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new  
evangelists  
monthly

*July*  
*2014*

# New Evangelists Monthly #19

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# Forward

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

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

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

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## It Is Not Your Imagination [at The Veil of Chastity]

If God seems far off and absent, it is not your imagination. For whatever reason, He operates in a cloaked fashion, shrouded in mystery. The authors of the Old Testament wrote about the mysterious nature of God and all the saints share this experience.

The spiritual life is veiled and we, unfortunately have to seek God with all our hearts, souls, strength and mind just to get a glimpse of Him. From my experience, He only gives enough to sustain me for a time. Then, He hides again. And, I must seek Him again.

Deuteronomy 4:29

*“But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him **with all your heart and all your soul.**”*

Jeremiah 29:13

*“You will seek me and find me when you search for me **with all your heart.**”*

2 Corinthians 3:16

*“...but whenever a person turns to the Lord, **the veil is taken away.**”*

Keep seeking Him in the way that He instructed by living a [Sacramental life](#). Each and every glimpse of Him will be worth it. Listen for Him in the quiet of your heart. Ask, seek, knock. Tell Him everything. Trust that He is working behind the scenes of your life. Without Him, we perish emotionally and spiritually. We can easily fall into despair. He is our hope and our peace.

So **it is not your imagination**. He is hidden from and seeking you at the same time. But, He can be found. He can be known. He can be trusted.

If you are in need of encouragement, please feel free to write to me. I know this is hard.

God love and bless you.



## Old Testament Scripture About The Hidden Nature Of God

Job 13:24

*“Why do You **hide** Your face And consider me Your enemy?”*

Psalms 69:17

*“And **do not hide** Your face from Your servant, For I am in distress; answer me quickly.”*

Psalms 88:14

*“O LORD, why do You reject my soul? Why do You **hide Your face** from me?”*

Isaiah 8:17

*And I will wait for the LORD who is **hiding His face** from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him.*

Isaiah 45:15

*Truly, You are a God **who hides Himself**, O God of Israel, Savior!*

Psalms 13:1

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You **hide Your face** from me?

Psalms 10:1

*Why do You stand **afar off**, O LORD? Why do You **hide Yourself** in times of trouble?*

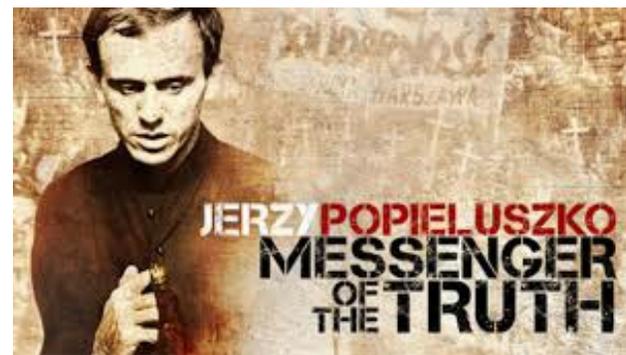
Psalms 55:1

*Give ear to my prayer, O God; And **do not hide Yourself** from my supplication.*

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This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2014/06/16/it-is-not-your-imagination/>  
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Acts 29:1-8 was the First Reading that morning, recounting the story of Paul traveling from Corinth to Ephesus. There he found disciples who became believers through the baptism of repentance by John and were waiting for Jesus. They said, “We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” Paul baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus, laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they received the gifts of the Spirit. Paul “debated boldly with persuasive arguments about the Kingdom of God” in the synagogue for three months.

The meditation of the day proposed a more practical approach than traveling to find baptized people and then finishing the job someone else started. The narrator asked: “Can I sense the presence of God and Holy Spirit in me and in people around me? Paul spoke to them and led them to a greater faith. Who has brought me to a greater faith? Can I share my experience of faith, of God, with someone today? Bring before God today someone searching for a deeper faith in God.”

I thought of the spiritual mentors who brought me closer to God in my life. The list was long and brought beautiful memories of formal teachings and casual conversations with many men and women. I thank God for them.

How could I spiritually mentor someone today? I was already home from Mass and exercise class and getting ready for lunch.

That afternoon I went to get a haircut from Susan. We often laugh about our spiritual struggles and victories from our different experiences. Mine in Catholicism and hers in the world of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Before I even sat down in the chair, she said she had something to ask me. She held in her hand a Mass program, then thrust it out. “Can you explain this to me?”

I took the program from her. It was a funeral Mass of the mother of one of her clients. She pointed to the different parts of the Mass and said she had no idea what it was all about. The funeral was the first Mass she’d attended.

For the next 20 minutes she trimmed my hair, and I went over each element of the Mass, explaining the parts of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. I told her about the consecration, how we take part in the sacrifice of Christ and how the Holy Spirit changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ through the priest.

I explained how every Mass is a re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice, so it has the same structure. Most of the elements listed are in every Mass, with special prayers and ceremonies for funerals, as well as weddings. So if she went to another Mass, the order of prayers would be the same, with different Scriptures, songs and homily for that day. "What's a homily?" she asked.

"Sermon," I said.

After listening intently to my clarification of the Mass, she sighed, happy that she could understand it a little better. It was no longer strange and scary to her.

Then she talked about a PBS program about the life and martyrdom of [Blessed Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko](#), martyr of the worst persecution, torture and killing of anyone for their faith in Poland. She vehemently asked how anyone could suffer like that. Why not just tell the torturers what they wanted? She could not imagine herself dying for others.

The martyrdom of Fr. Jerzy began a discussion on Saint John Paul II, his early life of persecution in Poland, his papacy and sainthood. She had heard of him and a little about his life. But not about St. Maximilian Kolbe. "How could he sacrifice his life for another man?" she asked, after hearing his story.

"He gave his life for a man with a family. He laid down his life for his friend," was all I could say. I didn't need to expound on why Catholics honor saints.

The conversation was as spontaneous and genuine as if we talked about our children or a friend who needed prayer. Yet what a holy event it was. God gave me an opportunity to fulfill the desire he placed within me a couple of hours earlier to share my experience of faith with someone today. Now I knew who to bring before God today who was searching for a deeper faith in him. All I did was show up. He gave me the words to explain to her just what she was ready to hear and appreciate about the Mass and the saints. He drew us closer to one another and to him. With no preaching required.

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful

And kindle in them the fire of your love

Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created

And you will renew the face of the earth.

(© 2014 Nancy H C Ward)



## Connecting Spirit to Spirit With Infants [at joy of nine9]

Michael and I were lucky because we somehow understood, right from the start, that we were relating to another human being when we communicated with our babies. I stopped and listened when they cooed and then I answered them when they finished cooing. It might sound foolish but I believe that this attitude instilled respect for themselves and others. I tried to treat them as people, albeit *little people*.

Prenatal babies have personalities before they are born. As any mother can tell you some babies move around energetically both in and out of the womb, while other infants are physically passive. Some infants are night owls both in and out of the womb and others actually sleep well at night.



Nurses will point out to new parents that their newborn quickly turns towards the voices of their mother, father, siblings and even grandparents. So that means that an unborn child hears what is happening and remembers what he has heard while he was still in the womb. These memories are conscious for the first couple of years of a young child's life but later they lay deep within their subconscious. For example, some musicians, when first introduced to a piece of music, already know how to play it without even rehearsing. Later they discover that their mother had practised that very same piece of music while she was pregnant with him.

Understanding the implications of these tidbits of trivia, I convinced my son to try this experiment with his pregnant wife a couple of months before the birth of their first child. Actually, this is something I did during all my pregnancies. Often my kids laugh and dismiss some of my beliefs but this time David took my suggestion and put it into action.



Daniel gently placed his hand on one side of his wife's stomach and then talked loud to his unborn child, welcoming her into their family. He told unborn Mary that both of her parents loved her already and that they would protect her and supply all her needs, physically, emotionally and spiritually. He concentrated on pouring love into his unborn baby's spirit. As Daniel loved his baby by talking and placing his hand on Erin's right side, unborn Mary kicked and pushed on that side of the womb! When Daniel placed his hand on the other side of Erin's stomach and repeated the 'prayers', their unborn daughter placed a few good kicks on that side instead! Obviously, pre-natal Mary heard everything and she was happy and excited by what she heard.

As a result of Mary's parents consciously soaking her with nurturing love while she was still in the womb, she is a peaceful, content baby who is a joy and a delight to everyone she meets. None of their friends can quite understand how Mary can be such a good baby. Basically the answer to their question is that my son and his wife connected with Mary's heart, mind and spirit before she was born. After birth they knew how to respond to Mary's none verbal communication. Daniel and Erin were in fact Baby Whisperers.

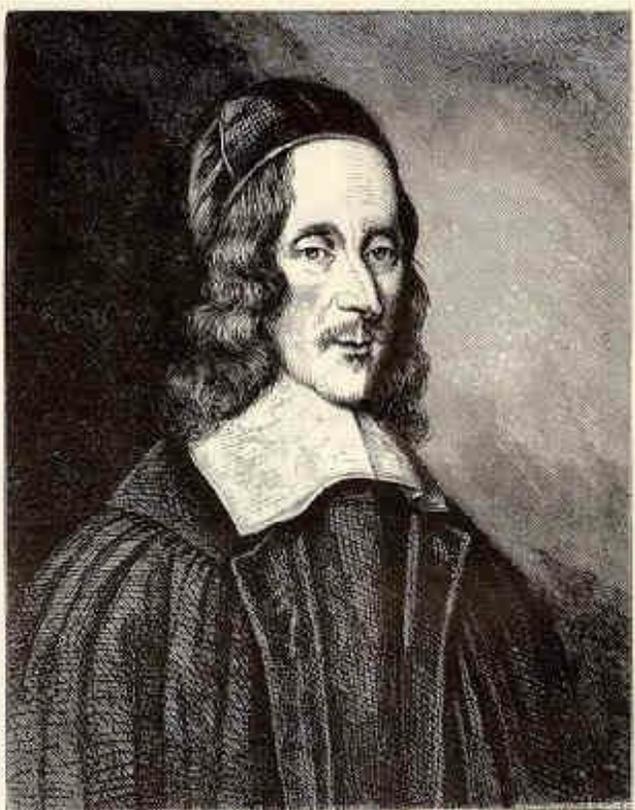
In the hospital, while holding his newborn daughter, Daniel turned to his dad and said,

"I think this is the best thing that I have ever done!"

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This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com/2014/06/16/connecting-spirit-to-spirit-with-infants/>  
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# 'Five Mystical Songs' by Ralph Vaughan Williams with words by George Herbert [at Breviary Hymns]



## [Five Mystical Songs](#)

is a song cycle by

## [Ralph Vaughan Williams](#)

(1872-1958). Written between 1906 and 1911, it was commissioned by the

## [Three Choirs Festival](#)

in Worcester, where it debuted in 1911 with Vaughan Williams conducting. The work is a setting of four poems ('Easter' is divided in two) by

## [George Herbert](#)

(1593–1633). They were published posthumously in 1633 as part of the collection,

## [The Temple](#)

. None of Herbert's poems were published during his lifetime and much of his other writings are believed to have been lost as a result of the English Civil War (1642–1651). Though born of noble

parentage, a facility member at Cambridge, and a Member of Parliament; he left these things and chose the life of a humble country clergyman of the Church of England as his vocation. He died of tuberculosis at the age of 39. All four poems (

## [Easter](#)

,

## [Love](#)

,

## [The Call](#)

, and

## [Antiphon](#)

) are included in the

*Religious Poetry Appendix*

of the Divine Office (1974).

Songs 1 and 2 - Performed by

## [Thomas Allen](#)

### 1. RISE HEART ('Easter' - Part I)

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise

Without delays,

Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise

With him mayst rise:

That, as his death calcined thee to dust,

His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part

With all thy art.

The crosse taught all wood to resound his name,

Who bore the same.

His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key

Is best to celebrate this most high day.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song

Pleasant and long:

Or, since all musick is but three parts vied

And multiplied,

O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,

And make up our defects with his sweet art.

2. I GOT ME FLOWERS ('Easter' - Part II)

I got me flowers to strew thy way;

I got me boughs off many a tree:

But thou wast up by break of day,

And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

The Sunne arising in the East,

Though he give light, and th' East perfume;

If they should offer to contest

With thy arising, they presume.

Can there be any day but this,

Though many sunnes to shine endeavour?

We count three hundred, but we miss:

There is but one, and that one ever.

Songs 3, 4, and 5 - Performed by

[Thomas Allen](#)

### 3. LOVE BADE ME WELCOME

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,

Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack

From my first entrance in,

Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning

If I lack'd anything.

'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here';

Love said, 'You shall be he.'

'I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,

I cannot look on thee.'

Love took my hand and smiling did reply,

'Who made the eyes but I?'

'Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame

Go where it doth deserve.'

'And know you not,' says Love, "who bore the blame?'

'My dear, then I will serve.'

'You must sit down,' says Love, "and taste my meat.'

So I did sit and eat.

### 4. THE CALL

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:

Such a Way, as gives us breath:

Such a Truth, as ends all strife:

Such a Life, as killeth death.

Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength:

Such a Light, as shows a feast:

Such a Feast, as mends in length:

Such a Strength, as makes his guest.

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:

Such a Joy, as none can move:

Such a Love, as none can part:

Such a Heart, as joyes in love.

## 5. ANTIPHON

Chorus: Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,

My God and King.

Verse: The heav'ns are not too high,

His praise may thither flie:

The earth is not too low,

His praises there may grow.

Chorus: Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,

My God and King.

Verse: The church with psalms must shout,

No doore can keep them out:

But above all, the heart

Must bear the longest part.

Chorus: Let all the world in ev'ry corner sing,

My God and King.

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This contribution is available at <http://kpshaw.blogspot.com/2014/06/five-mystical-songs.html>  
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## ... or does Sola Scriptura work?

When Christians study the Bible and reach different conclusions, how can they figure out which conclusion is the correct one? Is there a way to know that one is right, apart from the conviction that the Holy Spirit has led one in one's study of the Bible?



MS 206  
Hebrew square book script. Iraq, 1st half of 11th c.

### Hebrew Bible

When someone has a different interpretation of the Bible to ours, how do we know the Holy Spirit has led us, and not them? How can we be sure that we are right? **Or is there a possibility that we're wrong?**

Let us take, for example, the case of Antony, an Adventist, and Patrick, a Presbyterian. Antony has studied the Bible, and believes that infant baptism is wrong, but Patrick has studied the Bible too, and believes that infant baptism is right.

Both are Christians with genuine faith, both prayed for guidance, both studied the Bible diligently, but they came to opposite conclusions.

So I ask them, how do you know you're right. Each one says they know because they feel the Holy Spirit has led them to their respective understandings, because they studied the Bible and prayed about it.

Let's put them in the same room and get each of them to try to persuade the other. Out come the Bibles, and they show each other their evidence. Neither is convinced. Out come the website links arguing each case. Out come the references to scholars who have also prayed, studied the Bible, and read the original Hebrew and Greek.

Neither is convinced. Each thinks that the Holy Spirit must have led them, because to them, their conclusions are so obvious from the pages of Scripture. Antony looks at Scripture and concludes that it says that infants should not be baptised, while Patrick looks at Scripture and concludes that it says infants can be baptised.

To what authority can Antony and Patrick turn to resolve their differences? Both might say that the only authority is the Bible and the Holy Spirit (actually two authorities.) But we've done that, and the Bible doesn't say "*Antony is right and Patrick is wrong*" anywhere, and the Holy Spirit has not intervened by appearing and stating which is correct. For Antony and Patrick, there seems to be only the subjective sense that the Holy Spirit has guided them to understand the Bible correctly. Is there an objective arbiter we can turn to?

One might suggest their pastors. But their pastors have the same authority as each other, and so we end up with Antony and a pastor against Patrick and a pastor.

Antony might turn to Ellen White or the [28 Fundamental Beliefs](#), the official creed of the Adventist church, while Patrick might turn to the [Westminster Confession of Faith](#), a major doctrinal standard of the Reformed Churches.

This is where things get a bit more subtle, and the distinction between **Sola Scriptura**, **Prima Scriptura**, and **Solo Scriptura** comes in. The Reformers came up with the concept of Sola Scriptura, basically meaning that the Bible contains all the knowledge we need for salvation and following God correctly. Sola Scriptura is a sort of middle ground between Prima Scriptura and Solo Scriptura. Solo Scriptura teaches that the Bible alone, without history or tradition, is our only source of truth. Prima Scriptura teaches that the Bible, along with tradition and reason, supply that truth, but the Bible has primacy over the others. Protestant churches are divided into these three camps, but typically most Protestants don't realise the distinction, and most likely Antony and possibly Patrick fall into the camp of Solo Scriptura – the Bible alone without reference to apostolic tradition and ecumenical councils like the Councils of Nicaea in 325 AD and 787 AD.

Where does the idea of Sola/Solo Scriptura come from? In short, from this passage:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. – 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV)

There are multiple problems with interpreting this verse in this way, which I will briefly summarise in a [footnote](#).\*



Still life with Bible, Vincent van Gogh

So what are the implications of the three variants of Sola Scriptura for Antony and Patrick?

Solo Scriptura – at first glance, the Bible alone sounds good. **But the problem is that the Bible doesn't provide a list of correct interpretations of what it says.** One can use one passage from the Bible to interpret another passage of Scripture, but what about in the case of Antony and Patrick? All they can do is go back and forth quoting different passages of the Bible to each other, with no objective authority other than themselves to arbitrate and inform them as to who is right.

Sola Scriptura and Prima Scriptura – the problem here lies with the nature of any extra-biblical authority that Antony or Patrick turn to. Both will probably trust their own pastors, but not each other's. Antony may recognise Ellen White as an authority to guide interpretation of Scripture, but Paul won't. Paul may refer to Luther and Calvin who both supported infant baptism, but Antony won't accept that because he feels his church has more revealed light than the original reformers had, as he thinks they had not completely come out of Babylon, although he thinks they had made good progress.

And there we get to the crux of the matter. **Whichever authority either Antony or Patrick turns to, the other is free to reject, because he feels his interpretation of Scripture is more in line with Scripture itself.** Antony will reject any authority that disagrees with him. Patrick is probably more Sola than Solo Scriptura, and will respect many Christian authorities as being guided by the Holy Spirit, but ultimately, if pressed, he would probably reject these authorities.

Most Adventists believe in the Trinity, that God is three persons in one being – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Some Adventists don't believe in the Trinity, however (see [Early Adventists' Struggle with the Truth about the Trinity](#)). Antony has a cousin, Alan, who is also Adventist. Unlike Antony, Alan has recently come to reject the doctrine of the Trinity. Let's put Alan into the same room as Antony and Patrick.

The topic of discussion changes to the Trinity. Antony was under the impression that the Trinity was found in the Bible. Patrick points out that this is correct, but not explicitly so. He says the

teaching is found in the Bible but through proper interpretation, it can be explained. Alan disagrees, and says his interpretation is different – the Holy Spirit is just a force, and the Father and the Son are two separate beings. Patrick points out that early in Christian history, Christian leaders got together and debated and finally confirmed that the Trinity is official Christian doctrine. He says the Holy Spirit led them to this conclusion at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. Alan disagrees, and says that Patrick is following the traditions of men, that the Council of Nicaea had no authority from the Holy Spirit, and Christianity had already been corrupted by then. He says he used to accept the Trinity, but then he studied the Bible with an Armstrongite friend and decided it was wrong. Antony now sides with Patrick, and says that his study of the Bible has led him to believe in the Trinity.

What now?

Patrick respected the authority of the Christian leaders gathered together 1700 years ago, much like in Acts 15. But he realised that Alan is right – there is no authority that requires him to do so. At any point his study of the Bible could lead to a disagreement between his interpretation and the historical interpretation of the rest of Christianity. There was no biblical reason that keeps him bound to the Westminster Confession, or to the Council of Nicaea. There was not even a biblical reason to keep him bound to the New Testament itself – after all, the decision as to which first century writings were New Testament and what were not was made later, by some of the same people. The list of New Testament books is not even found in the Bible.



Antony and Alan continued to disagree about what the Bible said. The one said the Bible taught the Trinity, and the other said the Bible did not. **What they did not realise is that they were not differentiating between what the Bible said on the one hand, and their interpretation on the other. What they also did not realise was that they were not differentiating between an internal conviction that they were right on the one hand, and true leading of the Holy Spirit on the other – it's all a subjective feeling.** And even if they did manage to differentiate, they had no authority to tell them whose interpretation was the right one.

Alan even held the opinion that Christianity had become corrupt early on, and that the doctrines taught in 325 AD were false teachings. He thought original Christianity had gone under the radar, only to re-emerge hundreds of years later. He'd seen historical evidence that the Christians of 325 AD were very similar in their teachings to the Catholic Church, and concluded that they were

therefore not the real Christian church.

The problems this case presents us with are many. I'll address a few.

**First, we all think we're right.** After studying the Bible and finding something particularly notable, we all feel we've been moved by the Holy Spirit to see that. Antony felt moved like that when he studied baptism and concluded that infants should not be baptised. Patrick likewise felt that movement when he studied baptism and concluded that infants may be baptised. Both are internally convicted that the Holy Spirit has been leading them to their conclusions. Yet only one can be right. Neither of them can offer a final solution to resolving their dilemma. All they can do is say they are personally led by the Holy Spirit, while the other is not.

**Second, there is no final authority to which Antony and Patrick can turn for an answer.** They have only themselves. Any authority they can provide is considered non-authoritative by the other. As Antony claimed and as Patrick realised, any authority can be rejected in favour of one's own interpretation.

**And that is the essence of Protestantism.** The Bible alone without any interpreter that has clout. Luther rejected Catholic authority. John Smyth, the founder of the Baptists, rejected Luther's authority. Anyone, at any time, can reject any authority in favour of their own interpretation. **And that is why there are so many Protestant variants.**

Jesus founded a Church, so that Church has to be somewhere. Throughout Acts and the Epistles, we see that this Church had visible leaders. And they had clout.

No Protestant denomination today can claim to be the original visible Church, although they all claim to be part of the invisible Church. Where is the original visible Church that is continuous with the first century Church led by the Apostles? Or does it not matter? Did Jesus create a visible Church that continued to exist in all sorts of differing groups equally?

The Bible tells us that the Church is the pillar and foundation of truth.

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. - 1 Timothy 3:15 (KJV)

No, in this verse it is not God who is the pillar and ground of the truth. The cases of the nouns in the original Greek make the Church the pillar and ground of the truth.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in

heaven.

- Matthew 18:15-18

The Church Jesus founded has clout. It can make decisions. The Protestant denominations today may claim that clout over their members, but as we saw above, anyone is free to leave and determine their own doctrine – many have done so.



Leonardo da Vinci – The Last Supper (1495-1498)

Protestant churches are – must be – fallible authorities that can be wrong. Certainly Antony and Alan believed that – they were their own authorities. **For Protestants, there are only fallible authorities, along with a subjective conviction** that the Holy Spirit guided them individually. For Antony, Alan, and Patrick, that inner feeling was all they had.

Is there an original Church? Or do 1 Tim 3:15 and Matt 18:17-18 have no modern Church that fulfills their role?

If we say *No*, then somehow Christ must have failed to leave us any certainty. If we say *Yes*, then where is it?

There are only two real options – the Catholic Church, or a hidden Church that existed unknown for centuries.

Let's briefly look at the two cases:

### **Option 1: Hidden Church unknown for centuries**

Some claim that groups like the Albigensians and Waldenses and Paulicians etc. were this hidden Church. They carried the torch through the centuries under different names. Even Ellen White claimed this. The problem is that, if we used modern denominations as examples, it would be the same as claiming that the hidden Church carried the torch through the centuries in the form of Mormonism, Christian Science, Anglicans, and Pentecostals. Yes, the alleged true church groups were that radically different from each other. They believed things of this sort: two Gods, an evil God of the Old Testament, and a good God of the New Testament; marriage was sinful; ritual suicide ensured heaven; some sacraments came from their own priests, while others they got from Catholic priests; no forgiveness for sin was possible after baptism; etc. Even the Adventist Review acknowledges this problem. See these two articles for more:

## Albigensians, Waldensians, and Ellen White

### Adventist Review's indirect admission of Ellen White's errors

If these were indeed the true Christians, then we have the following problems:

1. They got their list of New Testament books from the Catholics, and didn't fully know what was and wasn't Scripture for 2 centuries until then. Alternatively, God either inspired them to compile the correct list separately AND inspired the Catholics to do the same, or the Catholics got it right by accident.
2. Each group was doctrinally different from the others to an extent that makes it absurd.
3. History as we know it needs to be ignored, and rejected as false.
4. The true Church can then only be identified historically using a fictional history.



The Synaxis of the holy and the most praiseworthy Twelve Apostles

### **Option 2: The Catholic Church is the original**

Historically, the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have the only historically supportable claim to be the original Christian Church. (If we use imaginary history, then Mormons and Albigensians and Herbert Armstrong may have a case.)

However, this is fraught with problems for Protestantism. And what makes it worse is that Protestants (those in the Sola / Prima Scriptura camps) cite Catholic authorities as valid authorities. For example, the Council of Nicaea, the Council of Chalcedon, the Council of Ephesus, etc.

Many Protestants are unaware that there are many writings that survive from the early Church. The Early Church Fathers, and in particular, the Ante-Nicene Fathers, are a very interesting read. They give us the context of Christianity in the first few centuries. And the disturbing thing for Protestants is that they were thoroughly Catholic. In fact, this is one of the big things that leads people to the

Catholic faith – that the earliest historical writings of Christians immediately after the New Testament were Catholic in theology. (Go and read [A Protestant Historian Discovers the Catholic Church](#) by Dr A David Anders, and visit [his website here](#)).

The first complete list of New Testament writings comes from people who:

1. Believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (transubstantiation)
2. Believed in a sacramental priesthood in addition to the priesthood of all believers
3. Believed in prayer for the dead
4. Believed in prayer to saints and angels
5. Believed Mary was a perpetual Virgin, the New Eve, the Mother of the Church
6. Observed Sunday as the principal day of worship
  - *Typically Christians celebrated the Eucharist every day, with Sunday as a special day, and often with the 7th day Sabbath as a fast commemorating the day Jesus was in the tomb. See the full quote from Socrates that Adventists won't show you at [Adventists abusing Socrates](#).*
7. Many other specifically Catholic teachings

These Catholic bishops finalised the New Testament Canon based on those books generally accepted by them and their predecessors to be authentic Apostolic heritage, suitable for reading publicly in their churches.

Protestants considering the Councils of Nicaea, Chalcedon, and Ephesus to be authoritative are really just selective in their application – the bishops of these councils:

1. Believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (transubstantiation)
2. Believed in a sacramental priesthood in addition to the priesthood of all believers
3. Believed in prayer for the dead
4. Believed in prayer to saints and angels
5. Believed Mary was a perpetual Virgin, the New Eve, the Mother of the Church
6. Observed Sunday as the principal day of worship
7. Many other specifically Catholic teachings



## Eve and Mary

The same St Athanasius who defended the doctrine of the Trinity was a Catholic bishop to the core. The very disciples of the Apostle John – St Ignatius and St Polycarp – were Sunday keepers who believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. St Ignatius’ disciple, St Irenaeus, wrote a lengthy treatise on the Virgin Mary. The same St Augustine who inspired Luther taught Catholic doctrine about purgatory, Mary, the Eucharist, and much, much more.

## Ultimately there are three roads to take –

1. The authority of the early Church vanished and we have no certain guide today other than our own conviction that the Holy Spirit leads us; none of us can know with any certainty that we’re right because the next person feels exactly the same way; the only resolution to this is to accept that there is no authoritative doctrine today, or else wait for the Holy Spirit to publicly say who is right, which hasn’t happened in a while;
2. There is an authoritative Church today that cannot be proven using legitimate historical sources; in this case we can make up any doctrine and claim it to be the teaching of the original Christians, as Mormonism and Armstrongism do;
3. The original Christians were Catholic, and their collective legacy shows where we can turn for authoritative answers.

## Further reading:

### Footnote:

Interpreting 2 Tim 3:16-17 as teaching Sola Scriptura is problematic as follows: First, the translation doesn’t reflect the Greek nuances. “All” means “every” – and we know that each and every verse in the Bible does not stand on its own as a single authority. So we could put in a subset of Scripture here and say “All four Gospels are given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” – and this

would still be correct, but the language would not limit us to the four Gospels. Second, the word “*only*” is not found in this passage at all. Third, what is profitable is not necessarily sufficient. Titus 3:8 uses the same word to describe good works, and which Protestant will agree that good works are sufficient? The Greek word means advantageous, useful, profitable, but not sufficient. Water is advantageous, useful, profitable, as well as necessary for us to survive, but it is not sufficient – we need food and shelter also. Fourth, the Bible did not exist in its current form in the first few centuries of Christianity. The Gospels and Epistles and Revelation circulated among Christians and were read in their liturgies, but they circulated with other books like Hermas and Clement and Barnabas, and there was no final decision regarding which were truly Scripture until the 300s AD. Interpreting this verse to mean Sola Scriptura was simply not part of early Christian teaching.

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# Whatever You Do [at A Spiritual Journey]

Whatever you do, make a point that no one knows about it, especially if you do something good.

Whatever you do, make a point that God knows about it, especially if you do something bad.

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## The Esheth Yahil (Woman of Valor)

Besides Mary as the New Ark of the Covenant, which I have written about in a [previous post](#), the image of her from Proverbs 31 as the *Esheth Yahil* or Woman of Valor has to be one of my favorite Old Testament Marian types.

I first learned about Proverbs 31 as a graduate student at Franciscan University of Steubenville in the fall of 2008. I can remember thinking the whole time as I was reading Proverbs 31 for homework that although this chapter was speaking about an ideal woman in the scriptures, it had to also speak of the Blessed Virgin Mary herself.

So how do we read this poem?

As it always with the *literal sense* of the scriptures, words point to things, in this case the literal words are pointing to a woman. This poem is modeled after a *literal* ancient woman. As it is with the *spiritual sense*, the things, in this case the ancient woman is pointing to other things or references.

First, the woman is pointing to the Church. The Church is always feminine for she is the Bride and Christ the Bridegroom. Second, the woman is pointing towards Mary, who is closely related to the Church for she cares and intercedes for it (we shall see this more clearly soon). Third, the woman in this poem is the everyday woman or women in general. Fourth, the woman points towards Wisdom, which in the scriptures has a feminine quality to it. And lastly, the woman is pointing towards Lady wisdom, which in turn points to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, who directs and guides the Church.

Proverbs 31 incarcerates all the other Proverbs. This Hebrew poem is the exalted point for woman in the Scriptures for we see the ideal woman that runs throughout. What also runs through this poem is a strong nuptial (marriage) theme that we see in verse 10 – “Who can find a good wife? She is more precious than jewels.” This good wife is a woman [*esheth*] of valor [*yahil*]. She is not a warrior maiden, but a mother of valor, an image we can clearly see the Blessed Virgin Mary holding.

When we think of the word – “force” or “valor”, our mind automatically thinks of a battle or a fight, but this is not what the sacred author is giving to us. The woman in Proverbs 31 is not a warrior; she is the ideal wife and mother. The sacred author, possibly King Solomon himself, is challenging our assumptions of valor and heroism. The woman of Proverbs 31 is a woman who is faithful to her daily duties and performs them well, without complaint. The woman who does is a witness of true valor and heroism.

So now that we have a basic understanding of this poem, let us turn our gaze to how the Blessed Virgin Mary fulfills Proverbs 31. There are quite a few Marian references here, so let's take a look

at a few.



1. In verse 12 it states: “She does him good and not harm, all the days of her life” – in regards to Mary this verse speaks of her perpetual lack of sin which derives from her [Immaculate Conception](#).
2. In verse 15 it says: “She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and tasks for her maidens” – here we see Mary as the Morning Star, which rises while others are still sleeping. As the Morning Star, she is Christ’s true herald of his word to the Church, the world, and all who will hear it.
3. In verse 20 it professes: “She opens her hand to the poor, and reaches out her hands to the needy” – The Blessed Mother as the Queen of Heaven cares for the spiritually poor. She brings the needs of the faithful to Jesus Christ, and as [Mediatrix](#), grace flows from her hands. The grace initially comes from Christ himself then Mary dispenses that grace to the faithful.
4. In verse 22 it reads: “She makes herself coverings; her clothing is fine linen and purple” – although Mary while on Earth probably did not dress with fine linens, as the Queen of Heaven, she is now adorned with purple, a color of royalty.
5. In verse 26 it states: “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue” – here we can see that [Mary’s fiat](#) at the Annunciation and words at the Wedding Feast of Cana, “do whatever he tells you” are guided with wisdom. With God’s grace, she knows the right words for each situation.
6. In verse 27 it says: “She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness” – Mary surpasses all woman for she is the tower of complete womanhood. The Blessed Mother is the true feminist. She stays busy maintaining her house, both in Nazareth, and now as the Mother of the Church.

7. In verse 28 it reads: “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her” – from the moment of her [Visitation](#) with her cousin Elizabeth, Mary has always been venerated as the Blessed Virgin. By praying the Hail Mary and the Rosary, we ask the Blessed Mother to intercede on our behalf with Jesus.

8. In Verse 31 it states: “Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates” – here we see the evolution of Christians toward their Mother. As Christians, she brings her children’s needs to the gates of Heaven.

For all the faithful and all humanity, Mary stands as our mother of valor. Without strapping on battle gear as would a warrior, the Blessed Mother, our Queen Mother, advocates for us to our Son and Our Lord Jesus Christ on a daily basis. The Blessed Virgin Mary is the one true *Esheth Yahil*.

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## You've Reached the Top, John Martin! [at Cherishing Everyday Beauty]

Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to catch up with [this girl](#) who has been a great friend to me since my first week at college and took me right under her wing while I was trying to figure out how to be a "college kid." Well, she was the first person I told all of this (and more) to, and she was kind enough to [share about it on her blog](#), too. (If you click the link, the story that starts with "Later on that afternoon" might or might not have something to do with me.) Basically, she and her fiancé are pretty awesome and both very good friends of mine and I am so, so, so blessed to have people like them to remind me of just how blessed I am.

Last weekend on Instagram, I captioned a photo with a promise to try to organize some thoughts about my tiny, precious nephew, John Martin, later in the week. "Later in the week" is here and so is Independence Day, and so is the Feast of Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati.

When pondering whether or not to share a few words about my nephew, I wondered about the appropriateness of sharing about him on the 4th of July. Certainly, he is in Heaven (of that, we have no doubt) and so he is free of whatever ailment or otherwise that could have afflicted him in this life. But then I realized: [Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati](#) and his prophetic quote: *Verso l'alto*. Of course!

Sweet and tiny John Martin. His death came as a complete surprise to us all, even to the doctor. I can't help but wonder what it will be like when the December date that was supposed to be his due date arrives... Meanwhile, his name. [My parents spent that day at the hospital with them](#), but came home in the early evening for dinner. He was delivered while they were home. When we all made it back to the hospital, they were still working on a name. Andrew commented that "John" kept echoing in his mind; Anna approved. A short time later, Anna said she kept coming back to "Martin". And so it was: John Martin.

In hindsight of naming him, it's been realized that the feasts of Ss John of the Cross, Juan Diego, and John the Beloved are all celebrated in December: the month in which we were anticipating meeting this sweet little boy. Furthermore, while watching his daughter hold her first son, my dad commented that the scene reminded him of the Pieta. And there you have it: St. John the Beloved.

Once home, my Mom got on the phone with my other sister, Susie, who is a FOCUS Missionary and, consequently, was unable to be with us during this time. Once Susie learned the name, John Martin, she commented that she had just spent the day walking around Florida with her new team of missionaries and she kept seeing all these statues of St. Martin de Porres. To top it off, just a few days before John Martin's funeral, she left for a mission trip to Peru... and is scheduled to visit the tomb of St. Martin de Porres.

As if that's not enough: the original working date for the funeral was Monday but what with finding availability at the Church, availability of a priest, and the availability of family, it was beginning to feel like we were the Holy Family knocking on each and every door, but alas: there was no room for us at the inn. When God closes a door, somewhere he opens a window. It was finally decided that the funeral would be on Friday and, suddenly, everything fell into place -- just like that! And only then did we realize: Friday was the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! And wouldn't you know it: the only prayer that the funeral home has to put on the back of a baby's holy card is... to the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

John Martin, I wish more than words can express that we could continue to watch you grow in your mommy's tummy, feel your kicks, and await your arrival with bated breath. Alas, it was not meant to be. Sweet child, *you are already at **home sweet home***. We are the travelers; we are the ones who are still en route. We have great hope that, one day, we will see you again. You will forever be a part of our family and we miss you something fierce. But like Father said, one day we will all be together again... in Heaven.

And so, John Martin, *thank you*. **Thank you for the joy you have brought to us** these last few months. On this, the eve of the feast of Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, I echo his words, with only a slight twist: *Verso l'alto (toward the top)* -- except, sweet boy, *you've already reached the top!*

John Martin, pray for us!

Domenica 7 Giugno 1825

Vers l'alto



 Sarah

*Disclaimer: this is probably not the complete story of all that happened and is written exclusively from my perspective, respecting the privacy of John Martin's parents.*

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## **Neither Gentile nor Jew, Servant nor Free, Woman nor Man: Age 18 [at Backs of People's Heads and Baby Faces]**

When I was 18, I decided that the Catholic Church was not for me and left it behind.

I had been completely confused by what my teachers were dishing out in Religion class. I had parents who sort of flirted with the idea that there was really not much difference between denominations. Though it was a requirement to go to Mass each week, I had no idea why it was so important. My pastor was so caught up in social justice issues that he forgot to teach the Faith that backs it all up and makes it make sense.

As a result of all these mixed messages, I believed that not even the Church knew what it was teaching. Asking those three entities what Church teaching was on any given subject might yield three different answers.

So there I was, the summer after my senior year, desperately looking for a spiritual home. And I found one at a local evangelical megachurch. The services were engaging and uplifting and I found more than a little support for asking questions and they seemed more than happy to help me find the answers.

In those days, there was not yet a definitive Catechism of the Catholic Church, nor was there access to the vast resources of the Internet to research and find answers. When I asked questions, I got two kinds of responses: 1) a kind of a wishy-washy response about "following my conscience" or 2) I would get answers that seemed rehearsed and didn't seem to come from a grounding in scripture at all.

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I had been away from Mass for several months when my father asked me to come and sing with his parish choir for Christmas. The music that was routinely played at the services that I went to at my evangelical church were simply no match for the majestic beauty of the choral masterpieces that my parents' parish choir was singing. So, on the First Sunday of Advent, I went to Mass to sing with the choir.

Music has always been a path to God for me. I find that every time I have a close encounter with God, music is involved either as an inspiration, a response to the experience or just the sign pointing to the beginning of the road. This time it was no different. It was love of the music that drew me to Church that day and marked the beginning of the path back.

I didn't go to Communion, of course. I still thought it was just a symbol and I didn't need a wafer to get close to God. I carried His Word in my heart, but I can remember meditating on the people

coming back from Communion. No custody of the eyes for me: I was completely unaware that watching people receive Communion was kind of rude.

I spotted one of the kids I grew up with lurking at the back of the church. I always assumed that he was a juvenile delinquent. He had kind of a rough attitude and was always dressed like he was more ready for the bar, than church. But I recalled that he seemed to be here every Sunday.



He filed up to receive Communion behind one of the sweetest little old ladies I have ever known - one right behind the other - and with the same light shining in their eyes and an attitude of complete trust, they both received Communion. I realized in that very moment that there must be something here. There must be something

*real*

here.

I closed my eyes and realized that all over the world there were thousands of people receiving the Eucharist at that very moment. It was something that united all of us: the bad, the good, the rich and the poor. People who had lived before me and those who would come after me, too. Heaven help me, I actually heard the first verse of "One Bread, One Body" playing in my head: "Gentile or Jew, servant or free, woman or man, no more..." We truly are one body in Jesus Christ. And if the Eucharist crossed all those boundaries it could not possibly be untrue.

I was still unaware of the meaning of the term "Communion of Saints", but I had an experience of it in my head that day. I suddenly became aware of the unity that exists in the Eucharist - a unity that transcends time and space. It was life-altering.

Since that morning, I have never doubted the efficacy of the Eucharist. I knew it did something real, but it would be a few more years before I understood the Real Presence. I knew that there was

*something*

about it, and that I

**needed**

it. I realized that I had been missing it. It was food for those on a journey and I was definitely on a journey. But as yet, I still did not understand the reality of Jesus (body, blood, soul and divinity) in the Eucharist.

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The thing I found so appealing about the evangelical megachurch I became attached to was if there was a question, they knew where to get the answer. They always looked to the Bible. In my experience, the Catholic Church simply didn't have that knowledge of the Word of God. But, the strength of this ability to go to scripture also becomes its weakness. The problem with the

### *Sola Scriptura*

mindset is that there's a question of interpretation. Some things just can't be explained neatly. If I disagree with your interpretation, for example, who's right?

Because of the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, there is an ultimate authority for interpretation. In my 30's I would eventually figure that out, but as a teenager, I was still very dedicated to having my own say and my own way. The breakdown happens when individuals decide that they don't like the Church's authoritative teaching so they throw it out. That's why I was getting different stories from different quarters.

Intellectual Pride is a constant struggle for me. I always want to handle things myself and then, once I have it handled, get back to God. Unfortunately, that's exactly the wrong order. I'm

*still*

working on that one: Poverty of Spirit and Humility are virtues that still elude me.

Additionally, there is an actual grace that is imparted in the Sacraments that you simply do not get elsewhere. While we have grace showered on us from all corners, the close, personal encounters with Christ through the sacraments give specific graces to strengthen us and build up charity in our lives. This is crucial to building understanding between ourselves and the world around us, as well as in our own hearts - leading us to know who we are as sons and daughters of God.

\*\*\*

After realizing that there was a reality that I had missed in Communion, I couldn't wait to get to Communion the next week. Of course, I had no idea that I needed to go to Confession, but that would come later.

God used the Grace of the Sacraments to bring me closer to him and began to renovate my soul. I had found one missing piece, but was still searching for that scriptural support.

[servant-nor.html](#)

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# Dominicans, Bad Music, Skirts and Flossing [at Working to be Worthy]

-1-

A friend from my

[Catholic moms group](#)

recently sent a group email asking if anyone was interested in learning more about becoming a lay, or Third Order, Dominican. The possibility of joining a Third Order or similar apostolate had never crossed my mind. Not that I'd thought and dismissed it, it just had never occurred to me. When I read the email, I was immediately interested. I read about the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites. As much as I am drawn to the idea, I am also hesitant. It has only been two months since my husband and I made our consecration to Mary. I am concerned that jumping into another (though complementary) commitment may indicate a desire to check spiritual boxes rather than actually grow in holiness. Also, we are taking on another big commitment in the fall (see quick take #2), so I think this may not be the season in my life to take up the

[discipline of the Dominicans](#)

, as much as their charism appeals to me. But maybe this is the time for YOU!

-2-

Tomorrow afternoon, my family will meet a young lady from South Korea whom we will be hosting for the '14-'15 school year. I'm not sure if she wants her name online, so for now I will simply use her first initial. H will be going into her sophomore year of high school at Aquinas, my alma mater. She went to 8th grade downstate, then joined her current program for high school. This will be our first time hosting a student; we're glad at least she has some experience with cultural exchange. ;-) Anyway, she will visit us tomorrow briefly and drop off some of her belongings, rather than paying to ship them home for the summer and back again in the fall. We're excited!

-3-

I know many wives, myself included, who are grateful for the spiritual leadership their husbands provide. It is tempting sometimes, though, to be disappointed if our husbands don't lead perfectly. As usual, the fault is in ourselves. Part of humility is accepting imperfect leadership! Lift up your husband in prayer. Encourage him to find supportive Christian friendships. Forgive any failings; we're not perfect either. You know who was perfect? Mary. And Joseph, her devoted, loving, protecting, leading husband, was not. But we can be sure she did not resent this saintly man! Let us

strive to follow her example.

-4-

Speaking of great husbands and fathers, I read a fantastic article titled, "On Daughters and Dating: How to Intimidate Suitors".

Instead of intimidating all your daughter's potential suitors, raise a daughter who intimidates them just fine on her own. Because you know what's intimidating? Strength and dignity. Deep faith. Self-assuredness. Wisdom. Kindness. Humility. Industriousness. Those are the bricks that build the wall that withstands the advances of Slouchy-Pants, whether you ever show up with your Winchester locked and loaded or not. The unsuitable suitor finds nothing more terrifying than a woman who knows her worth to God and to her family.

[Read more here](#)

to find out why women like this might be considered "too strong" by Christian men.

-5-

Still here? OK, go read this one instead:

[The Hidden Hand Behind Bad Catholic Music](#)

. But come back, because I want to know what you think. I agree with the sentiment that liturgy is at times in danger of losing a sense of the sacred. With the author, I'm not crazy about a publishing company having such a huge influence on Mass. But I don't think "contemporary" music destroys Mass. I've heard that many "traditional" hymns share tunes with drinking songs popular at the time, so where would one draw the line?

-6-

When we go to Mass, Anne and I wear skirts or dresses; Peter and Jeremy wear pants. Everyone has shoulders covered. In the beautifully warm weather we've had recently, this means immediately changing out of pants and shawls/cropped sweaters when we get home, but to me it is worth it. It's not a modesty issue for me, but simply respect. In our culture, clothes like the ones we wear to church convey respect. I think I'll do a post some time soon about why I don't even think skirts

*are*

more modest (and why the current modesty dialogue may be harmful), but that's too long for a quick take.

-7-

Alright, one take just for fun. Peter got spinach caught in his teeth tonight (after ASKING to have spinach for dinner!), so had his first experience with dental floss. Seeing him, of course, Anne wanted a turn, so he tried to floss her teeth for her...

"No, Anne, don't stick out your tongue."

"Anne, when your tongue is like that, I can't even see your teeth."

(puts her in a headlock) "Anne, stop eating the dental floss; it's not food."

Maybe now he knows how we feel. :-)



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This contribution is available at <http://workingtobeworthy.blogspot.com/2014/06/dominicans-bad-music-skirts-and-flossing.html>

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# Happy Bird Day at Andalusia [at Peace Garden Mama]

**This was it. This was the day**

we'd been imagining for so long.



We'd traveled all this way, saved all those pennies, convinced our families it was worth it for us to be gone for a while...all for this.



Some might think us a little mad, yet if given a chance, most anyone would travel to where a hero found her voice. That's all this has been -- a chance to feel the spirit of one whose spirit has moved us.



And yet it's been a little more than that as well. It's been a journey of connecting, discovering and even of healing.



I've long thought green to be a healing color. Today, we got plenty of it. This was our very first glimpse of Andalusia Farm.



Well, after this anyway.



## We'd breezed past

this sign on our way into town the other day, and for a day beyond that, held the visual in our heads and hearts, wondering what it would be like for real.

Though the house attracted us -- the elusive place where Flannery strung so many interesting sentences together -- we seemed drawn by an invisible force to the grounds surrounding her old home. Early to arrive, we were the only visitors for most of the duration, and I can't imagine a gentler, more appropriate introduction to the place we'd seen only in pictures and dreams before now.

Soon, we'd bumped into the home out back that had been residence to Flannery's and Regina's (her mother's) hired help, Louise, Jack and "Shot."





We couldn't believe how accessible everything was. A few spots were marked off as the furthest point we could go, but mostly we were free to roam.

Signs let us know how to behave and that was just fine by us.



As we found our way to the back of that outlying house, we discovered a little slice of heaven. Flannery always did call Andalusia a bird sanctuary, and as we learned, it most certainly was, and still is.



**You won't regret**

stopping

just a moment or two and listening...

I've always loved birds but in the past couple years I've become even more enamored with them. My father pointed them out often, and in his passing, I was left with the realization of just what gifts they are to us.

Healing green. Healing birdsong. Healing stroll through hallowed ground in the company of beautiful companions.



Eventually, we found our way to what is something of a main attraction. At first, we heard him calling through the grounds in that haunting voice that echoed from tree limb to tree limb. I remember the sound from childhood when we'd visit the Dakota Zoo in Bismarck and the peacocks that wandered the grounds would "yell" to us. That was the sound.

And there they were.



Flannery's special "pets." At one time, there were as many as 50 on the grounds. Now, there are just three -- the male, "Manley Pointer," and his two lady friends.



**I found the females**

beautiful too...



But Manley insisted on center stage.



When we first strolled up he was fanned out. The tour guide later told us he tends to do this in clockwork fashion, straight up at 10. We'd arrived at 10 but had missed the climactic moment, apparently.

But he was not quite done showing off. Soon, he was jumping up on a beam, giving us his best poses.



This is one of my favorites; Manley and Christina, posing together.



Ha! And showing off his sexy legs!



The birds seemed to like us. We had a connection. We were gentle with them, respectful, and in turn, they engaged and let us get some close-ups we had not anticipated possible.



It was as if Flannery herself were there with us, thrilled to show us her birds. "Aren't they beautiful?" "Yes, Flannery, they are."

It would only seem right that during our stop at the little gift shop later, I'd pick up a handful of peacock feathers for souvenirs for the kids.



**There they are,**

just around the corner from St. Therese in that vase, which is just above "The Habit of Being" I've been talking so much about. Yep, that's right. Signs of Flannery were all over this place, and we were eating it up like kids in a candy store.

We downloaded hundreds of photos today so I have to pace myself, but let this be a preview of coming attractions. There is more to come and it will be worth a return visit.

It's been another beautiful day in Milledgeville. My cup is overflowing and I hope to bring back some of this abundance to my loved ones back home soon. But for now the adventure is still unfolding. Hurray!

## *Q4U: What heals you?*

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/06/finding-flannery-day-4-happy-bird-day.html>

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## Our Lady of the Winds [at salliesART]



Today's featured drawing was inspired by another John William Waterhouse painting entitled "Boreas".

*Boreas* was the name of the Greek god of the north wind. The name is also used to speak of the north wind personified. The name, *Boreas*, is Latin from the Greek.

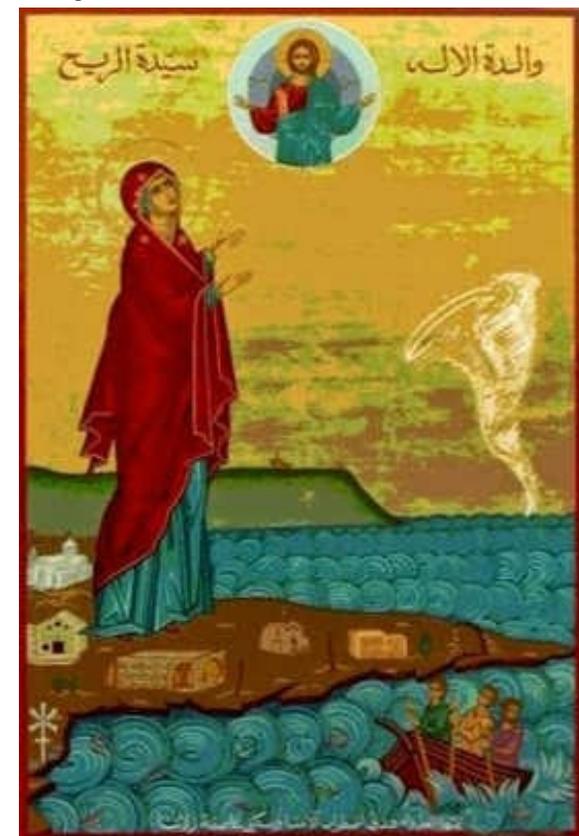
I, of course, thought immediately of Our Lady and decided that my drawing would be entitled "Our Lady of the Winds".

The Waterhouse painting, which you really might want to take a look at by the way, is quite a bit more detailed than my drawing. It shows more of the woman and of the wind-blown trees and grass.

After beginning the drawing, I checked on the Internet and discovered that there actually is a church of Our Lady of the Wind, *Saydet El-Rih* in Arabic. It was built in the Byzantine era in Enfeh, Lebanon. Even though the roof of the chapel has long since collapsed, it still retains traces of wall paintings representing Saint George and Saint Demetrios, the Omnipotent Christ, two evangelists, some saints and the Virgin calming the wind. It is believed that sailors and fishermen

from the village of Enfeh built the chapel so that the Virgin Mary would protect them as they sailed the Mediterranean.

Anyone who has ever spent time on or near the Mediterranean Sea knows how quickly the winds can arise and how frightening they can be. I don't blame those fisherman one bit for asking Our Lady to intercede with her Son for calmer seas!



There is actually a new icon of "Our Lady of the Wind". It comes from the Orthodox tradition. The nuns of Our Lady of Kaftoun finished this icon in December 2001 at the request of the parish of Enfeh after having shown preliminary designs to fathers and theologians who gave their blessing.

The icon now resides in the modern-day church at Enfeh, Lebanon (see left).

Of course, in the Christian tradition, the idea of "Our Lady of the Winds" is not just about calming rough seas such as the Mediterranean. It is also about asking Our Lady to calm our own personal rough seas. As it says in the *Paraklisis* (Supplicatory Canon in the Orthodox Christian Church and Eastern Catholic Churches) to the Theotokos:

*“O Virgin, calm the tumult of our passions and quiet the storm of our sins...” Amen.*

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**SUKI AND SALLIE**



For some reason, Suki loves to spend part of her day sleeping in a chair by the front door (see drawing to your left).

I have never understood why she likes to sleep there since the chair, being by the front door, means that she hears all the noises from the hallway. Not only would I expect these noises to disturb her sleep, but I also know how frightened she is of that hallway. She never goes out there and when the door is opened, she backs away and hides under the table near the apartment entrance until the door is closed again!

Be that as it may, she still likes to spend hours sleeping there each day. Of course, if she is in this chair when someone knocks on the front door, she reacts immediately. Bounding from the chair, she does not stop until she is almost in the living room. At this point, with her fur all bushy, she carefully peers around the corner as I go to answer the door. As soon as she hears me call out, loudly, "who is it?", her fur becomes a bit less bushy and she creeps forward just a bit closer to me -- still ready to run at a moment's notice.

On days when I am expecting both a package from the post office as well as a delivery from the pharmacy, she has to go through this entire routine each time someone knocks. I have asked myself many times, "why does she still like to sleep in that chair?" and I have never yet come up with an answer!

Of course, as I am writing this, Suki is sound asleep nearby. Whenever I am in my little office space, she has to be here as well. What a sweet and funny cat she is.

As for me, I continue to stumble along with no significant changes in my health.

I did see a doctor this past week, but he was only the locum for my regular family doctor who is presently on maternity leave. The main reason for my visit was to get a renewal on a prescription drug that my doctor likes to monitor closely. As well, I needed to have more blood work done in order to check on my potassium levels.

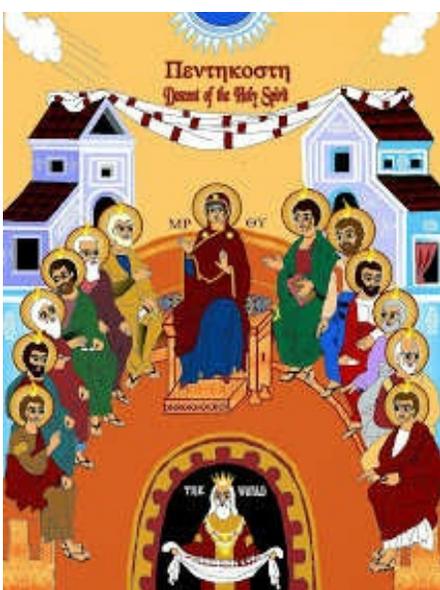
So far, I haven't had a phone call from the doctor about what the blood tests revealed, but, then, the visit to the lab was on Thursday afternoon and the doctor was not in the office on Friday. So, I will wait and see if I get a phone call tomorrow suggesting I increase the medication that is supposed to be helping me bring my potassium levels back down to normal.

What fun this is!

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## **PENTECOST SUNDAY**

Happy feast day to you all!



"And when the days of Pentecost were drawing to a close, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a violent wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as of fire, which settled upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign tongues, even as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak" (Acts 2, 1-4).

May the holy wind of Pentecost blow away all the storm clouds in our lives, leaving behind the peaceful breezes of God's grace. Amen.  
Our Lady of the Winds, pray for us. Amen.

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This contribution is available at <http://salliesart.blogspot.ca/2014/06/our-lady-of-winds.html>  
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# How to hate discussing sex with people who don't practice chastity

Last week, I *almost* hated discussing sex with people who don't practice chastity (If I'd gone there, I'd have a problem, as somebody whose [forthcoming book](#) is about it.).

My frustration with the conversation was rooted in an influx of critical feedback from people whose opinions don't align with mine. But after five years of writing about sex for secular and Christian audiences, I could have seen the temptation to hate it coming. Disdain for this sort of discussion is birthed by unreasonable expectations, outlined in the three steps any chaste person ought to take if he or she *wants* to disdain it:

## **Step 1: Expect to be regarded respectfully by everyone involved in the conversation.**

In direct responses to what I've written about saving sex for marriage, I've been referred to as unattractive, unintelligent, and — to quote a 60-year-old man who wrote a letter to a newspaper's editor — “probably not a hot babe.” **If you want to hate discussing sex with people who don't practice chastity, expecting to be treated with respect is a good place to start.** But if you would like liking the process of discussing sex with people who don't practice chastity to be within the realm of possibility, let go of that expectation. You are of infinite value because you exist. Your dignity does not depend on a person's opinion of you; your dignity is intrinsic. **Accepting that you will be disrespected is not the same as denying that you are worthy of respect.** You can control how often you remind yourself of your worth. You cannot control the people you encounter who don't believe in it.

## **Step 2: Expect to correct every misconception of sex that comes up, as soon as it comes up.**

Recently, I busted sex myths in a column I wrote for the Chastity Project, a site run by chastity author and speaker Jason Evert, who shared a link to the column in a post on his Facebook page. There, in comments on the post, misconceptions abounded: that you can lust and love at the same time, somebody wrote; that humans are just animals, wrote another; that it's very important to know you enjoy intercourse with a partner before you marry him or her, said somebody else. But the link to the column got clicked 45,269 times in its first three days on Jason's Facebook page — that's a minimum of 45,269 potential misconceptions. **If I wanted to hate discussing sex with people who don't practice chastity, I would have held myself responsible for correcting all of their misconceptions immediately.** But it is humanly impossible to clarify what you say for every person who hears it.

## **Step 3: Expect the people who don't practice chastity to define sex the same way you do.**

The greatest single cause of high blood pressure and sleep deprivation among people who practice

chastity is *probably* this step. If you want to hate discussing sex with people who don't share your sentiments, take it. But if you'd prefer for an inter-ideological discussion of sex to be productive, accept this: There are multiple kinds of sex. **When chaste people say "sex," we mean "sacred, physical, pleasurable sign of the the commitment spouses made to each other on the altar where they were married, ultimately designed to bond them and to make babies."** When people who don't practice chastity say "sex," they *probably* mean "the horizontal polka."

Sex, for people who don't practice chastity — according to people who don't practice chastity\* — is primarily supposed to satisfy an urge, or to be a fun, recreational activity (that can double, when desired, as a path to intimacy), or to help a person decide if marrying someone is smart. Sex, then, is not the same for people who practice chastity as it is for people who don't. There is sex the sacred sign, and there is sex the horizontal polka. When we start a discussion about sex without acknowledging that, a discussion is destined for doom.

To a person who doesn't believe sex is a sacred sign, "save sex for marriage" sounds like "wait until after you've married a guy or girl to get close to him or her" or "don't have fun with him or her until after the wedding" or "you have to be married to someone to engage in an activity you should use to help you decide if you want to marry him or her" — notions which, even in the opinions of chaste people, are asinine. **Unless we're to hate discussing this with each other, it's time to acknowledge that most of us can agree on this: there is no compelling reason to save the horizontal polka for marriage.**

But the existence of "sex the sign" — sex as we who are chaste define it — means there is also no compelling reason to participate in the horizontal polka at all. Sex the sign obviates sex the horizontal polka. The latter pales in comparison to the former. The latter is a distortion of the former. But the latter is *not* the same as the former. **People who practice chastity aren't waiting until marriage to participate in the horizontal polka. People who commit to practicing chastity commit not to participating in the horizontal polka ever (or ever again).** When we don't preface a sex conversation with that, we act like what we disagree on is when to have "sex the sign." We don't. What we actually disagree on is whether sex is a sacred sign at all.

We who practice chastity know that it is.

The people who don't think it is don't need us to hate discussing it. They need us to live what we believe, without condemning them if they don't. They don't need us to insult them because we're angry; they need us to tell them what we mean when we say "sex." **They don't need us to tell them what to do; they need us to show them how it's done.**

\* in interviews and surveys I've conducted with them



## Lessons from Italy [at Kitchen table chats]

I just returned from a seventeen day tour of Italy. There really are not enough superlatives to adequately describe our trip. It was a tour sponsored by the Smithsonian so we had the benefits of both a tour director and a tour study leader. All of the logistics were expertly handled and we were well prepared to appreciate the sites we visited. I will try to get a few pictures up in the next few days.

I can honestly say that I grew spiritually, philosophically, and intellectually on this trip. Returning to the routines of everyday life, I see them through a little bit different lens. I could easily wax ad infinitum on our trip and this may be only the first of several posts on lessons learned, but there are definitely some impressions I can immediately share. Some are admittedly trivial, while others offer a bit more cerebral heft.

First of all, there is absolutely no reason for any American fast food chain to have a presence in Italy. Every time I walked into a little trattoria or osteria I was greeted with delightful food made with fresh ingredients and served quickly.

Italians know how to make coffee. I never had a bad cup of coffee. I also never drank coffee out of a paper cup. If you are going to drink coffee it should be out of a ceramic/china cup. I made a resolution for drinking coffee now that I am home. My first cup of coffee every day will be taken seated and out of a china cup. No more gulping that first morning java from a to-go cup in the car.

America is not the center of the universe. A great deal of history occurred before our great nation was in its infancy. We would do well to remember that. The Roman empire was once thought to be invincible. Yet it is now gone. There is no guarantee that America will always be a world leader.

The beauty of sculpture by Bernini or Michelangelo can move me to tears. Artwork from centuries ago is still relevant for today. It does make me wonder if there is any art being created today that will stand the test of time as well as the Italian classics. Is anyone going to care about

[today's contemporary art](#)

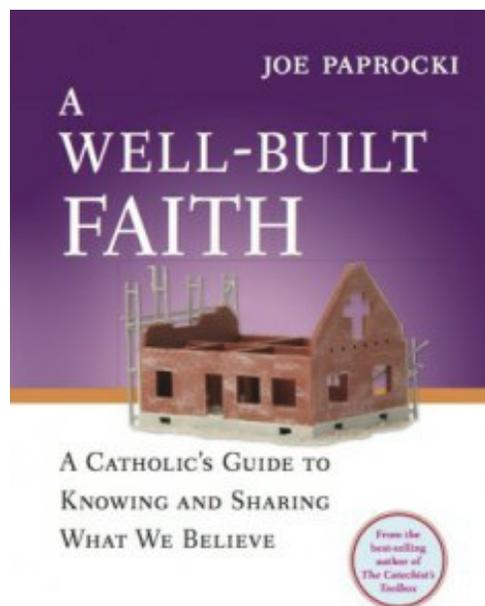
in 500 years?

Human nature is the same over the millennia. Pride, greed, lust, among other sins challenge the culture. Short term gains may result from vice but true flourishing requires virtue.

Italy was truly a paradise for me. Good food, good wine, good coffee, beauty and Catholicism surrounded me for seventeen glorious days. I am forever changed.

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## Found [at FranciscanMom]



Something I read in an early chapter of the [Lawn Chair Catechism](#) book reminded me of a passage from a book I read in college. I had copied it down and hung it on the bulletin board over my desk.

That piece of paper is long gone, but I did manage to remember the title of the book where it had come from.

Of course, the book is out of print now, but I was able to locate a copy of it on [Paperbackswap](#), which is a great way to unload books you don't want anymore and pick up books you *do* want, all for the price of media-mail postage.

This afternoon, the book landed in my mailbox. I still wasn't positive that this book was the source of the quote I could sort of still remember. I was a little disappointed that the previous owner of the book had "helpfully" highlighted various passages, but the one that meant so much to me was left unmarked. But it *was* in there.

the hunger you feel inside IS God. He is with you. You could not even want to be found and touched by God if he were not already touching and moving you to seek to be found by Him.



-from *Make Space Make Symbols: A Personal Journey into Prayer*

by Keith Clark, Capuchin

The truth behind those three sentences has stayed with me for over 25 years. I'm going to reread the book, and if you find yourself in a used bookshop or out-of-date church library, I recommend that you pick up a copy of this little treasure.

I guess I don't need to write down those words again and post them on the bulletin board above my desk, because they are already written in my heart.

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## Waiting on a Miracle [at Dancing in the Rain]

So if we are ever on the phone and I say I'm going hiking, please feel free to ask if I am going by myself. If so, you might attempt to suggest I find a track to walk around instead. The last two times I have attempted to stroll up a mountain solo have resulted in significant bush waking.

Now, there are times when we are just blatantly on the wrong path, heading in the wrong direction. Other times we get lost because we are distracted. Sometimes one could be accused of seeking an adventure, thinking she is "close enough" to the path, though the result leaves her four miles from her car (hypothetically, of course). Yet, what happens when we are doing the "right" thing, following the path laid out before us and for unknown reasons we end up pushed off course? The conversation I had right before starting out on yesterday's adventure was about the last of these situations. Regression: how do we handle slipping backwards for unknown reasons? What happens when you finally believe in miracles and yet you are awaiting the miracle itself? What do you do when it feels as though your pleading prayers are met with an abyss of seeming silence? Well, God has a sense of humor. Let's just say there was a parable to be found in between the branches and leaves.

As I was coming down the mountain, the trail disappeared and I found myself side stepping tree trunks while getting smacked in the face with tree branches. In order to come out of the forest, we must first know where we want to go and recognize when we are not heading in the right direction. Before we can change direction, we must know we are lost. So even though there is that sense that things aren't going the right way, it is an opportunity to pause so as to no longer continue down a dangerous path.

For me this came as I approached the edge of the cliff. Seeing as hang gliding wasn't an option, recognizing the path I was on was a dead end (potentially literally) it forced me to recognize I needed to find a path, the way. I spent many moments walking a little and then waiting. As I waited, I listened. In an attempt to hear anything other than the crickets, straining to hear other voices, I reassessed my surroundings. Waiting invites us to silence, which opens us to listen. After several attempts of walking and reassessing, I recognized I needed to back track. The spot I was in wasn't going to lead me to join up with the trail, so I needed to head to the top of the mountain to get some perspective. It was here that I was able to redirect my efforts so as to begin again.

Though I was happy to be back at my car, what is the value in the journey? While hiking it was getting to see look out points I hadn't planned on stopping at, it was listening to the bugs and watching the sun set. It was the opportunity to be outside to play longer than expected. Similarly, how can we learn to appreciate the gift of time, the gift that is found in the waiting for a miracle? For me, it has been in this "waiting space" that God has unfolded a myriad of gifts that I would have missed out on had God granted the instantaneous miracle I plead for. Friendships formed, adventures lived, faith purified, and joy received are some of the gifts God has generously given. These gifts are universal and yet incredibly specific.

It takes patience and grace to recognize that two steps forward and one step back are apart of the dance of life. Here is an invitation to work like it depends on you and to pray like it depends on God. It requires a sitting still, an open awareness, that in the midst of difficulty potentially lies the greatest grace. Do you dare to sit actively and to wait with courage? Do you dare to open the gifts that can only be found in the waiting? Let us wait with joyful courage and bold hope.

And you were meant to be here tonight.  
This is your time.

"We must be ready to allow ourselves to be **interrupted by God.**" Bonhoeffer

Dare to redefine the Waiting Place

It is not an abyss of nothing but rather a font of grace.

You can get so confused  
that you'll start in to race  
down long wiggled roads at a break-necking pace  
and grind on for miles cross weirdish wild space,  
headed, I fear, toward a most useless place.  
The Waiting Place...

...for people just waiting.  
Waiting for a train to go  
or a bus to come, or a plane to go  
or the mail to come, or the rain to go  
or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow  
or the waiting around for a Yes or No  
or waiting for their hair to grow.  
Everyone is just waiting.

Waiting for the fish to bite  
or waiting for the wind to fly a kite  
or waiting around for Friday night  
or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake  
or a pot to boil, or a Better Break  
or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants  
or a wig with curls, or Another Chance.  
Everyone is just waiting.

Somehow you'll escape  
all that waiting and staying.  
You'll find the bright places  
where Boom Bands are playing.

Oh the Places You'll Go - Dr Seuss



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This contribution is available at <http://dancingintherain401.blogspot.com/2014/06/waiting-on-miracle.html>  
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## Can I be a Sanctuary Light? [at The Cloistered Heart]



For years, I have tried to embrace a little hidden 'apostolate' of being a sanctuary light in the midst of the world. To me, this is a natural extension of life as a cloistered heart. I can go through my days gently pointing to Jesus, for He is present always and ever deserving of love.

This is generally a quiet 'activity.' After all, a sanctuary light does not draw attention to itself. It simply stands for and alongside Christ, and in His presence it glows.

If we go into a Catholic Church, we recognize Our Lord's Eucharistic presence when we see the candle lit. It is a signal to us, a sign that He is truly there. There are no arrows pointing, no signs flashing. But we know. Some, of course, have never been told that a lighted sanctuary lamp means the Blessed Sacrament is present. Yet, even those who do not know the reason for the candle often grow quiet and reflective in its gentle glow.

Some years ago, friends and I were discussing ways in which we could call attention to the fact that Jesus is present. We can do this in our churches, because sometimes even there His presence is overlooked. Our very movements call attention to Him when we genuflect, silence our voices, show reverence, kneel.

As we then go forth into the world, we are privileged to do so with Jesus in our hearts. We carry Christ within and we meet Him in others. Oh, how easy it is to forget this truth. And if we forget it, others do as well.

What is the job of a sanctuary lamp? To never leave Our Lord's side. To be steadfast and faithful, standing for Jesus through good times and bad. To follow Matthew 5, allowing our good acts to draw others to praise God. To remain aware of Him no matter where we are, no matter what we're

doing.

To stand in Christ's presence and let the whole world see us glow.

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Men do not light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket. They set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father." (Matthew 5:14-16) Photo above in public domain, from Wikimedia*

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## Three Reasons Obama's Newest Attack on Religious Liberty Concerns Catholics [at CatholicVote.org]



Last week, I reported that the Obama White House is working on an executive order that will impact federal contractors. Conceived as an effort to curtail unjust discrimination against LGBT persons, the new rule could impose a hefty price tag on Catholic and other faith-based federal contractors. In effect, the new order could force federally contracted Catholic adoption services – for example – to choose between conforming to President Obama’s progressive, anti-family agenda or closing their doors and shutting down.

But, why should this issue matter to Catholics? Why can’t Catholics let their federal contractor status lapse and hand the charitable social work done under that umbrella over to the government? The answer is that this issue matters a lot to us because it impacts the nature and mission of the Church and the reality of marriage and the family.

Here are three reasons Catholics need to heed the news about Obama’s new rule.

**First, the new executive order poses a recognizable and undeniable threat.**

Similar rules have forced archdioceses and dioceses around the nation to forfeit their contracted charitable social work. But, Christ The Lord calls the Church to the work of social justice, which is essential to her nature. The Church cannot give that work up. Indeed, she lives her life in this world in service to the whole integral good of man whether she carries out that service at the level of the individual or under the aegis of a federal grant recipient or a faith-based federal contractor.

Pope Benedict XVI taught in his inaugural encyclical letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, that “The entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man.” And, the Church carries out her service to the integral good of the human person “in order to attend

constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs" (DCE, n. 19). As the encyclical puts it, this charitable social work is – *in fact* – a manifestation of Trinitarian love in the world.

But, some are calling upon the Church to wash her hands of her federal contractor status and to re-commit to performing her good works independent of Obama's dollars. Folks, let's not forget something here: Those are our dollars. They belong to the American people. We gave them to the Feds. Catholics have as much a right to them as anyone else. So, let's not allow the Feds to crowd us out because we refuse to conform to Obama's radical social agenda.

**There's something else worth considering here, though.** If the Church sought to do good in the world in other ways, independent of the status of a federal contractor, she'd be capitulating to an insidious social agenda, which the new presidential mandate weaves into the fabric of our public life. And, that's the second reason Catholics need to heed the news about this mandate.

Truth be told, the new executive order communicates the message that children are not persons – gifts – but claims to which someone can have a right. According to the logic of the new rule, gays and lesbians have as much a right to adopt a child as a family rooted in traditional marriage. But, by advancing that message, the new rule writes into the fabric of our law an anthropological heresy.

Contrary to that heresy, Catholics believe that children are meant to be received as gifts and that marriage and the family are the proper context for the reception of those gifts. Placing them in a household that is not built upon a stable marriage between a man and a woman open to life and capable of fatherhood and motherhood would deprive them of that basic right.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states "A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift." Indeed, "the 'supreme gift of marriage' is a human person." And, as such, "A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged 'right to a child' would lead." Rather, "In this area, only the child possesses genuine rights: the right 'to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents,' and 'the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception'" (CCC 2378). In this connection, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church states that "It is in the family, therefore, that the mutual giving of self on the part of man and woman united in marriage creates an environment of life in which children 'develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny'" (CSDC, n. 212).

In the simplest terms, the new executive order would write into our legal and political culture – without prior democratic discourse and debate – an affront to the nature and mission of the Church in the world and an anthropological heresy that would militate against the Gospel of the Family and the dignity and rights of children. It is for that reason that the Church must stand her ground: She has a duty to preach the Gospel of the Family and to protect the dignity of children.

**But, in the midst of this Obama-induced fracas, there is at least one silver lining. And, that**

## lining is the third reason Catholics need to heed this news now.

The new executive order is being drafted at an opportune moment. Between June 21 and July 4, the US bishops' will hold their annual Fortnight for Freedom. As promotional materials for this year's event point out, the focus of the event will be on "the freedom to serve the poor and vulnerable in accord with human dignity and the Church's teaching." It goes without saying that President Obama's executive order would negatively impact that right, constricting its free exercise.

As the website of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops observes, the 2014 Fortnight for Freedom will take place at "a time when our liturgical calendar celebrates a series of martyrs who remained faithful in the face of persecution by political power — St. Thomas Moore and St. John Fisher, St. John the Baptist, SS. Peter and Paul, and the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome." We know that prayer is powerful and that the intercession of the saints is efficacious. So, let's storm heaven with our prayers!

As we do so, let's be sure to check out the website for the Fortnight for Freedom. It's got some great resources we can all use in the battle ahead. You'll find the website at [www.Fortnight4Freedom.org](http://www.Fortnight4Freedom.org).

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicvote.org/three-reasons-obamas-newest-attack-on-religious-liberty-concerns-catholics/>

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# "Navigating the New Evangelization": A Book Review [at Saints 365]

[Father Raniero Cantalamessa's](#)

latest book

[Navigating the New Evangelization](#)

provides a valuable addition to a growing body of books of the subject of evangelization in the church today. The book is a very readable compilation of teachings which Father Cantalamessa delivered to the Papal Household on the subject of evangelization during Advent 2010 and 2011. It would be a useful read not only for those who are directly involved in the work of the New Evangelization, but also for every Catholic who wishes to learn more about the history of evangelization in the church and how to respond to the current challenges facing the spread of the Gospel today - challenges faced by lay Catholics in the workplace, at backyard parties and among family members.

## The book is divided into two sections

The first section provides an overview of four major thrusts of evangelization in the history of the church, including the protagonists of those waves, the time periods during which they occurred and a description of the parts of the world which were converted. The second section defines three major challenges facing evangelization today. Father Cantalamessa succinctly defines each of these philosophies and provides tools to overcome them that can be used by every Catholic.

**Below is a visual representation of the content of the book:**

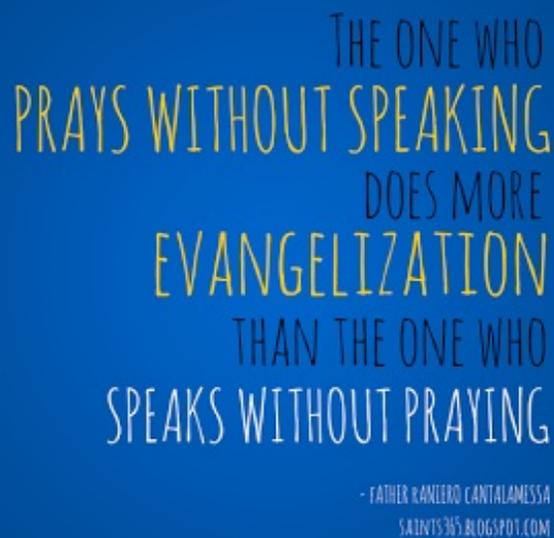


**Don't let the above visual deceive you**

- this is not a dry history text, nor is it an intellectual philosophy text. It is also not a detailed blueprint for evangelization. Do not read it expecting a "how-to guide". Father Cantlamessa provides something far greater than all of these- he challenges the reader to live out the principles which under-gird all evangelization efforts and have throughout the church's life. These principles are:

- The centrality of Jesus as the object and source of all evangelization
- The primacy and necessity of prayer over activities and programs in the work of evangelization
- The fact that honest, humble witness is far more effective in overcoming objections than intellectual arguments

The book is seasoned throughout with quotes from scripture, the saints and the Popes, all tied together in Father Cantalamessa's accessible, practical tone. Reading this book, and others by Father Cantalamessa, always give me the sense that I am sitting and having a conversation with a wise Spiritual Director, as opposed to reading a book. I highly recommend it. Below is a favorite quote from the book:



THE ONE WHO  
PRAYS WITHOUT SPEAKING  
DOES MORE  
EVANGELIZATION  
THAN THE ONE WHO  
SPEAKS WITHOUT PRAYING

- FATHER RANIERO CANTALAMESSA  
SAINTS365.BLOGSPOT.COM

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This contribution is available at <http://www.saints365.blogspot.com/2014/06/navigating-new-evangelization-book.html>  
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## Pauline Books and Media Blog



I have always loved the Easter season, particularly the way it crescendos at the end, culminating in the feast of Pentecost.

Our community of the Daughters of St. Paul, and all the Pauline Family, have a special Marian feast that falls between the Ascension and Pentecost—the feast of Mary, Queen of Apostles. Mary is the mother, teacher, and queen of all those who are sent to bring the good news of Jesus to the world. In some images, she is depicted among the apostles as they are gathered in the upper room, where the Holy Spirit descends upon them. A simpler form shows Mary with the child Jesus—not holding him close to her, but holding him out, as if handing him to someone. She is giving him to the world.



This year, the last few weeks of the Easter season have been special for me for two reasons. For one thing, I have begun the celebration of the 25th anniversary of my first profession. In the diocese of Arlington where I am stationed right now, the sisters of the diocese gather for a Mass and dinner for the jubilarians each year. I say “begun” because the actual date is in late June, and

then in August I will have a celebration with the other Daughter of St. Paul jubilarians (25th and 50th) in Boston.

The other very special thing is that my parents' 50th wedding anniversary is also this year, and my immediate family all gathered for a celebration with them—six children, 5 spouses of children, and 22 grandchildren.

Time passes so quickly. For me, it doesn't seem like it's been 25 years since I made my first vows. An anniversary can be a great opportunity to “pause” time for a moment—pause to look with gratitude on all God's gifts. It can happen that a person feels regret more than gratitude in looking back over the years. In that case an anniversary is a great time to repent, and then to place everything, the good and the bad, trustingly in God's hands.

The annual feast of Pentecost, with its promised gifts of the Holy Spirit, reminds us that God showers his love and gifts over and over, without growing weary. Each day we receive an abundance. Each day we can begin again to respond and, like Mary, to bring Jesus to the world around us.

Sr Maria Grace Dateno, FSP

Credits for the photograph of Sr. Grace and Mr. and Mrs. Dateno: Maria-Pia | Catholic Herald

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This contribution is available at <http://www.pauline.org/blog/token/info/articleid/1503>  
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## The Rock and the Net [at Treasures of the Church]



*"We worthily exalt the all-praiseworthy Peter and Paul, the defender of the rock of the Church, and the net of the world."--Sessional Hymn I, Matins of the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul*

Glory to Jesus Christ! The fast has ended, and the feast begun: we now celebrate the all-glorious Prime Apostles, Peter and Paul. We can see this feast as the final feast in continuation of Pentecost, which in turn continues Pascha, and thus the Great Fast, and thus Theophany, and thus even Nativity. For we can see a progression in time in many of our great feasts, beginning with the Nativity. We celebrate Christ's birth, and then His Baptism and the manifestation of the Trinity to the world, the great Theophany. Not long thereafter, we walk the way of the Cross during the Fast, remembering in part Christ's temptation in the desert falling His Baptism, and in part those days when He approached His death. At the end of the Fast, we remember His glorious entrance into Jerusalem and the following events: the betrayal, the Mystical Supper, and then "the Cross, the nails, the spear, and death." Yet death is not the end, of course: for then comes the greatest feast, the Feast of Feasts, all-glorious Pascha. For forty days we celebrate Pascha, and then we wait in eager anticipation of Pentecost. At Pentecost, the Spirit descended on the Theotokos and the Apostles and impelled them to preach the Gospel to all. Yet we do not cease our remembrances there: for a few weeks after Pentecost, after fasting, we celebrate this feast, the feast of the Prime Apostles, who were inspired by the Spirit given at Pentecost. Finally, we have in a month and a half the Dormition of the Theotokos, the Mother of God. As the Church Year comes to a close, we remember her dormition; yet shortly after it opens (September 1), we remember her nativity (September 8), and from there the cycle begins again, with Philip's Fast and the celebration of the Lord's Nativity.

So this feast is no isolated remembrance: it is joined to the rest of salvation history which we

remember, for it is intimately joined with Pentecost that precedes it. The rock of the Church, Peter, was the first to preach that day, and his were the words that cut the Jews to the heart, circumcising their hearts, and leading to the great conversion of thousands. Yet, though we have stories of many conversions that occurred through St. Peter, he is the rock, and not the net. For it is Paul, formerly Saul, who spread the Gospel across all the known world. He is truly the net of the world, as is obvious if we merely look at the many maps formulated to show his missionary journeys. Look at the addressees of his epistles: Rome in Western Europe, Thessalonica in Greece, Ephesus in Asia Minor, Titus in Crete. He spoke of even wishing to travel to Spain to preach the Word, as St. James did.

These two Prime Apostles had different, yet complementary, roles. After all, there are many gifts, but the same Spirit, and this is true of these two. Peter was the leader, the rock. He preached some, he wrote some, yet his role was to lead the Apostles and the Church, for this was the role given him by Christ. He was no autocrat, and he was not called to answer every question of every local Church. He was to lead his own flock, as the other apostles were, yet he was also to guide the rest of the churches when necessary. This did not mean he was perfect, even after Pentecost, as is evident in St. Paul's famous rebuke to him in Antioch. But he was called to be "the defender of the rock of the Church," the one whose special gift and role was to keep the Church in unity when error or anger strove to tear her apart.

While Peter was the rock, Paul was the net. For I have already discussed many of his missionary endeavors throughout the world. Yet besides his many travels to preach, he also preached through the written Word. It is from him that we have so much of the text of the New Testament: his epistles comprise a large amount of these Scriptures. These were the words that affected his addressees to such an extent that they were circulated and proclaimed in the liturgy, for they are the authentic teaching of the Apostles. So he caught the world in the net of the Gospel not just with his physical travels, but with his words, which resound through all the earth.

Let us, then, rightly praise these two Prime Apostles, with differing graces yet the same Spirit, being differing members of the same Body. Let us recognize the graces the Lord has given us, and let us live them; and let us, too, recognize the graces the Lord has given to others, for all of them are for the edification of His Body, the Church. Let us thank the Lord for the glorious gift of Sts. Peter and Paul, the rock and the net, and let us extol Him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for His are the kingdom and the power and the glory unto the ages of ages.



*Nota Bene: The opening quote is from the [Metropolitan Cantor Institute](#)*

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This contribution is available at <http://thesaurosteseekklesias.blogspot.com/2014/06/the-rock-and-net.html>  
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# Whitsun Embering: Observing Pentecost Ember Week [at Catholic Deacon]

In the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions the week between Pentecost and Trinity Sunday is an Ember Week. Historically Christians who belong to these traditions participate in an Ember Week by observing Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday as days of fasting and abstinence. As always, days of fasting and abstinence call for more time in prayer. Rogation and Ember days, while no longer obligatory for Roman Catholics, were not abolished after the Second Vatican Council.

Ember days were uniformly set forth for the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Clermont in AD 1095, the same council at which Pope Urban II called forth the First Crusade. As a result, there was a Latin mnemonic:

*Dant Crux, Lucia, Cineres, Charismata Dia/Ut sit in angariâ quarta sequens feria*

. From this an English mnemonic:

*Fasting days and Emberings be Lent, Whitsun, Holyrood, and Lucie*

, "Holyrood" refers to the Feast of the Holy Cross, observed 14 September, and "Whitsun" is Pentecost Sunday. It is the "Whitsun" Embering we have the opportunity to observe this week.



<http://familyfeastandferia.wordpress.com>

From *With Christ Through the Year* by Rev. Bernard Strassac, O.S.B.,  
Illustrated by Sister M.A. Justina Knapp, O.S.B.,  
Bruce Publishing Company, Copyright 1947.

In addition to fasting and prayer, we are encouraged to celebrate (yes, celebrate) the Sacrament of Penance during Ember weeks. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal indicates, "In the drawing up of the Calendar of a nation, the Rogation Days and Ember Days should be indicated (cf. no. 373), as well as the forms and texts for their celebration" (par. 395). Due to all the criticism, often exaggerated and unjust, of the Second Vatican Council when it comes to such

matters, I think it is important to note that what the Council Fathers and Venerable Pope Paul VI, who was given the arduous task of the implementing the Council, were seeking was not to abolish these tried and true means of spiritual and ecclesial growth, but to promote spiritual maturity among the faithful by laying heavy burdens on them, but issuing an invitation.

They sought to promote such growth by lifting the obligatory nature of such practices, including Friday abstinence outside of Lent, which is even now the preferred way of observing each Friday as a penitential day. It bears noting that by stating that something is obligatory, it means that a member of faithful's deliberate failure to do it amounts to committing a sin. As with Friday abstinence outside of Lent, the failure to promote Ember days after the Council has undoubtedly resulted not only in them being little observed, by even very little known about by large numbers of the faithful, including the clergy (who are a subset of faithful, not a group over and above them). Currently there are only two obligatory days of fasting: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. I remember teaching an adult Sunday school class a number of years ago and trying to make this exact point.

As I was discussing the change in Catholic practice of fasting and abstinence after Vatican II, an older lady in the class stated that she remembered a priest telling her straight up that if you ate meat on Friday and did not repent and confess it you would go to hell. I do not believe that failure, or even refusal, to abstain from meat on Fridays is a damnable offense for a number of reasons, but that's another post (actually a number of previous posts). Fasting, along with prayer and alms-giving, is a spiritual discipline given us by our Lord Himself. Along with prayer and alms-giving, it is one necessary component of any authentic Christian spirituality. I have written on the various ways these disciplines work together to open us to God's grace. In my view, fasting serves what might be described as an integrating function between prayer and alms-giving. I will end with an observation made by James Kushiner (one I run the risk of over-using):

Practicing a "discipline won't bring you closer to God. Only God can bring you closer to Himself. What the discipline is meant to do is to help you get yourself, your ego, out-of-the-way so you are open to His grace"

I invite you to join me this week, not because you have to, or out of a guilt-ridden sense of obligation, which is foreign to Christianity, but because it is a great opportunity.

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This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2014/06/whitsun-embering-observing-pentecost.html>

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## Another Ten Miles [at One Thousand Words a Week]

**Five summers back, my daughter Joan and I walked to Michigan.**

It's not as spectacular as it sounds – we live on the south side of South Bend, and Michigan is only ten miles away – but it was still quite the urban hike and, now, a happy memory.

The whole thing was a lark that had its genesis at a family dinner when somebody mentioned how close Michigan really was. “It's so close, we could probably walk there,” I remember Joan



commenting. “We should do that!”

I took her at her word (to her chagrin, it turns out), and we planned the trek. A few weeks later, we slathered on sunscreen and hit the road in the early morning, arriving at the [Dairy Queen](#) just north of the state line about eight hours later.

No earth-shattering revelations or extraordinary encounters along the way; no epiphanies or profound father-daughter exchanges. Just slogging along in the heat, mile after mile. A McDonald's here, a library visit there, a couple photo ops, and gyros for lunch. The conversation was intermittent, and almost nonexistent in the final stretch. It was an exercise in endurance, you see, and to succeed required only stubbornness: We *will* walk to Michigan, *just* to say we'd done it – and we did!

The first step is undertaken lightly, pleasantly, and with your soul in the sky; it is the five-hundredth that counts ([Hilaire Belloc](#)).

**Recently, Joan and I put in another ten miles**, but this time the setting was quite different. We were in New York City for Joan to receive special honors at the [Scholastic Art Awards](#) ceremony in Carnegie Hall. Thankfully, [Marian High School](#) helped underwrite our travel expenses, but funds were still a bit tight, so we had no budget for taxi rides. Instead, we took subways and buses mainly, and hoofed it in between.

And hoof it we did. From the [Port Authority](#) near Times Square to the [lions](#) at the Public Library, and then zigzagging uptown: First Fifth Avenue for about eight blocks, then over; Madison Avenue for a while, then over, finally, Park Avenue up to the [Armory](#) at 67th Street – at least a couple miles on foot, and we’d only been in the city a couple hours.

So went the entire weekend: Subway rides to neighborhood centers, and then walking block after block to our various destinations. From Yonkers and the Bronx down to Washington Park, we experienced New York the best way possible – that is, at eye level and on the street. Like when we walked west on 112th through Spanish Harlem to come up behind [St. John the Divine](#). The gargantuan Cathedral loomed before us, growing bigger and bigger with every step, and we, smaller and smaller. It was as if our march allowed us to become pilgrims



and penitents; much better than showing up in a cab or disembarking from a tour bus.

Our cuisine was street-bound as well: Hot dogs and pizza slices, chicken kebabs and blintzes, all mixed up with secondhand smoke, vehicle exhaust, and that unmistakable pungent scent of the city. I think we sat down for a single restaurant meal, and even then we rushed to grab a table outside. Sitting *inside* seemed too far removed from the exotic world we’d come to see and hear and assimilate.

Given all the time we devoted to just getting around, we didn’t get to see everything we’d hoped to – no Empire State Building, no [MOMA](#) or Cloisters, and nothing downtown at all. That wasn’t a big deal to me since I’d already soaked up quite a bit of New York [some years ago](#), but I had high hopes of getting Joan around to many more sights and landmarks. Turns out, it wasn’t a big deal to her either, and for the best of reasons. “I’m glad we’ve been getting around like we have,” Joan said at one point. “It seems like it has given us more freedom to do as we please and to really take things in.”

On a walking-tour you are absolutely detached. You stop where you like and go on when you like. As long as it lasts you need consider no one and consult no one but yourself ([C.S. Lewis](#)).

**So what’s next? [Compostela maybe?](#)** Or the Appalachian Trail? Either of those would be way more than ten miles.

No, I’m thinking Chaucer, and retracing the route of the Canterbury pilgrims. It would be more

manageable (about 60 miles or so), and more Joan's style anyway.



But if it was totally up to me, I'd have us in Rome, and we'd do a walking-tour of the Holy City's [seven pilgrim churches](#) – a tradition of visiting the four major and three minor basilicas that was popularized by St. Philip Neri. Pope John Paul II altered it a bit in 2000 by substituting a more contemporary church for the ancient church of St. Sebastian. However, if you visit all seven of the original churches, plus the one John Paul added for the Jubilee Year indulgence, you'll end up covering just about...[ten miles](#)! Coincidence? I think not!

So, whether it's ten miles in Rome, three score in England, or hundreds somewhere else – *I'm ready, come what may*. Of course, I know it's pretty iffy that I'd even have the privilege of ever again joining my daughter on a trekking journey, regardless of the mileage involved or destination. Heck, it's a wonder and a total gift I got to go along this time – I get that.

Yet, for us dads, that's just part of the deal. It's assumed in the “come-what-may” part of dadhood that if we're *doing* our job, we're working ourselves *out* of a job. God willing, sooner or later, our kids will merrily leave us behind, trekking and journeying with abandon to places we can't even pronounce.

In other words, we have to be ready to weather the transition from *parenting* youngsters to *accompanying* young adults – and as I'm easing into that transition, it seems that the accompanying is truly intermittent, and largely up to their discretion.

Bittersweet, for sure, and no doubt I'll miss out on plenty of ten-milers. But, come what may, I'll be here for the homecoming. I'll be here for the welcome home.

Roads go ever ever on  
Under cloud and under star,  
Yet feet that wandering have gone  
Turn at last to home afar.

~ [Bilbo Baggins](#)

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*A version of this story appeared on [Catholic Exchange](#).*

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This contribution is available at <http://onethousandwordsaweek.wordpress.com/2014/06/15/another-ten-miles/>  
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## Customer Service Evangelization: 7 Steps to Sharing The Faith [at Catholic Chapter House Blog]



*“He spoke to them for a long time using many other arguments, and he urged them, ‘Save yourselves from this perverse generation.’ They accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.” (Acts 2:40-41)*

Written By: Gregory Watson

Last Sunday, we heard Jesus give us the Great Commission to be His witnesses throughout the world. This coming Sunday is Pentecost, the Church’s birthday, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin Mary and the Apostles, and empowered them to fulfil that Great Commission—and after St. Peter’s first “general audience” as Pope, 3000 people were converted and baptised!

The last few popes have been proclaiming that now is a season of New Evangelization, reminding us that the Great Commission applies to us just as much as it did to the Apostles. But for many of us, the prospect of sharing our faith with our friends or coworkers is a terrifying thought—let alone preaching to crowds of thousands! What part do we play in the New Evangelization, and how can we play that role effectively?

Recently, I was briefly employed at a call centre doing customer service for a major telecommunications company. The job entailed helping callers resolve their particular consumer-related needs, and, having done that, to then try to sell them a new line of business offered by the company. While answering phones and trying to sell internet or television services to angry, frustrated, or confused people wasn’t my cup of tea, and I’ve since moved on to new employment, I did realise during the training I received on how to best handle calls in order to successfully pitch to customers, that the general method of handling calls, from answering the phone to closing the sale, was instinctively the process that I follow when I share my faith with others one on one. The points I’m giving you can help you be an effective New Evangelist, too.

## **Step 1: Preparation**

Obviously, if you're going to share your faith with friends, family, coworkers, etc., you need to have a decent idea of what it is you're sharing about. Learning about the Catholic faith, particularly a general overview of why we believe in God, who Jesus is and why He died, the Sacraments, Mary, and maybe a couple pointers about the "hot-button issues" that you know frequently come up in conversations about Catholicism, is very important. Work some spiritual reading into your daily prayer time. And don't even try to say you don't know where to get good [Catholic books](#), [CDs](#), and [DVDs](#). We both know where you're reading this article! On top of that, the fine folks here at Catholic Chapter House hold two annual [events](#), in the Spring and Fall, featuring excellent Catholic speakers brought in specifically to help prepare and inspire you to fulfill the Great Commission! So come on out and say hi! I'll be at the book table to help you find an excellent volume to further your preparation!

Of course, this preparation needs to begin and end with prayer. In particular, pray for God to bring opportunities to share your faith, and pray that He'd also give you wisdom and understanding to know what to say to people that will reach to their hearts.

## **2. Have your intro ready**

When I first got the job at the call centre, my training class had an "introduce yourself" session on the first day, where we went around the room, said our names, and told our colleagues something about ourselves. When it was my turn, I said, "I'm Gregory, and I'm very religious. I'm a convert to the Catholic faith, and I'm very devout. I love to talk about it. But this is a workplace, so I promise this will be the last thing I say about it, unless you bring it up. If you do, though, I'll probably talk your ear off!" Then it was the next person's turn.

During my six weeks at that job, though, every one of my fellow trainees, and even my supervisors, approached me at some point to talk about my faith. As I promised, I never brought it up again, but because of my intro, I could go about my day, and let them come to me.

Your intro can be accomplished in various ways in various settings (to greater or lesser effect). Some of my favourites are wearing Christian apparel, praying my Rosary in public places like while riding the bus, and having a "realmenpraytheRosary.org" bumper sticker and a little statue of the Blessed Virgin on my dashboard—which, just by itself prompted a co-worker at a past job to ask if she could come to church with me!

So again, find your not-too-subtle (but still non-confrontational) intro and use it! It'll do most of the work for you!

## **3. Clarify, Reassure, Capture Interest (CRC)**

When a customer called with some sort of issue or problem, our first response was to repeat their concern in our own words, to make sure we understood it (and to slightly reword it in a way that got to the heart of the issue as opposed to the particulars). We then were to reassure the client that we were the best-qualified person to help, or that we'd do all we could to solve their issue, or some expression to assure them that we could help them out. Then we were supposed to use a

“capture” statement to transition their thinking into wanting to hear about the missing line of business that we were going to try to pitch to them. This last part was mainly why I left that job. I loved solving the customers’ problems. I hated trying to sell them something while I was at it.

When it comes to evangelization, though, the “product” that we’re trying to “sell”, is Jesus Christ, and the richness of His grace available through the Catholic Church. We’re not trying to market some useless gadget that only appeals to our material wealth or leisure. Instead, we’re trying to help people to encounter the Risen Lord who wants to give life to the fullest (cf. John 10:10)!

So how do we do that? By following CRC. When someone raises their objections to the Church, and tells you all the reasons they think Catholicism is false or stupid or contradicts the Bible, etc., don’t react defensively and get agitated. Instead, empathise with them, tell them you understand their concerns (and then rephrase them to show them, and yourself, that you grasp the heart of their concerns), and reassure them that they can certainly voice their objections to you without you shutting them down, if their willing to listen to you suggest answers to their questions and concerns. This may mean saying “I don’t know the answer right now, but I can find out and get back to you,”—and then doing your homework (remember step 1?).

Capturing interest flows out of this fairly easily with simple phrases like, “What if I could show you in Scripture [insert Catholic doctrine]?” or “What if I could provide you with details about actual scientifically-studied miracles?” (Obviously these hook questions should be tailored to the specific objections.)

Note that so far, at the CRC phase, you haven’t actually shared any of the content of your faith. So far you’ve just shared your open, friendly, and warm willingness to entertain their objections, no matter how rude or angry they’ve been. And you’ve even included an “escape hatch” should you not immediately have all the answers (because really, who does?).

#### **4. Validate**

In the workplace, this meant confirming someone’s identity by asking a few questions pertaining to their account, so as to prevent fraud. In terms of evangelization, it means valuing them as a person, as opposed to just a “project”. Deepen your relationship with them (and maintain it even if they decide not to convert—your friends aren’t your friends only if they are or become Catholic). Plus, showing them that you care about them makes them more likely to listen to you. This is important, though: be authentic, sincere, and genuine. Pretending to be someone’s friend just to tell them about Jesus is precisely the “proselytism” that Pope Francis called “nonsense.” If you’re not actually willing to love someone, do them and the Church a favour, and don’t tell them you’re a Catholic at all!

#### **5. Resolve the issue**

Now we get down to “work”. This is where you actually go through the other person’s questions, criticisms, and objections, and patiently give them the Catholic answer. No matter how long it takes. My own investigation of Catholicism took four years before I finally decided to convert! So be patient, don’t get discouraged, and never stop praying!

## 6. Pitch

After answering every objection that your friend presented initially, it's time to prompt a response. "So you see, Confession really is biblical! Maybe you'd like to come to Church with me and explore more of my faith?" "So no, we don't worship Mary! But don't take my word for it. Here's an excellent book by Scott Hahn about her! He used to be opposed to Catholicism, too, as a Presbyterian minister! Maybe he'll have some further insights for you." "If you want to know more about what I believe, there's a great event coming up in Toronto with some great, entertaining Catholic speakers! Maybe we could go together? Check out [CatholicChapterHouse.com](http://CatholicChapterHouse.com) for more details! And while you're there, check out their informative blog!" See what I did there? Now it's your turn!

Just like at the call centre, the "pitching" part of evangelization is probably the most daunting. "What if they say no? What if they don't want to talk to me any more? What if they have more objections?"

To that, I simply ask, "What if they say yes?" We began talking about how St. Peter's first sermon led to 3000 people getting baptised. But this same Peter also died a martyr for the faith, because in his mind, the question of "What if they say yes?" outweighed "What if they say no?" And back in ancient Rome, "No" was a lot more painful than it is here for us in North America right now. And even if their "no" was fatal, well, then you'd be off the hook for having to evangelize anymore, anyway, so what do you have to lose?

## 7. Repeat

Assuming your pitch doesn't lead to your glorious martyrdom, just think, there's always next time! So keep on following these easy steps of customer-service evangelization!

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### Suggested Reading:

[How NOT To Share Your Faith – The Seven Deadly Sins Of Apologetics And Evangelization](#)

[How to Share Your Faith with Anyone](#)

[Catholic Living, Evangelization](#), by Catholic Chapter House.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicchapterhouse.com/blog/2014/06/06/customer-service-evangelization-7-steps-to-sharing-the-faith/>

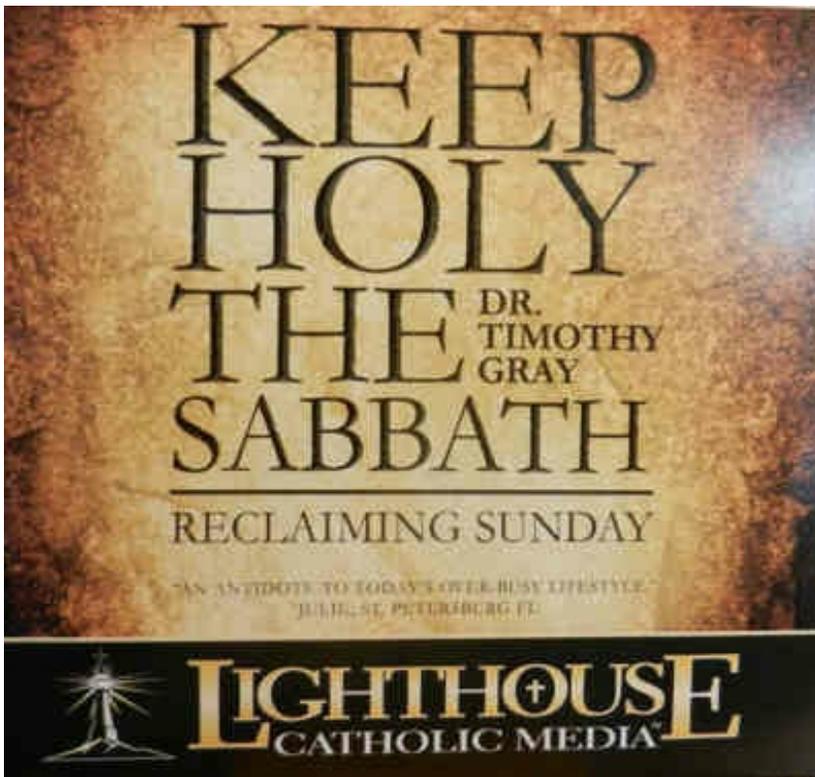
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## Keeping Sundays Sacred [at The Hill Country Hermit]



### Sundays and Chores

God has been nudging me about this one a lot lately. I can rationalize doing a lot of things on Sundays ... a "quick" load of laundry thrown into the washing machine ... it won't take long! (Nor will putting the washed clothes into the dryer, and then folding them, and then putting them away.); a "quick" going-over of one of the bathrooms; a "quick" run into town to buy a few things; a "quick" session on the computer to check my e-mails and facebook updates. I keep telling myself that I'll do them fast and it won't impact my day of rest. Hmmm...



### A Unique "Sanctuary of Time"

Call it grace, if you will ... after struggling interiorly for a while about how to manage my Sundays, I came upon

that stresses the importance of letting Sunday be for rest. To do God things. To go to mass. To relax. To appreciate accomplishments of the preceding week. To nurture the soul. To slow down. To rest in God. To embrace this special "sanctuary of time." Besides giving the obvious reason ... the Third Commandment, Dr. Gray offers many other persuasive points to support this ancient spiritual practice.



### **A Four-Sunday Experiment**

Dr. Gray's words inspired me to try four Sundays in a row to really keep work to the very basics (feeding my family - yes; laundry - no, for example). It helped. It really helped. I have learned that by better observing the practice, I have something to look forward to. I know I can count on at least one day a week of letting go. It's been nice, it has "watered my soul" and I believe it has helped me to improve the "art of living well." I'm going to try ... to really try to keep Sundays a bit more sacred in the future ...

## Eucharistic Procession [at mommynovenas]



Our Parish Priest has re established the tradition of a yearly Eucharistic Procession on the Solemnity of the feast of Corpus Christi.



Carrying the Blessed Sacrament in a Monstrance, Father was accompanied by a small group of parishioners and a faithful altar server bearing holy incense. We walked through our town, praying the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, reading Scripture passages and singing hymns. At the edge of town, we crossed a bridge where we greeted some people fishing on this warm resplendent afternoon. A couple passing through town got out of their truck and reverently genuflected while making the sign of the Cross. It was very moving.



At the conclusion of our procession, before we convened inside the Church for Benediction, a Knight of Columbus graced us with beautiful bagpipe music.



## **Prayer Before a Crucifix:**

"Behold, o good and most sweet Jesus,  
I fall upon my knees before Thee  
and with most fervent desire beg and beseech Thee  
that Thou would impress upon my heart  
a lively sense of faith, hope and charity,  
true repentance for my sins,  
and a firm resolve to make amends.  
And with deep affection and grief,  
I reflect upon Thy five wounds,  
having before my eyes  
that which Thy prophet David spoke about Thee,  
Oh good Jesus.  
"They have pierced my hands and feet,  
they have counted all my bones."

AMEN

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This contribution is available at [http://mommynovenasdelora.blogspot.com/2014/06/eucharistic-procession\\_22.html](http://mommynovenasdelora.blogspot.com/2014/06/eucharistic-procession_22.html)  
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# Ignatian contemplation among the poor [at Hermano Juancito ]

I don't know when I first heard about Ignatian contemplation, the imaginative reading of the scriptures.

As Jesuit Father James Martin explains in his book, *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*:

Ignatian contemplation encourages you to place yourself imaginatively in a scene from the Bible. For example, if you're praying about Jesus and his disciples caught in a boat during a storm on the Sea of Galilee, you would try to imagine yourself on board with the disciples, and ask yourself several questions as a way of trying to place yourself in the scene.

I do remember, though, one of the first times it really touched me. Before going on a two month sabbatical to El Salvador, to do some research for a book I'm still writing, I had an eight day retreat with a Lakota Franciscan sister on the Pine Ridge reservation.

She explained the method and gave me a list of passages to work with. I chose the Gospel passage of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth.

I read the scripture and, without planning, I felt myself as John within the womb of Elizabeth. I sensed something – the presence of Jesus – and jumped for joy.

Ever since that time I find myself reading the scriptures in a different way, a way also influenced by my experience with the poor.

Here I find that many people read the scriptures to get a message, often a moral message. That's all very good but I think that the scriptures are also a way for us to encounter Jesus.

That's what I really like about Ignatian contemplation.

A few months ago a few commentators noted that Pope Francis used a form of this in his Sunday homily in a parish in Rome.

So I thought I'd try it with catechists.

We first did breathing exercises to calm ourselves and to create a space of silence. Then I read the parable of the Prodigal Son and asked them to place themselves in the parable.

The silence was tangible and the atmosphere was one of deep prayer.

After a time I asked them to share what they had experienced with the people around them. Then a few shared with the whole group. One person noted how she felt the warm embrace of the father.

I think we are on to something.

So Padre German decided to try to renew the base communities, many of which had become top heavy meetings where one person talked and others listened or where the themes were very intellectual. He proposed that only once a month would the communities use materials. The second week they'd celebrate birthdays or anniversaries. The last week they'd discuss a situation in the village and propose some ways to respond. The third week would be "reading the bible in a different way" – Ignatian contemplation.

We tried it in a meeting of village base community leaders, I also have been using it in my training sessions with catechists. I have even written a form of this into the training for catechumens. I hope we can work this into much of our pastoral ministry.

It sometimes works, sometimes not. A few times I have read the passage and stopped with questions after a few verses. Other times I have read the whole passage, after urging them to place themselves into the situation.

I think this will be a good way to help the people revive their imaginations and see scripture not as a book to be read for its messages, but as a way into the heart of God.



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This contribution is available at <http://hermanojuancito.blogspot.com/2014/06/ignatian-contemplation-among-poor.html>  
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# What the Catholic Church Actually Teaches About Justification [at The Back of the World]

Growing up Protestant, I was always told that the Catholic Church believed in “works righteousness”. That is, that you had to earn your way to Heaven by being a good person and doing good works.

Imagine my surprise, then, when I began to read things like the Council of Trent’s *Canons Concerning Justification* and found passages like this: ***“If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.”***

It turns out that the Catholic Church doesn’t even come close to teaching “justification by works” or any such thing. But don’t take my word for it... Here’s a great passage from the Council of Trent’s documents:

“CHAPTER VII

IN WHAT THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE SINNER CONSISTS, AND WHAT ARE ITS CAUSES

This disposition or preparation is followed by justification itself, which is not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts whereby an unjust man becomes just and from being an enemy becomes a friend, that he may be an heir according to hope of life everlasting.[30]

The causes of this justification are:

the final cause is the glory of God and of Christ and life everlasting; the efficient cause is the merciful God who washes and sanctifies[31] gratuitously, signing and anointing with the holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance,[32] the meritorious cause is His most beloved only begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were enemies,[33] for the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us,[34] merited for us justification by His most holy passion on the wood of the cross and made satisfaction for us to God the Father, the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith,[35] without which no man was ever justified finally, the single formal cause is the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just, that, namely, with which we being endowed by Him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind,[36] and not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to everyone as He wills,[37] and according to each one’s disposition and cooperation.

For though no one can be just except he to whom the merits of the passion of our Lord Jesus

Christ are communicated, yet this takes place in that justification of the sinner, when by the merit of the most holy passion, the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Ghost in the hearts[38] of those who are justified and inheres in them; whence man through Jesus Christ, in whom he is ingrafted, receives in that justification, together with the remission of sins, all these infused at the same time, namely, faith, hope and charity.

For faith, unless hope and charity be added to it, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of His body.[39]

For which reason it is most truly said that faith without works is dead[40] and of no profit, and in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by charity.[41]

This faith, conformably to Apostolic tradition, catechumens ask of the Church before the sacrament of baptism, when they ask for the faith that gives eternal life, which without hope and charity faith cannot give.

Whence also they hear immediately the word of Christ:  
If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.[42]

Wherefore, when receiving true and Christian justice, they are commanded, immediately on being born again, to preserve it pure and spotless, as the first robe[43] given them through Christ Jesus in place of that which Adam by his disobedience lost for himself and for us, so that they may bear it before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ and may have life eternal.

#### CHAPTER VIII

### HOW THE GRATUITOUS JUSTIFICATION OF THE SINNER BY FAITH IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD

But when the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely,[44] these words are to be understood in that sense in which the uninterrupted unanimity of the Catholic Church has held and expressed them, namely, that we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God[45] and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification.

For, if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise, as the Apostle says, grace is no more grace.[46]“

*~Council of Trent, Session VI, Decrees Concerning Justification*



I had originally written this reflection for publication in an online magazine, but I didn't submit it in time. So I'll publish it here!

## Happy Feast of the First Martyrs of Rome

On a late July night in AD 64, hidden in the imperial palace, Emperor Nero's dark thoughts stirred. A substantial portion of the great city of Rome lay under ashes. Outrage spread throughout the streets of the empire's capital. Like any outraged populous, the people of Rome called for answers. They needed answers. For many, their lives seemed utterly ruined. The emperor, that sick and twisted man who had murdered his wife and his mother, must be to blame. So the rumbling crowds shouted. Nero needed an answer for them, something that would divert their anger from him to someone, or some group, of no consequence.

Perhaps it was an aide to him who made the suggestion. Perhaps he had heard tales of a strange group that had trickled out from Palestine, a group that adhered to strange rituals and bizarre teachings. They were a relatively unpopular group, often at odds with the traditional Roman priests. Perhaps reports came to Nero's court that these new zealots had stirred up trouble in Greece a few years earlier. The more the emperor thought on this, the more he knew he had his scapegoat.

He announced by imperial decree that this radical group was to blame for the fire of Rome. The religion became illegal, and for the 250 years that spanned the fire of Rome in AD 64 and the Edict of Milan in 313, Christians throughout the empire lived and preached under that ban. The hunt began, and it was not long before the first Christians appeared in a Roman court for that most persistent of crimes: faithfully following Jesus of Nazareth.

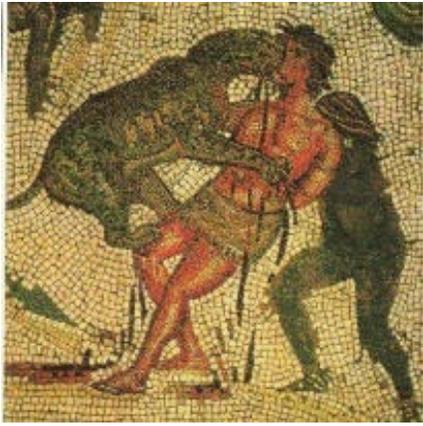
The feast of the First Martyrs of the Roman Church falls on June 30, the day after the Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul. It is a fitting placement for such a feast, for if we include in the list of the earliest Roman martyrs those who died before Nero's bloody suicide in AD 68, then tradition holds that both St. Peter and St. Paul fall into this category of First Roman Martyrs. On the other hand, this feast celebrates the lesser known martyrs, those whose names or life stories are lost to

history.

Their deaths, however, scar the period of the early Roman Empire and provide a blueprint for the persecution of Christians even in more recent years. Imperial troops scoured the city for Christians. Arrested Christians often confessed that they were Christian, and under torture often gave the names of other Christians. The Roman writer Tacitus describes how “an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind” (Tacitus, *Annals* 15: 44). Soon this multitude filled the prisons in Rome, and executions followed.

These executions, providing the martyrs with their crowns, stand in history as among the most appalling murders ever recorded. Men, women, and children died in the circus on the Vatican Hill, near where St. Peter’s Basilica is today. Some were killed by more traditional Roman methods of execution, such as beheading or crucifixion (St. Paul died through beheading; St. Peter died via crucifixion). Others died in more diabolical ways. Nero held grand parties in his private gardens. There the attendees would see performances of horrific tales from Greco-Roman mythology, particularly ones where the tragic figure would perish at the end. The part of the helpless victim fell to the Christian prisoners. In similar fashion, guests of the emperor hunted game in the gardens, though in this scenario the game was a Christian dressed in animal skins. Nero’s dogs attacked the caught Christian and killed him or her, as they might any wild animal. The most horrific, however, came after the sun set. Nero mounted his personal chariot and rode along the garden’s pathways, cheered on by the guests. As he rode, servants lit torches along his route. These torches, burning and spitting in the Roman night air, contained not mere pitch or oil, but rather helpless Christians, who being condemned to die, served as Nero’s “Roman candles.” Many died in such horrible manners, shocking though they may be. Though the death of Nero granted the Christians some respite from such tortures, it would not be long before another Roman emperor saw reason to wipe out Christians from the empire. As French historian Henri Daniel-Rops puts it,

Between 64 and 314 every single day held for the faithful believer the ever-present threat of a frightful death: the period is divided fairly evenly into the years of active bloodshed and those of relative quiet. And every so often, during those two hundred and fifty years of history, we shall hear that cry of distress and agony rising heavenwards again, just as it had risen from the gardens of the Vatican glade in Nero’s day. But from the moment of the first tortures the faith had known how to transform that cry into a cry of hope. (Daniel-Rops, *The Church of Apostles and Martyrs*, 159)



How do these stories of men and women slain nearly 1950 years ago apply to us today? Like in the days of Ancient Rome, Christians today face persecution. While many are not called to martyrdom, as the Christians under Nero were, we are all prepared for it. By our baptism we are brought into new life in Christ, and by living in Christ, we also share in His death and Resurrection. We are all called to suffer for the sake of the Name, even if it isn't to the death. We are all called to sacrifice our lives for the glory of God. No matter our vocation, we are called to give up what we once were and embrace a radical new way of living. This, then, is the ultimate lesson from these earliest martyrs of the Church, the same proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council: the Universal Call to Holiness. Only when we embrace this call can we stand with the martyrs of the early Roman Church and worship the Triune God for all eternity.

For Further Reading:

Henri Daniel-Rops. *The Church of Apostles and Martyrs*

Warren H. Carroll. *A History of Christendom*. Volume 1. *The Founding of Christendom*.

# Reflection: First Martyrs of Rome [at Quidquid Est, Est!]



## See? [at Smaller Mannhattans]



**X-RAY SPECS**  
An Hilarious Optical Illusion \$1.00

Scientific optical principle really works. Imagine—you put on the "X-Ray" Specs and hold your hand in front of you. You seem to be able to look right through the flesh and see the bones underneath. Look at your friend. Is that really his body you "see" under his clothes? Loads of laughs and fun at parties.

No. FL7 \$1.00

When discussing sacraments with 6th graders, I always emphasize that the physical part of a sacrament is more than a symbol. And by the time we even get to a sacrament (Baptism), they are already familiar with God's grace and power moving through physical media such as Moses' staff, Elijah's cloak, Elisha's bones, and Jesus' tassel. Later on when we get to Acts, they can figure out on their own how handkerchiefs and shadows can transmit healing to the afflicted. Catechism class is alive with God flowing through his Creation.

Ah yes, Creation- the stuff that God made in six days and all of it was good. As I say in class, "It was all good,

*morally good,*

even dead stuff like rocks. God makes only good things, that's just his nature." But then Adam sinned, messed up not just himself but all of Creation, and the rest is history. Now we struggle against the consequences of sin, not just spiritually, but physically: we get hungry, sick, injured, we hurt, we age, we die. Now you'll recall that if we

[graph the 6 days of creation](#)

, as days pass, the things created tend to be more and more like God. And at the top of the graph is Adam- well, no, Eve is at the top- well, no,

[something higher still](#)

...sorry for digressing. Anyway, before the Fall, everything was good. But in the case of a rock,

only as good a rock can be. A plant would have more goodness in than a rock; a bug more goodness than a plant, etc. More like God = more goodness. By no small coincidence that also means: more like Adam = more goodness. But the downside is that because Adam's sin cursed the Earth (and by implication the rest of Creation) the things closest to Adam took the biggest fall from grace. Let's say Adam fell 50%. And the things farthest from Adam, such as inanimate rocks and water, lost the least of their goodness- maybe 5%. So when God works miraculously through sticks, water, oil, shadows and rags, I see it as a reproach: God chooses those things on the low-end of Creation because they may retain nearly all of their original grace-goodness conductivity. Stuff near the top is more flawed, more unstable.

Now here's another consequence of the Fall: we need faith because we can't perceive all kinds of stuff that affects our existence here and elsewhere. Think about folks in Eden: did they need faith? Sin hadn't yet pried Creation into parts, so I doubt it. Or those in Heaven? No. But now, yeah, sin truncates our perception. We see only dimly, or not at all. And stuff I think I see clearly, like a tree or my wife- I bet they look way different,

*more*

tree,

*more*

wife, to a saint peering down from heaven. Sin makes it harder for us to see the Good that's woven into the fabric of the Universe. Sin's effects make us divide reality into what's "visible and invisible"; but it's actually one big continuity. Just because we see it partially doesn't mean we can't try to understand it as a single unified entity.

But how nice of Jesus to institute sacraments to bridge that gap. You know what a sacrament is, right? "A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace." That's a good Western definition. It points to the part we can see.

*Sacramentum*

is a practical word the Latin Church uses in place of the Greek word

*mysterion*, μυστήριον

. It makes perfect sense especially if you consider

*sacra-mentum*

is fundamentally a tool or means of making something holy, set apart. Like

*instru-mentum*,

a tool to construct something.

Too bad the Church doesn't yet again breathe with both of her lungs at the same time, because I'm fonder of that Greek word

*mysterion.*

Here's a good definition: "A *mysterion* is that to which signs refer; a reality laced with the unseen presence of God." I like this concept better because it directly addresses the bigness of the

*invisible*

reality, which extends far beyond the grasp of our sin-stunted senses. Beyond the normal...right?

Wrong. This may sound dumb:

*Eden was normal.*

Sin is

*not*

normal. Its consequences are

*not*

normal. The problem is that we wrongly assume what's normal is what we're used to; and all that stuff that's supposed to lie beyond our senses, well, it may be real in some detached way. But not as real as my fingers or my keyboard. Or at least the bits of them that I perceive. Who knows what aspects of my fingers and keyboard exist on the other side of my personal sin-constricted event horizon? And in spite of sin, reality remains "laced with the unseen presence of God." Laced? More like soaking wet with God.

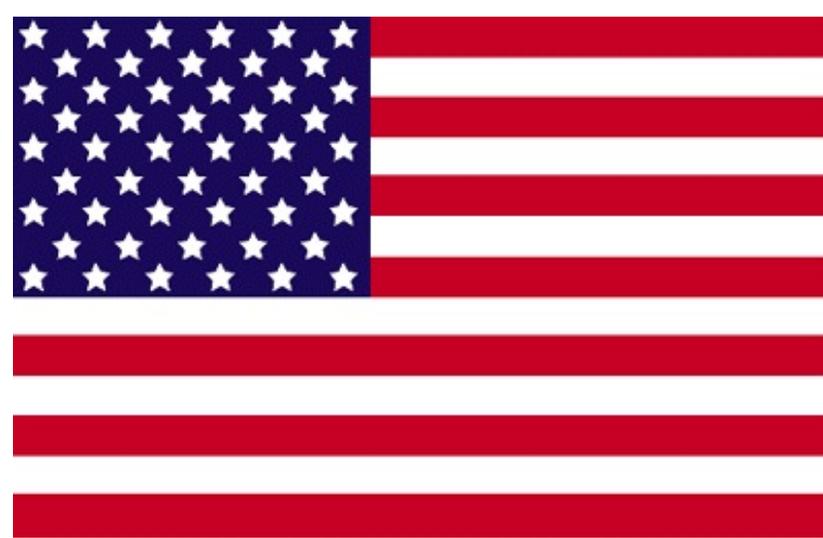
So let's look at a sacrament: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery (*megas mysterion*)."  
It sure is a mystery, because when my wife and I become one flesh, I

*know*

there is more to it than my senses can tell me. I mean physically more to it, not just spiritually. I don't think 'becoming one flesh' is symbolic or figurative. I think we physically become one flesh in a way that would be perfectly obvious to a saint. And that torrent of transcendent fusing while everything still looks the same to this sinner...well, that's the mystery. The merge, the one-fleshing is real. I just...can't...see it.

Likewise, we're literally part of Christ's body. Can you see it? Me neither. But it's not figurative, it's real.

I want to get to baptism in a second, but first let's consider this flag:



It's a symbol of America. But that's all it is. There's no metaphysical connection between the flag and the country. Burning the flag doesn't cause a fire in America. We could swap it out for another flag tomorrow.

But sacraments are different from a flag, and I am not content in class with calling the part of a sacrament that we can see a symbol, and leaving it at that. It's just the visible part of a bigger reality. Consider my wife. If I have a picture of her, that's a symbol. Burning the photo doesn't set my wife on fire. But if I'm looking at my wife- is she a symbol of herself?

*Oooh.*

Interesting. Living in the world I'd say no indeed, she is my wife, she is herself, not a symbol. But in the context of an unseen and larger reality, then yes, this bit of her I

*can*

sense is a symbol of the aspects of her being I

*can't*

sense. Or only sense fleetingly and dimly. If we both wind up in the New Jerusalem, of course there'll be nothing symbolic about her there: it would be The Total Babe for all eternity.

My point is that there are different levels of symbol; and Christians tend to regard the symbolic aspects of sacraments as being like the flag, when they are more like my wife. For example, we use water for Baptism. Some Baptists will tell you Baptism's nothing more than a symbol; doesn't do a thing. The Catholic Church teaches it's a symbol (an outward sign) that signifies what truly happens: sin is washed away. That's consistent with Acts: "Rise and be baptized, and wash away

your sins." Pretty clear- but did Luke mean it literally? Does the water actually wash away sin; or does God intervene when the water is poured? That is, on the spirit side, does the water do anything? Dumb old water? I think it does. That is, if the "cloud of witnesses" attends a baptism (and they probably attend them all), they see water wash sin clean off of the person, as plainly as I see dirt washed off of my hands. The wonder of that miracle (and sacraments are miraculous though not dramatic) isn't that it happens at all: it's no big deal for God. The wonder is that the unseen world pokes into the seen one for a few seconds. It's miraculous to us, yes. But it's also normal. It's normal for water to bear this Christ-infused goodness. Human beings, comprising a unity, a continuity, of body and soul, physical and spiritual, can be washed, body and soul, by water. Because like everything else, there are aspects of water we can't see. But then you ask, why doesn't water wash my sins away every time I bathe? Because Baptism effects a permanent spiritual change. Like an egg: one sperm, one time. It's normal. OK...but why don't people get their sins washed away the first time water flows over their heads? Because God leaves it us to intentionally bring a person into his family, and also to assume some responsibility. He does this with making babies; and with making Christians. Water always has the potential to wash away sin, but it happens only through our physical and spiritual cooperation with God's grace.

So think about sacraments as actual, physical, literal conduits of God's power that's not remote, but moves in us and around us. Think comprehensively- like the Catholic Church.

*Fun related link [here](#).*

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## Catholic sex: the good, the bad, and the very, very fertile [at Domestic Apologist]

Gestating in the summer makes me reflect on three things:



- 1) the person growing inside me
- 2) how it got there
- 3) why is it so blazing hot in my house.

Seriously, I did my dishes with the lights off tonight, just to eliminate any further sources of heat. I'll check my work in the morning.

I've been mulling over two great articles I read this week on Catholics and sex, though they couldn't have come from more disparate situations.

Hallie (who I get to meet at the Edel Gathering this month, wooho! and who

[admits to being known now as "that Catholic woman who published a book about great sex,"](#)  
[ha](#)

) would like to hear more from the Church about the "lively celebration" in the bedrooms of us

married folk:

Jokes abound about "Catholic prudery" and they cause us to throw back our heads and laugh; have people not seen the size of our families, or the ages of our children? Yes, concerned folks at the grocery store, we do know how that happened. And happened. And happened.

But the misconception—the disconnect between the reality of joyful Catholic sex and the prude stereotypes—shouldn't shock us that much. We just don't sing the praises of sex nearly enough. I say this not to criticize, but rather to encourage us all to consider this issue and think about ways that we might enact positive change. Rome needs to think about it, too.

In a less celebratory tone,

### [Calah of Barefoot and Pregnant](#)

is fed up with the conflict of Church instruction--which beautifully, rightfully, thankfully says no to artificial contraception--and some lay Church members, who have berated, glared and asked her (and her brood) to sit in cry rooms during Mass (emphasis mine):

The reality is that obedience costs a young couple something — sometimes it feels like it costs us everything. But it seems to cost the larger Church nothing. **So little valued is our obedience and the sacrifice it entails that most Catholics don't even know what the Church teaches on contraception.** They've never heard it from the pulpit. If they do hear it, they jeer and mock, because the prospect of life without contraception seems so impossible that it's frankly ludicrous.

Equally ludicrous are those who embrace it, willingly or no. We are targets of scorn and derision, while the Church stands silently by and watches us suffer to uphold her teaching. Sometimes she even joins in the fray, building "cry rooms" to put us undesirable, multiplying masses out of sight and out of mind; providing nurseries so our children can in fact NOT come to Christ, but be put aside so the grown-ups can come to Christ in peace and quiet; interrupting homilies to ask mothers to leave the Mass with their babies, since the babies are disturbing the rest of the parishioners; in short, **treating us as second-class citizens for the crime of actually obeying her teachings.**

Oy.

With Hallie's piece on the

*joy*

sex, I get it. Just as it'd be beneficial to shake up the language of NFP to the more

[clinical-sounding, less-stigmatized "fertility awareness methods](#)

," a similar shake up around the language we use to talk about sex within Catholic marriages would mean fireworks. We'd refute the lie (and it indeed is a lie) that monogamous sex, sex that is open to life, free from condoms, pills, rings, trap doors and whathaveyou--is boring. Or that it can't be spontaneous, satisfying, and, yes, really, totally sexy.

I just wouldn't want someone who's on the fence about using NFP in their marriage to think that all Catholic women have nothing but a rosy glow in their bedroom. I'd feel like I sold them a bill of goods. Because great sex in a Catholic marriage

*must come with*

what Calah is seeking--obedience. And that obedience is greatly rewarded, yes, with the blessings of a mutually respectful marital relationship and, God-willing, children.

But it's tough. Oh so tough.

It's tough to sing the praises of your contraception-free sex life to a Catholic wife and mother (someone in a situation much like Calah's), who has welcomed a bunch beautiful babies rather closely together, who has tried at least three NFP methods and not found any of them to work well for her body. Or a mother who is desperate to try and delay her next blessing for just a few more months. Or a wife who charts that damned fertile-type mucus from day five to day... 25.

Does she need (or want) to hear other Catholic women raving about how great Catholic sex is? Sure she does. The message we need to share (that the Church wants married couples to have the fulfilling sex they deserve) is an urgent one. But would it be greeted with an eye roll from couples and mothers in the situations described above?

If I were to follow Hallie's brave lead and "share the good news that is married sex," I would begin by saying that good sex, even great sex, in a Catholic marriage has seasons.

First trimester of pregnancy? Bad season.

Second trimester? Hooray!

Baby's first months? Tough times.

Baby starts sleeping through the night? "Lively celebration!"

All signs point to fertile, all the time? A complicated, frustrating season.

Signs become clearer, or a couple finds a way to deal? A

*better*

season.

I'm not saying that I think it's as simple as a snap of the fingers for a woman to better understand her fertility signs, or that it's easy for a couple to "just deal" with seemingly-hyper fertility. No. It's a cross for sure, and one that stick around for many moons.

But I do know that with crosses, the only thing you can do is pick them up, and carry them. In time, the weight of some crosses gets lighter; some get heavier and even more back-breaking to carry. But even there, the crosses have seasons, too.

If I've learned one thing by living with

### [Sean's fibromyalgia and degenerative disk disease](#)

, it's that he has good days, bad days, awful days, and just

*days*

. His cross is still upon us. But I am thankful, so thankful for the seasons when it is lighter. And I

### [beg for mercy](#)

and special help from our Lord when it's heavy.

So for physical suffering, or child rearing, or family-size discernment or yes, even great married sex, it's about celebrating the good seasons--and praying through the not-as-fantastic ones.

I know I've only been in this marriage gig for five years now, and I'm sure I'll laugh at my thoughts on sex one day. Right now, this is what I know. It's my good news, from the darkness of my hot house.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.domesticapologist.com/2014/07/catholic-sex-good-bad-and-very-very.html>  
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## **A Daily Dose of Joy - twice daily if you really pay attention! [at Come to the Water]**

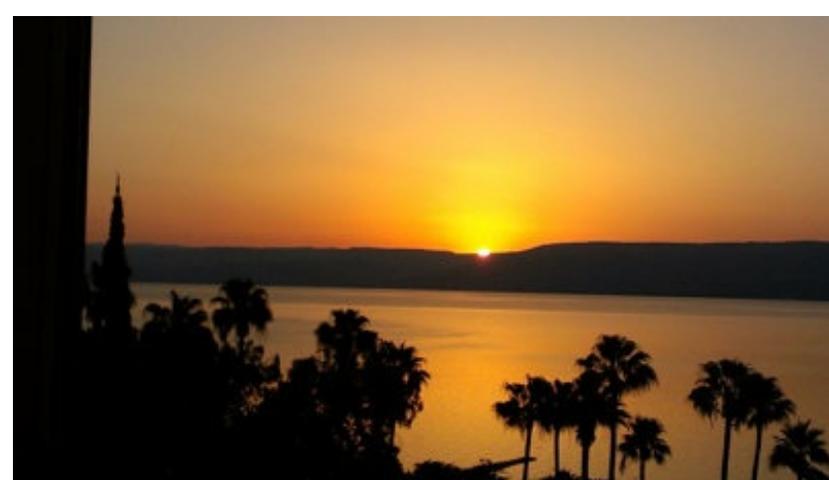
My pilgrimage to the Holy Land was a life-changing, whirlwind trip. The daily journal I thought would be filled with prayer and reflections became an itinerary to supplement the 1,000 photos I took along our fast paced journey to so many holy sites. I prayed at the end of the journey that God would reveal to me His message and His majesty in the weeks following this life-changing experience. And that prayer is being answered. The layers of God's graces upon me are being revealed, bit by bit, daily, as my summer unfolds.

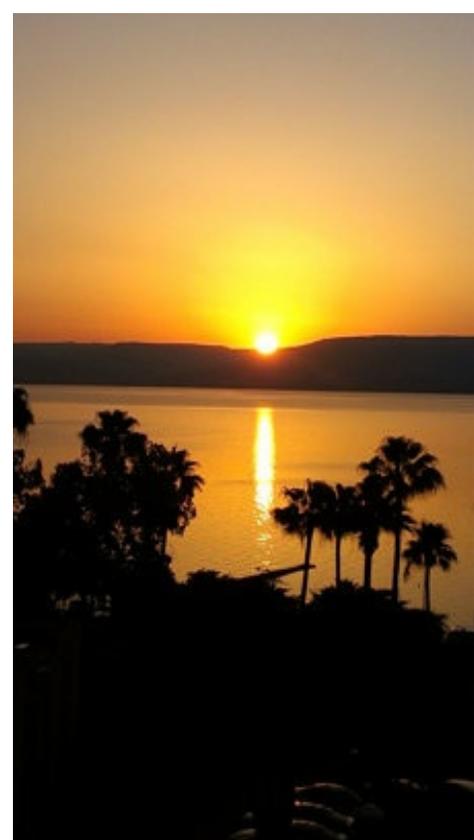
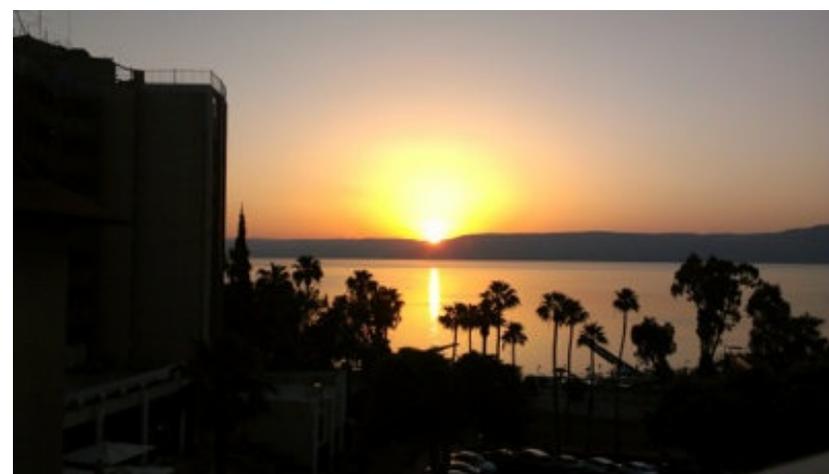
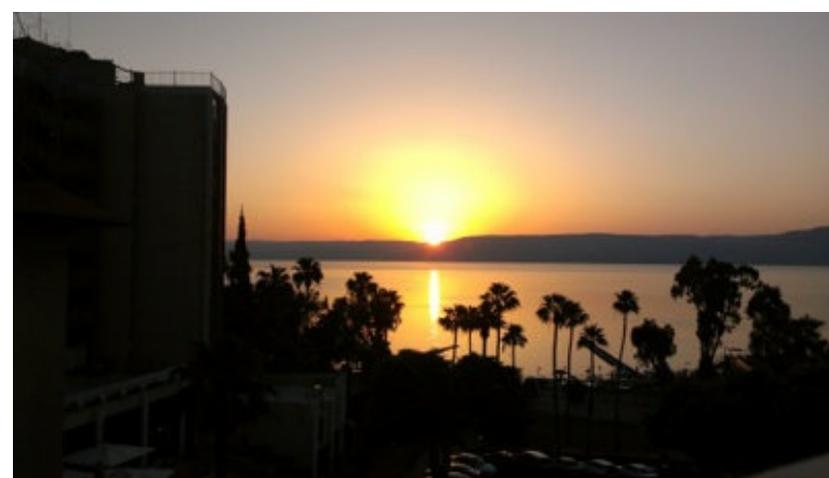
Today I write about one grace-filled morning that profoundly touched my heart on the spot, but yet is still being cultivated in my soul.

While we were relaxing in the pool during our brief time at at the Rimonim Mineral Hotel in Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, another pilgrim described the magnificent sunrise she witnessed that morning. I, too, wanted to experience a sunrise over this lake, so integral to so many miracles and teachings of Jesus. At this point in my life, I don't always sleep so regularly, so I was hesitant to set an early alarm because sometimes my best hour of sleep is between 5 and 6 AM. So, I asked God, if it is His will, to wake me so that I could see the sunrise. Well, He did wake me in time to witness a magnificent sunrise, at about 5 AM the next morning.

I woke, first disappointed about the robbed sleep, then excited that God answered my prayer! I sat, sleepy and grateful, on the plastic chair on our tiny porch. It took me a few moments to notice a fellow pilgrim on a neighboring porch. We are about the same age (read: sleep deprivation and many obligations at home always in the back of our minds), and our brief words together spoke volumes. We knew we were connected and part of something very big that God was about to do. Our souls were connected through God's power over nature, and we wordlessly joined our hearts as we focused our eyes on the illuminated Golan Heights. The oranges, pinks, and yellows of the sunrise were nothing like we see in the USA; no clouds dotted the landscape and scattered the light. The rays of the still invisible sun stretched even and unobstructed across the mountaintops – it was like watching God's magnificent palm emerging from the vastness of space. The all encompassing glow of the approaching – yet still hidden – SUN was the most peaceful act of nature I've ever witnessed. I sat, mesmerized, and overcome by emotions emitted by tears and gentle sobs. God loves us all so much. It must pain Him to see how much we screw things up. Yet, He still loves us. He wants to bring us JOY. Joy is what was in God's palm that morning. He was handing it to me in His magnificent, glorious sunlight.

I am going to attempt to show, in the pictures below, the sequence of this glorious, joyful, awe-inspiring sunrise. Here goes:





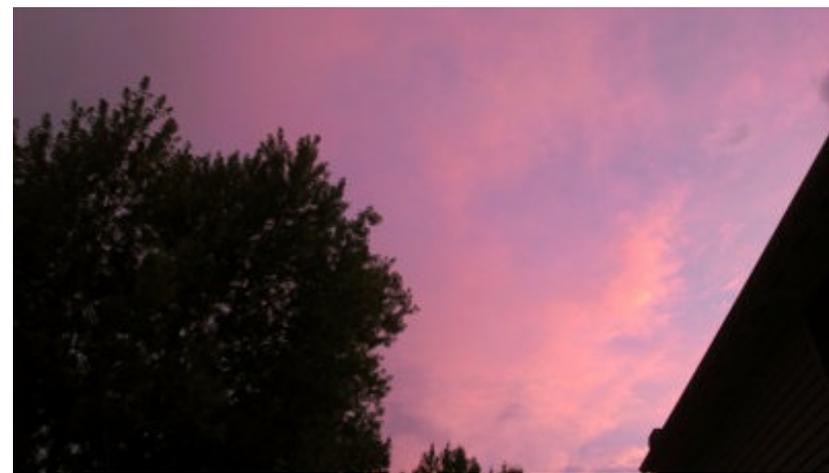
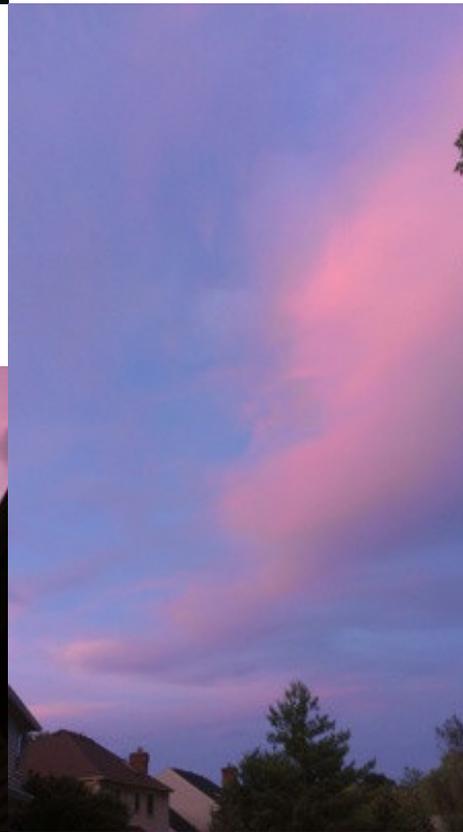
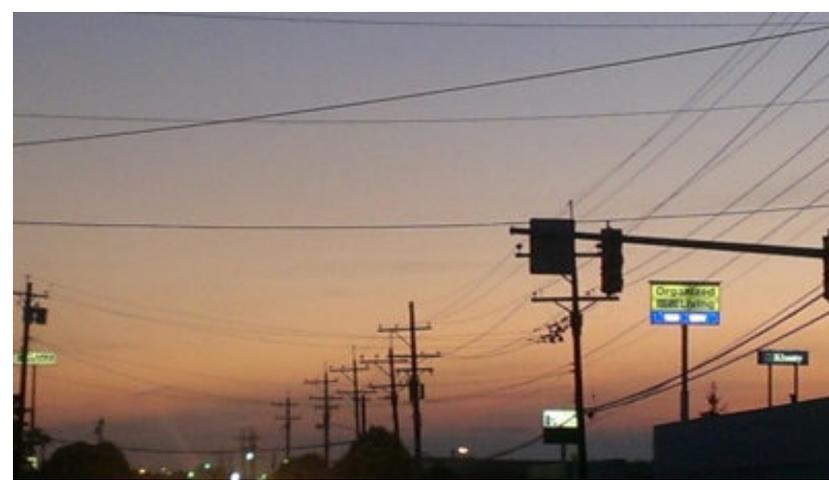
Pretty cool, eh? God did that.

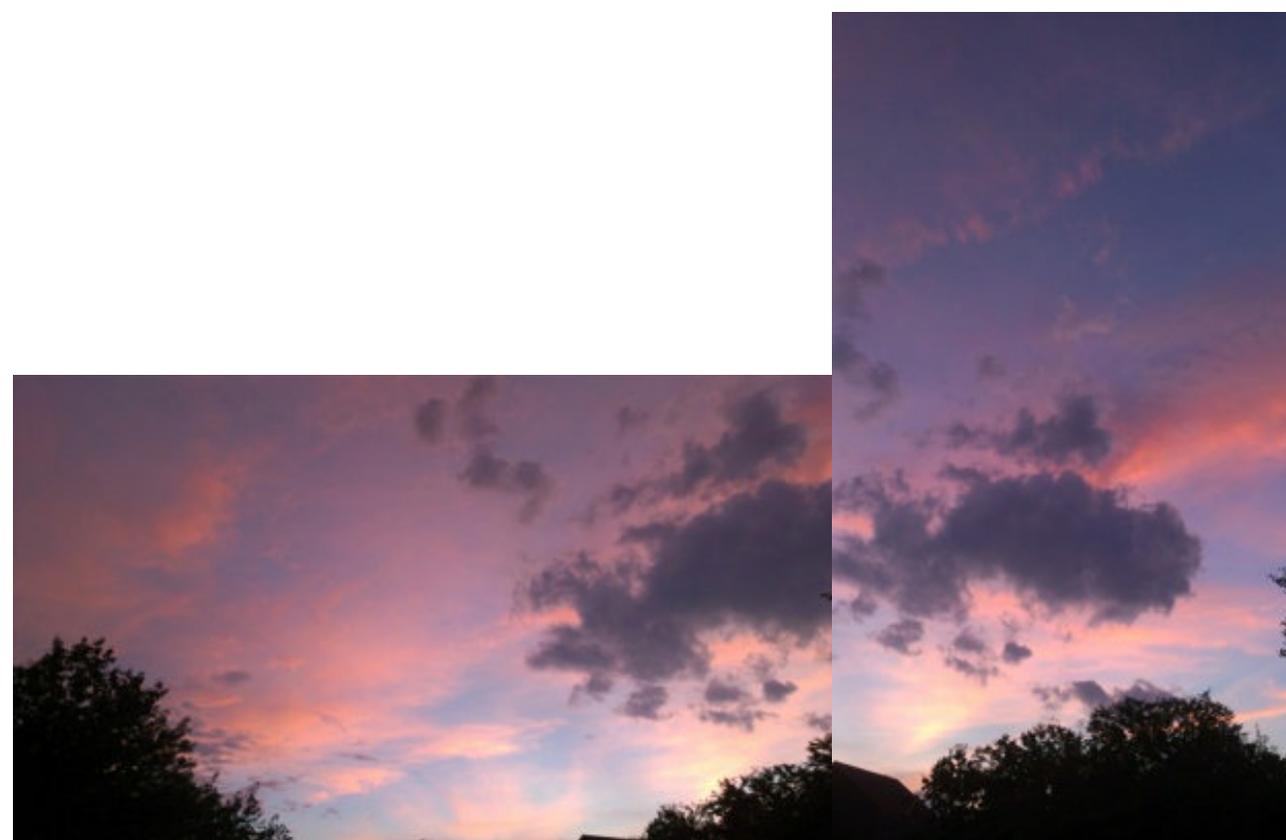
And, God has been doing that since before our Lord Jesus Christ rested, on the same shore as me and my pilgrim partner, and gazed upon a similar sunrise. Seeing this incredible event of God's

creation through the eyes of JESUS...Wow. Our Lord saw this. The apostles saw this. Mary of Magdala saw this in her town a few miles down from where I SAT. They saw such sunrises *with* Jesus, and also after His ascension. What comfort the disciples must have felt, watching this sunrise, after experiencing the Paschal Mystery. How much affirmation and joy the risen Lord must have given them through His power over nature's sunrise. They felt the joy and the peace that I did. It is a joy and a peace that fuels you for the challenges of the day. This encounter with our Living God was, perhaps, one of the most profoundly spiritual moments on my pilgrimage.

AND, as I settled back into my routine at home, it occurred to me that EVERY DAY God provides a majestic sunrise and sunset...and I have been missing it in the busy-ness of my daily routine. I am now much more aware of the sunsets. Thankfully I have been sleeping well through the sunrises for the time being. But, I make an effort to enjoy the display of light and color God performs at each sunset. The first night I became really in-tuned to the Cincinnati sunset, I even chased it down in my car! Here are some photos of God's grace reigning down right here in my little corner of the world.







Even before the time of Jesus, a humble shepherd boy and future king enjoyed the splendor of God's twice daily light show. I think our ancestor David says it best:

*Distant peoples stand in awe of your marvels;  
the places of morning and evening you make resound with joy.*

Psalm 65:9

Thank you, good and gracious God, for bringing joy to all who cast their eyes into the heavens as they begin and end their days! All praise and glory to our God!

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This contribution is available at <http://coffeenapsandbooks.wordpress.com/2014/07/01/a-daily-dose-of-joy-twice-daily-if-you-really-pay-attention/>  
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## Love of God and Dog [at Quiet Consecration]

Before anyone takes me to task may I simply state that I accept the Churches teachings on animals, our responsibility towards our good stewardship towards them and that they are not on the same plane as importance of creation as human beings.

I am, in other words, a Faithful Catholic.

That being said, I had a huge scare today because Duffy started vomiting and stopped eating. I had been told by his doctor that if that happened he was to be rushed in as soon as possible. Easy, unless it happens when I am at work which is 2 hours away from home and the only person in the house with him is my mom who does not have a car.

Easy, if it doesn't happen when the computer phone system goes down at work, two of the Records Management Systems start acting like a system one put together on a Commodore 64.

Easy, if you don't love your fur baby like he is your child because the five children you were destined to give birth to ended up waiting for you in heaven.

With all this happening at once I did what any level headed, Catechetically sound, professed lay Dominican would do.

I started to cry and called my brother. He called his son, Ryan and Ryan went and got Mom and Duffy, taking them both to the veterinarian who told us that the antibiotics I had been giving him should not be given to him on an empty stomach and sent us home free of charge because they had forgotten to tell me that bit of information.

Eventually, of course, I stopped crying long enough to take a phone call from my friend Laura. The call came as my level of anxiety and panic was rising and my first thought when I saw her name come up on my caller ID was "Oh no, she is going to want me to take her service commitment or something'.

I took the call because I have been taught to take calls no matter how I feel or what I am doing, so even though I was convinced the call would mean extra work for me I took it.

Was I wrong? Of course I was - why would that not be a surprise?

Laura was calling me only to hear my voice - you know why?

Laura was told today that her brother has about 30 days to live.

To describe the way I felt as two inches tall is being kind. I immediately thought of my panic over

my Scottish Terrier having gall bladder problems and thought, "you have no problems". Laura and I talked about how fabulous it is to be sober and to be in the position of being able to support someone we love during the last leg of their earthly journey. We discussed how blessed she is because she has given her brother such an amazing gift - her sobriety. He does not have to worry about her any more and he knows he can go on to meet Jesus without having to worry about his little sister. We cried, we laughed at ourselves and we ended the call - and I realized my purpose was to ask my Catholic family to pray for her because she has a row to hoe ahead of her. What I have is a sick dog.

There is a big difference.

Every day God reveals to me more and more how I have to learn to trust Him. Every day, thinking I have given Him my whole heart and soul, I get an example of how much deeper I need to go, how much more of myself I must be willing to hand over to Him without reservation.

My dog is my fur baby; of that, there is no doubt. I love him and do not want to lose him.

But Jesus Christ is my Lord, my Savior, my Creator, my reason for being. If He ever stopped thinking about me I would cease to exist - not die. CEASE to BE.

He loves me. He suffered and died for me. He founded a Church for me. For me He instituted the Sacraments.

He deserves my full love and attention, so I am going to try and remember that the next time I want to panic because my dog is sick.

Lord, let me remember who and what I am....but more importantly? Let me remember who and what HE is because when I forget that, when my dog becomes more important than God, I will be lost again.

Oh, and thank you for all your prayers - St Francis, pray for us!

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2014/07/love-of-god-and-dog.html>  
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# Practicing the Presence of God [at From the Pulpit of my Life]

One thing I ask of the Lord,  
This I seek:  
To dwell in the house of the Lord  
All the days of my life,  
That I may gaze on the loveliness of the Lord  
And contemplate his temple.

In this excerpt from Psalm 27 the word *temple* reminds me of a truth that I learned as a child. We, who are baptized, are “temples of the Holy Spirit.” God makes a dwelling place within us. We are sanctified by his indwelling presence. This is truly awesome to contemplate, but how often do I do so?

There is a devotion to God’s indwelling presence, encouraged by the Carmelite, Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection. A book called *The Practice of the Presence of God* is a collection of his writings and sayings about this devotion. It is very simple. The idea is to focus our mind on God’s presence. Brother Lawrence gives this several other names. These are a few:

- a general and loving awareness of God
- attention to God
- silent conversation with God
- the soul’s life and peace

Brother Lawrence recommended practicing this awareness with diligence. We are to recollect our mind, no matter how briefly, before starting a task or any activity. He suggests continuing the awareness throughout the activity. This might be easier for someone doing manual work than for someone doing intellectually demanding work. But, no matter, the point is to make the effort regardless. Then, when the task is completed, return to the inner awareness of God’s presence.

The result of practicing this discipline, according to Brother Lawrence, is a deep, abiding intimacy with God, that deepens faith, strengthens hope, and inflames love. He cautions that not everyone will reach an advanced state, but God ordinarily blesses those who are disposed to receive this gift. This means simply having the desire and the right attitude.

Do you want to get started on this path? Repeating the verses of Psalm 27, is, I believe, a good way to begin.

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## Samson [at Bible Meditations]



Strong-man Samson was betrayed by beautiful Delilah, according to the popularized version of the Bible story. But perhaps he was betrayed by his own foolishness. Three times Delilah begged Samson to tell her the secret of his strength, which was in his uncut hair. Three times he gave fictitious reasons. Delilah always acted on the information he gave her and baited him by crying that his enemies were attacking. *Three times*. Could he have expected her to do anything differently the fourth time when he told her the truth? Samson was certainly foolish to trust someone who had proven herself consistently untrustworthy in the past.

We can be just as foolish at times. A loved one hurts us again and again we go back for more. *This time it'll be different*, we think. *He promised never to do it again*. Or we clean up the messes our loved ones create over and over again. Whether we continue to help them do the homework they consistently put off until the last minute, or bail them out of DUI after DUI, if nothing changes, nothing changes.

Yes, everybody deserves a second chance, but when we continually feel like victims, it might help us to see how we contribute to our own victimization. What is there in us that is willing to play the same part repeatedly after being disappointed the fourth, fifth, or twentieth time? Changing our behavior doesn't mean we stop loving the people who repeatedly let us down. It doesn't mean we don't forgive them. But love and forgiveness does not mean allowing ourselves to be treated like a doormat. Besides, if those we care about continue to repeat self-defeating behavior, is our "help" really helping them? People have little motivation to change when they never experience the consequences of their own poor choices. It doesn't help our loved ones when we allow them to take advantage of us, and it certainly isn't healthy for us.

In spite of his foolishness—Samson ultimately played the part God had in mind for him to play. The good news is, so can we. Following God’s plan for our lives is in the best interest of ourselves and those we love.

Prayer: Lord, give me the clarity to see my part in my troubles and the willingness to change.

Reflection: What circumstances seems to be victimizing you? How might you be contributing to the situation? What options are available to you?

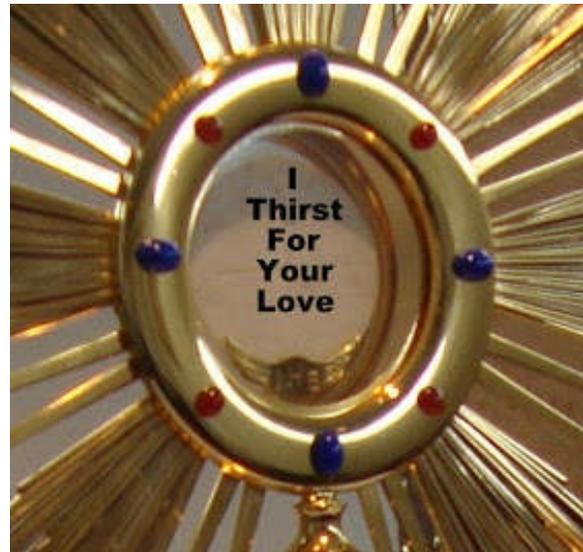
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# I Thirst For Your Love! [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

[What follows is the *Introduction* to my recently released book, *I Thirst for Your Love*. The book includes contributions from Dom Mark Daniel Kirby, O.S.B. Copies can be purchased [here](#) and [here](#).]



The time for mincing words is over.

The most significant crisis in the Catholic Church today, from which all the other problems we are experiencing flow, is the fact that an overwhelming majority of those identifying themselves as Catholic, no longer believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is really, truly and substantially present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Blessed Sacrament!

The sad but truthful reality is that in far too many of our Catholic parishes we have lost the sense of the sacred and an appreciation for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that are both essential for fostering and maintaining a belief in the Real Presence.

How can that be?

Our Church's teachings on the Eucharist are long standing, clear and include the following: the

Eucharist must be the source and center of our daily lives; whenever possible Catholic Churches are to keep their doors open for some period of time each day to facilitate visits before the Blessed Sacrament; pastors are to encourage such visits; they are also to promote and encourage their parishioners' participation in Eucharistic Adoration, setting an example for their flock by doing so themselves; and they are to support the establishment and continuation of regional chapels of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration when their own parishes are unable to sustain such a vital devotion solely by themselves.

As someone who has spent more than a dozen years coordinating Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration in a local parish and encouraging this devotion elsewhere, it has been difficult to understand at times why there is so much reluctance, if not outright opposition, to promoting Adoration - this despite our Lord's invitation for us to do so and the overwhelming evidence of the fruits that pour forth from such devotion.

The late Apostle of the Eucharist, Father John Hardon, S.J., realized 'that everything, everything, quote EVERYTHING of our faith (indeed the virtue of faith itself) depends on our faith in God being really present with us today in both His human and Divine nature, united in His Divine Person in the Holy Eucharist'.

Each of us must come to that same realization if we and those around us are to be the holy people God has called us to be.

Instead of cursing this darkness, ignorance and disbelief, it's time to do something affirmative to console Our Lord and to help rediscover a sense of the 'sacred' and of 'awe and amazement' in this gift of the Eucharist, as Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI had so frequently urged us to do.

We do not need any more study groups or committees or commissions in our Church. All lukewarmness toward or outright opposition to the promotion of Eucharistic Adoration and spirituality must cease. We need Bishops, priests, religious and laypeople to frequently get on their knees before their Eucharistic Lord. It is He, not any of us, Who will gift us with a deep, abiding, life-changing, sanctifying belief in His Real, Human and Divine Presence here among us. Everything else we need or think we need individually or as Church will flow from Him.

Stop a minute and ponder these Truths.

Our God does not need any of us, not even for a millisecond. Yet, as Jesus hung from the cross more than 2000 years ago, He let us know He was thirsty – not a physical thirst - but an unquenchable spiritual thirst as our Lord, Savior and Redeemer to be loved by those He created and for whose eternal benefit He died.

In the ensuing centuries, not enough of us have made sufficient effort to quench His thirst. For the most part, many of us ignore His plea to love Him as He loves us. He still thirsts for our love. He is still waiting for us to love Him! Has He not waited long enough? Why have so many of us been unwilling to quench His thirst?

There is only one credible and honest answer to that question - one that should make each of us uncomfortable but spur us to action:

If we really believed Jesus Christ was truly here with us, we would go visit Him. Nothing would prevent us from doing so. We would not permit anyone or anything to take precedence over Him. But we do not come as we ought because not enough of us believe He is here! We are the only ones who can quench His thirst. All we have to do is come into His Presence and tell Him we love Him! That's it! But most of us don't and won't.

He remains not only thirsty but heartbroken!

Shame on us for denying Him what He deserves, what He has asked of us and that which would be so very easy to give Him!

I am a simple man and can not offer a learned and theologically profound treatise on this subject. I am not qualified to do so. Moreover, such a book is not the type of writing those Our Lord longs to see, have the time or inclination to read.

Let me be frank.

Most of us spend little or no time on spiritual reading. We are one to two minute sound bite people. We do not like to read anything of any length. It is for those reasons that I kept the essays in this book brief – short sound bites intended to catch your attention and challenge you to come into His Presence or go there more frequently.

Mine is an uncomplicated approach. I invite the reader to take a reflective look at the issues raised in these short essays that I have divided into four basic themes: Lack of belief in the Real Presence; Adoration; the Priest as alter Christus; and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Wait a minute! If Popes, theologians, saints and brilliant lay folk have been unable to convince others to reverence, love and visit our Eucharistic God, then isn't it foolish and arrogant to think that anything a simple man may have to say on the subject will have any better results or bear any better fruit? Absolutely! It is absurd to think so. But for whatever His reason, this is the burden and passion God has placed on my heart. I must obey it.

In the end, the essays in this book are just words, observations and opinions of a simple sinful man and (thankfully) a faithful monk. But that is all we can do in response to God's never ending promptings and nudgings to share what He has placed in our hearts. Any value these words may have rests not in the men who typed and assembled them, but in He of Whom we write. We pray that by and through His power these inadequate words may penetrate, inspire and reignite the hearts of those He loves, for whose love He continues to thirst and whom He never ceases to invite into His Presence – ALL of us!

To have such a great gift, to have a God so easily accessible and not to reverence and appreciate that

Gift, is the greatest of all human failings.

Love Him! Reverence Him! Visit Him! Quench His thirst!

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This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2014/06/i-thirst-for-your-love.html>

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# Why sue over the mandate? [at Leaven For The Loaf]

With three days to go until the Supreme Court announces its decision in the Hobby Lobby & Conestoga Wood Products cases, time for a review: why even bother to sue the federal government over Obamacare's contraceptive mandate at all? Why not just go along?



Because religious liberty matters. It's not simply a matter of worship, taking place in a building once a week. The mandate forces the question of how Americans may exercise their beliefs in everyday life. If an American holds the religiously-based belief that contraception and abortion are immoral, can that American be forced to pay for them? How about a business owner who wants to provide employees with health insurance, but on religious grounds wants no part of helping fund contraception and abortion as "preventive care"?

Two years ago, the Catholic bishops of the United States filed twelve lawsuits challenging the mandate. Read Mary Ann Glendon's [Why the Bishops are Suing the Government](#), written in May 2012. The issues she described then are still unsettled today.

***"The main goal of the mandate is not, as HHS claimed, to protect women's health. It is rather a move to conscript religious organizations into a political agenda, forcing them to facilitate and fund services that violate their beliefs, within their own institutions. The media have implied all along that the dispute is mainly of concern to a Catholic minority with peculiar views about human sexuality. But religious leaders of all faiths have been quick to see that what is involved is a flagrant violation of religious freedom. That's why former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister, declared, 'We're all Catholics now.'"***

How about people with religious beliefs who don't work for a religious organization? That's where Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Products come in. Those are two companies that don't qualify in any way for the Obama Administration's "accommodations" on the mandate. They're secular businesses. The owners reluctantly filed suit against the mandate, because there seems to be no room under Obamacare for them to provide health insurance for their employees while having their own religious beliefs expected.

Religious liberty, or mere freedom to worship? The First Amendment's free speech guarantee got a very qualified endorsement by the Supreme Court in the recent buffer zone case. Let's see how narrowly another aspect of the Amendment is viewed by the Court on Monday.

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This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2014/06/27/why-sue-over-contraceptive-mandate/>  
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# Romans 4 and the Sacraments [at Washed, Sanctified and Justified]

## Romans 4

### King James Version (KJV)

**1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?**

Abraham is our father, according to the flesh. The Apostle asks, "what has he found"?

**2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.**

Now, he asks, "did Abraham justify himself?" If he did, then more power to him, but it is not of God.

**3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**

Now, he quotes Gen 15:6, **Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**

and he begins to explain what that means.

**4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.**

This is a reference to the Jew. The Jews had made an agreement with God. They would do what He commanded and He would save them:

*Ex 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:*

*6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

*7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.*

*8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And*

*Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.*

**5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.**

But Abraham was born way before God made that covenant with the Israelites. Therefore, Abraham did not work for debt. But for faith. As the Scripture says:

*Genesis 26:5*

*Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*

And this ties the Catholic back to Abraham. We also work because of our faith in God.

**6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,**

**7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.**

**8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.**

David is one of the circumcised. But this is a reference, not to the covenant of works. But to the covenant of reconciliation. It is to one specific incidence that this refers:

*2 Sam 12:13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*

David confessed his sin to God's human representative and God forgave him. It is the first confession on record. David confessed through a priest, the same as we confess in the New Testament Church.

*2 Corinthians 5:18*

*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*

No one can deny that David did many works. But here, in his confession, all he did was believe in God's mercy. That is what Catholics do when we attend the Sacraments.

**9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.**

Is this reconciliation only offered to the Israelites. By no means. Abraham was not an Israelite. He was not even circumcised yet, when God saw his faith at work.

**10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.**

**11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:**

This is a prophecy which showed that even the gentiles would be justified by faith.

**12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.**

That pretty much repeats what I just said. We, like Abraham, believe and are imputed righteousness, in the Sacraments of Jesus Christ.

**13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.**

The promise of God, then, was restricted to the Israelites but to the whole world, including the Israelites who believed God's promises:

*Hebrews 9:15*

*King James Version (KJV)*

*15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

**14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:**

Here, St. Paul is contrasting the Old Testament with the New Testament.

The Old Testament is the Law.

The New Testament is the Faith.

Those who followed the Old Testament were not members of the body of Christ. They were not

born again, nor could they be, because the Spirit was not yet given. Therefore Scripture says: *Heb 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:*

So, even though they did everything by faith which they were supposed to do, they did not inherit the promise UNTIL Jesus died upon the Cross and established the Sacraments with His Blood.

**15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.**

There was no ministry of reconciliation in the Old Testament. David's reconciliation was the exception and it was to show the blessedness to come. It was a foreshadowing of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,**

Again, this explains why Catholics are children of Abraham. Because we believe and it is counted to us righteousness in the Sacraments.

**17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.**

**18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.**

That is the promise which God made to Abraham.

**19 And being not weak in faith,**

and Abraham, believed God.

**he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:**

**20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;**

**21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.**

And believing God, even though there were many obstacles, he worked. Believing God, he performed.

**22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.**

And it was imputed to him righteousness. Just as it is imputed to the Catholic, who believing the promises of God, approaches the font of grace and submits to the Sacraments, calling on his name.

**23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;**

**24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;**

**25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.**

And that was not written for Abraham alone, but for us, who would receive the promise of the Holy Spirit of the Sacraments of Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:37-39

King James Version (KJV)

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Hebrews 12:18-24

King James Version (KJV)

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that

the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Sincerely,

De Maria

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This contribution is available at <http://washedsanctifiedandjustified.blogspot.com/2014/06/romans-4-and-sacraments.html>

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## Swimming [at Busy Catholic Moms]

Between swimming lessons and just splashing around, we've been spending a lot of time at the



pool. Our city pool has been upgraded in the past few years to include a lazy river, a water playground and two big slides in addition to the regular pool.

As we were floating around the lazy river yesterday, with no place to rush off to and the water finally warm enough to enjoy without shivering, I truly felt lazy. My kids weren't fighting or asking for a snack – they were actually smiling, joking and laughing with each other and my heart was at peace. It made me think about how sometimes in our lives we are able to float along with relatively few waves. No large problems, no rough waters. In fact, sometimes it may be such a slow float, so routine, that we come bored or at least complacent.

Our lazy river also features a small waterfall that I typically try to avoid because I don't care for water pounding down on my head. But sometimes, like when my son drags me over the waterfall or I inadvertent drift that way, I end up drenched. In the same way, we can suddenly find ourselves in an unexpected place where we were just previously floating along.

We also have two slides that reach off the ground by three or four stories. One of the slides is open and has a slow loop, while the other is a bit faster and is enclosed so it is entirely in the dark. When my youngest daughter found out that she was tall enough to go down the slides this year, she asked me to accompany her on her first slide. So we got into a double tube and glided on down, but because of the big difference in our sizes, when we got to the bottom, I ended up flipping the tube. Little Miss panicked for just a minute but then she popped her head up and grabbed hold of the tube. She immediately requested that next time, she slide with her sister instead!

Once again, I am reminded how there are times in our lives when we have a difficult task ahead of us. . Sometimes we can see slightly ahead of us and roll with the twists and turns, and then sometimes we are completely in the dark with no idea of what to expect. And sometimes, even when we can see what is ahead of us, we hit an unexpected bump and our lives are turned upside down. But we have to pop our heads up and grab hold of the nearest Raft.

But whichever way the currents pull us – whether slow and lazy or rough and rocky – we are

blessed to have a Lifeguard watching out for us. He is blowing the whistle when we start to cross the line. He is watching over us so that we don't get in too deep. He is always watching over us, ready to pull us out and help us along. Sometimes He waits for us to ask for His help but He is always there for us, looking after our eternal lives and ready to pull us into the safety of His arms.

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## David's Prayer [at A Still Small Voice]

Around a year ago, I was blessed to be able to meet this man named David. For a year now, he has never left my mind or my prayers.

I went on this service camp called the Real World, where you experience the world in a very real manner. Yes, it was uncomfortable and I'm a tad bit scared to go again this year, but what happened on that service camp can never compare to anything I have ever done or experienced in my life.

One of the real situations we encountered was homelessness. Now we not only lived in "poverty" (meals were guaranteed, health was protected) but we had the privilege to encounter poverty in its realest terms.

On one of the days, we went to St. Vincent's to help prepare meals, clean transportation, finalize a play ground and so forth depending on which group you were in, which was good, yes? But to me, that wasn't really uncomfortable, I had my group; we were having a good time cutting humongous Rice Crispi's and making bags, but that's not how Jesus broke my heart.

My heart broke encountering the very real people that live this very real life. It was said multiple times that a bag of food can go such a long way, but a "hello, my names Zoë, what's yours?" can go even further.

And that proved to be true.

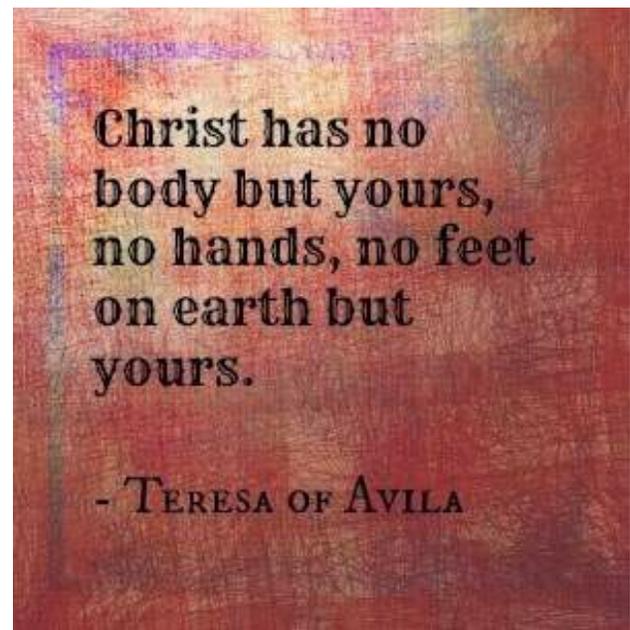
After helping prepare the bagged dinners, we went outside to wait in line like everybody else. When I finally got my food, I went sit down at this table. Across from me was this man who wore an American Bandana (I liked his taste), we talked for a while about how good the green beans

were and so forth. Not long after sitting there, something caught my attention - a miraculous medal hanging around his neck. Without thinking I told him of how much I liked his necklace and then that started a very eye opening conversation (who says Mary doesn't bring her children to Christ again?!)

What was happening was a crazy, beautiful miracle. I learned that this man, David, who was never religious before, was converting to Catholicism. Not to forget that out of ALL of the people that were there who I could've sat by, I ended up sitting by a man who desired to convert to the Catholic Faith... as I did 2 years ago.

He said, among many things, of how much he desired the Truth. He had no one and no home to go to and he stated that when you have nothing, Christ truly makes Himself everything. When he was talking he started to cry, of how much it hurts and how hopeless everything seems to be but he found the Truth and he clung to it with everything. I saw the pain in that man's tears, but not only did I find pain, I found redemption. How rich is the man, who has nothing but has found Everything?

Through this man, Christ gave me so much *so much* and I realized that whenever you completely give yourself to others out of the love and mercy of Christ, He gives it right back to you but in a hundredfold. You can never give more than what Christ wants you to receive from Him.



**Christ has no  
body but yours,  
no hands, no feet  
on earth but  
yours.**

- TERESA OF AVILA

We talked some more - he told me how he was going on an interview for RCIA that coming Sunday and where (along with more personal stuff) and then the time came where he had to go. I gave him my St. Michael medal and I told him that I was going to try to be at the Easter Vigil, on which he would be welcomed Home.

And God knows how much I tried; I called the church he told me he was attending on several occasions. I got in touch with the man and I asked about David, and he told me that he did have a David in his class and that he would tell him I called, but I didn't want that. I wanted to correspond with David. I called again and again, I even emailed them and the lady emailed back that she would forward the message to RCIA coordinator.

However, I didn't get anything. No one ever responded after that. So the only thing I could find myself do is simply pray.

After we finished at St. Vincent's we went to the Missionaries of Charity to give Adoration to Christ, in the most Blessed Eucharist. It was there that I offered and wrote a prayer that I still pray from time to time and I would like to share it with y'all.

(Obviously I'm not a pro at beautifully, poetic prayers, but this is it in its rawest form.)

*I pray intentionally today, as with hopefully my days to come, for David. I ask that you lead him to safety but most importantly to You, oh Lord. Make his heart burn for the Truth that you have given us. Let him desire the goods and fruitfulness of himself, as well as the others he has come in contact with. May he be apart of the evangelization of our Catholic Faith to the homeless community. I hope that one day I will be able to see him again soon and under better circumstances than he has been. I give you thanks for Your protection over him thus far and I ask it ever the more for today and everyday. I give You thanks that I was able to meet him, so that also my heart could be open, but first torn apart, to Your love and Your need for my hands and feet. I ask that You will make your presence known to him through the ways which he is living. Give him a hope, a reason to live. - You are the ways to which all hope and reasons come from. Let it be known to him of Your great mercy and abundant love for him. "For Your mercy endures forever and your love is from age to age to those who fear Him." I am so overly joy filled that he has recognized this thirst for the only One who is able to quench it. He will find you there and make it his home, never wanting anything more but to have this pure and*

*true faith in You. I love you so much dear Lord, and I give my life so that I may be able to authentically care and love my brothers and sisters who thirst for You, but under different stances of life. I hope I let You shine today and I ask that I would become so little that You may become in me who I was created to be. Keep us safe, Holy Mother, and show us how to love like Christ.*

*St. Michael the Archangel, pray for us.”*

What I experienced that week was not comfortable, it was not just some other retreat but rather it was a way for me to actually give myself to others through the vulnerability I was placed in. That week for me was extremely tough but I have never been in more of a humble state - ever.

Meeting David proved to be one of the most humbling experiences of my life. Not because he was in physical poverty, but because I realized that I was the one in spiritual poverty. Through David I realized how much I actually lack, an how selfish and ungrateful I am.

God puts us in situations of vulnerability to show us how much He wants to be EVERYTHING - to depend on Him. He asks us to serve simply so that while He is giving through us He is also giving to us.

There is no experience in this world more humbling and fulfilling than that of giving yourself all to Christ and through Christ for others - in the way in which He calls.

I ask that you please pray for David and also all those out there who are lost and are trying to find their way back Home. Please pray for me, that I will have the courage to spread the faith and be proud of the faith that I have been given and not to cower away from opportunities of humility and evangelization.

Let this man be an example of Christ's love and mercy for us.

May God bless and Mary protect.

*You  
and only You  
are my great Dependency.*

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven,  
but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

- Matthew 7:21

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# Come Holy Spirit, Grant me the Spirit of Piety [at Mother of the Fiat]



***“That I may find the service of God sweet and amiable”***

Service to God simply means to submit to Gods will for you at all times. That sounds easy enough you may be thinking, but is it? As a mother of seven children fulfilling Gods will is hard work and it is made more difficult if I am lacking the Gift of Piety. What does piety mean and why is it one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Pope Francis tells us that the gift of piety comes from within. It is a relation lived with the heart: it is a friendship with God, given us by Jesus; a friendship that changes our lives and fills us with enthusiasm and joy.

During the last four years I have been fighting a rare form of cancer. This walk with cancer has deepened my prayer life. My life, united with Jesus has made me more aware that my life is completely in the hands of my Loving Father in heaven. That nothing happens to me without His consent. I now know that without God I am nothing. Through the sacrament of baptism we become His children and He is our father. As a child loves his father we too love God and this love for God impels us to please Him in all things. For me that is to



fulfill my vocation as wife and mother as perfectly as I can. When we

allow our souls to be guided by the Spirit of Piety we are enabled to promptly and with ease to fulfill our daily obligations. For example, when I have to get up in the middle of the night with my child I can do so with joy and love and offer up to Jesus the loss of sleep for the salvation of souls. The gift of piety aids all those who battle illness, it helps us to be more kind and to turn to prayer when we are scared or discouraged. Piety shows forth in all our actions. It speaks to the world that we are Christians. It helps us treat others who may irritate us, with kindness or a smile. Why is this. Love. When piety touches love it activates the virtues and we begin to live for Jesus with joy and gratitude, we are saints in the making.

The Blessed Mother models piety as she holds her Son, her Baby, Her God on her lap after He was taken down from the cross. As one gazes at the “Pieta” you see a Mother filled with sorrow as she holds her son. She is filled with sorrow but not overcome by sorrow. Her heart is breaking and tears fall but she is in control of all her emotions as always. Piety was perfected in the Blessed Mother because she gave her “Fiat” to God. That one word was uttered out of Love and it brought her all the way to Calvary alongside Her Son Jesus. Let us pray for the gift of piety daily so we can give our “Fiat” to Jesus in whatever He may ask of us. Let us pray that we can be more like Jesus who fulfilled the will of his Father in all things even when he uttered the words “Not my will, but yours be done” in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Let us pray together; Come Holy Spirit and breath upon us Your spirit of Piety and fill our hearts with the spirit of filial love.

“Likewise the spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.” Romans 8:26

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## **This one is about chickens. Yes, chickens. [at crucesignatiblog]**

A bit of back-story first: a few weeks ago we moved our laying hens into their movable summer coop, which we tow ahead every few days. It allows them more fresh grass to eat than they would get at their winter coop. Around the summer coop we set up an electric fence which keeps the coyotes at bay. In a nearby pen, we also keep several llamas and alpacas. Due to their hatred of anything dog-like, they will chase coyotes away as well. However, we had a small problem with our chickens this year.

Chickens are creatures of habit, and shortly after we moved them out of the winter coop, three or four hens decided they wanted to go back. So they hopped over the electric fence and started on their way. We had already closed up the winter coop by that time, so they ended up living on whatever they could find around the barnyard. Now for the interesting part.

As I was heading out on my walk today I heard one of these chickens making a good deal of noise in the llama and alpaca pen. I walked a little closer to the fence so that I could find out what the matter was. I saw a coyote running away with a chicken in his mouth, and a llama chasing him. Once the coyote saw me climbing over the fence, he dropped the chicken and ran off with a little clump of feathers in his mouth. Sadly, the damage had already been done and the chicken was dead.

So what did I see in all this that made me want to tell you about it? Permit me to use a little analogy scenario. Say the summer coop, guarded by the electric fence, are the Catholic Church and Her teachings. The chicken is a soul and the winter coop is its former way of life; that is, before making its home in the Church. The llama is this soul's guardian angel and the coyote is the devil (hey, its just an analogy!). When a soul ignores the Church's teachings and hops over them as though they are only optional, it's aim (though seemingly unintentional) is to go back to it's old way of life. The soul can try to make do and live the best it can, but nonetheless, outside the Church it is far more weak and vulnerable. It's guardian angel can only protect it from so much before the devil claims it for himself.

The chicken's story had a rough ending: it is dead and nothing can bring it back. But for Catholics who have left the Church there is still a chance; they can still come home and make peace with God. Please, if you are a Catholic who has been away from the Church for a long time, know that God still loves you and wants you to belong to His son's one flock. God bless you!

“Rend your heart  
and not your garments.  
Return to the Lord your God,  
for he is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and abounding in love,

and he relents from sending calamity.”

Joel 2:13, NIV

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This contribution is available at <http://crucesignatiblog.wordpress.com/2014/06/30/this-one-is-about-chickens-yes-chickens/>

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## Nothing Else Really Matters [at bukas palad]



Year A / Ordinary Time / Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul

Readings: Acts 12.1-11 / Psalm 33 (R/v 8) / 2 Tim 4.6-8, 17-18 / Matthew 16.13-19

Don't we all need a hero or two in our lives?

Someone whose life encourages us to overcome our limitations whatever they are. Someone whose life-story gives us hope to succeed, especially when the odds are against us. May be, even someone whose history challenges us to rise above the discrimination and injustices we face because others judge us lesser for being different, for saying and doing the unusual, or for having made mistakes in our past.

Perhaps, our need for a hero or two is much simpler: to show us how to better live and love as a good parent, a gracious friend, a caring employer, an exemplary worker, or a diligent student.

I believe we each have a hero whose life-story we return to repeatedly. His life or her example is a wellspring from which you and I draw inspiration, wisdom and example to live our lives well.

The Church offers us heroes too. We call them saints. Today, we remember and celebrate two of

them, Peter and Paul.

Peter, first among the Apostles, served the early Jewish converts by gathering them as the Church to worship Jesus as Lord and Savior. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, converted many by preaching that Jesus is the Christ who saves, and for them established the first Christian communities in Corinth, Ephesus and Galatia.

Why does the Church invite us to commemorate the lives of Peter and Paul? Because they proclaimed and taught the Good News, and so established the beginnings of what we profess to be the Catholic Christian faith. Our Church is founded on this faith. And through the Church's teachings and tradition, we live and move and have our Catholic way of living and loving in this Church. In this celebration, we are especially thankful that they founded the Church through their martyrdom.

I don't know about you but I have often found it difficult to identify with Peter and Paul as I go about trying to live my Christian life. When I read the Bible, David's contrition before God inspires me, Mary's openness to God humbles me, and John's friendship with Jesus enlivens me.

For me, however, Peter and Paul are but the really great apostles and martyrs. Their apostolic lives and their zealous deeds are larger than life, at the least the ordinary life I live. Perhaps, you feel the same way about them. At best, we probably admire them, and from a distance. On a feast like today's, I have often thought, "There's no way I can be like them."

But I want to challenge us to put aside this mindset; it is not helpful in approaching today's solemnity. It blinds us to the real gift Peter and Paul's life-stories can give us for Christian living. We need another lens to look at them: it should not focus only on what they achieved or how they died for the faith. Rather, this lens should help us focus more attentively on what is so often overlooked in a celebration like today's. What we need to look for that almost invisible detail of what they first received from God: mercy.

If Peter and Paul are here, they would be the first to tell us that they have nothing to be proud about. They would tell us this because they know who they were. Cowardly Peter who denied his best friend three times and self-righteous Paul who persecuted and imprisoned Jesus' first

followers. They know they are flawed individuals.

But Peter and Paul would ask us to remember that Jesus called and gifted them in God's mercy with transformed lives. God chose Peter in Jesus to be the Church's foundation: "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church." And God chose Paul in Jesus to be his chosen instrument to proclaim his name to the Gentiles (Acts 9.15). Though they were hardly wise, all knowing, all good, God chose them. God chose them precisely because they were ordinary men who had made mistakes.

What Peter and Paul discovered in being chosen is that God's mercy Jesus taught about truly saves the sinner. Jesus, who identifies himself to Peter as the betrayed friend and to Paul as the persecuted Lord, compassionately reaches out to save them from guilt, despair and self-doubt. And saving them meant transforming them into his collaborators to make God's saving love real for Jews and Gentiles.

The Christian truth we celebrate today is that God's mercy does indeed save, and it always saves when we encounter Jesus. This is why Peter and Paul's lives must really matter to you and me. Through their humanly flawed but divinely graced lives, we—who are flawed too—are also being graced with God's mercy, and its promised transformation as our salvation. This is why Pope Francis always says, "God never tires of forgiving. Never!" We will poorer if we see today's celebration as just another Sunday obligation to fulfill because we will miss this gift of God's mercy completely.

We probably identify easily with the impetuous Peter who desires to come to Jesus on the water but panics and sinks when the seas get rough, or the zealous Paul whose forthrightness about the faith sometimes upset others. But I suspect it is harder for us experience God's mercy because we judge our human foibles, weaknesses and sinfulness more harshly than God. And, yet, don't we always yearn for God's saving mercy?

Where can we experience God's mercy? The Trappist monks at Spencer Abbey in Massachusetts offer us an answer. They tell us that it is the very place wherein we experience things falling apart in our lives. This space of fragmentation is where we truly become more open, more available to God's mercy. Consider Peter in his betrayal and Paul in his time of conversion. The moment when things fall apart in our lives is the graced time when we are most opened to God's mercy in Jesus

and to the good news that it will transform us.

I'd like to suggest that this is the real heroism Peter and Paul model for us. It is their willingness to embrace their vulnerability when things fall apart in life. Their vulnerability is the graced space for God's mercy to act in their lives.

Mercy that gave Peter courage to bear witness when it counted and wisdom to set up and lead the infant church. And mercy that taught Paul to trust Jesus's forgiveness and to go forth to preach about Jesus in the face of inevitable persecution and death. And what about you and me: *where will we let God's mercy take us?*

This is why it is so important in our everyday lives to pay attention to Jesus' question to Peter, "Who do you say I am?" It is a question couched in God's mercy. It is God's hope-filled question that will open us up to God's desire to save us in Jesus.

"Who do you say that I am? Who am I for you? What is your experience of me in your life, in your history? How do you experience me now?" Jesus whispers these questions to each of us in the depths of our hearts, at every moment each day. What will you and I answer?

Perhaps when we dare to admit how Jesus' question really opens us up to God because all our categories of who our Lord is will begin to fall part in the face of his love, then we can be like Peter and Paul. Like them, we will recognize ourselves as sinners desperately—yes, desperately—beloved by God in Jesus.

Then with Peter we can say, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God," and with Paul, "All I want is to know you, Christ Jesus, and to experience the power flowing from your resurrection" (Philippians 3.10). And with these, nothing else really matters.

*Preached at St Ignatius Church, Singapore* photo: god's mercy by willy sukumoto

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This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.sg/2014/06/homily-nothing-else-really-matters.html>  
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## Thoughts on Hiddenness [at beautiful thorns]

Last week I was watching a documentary put on by the Imagine Sisters giving us a glimpse into the lives of several religious sisters from different orders. One of the sisters talked about working in a thrift store. While there she would ask customers if there was anything she could pray about for them. One woman she encountered and asked this question to said no because she was an athiest. This caused great sadness with the sister. She realized that if the woman didn't believe in God then the woman had no hope. She then heard God's still small voice telling her to meet the woman where she was at. The sister remembered that when the woman first came into the thrift store she saw a bird house she really liked but didn't have enough money for it. The sister then went over to the bird house and gave it to the woman as a gesture of God's love for her.

How often does God meet us where we are at too?! He could Lord his authority over us, reveal his glory and demand submission but he doesn't. He knows all our flaws and imperfections and ways we are not able to receive his love but he is so patient and only brings things up when he knows we are ready. He remains hidden until our hearts are open to receive.

There are times we may beg for him to speak and reveal himself to us regarding a certain situation. We do not always understand when we do not receive an answer right away. Oftentimes it is out of his great mercy if we do not hear from him right away or see what he is doing because he knows we are not ready to receive and obey. If we hear from him and we don't act on it we will be held more accountable. He never witholds from us for his own benefit but out of mercy and compassion for us. *"Blessed are those who have not seen and still believe!" - John 20:29*

Maybe the reason Jesus hides himself under the appearance of bread and wine in the Eucharist is so more people will receive him. If our eyes were truly open to the reality of the magnitude of his presence in the Eucharist, would we run in the other direction and proclaim that we are not worthy or would we still be able to humbly receive his love in that way and be willing to approach his throne of grace? This way he is able to work his grace in hidden and mysterious ways.



The Lord also often hides us, his people. There are some reading this that may feel unnoticed and almost hidden to the world. There are things you desire to do but almost feel invisible at times. That is because you are like a lucky penny that someone finds on the street and puts in their pocket but went unnoticed by many other people before. Like the person that notices a lucky penny, the Lord notices you and hides you in the palm

of his hand. He desires to do a work in you and transform you into his image. He reveals himself to you in secret and desires you to grow in intimacy with him.. You may feel hidden and ordinary to the world but the Lord calls you his beloved. The only thing you are required to do during this process is surrender and receive his love. Often times we can grow impatient and question why it is taking him so long and why is he doing it this way?!

*But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" - Romans 9:20.*

Let's not forget that he came to us as a little baby and remained hidden for 30 years. He does not have a problem with hiddenness if it will help us and bring God more glory in the end. So, let us surrender to the process, be content with hiddenness and at the proper time, the Lord will pull us out and display his glory through us.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.beautifulthorns.com/2014/06/thoughts-on-hiddenness.html>  
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# If I Knew Then - Reflection of a Wayward Catholic [at The Wayward Catholic]

One of the first things I did when I decided to find my way back to God was to read the Bible. This is something I had never done. I remember once as a teenager, perhaps when I was in college, picking it up and starting to read it but I didn't get very far. This time I had more motivation and

“I DO NOT JUDGE. OR YOU TOO WILL  
BE JUDGED. 2 FOR IN THE SAME WAY  
YOU JUDGE OTHERS. YOU WILL BE  
JUDGED. AND WITH THE MEASURE  
YOU USE. IT WILL BE MEASURED TO  
YOU.”

© matthew 7. niv

Designed by  
God's princess  
Debra

actually read the whole thing ... twice.

One of the first things I noticed was that the Bible is full of good advice. I am not just talking about spiritual advice, although there is plenty of that, but just plain old common sense advice on life. Whether it be relationships, work or business there is something for everyone. I look at the Bible as a collection of writings with good advice for everyone. Even if you are one who doesn't believe the Bible is real, that is is a elaborate myth written by people with some kind of agenda to promote religion, it is hard to argue that there is a wealth of knowledge inside it.

Yesterday's gospel reading is a good example:

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” – Matthew 7:1 -2 (NIV)

What does this passage tell us, especially the last eleven words? Time's up. It tells us that we will get back what we put into something. This is true whether we are dealing with people, work, faith or even writing blog posts. If we do everything half-assed then this is what we will get back. If we treat others like dirt, we can expect to get treated like dirt in return.

In these times, especially here in the US, individualism, Hedonism and minimalism are the norm. Here is a quote from Matthew Kelly's Book “Rediscovering Catholicism”:

**Individualism:** When most people today are faced with a decision, the question that seems to

dominate their inner dialogue is “What’s in it for me?”

**Hedonism:** Hedonism is the philosophy that emphasizes pleasure as the ultimate goal in life. The motto, the creed, the catch cry of the hedonist is, “If it feels good, do it!”

**Minimalism:** A minimalist is always seeking to exert the minimum effort and receive the maximum reward. ([You can get a free copy of this book here. I recommend both Catholics and non-Catholics get it.](#))

These three terms certainly described me for most of my adult life. I am definitely the product of the late sixties through the early eighties when these traits took over our country. Although in my defense, once I had children my individualism turned more to a “family-ism” where I tried to do everything for them. I truly believe that had I not ran away from the church and the teachings of Jesus, had I studies (or even just read the Bible) I would not have fallen for these three traits and become the sinner I did.

Back to Matthew 7, when we only care about “What’s in it for me?” we don’t care what we do or who we hurt to get what we want. It is also the same with “If it feels good, do it!” I could write a book about my experiences with that one but I don’t write porn, not that I didn’t in another life. And it should be evident that minimalism isn’t really the best course of action. When you do as little as possible, when you only care about what is in it for you or doing only what makes you feel good, you will get back what you put into any situation.

If the measure you use is to lie in order to have as many sexual partners as you can, then guess what? Others will lie to you. If you cheat, you will be cheated on, if don’t give 100% at your job, then your job won’t give 100% back to you. When we strive to be materialistic, hedonistic, a minimalist of an individualist, we spend more time worrying about those things than we do about the truly important things like our health, family, friends and our faith.

I’ll leave you with one more passage from Matthew.

“For this reason I say to you, [n]do not be worried about your[o]life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the [p]air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his [r]life? 28 And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But [s]seek first [t]His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be [u]added to you.

“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will [\[v\]](#)care for itself. [\[w\]](#)Each day has enough trouble of its own.” – Matthew 6:25 – 34 (NASB)

Isn't this good advice, even if you leave the source out of it?

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This contribution is available at [http://thewaywardcatholic.com/2014/06/24/if\\_i\\_knew\\_then/](http://thewaywardcatholic.com/2014/06/24/if_i_knew_then/)  
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## Slowing Down, Learning To Enjoy Life [at A blessed mess]

I get asked a lot about what was your favorite thing about Austria. Actually however my favorite thing was not something that I had to leave behind. It was something that I learned in Austria but I refuse to let it stop there.

I learned to

*slow down.*

I learned to slow down and actually

*enjoy life*

.

I think this is one of the most important lessons to ever learn! The fact is learning this is life changing.

In Europe they never push you to leave a restaurant. At least not normally. It is perfectly normal for you to go to a coffee shop, order coffee and then proceed to spend the next 3-5 hours there. They never rush you to leave. It is like this for dinner and pretty much any meal in a restaurant.

At first this was annoying. I was used to eating and dashing!

This only got worse when I got to Italy! We would have these wonderful meals prepared for us and dinner would last on average 3 hours! Sometimes I thought I would fall asleep at the table...

I learned a lot from this, I discovered that life is to be enjoyed. While I was there I also read a book,

*The Rhythm of Life*

by Mathew Kelly. This book, combined with the European pace of life that I was learning to live changed the way I looked at things.

It was no longer about how much I could get done.

It was about finding rhythm and joy in my daily life.

Strangely enough I discovered that with this my anxiety decreased.

Finding the rhythm in my life meant discovering peace in my days. The rhythm of life includes

adequate sleep and caring for yourself. It involves identifying and taking care of your legitimate needs, deepest desires and talents.

One of my legitimate needs I soon discovered was just to allow myself to soak in the moments!

To stop, just to pause and thank God for the day. To make sure I spent adequate time in prayer, time sleeping, time with friends.

In short I stopped treating myself so much like a machine and a lot more like a person!

A person who actually cared for her own

*legitimate needs*

and let me tell you it was a great discovery!

One that taught me to slow down, to just sip and enjoy coffee, to enjoy moments with friends, moments enjoying nature, moments with God!

Besides the fact that you feel 100% better when you care for your own physical, spiritual and emotional needs first!

Remember "We are human beings, not human doings."

Take time just to be.

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This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.com/2014/06/slowing-down-learning-to-enjoy-life.html>

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## Too Busy to Pray



*“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8*

Years ago, Mother Teresa was [speaking](#) to one of the bishops in India about the overwhelming amount of work they were doing. He said, “I am so busy, that I hardly have time to pray.” Mother Teresa replied, “If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy!”

We all wish we had more time to pray. Ask 100 Christians if they would like more prayer time and most would answer yes. But, most would say that a robust prayer life is difficult.

Getting up early, getting the kids off to school, an 8 hour job, dinner to prepare, homework, getting the kids off to bed, then crash, it’s exhausting! Where do you find even an extra minute for a prayer life.

In Philippians 4:6, we are asked to *have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.* Making request known to God doesn’t really take that much time, a petition while driving, sitting at your desk, waiting for a stop light:

*“Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.” Matthew 21:22*

“Jesus, look after my wife today as she travels for business.”

“Lord, be with me today as I interview for this needed job.”

“God, calm Bill as he goes into surgery and guide the surgeons hands.”

That wasn’t that difficult! And if we do this, Philippians 4:7 continues, *and then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

When Saint Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing” he didn’t mean that we should be hands folded, head bowed, and on our knees all day. He is talking about an attitude of inclusion, where God is with us in our thoughts throughout the day. It’s an awareness that God is with us wherever we go and is there for us whenever we are worried, anxious, or discouraged. We can always turn to prayer. Even when things are going well and we feel happy, a quick prayer of thanksgiving keeps our Lord close.

*“Prayer is the oxygen of the soul.” -St. Padre Pio*

Here are a few tips on improving your prayer life that have worked for me. They, by no means, are the definitive list, but it might help you start.

1. **Pray at the same time every day.** It is important, so I make an appointment with God. I even write it on my calendar, as I would any other appointment. For me, that’s the first thing in the morning, right after I wake up. Then again, in the car on the way to work, and throughout the day short prayers of petition and thanksgiving.
2. **Pray out loud.** I may sound weird, but when I am praying the chaplet in my car, I pray out loud, or even sing along to the version I have on a compact disk. And, thank God I am alone!
3. **Start a prayer list.** People every day ask me to pray for them, so I have a list on my nightstand and have an app on my iPad call Prayer Chain, that I use to keep my list. I am never at a loss as to what to pray for, because there is always someone I know in need of prayer.
4. **Redeem time for prayer.** Let’s face it, we all waste time. Replace that road rage time with prayer time or that extra life on Candy Crush with a few quiet moments of prayer.
5. **Listen!** Make sure to allow some quiet time to just listen. Allow God to speak to your heart.

As Mother Teresa said, *“The fruit of prayer is a deepening of faith. And the fruit of faith is love. And the fruit of love is service.”*

Let’s make an effort to improve our pray lives, be aware that God is with us, wherever we go, and then, see the results in our lives.

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This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2014/06/too-busy-to-pray/>  
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## Disenchanted Catholics [at The Crooked Halo]

Ignorance is bliss, so the saying goes. In the age of the Internet where knowledge abounds... ignorance is just plain laziness. I'm not referring to non-Catholics who are clueless about Catholicism. I'm not talking about those who don't consider or realize that Catholics are Christians. Nope. I'm writing about uninformed Catholics.

Sadly, many "lazy" Catholics have never, ever taken the time to learn what the Catholic Church believes & teaches. IF they did, they would come to realize the beauty, the richness, the love affair with Christ that is the foundation of the One, True Faith. As the beloved Bishop Fulton J. Sheen said, "Not 100 in the United States hate the Roman Catholic Church, but millions hate what they mistakenly think the Roman Catholic Church is." Unfortunately, there are many baptized in the Catholic faith that can not defend her.

At the age of 8, I was given the St. Joseph's Missal to follow the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. In the Introduction, it explains the principle parts of the Mass. This red bound book paved the way to my understanding why Catholics do what we do every Sunday of our lives. This journey continues and I hope never ends. So what makes someone thirst for knowledge and others not?

### Parents

: My parents are/were devout Catholics. Mom at the age of 91 still attends Mass on a daily basis. She prays for hours each day and is an avid reader of Catholic literature. My dad, who has died, prayed the rosary, attended Mass and was unashamed of his love for Our Blessed Mother. He wore a gold Miraculous Medal for forty years. One day, I saw him go to his garden and pick a yellow rose. I asked him where was he going with it. In a reverent tone, he said, "I'm bringing it to Our Lady." This big, bear of a man gently placed it in a bud vase by the statue of Our Lady of Grace on mother's dresser. This kind of gesture helps a child realize there is something wonderfully special about his/her faith.

### Example & Tradition

: All Catholic holidays/holy days were made special in my family. The focus, unlike today, was on the religious aspect rather than the secular. Midnight Mass....a church filled with poinsettias, choir singing its heart out to Emmanuel. To this day, I sing "Happy Birthday" to the baby Jesus as I place the tiny statue in His manger. Easter....shhhhhh, the vigil Mass....a dark church suddenly alive with hundreds of lit candles to welcome the Risen Christ, Alleluia! With a palm dipped in holy water, the male head of our household blesses the family gathered around our Easter table. Regardless of

what friends we are with...what restaurant we are at, we are unashamed to make the sign of the cross, bow our heads and say grace before our meal. Growing up, saints were honored in neighborhood festivities....St. Joseph feast, a fair in remembrance of St. Marie Goretti. The story of this young saint who was raped and murdered, but who forgave her assailant before she died, was recounted each year. It set the example of forgiveness and grace for the children who heard it. Remember incense? For me, it was a hint of what God might smell like. Okay, now I associate Him with the scent of pine. (

## [Scent of God](#)

) But as a child....God wore incense cologne.

## Get Involved

: It's amazing how many think that Catholics are ignorant of the Bible. Poppycock! Pick up the Mass Book at church. When cycle A B C of this book is completed, the whole Bible has been read. There are plenty of Catholic Bible study guides, countless CDs & DVDs explaining the Bible by Catholic authors. Classes are full with Catholics wanting to learn more about Sacred Scripture. Renew programs, Cornerstone retreats, Charismatic Conferences abound for those who hunger for knowledge of the faith. I took a friend to a charismatic prayer meeting....in no time she was clapping her hands as we sang

## *God Is An Awesome God*

. Grinning she asked, "Why hadn't I known about this?" Not all Catholics sit at the back of the church and look like the "frozen chosen". Get involved. Make an effort. Join. It can be something as fun as helping with the church carnival. Being active in a church program puts you together with other Catholics. There is nothing more deeply spiritual than sleeping on a carpeted floor in front of a displayed Monstrance with other adoring Catholic women. I actually had this wonderful experience at a Woman's Cornerstone Retreat.

## Friends

: Birds of a feather flock together. Befriend a priest or nun. They are often separated from family. Invite a religious to share a meal at your home. Is there a visiting priest in your parish? He most likely hails from another country. What a wonderful opportunity to hear how foreigners celebrate the Universal Faith. And boy, do they! My life has been enriched by the friendships of priests, monks and sisters. I sat at the feet of Benedict Groeschel C.F.R., a Franciscan author, psychologist & activist, and listened to him speak. The nuggets of truth and wisdom he shared brought me closer to Christ. Truly, he is a living saint. My circle of Catholic friends is forged with the spirit of love and familiarity. We intercede for one another, we grow in our faith as we learn together and edify each other. Through these relationships, I have grown spiritually stronger. They have made me a better person in countless ways.

Read, Read, Read

: Many voracious readers will go from one romance, mystery or self-help book after the other and never think of picking up a book about his/her Catholic faith. I know a Catholic man who reads many books on "spirituality"....

*A Course In Miracles, Power of the Subconscious Mind, The Secret*

, but has never picked up one written by St. Augustine, Dorothy Day, John Henry Newman, Peter Kreeft or St. John Paul the Great. He can talk for hours on what makes a person a good Christian, a good person, but is clueless about the Catholic faith he practices. I believe there would be fewer

*disenchanted Catholics*

if they educated themselves in the most beautiful faith on the entire earth...the one created by Christ. Yes, there have been scandalous popes, priests, nuns and situations, but if we looked at the lineage of Christ.... murderers, adulterers, schemers, cowards....we might wonder....how could someone so perfect come from this? And so it is the same with Catholicism.

I cringe when I hear, "I don't get anything out of the Mass" mainly because the homily wasn't riveting. A stirring homily is nice, but that's not why I'm there. I love the prayers, the hymns and liturgy, but most of all the Eucharist. It takes my breath away. How can you not fall in love with the Holy Mass when you know the true Presence of Christ is in your midst? This knowledge brings me to my knees and tears to my eyes. Everything from the vestments the priest wears, to the beauty of the chalice, the stained glass windows, the awesome statues makes me aware that I'm on holy ground....I'm in the home of the King of Kings. I'm there to spend an hour with my Savior. Every gesture, every word, every part of the Mass has a special purpose. Knowing what that meaning, that purpose is, gives us a glimpse into the eyes of God.

Converts

: No one is more on fire than a convert to Catholicism. They put most "cradle Catholics" to shame. These men & women didn't convert because their future spouse asked them to...no, they systematically xed off all the "obstacles" that prevented them from converting. Intelligent, Bible believing people seeking the Truth listened to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. They heard Christ's call to leave all behind and follow Him...straight home to the Catholic Church. The books converts have written explains Catholicism in a no-nonsense approach. Some are: Scott Hahn's

*Rome Sweet Home,*

Jeff Cavins',

*Great Adventures Series*

, Kim Hahn's,

*Catholic For A Reason & If Protestantism Is True*

by Devin Rose. The most riveting testimonies come from Jewish converts, Hebrew Catholics. It is said that Judaism is the root and Catholicism is the flower. Want to better understand and appreciate being Catholic, then read,

*Honey From The Rock: Sixteen Jews Find The Sweetness Of Christ*

, compiled by Roy Schoeman.

[Hebrew Catholic Association](#)

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I just don't get...

*When They Just Don't Get The Catholic Faith*

. For me, my heart bursts with pride-I feel privileged to be a Catholic, an

*enchanted*

Catholic. Thank You, Jesus!

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This contribution is available at <http://crookedhalocatholicblog.blogspot.com/2014/06/when-they-just-dont-get-it.html>

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# Painted Teapot [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on July 3, 2014 · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)



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

I have this little teapot in my cupboard for still life set ups, and I finally put it to work. I made this session an exercise in speed and broad strokes, so as to keep the painting simple and unlabored. The fact that it contains someone else's painted design makes this also a painting of a painting... always intriguing to me.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2014/07/03/painted-teapot/>  
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# Silence, The Voice of God [at His UnEnding Love]



## The Blessing of Silence

One would think that the sound of God would be a mighty blast of the trumpet or the crashing sound of a tree falling in a forest. One might expect that the Voice of God would deafen the ears of His creatures and force us down on our knees.

Yet, in the silence of the burning bush, Moses heard the voice of God.

**"Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Mid'ian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God."**

**Exodus 3: 1-6**

Elijah met God, not in the thunders of the wind, earthquakes and fire, but in the silence that followed.

**"And he said, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the**

**Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And when Eli'jah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Eli'jah?"**

**1 Kings: 11-14**

Our days are blasted with noise that we both invite into our lives and noise which we do not. The media explodes in our homes bringing with it sounds and words that are not from God. Music, louder than the voice of God, pounds our ears. Often there is no rest from these influences.

Modern day saints have spoken of the need for silence.

Mother Teresa said: "We need to find God, and He cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass- grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls."

Pope Francis has said, "In the history of salvation, neither in the clamour nor in the blatant, but the shadows and the silence are the places in which God chose to reveal himself to humankind."

Pope Francis has also said: Each of us knows how mysteriously the Lord works in our hearts, in our souls. And what is the cloud, the power, the way the Holy Spirit covers our mystery? This cloud in us, in our lives is called silence: the silence is exactly the cloud that covers the mystery of our relationship with the Lord, of our holiness and of our sins. This mystery that we cannot explain. But when there is no silence in our lives, the mystery is lost, it goes away. Guarding the mystery with silence! That is the cloud, that is the power of God for us, that is the strength of the Holy Spirit."

With silence, we allow the Holy Spirit, then, into our lives. By surrendering in this silence, by shutting off the noise, we are gifted with the presence of God within us and He can then work in our lives. Think of all the noise you hear. Is this God? Most likely not. God can find you and prompt you in the midst of the noise. God is a God of miracles and He hungers for your soul. However, if we seek the presence of God in our lives, we need to seek silence and prayer. We need to let The Lord envelope us in His love which is a gift of silence.

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## NABRE NT Revision Thought [at Catholic Bibles]

I have made it pretty clear on this blog that I am a fan of the NABRE. For the most part, minus a couple renderings in Genesis, I think the revision is much better than the original and comparable to the other two of the big three, them being the RSV and NRSV. Yet, we also know that the CBA and USCCB are in the beginning stages of the NT being revised as well. This is going to take a number of years, likely around 8-10, because the desired result is that we will have a bible that matches the scripture heard during Mass. (The reason it will take that long is not only due to the process of translation, but also the typically slow process of having it approved by the Vatican for the lectionary.). I hope to have some information on the translating process in the coming months.

So, this leads to my question today: What elements of the current NABRE NT would you like to see retained? We have talked about what we would like see changed, Luke 1:28 being one that has come up often. But let's keep this discussion focused on what should remain. Perhaps this could be a particular rendering or maybe the overall translation philosophy. One thing, let's keep this focused on the text. Too often we get bogged down in the notes and commentary.

I'll start us off with this one: The way the NAB translates the "I AM" sayings in John. The NAB makes it crystal clear that Jesus is taking upon himself the divine name.

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*The Unblossomed Rose*

*www.veilsandvocations.blogspot.com*

This isn't the post I intended for today, but as the saying goes, if you want to hear God laugh, tell Him your plans for tomorrow. First, I would like to ask for prayers for a dear friend,

[Jessica](#)

at Shower of Roses, who is experiencing a miscarriage. My heart is

*breaking*

for her, because I know too well the pain she is going through.



*Miscarriage Prayer (by. Mother M. Angelica)*

*My Lord, the baby is dead!*

*Why, my Lord—dare I ask why? It will not hear the whisper of the wind or see the beauty of its parents' face—it will not see the beauty of Your creation or the flame of a sunrise. Why, my Lord?*

*“Why, My child—do you ask ‘why’? Well, I will tell you why.*

*You see, the child lives. Instead of the wind he hears the sound of angels singing before My throne. Instead of the beauty that passes he sees everlasting Beauty—he sees My face. He was created and lived a short time so the image of his parents imprinted on his face may stand before Me as their personal intercessor. He knows secrets of heaven unknown to men on earth. He laughs with a special joy that only the innocent possess. My ways are not the ways of man. I create for My Kingdom and each creature fills a place in that Kingdom that could not be filled by another. He was created for My joy and his parents' merits. He has never seen pain or sin. He has never felt hunger or pain. I breathed a soul into a seed, made it grow and called it forth.”*

*I am humbled before you, my Lord, for questioning Your wisdom, goodness, and love. I speak as a fool—forgive me. I acknowledge Your sovereign rights over life and death. I thank You for the life that began for so short a time to enjoy so long an Eternity*

There are times that I think I have forgotten my miscarriages, but then it only take a split second of a triggered memory and it all comes flooding back. I have never really forgotten, they are all scars on my heart, I suppose it is more that it becomes normal. There are moments that are seared into my memory, like the change in the technician's face when she couldn't find a heartbeat or my doctor holding my hand as the anesthesiologist put me under for the D & C. I couldn't have an epidural, because of other health issues, and when it came down to it, I didn't want to see or hear anything. I didn't want those memories. But, I suppose, what has stayed with me most is that we were unable to bury our daughter. Our Church was willing to perform a small funeral and help us find a place to bury her, I had generous friends of friends who offered to pay any expense incurred, I had signed papers for the baby's remains to be released to us and the nurses and my doctor were all aware and in agreement. Somewhere down the line though, someone didn't follow through.

I spent weeks calling here and calling there. Every time I got a reply that gave me hope, I would return the phone call or call the person I was told to only to hit another road block. My first two

miscarriages were quick and early. I was heartbroken, I mourned the tiny souls I never got to meet, the pregnancy I never got to experience, but they never developed past a couple of days. It was as if they were gone before they started. Honestly, if I had not been charting it is doubtful that I would have even known about the first one and might have completely dismissed the second. Those children did exist, and I know that they are resting with Jesus and that the babies I never got to cuddle will one day spend an eternity with me. However, my third miscarriage was so much harder.

We weren't expecting to be expecting. It was a surprise and a shock. I didn't know what to think, I was caught completely off guard. My husband was overjoyed, and I was too but there was a darkness that I just couldn't shake and I bemoaned the fact that I felt I had such a hard time getting excited about this new life. I think now that that uneasiness was God preparing me for all the hurt that was to come.

We went through Easter and other family gathering, not telling anyone. My husband wanted to, but I still had an uneasy feeling in my gut. I wanted to wait a bit long, I don't really know what I was waiting for. I wish now that I had told everyone, that she had been real to everyone else before she was gone. I planned on sharing the news after my routine ultrasound. I was all prepared with scripts in my head of calling the older kids in and letting them see our newest blessing. As soon as the ultrasound started, I knew something was wrong. She was there, perfectly there with a little face, and tiny hand and feet, but she was absolutely still. My other two it had taken forever for them to stay still long enough to measure the heartbeat--the heartbeat, there was no heartbeat. No flutter, no blinks, nothing! The technician tried over and over, but I knew it wasn't there. She didn't say it, but I saw it on her face and the monitor. She finished up and said my doctor would call me, no pictures were printed out, no due date announced. I left empty handed and brokenhearted. I wish I had asked her to take some pictures with the ultrasound but I was in too much shock to think that far ahead.

Ashley, we named her Ashley. I originally picked the name before we knew she was a girl. Ashley had always been a favorite boy's name for me but one I knew I couldn't use with it's popularity as a girl's name, and for some reason we both thought we were having a boy. I sometimes wish I had picked a saint's name, a more significant name, a name that fit with the other children's names. However, her name fit her in the end. I think I spoke to every department of the hospital in the weeks that followed my D & C. No one could help and only a few seemed to care. I was told that Ashley wasn't old enough to be issued a birth certificate and without a birth certificate I could not get a death certificate, which meant I had no rights to the remains nor burial. At the lowest point, the hospital actually tried to convince me that I had only thought I was pregnant, but it didn't really happen, the "fetus" never developed past a cell or two, my uterus had been empty. I told them that was impossible, I had positive pregnancy test, ultrasound pictures, blood work to prove my baby did exist. They said my pregnancy symptoms were just bad PMS! I saw her, I said over and over...I saw her!

My doctor fought all the way up to the state to get me right to get my baby's remains released. She was thwarted all the way. She was willing to keep fighting but I was tired, and my father had

unexpected passed away just two and a half weeks after my miscarriage, leaving me to help care for my disabled mother with brain-cancer. There was too much going on, I didn't have any more fight in me. I begged forgiveness from God and my baby, I pray that they understood. A week later, I got a call that the baby's remains had been released to a funeral home for cremation. I questions which one, when, how can I pick up the cremated remains. I was told the name but I would not be able to get Ashley's ashes because she would be cremated with "other surgical remains" and then buried with whatever casket they buried next. Surgical remains? Did they really cremate and bury tumors and tonsils and kidneys and gallstones?

Then I figured it out, she was being cremated with babies who had been surgically terminated. It broke my heart even more. You see, Ashley had Turner's Syndrome. I hesitate to tell anyone that because I usually get a response along the lines of, "well, at least that took care of itself." The Turner's is not why I lost her, I had a double infection that caused the miscarriage. She was healthy and growing and despite having Turner's had measured exactly to date. The vast majority of babies diagnosed with Turner's are aborted. Why God? Why? I wanted my baby, I was willing to love her no matter what. She was perfect to me, why take her? The answers to those questions, I will never know this side of Heaven. My husband and I accept God's perfect timing. We have no way of knowing what God spared her or us from. Ashley is a thread, albeit a short one, in His great tapestry and each of those threads has a purpose.

I suppose I am writing this post as much for me as for others who have experienced a miscarriage. Miscarriage is such a taboo subject in our culture. Once we started debating when a person becomes a person and at what point pain can be felt or viability starts, it all became very rudimentary. We stopped looking at the emotional wonder of pregnancy and reduced it down to statistics and measurements. Women who have lost a baby, have experienced a real loss, they need time and permission to mourn. It does not matter if the loss occurred at 7 week or 27 or 37, it was still a child that was loved and lost. I still miss Ashley everyday, I think about her regularly and notice the space that is empty as we stand together at Mass or take a family picture. Her due date was November 19, the feast of St Elizabeth of Hungry who is the patron saint of loss of children. I celebrate quietly each year lighting a novena candle and baking Hungarian bread. Even if no one else remembers, I will never forget.

**The Unblossomed Rose [at Veils and Vocations]**

**The Unblossomed Rose [at Veils and Vocations]**

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# Has Jesus Arisen In Your Heart? [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

*Has Jesus Arisen in Your Heart? (part 3)*

— *The Final Stage of our Transformation: Coming into Union with Christ*

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*Here are the Elemental Scriptures on which this Article is Based:*

*God's Transforming Purpose for Believers -*

***“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:29)***



Are you being Conformed to Christ's Image?

*Paul's Exhortation to Believers to Yield to God's Transforming Purpose -*

***“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.” (Rom:12:1-2)***

*Believer's Commitment in Response to God's Purpose-*

***“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)***

***God’s Graces Resulting from our Commitment -***

***“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. 2:12-16)***

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My dear fellow pilgrims in Christ Jesus,

In my previous articles on this subject I indicated to you my contention that the work of the Holy Spirit in conforming us to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29) in this life consists of at least three major stages or transitions of spiritual growth, namely,

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

In this article it is my intent to discuss my reflections on the final transition from our consecration as disciples to our spiritual union with Christ. This is a stage to which we are all called but to which few of us attain, mainly because, even though our hearts truly desires such a union, the struggle with our natural selves and the world obstructs us to the very end of our lives on earth.

Scripture clearly indicates that it is Jesus’ prayer to the Father that we all come into such a union so that we may all be one in the Spirit with the Father and the Son.

***“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” (Jn. 17:20-21)***

Because of the weakness of our faith some take the words to merely indicate the destiny of the Church to be One In Christ, forgetting that the church is made up of us as individuals and in order for that unity to occur we must all, as individuals, come to that unity with the Godhead through the Spirit of Christ that is in us.

In the previous stages of our transition to this unity we discussed how our spirits needed to be renewed through conversion and baptism into Christ by the Holy Spirit so that we are identified with Christ and He with us. We also discussed that in order for the Holy Spirit to conform us to the image of Christ we needed to yield to the Spirit so that we could begin the transformation through a renewal of our minds (souls). In that yielding we also offered ourselves up as a living sacrifice so that the Holy Spirit could work in us and through us to manifest the works of Jesus in and through our lives. This of course, entailed an empowerment by the Spirit of God that has been termed, “the Baptism in the Spirit”.

This second stage, which progresses from our “new birth in Christ” is sometimes called the “discipleship” stage where we learn to follow Jesus by dying to self through the obedience of Love and carry this cross daily as part of our discipline.

The third stage which we are discussing in this article is the successful conclusion to carrying our cross to the point where we are crucified with Christ, and like Paul can state that, “... ***It is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me and through me.***”

Those of us who are able to thus yield ourselves to the Spirit of Christ then come to a point of unity with the Spirit of Christ that all that they think, or say, or do comes not as from themselves but as an emanation of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in them. And actually, of course, He dwells in all who truly belong to Christ, but for reasons that are peculiar to each person, we are prevented from maturing sufficiently to reach this stage of Unity with the Divine here in this world.

Now all of us who belong to Christ will ultimately be one with Christ in our next life in the Kingdom. So our ultimate salvation is not at stake, it is only our ability to be fully His representatives in this world that will be diminished to the degree of lack of union with the Spirit of Christ that is in us.

It is the Father’s purpose for sending His Son to redeem us, not only to save us, but to multiply the presence of His Son in this world, through us so that we might be His Partners in continuing Christ’s ministry here on Earth, until He personally come for His Bride! Praised Be His Holy Name!

This is what the Scripture means when it says “... ***that He might be the First among many Brethren!***”

Now I know, that you may have been stirred by what I just related to you – but you are saying to your self: “can this be true can the Lord really be asking us to yield to His Spirit in such away that we come to a place where we no longer represent ourselves but represent Him – after, we indeed, are formed to manifest His Image in us?”

I know because I not only asked myself this question, but I also asked it of the Lord.

Here is His answer, not only to me but all of you who are Seeking His Kingdom – a Kingdom that

is only fully realized when we are united with the King in Spirit.

*The Lord's response ...*

***“My son, you have been seeking the Kingdom – you have desired to enter into my Kingdom. I am answering your prayer even now.***

***“Yes, there are obstacles in you that have been preventing the Kingdom from manifesting in your life. I am about to remove these obstacles, but I need your cooperation – your willingness. For you see these obstacles are self-inspired and removing them will cause you some discomfort. But I will give you the faith and strength you need to overcome these obstacles and cast them into the sea.***

***“I will reveal these obstacles to you one-by-one and together we will remove them from your life. As each one goes you will see more and more of the Kingdom manifested in you life. It is what I have always desired for you but you were not ready to receive this stage of manifestation.***

***“Through the work of my Spirit, you are now at the entry stage – only give yourself totally to me. Die completely to your own pretensions, ambitions, and self-congratulating desires. Learn to seek My Heart, My Love, My Desires, and my Compassion. Let My Spirit rule in your heart, then you will sense the River of My Love flowing through you. Then you will experience the true fervor of My Love – for all humanity. But in order to arrive to this point you must decrease so that I may increase in you and in your life! Then and only then will you truly enter into My Kingdom!***

***“Do this and LIVE my son, let your self be merged with mine! Do nothing on your own – seek Me in everything, be obedient to my leadings and you will no longer be your own. Then and only then, when you completely let go of your earthly self, will you enter into oneness with me – your God and Your Savior! “***

For about a week I meditated on what the Lord had Just told me when, during a prayer time, a Word from scripture, suddenly came to mind, confirming the Word He have me and leading me as to the path that I needed to take for entry into the Kingdom. The path I needed overcome my first obstacle my ignorance that it is through the intimate person-to-person knowledge of Jesus and His Promises that we become partakers of His Divine Nature, thus granting us entry into His Kingdom. Read for yourselves, this writing from Peter, and understand!

***Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,***

***To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.***

***His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.***

***For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.***

***Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.***

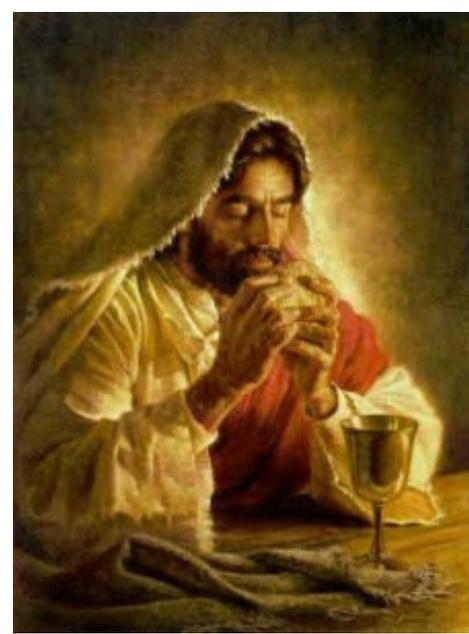
***(2 Ptr. 1: 1-11)***

If anyone, other than Jesus, is capable of telling us about the keys to the Kingdom it would certainly be Peter, to whom Jesus granted the Keys to the Kingdom. And in this scripture He is telling me that one of these keys is the “Key of Knowledge”. I understood then that it was my ignorance of spiritual things that was one of the things holding me back. And here the Holy Spirit, speaking through Peter, clearly lays out the path, in faith, that I must follow to begin my entrance into the Kingdom! Praised be His Holy Name!

Through this understanding of the Word, I dedicated myself totally to Him and His Word, opening myself to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, so that in this manner I yoked myself to Him and began my walk into His Kingdom. And that is what I am encouraging all my brothers and sisters to do, who sincerely desire to come to an intimate union with their Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Anointed of the Father. To Him be Glory Forever! Amen and Amen!

I also was given the understanding that, through receiving the Eucharist in Faith, not only, I would re-affirm my commitment to Him, but I would also be strengthened in my Spirit by His Abiding Presence in Him which is one of the Promises, mentioned by Peter, that make us partakers of His Divinity.

Here are some of the related Promises made by Jesus Himself, regarding our partaking of His Divinity...



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

***“... So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” (Jn. 6:53-58)***

***In His ultimate high-priestly prayer to the Father, Jesus also said ... ‘I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me’. (Jn. 17:20-23)***

We are kept from manifesting this revelation of our conformance to the image of Christ by a self-imposed veil, similar to the one that Paul discusses with the Corinthians ...

***“... to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds; but when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor. 3: 15-18)***

***“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. (2 Cor. 4:7)***



## [The Empowerment Gifts \(Part 2\)](#)

<*Links to Related Sites*>

[RC.net : Regarding Discipleship](#)

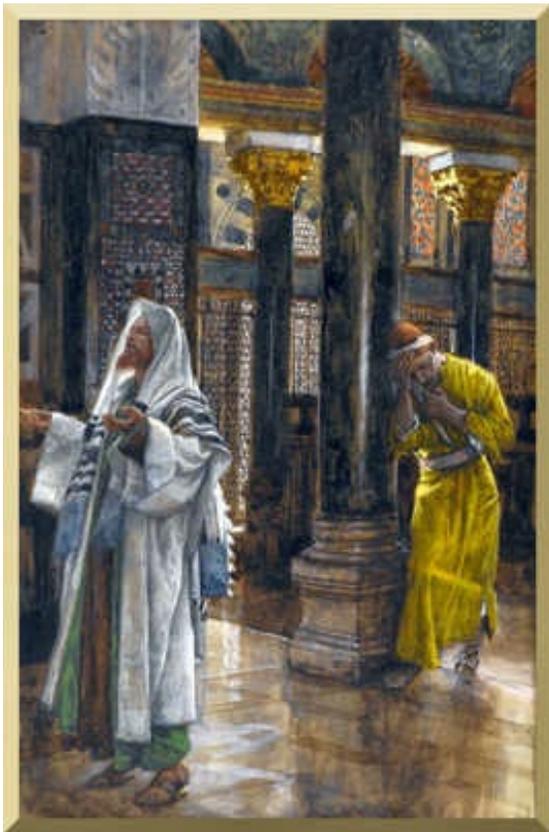
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This contribution is available at <http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2014/06/29/s-has-jesus-arisen-in-your-heart-part-3/>

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# Thinking Too Highly of One's Own Righteousness [at Faith of the Fathers]



If there is one thing that I believe most people can't stand, it's "uppity people" who look down their noses at everyone. You know what I mean. I am talking about those people who are absolutely convinced that no one else is quite as good as them. At least that is they way in which they perceive themselves to be.

Very much like the Pharisees. they see themselves as "above" others, especially in a spiritual sense, and they believe themselves capable of judging just who *is*, and who is *not* Christian.

What they don't realize is, that by their judging of others, they tread not just on dangerous ground, but *deadly* ground. Jesus warned us not to judge others [Matthew 7:1], that we would be judged by the same criteria we use in judging our brothers and sisters [Matthew 7:2-3]

People make the mistake of thinking they can judge someone by how he or she looks, talks or dresses, and once again they fail to heed Jesus' warning about this as well [John 7:24] Jesus also told us we can't read the heart as God can [John 8:15], and that only *He* can truly judge [John 8:16].

Now when I talk about judging how someone dresses, I am not referring to those who are scantily clad, but those who's manner of dress may come from more modest means. I know of an instance of this.

This was in a church where one farmer attended every Sunday dressed in his bib overalls. Some of the people in that church complained to the pastor that the man was not dressed "good enough" to come before the Lord.

The pastor told them that he was grateful for a God who didn't look at how well they were dressed, but looked at how well they held Him in their hearts. He told them that because he knew how God looked at the heart, that he was sure that all those who held God in their hearts would be more than happy to come the next Sunday dressed in bib overalls, as he, the pastor would also do. God he said, isn't concerned with whether we attend in a \$500 suit, or in bib overalls. He just wants His children to love and honor Him.

In essence, when ever you or I attempt to judge someone, we are calling them a fool for not being Christian in *our* eyes. We must not fail to heed the warning from Jesus about calling our brother or sister a fool [Matthew 5:22], for again *we* endanger ourselves.

If you or I get to the point of not just thinking, but believing that we are capable of judging another, then we have assigned ourselves the role of God, and we have also become like the pharisee who exalted himself above the publican and other sinners [Luke 18:10-14].

So, the bottom line is, do not fall into the trap of judging others.

Don't feel so smug, and satisfied in your perception of your own sanctity, that you believe you are

capable of deciding who is, and who is not Christian. Only God can read the heart, certainly not you nor me.

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This contribution is available at <http://faithofthefathers.blogspot.com/2014/06/thinking-too-highly-of-ones-own.html>

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## For His Greater Glory (and Those Aren't Just Words) [at String of Pearls]

In December of 2011, right around the time I was finishing up my manuscript for

*Finding Grace*

, I began to search the Internet for information about how to go about having it published. My cyber-travels ultimately led me to

[this 2007 article](#)

about Cheryl Dickow, a former middle school teacher who had started her own Catholic publishing house called

[Bezalel Books](#)

. I was immediately struck by the thought that I'd started writing

*Finding Grace*

in 2007, and that was the same year that this article originally appeared in

*Catholic Review*--

and I believe the same year that Cheryl started her company. I felt an immediate connection with Cheryl and it seemed that God was pointing me in the direction of Bezalel Books.



I will always be grateful that I stumbled upon that particular article about this extraordinary woman at that particular time. Thanks a million, Google! (Of course, my undying gratitude

*really*

goes to Someone else--whose name, coincidentally, also begins with G.)

Cheryl Dickow is not only a publisher; she is also an editor, a speaker, a blogger, and a contributor to many Catholic periodicals. She has written both fiction and non-fiction works. Her two novels--

*Elizabeth, a Holy Land Pilgrimage*

, and

*Miriam, Repentance and Redemption in Rome*

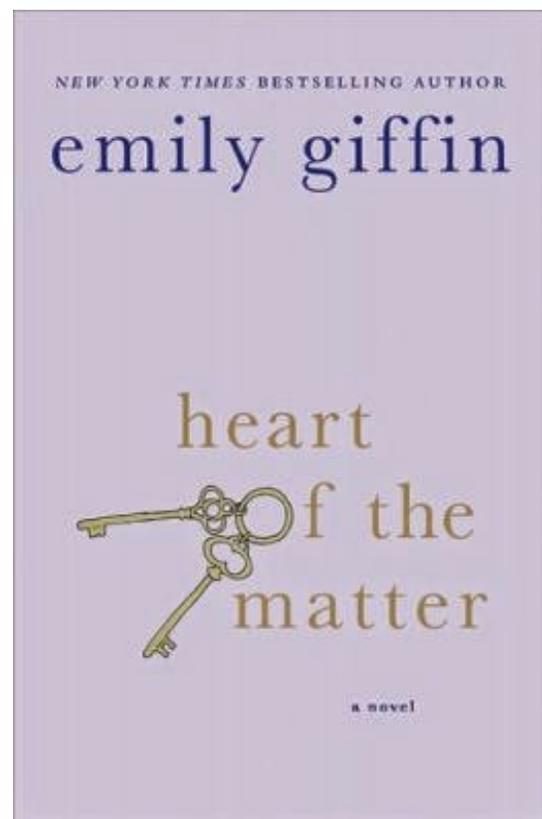
--are excellent books, God-centered and inspiring. They are Catholic "chick lit" at its finest, and would make perfect choices for your book club. In fact, if you go to the

[Bezalel website](#)

, Cheryl lists some other Bezalel titles that are just right for that purpose.



Now having given those recommendations, I cannot do the same for this novel, which I started on my plane trip out to MI last week and finished on the way back home.



I had made a vow to myself that I would give up reading others' novels while I'm working on one of my own (a YA novel for Bezalel), but sometimes reading is the only thing that takes my mind off

flying. It's really too bad, though, that I broke my vow for this sub-par novel...which was definitely not worth the time I gave it. Part-way in, I thought about putting it down and not finishing, but by that point I was "researching the enemy" (as my husband and I like to call it when we watch or read mainstream things that go against our faith and conservative values--if only to see what the majority of Americans are seeing and hearing from most media outlets).

Emily Giffin is a bestselling author of five or six novels. At least one,

### *Something Borrowed*

, has been made into a movie--which I'm a tad embarrassed to say I sort of enjoyed because it starred Kate Hudson and Ginnifer Goodwin, both really likable actresses, and John Krasinski, who to me will always and forever be the all-too-adorable Jim Halpert from the show "The Office." But the premise is just dreadful! It all revolves around this great "love story"...where a girl sleeps with her best friend's fiancée, yet somehow is portrayed as the sweet and lovable party in the whole thing! Why would you root for her? And why in the world she loves a guy who would cheat on his fiancée is the 64,000-dollar question, no matter how much of a crush she's had on him since they were in law school together.

The premise of this book is similar in that it involves a character who can't keep himself from falling into bed with someone to whom he's not married. It revolves around a couple whose marriage has hit a rocky patch. The husband, a renowned plastic surgeon, begins to fall in love with the single mother of one of his young patients, a boy named Charlie, and eventually he cheats on his wife with her.

I wish I could have cared about the cheating husband when he realizes the gigantic mistake he's made and goes back to his wife, begging forgiveness. But I never connected with him or thought he was such a great guy. He showed more interest in the young burn victim he was treating than he did in his own two kids. As a matter of fact, I never really connected with any of the characters, with the exception of Charlie.

Here are a couple of things I had a problem with--aside from the affair, of course!

The author makes a point of telling the reader that the main character (the woman who gets cheated on) doesn't think her Italian-Catholic mother-in-law approves of her, because she isn't raising her children in the Catholic Faith--or in any other religion, for that matter. That's how it always seems to be in modern fiction: characters are either irreligious or anti-religious. It's not only annoying and disturbing, but so predictable it's downright boring.

The term "MILF" is used. Eww. Enough said.

There's plenty more not to like about

### *Heart of the Matter,*

but I'd be embarrassed to spell it all out for you here, as this is a family-friendly blog. And I'm not alone; I actually read some one-star reviews of the book, in which the readers commented that they wished Amazon would allow them to assign zero stars. I personally could not possibly give this book more than one star.

And I'll bet Giffin's publisher didn't take her contract for this book over to the Adoration chapel so that it could be covered with prayers and blessings from the very beginning, the way Cheryl Dickow recently did with mine. Cheryl really does believe in fiction that both entertains and gives greater glory to God, and she puts her money where her mouth is. Bezalel Books may not have a slew of titles that are sitting at the top of the

*NY Times*

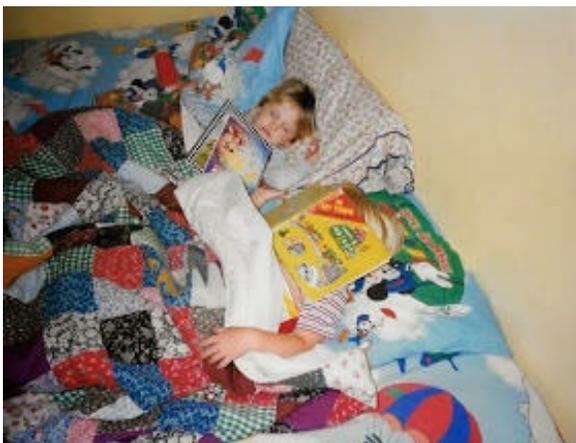
bestseller list or being made into Hollywood movies; but they do inspire readers, and they do give glory to God--which makes their worth inestimable.

Cheryl Dickow started Bezalel Books to offer readers something deeper and more meaningful than the mainstream fare. And honestly, that's the very reason I was inspired to write

*Finding Grace*

. I wanted to leave my sons--and especially their children--with something from my heart; to leave them something with a message that would provide an antidote to the poisonous and ever-growing God-lessness in this country.

When my guys were little, they had their noses in books all the time. They knew more facts about dinosaurs by the age of four or five than most of us (the non-paleontologists, anyway) will ever know. They used to fall asleep reading their books.



So far, it looks like my grandchildren are cut from similar cloth. So my darlings, keep this in mind: Grammy writes for God. And she also writes for YOU.



# Where East And West Unite: In The Sacred Heart Of Jesus [at Monks and Mermaids]



## INTRODUCTION:

The Word did not become words: he became flesh; and thus he was available to ALL the senses for those whom he met. The revelation of Christ has all the dimensions of the world around us. Of course, it took the gift of faith, given by the Holy Spirit, for Simeon to "see" God`s salvation in the little baby he held in his arms, or for St John to be able to say with certainty, "It is the Lord," as looked at Christ from the boat. Nevertheless, they were expressing more than an opinion when they said what they believed: they were seeing beyond the evidence of their eyes to the reality behind the evidence; and this ability to see beyond was an immediate contact with that reality, brought about by the Holy Spirit. It is the same today; which is why the the Scriptures alone are an insufficient vehicle for Christian revelation: they need to become flesh, to take on the dimensions of the world around them, to appeal to all the senses.

As with the Incarnation, this process of turning the words that reveal the Word into flesh is the work of the Holy Spirit; and his tools are Word and Sacrament. In doing so, he turns people into Church, transforming them from within so that they become Body of Christ together.



The Gospel message is transformed into liturgy which, in the words of Pius XI, is "the chief organ of the ordinary magisterium of the Church," and is understood to the degree that it is lived and celebrated. This understanding by members of the Church who live it and celebrate it, in so far as it is guided by the Holy Spirit, is one with the understanding of those who first listened to Christ and with his disciples down the ages and one with all across the world who are moved by the same Spirit.

The name for this is Tradition: not the passing down of dead credal formulas, but the sharing across time and space of an understanding always enlightened by the Holy Spirit who is particularly active in the Liturgy. It is in keeping with new paradigms, new insights, ideas and devotions, as long as they are all coherent with one another, reflecting the unity that is a characteristic of all that emanates from the same Holy Spirit.

Only then does Scripture reach its full potential as Christian revelation. Only then does it achieve its purpose, when it is understood and lived by the Church. Revelation takes concrete form in the Church and, in this form appeals to all the senses. Hence, the First Letter of St John could say, long after Christ had ascended into heaven:

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life - this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us - we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us.

That is why the New Evangelisation is as much about seeing as hearing. The world will not just hear that God is love: it will see that love at work in the love of the Christian community; it may be challenged by this love through the actions of a St Maximilian Kolbe; it may be touched by this love in the caresses of a Mother Teresa of Calcutta; it may even taste this love in food banks through the generosity of ordinary Christians. The revelation is reflected in the lives of a multitude of Christians with different but coherent vocations, like light reflected from the many facets of a diamond and receiving the source of their unity in the liturgy.

However, and above all, this happens when the Church is really united in love, in a love that

transcends all human divisions because its source is from within the life of the Holy Trinity, then the Gospel will be proclaimed by our lives, and the world will understand enough to be challenged by the revelation contained in Scripture.

The people who wander confused without a shepherd will see that there is a valid alternative to a secularism that leaves the world devoid of meaning and to Islam which appears to many as an alternative for ex-Christians who have lost their way..

Hence the first step in any New Evangelisation is to be evangelised ourselves, so that we freely love one another. Jesus says in his priestly prayer to the Father:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

## **THE EUCHARIST:**



In between our becoming Christians and being maturely Christian enough to bear testimony to the world as members of Christ's body, there are the sacraments and, above all else, the Eucharist. As St Paul says, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10: 17)

In every Mass, the unity of the Church across time and space and between heaven and earth is made manifest in the community celebrating: they are like the visible top of an iceberg because, in being united to Christ, they are united by the Holy Spirit to all who are united to Christ, both human beings and angels, and with them they are brought up into the presence of God the Father (Hebrews 12).

To understand this we must concentrate our attention on the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. His death was an historic event which took place two thousand years ago. However, he was connected in the Incarnation by the Holy Spirit both to his Father and to the whole human race across time and space, and, indeed to the whole cosmos. By his death, resurrection and ascension, his death, a temporal event, was brought into eternity. It was not only a temporal event: it was a personal event that lived on in the resurrection. Thus the lamb in the Apocalypse as though slain but standing (Revelation 5: 6). The death, resurrection and ascension

of Christ have become, through the activity of the Holy Spirit, a kind of black hole through which the human race must pass from time to eternity: we must die with Christ and rise with him and ascend with him; and, on the Last Day, the whole cosmos will be so transformed, heaven and earth will become a single whole. The process of approaching the Father is called by St Paul dying and rising with Christ. In the Eucharist, the Church already anticipates, celebrates and shares in this event of time entering eternity through Christ's sacrifice, and in the unity between heaven and earth. In the Holy Sacrifice of the altar, we offer Christ's death as our sacrifice so that we may share in his resurrection-ascension.

However, there is another aspect of the Eucharist that is absolutely invaluable both in our personal lives and as an evangelisation tool. The Spanish discovered this in the conversion of Latin America. On a certain date very close to Corpus Christi, the Inca king publicly manifested his presence to his people in Cusco. After the *Conquista*, this procession was replaced by the Corpus Christi procession, and it was a major element in the conversion of the Peruvian native population.

I have come across many people who became convinced of the presence of Christ in the tabernacle. One was my own father who was a practising Anglican. He fell in love with my mother, and she took him into a Catholic church for the first time. He was totally surprised by the sense of Christ's presence, a sense he never lost when entering a Catholic Church.

A young officer who survived the First World War, having experienced the horror of the worst battles, was wounded and invalided back to England. He belonged to the Southern Irish Protestant aristocracy; and, although their servants were Catholic, he knew absolutely nothing about their religion. Having come out of hospital, still in uniform, he was walking aimlessly down an English street when he came across a Catholic church. He had never been in one. Out of sudden curiosity, he entered and was immediately bowled over with a sense of Christ's presence; something he had never experienced before. There was a priest kneeling and praying in the church, so he went over and asked him how he could explain it. The priest pointed to the tabernacle and told him what it contained. The officer became a Catholic, a monk, and a priest. I know other examples. I remember Archbishop Anthony Bloom, a well known Orthodox metropolitan, who spoke of his conversion after experiencing the presence of Christ while reading the Gospel of St Mark from cover to cover. He later became a scientist, but could never even doubt the authenticity of this experience. I have met many converts to Catholicism whose experience of Christ was every bit as convincing, an experience they connected with the Blessed Sacrament.

There are Orthodox who deny any Catholic practice that is not found in Orthodoxy. I believe that this is because they are on the defensive: they feel threatened by the Catholic presence. However, there have been happier times when, in places like Cyprus where Orthodox and Catholics rubbed shoulders, Orthodox priests joined Catholic processions of Corpus Christi with lighted candles.

**THE THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**



It was given by the Holy Spirit to the Catholic West, not because of its strength, but because of its weaknesses. It is proof that the Church is Catholic, not because of our merits, but because of God's merciful love. It would probably never have come to light if the tradition of receiving communion at Mass had been faithfully observed or if the Church in the West had faithfully and enthusiastically accepted the whole doctrine of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicaea on icons. Both the falling away of frequent communion - only rectified by Pope Pius X - and the lack of enthusiasm for icons, due to anti-Greek feeling and suspicion, left a vacuum in Catholic devotion which was filled by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. 20th century liturgists, even revered ones like Jungmann, could not see how the liturgical piety that they were advocating could have any room for "individualistic" devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. They could not have been more wrong. Hardly anybody is in favour of the "old" Mass, now called the *extraordinary* rite, in Lima where I live; but the number of chapels is growing dedicated to Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament all day and every day, and some even have twenty four hour adoration organised by the parishioners. The most successful new religious families are also advocates of Eucharistic devotion, even if they are formed in the "new" post-Vatican II liturgy. & This needs an explanation.

Where did Jungmann & Co. go wrong? I am talking about my own heroes whose understanding of theology and liturgy I greatly admire and accept. However, I must admit they had a blind spot. I think they were victims of their own skills. It was enough for them to show that adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was a substitute for receiving communion for them to believe that the practice would wither away once holy communion was given its rightful place. They over-estimated the study of texts to reveal the fulness of Catholicism and under-estimated the activity of the Holy Spirit which cannot be a direct object of scholarly enquiry.

Let us start by quoting from the epiclesis of the Liturgy of St Basil.

That thy Holy Spirit may come upon us and upon these gifts here set forth, and bless them and hallow them and **show** this bread to be itself the precious Body of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, and this cup to be itself the precious Blood of Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ...

I choose this text because it is Eastern Orthodox, but also a Catholic liturgy which is, according to

Pius XIth, "the chief organ of the ordinary magisterium of the Church": it is an expression of the universal Catholic/Orthodox Tradition. It is as succinct and as accurate as any doctrinal definition, and comes directly from the Church of the Fathers.

This epiclesis is a part of a prayer expressing the humble obedience of the Church, obeying in faith the command of Christ at the Last Supper. Christ, in making intercession to the Father, makes this prayer his own.

He and the Church ask for the Holy Spirit to come down on us and on the gifts in order the **show** the bread to be the body of Christ and the cup to be the precious blood of Christ. In the Liturgy of St Basil, the consecration is a theophany.

For Symeon to have **seen** the salvation of Israel in a little baby, he needed an insight which goes beyond what he saw with his eyes, an ability to "see" that comes from the Holy Spirit. For Peter, James and John to see Christ transfigured in light on Mount Tabor, they needed to have their eyes opened by the Holy Spirit to see the effect of the divine Presence which, in fact, was always there, but was invisible to eyes unaided.

For the consecration to be a theophany, the Holy Spirit needs to change the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood; but he also needs to allow us to see the bread and wine, so consecrated, with the eyes of faith, and to recognise them to be vehicles of Christ's divine /human presence. That is exactly what the epiclesis prays for.

Hence,: just as the continual presence of Christ as body and blood is the direct result of the continual activity of the Holy Spirit, every time we recognise the consecrated elements to be the body and blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit is at work. It is a pentecostal moment to simply adore Christ in the host! All types of Eucharistic devotion outside the Mass are nothing else than the extension of that moment between consecration and communion to different times and places, so that we may grow to appreciate all that we receive at Mass. We have also discovered it to be a wonderful way to project Christ's presence among people who do not know him. The Mass, besides being Sacrifice and Communion, is also Theophany; and we have been taught by the Holy Spirit to extend that aspect of the Eucharist to all kinds of situations, wherever the Spirit may lead.

# THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AS AN EVANGELISTIC TOOL.



New monastic communities and ecclesial movements are prominent in their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, especially those who also use icons: they show how compatible they are because both the Eucharistic monstrance and the icon make grace **VISIBLE** without threatening anyone, or requiring a certain status or the observance of any rules or conditions: it does not even require even that the person is a Christian. That is why the Blessed Sacrament is such a wonderful evangelistic tool. Watch this video:

De Lubac explained the loss of faith in the city on there being no opportunity in the lives of a great number of city dwellers to encounter the sacred. It was for this that the *ressourcement* theologians wanted liturgical reform, but were terribly disappointed when togetherness took the place of a sense of the holy in the way so many celebrated Mass. They saw the drop-out from the practice of the faith to be a direct result of this. The New Evangelisation aims to give people just this sense of the holy; and, in this video you see it being done.

**Another example is "Nightfever".**

## **Idea**

The idea behind Nightfever is simple and brilliant at the same time: we want to open the church during the night and invite everyone to a moment of tranquility to find their inner peace.

**First church, then dance club? Or rather the other way around?**

Nightfever particularly invites Teenagers and Young Adults to encounter with God. Young people nowadays usually don't relate to the Christian faith and even less with the Catholic Church. Therefore we would like to try out a new way of approach to hand out invitations to them in the pedestrian zone.

Whoever goes out on a Friday or Saturday night usually have other destinations like pubs, dance clubs or cinemas on their mind. For this reason we want to address these people to pause for a

moment, to put aside their initial plan and to come into the church. We offer the guests a candle and invite them to light it up in the church.

### **Feel free to come and leave as you want!**

Whoever enters the church is usually surprised by the nice atmosphere, since the church is illuminated almost exclusively by candles, and there is quiet Live Music that goes on throughout the night. Inside the church you are welcome to light up a candle, to receive a paper with a quote from the bible or simply just take a seat and write down a prayer intention or to speak with a priest.

It is entirely up to you what you feel you are comfortable with. You can either take a long walk through the church or simply just stay at one spot where you want to be. You are also free to stay as long as you want: for a few minutes, half an hour or even the whole evening.

### **How did we come up with the idea of Nightfever?**

The idea of the Nightfever evenings was born right after the World Youth day 2005 that took place in Cologne, Germany. In the beginning, there were only two students from Bonn who initially planned a one off evening on the 29th of October 2005. However it has become an international initiative today.

Nightfever includes many different elements. Those elements can help you to grow closer to God and to reach a good level and basis for communicating with Him.

### **Prayer**

Prayer is the center of Nightfever. We come together in front of the altar in order to adore Jesus in the form of the bread. Adoration means talking to and with Jesus, to enter into a relationship with Him. We do not have to pretend and disguise ourselves for Jesus, we do not need a special technique in order to pray properly and we certainly do not need to be accomplished individuals. We may talk to Jesus just as we are, about everything that makes us happy or depresses us. Even if our thoughts are chaotic and unstructured, this time of silence can help us to gain a clear and peaceful mind again.

### **Enkindling candles**

We invite passerby, young and old, to come into the church for a few minutes, to light a candle and to put it in front of the altar, in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Even when these people leave, their candles burn on as a symbol of their concerns and thoughts.

Within the dark church those candles bring light and spread/shine forth hope and faith in God. They also create the special atmosphere of Nightfever.

### **Biblical sayings**

On the steps in front of the altar you can find baskets with biblical sayings. You are invited to take one for yourself. Often the drawn saying fits perfectly to our life, almost like it was meant especially for us. They can give us impulses for our prayer, for our conversation with God.

### **Conversation and reconciliation**

Many things concern and occupy us in our lives. Oftentimes a conversation can help us to find an orientation again. During the Nightfever-evenings, priests sit at the sides of the church. They are there for these conversations. They listen, give advice and are absolutely closemouthed and discreet.

You also have the possibility of receiving the sacrament of penance (confession) and thus to experience the liberation from many burdens. In the sacrament of penance, Jesus gives us his love

and mercy. The liberation from the burden of sin enables us to happily start anew and to continue on our path to God.

### **Blessings**

The priest can also give you a blessing. For these blessings the priest puts his hands on the head of the faithful/visitor. This action can be an amazing opportunity to feel God's presence. In the blessing we can experience God as the one who is present in the lives of us humans. God himself is the originator and guarantor of this blessing

### **Prayer Request**

Besides praying for oneself, there also is the possibility of letting someone pray for you and for certain concerns and requests. These requests one can write on a piece of paper and put it into a red box which is also placed near the Blessed Sacrament. Nuns of a monastery are then going to pray for your concerns.

### **Workshops and talks**

Sometimes Nightfever also offers workshops or talks about some interesting topics on faith in everyday life. These talks are offered because even though Christian mysteries of the faith cannot be proven, faith needs to answer to our reason, needs to live up to our reason. In those talks we think about how our faith and the teachings of the Church can be lived and practiced in our everyday life.

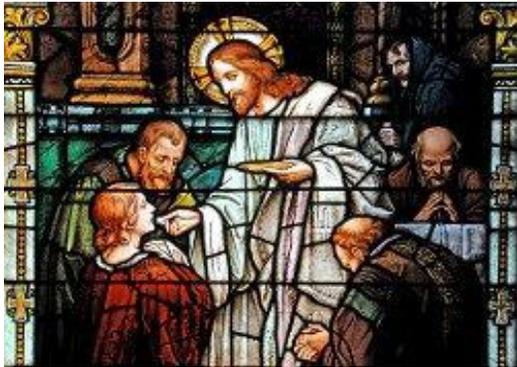
## **HERE IS ONE VERY GOOD WAY TO CELEBRATE THE CORPUS CHRISTI MASS**

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## Bread of Life [at Convert Journal]



St. John tells us in chapter 6 of a very special time in the ministry of Jesus. Our Lord's public ministry was at a peak. He was a superstar, for a while, then some might say that He had something of a PR disaster.

The chapter opens with a large crowd of disciples following our Lord. Scripture tells us there were 5,000 men – a large number by any measure, but with their families may have numbered several times that in total. As you know, they all “had their fill” from only 5 loaves of barley bread and 2 fish. Even so, these were not depleted but expanded in abundance to 12 baskets of left-overs. The people wanted to make Jesus king!

Later that night, the Apostles witnessed Jesus walking on the water 4 miles from shore.

Superstar!

Then, as recorded beginning in verse 22, everything took a dramatic turn. It begins with the crowds finding our Lord in Capernum and asking how he got there. They were eager to follow him and be fed.

“Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him the Father, God, has set his seal.” So they said to him, “What can we do to accomplish the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.” So they said to him, “What sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written:

‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

So Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

Notice:

- there is food that perishes and food that endures for eternal life
- the food that gives eternal life is given by the Son of Man
- the work of God is accomplished by believing in the one God sent
- God (not Moses or anyone else) provides for us, as illustrated in Exodus manna
- bread from heaven gives life to the world (physically and supernaturally)

Jesus was preparing them. The disciples were interested and eager for this food He spoke of.

So they said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. But I told you that although you have seen [me], you do not believe. Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me, because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it [on] the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.”

Jesus knows they do not understand, so He explains His divinity and coming atoning sacrifice that all may be saved. None-the-less, a person claiming to be God was blasphemy. We can imagine how unsettling this was.

Moreover, the food they seek is – confusingly – Jesus. Had He gone no further, the “food” might arguably be dismissed as “symbolic” — something along the lines of being spiritually nurturing.

The Jews murmured about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven,” and they said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” Jesus answered and said to them, “Stop murmuring among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day. It is written in the prophets:

‘They shall all be taught by God.’

Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”

Jesus “doubles-down.”

- No one comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him.

- Everyone who listens to and learns from the Father, comes to the Son.
- Only the Son has seen the Father.
- Jesus will raise them on the last day.
- Jesus is the bread of eternal life, not just a temporary sustainer of physical life like mana.
- Jesus FLESH is this bread of eternal life.

Needless to say, this did not calm the Jews. They did not say “oh, we see... that explains it!” In fact, this was quite upsetting. It sounds like cannibalism and that is about as abhorrent to Jews as you can get. Jesus had moved well beyond the point where this might have been considered a symbolic thing. The Jews got that.

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?” Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.” These things he said while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Way past doubling-down.

1. “eat the flesh of the Son of Man”
2. “drink his blood”
3. “Whoever eats my flesh”
4. “drinks my blood”
5. “my flesh is true food”
6. “my blood is true drink”
7. “Whoever eats my flesh”
8. “and drinks my blood”
9. “the one who feeds on me”

I can not think of another place in scripture that is as clear as this. The point not made once or even twice, but again and again and again. That we understand this is clearly important. Doing so in order that we remain in Him and He in us, to have life because of Him and to live forever.

The early Church knew Jesus meant this literally. It was understood throughout the 1st century, the 2nd, the 3rd, the 4th, the 5th, the 6th, the 7th, the 8th, the 9th, the 10th, the 11th, the 12th, the 13th, the 14th and the 15th century. This was not in dispute until some (not all) of the divergent branches of the Protestant schism took a new position after 1,500 years.

“Bible based” though they may be... there are, incredibly, those who persist in believing Jesus was speaking symbolically. They are sincere but wrong. I can not imagine how Jesus could have

said this more forcefully.

Back in Capernum, these words were taken neither symbolically nor lightly. There were immediate consequences.

Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, “Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.” Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father.”

**As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.**

Superstar status over. This was the truth and many could not accept it. Jesus knew that and did not stop them from leaving. They understood correctly and chose to no longer follow Him. Were His words only symbolic and simply misunderstood, He would have corrected them.

Those who stayed did so by faith, not understanding. They too did not understand how they were to eat Jesus flesh and drink his blood. This remained an open question until the Last Supper.

Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

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# The Ragamuffin Road [at Mere Observations]

Recently I was asked how I'm doing and why I haven't written much of late. After thinking about it for a moment I reached back into my vocabulary and dusted off this word:

tor·por

/ˈtɔrpər/ ↻

noun

noun: torpor

a state of physical or mental inactivity; lethargy.

"they veered between apathetic torpor and hysterical fanaticism"

synonyms: **lethargy**, sluggishness, **inertia**, **inactivity**, lifelessness, listlessness, **languor**, **lassitude**, **laziness**, idleness, **indolence**, **sloth**, **acedia**, passivity, somnolence, weariness, sleepiness [More](#)

Origin

LATIN

torpere → torpor

be numb or sluggish      late Middle English

late Middle English: from Latin, from *torpere* 'be numb or sluggish.'

Image source: Google

Initially I blamed my listlessness on the fact that we had just endured a draining ninety days from March through May. During that time both boys began their respective baseball seasons, my wife underwent major surgery followed by a delicate recovery period, and graduation and a graduation party loomed ahead in May. April brought more baseball, a prom, and graduation planning. And in May I frantically worked to finish up landscaping in the yard, more planning, more baseball, and finally the big events themselves at the same time that my oldest son's team went on a roll that culminated with them winning their second state championship in three years.

So yeah...June is a time to exhale. Maybe I still am. The month is only half-over after all.

But I'm also numb. And as I watch the events around our country and world spiral out of control while nurtured on by the policies of our current government I grow tense. With the realization that there's little I can do about it (and being as tired as I am) I shut down. The alternative is to froth at the mouth in angry rage. (That would be the hysterical fanaticism mentioned in the above image.) Rage at the things being done as a result of this government's policies. Rage at those who voted for it twice while at the same time saying that those who didn't were on the wrong side of history. Rage at their now being strangely silent. And I wonder: are they silent because they are embarrassed, silent because they are afraid of admitting they were wrong, or silent because deep down they agree with the nation-destroying actions of the man they helped elect twice?

So while numb and wanting to avoid having my blood pressure so high that my eyes bleed I have chosen to stay quiet and listen. Not to the news, social media or the like. But to God and what He

is saying for me to hear if I quiet myself and listen. And it is working.

In many ways I'm ready to retire and do some traveling with my wife. Instead I find myself with a suddenly open calendar and time on my hands looking for projects to do. I've considered constructing a gazebo in the back corner of our yard, building a second level to the deck, paving a patio extension and firepit area, and building a doghouse. And that's just in July and for the outside of our home.

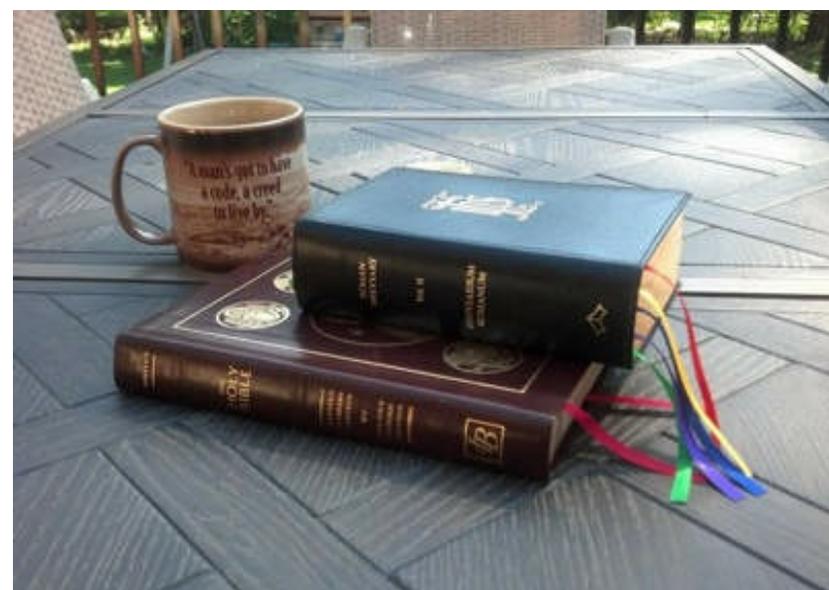
But I realize that I'm looking to fill my time and my space with things. My oldest son's time at home is nearly spent and soon he'll leave and a hole will exist where he was. Life as we've known it and our family's dynamic since the birth of our daughter will change as he leaves. Son #2 will move into the recently-vacated bedroom downstairs and my daughter plans the complete redecoration of her own room.

"I'm going to paint it pink, purple, red and white Dad." It's going to look like a unicorn exploded in there, but I'll love it.

So I'm looking to fill a hole in my heart with things. Same as it ever was. However, I've been around this block already and recognized this road. This is why I've stopped all of it and am listening. Stopped all the planning and researching. Because I can't retire yet. We can't travel unfettered as we wish or spend all our time accumulating things. We still have two more children to provide for and raise. My work continues.

Because of this my time is spent reading, praying, and listening.

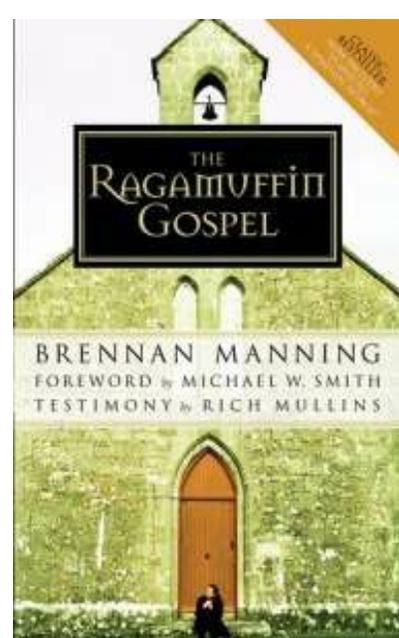
In other words I'm working on filling this hole in my heart with more of what, or who, should be there in the first place. While enjoying the cool spring/early summer days I've spent more than a few mornings and evenings sitting outside in conversation with God. I'm listening. Listening to God's voice in the psalms and prayers of the Divine Office and in the Gospels themselves.



"Morning Offering". Image source: Me

I'm also reading a book that I inadvertently left off my [summer reading list](#). I first attempted to read [The Ragamuffin Gospel](#) by Brennan Manning over ten years ago but quit half-way through. It was brought to mind recently when I watched the movie [Ragamuffin: The True Story of Rich Mullins](#). (As an aside, I plan to write a review of this movie soon. Rich Mullins was, and still is, one of my favorite singer/songwriters. This movie reminded me how much I miss him since his death in 1997.) Unable to locate my original copy of Brennan's book two weeks ago, I went to Barnes & Noble and purchased another. I've been reading it and highlighting it non-stop ever since. Here are but three of the many selections I highlighted within the first chapter alone:

\*\*\*\*\*



And Grace calls out, *You are not just a disillusioned old man who may die soon, a middle-aged woman stuck in a job and desperately wanting to get out, a young person feeling the fire in the belly begin to grow cold. You may be insecure, inadequate, mistaken, or potbellied. Death, panic, depression, and disillusionment may be near you. But you are not just that. You are accepted.* Never confuse your perception of yourself with the mystery that you really are accepted. – page 28

We want ever-sharp spirituality—push, pull, click, click, one saint that quick—and attempt to cultivate a particular virtue at a given point in time. Prudence in January, humility in February, fortitude in March, temperance in April. Score cards are provided for toting up gains and losses. The losses should diminish if you expect to meet charity in May. Sometimes May never comes. For many Christians, life is a long January. – page 31

In essence, there is only one thing God asks of us—that we be men and women of prayer, people who live close to God, people for whom God is everything and for whom God is enough. That is the root of peace. – page 46.

\*\*\*\*\*

That is the peace I'm looking for. It can't be found in social media, the news, the opinions of others or in a gazebo. It is found in prayer. It is found in communion with God. God is enough.

Moses spent forty years in exile before going back to Egypt to demand that Pharaoh let his people go. Israel then spent another forty years wandering in the desert before they were allowed entry into the promised land. Jesus spent forty days being tempted in the desert before launching his ministry three years prior to his death and resurrection.

I'm forty-six. I've wandered a long time. Much of that wandering was aimless and without purpose.

I've had my long January. I'm listening with purpose and know that action will follow while on this road. Action with a purpose.

I am a ragamuffin.

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This contribution is available at <http://jeffwalker.wordpress.com/2014/06/13/the-ragamuffin-road/>  
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# How to Listen When God is Speaking to You [at Can We Cana?]



God speaks to us constantly through ordinary events and signs, but we aren't always listening. We need to open our ears to hear his supernatural suggestions. As Jesus said, "let him who has ears to hear, hear." How do we fulfill this desire of Jesus?

## **1. Place ourselves in God's presence.**

Don't be too busy to pay attention to God. Take a few minutes to pray every day. Go to daily Mass if you can. Bask in an hour or more of Eucharistic Adoration. Best of all, take a day or weekend away for a silent retreat. God speaks to us in the silence. Particularly if we don't pray or go to Mass every day, a retreat can be a great way to reboot our spiritual life. Are you happy with your life right now? Is God happy with your life right now? A retreat can be a great way to discover answers to problems that you've been putting on hold for too long. And that's exactly what happened on my last retreat.

## **2. Be alert to the unusual.**

I went on retreat a few weeks ago with the intention of listening to God but also figuring that I could finish writing the book proposal that was due to be submitted to the publisher a week later. God's response was to hit me with the worst case of writer's block ever. Having worked for 10 years as a lawyer who read and wrote for a living, I could never have afforded to get writer's block and I pretty much never did. Getting writer's block in the middle of a retreat was equivalent to God launching rocket flares. He was trying to tell me something. But what was it?

## **3. Don't be stubborn.**

Knowing that God was probably urgently trying to talk to me, I still ignored him. For an entire day of that weekend retreat, I struggled to eke out sentences at a snail's pace. None of them was worth the paper they were written on. Knowing the deadline was looming, I told myself I had no choice.

Then I remembered that my life belonged to God, my intelligence belonged to God, and my book belonged to God as well. He could take it all away in an instant if he thought it jeopardized my eternal salvation. My stubbornness was about as foolish as a toddler's refusal to go to bed. Whatever God wanted would happen eventually, regardless of how much I fought it.

#### **4. Give God what he wants.**

Despite my rising panic over the deadline, I promised God an entire day just for him. I cried, I prayed, I sought spiritual direction, I went to confession, and then cried some more. Without my work as a crutch and as an escape, I was forced to confront certain experiences in my life that were deeply troubling me. Chronic fear had invaded my mental landscape and it was choking my ability to love God, my husband, and my children. God didn't care about my book at that instant. He cared about the fact that my spiritual life was a mess and I wasn't willing to admit it. He wanted me to abandon myself to him in a radical act of trust. Only by giving God what he wanted would I be able to move forward in hope. Giving God what he wants will always result in doing what's ultimately best for us as well.

So let's try to listen to God's voice and hear with our supernatural ears. Tuning him out will only prolong our unhappiness and our struggles.

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This contribution is available at <http://canwecana.blogspot.com/2014/06/how-to-listen-when-god-is-speaking-to.html>

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# Facebook: 5 Ways It Can Bless Your Life [at Catholic Stand]

Facebook is a vastly overused, much maligned facet of social media. Of that there can be no denial. We've all read stories of mothers neglecting their children to play some inane game. Dinners burn or go uncooked and families fall apart because a virtual 'relationship' got in the way. Other, smaller, proofs of the downside of extreme usage are most likely evident on a daily basis, somewhere in the world. There's another, more worthy side to the Facebook coin, however. As with all pleasures, moderation is key. We are in control of how many hours we spend on Facebook or any activity, for that matter. Also within our power is the amount of food, alcohol, and leisure activity in which we indulge. To everything available to us here on earth, there is a need for temperance. There can definitely be too much of a good thing – but that's more a reflection of our choices than it is on the activity itself. Although, I'd be remiss to claim Facebook usage perfection, I can share the boundaries I have set in place in an attempt to make my own virtual social interaction healthily balanced.

## Facebook Pen Pals

With Facebook, the number of virtual pen pals available is limited only by our keystrokes – and time allotted. The examples are plentiful. Emily understands about your daughter's neuropathy – because she's living it too. Erika can give terrific tips about homeschooling because she's a certified teacher who now teaches her own children. A side bonus is that her husband is a computer whiz. As a Canon Lawyer, Fr. V gives church-sanctioned advice on how to handle a relative's upcoming illicit wedding. Other friends share recipes, organic weed killing concoctions, and child rearing tips. I've traded flowers with other avid gardeners and set up First Friday gatherings with other homeschool families – all courtesy of Facebook. All this is available at the tips of your fingers – spend as much, or as little, time as you desire.

## Increase the Reach of Prayer Through Facebook

Who can't use more prayers? I know I need all I can get – and some days we are thrust into an emergency situation when the quick response of friends is a huge blessing. Facebook is the perfect place to garner the assistance of some fierce prayer warriors. It's also much more efficient than trying to make individual calls. Once you've honed your list of friends to a fine demographic, you're golden when it comes to prayers – both for your benefit and for the benefit of others. What better way to demonstrate the spiritual power of the Body of Christ? I know my family has benefitted greatly from these connections.

## **Gathering Information Via Facebook**

Don't know the difference between Discipline and Dogma? Join a good, faithful Catholic group and the official definitions will become readily available. Want to know more about the Latin Mass? When you make good Catholic friends from all over the world, you are gifted with photos, videos, and information on an almost daily basis. If you've been wondering what difference there is between the Second Vatican Council and the 'spirit' of Vatican II, the official Church documents can be shared by someone who just happens to have links to all of them and is more than willing to share.

The goings on in this complex world of ours can be overwhelming. Even more overwhelming, are the many self serving slants by which we are accosted by today's media. How to dig through all of the fabrications and distortions? I've found that a finely tuned Facebook account can be just the ticket. Much like a personalized Drudge Report, with snippets of news and links to the rest of the story, Facebook provides a way to filter sources of information. At this point almost anyone who is anyone, as far as information goes, has a Facebook page. All we have to do is 'follow' the ones whose information we trust. National Catholic Register, Church Militant TV, and EWTN gather Catholic information for me – while I rely on like-minded friends to fill my feed (and message box) with articles about news – both secular and spiritual – from all sorts of other reliable sources.

## **Facebook Evangelization**

There are few more effective ways for individuals to reach a large group of like-minded others – all over the world – than through electronic media. Whether through blogging, email, or Facebook, the number of lives we can touch is astounding. Of these options, Facebook provides a platform like no other. I relish learning about my faith and sharing what I've learned via the various aspects of Facebook, whether through my wall, fan page, or through the myriad of groups to which I belong. Are you discerning the devotion of veiling? There's a group for that. Is pro-life advocacy your passion? There are so many pro-life pages it's difficult to keep up. I've personally shared my 200+ pro-life [memes](#) with other pro-life advocates from all over the world. How about praying a Novena? Look no further than the posts from your friends; someone is always praying a Novena. Not only will they remind you every day, they'll add your intention to theirs as well. I've had friends go to Mass, Adoration, and even Lourdes – and remember my intentions while there. Our five little grandchildren, who are saints in Heaven, have had prayers said for them at national shrines. So, you see, the benefit is a two-way street. The faithful generosity of my Facebook friends is awe-inspiring!

## **Laughter: the Best Medicine**

Have you ever been home alone and had a really bad day? There you are, about to embark on a pity-party of astronomical proportions. Then you see a random posting from someone who's having a similar day. 'Not my circus, not my monkeys' – an old Polish proverb. Inexplicably, you

laugh out loud. The mood is lightened and you feel better equipped to just let go of your sour mood. Then there are the ‘kid quotes’ that are the daily fare of mothers on Facebook. Who can remain annoyed when Junior just saw a commercial and asked if his turtle could be affected by ‘reptile dysfunction’?

So while some folks out there might think that social media of any type is a big waste of time, some of us garner some rather tangible blessings. It’s another example of the wonderful multiplicity God’s children display. What works for me, might not work for you; but don’t discount the very real benefits I’ve reaped. I’ve contacted a group of cloistered nuns, who helped pray for a [miracle](#) that was realized. There have been many blessings from people who are undergoing similar trials – both spiritually and physically. Sometimes groups of Facebook friends even meet IRL (in real life), as was the case when our daughter traveled to Houston for cancer treatment. All in all, Facebook can help us to realize that we are not in this world alone. We really are little frogs in a big pond. The priest from [Nigeria](#), my Catholic friend from the Philippines, and a couple gals in Alaska all help me learn a bit about other ways of life. And the ‘other’ Birgit in Germany helps me retrieve childhood memories of nursery rhymes, prayers, and festivals.

As with all things in this world, one man’s garbage can be another man’s treasure and we are wise to limit our Facebook interactions to a reasonable consumption. Temperance in all things, our mother used to warn. ‘Don’t be too extreme in any of your emotions or actions or activities, because any good thing can be overdone.’ What can be a helpful resource is also very capable of becoming sinful, if we are excessive. As for me, I include Facebook usage in my daily examination of conscience. It can be a powerful tool or a deadly distraction. The side of the Facebook coin on which you land is up to your own discretion and conscience. There are so many more examples to share. What are yours?

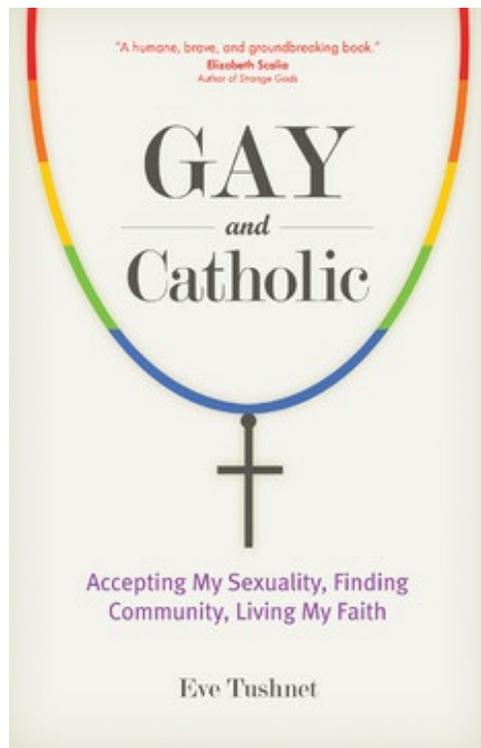
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This contribution is available at <http://catholicstand.com/facebook-5-ways-bless-life/>  
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## Gay and Catholic: A Review [at The True Dignity of Women]

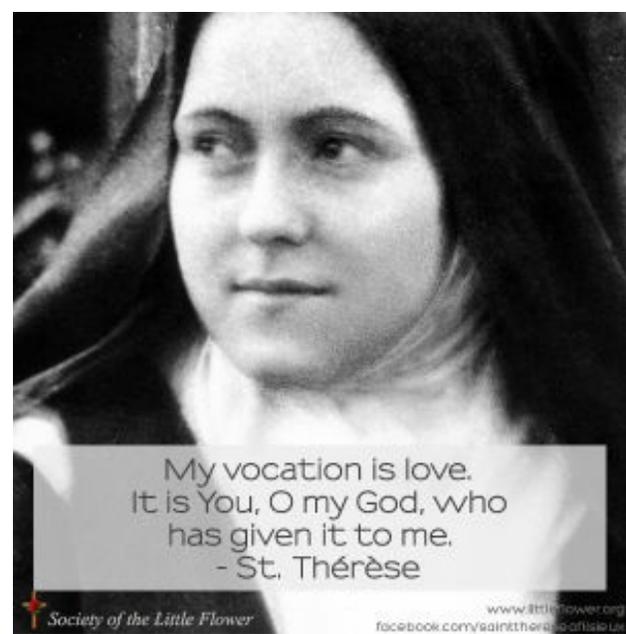
I, a straight married woman with a young child, learned something and got inspired by this book. I mention that right off the bat because I want to make it clear that you don't have to be gay and Catholic to get this book.



[Gay and Catholic](#) written by well-known blogger [Eve Tushnet](#) in part chronicles her discovery of her sexuality and her conversion to the Catholic faith. This is not the majority of the book, but it sets the foundation for everything she says later on. She's been there. She is one of a very few gay Catholics who openly talk about their struggles being faithful in a world that approaches chastity with suspicion or disdain.

As a fellow convert to the Catholic Church, I could relate to the story of her conversion. Like her, I led a very different life prior to becoming Catholic. I, frankly, hated Christianity. When I converted, it put tremendous strain on my relationships and many of them broke. No one in my family understood my new-found faith, they just had to somewhat grudgingly accept that I was Catholic now. Having experienced conversion as a liberal, non-Christian, I can only imagine converting as a *gay*, liberal, non-Christian.

Like her, the turning point for me was my first experience of Eucharistic Adoration. She says, "I felt that I was, finally, at home; I was in my place." I had the same experience. I felt like everything in my life had been geared to get me to that exact moment. Although I had never met any of my fellow adorers before, I felt like I had known them all of my life.



My vocation is love.  
It is You, O my God, who  
has given it to me.  
- St. Thérèse

Society of the Little Flower

www.littleflower.org  
facebook.com/saintthereseofficeus

I don't remember Tushnet mentioning this quote in the book, but I wouldn't be surprised if she did. I think she would definitely agree with the sentiment.

Of all of her advice for gay Christians and their friends and neighbors, one point in particular hit close to home for me: the importance of community and friendship. We are all so wired, we are losing fundamental social skills. In all of the battles for the nuclear family, friends and even extended family are lost in the fray. Everyone, gay or straight, white or black, rich or poor, can benefit from being part of a close community. Bonds made by community can be just as powerful as bonds made by blood. As she says:

It's possible to recognize the importance of marriage and family unity while also looking for all the other places in our lives where we can build a civilization of love.

This leads me directly to her beautiful, open-ended definition for "vocation":

In my view everyone has a vocation, and probably more than one. A vocation is the path or way of life in which God is calling us to pour out our love for him and for other particular human beings. Vocation is always a positive act of love, not a refraining-from-action.

In Catholic circles, you hear the word "vocation" thrown around a lot. It almost always means the priesthood or religious life, although sometimes it means marriage as well. We are just beginning to understand the vocation of unconsecrated single-hood. This book is a thorough exploration of just that vocation and like all vocations, understanding one better helps you understand and appreciate the others.

*Gay and Catholic* offers valuable advice for gay Catholics and those who care about them. But I got even more out of it than that. Tushnet helps us to better understand the vocation to love that we all share and the importance of community.

**[Gay and Catholic](#) will be published in October 2014. I have been given the opportunity to**

read this book in advance in exchange for an honest review. I thank [Ave Maria Press](#) for this opportunity.

I was able to do this through my membership with [NetGalley](#). If you'd like the opportunity to read good books and review them for your audience, membership to NetGalley is completely free and easy to sign up! I highly recommend it!

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This contribution is available at <http://truedignityofwomen.wordpress.com/2014/06/23/gay-and-catholic-a-review/>  
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# Dwelling Among Us (Where TeamForeverAlone Meets the Eucharist) [at Even the Wilderness]

You've probably heard of that estimable hashtag,

*#TeamForeverAlone*

(or just

*#ForeverAlone*

, if one wishes to express that they truly are alone and, therefore, do not belong to a team). You've probably also supposed yourself to belong to it at some point. Maybe it was sobbing into a half-pint of Ben & Jerry's that did it. Or perhaps Chick Flick Night a la Nicholas Sparks. Or maybe one too many nights when, completely exhausted and freezing because the heater is malfunctioning, you think that some human company wouldn't be so bad. But then again, there isn't another human in sight. And then again, one is also practicing chastity, so... there one is, chillin' at TEAM FOREVER ALONE IN ALL CAPS.



Truthfully, we all get lonely. Sometimes it isn't so bad- "Thank You, Lord, for this time of singlehood; I know You have a purpose and yada-yada-yada...". And then, sometimes it explodes, something snaps, and the aforementioned hashtag is employed; if not in an anonymous Twitter rant, then in an infuriated journal entry, long period of weeping, or a sudden boiling-over of righteous wrath whenever a friend posts a couple-selfie online: "Whaaaaaaaat?! They're engaged?! But... but... but... this is preposterous! One less sympathizing single friend! I shall soon be the only fancy-free maiden of our old quartet

1

! I hate them. I hate their guts. I curse the days of their births, and I wish with all my soul that his wife may plague his heart out.

2

"

[That may seem dramatic, and it can be, but it also happens all the time. Nothing makes one feel as worthless as being alone; even if we have realized that our worth is not based in our relationship statuses, it is still so easy to think that we aren't good enough; that there must be something wrong with us, or we would be being pursued already. This drives us to shoddy makeovers, immodest clothing, and losing our self-esteem. Others of us feel guilty, as though we're implying that God is not enough for us because we do things like ask Him to bring Prince Charming to us really,

*really*

soon because the thought of dying an old maid or wrinkling up before 'The One' comes along is absolutely terrifying. Even twelve-year-olds think like this.]

Our world is one of lust and infatuation, and we, the ladies who are striving to live virtuously, are being constantly told that our standards for men are impossibly high, that we are stuck up, and that chastity isn't worth it. These are lies. There is such a thing as a fellow who is perfect for you- not perfect, but perfect for

*you*

. Piety is not the same as snobbery. Chastity and holiness are

*so*

worth it. But even so, loneliness creeps into our lives, and we end up sobbing, our bodies smarting, and our hearts crushed within us

3

But it doesn't have to be this way.

*We have Christ.*

"That's different! It's not like He's physically here with me- here in Spirit, yes, but I cannot feel His arm around me, or His hand lovingly guiding me towards goodness, or see Him right next to me."

Wrong. Do you know that, any day, you can not only physically see Christ, but also feel Him, and even enter into a very intimate physical partaking in the Greatest Good of Life

4

? Well, you can. Where? Mass.



Physical proof of God's Love is in the fact of His humbling himself, coming down to dwell among us, first in human flesh... and then in a simple, bland wafer. Christ becomes Bread to feed us, body and soul, with Himself, because He loves us

*that*

much.

"The greatest love story... is contained in a tiny, white Host." -Archbishop Fulton J Sheen

The True Bridegroom, The One, is waiting to fill you with Himself, Body and Blood. He wants to fulfill you, and make you whole, and you can meet Him in the most intimate and special manner through Adoration, through Mass, and through all of Sacraments in their beauty and complexity.

That is how the Eucharist combats

*#TeamForeverAlone.*

So, my fellow loners, chat it up with Saint Raphael, watch some Leah Darrow talks, and lay out your clothes for Mass tomorrow. Hang in there.

Love,

*Grace*1: kudos to you if you caught that obscure reference to *Anne of Green Gables*.2: and that one's from *Sense & Sensibility*. Double kudos. 3: if this sounds nothing like you, feel free to adapt it. 4: I'm not trying to make this sound overly-sexual, m'kay? There is a difference between sex and eating.5: if you're Catholic. Perks of Catholicism, yo!

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This contribution is available at <http://garlicgraffiti.blogspot.com/2014/06/dwelling-among-us-where.html>  
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## Super Swell Times [at Super Swell Times]

Do you know [Sarah](#)? If you *don't* know Sarah, you should go read more about her — she has a **strong** appreciation for Catholic prison food. Anyways, more than a year ago (*Yea, yea, I know. I'm a super-duper blog stalker.*) Sarah wrote about her [experiences as a parish-hopper](#). It was a really interesting read for me because it gave me a closer look at something I don't understand: parish hopping.



Hey Sarah! I Googled “Catholic History Nerd” and this was the third image to come up! You’re welcome. (I don’t think you’re getting a Papal Facepalm, but I thought it was funny.)

### How I First Realized That Some People Belong to More Than One Parish

I’ll never forget the first time I realized that there were people out there who belong to/are involved in more than one parish. It was at our first outing with the Young Adults Group at our parish. “*Where else do you go?*” Was a **common** question around the table.



Credit: Catholic Journal. (Parish-hopping priests?)

This was confusing to me for a number of reasons:

1. As someone who has spent the last 25 years of her life moving around the world, finding one parish and “settling down” has always been one of the most important ways for me to make a new place “home.”
2. During my childhood, my family only parish-hopped once. We belonged to one parish that was close to our house and we belonged to another parish further away where we also went to school. The two years we spent splitting our time between churches were pretty confusing for me. (**Important note:** *I was 10, so my confusion was sort of understandable.*)
3. I have enough trouble being my charming, friendly self (*and getting in good with the pastor*) at one parish. The idea that I would have to go through the whole “introduce myself and bake banana bread” rigmarole a **two or more parishes** is terrifying to me.

The good news is that I’m not alone in my confusion. I asked my grandma about it and she (ever pragmatic, this one) asked me to find out how parish-hoppers determine their weekly contribution. (She also referred to someone’s second parish as “a mistress.” That’s pretty deep.)

*So, parish hoppers! How do you determine your weekly contribution? Do you feel like you’re involved with all of the parishes to which you hop? How did you become a parish hopper?*

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## Aeterne Rerum Omnium [at V for Victory!]



### Prayer of St. Francis Xavier, Apostle to the Far East, for Unbelievers

Aeterne rerum omnium effector Deus, memento abs te animas infidelium procreatas, easque ad imaginem et similitudinem tuam conditas. Memento Iesum, Filium tuum, pro illorum salute atrocissimam subiisse necem. Noli, quaeso, Domine, ultra permittere, ut Filius tuus ab infidelibus contemnatur, sed precibus sanctorum virorum et Ecclesiae, sanctissimi Filii tui Sponsae, placatus, recordare misericordiae tuae et, oblitus idololatriae et infidelitatis eorum, effice ut ipsi quoque agnoscant aliquando quem misisti Dominum Iesum Christum, qui est salus, vita et resurrectio nostra, per quem salvati et liberati sumus, cui sit gloria per infinita saecula saeculorum. Amen.

O God, everlasting Creator of all things, remember that the souls of unbelievers were made by Thee and formed in Thine own image and likeness. Remember that Jesus, Thy Son, endured a most bitter death for their salvation. Permit not, I beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thy Son should be despised any longer by unbelievers, but do Thou graciously accept the prayers of holy men and of the Church, the Spouse of Thy most holy Son, and be mindful of Thy mercy. Forget their idolatry and unbelief and grant that they too may some day know Him Thou hast sent, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Life and Resurrection, by whom we have been saved and delivered, to whom be glory

for endless ages. Amen.

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This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2014/06/aeterne-rerum-omnium.html>  
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# Let's Talk About Books, Man [at Jess]

Or people. Or Woman. Whatever.

Book review time!



This post might leave you with the realization that I am weird, but I suppose you had to find out sometime. So, let's dig in.

## Lean In

When this book first came out, a friend asked if I wanted to read it with her. I put it off for so long that I think she read it without me. I finally finished it in June. Sandberg has some really fantastic insight into women and corporate America. Some of this can be transferred to working women that are not in the corporate world, and perhaps even those of us that are at home. However, I think I might have been better off finding her TED talks. A former employer once mentioned to me that she noticed the tendency for women in work meetings to qualify their statements: "I might be missing something, but..." or "This sounds crazy, but what if we..." where as men just offer the idea to the group. I was hoping for a bit more insight to this sort of issue, but it seemed to repeat the same three or four catch phrases through out the book. I am glad I read it, but wish it had been a shorter read.

## Life, In Spite of Me

This was a quick read, but to be polite, it was boring. I put it on my GoodReads list a few years ago and forgot what it was supposed to be about. I think I started reading it thinking it was about someone that survived abortion, but it is about surviving suicide and her Christian conversion. I found it to be poorly written and lacked depth.

## **Neptune Noir**

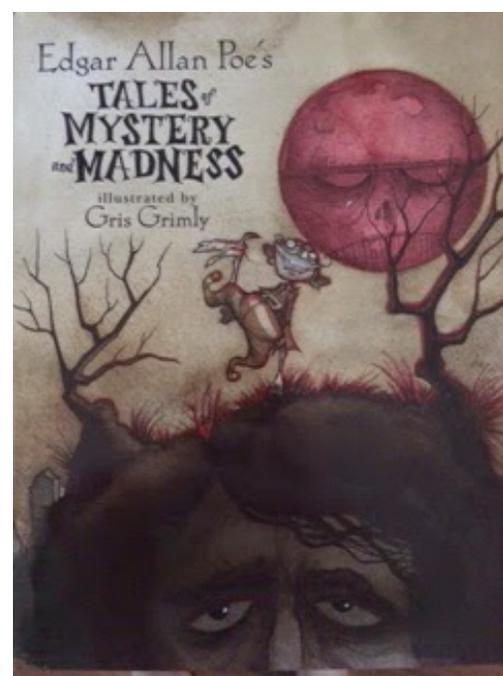
Yes. Once my certificate arrives in the mail, I will officially be a geek. I was hunting around Amazon to see if I could scope out the next Veronica Mars book release and I found this. It was edited by Rob Thomas, so I picked it out of the dozens of fan fic options. I didn't know that there was an entire book series that seriously analyzed TV shows. Wow. It was fun to read Rob's thoughts about VM in the blurbs ahead of the chapters. In case you were wondering, the second VM book is due out in late 2014. Yes. I have already pre-ordered. Leave me alone.

## **Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church**

BIG. Full of big words and more references than I can handle! What a great read though. You can find this on the Vatican website in its entirety. I found the book to be incredibly insightful. Here is a quick list of some of my earmarked sections:

183, 187 (poverty and the state), 234/251 (women and work) 335 (capitalism), 399 (death penalty), 401(armed resistance), 552 (commitments to others through service)

If you want to take the time, I recommend that you do so.



## **Edgar Allan Poe's Tales of Mystery and Madness**

Someone (who is still anonymous for now) sent me this in the mail, I assume for my birthday. The illustrations are just fantastic! I can't wait to use it to introduce the kids to Poe. It includes *The Black Cat*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, *Hop-Frog*, and *The Fall of the House of Usher*. The stories have been slightly edited (as in no dismembered bodies, so as kid-friendly as Poe can be) and as I said, beautifully illustrated. Adore.

If you're on

[GoodReads](#)

, add me! I love finding out what folks are reading!

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## One of Karol Wojty's Closest Friends: Jerzy Ciesielski



“The call to marriage is also a vocation, a gift from God. I will never forget a young man, an engineering student in Kraków, who everyone knew aspired with determination to holiness. **This was his life plan.** He knew he had been ‘created for great things,’ as Saint Stanislaus Kostka once expressed it. And at the same time, **he had no doubt that his vocation was neither to priesthood nor to religious life. He knew he was called to remain the secular world.** Technical work, the study of engineering, was his passion. He sought a companion for his life and **sought her on his knees, in prayer.** I will never forget the conversation in which, after a special day of retreat, he said to me: ‘I think that this is the woman who should be my wife, **that it is God who has given her to me.**’ It was almost as if he were following not only the voice of his own wishes but above all the voice of God Himself. He knew that all good things come from Him, and he made a good choice. I am speaking of Jerzy Ciesielski, who died in a tragic accident in the Sudan, where he had been invited to teach at the University. The cause for his beatification is under way.” (Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, emphasis added)

[On December 18th, 2013](#), Pope Francis recognized the holy life and heroic virtues displayed by Jerzy Ciesielski, a devout husband and father. His cause for canonization has been underway since 1985, when the Archdiocese of Kraków began the process. Jerzy was a close friend of Karol Wojtyła, who as a priest was his university chaplain in Kraków. When he heard about his tragic death in 1970, Wojtyła felt that he lost not just a friend, but a family member.

### Środowisko

In fact, they became very close friends and the two discovered they both had a love of the outdoors. Jerzy was a scout when he was younger and never stopped kayaking and hiking in the mountains. Father Wojtyła then invited Jerzy to be a part of his *Środowisko* group on young

people. This close-knit group of university students would often accompany Wojtyła on his adventures in the countryside. This time spent out in nature also included serious conversations about the meaning of life and the many struggles to be holy in the midst of the world.

Jerzy, an engineering student, benefited greatly from this relationship and enjoyed the *Środowisko* excursions. Providentially, among the members of the *Środowisko* Jerzy met his future wife Danuta, who also had been a faithful member of the group. They both enjoyed being with Father Wojtyła and went everywhere with the zealous chaplain. Danuta recollects that,

“Fr. Karol came with us on trips, to concerts, to the theatre and the cinema....We talked during excursions, around the fire and at organized meetings which took place in our homes. We had long one-to-one conversations with him about relationship problems and married life. To this day I have no idea how he found the time.” ([Vatican Insider](#))

Father Wojtyła was honored to preside at their wedding on June 29, 1957 and continued to be a spiritual father to the young couple throughout their life.

## Ordinary Holiness

One of Jerzy’s greatest attributes was his desire and determination to be a saint in the midst of the world. As already mentioned, he knew that he was called to holiness not in a monastery or rectory, but in the ordinary experiences of secular life. His thoughts on the subject were revolutionary at the time and greatly influenced Karol Wojtyła’s contributions to the Second Vatican Council. Wojtyła recalled how,

“Jerzy said lay people were also called to become saints. We talked about marriage as the sacramental path towards the fulfillment of life as a couple; and about work as an essential part of a person’s vocation. And this was before the Second Vatican Council took place.” ([Vatican Insider](#))

During his homily at Jerzy’s funeral, Karol Wojtyła highlighted this attribute of ordinary holiness:

**“[Jerzy] carried God’s witness in himself.** And he shared this witness...He knew that this witness of God which he carried in his soul must not be hidden under the bushel basket, that it is a light: therefore he bore witness...I dare say: he bore exceptional witness. It was exceptional also for this reason that he never said: I bear witness. And yet everyone knew that he did bear witness. **He never said: I strive for holiness. And everyone knew that he strove for holiness.**” (*The Making Of The Pope Of The Millennium: Kalendarium of the Life of Karol Wojtyła*, 411, emphasis added)

## On The Road to Sainthood

The cause for Jerzy’s sainthood is underway and currently needs one miracle to pave the way to his beatification. The Archdiocese of Kraków have been in charge of process since 1985, which

was 15 years after his tragic death on the Nile river. While on assignment teaching engineering students at the University of Khartoum, Jerzy took his children on a boat ride while his wife stayed behind at the hotel. The boat capsized and Jerzy, along with two of his children, died. Wojtyła returned from Rome to preside at the funeral in Kraków and was greatly saddened at the loss of a dear friend.

In the end, his life is a great inspiration for all people, especially men who are husbands and fathers. He teaches us that everyone is called to be a saint and that it is in our vocation of marriage and in our work that we attain holiness. Marriage is not somehow a “lesser” vocation, but it is a valid path to holiness and essential to the greater good of society.

Unfortunately, there is not much information on Jerzy in the English language, but I hope that someday we can learn more about him through the many notes and letters that he wrote in his short life.

Let us pray that Jerzy Ciesielski will soon be lifted up to the altars for veneration.

He is a light in the darkness.

If you have information relevant to this Cause, contact  
Rev. Michal Jagosz  
Biuro Postulacji J. Ciesielskiego  
ul. Sw. Anny 11  
31-008 Kraków, POLAND

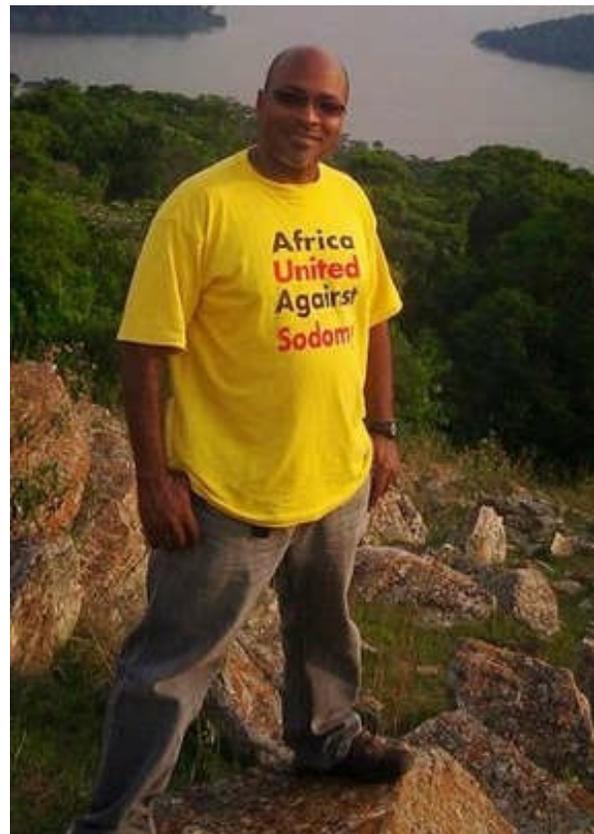
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## UGANDA Fights for the THE FAMILY: Center and Heart of the Civilization of Love [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

*“Kristu abagumye. Era abawe omukisa.” (May Christ comfort you, and may he bless you.)  
(Office of the Readings for June 3, 2014, the Memorial of Ugandan Martyrs St. Charles Lwanga and Companions)*



The last man standing on planet earth is likely to be a Ugandan.

At least that's what the people of Uganda hope for in their struggle for family rights.

While legislation signed into law in February in Uganda was characterized as an “anti-gay” bill, what it really represented was the East African nation's heart-felt belief that the family is the cradle of civilization, and sodomy only leads to death.

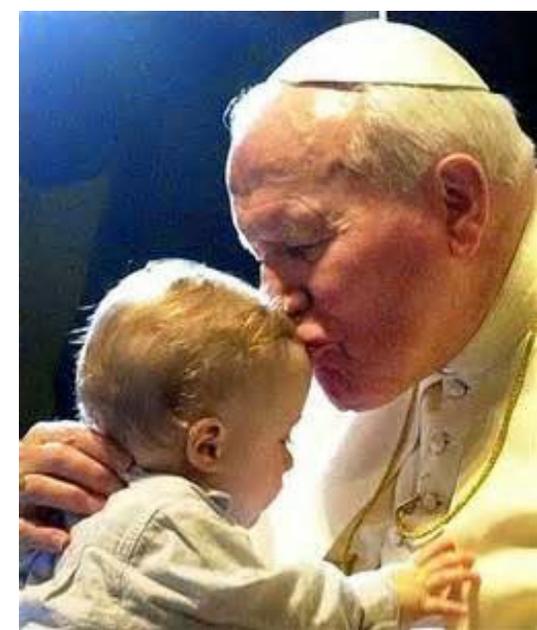
Their sentiments find a home in the thinking of Pope Saint John Paul II in his 1994 “Letter to Families” “Be human!” the pope said, emphasizing that the family is the “center and heart of the civilization of love.”

“The primordial model of the family is to be sought in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life. Man is created ‘from the very beginning’ as male and female: the life of all humanity — whether of small communities or of society as a whole — is marked by this primordial duality.” the pope said.

This message is totally lost on the unthinking West, which is gradually destroying the family and eliminating its own population through promiscuity, contraception, pornography, divorce, liberal education, so-called same-sex “marriage,” abortion and euthanasia. It’s materialism run amuck.

“The most merciful thing that a family does to one of its infant members is to kill it,” said American Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), adding, “Women of the working class, especially wage workers, should not have more than two children.”

In the last fifty years, her thinking has become entirely commonplace: “My wife asked me if I wanted a second dog or a third child,” a Coloradan joked recently in my presence, “I told her to get the dog.” His true sentiments were met with gales of laughter.



“The civilization of love means ‘rejoicing in the right.’ (1 Cor 13:6) But a civilization inspired by a consumerist, anti-birth mentality is not and cannot ever be a civilization of love.” Saint John Paul warned.

His thinking is not easily understood by the children of Margaret Sanger: “Can you please tell me why what two men do in the privacy of their own bedroom is of any business to anyone else? Why must sodomy be stopped?”

Indeed, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry shares the same mindset: “African leaders need to set aside sectarian and religious differences in favor of inclusiveness ... and they must accept that sexual orientation is a private matter,” he wrote in an editorial published May 2 in the Washington Post during his first major tour of sub-Saharan Africa. “LGBT rights are human rights,” he told the Washington Blade.

Imagine the hubris! The U.S. Secretary of State steps over the dead bodies of 57 million unborn Americans to go over to Africa and lecture them on human rights! And because he politely agreed that sanctions are needed to control the violence in South Sudan, his visit to Africa was hailed as a sign of hope!



“Though always with you (Western nations) when it comes to the so-called gay rights in Nigeria you run, but to the ongoing terror attacks by the Islamic militia Boko Haram you only stammer,” said Nigerian Catholic Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama, criticizing the liberal bias of the West. Nigeria is also on the hot seat with the American government because of their law against same-sex “marriage.”

"Constantly new violence, burned and mutilated bodies, women and children who are killed in a terrible rhythm: this is the emergency afflicting our country, but nothing from Europe on this. But for 'gay rights,' the EU, the European Parliament and other international institutions will mobilize," the Archbishop said in disgust.



His complaints were so familiar. It was the same message I received from African Delegates to the United Nations in 2000 at a preparatory meeting of the General Assembly, which I attended as a lobbyist for the Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute. After a war which completely decimated the population of one African nation, the West came in with free "family planning" services: condoms, birth control devices, abortion, all neatly packaged in local storefronts, sporting big blue and white signs, which read, "Population Control." The "aid," which encouraged promiscuity, was deeply resented.

"In all the villages of Nigeria, there are women who cannot read or write, but they have the morning after pill. Who gives them the morning after pill, pushing it into her hand?" said Archbishop Kaigama. "It is the western governmental and non-governmental organizations that impose their ideas on us. To ensure that our government gets international economic aid, they must accept this Western policy. But that is called coercion. A culture and a mentality are imposed that is not ours, for us Nigerians do not despise life."

Uganda also is a nation that does not despise life. It is the world's youngest nation with 78 percent of the population under the age of 30 and over half are under 15 years of age. Uganda has the third highest fertility rate in the world with lifetime births per woman at 6.7 in 2006. Compare that to the United States where some estimates show the fertility rate to have dropped to 1.8 children per woman's lifetime. That is well below the population replacement rate of 2.33 children. Our existing population of 310 million is imploding.

Despite that, the U.S. Census Bureau expects the population to continue to grow. That's either wishful thinking or it could be the reason President Obama is pushing immigration reform. Having lost 57 million Americans to abortion in the last 40 years, the U.S. needs to import more people to support its sagging economy. Heavens, who will pay the taxes to support America's aging population?



Uganda's population of 36 million – despite high infant and maternal mortality – is growing rapidly. They are on track to have the world's largest population growth in the coming decades, according to the Population Reference Bureau, a think tank in Washington, D.C.



While the West moans and groans about how Uganda needs more population planning, even going so far as to complain that only 20 percent of Ugandan women have access to contraception, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni welcomes the children. He has called the nation's population explosion a "great resource."

So this is the story of David meets Goliath. The evil giant is the culture of death embraced by the dying Western nations of the United States, Canada and Europe. David is played by the culture of

life embodied in the rapidly growing African nation of Uganda, the country that welcomes life.

Meanwhile on Easter Sunday in Uganda, Anglican bishops and Protestant pastors quietly gave their support to President Museveni, who courageously signed the so-called “anti-gay” bill despite worldwide threats to cut aid to Uganda. "We Africans never seek to impose our view on others," Museveni said, talking of Western pressure not to sign the bill, which he described as “social imperialism."

U.S. President Barack Obama had warned that passage of the so-called “anti-gay” bill would “complicate our valued relationship with Uganda.” And indeed, noticeably absent from Kerry’s three-country tour of sub-Saharan Africa in April was the country of Uganda.



Ugandans have an incredible sense of humor. They thumbed their noses at the United States by organizing a “Ugandan Pride” parade in Kampala on March 24, which mocked “Gay Pride” parades held here. The Guardian Africa Network reported that 30,000 people rallied in support of the “anti-homosexual” legislation, which is really a law against public indecency and rape.

Most of the enthusiastic “anti-gay” supporters were young, according to writer Rebecca Hodes, noting that their presence added to the hilarity of the event. “They ate messily, slept, listened to things on their ear phones. They rolled up their placards bearing slogans (against homosexuality), and attacked each other with them. They laughed themselves hoarse.” One placard held by a youth read: “Museveni, we the children thank you for saving our future.”



Frequently, it's said that bills, which limit homosexual interaction, are an injustice because people have the right to determine whom they love. Does that mean we condone prostitution, pornography, same sex "marriage," child and date rape, people with AIDs selfishly sharing their illness with another partner? Is that "love?" Those are the activities severely restricted by Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014.

The new "anti-homosexuality" bill is misnamed. In reality, the bill is anti-public indecency and anti-rape. Life in prison sentences only apply to rape of an invalid, child, drugged date, serial convictions of homosexual acts, or if you have sexual relations while carrying HIV AIDs.

The new "anti-homosexual" bill is highly popular among Ugandans because it's seen as a measure to protect their vulnerable youth. "We think this is an achievement for Uganda because the minors will be protected and the innocents will be saved from abuse and molestation," said Simon Lokodo, Uganda's minister of State for Ethics and Integrity.

So begins a cultural clash of titanic proportions. "We are living in very interesting times in Uganda. Like so many, I and the (Anglican) Church of Uganda are grateful to the President for signing into law the Anti-Homosexuality Act. We must assert our sovereignty and do what it takes to protect our children from being recruited into an immoral life and exploited by others," Anglican Archbishop Stanley Ntagali told his congregation on Easter Sunday. His fellow Anglican bishop Patrick Gidudu, Mbale Diocese, told his congregation, "We know that this legislation will protect society and the youth from homosexuality which is abominable in Africa."

Ironically, Archbishop Ntagali is fighting both the powers in the west and his own Anglican Communion on the issue of homosexuality. "The fabric of the Anglican Communion was torn at its deepest level in 2003 when the American Episcopal Church consecrated as Bishop a gay man

living in a same-sex relationship. Not only was this against the Bible, but it went against the agreed position of the Anglican Communion.”

“Our current concern is that the Church of England seems to be drifting rapidly in the same direction. We are very grateful to them for sending missionaries who told us about the good news of Jesus Christ. They seem now to be reversing themselves. Fortunately, we no longer need to be directed by them.”

“We can read and interpret the Bible for ourselves, and we know what it says about sexual behavior belonging between one man and one woman in holy matrimony.” In other words, to the Church in England: Uganda says thanks for the missionaries, now mind your own business.



“Who gives America or Europe the power to define for us a vice? We in Africa know sodomy as a vice, but they are saying it’s a right,” said Ugandan Pastor Martin Ssempe in a television interview March 1.

For the pastor, who lost two siblings to AIDs in 1990, it appears his personal crusade against sodomy is related to his own life experience. Reportedly after his brother and sister’s deaths, he blamed their promiscuity and feared his own lifestyle would lead to the same end. So he converted to Evangelical Christianity.

He frequently quotes statistics that men who have sex with men are 10 times more likely to pass on HIV AIDs. “Any time you promote homosexuality, you are actually fueling HIV 100 percent. We passed this law to protect the nature of our families.”

Uganda is seeing a rise in the HIV rate after a period of relative stability, which is disconcerting for a nation that saw a big decline in new infections during the 1990s. “In Uganda when we pushed abstinence, fidelity in marriage, the use of condoms consistently, we succeeded (in reducing HIV/AIDs),” Ssempe said. According to the most recent survey by Uganda's Ministry of Health, 7.3 percent of the Ugandan population has HIV, up from about 6 percent a decade ago.

“Even if the most powerful leaders of Europe and America are building their diplomacy and national security on sodomy, we want to show them ... that Africa has common sense,” Pastor Ssempe concluded.

“The family is indeed—more than any other human reality—the place where an individual can exist ‘for himself’ through the sincere gift of self,” wrote Saint John Paul the Great in his 1994 letter to families. “Indeed, although there is on the one hand the ‘civilization of love, (the family)’ there continues to exist on the other hand the possibility of a destructive ‘*anti-civilization*.’” Like a weed, the mindset of the anti-family *anti-civilization* has already taken root in America.

“Marriage,” the pope continued, “which undergirds the institution of the family, is constituted by the covenant whereby ‘a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life,’ and which ‘of its own very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children.’ **Only such a union can be recognized and ratified as a ‘marriage’ in society.** Other interpersonal unions, which do not fulfill the above conditions cannot be recognized, despite certain growing trends which represent a serious threat to the future of the family and of society itself.”

“So-called ‘safe sex,’ which is touted by the ‘civilization of technology,’ is actually, in view of the overall requirements of the person, radically *not safe*, indeed it is extremely dangerous. It endangers both the person and the family. And what is this danger? It is *the loss of the truth about one's own self and about the family*, together with the risk of a loss of *freedom* and consequently of a loss of *love* itself,” the pope said.

“Who am I?” Do I self-identify according to my sexual orientation, my personhood or by my relationship to Jesus Christ? If the family is dispersed, where can a child receive clear direction as to his own human identity? Do we deliver control of our children to the government? Do we allow the government to become the arbiter of ethics and morality as happened to my own local

bakery? A Colorado court just ordered Masterpiece Bakery of Lakewood, Colorado, to make same-sex “wedding” cakes contrary to their conscience and undergo sensitivity training. “They are turning people of faith into religious refugees,” said Nicolle Martin, an attorney with Alliance Defending Freedom. “Is this the society that we want to live in — where people of faith are driven out of business?”

“Who am I?” the anguished westerner asks. And the only image that rises in his mind is himself. So he buys his wife a second dog, and refuses to give her children.

Disneyland is not the happiest place on earth. The earth moves, people die, trials flourish, but the family bonded in love and founded on Jesus Christ is a source of great blessing. It is the happiest place on earth.

The new Ugandan law is popular in Africa where 37 countries have laws against homosexuality, but it has been met with outright hysteria from the LGBT community.

People, who self-identify according to their homosexuality, claim they are anxious to emigrate to the West because their own Ugandan mother will turn them in. That’s impossible because you need two witnesses to a homosexual act to convict. Liberal Canada hypocritically refused visas to Ugandan “gay” activists for the June 20-29 celebration of “Gay” Pride, known as WorldPride 2014 in Toronto. It seems they feared the Ugandans would over stay their welcome, seeking asylum.

Some report they fear that Ugandans with new cases of HIV won’t seek medical treatment because of the potential for prosecution. “We treat everybody. We don’t ask how they got HIV,” Pastor Ssempe emphasized.

Underlying the hysteria from the liberal and LGBT press is the question, “Do you love me even if I am gay? Will you treat me fairly?” I cannot answer the question for the nation of Uganda. But for the Catholic Church, which has also been the subject of hysterical rumors, the answer is a resounding “Yes!”

"We don't support homosexuality," Msgr. John Baptist Kauta, secretary-general of the Uganda Episcopal (Catholic) Conference, told Catholic News Service. But when the "anti-gay" bill was first discussed, the country's bishops were against the harsh penalties it involved for homosexual acts, including the death penalty. "The bishops were not in favor of that," he said. "We were for compassion, and we believe (homosexuals) can change."

The Catholic Church does teach that same sex inclinations are objectively disordered on account of how our bodies are structurally designed. But **persons who experience same-sex attractions** (regardless of how they self-identify or define themselves) "**must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity**. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition." (Catholic Catechism #2358)

The Catechism goes on to say: Persons who experience same-sex attractions "are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection." (#2359)

That Uganda itself must face down the suspicion of the LGBT community and all the power and might of the Western nations over the issue of homosexuality is ironic.



Perhaps one of the holiest days of the year in the mostly Christian nation of Uganda is June 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Catholic Memorial of Ugandan Martyrs St. Charles Lwanga and Companions. In the late 1800s, Uganda had a violent ruler, who self-identified according to his homosexuality, King Mwanga. He

routinely forced himself on the young boys and men who served him as pages and attendants.

A small community of 200 Christians served King Mwanga, and when he killed a Protestant missionary, the Catholic head of the court community, Joseph Mukasa, condemned the king's actions. Mwanga forgot his long friendship with Joseph and ordered his execution. Joseph forgave the king with all his heart, but made one final plea for the king's repentance before he was beheaded and burned on Nov. 15, 1885. He was only 25 years old.

Catholic Charles Lwanga took over the leadership of the Christian community at court, and accepted the job of keeping the young boys and men out of Mwanga's hands. The persecution died down for six months.

But in May 1886, the king asked one of his Christian pages what he had been doing that kept him from Mwanga. The page replied that he had been receiving religious instruction. The king was furious and killed the boy's Catholic instructor by thrusting a spear through his throat.

The king closed the compound and summoned the executioners. Knowing what was coming, Charles Lwanga baptized four catechumens that night, including 13-year-old Kizito. The king called together his whole court the next day and separated the Christians. "Those who do not pray stand by me, those who do pray stand over there," the king ordered. Fifteen men and boys -- all under the age of 25 -- were condemned to death when they refused to renounce their Christian faith.

On the 37-mile trek to the place of execution, the boys had to pass the home of the Roman Catholic Society of Missionaries of Africa, known as the White Fathers. Fr. Lourdel almost fainted when he witnessed the courage and joy of these converts as they passed his home. Thirteen-year-old Kizito was laughing and chattering.

The king also ordered the execution of a Catholic soldier James Buzabaliawo. His response to the king? "Goodbye, then. I am going to Heaven, and I will pray to God for you." When he passed Fr. Lourdel, he said, "Why are you so sad? This is nothing to the joys you have taught us to look forward to."



Some were killed on the way to the place of execution, but when the survivors arrived they were wrapped in reed mats, placed on a pyre and burned to death. Thirteen Catholics and 11 Protestants died, calling on the name of Jesus, and saying, “You can burn our bodies, but you cannot harm our souls.”

Their testament to chastity still burns brightly in the hearts of the Ugandan people.

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## The End of History [at One Arrow Alone]

Today I finished reading *Weisheit in Israel* (Wisdom in Israel) by the renowned Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971), a German Lutheran. The book is about Jewish wisdom literature. I shall not summarize it, but for an interesting thought in the chapter on the ‘determination of times’.

Von Rad says that Israel always believed that our lives were in the hands of the Lord. His ordering activity determines our destiny. This does not exclude the freedom of the will; God’s foresight and shaping of ends is not as deterministic as that. He merely arranges things so that they end up according to his will: for instance, with Joseph as vice-regent in Egypt. When necessary, He intervenes, by sending plagues to Egypt, lengthening the day, calling Isaiah, or something of that sort. When apposite, He changes his mind, e.g. after Jonah’s mission to Nineveh.

The apocalyptic vision in late Judaism represents a significant shift. For the apocalyptic authors, everything is already set in stone – or worse, in the ‘tablets of heaven’. This means that those who have had a vision of God have received knowledge of history, rather than God’s will for the moment. According to the (apocryphal) Book of Jubilees, God has shown Moses the events that had been and that were to come; it is this history that Moses recorded, from the creation to the day of the new creation. Jacob, too, would have read the entire history of his descendants on a tablet shown to him by an angel. In other apocalyptic literature, Henoch is said to have gained knowledge of the future through looking in the heavenly books.

As Von Rad says: ‘The image of the divine determination ... has forced the old image of history as a place of tension between occurring promises and unfolding fulfillments into the background.’

This drastically changes the view of history. There are no ‘*innergeschichtliche Heilsgründungen*’ (foundations of salvation within history). Certainly salvation takes place within history, but it is, in a sense, salvation *from* history – from what St. Paul calls the ‘aeon’, the spirit of the time, the prince of the world. Salvation occurs ‘at the margins of history’ from a world that has been permeated by evil. It is not prepared in time; it intrudes upon it.

Von Rad again: ‘The end breaks abruptly into an ever-increasingly darkening world of history, and the benefits of salvation, which had long been pre-existently available in the heavenly world – ‘until the times are at an end’ – (Son of Man, the new Jerusalem), come into appearance.’ The recipient of salvation is not Israel, but a holy remnant, or a congregation of individuals.

The story of God’s blessings in history (like the election of Abraham ‘to be a blessing’, the gift of the Law to Moses, the establishment of David), is replaced by knowledge of the periods or ages of history, in which God’s sovereignty can be seen. (Despite the appearance of the present age, there really is a plan!) But the events of the past do not provide any legitimacy to present affairs; the anticipated future is the measure of things.

In the Apocalypse of Ezra, Ezra complains that God has not given Israel a way to attain to salvation, despite his great plans. The promise of eternity has become useless in view of the evil works that Israel has done. Ezra’s angelic interlocutor confirms that little good has come to Israel in history, but there is a possibility for Israelites to attain to life and salvation in the age to come. Abraham was elected to understand the mysteries of this age.

In conclusion: ‘A view on history has arisen without praise for the historical sources of God’s salvation. Praise only springs forth in view of the apocalyptic end. The sense of the present meaning of God’s past deeds has disappeared. History has become matter of fact, to be adduced for instruction, but above all to turn the hour in which one lives to the right purpose.’

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## Give Jesus your "What Things"



The disciples of Jesus had worries and fears. They began doubting Jesus because they were scandalized by his suffering, afraid of his death, and death, and they feared they had wasted their life on following a false messiah. The Resurrected Jesus walks by their side and illumines their faith by explaining how necessary it was for the Christ to suffer. He strengthens them with his mystical presence in the Eucharist. And he frees them by changing their fears and worries to enthusiasm and joy.

He begins by asking for their "what things." "What things?" have happened to them in their life and to their Christ. Fears, tragedy, trauma, bad experiences, life. And it has paralyzed them. They stand still. It's a metaphor for their spiritual life. Once they give Jesus their "what things", he can begin illuminating, strengthening, freeing.

The Resurrected Jesus today is walking beside you and asking for your "what things". "What things are bothering you?" "What are you powerless over?" "What can't you stand, or wish you could change if only you knew how?"

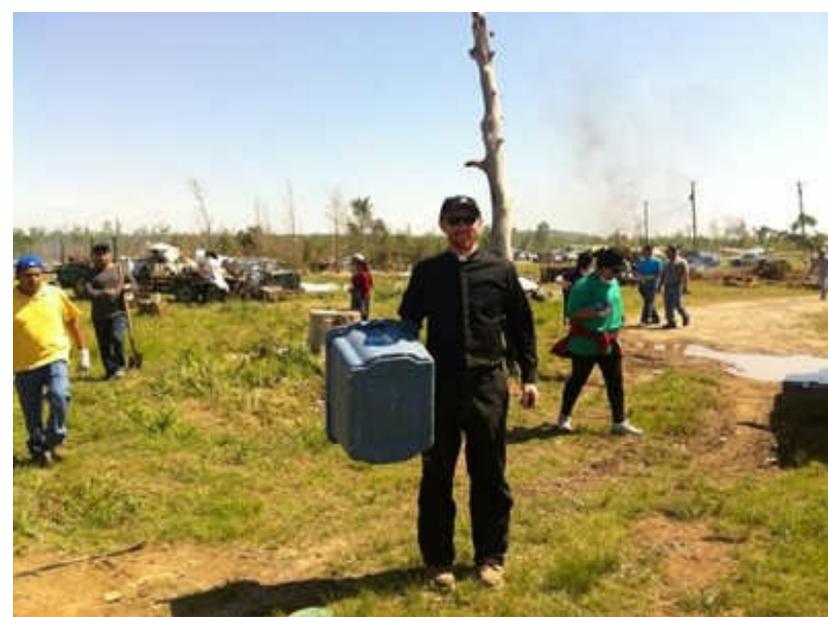
Give the Resurrected Lord Jesus your "what things".

We can do this in a very concrete and simple way. We tell Jesus:

“I can’t, but God can, so I’ll let him.”



And I’ve made myself a can and I call it my “God Can”. I put my “what things” in my “God Can” and let him take care of it. My useless worries, my fears, my frustrations, the people or things I cannot change. When I am paralyzed in my spiritual life and am standing still, I give my “what things” to God. One example. Last week, many people were asking me what we could do for the tornado victims. I really didn’t know, and I hadn’t a clue where to start. So I put the tornado victims in my “God Can.” Jesus, I can’t. I don’t know where to start to begin helping those people, and I don’t even know where or who they are. I know you can help them, so Lord, I’ll let you.” And by Monday night there were already notices and groups from St. Joseph’s in Conway collaborating with local volunteer fire departments to help those in Vilonia. So about twenty of us from St. Augustine’s and St. Andrew’s went out on Friday to help. I couldn’t have organized something like that. But God could. And we let Him. No matter what your “what things” are, give them to Jesus. Put them in your “God Can.” And watch how he gives you a new life.



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# A Catholic Moment [at A Catholic Moment]



Jesus said in today's gospel, "For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." This verse at first glance doesn't have anything to do with the first reading for mass today. Christ's words in the gospel are gentle and loving. He is warning us to pay attention to what we value in life, because this is what we will retain in eternal life. The first reading for mass by contrast, seems to be filled with negativity and violence and is void of gentleness and love. Or so it seems. But, if you go back to the first reading for mass today, it is an extensive elaboration on Christ's words in today's gospel.

Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, went on a rampage killing the entire royal family, Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram took his small son Joash and ran away with him. This young lady was not concerned about her possessions, or anything else in her own life. Her natural instinct was to protect the king's little son. Her heart was with the little boy, or else she wouldn't have run away with him to protect his life. She concealed Joash in the temple of the Lord while Athaliah ruled their land. By doing this, she saved the king's son's life.

Today's readings challenge us to consider where our treasure is? Where is our heart? If you had to flee your home today, what or who would you grab at the last minute? It is interesting to ask people what they would do, if they knew the earth was going to end in one day too. How would they want to spend their last day on earth and with whom? Their answers might surprise you. Those whom you may suspect to be very worldly, might actually have their heart in the right place.

Athaliah threw a fit and started crying "treason, treason" in front of the temple in today's first reading for mass today. She was led out of the city forcibly and put to death. Then, the people installed Joash as their new king. It was his rightful place to rule them, not Athaliah. The people took action and did the right thing. Then, they demolished the temple of Baal and shattered its

altars and images. There was much rejoicing and peace finally came upon their land.

Many Catholics believe that the type of negative events in the first reading for mass are not gentle, compassionate or peaceful, and are not Christian behavior. Yet, without this major conflict that occurred between Athaliah and her people, no genuine peace could have been possible. The people would have lived under her negativity, and the influence of false idols and false gods. It would have been like living in a perpetual state of friction and violent emotions simmering just below the surface. Either that, or the people would have been indoctrinated into worshiping false gods in the temple of Baal.

In the last verse of today's gospel Jesus said:

*“The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light; but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness. And if the light in you is darkness, how great the darkness will be.”*

Athaliah suffered the loss of her son Ahaziah, and her deep grief turned into an evil force in the world. She saw the world and everyone else she encountered, through the lens of the perceived injustice of her son's death. Evil is actually love, but it is perverted. Evil is a perverted form of love. Athaliah sought to satisfy her grief, by causing other people to suffer and taking control of the kingdom herself. A big part of this is because she worshiped Baal. Athaliah worshiped a false god, and the entire foundation of her life crumbled and did not last, because her life was built like a house of cards – on air.

It is important that we protect the love in our hearts, and keep it pure, with God's grace. Our love too, could become perverted or tainted with evil, without God's grace. God does not share His grace with strangers, only His sons and daughters. Let us be careful to strive always to remain in a state of grace, and to pray for God's grace the first moment love begins to turn into something it was never meant to be.

Attending mass, receiving communion, regular confession, prayer and reading the scriptures and other good spiritual books, along with the kind of company we keep, will help to protect the love and grace that dwells within us. No one is an island all to themselves. We are just like the king's son in the first reading for mass today. We need one another's support, and concrete help, to help us make it to our Father's kingdom.

Daily Mass Readings:

Kings 11: 1-4, 9-18, 20 / Psalm 132 / Matthew 6:19-23

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## Today's find: Rite of passage [at With Us Still]

It's a strange feeling, the first time you call your son "Father."

It's odder still, to hear him preach — and preach well — speaking the words of a homily that profoundly touches your heart and makes your spirit soar. I received that special grace from my son Chris a couple of days ago, as he celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving at [St. Matthew the Apostle Parish](#), a week and a day after [his ordination to the priesthood](#).

As I reflected on my son's insights into the Eucharist on the [feast of Corpus Christi](#), it became apparent to me that I was experiencing something like a rite of passage in my relationship with Chris: The Teacher was becoming the Taught.

It's not unlike the change I've been experiencing of late with our other son, Brian — the father of [our first grandchild](#). When Brian and I are together these days, I can feel some old, familiar roles slipping away: Primary Provider; Nourisher; Comforter; Leader.

So yeah, it's a strange sort of blessing, to watch your sons become fathers: You know, on some level, that a load is being lifted off your shoulders, and for that you're grateful. But you also realize that it's a load you loved to carry — and still love. A load you're loathe to release into another's hands, even when he demonstrates that he's more than capable of doing the job and doing it well.

All of which strikes me as an opportunity to reflect on an underappreciated strength in the personality of St. John the Baptist, [whose birthday we celebrate today](#): His willingness to move from front to back.

John was certainly blessed by God — the greatest of prophets, called to herald the Messiah, a job he did memorably and did well. Surely, it couldn't have been easy for him to step back from that role when Jesus did eventually arrive on the scene. But the Baptist did not cling to his position, his established routine. Instead, when the time came, he poured all of his energy into pointing toward Christ: *'He must increase; I must decrease.'* ([John 3:30](#))

As I ponder the Baptist's example in the light of my own recent experience, I find myself moved to pray:

*When I come to times of transition in my life, Lord, give me a full measure of the confidence that You poured out on your servant John. Give me the grace to trust that more blessings, and different blessings, await me — if only I can overcome my reluctance, and embrace the new roles to which I am being called. Amen.*



Here are the sons I now call fathers...along with the women who keep us on the straight-and-narrow.

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

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# Christianity is Not a Religion [at warriorsworlddad]

**The First Amendment to the United States Constitution reads:**

**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**

Today June 21, 2014 marks the beginning of a Fortnight for Freedom as called for by the Bishops of the United States. They felt compelled to do so because of the continuing overreach of the Federal Government and its unconstitutional intrusions into public and private life.

The courts have been a battleground for over forty years now in the ongoing battle to keep religion out of Public Schools, Public Places such as Courthouses and out of Public Meetings. Unfortunately nearly 100% of the cases involve keeping Christianity out of these places.

## **Newsflash: Christianity Is Not A Specific Religion!**

Not since before the split of the Church into the Eastern and Western branches could anyone claim that Christianity is a specific religion. With the Protestant Reformation Christian Sects were Fruitful and Multiplied. Today the multiplication of the sects rivals the multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes by Christ with now over 40,000 different sects claiming the moniker Christian.

The Church established by Christ in 33 A.D. was unified until 1053 A.D when the Great Schism occurred. Since the Constitution of the United States was written in 1787 A.D. , a full 734 years later, the writers obviously were not talking about the first Christian Church in the world. The Protestant Reformation in 1517 resulted in the Lutheran Church being created in Germany. However the writers of the Constitution were not from Germany, they were Colonists of the British Empire living in the New World. At the time of the writing of the Constitution, the Anglican Church, as founded by Henry VIII, was the Official Church of England.

The writers were all too familiar with the problems of an Official State Church. It was another means to discriminate against and control people. They realized that True Freedom involves freedom to participate in the activities outlined in the First Amendment without government interference of any kind. The establishment clause prohibits a Christian Sect, like Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism or The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints from becoming the Official Faith of the Land! It also prohibits any law from being enacted that interferes with members practicing their faith.

When courts rule that a Christmas Play performed in a Public School featuring Angels and the Christ Child violates the First Amendment because it promotes the Christian Religion, I have to

ask, which Christian Religion do they mean? The ones who promote these types of activities or the ones who don't! Some Christian Sects have forbidden celebrating Christmas in any way because they deemed it unseemly for such a Sacred Event.

When the government requires that all employers provide Contraception as part of their Healthcare Insurance Plans it violates the First Amendment in two ways:

First it violates the Free Exercise of Religion for those who see Contraception as against God's Law according to their faith.

Second it violates the Establishment Clause by implementing a law that promulgates Contraception as a Choice – a belief now adopted by many Main Line Churches. As such the law is aiding and abetting these churches in their doctrine.

As it now stands the government of the United States is picking and choosing which Christian Churches it approves of. Soon it will get around to the Jewish, Muslim and other faith sects for their approval.

The First Amendment is perfectly clear in what it means. A Fifth Grade History Lesson would clarify it even more for anyone. But this is apparently beyond the grasp of many of our Lawmakers and Jurists. It is either beyond their grasp or they are actively promoting an agenda that seriously limits the freedom of many of the Nation's citizens.

Such chicanery by the government is why the writers of the Constitution added the Bill of Rights. They were all too familiar with absolute power in anyone's hands and the damage it can do.

On the United States Council of Catholic Bishops webpage they explain the purpose for this year's Fortnight and the significance of its timing:

The ***Fortnight for Freedom: Freedom to Serve*** will take place from June 21 to July 4, 2014, a time when our liturgical calendar celebrates a series of great martyrs who remained faithful in the face of persecution by political power—St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher, St. John the Baptist, SS. Peter and Paul, and the First Martyrs of the Church of Rome. The theme of this year's Fortnight will focus on the freedom to serve the poor and vulnerable in accord with human dignity and the Church's teaching.

The Constitution's writers knew of these famous martyrs and the many other people who were incarcerated by King George on charges of Heresy. If the United States government successfully enforces the H.H.S. Mandate, will speaking against Abortion and Contraception become Heresy, Sedition or Treason and be punishable under the law in the future?

All people who truly value their freedom must stand up against this latest government tyranny. Whether your Church allows or bans contraception is not the point. The point is stopping the government from taking control of another part of our lives. When was the last time you heard of

any government saying it had too much power?

Stand For Freedom! Stand for the Constitution! Stop the government overreach into our lives!

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# I Wanted To Be Invisible [at A Catholic Heart For Home]

As a kid I was asked the question if I had to pick a super power what would it be, I always picked invisibility. My sister was made for the lights and centre stage I preferred the background, the dark corner, perfectly blended with the scenery. Still do.

Today's Gospel reading talks about we as Christians are the salt and the light.

**Matt 5:14 says "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid."**

A couple months ago one of the security guards at my job asked me if I was a Christian. I don't really have a relationship with this woman, I say good morning or what ever, I wish her a good weekend, some small talk on occasion. Nothing in-depth. When I told her yes she said "I knew it, you could always tell." I didn't ask her what she meant by that I thanked her because she really made my day that morning.

This last week I was having a conversation with a couple of co-workers, I've known both for less than a year but we talk regularly about a number of things so I would say we are fairly close. We are chatting about relationships one is married, the other is divorced but has a boyfriend and well I'm single. When I asked I said yes I would love to be in a relationship but basically I don't want a boyfriend just to have a boyfriend. One of them said she knew I was that kind of person from the way she has seen me act and heard me talk. She liked that I had standards.

I often think no-one notices me, that what I do or don't do doesn't make much difference to anyone.

I may want to be invisible. I may even act like it at times. However God has called us to be the salt and light of the earth. To not have our lights hid under a bushel basket but to shine before others.

We don't always know where our light may land, why or how but know that if you are living out your Catholic Faith you are shining for God.

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This contribution is available at <http://acatholicheartforhome.blogspot.com/2014/06/i-wanted-to-be-invisible.html>

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# Night watchers [at Living the Faith]



Night watchers  
That stands still heaven's gate  
Assigned with iron fist  
To guard the soul  
of roaming men  
From the snares of death

Bend low  
Thy gentle face  
Kind being  
On humanity's head  
with care

Lay peace  
by their bed's knees  
As they close  
the final page  
Of the day's sweet

Tap their head bliss  
With a goodnight kiss  
As they fling their gray eyes  
Departing the moon's dreams

This contribution is available at <http://twocatholicfriends.wordpress.com/2014/06/25/night-watchers>  
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## whatever happens, I'm going to be at peace [at jeffily]

“Whatever happens, I’m going to be at peace.”

I had that thought pop into my head today as I was walking to the mailbox and was surprised with an expensive medical bill. I was just wandering around the yard moments before, basking in the warmth and sunlight, my new handmade maxi skirt, and soaking in all of God’s creation. I had just put some cages on our “potted” plants, and was chatting with Jeff about our days. We just got a new hummingbird feeder and have been trying to catch brief glimpses of the quick little birds.



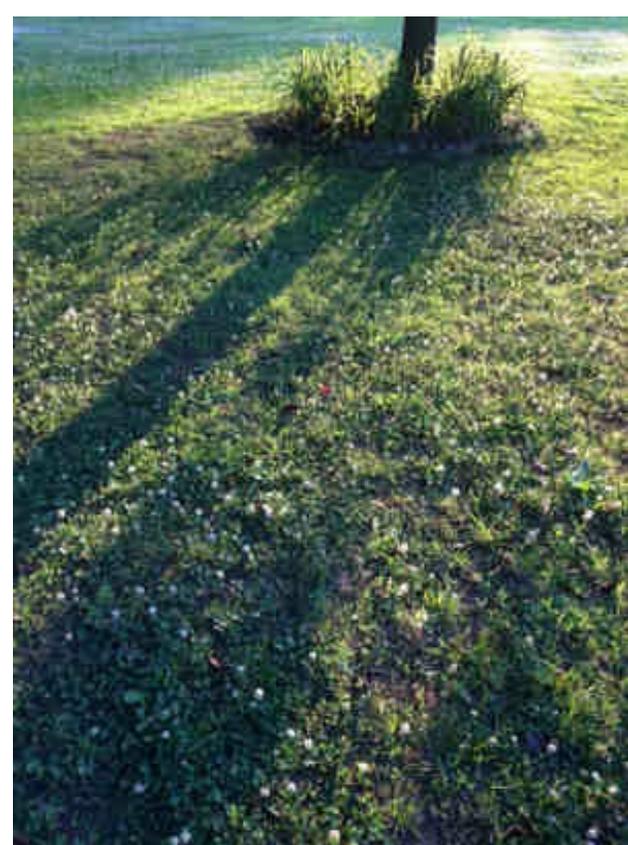
I am a worrywart by nature. In my head, I always go to the worst possible outcome first. A lot of my current fear, worry, and anxiety centers around our finances. Jeff is a teacher and I’m a social worker. We both went to expensive colleges. You do the math. We are making ends meet for now, but the constant fear in the back of my head is, “what if we don’t?”

Often in these times is when I fail to trust in God, when I fail to seek His will. I know, logically, His will is best, but how many times do I try to do it myself? Over and over again I say “I got this” and it only leads to anxiety, worry, and frustration. I think it’s in these times He puts these little phrases in my head. There are so many things in my life that could go ‘wrong,’ and how much effort am I wasting on worrying rather than doing something good?

One of my favorite Bible verses is Matthew 6:25-34: Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? 27 Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? 28 Why are you

anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. 29 But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. 30 If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry and say “What are we to eat?” or “What are we to drink?” or “What are we to wear?” All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. 34 Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.

So for today, I’m not going to worry about making ends meet. I’m not going to worry about how it’s all going to work out in the end. Sufficient for today is my trust in God, knowing that He has numbered the hairs on my head, and will provide, even if it’s not in the way I had planned.



And in the meantime, I’m going to go enjoy the wild flowers.

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This contribution is available at <http://jeffily.wordpress.com/2014/06/02/whatever-happens-im-going-to-be-at-peace/>  
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## Tax Collectors and Other Sinners: Family Life & the Place of Wayward Catholics in the Parish [at Patheos]



[Rebecca Hamilton](#) has written a beautiful and moving testimony on the nature of family life, and I think it gives us exactly the answer to the problem of Catholics who struggle with the Catholic faith. What's the right thing to do with our fellow Catholics who don't quite have it all together? People who are egregiously mistaken in their understanding of serious matters?

Our Lord answers the question quite plainly: Treat them as you would the pagans and tax collectors.

Before you sharpen the knives, let's recall how our Lord treated such friends:

- Giving them the time of day.
- Answering their questions.
- Healing their wounds.
- Inviting them to follow Him.

Your parish is full of rank sinners. In functioning as brothers and sisters of Christ, the question isn't, "Who are the holy people I can trust with the work of the Church?" The question is, "Who's the right kind sinner for this particular work?"

This doesn't mean we invite convicted child molesters to work in youth ministry as a display of our love and forgiveness. We don't entrust the collection-counting to the lady with the fraud convictions. If Father drinks too much, for goodness sake quit giving him the gift of beer. Your

catechists need to believe and practice the Catholic faith, your musicians should have musical talent, and your lectors should be literate. The funeral-meal committee should be staffed by people who not only know how to cook, but who also keep their hands washed and the food stored and served safely.

But no matter the baggage, the problems, the sins of the rag-tag group of scoundrels who make up your parish family, the question is never, “Does this person have a place in my parish?” The question is always and only, “How can this person love and serve God best within my parish?”

What can I do to help this one grow closer to Christ? What can this one do to help me grow closer to Christ?

*This is my last contribution to the [Patheos Symposium on the Synod for the Family](#). Of all the contributions I’ve read so far, [this article by Greg Popcak is the 101, the pure foundation of it all. Read it, absorb it, live it](#). And then check out the other good stuff.*

2014 Religious Trends:  
Francis, Family, and the Future —  
What the Coming Synod May Mean

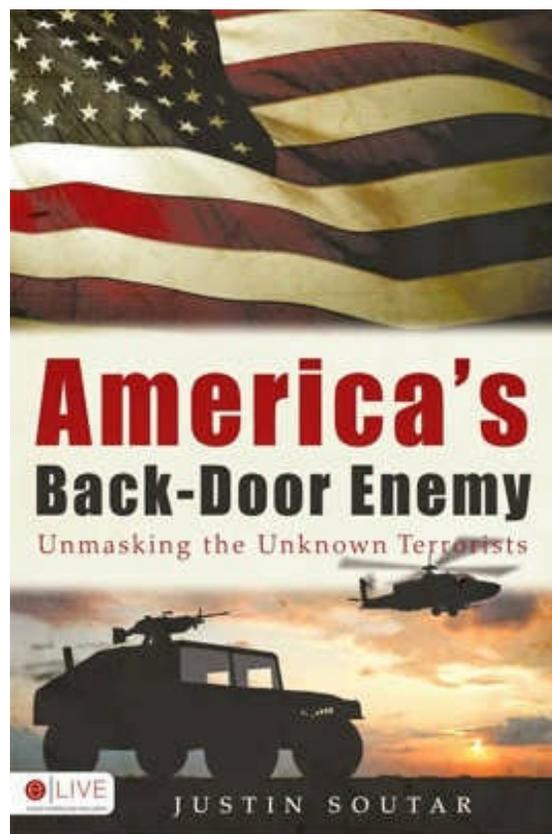
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This contribution is available at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jenniferfitz/2014/07/tax-collectors-and-other-sinners-family-life-the-place-of-wayward-catholics-in-the-parish/>  
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## America's Back-Door Enemy and the Situation in Iraq [at Justin's Corner]



In a few days, on June 23, I will mark the fifth anniversary of the release of my first book,

[\*America's Back-Door Enemy\*](#)

. I would like to thank all those who have purchased and read it (or listened to it) over these past five years. I've been thinking that this book is getting a bit obsolete by now, but then the news headlines about the situation in Iraq jumped out at me and showed me that I was wrong: the book is just as relevant now as when it was first published, and we need to heed the lessons it contains as we discuss and form opinions regarding US foreign policy toward Iraq.

As Iraq descends ever deeper into violence and chaos, as "Islamic" radicals take over the country, as Christians continue to flee in droves, and as the country continues sliding ever closer to full-fledged civil war, it seems that everyone is criticizing President Obama's foreign policy, and I won't deny that there is plenty of room for criticism there. But it seems that no one is daring to criticize or call into question President Bush's foreign policy, which is what got us into the current mess. Make no mistake: it was the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 that set the stage for what we are seeing happen now in that ancient and historic country.

As I point out in the book, Pope (now Saint) John Paul II, along with Catholic bishops in both the US and Iraq, warned that a military invasion of Iraq would have unacceptable consequences for

the civilian population of that country and for the stability of the whole region. Specifically, Saint John Paul predicted that a war with Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power would lead to a mass exodus of Christians from the country; would leave a power vacuum to be filled by violent "Islamic" fundamentalists; would lead to civil war; and would destabilize the entire Middle East. I am not justifying or excusing any of the atrocities that the dictator Saddam Hussein committed against his own people. I am simply saying that leaving him in power would have been the lesser of two evils, and pointing out that our Pope and bishops had good reasons for opposing the alternative of war which the Bush administration unfortunately carried out. What they predicted is exactly what is happening now. Iraq is falling apart. The whole Middle East is collapsing. Millions of people have lost their homes and are now living in refugee camps in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere, largely ignored and forgotten by the world outside, while terrorists and guerillas and armies plot death and destruction with impunity. Our invasion of Iraq was supposed to bring freedom and democracy and security to the country; instead, it has opened the door to anarchy, tyranny, and civil war.

In

### *America's Back-Door Enemy*

, I unveil the real reasons for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which had nothing to do with either freedom or democracy and everything to do with war profiteering for US defense manufacturers, control of Iraq's vast oil reserves, and the development of the Greater Israel so ardently desired by Israel's radical Zionist minority. As I demonstrate clearly in the book, these Zionist extremists are the "back-door enemy" secretly manipulating US and Israeli foreign policy and taking advantage of "Islamic" terrorist violence to advance their own wicked agenda. War in the Middle East is a key method of advancing this agenda. As Pope Francis has pointed out, when a war is being concocted, we should ask ourselves: Who is going to profit from this? We hear constantly about "Islamic" terrorists and their evil plans, and I am not here to downplay the horror and evil of the violence they perpetrate. But few people are aware of the existence and activity of radical Zionists, who are more subtle, more sophisticated, much more powerful, and far more dangerous than their "Islamic" counterparts. My book is a real eye-opener in this respect.

Some are now calling for a limited US military intervention in Iraq to take out the "Islamic" extremists and restore some measure of order in the country. My position as of this writing is firmly non-interventionist. For one thing, I do not believe that it is our job to police the world or to go about spreading freedom and democracy by force of arms, but rather that we should set a good example here in our own country for other nations to admire and imitate. Our nation's Founders established America as a "City on a Hill," not as a world empire or conqueror. The duty of our military is and should be to defend our own coastlines and borders from foreign aggression. I agree with Ron Paul and Pat Buchanan on this issue. For another thing, the US has been taking military action against Iraq on and off for years now, from the Persian Gulf War of 1991 to the low-level bombing raids of the late 1990s to the 2003 war, which really only just petered out a few years ago. What has all this war accomplished, for our country or for Iraq? Very little good and a great deal of harm. Additional warfare will not resolve Iraq's problems. Third, a US

invasion of Iraq without the approval of the United Nations would constitute an act of aggression, just as the 2003 invasion did. For all its grave problems, Iraq is still a sovereign nation, and we should respect that sovereignty by leaving it alone and not barging our way in uninvited. Fourth, the previous wholesale US military occupation of Iraq failed to destroy "Islamic" terrorist groups and bring order and stability to the nation; on the contrary, terrorism rates under US occupation exploded far beyond what they had ever been under Saddam Hussein. It's a key principle of my book that war does not end terrorism; history bears this out time and time again.

Furthermore, the Iraqi Catholic bishops, who are more familiar with the complex situation in their own country than we are--subjected as we are to many false and misleading news reports--are opposed to any new US invasion of their country because it would only exacerbate the situation. There is great danger that a limited "surgical" strike such as currently proposed by President Obama will not stop at that but will grow into a lengthy full-fledged war involving hundreds of thousands of American troops, just as limited US involvement in Vietnam in the early 1960s grew and grew into a protracted and ultimately fruitless conflict that claimed many lives. Let us learn something from what history teaches us in this regard. Finally, I oppose any US military action in Iraq due to the influence of Pope Francis, who rallied the Church and the world to pray for peace in Syria and the Middle East last year. As the subsequent turn of events proved, prayer is powerful enough to change the course of history. What we need right now is not more warfare, even of the limited kind. What we need is prayer and fasting for the conversion of sinners and peace in the world. Iraq needs more prayer, not more bombs.

If you haven't yet read my book

### *America's Back-Door Enemy*

, I would encourage you to do so. It is still available in print, audio book and e-book from Tate Publishing as well as various online bookstores. Laying aside partisan politics and ideology, it offers a frank and honest discussion of post-9/11 US foreign policy from a solid Catholic perspective--a discussion that is much needed as the possibility of yet another US military intervention in the Middle East looms on the horizon.

Mary Queen of Peace, pray for us!

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This contribution is available at <http://justins-corner.blogspot.com/2014/06/americas-back-door-enemy-and-situation.html>  
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