

NewEvangelists.org

new
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New Evangelists Monthly #18

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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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Bible Deficiency [at Forget The Roads]



One of our favorite things to say about Catholics, back in my Evangelical Protestant days, was “*if Catholics would only read the Bible!*” *If we could just get a Polish translation of the KJV into the hands of John Paul II, for example, he would feel compelled to abdicate, assuming he’s an honest man, when he sees how thoroughly unbiblical his beliefs are!* We were convinced that if Catholics would just read through the Bible once, they would see how ridiculous it is to subscribe to unscriptural, man-made doctrines like the belief in a hierarchical Church (Isa 22:20-22, Mt. 16:16-19, Mt. 18:17-18, Lk. 10:16, Acts 1:15-26, Acts 6:6, Acts 15, Acts 16:4, 2 Cor 10:6, 2 Thess 3:14, 1 Tim 3:15, 2 Tim 1:6, 2 Tim 2:2, 2 Tim 4:1-2, Titus 2:15, 1 Jn 4:6, Heb 13:17, etc.) You see, Protestants don’t realize how Biblical certain Catholic beliefs and practices are because they do not know the Scriptures. Oh, they THINK they know the Scriptures – most study them at least once a week, if not every day. But the truth is, they read the Bible through their denomination’s schema, which serves to filter out anything that sounds different from what their pastor happens to be teaching. That’s how they end up with bone-headed notions like “nowhere does the Bible teach some kind of distinction between ‘mortal’ and ‘venial’ sins,” (1 Jn 5:16-17) or “nowhere does the Bible say mere men can grant absolution” (Jn 20:21-22). Really, it’s right there. Former Protestant pastor Marcus Grodi of the Coming Home Network often speaks of “[the verses I never saw](#),” verses like 1 Timothy 3:15 and Revelation 14:13, verses that contradict the Protestant narrative and therefore are glibly glossed over (“You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone” being a perennial favorite). The verse that knocked me personally for a loop was a verse in a passage I knew well. It was the passage read whenever we Evangelicals celebrated the Lord’s Supper:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 1 Cor 11: 23-30

I do believe that most Evangelicals would claim familiarity with those words. And yet, hidden in that passage was a phrase that would rock my theology: Anyone who eats and drinks *without discerning the body* eats and drinks judgment on himself. Body? What Body? Since I had been taught to take figuratively the Lord's discourse in John 6:22-69, that phrase blew in one ear and out the other, communion after communion after communion. Then one day it dawned on me that I as an Evangelical took Jesus' words in John 6 figuratively because I lacked the faith to believe what He had actually said (and what everyone present had understood Him to say, and what every Christian for 1,000 years after that would believe He had said). Those words in 1 Corinthians exploded into my consciousness: we must discern Christ's Body when we eat the bread and drink the cup, or we are drinking judgment on ourselves.

Holy moley....

So, if your Protestant next-door neighbors ever start complaining to you about [the "unscriptural" Catholic Mass](#), why not suggest just for fun that they mail a couple of Spanish KJV's to the Vatican? After all, our Holy Father is known for his sense of humor. I think he'd get a kick out of it, don't you?

On the memorial of St. François de Laval

Deo omnis gloria!

This contribution is available at <http://forgettheroads.com/2014/05/06/bible-deficiency/>
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When I was 15 I quietly committed my life to God at a Protestant youth retreat, telling no one. He was there for me when my father suddenly died when I was 18. I knew God would never fail me. Before my conversion, I was 19 years old, living at home and going to college. I was close to the pastor and staff at my Protestant church, where I had worked.

What happened that led to my conversion to the Catholic Church was a thunderbolt of love, followed by a gradual awakening of what God wanted. I loved Phil before he realized I was the one for him. We both resisted getting serious, but we were falling deeply in love. Trouble was, he was a faithful Catholic. Before he even proposed, I would have to decide whether to marry in his church or move on. Could I live without Phil or without my church family?

The first turning point was when I struggled with how I would tell my mother. I realized I had made my choice. I wasn't choosing Phil over God, only over my dream of marrying a Protestant in the church I loved.

Love was changing everything in my life—except my relationship with God. You see, I would do anything for Phil, but I knew in my heart that worshipping God was between him and me. That settled; we became engaged.

Fr. Burke gave me six weeks of instructions and married us under the huge golden wings of the Holy Spirit in the cathedral, but without mass. Somehow both families rejoiced. I was 20, and Phil was 22, with one more college semester before graduation.

The second turning point came 2 ½ years later. We were finishing our two years in the service and heading home with two babies. I had spent those two years trying out the disciplines of the

Catholic Church, which at that time meant meatless Fridays and following the Latin Mass. In the three places we lived, I marveled at the universality of the Church, the consistency of liturgies and the instructions from three different priests. The last one said I knew enough to become Catholic and told me. “When you go home, have the priest who married you baptize you.”

I knew I was ready by the peace in my heart. Our two babies were Catholic. It was time for me. When we returned home, Fr. Burke heard my first confession, baptized me and gave me my First Eucharist in the cathedral.

Now I am one of those faithful Catholics that I saw in Phil so many decades ago. I have never looked back except to thank God and my mother for a solid Christian upbringing, which nurtured my personal relationship with Jesus. The tenets of faith I received there enabled me to leave that church, but not my relationship with God.

I’m sure that falling in love with Phil was the only way God the Father could ever get me into the Catholic Church. He was showing what extremes he uses in guiding us into the joy he has for us. And I find great joy in belonging to the Catholic Church.

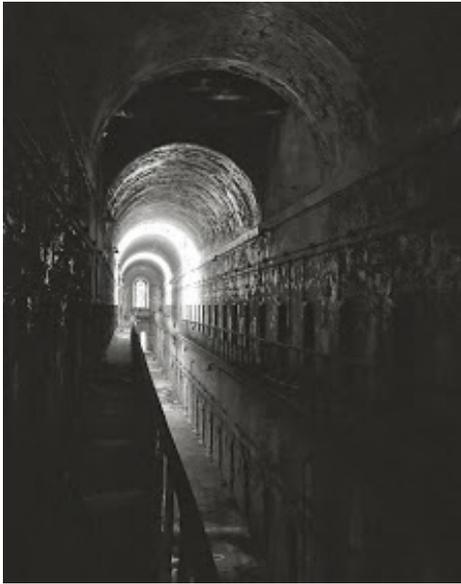
Like every conversion, Love, which is the name of God, initiated my conversion. And Love, who creates his will in us through love, completed my conversion. I might be happy as a Protestant married to a Catholic, as my in-laws. But what joy to share every Eucharist and many ministries with my husband and children.

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This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/joy-stories-a-thunderbolt-of-love/>
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Poem: The Hound of Heaven [at Breviary Hymns]



[The Hound of Heaven](#)

is by the Catholic poet,

[Francis Thompson](#)

(1859-1907). After attending college, he moved to London with hopes of becoming a writer. Instead, he ended up destitute and addicted to opium. Nevertheless, he still continued to write: sometimes selling poems written out on scraps of paper to passers-by, or submitting them to publications. One submission caught the attention of editor of publisher and editor,

[Wilfrid Meynell](#)

(1852-1948). He and his wife, the writer and poet

[Alice Meynell](#)

(1847-1922) arranged for his care at the

[Our Lady of England Priory](#)

, where he overcame his addiction, and in 1893 oversaw the publication of his first collection of poems, which included

[The Hound of Heaven](#)

. Unfortunately, his years of homelessness and addiction had left him with chronic health problems and emotional instability, at one point attempting suicide. He died from tuberculosis in 1907 at

St John's Hospice

, London. -

The Hound of Heaven

is included in the

Poetry Appendix

of the Liturgy of the Hours (1975).

Read by

Richard Burton

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN Francis Thompson, 1893 (Public Domain)

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;

I fled Him, down the arches of the years;

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways

Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears

I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

Up vistaed hopes I sped;

And shot, precipitated,

Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,

From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase,

And unperturbèd pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,

They beat—and a Voice beat

More instant than the Feet—

All things betray thee, who betrayest Me'.

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,

By many a hearted casement, curtained red,

Trellised with intertwining charities;

(For, though I knew His love Who followed,

Yet was I sore a dread

Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.)

But, if one little casement parted wide,

The gust of His approach would clash it to:

Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.

Across the margent of the world I fled,

And troubled the gold gateway of the stars,

Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars;

Fretted to dulcet jars

And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.

I said to Dawn: Be sudden—to Eve: Be soon;

With thy young skiey blossom heap me over

From this tremendous Lover—

Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!

I tempted all His servitors, but to find

My own betrayal in their constancy,

In faith to Him their fickleness to me,

Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;

Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.

But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,

The long savannahs of the blue;

Or, whether, Thunder-driven,

They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven,

Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—

Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

Still with unhurrying chase,

And unperturbed pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,

Came on the following Feet,

And a Voice above their beat—

'Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.'

I sought no more after that which I strayed

In face of man or maid;

But still within the little children's eyes

Seems something, something that replies,

They

at least are for me, surely for me!

I turned me to them very wistfully;

But just as their young eyes grew sudden fair

With dawning answers there,

Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.

Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share

With me' (said I) 'your delicate fellowship;

Let me greet you lip to lip,

Let me twine with you caresses,

Wantoning

With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,

Banqueting

With her in her wind-walled palace,

Underneath her azured dais,

Quaffing, as your taintless way is,

From a chalice

Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring.'

So it was done:

I

in their delicate fellowship was one—

Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.

I

knew all the swift importings

On the wilful face of skies;

I knew how the clouds arise

Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;

All that's born or dies

Rose and drooped with; made them shapers

Of mine own moods, or wailful divine;

With them joyed and was bereaven.

I was heavy with the even,

When she lit her glimmering tapers

Round the day's dead sanctities.

I laughed in the morning's eyes.

I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,

Heaven and I wept together,

And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine:

Against the red throb of its sunset-heart

I laid my own to beat, And share commingling heat;

But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.

In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.

For ah! we know not what each other says,

These things and I; in sound

I

—speak—

Their

sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.

Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;

Let her, if she would owe me,

Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me

The breasts o' her tenderness:

Never did any milk of hers once bless

My thirsting mouth.

Nigh and nigh draws the chase,

With unperturbed pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;

And past those noisèd Feet

A voice comes yet more fleet—

'Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me.'

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!

My harness piece by piece Thou has hewn from me,

And smitten me to my knee;

I am defenceless utterly.

I slept, methinks, and woke,

And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.

In the rash lustihead of my young powers,

I shook the pillaring hours

And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,

I stand amidst the dust o' the mounded years—

My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.

My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,

Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.

Yea, faileth now even dream

The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.

Ah! is Thy love indeed

A weed, albeit an amarinthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?

Ah! must—

Designer infinite!—

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?

My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;

And now my heart is as a broken fount,

Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever

From the dank thoughts that shiver

Upon the sighful branches of my mind.

Such is; what is to be?

The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?

I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;

Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds

From the hid battlements of Eternity;

Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then

Round the half-glimpsed turrets slowly wash again.

But not ere him who summoneth

I first have seen, unwound

With glooming robes purpleal, cypress-crowned;

His name I know and what his trumpet saith.

Whether man's heart or life it be which yields

Thee harvest, must Thy harvest-fields

Be dinged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit

Comes on at hand the bruit;

That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:

'And is thy earth so marred,

Shattered in shard on shard?

Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!

'Strange, piteous, futile thing!

Wherefore should any set thee love apart?

Seeing none but I makes much of naught' (He said),

'And human love needs human meriting:

How hast thou merited—

Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?

Alack, thou knowest not

How little worthy of any love thou art!

Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee,

Save Me, save only Me?

All which I took from thee I did but take,

Not for thy harms,

But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.

All which thy child's mistake

Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:

Rise, clasp My hand, and come!

Halts by me that footfall:

Is my gloom, after all,

Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?

'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,

I am He Whom thou seekest!

Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me.'

A modern re-telling, produced by

[Emblem Media](#)

This contribution is available at <http://kpshaw.blogspot.com/2014/05/hound-of-heaven.html>
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Celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation ~ Festive Recipes and Ideas [at Campfires and Cleats]

Welcome friends!

As you know, my oldest son
received the sacrament of confirmation

earlier this week, the final of the

three sacraments of initiation in our Catholic faith.

The story of our big day, in photos, [is here](#)

if you have a minute (or five) to click over.

And it IS our big day.....

The spiritual prep that culminated in his anointing
with chrism was truly emotional and overwhelming

We're still talking about how beautiful the mass was,

how gorgeous the weather,

how fitting the bishop's homily,

how happy my son was to have received the Holy Spirit.

Yes, he *does* feel different!

Now, for the nitty gritty practical side of things~~~

There are several dishes,
treats and ideas I created or adapted

that I'd like to share here,
which made my son's day a touch more special and festive.

Here we go:

~**Dinner**~

I took no pictures of these courses - drat)

but we served shrimp appetizers after the mass,

followed by leg of lamb as the entree..

Fitting, right?...

along with potatoes and veggies. A table setting photo:



Can't for the life of me get the picture right side up! Sorry!! In the little cordial glass is a chocolate cross, whose mold I bought yeeeeeeears ago in a chocolate shop in Queens. I've used that mold for every Easter and every sacrament for the past 35 years! I little chocolate cross at each setting makes a nice added touch, I've found, for adults *or* kids....

~Decor~

Before the mass, a quick get together in the kitchen....

we also tied balloons to the front door lanterns.

Present at the mass and celebration were my son's Godmother,

to whom he gave flowers and his sponsor/uncle,

to whom he gave a boutonniere....

a white carnation, representing purity,

with a spray of red,

representing the Holy Spirit!

And here's the dinner table.~~~

(It's amazing the slabs you can request be

formed into an

4 by 8 table with a base from "scraps" in Cancos's yard!!)

My hubby is a sort-of geologist and actually,

this is gneiss, not granite.

If you happen to come over and mistake the rocks,

well, be prepared for a

30 minute talk on the differences between the two!

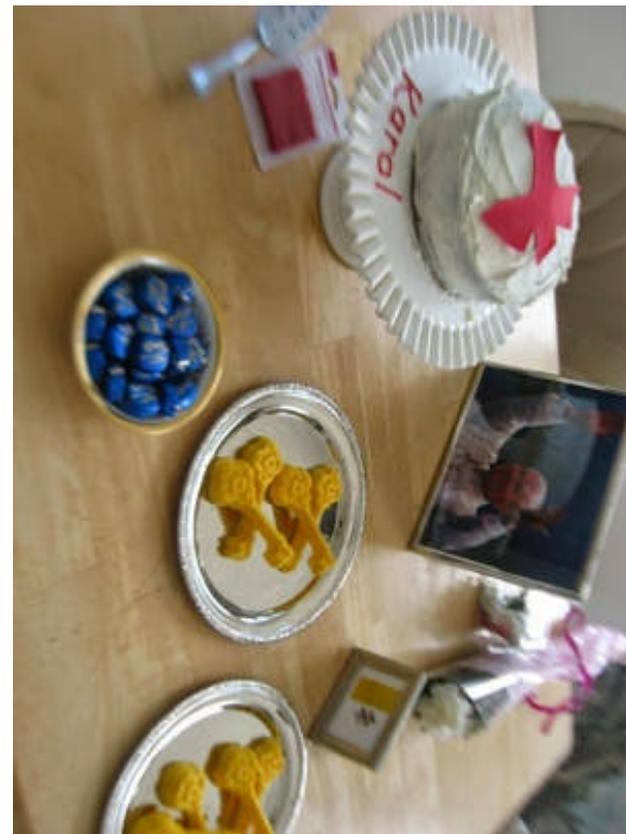
He does love talking rock formation~~ !

Anyway, I do love this room, especially for celebrating special events,

such as our sacraments!



~Desserts~



The "centerpiece" of the table is the framed picture of our hero, Pope Saint John Paul II, our Karol.

This is my son's favorite photo of him; so we had it printed and framed for the canonization two weeks ago and for his special day.

I'll detail each dessert below~~

Again, not sure how to flip this pic....

I've tried everything.

If anyone knows, I'm grateful for a tip.

Thank you!



~The Cake~



Preparation:

So simple, it's crazy!

Boxed cake mix, canned icing~~

I found a Pentecost cake at [Catholic Cuisine](#) with a dove atop and I was all set, especially after some encouraging words about its arrangement from my friend and fellow faith/ homeschool /cake/ family blogger, [Tracy](#)

Off I went to simply draw a dove and then trace it onto a

Wilton sugar sheet, which I got at Michael's.



on the cake platter.....

Which, as you all know by now from reading it nine million times

in my excitement and pride,

is *Karol*.

When I stumbled on birthday candles in the cake creation aisle at Michael's, I decided it would be appropriate and fitting to buy RED so that my confirmandus (is that correct?) could say a silent prayer of thanks before blowing out seven flames, representing the [seven gifts of the Holy Spirit](#), which blessed him that day.



Wisdom

Counsel

Fortitude

Piety

Knowledge

Understanding

Fear of God

"Dove" Chocolates



Hey, a play on words around the Holy Spirit involving

chocolate? I'm in.

"Keys to the Kingdom"



Another beautiful idea I adapted from [Catholic Cuisine](#)

All the details are over there...but this is a lovely, simple and festive touch to any Catholic celebration, is it not?

Here's what we did to create the papal Keys to the Kingdom, as seen on the papal flag



then picked up a bag of yellow chocolate at Walmart...

(nice and cheap)

We melted and molded the keys so easily and quickly,
then displayed them as they are seen on the flag.

One bag of chocolate made 8 key candies.

Enjoy!!



Papal Cream Cake



The enchanting story behind Kremowska, Pope Saint John Paul II's favorite dessert is [right here](#).



We made the Papal Cream Cakes for JP II's canonization on April 27th and again for our confirmation celebration this week.

The super easy how-to, as well as our major adaptation to the recipe

Enjoy!!



Thank YOU, friends, for stopping by and sharing in

The Big Day!

I hope you might find some of these ideas adaptable to your own sacramental celebrations!

We were graced to be in our pontiff's presence a number of times.

Here, in America, twice.....once, in Rome.

Also, friends, if you are not Catholic and you'd like to learn more about this beautiful Faith,

OR

if you are Catholic and have not been involved in the practice of the Faith but would like to come home, there is nothing that would make *your Church* happier! Please do not hesitate to contact me~~

I'll put you in touch with a priest who can assist you!



Friends, as always,

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

Don't forget to subscribe to Campfires and Cleats

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

I'd love to stay in touch regularly.

Until next time,

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2014/05/celebrating-sacrament-of-confirmation.html>
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Why you should pray for your future spouse [at Chastity]



“Pray for your future spouse.” It’s a beautiful phrase which often serves as a reminder to entrust everything to God – including our love lives. But more often than not we hear the phrase in the low points of singleness, when we’re encouraged to ask God to bring us the spouse we long for.

The problem with that is we risk getting so caught up in our own desires that we forget what we’re really praying about: a person! Sometimes we focus so much on the future that we forget they already exist. They’re the same person now as they will be when you meet them—they get out of bed every morning, go to work or school, spend time in prayer, practise hobbies and hang out with friends... And they have needs and desires! Instead of just prayers of petition for ourselves, we should be offering up prayers of intercession for our future spouses.

Around December last year I felt the Lord urging me to pray a novena for my future husband. I don’t know who he is yet, I don’t know what was happening in his life at that time, but I do know that for whatever reason he needed my prayers. Because I love the person he will be on our wedding day, I love the person he is right now—so I continue to pray for his growth with God and for his protection from the enemy.

I want to encourage you to pray *for* your future spouse, rather than simply praying *to have* them!

1. Seeing your future spouse as a real person will keep you focused in your pursuit of purity.

When the person you will marry becomes real in your mind rather than an abstract concept, they provide the motivation to resist temptation and save yourself for them. You know the heart of who you’re waiting for, even if you don’t yet know their name, height or hair color.

2. Praying for their needs will prepare you for the total gift of self that is marriage.

When you get married, and even more so if you have children, you will need to very quickly adapt

to having more than just yourself to worry about, and sometimes having to put your own desires lower down the priority list. Replacing prayers for what you want with prayers for what they need is the first step.

3. Not focusing on your own desires helps you to put your trust in God.

You may feel you're called to marriage, but only God knows when that will be. Demanding instant gratification in the romance department won't alter God's plan to prosper you. So instead of offering God a comprehensive list of qualities you need in a partner (with an N.B. that you'd prefer them all by next Easter), try thanking Him for the person they are and praying into their current situation... whatever that might be.

You might be thinking “sappy, overly-romantic, idealistic.” Well, anyone that knows me will tell you I'm none of those things. For me, praying for my future husband isn't a way of “coping” with singleness, it's an assertion in advance of my equal status in our relationship and prayer life. I believe that the power of a couple's prayers *for each other* secures their relationship.

What if I don't get married?

Your prayers are never wasted! You are, first and foremost, a bride of Christ—so if your vocation doesn't involve marriage, then your prayers will be offered up to your holy spouse (Jesus) anyway. As the idea is already to pray for needs that we don't fully understand, only Jesus will know what good your prayers do for humanity through Him.

Try adding your future spouse to your prayer list, or offering up a prayer whenever you think about them, and see how your perspective changes! Pray for blessings on their life, pray for their safety and security, pray for their faith and relationship with Jesus. Most of all pray for *them*, rather than your desire for them.

This contribution is available at <http://chastityproject.com/2014/05/pray-future-spouse/>
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Conversion: Driven by Thirst [at joy of nine9]

Seeking

Asking



body_of_christ_hahlbodm

Not content to live on the surface

Eating, drinking, shopping or buried in entertainment

Aware of a hollow within

Thirsty for more of God's presence.

Searching for meaning.

Empty, even though 'saved'

It drove me to

Question



Lombard artist (ca. 1520), Madonna and Child

Listen.

Desperate

I stepped out in faith,

Letting go of old prejudices against Catholics

Curious

If the Eucharist really was the Body of Christ

Then I needed to ,eat, share

Trusting in the witness of millions of saints who had gone before me

Embracing the unknown,

The mysteries

Walking into the Unknown

To discover that

Mystery is liberating



1447, Fra Angelico,

Joyful

fulfilling

Embraced by a Heavenly Mother

Surrounded by a cloud of witnesses

Plugged into a Mystical Body

Home

This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com/2014/05/13/conversion-driven-by-thirst/>
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An Angel and a Devil Fighting for the Soul of a Child by Gimignani (Wikimedia Commons).

Why are we tempted to sin? How can we know when a thought is simply a temptation and when we actually consent to sin? How should we avoid and resist temptation? I'd like to explore these questions over several blog posts, starting with the sources of temptation. Traditionally, the three sources are called the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

The Devil is real and active

All temptation began with the Devil. Before God created the material world, He created the spiritual world, including angels and archangels. God gave angels and archangels a chance to choose to obey or disobey Him. Lucifer led a third of the angels and archangels to rebel against God. Lucifer was transformed into the Devil (Satan). His followers became demons.

After God made man, the Devil tempted Adam and Eve. Hating God, he also hated creatures made in God's image. Although he cannot experience real joy, he takes a perverse pleasure in seeing man turn away from God.

Jordan Aumann, O.P., in his modern classic *Spiritual Theology*, cautions us against entering into conversation with the Devil. When the Devil tempts us, we should turn aside to some other activity. Arguing with the tempter only causes trouble. The Devil will twist God's words. He will lie to and deceive us. He will try to trap us. He is smarter and more powerful than we are on our

own.

Sometimes it seems that the Devil is completely ignoring us. We need to be careful not to grow lax. We should use these intervals for prayer, and perhaps fasting. When the Devil leaves us alone, it is never because he is indifferent to our salvation. He is only biding his time and making ready for another attack.

The world also entices us

When we speak of *the world* in the spiritual life, we don't mean the created world. Rather, we mean the culture in which we live, especially the culture of unredeemed man. We say that consecrated religious leave the world. Obviously, they still live on earth. They cut themselves off from the culture of unredeemed man to a certain extent. This is especially true of monks, hermits, and cloistered nuns. The rest of us remain in the world. We have to strive daily against it.

Since the world has not submitted to Christ and His reign, it idolizes creation. The world takes the good things God created to reveal Himself to us, and turns them into idols. The world entices us to become attached to creatures and creature comforts. It thrives on pleasure.

Worldly people often ridicule those who are trying to follow God. They persecute believers. Our fear of rejection and of suffering can tempt us to join the crowd and give in to sin.

The best way to avoid being tempted by the world is to avoid the near occasions of sin. Some people might be easily swayed by their peers. They must choose friends and acquaintances carefully. Others need to stay away from certain places where the pull of the culture is too strong for them, such as bars. Still others might find certain jobs tempt them to give in to the world. They may have to avoid getting involved in political campaigns or working for companies that promote greed.

The flesh never leaves us alone

Unlike the world and the Devil, which we can run away from to a certain extent, the flesh is always with us. We can't get away from it, but we can tame it. I wrote in detail about [battling against oneself](#) recently.

Original Sin left us with concupiscence. Concupiscence is our love for pleasure. It causes us to shrink from suffering. Since our strongest natural desires are for preserving our lives and passing life on to others, we tend to cling to food, drink, and sex.

Obviously, eating, drinking, and the marital act are not evil in themselves. But when we overindulge in them, we make ourselves vulnerable to temptation. Fasting strengthens us both physically and spiritually. Abstaining from marital relations can also help us keep them rightly ordered. We should never push these pleasures to the limit. To do so is to risk losing control of

our appetites.

The world, the flesh, and the Devil war against the life of grace within us. but all three of them together cannot begin to compare with the power of Christ. We can triumph over temptation with His help.

In a future post, we'll look at how to behave in the midst of temptation.

Connie Rossini

This contribution is available at <http://contemplativehomeschool.com/2014/05/20/world-flesh-devil-sources-temptation/>
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Conversion is a funny thing: Age 16 [at Backs of People's Heads and Baby Faces]

I've been thinking a lot about my conversion lately. I was raised Catholic, and apart from a very short period of time when I was 18, I was always Catholic. But not exactly the best Catholic. There were a lot of things I simply did not understand about the Faith.

I'm not sure why, but my conversion has just really been on my mind a lot recently. I don't really think of it in terms of a knocked-to-the-ground conversion moment. It's really very much a knocked-to-the-ground-repeatedly series of events. Maybe that's why I haven't ever written about it.

It's a really complex story. It takes a lot of twists and turns. It's not a straight line and it's not a moment in time when I knew the Truth. As a matter of fact, God and I have sparred with each other for about 30 years now and he's still not finished with me yet.

Conversion is a funny thing. It's completely individual for each person. Placing a formula on conversion is like trying to buy a wedding dress off the rack at Filene's Basement - and not have any alterations done. It's impossible. Well, at least close to it.

My conversion, for example, has been a case of learning that without God, I am nothing. I am not in control of the world around me, only God is. And furthermore, God can bring great good out of the most tragic evils that we can throw at Him.

*I can't really tell my whole story in all it's gory detail. There's passion, betrayal, joy, suffering, death, despair, triumph and even a few encounters with the voice of God. But I can share one of the most important things I have learned: **Without an encounter, a personal encounter, with Jesus Christ, there is no real conversion.***

This series will be kind of catch-as-catch-can. We'll see where this takes us. Today, though, we'll begin at 16.



- Age 16 -

I can remember going to spend time in the church in the middle of the night when I was a teenager. Things would get tough at home and I'd go for a walk to clear my head or get some space. Almost every time I would end up sitting in front of the tabernacle at Immaculate Conception. I wasn't sure

why, but I knew that it was the right place to be.

The homeless men who took shelter against the elements in the church pews never bothered me. Maybe I was too certain of my invincibility or just too dumb to be afraid (I

was

a teenager, after all,) or maybe I really had nothing to fear. I remember there being a great deal of dissent within the parish about the dangers of leaving the church unlocked. Regardless of what my pastor's motivation was for keeping the doors of our urban church unlocked day and night, I will always be eternally grateful for the spiritual shelter of the always-open church.

Even at that young age, I would sing to the Lord in the silence of the Church or just sit quietly and contemplate the tabernacle. I had no real understanding of the reality of the Eucharist at the time, mind you. Despite my very expensive Catholic school education, I truly believed that the Eucharist was just a symbol. It was just a piece of bread that represented something that I could never attain.

I knew about the Bible. I read the entire Bible my Third and Fourth grade year. I read a chapter a night until I was finished. Of course, I didn't understand it, but it was a start. And the actual words went to work on my heart - whether or not I knew or understood them. I can see that now. But, I couldn't see it at 16.

Church was just a quiet place to be and the altar of reservation was just so lovely, I couldn't help but be drawn to it. I had no idea that Jesus was actually calling to me. He was wooing me and courting me, just as my husband would a few years later. Jesus wanted so very much to be with me and be my strength and my comfort in my tumultuous life. I wasn't so sure. I was so caught up in finding out who I was, that I neglected to find out who he was. I had no idea that when I took the time to find out who Jesus really was, I would find myself, too.

To me, Jesus was just a nice idea. A nice guy, who never got angry or threw things (I kinda skipped that whole "expelling the money changers from the temple" thing, I guess). Jesus was a perfect person. I would never be a perfect person. Even more remote was the idea of his mother, Mary. How could someone be

that

perfect? Not me. I was as far from perfect as I could get.

The divine life was a concept for me. It was a construct of harps and angels, and clouds and blue skies that was so far removed from my experience that I could not even conceive of such a place or of such persons. God was just an idea. There was nothing personal about him for me.

It is very hard to have an encounter with an idea. Ideas have no real substance and carry no weight. Part of the beauty of the Incarnation is the fact that through God's revelation of the person

of Jesus, we are able to put a face with a name. We are able to touch the face of God. And, in fact, through the sacraments, we do just exactly that. In the Eucharist we touch God and he becomes one with us.

There is a sensual experience of receiving and adoring the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus in the Eucharist. There is something tangible in spending time with the Blessed Sacrament. It's not just an idea or a magic trick. It is a reality. It brings us, not just close to God, but we become subsumed into the Body of Christ by receiving Him into our bodies in a real and tangible way.

I am no Theology of the Body expert. Heck, I'm not an expert on anything but liturgical music. I just know what my experience has been.

If you want to get close to the Lord, if you want to have a personal relationship with Jesus, you have to start with the Sacraments. Each one becomes a conduit through which we receive and build Grace and Charity. But there are three, in particular, that specifically speak to my journey.

Through Confession, he speaks to me, personally.

Through the Eucharist, he actively storms the borders of my comfortable little life.

Through Confirmation, he called me to take the light of Grace to the world.

Is Jesus calling to you? Will you let him win your heart?

This contribution is available at <http://peoplesheadsandbabyfaces.blogspot.com/2014/05/conversion-is-funny-thing-age-16.html>

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Seeing is Believing, Part II [at With Us Still]

I wasn't really looking for proof that 'God is in the House' ...but I got some anyway when we had the chance to complete our Kairos Weekend at Menard this past Saturday and Sunday.

A couple of weeks ago, when [the lockdown occurred that shuttered](#) the originally-scheduled Weekend in mid-stream, it was a bit discouraging — not so much because it left our agenda unfinished, but because so many powerful things seemed to be happening inside the prison. As I wrote the day after,

While I certainly don't relish the heartbreak, I realized upon further review that I was witnessing something of an Easter miracle behind those locked doors. We'd spent less than 30 hours together, but already a strong bond had grown between us. Christ was melting hearts — *theirs* and *ours* — and pouring out a full measure of mercy and affirmation in our midst.

At the time, we didn't know when — or whether — we'd be allowed back in to continue the program. And frankly, as we headed back to Menard early on Saturday morning, many of us on the team were kind of wondering how the "restart" would work out: Could there possibly be the same level of energy, the same spirit, in the room some three weeks later?

Certainly, it was not the most ideal of circumstances. But as one of our Kairos brothers observed, *'there is not a stray atom in creation.'* God's presence might not always be obvious, he said, but God is at work in *every* circumstance, and under all types of unlikely conditions.

And so it was for us this past weekend.



How powerful a Truth can penetrate even these walls?

The Holy One's presence was made known to us in all kinds of remarkable ways during the final two days of our Kairos — some of the most memorable of which came during the “open mike” time of our closing ceremony. Participants were invited to share how their hearts had been moved, their outlooks changed, by the time we'd spent together...or more precisely, by the encounters they'd had with the Body of Christ.

One Kairos brother noted how he'd always felt close to the Lord when he lived on the outside — a feeling that had been taken from him during his years of incarceration. *'I wanted that feeling back,'* he said. *'I've been praying, "Lord, show me that you're still with me!" And then Kairos came. The Lord answered my prayer.'*

Another participant talked about how he felt like he'd been running for all of his 35 years on earth — running, but with no finish line ever in sight. *'Now, I see,'* he said. *'God saw me running all that time...and He was just waiting for me to get tired. God wanted me to get tired...so that I could finally fall into His loving arms.'*

Yet another could not suppress the smile on his face, as he reflected on the forgiveness he had experienced during his Kairos Weekend. *'It's there for me — even me,'* he said. *'The chief of sinners...can be made into a saint.'*

As for myself, I spent some time gratefully reflecting about the chance I'd just had to witness a prayer being answered in real-time. You see, several times during the course of the Weekend, we had recited the Kairos Community Prayer together. It goes like this:

Jesus, come join us in our journey

as we seek Your will for this community in this environment.

Teach us to love each other as You love us,

To give ourselves as You give Yourself,

So that the Kingdom of God might be made present to all. Amen

There's no question in my mind that this prayer was answered — right before our eyes.

Love...and the Kingdom...had indeed come into the most unlikely of places.

Let us pause now...to recall that we are in the presence of the Holy One.

This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2014/05/21/todays-find-seeing-is-believing-part-ii/>
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Why it isn't time to change our views of adultery and marriage



My phone rang mid-day on a Monday -- an unexpected call from a friend in a crisis sparked by a spouse's newly revealed infidelity. I thought of my friend last week as I read a column on HuffPost Wedding, a request by life coach Lisa Haisha to reconsider monogamy, which is a promise implied by marriage but breached by many-a-spouse. The divorce rate, Haisha wrote, "coupled with the prevalence of adultery," is indicative of what she thinks we need: to let marriage evolve, to let each couple decide if infidelity is ok.

The column admirably encourages spousal self disclosure, but it also implies that monogamy in marriage might not be important, as if infidelity's prevalence is a reason to redefine a covenant.

But if we redefine marriage to include people who don't want to be faithful, we redefine marriage for people who don't want to be married.

Their choices do not negate the truth: monogamy in marriage

is

important.

This is, as Haisha wrote, the first time in human history in which the death that dissolves a monogamous marriage may not happen for several decades. She also wrote that monogamous marriage itself is new compared to plural marriage, that adultery might be inevitable, that it's so normal among married women and men that we all ought to be free to change marriage's boundaries to include it.

But norms aren't normal because they're good. They're normal because we keep them that way.

The onus is on each of us to consider norms critically, to admit that a new definition of marriage is desired because it's easier to change marriage into something that allows for infidelity than to become people who can be faithful, not because monogamy isn't important.

As a result of a longer life expectancy, a couple indeed can be married for 60 years, Haisha wrote, and she followed that up with a question: "Is it realistic to think that two people could be emotionally, mentally, physically and sexually compatible for that long?" In short, and even in my opinion, no.

But the absence of constant compatibility in a marriage doesn't warrant a rejection of monogamy. That's because constant compatibility in marriage is impossible.

People are compatible when they can exist together without conflict, which means compatibility, by definition, is not constant. But that compatibility waxes and wanes is not proof that monogamy is irrelevant. It is proof that monogamy is important. It creates a safe space in which a couple can use the communication Haisha suggests couples use -- and not to redefine marriage, but to achieve compatibility again and again.

Couples who are monogamously married for decades and are happy are few and far between, Haisha wrote. But unhappily married couples aren't unhappy because they are monogamous. They are probably unhappy because they aren't communicating (or because they probably shouldn't have gotten married in the first place).

Widespread marital misery is not an excuse to permit adultery, but evidence of what a marriage actually needs, of which too many marriages are devoid: love.

Real love, selfless love -- the kind of love I, a practicing Catholic, learned from Jesus. Maybe monogamy is hard, and maybe it is rare, but it reminds us that relationships don't thrive if they don't involve work, that marriage is designed to result in the destruction of self absorption. Adultery says "nothing is more necessary than gratification" and monogamy says "nothing is more necessary than love." And in a marriage, I can't imagine anything more important.

- - - -

Click

[here](#)

to read Haisha's column on HuffPost Wedding.

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Mothers and Sons



Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, 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. John 19:25-27

There is something special about mothers and sons. It is an unexplainable bond that only they share. She gave him birth, nursed him, wiped his slobbered chin, and held the tissue when he blew his nose.

Throughout his early years, mom was always there to bandage his bruised knees, and salve his bruised ego.

She was his biggest cheerleader watching youth sports and later as he played high school football. She was his confidant when he was dating as he searched for a girl just like mom.

She cried when she sent him off on the first day of school. She cried when he went away to college. She cried at his wedding, and at the birth of each of his children.

Yes, there really is something special.

I've seen prisoners drop to their knees at the sight of their elderly mother grieving over their incarceration.

I've seen men who worked hard and when they've made it purchased a new home for mom.

Recently, Kevin Durant, when named the NBA's most valuable player, cried as he thanked his mother for the sacrifices she made for him and his brother growing up. He called his mom the real MVP.

Yes, indeed, there is something special about the bond between mother and son.

There has never been, nor will there ever be anything quite so special as the love between a mother and son. –Anonymous

I imagine the same held true for Jesus and his mother Mary. Although we don't know much from scripture about Jesus's youth, I'm sure she did all of the same things that your mother did.

She gave him life, nursed him, and wiped his chin and nose. She was his biggest cheerleader as he began his public ministry, his confidant and adviser. And, she cried as she watched him be taken away and crucified.

There's not a thing Jesus wouldn't do for his mother, even requesting a miracle at the wedding at Cana. And, there is nothing she wouldn't do for Him.

That might just explain the power of praying to Mary to intercede for us to our Lord. There's nothing He wouldn't do for her. Remember, He gave Mary to us as our spiritual mother from the cross.

Moms, are you having a problem in your life, a health problem, a problem with your marriage, or a problem with you children, especially your son? Then, right now, pray the rosary, say a Hail Mary, or simply ask the mother of our Lord and Savior to intercede for your intention.

And sons, pray for your mother, call her often, stop to see her frequently. And, if you mom is deceased, keep her in your prayers, and don't be afraid to asked her to intercede for your intentions.

It's true; there really is something special between mothers and sons.

****Note**** This post is dedicated to my Daughter in-law Jackie and my new grandson Nico, born June 2, 2014 at 8:20AM. Mother and son are doing great! Yes, There is something special about the bond between Mother and Son!

This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2014/06/mothers-and-sons/>
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I was a reluctant liturgical dancer [at Super Swell Times]

More than a decade ago, I learned the hard way that [liturgical dance](#) is *not* a good idea. To be fair, it wasn't actually my fault that I had a one year stint as a liturgical dancer — it was **mandatory**.



A Little Background

If you're Catholic or went to Catholic school, you're probably wondering how it is possible that I spent my 8th grade year in an obligatory liturgical dance group. Believe me, I've spent a few years scratching my head over the whole thing. The best answer I've come up with is that my school wasn't *really* a Catholic school. Sure, it was affiliated with a Catholic church and had all the exterior trappings of a traditional parish school (*uniforms, weekly mass attendance, tether ball courts*) but that's all they were — trappings.

In fact, when I describe the school to my friends today, I explain that it had all the celebrity-worship of your average Scientology center against a prestigious backdrop of red plaid and an astronomically high average disposable income.

There were a lot of weird things about this school: the pastor who looked like he spent more time on his makeup in the morning than I did, the less-than-morally-sound 7th grade "Morality Unit," and of course, the mandatory liturgical dancer troupe. Ultimately, I think most of the weirdness stemmed from this crazy sexual undercurrent that the school had. I could go **on and on** about what that sort of environment does to a 13 year old girl's sense of self worth, but I won't.

After all, I'm here to tell you about my less-than-successful liturgical dance career.

Dancing through the Stations

On my very first day of 8th grade, the teacher informed us that the 8th grade girls (all 12 of us) would get to do something *very special*. We would get to choreograph *and* perform our very own “original dance version” of the Stations of the Cross. We didn’t get to pick the music though, as the teacher “had appropriate songs already.”

I ended up in a group that danced to Phil Collins’ “” but I can’t actually tell you what station that was for. I *do* know that it involved a really snazzy boat neck, 3/4 sleeved black leotard and a junky skirt made of elastic and bright purple tulle.



If we’d gotten to wear swank outfits like this, maybe I would have stuck with it longer.

My Ma Says No

From the beginning, the whole liturgical dance thing was *not* popular in my house. My mother was enraged, my father had that whole “I’m bewildered by this situation involving my teenage daughter” face going on and my brother spent a lot of time hiding as far away from the *conversations* as possible.



Bewildered?

I'm pretty sure the whole family would have been **a lot** happier if I sat out the whole performance. Ultimately, I did something that I wasn't particularly proud of – I fought for my right to wear a stupid leotard and spin around barefoot down the center aisle to a stupid Phil Collins song. **And I fought hard, dudes.** I fought like it was the most important thing in the world to me, even though it wasn't. *Even though I didn't even want to do it.*

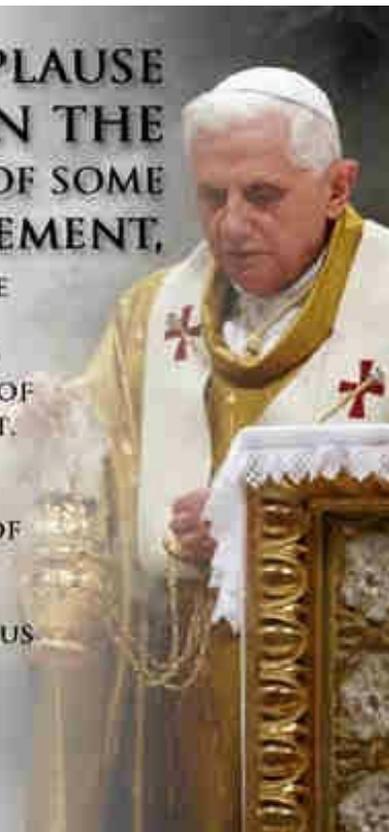
Chalk it up to teenage angst, peer pressure or the discomfort I felt being a Midwestern transplant in LA. Either way, I knew that getting excused from the mandatory stations would *not* endear me to my classmates and I did **not** want to give them anything else to bother me about.

The Fallout and the Lesson

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.
SUCH ATTRACTION FADES
QUICKLY - IT CANNOT
COMPETE IN THE MARKET OF
LEISURE PURSUITS,
INCORPORATING AS IT
INCREASINGLY DOES VARIOUS
FORMS OF RELIGIOUS
TITILLATION.

- POPE BENEDICT XVI



Pope Benedict would probably not have enjoyed our performance, either.

Suffices to say that it did **not** go well. Old ladies walked out! Children's eyes were covered by protective mothers! My own mother was *super* mad! It was **mortifying**. To this day, I can't hear Phil Collins without breaking out into a cold sweat. Beyond all that, the worst part of the whole ordeal was the knowledge that I was willing to throw aside my very real beliefs for the sake of fitting in with my fellow 8th grade miscreants. To this day, I can't even really laugh about it – which is bizarre because I laugh about everything.

I did, however, learn a few things from the whole experience:

1. “My ma says no” is a perfectly valid reason to get out of doing something. I have it on good authority that I can continue using it until I turn 30.
2. Liturgical dance shouldn't happen. It just shouldn't.
3. Your worth as a person is not defined by how you look in a leotard – or how willing you are to spin around in the most revealing leotard you can find.
4. One major slip-up in the mores of decency in 8th grade doesn't define you as a person or a Catholic.
5. If you *do* have to wear a leotard for a mandatory activity, go with the boat neck. It's very flattering.

***In case you're wondering, if any pictures of this ordeal ever existed, they have long since been destroyed.*

This contribution is available at <http://superswelltimes.wordpress.com/2014/05/15/i-was-a-reluctant-liturgical-dancer/>
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Scapegoating the Body [at Smaller Manhattans]



that's a relief

(This post is a bit of a sequel to the prior post.)

On April 30 I completed what I think is my 10th year of catechizing 6th-graders in Wednesday Night Sunday School. I love teaching, but I like to also sit down and have someone else be the teacher, especially if they really have something to teach. My classes are on Wednesday nights at the same time RCIA; and on Thursdays the parish offers lectures on assorted topics of interest to Catholics such as the Reformation, the Divine Comedy, and Islam. Both RCIA and the Thursday night series are led by our Director of Christian Formation T.J. Nielsen, who, like Goldilocks' porridge, is just right: brisk, informed, funny, comment-and-question oriented, and not too Powerpointy. But during the Catechetical year, having taught on Wednesday I don't wanna go back out on Thursday; so I attended only one of TJ's presentations before May, and two more since then. My loss. I may try harder next year.

When I hear anyone speak live about religion-philosophy-culture-society, it's usually from the pulpit on Sunday or a lectern during the week. I'm always catechetically assessing the moment-by-moment content of what I hear: do I cover that in class? If so, is this new content I can merge with what I already do? If I don't cover it, should I? How much time would it take? How would I teach it to kids? That sort of thing. It's affirming that most of what I hear from pulpit or lectern overlaps and harmonizes with lots of class content and thought-process, although the pitch is different. And even if there's no direct lesson-plan application of some memorable bit, inevitably some child will ask an off-the-wall question; and

pow,

I deliver an answer I mooched from someone else years ago.

So refining kids' content through exposure to adult thinking is second nature. But over the last couple of weeks being in TJ's class, I heard questions and comments coming from adults that I had already heard at least once from kids. And of course my 6th-grade answers were different from

adult-type answers. So I felt constrained to strip the kiddie-approach out of anything I said before

I

commented. But still: meaningful adult content lay within children's catechesis, content that wasn't likely to emerge in an adult-only learning environment.

Last night's parish lecture on the Catholic Worldview included discussion of a human being comprising a unity of a body and a soul. TJ mentioned Manicheans and Gnostics, who align the Soul with light and the good; and the Body with darkness and evil. A woman asked why Christian heretics such as the Cathars would reinvent those old ideas- after all, Genesis observes that everything was good. Now, kids don't ask questions about Cathars or Gnostics. But kids ask questions about how our bodies and souls go together; and discuss why people don't like to apologize or accept blame; why sin is bad; its effects; why bad things happen. In class, Body and Soul is a theme that runs all the way from Genesis through the Mass. There was a good, kid-type answer to that woman's question, but I had to think about it. After the lecture was over and people were chatting, I asked her if I could respond to her question especially with reference to the Genesis bit. She said sure.

I crouched down so I could touch the floor. "You're right that Genesis says everything God made was good. That means even stuff like rocks. It was all good 'cause everything that comes from God is good

unless something messes it up.

But Adam and Eve sinned, and God said to Adam, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you." You may already know

adama

is Hebrew for earth, ground, dirt. So Adam was made from

Adama

and God's breath (I pretend to scoop up dirt, breathe into it, and mold it), and he was good. Now Mr. Dirt has sinned. But Adam's sin doesn't just affect Adam the man; Mr. Dirt's sin also curses the dirt, the

adama

(I angrily smack the floor), because they are connected. Adam sins, and all Creation pays for it. Now nobody wants to think their sins have such repercussions; but I think when I sin, it may have some bad effect centuries or light years from here, like throwing a sin-rock into clean, calm water. I don't know how far the bad ripples will go, but I expect to be appalled when I find out. If God

showed me right now all the bad I've caused, it'd probably kill me or at least drive me insane. And being prideful, I look for an easy way around that Matterhorn of guilt- you know, I'm not as bad as Hitler, or my prodigal brother, or Judas. Or my sins are just on me, so no biggie to get God's pro-forma forgiveness.

I expect everybody looks for that sort of out: one that lets us keep most of our pride intact. So people take advantage of a major consequence of sin: death. See, death separates the body and soul, and the body belongs to the visible, physical world, which we already know is a mess: famine, plague, tornadoes, tigers, yuck! It was a mess before I got here! So that must be the problem: our souls, our

invisible real selves

are good and pure, and not morally responsible for being stuck in these lousy sin-prone bodies. This heresy simply scapegoats the Body, in order that the Soul may get a pass. A convenient construct, but a false one. A human being is singular, even if we can imperfectly perceive different aspects of that singularity. We're a bit like Jesus in that respect: Jesus comprises God/Man/Body/Soul all at once. But Jesus is singular; prying him apart is heretical. Likewise the Trinity: the three-ness is singular. Prying them apart is heretical.

The whole person sins. There's no Gnostic spiritual better-half with an eternal get-out-jail-free card. That's why there will be a Resurrection of the Dead before the Final Judgement: the whole person is good or bad, so the whole person will be judged. Ouch.

That's why that heresy remains popular. And it's why the Catholic Church is always clear about why it truly is heretical: the only out is true repentance, and the sacrifice of one's pride."

Ouch again.

(Audio version

[here](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2014/05/scapegoating-body.html>
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In Warner: small school, big mission [at Leaven For The Loaf]

Recently, I attended a commencement at a small college in Warner, New Hampshire. I mean *small*. Why make the trip, when I had no child in the class? Because those graduates are shifting the culture. I came to cheer them on. A more joyful morning would have been tough to arrange.



Posing for the class portrait: College of Saint Mary Magdalen class of 2014, with Bishop Peter Libasci.

For my day job as well as from personal inclination, I spend a lot of time looking at state legislation. It's easy to get tied up in that. Every little success is magnified, as is every little failure. A committee votes the "wrong" way ... a bad bill goes to interim study ... a long-awaited floor vote gets postponed: the highs and lows could get completely out of hand. Balance comes from faith, family, and anything in the community that doesn't have a direct line to the State House.



Hence, my admiration and respect for the people who have built up the College of Saint Mary Magdalen in Warner. They're working with a long view. The founders and faculty members are neither content with the current culture nor defeated by it. The College is Catholic. "Pro-life" ought to go without saying. Times being what they are, though, it bears stressing that this is a pro-life community. The students who come and who choose to stay through graduation are thoroughly steeped in the richness of faith and the best of the liberal arts tradition. The students' commitment to respect for life flourishes naturally.

My husband and I are graduates of a state university. More than thirty years ago, we could see that while our state institution was in no danger of going under, some of the Catholic colleges whose work we admired were definitely struggling. We made the decision at that time that to the best of our ability, in good and lean times alike, we'd do what we could to support the schools that were standing up for the right to life. The College of Saint Mary Magdalen has been one of them.

Forgive me for one State House digression: I've seen some CSMM students in action at legislative hearings on life-issue bills, where they've signed in and testified. Few other schools encourage this. The students make much more of an impact than they realize. People are forced to stop and think when they hear college-age women and men urging legislators to affirm life. It doesn't fit the normal young-activist template. I know; I hear the conversations in the hallways after the students leave.

This is a long way of explaining why I made the drive to Warner in early May. I'm grateful to those students, most of whom don't know me personally. I'm grateful to their professors, some of whom I'm known for many years. The culture of life doesn't sustain itself; it has to be nurtured and preserved and then handed down to the rising generation. That's what's happening in Warner.

Fly a Little Higher [at Cherishing Everyday Beauty]

This post is part of the Fly a Little Higher Blog Tour which I am delighted to be a part of along with hundreds of bloggers raising awareness and giving hope to those with cancer. To learn more and join us, [CLICK HERE!](#)



I never dreamed of going to college. The thought of showing up at a school with potentially hundreds of people who didn't know each other might be exciting or even enticing to some, but the thought of it terrified me. I didn't think I would succeed; I didn't know if a lifetime of homeschool* had adequately prepared me to face the big wide open world. All I wanted was to get myself out of school, get married, settle down, and raise a Catholic family.

I still have those dreams. But by now, I've flown a little higher and discovered sights I had not seen before.

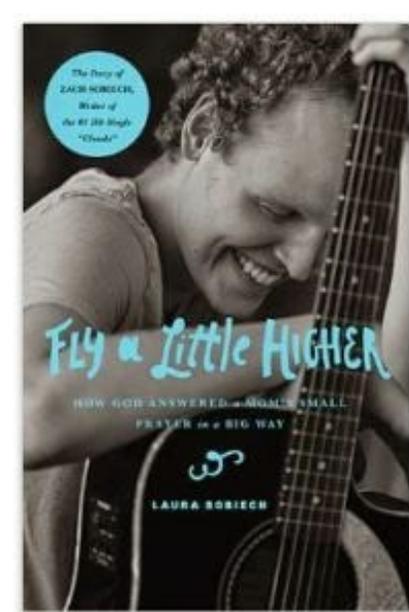
Now, I am graduating from college. I earned a degree in Early Childhood Education and, though I can't honestly say I enjoyed every minute of it, I *can* say that I learned more [about myself] than I ever expected, realized I am capable of more than I thought, and discovered that there is a method of Education that relates quite well to what I knew while growing up as a homeschooler. I can say with confidence that I am *glad* and *happy* that I spread my wings and flew a little higher.

About a year ago, my sister told me that a musician/singer/songwriter had died the day before. [An instrumentalist myself](#) and very curious, I asked about who had died. "Zach Sobiech. He just died of cancer and used songwriting as his way to say goodbye to his family." I was more than a little intrigued and wasted all of about 0.5 seconds before getting on YouTube and searching for his songs. I listened to "Clouds" and it blew me away (no pun intended). I watched the 20 minute

documentary about his last days and cried the whole way through. I was amazed that this 17-going-on-18 year old could have such a great smile on his face and look so peaceful and joyful, even in the midst of his agonizing battle with osteosarcoma.

And then the quote. That one line that caught my attention and has stuck with me ever since: "I just want everyone to know: **You don't have to find out you're dying... to start living.**"

Two days before I was to give my final oral presentation at college, I received an email and was rather surprised to open it and discover it was from Zach's mom, Laura Sobiech, asking if I would help spread the word about her new book, *Fly a Little Higher*, which is written from her perspective and tells the story of Zach's battle with the disease. One of my favorite things in the world is helping others fulfill their dreams. With the little background knowledge I knew about Zach, as well as the chance to read a new book and get to know him a little better, I eagerly accepted.



This book. Will change your life. That might sound a bit dramatic, but I don't think you can read this book and *not* be touched in some small way by Zach's example of living his life while facing death.

It's a very real story. Laura tells of the excruciating times, the happy times, and the memories that will be cherished for years to come. She describes each family member's personality in such a way that I felt like I was befriending them just from reading the book. Zach's sense of humor shone

through the pages and had me in stitches a few times, but there were no shortage of tears either.

Especially towards the end of the book, there were times I couldn't see the words on the page because tears blinded my vision. Setting the book down, though, was simply not an option. There is so much *good* and *beauty* in this book.

Going to college was hard. It was difficult to persevere through each class, each semester, and each year. It was hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel, hard to work with my anxiety, and hard to push myself -- over and over again -- outside of my comfort zone.

But I did. Time and again, I proved to myself that *I can do all things through Him who gives me strength*. (cf. Philippians 4:13) I've spent the last four years attending college and going from not having a clue of what I wanted to do with my life to becoming very passionate about Education and the Montessori Method. These last four years have taught me that, if I only fly a little higher and open myself up to whatever God has in store, God will indeed do great things and take me to places I have never dreamed.

Zach - *thank you* for choosing to live while dying. You've shown me that the impossible is, indeed, very possible.

 Sarah



Oh, before you go... check out these links and get to know Zach & his family a little bit better for yourself!

"" [Grab your copy of the book here!](#)*On the contrary, I found that my homeschool background over-prepared me for college! I might have found myself in a classroom for the first time at age 18, but I was one of only two people in my English class who knew how to recognize a verb in a sentence. Academically speaking, I was quite well prepared

for what lie ahead.

This contribution is available at http://cherishingeverydaybeauty.blogspot.com/2014/05/fly-little-higher_4.html
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"I Don't Care What Your Faith Is!" [at V for Victory!]



I recently had a conversation with a dear friend on the subject of religious strife. At one point, in connection with his status as a fallen-away Protestant and mine as an observing Catholic, he said to me: "I don't care what your faith is!"

I think he meant this in the spirit of tolerance, which too many people in what now passes for Christendom think is the highest good. I think he meant to say that he accepts me even though I believe a lot of stuff he disagrees with. But the words are wrong on so many levels, beginning with the fact that they happen not to be true. For one thing, my friend has explicitly acknowledged that he comes to discuss things with me precisely because of my religious convictions, which he knows are central to who I am, even though he does not share them. For another, the essence of this statement is a callous indifference that I don't believe he really has toward me or, for that matter, anyone else. For still another, it is contrary to the good will in respect of God and the hunger for truth that I know he possesses.

I gave him the first response my mind could lay hold of: "*I care what your faith is!*" I meant it, and mean it, with all my heart.

People who say things like "I don't care what your faith is!" are either malicious or not thinking what they are saying. A Catholic who can say this cannot be living his faith. It means he does not take seriously that the entire business of our lives is, first, to save our own souls, and second, to help others to save theirs, and that the Catholic faith is the means by which this is to be accomplished. If I were to say to my friend what he said to me, what I would really be saying is: I don't care whether you go to heaven or burn forever in hell when you die; it's all one to me. What a horrible thing to say to anyone, let alone to a friend! In fact, it's hard to decide which would be worse: that, or affirmatively to wish for his eternal damnation. I doubt this is what he really *meant* to say to me, though it is in effect what he did say; he simply did not know any better. But if I, who do know better, were to say that to him, he should not be pleased; on the contrary, he should be very hurt.

What does it mean for me to care about my friend's faith, or lack of faith? Does it mean I want him to conform to me? Not at all. I want him to conform to God, because God made him to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next. I have neither the right nor the desire to do what not even God will do, and shove the Faith down his throat. He has to want it for himself. But I would be faithless both to him and to God if I tried to get out of sharing with him the greatest treasure I possess.

If some little bit of joy falls into our hands and we want to share it with our friends -- a bottle of good wine, or some fudge, or a piece of good news or a funny story -- how much more should we want to share the joy that the world cannot take away? If we have the Catholic faith, then we have a gift beyond price that we were given out of pure gratuity and on account of no merit of our own whatsoever. With that gift comes the solemn obligation to share it -- if we need more motivation beyond love for friends and family and associates. Of course we cannot bludgeon them into accepting it -- nor should we want to. But they deserve to have the option of knowingly accepting or rejecting it, and we have no business withholding it from them. I not only *do* care what your faith is; I *must* care what your faith is.

This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2014/05/i-dont-care-what-your-faith-is.html>
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Happy Birthday Pope Saint John Paul II

Here are some pictures of the great life of Karol Wojtyla before his election to the Papacy in 1978. He would become Pope John Paul II.

He is now Pope SAINT John Paul II.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY JP2!!!



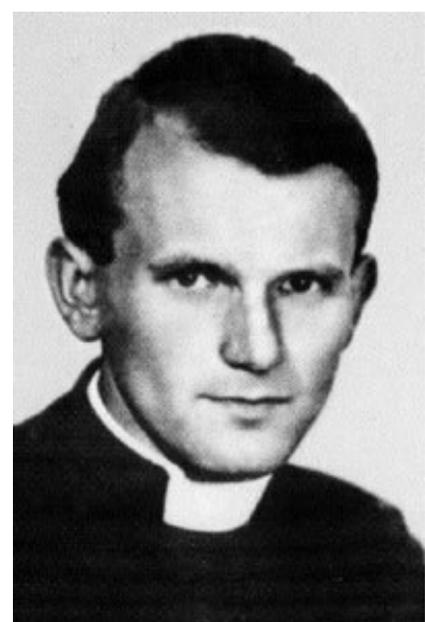
Karol Wojtyla as a young child with his parents.



Karol Wojtyla as a young boy.



Young Karol Wojtyła as a factory worker and wearing a brown scapular.



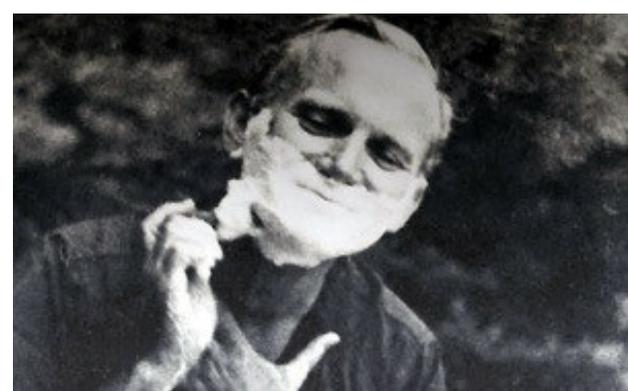
Karol Wojtyła as a young priest. He was ordained on November 1, 1946.



Fr. Karol Wojtyla hiking.



Fr. Karol Wojtyla rocking the sneakers (maybe Chuck Taylors) and eating a pastry.



Fr. Karol Wojtyla shaving on a camping trip.



Fr. Karol Wojtyla rocking the black hat.



Bishop Karol Wojtyla.



Bishop Wojtyla wearing the black beretta.



With Cardinal Wyszynski.



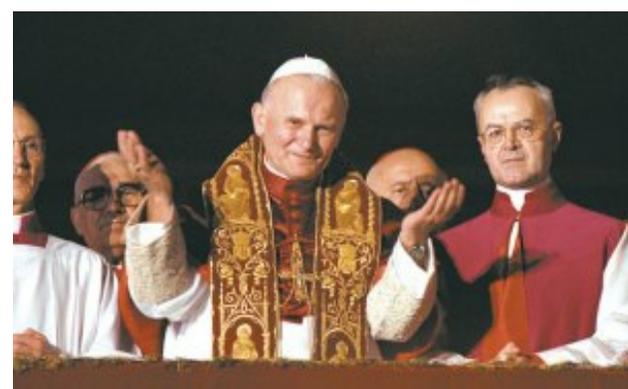
Receiving the “red hat” from Pope Paul VI.



Cardinal Wojtyla on the ski slopes.



Cardinal Wojtyla with his predecessor, Pope John Paul I.



Pope St. John Paul II on the day of his election to the Papacy.

This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2014/05/18/happy-birthday-pope-saint-john-paul-ii/>
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Give Him 3 Dates [at The Veil of Chastity]

Scenario: You go out with a guy, you both enjoy the date and he says he would like to go out again. But, you are not sure if you are feeling a spark or not. Should you go out with him again?

My recommendation would be to go on the 2nd date and see if your feelings change. I would even recommend a 3rd date just to be sure. Sort of like the 3-date rule but this time you are giving the guy a chance to grow on you.



After 3 dates, then you can tell him *“I am sorry but although I was hoping for a spark, I am just not feeling one. Thank you for the fun and thoughtful dates.”*

The Wrist Twister

I have been in that situation before and it was always uncomfortable. And sadly, I think the guys could tell that it was somewhat forced. But, **I still was glad that I gave them a chance**. Those dates were all **part of the process**. They helped me to assess what was important to me and what I was attracted to.

This one guy comes to mind. He was Catholic, nice, employed and a homeowner. Check, check, check and check. But, I did not feel emotionally, spiritually, intellectually or physically attracted to him. He was attractive, but I was not attracted to him.

I remember him because the poor soul would do this weird thing when he held my hand. He would insist on his hand being in the back rather than allowing my hand to fit nicely into his hand. My hand and wrist would start to hurt and it made me feel like I was in the masculine role rather than the feminine role. It would sort of make me cringe. It made me wonder if he understood his role....you know...in general. Anyway....

Sexual Attraction

You may be wondering if I think sexual attraction is important. Yes, yes I do! In fact, [I wrote](#)

[about it in this post!](#)

Now, it may seem like I am saying one thing in that post and telling you something else in today's post. In the **Sexual Attraction** post, my point is that a guy can **grow on you over time**. In addition, God **heals our sight** so that we can recognize our Holy Spouse.

In today's post, I am suggesting that you give it 3 dates to allow for God to move **if He chooses**. You can always say to God, "*I gave this guy a chance. No spark.*" You remove any feelings of doubt and when the enemy tries to tell you that you are too picky, his words will not have any power over you. You can rest assured that you are participating in the process.

Part Of The Process

These dates with these non-sparking guys are all part of the process. They will help you form your assessment of what you need in a husband. And, you will learn something about yourself. For me, all those non-sparking guys made me appreciate Gregg all the more. Remember that God put these guys in your life for a reason. So let's see what He does!

It is just 3 dates. Trust in the process. Trust in the Lord.

God love and bless you!

This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2014/05/13/give-him-3-dates/>
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VBS!

Our Vacation Bible School is going on this week and I am blessed to be coordinating the snacks. I get to help put the snacks together and then present them to the kids along with the meaning behind them. For example, today everyone got to make masterpieces of their own by decorating sugar cookies with skittles and licorice because God made each of us a masterpiece too!



We have a big crowd and by the time the last child trickles out of the cafeteria, we have served 600 kiddos, hopefully feeding their souls and their tummies.

What I am discovering about this week is that VBS is more than just a time to give kids food and teach them a Bible story. For me, it has become a movement of the Holy Spirit – what child does the Holy Spirit want me to connect with? Which teen helper needs to be recognized for doing a great job? Which adult leaders am I blessed to visit with? To whom is the Holy Spirit leading me?

And as I walk up to a dear friend that I haven't seen in a few weeks to chat with as the kids munch, I can picture Mary and Elizabeth, working together, sharing each other's company, living in the love of God.

As all of us gather before the snack to pray, I can visualize the first disciples spreading the Church to so many new people after Jesus' resurrection and Ascension. We too are coming together in the joy of Christ to share a spirit of love – The Spirit of Love.

If you are helping out at a VBS this summer, expect to be worn out, but fed spiritually by sharing a common faith, a central Truth – the Holy Spirit guides us to love, support and learn from each other.

And if when only two or three are gathered in His name, Christ is there, how much more is he present when 600 come together to fill the church!!

I Think I know What Purgatory is Like [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

I published this in early 2013. It is worth repeating:

The Catholic Church teaches (in part) about Purgatory this way:

The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: . . . before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come. (Paragraph 1031)

*To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood
(Revelation 1:5)*

I think I know what purgatory is. I caught a glimpse of it one morning in October 2011 when I attended a men's meeting at my parish. Nearly three years later it remains fresh in my memory.

I didn't think too long about that morning's topic of abortion. Why should I? Although I'd driven my girlfriend to an abortion clinic some 45 years earlier, I confessed and repented of that sin decades ago. And I believed Scripture's promise that He had wiped my sin spotless in Christ's precious blood.

So I walked into the meeting only mildly curious about the video and the discussion that would follow. But ten minutes into the program I received a gut-wrenching epiphany. For the first time in more than four decades my eyes opened to the depth of my abortion sin, an immeasurable depth I'd never known existed. White-hot shame seared into my bowels. Waves of unrelenting guilt swept over me like a tsunami, sucking away my breath, only to return churning ravaged memories through my mind.

I could not watch the video any longer. I grabbed my coat and stumbled from the room into the

cold October morning. It was all I could do to get into my car before irrepressible sobs convulsed through my body. “What are you doing to me!” I wailed at heaven, horrified, confused, angry. “Why did you show *that* to me! Oh, God! What have I *done!* What have I *done!*” Suicide actually flashed through my mind. “I don’t . . . I don’t deserve even to live!” I could not comprehend why God, who buried my crime in the sea of Christ’s blood four decades earlier, why He brought me to my knees like this. Why slash open my soul? Why lay me in the ashes of my past? It was not until hours later, after processing what God had done to me, I caught a glimpse of understanding. My abortion is only one of countless sins I’ve committed in my life, sins I’ve confessed, sins that have been forgiven, sins that have been immersed in the blood of Christ. The young women I turned into whores. The fledgling faith in Christ of others that I’d shattered. The families I destroyed as I seduced wives into adultery. The litany of my wickedness and the destruction I left in my wake seem to me, even now, near endless. Yes, I remain confident of God’s forgiveness for each one of those terrible acts; But my experience that October morning taught me – and reminds me even to this day – I have not fully comprehended the depth and breadth of all those sins. Further, I know I can *never* fully comprehend them unless God reveals them to me.

And He *will* reveal them to me.

Purgatory, I believe, will be that revelation. Perhaps it will unfold something like this: I am dead. My guardian angel ushers me to my Father’s presence. I see Him seated on His throne. Jesus is beside Him. And like the difference between absolute darkness and blinding light, I am suddenly self-aware, more self-aware than I could ever have been in life. My Father reaches from His throne and lifts me to His chest. He lays His chin on my head. He wraps His arms around me. I snuggle down into His warmth. I feel Him breathe. I hear His heart beat. And then, one by one, He shows me the fullest measure of each of my sins.

Each of my sins.

He reveals to me their hideousness. The death each wrought. The sadness each gave birth to. The relentless ripples of despair each caused in so many lives.

So many lives.

They are all there before me. One after the other. An endless lament. And as I watch each scene play out before my eyes, that same sword of shame sears again into my gut. Excruciating, unrelenting guilt swells over me like a tsunami. I convulse with unremitting horror at what I’ve done.

If my purgation in heaven is anything like what happened to me after watching the abortion video, the only reason my spirit will survive is because I will be snuggled in my Father’s lap. His arms

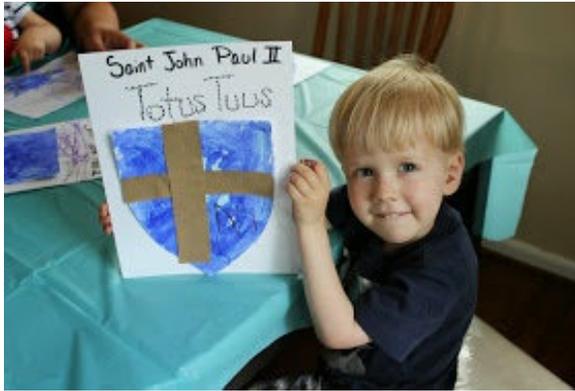
will enfold me. His warmth will comfort me. His breath will soothe me. His heart, beating with the gentlest of rhythms, will calm me. With His hand He will wipe every tear from my eyes, “and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain . . .” (Revelation 21:4).

Such will be the *only* reason I will survive my purgatory.

This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2014/05/i-think-i-know-what-purgatory-is-like.html>
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Becoming a Saint [at Working to be Worthy]



A friend recently suggested I, out of a roomful of Catholics, was on my way to sainthood. She seemed sincere rather than teasing, so I said thank you and let it go. I must admit I was puzzled, though. I mean, I am striving for holiness, but I wasn't sure what she saw that set me apart. After giving it more thought, I have an idea about what prompted her comment: we're spiritual opposites.

I enjoy solitude, meditative prayer, and dense theological books. I tend to have a cognitive approach to my faith. I'm fairly reserved in social settings (because I feel uncomfortable), so I rarely say things impulsively. She notices in me what she aspires to in herself (I'd guess) and thinks I'm further along the path to sainthood.

She is outgoing, warmly welcoming the stranger and reaching out to the tired and lonely. She creates faith-filled community, building up the Body of Christ. She is open, feeling the hurts of those around her; a burden shared is a burden halved. She is honest, offering encouragement by sharing her own struggles. She enthusiastically enters into the joy of those around her. "The greatest of these is love" - which she has in abundance. I see in her what I hope to cultivate in myself.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;

there are different forms of service but the same Lord;

there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Putting Free Will to Rest [at A Spiritual Journey]

God gave us our free will to choose between good and evil, between obeying him and disobeying him. Once we decide to surrender to God, we put our free will to its best use. Now God's will and ours become one and we no longer need to exercise our free will anymore.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2014/05/putting-free-will-to-rest.html>

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If You Give a Mouse A Condom... [at The Back of the World]



If you were in elementary school in the U.S. at the same time I was (early 90's), I'm 100% certain that you've read the classic children's book "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie."

If you weren't so fortunate as to grow up with that book, allow me to introduce the basic premise to you: things start out innocently enough. A young man, probably about the reader's presumed age, offers an amicable mouse what appears to be a chocolate chip cookie. The naive lad doesn't realize, though, that he's damned himself to a ride down a very, very slippery slope. For, as the book foretells, "if you give a mouse a cookie, he'll probably ask for a glass of milk." Well, sure, no problem there... but if you give him a glass of milk, he's going to want a straw. And most likely he's going to ask for a napkin too... and before you know it, your entire day has been pushed beyond the event horizon of the black hole that is your relationship with a very needy rodent.

It's a prophetic parable for the primary grades set: the people around you may cry about "slippery slope" arguments being logically fallacious, and yet sometimes... well, sometimes you get a very long way down the slope before you realize a hungry mouse's desert craving has destroyed your entire day.

Sometimes life imitates art. I'm talking, in this instance, about Protestant acceptance of birth control.

Before the 1930's, more-or-less all Christian denominations agreed that birth control was sinful (which is a fact that I was blissfully unaware of until I was well on my way to becoming Catholic. In fact, our evangelical pastor strongly advocated birth control in our pre-marital counseling, and I hadn't the foggiest idea that would have ever been controversial... but I digress, and I thank God for the grace of Confession). Back then, I think Christians would have unanimously given their assent to G.K. Chesterton's statement that those who advocate for birth control actually believe in neither birth nor control.

But in the 1930's, the Anglicans broke rank. Pretty much every Christian denomination thereafter

followed suit...except, famously, the Catholic Church. In a tumultuous time in Church history, Pope Paul VI wrote his encyclical [*Humanae Vitae*](#), which not only defended the Church's traditional teaching, but offered some pretty bold predictions about what would happen in society if contraception became widely embraced. The Catholic Church taught then and still teaches now that marital sex has both a unitive and a procreative purpose: that is God's design is that sex draws the couple together, and the result of that is an openness to new life as a result.

At the time, it sounded like an awful lot of "slippery slope" to many progressives, both inside and outside of the Catholic fold. It also sounded like a lot of Catholic hogwash to Protestants who had, by the time the encyclical was released in 1968, almost universally embraced contraception for married couples. A lot of scare tactics from an old celibate Italian man who lived in a castle, right?

...right?

I thought about all of that this evening because I just read that the lead singer of Jars of Clay—a very popular Christian band from my evangelical youth—[has decided to very vocally support gay marriage.](#)

Frankly, I wasn't surprised. Oh sure, it flies in the face of New Testament teaching, but I've heard whispers of support of this sort of thing from evangelical friends and acquaintances for quite some time now. Some popular evangelical speakers and bloggers have been going down this path for a few years. Jennifer Knapp, another popular Christian artist from my youth, [came out as a practicing homosexual back in 2010](#). A few months ago, there was [the scandal/public relations fiasco caused by World Vision...](#) Is it too early to call it a trend? Maybe.

But there's other troubling signs within evangelical views of sexuality. Divorce and remarriage is already widespread and accepted, despite Jesus' clear teachings against it in the New Testament. There doesn't seem to be a consensus about issues like in vitro fertilization or storing embryos. And among evangelicals my age, there seems to be...well, fatigue, for lack of a better word, surrounding the issue of abortion, even if not many take up the pro-choice mantle.

This is what allowing for contraception does: when once you separate the unitive and procreative aspects of sexuality, you pretty much end your chances of having a coherent Christian theology of sex. If sex is mainly unitive, and procreation is optional, then the entire function of marriage becomes very self-centered: we are brought together for the purpose of being brought together. The question becomes: what will make me and/or my spouse more happy or fulfilled? And if we stop being happy when we come together, then why shouldn't I divorce you and marry someone else? And if I want to come together with someone from the same gender because that's what makes me happy, then why should we be denied the unitive, since the procreative is optional anyways? Why should I let a few Bible verses affect my opinion— I mean, Paul was a product of his culture, he didn't really understand what homosexuality is the same way we do, right?

You see, that old celibate Italian guy who lived in a castle understood something: conclusions follow from premises. When once you alter your starting premises, even a little, your conclusions are bound to be wildly, radically different. Even evangelical Christians who believe in the Bible as the inspired word of God are not immune to this. Without a coherent Christian philosophy of sexuality based on natural law and reason, people find a way to dance hermeneutical jigs to get the doctrine they want. Allowing contraception into Christian marriages was just the first step on the path towards a wholesale abandonment of all traditional Christian sexual morality.

That is to say: if you give a mouse a condom...

This contribution is available at <http://backoftheworld.com/2014/05/26/if-you-give-a-mouse-a-condom/>
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What “Social Justice Catholics” Get Wrong About Social Justice [at Aleteia]

“How can you support gay marriage and abortion? I thought you were Catholic.” “Well I’m a social justice Catholic.” Right. Whether it’s used to describe commentator E.J. Dionne, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, or Vice President Joe Biden, it’s well-known that the term “social justice Catholic” is almost always a code word for a certain brand of cafeteria Catholicism that intentionally rejects a wide range of Church teaching. What’s not as well-known, though, is that what they reject often includes central tenets of the very Catholic Social Teaching (CST) they claim to champion. Here are three significant examples. The [Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#)

offers several key principles to CST:

subsidiarity

,

solidarity

, the

common good

,

universal destination of goods

, and

participation

, but the first and most important principle is the

dignity of the human person

.

Grounded in the biblical doctrine that we are all made in the image of God (Genesis 1.27), this principle means that all human beings have certain rights, the first of which the *Compendium*

lists as this: “the right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the

mother's womb from the moment of conception..." (

[CSDC](#)

155)

That's right: opposition to abortion is one of the most important tenets of CST. In fact, to reject the Church's teaching on abortion is to reject the basis for the Church's teachings about helping the poor. If that seems a bit much, I'll point out that Pope Francis, who has made care for the poor a centerpiece of his papacy, made precisely this point in his apostolic exhortation [Evangelii Gaudium](#)

:

[T]his defence of unborn life is closely linked to the defence of each and every other human right. It involves the conviction that a human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development. [...]

Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defence of human rights, which would always be subject to the passing whims of the powers that be... Precisely because this involves the internal consistency of our message about the value of the human person, the Church cannot be expected to change her position on this question. (213-214)

To support abortion, as many self-identified social justice Catholics do, is to reject the first principle of CST. After the initial principles are established, the *Compendium*

starts applying them to specific parts of society. The very first subject, before talking about economics, the role of government, or the environment, is "The Family, the Vital Cell of Society." (CSDC 209ff) In fact, t

he second human right listed in the *Compendium*

is "the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality." (CSDC 155) Regarding the proper form of the family unit, the

Compendium

is clear: "indissoluble monogamous marriage [is] the only authentic form of the family." The

Compendium

adds that government legislation "must never weaken recognition" of this fact and specifically warns against redefining marriage legally to include same-sex marriage. (CSDC 228, 229)

In other words, divorce and same-sex marriage are both, according to CST, contrary to the very foundation of society. So are a whole host of other things the *Compendium*

rejects: fornication, contraception, illicit fertility methods (e.g.

[IVF](#)

), polygamy, etc. The list of sins against the family could go on, but the point is clear: there's no way a person can embrace the sexual revolution, as many social justice Catholics do, and yet also claim to embrace CST.

This contribution is available at <http://www.aleteia.org/en/religion/article/what-social-justice-catholics-get-wrong-about-social-justice-5810116750213120>

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The Music In My Heart [at Loved As If]

He placed a joyful song in my heart which had been so filled with sadness and hurt. But He didn't take away all the pain. Instead, He tapped the joy that lay beneath the ache and tears in the well that was even more fathomless than I imagined. He overwhelmed me with love. My wounds were no hindrance to His love or to the love He brought me in Christian community — I am still just a people and I need people. He knows that and provides brothers and sisters who love me as if I am one of the family. It still boggles my mind but I'm learning to accept it. My family is dead. My family is alive and much bigger than I knew. It breaks my heart in the best way possible and releases more joy. The pain, while real, is, in comparison, tiny.

My Friend isn't what we'd call nice. (But then, neither would Phronsie more than 100 years ago.) In fact, I can only claim Him as "my Friend" because He chose to befriend me and I said, "Yes." But I can't pretend I knew what I was doing. He didn't choose me because I'm anything special; He is the same God who told me my life is worth no more than the lives of every other person He has created, the same God who left me with hateful people for eleven years, the same God who allowed others to kill my family. And, He is the same God who values me as much as every other person He has created, He is the same God who used those eleven years to teach me to fight my own sadness and protect me from pain I was much too small to face. He is the same God who used my curiosity to help me forgive, love, and pray for those I wanted zapped out of existence. Not nice. Glorious. Before I was old enough to understand, God took my hand and brought me into the heady swirl of His banquet. We've danced and feasted and waited for the next course together. He trusted me to see that He has done well. I do see it. Thanks be to God! I do see it.

He chose me for the same reason He chooses everyone else. I need Him. That's all I have, all I'll ever have. Need. My need is as deep as my joy. I need the One who loves me even though it's not always pleasant, for Him or for me. I need the One who trusts me to turn to Him when I'm in pain, when I'm happy, when life is mundane.

"When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world." (John 16:21) That's what I needed, the tremendous joy that comes after great travail. That's what He made me able to accept and what He gives me. Isn't that what we all need? Don't we all long for the joy that is infinitely greater than our pain? Don't we all long for "the glorious liberty of the children of God"? Don't we want to blend our voices and sing the music in our hearts as we dance with joy?

When God asked me, "Can you be happy without knowing everything?" I said, "Yes." I had sung and danced and swum joy, even with pain in my heart. Of course, I could be happy. I just didn't know how to do it when not singing, dancing, or swimming. He did. He does. And I am happy again. The music in my heart is no longer limited to dirges. To a Bossa Nova beat, eminently

suitable for dancing, I now sing, “Heaven and earth are full of Your glory! Hosanna in the highest!”

This contribution is available at <http://lovedasif.com/2014/06/07/the-music-in-my-heart/>
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The Heart of the Matter [at beautiful thorns]

This past weekend our family went on a retreat with the

[BSCD](#)

. It was our annual regional gathering. We had it at

[St. Leo Abbey](#)

in St. Leo, Florida. It is always good to get together, reconnect with other like-minded brothers and sisters in Christ and encounter the Lord together. It was a powerful time and the Holy Spirit definitely showed up and blessed us!

The Lord started speaking to me right off the bat when we arrived. We were letting our children run around on the beautiful monastery grounds before we went up to our room. My five year old daughter was enjoying herself at first but then she kept encountering bugs which were scary to her. She asked me, "Mom, why are there so many bugs here?" I told her it was because there was a lot of nature and bugs like nature. I then said to her, "Just focus on the nature and don't pay attention to the bugs." Immediately I knew the Lord was speaking to me. So often in life I pay more attention to little annoyances, frustrations and objects of stress in my life rather than the beauty and blessings around me. By doing this, I rob myself of joy.



Another way I think we rob ourselves of joy is by choosing to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil instead of the tree of life. We get caught up in what we should or should not be doing instead of making it our main goal to encounter Christ and rest in his love for us.

Saturday afternoon we had time for worship and the Lord showed me an image to share. It was of

a big, bright red, fully ripe strawberry hanging from a tree. It was so ripe it was dripping with juice. I knew the strawberry represented the heart of Jesus. I heard the Lord say, "Pick from the choicest of fruit which is love! Taste and see that the Lord is good! Then go out and give this love away to those who do not know about my love!" The word was full of emotion as I experienced the Lord's heart for his people. This word also went right along with what the Lord has been showing me over the last few months. We can be doing all the right things, keeping up with our responsibilities and even having a daily prayer life but if our main goal isn't to actually encounter Jesus and experience his love for us every day then life ends up feeling burdensome and lacking joy.

Last week Pope Francis tweeted, "Each encounter with Jesus fills us with joy, with that deep joy which only God can give."

Nehemiah 8:10 says, "The joy of the Lord is our strength."

Encountering Christ and his love everyday is how we eat from the tree of life. This is what gives us joy and propels us forward with the strength we need. It is this joy that will attract others to Christ and our way of life.

This contribution is available at <http://www.beautifulthorns.com/2014/04/the-heart-of-matter.html>
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5 Reasons to be Grateful to God and Be Filled with Joy [at His UnEnding Love]



1. God loves you. No matter who you are. No matter what you do. God loves you. He will never not love you. He will never stop loving you. God loves you.

“

Can a woman forget her child...?

Even if these may forget...,

I will not forget you.

I have carved you on the palms of my hands.”Isaiah 49: 16

2. Even if life is challenging, you are alive. You still have a chance to make things right or good. You can still make this world a better place in which to live.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5: 14-16

3. God is good. God is good. You are His Beloved Child. God is good.

“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

his steadfast love endures for ever!”

Psalms 118: 1

4. If you are suffering, you can always offer your sufferings up and unite your sorrows to the love of Jesus. You can help to save souls. Even in suffering, you can make a difference. Jesus knows

how much you suffer. He loves you for this. Even in your suffering, you can embrace the cross.

And he said to all, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9: 23

*(There are those who can be joyful in suffering.)

“I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much.”

Mother Theresa

5. There is power behind prayer. You can pray. Prayer is the balm for the soul.

“Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Phillipians 4: 6-7

This contribution is available at <http://hisunendinglov.blogspot.com/2014/06/5-reasons-to-be-grateful-to-god-and-be.html>

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Dancing with the Dead! [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

by Susan Fox

That's my husband happily ushering me out the door.

I am leaving the deadly dull aspects of my life as a housewife -- the dust, the dull monotony of paying bills, grocery shopping and ordering my son around -- all the heavy duties of keeping a house running.

I am going on an incredible mission that will require enormous physical stamina, a sense of adventure, the ability to laugh spontaneously, vocal cords to allow me to scream every so often and perseverance while my fibromyalgia symptoms flare up and my muscles spasm through the whole ordeal.

In short, I am going to the gym.



My husband knows I enjoy this activity. I think however he'd be surprised to know I am actually going to pray the whole time – while I am hopping around madly at Zumba!

I started praying this way because I needed reassurance. I am 61 years old. And though one of my Zumba instructors is 51, she looks like she's 25, and more importantly she acts like she *feels* 25.

I, of course, look much younger than my 61 years. But I feel much older than 82. In fact, when I was only in my 50s I ran a church group in Arizona, and if I dropped something on the floor, my 82-year-old friend would lithely rush to pick it up for me. The whole group knew if Susan got on the floor, no one would ever be able to get her up again.

It was funny the first time I showed up at Mat Pilates after I moved to Colorado. It took three people to get me off the mat. The instructor tried to convince me to leave the class.

But I am stubborn. Now I get on and off the mat by myself, and I've even learned to roll like a ball, and sit up. This amuses my husband to no end, as I practice at home. I hadn't done that since I was a kid.

But I digress. I have been doing Zumba since 2010. I am an old hand at it, although new people seeing me in action for the first time often mistake me for a newbie, and try to offer me consolation by saying, "Don't worry it gets easier!"

I had quadruple heart bypass surgery in 2010. By the way, this was the unreported "second miracle" of the new Saint Pope John XXIII. (I write this tongue in cheek) Some grumpy Catholics were shocked that Pope Francis canonized him without a second miracle, the normal process of canonization. How embarrassed I was when I realized I was the "second miracle!" And I hadn't reported it!



Let me make up for it now. I had intense stomach pain for 14 years, and hearing that Pope John XXIII had already dramatically healed a nun with stomach cancer, I prayed to him fervently for some years to get my stomach healed.

They did every test in the book on my gut, but they could find nothing wrong because there actually was nothing wrong with my stomach. One day I was sitting in the gut doctor's office and I said very casually, "You know the pain has moved up from my throat to my jaw. Do you think I could have a heart problem?"

After we pulled the frustrated doctor off the floor where he had fainted, he immediately ordered a heart stress test. Then they threw me into the hospital lickety-split and did heart bypass surgery just in the nick of time. No more stomach pain and hello Zumba! Thank you Saint Pope John XXIII.

For the uninitiated, Zumba was invented in the 1990s when a Columbian aerobics instructor, Beto Perez, forgot his music tape for an aerobics class. He went to his car and got his Salsa music and improvised the class. The dance fitness class he invented came with him to the United States when he moved here in 2001. I am only one of about 14 million people who take weekly Zumba classes in over 140,000 locations across more than 185 countries.



I think it is more fun than regular exercise because we dance to music – hip-hop, samba, salsa, merengue and mambo. I really don't know which is which. But I recognize different languages including some African when we are dancing. Squats and lunges are included. We do the lunges pretending to be Spanish matadors. Luckily, the bulls are invisible. And we don't really hold a red cape.

But from the first moment I stepped into my first Zumba class, I realized a certain irony.

I remembered my mother and my father's mother at my age, and they never ever did anything like what I am doing now! Man, the most I ever saw my mother do was sit-ups in the living room!



So I thought it would be very consoling for me to talk to them while I was hopping around madly

in Zumba. Grandma's name is Dora. Mom's name is Tora and guess what! My Dad had a sense of humor. He gave me the middle name of Cora.

It's easy to talk to Mom and Grandma exercising because they are as close as Jesus Himself. They are "sons of the resurrection" -- "dead" but alive in Christ. They have joined a group called the Communion of Saints. Actually, I belong to the same club. It means "The unity in Christ of all the redeemed, those on earth and those who have died." (Catechism of the Catholic Church CCC)

"Since all the faithful form one body, the good of each is communicated to the others...We must therefore believe that there exists a communion of goods in the Church. But the most important member is Christ, since he is the head...Therefore the riches of the Church are communicated to all the members, through the sacraments. As this Church is governed by one and the same Spirit, all the goods she has received necessarily become a common fund." (CCC #947)



It's called the Treasury of the Saints, and that's how Saint Pope John XXIII stopped my stomach pain with heart surgery. (By the way, in reality this "miracle" did not constitute a physical healing, and so would not be accepted by the Church. But it was a miracle to me! I suffered 14 years of intense pain because the doctors couldn't diagnose my condition. The miracle was information! We finally found out what was needed to fix me for good.)

The pope withdrew the merits of his own life and those of countless other people who united their suffering with that of Jesus Christ from the Treasury of the Saints. And he applied those merits to my situation. God smiled. I was healed.

“The term ‘communion of saints’ therefore has two closely linked meanings: communion in ‘holy things’ and ‘among holy persons.’” (CCC# 948)

It is about the communion among holy persons that I write now. I have always had a great affection for the holy souls for whom I always pray. Once, I visited a cemetery in Finland. The sun was setting. The grass was soft, fulsome green under the shade trees, and there was a little river running through it. No one was around. A sense of joy came over me, and I started skipping through the cemetery, singing, “Don’t sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me...” That was a popular song during World War II, but in Finland?

So here we go. I have just entered Studio #1 at Greenwood Athletic Club. Susan Cora attempts to get into the groove. Here comes Tora and Dora. *Olé! PresentingThe Three Musketoras!*

Dora: “You are late again.”

Susan Cora: “Yes, Grandma.”

Dora: “How come you don’t move as fast as the girl in front of you?”

Susan Cora: “Grandma, she moves faster than the instructor. Those little tails on her rear end are swinging back and forth -- quick as lightening.”

Dora: “Can’t say I’ve ever seen anything like that. Is that a new fashion?”

Susan Cora: “It’s Zumba style clothing. We move our rear end so much that having little tails on each cheek highlights our movements. It is like an exclamation point at the end of a well-written sentence.”

Dora: “Why don’t you have little exclamation points on your rear end?”

Susan Cora: “I hate to shop.”

Tora: “We never had anything like that when we were young. I don’t think anyone expected women to exercise this vigorously in my day. Oh my, the cats have started howling already.”

Cat cries penetrate Susan’s earplugs. They are dancing to the Zumba song "Chucucha."

Susan Cora: “Cha Cha Cha.”

Susan Cora: “I am just singing along, Mom. We have to rub our hands together in the air, move in a circle while the cat cries, and the singer purrs ‘Cha, cha, cha.’ Whoops, I am facing a room of 35 women, and they are supposed to be seeing my back.”

Tora: “You were never coordinated as a child either.”

Susan Cora: “Thanks. Mom.”

Gobble, gobble, gobble...

Dora: “Susan, what is that gobbling?”

Susan Cora: “I think we are pretending to be turkeys? We have to “gobble” as we turn left in rapid tiny steps...”

Susan Cora: “I love this move. We are pushing the gnomes heads down.”

Susan Cora: “The short make-believe gnomes. Now we are circling with our skinny invisible dance partner, flinging our right arm back and then throwing something down. I always think of this move as ‘throwing away the tobacco.’”

This elicited no response from the puzzled mother and grandmother.

Dora: “Look at that! They are rubbing their gorgeous long hair – even the ones with short hair. That’s a gesture we used when we were young.”

Tora: “Yes, but we did it more slowly and it was a lot more seductive that way.”

Dora: “I honestly think they are just trying to exercise. There aren’t any men in this class except for the instructor. He is very pleasant on the eyes.”

Susan Cora: “Give glory to God, Grandma. Are you remembering the days when you rocked on the porch with your beaux?”

Dora: “Yes, honey. Those were the days.”

Susan Cora: “Did you rock on the porch with anyone other than Grandpa? “

Dora, flustered: “What a question! Your grandfather was a very handsome man.”

Susan Cora, sighs: “Yes all my cousins are absolutely drop dead gorgeous.”

Dora: “Well they have some of my looks too.”

Susan Cora: “Yes, thank God I inherited some of your looks!”

Tora: “The women in my family are pretty too.”

No one responded to that.

Dora: “So have you tried showing your husband your Zumba moves?”

Susan Cora: “Yes, Grandma.”

Susan Cora: “He lay on the bed and laughed until tears came out of his eyes.”

Tora: “Oh, I am so sorry, dear.”

Susan Cora, laughing: “Not at all, Mom. He wasn’t laughing at me. He was laughing with me. He said to me, ‘Oh my, how you must laugh in that class!’”

Tora: “You do laugh a lot here. But I really can’t believe you got out of your chair to do it. You spent your whole childhood in a chair with a real cat reading a book.”

Susan Cora: “You were surprised when I started gardening as well. Remember, I brought some of the herbs I raised to the hospital when you were dying. And though you were blind and missing one leg, you smelled them with such intense pleasure. It was like they contained all delight -- the most beautiful scent on earth. It was the way one might have imagined our first mother, Eve, smelling the flowers in the Garden of Eden before the snake showed up and ruined everything.”

Tora: “We are supposed to sanctify our senses, not suppress them. For me, that was one of the delights of becoming Catholic. I could sincerely enjoy a martini. It wasn’t wrong. Everything in moderation.”

Susan Cora, reflectively: “I guess I am doing that now.”

Tora: “You are sanctifying your senses?”

Susan Cora: “No, God is. But I am finding that enjoying life is not evil. In fact, life is good.”

Tora: "So is that the purpose of this post?"**Susan Cora:** "Yes, God definitely doe not rain on our parade. He makes life more interesting."**Tora:** "Here too, daughter."

Much of that conversation was based on my memories of my mother and grandmother. But I was taken aback when another person entered our trio in reality. We were given a fourth Muskatora!



My cousin Connie, who was Tora's niece and Dora's granddaughter died on March 21, 2014. She was one of my favorite drop-dead gorgeous cousins.

On March 22, I was in Aqua Zumba in the lovely in-door pool at my gym with Mom and Grandma having our usual silly conversation. One wall is all glass. And in the winter, we can watch the snow come down behind the moving figures of our instructors.

Suddenly, I realized Connie was there. It wasn't a vision. I simply sensed her with the eyes of my soul. She was unaware of my presence and was staring at the light from the big window. Or perhaps it was the Light from the New Heaven and the New Earth?

"They will look upon his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more, nor will they need light or sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever." (Rev. 22: 4-5)

There was funny writing on Connie's forehead. I didn't realize that until now. Regardless, my husband and I rejoiced when I got home that day. That Connie was with Mom and Grandma was a very good sign.

Susan Cora: "Welcome to the Club, Cousin. Rest in Peace. Visit me at the gym when you can. Oh, and don't sit under the apple tree..."



Zumba Video. I chose this one because they are dressed modestly, are pretty darn good at the moves, and they are dancing to the song where we get the gobble, gobble sounds, and the cat crying. The song is called "Chucucha." I dare you to watch it without laughing!

This contribution is available at <http://christsfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2014/05/dancing-with-dead.html>
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Has Jesus Arisen In Your Heart? (part 2) [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

Has Jesus Arisen In Your Heart? (part 2)

From Enlightenment to Empowerment and Consecration



Jesus Baptized in the Spirit

My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you! (Gal. 4:19)



Jesus begins teaching us as children

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food; for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil. (Heb. 5:11-13)

“Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.” (Heb. 6:1-3)

My dear fellow pilgrims in Christ Jesus,

In the first article of this title I postulated that, at the very least, there are three major phases or stages possible in our growth to spiritual maturity while we are in this world. Sadly, most of us Christians rarely get beyond the first stage which I summarized in part 1 of: [***“Has Jesus Arisen in your Heart?”***](#). The stages that I listed in that article are as follow:

Stage 1 – Unbelief to a Living Faith and Spiritual Awakening (Enlightenment)

Stage 2 – Spiritual Awakening to Spiritual Empowerment and Consecration

Stage 3 – Spiritual Consecration to Spiritual Union With Christ

<> What we learned from the first stage and why we need to grow out of it ...

I described the first stage as basically consisting of how, upon hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ, our spirits come into an awareness of our fallen state and an inner desire seek to be reconciled with the Father through repentance and faith in Jesus His Son. This Enlightenment results in a re-born spirit within us that enables us, through conversion and baptism to experience God in our lives and begin a relationship with Him through Jesus as our Savior, Lord, and Shepherd.

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake. Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord abides for ever.” That word is the good news which was ***preached to you.*** (1 Ptr. 18-25)

This turning to God and spiritual re-birth is a decision that is the beginning of our conversion and initiates a personal relationship with the Jesus that, if we endure in faith, will take us to our eternal destiny with Him in Heaven. I term this stage as an Awakening or Enlightenment because through this process of conversion our spirits re re-born and become sensitive to the spiritual presence of God in our lives. That is why the church also calls this phase “Enlightenment”. However, we

really need to understand that this Phase is only the beginning of our enlightenment, for really, once we become spiritually aware we will continue growing in our enlightenment through eternity. In this initiation stage, in most cases, we merely gain enough enlightenment to enable our faith in who Jesus is and our dire need to receive Him so that we turn to Him for salvation.

In this stage we find ourselves, like babes, thirsting for His Word and immersing ourselves in His loving presence through prayer and worship. Some of us enjoy this stage so much that we have the tendency to linger and not understand that this is only the beginning – an open door to even more wondrous transitions that are part of our legacy in Christ Jesus! But we need to continue growing into that legacy. That is, the legacy to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29), so that we may be one of His many brethren as true children of God.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom.8:28-31)

Yes, brethren, in Christ, we are called into a glorious spiritual inheritance, an inheritance that involves several transitions, from spiritual babes to spiritual maturity. Unfortunately some of us, like myself, tend to get stranded in the infancy stage

However we don't have to remain in this stage but taking the apostle Peter's advice we can grow by feeding on the Word of God...

“Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation” (1 Ptr.2:2)

Those of us who tend to get stranded in this stage, do so mainly because we end up being conformed to the world rather than to Jesus. I, for instance, though I grew up in a Catholic Christian family and was more or less compliant to all that my tradition required of me, I did not, however, experience an renewed spiritual awareness until adulthood, when for the first time the Word of God reached my heart and I gave myself to Him and encountered Him in a personal relationship! Praised Be His Holy Name!

Also, not all of us who enter this phase take appropriate action in responding to our newly awakened spiritual sensitivity and continue operating the venue of the "flesh" or our human nature., thus grieving the Holy Spirit within us.

The apostle Paul makes this possibility clear to the Christians in the Corinthian community when he tells them ...

“But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in

Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men?” (1 Cor. 3:1-3)

<> Now - Proceeding on to the Next Stage – Our Consecration as True Disciples in the Spirit ...

The apostle indicates that even though they are baptized “brethren”, they have not yet broken through to the spiritual maturity they ought to have and he further informs them that without their appropriate response to the Spirit they will not be equipped to become disciples and proceed into the next phase that requires an even greater acuity of spirit...

“...God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit. The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor.10-16)

So likewise in our age we must understand that ... *The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*

Here, we need to ask ourselves, “am I able to understand and receive the spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul in his letters to the Romans, Corinthians and Ephesians? If they appear to be folly to me, does that mean I am ‘unspiritual’?”

Sadly, brothers and sisters, unless we learn to operate and grow with our newly awakened spiritual nature, we should consider ourselves as ‘unspiritual’ and, because of this, we will not be able to cooperate with the Spirit of God that is in us as converted Christians to truly carry out the ultimate purpose for us in this world: which is to be a disciples and to make disciples. To put it in Jesus’ terms, you will not be able to hear the Shepherd’s voice in order to be able to follow Him (see Jn. 10:27).

You would think that once we entered the first stage of spiritual awareness through our conversion and subsequent enlightenment, that proceeding on to the next stage would be easier. But, as you can see from what I stated prior, that if we cannot get out of the rut of walking in the flesh, we will not be able to move on ‘in the spirit’. It requires a renewal of our minds (Rom 12:1-2) as well as our spirits. That is not that easy for us humans, we like to live in ruts – we feel more comfortable when we are not challenged. We can only progress in our spiritual growth if we cooperate with

the Holy Spirit and NOT grieve Him by ignoring Him and His Gifts!

In the opening quotation from Paul's letter to the Galatians (Gal.4:19) we see the apostle express his frustration the Galatian community. A community of newly evangelized and baptized Christians who found it so difficult to proceed on to spiritual maturity that Paul said that he was in prayerful "travail" for them until Christ be formed in them! This clearly indicates that the work of the Holy Spirit in us only begins at our initiation into Christ Jesus, our initial conversion and enlightenment being only the door to the Spirit bringing us to perfection (completing our transformation to the image of Christ).

The reason Paul was concerned for the Galatians was that, although they had accepted Christ in the spirit so as to be enlightened through faith as to the nature of the salvation that had been won for them by Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection from the dead, they still did not have any notion of the continuing spiritual transformation involved in being conformed to the Spirit of Christ (Rom.8:28-29) and the cooperation that was required of them to proceed to the stages that followed in their spiritual growth.

Here is Paul expressing himself again on the reasons behind his frustration in their lack of progress in their spiritual lives:

"Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have labored over you in vain." (Gal. 4:8-11)

The background behind the situation that Paul encountered was, that after evangelizing and founding this nascent Christian community, certain unauthorized "missionaries" came from Jerusalem with the intent of "Judaizing" the new converts to the religious practices of the Jerusalem community. Of course, they came with a misguided zeal, to ensure that these gentiles be circumcised and be faithful to the rules and regulations they thought were needed for them to be part of their belief system.

You see, it was still unthinkable to these "Judaizers", who had accepted the Messiah as Jews, that any one could be part of God's plan of salvation unless they were truly "practicing Jews". They still did not fully understand that the Messiah was sent not just to save the Jewish people but the whole world and, salvation would come, not through compliance with religious rules and regulations, which were but a shadow of God's ultimate intent, but by Grace through Faith in the Messiah Himself! All of this would come through the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of men as "The GIFT of the Father" and not due to any merits or works on our part so that the Glory of His Gift would be totally His through the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son!"

What we moderns also don't seem to realize is that when we first come to Christ, our human nature (that is our flesh) causes us to behave in a manner very similar to the Galatians. That is, we

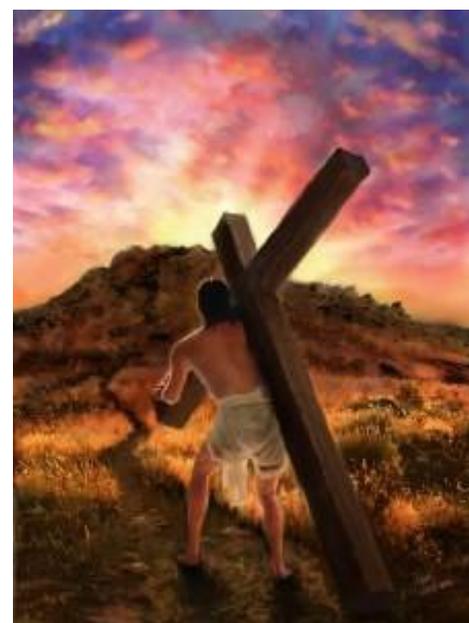
have a hard time understanding the “Truth” that our salvation is NOT dependent on our compliance with the religious practices of the community into which we were assimilated.

Rather, our religious practices and our “good” works must come as the “fruit” of God’s indwelling Spirit in us and from our need to express our worship through praise and thanks to the Father, for the magnificence of His Love for us through Jesus who as the Lamb of God, offered Himself in propitiation for our sins so that we might become a new creation, acceptable to the Father in Him! By taking our place to satisfy God’s justice, He, Jesus, freed all humanity from the bondage of sin and reconciled us to the Father, enabling us to take our place as His Children and as brothers to Him, the very Jesus who brought us to salvation! A salvation, that was provided to us while we were yet sinners and did not in any way merit the inconceivable generosity of His Grace! Praised be His Holy Name!

Its clear then, that many of this generation have not come to fully comprehend is that Christ died for us, not only to save us and reconcile us with the Father, bringing us into the Kingdom of Grace, but also so that we might be conformed into His Image here on earth, so that He, living through us (abiding in us), might continue, through us, to bring forth fruit to the Glory of God the Father!

<> ***Consecration as a Disciple Requires a Decision***

This, then, is our purpose in Christ, a role that we take on as we enter into this, the next stage of our spiritual growth where we go from Enlightenment to Empowerment and Consecration. It is not a stage we automatically enter into, it is a stage that requires our full understanding and willingness so that we may consecrate our lives fully to Him, through the renewal of our minds (Rom.12:1-2). It is a stage where He sends His Holy Spirit to empower us so that the works that we do are empowered by the Spirit of Christ in us so that they are truly His works and NOT ours! It is a stage where it requires us to make a decision to yield ourselves fully to Him – in fact to yoke or “consecrate” ourselves to Him by denying our self-driven instincts and letting His Spirit to totally take hold of us and direct us down the narrow path of discipleship to Him and Him alone! Praised be His Holy Name!



The Way of True Discipleship

This is the stage where our transformation truly begins. Where we truly take up our cross of self-denial. Again, it is Paul that instructs us, regarding the requirement for this stage, the first of which is moving from walking in the flesh to walking in the Spirit (see Rom. 8:4; Rom 8:9; Gal. 5: 16; Gal. 5.25). A walk that requires entering into an enhanced intimate spiritual relationship and awareness of the Trinity, so that we may know and understand the Father's desires and enable us the ability to cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in us to carry out these desires in our lives.

This level of spiritual awareness permits us to understand and receive the gifts of God as well as the divine wisdom we need to operate in these divine gifts (NOT our natural gifts). It also, necessarily, brings us into a closer relationship to the Divine through Jesus Christ who is the Door and who has told us that ...

“No one comes to Me unless the Father draw him...” (Jn. 6:44)

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.”

(Jn 14:6)

and ...

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (Jn. 15:45)

When Jesus accepted His role He submitted to be baptized by John in order to identify with sinful humanity thus assenting with the will of the Father to be the Sin Offering for us. When the Holy Spirit came upon Him after His baptism with water, He received the anointing and authority He needed to fulfill His Role as Savior and King.

So it is with us, when we are converted and baptized in water we identify with Him and the role He accepted to take on our sins. When we receive the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” we are empowered (anointed) with His anointing to carry on His ministry in this world.

Shortly after His baptism, when Jesus attended a Sabbath service in Nazareth, ...

...and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and

sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4: 17-21)

In the same way we, His Disciples, are called not only to be baptized in water but also to be anointed (with His Anointing) to empower us to fulfill our roles when we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as all the apostles, disciples and believers received at Pentecost.

The spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul in his letters are, in fact, the manifestation of the anointing of the Holy Spirit (see 1Cor. 12) needed by us to carry on our Master’s work for the building up of the Church. The anointing is the anointing that was on Jesus and is now distributed amongst us to continue His ministry to His body, the church.

This is the baptism of which John said ***“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”*** (Mathew 3:11)

It is also termed by Luke (who wrote The Acts of the Apostles) as the “Promise of the Father” as the source of the Gifts received at Pentecost, saying ...

“... the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:2-5)

And Peter, at Pentecost, also spoke of this “Promise of the Father” as follows...

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and [then] you shall [also] receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.” (Acts 2:38-39)

Thus, brothers and sisters, it is clear that if we are to progress on to our calling and growth in the spirit in this phase of our transition, we cannot ignore the need to be empowered to serve by asking for and receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In conjunction with this empowerment is also the need to intentionally consecrate ourselves as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ by offering our selves totally to Him for His Service. Listen to what the apostle Paul exhorts regarding our consecration...

“I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the

will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him.” (Rom. 12:1-3)

Many of us take for granted that if we are believers we are “automatically” disciples of Jesus. No, my brethren! To enter discipleship requires a separate decision from believing in who Jesus is or entering into a relationship with Him. It is a decision that must be made freely, out of “agape” love, and NOT as a condition on our salvation. That is why Jesus admonished those who believed in Him and were ready to follow Him MUST measure the “cost” of discipleship before making a decision – a discipleship of which the first step is to “deny oneself and carry that cross daily”. It is a sacrifice of your right to yourself by a thorough and complete yoking of your life to His! But since your salvation is already assured by your faith in Him, you make this decision freely without any coercive thoughts that you might lose your salvation.

Besides the carrying the cross of self-denial daily, you also need to understand that you are committing your self to the Holy Spirit so He may continue to conform you to the image of Christ. And that this process of transformation will, of necessity involve the “renewal of your mind” so that you will no longer live your life in conformance to the world but to the Spirit of Christ who is in you. This is the process the apostle Paul refers to “as working out your salvation” when tells the Philippian community...

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.” (Phil.2:12-16)

Paul, in order to ensure that they maintain their commitment and their consecration, also asks the Galatian community to...

“... walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh, for the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would.

But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus

have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”

(Gal. 5: 16-25)

Let us, who consecrate ourselves as intentional disciples of Christ Jesus, set for ourselves the same goal that Paul set for himself ...

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20)

I urge you therefore, beloved pilgrims in Christ Jesus, to consider carefully in prayer and meditation the themes that I have presented here, based on the Word of God. And, asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, seek the desire of the Father for your life and freely commit yourself to fulfill the Fathers desire. I pray this in Jesus’ mighty Name! Amen and Amen!

Your brother and fellow pilgrim in Christ Jesus Bartimaeus

PS: If my presentation here has moved you to further inquiry I now refer you, below, to several previous articles on this matter that will provide you further information that will permit the Holy Spirit to guide you as you prayerfully consult Him!

Important Related Articles:

[Prayer to receive the Holy Spirit](#)

[Cast your Net on the Other Side](#)

[Sweet Yoke of Love](#)

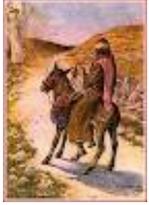
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This contribution is available at <http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2014/05/25/s-has-jesus-arisen-in-your-heart-part-2/>

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Every Knee Shall Bend! [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]



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

A few days ago, I was prompted to read through some older journal entries and discovered one from more than 13 years ago. How timeless are the insights God gives us, especially those we may have forgotten but are blessed to rediscover!

Let me share with you what I wrote (with some editing) more than a decade ago:.

“I attended Mass at a Dominican Monastery today. There are no resident Dominican friars there. As I exited my car, I saw an elderly Franciscan priest getting out of his vehicle. He had come to say Mass. He was unable to stand upright. His elderly and frail body was hunched over (literally in half) as he walked carefully on the snow with the aid of a cane, his priestly vestments folded over his other arm.

I asked Father if he needed any help. He joyfully declined my assistance as I held the door leading into the monastery open for him. His walking was deliberate and appeared painful. He was unable to stand erect.

I assumed he would take the elevator, But he surprised me when he laboriously climbed the steps to the second floor chapel. As we approached the chapel door, I opened it for him as well. He entered and fully genuflected before entering the sacristy - his knee touching the floor. It took great effort for him to do that; he was quite unsteady when he got up, still hunched over in half.

I was touched that this priest loved God so much that he ignored his own physical limitations and discomfort in order to provide all of us present with such a visible and powerful sign of his respect, reverence for, and belief in, the Real and Substantial Presence of our Lord, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, hidden behind the locked doors of the chapel's tabernacle.

How many of us do not genuflect at all, though fully and physically able to do so?

I was moved throughout the Mass as Father continued to genuflect when required, his knee always touching the floor despite the pain it caused him and the great difficulty he had in getting back up. He was never able to stand upright.

But I was finally brought to tears when Father forced himself by sheer love for the Eucharist and the grace of God to stand fully erect when he lifted Our Lord first in the Sacred and Consecrated Host and then in the Holy Chalice of His Sacred Blood!

What I witnessed and what this priest did was nothing short of miraculous! Despite his physical limitations, He was determined to give honor to the God he so obviously believed was in his hands.

His example should serve as clarion call for the rest of us to always honor our Lord by our words and actions as well.”

Thank you God for the holy priests in our midst!

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2014/05/monday-musings-every-knee-shall-bend.html>
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Why we should pray the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of Mary [at 8 Kids And A Business]

Posted at Catholic Insight



“I’ll pray the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of Mary for you,” I assured a friend who had just revealed some upsetting news. “It seems appropriate.”

I had never prayed the Rosary of Seven Sorrows before and didn’t know anything about the devotion to our Lady of Sorrows but I had recently bought the special rosary because I thought it was pretty. A prompting in my heart assured me this was the right thing to do, and determined to keep my promise, I tore open the package and read the little booklet that came with the rosary. Twenty minutes of meditating on Our Lady’s sorrows each day made me realize how important this observance is not just for my friend’s intentions but for all of us.

Historically, devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows began at the crucifixion as St. John stood with Mary at the foot of the Cross and comforted her, but it wasn’t until Good Friday in 1239 that the practice gained in popularity. Our Lady appeared to seven holy men who lived in solitude on Mount Senario in Italy and instructed them to form an Order dedicated to her Sorrows. The men formed the Order of the Servants of Mary (or Servites) and their mission was to meditate on and propagate the Seven Sorrows of Mary. The men, all of whom are canonized saints, introduced the Chaplet (little Rosary) of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In our time, Mary again appeared to chosen souls and asked one of them to revive the devotion. Our Blessed Mother began appearing to three school children in Kibeho, Rwanda on 28 November, 1981, and the apparitions officially ended on the same date in 1989. On 3rd March, 1982, Mary taught one of the visionaries, Marie-Claire Mukangango, how to pray the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows and tasked her with the mission of spreading its devotion throughout the world. Marie-Claire, who was later killed in the genocide, never travelled outside of Kibeho, but by God’s grace, the efforts of this little seer continue to be used to spread the devotion. This chaplet does not replace the traditional rosary but adds to it by meditating more closely on the Sorrowful Mysteries.

In *The Glories of Mary*, Saint Alphonsus de Liguori wrote: “The Blessed Virgin Mary, for the

love She bore us, was willing to see Her Son sacrificed to Divine Justice by the barbarity of men. This great torment then, which Mary endured for us – a torment that was more than a thousand deaths – deserves both our compassion and our gratitude. If we can make no other return for so much love, at least let us give a few moments this day to consider the greatness of the sufferings by which Mary became the Queen of martyrs; for the sufferings of Her great martyrdom exceeded those of all the martyrs; being, in the first place, the longest in point of duration; and in the second place, the greatest in point of intensity.”

The Seven Sorrows of Mary

1. St. Simeon’s prophecy
2. The flight into Egypt
3. The loss of Jesus in the temple
4. The meeting of Mary and Jesus on the way to Calvary
5. The crucifixion and death of Jesus
6. The piercing of the side of Jesus, and His descent from the cross
7. The burial of Jesus

According to Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, Our Lady of Sorrows promised the following graces to all who recite the chaplet faithfully:

1. That those who before death invoke the divine Mother in the name of Her Sorrows will obtain true repentance of all their sins.
2. That He will protect all who have this devotion in their tribulations, and will protect them especially at the hour of death.
3. That He will impress on their minds the remembrance of His Passion.
4. That He will place such devout servants in Mother Mary’s hands to do with them as She wishes and to obtain for them all the graces She desires.

Mary attached seven promises to the faithful prayer of the chaplet:

1. “I will grant peace to their families.”
2. “They will be enlightened about the divine Mysteries.”
3. “I will console them in their pains and I will accompany them in their work.”
4. “I will give them as much as they ask for as long as it does not oppose the adorable will of My divine Son or the sanctification of their souls.”
5. “I will defend them in their spiritual battles with the infernal enemy and I will protect them at every instant of their lives.”
6. “I will visibly help them at the moment of their death – they will see the face of their Mother.”
7. “I have obtained this grace from My divine Son, that those who propagate this devotion to My tears and sorrows will be taken directly from this earthly life to eternal happiness, since all their sins will be forgiven and My Son will be their eternal consolation and joy.”

While the promises and graces are intended for those who pray the Rosary of Seven Sorrows, I am confident that my faithful prayer will help my friend. At times, the suffering of the people we care about is a martyrdom of their heart and we who support them can only accompany them in their struggle. We may become frustrated because we may not be able to fix the problem, or correct the injustice, and we can't foresee how things will unfold. When we bring their sorrows (and ours) to our Mother and unite them with her Seven Sorrows, we stand with her in solidarity. And Mary, who will never be outdone as our Heavenly Mother will present them to Jesus and He will turn them into joy.

Sources:

Sanctuaire Notre Dame de Kibeho. <http://www.Kibeho-sanctuary.com>

Devotion of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary. <http://www.fatima.org>

Photo: author's own

This contribution is available at <http://8kidsandabusiness.wordpress.com/2014/05/22/why-we-should-pray-the-rosary-of-the-seven-sorrows-of-mary/>
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Life [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



Going through change is hard.

I have been really been thinking (like Sims here)

about life and the type of mama I want to truly be.
(no,it's not too late for that!)

We've been trying to adjust to life changes, business changes,

school ending, planning a winter getaway,
planning a move to another state, (Texas)
and just the busy times of having a family with 6 children
all with different personalities, wants and needs.



It's been 4 weeks now since my sweet 4 year old was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes.

I can tell you it turned my life upside down
for what seemed like *forever*

When in actuality it was only a week or so

Aren't struggles like that?

Once I accepted it,
accepted that our (her) life would be different than
I was used to
things were fine.

Once I accepted it,
I was no longer mad at God.

Yes, I said that, didn't I?
I was mad at God.

I was.

I was hurt and sad



(counting carbs for a 4 year old is tricky, one trick I do to help
is fancy divider plates, makes counting easier and eating fun)

I felt like,
"How could YOU do this to ME?"
I do so much for YOU

Don't we all feel like that?

What we are doing is "enough"

Or better yet, *more than enough?*

but is it?

Sometimes God knows we need more.

We should never become lukewarm,

or OK with the mediocre



I started thinking,

"I've been through so much,

I've been a good girl, now let me coast a while"
(reward me)

I still struggle with this,

I kind of fear God and what He will give us next.

God has a sense of humor.

He is also gentle.

He knows all and He sees all.

He sees the BIG picture.

And I TRUST.

I do not know who said this,

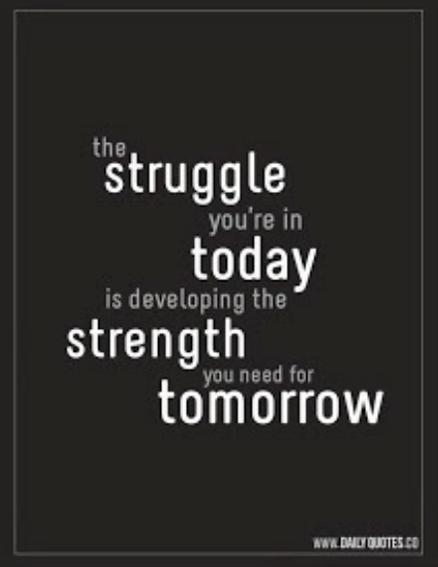
but it goes something like this:

**"If you don't have a cross in life,
you better get on your knees and beg for one"**

I believe it.

I know it.

It is through our crosses that we grow closer to God



the
struggle
you're in
today
is developing the
strength
you need for
tomorrow

WWW.DAILYQUOTES.CO

A friend recently asked for prayers
and she asked if I'd offer up some of my suffering for her.

I was like,

"I'm not suffering, but I'll pray for you"

Really, I heal that quickly.

I'm such a baby

when it starts though.

I cry

I beg for Him to take it away
and

instead of saying

"Why me?"

or even

"Why *not* me?"

I get jealous, point fingers and say things like,

"Why not *them*?"

We are like little children

At least I am.

I complain and cry and finally

I accept things the way they are.

The way God has allowed.

And you know what?



A BIG weight is lifted off my shoulders.

Are things a little harder than they were before?

Yes.

Are we all OK?

Yes.

Will we survive?

Yes.

Things are normal now

(besides mealtimes being a little more chaotic than they were before)

(Yes, I guess that *is* possible)



Summer will be tricky with bringing her supplies and snacks,
but we'll figure it out.

God is continually working on me.

Giving me more patience

(towards crabby, demanding kiddos)

more charity

(towards people that ask dumb questions--my pet peeve)



And after acceptance is set in,

I realize there was nothing to cry about in the first place.

There is a lot more suffering out there.

This is small.

Once hard things are accepted,

they are no longer hard.

The cross is lifted.

But if we complain about and compare our "hard things"

with others, our crosses will remain and we will be burdened.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves.

[For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”](#)

Matthew Chapter 11:28-30

I have not been reading blogs much, I'm so sorry, forgive me?

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Odysseus' Lack of Contrition and a Class Full of Disapproving Teens [at Rambling Follower]



Bartholomäus Spranger - Odysseus and Circe

[Statistics](#)

tell a troubling tale: the current rate of divorce in the United States is 50 percent. Ten percent of the population is divorced. Forty percent of people who divorce have children.

[Forty-one](#)

percent of married people say they have had an affair. One could even say broken marriage and cheating spouses are "normal." One would think today's teenagers are unfazed by adultery.

And so I was struck the other day, as my public high school class of reluctant readers and writers finished reading

The Odyssey

, that, to a student, they were outraged by the hero's infidelities to his loyal wife, Penelope.

In case it's been a while since you have read this ancient poem, here's a recap. If this were a telenovela

The Iliad and The Odyssey

would get the steamiest of ratings.

The first part of this tale begins with

The Iliad,

another epic poem by Homer in which Paris of Troy kidnaps Helen from her husband, Menelaus of Sparta. This starts a war. Odysseus, Greek king, leaves his home in Ithaca to fight in war, a war in which he cleverly comes up with the idea of building a Trojan horse for the Trojans. It's not a gift but rather a subterfuge: Odysseus hides his men in the massive horse and they win the war.



Detail from *The Procession of the Trojan Horse in Troy*

The *Odyssey* is the sequel and recounts the homesick Odysseus' ten-year journey home.

He ends up using his considerable guile to battle monsters like Polyphemus, the one-eyed monster, and incurring the wrath of the Poseidon, the sea god, which doesn't make his journey any easier. But he also ends up in the arms - and beds of goddesses, including Calypso and Circe. Despite my efforts to teach students how Odysseus is a human hero with flaws, my students could not see past his adultery. They were especially rankled that while Odysseus was straying, his wife Penelope was loyal to the core.

As the story ends, Odysseus is back in the arms of Penelope in their marriage bed.

While I did not take notes, the conversation among students when we finished the poem went something like this.

"

Why did Odysseus have affairs? He is not a good person."

"Oh, he couldn't help that. He had to have the affairs with goddesses in order to save his men."

"Yeah, but it didn't do any good. All his men got killed anyway."

"OK, well he was a man. Twenty years is a long time to be away from your wife. But why didn't he tell her about his affairs?"

"He should have told her. She has no idea he was disloyal. That is not right."

I was not sure what to make of their reaction. I chose to listen, and not interject my views, into these conversations in part because I am curious about where the conversations are going. I am happy they are engaged in literature and the conversations began to take a life of their own, with students "citing textual evidence" or making reference to characters or incidents to make their points. This is the kind of engagement a teacher dreams of.

As their teacher, I started to wonder, however, whether these teenagers understand that even heroes are going to fall down, over and over. They will fall because they are as human as we are. Nobody and nothing on this earth will satisfy us for long. As St. Augustine wrote: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

As the school days went by and my students kept bringing up - among themselves! - the matter of Odysseus' unfaithfulness - it struck me that it's not so much his sins but his lack of regret and truthfulness, his lack of contrition, that bothers them the most.

This belief in contrition that is part of the Christian proposal. Without contrition, we cannot reconcile ourselves with the one who made us.

Perhaps it's the state of his immortal soul that troubles them most as these students "dis" Odysseus.

This contribution is available at <http://ramblingfollower.blogspot.com/2014/05/odysseus-lack-of-contrition-and-class.html>
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Not Just Simply Waiting [at A Still Small Voice]

In a world full of instant gratification, in a world full of “

me

” and “

now

”, no wonder people don’t find the point in saving themselves for their future spouse.

For a fact waiting is not easy. When you’re waiting you are uncertain of maybe what/whom you’re waiting for or even more so if you’re even waiting for anything/anyone.

- Although, I’m not just simply waiting.

I’m not waiting for the day I meet my husband (or come to realize who God has planned for me if I’ve already met him) to love him. I’m not just simply waiting to share my first kiss with my husband upon the sacred altar. I’m not just simply waiting to give myself to my husband after being declared “husband and wife.”

I’m not just simply waiting.

However, in this time that I am indeed waiting, I am also

striving

.

I’m striving for the best for myself as well as for my husband and for our future marriage (and

even our kiddos).

I don't want to just simply wait as in living in the

absence

of someone, but rather wait as in striving for the greater glory and holiness for someone (including myself).

You see, I don't perceive this time in my life as incomplete or not fulfilled just because I'm single. I know for a fact that the beginning of my life will not be my wedding day, that my husband cannot ultimately fill the desires of my heart and that Christ

is

the ultimate Lover. If man seeks woman for his ultimate fulfillment, he ends either addicted or emasculated. He must seek God in her, and through her find Him (Donaghy).

Although, let's not take for granted that through the vocation and Sacrament of Marriage we are leading each other to Christ and to His heavenly Home. My husband is my "big" vocation - my ultimate calling to love.

“The passion of man and woman in God's plan is meant to be an icon, an earthly sign that points us beyond itself to our eternal destiny of union with God. But when we lose sign of our destiny, when we lose sign of union with God as our ultimate fulfillment, we begin to pin all hopes for happiness on the earthly image. The icon then degenerates into an idol.”

Saint Therese said “At last, I have found my vocation; my vocation is love!” And isn't that every single person's vocation? You don't have to be in a convent, or even be cloistered, to love. You don't have to be married and have 5 children to love. You don't have to be single and ready to mingle to love.

Love God, love others, love yourself and you'll see that you won't just be waiting. There is a

purpose in every stage, in every form of life and it is to love.

I'll say it again - I'm not just simply waiting for my husband, rather I'm striving for the best by loving him

now.

Some may ask (as I have come to learn), "How can I love him if I don't even know who he is?"

And to answer that I say:

A huge part of that is, in fact,

-

Saving yourself until marriage.

"First, by not having sex before marriage, you're insisting on your right to take these things seriously, when many around you don't seem to. By reserving a part of you for someone else, you're insisting on you're right to keep something sacred, you're welcoming the prospect of someone else making an enduring private claim to you, and you to him."

And also, by doing so, you are ultimately telling him (by showing him) just how important, how beautiful, and how sacred he is to you. And there is waaaay more Theology of the Body behind this, for a good and interesting read, study

Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love

by Edward Siri. I can't even begin to explain just how much - how much - there is between man and woman in this sacred act.

-

Same thing goes with kisses.

Now kisses are something smaller than the total self-giving act of sex, but that should never take away the importance and significance it has for saving them for your spouse. (I recently just came to a bigger realization with this a couple of weeks ago.)



“Without question, purity is beautiful. We’re not talking about repression or prudishness, but about having a confident and serene sense of your dignity and worth, so hold on to your kisses!”

By saving your kisses for your spouse you are saying that even the smaller things you are giving to

him - to him alone. How much more do you believe they would completely cherish that small, but significant gift? Because I know I would.

I, specifically, pray for my husband's love and devotion to the most Holy Trinity as well as our Blessed Mother. For any special graces that he may need at the moment as well as any growth in virtues. I also pray for his purity and that God's perfect will will become his own and so forth.

I mean just because you don't know a person doesn't mean you can't pray for them, right? I pray for people who I don't know because their great aunt's daughter's nephew asked me to, so no harm will ever come for praying for your future spouse even if you don't know who they are. And who knows, they might really need it at the time.

-

Become the person God created you to be.

By doing this you are allowing God to be your Creator, who gave you the desires of your heart, your Lover, who can transform you in ways unimaginable and your Dependency, who fully gives you the desires of your heart.

I mean if we think about it, if there is this one man who was created for me and me for him (correct grammar?) then ultimately I must completely give my whole self to the God who created us both for each other. These quotes pretty much sum up anything and everything I'm trying to muster up.

“You will become more attractive to the person God has in mind for you when you become the woman that God is calling you to be.”

“All beauty comes from God, and should point our hearts back toward Him. As a woman, your task is to use this gift to draw the hearts of men toward God, while avoiding the temptation to distract them from Him. Your modesty is a ministry of beauty. A woman should be so hidden in Christ that a man has to see Christ just to see her.”

When I have learnt to love God
better than my earthly dearest,
I shall love my earthly dearest
better than I do now.
~ C.S. Lewis



And for me, the thing I'm most attracted to in a man is his holiness and his complete and utter devotion and love for God as I've already stated in my later post. If holiness is what I desire in my spouse, and obviously I want to be attractive to him, then what makes me think that holiness is not what would attract him? I feel like what I'm attracted to is what I desire, not only in my spouse but also for myself. And by becoming the woman God created me to be, I would sure hope that the man I'm attracting is not being attracted to just myself, but Christ in me.

I know I've said a lot, and it's probably all scattered because there is just so much to say and so much I didn't say, so you will have to excuse my lack of english writing skills. I just really pray that my readers (and myself) will take to heart that being single is a critical time in our life (as in any time) to simply grow as an individual and in finding our worth in Christ - that by doing so it will never limit us from finding fulfillment and joy in being content with God, solely.

So to conclude: Ultimately our whole life, you can say, we are always waiting. However, we are not just simply waiting - we are striving and by striving we are doing and what we must do is love.

Love always.

God bless and Mary protect.

"Let us not grow tired of doing good,
for in due time we shall reap our harvest,
if we don't give up."

- Galatians 6:9

Beautiful song to pray

This contribution is available at <http://zoejumonville.blogspot.com/2014/05/not-just-simply-waiting.html>
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Homosexual, Heterosexual, or just plain Human? [at A Faith-Full Life]

Why are Americans being forced to consider homosexual acts as morally acceptable? Why has the US Supreme Court accepted the validity of same-sex "marriage", which, until a decade ago, was unheard of in the history of Western or any other civilization? Where has the "gay rights" movement come from, and how has it so easily conquered America?

The answers are in the dynamics of the rationalization of sexual misbehavior. The power of rationalization the means by which one mentally transforms wrong into right drives the gay rights movement, gives it its revolutionary character, and makes its advocates indefatigable. The homosexual cause moved naturally from a plea for tolerance to cultural conquest because the security of its rationalization requires universal acceptance. In other words, we all must say that the bad is good.

At stake in the rationalization of homosexual behavior is the notion that human beings are ordered to a purpose that is given by their Nature. The understanding that things have an in-built purpose is being replaced by the idea that everything is subject to man's will and power, which is considered to be without limits. This is what the debate over homosexuality is really about the Nature of reality itself.

The outcome of this dispute will have consequences that reach far beyond the issue at hand. Already America's major institutions have been transformed its courts, its schools, its military, its civic institutions, and even its diplomacy. The further institutionalization of homosexuality will mean the triumph of force over reason, thus undermining the very foundations of the American Republic.

"Robert Reilly shows that to go with the flow of the homosexual movement is to go against nature, science, children, marriage, the family and the common good; in fact to go against common sense. This movement is now the leader of a long-term pack working to undermine society, a process designed to bring chaos (see Gramsci) and dictatorship before freedom is enjoyed again. The time and the means to oppose are both narrowing. If this book does not move you to action nothing will."-- **Patrick F. Fagan, PhD**, Senior Fellow, Family Research Council

"Plato teaches that societies take on the features and tastes of the persons most prominent in them. Reilly shows how America's ruling class is shaping our society according to its taste for homosexuality and its distaste for natural families. If you want to know the philosophical and legal background of the revolution that is being imposed upon America and its consequences read this book."-- **Angelo M. Codevilla , PhD** Professor Emeritus, Boston University; Author, *The Character of Nations*

"This book is magnificent, a real achievement. For anyone interested in taking our country back from the sexual radicals, you must know how they did it, so rapidly, efficiently, even brutally. The gay rights movement slid through American institutions, both public and private, like a hot knife through butter. I suspect it has surprised even its proponents to see how fast we have capitulated. First philosophy fell, then psychology, the courts, education, the military and even the Boy Scouts followed. No one has told both the broad sweep and the specific details of this story better than Robert Reilly."-- **Austin Ruse** President, Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute

"The mainstreaming of sodomistic practice is a sign that a culture has lost not only its faith but also its mind. Robert Reilly patiently and convincingly explains how that flight from reason occurred and what can be done about it."-- **Charles E. Rice, JD, JSD** Professor Emeritus of Law, University of Notre Dame Law School

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Floodlights [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on June 5, 2014 · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)

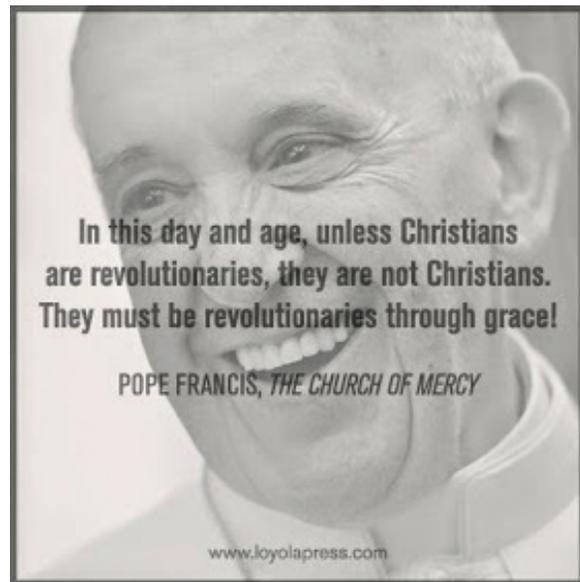


8×8” oil paint on canvas panel; use “comment” below to inquire.

If you were ever on the beach just after a thunderstorm, you have seen it peel away in great climax. This painting is all about that drama. I tried to express the light show with an economy of brushstroke.

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2014/06/05/floodlights/>
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My Top 10 Favorite Quotes from Pope Francis (Some Will Surprise You!) [at Can We Cana?]



Pope Francis has proved himself to be a revolutionary, setting some hearts on fire with love and other hearts on fire with anger and dismay. After nearly every telephone call or off-the-cuff remark by Pope Francis, at least one Catholic commentator complains that Pope Francis should just stop speaking so freely. I don't see that happening any time soon.

Some of Pope Francis' most controversial comments are actually my favorites. But all of his comments display a clear-sighted vision of the problems facing people today and the immense possibility our Church has to solve those problems through grace and action. Without further ado, here are my top 10 favorite Francis quotes:

1. "In this day and age, unless Christians are revolutionaries, they are not Christians. They must be revolutionaries through grace!"

(from

[The Church of Mercy](#)

). Don't be complacent. Speak up. Ask hard questions. Love difficult people. Pray and give til it hurts. Realize that you are already part of a revolutionary movement that has been sweeping the world for more than 2,000 years. People around the globe are martyred every day for their Christian faith. What are you willing to do for yours?

2. "If a person is gay and seeks the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge that person?"

(from

[World Youth Day 2013 press conference](#)

). The Church's teaching on sexuality conflicts sharply with modern sensibilities and continues to be radically misunderstood. People think that Church teaching lacks compassion when nothing could be farther than the truth. The Church encourages us to love and understand our gay brothers and sisters, to hear their stories and struggles without fear or judgment, and to give them the affection and acceptance they crave. Chastity is difficult for young, single people. It is even more difficult for people being asked to face a lifetime of sexual abstinence. There are homosexuals in our Church, and they need our support.

3. "God has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: ... Even the atheists, ...everyone!"

(from

[Homily at May 22, 2013, Mass](#)

). This makes my favorite list because it caused my atheist friend to perk up his ears and take notice. Is this true, he wanted to know? Yes, especially for those who have not heard the saving news of Jesus, I explained. It's different for those who know God and still choose to turn their back on him. My clarification made my friend a bit sad. But how amazing that Pope Francis' message of love and redemption sparked the hope of being cherished by a God my friend did not even believe to exist!

4. "We think of our parents, of our grandparents and great-grandparents: they were married in conditions that were much poorer than ours Where did they find the strength? They found it in the certainty that the Lord was with them."

(from

[Address to Young People in Assisi](#)

). Pope Francis' emphasis on poverty reminds us that many of us in the First World have never known and might never know real financial poverty. We fear unemployment, the perceived financial burdens of marriage and parenthood, we fear the future. But we don't realize that earlier generations had much less money and often much less fear. If we're looking for courage, we might not have to look farther than our own families.

5. "An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral!"

(from

[Evangelii Gaudium, or The Joy of the Gospel](#)

). Who wants to be Christian if it means gloomy adherence to a set of kill-joy rules? Pope Francis'

plain-spoken words tell us that Christianity is all about joy. If we've lost the joy, that's not the fault of Christianity or the Church. It's up to us to find that joy again and manifest it to others.

6. "If love needs truth, truth also needs love. Love and truth are inseparable. Without love, truth becomes cold, impersonal and oppressive for people's day-to-day lives."

(from

[Lumen Fidei, or The Light of Faith](#)

). Real charity means telling the truth, even when it's hard to face. But do we tell the truth with personal warmth and a desire to help, or are we just wagging a critical finger? The truth doesn't oppress people. It ultimately frees them.

7. "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendor of true love, to you we turn with trust."

(from

[Prayer to the Holy Family](#)

). Pope Francis has requested the intercession of the Holy Family for the upcoming Extraordinary Synod on the Family, which will discuss issues such as annulment, divorce, and reception of the Eucharist by divorced and remarried Catholics. The synod's ultimate goal is not just temporary reprieve from pain but the splendor of true love as reflected by the Holy Family. Let us all trust that the Holy Family will guide the synod and any changes that result from it.

8. "This relationship between Jesus and the Father is the 'matrix' of the bond between us Christians: if we are intimately part of this 'matrix', this fiery furnace of love, then we can truly become of one single heart and one single soul among us."

(from

[October 30, 2013, General Audience](#)

). As leader of a global flock of Catholics, Pope Francis needs to get everybody together and on board with the program. Easy as herding cats, I know. But the first step needs to be stopping the bleeding or, in this case, the fighting. Wasting our energy fighting each other results in hamstringing our ability to move forward together accomplishing great things for God. So let's try to become one single heart and one single soul, united the way God wants us to be.

9. "The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the people, who walk through the dark night with them, who know how to dialogue and to descend themselves

into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost."

(from the

[America magazine interview](#)

). It takes a great man to descend into the darkness without getting lost. We all need to find within ourselves the strength to do that, because that is our common call in baptism -- to preach the good news to all the nations. If we want people to hear us, we need to meet them where they are. If we want to save them, we need to lead them step by step out of the darkness. As St. John Paul II told us, we need to be strong with the strength of God so that we can help one another.

10. "With this letter, I wish, as it were, to come into your homes."

(from

[Letter to Families](#)

). Pope Francis' approach to evangelization is to focus in an intensely personal manner on one soul at a time. He wants to enter into our personal, private space and break bread with us. So does Jesus. Each one of us will have to walk through the gates of heaven alone. There's no separate entrance for bus tours, and we can't expect to achieve salvation because our pope or our priest or our next-door neighbor does. We must open the door to our homes and hearts and let Christ in. Pope Francis is more than ready to show us how.

What's your favorite Francis quote and why? Tell us in the comments!

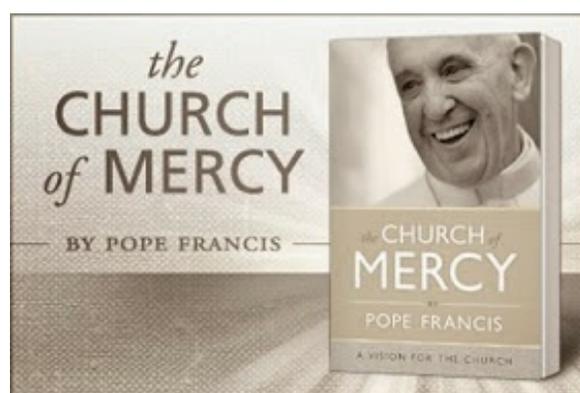
For more great Pope Francis quotes, check out the new book

The Church of Mercy

, by Pope Francis, just released by

[Loyola Press](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://canwecana.blogspot.com/2014/05/my-top-10-favorite-quotes-from-pope.html>
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Pilgrim's Progress (?) [at One Arrow Alone]

When life has no more glitter, is that a good or a bad thing?

I used to have ‘convictions and predilections stout’ – to pick just a few, that Tolkien was the greatest author in the history of literature, that assenting to the Christian creed was guaranteed to bring lifelong happiness and prosperity (and denying it only darkness and error), that insensitivity to heroic ideals and images was the worst curse anyone could be afflicted with.

Even seminary life has lost its magic. The image of the devout souls who have given every second of their lives to the Messiah, dwelling somewhere in the outer precincts of Heaven in anticipation of their mission, has given way to the image of a group of guys who have somehow blundered into the same building and learnt to live with each other – no mean feat either. And there’s always work to be done in the Church, though what work and why and to what effect – let’s say that’s part of the mystery of the Church.

I hope that the loss of glitter is a way towards seeing things more profoundly, not more shallowly.

This contribution is available at <http://turgonian.blogspot.nl/2014/05/pilgrims-progress.html>
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A Pope, Nobel Laureate in Literature? [at MondayVatican]



Pope Francis, some say, may be the first Pope to earn a Nobel Prize, for Peace. Only a few people know that, before Francis, the idea of proposing Benedict XVI for the Nobel Prize, in Literature, had been seriously considered.

Father Giuseppe Costa, director of the Vatican Publishing House, had this idea, as he recalled during the International Book Fair in Turin, where the Holy See was invited as a special guest.

Under a St. Peter's Dome made of books, surrounded by works of the Vatican Museum and of the Vatican Apostolic Library, Father Giuseppe Costa explained that, yes, he had thought about initiating a campaign to give Benedict XVI the Nobel Prize in Literature, and had reached out to some major universities to promote the candidacy. The project did not take off, and then Benedict XVI resigned. The rationale at the root of the idea, however, is still valid: religious literature is not a “class B” literature, it has gravitas and addresses a market demand. While a [“Francis’ bounce” is noticeable](#) in religious publishing, a review about the cultural work that preceded “Pope Francis’ bounce” is in order.

Continually in dialogue with cultures, Benedict XVI attracted interest on the part of secular readers, so much that Ratzinger's books were discussed and read in non-Catholic circles. The presence of Ratzinger's books favored a stronger presence of Catholicism in the cultural debate. Joseph Ratzinger's books had worldwide distribution. For example, widely discussed was his analysis about a [rootless Europe](#), published in 1992. A time when the Treaty of Maastricht was about [to bring to an end](#) the Europe of subsidiarity, of Christian inspiration, and replaced it with a European Union mostly conceived as a financial institution. His interventions as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had been widely discussed and even criticized, laying grounds for fundamental cultural dialogue.

After the big evangelization of John Paul II, the Pope of reason was called to reinforce the building blocks of the Church. An appeal to the Church to recognize her own identity was much needed. Benedict XVI made that appeal. Also by ceding to the Vatican Publishing House the copyrights of the books he had published before being elected Pope. The decision had not come about by chance. It was part of a precise strategy of reinforcing the Vatican Publishing House, giving it the possibility to publish his opera omnia.

The Vatican Publishing House already controls [the copyrights of the Pope's statements](#), and it sells

rights to their publication all over the world. There is a demand in the market for the words of the Pope. Every encyclical sells between 600,000 to 1 million copies. Every book written by a Pope will certainly be a best seller. Popes' books are extremely profitable for the Vatican publishing house. Through these profits the publishing house can support other Catholic publishers and take a stand for identity, helping them not to be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the big (and very rich) secular publishers.

Benedict XVI's choice was ultimately a choice of sovereignty. Despite that choice, there had anyway been [some controversial decisions](#): two of the three books of Benedict XVI's trilogy on Jesus of Nazareth had been given to a secular publisher, according to a marketing logic more than to a logic of delivering a message. A choice that proves the weakness of a Catholic world that lives under a sort of inferiority complex toward the secular world, believed to be better in distributing, advertising, and selling. These are flawed justifications. The Catholic Church [is not a company](#) aimed at building consensus or skyrocketing sales.

At the Turin International Book Fair, the Catholic publishers Greg Erlandson (Our Sunday Visitor), Albrecht Weiland (Verlag Schnell und Steiner GmbH,) Henrique Mota (Principia) and Giovanni Cappelletti (Italian Catholic Booksellers) discussed the state of the art of Catholic publishing. All of them underscored that there is a strong demand for religious books, especially thanks to the Pope Francis' bounce. All of them complained that the major works of Catholic writers are preferably sold to secular publishers with a broad presence in the market, rather than giving them to Catholic publishers that could use the profits from their publication to foster and reinforce their network.

It may seem to be merely a cultural debate. It is not. It signals a lack of vision. What is really missing are influential Catholics with an impact in society. At an international level, there are just a few countries where the ideas raised in Catholic Social Teaching carry any weight in the debate (even in the political arena), and when they have an impact, they are always under attack. Just think about what happened [in Finland](#) and [Hungary](#) in the recent past, where Christian leaders with [Christian-inspired electoral programs](#) have been accused of homophobia. From a European point of view, lobbies ideologically against the Catholic Church carry ever more weight and influence, as it was proven – for instance – with the approval of the [Lunacek report](#) (the “EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.”) From an international point view, the Holy See is constantly under attack by the gender lobbies, that are even [pushing the Church](#) to change Church doctrine and canon law. On May 23, the final observations of the UN Committee Against Torture may follow this script once again.

It seems the Catholic world is standing by, watching these attacks with no cultural tools to fight them. The professionalization of Vatican communications (with expensive ad hoc advisors and external consultants now in charge of it) has not improved the quality of the debate because ideas to forge public opinion are lacking. Applying good communications techniques do not improve communications if the ability to give a real and deep content to the message delivered is still missing. The content can be deep only if it comes after an in-depth cultural movement nurtured within society.

Perhaps, the idea of giving a Pope a Nobel Prize in Literature should be considered again, in order to show the Catholic world that Catholicism is also a cultural challenge, to be lived and nurtured. And also to urge Catholics with the means to build up a Catholic network, to do so.

This contribution is available at <http://www.mondayvatican.com/vatican/a-pope-nobel-laureate-in-literature>
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A Letter to My Daughter [at A Helping of Home]

Dearest Daughter,

This letter is for when you are older, but I don't want it to come too late so I'm writing it to you now.

I want you to know a few thing about your mom.

When we heard "It's a girl!" I could barely contain my excitement. I'd finally get to do all those girly things like bows and ruffles and dolls. Your grandmother is my best friend and *I had always hoped that one day I would have a daughter to share that relationship with as well.* And as we continued to prepare for your arrival, my excitement still grew but I began to realize more and more what having a daughter, especially in these times, would mean. You see, the world is a tricky place. As a woman, you are lucky to live in a time where you can do and be whatever you want. A mother, a doctor, a teacher, a politician? Go for it! I hope you find your passion early and give it your best shot. However, there's a darker side of this world in which we live. One where sin prevails and a woman is objectified and misused with little thought to her as a whole person. Just walk down any magazine aisle and read the headlines. It's all about how you look, how sexy you are, what you can offer to your man. And while I may tell you your worth is so much more than that, I know the world loudly shouts something else.

And then Sweet One, I had you and watched you start to grow. You are absolutely beautiful to me. No really, you are stunning. And the more I thought about how the world might make you feel otherwise, the more angry I became. Not at the world, love, but at myself. For women are the ones that have allowed this to happen. We were the ones that bought that lie. We're the ones that kill ourselves trying to look a certain way, complain about our worst features, and dream about what it must be like to be just one size smaller or one inch taller or just a little bit curvier.

So I began to think about how maybe I could save you from all the pain so many women go through. I could keep you in a bubble, never exposing you to the world, but there's so much good out there I want you to see too. Maybe I could try my hardest to protect you from bad influences

and just never let you out of my sight. But then how would you learn to be independent or grow from mistakes? I don't want to save you from every fall or broken heart. It was then I had the scary realization, that all parents do at some point, that I can't control your life forever and at some point I will have to let you go. All I can do is give you the tools to survive.

But I don't want you to merely survive, I want you to thrive. There must be a better way for a woman to live than constantly obsessing about how she looks. But isn't that what we women do?

Why is that? Where do we learn that from? It must be from other women. When I came to that conclusion, I decided that I would try with all my might to teach you something different. I can't control the world, but I can control me. Maybe, just maybe, my influence would be enough to give you the strength to not buy into the image obsessed culture in which we live.

My words will never be louder than the culture's, but I hope my actions are. So I want you to know...

When you see me running and working out, it's not so I can fit into size 0 jeans or have a bikini body. It's because ***I love fresh air, the feel of working for something hard, and I want to be good to this body God has given me.*** I do it so I will be around for your children, and God-willing, your children's children.

When you see me eating a salad or choosing a healthy food option, don't think it's because I'm deathly afraid of cellulite or gaining a few pounds. Know it's because eating the natural things of this earth remind me of ***how blessed we are to be able to have good food that nourishes our bodies.***

When I put on make up, please don't ever think I don't like the way I look without it. Just as I like nice clothing that flatters my body, ***I enjoy having fun*** with make up. But if I ever thought it made you think you needed it to be pretty, I would throw it all away in a heartbeat and never wear it again.

And when you hear me talk about myself, I hope you never hear me complain about the way I look. ***How could I not like so many of my features that I see look so beautiful on you?***

I hope you learn to value looking beautiful rather than "looking hot." I want you to enjoy good chocolate and a fine wine while knowing moderation and temperance. I want you to know the virtues because you were raised surrounded by them. I want you to know you are loved. I want you to know who you are and what you stand for and to never waiver in either of those. I hope that if I can teach you only one thing about being a woman, it's to see yourself as God sees you and to be grateful for this body of yours.

I love you my beautiful girl,

This contribution is available at <http://ahelpingofhome.blogspot.com/2014/06/a-letter-to-my-daughter.html>
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Out of the Game, Into the Diaper Aisle [at One Thousand Words a Week]

Russ, do you remember when we first got into this business? We said we were gonna' play the game like we had nothing to lose.

~

It's hard to pick a favorite character in [Ocean's 11](#), isn't it? They're all crooks, of course, and certainly not role models for our young'uns, but still an affable bunch, and curiously sympathetic. I'm convinced that the likability of the "eleven" is the main reason the film is such an enduring



favorite and eminently re-watchable, over and over again.

In our most recent family screening ("family" minus the wee ones, of course – affability only goes so far), the standout character for me was Saul Bloom, a veteran con-artist recently retired. In one , Danny Ocean expresses his hope to recruit Saul for one more big caper. "We need Saul," he tells Rusty, his partner. "He won't do it," Rusty replies. "He got out of the game a year ago.

Out of the game – meaning out of the crime business, out of the craziness and thrill of setting up marks, pulling off jobs, and living on the lam. Saul got out of the game and took up a respectable, *domesticated* life instead. "I got a duplex now," he says at one point. "I got wall to wall and a goldfish. *I've changed.*"

Saul came to mind when I heard an NPR [interview](#) with Nathan Deuel recently. Deuel had been a reporter in the Middle East during the Arab Spring uprisings, and he wrote a book about his experience living there with a young family. At one point, Deuel responded to a question about how he balanced his work with the responsibilities of fatherhood, and he made this comparison:

In some ways I was so kind of humiliated by all the simple things I had to do like...figuring out what to do with my daughter's dirty diapers in Istanbul. At the same time, Tahrir Square

in Egypt is exploding and there are these exhilarating, wonderful things that I feel tangentially a part of, but my duties at the end of the day were to make sure this 1-year-old was happy and learning how to walk and clean and safe and warm.

That's it! Nathan has gotten out of the game and discovered the secret of dad-hood: Kissing exhilaration goodbye, and learning to thrive in a land of poop diapers.

We're never great at this, which is why [George Gilder](#) could write so convincingly of brutish men requiring the civilizing influence of marriage and family life. Yet, even when we get married and start raising a family, an ongoing submission of the will is required or the civilizing effects won't take. Without that submission, we wind up bitter and frustrated, and probably divorced – like the central figure in Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle* as described by [Sam Sacks](#):

Volume two alternates between Karl Ove's life as a husband and father and the circumstances that led him to leave his first wife and marry his second. Its most memorable episodes involve the pram-pushing indignities that bourgeois parenthood inflicts on a man possessed by dreams of grandeur and "invincibility."

It's true: Pram-pushing and diaper-changing are hard to reconcile with dreams of grandeur, *which is why we have to surrender our dreams of grandeur.*



Instead, we embrace diaper culture and its accompanying formation in humility. No grandeur in wrangling wet diapers, that's for sure, and nothing exhilarating about making midnight diaper runs to Kroger's. Instead, the diaper aisle and the diaper pail are the dad's equivalent to [St. Benedict's](#) "school of the Lord's service,"

in which we hope to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome. But even if, to correct vices or to preserve charity, sound reason dictateth anything that turneth out somewhat stringent, do not at once fly in dismay from the way of salvation, the beginning of which cannot but be narrow.

And it's only the beginning, of course – next up, potty training! Meanwhile, cool stuff is happening in Tahrir Square and elsewhere, and you're home, keeping tabs on your toddler's fluid intake and toileting schedule while scrambling to get the lawn mowed and the bills paid. Not exactly exciting stuff, yet the ideal classroom for training in selflessness. Deuel put it this way:

I have to tell you that the birth of our child completely changed me. I found myself worrying more and seeing some of the dangerous — or perhaps adventurous if you want to be charitable — things we used to do; I was no longer attracted to them because I had like this tiny, beautiful human being who needed us.

And here's the odd thing: It's unlikely you'll *ever* be attracted again to your old life of danger and adventure, whatever form it took.

Striving to be a decent father changes us in ways we could never anticipate: Our priorities change, our interests, our passions. It's hard to describe, but I'll tell you what. When the kids start growing up? When they're graduating from high school and going to college? You won't start pining for Istanbul and grandeur. Instead, if you're like me, what you'll *really* miss is the diaper aisle, and you'll get nostalgic every time you pass it by.

I haven't been down one in a long, long time.

This contribution is available at <http://onethousandwordsaweek.wordpress.com/2014/05/30/out-of-the-game-into-the-diaper-aisle/>
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Dancing with the Devil - The Final Cut [at Catholic Stand]

“The devil’s finest trick is to persuade you that he doesn’t exist.”

—Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867)

In today’s academic milieu, you should expect that a Black Mass performed by a group calling itself “The Satanic Temple” under the auspices of an Ivy League university to be a bold, daring exercise in transgressing boundaries, right? Especially if the celebrants use a consecrated Host for the ritual desecration that was retrieved at a legitimate Catholic Mass.

Well, not so much. For one thing, a spokesperson for the Temple, Priya Dua, officially denied the use of a real Host (after initially confirming it) in [a conversation with Elizabeth Scalia \(The anchoress\)](#). Later, [the Harvard Extension Cultural Studies Club released a statement](#) that read in part, “Our purpose is not to denigrate any religion or faith, which would be repugnant to our educational purposes, but instead to learn and experience the history of different cultural practices.” [A still-later statement repeated the peaceful intent](#), albeit in the midst of a blither of revisionist history and boilerplate insults calling Catholic objections “closed-minded” and “based on intolerance and ignorance”. (See [Thomas L. McDonald’s post in God and the Machine](#) for an acerbic yet accurate outline of the relevant history.)

But Doug Mesner, aka “Lucien Greaves”, supposedly the head of The Satanic Temple, didn’t seem to be reading the same script. [According to Kaitlyn Schallhorn of Campus Reform](#), Mesner asserted that the HECSC Black Mass “[would have] mock[ed] rituals of other mainstream religious rituals [*sic*]”, so Catholics wouldn’t be the only ones dissed. On the question of the consecrated host, Mesner was suspiciously coy, telling The Anchoress that he doubted anyone would “waste time going to all that trouble” to get one (Really? Only falling off a log would be less trouble), but telling Schallhorn “he couldn’t call it a ‘consecrated host’ as Catholics do” ... which, [The Anchoress pointed out](#), implied that Catholics *could* call their host consecrated.

On May 12, the event was “[postponed indefinitely](#)”; like [Eliot’s hollow men](#), it ended not with a bang, but a whimper.

The problem isn’t simply that Harvard Extension was going to host an event both obscene and insulting to Catholics. Rather, the event was justified on a false historical narrative, and was to be performed precisely to offend Christian sensibilities, on the transparently disingenuous grounds that it would get Christians to “reevaluate what they think they know, redefine arbitrary labels, and judge people for their concrete actions”. Is there any evidence that mockery has reversed the

thinking of a mind secure in its previous convictions? That it has taken faith away from anyone who hadn't already lost it, or who never had it to begin with?

Harvard's president, Dr. Drew Faust — yes, you read that right: [Doctor Faust](#) — was no help. Although she called the event “flagrantly disrespectful and inflammatory,” and the club's decision to hold it “abhorrent”, the ceremony would be permitted due to the university's “commitment to free expression”. So much for the university's motto, *Veritas*: [free expression](#), no longer oriented to truth, is now an end in itself.

Adding to the confusion is the nature of the Temple's identity — or, rather, what Mesner says is the Temple's identity. On the one hand, Mesner claims to worship a Satan “inspired by authors such as Anatole France and Milton — a rebel angel defiant of autocratic structure and concerned with the material world.” On the other, Mesner's Satanism is “a rejection of superstitious supernaturalism;” just as there is no difference to him between consecrated bread and unconsecrated, “the word *Satan* has no inherent value”. When [Shane Bugbee of Vice](#) asked him whether the Temple was “a satanic, or a satirical group”, Mesner replied, “I say why can't it be both?”

It is our goal to separate religion from superstition. Religion can and should be a metaphorical narrative construct by which we give meaning and direction to our lives and works. **Our religions should not require of us that we submit ourselves to unreason and untenable supernatural beliefs based on literal interpretations of fanciful tales [bold type mine.—ASL].** Non-believers have just as much right to religion—and any exemptions and privileges being part of a religion brings—as anybody else.

For all his erudition and pleasantness, Mesner's atheism is little more than garden-variety neo-positivism, which is to say his religious education is a mile wide and an inch deep. He's grasped that religion does serve a positive purpose, but he doesn't really get why or how it works.

Religion begins in symbols which communicate a view of the universe, encoded in stories which are shared by a community, and which form the basis for ritual and doctrine. ***Cosmos precedes mythos***, in both time and causality. Put differently, religions tell supernatural tales precisely because their participants believe in a *cosmos* that transcends and guides mere nature. Many religions don't have “scriptures” in the Judeo-Christian sense; the importance of the tales they tell about the gods is not in their historicity, or lack thereof, but what they reveal about the believers' perception of the universe and Man's role in it. [A mission statement and a set of somewhat ambiguous general tenets](#) are no substitute for a *cosmos* and a *mythos* to articulate it.

Because symbols refer back to an overarching reality, they can't be both meaningless and metaphors. By definition, a metaphor has at least one deeper meaning underneath the literal surface. Symbols work by reaching past our conscious minds to plant that deeper meaning in our imaginations. The imagination is where models and hypotheses begin their formation; it's where we design solutions to problems and answers to questions. A symbol can do none of this if it has no meaning.

Not believing in a symbol doesn't give you power over its meaning. Mesner wants Satan to be “a rebel angel defiant of autocratic structure and concerned with the material world”. Within the Judeo-Christian cosmos, however, Satan's rebellion is doomed to defeat. **Satan isn't simply a symbol of evil but of the futility of evil, of self-assertion, and of rebellion against God.** One could perhaps try to claim for Satan some kind of “moral victory”, but such an allegation would only highlight how barren and hollow such “moral victories” are.

This makes Satan an unfortunate choice for Mesner's satirical purpose. To successfully mock believers, Satan must have a believer's meaning; yet to Jews and Christians, **Satan is a loser**, the prime example of how pride leads to humiliation (cf. Proverbs 16:18). Worse, his human followers are little more than greedy, credulous tools whom Satan uses, misleads and eventually destroys. Even if you don't believe he really exists, it's folly to lionize him as some kind of anti-hero, or to ascribe to him some nobility of purpose.

Satirist Peter De Vries said of the power of religion, “It is final proof of God's omnipotence that He need not exist in order to save us.” Religion, *inter alia*, is Man's recognition that he isn't in complete control of his life or destiny, that there are things beyond him to which he owes not just submission but honor. In this sense, Satan needs not exist in order to lead us into damnation.

But I wouldn't bet that he doesn't.

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- **Dancing with the Devil — The Final Cut**

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Life Guard [at Dancing in the Rain]

5 o'clock at night was always one of my favorite times at the beach and not just because Jimmy Buffet extols the hour. At that time, the lifeguards would knock over the guard towers and they'd compete as the tide was coming in - row boat races, paddling competitions, and swimming sprints to name a few. It was pretty badass. Obviously, I wanted to be a beach guard.

As I think about the many hours spent playing in the ocean, I knew there was a freedom to play and explore beyond my comfort zone - to stay in when the water was rising not only because the adventure of high tide was fun but because I knew who had my back. We all have people we allow to sit in the guard chairs of our lives, those whom we trust to guard our hearts. Who's on guard for you? Who are your life guards?

“In a sermon written in 593, Pope Gregory the Great took a familiar biblical text (“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel”) and sketched a portrait of the prophet Ezekiel that seemed to apply to John Paul II ...: ‘Note that a man whom the Lord sends forth as a preacher is called a watchman. A watchman always stands on a height so that he can see from afar what is coming. Anyone appointed to be a watchman for the people must stand on a height for all his life to help them by his foresight.’ (Witness to Hope, 885).

At different times in life, there might be different people who are sitting in the guard chair for you. In college, for me, it was the Dominicans -

domini canes

- the watch dogs of the Lord.

Like a good lifeguard they watched on as I played safely, pre-emptively spotted danger and called me back when my youthful spirit got too adventurous, and they trained me, similarly to the lifeguards, through daily exercises. These watch dogs expounded the college motto Veritas, Truth, by showing me His face and His heart. We are each called to play within the bounds of the lifeguard's view, for our own protection, and we are also called to serve as life guards for our

brothers and sisters. Let us protect and nurture one another's faith and hearts with youthful zeal and steadfast courage.

My blood runs red, white, and blue

I'll brave the cold, the wind and the bullets so you don't have to....

I'll keep you safe on my watch tonight

when the edge of surrenders in sight

don't you worry

it's gonna be alright

cause I'm always ready

i won't let you out of my sight

Hail Providence! We praise thy name!

This contribution is available at <http://dancingintherain401.blogspot.com/2014/06/life-guard.html>
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Things I learned in Austria [at Rediscovering Glory]

My semester in Austria has taught me so much.

1.

The point of leisure is really only to prepare us to give us a respite for the really important things that we do. Leisure is not the end goal, it is only pursued and enjoyed for the sake of getting us back to our work.

2.

It is not all about productivity, not at all. This might seem contrary to #1 but actually I have learned doing things, getting things done is not the most important thing in life!

3.

Stop. Just enjoy life! You do not have to do anything. You can just enjoy life and thank God for it!

4.

Soak in those moments of quiet, of silence, of rest.

5.

Sometimes a nap is the best life decision you can ever make.

6.

Sometimes going to bed at 7 p.m. is just what you need so do it!

7.

People are more important than anything else. Cherish them and spend time with them!

8.

Life is crazy busy, it basically goes by like a speed train so capture the moments. Make time for what is important otherwise you will never do it.

9.

The time you spend in prayer each day is the most well spent time ever!

10.

Create a rhythm of prayer in your life! Figure out what amount of time you need to spend with God to thrive and make it happen-no matter what.

12.

There will be moments in your life of incredible joy and moments of incredible pain. Embrace them both.

13.

Find your purpose in life and fulfill it!

14.

Fall in love with your life and with the world around you.

15.

Always be ready for an adventure and take advantage of every one!

16.

Who you become is more important than what you do.-Mathew Kelly said this but it is so true!

17.

Laugh a lot, no matter what happens!

18.

Know yourself, know your limits and do not push past them.

19.

YOLO you only live once so embrace life!

20.

Life is way too short to stress.

21.

Enjoy life do not just waste it on facebook or the internet.

22.

Make sure your friends know just how much you love them!

23.

When you say yes to God and trust totally in Him he will lead you on the adventure of a lifetime!

24.

Fall in love with the Lord.

25.

Remember at the end of the day God loves you no matter what and that is all you need!

Lastly, Life is way too short not to creek jump!!!!



Despite What You May Think... You Are a Good Mom [at Revolution of Love Blog]



Photo Credit: [cboswell / 123RF Stock Photo](#)

We all have an image of what a good mom looks like. For some of us it is the Barbie look alike at school with the well behaved kids that look like they just stepped off a Baby Gap ad. For others it is the mom in the homeschooling group that attends daily Mass with her six saintly children, teaches from her perfectly organized lesson plan (never second guesses her choices) and still manages to keep a tidy house and cook meals from scratch while planning stimulating educational field trips. Or perhaps it is the mom we've never met in person but we read her blog and marvel at her parenting skills, witty and intelligent writing style, her organic recipes with professional photos, and her elaborate Catholic crafts and sewing creations. She is a Pinterest dream come true. There are numerous other versions but safe to bet we are all guilty of wishing we were more like "that" mom at some point. For me, feelings of not being a good mom crept in from the very beginning of motherhood.

When I first found out I was (finally) pregnant, I had all these ideas of exactly how I would welcome my baby into the world – have her placed on my chest after birth, breastfeed on demand, baby wear and have an incredible bond from the beginning . However, when my water broke a month earlier than expected, I was already thrown off my game. I was never able to hold Bella after birth. She was rushed to the NICU and spend the next 11 days in there while I returned home without a baby in my arms. I pumped milk and fed her when I was allowed but the reality was that she spent more time with her nurses than with me. How would she know that I was her mom and not another nurse?

Even after the joyous 11th day when we were able to bring Bella home things, it was still

difficult. After endless days of feeding, changing diapers, and trying to quiet a screaming baby, I felt no bond. I felt more like the live-in maid working 24/7 than a good mom. I had to learn to love even when it seemed that no love was reciprocated. After some time had passed, I recall sitting on the living room couch feeding Bella as usual, except that this time her eyes were completely focused on me. After a few minutes of sucking she stopped and gave me a smile of recognition! My heart completely melted as I cried, “She knows me!” In that moment it was as if our hearts were completely bonded. She was my baby and she knew I was her Mama.



I'd love to say that after that moment I was confident in my abilities to parent but as any mom knows, there are countless other decisions and parenting styles that we must choose – breast feed or formula? Store bought baby food or homemade? Cloth diapers or Pampers? Pick the baby up or let her cry it out? As Bella got older, the list of choices just grew and grew. Some of these choices can be life altering, such as, do I go back to work or try to live on one income? Or, do we homeschool or attend a traditional school? Others decisions may not seem as important but they still affect how you live – Do we let our kids watch TV? Do we only eat organic? Do we attend Mass as a family or split up and leave the babies home? How to we discipline? You can find vehement supporters on both sides and sometimes those supporters will look down on you for not making the “right” choice.

There comes a point when you have to just stand up and say, okay, this is what works for my family and shut out all the other voices telling us otherwise. I've seen too many moms beat themselves up because they feel like they are doing it “wrong.” There is no one right way! If it works for your family and it isn't drawing you away from God and your vocation, then don't sweat it. You are unique and your family situation and your kids are unique. Do what works for you and your husband.

As time passes and your family grows, so will your parenting style. There will be times when we see areas that need improvement and it is okay to learn from other moms but instead of stressing out because your three year old is not potty trained yet or your daughter refuses to eat anything green or your son hates math, get advice from other moms who have managed that bump in the road. Avoid moms that are judgmental and turn to someone you know who will offer their help and

support. We will never have it “all together” and there will always be areas where the Holy Spirit gently nudges us to make a change or tweak a certain practice. That doesn’t mean you are a bad mom it just means you are a good mom that is evolving into an even better mom.



A couple years ago [I was struggling](#) a lot with feeling inadequate in my mothering and homemaking but I’ve since made improvements and I think I’ve reached a point where I am at peace with who I am and how I mother. For example, my sister [Elena](#) and I are both mommy bloggers but we have very different personalities and styles. She is neat and organized. I am a mess cat. She reads non-fiction books. I read novels and magazines. She watches the history channel for fun. I secretly watch reality TV. She sews her kids clothes. I mend my kids clothes with a safety pin. Her 5 year old talks about photosynthesis. My 5 year old talks about boogers. So it is no wonder that our parenting styles are different.



For example, Elena [wrote a post](#) about how she raised her kids to be good eaters. Of course when she says picky eaters are made and they don’t come about naturally, I immediately think about two of my boys that have a hard time eating certain foods but instead of feeling like a loser mom I take the advice that I can incorporate – give them less snacks and more choices in their menu. I’ve tried both and it has been working well. On the other hand, while she goes hard core in her rule that if

you don't finish eating your veggies at dinner, you have to eat them for breakfast. It works for her and as a result her kids are amazing eaters. But me? I can't (or won't) do that. I remember what it was like to gag and nearly throw up eating certain foods. Andrew does the same thing. Instead of forcing him to eat it all he had to take one small bite. Each day one bite. It may have taken six years but Andrew will finally eat lettuce and broccoli (even though he prefers the stems to the top part.) I'm okay with that.

The point is, yes, my sister is an awesome mom, but I am too in my own way. We both have happy and healthy kids. We both are seeking to do God's will and living his love within our homes. We both accomplish that in different ways but it works. We both have made great strides and we both have had days when we've completely lost it. When I see her accomplishments, I can rejoice in them without feeling bad about myself. When I need mothering help or advice I know I can go to her and she'll give me tips and advice without making me feel bad. And she knows that I'm her big sis and I am always there for her to help in any way I can. The fact that we are sisters has made this a lot easier but in the grand scheme of things, aren't we all sisters in Christ? We all have differences and similarities. We all have our strengths and our weaknesses.



We'd be a lot happier if we stopped comparing ourselves to each other and accept that we're all in this together and each of us reflects the love of God to the world. Like flowers in a garden, some of us are delicate roses and others are robust sunflowers. Some are perky daisies and others are shy violets. Regardless, we are all reflections of God's beauty and creativity. Embrace your abilities as a mom. Work on the areas you need improvement with the confidence that God will give you all grace and tools you need. Support your fellow sisters in this difficult yet incredibly important job of raising our families because despite what you may think, you're a really good mom! 😊

Bobbi 😊

PPS – This post may contain affiliate links.

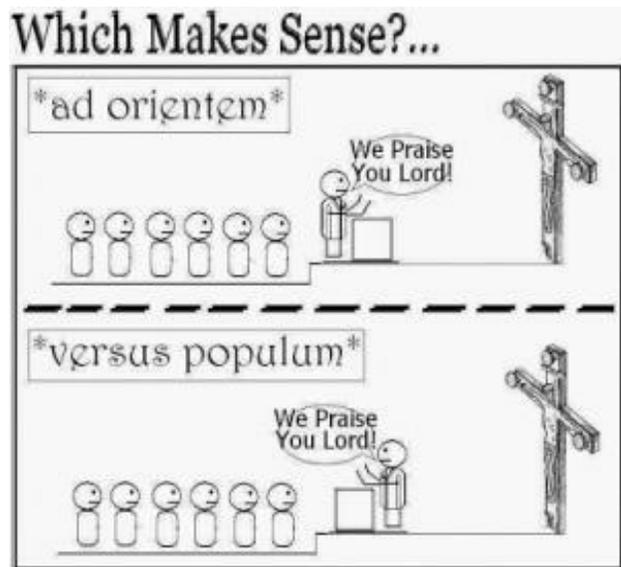
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The Mother's Day homily [at crucesignatiblog]

A couple weeks ago my family and I went to Mass on Sunday morning as we normally do. However, even before we got to the church I had a feeling that the homily would have nothing or little to do with that Sunday's readings. And sure enough, that is just what happened. The priest, who is retired and was just filling in that Sunday, managed to spend the whole seven minutes or so talking about mothers. He basically gave us a shallow sort of reflection on what mothers do ("She laughs with us, she cries with us, she is always there when we need her," and so on). That was it! Did it slip his mind that it was Good Shepherd Sunday as well? There are a wealth of topics that develop from that one simple part of the Gospel. There is the matter of Christ as guiding Shepherd and Head of the Church; the matter of heretics or schismatics being outside the fold and the importance of being in the fold; the matter of one fold, one Shepherd, one Church; and I'm sure there are more topics out there that I am unaware of.

I don't want to sound like some disparaging, mom-hating nutbar; that is certainly not my aim with this post, but the few points that I listed above are important issues in the Church today. Catholics don't always understand that the Catholic Church *is* the one, true Church, so priests need to give the flock, "the milk of grace, of doctrine, and of guidance." Catholics cannot survive on Wonderbread homilies alone. Our souls need real food to grow properly. Yes, moms rock and I appreciate my own mother very much, but can we keep the focus on God instead of ourselves? I mean:



Oh, and the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion helped the priest hand out carnations to all the mothers before the end of Mass. Anyhoo...on that happy note, enjoy your day and God bless you!

Why You Should Never Comment On Another Person's Fertility [at jeffily]

Lately I'm finding myself in the position where various people ask if I'm pregnant. this happens frequently. I can understand why, I'm recently married. Of course the next logical step is hundreds of babies, everywhere. Every time I say I feel sick.. are you pregnant? Not drinking alcohol in excess? Pregnant. Ordering half caf or decaf coffee? With child. Cravings? The baby wants it.

In some ways, I know this is just the beginning. I know it's going to get worse when/if we eventually do start having children, and strangers come up with unsolicited advice or comments. And hey, we're Catholic, so God willing, we will have lots of kiddos and then the comments and looks and stares and what have you will be pouring in. And i'll be looking back laughing at when a few people asked if I was pregnant.

But seriously, stop. To anyone who has ever uttered the words "are you pregnant?" or "when are you due" or "when are you going to start having kids?" Please. Just. Stop. Even if your intentions are good, even if you are well-meaning and have only positive things to say, please don't ask. It is rude, it is assuming, it puts everyone in an awkward position.

You are not part of my reproductive life unless you are my husband or my OB. That's it. Whether my uterus is occupied or not is not any of your business unless I have chosen to share that information with you. What if we are abstaining for serious reasons? For serious, personal, reasons that we don't want to share with you? What if we are struggling with infertility? What if I have had miscarriages? What if I *am* pregnant but we're just not ready to tell you? What if I've just gained a few pounds? It is a very personal subject with a very personal, possibly complicated answer, so please just don't ask.

Just take a step back and ask yourself, is this something I really need to know? Is it worth potentially causing the recipient heartbreak, anguish, or putting them in a position to have to lie?

I promise, I have plenty other things to talk to you about outside of whether or not I'm pregnant. And I assure you, I will be so over the moon elated to share when I am pregnant, that you will definitely know, whether you want to or not. Until then, simma down and I'm going to keep on enjoying my wine and sushi.

This contribution is available at <http://jeffily.wordpress.com/2014/05/17/why-you-should-never-comment-on-another-persons-fertility/>

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How I Get My Gutsy [at Peace Garden Mama]

"Were your ears burning

like crazy today?" my friend asked. She was smiling and I had an immediate clue where she was going with it.

Earlier that day, I'd run into a mutual friend from our faith-sharing group. I'd missed our weekly gathering that afternoon to help with my son's school field trip, and apparently, in my absence, my name had come up more than once, or so my other friend had told me.

"Yes we mentioned you a few times," the one before me now said. She proceeded to explain that the afternoon's focus had been on being brave for one's faith -- sticking your neck out in ways many would find inconceivable, yet inspiring.

Mostly, they were referring to my writing and the risks I regularly take through sharing and defending the faith.

"We just couldn't imagine doing it," she said. "You're so brave!"

Who me, brave?



It was nice to know the discussion had surrounded something they perceived as positive, and in some ways, perhaps better they talked freely without me around. I don't need to know all the details to understand it was an affirming discussion. But if I had been there, I would have had to be honest about it all.

"You know why I'm gutsy, right?" I said. She looked at me questioningly. "It's because of you all, and Him."

It's true, I take a few chances when I'm out there writing blog posts and columns. Recently, I took a big one, speaking out on my confusion over what I perceive as a pattern in the atheist world to covet at least some of the ways of believers.

I know it was bold, and I got some slack from the non-believing camp. Even if my purpose was ultimately to generate discussion and probe to better understand for the sake of unity, some did not receive it that way.

But I did not enter

those waters lightly. And I didn't enter without first knowing it was safe to do so.

Granted, the waters I entered were a bit murky, but I knew they were safe -- not because there were no potential hazards in them, but because I knew I'd be buoyed up by the nurturing circles that serve as essential reinforcement.

My family.

My friends. My spiritual director and mentor.

My online community.

Prayer. The Eucharist.

My belief in a loving God who wants ultimately to draw everyone to himself, and on whom I depend for my every breath.

Because of all this, I did not crumble when the challenges came. Rather, I felt an underlying peace flowing through my soul.

On my own, I am

not gutsy at all. I'm just as weak as the next human being, just as vulnerable, just as skittish. But when all these other things are added onto what little I am able to offer on my own, they bring an abundance of fortitude my way.

If I didn't have a loving circle to return to each week and every day in some sense, I could not "go out there" and be bold. I would be a cowering mess.

Because at bottom, we are all fragile, and we are all -- even those who don't show it -- completely dependent on others. We cannot, by ourselves, tackle the tasks of this world. Not even close. We need others to hold us up and encourage us onward. And if we go by faith, those reinforcements will come, just as we need them. Often, not a minute sooner, but always perfectly timed.

In my "Magnificat" today, I read the following:

"Branches severed,

branches hanging tenuously from Christ the vine, wither." While, on the other hand: "Branches

firmly grafted into Christ the vine continue to be refreshed and renewed by the water of life, the Spirit of God, for whom all human beings thirst, knowingly or unknowingly."

Did you catch that? If we are firmly grafted into Christ the vine, we will continue to be refreshed and renewed by the water of life!

That is the secret to being gutsy. We are not alone! Jesus himself will provide all that we need -- the living water. I feel this, daily. Just when I'm about to give up, another sip is offered, and it is deeply quenching. It revives, strengthens and readies the soul.

We can trust in this. We can. It doesn't make sense on a natural level, but I have lived this and know it to be true. The supernatural graces that flow when we cling tenaciously to our branch, Christ the vine, will be just what we need to collect all that is necessary to do God's will.

Gutsy with fortification, yes, but whatever it takes to follow my Lord.

Q4U: Who and what makes you brave?

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/05/faith-family-fridays-how-i-get-my-gutsy.html>

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The Opportunities of "Gay Marriage" [at Dulcius Ex Asperis]

As the usurping and counterfeit constitutional convention of judges rolls on with each delegate federal judge casting his or her ballot to functionally amend the Constitution to allow for homosexuals to legally (but not really) marry each other, one has to be impressed with how the gay and lesbian lobby has been able to make what seems to be an unstoppable run to the cultural end zone.

A confluence of activist judges, a Democrat president, a gridlocked Congress, and state politicians scorning their oaths of office and lawful duties (but not resigning), is making this one a slam dunk for the Enemy who can, it seems, not only quote Scripture to effect our demise, but who also knows our Constitution and its weaknesses. Like *Roe v. Wade*, he sees a quick win, and he and his followers will take it. It's all about winning and getting what you want no matter the means.

While I've shaken my head in dismay and prayed for our Battle of Lepanto moment, I think we have to at least consider that if Supreme Court justice and nominal Catholic Anthony Kennedy is the swing vote next year that forces all fifty states to go along with the legal fiction of "gay marriage", it really could have been worse. Because, while we'd rather not be in this position and we need to keep fighting, there are some very significant opportunities for Christians in the war if we lose this battle.

What the gay and lesbian movement is about to hand us is the *Roe v. Wade* of "gay marriage". It will cause an enormous amount of damage, corrupt more than one generation, and be a clear win for gay activists. However, it will also leave more than half of Americans unconvinced that two men or two women can constitute a marriage. It will also give them another cause sprung from the trampling of democracy by a specious, abusive and unaccountable judiciary.

As everyone now knows, the *Roe v. Wade* decision did not end the abortion debate as decreed, it just threw gasoline on the fire. The suddenness of the change by court order in 1973 left a core of people who thought the decision both wrong and constitutionally illegitimate

and they fought back. Over time, they have been very successful. We have gone from a society that was moving toward accepting abortion in the cultural and legislative spheres to a nation where most people are pro-life and the abortion industry is slowly being dismantled by persistent legislative efforts. The only effective support the abortion industry has had in recent years has been judicial, and even the judges have barely been able to keep the abortion regime propped up.

It wasn't easy getting to this point. We learned early on that millions of women and men would have or participate in abortions given the chance, but at least we were no longer under any post-

World War II illusions of the sanctity or nobility of our fellow Americans. We grew to understand we'd have to take the long road and win hearts and minds. We'd have to bring about a national conversion by converting one mother (and father) at a time.

Contrast that with divorce. Divorce has made a mockery of marriage in this country, has caused enormous damage to our culture and ruined countless lives. But, divorce didn't come from the courts. Divorce came from the legislatures. It moved slowly, gained legal and then cultural acceptance, and never gave those opposed to it a defining moment around which to coalesce. There is no Roe v. Wade of divorce. There also is no March for Life-Long Marriage with hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in Washington, D.C. each year. Attempts to dial back no-fault divorce and the divorce-and-remarriage culture have gone nowhere, even in the most conservative states. Even if we still philosophically, religiously or theoretically oppose it, we've come to accept divorce as inevitable and the divorce culture as impossible to unmake.

If we're going to wind up with "gay marriage" anyway, I'd much rather it hang on a Supreme Court decision than have it arrive through the legislatures of each of the fifty states. The first way will eventually be overturned even if it takes decades. But, the second way, arrived at by slowly and permanently corrupting the electorate, will keep "gay marriage" with us to the end of the republic (whenever and however that comes about).

One can only speculate how the fight for real marriage after a court-decreed institution of "gay marriage" will play out in the details on the state and federal levels. However, when we do engage that fight, we will have the opportunity to put divorce in the crosshairs, as well. By completely deconstructing marriage, by emptying it entirely of its meaning, the Supreme Court will be giving us a do-over. It will be inviting us to prove what marriage really is in our own lives, argue for what it really is in the public square, and to slowly reconstruct it in the legal sphere by redefining who gets the benefits bestowed by marriage and who does not.

Part of the problem we've had in defending so-called "traditional" marriage, is that marriage in our society has been in the tradition of Henry VIII, not the tradition of Jesus Christ. We've allowed relatives and neighbors in opposite-sex relationships to present themselves as married after having divorced (in some instances multiple times), or having married with no intention of having children, or having simply shacked up without ever having made a genuine commitment. We've given them the privileges and status of marriage while they continuously spurned the responsibilities. In the realm of civil law, the judges are just taking this to its final phase. We didn't take marriage seriously as a life-long, child-bearing union of man and woman, and they are simply going to legislate that choice through the judicial branch.

What the Roe v. Wade decision for "gay marriage" will give us, though, is an obvious contempt for the institution that will shed light on the less obvious contempt that we've allowed in the past. We will be forced into a debate about what marriage really is where we will have to make distinctions between what the state calls a marriage and how God actually established marriage. And, we won't be able to pretend our four-times-married relatives are doing anything more than state-sanctioned shacking: "Yes, I know you have a marriage certificate, but what marriage really

is...".

That will be the moment we start to bring marriage back, the moment when we no longer are fighting to defend "traditional" marriage, but are fighting for real marriage instead. It won't be easy and it won't be fast, and the first ten to twenty years of the debate will likely see a lot of defeats. Slowly, though, the truth will outmaneuver and outlast its opponents.

Another significant opportunity in the coming of "gay marriage" and the removal of the stigma that has kept many with same-sex attraction in the closet, is that they will no longer be hiding and we'll know exactly whom we need to be ministering to. The gay culture has been with us for decades; it was in pornography and the bar scene in the '70s and '80s, on network television in the '90s and 2000's, and has now taken over significant parts of big business and the government.

Homosexuals are outing themselves in droves and being celebrated for it. Now is the time to start ministering to them one to one, making known to them God's mercy and love in a way that we never could before. If you want to know how, I recommend reading Tyler Blanski's

[excellent piece in Crisis magazine](#)

. The gay culture grew to monstrous proportions in the shadows. Having it in the sunshine will give us the opportunity to roll it back and free those who have become trapped by it.

Finally, the Roe v. Wade of "gay marriage" will give us a chance to step back and, once again, identify ourselves as Christians first and Americans second. There's been a lot of confusion among Catholics over the past sixty or so years about where our first loyalty lies. No matter how great the American experiment, it is manmade and destined to fail. There will be no perfect government until Christ reigns supreme. Between now and then, we are just sojourning through this land. While we will engage the American government and culture as Americans, we will also need to see that quickie political wins aren't what God has placed us here for. He's placed us here to win souls for Christ. And, while we'll need to win some political battles along the way, we need to also be ready for the opportunities God will give us in defeat.

This contribution is available at http://liamferguson.blogspot.com/2014/05/the-opportunities-of-gay-marriage_23.html

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Putting God First: an Engagement Story [at String of Pearls]

I've been teasing you lately with the promise of a great proposal story, and now here it is.

On May 9, our second-oldest son got engaged to a lovely young lady whom we are thrilled to welcome as a fourth daughter. This is a date my husband and I will never forget because it is also the birthday of my late father-in-law, a figure beloved by so many, who would be 86 if he hadn't been taken from us--way too soon--back in 2003. Papa lived for his grandchildren, and he would have certainly approved of his grandson's choice of a mate.

Three of our other sons are married already; son #1 got married in December of 2009, son #3 in December of 2013, and son #4 in February of 2014. Now son #2 and his bride-to-be are looking at a November 2014 wedding date. Our firstborn pointed out recently that the oldest four in our family were born less than five years apart, and now they're going to all be married within five years of each other. He had quite a head start on his younger brothers, but the three of them are making up for lost time by getting married in one 11-month period.

All this is to say that life will surprise you! Just when I thought it was a possibility that our #1 son's girls might be old enough to babysit for their Pearl cousins, because none of our other boys were dating anyone seriously yet, their uncles totally made up for lost time (and now one of them is expecting his first little one!). My husband and I have always prayed for our sons' future wives, that they were out there and that our boys would find them sooner rather than later...and boy, have our prayers been answered.

Our three married sons met their wives on CatholicMatch.com. And you might say that Catholic Match had a hand in this union as well, because the bride-to-be is a college friend of son #3's wife Preciosa. She was a bridesmaid at their wedding last December, and son #2 was a groomsman for his brother. The two of them talked at the reception, but never got around to dancing with each other. Yet soon afterward, they began to text each other, which led to epic phone conversations, which led to visits by plane and by car between her home in VA and his here in NH.

It didn't take long for two mature 29-year-olds to realize this might be the real deal. They saw in each other just what they'd been looking for: both are strong in their Catholic Faith and wanted to find someone with whom to share that; both are teachers; both are extremely family-oriented. It seemed like a match made in Heaven--but to be sure, they decided to say a 54-day Rosary novena to help them discern if this was what God wanted for them.

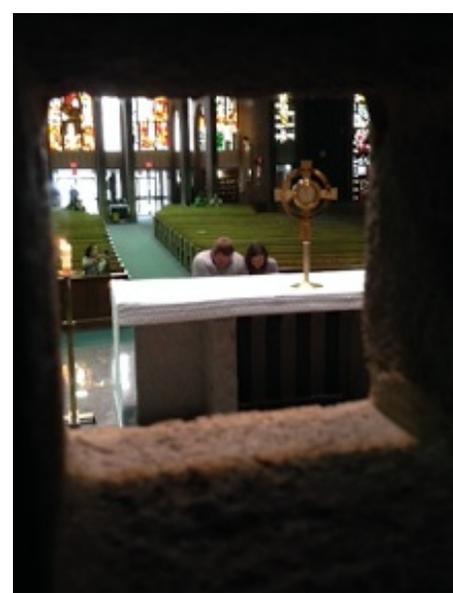
They prayed a Rosary together every night, for 54 nights, mostly over the phone (except for on those weekends when one happened to be visiting the other). With a beginning like that, how could God fail to bless these two kids and their relationship? Have you ever heard of such an inspiring courtship, where two young people immediately put God's wishes for them above their

own?

The novena ended, and they felt ready to move ahead, to take the next big step. So my son began to devise a complicated plan to surprise his sweetheart with an extremely special proposal. He told her he was flying down on Friday after school, but in reality he took a personal day on Thursday and stayed with her sister's family that night. While she was at work on Friday, he snuck into her house and set up a scavenger hunt, with each romantic clue hand-written on antique-looking treasure map paper and sealed with red wax (and a heart stamp).

[A quick aside here: her folks asked my husband if our son got this romantic side from him, and we both had a hearty laugh. We don't know where our boys get this tendency. I'm beginning to suspect they're secretly on Pinterest.]

The scavenger hunt ended with a pair of pretty pearl earrings, and then my son's unsuspecting future fiancée's younger brother (who was in on the ruse) drove with her over to their church, where they had plans to take their priest friend out for a bite to eat (supposedly!). When they arrived at the church, the priest was waiting outside with another scavenger hunt clue, and when she saw the treasure map paper again, she knew what was happening. Inside the church, my son was waiting for her in front of the exposed Blessed Sacrament (the priest had been in on the plan, too, obviously), and that's where he got down on bended knee and presented her with a diamond solitaire.



Right afterward, they prayed in front of Our Lord, and then the priest said a blessing for their marriage and sprinkled them with holy water.

I have never in all my life known anyone whose proposal occurred on a church altar in front of the exposed Blessed Sacrament, but apparently it's more common in that part of VA in which the future bride lives. It makes me want to move to this hotbed of Catholicity! Have you ever heard of something like this?

These two kids will be getting married exactly 11 months and one day after meeting for the very

first time. But when your union starts off with a 54-day Rosary novena and a proposal in front of the Blessed Sacrament, with God at the center from the get-go, I like your odds for a long and happy marriage.

This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2014/05/putting-god-first-engagement-story.html>

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Serious Reason [at This Cross I Embrace]

The one similarity I'd like to draw upon today is a term used very frequently in NFP: the term "serious reason to avoid." Briefly, I'll quote what is meant by the term

the physical or psychological conditions of husband and wife, or from external conditions, the Church teaches that it is then licit to take into account the natural rhythms immanent in the generative functions..."

It is their duty to make certain that their desire is not motivated by selfishness but is in conformity with the generosity appropriate to

responsible parenthood. Moreover, they should conform their behavior

These serious reasons, when applied to using NFP to avoid pregnancy, are meant to be discerned by the couple and is a very personal spiritual application, one that cannot be judged from outside of the marriage trinity of husband, wife, and God.

But interestingly, the term "serious reason" is never used in connection with the flip-side of the NFP coin. Which leads me to question,

are there

serious reasons to conceive?

If you were to ask this of anyone currently trying to conceive, I'm sure you would be met with quick answers to the affirmative, and not just from those with infertility. Those reasons, juxtaposed side-by-side with the serious reasons to avoid, may look something like this:

"My husband is going away on deployment in the Fall." (TTA serious reason: "My husband is going away on deployment in the Fall.")

"I just got accepted to grad school." (TTA serious reason: "I just got accepted to grad school.")

"DH just got laid off." (TTA serious reason: "DH just got laid off.")

The list can go on and on, and there may be minor differences here and there, such as TTC: "My parents' health is failing and they may not live much longer," vs. TTA: "My health may be severely compromised in pregnancy," but at the root of all of these serious reasons to either conceive or to avoid is one fundamental similarity:

FEAR.



If I were to continue making a list of the serious reasons to conceive, I could (I guarantee you) develop a list lengthier than any list of reasons to avoid, having experienced what I believe to be some of the MOST serious reasons to conceive known to most couples. But, guess what? Despite all of the most serious reasons that I absolutely, 100%, no doubt about it

NEEDED

to conceive?... I still did not.

And guess what else? The world did not come crashing down.

It may seem laughable to those who are

seriously

trying to avoid to think that there could be

serious

reasons to conceive, for several reasons. First, there are no guarantees of conception when one *does* have a serious reason to conceive, even in a couple of healthy and normal fertility.

Second, children are not commodities, so the state of pregnancy, which would be the desired end result of the serious reasons to conceive, should be seen as a gift, not a right. Third, no one has ever heard of a woman or a couple suffering so incredibly much, for years and years on end, because they weren't able to achieve a pregnancy.

Oh... wait.

So, that third reason - perhaps that third reason takes the comical aspect out of this idea of "serious reasons to conceive," after all. On the flip-side, we have all heard of the women and couples who conceived EVEN THOUGH they had serious reasons to avoid pregnancy... and their suffering does appear to be much more finite than the couple who has

not

conceived with serious reason.

But, getting back to the first two reasons, it is worth arguing that those points are valid - as they should be - but

they can also be applied to

the couple who believes they have serious reasons to avoid pregnancy.

How? Because first, there are no guarantees that the plan we envision for our life is the one that will come to fruition - we may believe that our desired outcome (not achieving pregnancy, or achieving pregnancy) will be THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING we can do for ourselves, our future, and our family. Second, children are not commodities, and should be seen as a gift, not a punishment.

It all comes back to fear. Fear of the unknown (How will we afford another baby? What if my C-Section scar ruptures my uterus? I'll never be able to make it through another 9 months of debilitating sickness.) is what drives our serious reasons for avoiding, just as fear of the unknown gives us our serious reasons for achieving pregnancy. They are, in essence, exactly the same. Fear is what unites us all, whether we believe we have serious reason to avoid pregnancy, or serious reason to achieve pregnancy.

In the case of those two groups of women, it is no wonder we do not hear the term "serious reason" applied to trying to conceive. Clearly the reasons to conceive cannot be so serious if our plans so often

do not

match our intention, and yet still the world does not implode. But when it comes to serious reason to avoid, the opposite is nearly always true: the plans so often

do

match the intention (of not achieving pregnancy), with the occasional *surprises* and *oops* always proving otherwise (that God's plan IS better than ours).

I suppose what I'm getting at here is not that there are no serious reasons to avoid (again, these reasons are not for anyone outside the marriage to judge), or even to argue that there ARE serious reasons to achieve (which, I do believe there are, and to the same end, cannot be judged from without), as much as to say that our reasoning in general is more similar than we may have realized. And I do believe so much of our reasoning, as humans, is dictated by our fears.

Rather than throw all caution to the wind, I would advocate that we make informed decisions for

our family using the wisdom of the Holy Spirit - while not allowing fear to be a factor. Whether we believe we have serious reasons to either avoid or achieve a pregnancy, let us look to the here and now, let us remember that no trial is so great that God cannot overcome it in our lives, and most of all, let us reflect on these words of Our Lady of Guadalupe:

"Do not fear... Am I not here with you, who is your mother?"

This contribution is available at <http://www.thiscrossiembrace.blogspot.com/2014/05/serious-reason.html>
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When Butterflies Rule the World [at In my own words]

Do you ever wonder if your small efforts, quiet prayers, unseen actions ever do any good? I know sometimes I do.

Recently I was reading about the mathematician and meteorologist Edward Norton Lorenz (1917-2008). In the early 1960's he was working with mathematical formulas, feeding them into computers to predict weather patterns. When he tried to shorten the numbers in the formulas, from six decimal points to three, he found the computer's weather predictions varied wildly. And so, he determined that the slightest variance -.001 vs. .000001, created completely different outcomes. This gave birth to the Chaos Theory also known as the "Butterfly Effect." To illustrate this *effect* he said that a butterfly flapping its tiny wings in Africa could set into motion a whisper of a breath, that could ultimately cause a hurricane in North America.

This kind of reminded me of the words of Mother Theresa, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things, with great love."

But, thinking of the Butterfly Effect, even those small things done with great love, can do great things.

What are those small things? Smiling at that co-worker who drives you crazy; taking out the garbage without *asking*; forgiving someone who doesn't even know they've hurt you; checking on an elderly neighbor; laughing at a friend's so-un-funny joke; running another errand just as you walk in the door, -cheerfully; lending an ear to a stranger who wants to share a story; quietly praying for a friend who's struggling to find a job, or having a tough time at home. Sending an unusual note...

Several years ago a man approached me at my father's funeral. He was a family friend, a big stocky gentleman and a former Marine, like my father. As we shook hands outside the church after the service, "Bob's" weathered, wrinkled face gently filled with emotion.

"Your dad was something special," he said in a solemn tone. "You probably don't know this but every year he'd send me a birthday card." He paused and looked away, then he laughed to hold back tears that were welling up. "It wasn't on my birthday, that's the funny thing. It was on November 10th, the birthday of the Marine Corp," he paused to pull out a cigarette. "A card on the birthday of the Marine Corp," he said with another laugh. "Yes sir, I really loved that about him."

He just fumbled with the unlit cigarette as he quietly spoke about other kind things my father did; but the birthday card each November 10th, "he'd really miss that," he whispered as his eyes grew misty once again.

The thing is, my dad wasn't a typical former Gung-ho Marine. He wasn't even a Gung-ho Marine,

when he was a Marine. He served in combat in the Korean War, but he never talked about it.

After his time in the service, he packed away all the pictures, uniforms, medals and mementos from that part of his life. The only thing he shared with us was silly made-up Korean phrases that made us laugh. “Ideo-ship-sho-nay-chingo,” he’d cry out and then Karate chop or high kick the air, with a bread basket on his head. Yeah, he was a real warrior.

But, he knew “Bob,” was a proud Marine. So, he acknowledged that each year with a simple card. I never knew that until Bob shared it with me; an unknown, unseen act that brought a big rough and tough Marine to tears.

So, you never know the hurricanes, tornadoes, cyclones, tsunamis your own seemingly butterfly prayers, wishes, and deeds are setting into motion; only the one’s you never put into action.

This contribution is available at <http://nfinity22.wordpress.com/2014/05/29/when-butterflies-rule-the-world/>
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Walking in the Footsteps of Saints



Source – Richard Dorrell

On Wednesday, January 9, 1918, Josemaría [Escriva] turned sixteen. The city of Logroño lay peaceful under a heavy snowfall. The temperature hovered around zero degrees Fahrenheit. No one went out unless they absolutely had to.

On one of those wintry days the **young man looked down at the snow and saw footprints** left by bare feet. He realized that they had been made by one of the Carmelite friars who had recently arrived in the city. **He wondered: If others can make such sacrifices for God, can't I offer him something?** It was a thought destined to remain with him for the rest of his life. ([Source](#))

Often when we think of becoming a Saint, we tend to balk. We either think that we are not good enough or simply think that it requires too much energy. Yet, when we look at the lives of the Saints, we find a trend: **they were simple, ordinary people, who were human.** They may have been able to accomplish many extraordinary deeds, but it was only through the power of God that they did anything good. Simply put, they knew how to decrease so that He could increase.

The lives of Saints have always inspired me and are points of encouragement when life is not so simple and easy. The Saints show me that it is possible to be holy. In fact, thousands and thousands of people have already run the race before me and have reached the final destination.

Yet, it is easy to be discouraged and that is why I so often post on the lives of Saints. In looking back over my posts I noticed a trend and noticed that my most popular posts were those that focused on the examples of simply, holy men and women, who followed God's will. Even when

writing on [Tolkien](#) I chose to focus on his attributes of fatherly holiness and how he was able to correctly set his priorities straight.

Consequently, going forward I chose as a tagline “**Walking in the Footsteps of Saints**” to best summarize the posts already contained on my blog and to give myself a goal to attain. I still remain committed to my Polish heritage and will primarily focus on the many examples of [Polish Saints](#) over the past century. Yet, from time to time I will include other examples of holiness that act as lights upon the path and encourage us onward.

In the end, I hope to walk with you in the journey of life and follow the numerous examples of those who have gone before us and have already reached the end. They offer us hope that we too can be like them and become Saints.

This contribution is available at <http://www.philipkosloski.com/walking-in-footsteps-of-saints/>
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Justification by faith and the Catholic Sacramental System [at Washed, Sanctified and Justified]

Justification by faith apart from works and Justification by faith and works are seamlessly combined in the Catholic Sacramental System.

Justification by faith apart from works succinctly describes the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Anointing and Eucharist.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Sacraments are Works of God:

740 These "mighty works of God," offered to believers in the sacraments of the Church, bear their fruit in the new life in Christ, according to the Spirit. (This will be the topic of Part Three.)

987 "In the forgiveness of sins, both priests and sacraments are instruments which our Lord Jesus Christ, the only author and liberal giver of salvation, wills to use in order to efface our sins and give us the grace of justification" (Roman Catechism, I, 11, 6).

These Sacraments impart grace to the extent of one's faith: The Church teaches that the effect of a sacrament comes *ex opere operato*, by the very fact of being administered, regardless of the personal holiness of the minister administering it.[3] However, a recipient's own lack of proper disposition to receive the grace conveyed can block the effectiveness of the sacrament in that person. The sacraments presuppose faith and through their words and ritual elements, nourish, strengthen and give expression to faith.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacraments_of_the_Catholic_Church

Justification by faith and works is the preparation of man for the reception of grace in the Sacraments: 2001 The preparation of man for the reception of grace is already a work of grace. This latter is needed to arouse and sustain our collaboration in justification through faith, and in sanctification through charity. God brings to completion in us what he has begun, "since he who completes his work by cooperating with our will began by working so that we might will it:" Indeed we also work, but we are only collaborating with God who works, for his mercy has gone before us. It has gone before us so that we may be healed, and follows us so that once healed, we may be given life; it goes before us so that we may be called, and follows us so that we may be glorified; it goes before us so that we may live devoutly, and follows us so that we may always live with God: for without him we can do nothing.

<http://www.scborromeo.org/ccp/para/2001.htm>

An adult who converts to the faith of Jesus Christ,

[must justify himself](#)

in preparation for the Sacraments by performing works worthy of penance. He performs these good works by exercising faith in God. Just as we exercise our muscles, this strengthens his faith making him more open to receive the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit which transforms him according to his faith. He is then sent out again to continue doing the works which God prepared for him from the beginning of time and continue to exercise and enlarge his faith so that he becomes more open and properly disposed to receive more Sanctifying grace which is imparted by the Sacraments.

Which is completely consistent with Scripture which says, only doers of the law will be justified (Romans 2:13) apart from the works of the law (Romans 3:28).

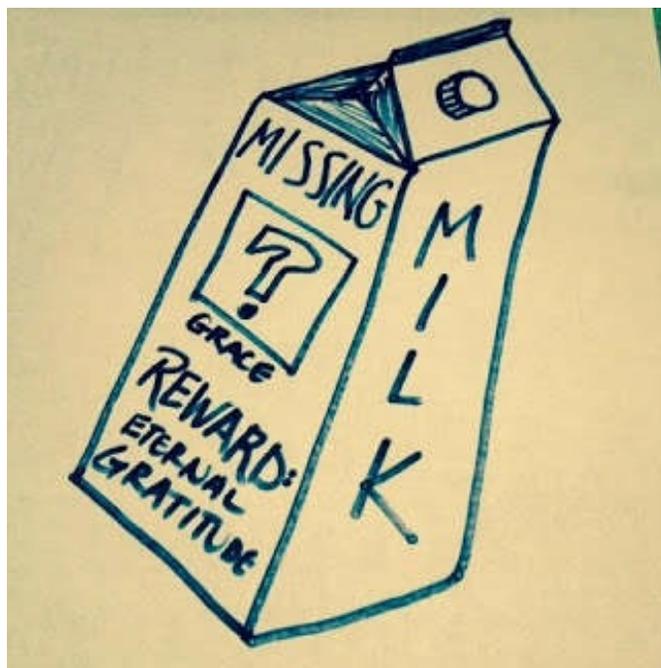
May God bless you.

This contribution is available at <http://washedsanctifiedandjustified.blogspot.com/2014/05/justification-by-faith-and-catholic.html>

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In Search of Grace [at The Pitter Patter Diaries]



Changes can bring about a lot of joy, but that can often be mixed with a lot of turmoil. When stress is high, it feels like all the little things that normally would be minor annoyances start to take on a magnitude rivaling the peak of Mount Everest. I long so deeply to be the woman, wife, and mother who exudes a quiet and peaceful countenance, who "obtains, maintains and establishes a steady cool." {*That last phrase was a shout out to my old Dean of Students...*}

I am not. No matter how hard I try, it seems like the slightest ripple unleashes a chain reaction of seismic proportions. Toddlers are messy. Toddlers are noisy. Toddlers have accidents. All of this is perfectly normal, except in my head where I'm pretty sure mine are the only ones who need a hearing aid before the age of four and are secretly plotting not to turn my hair grey lest I have any semblance of glory, but rather lead me to exhibit female baldness a la Sinéad O'Connor (or Ross's girlfriend Bonnie on *Friends*).

Why? Why is that? Why can I not just roll with the punches and revel in the independence-gaining chaos that is life with toddlers? ***What keeps me from extending grace*** when they do not respect my author-i-tay or mistakenly believe I am wearing a cloak of invisibility that also makes my voice inaudible?

Jesus and numerous other people extend me grace *every second of every day*. I am far from perfect and yet I am forgiven and given so many chances to try again and do better. What makes my first reaction so far from grace? **What makes me so intent on "teaching lessons" that I cannot embrace the joy in the blessed mess?** How do I so quickly forget that love has to come first, before the correction, before the losing of one's final brain cell?

I know part of the secret is balance and order. When the basics are unbalanced (sleep, nutrition, prayer life, sleep, house), the train derails more quickly. I know. I know part of the secret is not comparing myself to other moms who can glide through the day with twice the kids and half the chaos, throwing in a handful of outings to boot. **While I know all these things, the end result still doesn't land in the realm of peacefulness.**

At the end of the day, I think the real secret is that I need to open myself up to receiving grace before it will flow out from me. I think *that* is the "secret that's not a secret" of the seemingly supermom who can navigate a half dozen toddlers with a single bound. She likely is allowing herself the time to soak up grace so she can bestow it on others. That's the circus feat I need to conquer.

Here is the real question. How do you open yourself to that when it seems like you are spiraling down without a net? When your mind, body, and spirit are headed for automatic shutdown, where is the restart button to begin again, to quiet and calm your soul before Jesus to let Him fill you with His grace? When there is so much to be done and the quiet minutes are but a precious few, how long is long enough to focus on the One who is that stream of life you so desperately seek? **When everything on the inside screams out holy hot mess of tangled yarn, how do you fix your gaze on the One by whom you were woven and spun?**

No really, how? **The only thing it seems I can do is start small, and start with something. Anything.** A Hail Mary. A chapter of a devotional. A few verses of Scripture. **Anything is something that opens the door.** There may not be a secret code or "right way" after all, other than to just do it. Perhaps Nike was on to something bigger than they knew. **The secret to receiving grace may simply be to stay in search of it and open the door to receiving the outpouring God has in store without preconceived notions of how it will appear.** Here's to opening the doors and windows and throwing away the umbrella in the hopes of a torrential downpour like the one outside right now. Lord knows I can use it, and so can all those who encounter me daily.

Blessings,



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Veiling and You: 5 Things Catholic Boys and Girls Should Know [at Designs by Birgit]

Her question was the perfect catalyst to set me into action. I wanted to include young men in the discussion because they should also be made aware. After all, we are training them to respect women and their special place in God's plan. This may be an evolving list, but here are five ideas I can readily share:

1.) Women are very special in the eyes of God. He made them to nurture new life and to be the complimentary (different, yet equally important) partner to men. The most special woman ever born was Mary, the Mother of God. God asked something very difficult from her - he wanted her to be the mother of His Son, Jesus. When she said 'yes' to Him, she showed us how we should react when we are asked to do something for God. If you look at pictures or statues of Mary, you will see that she has her head covered with a veil. One of the ways we can try to be like her is to do the same. Saying 'yes' to God, no matter what He asks, and showing that we understand He created us in a special way by wearing a veil, are two ways we can honor Him.

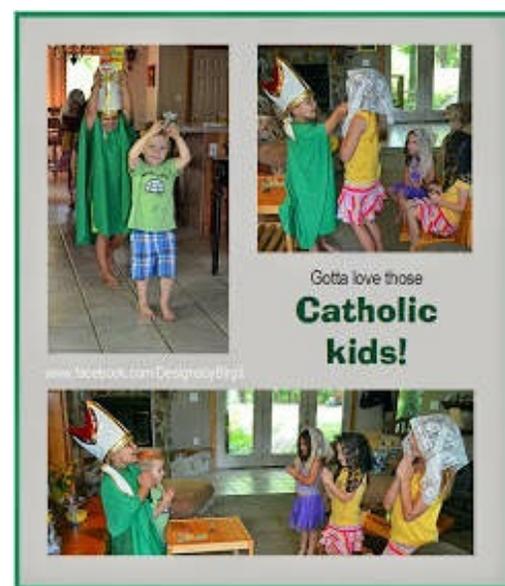
2.) Since women and girls are special and want to honor God, they should show respect when they go to His house. When we go to an important place or have a special occasion in our lives, we dress a certain way. We wear our very best on Easter, Christmas, birthdays, and weddings. When we go to God's house (church), we are certainly going somewhere very important! That's why we should do our very best to give honor to God by looking our best. In addition to wearing their best clothing, women and girls can also show Him how much they love Him and His mother by wearing a veil.

3.) Notice things in the church itself. You will see that the altars are decorated with flowers and candles. We have beautiful statues and Stations of the Cross. We also see that holy things are often covered. During Holy Week, the statues and crucifix are covered with a veil. The Eucharist, which is Jesus Himself, is also covered when not being given to the people during Holy Communion. Even the tabernacle has a veil behind its doors - to show how special the Contents are. As the beautiful flowers in God's garden, women and girls can put on a veil to show that they know they are His.

4.) Wearing a veil can also be a big help when we are trying very hard to concentrate during Mass. Do you ever notice that sometimes you feel distracted and start daydreaming during Mass? Maybe someone beside you is fidgeting or maybe there is something else going on that keeps you from your prayers. Wearing a veil can keep you on track - just like using Rosary beads to pray can keep you focused on what you're supposed to be doing.

5.) Wearing a veil whenever you're in church is a way to show what's going on inside (your thoughts, prayers, and love of God), on the outside. The priest wears his vestments to show us that he is acting in the person of Christ during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Married people wear a wedding ring to show that they belong to each other. Religious sisters and nuns wear habits to show that they have given their lives to Jesus. Wearing a veil shows that a woman or girl belongs to God. It helps others see that they are serious about doing what God wants them to do.

I hope this brief list will help begin a fruitful discussion of veiling with your children. Please share any other thoughts in the comment section below. If you know of someone who is contemplating the devotion of veiling, feel free to share this post. God bless!



This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2014/05/veiling-and-you-5-things-catholic-boys.html>

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When 'The Good News' is Presented Badly [at Sacred Sharings For The Soul]

"But in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15)

BEFORE YOU



think

t= is it TRUE?

H= is it HELPFUL?

i= is it INSPIRING?

n= is it NECESSARY?

K= is it KIND?

Our modern technological advancements and the embracing of media as a means of evangelization has given rise to the increase of sharing ones faith. In many ways this is a wonderful and beautiful thing. Yet, at times it seems that there is need for more silence, reflection, thought, and most importantly reverence before one can share the 'Good News' effectively. I have come across many wonderful blogs, tweets, Facebook shares, and other forms of social networking that primarily focus on sharing and reflecting the Catholic faith. I have sadly also come across the opposite. I say this with all reverence to Christ and void of judgement toward my brothers and sisters in faith. When 'The Good News' of our faith is poorly presented it does more to wound than heal. It does more to turn one away from Christ than to lead others toward Him. It does more for division than it does for unity. It does not reflect the love of our Lord and the 'hope' that is within. Rather, it highlights the virtue one is without and the time they truly need to spend with reverence in their heart for Christ as Lord.

Today's Gospel highlights our need to be hidden in the heart of Christ, and reminds us that we are to be '**prepared to make defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you**'. We must not read today's Gospel and isolate this one sentence but further our reading and see that we are called to do this with 'gentleness and reverence'. Charity must be at the root of our message or it is not rooted in Christ. There is not a lack of morality or sound doctrine and discipline by sharing and responding to others with gentleness and reverence.

Today we have an outpouring of instant communication. Absence of thought and quickness of speech. Technological advancements while able to contribute positively to our Catholic evangelization can also greatly wound and lead to confusion. If we claim to be a follower of Christ, if we claim to have faith, if we profess to be in communion with the Holy Catholic Church, then we are obligated, responsible, and accountable to build up and foster the fruits of what this means and cultivates in our lives. It is not about us and our feelings. It is about Christ and His Church.

Let us place our energy and our voices first into the silence of prayer. Let us turn to our Lord , hear His voice and understand what it is He asks of us through our trusting obedience to Him and His will. If we disagree with someone let us pray first for them before we react. It is not about being `right` it is about our Lord seated at the `right hand of the Father` who is the judge of what is `right and just`.

Let us not be victim of reacting before retaining, speaking before listening, and commenting before first comprehending. We can often realize in hindsight that if we first sought His sight and turned to our Lord with matters of faith, our concerns, and our confusions, we would gain clarity and understanding. To be a disciple of Christ and to strive to evangelize we must first be a student of silence and prayer. We must patiently endure and prayerfully wait upon the Lord.

The old question `What would Jesus do?` comes to mind to me today. If our Lord had to tweet, blog, and facebook..what would His page look like and what response would he offer to others when called to give account? (C.C.)

This contribution is available at <http://www.sacredsharingsforthesoul.blogspot.ca/2014/05/when-good-news-is-presented-badly-bycc.html>
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Take Up Your Cross [at Raising Angels]

We've been going to a family prayer meeting every Thursday night for many, many years. There is a man there I've watched for nearly as long. I watch him because, at almost every meeting, he can be seen standing somewhere near the front holding a very large wooden cross. I know him well and my views about this action have evolved over the years.

In my younger years, I saw him as a zealot. I knew he loved to do street evangelization, the kind that involves praying over complete strangers...in public. My thought was, "Whew! I'm so glad God didn't call me to do that!" I didn't have a problem with him, I just thought he was a little, well, crazy.

This evolved into a much more practical viewpoint. The man is a carpenter, more accurately, a true artist with wood. His work can be seen in many churches. He has carved everything from Crucifixes to coffins, all of which are stunning. Maybe, I thought, he carries that cross as an advertisement. Yeah, that's probably it, I figured for myself. Made sense.

And then, for a long time, I stopped watching him. This was largely in part to the fact that I was spending most of my time in the prayer meetings corralling three small children. Honestly, those days I think the prayer I prayed most went something like, "Please Lord, let this thing end...now." I didn't have time for anything but the task at hand.

Over the last several years, God has been working on me a bit. He has, much to my original chagrin, called me to...gulp...evangelize others. I have, in fact, prayed over a complete stranger, in a public place. Feeling this desire to bring others closer to Jesus, knowing God was working on changing my heart and my call, has given me a totally new respect for the man who carries that cross...still.

Funny, how in all these years, all these attitudes, I've yet to ask him the question. I'm not sure what's stopped me because he would tell me without hesitation. Maybe I feel like a decision like that is too personal to pry into. Maybe his answer would be so simple that it would negate all the time and energy I've spent watching and wondering through the years. Whatever the case, I haven't.

Tonight though, I caught him in the act. We were all quiet in the meeting. The goal was to spend some contemplative time with the Lord. The lights were low, the music soft, the room peaceful. I had come in late after picking the boys up from golf lessons, so I was using the time to rest and recenter. I was trying desperately to quiet myself long enough to listen to God rather than chatting Him up as is my norm.

I was staring at a cross on the stage, not praying, not talking, just being. And that's when I saw it. He got out of his seat when everyone else was sitting. He walked over to that gigantic cross and picked it up just like he always does, like he always has, for as long as I can remember. Except

that tonight, instead of surmising yet another reason for this act, I felt a nudge from the Lord.

"You see him? He's taking up his cross. He didn't wait for someone to give it to him, he made a very conscious decision to pick it up on his own. "

God often speaks to me as if He's writing

The Spiritual Life for Dummies

. I'm a slow learner in most things spiritual it seems.

It wasn't rocket science. The man was taking up his cross just like the Bible tells him, and the rest of us, to do. Tonight I finally got it. If someone had walked over and handed me that cross in that moment, I would have been a bit perturbed that my restful time was interrupted. I would have tensed up some muscles in my frustration and that cross would have been hard to handle. Most likely, my face would have demonstrated that.

As I watched him, that's not what I saw. He walked toward that cross in total peace. He picked it up and held it and that look never left his face. He was doing more than holding that cross, he was embracing it and it was beautiful.

"Perhaps," God gently nudged again, "there is a lesson here. How much smoother would your life be if you chose to take up your cross and follow me?"

I have spent most of my life on the "follow me" portion of that scripture. I have all but ignored the whole "take up your cross" aspect. I know that my life will have crosses to bear. I've already carried a few. Suffering is inevitable as long as I am on this earth (thanks for that Adam and Eve). In almost every case, when I look back, I can see the good. Each cross has brought growth. Hindsight helps in seeing the hidden blessings. And yet, how much more growth, how many more blessing would there be if instead of shirking that wood, I embraced it?

Suddenly, it's not about the man actually carrying that cross, it's about his conscious decision to pick it up. This realization made me want to leap out of my seat and tear it from his arms. "Dude, I need that peace I see on your face, gimme that thing!" Somehow, I don't think that would achieve my goal. That's his cross to carry, not mine.

Now all I have to do is muster up that same enthusiasm for the crosses God puts before me. I have to find the strength and resolve I need to go ahead and pick it up before someone just lays it on me.

We all have some kind of cross to bear. His might be holding that thing in public. Mine has something to do with holding a gigantic baby whose drool and snot are smeared on the shoulder of my shirt. Yours, well, you know what it is. I don't need to tell you.

I'm thinking maybe, just maybe, if we choose to embrace our cross, we may be able to avoid knocking someone over with it.

This contribution is available at <http://raisingangels.blogspot.com/2014/05/take-up-your-cross.html>
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Life and death [at Convert Journal]



LIFE & Death

Life and death are interesting terms which mean different things depending upon context. In the mortal, physical sense, we understand that the body has life and that life will one day end in a permanent state called death.

On the flip side, few would argue with the scientific fact of life beginning at conception. Many would argue unfortunately against all life being of the same human dignity. They say that some life is of a lower value that can be terminated by the choice of the mother – should she find it to be inconvenient or if it falls short of her notion of perfection. Other life may be too old to “invest” in, a burden on family and society, and best concluded “with dignity” for all concerned.

This great debate is about when life is of value. Is it when conceived or does it vary by the circumstances of conception, at implantation, at a certain point in gestation, upon certain conditions of viability or pain sensing, by gender, at birth or maybe when able to cast votes? Likewise is it over when it is too sick, too old or too depressed? Who decides for that life? These are very, very difficult questions... unless you are Catholic. In that case the answer is the true one taught by Holy Scripture (the 5th commandment), Jesus and His Church. Life begins at conception and ends at natural death. Simple.

So there is life and there is death. It is a binary thing, a person is alive (putting aside value judgments) or is dead. So what then do we make of this recent Gospel reading:

A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it **more abundantly**.

This is huge! While human dignity is equal, “abundance” is not. It is quality of life *right now*, but very different from the secular sense of material things, good fortune, family or even health. It is true joy in life through embracing Jesus Christ with our whole heart and trusting in Him above all else. It is living “God’s way,” by His will and not our own.

We see example after example of proud people who live life on their own terms (a secular ideal) — and they are miserable. They may even have great fame, immense power, incalculable

wealth... but not happiness. Perhaps they are of more modest means, chasing the American dream. Priority goes to their family, their house, their job, political ideology, sports, hobbies, and so on. If God is on their list at all, knowing Him and His will are secondary to those other priorities. When His will is known and conflicts, personal reinterpretation readily handles it. God understands – if He is love as He claims to be, then He must yield to the primacy of our will and be completely tolerant and accepting of whatever we want to do, right? If His Church says otherwise, they must be hateful and not know the ~~golden calf~~ god we fashioned. This is delusional, separation from the one, true God and a prideful rejection of the abundant life He wants for them.

You probably know “saintly” people. We often see them as exceptional, as inspired. They are responding to God’s grace in the same call to holiness we all share. We usually refer to saints as those already in Heaven, but scripture uses the term more broadly to include the Church Militant as we poor banished children of Eve struggle to reach it. We are “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own” ([1 Peter 2:9a](#)). Our happiness right now is directly related to how we embrace that.

This has nothing to do with worldly success. It is also not opposed to worldly success, only that things of the world always and without exception must never come before God. He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ([Matthew 22:37-39](#))

Finally, there is eternal life or death beyond our mortal lives. The good news is there is no death in the sense of ceasing to exist. We all will exist forever. That existence can be independent of God (a/k/a Hell, death), which is simply a continuation of how many live their mortal lives today — or it can be with Him (a/k/a Heaven, life). It is our choice, one which we may taste the fruits of now. It is too late only when our last breath has been exhaled. Why not joyfully accept God’s full gift, in obedience, humility and thanksgiving?

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

The offensive worker [at walk the way]

The people took offense at him.

Matthew 13: 57

One of my pet peeves here in Honduras is the way manual workers and *campesinos*, the poor workers in the countryside, are treated.

They are looked down on, at times despised, for their lack of education, for being manual laborers. They are not *culto*, cultured.

As I look back on my life I recognize that this is not a concern that began when I came to Honduras almost seven years ago.

Neither my father nor my mother finished high school. They were “blue-collar” workers, though my Dad, because of his incredible math skills, went from working on the floor of a steel-fabrication plant to an assistant supervisor.

But it is also for me a question of spirituality.

I remember the story about St. Bonaventure in which he told a friar that a poor woman could get to heaven just as well – or maybe better – than he could with all his learning.

I remember hearing Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking in a north Philadelphia church, with a call much like this text of a 1956 sermon:

Whatever is your life’s work, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better. If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, like Beethoven composed music; sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, “Here lived a great street sweeper, who swept his job well.”

I remember reading this text of John Gardner in the early 1970s and sharing it with a person working at the Catholic Peace Fellowship:

An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. The society that scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.

Bill noted the appropriateness of the quote. He was a plumber and I was studying philosophy.

When I was a campus minister at Iowa State University, I kept insisting on the dignity of work and had a special concern for agricultural issues and students studying agriculture at “Moo U” as some called ISU.

In a talk at the Antioch retreat I reminded the students of the priestly nature of their work by quoting Monseñor Oscar Romero who once said,

How beautiful will be the day
when all the baptized understand
that their work, their job,
is a priestly work,
that just as I celebrate Mass at this altar,
so each carpenter celebrates Mass at his workbench,
and each metalworker,
each professional,
each doctor with the scalpel,
the market woman at her stand,
are performing a priestly office!

Today is Labor Day in most of the countries of the world. Today is also the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, when we remember that Jesus came from a working family.

The people of his town took offense at this:

Where does this guy get all his wisdom and powers? He’s just the carpenter’s son.

Today is a day to remember the dignity of manual work – and the need we have for that work and for the people who sweep our streets, wash our dishes, grow our food. It is a day to remember that Jesus was one of them.

They have much to teach us. As Thomas a Kempis, the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, wrote:

A humble countryman who serves God is more pleasing to Him than a conceited intellectual who knows the course of the stars, but neglects his own soul.

This contribution is available at <http://walktheway.wordpress.com/2014/05/01/the-offensive-worker/>
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The Holiness of the Name [at Treasures of the Church]



"When the priests and the people which stood in the Temple Court heard the Expressed Name come forth from the mouth of the High Priest, they used to kneel and bow themselves and fall down on their faces and say, 'Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever!'"--Yoma 6:2

For many cultures throughout the world, a name is a powerful thing. It was no different for our forefathers in faith, the sons of Israel, for to them had been revealed the Holy Name of God. His Name was seen to be so powerful that only the high priest could pronounce it, and that only once a year. The Name was so great and so holy that Jews to this day do not pronounce it when reading the Scriptures, instead only saying "Adonai" (Lord). For the holiness of God is an immense flood that soaks everything relating to Him, so that from the Ark of the Covenant to the Holy Name, all is imbued with His sanctity. And this sanctity is of such a power that the one who is unprepared and unworthy is destroyed by it, as was Uzziah when he tried to touch the ark. (Just so the Eucharist is Holy, and he who partakes of it unworthily eats and drinks condemnation on himself.)

The Holy Name of God is of immense sanctity, so much so that the sons of Israel would fall prone upon hearing it spoken. Yet our Holy Name is the name of Jesus, "the one above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Lord is Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father." This Holy Name is the one with which we should flog our foes, as St. John Klimakos instructed; in other words, "Chase, chase the devil away from yourself. Chase it away with the name of Jesus," as Elder Michael of Valaam declared. "Blessed is the soul which speaks in the name of Jesus Christ crucified. Call upon that name and every disease will flee, every attack of Satan will yield" (St. John Chrysostom).



Why is it that there is such power in the Holy Name of Jesus? Fr. Jean Corbon thought it was because it is "the only name that is not a word detached from the person but rather contains the presence it invokes. It is the only name that is not possessed when pronounced, for it opens the heart by drawing it to Him." Thus countless writers have proclaimed the wonders of this Name, for by it we are united to Jesus Himself. Just read the poetic praises of Richard Crashaw:

"Sweet Name, in Thy each Syllable

A Thousand Blest Arabias dwell;

A Thousand Hills of Frankincense;

Mountains of myrrh, and Beds of spices,

And ten Thousand Paradises,

The soul that tastes thee takes from thence."

If there is such power, majesty, and sanctity in that Name, should we not reverence it? The sons of Israel would fall prostrate upon hearing the Holy Name revealed to Moses: should we not at the least incline our head when we hear the greatest Name, and with our head incline our heart? With His Name comes Jesus Himself, God become man to make us God. He Who loved us and died for us and rose for us and reigns for us, should we not pay honor to His Name? Let us surpass our brethren, the sons of Israel, in honor to the Holy Name, as the Gospel surpasses the Law. May we reverence the name of Jesus, in all places, at all times, for holiness flows from His Name, and holiness is worthy of the greatest honor. "Let us therefore also gaze upon God, raising up and exalting His holy name in praise. Let us take refuge with His purity by continual recollection of His name; let us sculpt out the beauty of our souls by gazing on the likeness of His glory, so that we may be seen to be glorious statues of His divinity within creation" (Sahdona). And let us pray with St. Isaac of Nineveh:

*"O name of Jesus,
key to all gifts,
open up for me the great door to Your treasurehouse
so that I may enter and praise You
with the praise that comes from the heart
in return for Your mercies
which I have experienced in latter days;
for You came and renewed me
with an awareness of the New World."*



*Nota Bene: The opening quote is from the
Mishnah
, as found in*

The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes

, translated by Herbert Danby, D.D. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933). The saying of St. John Klimakos that is referenced is found in

Unseen Warfare

, St. Theophan the Recluse's revision of St. Nikodimos the Hagiorite's Greek version of Lorenzo Scupoli's

Spiritual Combat

. The quote from Elder Michael of Valaam is from

Interior Silence: Elder Michael: The Last Great Mystic of Valaam

, by Nun Maria Stakhovich and Sergius Bolshakoff, edited by Abbot Herman (Ouzinkie, AL: New Valaam Monastery, 1992). The quote from St. John Chrysostom is from his

Baptismal Instructions

XI.25, translated by Paul W. Harkins as volume 31 of the

Ancient Christian Writers

series (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1963). The quote from Fr. Jean Corbon is from his

The Wellspring of Worship

, translated by Matthew J. O'Connell (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988). The quote from Richard Crashaw is from his poem "To the Name above every Name, the Name of Jesus," as found in

The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse

, compiled by D.H.S. Nicholson and A.H.E. Lee (published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969 reprint of the 1917 original). The quote from Sahdona is from his

Book of Perfection

II.8.62, as found in

The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life

, translated by Sebastian Brock, volume 101 in the

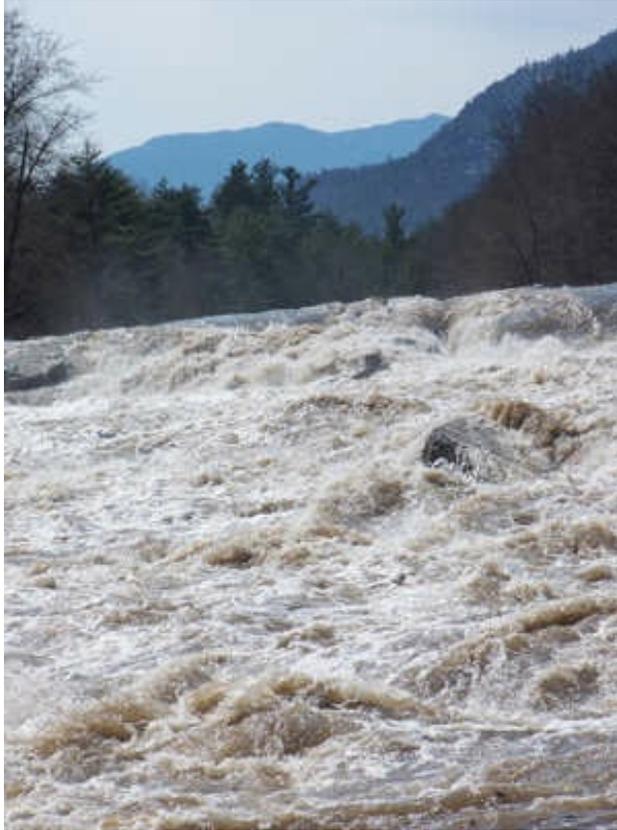
series (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1987). The prayer of St. Isaac of Nineveh is his Prayer #5 as found in the same volume.

This contribution is available at <http://thesaurostesekklesias.blogspot.com/2014/05/the-holiness-of-name.html>
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Mystical Euphony [at Camino La Mancha]

We lingered after Mass today and sang some Holy Week chants and rounds. The acoustics of the empty church added a mystical euphony to our spontaneous chorus. Then we took a walk by the river as chilly April showers evaporated into misty golden rays of sun. Later, while washing dinner dishes, I was pleasantly surprised by the memory of how my Papi used to sing while he was washing the dishes.



Sometimes he sang camping songs, or old folksongs from Puerto Rico. Sometimes he sang hymns. My Mom sang along with him. They shared a warm and loving harmony in song as in life. Pretty soon we'd all join in. We'd make up silly verses or invent new variations on the melodies. We laughed alot. It is a sweet memory. I am grateful that this joyful tradition is still alive in my family.

This contribution is available at <http://caminolamancha.blogspot.com/2014/04/mystical-euphony.html>
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What is Church? [at Journey to Wisdom]

A Reflection on the Readings for Sunday, June 1st.



What is *church*? Is it just a building with a steeple, a basilica, a cathedral, or simply a place of worship? Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines *church* as *a building that is used for Christian religious services*, or as *a particular Christian group*. Dr. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the outstanding Lutheran theologian, said, "Where a people prays, there is the *church*, and where the *church* is, there is never loneliness!"

How badly did the disciples need *church* in the days between the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost? What an emotional roller coaster! Being with the Lord during his earthly ministry – joy! The abomination of His scourging, crucifixion and death – despair! His resurrection - jubilation! His ascension into heaven – bewilderment! How abandoned, depressed, lonely, even hopeless might they have been feeling? Instead of shrugging their shoulders, kicking at the dirt and dejectedly returning to their pre-Jesus lives they clung together in spiritual love and prayed to God. This Sunday's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles tells us that they became *church*.

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away.

¹³ When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

¹⁴ All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. – Acts 1:12-14 N.A.B.

Jesus hand-picked and spiritually formed the apostles for a special mission. They were going to be sent into the world to make the Father known to the world just as the Father had sent Jesus into the world to make the Father known. This group had listened to Jesus pray earnestly to the Father for them during his last discourse. As they became *church* they might have been clinging to the intercessory words of his prayer:

⁶ “I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

⁷ Now they know that everything you gave me is from you,

⁸ because the words you gave to me I have given to them, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.

⁹ I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours,

¹⁰ and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified in them.

¹¹ And now I will no longer be in the world, but they are in the world, while I am coming to you. - John 17:6-11a N.A.B.

Why did Jesus pray for them? Francis J. Moloney S.D.B. (The Gospel of John, Sacra Pagina) writes, “Despite Jesus’ words on the disciples in verses 6-8 they remain fragile in a hostile world and they will not survive unless the Father keeps them in his name.” They had heard Jesus’ intercessory prayer to the Father for them, and they had *church* (prayer, fellowship, spiritual love for each other), but was that enough? As time passed they were expelled from the synagogues,

persecuted by the Jews, and suffered Roman persecution and martyrdom. Was it all worth it? Understandably they needed reassurance, and in 1 Peter they got some.

¹³ But rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly.

¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

¹⁵ But let no one among you be made to suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as an intriguer.

¹⁶ But whoever is made to suffer as a Christian should not be ashamed but glorify God because of the name. - 1 Peter 4:13-16 N.A.B.

The first Christians depended on *church*, clung to the memory Jesus' prayer to the Father for them, and desperately needed assurance that their faith was not in vain. How easy is it to be a faithful Christian in our society? Does it seem as though our faith is under constant attack in our country, and even in our own cities and towns, and sometimes even in our own families. Can we sympathize with Jeremiah?

⁹ I say to myself, I will not mention him, I will speak in his name no more.

But then it becomes like fire burning in my heart,

I grow weary holding it in,

¹⁰ Yes, I hear the whisperings of many:

Denounce! let us denounce him!"

All those who were my friends

are on the watch for any misstep of mine.

"Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail,

and take our vengeance on him."

Jesus prayed to the Father for his disciples. Did He also pray for us? Yes!

²⁰ *“I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,*

²¹ *so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.*

²² *And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one,*

²³ *I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.*

²⁴ *Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

²⁵ *Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me.*

²⁶ *I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.”* – John 17:20-26 N.A.B.

How fragile are we (modern Christians) in an increasing hostile society? There is wisdom in the ability to recognize when something is unchangeable even when those around us are saying that it is. Abortion is contrary to God’s law – that will never change. God’s chosen Holy Family consisted of a man, a woman, and a child – that will never change. Jesus told us that the second greatest commandment is to love one another – that will never change. If we can’t recognize the principles of our faith that are unchangeable, it won’t be long before we won’t be able to recognize our faith. To remain steadfast we need to remember that Jesus prayed for us, we need the encouragement of Scripture, guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Magisterium – and we need to *be church!*

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2014/05/whatis-church-areflection-on.html>
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Idol-worship [at Bible Meditations]



They made a gold bull-calf at Sinai and worshiped that idol; they exchanged the glory of God for the image of an animal that eats grass. Psalm 106:19-20

God led the Hebrew slaves out of bondage in Egypt. When they were trapped and their enemies were closing in on them, God parted the Red Sea, led them to safety, and destroyed their enemies. Moses left them on their own to climb Mount Sinai and receive the Ten Commandments from God. While he was gone, the people created a god for themselves...and what a gyp of a god they came up with: creature lower than themselves, a baby cow. What a chintzy god to settle for.

But isn't that always the case? How could anything we come up with on our own compare to the perfect, all-powerful, all-wise God of love who created us? We sell ourselves short when we settle for less. Maybe you think we don't worship idols like a gold bull-calf in this day and age. Think again. Madison Avenue, Wall Street and Hollywood bombard us with images of gold bull-calves all the time.

Gold: How many of us are tempted to sacrifice our time, our relationships, and our integrity for money and the luxuries it can buy? Investing our happiness in possessions is disappointing. When

the thrill is gone we're left wanting to go out and buy more, creating a spiral of trying to fill the emptiness that can't be filled with things.

Bulls: The modern version of this image of power isn't restricted to a bullish stock market. Bullying in the form of road rage, gang wars, school yard or social media intimidation are blatant, but what about the more subtle forms? The power we give to the opinions of others, economics and social policies that fail to address the needs of the vulnerable ones in society may be less obvious but are still damaging.

Calf: A calf is a young bull. Our culture seems obsessed with youth. Anti-wrinkle creams, cosmetics, and supplements promise to turn back the hands of time. What is that about? Could it be a form of denial of the inevitable end of our physical lives? For those of us that have only the gods of our own creation, what else is there to hang on to but what we can see and touch in the present? Who wouldn't want to put off the end of life as we conceive it to be?

Let's turn instead to the one God who is so beyond what we can imagine that it's safe to trust him with our well-being, both here and in the hereafter. Twelve Step programs use the term Higher Power for God. If God truly is God, He must be a Higher Power, higher than anything we could come up with on our own. It is worth our time and effort to ask, seek, and find the glory of the true God. But as someone said, "It's hard to find something that's above you when you're looking down."

Prayer: My Creator, help me look to you rather than to the idols I come up with on my own.

Reflection: Who or what am I relying on today?

This contribution is available at <http://www.biblemeditations.net/archives/1882>
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Latin Names for Sundays in the Roman Rite [at A Catholic Life]

Advent **First Sunday of Advent** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Ad Te Levave' **Second Sunday of Advent** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Populus Sion' **Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday)** 1 Cl. Rose Missa 'Gaudete' **Wednesday/Friday/Saturday of Advent Embertide (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after the Third Sunday -- Gaudete Sunday -- of Advent)** 2 Cl. Purple Missa 'Rorate Coeli'/Missa 'Prope es Tu'/Missa 'Veni' **Fourth Sunday of Advent** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Rorate Coeli' **Christmastide** **Vigil of Christmas** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Hodie Sciētis' **Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Christmas)** 1 Cl. with Octave White First Mass at Midnight: Missa 'Dominus Dixit'

Second Mass at Dawn: Missa 'Lux Fulgebit'

Third Mass During the Daytime: Missa 'Puer Natus Est' **Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity of Our Lord** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Dum Medium' **Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus (the Sunday after Jan. 1, or Sunday after the Octave Day of the Nativity, or Jan. 2, or the Sunday between the Octave Day of the Nativity and the Epiphany)** 2 Cl. White Missa 'In Nomine Jesu' **The Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Ecce Advenit' **First Sunday after Epiphany (Feast of the Holy Family)** 2 Cl. White Missa 'Exsultat Gaudio' **Time after Epiphany** **Second Sunday after Epiphany** 2 Cl.. Green Missa 'Omnis Terra' **Third Sunday after Epiphany** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Adorate Deum' **Fourth Sunday after Epiphany** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Adorate Deum' **Fifth Sunday after Epiphany** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Adorate Deum' **Sixth Sunday after Epiphany** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Adorate Deum' **Septuagesima** **First Sunday of Septuagesima (Septuagesima Sunday)** 2 Cl. Purple Missa 'Circumdederunt Me' **Second Sunday of Septuagesima (Sexagesima Sunday)** 2 Cl. Purple Missa 'Exsurge' **Third Sunday of Septuagesima (Quinquagesima Sunday)** 2 Cl. Purple Missa 'Esto Mihi' **Lent** **Ash Wednesday** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Misereris Omnium' **First Sunday of Lent (Quadragesima Sunday)** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Invocabit Me' **Wednesday/Friday/Saturday of Lenten Embertide (Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after the First Sunday of Lent)** 2 Cl. Purple Missa 'Reminiscere Miserationum Tuarum'/Missa 'De Necessitatibus'/Missa 'Intret Oratio' **Second Sunday of Lent** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Reminiscere Miserationum' **Third Sunday of Lent** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Oculi Mei' **Fourth Sunday of Lent ("Laetare Sunday" or "Rose Sunday")** 1 Cl. Rose Missa 'Laetare' **Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passion Sunday, which begins the two weeks of Passiontide)** 1 Cl. Purple Missa 'Judica Me Deus' **Friday after Passion Sunday (Feast of the Seven Sorrows)** Com. White Missa 'Sabant Juxta' **Sixth Sunday of Lent and Second Sunday of Passiontide (Palm Sunday, which begins Holy Week)** 1 Cl. Red Missa 'Domine Ne Longe' **Spy Wednesday (the Wednesday of Holy Week)**

Purple Missa 'In Nomine Jesu' **Maundy Thursday (the Thursday of Holy Week. The three days called the "Sacred Triduum" begin now)** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Nos Autem' **Good Friday (the Friday of Holy Week)** 1 Cl. Black Mass of the Presanctified (not a true Mass, but a Communion Service using pre-sanctified Hosts) **Paschaltide** **Holy Saturday (Eastertide begins with the Vigil Mass)** 1 Cl. Purple No Mass, but an Easter Vigil Service which begins the Easter Season **Easter Sunday** 1 Cl. with Octave White Missa 'Resurrexi' **Monday in Easter Week** 1 Cl. White

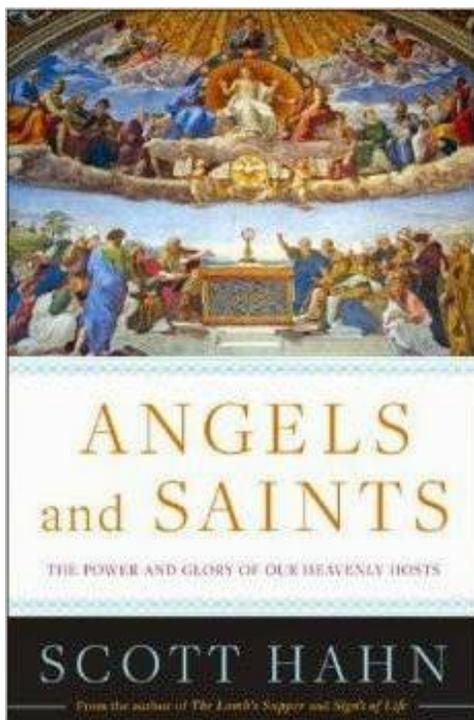
Missa 'Introduxit' **Tuesday in Easter Week** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Aqua Sapientiae' **Wednesday in Easter Week** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Venite' **Thursday in Easter Week** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Victricem Manum Tuum' **Friday in Easter Week** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Eduxit Eos Dominus' **Saturday in Easter Week** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Eduxit Dominus' **First Sunday after Easter ("Low Sunday" or "Quasimodo Sunday" or "Divine Mercy Sunday")** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Quasi Modo' **Second Sunday after Easter**
White Missa 'Misericordia Domini' **Third Sunday after Easter**
White Missa 'Jubilate Deo' **Fourth Sunday after Easter**
White Missa 'Cantate Domino' **Fifth Sunday after Easter**
White Missa 'Vocem Jucunditatis'

Outside of Eastertide: Missa 'Protexisti' **Ascension Thursday** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Viri Galilaei' **Vigil of the Pentecost** 1 Cl. Red Missa 'Cum Sanctificatus' **Pentecost Sunday (Whitsunday)** 1 Cl. with Octave Red Missa 'Spiritus Domini' **Wednesday/Friday/Saturday of Whit Embertide (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after Pentecost)** 1 Cl./1 Cl./1 Cl. Red/Red/Red Missa 'Deus Dum Egredieris'/Missa 'Repleatur Os Meum'/Missa 'Caritas Dei' **Time after Pentecost First Sunday after Pentecost (Trinity Sunday)** 1 Cl. Green Missa 'Benedicta Sit' **Thursday after Trinity Sunday (Feast of Corpus Christi)** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Cibavit Eos' and Procession **Second Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. White Missa 'Factus Est Dominus' **Friday after the Second Sunday after Pentecost (Feast of the Sacred Heart)** 1 Cl. White Missa 'Cogitationes Cordis' **Third Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. White Missa 'Respice In Me' **Fourth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Dominus Illuminatio Mea' **Fifth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Exaudi Domine' **Sixth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Dominus Fortitudo' **Seventh Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Omnes Gentes' **Eighth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Suscepimus Deus' **Ninth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Ecce Deus Adjuvat' **Tenth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Cum Clamarem' **Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Deus In Loco' **Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Deus in Adjutorum' **Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Respice Domine' **Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Protector Noster' **Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Inclina Domine' **Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Miserere Mihi Domine' **Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Justus Es Domine' **Wednesday/Friday/Saturday of Michaelmas Embertide (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday after September 14)** 2 Cl. Purple Missa 'Exsultate Deo'/Missa 'Laetetur Cor'/Missa 'Venite Adoremus Deum' **Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Da Pacem Domine' **Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Salus Populi' **Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Omnia Quae Fecisti' **Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'In Voluntate Tua' **Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Si Iniquitates Observaveris' **Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Dicit Dominus' **Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Dicit Dominus' **Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Dicit Dominus' **Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Dicit Dominus' **Twenty-seventh Sunday after Pentecost** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Dicit Dominus' **Last Sunday of Pentecost (no matter how many Sundays in Pentecost there are)** 2 Cl. Green Missa 'Dicit Dominus'

This contribution is available at <http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2014/05/latin-names-for-sundays-in-roman-rite.html>
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Review of Angels and Saints: A Biblical Guide to Friendship with God's Holy Ones [at Catholic Bibles]



The Review:

In his newest popular book, Dr. Scott Hahn, in his typically humorous and personal tone, looks at the importance and everyday relevance of the angels and saints for the ordinary Catholic. The book has a pretty basic structure, with the first part focusing on the Church's theological understanding of the role and canonization of the saints, with special emphasis on the scriptural foundations. In the second half of the book Hahn, in the form of a meditation, looks at the lives of particular saints. One element of this section that I appreciated the most is that at the end of each chapter, Hahn lets the saint (or another saint speaking about that particular saint) speak for him or her self.

My favorite chapter is the fourth one, which Hahn calls

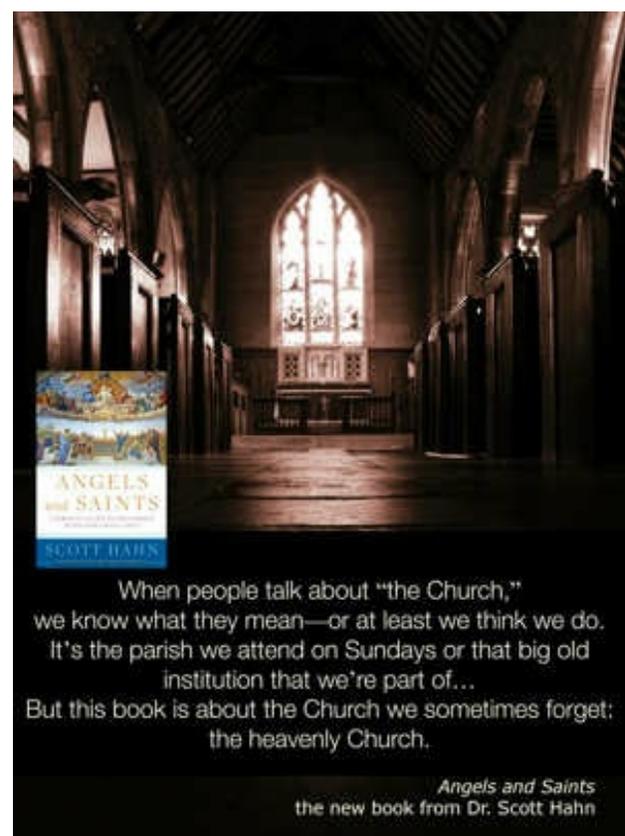
What Do the Saints Do?

He reminds us that the saints are an active element of our lives. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ, who truly desire that we attain eternal life with them. So, how do they help us? Dr. Hahn points to the Book of Revelation which "shows us the saints in heaven, they're engaged constantly in worship.....note that they are pleading with God for those who remain on earth (59-60)." And guess what? Not surprisingly, God answers the prayers of His saints in pretty dramatic fashion: "In response to the prayers of the saints, God calls upon the heavenly priests to blow their seven trumpets, evoking the Old Testament Battle of Jericho (61)." That right there reminds us that God mightily responds to those prayers. The whole chapter should give us great encouragement

when we say I (or we) "believe in the Communion of the Saints."

St. Paul:

As part of this blog tour, I have been asked to comment on chapter nine, which focuses on St. Paul. I was very delighted to get to write a bit on St. Paul. When I ask people what their favorite part of scripture, I often hear one of three things: 1) The Psalms; 2) The Gospel of John; 3) Paul. Notice I didn't say which letter of Paul, but simply Paul. I have found that Paul has touched so many people who are daily Bible readers, Catholic or Protestant, that often they are unable to pick which of his letters they like best. It would be like selecting your favorite child. I have often felt the same way. Those thirteen letters of St. Paul provide us a rich insight into understanding the Church, how to live as Christians, the role of Grace and Faith, and, put simply, Jesus Christ himself. As Hahn says: "When we read them, we sometimes feel as if we're being propelled forward by a hurricane, a tidal wave, or some other force of nature. But it's even stronger than that, because it's a force of Grace (104)." And as Hahn points out, when we read those letters, or hear them in the liturgy, we are exposing ourselves to that same powerful force (105).



As I was reading this chapter, I couldn't help but think of the Pauline year that our Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI called for all the Church to observe in 2008. Of all the special jubilee or thematic years that recent Popes have called, I must say that the Year of St. Paul was the one I most participated in. I spent the year reading, and re-reading, Paul, led a few Bible studies on his letters, and made sure to meditate on many of the rich passages that have come down to us from him. I really felt like I had been wrapped up in that "hurricane of Grace" that Hahn describes in this chapter. The word that was continually impressed upon me was passion. Paul, perhaps more than anyone else, knew that his whole life had been forever transformed by his encounter with

Jesus Christ. He, then, dedicated the rest of his life to proclaiming, with passion, that "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father (Phil 2:11)." He did this, however, over a period of thirty long years. We are so blessed to have St. Paul's words at our fingertips, as well as having documents that give biographical information about his life. Yet, sometimes it is easy to forget that while he had many moments of not only trial and triumph as he went on mission, but also plenty of ordinary moments that made up his daily life. I often want to be zealous like St. Paul, but

Angels and Saints

, and the Year of Paul in 2008, has helped remind me that the Christian journey is long. The Lord often gives us this "ordinary" time to remember that we are totally dependent on him. We need this time to grow in patience and trust in the Lord. Often, I need to have a better understanding of this in my life far more than I typically do. St. Paul, in all that he did, allowed God, in those extraordinary but more often in the ordinary moments, to build him up and remind him on whom he was totally dependent.

Contest: Our friends at Image Books are happy to offer you, my faithful readers, an opportunity to win a free copy of this new book by Dr. Scott Hahn. I will follow the standard contest procedures, as with typical contest on this blog which are:

- 1) If you have a website or blog or are active on Facebook, please announce this contest. If you don't, that is OK. You can still enter the contest.**

- 2) Please enter your name in the comment section of this blog post along with your favorite verse from one of St. Paul's letters. I will randomly draw one winner at the conclusion of the contest, which will be on Sunday June 1 at 11:59PM.**

- 3) I will announce the winners on June 2nd. The winners must contact me, via email, within a week with their full name and address. I will then forward their name to Image who will send out the book soon after.**

- 4) One entry per person.**

- 5) Contest is only available to those who live in the United States.**

Angels and Saints Blog Tour

Thank you to Katie at Image Books for providing me a review copy.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicbiblesblog.com/2014/05/review-of-angels-and-saints-biblical.html>

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Reflecting on Gospel of Sixth Sunday in Easter, A [at From the Pulpit of my Life]



If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

John 14: 15

The style of religious education that I experienced in my childhood relied heavily on learning by heart the definitions, questions and answers in *A Catechism of Christian Doctrine*. Although my dad helped me with the memory work, I didn't always like what I was learning about God. For instance, one of God's *perfections*, as they were called, was that He is *all-knowing* (omniscient). He knew *everything*—past, present, and future, even our most secret thoughts, words and actions. Personally, I wanted more privacy than that! Also, I learned *God is everywhere* (omnipresent). I didn't find that consoling either. I asked my dad, "Will God see me if I hide behind the clothes in the closet?" Basically I wanted a refuge where God wouldn't see me at my worst. What I hadn't quite grasped at that time is that God watches over us with care and mercy, not like that scary eye in the triangle on a dollar bill!

This liturgical season's Gospel readings from St. John, paint a tender image of God. Jesus promises his disciples that he will not leave them orphans. He says, "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate." *Advocate* is St. John's term for the Holy Spirit. The Advocate unites the Father to the Son in a union of love, and anyone who loves Jesus participates in this dynamic union. The Trinity makes a home in us and accompanies us from baptism to the Beatific Vision of heaven.

To remain in this union Jesus said, "Keep my commandments." So, if my love of the LORD is authentic, I *will* keep his commandments. If I don't keep them, I don't love him. What does it mean to *keep* something? In the dictionary I found five definitions for the verb *keep*. In the Thesaurus there were many synonyms: retain, remain, persist in, comply with, preserve, look after, etc. So what did Jesus mean? I think he meant more than legalistically adhering to a list of rules, because that alone doesn't strike me as a complete expression of love. Keeping the commandments is more like *doing what Jesus did*. They are a means of love.

LORD, help us to love you and to do your Will.

This contribution is available at <http://www.fromthepulpitofmylife.com/2014/05/reflecting-on-gospel-of-sixth-sunday-in-easter-a/>

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Don't Turn Your Back on Fatima [at Written By the Finger of God]

This post is featured on [Catholic Stand](#).

Did you hear the true story of the Hiroshima atomic bomb survivors? Fr. Hubert Schiffer, SJ and at least four other Jesuits were living in quarters eight blocks away from the epicenter of the bomb. They miraculously survived the bomb blast and Fr. Schiffer lived for at least fifty more years without a trace of radioactive side effects. Fr. Schiffer attributes the miracle in his own words as related by Fr. Paul Ruge O.F.M.I, “We believe that we survived because we lived the message of Fatima. We lived and prayed the rosary daily in that home.”

‘Fatima’ refers to the Church approved apparitions of Mary in 1917 to three shepherd children in Portugal for a period of six months. The children were given messages concerning world events and the miracle of the sun capped the end of the public apparitions. Through St. Jacinta, St. Francisco and Bl. Lucia (the seers), the Church was introduced to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, entreated to pray the rosary daily, and encouraged devotion known as the Communion of Reparation where the faithful assist First Saturday Masses in reparation to the offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Mary also begged the world to stop offending the Lord and to make sacrifices so that sinners would be saved. She promised that if her requests are heeded, *“a period of peace will be given the world... and in the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.”*

The alarming Fatima prophecies centered around world wars, the Pope's assassination and Russia's communistic influence. Today, it is tempting to dismiss that the A-bomb of Hiroshima, the crumbling of the Berlin wall and St. Pope John Paul II's consecration of the world closed the case for Fatima's relevance. However, St. Pope John Paul II's successors didn't think so. Pope Benedict XVI on May 13, 2010 in a Mass at the Fatima shrine said: *“We would be mistaken to think that Fatima's prophetic mission is complete.”* After him, Pope Francis, not even a year into his papacy requested Our Lady of Fatima's statue to be brought to St. Peter's square. On October 13th, 2013 (the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary and anniversary of the last apparition), Pope Francis consecrated the world to Mary.

The threat of China and North Korea's communism over Asia, Russia's re-appearance in world events, middle east instability, killing of the innocent unborn, and universal Church persecution should alert us that this period of peace is not among us yet. What we see, in fact,

looks more like the cusps of a brewing storm of global mayhem. Current events make for a compelling case of why we still need to listen to and live out Mary's message in Fatima. We put our own future at risk when we turn our backs on Fatima.

The Fatima lifestyle ushers in the reign or triumph of Mary's Immaculate Heart, a precursor to the coming of Jesus' kingdom on earth. St. Louis de Montfort once said: *"His [Jesus] kingdom will come. But this will happen only after the Blessed Virgin is known and has begun to reign...She gave him birth the first time. She will bring Him forth to us when He comes to us again."*



How do we live out the messages of Fatima?

1. Pray the rosary daily
3. Practice the Communion of reparation for First Saturdays
4. Make penance and sacrifices for sinners

The Fatima lifestyle is a shield of the Church for our perilous times. During the super cyclone that hit the Eastern seaboard of the Philippines, almost all the parishes the diocese of Tacloban sustained heavy damage. All except one: the parish where a First Friday Eucharistic Adoration was going on at the time of the storm. This parish had been practicing the Communion of Reparation, a devotion which begins with an evening first Friday Mass, through nine hours of Adoration and rosaries, and closes with a midnight first Saturday Mass... as inspired by Our Lady of Fatima's requests.

This contribution is available at <http://www.anabellehazard.blogspot.com/2014/05/dont-turn-your-back-on-fatima.html>
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I Lost but I Gained and I am so GLAD! [at Quiet Consecration]

I lost so many people over the past 20 years because of mistakes I made and because of the path towards God that I chose. Those who have rejected me because of my bad behavior are perfectly justified to do so and the ones that decided I am 'too Catholic' are simply, well, bigots. That is OK. Everyone has the right to be whatever they want to be, to reject, to not forgive, to build their lives in the way they think is the best.

I cried for years over those who have decided they do not want me in their lives. It hurt like heck.

My spiritual advisor and my 12 step sponsor guided me to let go, to accept their decisions and remember that my job is to keep an open heart so that if they ever change their minds they know where to find me and that they are welcome in my life.

Meanwhile, I set about rebuilding my support system. I started asking God to guide me to those who do not think everything I do and say has to be filtered and approved by them, to surround me with people that I can laugh and cry with and with whom I can share my life without fear. I hoped that God would give me a chance to find people I can talk with, play with, worship with, have fun with and call on in times of trouble.

Slowly but surely, that has happened and today my life filled with solid Catholics, good sober people who believe one can stay sober without leaving good morals and God by the side of the road.

It makes me wonder why it took so long?

Maybe the changes in my life, the ones that first isolated and caused me pain, were part of the walk towards Calvary that all Christians have to take?

Jesus tells each of us to take up our cross and follow Him. He made other promises as well - He promised we would be hated by the world as He was hated. We read that in Holy Scripture and it doesn't always make sense until it starts to happen. Then, when it does happen, it takes us by surprise and we find ourselves on our knees, crying in pain and wondering what we did to deserve this treatment?

The answer is simple.

We chose to follow Him.

The number of people I have met over the past 10 years who have experienced what I have experienced have caused me to totally accept that what Jesus says is true. Sure, intellectually I accepted the Truth of His Teachings but I am going to tell you it is not until one feels the weight of

the cross on their own shoulders, feels the trickle of blood down their face caused by their own particular crown of thorns that the full impact of becoming an Intentional Disciple of Jesus Christ becomes a reality.

One of my brothers told me recently that his birth family is always making snarky remarks about him, his wife and his children.

A member of our Catechumenate was told by their grown children that if she joins the Catholic Church she will never again be welcome in their homes.

A young teen, recently confirmed, called me in tears. His father and mother laughed out loud when he said he thinks he has a calling to be a priest, telling him that only losers at life become religious. They did this while still taking their family to Mass every Sunday.

I guess what I have learned is that many of us who face holidays alone or want to run screaming from the room when some talk show host gives tidbits about how to meet Mr. Right when we are in our 60's have now fully embraced the path we started walking 10, 15 or 20 years ago. And because that path leads towards heaven, we are picking up the other lost ones along the way. We are gaining in numbers and in strength and the results are so much better than we ever imagined.

Today, I am not alone. I may be lonely, I may get tired, I may get down and I may miss what I had - but today, I cannot ignore what I have..and what I have is amazing.

Thank you, God, for my life today exactly as it is..I would not change a thing, even if I could!

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2014/06/i-lost-but-i-gained-and-i-am-so-glad.html>
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If It's Good Enough for Dorothy Day, It's Good Enough for Me [at Jess]

I did not attend a Catholic high school, and it never occurred to me that I should have a catechism. I think my mom had one lying around the house from her RCIA days. By the time I had arrived for my first day of Totus Tuus training, I was wishing I had thought to look.

We sat for a week and listened to pretty fantastic talks and lessons concerning what we would be teaching in our parishes. They gave us a list of helpful tools (All of which I somehow never purchased while teaching): A solid Catholic bible, the CCC, and

[apologetics resources](#)

that included the most incredible

[piece of laminated paper](#)

I had ever seen (which I did buy halfway into the first summer).

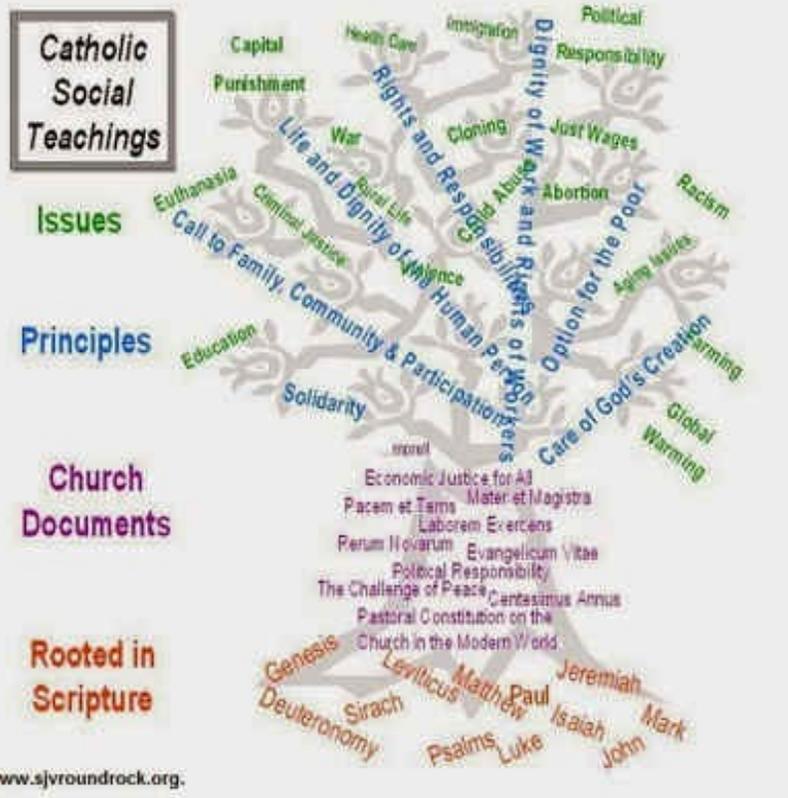
I honestly believe what hooked me for life that first summer, was hearing about Catholic Social Teaching (CST) for the first time in my life. I had never heard it phrased that way, though I certainly knew the principles. I borrowed my teammate's catechism nearly every day that first summer to go through and study all the reference numbers from our training.

Sometimes, I hear CST thrown around as a "liberal Catholic thing" and this drives me bonkers. First, because I loathe it when we label universal Catholic teaching by a limited, American political term. I also loathe it when others can't see how perfectly CST rounds out the "faith and reason" idea within Catholicism.

Because CST holds such a special place in my heart, I thought I would shoot off a post for you with my top eight all things CST. So, in no particular order, here we go:

one

I came across this INCREDIBLE infograph a few years ago, and it is just one of my favorite things ever. Current issues, scripture, encyclicals, CST. Pure awesome.



two

I wrote about this back in April (

[post here](#)

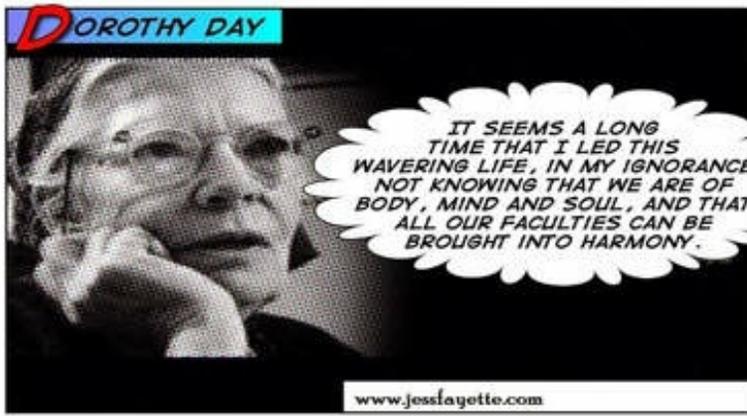
), but I really find the application of CST to the modern American economy/political scene to be fascinating. It truly reinforces that no one political party embraces purely all that is good. I am certain that, given the Church's universality, these principles are easily applied to other nations and political climates as well. How fortunate are we to have a thoroughly sourced and well-written rubric to help us navigate current social issues

without dictating how we all must come to a conclusion?

Yes. There are different ways to apply these principles. Who doesn't love a good Catholic debate, eh?

three

I also positively adore the fact that some principles of CST (ahem... dignity of work and rights of workers) helped to bring Dorothy Day into the church.



IT SEEMS A LONG
TIME THAT I LED THIS
WAVERING LIFE, IN MY IGNORANCE
NOT KNOWING THAT WE ARE OF
BODY, MIND AND SOUL, AND THAT
ALL OUR FACULTIES CAN BE
BROUGHT INTO HARMONY.

www.jessfayette.com

four [The Catechism](#)

also presses the need for social justice. These passages not only spell out our equality despite differences, but acknowledge barriers to be overcome:

1938 There exist also sinful inequalities that affect millions of men and women. These are in open contradiction of the Gospel:

Their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace.⁴⁴

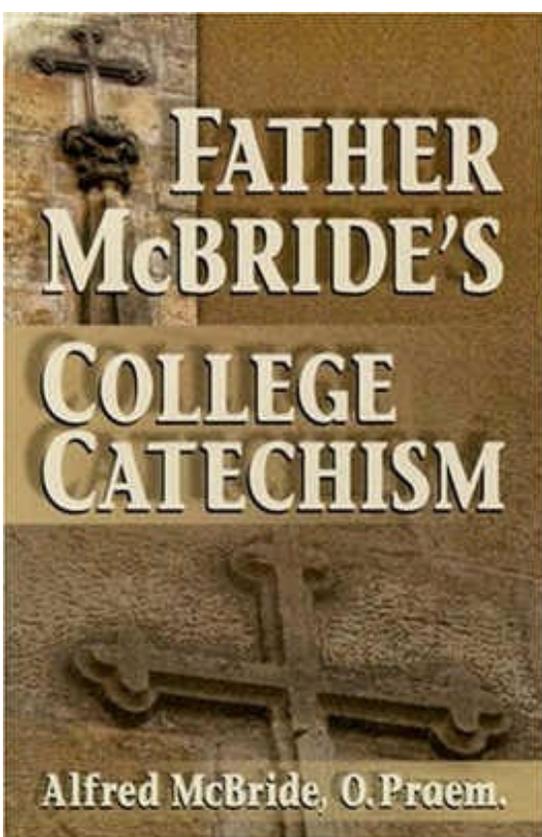
five

Solidarity, yo (CCC, 1939). We are all in this together, like it or not. The duality of this is striking: comforting to know we are all in the same boat, but that means we can all go down if it sinks.



six

Personal story time: My first-ever, real live, religion class post-Catholic school, was my junior year of college. Intro to Theology with Fr. Meinrad Miller at Benedictine College. The course was cleverly nicknamed 'Intro to Catholicism' by the student body. After two summers of teaching Totus Tuus, I finally had to purchase my own copy of the Catechism, and it was a pretty exciting. As I was making my giant book purchase at the student bookstore, I was pretty eager to get my CCC up to my room and start looking stuff up. This book was also on the list:



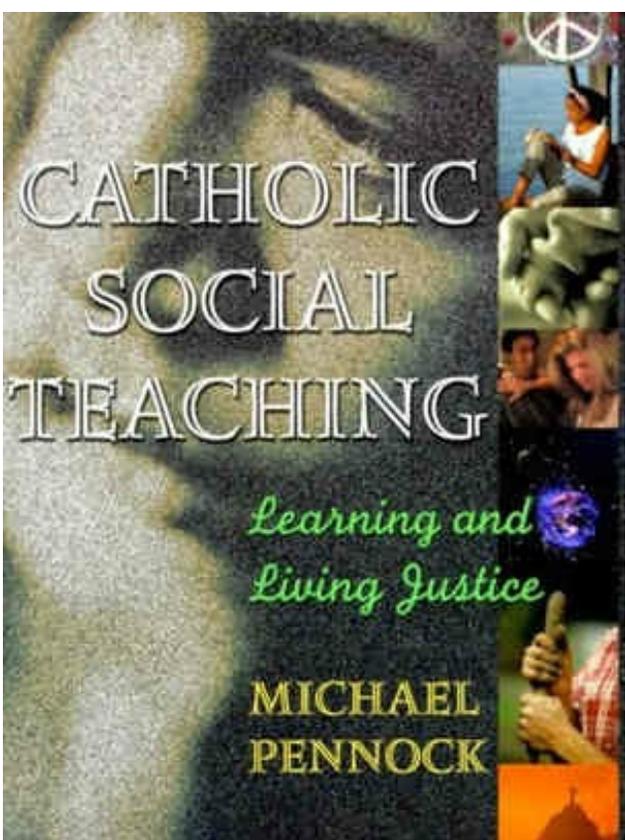
Once I had my books, I paid and stepped away from the window. I checked through the order to make sure I had the right items and

neither catechism was in my bag!

I had to wait in line again, and convince the bookstore guy he was wrong. It took some arguing, and then I had to go another week without my books because they had ordered the wrong ones. That guy is now my husband, and it still takes some convincing when he is wrong. Ha!

seven

For Christmas one year, my adorable husband gave me this book:



I had just started working as a domestic and sexual violence advocate. While the work was tragic and rewarding, the environment was tough one for me to find my place. I did not know a single person that was a practicing Catholic that did the work, and I was discovering that clergy (Catholic, other Christian denominations, etc.) did not always jump on the "Say no to abuse!" train the way I had assumed. I needed as many resources as possible to confirm that Catholicism in no way supported women staying in abusive relationships. The section of this book that covers the "sinful inequalities", human dignity, etc. definitely helped confirm this for me, along with...

eight

...

[The FaithTrust Institute](#)

. While this agency acts as more of a non-denominational resource, (meaning, not everything you will find on the site fits within the teachings of Catholicism) many of the resources they offer helped my clients, and helped me to remember what God's plan for marriage looks like, and that violence (physical, sexual, mental, emotional or of any kind) has no part in that plan. If the family is the social unit upon which we build our society, it must be healthy: there is no room to treat a spouse like they are less than.

Now that you have a glimpse into my obsession on the subject, what are your thoughts on social justice, or CST? Any resources you care to share?

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About Being a Tired Mother [at Stories of an Unschooling Family]



Today I am very tired. Last night, I lay in bed awake unable to drift off to sleep. Hour after hour passed until it was time for my husband to get out of bed and start his day. Then, just as he disappeared into the shower, I fell asleep.

When the girls heard I'd had a bad night they said, "You're to rest today, Mum. We'll take care of everything." Imogen drove Charlotte to her piano lesson. Sophie made me a bowl of porridge for breakfast. Gemma-Rose gave me a hug.

Quite often I have bad nights. There are many days when I feel overtired. It's hard facing the day knowing I haven't got enough energy to do all I need to do, let alone all I'd like to do. It reminds me of when we had babies and toddlers in the family. In those days, I used to dream of a time when I'd be able to sleep the whole night through, without anyone waking me up. I wanted to get out of bed feeling refreshed. I wanted to be able to enjoy my children without feeling weary all the time. I wanted to be able to give them my best.

After Sophie was born, I hit an all-time low. I'd had seven children, five miscarriages, and years and years of having a little person constantly attached to me. I thought I couldn't face any more. I talked to a priest: "I'm so tired. I don't think I can accept any more children. I just want a break. I

want to enjoy the children I have, give them more without spreading myself too thin..." Do you know what the priest's reaction was? He laughed, and then he said, "Surely you can accept just one more?" Oh, I felt misunderstood. I was confused, and hurt. I felt so sorry for myself. I hadn't got the response I'd been hoping for. The words stung, but it was the laughter that hurt the most.

A few months later, I fell pregnant. Yes, I thought, maybe I could accept one more child after all. Except I didn't have that baby, at least not here on earth. I miscarried again and I had to deal with more sadness and turmoil, while still caring for our other children. But I recovered and one day I found out I was expecting another baby. This baby was Gemma-Rose.

I can't describe adequately the love I feel for Gemma-Rose (and all my children). What would my life be without her? What if that priest hadn't laughed and made light of my situation. What if he'd agreed with me? I might have missed out on so much.

Motherhood isn't easy. Sometimes it even seems impossible. We lose control of our lives and often wish things could be different. Surely we won't survive? We wonder if our children will end up suffering because we haven't enough energy to be the perfect mother to them.

I have lots of time to give Gemma-Rose because she is the youngest child in our family. In a way she is getting a perfect childhood, despite my tired days. I can read to her without being interrupted by the cries of a baby. I can give her my full attention. Is she better off than my older children who had to share me, who had a rather frazzled mother? Do my older children wish they were the youngest? No. They had their own share of delights. They grew up in exciting time: babies joined our family, they enjoyed little siblings who adored them. Gemma-Rose has never known that. My older children had many natural learning experiences she will never get. They didn't really suffer. They saw Andy and I accept more children into our family and hearts, despite the difficulties. They knew they were loved.

So I muddled my way through the baby and toddler years when everyone seemed to need something from me all at the same time, on days when I had little energy to give them. Yes, it was a muddle but I survived. And looking back, I wouldn't change a thing. I would make those sacrifices all over again. I would give up my time, my freedom, my sleep, my arms... You see, every one of my children is a blessing. I now know perfection isn't necessary. A spirit of willing self-sacrifice is far more important.

Times change. My children are now the ones making sacrifices. They are the ones who are looking after me. They are freely giving back what I gave them.

“Did you enjoy your morning tea, Mum?” asks Gemma-Rose.

I smile. “It was delicious. Thank you for cooking the biscuits for me. Thank you for looking after me.”

Today I'm very tired. But that's okay, because today I feel especially loved.



Image: memories of a time when the house was full of noise and mess, a baby and love

PS Of course this isn't a maths post as promised. I will write that soon, and also answer the

much appreciated comments on my last post, [Approaching Maths Backwards](#). We've been having a good conversation on Facebook about maths. If you'd like to read it, or look at the other resources, links, photos ... I've recently posted, they can be found on my [Sue Elvis Writes](#) FB page. Please join me!

This contribution is available at <http://www.storiesofanunschoolingfamily.com/2014/06/about-being-tired-mother.html>
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Dwelling in Friendship [at bukas palad]



Year A / Eastertide / 5th Sunday Readings: Acts 6.1-7 / Psalm 33 (R/v 22) / 1 Peter 2.4-9 / John 14.1-12

Of late, “friendship” has been on my mind.

As I packed up my room, boxed up my books to ship home and said goodbye to my closest Jesuit brothers, I found myself thinking about friendship. My thoughts were a mixture of joy, for the good times shared, and of sadness, for the departures we must make. I oscillated between gratitude, for what our friendships are, and of anxiety, for how they will change.

As I gazed at my friends’ familiar smiles and savoured the timbre of their voices one final time, and as we shared one last hug, I acknowledged that the moment to let go had come. To let go of them—and today, of you too—with whom I have woven histories with. To let go of those with whom I have knitted together our stories of faith and life in Jesus in these my Boston years. Yes, the time has come to say goodbye and to move on.

Truth be told, I find it difficult to say goodbye. But I found some consolation in poetry, as I always do. In particular, I found it in this quote from the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats: “Friendship is all house I have.” Yeats wrote this line in February 1909 when he grappled with the death of a close friend. His quote—which interestingly is in the present tense—does not speak about loss or farewell. Rather, it speaks to me of always being embraced in friendship’s warmth. Though they were no longer physically present to one another, their friendship continued to be, for Yeats, his dwelling place.

In today's gospel passage, we hear an echo of this reality of friendship as a dwelling place. We hear it in Jesus' hope-filled message to his disciples that friendship with him leads one to the Father's house. More beautifully, it leads one to dwelling in this house of God, where is always room for everyone.

This house is not a future dwelling place the disciples have to wait for. Nor, is it a place or destination they have to anticipate arriving at in some distant future. Rather, they are already dwelling in God's house. Jesus—who is one with the Father, who is dwelling in the Father, as the Father dwells in him—says to them that where he is, there also they will be, and where he is going, they know the way.

Jesus' message must have been consoling to the disciples. They had been hearing Jesus bid them farewell as they shared their last supper. Their hearts were probably troubled that he was about to leave them and to be put to death. A death for their salvation, and for our salvation too. He quieted their aching hearts by speaking of God's house; he calmed their anxious spirits by assuring them that there is always abundant accommodation in God's house. In contrast to the birth of Jesus when there was no room at the earthly inn, Jesus promises that the Father's heavenly inn will never be too full; there will be always room for one and all, saint and sinner alike.

This house is also far more than a guesthouse; the Father's house is home. It is the place the prodigal son returns to when he comes to his senses; coming home, he is not only forgiven but he is also welcomed back, embraced as his father's own and given back his dignity as the son. This place, God's house, is where you and I long to return to when we are homeless and heartsore. And yes, this is where our earthly pilgrimage will certainly end at.

How will we get there? Through Jesus; with Jesus; in Jesus. He is the shepherd and the gate from last week's gospel who will make sure that everything and everyone will be brought "back home" to the Father. This is his assurance to Thomas: to follow him is follow him to the Father's house. This is his pledge to Philip: to walk with him is to come to know who God really is and what God really does: God loves us to save us so that we can live with him fully and happily, now and always.

This is why Jesus is for all peoples the way to God, and the truth and the life that they are God's own. Indeed, in God's mercy and love, coming home to God and being one with God is what

Jesus' death and resurrection has gained for us. Coming home and dwelling with God is another way to celebrate what Easter is about.

Today we have the example of Jesus handing on to us this good news: we will always be welcomed into the Father's home. Jesus hands this on because we are his friends. This good news is what the apostles—Jesus first friends—in turn, handed on to us in the Gospels and through the Church's teaching and tradition. They did not interpret, teach or proclaim this good news of God's house as our dwelling place using theology or philosophy. Rather, they could do this because of their intimate friendship with Jesus. With the apostles, we learn that to know Jesus is always to know the Father.

Friendship with Jesus is what you and I are also called to hand on to one another as friends. We can do this because we already have the gift of Jesus' friendship. We did not choose him as friend; rather, he has already chosen us as his friends. And he has etched onto our hearts his name—Christian, one like Christ—and so, claimed us as his own forever.

The goodness of our individual friendships with Jesus does not come alive, however, until we can hand on the gift of Jesus in our lives to someone else. Then, we make real for them and for ourselves, that Jesus's good company with us leads us to no other place but God's house. And he does not just lead us there; he also welcomes into God's house to dwell, to rest, and to have life to the full. It might be good, then, for us as a community of friends in the Lord to ask ourselves, now and again: "Am I handing on Jesus' friendship to another? Am I doing this enough and well?"

I believe we have done this for each other here in this place and over these months together. Instead of doing this with theology or teaching, we have done this by living out our friendship with Jesus with each other in small and big ways. Like Jesus: we have reached out to one another; we have welcomed all; we have accepted each other in spite of our limitations and faults; and we have exchanged peace with a handshake, a smile or a hug. And like Jesus, we have generously shared our life of faith in God with simple, life-giving words and warm affection.

I'd like to suggest that it is in sharing Jesus' friendship that you and I can draw strength and hope to recognize that goodbyes do not lead to forgetfulness and loss. Rather, in Jesus, friends remain friends. This is because they will abide together in him who is always with us, even to the end of time (Matthew 28:20).

Indeed, with Jesus, friends—like you and me—live in no other place but God’s house. Here, they will always be sheltered in life-giving love. Here, they will find safe harbor in difficult times. Here, they can always rest their weary hearts. Here, they will learn again and again the fundamental lessons of life and faith whenever they are confused or disobedient.

And yes, it is here, in God’s house, that friends will find the source, the reason and the joy to be in friendship all the days of their lives.

Indeed, with Jesus as our friend, how can our friendships with one another not be on our minds and in our hearts always?

Preached at Blessed Mother of Teresa of Calcutta, Dorchester, Boston

photo: from the internet

This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.sg/2014/05/year-eastertide-5th-sunday-readings.html>

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