candles flamed so high that they dripped wax all over the cake and Guinness didn't accept our entry. But the sheer energy behind the attempt was electrifying.

No party is complete without a present, of course, so Peter decided we should create a pre-Cana marriage preparation program faithful to the principles of this great Pope in honor of the upcoming anniversary. When Peter asked who would be willing to create a syllabus, I volunteered. Peter gave me a copy of the Pontifical Council for the Family's document on Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage, which provided a road map of the topics that the Vatican considered most important for engaged couples to learn. To our surprise, most pre-Cana programs skipped at least half of the recommended topics, so

[we had to develop a curriculum from scratch](#)

. With the approval of the Sisters of Life, who ran the Archdiocesan Family Life Office, my husband and I began teaching classes that year.

Marriage and family mattered so much to Sts. John Paul II and John XXIII that

[the prayers issued for their canonizations](#)

both mentioned family. The official prayer to St. John XXIII states: "You spoke often of the beauty of the family gathered around the table to share bread and faith: pray for us that once again true families would live in our homes." In even more powerful language, the prayer to St. John Paul II states: "May you bless families, bless each family! You warned of Satan's assault against this precious and indispensable divine spark that God lit on earth. St. John Paul, with your prayer, may you protect the family and every life that blossoms from the family."

Pope Francis' similarly intense concern for marriage and the family is highlighted by his call for

an

## [Extraordinary Synod on the Family](#)

, which will occur October 5-19, 2014. This extraordinary synod of bishops will address pastoral challenges for the family in the context of evangelization. Many people are eagerly awaiting the synod's expected pronouncements on

### [annulment](#)

, divorce and remarriage,

### [reception of the Eucharist after remarriage](#)

, and other contemporary issues plaguing Catholic families today.

The "Francis effect" is drawing many disaffected Catholics back to the Church, but Pope John Paul II -- and Benedict after him -- solidified its core. Pope Francis is attracting people not just to himself but to the modern Church that St. John XXIII initiated and St. John Paul II refined. It is only fitting that Pope Francis was the one to declare his two predecessors as saints in the modern Church that they brought to life.

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This contribution is available at <http://canwecana.blogspot.com/2014/04/canonizing-two-thoroughly-modern-men.html>

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## Book & Blood [at Smaller Manhattans]



Tonight we finished Revelations: Alpha & Omega, New Jerusalem, Wedding Feast of the Lamb; and jumped into the Mass. I start by drawing the

[Synagogue and the Temple.](#)

We review what happens in each place, their history, and who is in charge. In prior years, I'd say the Synagogue is for Reading, the Temple is for Offering, and a Catholic church is for Both. It's a good intro to the Mass, but hardly memorable.

But tonight after drawing the Temple, I impulsively added red-marker-blood out front to emphasize its sacrificial raison d'être. In doing so I careened into a pithier, catchier way of putting things:

Synagogue for Book.

Temple for Blood.

Church for Both.

Or as we'd say once the concepts were learned:

One for Book.

One for Blood.

One for Both.

I like that.

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This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2014/04/book-blood.html>  
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## A Good Catholic? [at CF Family]



**Over the past few months, I have been told that a *Good Catholic*:**

Would never vaccinate her children.

Must vaccinate her children.

Would never hold hands during the Our Father during Mass.

Would never even attend an ordinary Mass (only Latin).

Would never wear pants.

Must wear a veil.

Would never receive Holy Communion in the hand.

Would only receive Holy Communion on her knees.

Would never stay home from church with naughty children.

Must stay home from church with naughty children.

Would feed her children only the GAPS diet.

Would feed her children Ramen in order to send more to charity.

Would never purchase health insurance.

Must purchase health insurance.

Would be an organ donor.

Would never be an organ donor.

Would never vote Republican.

Would never vote Democrat.

Would never color her hair because that is disrespectful to age-wisdom.

Must color her hair to be a good witness.

Would never write about God's Love because it sounds too liberal.

Must only write about God's Love because rules are icky.

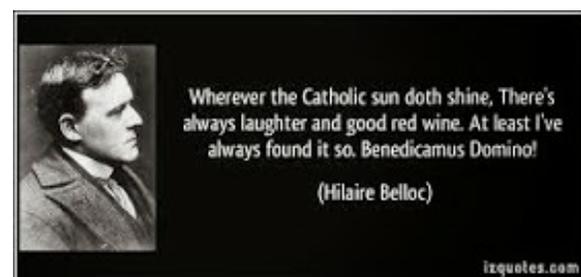
Would never give money to go see

*Noah.*

Would never even

**like** *Noah*

It's nice for us to have different shticks but not nice at all to peddle your shtick as The Real Way to be a Good Catholic. As long as we believe and affirm all the Church teaches to be true, we're Catholic.



Now let's have a nice week, everyone!

Love, Allison

P.S. ~ I loved the Noah movie and am having a hard time putting my facts and emotions to paper. It'll come...



## Happily ever after [at It's Only Write]



Once upon a time, there was a child who loved fairy tales. She didn't just read them; she crawled into them and took up residence, living for a few hours with good that triumphed over evil, in a land of love she knew would never end. Always, there were villains trying to thwart the most perfect plans. Always there was a rescuer, rushing in to thwart the thwarters. Happily ever after, that was the expected end. And so it was. And so it always was.

Snow White was a favorite. She was lovely, and kind, and the child dreamed of her with the help of a Little Golden Book. Oh, such a story! The evil queen was not evil in the beginning; she became a wicked thwarter after falling prey to pride. The Huntsman took pity on Snow White and allowed her to live, but then the prideful queen learned the truth. Snow White's continued existence was one thing the prideful queen could not endure.

We all know the story. We know the wicked queen went to Snow White and enticed her with an apple. In her guise of a pitiable old lady, she held the fruit out to Snow White, and she lied. What harm, after all, was a lie? It was nothing in the mouth of one who had a jealous, murderous heart.



One bite of the apple was all it took; just one little bite. Snow White fell lifeless, and was laid to rest by her mourning friends.

Enter the prince. One glance and he knew that, here, was his love. One kiss, and lo, she awoke.

She had been kissed awake by love.

Many years after being a child reading fairy stories, I'm of the opinion that these are more than simply tales. More, even, than 'this-world-centered morality tales.' After all, where do we find Ever After in

*this*

world? We can find commitment, and self-sacrifice, and heroism, and lasting marriage. But even sacramental marriage vows end with 'till death do us part.' No matter how much a man loves his wife, once she has passed from this life, he cannot kiss her alive.

Enter the Savior. Not because someone dreamed Him up in order to make of this life a fairy tale; I'm convinced the truth is just the opposite. Writers of fairy tales and legends knew/know in their hearts that this was how the

*real*

story is meant to be.

*'The Lord God ... instructed him, saying: 'From every tree of Paradise, you shall eat. But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat. For in whatever day you will eat from it, you will die.'* (Genesis)

*'The serpent said to the woman: 'By no means will you die. For God knows that, on whatever day you will eat from it, your eyes will be opened; and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.'* And so the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and beautiful to the eyes, and delightful to consider. And she took from its fruit, and she ate. And she gave to her husband, who ate.... The Lord God said... *'By the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, until you return to the earth from which you were taken. For dust you are, and unto dust you shall return.'* (Genesis) *'Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called 'Satan' or the 'devil'... 'The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God, but they became evil by their own doing.'* (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 391)

*'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life.'* (John 3:16)



*'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth...' (Song of Songs 1:2)'Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love Him.' (1 Corinthians 2:9)'I saw new heavens and a new earth... I also saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband.... He shall dwell with them and they shall be His people and He shall be their God who is always with them. He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain...' (Revelation 21)  
And we shall live happily ever after.*

*This version of the song is sung by Barbra Streisand. Hope you enjoy it as much as I do.*

*Painting of sleeping child: Dreaming of Snow White and the Seven Dwarves Photo of apple by Nancy Shuman  
Painting of Sleeping Princess by Duncon, 1915*

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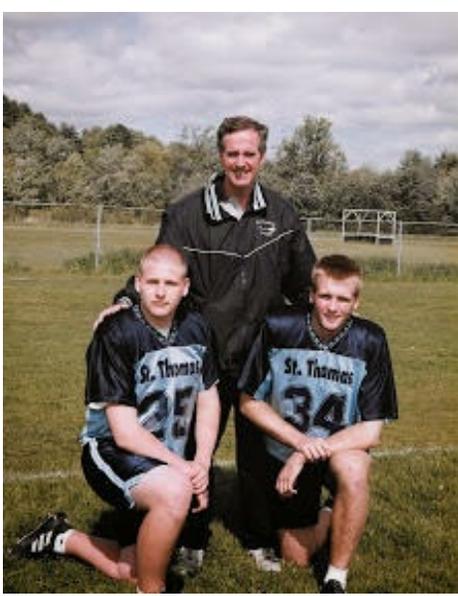
## Our Boys' Life Coach [at String of Pearls]

My husband was always very involved in anything that interested our boys; one thing was football (something he'd played himself in his younger days), and another was lacrosse (which he hadn't)

He arranged his work schedule so that he could help to coach their Pee Wee and junior high football teams, and he even did a stint as a freshman football coach when one was needed during their high school years. As an airline pilot, he was usually able to bunch his trips together so that he could be off and available for game day, and for as many weekday practices as possible.

When our boys discovered lacrosse, this man of mine ("my hero," as I like to call him) became such a knowledgeable student and true die hard fan of the "fastest game on two feet" that he ended up becoming an assistant lax coach as well, dealing mostly with the defense, throughout our sons' youth lacrosse years. The head coach, a good friend of ours, saw early on how well he understood the game just from watching the action on the sidelines and asked him to join the coaching staff. My husband reminded him that he'd never played lacrosse himself, and our friend replied, "That's perfect. I can mold you." From there, my husband eventually went on to become the head defense coach at our boys' Catholic high school, and for the many years he was in that role (and later he and our second oldest son--as the greatest defensive coaching duo NH high school lacrosse has ever known, in my learned opinion), he led the squads under his tutelage so well that our boys' teams were always ranked at the top of the pack defensively.

By the end of his youth lacrosse days, our oldest son had made a bit of a name for himself. The summer after 8th grade, the head coach at the high school he was going to attend got wind of this, and he invited our boy--a mere incoming freshman--to go to a lacrosse camp at Johns Hopkins University with a group of older players who would be his teammates the following spring. It was kind of a big deal for him to be asked to join them, and he was terribly excited. There was just one problem: the camp was going to run for five days, from Thursday to Monday. How was our son going to get himself to Sunday Mass, if the camp was on a secular university's campus and he couldn't find a church in Baltimore that was convenient to get to? And if his coach was working as an instructor at the camp and couldn't manage to carve time out of his schedule to get him there, who would take him? My husband voiced these concerns to the coach, who said, "Oh, don't worry, Mr. Pearl. I'll see that the boys get to church." Now in his defense, we did believe the coach had good intentions. But we also knew that many, if not all, of the other players--despite the fact that they were for the most part Catholics--would use the traveler's dispensation, since it would probably be a big hassle getting to Mass. (Not to mention that doing so would mean they'd have to miss a drill or a scrimmage.) If our son was the only one who cared about going, chances are it wasn't going to happen.



The more he thought about it, the more this situation ate away at my husband.

[A quick aside: why do five-day sports camps always include Sundays? I realize that lots of the coaches have other day jobs and maybe weekends need to be involved. But couldn't some drills be postponed until later in the day on Sunday, so that those who want to can make it to church? Okay, back to the story now.]

Well, my husband decided to fly down to Baltimore on Saturday, rent a car, and book a room for the night at a hotel--all so that he could be there on Sunday morning to get his firstborn son to Mass. It was just the two of them, and it was totally worth it. Then he dropped our boy back off at camp and flew back home.

And I know what you're thinking--the fact that he can fly stand-by for free, one of the great perks of his job, made this sacrifice a whole lot easier than if he'd had to buy an expensive airline ticket. That's very true. But it was a sacrifice nonetheless; because if you were married to an airline pilot (or at least to

*my*

airline pilot), you would understand that the last place he ever wants to be on his days off is at an airport or on an airplane. That feels too much like work. Pilots are away from home too much as it is, and they guard their days at home, and their glorious nights sleeping in their own beds, quite jealously. Where my pilot wanted to be was not on a plane heading down to MD, but relaxing at home with our four younger sons and me. However, when it comes to the devout practice of the Catholic Faith and the role of Christian fatherhood--which means that the father is responsible for passing the Faith on to his children, so that they truly know just how important it needs to be in their lives--there is no sacrifice so great that my husband wouldn't make it for the good of his family.

Fast-forward to the following summer: our second oldest son, following directly in the cleat steps of his older brother, had made a bit of a name for himself in the youth lacrosse world, and the high

school head coach decided to invite yet another incoming freshman Pearl to join a group of future teammates (one of them being his brother) down to Johns Hopkins for a five-day lacrosse camp. The funny thing was that right away, the coach said to my husband, "And don't worry, Mr. Pearl. I've got it all set up and I'll see that the boys get to church."

Do you think my husband heaved a sigh of relief and stayed home, or do you think he flew down to Baltimore again to make absolutely sure his sons were able to attend Sunday Mass?

If you guessed the latter, you are right. He just couldn't leave it to chance. But this time, at least, the coach really had made arrangements ahead of time to have someone take the group to church. Since he was there anyway, however, that someone ended up being my husband. And if I remember correctly, there were a couple of other lads on the team who joined the Pearls for Mass that day.

Some people might think this is the story of a dad who went above and beyond what's expected or necessary. But I don't think there's any way our boys can look at those two trips their father took, when he would have much rather been enjoying his days off at home, and not realize just how important the Mass is supposed to be to faithful Catholics. During those teen years, so many of our boys' peers were questioning the Faith--and their parents stepped back and let them figure out their own paths on their own "faith journeys," even if that meant watching them miss Mass every weekend. My husband never had to lecture or harangue our kids about attending Mass. They just did it because they saw through his example that this is what Catholics do; and Pearls are Catholics, so it's what

*we*

do. Some kids might have been embarrassed to have their dads show up at lacrosse camp to take them to Mass; but to our boys, that was just

*Dad being Dad*

. And accepting--without resentment or embarrassment--that he was there to get them to church on time was just

*them being them*

. He showed those sons of his with his very loud actions that there are some things that take precedence over even your most beloved team sport. God before lacrosse, that's just how it is.



It should come as no surprise to anyone, then, that when several of our sons weren't meeting the kind of young women who were "wife material," they went on

[CatholicMatch.com](http://CatholicMatch.com)

and found soul mates who shared their Faith, morals, and values. All three of our married sons met their spouses that way. It should also come as no surprise that all five of them still go to Mass every Sunday. Or that our three little granddaughters (who go by non-saintly aliases on this blog) were given the strong and beautiful names of some of the most eminent saints in the Catholic Church. The Faith is simply part of who our boys (and now their spouses) are.

Our boys

are

were football and lacrosse players. They are (or will be) sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers. But above all, they are Catholics.

I give all of the credit for the way our boys embrace and live their Faith to their father. He was once their football and lacrosse coach...but he has always been their life coach.

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This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2014/04/our-boys-life-coach.html>  
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## To Be Catholic [at A Still Small Voice]



catholic.

Being Catholic (to me) is simply a  
gift.

I would never trade the divine beauty of Catholicism for anything -  
*anything*

. There is no material, worldly things, no evil pleasures, not even good things that could make me neglect the even greater graces that God has prepared in the light of His Church.

A lot of times I ask myself with tear filled eyes, “Why?” Why is it that through all the disastrous

sins I committed that He called me to this way of life? Through all the ugliness, the times of hatred and envy, through times of despair upon despair, through times of betrayal and unbelief, through times of stubbornness and through times of unwillingness to be forgiven and to forgive, that God called upon me and told me to follow Him -

**Him**

-

in this way of Life

. I did nothing to ever deserve anything like the gift of the Catholic Faith.

And my friends, it didn't stop when I converted, I still don't deserve it. So why is that I am able to receive it with such joy, gratitude, love and awe?

-Because it is not out of my own merits that I came to be where I am today, but purely out of the merits of love, desire, and mercy that Christ has for His people. (1 Corinthians 15:10 - But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them - yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.) I can accept it with joy knowing that He doesn't call those who are proficient and so forth continue strive to receive all of the graces God wants to bestow upon me and use them to the utmost degree OR I can reject the offer and wallow in my own unworthiness, never acknowledging the power of God's mercy as to make one worthy. We do not make ourselves worthy of God. Only God's powerful love and mercy could attain that for us. You are either accepting or rejecting God's graces, there is no in between.

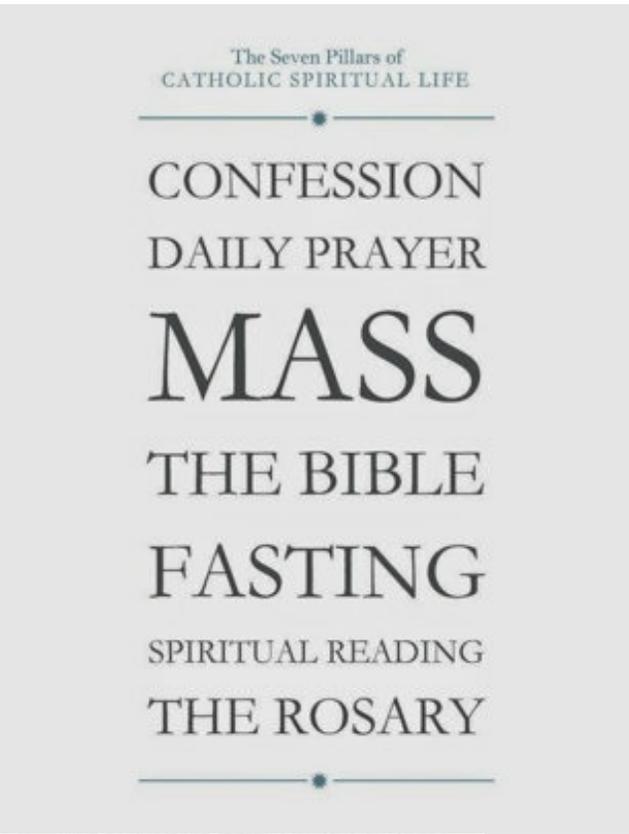
It's a beautiful blessing to have such deep and meaningful traditions throughout the Church. I know very few of these, but in that few come sincere wonder and awe.

For example: the Rosary, The Sign of the Cross, Novenas, The Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, The Saints, Sacred History, Reconciliation, Religious Life, Mary, Angels, Stations of the Cross - I could go on but you get the point.

**EVERYTHING**

that the Catholic Church teaches and does has meaning behind it and that completely astounds me. From the Celebration of Mass in and of itself (which has SOOO much you could write series of books on it - wait I think there already is some;-) to the simple, but beautiful act of genuflecting.

Here's just some pictures I think would be appropriate to share on the lines of Catholicism and what I love about it:





The Rosary is the best therapy for these distraught, unhappy, fearful, and frustrated souls, precisely because it involves the simultaneous use of three powers: the physical, the vocal, and the spiritual

— Archbishop Fulton Sheen





Being Catholic isn't simply a religion that people "fall" in and out of.

Just how you simply can't "fall" in and out of love.

You are either in love or you're not, you are either Catholic or you're not. I know it sounds harsh, but I will not let myself try to sugar coat such beautiful things that are being taken for granted on an hourly basis.

Now there has been and will be moments of extreme doubt but because of this doubt that doesn't give me any excuse not to believe or to even stop striving for the goodness Christ desires for me (and you). And no doubt, neither small nor large, can make me completely reject Catholicism and all that it teaches just because of such rich history and also the miracles that have happened to me regarding the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. When my heart is full of doubt, my mind is saying otherwise and when my mind is telling me lies my heart is feeling otherwise. > That situation has happened multiple times before, but it's not always like that.

-Another thing, just because one does not simply believe in something or Someone, that does not at all mean that that something or Someone is indeed not there. I can easily say that I don't believe in the celibacy of Priests and Religious, but that doesn't mean that it doesn't happen anyways. There is only one Truth (Veritas) and obviously there will be a lot of people who will state otherwise, but that doesn't mean it's not true. And for those who argue that there is no such thing as Veritas, (an objective truth), argue in such manner that is contradicting. If someone states there is no such thing as one Truth then they are also stating an objective truth.

(Oh and by the way, I am all for the celibacy of Priests and Religious. I just used that one because it's very controversial not only to non-Catholics but to those in the Catholic Church as well.)-

What I'm trying to get to is that there is SOO much in Catholicism that we may not understand, but just because we don't understand doesn't mean that we can't seek the Truth by asking questions. I'm pretty sure that there is not ONE saint that never asked a question about God, about their vocation, about the Faith, etc. Because of questions I am able to further my understanding of what Christ wants to show me and so much more. Without questions I know for a fact that I would have not converted.

Never stop asking questions

*(we will never know the full mystery anyway)*

, and never stop living in wonder and awe. The only way I can even manage to think about Catholicism is with wonder and awe.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux stated, "There are things that the heart feels, but that words and even thoughts can't manage to express . . ." That's how I feel trying to put into words how BEAUTIFUL

the Catholic Church is. I simply can't. No matter how much I try to write about it, I'm still going to want to write more.

So with all that being said, I really do urge my Catholic brothers and sisters to come to love and to know the Holy Trinity and The Church given to us, for us. To think about what we are professing at Mass when we say the Nicene Creed. Catholicism is truly a Gift, let's open it and see what's inside.

(Okay that was cheesy but it just came to me so I'm going with it.)

^Sums it up!^

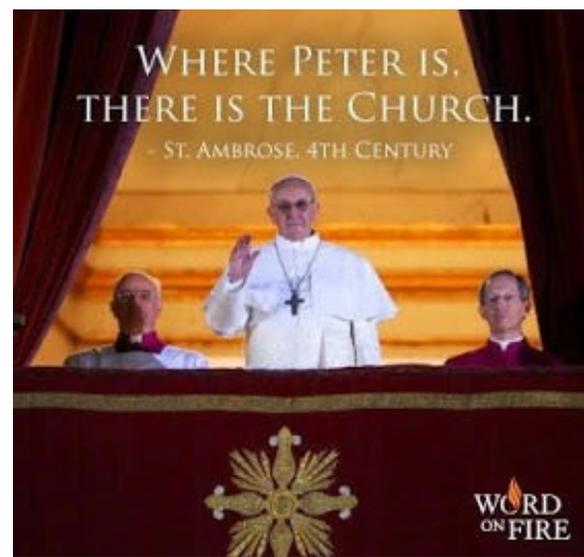
God bless and Mary protect.

*“Let the whole earth fear Yahweh,  
let all who dwell in the world revere him.”*

*Amen*

“So I say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will built my community.

And the gates of the underworld can never overpower it.”



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This contribution is available at <http://zoejumonville.blogspot.com/2014/04/to-be-catholic.html>  
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# Liturgical Abuse and Moral Corruption Is There a Correlation? [at Catholic Stand]

Efforts at living an upright, godly life and following the rules don't always make life easy. We will inevitably encounter those who don't appreciate compliance to civil or natural law as well as those who have contradictory impulses. We find vehement opposition and slander when we stand in support of our deeply held convictions in support of life, marriage, and justice. Similarly, those who yearn for devout liturgy, theologically correct hymns, respectful attire, and adherence to the Rubrics are quickly assigned the labels of judgmental or legalistic.

When liturgy isn't properly followed and the faithful express dismay, they might even be labeled as Pharisees, along with the characterization of caring more for structure than for Jesus. Jesus, after all, is a God-Man of love and inclusion. He never took appearances seriously or castigated those who trivialized His Father's house. Oh wait! Yes, he did! Remember the turning of the tables in the temple and the expectation for wedding guests to wear the proper garments?

## Liturgical Abuse – It Comes Down to Obedience

In response to an aversion to self-congratulatory hymns songs, we are told they are perfectly fine because they make you 'feel good'. Balderdash! In reality, popes, cardinals, bishops and priests have frequently weighed in about proper disposition and decorum. In his book, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) famously said,

“Wherever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment.” ([Spirit of the Liturgy](#) p. 198)

This wasn't some off-the-cuff remark that should be viewed lightly. The point was that he wanted the people in the pews to remember that worship is not horizontal (people to people) but is, in fact, vertical (people to God). When we sing songs about ourselves and how important we are, if a priest ad-libs the prayer that is Heaven on Earth (the Mass), or the faithful come dressed for the beach instead of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb – then they are giving priority to the *Jesus is my friend* idea and forgetting that Jesus is also the King.

Excuses for immodest dress, bring tales of poor young women, with little catechesis, who will be turned off by the mean spirited modesty/liturgy police. Since they can't afford anything other than torn jeans or miniskirts, or belly tees, we are told, we are suffering from hardness of heart. Never mind all the regular, informed church goers who dress similarly – the *actual* focus of concern.

Even in small, seemingly innocuous, instances of disobedience the larger turmoil is apparent. Cardinal Francis Arinze, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, said, “Focusing on the Eucharistic celebration, ‘ars celebrandi’ refers to both interior and exterior participation on the part of the celebrating priest and on the part of the congregation.” He added, “‘Ars celebrandi’ helps the priest to have a faith-filled and disciplined posture at Mass. On the one hand, he cannot isolate himself from the presence of the people. On the other hand he should not become a showman who projects himself”. “The liturgy” he [stressed](#), “is not primarily what we make but what we receive in faith.”

## **Liturgical Abuse – The Larger Problem**

As insignificant as these anecdotes may appear, they point to a larger problem. If we don’t obey in the small areas, it will certainly affect our following authority in the larger. Edward Pentin, of Zenit, reported some [comments](#) from Raymond Cardinal Burke, former Prefect of the Vatican’s Apostolic Signatura. Cardinal Burke shared his conviction that a fitting worship of God is essential to the moral life.

“There’s no question in my mind that the abuses in the sacred liturgy, reduction of the sacred liturgy to some kind of human activity, is strictly correlated with a lot of moral corruption and with a levity in catechesis that has been shocking and has left generations of Catholics ill prepared to deal with the challenges of our time by addressing the Catholic faith to those challenges.”

Similar and exceedingly troubling signs of moral corruption in today’s society are analogous to liturgical corruption – they show a conspicuous lack of obedience and decorum. We seem to be ever more independent and democratic in our thinking. Yet the Church isn’t a democracy, nor are we independent. The worldly ideal appears to be that *no one is going to tell me what to do and many people do this so it must be okay*. This is the moral relativism about which the Holy Father Pope Francis has cautioned. Whether it’s accountability for babies conceived through promiscuity or *just* civil punishment for crime, the goal becomes more about a way out than on bearing the consequences of action. We have become a freedom loving society that has little respect for the significance of choices and actions. The result is often rampant, unapologetic abortion and revulsion of the adherence to just civil (and Church) law – our society is suffering under the impact of conscienceless living.

Righteous civil laws matter; they are, for the most part, based on the 10 Commandments. Liturgical laws matter as well. In order to live in a structured society we need to give preference to the adherence to laws, both civil and spiritual. As other evils enter into our secular lives, we also experience liturgical disorder. The impact of such free thinking produces a serious injustice – depriving the faithful of licit and in some cases valid, sacraments. This, even though Canon Law states that the licit, devout celebration of the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass is something to which we Catholics have a right.

“The Christian faithful have the right to worship God according to the prescriptions of their own

rite approved by the legitimate pastors of the Church, and to follow their own form of spiritual life consonant with the teaching of the Church.” ([Canon 214](#))

When speaking of ‘legitimate pastors of the Church, we’re not talking about every individual priest and his personal preferences. Only the Holy See (and duly appointed bishops) has that authority. As we read in article 22 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Divine Liturgy), “Therefore no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority”.

### **Eucharistic Celebration – Real Nourishment for Real Evangelization**

In the liturgical context we seek the nourishment needed to go out and proclaim the Gospel. This is our closest earthly encounter with the Divine. According to Francis Cardinal Arinze, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, “The liturgy is not primarily what we make but what we receive in faith.” Arinze also [noted](#), on Eucharistic Celebration, “‘ars celebrandi’ demands good preparation, faith, humility and focusing attention on the sacred mystery rather than on self. When the Mass is celebrated in this spirit it nourishes faith and manifests it powerfully – ‘lex orandi, lex credendi.’ With a genuine understanding of the role of liturgical norms, such a celebration is free of trivialization and desacralization. It sends the people of God home properly nourished, spiritually refreshed and dynamically sent to evangelize.”

If the proper celebration of liturgy sends the faithful away strengthened, nourished, ready to Evangelize, we must recognize the vital necessity of proper disposition. Any false intent or participation would void much of the good we are called to go out into the world to do. A disordered celebration of the Mass brings a disordered concentration to living life as we should.

### **The Church believes as she prays**

There is a Latin dictum that addresses the centrality of worship in the life, identity, and mission of the Church; “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi”, literally means the law of prayer (“the way we worship”), and the law of belief (“what we believe”). The longer version, sometimes written, “lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi”, further deepens the implications to which it points – how we worship reflects what we believe and determines how we will live.

Yet a decline in sacred music, priestly showmanship, secularized church design, and casual reception of the Holy Eucharist demonstrate a lack of respect for the dignity of the Divine Liturgy. What this world badly needs is reaffirmation of the importance of experiencing the Sacred in the sanctuary and prominent placement of the Tabernacle. As liturgical worship has been overwhelmed by poorly discerned trends, the worship of the contemporary Catholic Church has been undermined. The Rubrics (norms) of the liturgy have often been discarded or marginally followed. Instead of joining the angels as they bow in profound reverence at the Supper of the Lamb, we find minimalism.

When we assist in the Holy Sacrifice of Holy Mass we are transported to the foot of the cross at Calvary. In this Holy Place, we are in the presence of our Savior. How we participate and present ourselves, as well as our demeanor is undeniably of eternal consequence. The more reverence and honor we bestow on this supernatural gift, the more our worship is pleasing to God. Shouldn't we offer our very best for the King of Kings? I suspect many Catholics would welcome a return to reverence, transcendence, and splendor in the Divine Liturgy. Doing so would transform us, but more importantly it would transform the world. "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi". As We Worship, so we will live. Let our outward disposition reflect an inner honor for the sacred, which carries through into our earthly actions!

- **Liturgical Abuse and Moral Corruption – Is There a Correlation?**

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# Thank You For Breaking My Heart [at The Veil of Chastity]

Happy Easter! We were out of town for the weekend and had a wonderful time with my family. I am behind on everything, including responding to emails and planning a post for this week. As of yesterday, this week's post was a big blank document. I had a number of topics I could have shared but none of them seemed to be 'just right.' Then, I read [a post by Amanda](#), on her blog, *Worthy of Agape*, which contained the statement, "Thank you for breaking my heart."

As I was reading it, I said, "Yes, yes!" and "It is [the Veil!](#)"

Amanda gave me permission to reblog her post and I have added my own comments. I pray her testimony of a broken heart will encourage you!

*"To all of those who came before:*

*Thank you. Thank you for having the courage to end things, even though it may have been hard. Thank you for recognizing that I wasn't "The One," even if I told you that idea was insane. Thank you for letting me go so that God could bring something even more amazing into my life. Thank you for having the strength to walk away, even if it meant some broken hearts and tears fell along the way."*

*"Thank you for recognizing that I wasn't "The One," even if I told you that idea was insane."*

This whole idea of "The One" can confound us and the idea can seem insane. It only makes sense in hindsight when you can look back and see how wrong the others were for you and how right a certain person can be.

I have this theory called [The Veil](#). The theory claims that the Lord covers us all with a veil and this veil will only be lifted for The One that God has intended for us. Only this person, I call our *Holy Spouse*, can see us. All other men will reject us because the veil prevents them from seeing us. This rejection, in the end, is loving protection from God. Although Amanda is not endorsing my theory, it seems that her beautiful testimony reflects this idea of a Divine will leading her towards The One.

*"Dare I say it, thank you for breaking my heart. Fulton Sheen said that sometimes the only way that the good Lord can get into our hearts is to break them. Thanks for breaking mine so that He could enter in more deeply. Thank you for shaking my life up, for opening me up to new possibilities. Chances are that when you left I had to readjust my understanding of what my life would look like. You got me out of my comfort zone and into God's heart, the only place I ever really found rest until the right one came along."*

*"Dare I say it, thank you for breaking my heart."*

When you are in the middle of rejection and heartache, it is unimaginable that you would ever utter the words, “Thank you.” This is the part of our Spiritual lives that makes no sense. Staying in the Lord’s will, however, allows us to see the works of His hands and make sense out of it all.

*“You could have held on, you could have stuck it out and tried to make it work. You could have fought the feeling that it wouldn’t have worked out in the end. You could have held on, knowing that I’d follow your lead and stick out to the bitter end. But instead you walked away. Honestly, I probably didn’t appreciate it at the time. I was probably pretty mad at you and thought some horrible things about you. I may have thought you were a coward for walking away. I’m sorry for that. If I’d had any idea what your walking away opened the door for, I wouldn’t have been so harsh. But that’s sort of the point, isn’t it? That we don’t know what’s coming, but we should be more charitable anyway, which is exactly why I’m writing you this letter.”*

*“I may have thought you were a coward for walking away.”*

It is normal to blame the one who rejects us. It is difficult to view the rejection in a positive light.

*“In case you haven’t figured it out by now, I’m getting married. As I prepare for the wedding and the marriage, I realize with stunning clarity how none of this would have been possible if you’d stayed. We might have been happy, but you ending things when you did made the stars line up just right for this beautiful relationship to fall into place. If you had stayed even one day longer, I might still be bitter. I might not be writing this letter at all. I might not be marrying the man God made for me, and I for him. If you hadn’t walked away we might still be together, but we probably wouldn’t have been that happy. Who but God knows? All I know is that today, as I sit here and joyfully countdown the days until my wedding, I’m grateful for you in a whole new way. I’m grateful that you walked away so that all of this bliss could fall into place. You played a part in my fairy tale, and I hope I played a good part in yours. I hope one day, if it hasn’t happened already, that you find your reason to write a letter like this. I hope you are thankful for all of the ones that came before. Thanks for touching my life in the way God called you to, and for having the strength to let me go.”*

*“I realize with stunning clarity how none of this would have been possible if you’d stayed.....If you had stayed.....I might not be marrying the man God made for me, and I for him.”*

Amanda can look back and see the Lord’s hand in her life. Like a Divine Surgeon, He poured out His grace and cut out all that would interfere with His will.



Amanda and Anthony (credit Irving Photography)

Thank you, Amanda, for sharing your heart with us! We will keep you and Anthony in our prayers as you enter Holy Matrimony next month!

God love and bless you!

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This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2014/04/22/thank-you-for-breaking-my-heart/>  
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# I'm Hitting the Wall Right Now, God [at FranciscanMom]

Yesterday at our Secular Franciscans meeting we had a guest speaker: a Sister who works at a [local retreat house](#). She gave a presentation about practical ways to pray constantly.



Here's one of the recommendations she gave us:

- **What is the one sentence I'd like to say to God right now?**

I just used that technique, and I have to say, there's comfort in it.

I'm in the middle of some red tape on the medical-provider end of Little Brother's diabetes care, and the idea of the confrontation I'll probably have to have in order to untangle this mess has ratcheted my anxiety level into the stratosphere. Suddenly I just stopped what I was doing while waiting for the phone call I'm dreading and said, out loud,

**“I'm hitting the wall right now, God.”**

(Fortunately no one else is home right now.)

It helped a little, though, just to get that out there. I can kind of feel my jaw unclenching and my fists opening up—just a bit.

And then, the tears. Not tears of despair, but instead that almost-relief when you know in your heart that **God's got this**.

[image source](#)



## Embedded Faith

I look forward to First Fridays with Francis and sharing what our Holy Father has said that has been inspirational to me. This month I have taken my inspiration from his [homily at Mass celebrated in the Santa Marta residence on April 24](#). Pope Francis spoke of Christians who are afraid of the joy of Christ's resurrection. He compared them to bats hiding in dark caves that prefer the shadows and avoid the light.



*“This is a Christian’s disease. We’re afraid of joy. It’s better to think: Yes, yes, God exists, but He is there. Jesus has risen and He is there. Somewhat distant. We’re afraid of being close to Jesus because this gives us joy. And this is why there are so many ‘funeral’ (mournful) Christians, isn’t it? Those whose lives seem to be a perpetual funeral. They prefer sadness to joy. They move about better in the shadows, not in the light of joy, like those animals who only come out at night, not in the light of day, who can’t see anything. Like bats. And with a little sense of humor we can say that there are Christian bats who prefer the shadows to the light of the presence of the Lord.” – Pope Francis*

Bats are nocturnal animals. They fly and seek their food at night, and during the day they want a safe place to sleep. Caves often are the place of choice for many bats as they provide the

protected shelter that they bat can thrive in. Some species live in large cave colonies that have millions of members, even up to 20 million in one cave. When they go out and fly in the dark they use echolocation, a process by which sound waves bounce off objects and back to the bat. They use this as their way to locate food and avoid obstacles in the dark. Bats have the ability to create and hear noises that humans cannot hear. It is those sound waves bouncing back that help them to judge the size and distance of objects around them. These subsonic noises vary in length and pulse frequency, and are unique to the individual. Each bat recognizes its own pulse reflections, just like we recognize another human voice. Bats recognize and use their voice, that personal pulse frequency, to navigate where things are around them and distinguish their “voice” from other bat “voices.”

After dark, the bats will leave in large groups. But Before leaving they prepare themselves for this departure by flying around inside the cave. Flying around with thousands of other bats inside a cave creates a chaotic amount of noise! When bats are paying attention to their sonar signals, they can navigate without crashing into things. In the cave while in this pre-departure madness before they take off they **choose not to listen** to their personal voice even though their echolocators are on. So what would happen if a person suddenly appeared in their cave among these flying bats? The bats would crash into them. The famous bat expert, Dr. Donald. R. Griffin, called this phenomenon the "Andrea Doria effect." The Andrea Doria, as you may well remember, sank when it crashed into another ship out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

Are you starting to see some parallels?

We too can hide in our safe caves choosing the darkness over the light of Christ. We can choose to not listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit that guides us and instead just fly chaotically around in our caves where we eventually just crash and sink.

As Christians, we can may the choice to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit over the noise and chaos of the world. We can make the choice to come out of our safe dark caves and soar into the light. Our Holy Father reminds us that we do not have to be afraid of the joy that comes from knowing the full truth of the resurrection and living as intentional disciples of Christ.

Cyndi

**(Jesus) is a living reality,**

**He has a body,**

**He is with us,**

**he accompanies us**

**and He has won.**

**We ask the Lord for  
the grace to not be  
afraid of joy.**

**Pope Francis**

*Embeddedfaith.org*



**MY FAVORITIE PHOTO OF THE MONTH!**



*Duck, duck, goose!*

This contribution is available at <http://www.embeddedfaith.org/1/post/2014/05/holy-bat-joy-first-fridays-with-francis.html>  
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## Lessons I Learned in April [at Quiet Consecration]

The best part of being a regular Sober Catholic Blogger is the chance to look back at the previous month and do a hard core evaluation of what I shared with all of you.

That being said, let me revisit my original commitment to living my life as a Catholic Out Loud and a Sober Woman, trying to respect the Traditions of the 12 Step Group to which I owe my life.

I vowed to do my best to be hardest on ME, to try and evaluate the ups and downs of life and my reaction to them. I would be introspective; evaluating my actions and reactions against the standard set for me as a Catholic and as a sober member of the 12 Step group.

I would really try not to lie. Now, this may seem like I am equivocating but what I have come to learn is that I have a perspective that might not encompass the entire show (so to speak) and so any omission of something YOU might think is important and, therefore, assume is a deliberate attempt at falsehood on my part may not be what it seems. That being said, if you can bring a perspective to a situation that is beyond a fancy way of saying, "You're ugly and your mother dresses you funny", you will just have to accept that I don't remember or see something the way you see it. I do not understand that as lying, but you might and I respect your decision to decide I am a liar.

I will not deliberately hurt someone. If, however, my evaluation of a situation hurts your feelings and you cannot see that I am trying to figure out how I should have behaved or will behave in the future, I am sorry. The hurt is unintentional.

OK, now...let's look back on April 2014.

What did I learn?

St Paul recommends that we try to be all things to all people. For Catholics that means acknowledging that the practice of our Faith can be done beautifully and effectively by the upper crust and those of us walking in the mud and the mire. One does not need to be a theologian to be a faithful Catholic. That being said, if one knows their faith there is no way on God's green earth they will walk away from Holy Mother Church. NO one will walk freely away from Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, or the fullness of the Christian experience. So while we all do not have to be Catechists, it is essential that we know our faith and TRUST the Church.

As a member of the sobriety world, however, I cannot be all things to all people. I am a Clerical Supervisor, a Catechist, a writer (maybe), and an artist (kind of). I do not know how to be something I am not - a clinical social worker, a psychologist, a counselor, a guru of all-things-sober. And while I have seen amazing things happen in my 12 Step group for people who have problems other than alcoholism, I cannot be Captain America and dive blindly into a fray of which I have no experience or knowledge. To do so would be arrogant on my part, dangerous to the other

person involved and basically my attempt to play God in someone else's life.

I have learned to trust my instincts a little more. If it smells like a duck, walks like a duck and does a lot of quacking, the chances are really good that I am dealing with a duck - even if it looks like a zebra. Zebra suits are easy to find and lots of ducks wear them. Some of those ducks are not even AWARE they have donned the Zebra suit and when you point out the zipper to them, they will tell you they cannot possibly be a duck in zebra clothing because some of their best friends are zebras and those zebras will vouch for them.

However, if you are (in your everyday speech) referring to members of The Church as 'papists' you might as well take off the zebra suit and admit you are a duck. While we have (some of us anyway) reclaimed that derogatory name in some quarters, it is still a hurtful moniker. Keep it to yourself.

I have learned to eat better and maintain my weight loss during times of illness. I am not getting to the gym as often as I would like but I am back at daily morning exercise and committing to three times a week running on that stupid treadmill (among other things). I feel good about myself. I am never going to be a supermodel but I am a lot healthier than I was three years ago when the physical self improvement mission began and for that I am responsible.

Last but not least, I have learned to stand a little straighter and firmer. I have learned to tell someone calmly and carefully when their behavior is not going to be tolerated. I have learned to let them make the decision to stay or go but to give them enough information about me so that their decision is made with honesty. It might still hurt but by golly it is honest and that is the most important thing someone like me can be - Honest.

Thank you all for keeping me in prayer this past month. Thank you for being in my life.

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2014/04/lessons-i-learned-in-april.html>  
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## Toxic Thoughts [at The Beautiful Gate]



Toxic thoughts used to be the bane of my existence. Looking back, I can see just how much they affected my life. I wasn't really fully aware of them at the time. I thought my thinking was normal. The toxic thoughts were more like a background noise, subtle at times but almost always there if I paid attention. My thinking definitely leaned toward the negative side. Like a tape being played over and over again. These thoughts were like bloodthirsty leeches, slowly draining my energy, my peace, my joy. When I DID become aware of how problematic my thinking processes were I tried to do something to overcome them.

But kept failing.

Why?

Because I placed my focus on overcoming the bad thoughts without understanding that there were underlying issues feeding them. It was like trying to bail out a leaky boat with a straw. How can it work if you don't fix the leak first?

Fix the leak. Then you can bail out the water.

In my case,

[repressed/suppressed anger](#)

was one of the culprits fueling the toxic thoughts. I've spoken about this in numerous posts so I won't go into detail here except to say that you have a much better chance of conquering negative thinking if you deal with the underlying issue first. You can be mild-mannered on the surface and still have a lot of anger simmering deep inside. The surface mildness may just be saying that you have good control. Mine was rigid.

Even now, I have to be diligent in the area of my thought life because negative thoughts still like to creep in on occasion and if I am not careful they wreak havoc in a very short time. Anyone who

has struggled with this knows how difficult it can be to overcome poisonous thinking processes. There aren't any "quick fixes", at least there weren't for me. I guess God could certainly cure a person of this in an instant but usually He doesn't work this way. It usually takes time, grace, and effort before we see lasting changes in this area.

In other words, He supplies the grace, you supply the effort. You work in tandem like a tag team.

So, the first way to deal with unwanted thoughts is to ask God to help you with the underlying issues lurking beneath the surface that may be helping to fuel the thoughts. Once these are addressed you can

start actively working on getting rid of the thoughts themselves.

Some people may not even be aware that they struggle with toxic thoughts but it's not difficult to find out if you do. For a few days, pay attention to where your thoughts go. Don't dwell on them, just see if you can notice subtle poisonous thought patterns aimed at yourself or others. Thoughts such as:

"God doesn't really want to help me."

"I'm not good enough."

"I'll never be able to do this!"

"I can't lose weight! I'll always be fat and ugly."

These are just examples. Look for any patterns of cutting yourself or others down. Check for accusatory thoughts aimed at yourself or others. Note any patterns of despair:

"He/she (or I) will

**never**

change!"

"This is

**hopeless**

!"

"I

**hate**

my life!"

Remember, you are not looking for occasional bad thoughts that pop up, you are looking for recurrent patterns or themes. Thoughts that consistently come to mind when you aren't caught up in an activity that holds your attention. The good thing is that the thoughts themselves will give you an idea of the underlying issue.

For instance, some consistent patterns of thinking can point towards a particular Deadly Sin that may need to be worked on, so as frustrating as it may be to deal with such thoughts they can actually help you pinpoint certain areas of your life that may need work. To give you an example, if the thoughts tend toward:

God doesn't want to help me/ I am all alone and God doesn't care/ I'll probably go to hell, God doesn't love me/ God is always silent (thoughts that doubt the goodness of God) - it may be a good idea to look at sloth first.

If the thoughts tend toward:

I never do anything right/ I'm such a loser/ I can't keep up/ I hate myself (etc..) you can look for suppressed/repressed anger issues (and these thoughts may suggest that you have difficulty forgiving yourself so praying for humility may help as well).

If you DO find "negative brain tapes", don't worry.

God already knows about them and wants to open up this area to His grace.

In brief, step one is to come to terms with the underlying issue (or issues) such as anger,

[envy](#)

, unforgiveness, despair, (etc...) by admitting you have trouble in this area and asking for God to help you with it. Once you face the problem, you can tackle the thoughts themselves which I talk about in my next post.

Next post:

[Do not Feed the Bears](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://openingthefloodgatesofmercy.blogspot.com/2014/04/toxic-thoughts-part-1.html>

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## A Tribute to Father Lewis Glidden

With much sadness in my heart and tears in my eyes, I said goodbye today to a dear friend and brother in Christ, Father Lewis Glidden of St. Stephen the Martyr parish in Oakland, Maine.

When I served as an Anglican bishop, Father Lewis was a priest under my care. I only met him a few years ago but came to know and love him dearly.

Father Lewis labored for the Lord for many years without thought of himself. He had been able to get his church for a few hundred dollars. A stately old church with a huge pipe organ that had formerly been the meeting place for a group of Unitarians, St. Stephen the Martyr parish had been sharing the space with the Unitarians and when the Unitarians disbanded they virtually gave Father Lewis the property.

The parish of St. Stephen was not large. In fact, when the parish and Father Lewis came under my care there was only a handful of parishioners. When I went to receive the parish and celebrate Mass with Father Lewis there were only 10 or so people in attendance besides ourselves. In spite of the small number, it was a wonderful time. The Lord blessed us that day.

Father Lewis was diligent to say Mass and have morning prayer even if no one showed up. He paid all the bills out of his own meager Social Security income. The heating bills were tremendous in the dead of the Maine winters. Yet Father kept the parish open.

Father Lewis had many health problems among which were a bad heart and cancer. The cancer was in his lungs and had spread to his vocal chords. Over the past year he had rapidly gone downhill. I received a call this morning telling me that Father Lewis had been moved to hospice and that it was only a matter of days before the Lord would call him home. I called Father Lewis afterwards and spoke with him for about 20 minutes. He could only whisper.

I asked Father Lewis if he was at peace and he said all was well. He said he knew that in just a matter of hours or days he would be home with the Lord. He was excited about that. Father told me that he had been looking back over his life the past few days and saw many things he wished he had done differently or could have done better. But, he said, as he was thinking of those things the Holy Spirit spoke to his heart and told him, "Lewis, you have been forgiven. The Father has no remembrance of those things." Father Lewis said he decided that if those things were a moot point to the Heavenly Father then they were a moot point to him also. He was at peace.

Father and I concluded our conversation as we usually did, by praying for each other. I could hardly hear him but I know the Lord Jesus heard him loud and clear. I did hear him ask the Lord to take the sadness from my heart and fill it with joy. After we prayed I told Father that I would be asking him to intercede for me from time to time. He assured me he would remember me at the Throne of Grace. His parting words to me were, "Bishop Mark, know that when I go, I am going to pay you a visit from time to time. You will know I am there when you feel my arm around your

shoulders.”

It has been an honor and a privilege for me to know and love Father Lewis. He has been a shining example of a faithful priest who labored in obscurity, known only to a few, yet fully known by the Most Holy and Blessed Trinity. His reward will be great and he will soon hear those most joyous words from his Master, “Well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.”

When I had visited Father in Maine, it was the dead of winter and when I got to his house the snow was up to my knees. While driving me from the airport, Father got turned around and as he was trying to get on the right road he ran a red light. I am currently a police officer and when he realized he had run the light he said jokingly, “Well, here I am a priest with my bishop who is also a police officer in the car with me and I go and run a red light!” We have always had a good laugh about that moment. When I prayed for him over the phone today, I asked the Lord to please do one thing and reprimand Father about running red lights. In a whisper I could hear Father laugh.

Before I said goodbye to him, my last words to Father were, “I’ll see you again soon my brother.” I miss you already Father Lewis, more than words can express. I love you. Thank you for being my friend and for being a prayer warrior on my behalf. I will see you soon.

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This contribution is available at <http://mccatholic.com/2014/04/25/a-tribute-to-father-lewis-glidden/>  
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## The Journey Home From Anxiety and Panic [at St. Joseph's Vanguard]



What a time it's been! last week, on Easter Monday, the very day, thirteen years ago, that I entered full communion with the Catholic Church.

It was a good experience, but not one without anxieties. On the show I shared how God saved me from death, both physical death that I was contemplating via suicide and the spiritual death of despair and unbelief.

I haven't watched the whole video—only got to see about fifteen minutes so far due to working “nights and weekends” at my work—but many friends have remarked to me that they thought it went really well and that they could hardly believe I was someone who had an anxiety disorder.

But I did have one, and leading up to the show I was quite anxious about it. Because I'm like an alcoholic who has been sober for ten years—the temptation to drink again is always sort of there in the background—just as for me the temptation to fear and panic is there. For the show I knew I would be in the limelight, something some people desire but people with disordered anxieties avoid at all costs. I didn't know much about how the show would be done, either, up until the night before.

They told me that there would be little preparation because Marcus likes to have the interview be as spontaneous as possible—he's hearing the story for the first time like the viewers are—and that they do one taping straight through. So no do-overs for mess-ups, basically.

All this made me a bit uneasy, but when battling rising anxieties I've learned a few things. The first is that I tell God I'm afraid of failing or being humiliated, but that I seek to do this thing for His glory, so that others might come to know him. Since that is my goal, and not my own self-promotion, I need not fear. For I can only do my best, and if God allows me to be humiliated, then that is for His glory. I'm a poor instrument and can't be surprised that not every note that comes out of me sounds good.

I also learned to remind myself that I'm surrounded by my brothers and sisters in Christ. They are on my side. They love me and don't want me to fail. They are my spiritual family, and I can let my guard down. That was the case with the people at the [Coming Home Network](#) (who do The

Journey Home). They are a great group of people, faithful and kind, and so welcoming. They made me feel at home.

Another thing I learned is that my children and wife are always proud of me. All my son and daughter knew was that I was flying on “a jet plane” to Ohio and would be back the next day after they were in bed. But that I would come in and give them a kiss when I got home. They love it when I can read to them, carry them on my back, do the “super fly” game, and get home from work so I can push them on the swing. My wife likewise loves me no matter whether I’m successful or a failure.

The anxiety disorder and depression that God rescued me from taught me to not be puffed up anymore. I was ground down to a fine consistency and realize I may very well be again one day. When I tell my wife such things she laughs and says “you’re the last person that would let success and recognition go to their head.” I hope so.

While Marcus Grodi normally doesn’t speak much beforehand with the person being interviewed, he and I ended up chatting an hour prior to the show about farming. He and I have a lot in common in this area and traded stories, books we’ve read, and ideas about how the rich Catholic agrarian life may be recovered and brought into the modern world. It was providential, and something I didn’t expect at all, not knowing that he was interested in this subject until I mentioned that we had bought a milk cow. It was one more small gift of our Lord that helped me to feel more at ease.

After thirteen years, God has substantially healed me of disordered anxieties, including depression and panic attacks. I no longer have to take any medicine for them, and they are usually manageable. Sometimes, when multiple severe life stresses occur, they can flare up again, but they have not been able to paralyze me as they once did.

To all my friends who messaged or called me telling me they thought the show went well, *thank you*. I can’t tell you how encouraging it is to hear that, and how grateful to our Lord that I am for it. Blessed Easter season to you!

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This contribution is available at <http://www.devinrose.heroicvirtuecreations.com/blog/2014/04/28/the-journey-home-from-anxiety-and-panic/>  
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## 3 Things Catholics Need to Confidently Reclaim and Own Again [at Aleteia]

I'm thinking of a person who describes himself as a Christian, gets his beliefs from the Bible, and has a passion for sharing Jesus with others. What kind of person comes to mind? I bet the first thought most people have is an evangelical Protestant. But not a Catholic. And that's a problem. One of my more recent articles was an [open letter to evangelicals](#)

. This one's for Catholics.

How did we get here? Catholics are members of the Church that compiled the Scriptures, the Church of the great missionary [saints](#)

and

, the Church established by Christ himself - how did it come about that other people are more known for being evangelizing, Bible-believing Christians?

I'm sure our status as a cultural minority here in the U.S. has been a factor in forming these perceptions (the Protestant majority has had more power in setting linguistic norms, etc). And the widespread lack of faithfulness to Catholic doctrine among self-identifying Catholics in the last few decades certainly hasn't helped. But whatever the reasons, I think we Catholics have come to accept these perceptions to a large degree, and in doing so have ceded far too much to our Protestant brothers and sisters. This is injurious both to our own self-understanding as Catholics and to our relations with non-Catholics. It's hard to live the faith right and accurately share it with others if we've accepted false cultural narratives, false dichotomies, and improper terminology. To be clear, I'm not saying Catholics should demand that others stop identifying themselves with these things or that we should try to force others to speak about us a certain way. Other people can express themselves from the point of view of their faith or worldview. But so can we. So I propose that, in our speech, minds, and actions, Catholics more confidently own these three things: **1) The term "Christian"** How many times have you heard someone make a distinction between "Catholics" and "Christians," using the latter to refer to Protestants? Now compare that to the number of times you've heard Catholics call themselves "Christians" in ordinary conversation. This is a fairly serious identity crisis. The Catholic Church teaches that she alone has the fullness of the Christian faith. Indeed, "Catholicism" is just another name for the Christian religion. So insofar as we follow our faith, Catholics are Christians in the fullest sense of the term. And if we really believe that, it should be reflected in our speech. I'm not saying we should abandon the term "Catholic" - I'm obviously using it throughout this article. The Church holds that non-Catholic baptized followers of Christ are also rightly termed "Christians" ([Unitatis Redintegratio](#)

, 3), so we need the term “Catholic” to help distinguish ourselves.

But we should also confidently call *ourselves*

“Christians.” Or at least “Catholic Christians.” We shouldn’t let “Christian” be a synonym for “Protestant.”

**2) The Bible** The Bible teaches Catholic doctrine. It does not teach Protestant doctrine. Really. Is that strange to hear? I might be more affected by this since I was raised Protestant, but it seems to me that since many Protestants, particularly evangelicals, have been so insistent for so long that their beliefs are what the Bible teaches, it’s as if Catholics have ceded them the point. We’ve let them have the Bible, at least culturally speaking. But we shouldn’t. Let me be even more specific: the Bible does not teach *sola fide*

or

*sola scriptura*

. Purgatory, on the other hand, is entirely biblical (cf. 1 Cor 3.11-15, Mt 12.32, et al.). So is the authority of oral Tradition (2 Thess 2.15), the power of priests to absolve your sins (Jn 20.22-23), and the practice of praying for the dead (2 Maccabees 12.39-45).

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This contribution is available at <http://www.aleteia.org/en/religion/article/3-things-catholics-need-to-confidently-reclaim-and-own-again-5235764010942464>

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# John Paul II - A Re-Posting of My Experience [at All This And Heaven]



John Paul II, Pray for us!

My experience with the John Paul II as the Holy Father was a little different than others. I don't have pictures of being blessed by this very holy man, but I have wonderful memories. I have heard that the true desire of any Saint is to bring us closer to Christ. They do not seek personal devotion but devotion of our Lord. This is what I was blessed to receive from our Holy Father. I have been raised Catholic my entire life, baptized at a few weeks of age. I attended Catholic grade school and high school. I really took it all for granted. I remember the election of JP and then a few days later JP II. It was one of the only times we were allowed to watch TV in school. I remember the church ringing the bells for a long time when it was announced that a new Pope had been elected. I remember thinking that I would have chosen another name. John Paul had not worked to well for the first guy. I mean he died so soon. I was worried that this second guy would die also.

Fast forward a few years. . . JP II did a youth rally that was televised between 4 cities. In St. Louis I was chosen to be one of the representatives from my parish to sit in on this huge teleconference. So I wasn't actually in his presence but by satellite I was close. I really felt called to be faithful to the church. It was moving in a general sort of way.

Fast forward again. . . It was now 1998. I had 4 beautiful children and had just had a miscarriage. My husband and I talked about going to Rome. We contemplated being involved in the Holy Door stuff for the year jubilee 2000. We had gone so far as to get sitters and start learning Italian. We had planned to stay 2-3 weeks and work as volunteers to help other pilgrims. Our dear friend Fr. Tom Keller had expressed interest in going as well. I discovered that I was pregnant again so without explaining Jason and I backed out. Fr. Tom didn't seem upset or even question why. He just said he wasn't going either and not to worry. We would get to see the Holy Father.

As it turned out JP II was planning a visit to St. Louis in Jan of 1999. Fr. Tom was made head Sacristan for the Papal Mass. His committee consisted of himself, one priest and one religious brother, 6 teenagers, my husband Jason and me. We worked for months to prepare for one Mass.

Fr. Tom worked so hard. He always kept my kids in the loop. When he acquired the vessels for the Mass and the Monstrance for a chapel he would bring them by the house. These were ones that had been held by St. Philippine Duchesne and others of such high esteem. The Chalice the Holy Father used during the Mass had also been the one used in 1698 during the first Mass in St. Louis, back when it was just wilderness. Fr. Tom let the children reverently touch the vessels and lovingly pointed out to them that it was true that some were considered extra special because they had been held by a saint or two. He also pointed out why they were truly special. Our Lord had come to be in each of those vessels during various Masses. That simple little gesture with a loving comment from a holy priest instilled in all of our hearts a true knowledge of Christ in the Eucharist.

A few days before the visit, Jason and I bid our children goodbye and headed to the TWA dome to begin preparing for the Mass. Fr. Tom had set us up well. We had very specific jobs to do and had to be ready for anything. I have NEVER worked so hard in all of my life. I was 7 months pregnant and had just gotten over a bout with shingles. My body was sore but it wasn't going to stop me.

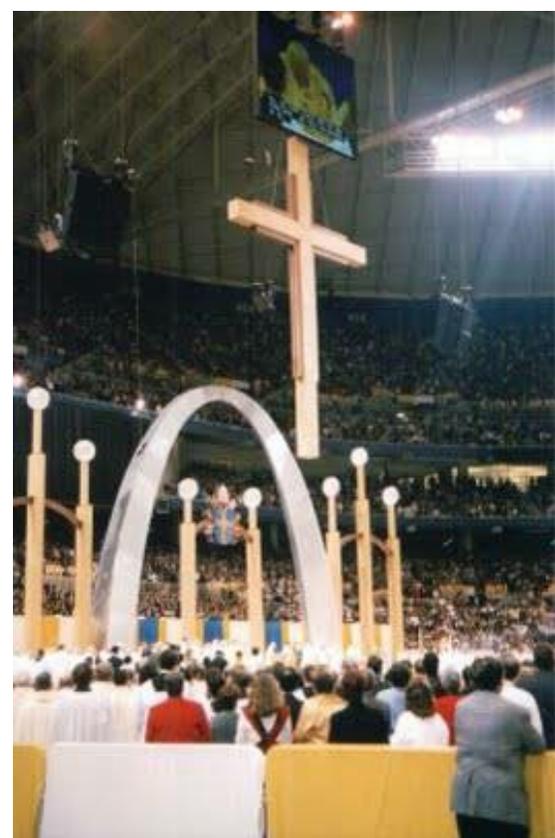


One of my duties was to lay out hundreds of vestments for the bishops from around the United States and then prepare another room with 20 or so Cardinal/priestly dignitary vestments. There were over 1000 concelebrants for this Mass. There were 107,000 people at the Mass. We transformed a common convention room into a beautiful Adoration Chapel. It was then opened and filled with people constantly. The only way humans could have worked so hard and not run into trouble would be with the help of God. We transformed a garage room that held lawn mowers into a room for the Holy Father to prepare for the Mass. We worked hard and slept little!!!

Fr. Tom, the priests, and young teens all left to attend the Youth Rally. Jason and I were left behind. We worked till everything hurt and then had to keep working. My husband, along with Fr. Tom and the other priest were the only three people in St. Louis other than the Arch-Bishop, his people, the Pope and his people that had total security clearance. He had been checked by the FBI and the secret service weeks before hand. He was then put in charge of the Pope's belongings. After the Youth Rally was over The Holy Father's vestments and chair (designed to withhold a bomb blast) were brought to the dome by secured vehicles. Jason and I got to unload it. We also got to touch it, sit in it and move it into place. It was the one item that we could actually place on the Alter before the Mass started without the union workers. Every other chair, rug, or backdrop could not be touched by us because of contract issues with the union.



The morning of the Mass came. We were exhausted but exhilarated. We went to work right away. Jason and Fr. Tom put the vessels on the Alter. Fr. Bede stayed to put the finishing touches on the room for the Holy Father. He was also there to assist in any way. We heard many scary things over our radios until he arrived. The radios went dead right before the Holy Father arrived. This was a security thing.



Even with all the distractions I knew the second the Holy Father entered the building. We all did. You really could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was “A Calm and A Peace” that made everything still. My heart jumped for joy. It really is the strangest thing to describe but it was so palpable. 30 seconds later the radios began ringing again, “One of the teenagers was yelling over and over again, “He is here! He is here!” I had just sent this young guy upstairs with instructions to come back as soon as the Consecration began. He knew that I was still trapped in a room without a TV screen. I was lining up the Cardinals for the procession into mass.

Mass started and I went to a seat that Fr. Tom had saved for me. My daughter Dani was to make her first communion that year. Fr. Tom got her and my mom seats. As I listened to the homily I fell

in love with my faith once again. Then I was off again. My job was to oversee the collection of the 300 + ciboria and chalices from the Mass. I had to make sure every single one was accounted for. There was a high fear that some might be stolen as souvenirs. Our Lord was not to be mistreated. Everyone had to receive on the tongue and we had people placed everywhere to make sure no abuse came about. I would assist in the transportation of our Lord to the room next to the chapel. I was met by the local seminarians who were then responsible to move our Lord into as few ciboria as necessary and clean the rest. This meant a lot of water and a lot of bending. I was the only woman and only non-seminarian (Except the priest who was in charge of the seminarians). I was there to serve them.

I had had a gun drawn on me earlier by the secret service. He was afraid that the baby was a bomb. Everything was OK, it was just annoying. As I collected the clean ciborium I began to feel a little jaded. I had worked so hard and I had not gotten to see the JP II but for a few minutes and from a great distance at that. In a very human moment I began to resent my husband. I was Fr. Tom's friend first and yet he got to be within touching distance of the Holy Father and I was stuck in this small room not even able to see what was going on. I was being so silly, but very human. I was in a room surrounded by future priests and Our LORD. God was so good to me as he gently pointed this out to me.

As I felt sorry for myself I got on my knees to collect the ciborium from the bottom of the cart. They all had a few hosts in them. I have never been that tired, that sore and that drained. Childbirth had been nothing compared to the past few days. I reached over to grab a dish and by God's grace was completely overcome with the true presence of Christ. The tears began to flow and flow and flow. This is a feeling that can not be described well. My entire body was filled with joy and love. I really couldn't think anything but GOD. The Priest in charge of the seminarians looked down and became very concerned. Here a pregnant woman was crying on the ground. I can only imagine the fear that went through his mind, "A baby, not now!"

I looked up at him as I handed him a stack of ciboria and I cried, "My God!" His eyes became tense as he questioned, "Are you in pain?" My replied comforted him, "No, This IS My GOD !!!" He smiled and said lovingly, "Oh a God moment, we get those all the time."

The Holy Father's visit was wonderful. I didn't get to see him up close, hear much of what he said or get a papal blessing for my baby. I didn't get top security clearance to go where I wanted. I worked harder than I ever had in my life. I had a gun drawn to my head. I had been patted down for weapons and accused of being a suicide bomber. I was in pain all over my body. That big personal moment that I had hoped for with John Paul II never happened. Instead because of JP II, I had that special big personal moment with our Lord.

I later told Fr. Tom. He laughed at me. He knew what he was doing all along. He said, "I put Jason in charge taking care of the Pope and you got the better job. You got to be in charge of taking care of our Lord!" Recollections of that moment still bring me to tears. Isn't that the mark of a true saint? The glory is not for the human individual but the glory is for our Lord.

# **I thank John Paul II most sincerely for that moment with God!**

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This contribution is available at <http://allthisandheaven.blogspot.com/2014/04/john-paul-ii-retelling-of-my-experiece.html>

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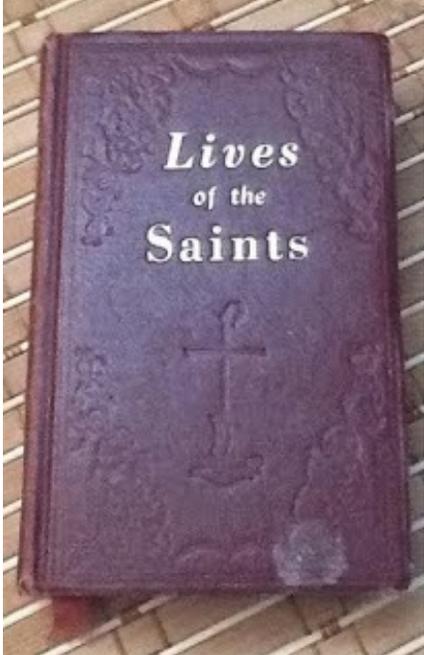
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# A Moment with St.Catherine of Siena [at Sacred Sharings For The Soul]



The Tomb Of Saint Catherine of Siena- *Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Roma*

Today the Church celebrates the feast of Saint Catherine of Siena. There has been much talk recently of sainthood in light of the canonizations of St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II. Sainthood and the veneration of these holy men and women is often misunderstood and interpreted as 'misplaced' glory or some form of 'idol worship'. It is important, and rather crucial to rid of this misunderstanding. To honor these holy men and women of God is to give praise to God. It is to praise the manifestation of His grace and His greatness through such humble and lowly cooperative servants of Christ. To venerate the Saints is to recognize our personal call to holiness as His faithful, and to also understand the sanctity of living hidden in Christ. In a [recent interview](#), Cardinal Collins spoke of the saints and their significance as models of virtue. **"all of us are called to holiness and we can always look to the models of the great saints"**. My interest in the lives of the saints began with a gift from my nonna when I was nine years old. I was much too young to fully grasp their importance, and my Italian too poor at that time to understand what it was my grandmother was trying to share.



It did not take long to explore this book and learn about these holy men and women of God. Naturally being named Catherine (*Celeste, being my middle-name*) I was drawn to the list of St. Catherines found in the book. St. Catherine of Siena was definitely one of my 'top favourites'. At my young age I was horrified reading on about the other Catherines, I realized that St. Catherine of Alexandria's manner of martyrdom was much too much for me! And though still very young and ignorant of what Saint Catherine of Siena had done, I spoke often to her in prayer.

Many years later and sadly increasingly ignorant of the faith, it was God's grace that awakened me to return to this former practice of prayer and also to include Saint Catherine of Siena among my intentions. Over time as this continued I found myself growing in love toward many saints, but particularly seeking to know more about this young woman of Siena. I threw myself into her writings, finding great comfort and inspiration. Her active life in the Church and the immense impact that she made was accomplished in her young adult life, which were also to be her final years as she went Home to our Lord at the age of 33. She was lively and confident, bold for the faith, and stood up for what was right and just without being self-righteous. I am sure to quietly pray to her before writing and keep a tiny statue of her beside my computer before blogging.



This year brought particular affirmation to me about the power of devotion to our saints, of God's grace, and of the friends we truly have in these holy men and women. In January I came across an advertisement from the [Pontifical Council for the Family](#) about an event at the Vatican on Saint Valentine's Day where Pope Francis was calling together engaged couples from around the world for an engagement blessing. At the time this seemed to be something far out of reach and quite frankly 'crazy'. To leave Toronto for a weekend and fly to Rome? Who does that? Well, maybe Cardinal Collins, but he definitely has important things to do! Anyhow, I kept this between God and I, (*did not tell my fiance*), sent an email to the

PCF

and prayed.

While keeping this to myself, I did feel rather at peace with entertaining the idea of going to Rome and began researching flights and times, accommodations, and also looking into my school board's voluntary unpaid leave of absence days. Thank God for those days, because the idea of heading to Rome for a Papal blessing and calling in 'sick' to work is probably a sin that I'd end up having to confess!

Eventually I did inform my lovely fiance (*now husband*) about what I had been up to. At first he was caught off guard, but not entirely because he was well aware of my stubbornness with ideas, and also of what happens with an ounce of determination and a whole lot of prayer. I translated his lack of a clear "NO" and a deep exhaled breath to mean "Let's do this"(*.....poor guy*). He left my house that night and as I retired to bed I quietly prayed ....

"Saint Catherine, you brought the Papacy back to Rome, now help us get to Rome and receive a Papal blessing"!

Carmen and I quietly planned our trip together, sorted everything out, and though to be only one couple among thousands, to us it was worth it. There were apparently no tickets for the event and it was to be held in St. Peter's Square, 'first come, first serve' sort of event. I assured Carm that if necessary we would be sleeping in the square (*poor guy...again*). To my amazing surprise departure day February 12th. 2014 I received this prior to our flight

**"Gentili Signori,**

**Vi scriviamo in merito all'udienza dei fidanzati che si terrà il prossimo venerdì in Piazza San Pietro. Volevamo comunicarvi che abbiamo riservato al vostro gruppo un numero di 2 BIGLIETTI per il sagrato (parti laterali a destra e a sinistra del palco dove si trova il Papa).**

**Vi chiediamo gentilmente se un referente potrà venire a ritirarli la mattina del 14 dalle ore**

**08.00 alle ore 09.00 davanti la Porta Sant'Uffizio(colonnato sinistro della basilica, ingresso Aula Paolo VI). Troverete una postazione del Pontificio Consiglio della Famiglia con degli incaricati che vi distribuiranno i biglietti.**

**In attesa di un vostro riscontro vi porgiamo cordiali saluti,**

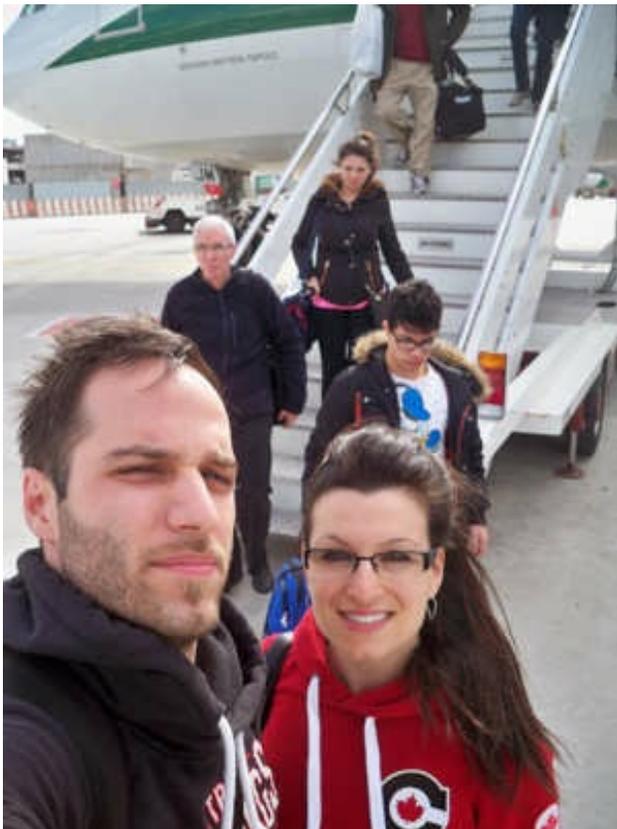
**Pontificio Consiglio per la Famiglia"**

.....Which, basically says that there are now two tickets reserved for us and that we are to come to get them on the morning of the event! I had no idea how this happened but I was even more excited and grateful to God. One part I should add is that February 12th, 2014 was less than a month to our wedding day (march 8th, 2014)! There was a lot going on. When I received this email I was sure to also pray in thanksgiving to Saint Catherine of Siena, just in case she had anything to do with this! We were off....

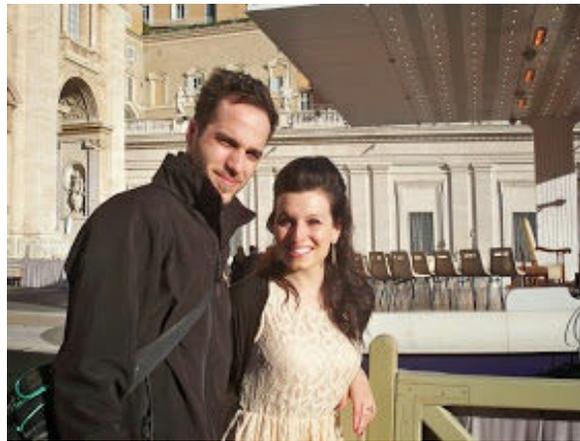




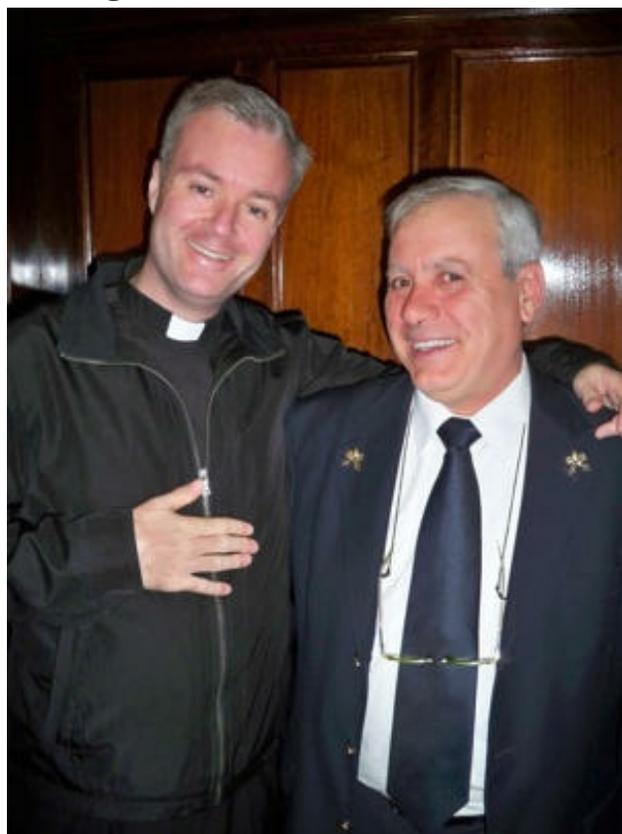
We arrived in Rome, ate really good pizza, checked into our accommodations, and found the nearest Church to pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God!



I woke the next morning and said 'Carm, it's Pope day let's move!'"



We also met and got to know yet another wonderful priest from the [Archdiocese of Toronto](#) while visiting and the fun continued.



Listening to Pope Francis and being so close to Him and his presence truly affirmed God's presence and the humble and hidden life of Christ that he lives. His [advice](#) to us as engaged people remains etched in my soul and are those that I often reflect upon, especially in times when I need to be reminded about what the vocation of marriage is. Marriage is a Sacrament meant for holiness, not for happiness. But it is in striving toward holiness that we undoubtedly find joy beyond measure; a pursuit well worth more than any worldly merit.. Now, back to Saint Catherine of Siena!!

On February 15th, 2014, following our wonderful day at "The Joy of Yes Forever" event, Carmen was set on heading to a store called Gammarelli's in order to buy a requested gift for a dear friend back in Toronto. In fact, what this man wanted specifically was a mini Cardinal biretta for his desk! Apparently these mini birettas are sold around the installation time of new Cardinals in the Church. I hope he enjoys this gift because we had to walk half way across Rome from where we were staying to get it....God had grace in mind!

In walking through Rome Carmen and I often took the chance to pause and visit many Churches. On this day; following the mini biretta moment, something amazing happened! We were both pretty exhausted. Carmen saw some Roman ruins and was eager to check them out, but like the good and faithful man that he is he agreed with my plan instead (*poor guy*).

I spotted a Church while walking and really wanted to go into it and pray. And so we entered [Santa Maria sopra Minerva](#). The beauty of what followed stems from my complete ignorance and God's amazing grace. We walked around the Church casually apart from one another and took personal time for prayer. The side chapels are captivating, like most Churches in Rome and it is easy to spend time taking it all in. After making my way to the main altar I could see that there was a tomb beneath it and some people gathered there in prayer. This Church that we casually walked into to pray is the home of Saint Catherine of Siena's Tomb. I knelt and wept. I wept, and I wept. Carmen stood beside me, prayerful and then comforted me while handing me Kleenex after Kleenex. He was well aware of what this moment meant to me.



In my reading of Saint Catherine of Siena, I never did read about where her tomb was or what happened at the end of her life. Given that she was from Siena I had made the assumption that her tomb would be there. This moment has remained one of many profound moments that Carmen and I experienced while in Rome. Saint Catherine of Siena not only interceded by aiding us to get to Rome, but was also quite adamant that I knew she was listening.

Today on her feast I am brought to reflect upon a 'crazy' last minute, four day trip to Rome, receiving a Papal blessing, and being before the tomb of a beloved Saint who brought the Pope back to Rome, and me to the Pope!

To God be the glory!!! Saint Catherine of Siena.....pray for us.

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This contribution is available at <http://sacredsharingsforthesoul.blogspot.ca/2014/04/before-her-tomb-weepinga-moment-with.html>  
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# John Paul: read him, not about him [at Leaven For The Loaf]

Karol Wojtyla, better known as John Paul II, doesn't need sainthood to be unforgettable. I have only one reservation about his canonization: I fear it will somehow fence him off from the larger world, leaving people who aren't Catholic to think that he's just a curious artifact of a particular religion. He was Catholic, to be sure, with abiding respect for the fullness of truth. He spoke to all of us, though.

I was in college in 1978 when Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II. Upon hearing the news, I went to the nearest bookstore and grabbed a newspaper. I was still trying to figure out if the church I grew up in had a place for me as an adult, but even in my self-absorption I knew this new pope was big news. This post includes a photo of that newspaper, yellowed and folded but still dramatic. The size of the headline speaks for itself. The news was about how young this man was (58), how affable he was, how much he liked to ski. (Political cartoonists had fun with that one.) I had no idea what was ahead.

Pro-life, joyfully. No compromise. He introduced me to concepts like the culture of life and the theology of the body. He had brains as well as heart, and he showed me that our Creator expects us to use them both. He brought the pro-life message everywhere he went (and he went everywhere, it seemed).

I'll leave the biographical sketches to others. I'm not going to read *about* him on this canonization weekend. I'd rather recollect what he wrote himself, especially what to me is his masterwork, *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*. Here are just a few threads from that rich tapestry, from a section of particular interest to those of us concerned with how our laws treat the right to life.

## **To the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women religious, lay Faithful and all People of Good Will, on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life**

*Where life is involved, the service of charity must be profoundly consistent. It cannot tolerate bias and discrimination, for human life is sacred and inviolable at every stage and in every situation; it is an indivisible good. We need then to "show care" for all life and for the life of everyone. Indeed, at an even deeper level, we need to go to the very roots of life and love.*

*...If charity is to be realistic and effective, it demands that the Gospel of life be implemented also by means of certain forms of social activity and commitment in the political field, as a way of defending and promoting the value of life in our ever more complex and pluralistic societies.*

*Individuals, families, groups and associations, albeit for different reasons and in different ways, all have a responsibility for shaping society and developing cultural, economic, political and legislative projects which, with respect for all and in keeping with democratic principles, will contribute to the building of a society in which the dignity of each person is recognized and protected and the lives of all are defended and enhanced.*

*This task is the particular responsibility of civil leaders. Called to serve the people and the common good, they have a duty to make courageous choices in support of life, especially through legislative measures. In a democratic system, where laws and decisions are made on the basis of the consensus of many, the sense of personal responsibility in the consciences of individuals invested with authority may be weakened. But no one can ever renounce this responsibility, especially when he or she has a legislative or decision-making mandate, which calls that person to answer to God, to his or her own conscience and to the whole of society for choices which may be contrary to the common good. Although laws are not the only means of protecting human life, nevertheless they do play a very important and sometimes decisive role in influencing patterns of thought and behaviour. I repeat once more that a law which violates an innocent person's natural right to life is unjust and, as such, is not valid as a law. For this reason I urgently appeal once more to all political leaders not to pass laws which, by disregarding the dignity of the person, undermine the very fabric of society.*

*...”Walk as children of light ... and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph 5:8, 10-11). In our present social context, marked by a dramatic struggle between the “culture of life” and the “culture of death”, there is need to develop a deep critical sense, capable of discerning true values and authentic needs.*

*What is urgently called for is a general mobilization of consciences and a united ethical effort to activate a great campaign in support of life. All together, we must build a new culture of life: new, because it will be able to confront and solve today's unprecedented problems affecting human life; new, because it will be adopted with deeper and more dynamic conviction by all Christians; new, because it will be capable of bringing about a serious and courageous cultural dialogue among all parties.*

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This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2014/04/26/john-paul-ethic-of-life/>  
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## **Pope Francis on the current milieu - a few thoughts in passing [at Catholic Deacon]**

Towards the end of my post castigating Brandeis University (see

["Conscience: A matter on which I must take a stand"](#)

) for siding with the oppressors instead of the oppressed by unilaterally deciding to withdraw the honorary doctorate they were going to confer on Ayaan Hirsi Ali, I wrote:

Let's not forget that Christians are not entirely guiltless in related matters. May we continue to repent and seek to live in the triumphant love of Jesus Christ, which we are preparing to celebrate at Easter. I think it's important for victims to be able to share their stories without fear of more violence

Therefore, I was very happy to read the very next morning what Pope Francis said about this matter during his meeting with the leadership of the France-based International Catholic Child Bureau:

I feel called to take responsibility for all the evil some priests – large in number, but not in proportion to the total – have committed and to ask forgiveness for the damage they've done with the sexual abuse of children.

The Church is aware of this damage

While I do not presume to lecture the Holy Father on what he should say, I do think, at least from where I sit, that continually expressing surprise that this would, or even could, happen in the Church, as the Pope did when he said that it was hard for him to believe that "men of the Church" would do such thing, is harmful. It can and has happened. We need to know that certain "men of the Church" are more than capable of such things. Who knows what evil lurks in the human heart? On the other hand, Deacon Greg, citing John Allen, rightly draws our attention to what Pope Francis did right in his remarks:

["Why what Francis said about sex abuse yesterday matters."](#)

A little more than a week ago,

[Deacon Greg](#)

also noted that reports of such outrageous behavior on the part of "men of the Church" continues to be reported here in the U.S. Some of these accusations proved to be substantial. According to the most recent USCCB audit, conducted for the period between 1 July 2012 - 30 June 2013, "936

Allegations Of Sexual Abuse Were Made Last Year." Of those, 27 "allegations have been substantiated." More than 700 clerics were accused of abuse, including more than 500 priests and 11 deacons.

At least Pope Francis seems to partially refute his dismay concerning certain evils committed by "men of the Church" with his refreshing emphasis on the fact that, precisely as Christians, as "men of the Church," our enemy has us in his cross-hairs. In his

[homily](#)

for daily Mass just yesterday, the Holy Father noted:

We too are tempted, we too are the target of attacks by the devil because the spirit of Evil does not want our holiness, he does not want our Christian witness, he does not want us to be disciples of Christ. And what does the Spirit of Evil do, through his temptations, to distance us from the path of Jesus? The temptation of the devil has three characteristics and we need to learn about them in order not to fall into the trap. What does Satan do to distance us from the path of Jesus? Firstly, his temptation begins gradually but grows and is always growing. Secondly, it grows and infects another person, it spreads to another and seeks to be part of the community. And in the end, in order to calm the soul, it justifies itself. It grows, it spreads and it justifies itself

It is impossible for our Enemy to succeed without our complicity.



As we

[asked](#)

some four years ago, "Alongside all the limitations and within the Church's wounded humanity, is there or is there not something greater than sin, something

*radically*

greater than sin? Is there something that can shatter the inexorable weight of our evil?" We need to end the denial so as to end our collective self-deception by continually returning to the

*only*

One who is greater.

According to the U.K.'s

[Catholic Herald](#)

newspaper, there were a few other things in Pope Francis' comments that, understandably, were lost as the result of his apology and strong condemnation of sexual abuse within the Church. I think these things are worth noting. I will even be so bold as to assert that these issues are tangentially related.

The first was the Pope's insistence of the need to defend a child's right "to grow in a family with a mother and father able to create a healthy environment for their growth and affective maturity," which allows the child to mature "in relationship to the masculinity and femininity of a father and a mother."

His Holiness also strongly defended the "right" of parents to determine the proper "moral and religious education" for their children. He insisted that this parental determination should not be undermined by, or given a lesser priority, than the curriculum offered in schools. School curricula, he pointed out, to use the words from the Catholic Herald article, is often constituted by "thinly veiled courses of indoctrination into whatever ideology is strongest at the moment." In this vein, he went on to say that it is sometimes difficult to discern whether parents are sending their children to school for authentic education, or if they send their children "to a re-education camp" like those run by totalitarian regimes.

In his balanced manner, which balance is frequently lost in secular media reporting, he went on to state that children can't be raised in "glass jars," but need to be taught and equipped, as part of an authentic education, to grapple with contemporary issues in a media-saturated culture while respecting the freedom and dignity of others.

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This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2014/04/pope-francis-on-current-milieu-few.html>

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## Aliens and Other Silliness [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

*The beginning of pride is Man's stubbornness in withdrawing his heart from his Maker. For pride is a reservoir of sin, a source which runs over with vice. (Sirach 10:12-13)*

Some of you may remember the story I've told of my traffic light experience in 1969. I was stopped at a red light on the corner of Mott Avenue and Beach Channel Drive in Far Rockaway, NY when this thought dropped into my mind: *What if there is a God?*

I considered the prospect for a few moments until I realized if God existed, I would have to change my lifestyle. But I was unwilling to give up my 'sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll.' So as the light turned green, I made a choice.

In the last year I've had several conversations with professed atheists, all of whom are intelligent men and women. During one conversation, one man told me he believes aliens planted DNA on earth millions of years ago, which then evolved to life as we now know it. (He might not have realized he was parroting the theory of renowned atheist, Richard Dawkins. You can read about Dawkins' comment here: <http://www.theoligarch.com/richard-dawkins-aliens.htm>).

Of course there is not so much as a nanometer of evidence to support such a theory, but it is far more expedient to have faith in an idea that requires nothing from us regarding our lifestyle than to have faith in an omnipotent and eternal God who places some rather significant requirements on our lifestyle.

When I stopped at that traffic light and thought about those requirements, I made a choice – not an intellectual choice, but a *moral* choice. I rejected the idea that God exists.

In the 40-plus years since I finally called Jesus my Lord, I've spoken with dozens of self-professed atheists and agnostics like those I spoke with in the last 12 months. And in each case –

*each* case – their arguments only thinly veiled the real reason for their rejection of God: they were moral reasons, not intellectual.

The Lord Jesus is not fooled by such self-deceptive and disingenuous arguments as aliens planting DNA on earth, and similar silliness. He pretty much said so in John 3: *“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed”* (verses 19-20).

“Men loved darkness rather than light.” Pretty succinct, don’t you think?

Or as Sirach said it: *The beginning of pride is Man’s stubbornness, in withdrawing his heart from his Maker. For pride is a reservoir of sin, a source which runs over with vice.*

There is a better way to live. Jesus showed it to us. And He yet says to every atheist, agnostic, and even to the churched: *“Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me . . .* (Matthew 11:28-29).

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## Sunshine, Sisters, & Canonizations [at Cherishing Everyday Beauty]

In a nutshell, *that's* what my weekend consisted of. It was pretty awesome. ;-)

I successfully completed my final presentation, and -- with it -- all course work, on Thursday 4/24. Earlier in the week, I'd signed up to participate in [100 Happy Days](#), my own challenge beginning on Friday, 4/25 (if you'd like to follow along, I'm posting the happy pictures on my [Instagram!](#)) With my presentation done and awaiting only my final grade to make it completely official (I should find that out on Thursday, 5/1), I decided there was only one thing to do: live life FULLY!

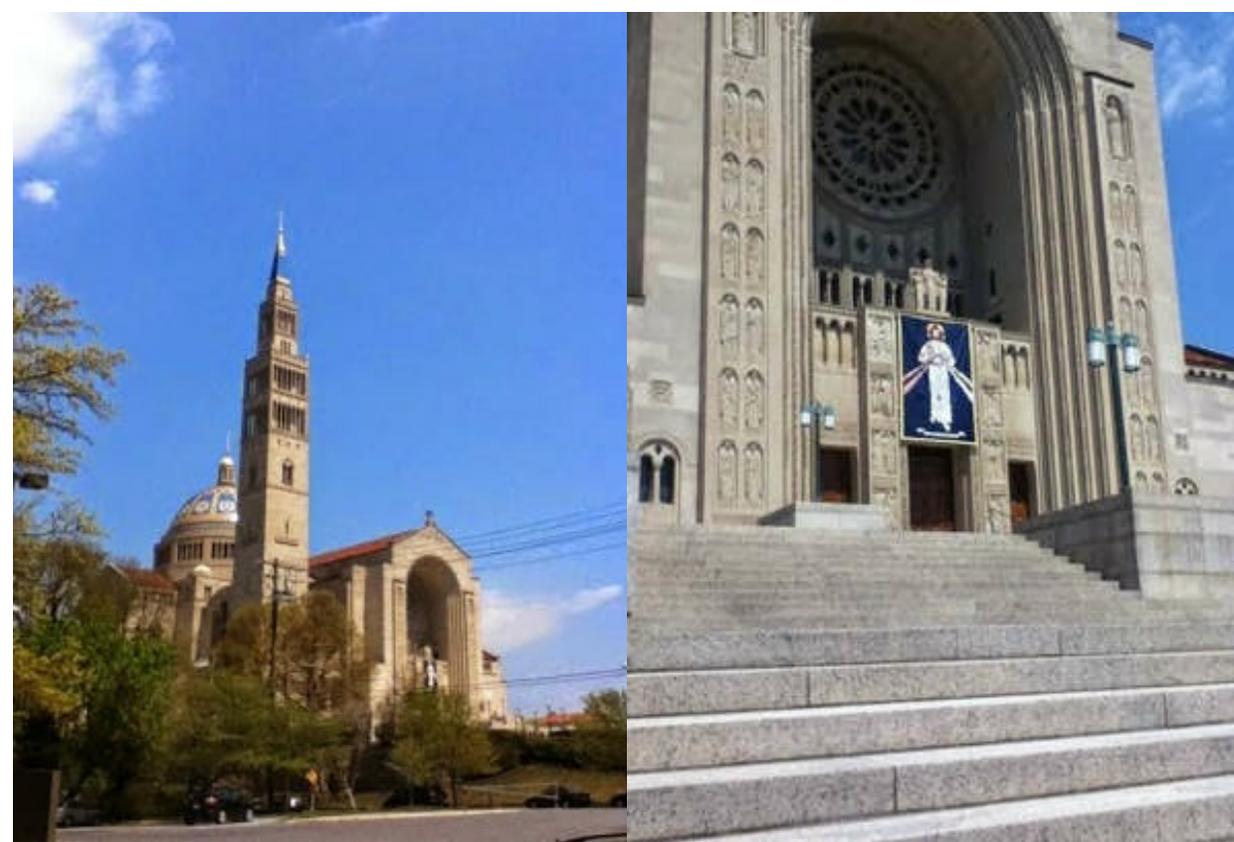
A friend from CCM (Catholic Campus Ministry) had invited me to join a small group of girls for a Nun Run on Saturday. My older sisters had gone of several while in high school and I'd been wanting to participate in one since then, so I jumped at the chance of spending my first homework-free weekend in the company of Jesus' brides. \*smiles\* We visited the Poor Clares, Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, and Sisters of Life.



our little group with the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist.



Our Lady in the garden behind the Basilica.



the Basilica of the vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday.

My friends & I discovered that, with the help of a GPS, we are quite capable of driving to the Basilica independently. Hence, we might hoping for another visit or two over the Summer - we live so close!

Collectively, our time spent with the sisters consisted largely of them telling us their vocation stories. They also, of course, answered some of our questions (the primary one regarded how each order goes about choosing a sister's religious name). The Dominicans & and the Sisters of Life both greeted us with ample amounts of candy in their hands: it being a solemnity within the Easter octave, there is still no shortage of celebration to be had by all! The most hilarious was when a Dominican Sister offered us "food" (jelly beans) for the road and I -- completely forgetting the Solemnity -- said, "... and lead us not into temptation?" Sister got a good laugh from that, but promptly reminded me of the solemnity. \*smiles\*

We prayed midmorning prayer with the Poor Clares (well, they were on the cloistered side of the chapel and we were on the visitor's side) and joined the Sisters of Life for a Holy Hour, the last day of the Divine Mercy Chaplet novena, and Vespers. It was *beautiful*.



1). Poor Clares; 2). Sisters of Life

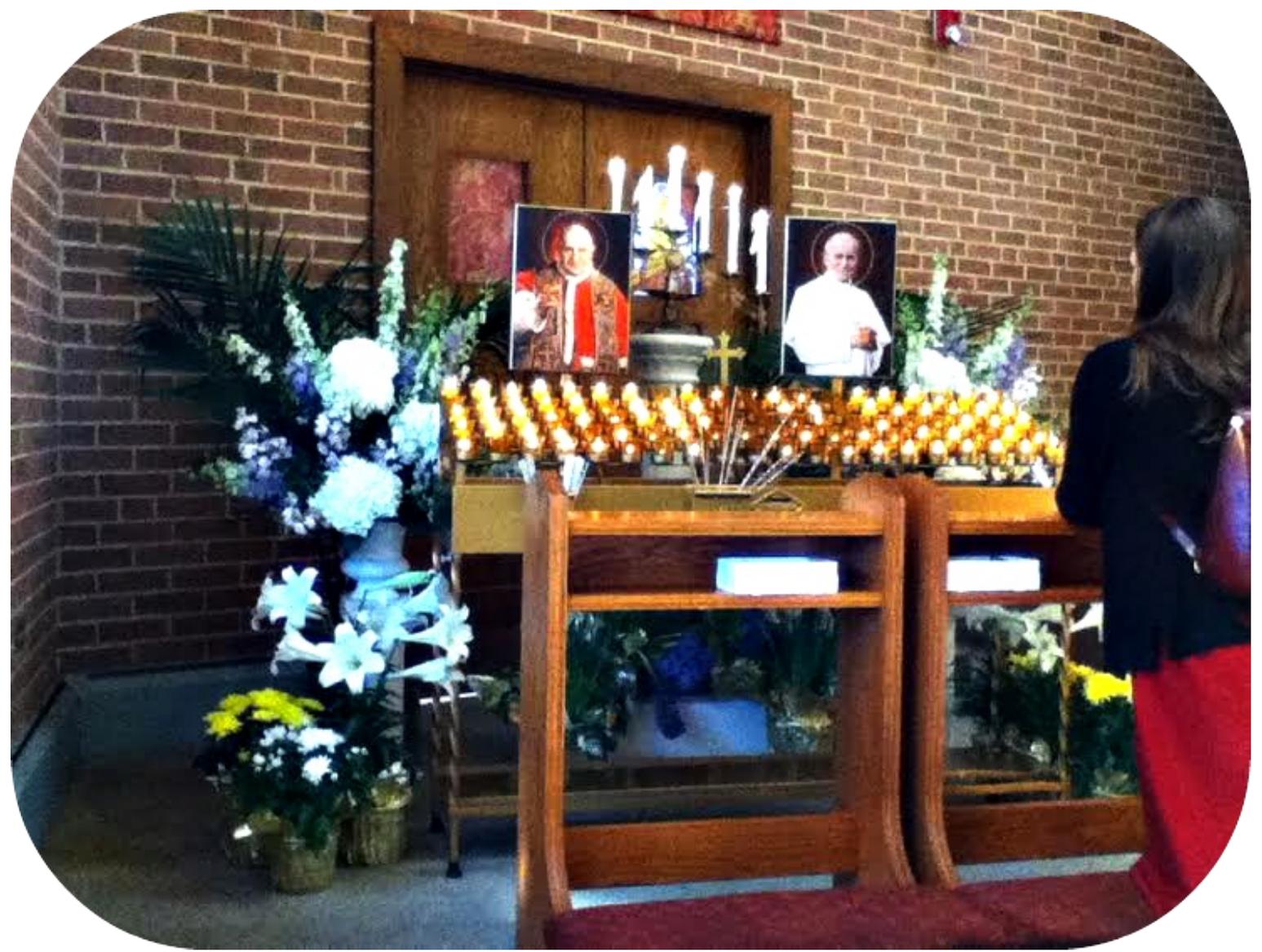
By the time we arrived home around 7pm, we'd been gone for about 9 hours and were exhausted. Still laughing & enjoying ourselves, but plenty tired. Perhaps it was being in the company of girlfriends; perhaps it was having spent the day in the company of religious, or maybe it was the joy of the coming canonizations, but it was such a joyful weariness. Thanks be to God!

I awoke in the middle of the night to watch the canonizations on my computer. However, once Pope Francis prayed the prayer of canonization, I fell asleep again. The livestream still played, however, and so I remember waking up again and sitting up temporarily in bed and saying, "Oh! Hi, Jesus!" -- for Pope Francis & a Deacon were elevating the Body and Precious Blood of Our Lord for the Great Amen.

Sunday was low-key. The day following a more active day + waking up in the middle of the night for part of a canonization Mass will do that for me. Happily, the sun was shining and the flowers were brilliant, so I lay on the driveway and listened to Little Women on Audible. \*happy sigh\* Such a delightful afternoon!



And when I arrived at our Church for evening Mass, I was greeted by a new little shrine dedicated to the Church's two newest Saints.



I thought it was on display only for the weekend, but I've since been informed that it's here to stay!

**Pope St. John Paul the Great**

**&**

**Pope St. John XXIII,**

*pray for us!*

And now we've reached Monday. I'm happy to see it. \*grins\* There are so many books I've been

waiting for so long to read and I am so happy the moment I can do so is finally here! I *should* know on Thursday about my final grade, but I think I've managed to pass. \*smiles\*

Also -- THIS Thursday is when I begin blogging at [Cherishing Everyday Beauty](#) & I am so, so, so excited!! I do hope to see you there!

God bless you, Happy Monday, and have a **FABULOUS** week!



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This contribution is available at <http://cherishingeverydaybeauty.blogspot.com/2014/04/sunshine-sisters-canonizations.html>  
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## St. JP2 on Inequality is the Root of Social Evil [at *cosmostheinlost*: catholic backwardness]

Pope Francis caused a storm of controversy with the tweet, “Inequality is the root of social evil.”

This sent some scrambling to set up a genealogy. From the looks of it Thomas Piketty author of [Capital in the 21st Century](#) seems to be the prime suspect. I know next to nothing about this book, so all I can offer you is the following publisher blurb:

“What are the grand dynamics that drive the accumulation and distribution of capital? Questions about the long-term evolution of inequality, the concentration of wealth, and the prospects for economic growth lie at the heart of political economy. But satisfactory answers have been hard to find for lack of adequate data and clear guiding theories. In [Capital in the Twenty-First Century](#), Thomas Piketty analyzes a unique collection of data from twenty countries, ranging as far back as the eighteenth century, to uncover key economic and social patterns. His findings will transform debate and set the agenda for the next generation of thought about wealth and inequality.

Piketty shows that modern economic growth and the diffusion of knowledge have allowed us to avoid inequalities on the apocalyptic scale predicted by Karl Marx. But we have not modified the deep structures of capital and inequality as much as we thought in the optimistic decades following World War II. The main driver of inequality—the tendency of returns on capital to exceed the rate of economic growth—today threatens to generate extreme inequalities that stir discontent and undermine democratic values. But economic trends are not acts of God. Political action has curbed dangerous inequalities in the past, Piketty says, and may do so again.

A work of extraordinary ambition, originality, and rigor, [Capital in the Twenty-First Century](#) reorients our understanding of economic history and confronts us with sobering lessons for today.”

I’ll leave the conspiracy theorists to themselves, because the real culprit seems to be something as simple and traditional as Catholic Social Teaching. CST has been battling inequality since [Rerum Novarum](#).

Today’s tweet should only be a surprise to those who have been spoon-fed ([crack spoon](#)) their CST from Novak, Weigel, Zmirak et al. But for those who’ve read a little CST the Neo-Con capitalist absolutism is merely another version of the throne and altar arrangement.

They agree to throw holy water on real-existing capitalism because it’s on the up and up and they don’t want to be left behind. The problem with these altar and throne arrangements is that they always inevitably come too late and embrace something that’s on the way out (like absolute monarchy or the nation-state in ages past). Throne and altar arrangements always make the Church look like a fool in the long run.

CST is so much ahead of the curve that I sometimes like to troll friends on facebook by quoting passages from [Rerum Novarum](#) and attributing them to [Marx](#). This inevitably leads to at least one respectable academic soiling himself or herself about what jerks [Marx and real-existing communism](#) were.

Here's a favorite passage of mine from Leo XIII (always get them, try this on your friends):

“47. Many excellent results will follow from this; and, first of all, property will certainly become more equitably divided. For, the result of civil change and revolution has been to divide cities into two classes separated by a wide chasm. On the one side there is the party which holds power because it holds wealth; which has in its grasp the whole of labor and trade; which manipulates for its own benefit and its own purposes all the sources of supply, and which is not without influence even in the administration of the commonwealth. On the other side there is the needy and [powerless multitude](#), sick and sore in spirit and ever ready for disturbance. If working people can be encouraged to look forward to obtaining a share in the land, the consequence will be that the gulf between vast wealth and sheer poverty will be bridged over, and the respective classes will be brought nearer to one another.”

[John Paul II](#) continued the tradition of CST with the encyclical [Centesimus Annus](#), written to celebrate the 100th anniversary of [Rerum Novarum](#). Look at what he says below falls in line with Leo and Francis.

Let's face it, CST is the real culprit in this tweet affair, and [David L. Schindler](#) is right in arguing that we've appropriated it mostly by ignoring it. I would like to advance the hypothesis that, out of pure ignorance, more Catholics are unfaithful to CST than they are unfaithful to the Church's teaching on contraception.

Here is a fuller context for the passage quoted above in the banner for this post. It's from [Centesimus Annus](#):

“35. Here we find a wide range of *opportunities for commitment and effort* in the name of justice on the part of trade unions and other workers' organizations. These defend workers' rights and protect their interests as persons, while fulfilling a vital cultural role, so as to enable workers to participate more fully and honourably in the life of their nation and to assist them along the path of development.

In this sense, it is right to speak of a struggle against an economic system, if the latter is understood as a method of upholding the absolute predominance of capital, the possession of the means of production and of the land, in contrast to the free and personal nature of human work.<sup>73</sup> In the struggle against such a system, what is being proposed as an alternative is not the socialist system, which in fact turns out to be State capitalism, but rather *a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation*. Such a society is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the State, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied.

The Church acknowledges the legitimate *role of profit* as an indication that a business is functioning well. When a firm makes a profit, this means that productive factors have been properly employed and corresponding human needs have been duly satisfied. But profitability is not the only indicator of a firm's condition. It is possible for the financial accounts to be in order, and yet for the people — who make up the firm's most valuable asset — to be humiliated and their dignity offended. Besides being morally inadmissible, this will eventually have negative repercussions on the firm's economic efficiency. In fact, the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a *community of persons* who in various ways are endeavouring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society. Profit is a regulator of the life of a business, but it is not the only one; *other human and moral factors* must also be considered which, in the long term, are at least equally important for the life of a business.

We have seen that it is unacceptable to say that the defeat of so-called 'Real Socialism' leaves capitalism as the only model of economic organization. It is necessary to break down the barriers and monopolies which leave so many countries on the margins of development, and to provide all individuals and nations with the basic conditions which will enable them to share in development. This goal calls for programmed and responsible efforts on the part of the entire international community. Stronger nations must offer weaker ones opportunities for taking their place in international life, and the latter must learn how to use these opportunities by making the necessary efforts and sacrifices and by ensuring political and economic stability, the certainty of better prospects for the future, the improvement of workers' skills, and the training of competent business leaders who are conscious of their responsibilities.<sup>74</sup>

Does this resemble anything we've inherited in the [hell of inequality](#) we've created here in the States and abroad? [Heck, no.](#)

Break down the barriers and monopolies indeed!

[Weigel, Novak and Zmirak](#), quit with the holy water already.

Postscript: If you're one of those people who annoyingly insists on a biblical warrant for this sort of thing, there's yesterday's [first reading](#). The [story of Ananias and Sapphira](#), also from Acts, adds some context and spice to the picture. Remember what happened to them?

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This contribution is available at <http://cosmostheinlost.com/2014/04/28/inequality/>  
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# Easter Reflection - A Borrowed Heart [at Making It In Vermont]

As I said in my previous post, it has been a challenging Lent on many fronts (in the grand scheme of things all little stuff, but challenging none the less). Last night I attended Easter Vigil for the first time with my 10 yr. old son ~K. He really wanted to go, it was a 2 hour Mass with a candle lit procession. As beautiful as it was, I found my mind wandering. I thought about what I could fit my 16 week pregnant belly *that someone really needs to tell is not 7 months pregnant* into for Easter morning Mass and other random thoughts. Through most of Mass I struggled to keep my focus.

This morning's Mass started out no different till nearly the end when a little girl around 2 yrs old, a few rows up and across the aisle who was also having a hard time focusing discovered our family and came right over and started playing peek a boo with 2 1/2 yr old ~O. You just couldn't not smile and it brought the lightness of joy that my heart was missing.

After communion as I knelt to say a little prayer I thought of my mom who has been gone for 15 years now. I looked at each of my 6 boys as they sat in the pew and meditated on how she would have loved them had she lived to know them. Feeling as if I had her heart for just a few moments I loved each one in turn as she would. I felt her unconditional and near perfect love and then saw the look on their faces when they were so totally validated and appreciated. It was a love where only their best intentions were assumed.

It was a minute or so of heaven where I forgot myself and loved fully.

I know my boys feel loved by me, but it is a far from perfect love, marred by the ups and downs of each day. If Jesus could help me do as he did and forget my own selfish motives and needs, I feel certain that a more pure love could spill from my heart.

Today I had a moment to try that heart on, and as costly as it is, I think it may just be worth the price.

Happy Easter!



Love,

~Lisa

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This contribution is available at <http://www.makingitinvermont.com/2014/04/easter-reflection-a-borrowed-heart/>  
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# Why there should be no such thing as a Traditional Catholic [at crucesignatiblog]



Or for that matter, liberal Catholic, charismatic Catholic, or any of the other labels that Catholics these days give to themselves.

The word “catholic” means universal, but why does the Church today seem so divided? In almost any given parish you’ll have Catholics who are somewhat charismatic and some who lean towards the traditional side. You’ll have some who practice NFP and others who use artificial birth control. You’ll have some who want to be holy and others who just want to be good. This seems wrong. If we really are the universal Church, then shouldn’t we be, I don’t know, maybe more “universal”? When Catholics need to put an adjective in front of their religion just to describe what they believe, you know something isn’t quite right.

In this post I don’t want to pose the question, “Why is it like this?”, but I want to simply point out that as the universal Church, we should be more united in practice and belief. Take these two pictures as an example.





These are both considered Catholic Masses.

In my humble opinion, we need to stop focusing on the “feeling” of unity and become more united in actual belief and practice of our holy Faith. A new evangelization and conversion needs to happen within the Church before we can focus on the evangelization of the world. God bless you all.

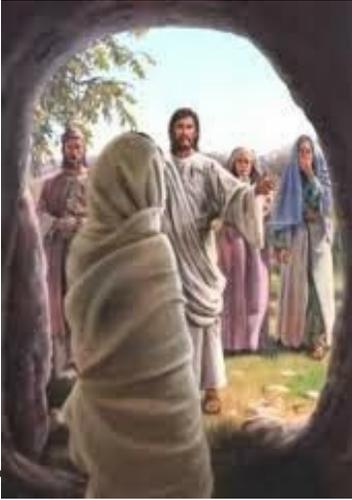
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This contribution is available at <http://crucesignatiblog.wordpress.com/2014/04/29/why-there-should-be-no-such-thing-as-a-traditional-catholic/>  
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# Jesus Wept [at Journey to Wisdom]

A Reflection on John 11:17-44



By: Larry T **Here's a riddle:** Mary of Bethany fell at Jesus' feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Then she began to sob over the death of her beloved brother Lazarus. *The Jews*, who had come to comfort Mary and Martha, wept with them at the tomb. Jesus became deeply troubled and wept with Mary, Martha, and *the Jews*. In the end Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. If Jesus knew all along that he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, why did he join the mourners in weeping over the death of Lazarus?

- <sup>17</sup> *When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.*
- <sup>18</sup> *Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away.*
- <sup>19</sup> *And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother.*
- <sup>20</sup> *When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home.*
- <sup>21</sup> *Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*
- <sup>22</sup> *(But) even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you."*
- <sup>23</sup> *Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise."*
- <sup>24</sup> *Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day."*
- <sup>25</sup> *Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,*
- <sup>26</sup> *and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*
- <sup>27</sup> *She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."*
- <sup>28</sup> *When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you."*
- <sup>29</sup> *As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him.*
- <sup>30</sup> *For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him.*
- <sup>31</sup> *So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.*
- <sup>32</sup> *When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord,*

*if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”*

*<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled,*

*<sup>34</sup> and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Sir, come and see.”*

*<sup>35</sup> And Jesus wept.*

*<sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, “See how he loved him.”*

*<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?”*

*<sup>38</sup> So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.*

*<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him, “Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days.”*

*<sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?”*

*<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you for hearing me.*

*<sup>42</sup> I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me.”*

*<sup>43</sup> And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”*

*<sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, “Untie him and let him go.” – John 11:41-44, N.A.B.*

Principle characters in this story are Mary, Martha, Lazarus, *the Jews*, and Jesus. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus are well known to us as siblings, but what about *the Jews*? In John’s gospel *the Jews* are not necessarily Jewish people, but anyone who rejected Jesus and his teachings. In this story *the Jews* were present to comfort Mary and Martha.

Jesus, the *Good Shepherd*, offers eternal life to all who believe in him. This gospel story is all about the rejection, misunderstanding, or acceptance of Jesus and his offer of eternal life. *The Jews* had already rejected Jesus and his teaching. But what about Martha and Mary, how did they receive Jesus’ offer? Let’s begin with Martha.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she rushed out to greet him and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.” Martha clearly believed that Jesus was a miracle worker; she was convinced that whatever Jesus asked of God, even then, would happen. Sadly, her belief in Jesus’ miracle working ability fell short of true faith because she believed that Jesus was simply a teacher from God who did wonderful signs because God was with him. When Jesus tried to correct her misunderstanding of him by saying, “Your brother will rise,” she impatiently interrupted to tell him that she knew what resurrection meant: “resurrection at the last day.” When Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,” and bluntly asked, “Do you believe this?” She said, “Yes Lord. I have come to believe that you are the

Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.” Martha was expressing the first-century hope and belief that the messiah (the new King of the Jews) would come into the world, overthrow the Roman Empire, and restore the Davidic Kingdom.

The disciples (Jn 1:41), Nathaniel (Jn 1:49), and the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:25, 29), had also expressed the same belief in Jesus as the messiah, and as exalted as their declarations were, they had all arrived at a partial conditioned belief in Jesus. The “Son of God” expression was based on 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2:7. Martha’s limited faith was exposed again when she returned to her sister and said, “The *teacher* is here and is asking for you.”

Particularly important for the *calling of Mary* in this story is Jesus’ allegory of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-18). When the *Good Shepherd* called Mary by name she got up quickly and went to him, and when she saw him she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.” Mary’s unconditional trust in the power of the presence of Jesus was plain for all to see. At this juncture it was Mary, not Martha, who accepted Jesus as the resurrection and the life.

To this point in the story *the Sheep* was completely focused on Jesus. Then without warning Mary’s attention suddenly shifted from *the Good Shepherd* to *the Jews* who were weeping over the death of Lazarus. The center of attention should never have been the death of Lazarus, but when Mary joined *the weeping Jews* she made it so. When Jesus saw her weeping with *the Jews*, he was strangely moved. It was not compassion – or the lack of compassion – that moved Jesus to anger in spirit and being troubled. Mary had earlier shown every sign of transcending the rejection of *the Jews*, and surpassing the partial conditioned belief of Martha to understand the true meaning of the death of Lazarus and Jesus’ self-revelation as the resurrection and the life. Her weeping with *the Jews* was a reversal of her earlier response to him, and it generated anger and severe disappointment in Jesus. Would no one come to believe?

Jesus was deeply moved by a justifiable anger and emotion, but had to proceed with the mission that had been entrusted to him - he had to wake Lazarus from his sleep - glorify God, and through this event be glorified. He asked to be led to the tomb of Lazarus, and *they* invited him to *come and see*. It was Mary and *the Jews* who issued this invitation. Mary’s total association with the perspective of *the Jews* led Jesus to tears. *The Jews* misunderstood the tears of Jesus as a demonstration of Jesus’ love for Lazarus, and said, “See how he loved him.”

**Riddle Solution:** “Jesus weeps because of the danger that his unconditional gift of himself in love as the Good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life who offers life here and now and hereafter to all who would believe in him, will never be understood or accepted. While Mary

*moved toward Jesus there was hope that one of the characters had come to faith. Once she joined “the Jews” in their sorrow and tears Jesus’ promises seem to have been forgotten, and Jesus weeps in his frustration.”*

– Sacra Pagina, Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B. pg 331-332.

Today who are *the Jews*? Aren’t they still those who reject Jesus and his teachings? How many of us are like Martha? We carelessly allow our belief in Jesus to be conditioned and limited by the newest and latest definition of him? When someone or some group hangs a new cool, fashionable label on Jesus, isn’t there a danger that he becomes a reflection of what they want him to be, rather than who he truly was and is? What about Mary? How often do we lose our initial focus and become distracted? Is Jesus simply an intrusion in our busy lives?

In this story the miracle of the raising of Lazarus can easily overshadow the importance of the call of *the Good Shepherd*. Perhaps one of the more important lessons in this story is that we must answer the call of Jesus and strive to remain focused on him.

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# Will Your Lie Cost You Your Life? [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

If there is one Scripture passage that we defense lawyers should especially appreciate, it has to be today's first reading (Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62).

The case against Susanna was open and shut. All seemed hopeless. There were two eye witnesses – and they were judges and well-known leaders of the community to boot! How could anyone credit the adulteress' self-serving denial? No one did, save for Daniel.

He knew that things are not always as they appear. Daniel was unwilling to ignore a lifetime of virtuous living by this fine woman and “rush to judgment”. He trusted that God would show him the way to expose the perjured testimony of these two lecherous old men. God did not disappoint!

What lawyer hasn't dreamed of so dramatically exposing the lies of witnesses as Daniel so skillfully did as recounted in today's first reading? Even Perry Mason would be in awe of his approach and skill!

But there is much more to reflect upon other than Daniel's text-book strategy and perfect cross-examination.

Let me warn you. By doing so, we might find ourselves becoming a bit uncomfortable.

How often have we treated others unjustly?

How many times have we rushed to judgment about the reported conduct of others?

How often have we convinced ourselves of someone's guilt, not based on our own personal

knowledge of the facts, but because of the position of the people who levied the accusations in the first place?

How many times have we remained silent in the face of obvious injustice for fear of offending those in power?

How many of us would follow Susanna's example and accept an unjust physical death in order to preserve our eternal life?

I could go on but I have made my point.

It took courage for Daniel to do what he did.

It took courage for Susanna to protect her soul rather than her physical life.

It will take courage for each of us to stand up against the powerful and fight for justice.

It will take great faith and trust in God to suffer in this world in order to have glory in the next.

Are we ready to pray for such courage and such grace?

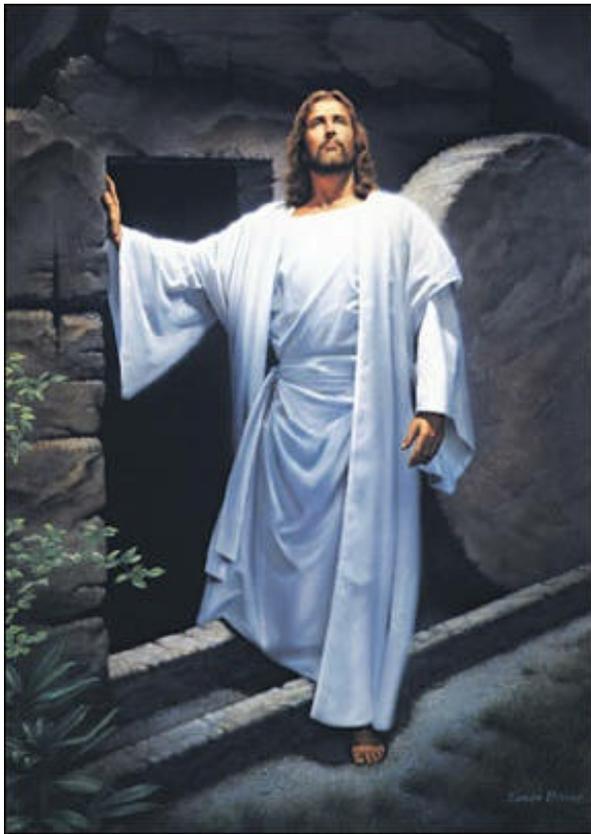
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# Has Jesus Arisen in your Hearts? [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

*Has Jesus Arisen in Your Heart?*

— *Are You Being Conformed into His Image ? (Part 1)*



He Is Risen!

***“... those whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to become] conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” (Rom.8:29-30)***

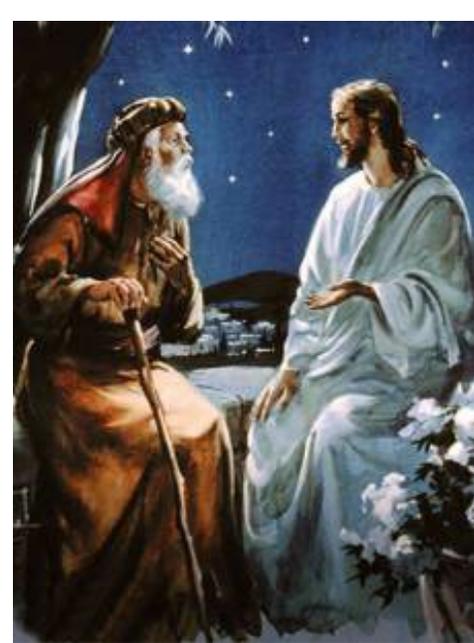
My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have just celebrated the solemnity of the Resurrection of Christ – a feast which, along with His crucifixion and burial are the keystones of the Christian Faith. However, in the practice of our faith, some of us tend to overlook the fact that the Resurrection took place on the Jewish feast of Firstfruits and that Jesus was indeed the first fruits of a new creation. You see, Jesus not only died to pay for the sins of humanity but also so that He might be the first among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). So that He, living in us and through us believers, might continue the work of bringing the Good News of God’s Kingdom here amongst the people of the world. He was leaving, but He was passing His anointing unto us so that we might continue His work.

In order to fulfill this, our role in this world, we need to be conformed to His image by the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:29) and yield ourselves to His rule so that we can be empowered to be His instruments in bring in forth the Kingdom. However, this cannot happen unless we, of our own free will, permit the Son of God to “arise in our hearts” so that we can experience His resurrection presence in us – only then can we be His partners in being instruments of the Father’s Will here on this earth!

Because the Father will not impose Himself on us, our salvation is NOT contingent on our decision to become His bondservants – it must be a free will decision of “agape” Love to give ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Father, in Jesus’ Name! (Rom. 12:1). Our decision will then allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us to renew our minds and empower us for the work of the Kingdom and for the final transition to union with Him!

To begin this spiritual transformation the Holy Spirit begins by first awakening our spirits to His leadings – an awakening that can only be accomplished by Him, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus (a leader of the Sanhedrin). In essence, our spirits have to be re-born from above so that the Spirit of Christ may come into us. This, the Arising of Jesus in our hearts, is the first step in being conformed to His Image.



***“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”***

***Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”***

***Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.***

***Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (Jn. 1:1-8)***

+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+

We ended this Lenten season with the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior from the dead and as the harbinger of our own spiritual transition that begins with our transition from unbelief to a Living Faith and a renewed Life in the spirit as Children of God – a renewed awareness, which permits you to sense the “wind” of the Spirit.

In this series of articles I will be discussing the various levels of transitions we must all go through in our journey to spiritual maturity as the Spirit Conforms us to the Image of Christ. Besides laying the groundwork for an understanding of the nature of these transformative stages, the first stage I will be discussing will be our coming to the awakening of our spirit. If you can sense the “wind” of the spirit then you have an awakened spirit and are beyond this first stage. If not, then you need to ask God to send His Holy Spirit to renew you.

We cannot live in this world without undergoing transitions – in fact, natural life, itself, is a process in which transitions are of the essence. What we don’t realize or sometimes take for granted is that the development of our spiritual life itself requires a series of transitions in order to mature our spiritual nature sufficiently so that we may enter into a true and fulfilling intimate living relationship with the Divine through Christ Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We all are tripartite beings composed of body, soul, and spirit (1Thess. 5-23). Our body and soul are designed to permit us to interact with our natural and time constrained environment in order to be able to subsist and procreate to thus fulfill our natural role in this world. Our spirit, is, essentially, our inner sanctuary, designed to permit us to interact with our creator so that He may partner with us in the living out of our our lives, and thus be His instruments in bringing forth His will into this creation in our God-intended role for us.

However, as natural descendants of Adam, and victims of his rebellion against being ruled by God, we are born with an inactive spiritual connection to the Father – with an empty and desecrated sanctuary, so to speak. In this, our natural state, we are, of necessity, controlled by the physical and emotional necessities of the world around us as well as the forces of darkness which utilize our weakened state to foil the Father’s true purpose for the human race and, essentially, attempt to bring us to a final destruction.

Jesus, the Father’s Only Begotten Son, was sent not only to save us from our sins by satisfying God’s justice but to restore our spiritual nature to its original state before sin entered into human nature and thus reconnect us to the Father via the Holy Spirit and His Word. Because of sin, our human body is destined to return from the dust from which it came. But our soul and spirit are destined for a recreated body at the resurrection of the dead when Jesus returns – no longer as just our savior, but to judge the living and the dead, to determine where we will spend eternity.

Before that day comes, we who have believed in the Christ and the Good News of Salvation must pass through a series of spiritual transformations or transitions, not only to be saved but also so that we may be His instruments in bringing the same Good News to this fallen world. These transitions begin with the first stage: the re-birth of our spirits, just as Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born of water and the spirit” in order to enter into this stage of spiritual renewal.

From the scriptures we can identify at least three major stages of this transformation. The Holy Spirit whom the Father sent to us at the behest of His Son is God’s Agent of Grace and His Word to bring us through this process. I propose that the main stages where Grace intervenes in our spiritual formation to be as follows:

Stage 1 – Unbelief to a Living Faith and Spiritual Awakening

Stage 2 – Spiritual Awakening to Spiritual Empowerment and Consecration

Stage 3 – Spiritual Consecration to Spiritual Union With Christ

If the naming of these major stages surprises you, don’t worry, most people brought up in our traditional religious culture, as I was, would not be familiar with these terms. They are unfamiliar because our religious culture uses other terminology to express them. The reason is that our culture of “intellectual enlightenment” tends to avoid using the terms, “spirit” and “spiritual” – which are considered to be too theologically abstract for the common man.

For instance, in our cultural thinking the term “conversion” is considered as merely coming to a different intellectual understanding or assessment of certain philosophical or cultural tenets and the realignment of our lives to that renewed understanding. It cannot even conceive that the term, as used in scripture, refers NOT to an intellectual change of mind but of our response to hearing the Word of God in our “heart” or “spirit” thus evoking an understanding in us that tells us that we are not walking in harmony with God’s Spirit – a level of “spiritual awareness” that brings a deep desire in our hearts to repent and turn to follow His leading so that we can be in alignment to His will.

### ***Now, About Stage 1***

When Jesus told the crowds that “.... ***unless you are converted and turn [repent] you shall all likewise perish***” (Luke 13:5) He was not speaking about them accepting a new philosophy or theology but about something that had to occur in their “spirits”, not their minds through the Word preached to them – a spiritual impartation that would cause them to accept the Good News of Salvation that the Father was offering them through Jesus’ preaching and teaching.

It is true that sometimes a true conversion or “turning to God” is preceded by an intellectual reassessment of what we believe, but that happens because our intellectual preconceptions are blocking what the Holy Spirit is telling our hearts or our spirit



## Jesus Offers Living Water

As an example of this take the instance where Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman who came to the well to draw water, asking her to give Him a drink. She was taken aback that a Jewish man, especially a rabbi, would ask a foreign woman for a drink...

So Jesus [said to] her, ***“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”*** (Jn 3:10)

The woman, of course, did not understand what Jesus was saying about “living water” in a “spiritual” way so she responded, just as we would, in a natural way, asking Jesus, “how are you going to get this water? You don’t have anything to draw water with?”

***Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*** (Jn:3-13-14)

Now, the woman’s spiritual ears perked up and, sensing that what Jesus was referring to was “spiritual”. she said, ... “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” (Jn 3:15)

***Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”*** (jn 3:16-18)

She now recognized “in her spirit” that Jesus was speaking from His spirit as a prophet of God and so, sensing an opportunity, tried to get Jesus to tell her about where God intended men to worship. But Jesus answered her:

***Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now***

***here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”***

***The woman said to him, “I know [from tradition] that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.”***

***Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”(Jn 3:21-26)***

Here Jesus, by direct revelation, makes it clear exactly who He is and that the Father desires for us to come before Him “in [a renewed] spirit and in truth”. Jesus came just so that we could have a reborn spirit so we could worship the Father as He desires to be worshipped. How many of us can say that we “know” that our worship is “in the spirit”? I, before my spirit awakened, a compliant baptized Christian, did not even know what being “in the spirit” was!

Now, for the Samaritan woman, the transition from unbelief to belief was completed when she understood “in her spirit” who Jesus was, so she immediately got up and went to give her witness to the villagers and...

***Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” (Jn.3:39)***

It is important to note the significance that, once awakened, the woman’s witness of her faith had on the villagers. Yes! Her faith was contagious! And, yes, the faith of the villagers was also connected them to the person of Jesus and who He was. However, their initial level of belief was still at the “human” initiation stage, a stage that was calling them to go further in their faith. It was an intermediate state that was inciting them to seek out Jesus for themselves. The Holy Spirit was drawing them to go further and experience and hear Jesus for themselves. In their curiosity the Holy Spirit drew them to seek Him personally and, when they did He preached and taught the Word of God to them and them several days. It is, at this point, after they had heard the WORD directly from Jesus ...

***They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” (Jn3:42)***

Just as the Word had to be heard directly from Jesus to be able to be received spiritually to activate their spirits, so also we who have heard the testimony of “tradition” must spiritually seek out Jesus for ourselves and hear the Word directly from Him in order to complete the first stage of transition from unbelief to belief and have the Risen Jesus present in our hearts (spirits). Praised be His Holy Name!!

In living out our faith however, we get stuck at the intermediate stage, “the testimony of tradition”, and never seek out Jesus for ourselves to activate our spiritual awareness. We don’t do it because we cannot comprehend that, “in faith” we can transcend our human circumstances and reach out to

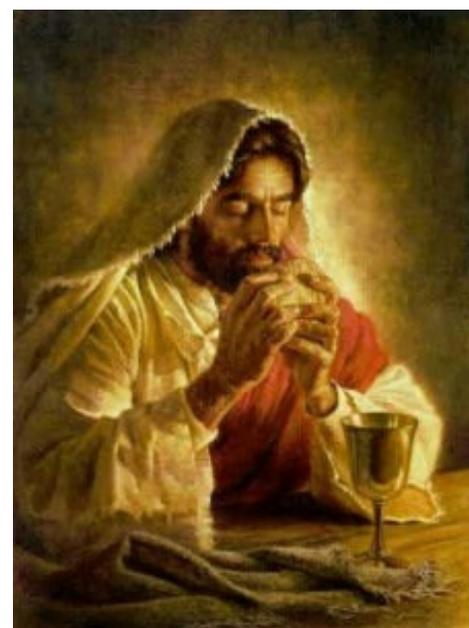
Him “in the spirit”- our reborn spirit that is NOT bound by the natural circumstances in which our physical self is embedded!

One of the reasons we don't even try is because our religious culture is very cautious in teaching us about our newly awakened spiritual nature and what our spiritual legacy in Christ really is! And that legacy is that we now abide in HIM and HE in us in our spirits and that because of this we can take the next step in faith into spiritual waters and actually experience His presence and Hear His Voice in the here and now! Again, let us give praise to His Holy Name!

Remember the two disciples who, depressed by the circumstances of Jesus' death, were on their way to a village called “Emmaus” when they encountered Jesus (without recognizing Him). In conversing with them He chided them, saying,

***“O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?” And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*** (Lk 24:25-27)

As the day was ending they said to Him ...



Unless you eat of my flesh and drink my blood...

***“... Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent”. And he went in to abide with them. And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, “Was not our heart burning within us, while he spoke to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?”*** (Lk 24:29-32)

Our religious initiation, again, tends to major in the doctrinal portion of catechesis and glosses



**[Prayer to Receive the Holy Spirit](#)**

**[Cast Your Net on the Other Side!](#)**

**[Jesus, The Source of Living Water and Us!](#)**

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## So that's what you think -- GOD IS A KILLJOY? [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

*(St. Teresa of Avila wrote a book called the Interior Castle. It refers to the interior life of man. It explains the difficulty Christians have in talking to atheists. The Beloved is at the heart of the Castle. Those souls who have moved into the Castle can hear His Voice. Those outside are deaf to the Beloved. It explains how two people can be arguing religion out of two totally different perceptions and states of being. The atheist, running away from the Castle, will never perceive what the Christian profoundly experiences -- unless he turns around.)*

You have walled yourself inside glass

You live outside the Castle

with brute beasts and tumultuous passion.

you see a useless housewife,

waiting in pain to see a doctor.



This Water is welling up pure and sweet

in a dry desert -- in a husk of an old housewife.

Like at Meribah and Massah,  
Water gushing from the Rock.

I cannot even bear it.

But the skeptic is deaf to thunder,  
blind to lightening from the throne of God.  
I wear his unhappiness like a disheveled glove  
trading tweet for tweet in short Twitter speak.  
The Voice is sweet and clear



I used to look for Him everywhere and nowhere.  
I wandered many alleys and byways,  
absently rambling through English hedgerows,  
happily dancing through the stranger's graveyard,  
smoking a pink cigarette, searching for romance...  
I read T. S. Eliot to my mother walking backwards on the beach.  
I did find Him in these pleasures,  
but to my surprise, when I completely stopped walking

His voice is sweet like nectar from a flower --

such subtle flavor, exotic.

He tastes of everything I ever longed for

like manna from the desert

And it is here within me --

the Water, the Bread so sweet

Its beauty is indescribable.

I live on a tranquil island in a tropical paradise.

Everything you ever longed for is right here:

Food for the poor – “meat to eat you know not of;” Living Water shared with the woman by the well;

Justice as you have not understood it;  
such thirst for justice as you cannot even describe it;

where now you ride the stormy waves of anguish.

We were not raised together.

We are from different families,

You call me a crazy housewife --

useless by anyone’s measure in life.

But I have a little hammer.

And I am patiently tapping those glass walls

The hammer's name is "Prayer."



The climb to Sacré Cœur de Paris\*  
rises out of the writhing guts of the Red Light District known as "Pig Alley."

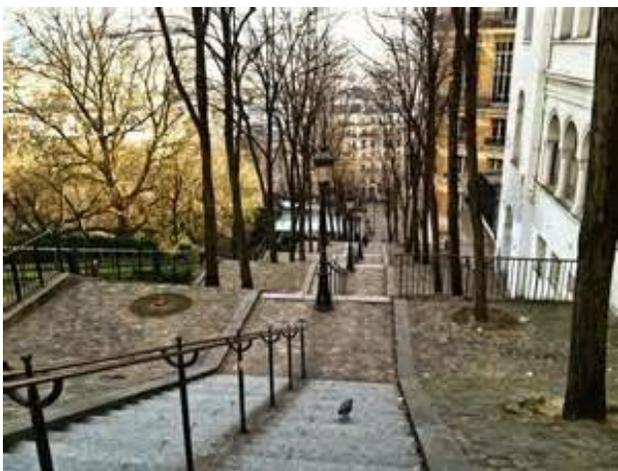
At the top of Montmartre,  
the Beloved's heart beats for 120 years.

Do not walk away, brother.

Let us go together to defend the Castle of the Sacred Heart!

You have more right to Him than I.

You have more right to His Mercy.



Great! Your house is cracking, my son.

With my tiny hammer, I ruffle the fragile foundations of your prison -- so that you might walk on

air!

You can fly. You do not need to bury yourself in offal.

“Come up, my brother. Come up!”

Together, we will cuddle with Jesus crowned by thorns.

We will all be mocked together.



*(\*The Basilica of the Sacred Heart sits on top of the hill in Paris called Montmartre. Around the base of the hill is the famous seedy neighborhood of Pigalle, dubbed “Pig Alley” by American servicemen in World War II. Often simply called Sacré-Cœur, the Basilica has constantly held the Real Presence of Jesus Christ displayed in a huge monstrance since 1885. It is amazing for this and the large number of first class relics of martyrs contained in the Church.)*



*Sacré Cœur de Paris by day*

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## Don't eat meat. Or anything else. [at Working to be Worthy]

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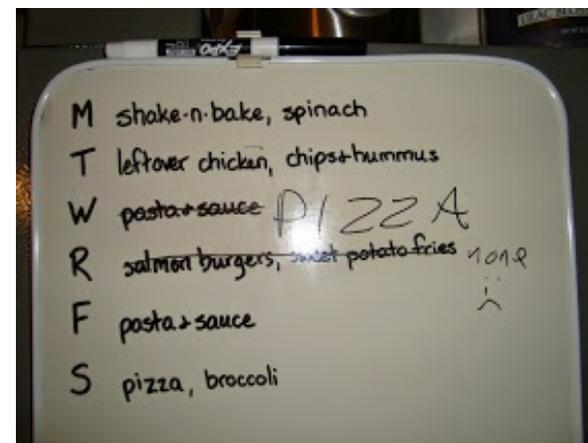
He is risen! I'm overjoyed that Easter is here. As I heard recently, "This was the longest Lent in a long time." The very late arrival of spring definitely kept us in the proper Lenten mood; the recent increase in temperatures has brought us dancing into the glory of Easter. Alleluia!

-2-

In less joyful news, my husband went into urgent care last night because he thought he might have food poisoning. Turns out he had appendicitis. I spent this afternoon at the hospital with him. Thanks be to God and modern medicine, he had an uncomplicated appendectomy and is now home, sleeping peacefully.

-3-

He was able to eat a sandwich and some grapes for dinner, which was very much appreciated after his "clear liquids" lunch at the hospital and dry toast for dinner last night.



-4-

Anyway, back to my original plan for this post, before the sleep deprivation and stress of the past 24 hours. Now that Lent is over, we don't have to abstain from meat. So, we're free to do whatever, right? Wrong. I didn't know until after college that the rules about year-round abstinence were

*changed*

, not

*removed*

[The USCCB still calls Catholics to acts of penance every Friday.](#)

-5-

In fact, the council still suggests that Catholics abstain from "flesh meat" on Fridays throughout the year. This is no longer an obligation, but has value as "an outward sign of inward spiritual values that we cherish." If Catholics choose not to abstain from meat, they must to perform a different act of self-denial and penance so to remember Christ's sacrificial death for us on a Friday.

-6-

The USCCB further encourages Catholics

*in addition to penance*

to perform acts of charity and mercy, particularly on Fridays.

It would bring great glory to God and good to souls if Fridays found our people doing volunteer work in hospitals, visiting the sick, serving the needs of the aged and the lonely, instructing the young in the Faith, participating as Christians in community affairs, and meeting our obligations to our families, our friends, our neighbors, and our community, including our parishes, with a special zeal born of the desire to add the merit of penance to the other virtues exercised in good works born of living faith.

-7-

My husband is surely continuing his journey toward holiness. He not only abstained from meat, but from just about everything else, too. What a saint. :-)

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# How to Do Good and Avoid Evil [at From the Pulpit of my Life]



Saint John Baptist de la Salle

April 7th was the feast day of [St. John Baptist de la Salle](#), founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools or Christian Brothers. The Institute of brothers was dedicated to teaching poor boys using the very successful teaching methods developed by St. John. But John's main concern was with living the Christian life wholeheartedly.

The Gospel of the day for St. John's feast day is John 8:1-11, the story of the woman caught in adultery. It is a story very familiar to me and to most Christians. All I will say about it here is that the story ends with Jesus asking the woman if anyone has condemned her. She says, "No one, sir." So Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more."

When we Catholic receive forgiveness for our sins in the sacrament of Penance, we are to have the intention of sinning no more. But how can we, in our human weaknesses, actually comply with that requirement? It's not easy, but St. John Baptist de la Salle has some suggestions. Begin by praying for the graces we need to do good and to avoid evil.

- When praying to do good ask for occasions and the competence needed to do good acts that we find difficult:
  - pardoning those who have offended us or who don't like us
  - doing as much good as we can for someone whom we find disgusting
  - speaking charitably toward someone we detest

- When praying to avoid evil ask for help and protection from falling into temptations:
  - strength to remain humble and pure
  - moderation of anger and passions
  - shunning coarse language, swearing or lying
  - steering away from occasions that would cause us to be tempted.

The Lord is on our side. He wants nothing less than our salvation. We can pray for these graces with confidence.

You can find St. John's suggestions in "Meditation of the Day" section of the April issue of *Magnificat Magazine*, p.111.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.fromthepulpitofmylife.com/2014/04/how-to-do-good-and-avoid-evil/>  
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## A day I will never forget [at Rediscovering Glory]

I was incredibly blessed to be in Rome on Divine Mercy Sunday 2014!!! For the canonization of not one but two Popes!! What makes it all the more amazing is that there were two Popes there. Both Pope Emeritus Benedict and Pope Francis.

It was astonishing! I have never experienced so many people all in one place nor have I ever experienced so much energy. All for (in the eyes of the world) two old men. Two old men, one named John the twenty-third, another named John Paul the Great. These two men changed the world.

John the twenty-third called the second Vatican council. He started changes in the Church that helped us to grow. His contribution is inestimable. While most of us of my generation do not know much about him. He contributed something important to the world. I guarantee that millions of lives have been changed as a result of the way that he lived out his life. While I do not know as much about this man as I would like personally, I challenge you to learn about this new saint of the Church! Learn about him and most importantly ask him to pray for you! St. John the twenty-third pray for us!

The second man St. John Paul the great is a lot more commonly known. We recognize his contribution to the Church. I can still picture him declaring to the people of the world and especially to young people “Be not afraid!” That message is still so relevant. I cannot tell you how many moments in my life I recall this, I return to that message. His call was and still is so powerful! Now of course we can ask his intercession to live that call out. St. John Paul the great pray for us!

Both of these men changed the world. In fact about 6 million people came to Rome to celebrate their canonization. People of every race and nation. Most of us did not speak the same language. We did not even understand the Mass since it was in Latin. We were crammed into the streets of Rome and standing for hours. To celebrate to rejoice with Heaven that these two men are saints of God!

The moment when it was proclaimed that they were saints, the crowd went wild! It was a celebration! We all rejoiced. Then we got to celebrate the Eucharist in Thanksgiving. We also got to celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday with millions of other pilgrims!

The Divine Mercy of God is so incredible! In fact I think it is my favorite feast of the Church! It was so fitting for so many people to gather to celebrate and to join in asking God for mercy upon the world. Our world needs it so much, today more than ever!

After the canonization was all over, in fact hours later I made it to St. Peter's square! Words cannot describe how much I love that place. Nor can they describe my feelings and emotions to stand there. There in the place where Pope John Paul the second preached, where he was shot, where millions joined for his funeral! Where now less than ten years after his death millions gathered to celebrate him as a saint!

What makes all of this so incredible is that each of these men had a simple choice. A choice that both you and I have. The choice to follow the will of God or not. We all know the alternative. What I experienced just yesterday is what happens when you follow the will of God.

When you respond to God's call this is what happens. Lives are changed forever. Millions of people gathered not just to celebrate the lives of two men, but to celebrate everything that God did in their lives!

As Saint John Paul the great would say "Be not afraid to open wide the doors to Christ!."

Saint John Paul the Great and Saint John the twenty-third, Pray for us!

I hope you can get a hint of the excitement I feel, if not you can always watch this

[interview](#)

!!

All I can say is God is soo good!!! Blessings!!!

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This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.co.at/2014/04/a-day-i-will-never-forget.html>  
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## Bible study [at Convert Journal]



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Hallelujah! All faithful Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Holy scripture is a huge gift to humanity. St. Paul says:

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

St. Jerome, translator of the original canon of scripture (the Vulgate, which remains the official Catholic Bible), says simply: “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” No Christian community is more “Bible-based” than the Catholic Church, its very self inseparable from Christ. The Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass – Catholic worship – was instituted by Jesus and is tied directly to Holy Scripture from start to end.

To know Christ, God’s revelation, and His will for us – to live on the “straight and narrow” path ([Matthew 7:13-14](#)) – we must know scripture.

The canon of scripture is the fruit of *Sacred Tradition* and infallibly known through the *Magisterium*. Without both, we would not have the Bible. Without both, we would not be able to correctly understand it today. For the first 4 centuries, there was no official canon of Holy Scripture. Around 400 A.D., the Catholic Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, infallibly declared the 73 sacred books, determined their order and numbered their verses. All translations for 1,100 years, the New Testament writers themselves and the Church fathers were Catholic.

It's all a matter of interpretation...

No, I am not suggesting relativism. There is only the truth, unchanging and certain, that will set you free. The problem is, how do you know what that is? The fact is, words are ALWAYS interpreted and can mean quite different things to different people.

Patrick Madrid uses a very simple 6 word example: "I never said you stole money." It seems straightforward, containing easy words, obvious in meaning — or not. Read that sentence, without emphasis then put emphasis successively on words 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6. You get 6 very different interpretations.

Holy Scripture is far more complex. It is a translation, so those who understand ancient Aramaic and ancient Greek have an advantage. The words must also be understood culturally as they would have been thousands of years ago. Different books use different types of prose. Finally, and very importantly, it must be taken as a whole.

Those scholars who are on-top of all of this, still differ. Reasonable, well educated, well-intentioned people can make plausible cases for very, very different interpretations. There is also a temptation for all readers to see in the words what they want to see and not see what they do not wish.

The false Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura* posits that scripture is the ONLY authority (a claim not made by scripture itself) and that the authority of Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium somehow ended upon the canonization of scripture. This was of course, a necessary invention of the Protestant revolution in order to be separated from the authority of the Church given by Christ.

In this novel doctrine, created 1,500 years after the time of Christ, proper understanding is generally assured by personal guidance of the Holy Spirit. This quite flawed assumption has resulted in countless Protestant denominations and ever increasing division among the faithful. While they may cringe at the description, each denomination has their own "tradition" to guide their flock in the "correct" interpretation.

This is precisely why Christ established a VISIBLE CHURCH, His bride, joined together in the Communion of Saints to form the Body of Christ. This Church is ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC (universal) and APOSTOLIC. To His Church, he gave real and infallible authority to know and teach faith and morals — despite their personal failings.

## Learning the Bible

We Catholics have an advantage in addition to our Bible based liturgy: every Mass focuses on different scripture readings (uniform, throughout the world). Those readings are proclaimed then reflected on in a homily (from the Greek *homilia* meaning explanation) given by an ordained priest or deacon. This provides an excellent baseline understanding.

Deepening one's knowledge of scripture can be advanced by simply reading it. While that is a start, there will be questions. A good Catholic study Bible or commentary will help immensely. There are many good choices such as the [Ignatius Catholic Study Bible](#) and the [Navarre Bible](#). There are good online resources too, including free ones such as [Haydock's Catholic Bible Commentary](#).

Perhaps the very best way to learn the Bible is in a class, a "Bible study." There you will read scripture, discuss it, and use various resources to explore and understand it. These include the leader, printed materials, audio and video presentations, and so on.

## Bible Studies are Always BIASED

I bet that heading got your attention! Many people presume that the Bible is the Bible and any study of it is comparable to any other. This is simply not true as I explained above.

Those offering Bible studies genuinely hope to share the Word of God and have no intention to deceive. Yet, their interpretation will be seamlessly interwoven throughout the class. This is true for Catholic Bible studies and Bible studies offered by each of the numerous Protestant communities. It is unavoidable.

There is no such thing as a truly non-denominational or inter-denominational Bible study, despite claims to the contrary. It simply is not possible. At most, interpretation would have to be severely restricted to a least common denominator and even so, remain open to interpretation. I see this all the time between Christian communities. Words are said, everyone nods agreement, but if you scratch below the surface you quickly find understanding differs.

Due to the unfortunate nature and results of the Protestant schism, this issue is especially prominent for Catholics. To be blunt, Catholics should not accept invitations to non-Catholic Bible studies. Here is a partial list of issues:

- How exactly one is saved (justification) will be wrong. This will probably include false (and non-biblical) doctrines such as being saved by faith alone and/or once saved, always saved.
- The novel Protestant doctrine of sola scriptura will be pervasive. The equal, supporting and non-contradictory roles of Sacred Tradition and the Magisterium will not be recognized.
- The visible Church founded by Jesus Himself will likely be denied. In its place, a non-biblical theory of an invisible Church of all believers will likely be substituted. (You will also find the definition of "believer" to be problematic.)
- The authority of the Vicar of Christ, successor of Peter, and those bishops in communion with him will be rejected. Either there is no authority (you are on your own) or their denomination's leaders are correct (by some vague authority).
- No ministerial priesthood will be acknowledged – those ordained by a Sacrament of Holy Orders and uniquely configured to act sacramentally for Christ. (If it comes up at all, [Matthew 23:9](#) will be woefully misinterpreted.) Apostolic succession will be seen as irrelevant.

- All or most of the sacraments instituted by Our Lord will be denied. The gifts of their sacramental graces will be unknown.
- The real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is denied. At most, communion is a symbolic ritual.
- Baptism may or may not be understood as required for salvation. If baptism is believed to be necessary, its regenerative nature may not be understood.
- The indissolubility of marriage will probably not be accepted. The nature of marriage itself might not be understood. Liberal Protestant communities sometimes believe that homosexual unions are possible, normal and good.
- Life is not necessarily sacred from conception to natural death.
- Understanding God's mercy and justice probably differ. Likewise, understanding the forgiveness of sins and perhaps the need for the forgiveness of sins may differ.
- Most denominations do not recognize the Communion of Saints. Most believe that praying for each other is possible only among those currently on Earth.
- Mary, the Mother of God, her role in salvation history, her perpetual virginity and her assumption into heaven is diminished or denied.
- The existence of purgatory is not understood, nor the authority of the Church to grant indulgences.
- The non-biblical and false (and relatively recent) novelty of rapture doctrines like a 7 year tribulation may be taught.

As there is no single Protestant theology, the above list is both incomplete and not applicable to all denominations. It is however at least *possible* to attend a Protestant Bible study where the differences to Catholicism are not great — depending on the particular study, the leader and their denomination. Protestants are, after all, Catholic too... just not in full communion with Christ's Church. That said, the only safe path is to avoid Protestant Bible studies.

## A Cautionary Tale

I met a very nice Catholic man recently who has attended a large, Protestant “inter-denominational” Bible study for several years. He really enjoys it and feels that he has learned a lot about scripture. Actually, it was through my encounter with him that I decided to write this piece.

My discussion with Bob (not his real name) was not exhaustive, but I could see that his Catholic faith was undermined. He expressed that the Bible was the sole authority for truth. He noted that religion was the creation of men. He dismissed the importance of differences between ecumenical communities.

Bob is sincere in his search for truth, but is unwittingly being lead away from it. The group he is with genuinely believes that they teach only the truth. Yet, they have their own statement of faith and supporting study materials. They use the Protestant NIV Bible, a dynamic (less literal, more interpretive) translation. Leaders must pledge fidelity to their beliefs so Catholics are not accepted as leaders. For all practical purposes, while not their intention, this group has none-the-less

become simply another Protestant denomination.

The bottom line is this: seek the truth. I believe you will find it only in the Church directly founded by Jesus Christ. If you are Protestant and think that all Protestants have mostly the same beliefs, look closer. You will be surprised to learn how different they are on core Christian beliefs. If you are Catholic, depend only on the numerous Catholic sources of information.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2014/04/bible-study/>  
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# Our papal poetry contest winners [at Catholic Review]

I would love to say we were showered with entries from all corners of the globe, but I do think more than a few of you were intimidated by the entries posted to the comments section. Who wouldn't be?

Today I am delighted to introduce you to two poets in our virtual, blog-reading midst, and share their poignant, quite different tributes to our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

From RXB, we have a haiku, touching in its elegant simplicity:

**From Argentina**

**To the Vatican you flew**

**A dove to the Ark.**

Then, from [Mary Ann Kreitzer](#), we have a brilliantly composed sonnet. I had not even thought to take on such a complex art form, yet she mastered it in a splendid poem summarizing so much of what our beloved pope has meant to the Church and the world!

**To Peter's chair he came, a big surprise**

**With love for Lady Poverty his mark,**

**Refusing pomp and trappings, he abides**

**In simple rooms outside the papal park.**

**St. Peters's has not seen his like before**

**Although that could be said of every pope.**

**Each is unique in place and time, what's more**

**Each offers to his age the gift of hope.**

**Pope Francis is God's gift for these hard days**

**When mankind seems intent on suicide.**

**He calls us to be brave, embracing ways**

**That call to all to rush to Jesus' side.**

**And while we cannot know the day or hour,**

**We still can till the garden for the flower.**

Wow! Thank you and congratulations to our two winners!

It occurs to me now that perhaps the contest stifled the creativity of readers who might have been inspired to write about other popes, including those two who will be canonized on Sunday.

For example, this week my brother-in-law George P. Matysek, Jr., responded to an email with this verse about John XXIII:

**'Twas a bold question to pose to a pope,**

**But the reporter was brave and no dope.**

**'How many work at the Vatican?' he asked,  
holding his breath quite very fast,  
awaiting his answer with some hope.**

**Good Pope John paused and reflected;  
The question need not be neglected.  
So smiling and nodding, the pontiff did laugh:  
Then gave his response: 'About half.'**

In the true spirit of a poetry slam, I toss back:

**John Twenty-three! How can it be  
You left your mark for all to see?  
You may have been a country priest,  
But with the strength to fight a beast  
And shoulder problems as our pope.  
You gave the Church a deep, deep hope.  
Before your tenure was quite through  
You launched that Council Number Two!  
You spoke of love, and lived it out,  
And so on Sunday, we will shout,  
Hurrah! Hurrah! And yay! Whoopee!**

**For our great saint, John Twenty-three!**

And then this one on Pope John Paul II:

**John Paul the Great! John Paul the Great!**

**The Holy Spirit was his mate!**

**He fought for people to be free**

**And communists from him did flee.**

**He showed us how to age with grace**

**And traveled to 'most ev'ry place.**

**He led a life so full of love**

**And loves us still from up above.**

**And so we said, and we still do,**

**John Paul Two, we do love you!**

What an amazing moment in history! If you aren't celebrating by writing poetry, do you have any plans to mark the canonizations of these two beloved popes?

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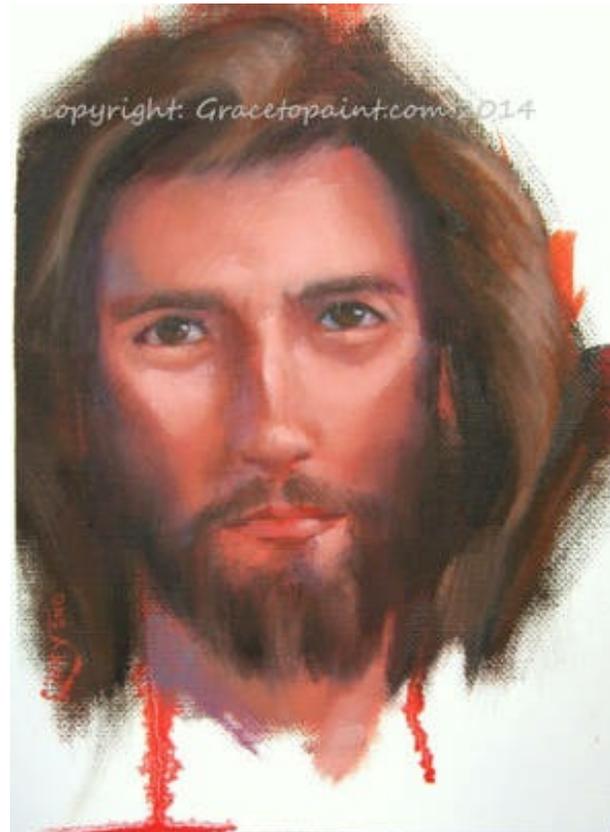
By



# Savior VI [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on April 18, 2014 · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)



6×8" oil paint on gessoed canvas paper; use “comment” below to inquire.

A Blessed Good Friday to all. And as we will sing in the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday Night: ”  
O happy fault that merited for us such and so great a Redeemer.”

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2014/04/18/savior-vi/>  
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# Ending Verbal and Psychological Abuse in the Family [at Suffering With Joy]

April 29, 2014



Family portrait, 1910, Zinaida Serebriakova, used under fair use principles via Wikipaintings

You've heard it. Or maybe had it happen to you, cutting "jokes" that mask hostility which the jokester denies when confronted. Sarcastic remarks. Sneers. Put downs. Then there's ridicule of others, a poison to the spiritual life and serenity of relationships, especially the family. All are ways of abusing, dominating, and bullying. All are ways of controlling others and keeping them in line. All are dramatized in movies, on television and in the theater, presented as clever amusement rather than the soul destroying evil behaviors that they are.

Last night in a conversation with a friend, she revealed that not only did her family behave this way during her childhood and up to the present, but her ex-husband also delivered a steady stream of this kind of abuse among other ways of torturing her and the children. The children perpetuate this abuse amongst themselves and towards her. It doesn't seem to matter how faithfully all of them attend Mass, the ugly behaviors are right there to eat away at peace and tranquility in the household only hours later. Two other friends have told me similar stories about their families, only they included childhood sexual abuse as well.

Just as virtue is a habit, so vice is also, resulting in behavior patterns that tear others down while failing to build offenders up, even though, in this case, abusers may think tyranny makes them No.1. In fact, a dominant philosophy of abusers is, "The beatings will continue until morale improves, i.e. until I get my way." While this slogan was presented for satire and an example of how not to manage others when I worked in the corporate world, little did I realize at the time how many

people went home to this reality every day of their lives.

What is particularly awful about abuse in the family is that often members grow up thinking that it is normal and that everybody lives this way. Moreover, the abusive ones may keep their evil behind closed doors while in public present an entirely different face, even to the point of carefully erecting a façade of being a righteous Christian.

Where is it written that I can have one standard of behavior at home and a different one everywhere else? The truth is, people in the work place and casual acquaintances won't put up with the abuse visited upon family members behind closed doors. In itself that indicts the bully and proves his/her guilt. It proves bullies know what the right way to treat others is and choose not to do so at home. They indulge their predatory behavior against the most vulnerable, those who are trapped with a father or mother, husband or wife or siblings who consistently violate their dignity. The abused are objects to be manipulated, not persons to be respected.

Need I say that deep spiritual and psychological sickness is at the root of it all? Looking closer it is likely that alcohol or drug abuse and/or pornography fuel the already disordered mentality of abusers. What to do? In his discussion on Chapter 66 of the Rule of St. Benedict, Father G. A. Simon writes:

Let the Oblate living in a family know that his true milieu is his family.... **The Benedictine spirit is essentially a family spirit.** To be faithful to the spirit of the Rule, therefore, the Oblate to whom Providence has entrusted the care of a family **should love his home and maintain there that profound union which can come only from supernatural charity, grouping all the souls, so to speak, in one and the same search for God.**

This applies to everyone who has a family or lives in a family, even if he or she isn't an Oblate. It's an ideal and goal to strive for.

We can say that habitual use of bullying tactics such as cutting and sarcastic remarks, hurtful jokes, and ridicule are designed for division, not union, don't reflect supernatural charity towards family members, and don't bind souls together in a search for God. Eradicating this behavior is not easy, especially when it is a product of generations of refinement. Yet with Christ all things are possible.

One of the first places to start is by not leaving our religion in the pew when we leave Mass. Second, practice the Ignatian Particular Examen throughout the day to direct us away from ourselves and toward God. Third, give place to God's will. Fourth, censor entertainment. What Hollywood and other media present as the norm is designed to point us to division and disruption. Fifth, take the saints as models and study their lives. Sixth, practice [The Golden Key](#). Make it public in the family that ugly behaviors towards one another are forbidden and arrange appropriate consequences for violations. Seventh, watch the company kept and end associations with others that are harmful to family relationships. Eighth, ask others for prayers to overcome the vice of abusiveness and break the cycle of abusiveness passed down through generations. Ninth, study the

Holy Family as an example and strive to imitate them.

Finally, confess sins regularly with a firm purpose of amendment. Ask God for a conversion of morals as St. Benedict urges.

Our families should be our treasures where our hearts reside and children are nurtured. Abusiveness handed down for generations can be stopped with the current one. It's all a matter of choice, moving out of a comfort zone habitual vice creates, and focusing on God. Those being abused, if they are adults, have to refuse to take it, and stop enabling the abusers. Really, plenty of help is available to correct this poisonous affliction, not the least of which is God's grace. "Be not afraid" as St. John Paul II said again and again. Although freedom from abusive behavior won't happen overnight, without a first step and determination it won't happen at all.

Let us pray today for all families fractured by abuse, that they will have the resolve to start anew on a path of healing and growth in the love of God.

[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/2014/04/29/ending-verbal-and-psychological-abuse-in-the-family/>  
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## Trust [at Children's Rosary]



Several months ago I asked one of my children why the Children's Rosary is important. He responded, "because it shows God we trust in Him". This was an answer I had not expected but upon reflection indeed it was true. To spend time in prayer is a way of showing Our Lord we trust in Him and believe He is listening to our prayers. As we approach Divine Mercy Sunday, it seemed a perfect time to reflect on a little portion of the Diary of St. Faustina in which Our Lord explains to St. Faustina how pleasing is a soul who trusts in Him.

**"I seek and desire souls like yours, but they are few. Your great trust in Me forces Me to continuously grant you graces. You have great and incomprehensible rights over My Heart, for you are a daughter of complete trust. You would not have been able to bear the magnitude of the love which I have for you if I had revealed it to you fully here on earth. I often give you a glimpse of it, but know that this is only an exceptional grace from Me. My love and mercy knows no bounds." (Diary of St. Faustina #718)**

The Children's Rosary at Holy Redeemer Parish in Menominee, Michigan will be meeting today at 5PM Central Time. Please consider joining the children in prayer. The children always pray for those unifying prayers with them.



## Faint Hue of Grace

“For we contend not with flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”

How the heck are we supposed to do it?

We’re attacked daily by temptations and by these dark powers who seem to rule the world. Every. flipping. day. Will it ever end?

Nope.

It gets exhausting.

Have you ever been affected by spiritual warfare? It’s definitely real, so it’s likely you have. Have you discounted it, saying “Oh, that was just a coincidence?” Hm. You may want to reconsider.

It can get so discouraging. One friend struggles with his family, another with her faith, another with his past, and still another with pretty much every aspect of her life. Spiritual attack comes at us from every side.

What’s a Catholic to do? Get down, see no hope for the world, think that junior year of college must be the end of everything good in life. Of course. Right?

Wrong.

Our battles aren’t with the things of this world. Our battles are based in our fight for salvation. Every day is an active battle for our soul, and sometimes, it’s easy to win that battle for the day. Other days, it’s pretty clear to us that satan is winning against us. But is he *really* winning?

“For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and in Him is plenteous redemption”.

Ultimately, our salvation is won already. We have to strive for it ourselves, and we can forfeit that salvation through our actions. (Get ye to confession, ya’ll!) But as we walk, and fight, and struggle, and ultimately conquer with and through the Lord, He is there as that loving shepherd who only seeks our good.

The other side, the dark side, looks pretty nice sometimes. Hence, temptation. And if you’ve been

to that place before, it can be even easier to go there. But if you've been there before, you also know how empty and dark and hopeless it feels. With the Lord, we find that redemption that the psalmist speaks of. Redemption which brings fullness and light and oh-so-much Hope.

So go fight that battle. Face the rulers of this world with your rosary and holy hour and confession. Tackle your temptations head-on through unity with the Lord.

### **Be Strong in the Faith.**

And pray with and for each other, not being afraid, because He has won for us.

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This contribution is available at <http://fainthueofgrace.weebly.com/1/post/2014/04/the-battle-of-our-lives.html>  
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# Walking the Way of the Cross in Dulce Nombre [at Hermano Juancito ]

The Stations of the Cross are a Catholic devotion, accompanying Jesus from his condemnation by Pilate to his burial in the tomb. A few years ago I walked the original Way of the Cross in Jerusalem, but each year I usually accompany some communities with the Stations in the streets of their villages.

This year the Dulce Nombre parish celebrated the Way of the Cross in the street of Dulce Nombre de Copán. Several hundred people from all over the parish gathered for the four hour procession, followed by Mass.



This year has been a hard year for the parish. The economic situation is poor, especially due to the *roya*

that affected much of the coffee crop. The security situation has worsened with a large number of murders (usually targeted) in the parish. There has been one kidnapping recently. There is a lot of concern about alcohol and drugs. A number of young people have left to try to get to the US to better the lives of their families and several have been deported back to Honduras. Padre German is trying to help the parish reorganize in order to have strong faith formation and functioning base communities – and it has not been easy. Some people have been a bit upset (since their power was threatened.)

Therefore it was good to see so many people to come to pray the Stations.

For the stations we edited a text describing the station, and then added a scripture quotation and a quote from martyred Salvadoran Archbishop Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Then we had three petitions, which were based on the reality of the parish.

Padre German had also asked people to bring crosses with the photos or names of people who had been murdered in the parish. The village of Montaña Adentro brought four crosses, three with photos. There were two crosses from Zone 3 of the parish with about 10 names.

At the twelfth station, Jesus dies on the cross, we left a time for people to mention those murdered. After the names on the crosses were read, we asked others to add names. There must have been about eight to ten more names of murdered, at least one from a few years ago.



I found myself greeting a lot of people, but I especially spent time hugging or standing near people from Montaña Adentro, including the wife and sons of one person killed (whom I knew) and the mother and brother of a seventeen year old who had been killed. All I could do at one time was to put my arm around one of the young men as his eyes filled with tears. This was a small way to accompany them in their sorrow.

Padre German was clear in his remarks at each station in his condemnation of violence and what causes the violence. He spoke very strongly about domestic violence.

But he also spoke of the importance to maintain the risen Lord as a source of hope in the midst of all this sorrow and tribulation.

The Mass was very simple, celebrated outside on the steps.



Children from the village of Bañaderas brought a crucifix that had been donated for the church. It is the image of the Black Christ of Esquipulas. In a society that is racist and classist, it moves me

to see that image.

The families from Montaña Adentro brought the four crosses commemorating their dead and placed them in front of the altar.



It was a moving and prayerful morning – and I am so glad I could be there with the people.

I'll be with another community on Good Friday morning for their celebration of the Way of the Cross. We'll again use the stations we prayed today – since Padre German has asked the villages to use the stations in their Good Friday prayer.

The text of the *Via Crucis* in Spanish is available [here](#).  
More photos of the *Via Crucis* can be found [here](#):

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This contribution is available at <http://hermanajuancito.blogspot.com/2014/04/walking-way-of-cross-in-dulce-nombre.html>

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# The Ecclesial Ministry and the Pope

With the Canonizations of Popes John Paul II and John XXIII, I found it fitting to discuss quickly what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches on the ecclesial ministry and the head of that ministry, the Pope. Tomorrow will be a glorious day in the life of the Catholic Church when two of its recent princes will be officially elevated to Sainthood.

Let us give Praise and Thanksgiving to Our Lord Jesus Christ for his abundant mercy and for sending us these two great priests, bishops, and Popes to serve the Church in the latter years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Let us also offer our gratitude to the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints and the Angels in the Heavenly Kingdom that watch and intercede for the entire Church. Come Holy Spirit Fill the Hearts of Your Faithful!

CCC 935: To proclaim the faith and to plant his reign, Christ sends his apostles and their successors. He gives them a share in his own mission. From him they receive the power to act in his person.

CCC 936: The Lord made St. Peter the visible foundation of his Church. He entrusted the keys of the Church to him. The bishop of the Church of Rome, successor to St. Peter, is “head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal Church on earth” (*Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 331).

CCC 937: The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, “supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls” (*Christus Dominus*, 2).

CCC 938: The Bishops, established by the Holy Spirit, succeed the apostles. They are “the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches” (*Lumen Gentium* 23).

CCC 939: Helped by the priests, their co-workers, and by the deacons, the bishops have the duty of authentically teaching the faith, celebrating divine worship, above all the Eucharist, and guiding their Churches as true pastors. Their responsibility also includes concern for all the Churches, with and under the Pope.

For a more extensive teaching on the above paragraphs, please read CCC 874-896 of Chapter 3, Article 9, Paragraph 4, Section I.

## Love is messy; Love is kind [at Mercy Me!]

I heard the new Justin Timberlake song on the radio the other day and it got me thinking about love.

I would not have even known it was the former boy-bander had the announcer not mentioned it. Timberlake really isn't my type, which I am sure is a huge relief to his wife, actress Jessica Biel.

Don't worry, Jess, I'm not interested in Mickey Mousing around with the former Mouseketeer.

It's just that his song got me thinking.

Maybe it's because I seldom listen to music in the car anymore since I enjoy the rare sound of silence so much more. Or, maybe it was the combination of the beautiful spring day and the right amount of coffee, but I was feeling philosophical about the pop song.

Timberlake was singing about love, and something about making some girl's dream come true by loving her.

If it was Jess, he didn't say so.

I think it went something like this: love, give it a chance, yadda, yadda, (optional gag,) and if you do he will make your dreams come true. This was set to a rhythmic beat that seemed too fast to slow dance to and too slow to fast dance to.

Maybe it's folding towels kind of music.

Is that a genre?

Anyway, I guess it was the part about the dreams coming true that I was stuck on.

When I think of dreams, I think of sleep; glorious sleep.

But maybe that's totally lame. (It probably is.)

So, I tried to be open-minded and think about what the heck Timberlake was crooning about.

*Dreams and love...* Hmm. Yeah, I just wasn't feeling it.

I have been married for 16 years. We met when we were 14. (No, not in a commune – but in high school, which admittedly is in some ways similar.) Anyway, we didn't date until after college so if you go by our dating years, it will be 20 years this summer that we have been together.

But those are just statistics, and numbers don't mean anything when you are talking about love.

Still, whether it's been 16 years or 20, I have never thought of my husband as my dream.

I don't think this would devastate him either (but I will certainly ask before I post this).

He is my dearest friend. The person I count on more than anyone else. Someone I have been really mean to and really nice to (mostly nice); a person who has seen me at my best and at my worst (mostly somewhere in between the two); and I could go on. But this is not a Hallmark card and the intimacies of my marriage are just that.

Ultimately, he is a lot of amazing things and a partner in the truest sense of the word, but he is not my dream.

Why?

Because I think that is a totally ridiculous sentiment! Seriously — it's just gross.

I don't mean to pick on Timberlake and because I am certain he quit reading this in paragraph two when I said he wasn't my type, I don't feel bad saying it's ridiculous.

I know it's a ballad and it's entertainment.

But I think it's a little bit of a problem when we envision romantic love as the end all, be all — the dream.

Thinking of love only as first kisses, long gazes and electric touches, it's no wonder so many people become disenchanted with their spouses.

All of that is flirtatious and often fleeting.

I would also find it a little annoying if my husband gazed at me anyway. Either speak to me or go unload the dishwasher. Don't just sit there and stare! Who does that?

It's weird.

And it's not that I am not a romantic that I say all of this.

Long stares aside, I love those moments when your breath catches in your throat.

But it's not sustainable. You would quite literally start to choke or gasp. Neither of which is particularly attractive.

Those moments are fun and they're giddy. They sell books, movies and even, songs.

But, I think when we get too caught up in them we set unrealistic expectations in our relationships.

It sets everyone up to fail because it ignores a fundamental truth about love.

*Love is messy.*

I know they didn't say that in Corinthians 13:4-13 which begins with "Love is patient, love is kind..." But maybe what's inferred is that love is messy, so be patient; love is messy, so be kind...

Real love isn't just romance. It is listening when you don't feel like hearing. Love is accepting when you want change. Love is trusting. It is surrender. It is scary.

Add a mortgage and a couple of kids and it gets even scarier.

How come no one sings about that?

No, it's not sexy but somehow, it's kind of beautiful.

No one dreams about a sink full of dishes or a sinking feeling when you have different opinions or different approaches. No one dreams about taking care of someone when they are sick or struggling with feelings of indifference or apathy. No one dreams about the fights or the vulnerabilities they expose.

Love is beautiful because it's so messy and it endures all the humanness, all the brokenness.

It's beautiful because being willing to surrender takes a lot more courage sometimes than a fight.

It's loving someone through moments, days or periods of time that for whatever reason feel like a nightmare.

When Jesus died on the cross for us, it was no dream.

It was a brutal reality. Yet, it was love.

It was the epitome and essence of love. It was sacrificial and unconditional.

Often our relationships with those we love require sacrifice. That's the messy part, but arguably it's the part that matters most. Knowing someone has seen the worst of you and still wants only the best for you, is pretty amazing.

I guess no one knows this better than Jesus. He sees us at worst, at our weakest and still, he remains.

Jesus deserved better than He got on the cross. I am not worthy of His love through anything I have

done but through everything that He has done.

I can't live up to His example or repay His sacrifice.

Still, I am humbled by that reality. And even though I may have to pick up my own cross seven times seventy times to show the people in my life genuine love. I would do it.

It's far from a dream, but somehow it's music to my ears – the kind I actually feel like I can dance to.

Categories: [catholic](#), [God](#), [inspiration](#), [love](#), [relationships](#), [Uncategorized](#) | Tags: [Jesus](#), [Justin Timberlake](#), [life](#), [love](#), [religion](#) | [Permalink](#).

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

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This contribution is available at <http://mercyme40.wordpress.com/2014/04/08/love-is-messy-love-is-kind/>  
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## Divine Mercy Sunday [at One Arrow Alone]

Last Sunday, two Popes were canonized by Pope Francis. I was there. With another seminarian, I went to the Vatican around 00.15 and crossed the Angel's Bridge at 00.49. Not too far along the Via della Conciliazione between the Angel's Fortress and St. Peter's Square, we found we could no longer advance, so we went back a short distance and sat down in front of a screen.

People were lying down on the ground on mats and in sleeping bags. Others had brought chairs. A statue of the Blessed Virgin that stood to our right had been decorated with a scarf that said 'POLSKA'.

For some reason, either because the crowd had gone back or because a new stretch of road had opened, we found out that we could walk further, perhaps around 2am. At the next screen, we debated whether we should go on or sit down. We went on, and got stuck. That is how it started.

For about seven hours, the two of us stood in a road full of people, with more and more coming from behind. Groups around us sat down on chairs or on the ground, until there was another small wave of forward motion and we could advance a number of steps. We were carried along by the movement; the crowd was packed together densely, with people pushing and shoving at every new surge.

Twice I almost fell asleep standing and flailed, hitting the people around me, thankfully not their heads. A third time my friend snapped his fingers in front of my face a few times before I realized what was happening.

'You can try to sit if you like,' he said, and I lowered myself to the ground (which was difficult enough) for a short while. But he remained upright for a full twelve hours or more.

Eventually we were separated, but the periodic movement went on. In the early morning light, I found that I was close to the first screen before St. Peter's Square. Closer was hardly possible.

People kept coming in from and going away to the side of the road, where more movement was possible; every time someone passed, I had to shift my backpack; in the end I had to lift it above my head.

As this was very inconvenient, I decided to forgo the place I had waited so long to obtain; I went off to the side and walked back a short way, but still in sight of the first screen. The view was not ideal where I ended up, but it was a bit quieter and I could sit down for a while.

I suppose there was great excitement when the Pope arrived, but I don't remember; in my fatigue, it all seemed rather muted.

Around ten o'clock the canonization Mass started with the Litany of the Saints. The sound was not properly synchronized; for every phrase there were two echoes, so that it was difficult to hear or to sing along.

At the first reading, a girl offered me a seat, for which I was very grateful. During the Liturgy of the Word, many people were dozing off or simply sleeping. It seemed ironic to me that those who had shown the greatest fervour in coming here were the least able to participate in the actual Mass.

During the homily, the kind girl next to me fell asleep, her body folded double. After a while the lady on my other side asked if she was breathing. I did not check, but said she was.

When everyone rose for the Creed, the girl remained where she was. During the offertory, the lady asked me again if she was breathing. Thinking that I had better make sure, I shook her until she opened her eyes. 'Are you all right?' I said. 'We were worried for a second.'

She told me that she was from Poland. I said I was from the Netherlands, and introduced myself. She said her name was Dominika – which my mind translated as 'the Sunday girl'. Beautiful and apt.

Communion was a holy chaos; sometimes people held up their hands to indicate they still wanted to receive Communion; we had to wrestle and be pushed towards the priest, and away from him after receiving. There was really no graceful way of doing it.

I am still glad to have been there for this once-in-a-lifetime event, though it feels like I missed it mentally. Well, it has been recorded; I can watch it again. It was worth the vigil, for the memory and the kindness exchanged.

And, as my friend later pointed out: though all sacred hosts are of equal value, it's still special to have received one consecrated by two Popes.

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# Priesthood, and the Call to Holiness [at Renew The Church Blog]

Many years ago, a priest for whom I have great respect said to me during a conversation about vocations, “We don’t need more priests. We have too many priests.” I was so stunned that I did not know how to understand his comment, nor how to respond.

I think I understand now. We don’t need more priests; we need more holy priests. My friend was a holy priest, and thanks be to God for making our paths cross. There are other kinds of priests, who cause great grief to the Church. Thanks be to God also for Pope Francis, who has made public his awareness of the need for holy priests – priests who live the holy vocation, who serve in the name of Christ our Lord. Pope Francis recently received in audience Monday seminarians from a Pontifical College at the Vatican. In [his comments to the seminarians](#), he included this:

You, dear seminarians, are not preparing to engage in a profession, to become employees of a company or of a bureaucratic organization. We have so many, so many half way priests. It is a sorrow, that they do not succeed in reaching the fullness: they have something about them of employees, a bureaucratic dimension and this does no good to the Church. I advise you, be careful that you do not fall into this! You are becoming pastors in the image of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, to be like Him and in His person in the midst of his flock, to feed his sheep.

“We have so many, so many half way priests.” Half way priests. This is one way to describe the many who seemed to begin a response to a holy calling, but who chose a “compromise” along the way. Men who perhaps really heard, at the first, a call to leave the world and follow Jesus with all their heart, mind, soul and strength – but they wanted a compromise with the world, half way. It does not work. Half way does not work, in one’s relationship with God.

Do we need more priests? We might say we need fewer half way priests, and more whole-hearted, wholly consecrated, wholly committed – holy – priests. We don’t need employees of a [religious] “company”, or CEOs of one either. We need pastors of souls, for the Kingdom of God.

St. Augustine saw, discerned and wrote of the irreconcilable clash of the two loves that vie for the heart of a man, the two gods, the two callings in the souls of men. Every man must choose and choose definitively: I will follow God, or I will follow men and this world. I will seek His will, or I will pander to theirs. [Augustine said it](#) this way (City of God, Bk XIV Ch 28):

Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience.

There is no compromise! But through the ages men have tried to make a compromise with God, to find a middle ground, to have it both ways – indeed to have both cities, the City of Man and the City of God. Men and women are tempted to this impossible compromise – laity, clergy, religious and secular. There is no compromise. “Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4)

This leads to a thought that ought to be very troubling. Yes, among the Catholic laity are citizens of the City of God, thanks be to God. These are Catholics seeking holiness, seeking sanctity, seeking to be faithful to God and to His intentions for us – willing to say “no!” to anything but God and His will. But there are also among the lay members of the Church, citizens of the City of Man who are trying to work an impossible compromise, trying to be acceptable to God while still following the loves, ambitions, and values of the secular world. They can be active in all the social events, fund raisers, committees and boards of the parish, but they are lukewarm spectators during the Mass.

Among the clergy, and the consecrated religious – those who are religious leaders – there are, as well, citizens of the City of God, and others who are citizens of the City of Man, seeking to work the easy but impossible compromise with God. These, who wear the titles and clothing of the City of God, are in their hearts citizens of the world, of the City of Man – “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” For the clergy and consecrated religious, the burden and responsibility before God are great, and thus the moral imperative is grave. Jesus was strong in His warnings and judgement against the scribes, and the Pharisees. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in.” (Mt 23:13)

Yes, the result of religious leaders loving the world and seeking a middle ground – and thus avoiding the cross, promised by Jesus – is hypocrisy within themselves and grave scandal to those who innocently follow them. Their Gospel is not of life, but of the world, and it is received and loved by men who love their sins. But Jesus warned, in fact to His disciples, “It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin.” (Lk 17:2) A religious leader, a guide for others seeking God, must – must – be true to God and seek His approval in all things, and not pander to or seek the approval of men. He must seek to please God, and not be a man-pleaser. He can do good for men truly, only if he is true to God. The religious leader can be a blessing for men only if he seeks the blessings of God in all things. He must be a man of prayer, in communion with God, before he can speak a helpful word to others. Pope Francis urged those seminarians to the path of holiness:

And this path means to meditate every day on the Gospel, to transmit it with your life and your preaching; it means to experience the mercy of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And never leave this! Go to confession, always! And in this way you will become generous and merciful ministers because you will feel the mercy of God upon you. It means to nourish yourselves with faith and with love of the Eucharist, to nourish the Christian people with it; it means to be men of prayer, to become the voice of Christ that praises the Father and

intercedes continually for brothers (cf. Hebrews 7:25).

The advice that the Pope is giving the seminarians should seem obvious. Be men of prayer! Be men close to the mind and heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd! Use time every day to reflect and meditate on the Gospel!

We might add some advice along the same lines. Do not be seekers of the praise and glory of men! Jesus said, “How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (Jn 5:44) Do not pander to their desires, making light of the Gospel with easy truths and funny stories, making short the holy sacrifice of Mass to keep from offending their schedules, catering to the comfort of parish contributors while ignoring the mission of the Church, and the true spiritual needs of the sheep. Take precious time with the Lord – before the Blessed Sacrament, in His Holy Word. Meditate upon and pray the Scripture Readings personally, in quiet and solitude, before the Lord. Be the man who unfolds His words to reveal Jesus the Word for the people in Holy Mass. Be the man who “trembles” at His Word! (Is 66:2) Be the man who finds his life in His Word, Jesus!

We need to pray for the Church! We need to pray for holy bishops, and priests, and deacons, and religious sisters and brothers – and all lay Catholics! All are called to *holiness*! None are called to mediocrity, to lukewarmness, to half-heartedness in the things of God. All are called to holiness. All are called to His Cross, and are given a cross of their own, to carry and to follow behind Him. All are called to offer their lives as a living sacrifice, in union with His, which is our spiritual worship. (Rom 12:1)

The priestly vocation deserves to be lived faithfully, generously and heroically. The Pope challenged the seminarians whom he addressed to take a sober assessment of themselves, and their personal response to the call of God. He said,

If you – but I say this from my heart, without offending! – if you, if one of you, is not willing to follow this way, with these attitudes and these experiences, it is better that you have the courage to look for another way. There are many ways in the Church of giving Christian witness and so many ways that lead to sanctity. In the ministerial following of Jesus there is no room for mediocrity, that mediocrity that leads always to use the holy People of God for one’s own advantage. But Heaven help evil pastors, because the Seminary, let’s say the truth, is not a refuge for the many limitations we might have, a refuge from psychological lacks or a refuge because I don’t have the courage to go forward in life and I seek there a place that defends me. No, it’s not this.

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This contribution is available at <http://renewthechurch.wordpress.com/2014/04/20/priesthood-and-the-call-to-holiness/>

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## In Defense of Kirsten Dunst [at Catholic Girl Problems]

Actress Kirsten Dunst is being slammed by the media for voicing her opinion on traditional gender roles:

*“I feel like the feminine has been a little undervalued. We all have to get our own jobs and make our own money, but staying at home, nurturing, being the mother, cooking – it’s a valuable thing my mom created. And sometimes, you need your knight in shining armour. I’m sorry. You need a man to be a man and a woman to be a woman. That’s why relationships work.”*

I couldn’t agree with her more.



God created the sexes in His image and likeness, and both carry with them characteristics of the Divine. While a list of these characteristics would take nearly all day for me to list, I will mention the most obvious. Like God, women have the ability to seduce with their beauty and nurture with a love unconditional to the point of dying for the object. Men, on the other hand, are strong both physically and spiritually – designed to provide for and protect at all costs. Combine the two, and you see the Divine imprint in the flesh.

But modern women (for the most part) have rejected their feminine design, as evidenced by the

responses to Dunst's honest statement:

*"Kirsten Dunst is not paid to write gender theory, so it shouldn't surprise anyone that she's kind of dumb about it."* – Erin Gloria Ryan, Jezebel Magazine.

*"Dunst has some funny ideas about what a relationship should be like."* – Elle Magazine

*"Kirsten Dunst has shared her thoughts on gender roles in a relationship – and we're kind of wishing she hadn't."* – Colleen Nika, Refinery29

*"She's regressing to a 1950's archetype of womanhood."* – Ariane Sommer (some writer of something I've never heard of).

*"She's an insufferable person who thinks that women should know their place is in the home."* – Uproxx (whatever that is).

*"Her interview is messed up."* – The Gloss (a beauty website).

I don't get it. One would think Dunst said all women should be isolated to the home wearing burqas so as to cover every inch of their bodies until their "masters" came home from work and demanded supper before forcing crude, sexual demands upon their wives. Honestly, what do women have to be so angry about in this day and age? Our foremothers fought for the right to vote, and thanks to their fortitude, we now have that right. We're even about to [receive equal pay](#) as men in the workforce, so what else is there?

What's funny is these magazines bashed Dunst on the premise of "respect for women," yet they seem to go out of their way to achieve the extreme opposite. As if the title of "Jezebel" weren't debasing enough, the magazine's online tagline reads "celebrity, sex, and fashion for women." Quoting covers for Elle Magazine is even more interesting:

*“Sex and Love: 70,000 Men and Women on Why they Commit and Why they Cheat”*

*“More Sex; More Money; More Respect”*

*“How Affairs Make My Marriage Stronger”*

Don't get the wrong impression about me, however. My intent is not to bash these publications, but rather to make a point. There is something very powerful about the feminine, something which is in short supply these days. The ability to not just nurture and care for a family, but to *desire* to do so; the intrigue of beauty veiled modestly rather than cheaply exposed for the masses; the regard for one's own self so as to allow pursuit of a man, as opposed to desperately chasing one down at all costs – all of these feminine qualities and more are nearly extinct, and the effect upon our society is evident.

Take our youth, for example. One thing the “Donna Reed generation” provided was a stable home, filled with structure. The husband worked, while the wife stayed at home and practically ran the place – from cleaning to budgeting. When school was out, the children came home to a healthy household in which they promptly did their homework before heading outside to play for a few hours. Meanwhile, Mom would be putting the finishing touches on dinner, which would be enjoyed by the entire family – together – prior to heading off to bed for the night.

I don't mean to imply that women should “reclaim their place” in the home, but there was some value to the gender roles as evidenced in decades past. The stability children crave was plentiful; not like today, when school shootings (and most recently, [stabbings](#)) have become a weekly occurrence. Do you know they have [bullet-proof backpacks](#) now? What's even sadder, I don't think the idea is so bad, which begs to ask...

What the heck went wrong?

Women hold more power than they realize, and sadly, we've abandoned such power. Well, scratch that. I wouldn't say we've abandoned our power, so much as we've redirected it...and in the worst way imaginable. As these magazine covers indicate, "feminism" has become the ability to arouse sexual hunger in any way possible, to anyone who will notice. No longer do we embrace our loving, nurturing, soft side. We are creatures on the hunt – demanding respect, while at the same time, disrespecting the very qualities which make us so beautiful in the first place.

So if we're angry about anything, it's not our right to vote or get paid for equal work as our male counterparts. We're angry because we want to be recognized as more than sexual objects for male use, but what we don't realize is we're shooting ourselves in the foot towards this effort. There is nothing wrong with loving a man, nurturing him and his children, keeping a clean home for them, and cooking healthy meals. All of these actions and more define the feminine as God intended, but when abandoned, rip a hole in relationships and eventually result in the disintegration we see in our world today.

I think the brunt of criticism against Dunst came from her "knight in shining armour" comment, but again, I couldn't agree with her more. Traditional gender roles (once again, defined by God) have women as the softer sex, while men are the protectors. How many little girls pretend to be princesses in need of rescue, as opposed to the prince charging in on horseback with sword in hand? The desire to be pursued, cherished, and someone worth fighting for is innate in every woman, from the earliest of ages, and should indicate how she is regarded in the Divine's eyes.

We are His princesses – daughters of the King of kings – and until we embrace how He made us, we will never find the happiness we crave.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicgirlproblems.com/2014/04/in-defense-of-kirsten-dunst.html>  
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## Staying above the fog [at Mere Observations]



Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog, painted by Caspar David Friedrich (1818)

Tonight I'll read the final chapter in the long and wonderful saga that is *Kristin Lavransdatter*. Among many things in her life Kristin has lost her honor, her wealth, her husband and not a few of her children. She has not lost her faith.

The passage at the end of this post is from one of the final chapters in Book Three: The Cross. I read it last night after getting out of bed and sitting under a living room lamp in the early morning hours. I've been doing that a lot lately as we prepare for graduation and the transition that it represents. I've stayed up late into the night as I've been unable to shut off my brain considering the end of this phase of our lives and the gestation of a new one. In this chair I've prayed for my family's health, in particular my wife as she underwent one form of major surgery in March. I did it again last night because just prior to our senior's baseball game she had received a call from her doctor's office regarding the results of last week's mammogram. Scans had revealed something, and this "something" was enough to warrant concern and a return trip this morning for more tests. So I wait, and gasp for air while grasping at calm.

Each night, and again tonight, I sit in this chair long after my family is asleep. A rosary in one hand with my breviary or my bible in the other. I try hard to remember that no one has added a single hour to their lives by worrying. (Matthew 6:27) Other nights I sit with a finger or two of scotch and spend an hour or so with Kristin and her clan. Tonight will be the last time I do this. As I do whenever I have spent so much time with a character I enjoy and the book is over I will mourn for a little while. And then I'll move on.

Kristin is looking back on her life from a place that is above the valley in which she has spent her

years. Not a physical valley, but the valley that is the story of her life. It's locations, people and events. It is a plane that I myself ascend to now and then whenever I face a transition such as this. It's why I use the painting at the top of this post as my avatar in WordPress and other places. Life can get pretty foggy when we're caught up in the business of living with all its frantic pacing and activity. It is when we are able to make our stand in one place, on solid ground above the fray, that we are able to look across the valley of our lives and breathe in the clarity that comes with the clear air.

For me, it is where I remember that trait or virtue called Gratitude.

*For every breath, for every day of living*

*This is my Thanksgiving.*

~Don Henley, My Thanksgiving (Inside Job, 2000)

I am trying to be grateful, though I admit that this choking fog threatens to overwhelm me many hours during the course of a day.

One day, whether in this year or a decade or more from now, the busyness will end. There will be no more baseball games, no more graduation parties to plan. No more fighting or laughing or roughhousing. No more barking. No more dog crates and blankets to clean after our beagle gets sick as he did this morning.

One day, whether in this year or a decade or more from now, I may find myself alone. Suddenly I will have the quiet and that form of peace that comes with an empty house. Or maybe I'll get out of the house, grab my walking stick and hit the open road.



Still from The Way (2010) starring Martin Sheen

One day, whether in this year or a decade or more from now, I will need to focus on staying above the fog and not suffocating in the solitude. Above the fog I will find and cling to Christ.

And I will be grateful.

\*\*\*\*\*

*But as she talked to the man who was the last remaining witness to the interplay of sowing and harvesting in her life together with her dead husband, then it seemed to her that she had come to view her life in a new way: like a person who clammers up to a ridge overlooking his home parish, to a place where he has never been before, and gazes down on his own valley. Each farm and fence, each thicket and creek bed are familiar to him, but he seems to see for the first time how everything is laid out on the surface of the earth that bears the lands. And with this new view she suddenly found words to release both her bitterness toward Erlend and her anguish for his soul, which had departed life so abruptly. He had never known rancor; she saw that now, and God had seen it always.*

*She had finally come so far that she seemed to be seeing her own life from the uppermost summit of a mountain pass. Now her path led down into the darkening valley, but first she had been allowed to see that in the solitude of the cloister and in the doorway of death someone was waiting for her who had always seen the lives of people the way villages look from a mountain crest. He had seen sin and sorrow, love and hatred in their hearts, the way the wealthy estates and poor hovels, the bountiful acres and the abandoned wastelands are all borne by the same earth. And he had come down among them, his feet had wandered among the lands, stood in castles and in huts, gathering the sorrows and sins of the rich and the poor, and lifting them high up with him on the cross. Not my happiness or my pride, but my sin and my sorrow, oh sweet Lord of mine.*

~[Kristin Lavransdatter](#) by Sigrid Undset

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This contribution is available at <http://jeffwalker.wordpress.com/2014/04/29/staying-above-the-fog/>  
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## Four Victories [at Justin's Corner]

The last three weeks, including Holy Week, have seen four significant victories for the American people and their God-given inalienable rights against the fierce onslaught of their twin enemies, Big Government and Big Business.

Here in Virginia, earlier this month, for the first time in our state's history, our governor, Terry McAuliffe, had denied a permit to hold a prayer service on the National Day of Prayer at noon in front of the state capitol, using the excuse that this is the hour when people eat their lunch on the capitol grounds. This prayer service has always been held at noon, which allows people who work to participate in it during their lunch break. In a break from this longstanding tradition, the governor allowed the prayer service to be held at 1 PM instead, which would have prevented many people from participating. The Family Foundation raised a storm of protest, rightly pointing out that this was a blatant case of discrimination against religious believers that could not be tolerated. Republicans, Democrats and even the ACLU joined us in denouncing the governor's move. As a result, on April 11 Governor McAuliffe relented and announced that the prayer service could be held on the capitol grounds at noon as usual. This was a victory for religious liberty and a defeat for radical secularism.

In Colorado, a terrible abortion bill that would have repealed all state restrictions on the barbaric practice was defeated on Holy Thursday, just two days after Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver rallied Catholics across his diocese to pray in front of the state capitol on Tuesday, April 15 at 3 PM. Kudos to Archbishop Aquila for being a true leader and demonstrating the courage of his convictions by challenging the culture of death head on. This was a victory for the right to life of the innocent unborn in Colorado and a defeat for the abortion cartel, led by Planned Parenthood, which is desperate to stay in business as long as possible while public demand for abortion continues to decline steadily.

On April 16, Vermont became the first state in the Union to pass a law requiring all food products sold in the state that contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to be labeled as containing GMOs. GMOs artificially alter the genetic structure of food crops, messing with the Creator's perfect design to produce bigger yields or make them resistant to chemical fertilizers. Although the purveyors of GMO crops claim that they are safe and healthy, a mass of troubling evidence is accumulating that tells a very different story: GMOs are harmful and destructive to human and animal health and the environment. Deep down, most Americans are rightly wary of GMO food products; surveys confirm that more than 80 percent of them want GMO food products labeled so that they can avoid purchasing them. We certainly have the right to know what's in our food and how it was grown. But Monsanto, America's leading producer of GMO food crops, has been fighting tooth and nail to protect its massive profits, spending millions of dollars on advertising campaigns to defeat GMO labeling legislation in California and other states and corrupting the FDA to ensure that GMOs remain legally hidden in thousands upon thousands of U.S. food

products every year. The passage of this GMO labeling law in Vermont was a victory for American food safety, public health, and the right to know what's in our food--and a defeat for Monsanto, whose unscrupulous abuse of technology for profit and utter disregard for public health and the environment are finally getting the attention they deserve.

And finally, on April 22, Tuesday of Easter week, the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that an unborn child is a person, fully entitled to the same protections of the law as persons who have already been born. Such a ruling by any U.S. state or federal court is long overdue. Unborn children are persons with the same basic rights as born persons, and all courts and branches of government have a serious obligation to uphold that fact and protect those inalienable rights. Thank God there are at least a few good judges and one good court in this country that have enough common sense to render a just decision and have not been corrupted by Planned Parenthood and NARAL! This is a completely rational and logical decision that simply recognizes the objective truth of the matter—now well established by science—that the unborn child is a human person. This is a landmark decision properly grounded in natural law that protects the human rights of the innocent unborn in Alabama. Hopefully, other state courts will begin to follow suit with similar rulings to protect the right to life of the innocent unborn children in their jurisdictions as well. Moreover, this significant ruling marks the first time since *Roe v. Wade* that any U.S. court has explicitly acknowledged the personhood of the unborn child. Thus it signals a turning point—the beginning of a trend toward the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. The misguided judges who saddled us with that horrible travesty of justice back in 1973 admitted that if the personhood of the unborn child could be established, then the rights of the fetus would be specifically guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, which forbids depriving any innocent person of life. Such personhood being now definitively established, the conclusion is obvious: *Roe v. Wade* has no legal foundation in the Constitution.

These four victories for the unborn, for religious liberty, and for food safety underscore the importance of active involvement in the political arena by concerned citizens. Powerful corporate interests may increasingly dominate state and federal policies today and many bad things are happening as a result of ever more widespread government corruption, but that is no excuse to throw in the towel and say, "There's nothing I can do to change things." That's a lie from the Father of Lies, the Devil, and one of his choice strategies to further his wicked agenda is to convince good people to do nothing to stop it. There are two crucial things we can do to make a difference: 1) pray and 2) take action. Prayer is powerful and can change the course of history; it has done so many times. And timely and concerted political action can halt the march of destructive policies that would infringe on our God-given rights; it has done so many times. Praying and getting involved in the political process do make a difference. These are our duties as good Catholics and good citizens, which we should perform out of love for God, our neighbor, and our country both in good times and in bad. The fact that our nation today is a shell of its former self makes it more imperative, not less imperative, that we its citizens daily unite in offering our prayers, sacrifices, words and actions in service to our country to help restore its former greatness. As long as we continue to do that, there is hope for our nation's future.

Someone once wrote that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. Today our liberties are under attack as never before by an unholy alliance between Big Government and Big Business, driven and justified by the anti-God and inhuman ideologies of radical secularism and insatiable materialism. We must remain vigilant in defending our inalienable God-given rights and liberties--including the right to life of innocent unborn children, our right to pray and worship God publicly, and our right to safe and healthy food--against the attacks of these twin enemies of the American people, and we must not rest until those rights and liberties threatened and denied us are fully restored and protected.

Let freedom ring!

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## How Strong Is Your Belief? [at Another Matt's blog]

In between cheers celebrating the [defeat](#) of Colorado Senate Bill 175 last night, I was observing the curious demeanor of the bill's proponents during the aftermath of the bill's striking. The Democratic senators who had so fervently pushed the potentially landmark abortion legislation until April 15 had withered, dropping like flies and avoiding constituents' questions in the face of a sudden mountain of opposition.

The bill didn't even reach the stage of floor debate before its main sponsor, Sen. Andy Kerr, [decided to pull the plug](#). Kerr shifted into reverse when he saw hundreds of pro-life demonstrators gathered on the steps of the Capitol building, led by Denver archbishop Samuel Aquila, peacefully but ardently fighting against his bill.



It was surprising, to say the least, that those on the side of so-called public opinion would back down without so much as a discussion on the Senate floor. After all, the bill they proposed would protect a woman's abortion rights from being rescinded, in any way, in the future. One might think that solid backing from left-leaning Coloradans should have provided enough cushion for Kerr to keep up his fight, at least through the debate stage.

But that wasn't the case. Kerr backed down while pointing a finger across the aisle. He cowered in the face of opposition.

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Yesterday, I happened across another story, this one about a woman who lived in the early 300s in modern-day Spain. Engratia, as she's known today, was fighting in a battle over the right to life, as well (in a manner of speaking).

Devoutly Christian herself in a time where identifying as such was illegal, Engratia was outraged at the merciless killing of her brothers and sisters going on under in the region of Saragossa under Governor Dacian. She left her home and traveled to Saragossa in an attempt to change the governor's dispositions, resolving to succeed or die trying.

After somehow receiving an audience with the governor, Engratia reproached him for snuffing out those people who had done nothing but adored God and despised vanity. She, not shying away from her own status as a Christian, was thrown in prison along with 18 companions. Though her companions were killed quickly, Engratia had her sides ripped open with iron hooks, one of her breasts cut off, and part of her liver pulled out. In such dire condition, she was thrown back into prison and eventually died of her wounds.

Through it all, she never once renounced her belief in what she was fighting for.

So, am I saying that Sen. Kerr should be willing to be drawn and quartered for his bill? Not necessarily, but I am pointing out a lack of virtue on the part of him and his fellow proponents. Nowhere to be found was even a hint of fortitude, a hint of courage, a hint of defense of what he supposedly "believed in".

How many of us carry out beliefs only because they're seen as favorable to our 10 closest friends, to the people whose opinions we value, to a group we want to be a part of? And how often do those opinions change as soon as it stops being the fashion?

I know that's still the case in a lot of aspects of my own life. So many times have I reflected on my day and realized the little places where I sold out to what was right, having merely responded to avoid a conflict or to appease another person.

Believing in something and witnessing to it no matter what those around you are saying, right or wrong, is virtuous. Now, wrong is still wrong, but Jesus Himself was nevertheless more in favor of choosing a side. He said in Revelation, "I wish you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."

Believe in something, even to the point of being willing to die for it. And if you aren't willing to die for it, figure out why not.

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Find me on [Facebook](#)

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# IUD Nightmare

I don't normally write a ton about my personal life other than goals and updates with those. However this week we had a bit of a health scare with me.

Back in September I picked up a book "Beginning Apologetics 5" for our mom's group at Church before Mass one morning. I sat in the pew flipping through and began an almost 4 month battle over a choice I made over 2 years before after David was born. This was all before I had decided to convert to Catholicism. I had an IUD and now was learning so much more about what it was. With the help and guidance of several people in our parish I had it removed today, but it wasn't as simple as I hoped it would have been.

I know that God was giving me the information because he knew the time was right and my heart and mind would be open to receive it.

I have decided to convert to Catholicism and with that I am looking at life very differently, I had begun to have a lot of guilt over the birth control that we chose after David was born, Mirena (A IUD with progestogen- The intrauterine device with progestogen is a hormonal intrauterine device classified as a long-acting reversible contraceptive method. It is one of the most effective forms of birth control. [Wikipedia](#)). I have learned how it truly works in more ways than I knew and didn't realize that my body was basically self aborting each month because the egg could still become fertilized but not implant with where the IUD sits, I believe life begins at conception. Along with this of this I was having other issues as well, I gained about 20 pounds since having it put in, went from enough milk for triplets to David being on JUST formula. And let's not forget the cramping I have had for almost 2 years.

So, I discussed this with Kevin and as a couple we made the decision to have my IUD removed and begin using the Creighton Model of Natural Family Planning until we decide we are ready for baby number 2!

I went in on Tuesday morning to have the IUD removed, a very simple procedure that normally takes just a few minutes. Well she couldn't find my strings. I immediately broke down because I had recently done so much research over the past few weeks about this particular IUD and knew that this meant that it could be embedded in my uterus or even punctured through my uterus. These 2 issues would require surgery to take care of the problem. I also knew that it could mean that we may not be able to have more children on our own. This all hit me very hard. We talked for a few minutes and believe that it shifted late winter/early spring of 2012 so almost 2 years now. The Nurse Practitioner I was seeing immediately began making calls to my Creighton Practitioner to figure out where we could go from there, she was very supportive both spiritually as well as emotionally. I made the call to Kevin to sort of fill him in but knew he was at work and didn't want to get into too much detail. I texted my great friends who are very supportive of me and my

recent journey for some emotional support because there wasn't much that my loving husband could do from work. Oh the icing on the cake was that all of this happened on my 28th birthday.

When I got home Emma had decorated the house with streamers I had left out to put up in the attic later that were left from David's birthday last year (been cleaning out some closets this new year to become more organized), David was running around pointing saying "Party, party, Mom's party." But all I could do is cry because I was so afraid that this could be the end of us thinking of expanding our family with out adoption of foster children. Emma baked a cake, and Kevin made me my favorite dinner but I couldn't bring myself to eat any of it. I felt so depressed and upset all I wanted to do was lay in my bed and cry. Some of you personally know me and know that I am not one to lay around unless I am truly sick or have worked all night and am sleeping.

Later that day I got a call with some information of a local OBGYN who was going to see me this week, and the information I needed to call him and set up an appointment. I called and took the earliest appointment they could get for me today (Friday the 10th) at 10:30 am. They told me that he can usually get them with a special tiny hook, if it isn't embedded or caused other issues.

I got some rest that night, woke up feeling a bit better and went about my day, met with my Creighton Practitioner and got the information I needed to begin that and was told they had some things set up already in case I was going to need minor sugary to have the IUD removed.

Thursday I spent time with my little dude and caught up around the house and on my coupons. I still felt down and was worried what I would find out the next morning but was trying to remain calm because David had picked up on my anxiety and it was really affecting him.

This morning I woke up on edge and nervous as all could be, was some what shaky and sick to my stomach. I checked in with friends and was reassured that they were all praying for the best outcome. Headed out to the doctor and met a great one at that! He came in spoke with me and left so I could get ready to hopefully end this nightmare.

I hate going to the OBGYN to begin with because I always find it uncomfortable, however this was way worse they ended up having to use the small hook to get a hold of the IUD to remove it, I cried and yelled owe a few times. The doctor was great and offered to stop but I just wanted it out and him to continue as long as he wasn't meeting any resistance. Finally it was out he helped me sit up and told me they would bring me some Ibuprofen.

I still am crampy this evening but expect it to resolve tomorrow. I am writing this to bring to your attention that though these all seem so great there are true risks and side effects with them. I had concerns when I went to have it put in and was reassure by my doctor at the time that this was in my best interest and wouldn't affect my milk supply. We are taught to trust our medical providers but we have to be our best advocate because only we truly know our bodies.

If anyone were to ask me now would I recommend any form of conventional birth control I would say NO! Especially not an IUD! The more I have discussed this, over this past week with other

women the more I hear of other having issues with the Mirena! I am just glad that God put the right people in my life to help me in taking care of all of this quickly and safely and to support me in a time where I really needed it!

I will continue to update y'all with how I am doing now that it is out in the coming weeks, I am really hoping that I will begin to lose some weight soon!

Also if you have an IUD and your doctor like mine told you not to worry about checking your strings I would either look into it or look in to seeing the doctor to have them checked, because had I been doing that we may have known sooner that my IUD was missing!

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## Rejoice, Rabbi [at Treasures of the Church]



*"And immediately approaching Jesus [Judas] said, 'Rejoice, rabbi': and he kissed Him."--Mt 26:49*

The apostate who ran to the high priests with the Bread of Heaven still in his mouth betrayed our Lord with a kiss. What is a symbol of filial love, the kiss (φιληματος), Judas turned into a symbol of betrayal. He who was one of the twelve chosen by Christ to follow Him gave full rein to his greed and allowed Satan entrance into his heart. Since he betrayed with an act of love the Lover of Mankind, it is fitting that Jesus said, "It would be better for this man if he were never born." And if the betrayal by an act of love were not horrific enough, ponder the words Judas spoke: "Rejoice, rabbi."

"Rejoice." It is the same greeting spoken to the Theotokos those decades before by the angel at the announcement of the Lord's coming. It is the greeting the risen Lord Himself will speak to the myrrh-bearers on the Paschal morn. How hideous, then, that the apostate spoke the same word in betrayal! And yet there is a hint of truth in that greeting, unbeknownst to Judas. For it is Jesus' joy to do His Father's will: for this He came into the world. It is His will that Jesus be crucified, that He may be risen and raise mankind with Himself. Jesus knows the path that He is following; He knows the prophets, and He knows what is to come. Thus He sees true joy hidden in these horrific events: He sees the Resurrection to come. Because we, too, see this, we call this day Good Friday.

By this act of twisted love the betrayer opened the door for the events of today, when Jesus is crucified by the call of the crowd and the consent of the guards. But he also opened the door for the events of the Sabbath and the Sunday, for by His death Christ will break the gates of Hell and trample death, rising to new life while bringing mankind with Him.

But today is the day of the Crucifixion and the Burial: today is Jesus' body laid in a new tomb after being anointed with spices and wrapped in clean linen. Today we mourn, but we expect what is to

come, the miraculous and glorious events Judas unwittingly foretold in his greeting of betrayal:  
"Rejoice."

*When time had come for Christ to die,  
and Judas had betrayed Him by  
a twisted kiss for silver's gain,  
the sky did not hold back its rain.*

*His Blood upon the ground did fall  
as guards brought Him the bitter gall.  
The sun did darken in that hour  
for sorrow did it overpower.*

*In two spots did blood run that day,  
from the betrayer, from betrayed,  
in Akeldama's soiled field,  
on Golgotha where thunder pealed.*

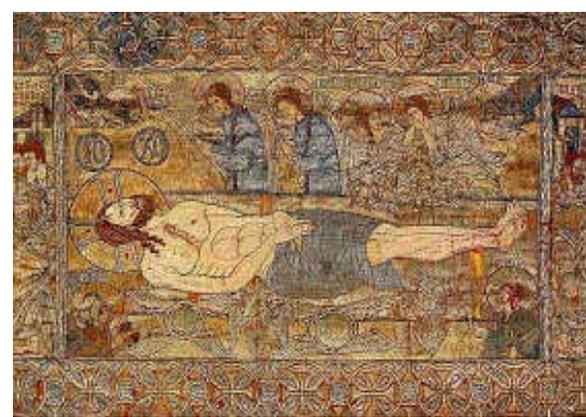
*Sixth hour passed when He was nailed,  
Ninth hour now the One who's hailed  
as He Who comes in the Lord's name  
will die the death of the infame.*

*One thief to Heaven, one to Hell:  
the Psalm is now the Lord's death knell.*

*And letting out His final breath,  
the Christ has fin'lly come to death.*

*Silence now reigns upon the earth,  
soaked by the blood of countless worth.*

*In sorrow is now sealed the Tomb,  
of glorious birth the second womb.*



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## Mother May I [at parishpriest]

Rev 12:1; John 19:27

We begin the month of May honoring Mary, the Blessed Mother. Throughout the globe there will be processions with flowers and perhaps even crowns where a statue, symbolic of Mary's presence, will be crowned.

There are many Christians who are appalled by this, which is due to lack of understanding on their part and lack of charity as well.

First, we process to signify that life is a journey, a pilgrimage. From the moment of our baptism, we were filled with the Holy Spirit and began a journey back to the Father, but also a journey of living our faith in and through all circumstances. A public procession symbolizes and invokes the reality of faith being a public reality. Faith is to be professed publicly, outwardly in a community. We journey together.

We place flowers and a crown on this symbolic representation of the Mary, the mother of Jesus. We do this to recreate heaven on earth. In the book of revelation, we are told of a woman clothed with a son with a crown of twelve stars upon her head. This is the vision St John gives us of heaven. Mary is the woman with the crown. This crown she wears is not of her own doing, we do not sneak our own crown into heaven, but rather God, the Father, has placed this crown upon her head. We imitate the Father in crowning the Blessed mother. Through her yes, Jesus entered the world, Jesus had access to our humanity, redemption was inaugurated in time and space. If Mary has a crown on her head then God must have given it to her.

So we recreate that reality, giving thanks to Mary's yes which brought Jesus into our lives.

Secondly we fulfill one of the last commands of Jesus from the cross. In John 19:27 Jesus entrusts Mary, his mother to the beloved disciple, "Then he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother'. And from that hour the disciple took her into his home."

Jesus invites the disciple to take his mother into his home. Jesus also invites his mother to claim us as her own, "woman, behold you son." We honor her who through Jesus and by his command has become our heavenly mother. The crown we place upon her head is our sign of gratitude and thanks.

Just as God the Father entrusted himself and the world to Mary as she conceives and bears his son into the world. Jesus also entrusts his mother, Mary to us and us to her, as he brings forth salvation and redemption by his death and resurrection.

Mary illumines the path, like the moon that reflects the light from the sun, so Mary reflects the light of Christ for us. As the Father ask for her intercession the moment the angel ask her to become the mother of Jesus, so Mary continually intercedes for us. We look to her for guidance that she made lead us every closer to her son.

We can boldly ask for her to pray for us as we would ask our earthly mothers to pray for us. We can thank her for he guidance as we thank our earthly mothers for their guidance.

We remember that being a mother is more than just giving birth. A mother is one who cares for us. A mother is one who chooses to be there for us. A mother is one who puts the will of God first in their life for us. The Blessed Mother is all of these things and more.

As we approach, we should have the words, "Mother May I" pressed upon our lips in honor and thanks for the hidden guidance she brings to us daily as we move ever closer in step with Jesus her son, our brother, as we journey back to the Father.

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# St. John Paul the Great and St. John XXIII [at Dulcius Ex Asperis]

We don't get a lot of popes who are also saints. In an institution that places great importance upon the See of Peter, you'd think just having the job for awhile would give you a leg up on making the list of the officially canonized. But, you'd be wrong. In fact, in a way that seems counterintuitive, being a pope might not be the best way to get that recognition.

Well into the middle of the fourth century, to be the pope was to also be recognized as a saint fairly quickly after your death. Many of them, though, achieved it through martyrdom. After St. Julius I, the odds were still in your favor until St. Adrian III in the ninth century. From that point on, but for a few, none of the popes until today achieved formal canonization.

That makes this weekend's canonization of St. John Paul the Great and St. John XXIII all the more remarkable. Not only do we now, once again, have popes who are saints, we also have popes contemporaneous to us who are now saints. If you are a Baby Boomer or older, John is your pope (although frequently for the wrong reasons). If you are a Gen-Xer or younger, John Paul is yours.

This division of generations is being played by the secular media as Good Pope John versus the Pope Who Is A Saint Despite the Abuse Scandal. John is viewed by many of the now-retirement age Boomers as the pope who would have affirmed a pagan shift in the Church to acceptance of divorce, birth control, abortion, and the rest of the sexual vices that have mangled and strangled western societies over the past sixty years. John Paul is given grudging recognition for having played a role in the demise of communism, but also derision for having reaffirmed the Church's teachings in regard to marriage and sex.

Frequently, the terminology of western democracies is applied and John becomes the liberal pope who called Vatican II, while John Paul is the conservative pope who derailed its reforms. But, that is not only simplistic, it is simplistic in the egoistic way that only western leftists have perfected. For the liberal, whatever happens happens in reference to "me". Whatever the pope is doing is to be measured by the

*Associated Press, The New York Times*

, etc. in a manner that determines whether the pope is in agreement with the Left. And, the Left is nothing but an unvarnished coalition of the self-interested. If the pope agrees with them, he's a good pope. If he disagrees, he's a bad pope. If he disagrees but does nothing to stand in their way, he's a moderate.

The truth is, it was never about them or their standard. It was about Him, the God who became man and died for our sins. St. John XXIII and St. John Paul the Great were neither conservative

nor liberal. They were Catholic. Calling Vatican II did not make John a liberal. The Second Vatican Council had been anticipated since the First Vatican Council had to be suspended in 1870 because of the Franco-Prussian War and the capture of Rome by the Kingdom of Italy. John only became a "liberal" because it was useful for the Left to set up an imaginary pope who agreed with them as a counter to later popes. A generation could then pretend to be loyal to the Church while in reality becoming one of the fiercest, most virulent of its enemies in the two millennia since its founding.

Neither did restating the Church's teaching on sexuality make John Paul a conservative. It made him a man who saw the human person as something more than his or her genitals. Beyond its simplistic egoism, the Left is also adept at smearing its opponents by projecting its own vices and shortcomings onto others. It has frequently been said by the Left that the Church is obsessed with sex when, in reality, it is the Left that fomented and fed the pornographic culture in which we currently live. Modern liberals have been more sex-obsessed than any since the Roman Empire.

John Paul was also not a conservative in the western sense because, while he was implacably opposed to communism, he was also opposed to the rampant materialism of the capitalist West. He saw it, rightly, as dehumanizing. Just as humans are more than their genitals, John Paul reminded us that we are also more than our wallets or our productive capacity. Western conservatives also found him troubling in his evaluation of the death penalty as unnecessary and to be avoided in the modern world.

In the end, though, this dichotomy set up by the liberals who control the major media will pass. One thing I relish about being Catholic is knowing that while AP and

*The New York Times*

will pass away, the Church will not. The Catholic Church has always written its own history. Two centuries from now, the biographies of Catholic writers such as George Weigel will be read as authoritative while the world will have passed to other efforts to bend the Church and the popes to its will.

I was twelve when John Paul became pope and 38 when he died. Although I never met him, like many people my age, I really felt like I knew him. And, without a doubt, he was a major influence in our formation as Catholics. I did not go through those nearly 27 years of his pontificate with blinders on. I saw the imperfections and the scandal. While I wish he had been able to see the enormity of the child abuse crisis, he didn't cause it. It was caused by priests and bishops who abandoned the Church's teachings on sexual morality in favor of the immorality of the world. And, as is frequently the case, the current accusers are the same ones whose morality those priests and bishops capitulated to.

To be a saint is to be holy not perfect, superhuman, or omniscient. I saw the great pope's tremendous love and holiness. I saw his defeat of communism and his return of the Second Vatican Council back from those who co-opted it to the good pope who called it. What St. John XXIII

began, St. John Paul the Great in an amazing pontificate brought to fruition.

There is no dichotomy, just two great men who guided the world through its most murderous century, and the Church through one of its most turbulent. In fifty or a hundred years, I suspect the Church will look back at a string of canonized popes such as it hasn't seen since St. Adrian.

St. John Paul the Great and Good Pope St. John, Pray for Us.

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# A Heart Like Mary's - Growing Closer to Christ Through His Mother [at Even the Wilderness]



*The more we honor the Blessed Virgin, the more we honor Jesus Christ, because we honor Mary only that we may the more perfectly honor Jesus, since we go to her only as the way by which we are to find the end we are seeking, which is Jesus.*

-Saint Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*-

Good morning, y'all, and happy Feast of

[Saint Peregrine](#)

!

It's the first of May, the month which we, as a Church body, devote to Our Blessed Mother. For this reason, May ought to be a beautiful time wherein we increase Marian devotion, right? Unfortunately, not all of us can jog backwards uphill during a blizzard praying Hail Mary for two hours each day, whether it be because of lack of hill, lack of blizzard, or because it's also an exam month and jogging anywhere is unheard of. But it is important that we all strive to be more like Mary, to have a heart like hers, to imitate her in all aspects of life. Why? Because she said, "yes" to Our Lord, was Mother to Our Saviour, and was filled with such an amazing love of Christ that she wants nothing more than to draw us to Him.

*That,*

people, is a role model.

How can we become more like Mary in the midst of our struggles, our temptations, and the sheer busyness of life? How to imitate her grace and beauty?



### Marian May for Beginners

Haha, because I'm one.

One of the best ways is by **increasing Rosary time**. Make a commitment to pray the Rosary more often; if you pray it once a week, try twice; if you pray it every other day, try on a daily basis. Pray it just before bed, during your lunch hour, through your study-break. Or buy a lovely little one-decade-long pocket rosary, and pray it one decade at a time throughout the day. There are a lot of other **prayers** that are easily memorized, like the 'Hail Mary', Memorare, or 'Hail, Holy Queen' that one could easily incorporate into whatever prayers one says daily. You could always **memorize a Marian song or chant** (or, haha, Madonna song), like the Salve Regina or Ave Maria, and sing it quietly while you go about your house. Saint Cecilia approves.

Another way to honour Mary is by

**wearing blue**

Wearing blue is a small gesture, to be sure, but every time you don your blue clothing, let it be a reminder to say, "Holy Mother, pray for me". Oh, and girls- you now have an excuse to go stock up on blue blouses, blue cardigans, blue skirts, and blue scarves (just use moderation; we wouldn't want to be gluttonous under the pretext of celebrating the Blessed Virgin!). Heck, even blue nail-polish.

But here's a challenge: **adopt one of Mary's personality traits**, one that seems most admirable to you, and make a point of imitating it throughout the month. Whether it be her obedience, strength, humility, purity; whichever virtue will help you most on your journey to a closer relationship with Christ.

Its amazing how every major vocation reflects a part of Mary, whether her virginity, her motherhood, etcetera. So why not **pray for your future spouse/for vocations** everyday during May, and consecrate them to Our Blessed Mother? We all worry so much about our futures- who we'll marry, when we'll marry, what our jobs will look like, when we'll get around to tidying our flats, and what we'll eat for lunch. Sometimes, its a great release to say, "here are my problems; please pray for me and help me through them".



May is also a great opportunity to **embrace one's femininity**. No, not sitting around all day being completely helpless, but being feminine as Mama Mary was: humble, strong, nurturing, kind, obedient to God's call, pure, modest, and full of grace. This is another excuse to go shopping and buy a butt-ton of classy, modest skirts, and to wear them often; skirt-wearing doesn't *make* one more feminine, per say, but it does remind the wearer to be feminine, and presents oneself as feminine (not that you can't be feminine whilst wearing pants, mind).

**How will you be celebrating Mary in May?**

May Our Lady of Divine Grace guide you today,

*Grace*



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## Let's talk conflict [at Flow Chart to Surrender]

If you tell me you truly believe that  $2 + 2 = 5$ , I will tell you I truly believe you are wrong. If you persist in believing this equation to be true, I'll probably continue to hang out with you and go to the movies with you and be your friend. You'll just be wrong about math and I probably won't want you to be in charge of teaching it to any children. I'll be sad about your incorrect math skills. But life would go on and at no point would we hate each other over this disagreement.

That's a simplistic view of conflict over deeply held beliefs that does not end in fear and hatred. I'm not sure why we can't apply it to other things. For instance, I believe abortion is wrong. The act itself is intrinsically evil, which means it can never be justified. However, this does not mean I hate women. It does not mean I hate women who have had an abortion. Identifying something as a sin should not actually lead to hate and fear of the person. As we're called to bring Jesus to people and Jesus came to save sinners (like us), we should continue to love these people. This brings about the "hate the sin and love the sinner" catchphrase that is often thrown around but oftentimes not understood or put into practice.

Of course, some might argue the analogy to math isn't valid as we know math to be true. Some would argue we don't know that about God and morals. I'm an engineer, I like math. I trust math. However, I believe in God more than I believe in math. "Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but 'the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives'" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 157, quoting St Aquinas). The analogy is valid for a believer.

Now let's go back to the math. Let's say you were trying to write laws that allowed the teaching of your  $2 + 2 = 5$  equation. I would oppose your laws. I don't think it will bring good order to society to teach such things. I'll probably invest money in the campaigns against your campaign and put a sign out in my yard. However, this still would not prevent me from hanging out with you, assuming we could remain civil. It is always harder to remain civil with politics, but that would be a goal.

So when there are laws in favor of abortion, I must also oppose them. Naturally if I believe in God and think He's opposed to such actions, I wouldn't want to support laws that allow them. I'd want to invest in campaigns that are opposed to these laws and hopefully participate in educating people as to why abortion is wrong while providing other alternatives. Again, this does not mean I hate women. It does not mean I hate women who have had an abortion. I don't sit around at night wondering how I can make life harder for another woman while laughing maniacally.

When the Catholic Church or others identify behaviors as sinful and when they fight policies that promote sinful actions, they are not also hating on their opponents. In fact, in many cases you'll

find these churches have ministries to reach out and assist the very people they supposedly "hate." No doubt there are some groups and people who truly hate other individual people, but I'm going to go out on a limb here and say they're doing it wrong.

Does this setup cause conflict? Yes. In the math example, the other "side" clearly believes they are right. In the conversations we have with others and the battles we must wage politically, the opposing "side" believes just as heartily as we they are indeed correct. Disagreement is inevitable. But let's get over the idea we have to hate each other, personally, in the process. "Remember who the real enemy is." For Christians, that enemy is satan. It is okay to hate him. But everyone else is called to a life with God, even if they don't know that, and we should remember it and treat them accordingly.

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# Blessed and broken

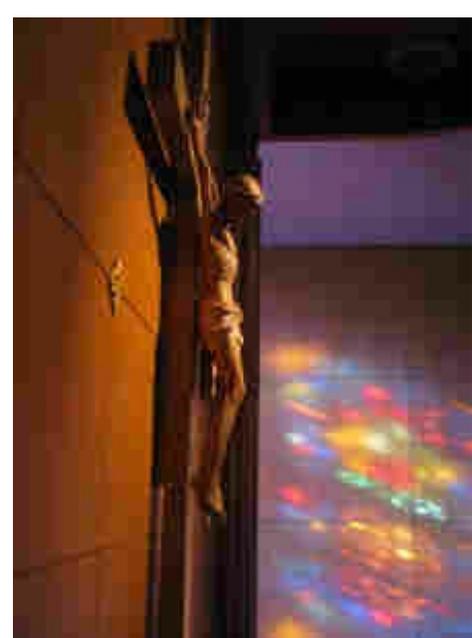
It is Sunday night, and the pain tells me that trouble is coming.

The line winds across the concrete floor, and over the sound of the piano I hear recited “Body of Christ”, “Blood of Christ”.

As I approach the minister of the cup, pain flashes across my abdomen, reminding me that some piece of me is softly bleeding, deep inside of me.

*This is my blood.*

\*\*\*



Jesus hangs on the cross. He doesn't hold himself up, he hangs, arms stretched beyond their limits and knees buckled under the weight of his lifeless body.

*Not a bone of it will be broken* they say, as if that is some consolation. With bones intact everything else has fallen apart: his body, the world, his people.

\*\*\*

The discomfort is more frequent than it was this time last year. My guts wake me in the night more often. Some days the energy my body is using to battle itself leaves me exhausted before sundown. The skin on my face flares with irritation. My back aches.

The effects of my disease manifest themselves constantly now. The silent attack my immune system wages finds ways to make itself known. My body is not working right.

[Do not entertain thoughts of “one doesn’t know what one has until one loses it”. Before I was sick I marveled at the wonder of a body that functioned correctly. I knew exactly what I had, and how blessed I was. Look how much good it did me.]

Because I am always aware of illness now, I am always thinking of ways it might be alleviated. So far, miracles are in short supply. As I run through my mental checklist of nutrition, exercise, medication and prayer, the circle turns back to reflecting on whatever mystery caused this, and I am crying before I can even articulate the words that keep popping into my mind.

*I am broken.*

\*\*\*

A few students always ask “Why is it called *Good Friday*?” and for the sake of brevity I respond “because we know how the story ends”. There is more to the answer than that. I am still figuring out it as I delve into the mystery of the story.

This is a story that writes itself every day across my blessed and broken body.

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## Holy Saturday: The Harrowing of Hell [at V for Victory!]



**I will deliver them out of the hand of death. I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite...**

*Osee (Hosea) 13:14 (Douay-Rheims translation)*

**Because Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust: that He might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit, in which also coming He preached to those spirits that were in prison: which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe, when the ark was a building: wherein a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.**

*1 Peter 3:18-20 (Douay-Rheims translation)*

**...He suffered, died and was buried. He descended into hell...**

*From the Apostles' Creed*

In this age of modernist obfuscation and general graying out of vivid supernatural reality, the Harrowing of Hell is probably the most ignored of the creedal doctrines. Yet as Catholics, we are bound to believe that sin shut the gates of heaven against the souls of men; that it was only Christ's Passion and Death on the Cross that opened heaven; that until then, the souls of the Just were imprisoned; and that, after His death, Christ liberated these souls. Perhaps one reason we do not devote more time to considering this stupendous event is because it has been obscured by the modern obsession with avoiding any and all mention of Hell: its edge has been blunted by the

milquetoast English rendition of the event as "He descended to the dead." This bland, pedestrian translation fails to confront us with the startling fact of Christ in Hell; we are not inspired to inquire further into its meaning. It seems obvious that while His Body lies in the tomb, the Son of God is among the dead, having died on the Cross; but how can He, pure and sinless, be in Hell, and why?

First of all, what is the Hell to which Christ descends? We think primarily of the Hell of the damned, from which there is no escape, and from whose punishments there is no reprieve. Before the coming of Christ, sin barred the gates of heaven to men. The souls of the Just could not get into heaven until after Jesus had sacrificed Himself to pay the penalty for our sins. [As St. Thomas Aquinas says](#) in the *Summa Theologica*:

[T]hrough Christ's Passion the human race was delivered not only from sin, but also from the debt of its penalty... Now men were held fast by the debt of punishment in two ways: first of all for actual sin which each had committed personally: secondly, for the sin of the whole human race, which each one in his origin contracts from our first parent, as stated in Romans 5 of which sin the penalty is the death of the body as well as exclusion from glory, as is evident from Genesis 2 and 3: because God cast out man from paradise after sin, having beforehand threatened him with death should he sin.

So what happened to all the good people who lived before Jesus' time, and died without ever having the opportunity to believe in Him or receive the Sacraments? They dwelt in a place of waiting -- variously called, among other things, the Bosom of Abraham, or the Limbo of the Fathers, or the Limbo of Hell. There they did not suffer the torments of the damned, but they did suffer privation. [Aquinas elucidates](#):

After death men's souls cannot find rest save by the merit of faith, because "he that cometh to God must believe" (Hebrews 11:6). Now the first example of faith was given to men in the person of Abraham, who was the first to sever himself from the body of unbelievers, and to receive a special sign of faith: for which reason "the place of rest given to men after death is called Abraham's bosom," as Augustine declares (Gen. ad lit. xii). But the souls of the saints have not at all times had the same rest after death; because, since Christ's coming they have had complete rest through enjoying the vision of God, whereas before Christ's coming they had rest through being exempt from punishment, but their desire was not set at rest by their attaining their end. Consequently the state of the saints before Christ's coming may be considered both as regards the rest it afforded, and thus it is called Abraham's bosom, and as regards its lack of rest, and thus it is called the limbo of hell.

[Aquinas goes on to explain](#) that the Limbo of the Fathers is not qualitatively the same as the Hell of the damned, because the damned suffer eternal torment without hope of reprieve, whereas the Just before the coming of Christ suffered no sensible torments and had hope for a release from imprisonment. On the other hand, situationally, the Limbo of the Fathers was probably the same as

the Hell of the damned:

For those who are in hell receive diverse punishments according to the diversity of their guilt, so that those who are condemned are consigned to darker and deeper parts of hell according as they have been guilty of graver sins, and consequently the holy Fathers in whom there was the least amount of sin were consigned to a higher and less darksome part than all those who were condemned to punishment.

So, [as Aquinas says](#),

Directly Christ died His soul went down into hell, and bestowed the fruits of His Passion on the saints detained there; although they did not go out as long as Christ remained in hell, because His presence was part of the fullness of their glory.

We come to the reasons for the Harrowing of Hell, which we have already begun to touch on. [The Angelic Doctor gives three reasons](#) why it was fitting for Christ to descend into Hell. Firstly, to bear the penalty for sin -- namely, death of the body and descent into Hell -- in order to free us from penalty (though we are not yet delivered from the penalty of bodily death). Secondly, to force Hell to disgorge its righteous captives. And thirdly, to show forth His power and glory even in the domain of the devils.

This last point is worth lingering over. Because the wills of the damned are confirmed in evil at the moment of their deaths -- just as the wills of the righteous are confirmed in goodness and charity at the moment of their deaths -- Christ did not rescue any of the damned from Hell. In His essence, He visited only the Limbo of the Fathers; but the effects of His power reached every part of Hell. [Aquinas](#):

A thing is said to be in a place in two ways. First of all, through its effect, and in this way Christ descended into each of the hells, but in different manner. For going down into the hell of the lost He wrought this effect, that by descending thither He put them to shame for their unbelief and wickedness: but to them who were detained in Purgatory He gave hope of attaining to glory: while upon the holy Fathers detained in hell solely on account of original sin, He shed the light of glory everlasting.

In another way a thing is said to be in a place through its essence: and in this way Christ's soul descended only into that part of hell wherein the just were detained. so that He visited them "in place," according to His soul, whom He visited "interiorly by grace," according to His Godhead. Accordingly, while remaining in one part of hell, He wrought this effect in a measure in every part of hell, just as while suffering in one part of the earth He delivered the whole world by His Passion.

He puts it briefly in another place thus:

When Christ descended into hell, all who were in any part of hell were visited in some

respect: some to their consolation and deliverance, others, namely, the lost, to their shame and confusion.

When Christ descended into hell He delivered the saints who were there, not by leading them out at once from the confines of hell, but by enlightening them with the light of glory ***in hell itself***.

Think of it. Hell is the privation of God and His glory. For the imprisoned elect who found themselves in the presence of the living God and beheld the light of His glory, *Hell, in that moment, ceased to be Hell. Hell was overthrown.* No wonder it is written in Philippians 2:10-11 "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."

Today at Matins (Office of Readings) according to the revised Breviary, we read the following ancient, anonymous Holy Saturday sermon:

Something strange is happening - there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and He has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, He has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won Him the victory. At the sight of Him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: "My Lord be with you all." Christ answered him: "And with your spirit." He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: "Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

I am your God, who for your sake have become your Son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by My own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of My hands, you who were created in My image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in Me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.

For your sake I, your God, became your Son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden. See on My Face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in

My image. On My back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See My hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree. I slept on the Cross and a sword pierced My side for you who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in hell. The sword that pierced Me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will enthrone you in heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The kingdom of heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.

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This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2014/04/holy-saturday-harrowing-of-hell.html>  
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# Reflections on the Eucharist [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]



## Power Ideas on the Eucharist

by Blessed James Alberione

Blessed James Alberione often spoke of the Eucharist as central to our Christian life and vocation. The Eucharist is the highest form of prayer because: 1) the Eucharist is the memorial of Jesus' saving passion, death, and resurrection, whereby He offers Himself again to the Father for us and with us; 2) the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; Jesus is really and truly present under the form of bread and wine; 3) in receiving Communion, we receive Christ Himself and are intimately united with Him and with the entire Church. For Alberione, Eucharistic adoration helps us to participate more fully in the Eucharistic Celebration because it enables us to ponder the tremendous mystery of Christ's self-giving love that we celebrate at Mass. Calling the Hour of Adoration "the school of Jesus Master," Blessed James compared it to the time the first disciples spent coming to know, love, and follow the loving Teacher who called them. He also referred to the Hour of Adoration as "the Visit," an expression which signifies the intimate and intensely personal nature of this prayer.

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## Poem: Corpus Christi Carol [at Breviary Hymns]



The

### [Corpus Christi Carol](#)

is an anonymous poem first found in a manuscript believed to have been written around 1504. Scholars have speculated (among other things) that the text may be an allegorical portrayal of the suffering Christ as a wounded knight. In 1933

### [Benjamin Britten](#)

(1913-1976) used it in the fifth variation of his choral composition:

### [A Boy was Born](#)

, a version of which is featured in the following video. In the Divine Office (1974),

### [Corpus Christi Carol](#)

is included in the

*Hymns and Religious Poems (Lent and Eastertide) Appendix*

Performed by

[Voces8](#)

*Lully, lullay, lully, lullay, The faucon hath borne my make away.*

He bare him up, he bare him down,

He bare him into an orchard brown.

In that orchard ther was an hall

That was hanged with purple and pall.

And in that hall ther was a bed:

It was hanged with gold so red.

And in that bed ther lith a knight,

His woundes bleeding by day and night.

By that beddes side ther kneeleth a may,

And she weepeth both night and day.

And by that beddes side ther standeth a stoon:

Corpus Christi writen thereon.

## And Jesus Wept [at The Road Home]

During today's gospel reading, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, I wondered if our tears are not only the lenses through which we see Jesus, but if perhaps they are not prayers in and of themselves. In the gospel, when Jesus arrives at the tomb of Lazarus we are told "And Jesus wept." (John 11:35 - this is the shortest verse in the whole bible, just in case you were wondering.) What follows is then the conversation about the stench and Jesus admonishing Martha for not believing, and while there is good stuff there, that's not what stood out to me today. It was that the next time Jesus spoke he said: "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And then Jesus calls Lazarus out.

So, in a bit of sequence, here is how it went:

*And Jesus wept.* (John 11:35)

Jesus said: *Father, I thank you for hearing me.* (John 11:41)

There was nothing in between the weeping of Jesus and the prayer of thanks to the Father for hearing Him. No "please raise Lazarus." or "Bring my friend back to life." or anything of the like. From Jesus' weeping straight to gratitude for being heard.

So often, when the tears are coming it is because I feel abandoned, forgotten, ignored. I wonder if God hears my prayers, sees my pain, even cares at all. In my head I know that He does, but my heart and soul just don't feel it. And I wondered, if our tears can be lenses through which we see Jesus, can they also be words that we are unable to say offered in prayer to God that He is able to hear? It seems from today's gospel that they are. In my search to find an image to include with this post, I came across this, supporting my interpretation of today's gospel (in my humble opinion):



Tears are prayers  
too. They travel to  
God when we can't  
speak.

- Psalm 56:8

InstaQuote

In light of this and even though I've come to see my

[tears as a grace](#)

, the lenses through which I see Jesus, at times, as I wrote about last, I've also felt guilty so many times when they have appeared.

E. commented that perhaps my tears were not feeling sorry for myself, but rather sorrow, and I've been trying to think about them differently. I've spent much time in the last few days reflecting on my tears and many of the emotions of infertility in a new light. I've been struggling with where these reflections are leading me, as I'm not arriving at the place of clarity and understanding that I desire. I have resisted this experience of sorrow. Sorrow being different from sadness, a deeper experience than sadness; one that sticks around. Though I have fought the sadness, too.

I've told myself countless times that I have no right to be sorrowful. I have so many blessings in my life, how dare I have sorrow over the one thing that I do not have.

I've compared my suffering to others - even feeling extreme guilt for suffering over this at all. I mean, I am not dying, I do not have a debilitating illness, and I could go on and on, but I think you get the idea. All leading to the conclusion that I have no right to be sad, let alone sorrowful. I realize this is not a healthy approach, for if we should not let comparison steal my joy, I suspect I should also not let comparison steal my sorrow either. Yet the latter is more difficult for me.

I can't explain to others clearly why infertility hurts so badly, I don't understand it myself. I've faced many disappointments in my life, didn't get many things that I wanted, and yet, infertility is different. It is almost impossible to explain.

Then, there is the shame. The shame in answering the question "how many children do you have with?" with zero. The shame in allowing infertility to consume so much of my life. While it doesn't consume it all, not a portion of a day goes by without it entering my mind, without a reminder and having to deal with the emotions of that reminder. Sometimes when I lay down at night the only prayer I can muster is that the next day I will be granted a morning or an afternoon in which I don't think about my inability to have children; about my brokenness. There is so much shame in how much this has consumed my life, and yet no matter how hard I try, it doesn't get better - the consuming or the shame.

There is shame in the sorrow. So while I've come to realize my tears were not tears of self-pity, but rather of sorrow, the shame is still there. I am embarrassed that when someone says something that is truly kind and helpful, that I feel sad and sorrowful instead of grateful; I am embarrassed that when someone announces a pregnancy, I am filled with sorrow for my own lack, even amidst my joy for them. Once again, I could go on and on, but I think you get the idea.

I don't have answers to this shame, sorrow, suffering trifecta that seems to be enveloping me these days, I am trying to remind myself of these two things: My tears are lenses through which to Jesus

and they are prayers that I am unable to speak, but that God, hears, understands and answers according to His will. These tears that I am ashamed of, these emotions that I don't know what to do with that spill out of my eyes without my permission, perhaps they are an even greater grace than I realize?



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## **St Pope John Paul II. A modern Saint. [at Catholic Xray, a penetrating view of modern Catholicism]**

On April 27th 2014, Divine Mercy Sunday Pope Francis canonized Pope St John Paul II and Pope St John XXIII. I mean no slight to the later by focusing this post on the former. On a personal level Pope St John XXIII is much more a historical figure to me as he died when I was not yet even in kindergarten. In contrast St Pope John Paul II was a central figure in my understanding of Catholicism. He was the Pope of my adulthood, becoming Pope the year I graduated high school. His canonization has a particular meaning for some of us. It is hard to believe he has been dead almost a decade, and was Pope for more than 27 years. Books have been written about his papacy and I imagine there will be many more. I would like to reflect on 3 aspects of the Papacy that ultimately capture its essence.

It has been suggested John O Sullivan ( former speech writer for Margret Thatcher , author and conservative pundit), that when historians think of St Pope John Paul II he will be seen as part of the triumvirate of historical figures (President Ronald Reagan, and British Prime minister Margret Thatcher) who brought an end to Soviet Union and the Cold War. This in a effect ended the period of European tyrannies that were the bane of the twentieth century. People younger than a certain age will have almost no sense of what the landscape of that period looked like. For those of us in midlife however, one major feature of that time will have been the duel threat of Communist tyranny and potential nuclear war. There is a whole world of novels and movies like Burdick and Wheelers novel Fail safe, to movies like Stanley Kubrick’ “Dr. Strangelove” that characterize the fear of a civilization ending nuclear exchange, characteristic of the Cold War. This was more than an idle fear. Nuclear war came relatively close to becoming a reality in 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis. This was not the only near miss. An equally near catastrophic confrontation with the Soviets that is less well known occurred during the 1967 Arab-Israeli six day war. The details of which can be read [here](#) . Beyond the ever present threat of war, lurked the spectre of expansionist Communist tyranny. The nature of this threat was outlined in books like Whitaker Chambers “Witness” or Solzhenitsyn’s’ “Gulag Archipelago” along with movies like Henkel von Donnersmark” the “Lives of Others”. Religious works like Fr. Walter Ciszek’s “With God in Russia” also capture the evil of the Soviet system. When I was a teenager it was a given that the half the World would live behind the Iron Curtain in what amounted to a giant prison camp. The election of John Paul II to the papacy and his subsequent electrifying visits to Poland gave birth to the Polish labor Union “Solidarity” which was the beginning of a real movement in opposition to Communism. (Indeed the fact that he was instrumental in the demise of the Soviet Union is one reason his assassination attempt by Mehmet Ali Agca’s has been at times linked to Soviet proxies, though inconclusively.) In any case even folks like Timothy Ash (a journalist for the British left wing news paper “The Guardian”) have conceded John Paul II was instrumental in ending Soviet Tyranny. He wrote shortly after John Paul II’s death the following:

**“No one can prove conclusively that he was a primary cause of the end of communism. However, the major figures on all sides – not just Lech Walesa, the Polish Solidarity leader, but also Solidarity’s arch-opponent, General Wojciech Jaruzelski; not just the former American president George Bush Senior but also the former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev – now agree that he was. I would argue the historical case in three steps: without the Polish Pope, no Solidarity revolution in Poland in 1980; without Solidarity, no dramatic change in Soviet policy towards eastern Europe under Gorbachev; without that change, no velvet revolutions in 1989.”**

The whole piece can be read [here](#) . In any case I think it is difficult to convey how astonishing all this appeared at the time. The Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and it appeared almost miraculous.

The second feature of the Papacy that particularly resonates with me was mentioned in Pope Francis’s homily during the canonization mass. I will quote the relevant passage below.

**“In his own service to the People of God, Saint John Paul II was the pope of the family. He himself once said that he wanted to be remembered as the pope of the family. I am particularly happy to point this out as we are in the process of journeying with families towards the Synod on the family. It is surely a journey which, from his place in heaven, he guides and sustains.”.**

This is a deep insight. There are a great many things wrong with the world today, but probably a lot of them can be traced to the destruction of the family. (Even on the prosaic level of practical politics, how much poverty, crime and drug abuse has been linked to the epidemic of non intact families?). A Great deal that John Paul II wrote about involved family life, from his Theology of the Body, to an early work prior to his Papacy (Love and Responsibility) to the classic pro-life encyclical Evangelium Vitae, all were devoted to strengthening the family. Unfortunately a lot of this appears to be currently falling on deaf ears, but then again so it appeared to Christ’s disciples that the preaching of Jesus too fell on deaf ears... so appearances can be deceiving. A little appreciated document that really should get more attention than it actually receives is Pope St John Paul II’s Letter to Families issued in 1994 (just about 20 years ago) in the year of the family... the full text of the letter can be read [here](#) .

The centrality of the family in John Paul II’s view can be appreciated from this passage taken from the letter quoted below:

**.....it seems clear that the “civilization of love” is strictly bound up with the family. For many people the civilization of love is still a pure utopia. Indeed, there are those who think that love cannot be demanded from anyone and that it cannot be imposed: love should be a free choice which people can take or leave. There is some truth in all this. And yet there is always the fact that Jesus Christ left us the commandment of love, just as God on Mount**

**Sinai ordered: “Honor your father and your mother”. Love then is not a utopia: it is given to mankind as a task to be carried out with the help of divine grace. It is entrusted to man and woman, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, as the basic principle of their “duty”, and it becomes the foundation of their mutual responsibility: first as spouses, then as father and mother. In the celebration of the Sacrament, the spouses give and receive each other, declaring their willingness to welcome children and to educate them. On this hinges human civilization, which cannot be defined as anything other than a “civilization of love”. The family is an expression and source of this love. Through the family passes the primary current of the civilization of love, which finds therein its “social foundations”.**

It is really not possible to do justice to Pope St John Paul II’s thoughts regarding the family in a small space. Suffice it to say he argues persuasively that the family is the “fundamental cell” of society, and its protection and cultivation is essential to a humane society. I would say its hard to dispute that. Unfortunately as George Orwell said “..... **we have now sunk to a depth at which the restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men**” Again I would urge everyone to read the entire letter at the above link.

Finally we would be remiss if we forget John Paul II’s devotion to the Blessed Mother. We will return to this topic in future posts. For now I simply encourage everyone to recall John Paul II’s letter on the Rosary in which he introduces the “Luminous mysteries”. The full letter can be read [here](#) . It too is an under-appreciated gem. In it John Paul II outlines the nature of the Rosary and links it to not just honoring Mary but to contemplative prayer in general. In particular one who says the Rosary joins with Mary in contemplating the Gospels, with every phase in the life of Christ being featured, Traditionally The Joyful Mysteries focused on the events surrounding the Incarnation, The Passion is featured in the Sorrowful Mysteries and the events associated with the Resurrection are called to mind by the Glorious Mysteries. In this Letter John Paul II gave us the Luminous Mysteries which focus on events in the Public Ministry of Jesus. There is a beauty to this that really makes it feel that the Holy Spirit was at work here. One other startling feature of this letter is that the Pope links the rosary to two parallel crises that are defining the new millennium, the assault on the family and the rise of radical Islam. It is significant that the “luminous mysteries” were given to us shortly after the threat of radical Islam was demonstrated by the events of 9/11. It is useful to call to mind the Popes actual words:

**“A number of historical circumstances also make a revival of the Rosary quite timely. First of all, the need to implore from God the gift of peace. The Rosary has many times been proposed by my predecessors and myself as a prayer for peace. At the start of a millennium which began with the terrifying attacks of 11 September 2001, a millennium which witnesses every day innumerable parts of the world fresh scenes of bloodshed and violence, to rediscover the Rosary means to immerse oneself in contemplation of the mystery of Christ who “is our peace”, since he made “the two of us one, and broke down the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph 2:14). Consequently, one cannot recite the Rosary without feeling caught up**

**in a clear commitment to advancing peace, especially in the land of Jesus, still so sorely afflicted and so close to the heart of every Christian.**

**A similar need for commitment and prayer arises in relation to another critical contemporary issue: the family, the primary cell of society, increasingly menaced by forces of disintegration on both the ideological and practical planes, so as to make us fear for the future of this fundamental and indispensable institution and, with it, for the future of society as a whole. The revival of the Rosary in Christian families, within the context of a broader pastoral ministry to the family, will be an effective aid to countering the devastating effects of this crisis typical of our age.”**

It is perhaps fitting that this letter written in 2002 is probably the beginning of the end of the John Paul II era in the Church. The previous year the Pope was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease (indeed probably had the diagnosis earlier, but the disease had progressed to the point that it had to be revealed publicly.) Many of the features that critics of the John Paul II papacy point to can be traced to this time period. The Priest abuse crisis emerged in 2001-2002 (Cases were first required to be reported to Rome in 2001), the debacle that was the handling of the case of Legionaire’ s of Christ founder Marcial Maciel, the kissing of the Koran... All of these things were the deeds of the debilitated, slowly dying John Paul II in his waning years, not the vigorous charismatic John Paul II of 1978 through the end of the millennium. The Pope’s health began rapidly declining as the new millennium began. This period overlapped sadly coincided with the time that attacks on the family increased and radical Islam fully emerged as a grave problem and corruption of theism. It is fitting that Pope St John Paul II leaves us with the rosary as the last weapon against these evils. It is a sorrow that the Pope who was instrumental in ending the Cold War could not relish this great victory over evil, but as his health declined witnessed new threats to the world.

It has been suggested that the Pope at the end of his life may have been suffering from a degree of dementia. Dementia is common in advanced Parkinson’s disease and one is not showing disrespect to the Pope to point out that this could quite possibly be the situation in John Paul II’s case. In fact a brief but poignant piece by Fox News journalist Major Garrett points out that all three of the historic figures who largely were responsible for the bloodless end of the Soviet communism may not have been able to recall what they did before they died, as all of them had some degree of dementia. This is certain in the case of President Reagan and Lady Thatcher, and quite plausible in the case of John Paul II. The entire piece (which is really a tribute) can be read [here](#).

I will close with a comment from that piece:

**“For leaders now: Heed the instructive lesson laced through these three lives. Study, if you dare, the implications of their tragically dimmed memories and their heartbreaking walk down that vacant corridor toward death.**

**They took not wealth. They took not memory.  
Yet they left a world transformed.  
Lead not for wealth. Lead not for memory.  
Lead as if years hence you can't explain what you did or why, because you can't remember.  
Lead in a way that will not require it".**

St John Paul II transformed the world; he can continue to do so by his example and by his prayers for us in this time of upheaval.  
St John Paul II pray for us!



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This contribution is available at <http://catholicxray.com/st-pope-john-paul-ii/>  
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# The Reason For The Religion [at Peace Garden Mama]



## I'd just read an article

about how hard it is to shake the Catholic from our blood, no matter how hard we try.

The gist was that our Catholic faith runs deep in our veins, and those that leave the faith often find aspects of the Catholic sensibility and even tangible history that remain a residual part of them.

As a grateful Catholic, and someone who has approached the faith at one time from a wandering, wondering distance before finding her way back fully in the fold, it is hard for me not to respond with an, "Amen! I get this!"

Naturally, I wanted to share this interesting piece with my Catholic friends in particular. Since many of them are on Facebook, I started there. Upon posting a link to the article,

["No-Exit Catholicism,"](#)

from Ethika Politika, I added these thoughts to my status update:

*"Interesting piece on how being Catholic can take hold of individuals and cultures. Even those who wish to walk away cannot totally un-thread from Catholicism's beautiful grasp." But a **Christian friend***

misunderstood my intentions - at least it seemed to me - and offered a gentle challenge:

*"I see the tie as Christ himself. Don't lose focus on the reason for the religion in the first place."*

Not being entirely clear on her words, I initially did some self-analysis. *Does she think I am somehow discounting that Jesus the Christ is intricately involved in this entity called the Catholic Church?* It hurt to think this could be the case, knowing the reality of how I feel about Jesus.

Of course the reason for the religion is Jesus. Of course!

Needing to sort through the words that brought me straight to the core of my beliefs, causing me to face them head on and size up the misunderstanding, I asked for clarification.

She responded that she feels my posts, like this one, sometimes come off as being "focused on Catholic over Christ." She felt compelled to comment "because I don't want you to get off track." **So far the clarifications** weren't making me feel much better. There was a disconnect going on; that was clear to me. Thankfully, the underlying peace I feel at my core because of my faith and belief in Jesus gave me an assuring whisper: "Still here." But it bothered me that she'd somehow missed my intentions. What seemed to be happening was a misunderstanding between the Catholic mindset and that of a fellow sister in Christ who is not Catholic. In fact, in a way her comment fortified what the article was saying; that being that there is a particularly Catholic way of looking at the world, and you either see it or you don't. Once you do, it's hard to unhitch from that. If you never did, it would be hard to explain. From the non-Catholic's eyes, my zeal for Catholicism was somewhat off-putting. In highlighting the Catholic Church, I was being perceived as somehow dissing God - making the Church more important than Jesus himself. But the truth of it is that for the Catholic who truly knows his or her faith, Jesus and the Church are one and the same. When I am leaping up and down about the Church or something awesome the pope said or some other beautiful truth that has been revealed to me through the Church, I am actually and truly leaping up and down for Jesus. **Other Catholics would** get this, but Protestants might not. And in the end, there's really nothing I can say to satisfy my friend or make her believe this Jesus = Church reality. There are too many forces, religious and non-religious, purporting otherwise. We forget that because the Church is full of human beings who sin that we cannot still have a truly holy community that has Jesus infused into every aspect of it.

Because the Catholic Church looks so human so much of the time, especially in terms of the ways the world looks at us from the outside in, many, Christians and otherwise, cannot, will not, grasp the continuity of the two.

It's one of those misunderstandings I will be forced to live with, I'm afraid. Of course, I can start editing all my posts to make it explicit that whenever I mention "The Church" I really mean "Jesus," but to me, it's redundant.

I'm left with the realization that my Catholic readers will get it, and my non-Catholic readers won't. And the matter may not be settled in this life.

**All that said**, in the end I felt gratitude for the comments. They came from a good heart and I knew that from the start. For that reason they were never a threat, but an opportunity to try to explain and share the reason for my fervor regarding the Church, which I did.

And putting it most simply, that fervor comes from a heart that "once was lost, but now is found." There's no taking away my zeal at this point, but the exchange helped me see that I can temper that with welcoming challenges as opportunities to explain my true intentions whenever they are misunderstood by those who don't share my Blood Type of Catholic.



Thank God, I do know the reason for the religion, and every day I feel blessed to not only live for Him but to live out my love for Him through the beautiful, revolutionary, mind-blowing entity called the Catholic faith.

**Q4U: Have you ever felt misunderstood when it comes to "the reason for your religion?"**

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/04/faith-family-fridays-reason-for-religion.html>

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# What's Wrong With this Picture [at The Wayward Catholic]

May 1, 2014

Did you ever play the game “What’s wrong with this picture?” This is a game where you look at two similar pictures and try to determine what is different in them. We can do this in real life as well. For example let’s look at this recent news story:

PROVO, Utah (Reuters) – A Utah mother accused of killing six of her newborn infants over a decade and stashing their bodies in a garage was charged on Monday with murder in their deaths. – [Yahoo News \(Reuters\)](#)

A woman kills six newborn babies and charged with murder. If found guilty she could get up to six life sentences. We don’t yet know why she did it, she has three other children, one of which was born during the time she was killing the others. People are outraged, some even calling for the death penalty. Clearly this was a despicable act and the woman should be punished.

What’s the other picture we need to look at?

## STATE-LEVEL DATA (UTAH)

### **Total Abortions (2011): 3,386**

The Utah Department of Health reports that 3,386 abortions took place in Utah during 2011.

SOURCE: [Utah Department of Health](#)

Abortion is legal in the United States. A woman can have an abortion and she will not be arrested or charged with anything. Therefore if this Utah mother had aborted the six babies she would have been well within her rights. Does anyone else see a problem with this?

The government’s own definition attests to the fact that life begins at fertilization. According to the [National Institutes of Health](#), “fertilization” is the process of union of two gametes (i.e., ovum and sperm) “whereby the somatic chromosome number is restored and the development of a new individual is initiated.” Thus, in the context of human life, a new individual human organism is initiated at the union of ovum and sperm. One textbook similarly explains:

Human development begins at fertilization when a male gamete or sperm (spermatozoon) unites with a female gamete or oocyte (ovum) to produce a single cell – a zygote. This highly

specialized, totipotent cell marked the beginning of each of us as a unique individual. -  
[LifeNews.com](http://LifeNews.com)

Why is killing a baby okay in one case but not in the other? Either way there is the same result, six lives have been ended. Why do we let the law decide when only God has the right to determine who lives and dies?

Think about it.

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This contribution is available at [http://thewaywardcatholic.com/2014/05/01/abortion\\_whats\\_wrong\\_with\\_picture/](http://thewaywardcatholic.com/2014/05/01/abortion_whats_wrong_with_picture/)  
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## The Difference of Being Beloved [at bukas palad]



Year A / Eastertide / Easter Sunday

Readings: Acts 10.34a-43/ Psalm 118 (R/v 24) / Colossians 3.1-4 / John 20.1-9

Here we are:

we have walked the Lenten way of conversion and accompanied Jesus over the triuduum, and this Easter morning, we have come rejoicing.

Here we are:

with family and friends in Church, dressed in our Sunday best and partaking in this liturgy of Easter joy with holy water and holy smoke, with Resurrection songs and readings, with Hallejuahs and Glorias—all of which proclaim Jesus is risen!

Here we are:

invited to feast with Jesus and one another on this most happy day. Happy because whether we are saintly or sinful, you and I already have a reserved place at Jesus' table because of his' death and resurrection.

Here we are:

another Easter Sunday in the history of our lives. Or, is it?

Imagine that you and I are in class. The professor is teaching. Suddenly, he stops and says to Michael seated here: "Listen, Michael. Just listen. Don't look around now, Michael, but there's someone seated behind you who loves you, and will always love you."

To the world and to us in class, the professor's revelation would mean nothing at all. But to Michael it would mean something, if not everything.

Indeed, how can this revelation of someone loving him not affect him? Not touch the deepest core of his being? How can he not start looking for these signs of being loved? How can this revelation not transform him, transform the way he lives and how understands himself? How can it not make him thankful for the one who loves him? Truly, how can this revelation of being loved not change everything about his life?"

What if you and I are being invited this Easter to see and to live our Christian faith in the same way that Michael is invited by his professor's revelation to live his life anew?

**What does it mean to live in the light of the Easter revelation that we are God's beloved?**

Peter and John race to the tomb upon hearing Mary Magdalene's report that the stone was removed. Peter goes in first and discovers it empty. John, the beloved disciple, follows. It probably took him a minute or two to see what the scene revealed; he might have closed his eyes to remember Jesus. Then, taking a deep breathe, he believed: Jesus is not dead; he is alive. This is the same experience Mary Magdalene had in another part of the Easter story. Weighed down by sadness outside the tomb, she hears Jesus calling her name; his voice reverberates within her as the living presence of him who is not dead but alive, and alive to love her still.

Like John and Mary, we too are God's beloved. Jesus' death and resurrection reveals to us how

much we are loved by God. Loved not because we have done anything to deserve it. Rather, loved because we God's very reason for loving.

What if we are to truly experience this revelation of God's love in Jesus for just a minute or two this Easter? What would it mean for us? How would it change us, even if the world continues to be the same?

Consider how we are probably experiencing this revelation even now:

We are here,

alive and celebrating Easter. What moved you and me to come this morning and celebrate? I believe it is God's love in our lives; the depth of God's love that we remember, celebrate and believe in this morning—in Jesus' death and resurrection, God's love saves us.

We are here,

with family and friends singing Alleluias and savoring the goodness of salvation. What binds us together still, in spite of those moments when we have quarrelled and been less than giving and faithful to one another? I believe it is the spirit of God's reconciliation at work in us. This Spirit is Easter's gift because Easter is the truth of God reconciling himself to us in the risen Jesus.

We are here,

about to eat his body and drink his blood. What will draw us—even as we continue struggling with our faults and sinfulness—to still come to this table to be fed and nourished in a few moments? I believe it is the awareness we have experienced deep within us God's mercy this Lent, and which Easter proclaims in Jesus' death and resurrection as God's way of drawing us into his eternal happiness.

If you sense any of these—or something as simple as the goodness of this spring morning, or the goodness of an Easter lunch, or even at the end of this day, that this day is blessed—than you are experiencing the revelation of being beloved by God. This is what we celebrate today: that we are

not only saved and alive in the risen Jesus but in him, God's love is alive *with* us and *for* us.

How can this revelation, then, not make a difference in our lives? How can it not challenge us to see and live our lives anew in the risen Jesus?

If you agree with me that this revelation of being beloved by God must make a difference, then, this awareness challenges us to celebrate this Easter Sunday differently.

Easter isn't for one day in the year, or one hour at this Mass. The reality of Easter is meant to be our life-long joy and our life-long way of living the Christian faith. After all, we are an Easter people. How can we live as an Easter people?

We can begin by realizing that our Lenten practices have provided us with a renewed ways of living. What we began in Lent, Easter invites us to continue doing.

Like John who goes forth to evangelize, our prayer life will nourish our relationship with God and enable us to proclaim God's good and saving love.

Like Mary who comforts the dispirited disciples with news of Jesus' resurrection, our alms-giving will help us reach out to all, especially, the less, and to care for them with God's love.

And like Michael whose world is no longer the same because he now knows he is loved, you and I cannot bluff ourselves any longer than tomorrow is just another day; it is rather, God's day with us. And so our fasting, should keep us hungry for God's daily bread.

To live in these Easter ways involves our commitment, our energy and our willingness to cooperate with God's spirit.

In the coming days, we might want to sincerely wish each other, including our enemies, a heartfelt “Happy Easter.” We might also want to reach out more intentionally to others in need, and to share the Easter joy. And we might want to more consciously work at reconciling with God and one another when we sin. And finally, we might make more of an effort to keep coming to this feast with Jesus and each other, and so become for others what Jesus is for us, bread for life.

Living this new way is not something you are being invited to do today. It is also what I have to work on in my life, especially as I prepare to leave Boston and to head home to Singapore to begin my new ministry. In these next weeks here, I will have to be less selfish about saying goodbye. I don’t like goodbyes; they are painful. It is the part of Jesuit life I like least. I would rather go quietly away. But it always takes two to say goodbye. And so, I must be less self-centred about this. If I truly care for and love my friends here, especially, my Jesuit brothers, I must be less selfish, more generous and indeed open to let them say their goodbyes in their own loving ways—ways I know are their gifts for me for the road ahead.

Indeed, if you and I can continue to celebrate Easter joy and to love in all these Christ-like ways of emptying ourselves for others, not only today but always, then we can make real what our Easter revelation proclaims: God’s love in Jesus is alive. And, it has changed us and our lives.

Then, others who see us will say, “We know they are Christians: see how they love one another. Truly their Jesus is risen, and he is alive in them! Alleluia!”

*Preached at Blessed Mother of Teresa of Calcutta Parish, Dorchester, Boston*

image: from the internet (the octavius winslow archive)



## Satisfaction [at Bible Meditations]



*For Christ did not please himself...* Romans 15: 3a

This phrase jumped out at me as I was reading Romans one Sunday morning. The simple fact that Christ did not please himself somehow made me want to follow His example. It became my mantra...at least for a little while. While I was enjoying Sunday paper, my husband started a conversation. I wanted to give a dismissive answer and get back to my reading, but “Christ did not please himself” popped into my mind. I gave my husband my full attention, willingly—even though I didn’t feel like it. (There’s a difference between wanting to do something and being willing to do it.)

The thought of being selfless conjures up images of co-dependently giving in to others. Instead, thinking of others rather than ourselves can be a freedom. Freedom from self-will can enhance our relationships. But being attentive to the needs of others is not the same as giving away our personalities co-dependently. What’s the difference? The better question might be, if Christ didn’t please himself, who did he please? Certainly not other people—at least not those who wanted to be in control. Although he healed those asked him to make them whole, he did not give everybody whatever they wanted. If he did, they wouldn’t have executed him.

So, if we aren’t aiming to please ourselves, and we aren’t aiming to be people-pleasers and give others what they want, who are we aiming to please? God. When we follow what God wants, we find it is what satisfies the deepest longings most of us have anyway. Ironically, the satisfaction we long for—close relationships, love, and self-respect—aren’t obtained by pleasing ourselves or others. By surrendering to God’s will rather than our own, we guarantee our own contentment. The price? We sacrifice feeling good at the moment to a good feeling that endures.

Prayer: Lord, open my heart to the joy that comes from pleasing You rather than myself.

Reflection for sharing: When has letting go of self-will brought you satisfaction?

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# Learning How to Pray [at A Dreamer's Wife]

Pray with great confidence, with confidence based on the goodness and infinite generosity of God and upon the promises of Jesus Christ. God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray.

*-St. Louis de Montfort*

I've wanted to write a post about prayer for awhile, but it just seems like such an overwhelming subject to tackle! There are so many different ways to pray and so many books on the topic! I'm not going to let that stop me, though!

Since it's such a popular subject, prayer is clearly important. It is one of the most vital things that we can do to grow closer to God and be molded into who He wants us to be. It's essential in order to discover His will for us. Praying must be more than just a few petitions tossed up throughout the day or a quick "thank you" when things work out our way. Prayer needs to be a priority so that everything else is rightly ordered and our "paths are made straight" (Proverbs 3:6). Just as a couple needs to continuously communicate and sacrifice daily in order to cultivate a healthy marriage, the same must be done to grow deeper in a relationship with Christ.

Improving my prayer life is something that I've personally been focusing on the past several months. Even though I'm a full-time working mother, I try to find moments in my day that I can dedicate consistently to prayer. This idea of *making a point to set aside a specific time to pray each day* has been a recurring theme that I have come across often in my reading.

I use my drive to work in the morning to pray and prepare for the day. I've been trying to get back into praying the rosary consistently, too. (It helps that my radio is broken, too – no distractions!) I also spend a little time reading the Bible after tucking my girls in at night. I'm not spending hours in prayer, but I have found that I feel much more at peace when I stick to my new routine, however short it is.

I do have to say, though, that the more I am aware of the blessings in my daily life and promptings to do God's will, the more I feel like my actions and special moments are like little prayers. Sometimes I find myself soaking in a genuine smile from one of my daughters and I feel it's God showing me His love and allowing me to experience true joy that only comes from Him. I can feel

God in the moment. No words even need to be said.



In doing my research on prayer, I have come across some very helpful and inspiring resources. Instead of trying to quote and paraphrase, I think it'd be best to just share and link, because they each deserve to be read in their entirety!

#### Recommended Resources on Prayer:

1. [The Prayer Process](#) as shared in *The Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic* by Matthew Kelly. This 7-step process is a great daily way to pray. It helps me reflect on the accomplishments and failures of the day, how God is speaking to me, and what I can do for others.
2. [Prayer Primer: Igniting a Fire Within](#) by Fr. Thomas Dubay. This book really is a must-read on prayer. There were many great insights in this book. Not only did it address the various types of prayer and their value, but it discussed how to help children pray and how to pray even when we are busy. I know that this is a book I could re-read over and over again and continuously learn more.
3. [Lesson One in Prayer](#) by Peter Kreeft. I love how Kreeft writes – so visual and direct. This brief article on why to pray and how to get started is definitely a kick in the pants! Kreeft has also written *Prayer for Beginners*, but I haven't read it yet. It's definitely on my list and is actually available from [Lighthouse Catholic Media](#) for \$5.
4. **Meditation Stuff:** The [Laudate app](#) is free and has daily readings and meditations. I also like [Word Among Us](#) for their daily meditations on the readings. I recently discovered [The Catholic Company's Morning Offering daily email](#). At first, I was like, "I don't need another thing to read and meditate on," but I have discovered that I really like the saint quotes that they share! Each day they feature that day's saint, Liturgy of the Hours, and more. I highly recommend it!
5. **St. Josemaria Escriva.** One of my favorite bloggers, Erin of Humble Handmaid, has mentioned

this saint's writings often on her blog. She recently shared this post, "[Making Every Breath a Prayer](#)," where she again shared some more of his wisdom. I definitely need to get to know this saint more!

***How do you fit prayer into your daily life? Do you have any favorite resources or tips?***

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This contribution is available at <http://adreamerswife.com/2014/04/11/learning-how-to-pray-5-helpful-resources/>  
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