

NewEvangelists.org

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New Evangelists Monthly #20

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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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Dear Cindy ~ Initiating Contact Online [at The Veil of Chastity]

Dear Cindy,

I am writing for advice. After taking a year off from online dating, I just signed up for Catholic Match. In the past, I did eHarmony and Match, with no luck. I also realized that any time I initiated contact with a guy (a wink or “liking” one of his photos), we might end up messaging, but nothing has ever come of it beyond that. So my online dating strategy has been to write the best profile that I can, then just wait and hope. Most of my friends think this is crazy to be so passive when one is paying for a dating service. Can you tell me what you think? (especially since I’m pretty sure you said you met your husband via Catholic Match)?

Thank you,

Patiently Waiting



Dear Patiently Waiting,

I believe that the need for the guy to initiate contact is the same no matter whether it is online or in real life. Maybe even more so and here is why:

The two of you have joined the online dating site for, hopefully, the same reason: Marriage. If a guy is going to pay money to have access to hundreds (thousands?) of potential wives, it only makes sense that he would be aggressive in his search. If he is sitting back and waiting for girls to initiate contact, then that, to me, indicates that he is missing *one or all* of the **three R's**.

The Three R's

Resourcefulness: He is not very resourceful and this will drive you craazy in a marriage.

A resourceful man will spend time searching for his love and with online dating, it could not be easier. It takes his search from several billion (in the whole world) to several thousand (on the site). And, if it is a Catholic site, his search is narrowed down even more because every single girl is of his same faith. All he has to do is read profiles, look at photos, send an email and decide

if he wants to pursue her. Easy peasy. If he considers this hard or too difficult, then this says something about him. He is not resourceful (read: lazy). A lazy man in marriage is the worst. No, no you do not want this!

Readiness: He is not ready for marriage and this will drive you craazy as you ‘date’ him.

Like a toddler who plays with his food by moving it around on a plate, some guys just play with the girls on the site by texting, emailing and even dating. But, his efforts have no end goal behind them. It is just something to do until he is ready. The toddler is not hungry nor does the food on the plate inspire his taste buds. Same with the guy who is on the site but is not ready for marriage. **He is not hungry** nor is he incentivized to seek out someone to satisfy his hunger.

Realistic: He is not realistic and this is a huge turnoff. Or, it should be. Some guys see online dating as a source for young, perfect and holy women to pick from. They are hoping for girls who are, dare I say, out of their league. For example, he is 45 and his filter is for girls age 20 – 30. He is not attractive yet he only initiates contact with the girls who have many guys fighting to get their attention. The problem is he has **not properly assessed himself**. He is just not realistic.

He Picks You, Then You Decide

A man who is resourceful, ready and realistic will use the site to his advantage to successfully find his wife. He knows himself well enough to know who he can attract and who, most likely, will not be interested in him. This man will make you feel cherished and pursued.

Once he picks you, then you are in a position to **decide** if he is right for you. It is a horrible feeling to “pick” a guy only to have him decide against you.

The Problem With Female Initiation

When girls initiate contact online, they feed the beast and they weaken his resourcefulness. Like a toddler, he feels justified in playing with his food (you and your feelings). Besides, he didn’t even have to get up to put the food on his plate. It just arrived. And he wasn’t hungry. In his mind, this is not his fault!

A wink or a ‘like’ seems harmless and maybe it is. But, would you wink at a guy in real life just out of the blue? It puts the guy in the role of the pursued rather than the pursuer.



Finally, when girls initiate contact, it prevents the man from assessing himself truthfully. It makes him think that he can get a girl **without even trying** and that he is highly sought after. This is not good for him nor is it good for your sisters in Christ. Rather than being humble and realistic, he is full of himself. Rather than pursuing a sister in Christ and marrying her, he is stuck in fantasy land because you have contributed to the trend of female initiation.

Let Him Suffer Through It

There is nothing better for a man than solitude and honest introspection. It is good for him to take risks and it is **good for his future wife** as well. He will always think “*I did it! successfully wooed her! Isn't she amazing!*” It is good for him to exhaust himself in his search only to finally find the **pearl of a great price**.

Superabundance

I kid you not, this [superabundance](#) thing is your secret to attracting your husband. The supernatural power of Chastity makes you like a magnet for the right guy. Keep in mind that there is physical Chastity (the right application of our bodies and fertility) and emotional Chastity (the right application of our emotions). Let's add one more: **Behavioral Chastity**. This could be described as the right use of your mind, intellect and actions. This includes **not allowing yourself to believe** that you have to **compete** as if you are ‘*of the world.*’ No, you belong to the Lord and you must think and act in accordance with that belief.

It Is Not A Competition

God's will does not require you to compete for your husband. You will not need to become the aggressor in order to get your man's attention. Your Father in heaven may be saddened at the idea of his precious daughter acting like you have to control something that is not yours to control. **You can trust in the Lord.**

Go here for more online dating advice: [Mr. Online Man](#)

God love and bless you!

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My Family lived in the Sonoran Desert [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

This is a blues poem set in Arizona. The blues poets often “borrow lines” from other famous poets in this genre. I borrowed a verse from Robert Johnson’s famous poem “Hellhound on my Trail.”

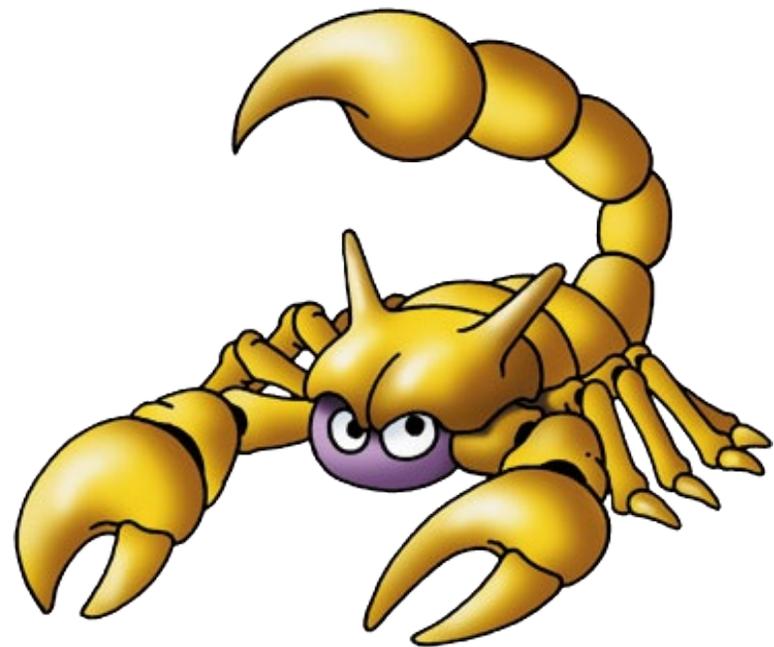


A tarantula dueled to the death on our garage floor.

We kindly removed his carcass next day.

His scrappy adversary would have met the same fate.

But the scorpion woke up and ran away.



Wolf spider hunted the same ground.

Thought he was safe crawling under the car

“Back up!” I shouted. Scrunch. What a sound!

His ladylove had more brains.

The moon illumined her get away.

She madly scampered over the rough red clay,

chased by a madman swinging a broom.

Hell hound sniffing my trail

Lacey red brown lady, frightened, circled my tub.

“Darling, I can’t get you out alive
without risking harm to myself.”

A whistle for the brute with the knife; scorpion joined the dead club.

Hell hound finding my trail

The boy stared into the mirror

A red brown lady on his shoulder stared back.

His sub-processors formed the response before the thought hit the main frame.

He smashed the scorpion with his bare fingers, flung it to its tomb.*

Post-Mortem: Body squashed, tail intact on opposite sides of the room.



An injured spider limped across the floor,
his love for living passionate and pure.

Do you realize the terror he suffers before the final blow?

He lives in a world peopled by ugly giants with deadly brooms.

His tiniest finger is a killing machine.

Her merest whistle signals his doom.

Hell hound found my trail



**This verse is from Robert Johnson's famous poem "Hellhound on my Trail."*Yes, my 14-year-old son crushed a scorpion --that he found sitting on his shoulder -- with his bare fingers.*

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2014/07/my-family-lived-in-sonoran-desert.html>

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seemed an impossible situation and I resigned myself to simply staying at home on Sundays for the time being.

Suddenly, we were both startled as a flushed and distraught three-year old Mark came running into the kitchen. He was still groggy from his nap but was able to yell in very loud voice,

“Jesus says come, Jesus says come!!!

We were both stunned into silence.

The deep discussion was over.

This episode really seems to be a mystery at first glance but perhaps but this was a simple demonstration of the power of God living in all of us, adults as well as little children. As a family we chose to live, move, breath and have our very being in Him. He took charge of this particular dilemma by using the most open, articulate member of our family, a three-year old.

No wonder Jesus said, “Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

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Catching up [at Kitchen table chats]

I am still here. We have been doing far more traveling this summer than usual. In what seemed like a blink of an eye after we returned from Italy we were back on a plane flying to Alaska to visit our kids and grandkids. I have been writing but the words just haven't shown up here so I thought I would provide a few links to catch you up on my recent thoughts.

The Supreme Court Hobby Lobby decision caused a stir so I have a couple of pieces over at the Truth & Charity Forum:

Abortion and advocates including the Guttmacher Institute went nuts after the decision so I thought I should offer

[A Reasoned Response to Guttmacher Hysteria](#)

While the decision is certainly something to applaud, it is not the end of the fight. This was

[One Victory, but Many Battles Remain.](#)

As an HLI fellow, I still pen a monthly column for Zenit.org.

My July column looked at the scourge of human trafficking as a pro-life issue. We need

[to heed the call of Pope Francis and do what we can to combat this assault on human dignity.](#)

Religious persecution is rearing its ugly head all over the world, especially for Christians in the Middle East and Africa. In addition to condemning this, we need to recognize that the same thought process that motivates Boko Haram motivates anyone who claims to be able to place a value judgment on the life of another and support abortion and euthanasia.

[They are all assaults on the sanctity of human life.](#)

I also have a new writing gig over at

[Catholic Stand](#)

. What I love about this site is the diversity of the voices who are all faithful to the Magisterium. There is also a respectful tone to the writing that doesn't include the sniping and snark that seems to be infiltrating much of the Catholic blogosphere. So far I have contributed two articles:

It is important to remember that Jesus called us to make disciples and not to win debates so we

must always strive to make our words charitable and persuasive instead of divisive. It is not about winning for "our side" but

[uniting all in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.](#)

My second article expanded on some thoughts I had originally published here at Kitchen Table Chats. Perhaps

[we can learn a thing or two from Sam-I-Am when we seek to evangelize.](#)

I have some writing deadlines looming and classes will begin in just a few short weeks, so I am not sure how soon I will get back to the blog. I really have a lot to say but I have to live life and not just blog about it. Until then, I hope you enjoy these articles!

This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2014/07/catching-up.html>
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Wheaton's Catholic Speakeasy [at God-Haunted Lunatic]

You start reading C.S. Lewis, then you're reading G.K. Chesterton, then you're a Catholic.

~ [Ross Douthat](#)

BEWARE!

That's what it should say outside Wheaton College's [Marion E. Wade Center](#). If C.S. Lewis is a [gateway drug to Catholicism](#), then the Wade Center's promotion of Lewis and those who influenced him is equivalent to an evangelical opium den. At least it was for me.

Growing up in an evangelical milieu, I discovered [C.S. Lewis](#) early on by way of his Narnia tales. I can well remember the rush of wonder and delight that accompanied my exploration of that world of talking animals and moral nuance. Like so many, I ripped through all seven books one after another with hardly a pause in between, and then had to endure the vacuum created at the end when there was no more. Occasionally books will distress us because of *how* they end, but rarely because they end *at all*. The Narnia saga ranks in the latter category.



After Narnia came *Screwtape* I think, and then [The Great Divorce](#). I was in high school by the time I got around to reading the Space Trilogy, and somewhere along the way *Mere Christianity*. That whet my appetite for Lewis' nonfiction, and I began dipping into more as I went off to college, particularly the wide ranging essays in *God in the Dock*.

What did Lewis teach me? First, a deep appreciation and anticipation of the supernatural – what [Regis Martin](#) calls the “numinous.” The numinous core of Lewis' stories frequently even evoked a palpable response. Think of that tingly sensation you got as a kid when you faced the unknown – like when you went to summer camp for the first time, or your first mission trip overseas. It was a bit of fear, a bit of excitement, all tangled up with the sense that something important was at work. Moreover, encounters with the numinous in Lewis' work are always mediated through encounters with things. The supernatural is never merely an abstraction in his stories – not just an idea or concept – but rather something incarnated and, consequently, something his characters bump into

and trip over.

Lewis also introduced me to the idea of purgatory, and, through that, a much more profound desire for heaven. Through his stories and explanations, he showed me that Christianity went beyond avoiding sin and hell, and was ultimately about embracing a fullness of life, love, and joy. Lewis took the biblical Christianity that I'd been raised in and made it inhabitable – like that scene in the beginning of [The Voyage of the Dawn Treader](#) where the children first gaze upon the painting of a wild sea, and then are actually drawn into it.

That was all harmless enough as far as it went. However, the more I read Lewis, the more I wanted to know about him, and by the time I got to [Wheaton College](#), I



was primed for the kind of Catholic correlations that the Wade Center seems designed to elicit.

Back then, the Center was housed in an out-of-the-way corner of the library, and I recall some of that tingly sensation as I tracked it down one day. Among other things, I'd heard that they had various Lewis artifacts, including his Oxford desk and chair and the actual Lewis family wardrobe – the very furnishing that undoubtedly influenced the genesis of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. These were only “things,” to be sure, but they serve to connect the visitor with the author himself. And this, in turn, underscores the “thinginess” featured in Lewis’ writing – a sacramental vision of connecting with the unseen through the seen, with the ethereal by way of the concrete. For Lewis, ordinary things and events were never merely incidental. Instead, they were noble vehicles of grace and truth and revelation.

Even more significant for me, however, were the other six authors spotlighted by the Center: George Macdonald and Charles Williams, Dorothy L. Sayers and Owen Barfield, J.R.R. Tolkien and, of course, [G.K. Chesterton](#). The Wade Center’s main focus is unquestionably C.S. Lewis, but the others are featured as well because of their influence on or relationship to Lewis. They had their differences, but altogether they had a rich, incarnational vision of what the Christian life was about.

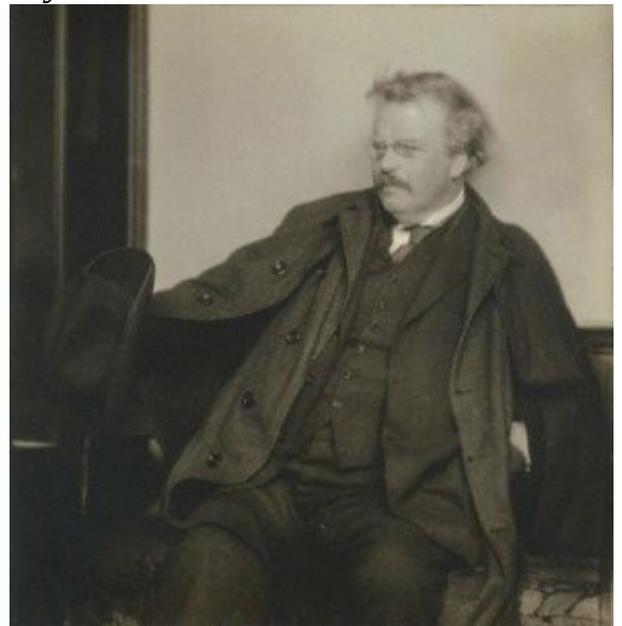
Thus, a visit to the Wade Center allows the seeker a chance to linger in the literary presence of all seven of these great British writers and thinkers. Just to be there – among their manuscripts and letters, portraits and paraphernalia – was to drink in, as it were, their grand vision of the Christian life and to become intoxicated with their convictions about faith as an adventure. These

were heady influences for a young, impressionable undergraduate, and they were equally heady when I returned years later for a day trip from my new home at the Chicago [Catholic Worker](#).

It was a confusing time for me, and my faith was in crisis. I had firsthand knowledge that my Catholic Worker friends were living the Gospel and clearly followers of Jesus. But they were... well, Catholic, and I couldn't bring myself to seriously entertain formally joining their ranks, despite my inclinations. There were too many unanswered questions, too many practices that didn't make sense, and lots of doctrine that didn't seem to square with the Bible. What to do?

So, who better to turn to than my mentors at the Wade Center, and I took the train out to Wheaton for a draught or two of their inebriating influence.

While there, I was particularly drawn to the Chesterton collection. I'd read a few of his works – [The Man Who Was Thursday](#), for instance, and *Orthodoxy* – and I knew that Chesterton's



apologetics were instrumental in Lewis' own religious conversion. Plus, there was that curiosity that Chesterton himself had become a Catholic after having embraced Anglicanism for a time, so what was that about?

The librarian – the *Wheaton* librarian, mind you – directed me to Chesterton's [The Catholic Church and Conversion](#), in which the author humbly laid out a defense of his ecclesial switch. I couldn't read it all that day, but I read enough to convince me that I needed to track down a copy when I got back to Chicago – which I did with no little difficulty (in the days before Amazon and the internet).

There's no way I could adequately summarize Chesterton's masterful arguments and magnificent illustrations here, but suffice it to say he had me hooked. He didn't attempt to defend individual Catholic doctrines or practices, but instead defended the idea that they *could indeed* be defended. He insisted that being a Catholic was reasonable and good. He provided example after example of the Church's internal consistency and lucidity, and challenged the reader to test them for himself. And, finally, in the end, Chesterton made it plain that he could see no other way forward.

But if a convert is to write of conversion he must try to retrace his steps out of that shrine back into that ultimate wilderness where he once really believed that this eternal youth was only the “Old Religion.”...The difficulty was expressed to me by another convert who said, “I cannot explain why I am a Catholic; because now that I am a Catholic I cannot imagine myself as anything else.”

G.K. Chesterton’s [cause for canonization](#) is now in process, and it may well be that the interest generated by the investigation could blow the cover off of Wheaton’s underground Catholic hideaway.

In any case, if all goes well, we’ll all be visiting the Wade Center as pilgrims someday – to gaze on Chesterton’s correspondence and possibly even venerate volumes from his personal library as so many relics. Wouldn’t that be ironic? Imagine it! Wheaton College, a Catholic pilgrimage destination! C.S. Lewis, I trust, would be pleased.

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

This contribution is available at <http://godhauntedlunatic.wordpress.com/2014/07/13/wheatons-catholic-speakeasy/>
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Ego Ever Present [at A Spiritual Journey]

In today's Gospel reading from Matthew 13 at Mass, Jesus spoke to the crowd in parables, because *they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand*, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. Should we blame them? I thought of how blind and deaf we are to the presence of our ego. We enjoy being praised; we like to be noticed for anything nice we've done; we care about what people think of us; we want to be life of the party; we don't like to be told what to do even though the adviser meant well; we are turned off by anyone who is not attractive to us in some way; we judge others; we can not forgive those who have offended us.... Why? All because of the presence of ego.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2014/07/ego-ever-present.html>
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[Ellen Kolb](#) July 1, 2014

Not just freedom to worship [at Leaven For The Loaf]

This quote is from a Catholic man speaking to other Catholic men, but his message is for all of us, regardless of gender or faith or state in life. Remember what kind of freedom we as Americans have been able to enjoy; don't leave the future to others; know when and how to talk back when conscience rights are threatened.

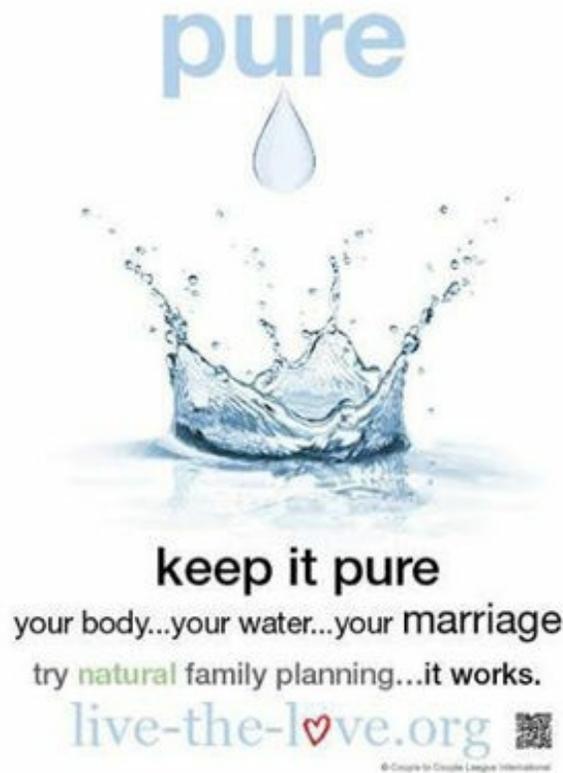
In the early days of Obamacare's contraceptive mandate, some American bishops visited Pope Benedict XVI. Benedict knew about the mandate already. In his formal remarks to the bishops, he said that lay women and men – everyday people – have to step up. That's not just about Catholics. Did you know the owners of Hobby Lobby identify themselves as evangelical Christians, and the owners of Conestoga Wood Products are Mennonites? They're the ones who prevailed at the Supreme Court. They knew what Benedict was talking about, even if they never heard him speak.

[Pope Benedict to American bishops, January 19, 2012](#) (emphasis added):

In the light of these considerations, it is imperative that the entire Catholic community in the United States come to realize the grave threats to the Church's public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression in the political and cultural spheres. The seriousness of these threats needs to be clearly appreciated at every level of ecclesial life. Of particular concern are certain attempts being made to limit that most cherished of American freedoms, the freedom of religion. Many of you have pointed out that concerted efforts have been made to deny the right of conscientious objection on the part of Catholic individuals and institutions with regard to cooperation in intrinsically evil practices. Others have spoken to me of a worrying tendency to reduce religious freedom to mere freedom of worship without guarantees of respect for freedom of conscience. Here once more we see the need for an engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity endowed with a strong critical sense vis-à-vis the dominant culture and with the courage to counter a reductive secularism which would delegitimize the Church's participation in public debate about the issues which are determining the future of American society.

This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2014/07/01/not-just-freedom-to-worship/>
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Theology of the Body in a Nutshell [at Plot Line and Sinker]



I'll be posting links, cartoons and articles all week to celebrate NFP Week!

So why NFP (or Natural Family Planning)? NFP is safe, healthy and effective. Most importantly, it is a morally acceptable way to avoid and achieve pregnancy. Here is a repost of an article I wrote in 2012:

If we look at the **four components of God's love for us (free, total, faithful, fruitful)** and compare God's love to marital love, we can discover how to live the Sacrament of marriage as the ultimate expression of spousal love.

Free: We need to be able love our spouse freely. If we ask for conditions, that's not love. If we force our spouse to do something, that's not love. If we cannot say no to our sexual urges, then we are not free.

Total: The love for our spouse must be total. We can't say, "Well, I'll give you everything, honey, except for my fertility." Total means total. (Re: CCC 1643).

Faithful: Obviously, faithfulness means we must only have intercourse with our spouse and no other. But if we want to be truly faithful to our spouse, we must be faithful in word, action and thought.

Fruitful: Marital relations **must be fruitful**, open to children, each and every time. That doesn't

mean we will conceive (or want to conceive) a child with every marital embrace. It just means we need to be open.

Birth control, in fact, destroys all four of the essential components (free, total, faithful, fruitful). Birth control violates not only God’s plan in fruitfulness, but it also encourages an “I can’t say no” mentality to sex. When an action, device, medication or operation is purposefully used to remove fertility, a couple cannot give themselves totally, no matter how much they love each other. Contraception says, “I give all of myself to my spouse – **except** my fertility.”

Natural Family Planning allows a couple **to love each other as God loves**: freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully. Couples using NFP chart the wife’s cycle and, if avoiding pregnancy, they abstain in the fertile time. If they are planning a pregnancy, they engage in relations during the fertile time. They are not using devices; they are fully giving of themselves and they are open to children with each and every act of marital relations.

NFP allows us to love our spouse as God loves us: freely, with no reservation, faithfully and open to children. Marriage can be a holy vocation when a couple loves as God loves: freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully.

Want to live the highest expression of your marital love? Use NFP and be open to life.

For more information about the Theology of the Body:

<http://thetheologyofthebody.com>

For more information on NFP:

www.ccli.org

www.woomb.org

www.creightonmodel.com

This contribution is available at <http://ellengable.wordpress.com/2014/07/21/nfp-week-theology-of-the-body-in-a-nutshell/>

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Are your fears, doubts, and frustrations keeping you from intimacy with God? [at Contemplative Homeschool]



We need never be afraid to approach God and ask for his mercy.

#TrustingGodBook

Trusting God with St. Therese by Connie Rossini

How is your spiritual life going? Are you feeling frustrated with yourself? Are you distraught over your lack of progress? Do you keep falling into the same sins repeatedly?

Welcome to the human race!

No, I'm not trying to dismiss your concerns flippantly. Sometimes we just need a reminder that we are, after all, fallen. Adam's sin affects us all. But here's something you may not have realized:

Your sins do not shock God!

God is used to sinners. He has centuries of experience with them. He even came down from Heaven to live among them. Then people criticized Him for eating with sinners instead of the "righteous." Yes, He loved to hang out with people like you and me.

God delights in showing mercy. He delights in lifting our burdens. He delights in carrying our yoke with us, comforting our sorrows, calming our fears.

In chapter 10 of [Trusting God with St. Therese](#) I tell how I endured being brainwashed by a group of Christians who believed only they were true followers of Christ. One sentence they said has never left me: "God is displeased with you." Oh, how untrue that was and is! When we try to follow Christ, He is never displeased with us. He is only displeased by our rebellion, our deliberate turning away from Him. And if we have deliberately sinned or even turned away from Him completely, He extends a hand to bring us back.

Listen for His gentle voice! Look for His grace!

He offers us forgiveness and an eternal life of joy. All for the price of doing the only thing that will make us happy anyway—giving ourselves totally to Him.

The God who bled and died for you is not angry over your shortcomings! But He is saddened by your lack of trust. The only thing standing between you and Him is yourself. Let go! Let go of your fear. Let go of your disappointment. Let go of your self-flagellation. Make room instead for His grace and love.

Connie Rossini

[Trusting God with St. Therese is now available](#) in digital and paperback versions. Learn how to overcome your scruples and fears as Therese did. Let her help you trust in God and His goodness. You can [enter to win a free signed copy here](#).

This contribution is available at <http://contemplativehomeschool.com/2014/07/18/fears-doubts-frustrations-keeping-intimacy-god/>

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Old Stuff [at Smaller Manhattans]



see if it still works

Let's look at some miracles.

First, God thought matter into existence. That is, some of his immaterial love is so dense that it actually manifests itself as stuff. You know: fermions, gluons, bosons, all the impossibly tiny little grains of love that everything else is composed of. Then he thought the stuff into things such as our bodies. Isn't that miraculous? I think it is. And until the Fall, it was all good, being ultimately made of love.

But we sinners have made a mess of it, and now know God at a remove. Still, God helps us and communicates to us, often through physical bits. F'rinstance after the Flood, God used a rainbow to communicate something important to Noah's family...ehh...I forgot what it was.

Regardless, God later mediated his power through Moses' and Aaron's staffs. They whacked the Nile, canals, the Red Sea and rocks with miraculous results.

Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground due to the power in the Ark of the Covenant.

Elijah and Elisha each crossed the Jordan on dry ground by striking it, Moses-like, with a cloak.

At Elisha's instruction, Naaman the pagan leper was cured by bathing in the Jordan.

After Elisha passed away, a dead man hastily thrown onto Elisha's earthly remains was restored to life.

But miracles aren't just an Old Testament Thing. God kicked off the New Testament by putting a star in the sky...something to do with Jesus.

Jesus worked miracles too, often fixing not just physical problems, but spiritual ones, "healing the sin-sick soul" as the song says. And he worked these miracles through his physical nature, living

stuff face-to-face with the afflicted or an intercessor.

Sometimes Jesus didn't even need to be directly involved, but simply physically available, like a cloak or a bone. Recall that the woman with a hemorrhage barely managed to grab the trailing tassel of Jesus' prayer shawl. Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." Just plug into the Holy Battery, get a nice jolt.

But miracles aren't just a Jesus Thing, either. After the Ascension, Paul and Peter could also heal without being directly involved. Peter's shadow could heal as it fell on someone. And "God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them."

Sticks, bones, water, aprons, cloaks, people, the common stuff of the world; none of them magic, all of them sacramental. God has related to the world sacramentally since the Fall, and there is no expectation in the Bible that he'll stop until the Second Coming. Miracles aren't just a Bible Thing. So think of the sacraments as Jesus-supercharged miracles in which divine power still flows through bits and pieces of love older than Creation itself.

Think big. Think Catholic.

This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2014/07/old-stuff.html>
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Black velvet “Reserved” signs draped over the back of the first two pews, with their gold fringe hanging down. Not that unusual for weekday mass. We often celebrated silver or golden wedding anniversaries among our aging parishioners. But usually there aren’t young children.

A dozen or so people I normally don’t see at daily mass arranged themselves in these two pews and spilled over to the third row. After the Liturgy of the Word, Fr. Joseph called a young couple to the altar for their wedding vows. A 5 or 6-year old daughter clung to her mother as she stood at facing her husband. Two witnesses completed the wedding party with friends and relatives caring for the toddler daughter in the front pews.

Fr. Joseph gave them the full treatment — the entire wedding treatment complete with vows, blessing of rings, a quick husband-and-wife kiss, and an introduction to the congregation. We applauded. The bride smiled so big her shoulders rose to her ears.

At communion time, the newlyweds received the Body and Blood first. Then they returned to the front row. As we parishioners came forward for our turn, the toddler daughter fussed, squirmed and pointed to the priest distributing communion. Her mother kept rocking her and turning toward the back of the church to distract the child, but the toddler would only look back over her mother’s shoulder, cry and point at the priest.

When the line ended the mother took both daughters to the priest for his blessings, and all was peaceful. The children seemed familiar with the blessing of communion time and were no longer left out.

The daughters got to process out with their parents and Fr, Joseph at the end of Mass. Soon the group returned to the altar for quick photos.

I wondered what brought this couple to this decision. I know that our parish encourages couples with civil marriages to convalidate or bless their union in the Sacrament of Matrimony. The bulletin announces meetings and planning sessions for a large group wedding ceremony for such couples each year. I left mass feeling good about our parish and our Catholic Church that tries to bring unsacramentalized people into full communion with the Church.

A week later in a conversation with our Faith Formation Director, she mentioned that one of her teacher's aides last year wanted to lead a class this year. One of the requirements is a valid marriage in the Church. It turns out that this Wednesday morning bride was the former teacher's aide. Now she's training to teach a class of her own.

From her desire to serve as a catechist came the impetus for her and her husband to sacramentalize their marriage. They are fully in the Church and enjoying all the sacraments, as she prepares young children to do the same. God was at work in her life and in mine. He completed the picture for me of the Father/Bridegroom enjoying communion with us, the Body of Christ, his Bride.

Do you know anyone you can encourage to receive the sacraments more fully?

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This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/wednesday-morning-wedding/>
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Are You Born Again? [at Defenders of the Catholic Faith]

jason fernamdes March 11, 2013 at 2:17 PM

You should understand the interpretation of John 6:44, John 6:37, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1.

You mean, YOUR interpretation of John 6:44 etc.

We are not followers of Jason. We are followers of Christ through the Teaching of the Catholic Church. All whom we follow are Catholics.

Understand what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3.

We understand perfectly. One must be born again of water and spirit. One must be Baptized.

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Understand what it means by the terms Physical and Spiritual realms. A man is “Spiritually” dead in sin i.e. without Gods Spirit and therefore has a carnal mind which is enmity against God- see Romans 8:7.

Read Romans 8, carefully. It is telling you that you have a choice to follow the flesh or follow the Spirit.

It is the same choice which God the Father gave the Israelites:

Deuteronomy 30:19

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

Follow the flesh and die.

Follow the Spirit and live:

Rom 8:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

In so many evangelical Protestant churches also preach a “false method of Salvation” – a prayer that one says – “knowing i am a sinner, i now ‘accept’ Jesus to come into my heart”. This type of prayer is showing man’s decision to accept Christ. Does the scriptures say that we can merit salvation by our decision to accept Christ?

Yes. As long as that decision includes a decision to obey Christ.

Hebrews 5:9

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Romans 6:13

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Yield yourselves unto God:

Romans 6:16

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Unless you do so, you can not be saved. God saves the righteous, who choose to do righteousness:

Acts 10:33-35

King James Version (KJV)

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Sincerely,

De Maria

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicconvert.com/blog/2014/02/16/are-you-born-again/>
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One of Those Difficult Questions: Do You Love Your Family More Than God? [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

I should have written this little reflection two days ago when the Gospel reading was taken from Matthew (10:35-39).

I did not want to. Why? I am a coward. That specific Scripture makes me uncomfortable. Does it have the same impact on you? It is another one of Jesus' "hard sayings" and one that at times we no doubt have had difficulty following.

Jesus minces no words. He intended to make us uncomfortable. First, our Lord tells us that if we love our family more than God, we are not worthy of Him. Secondly, He informs us, that it will often be our very own family members, those we love dearly, who will jeopardize our spiritual well-being and salvation by insisting that we ignore God and please them.

Wow! What a reality check and challenge!

None of us want familial discord. But we must serve God, putting Him first in all things, and above all individuals, even our families. We must obey Him despite ridicule and persecution for doing so, and even in the face of the disharmony and turmoil such obedience to Him may initially cause in our family and among its members.

The choices Jesus places before us are often frighteningly difficult. This is most certainly one of them. God must be first. There can be no exceptions – not even a well-intentioned desire to maintain "peace" in our families.

Any "peace" purchased at the price of putting our families first and God and His law second is no real "peace" at all. It is a path to spiritual and eternal death.

This is an impossible Truth to live, we say? We would be correct if we thought we had to rely solely on ourselves and our weakened human nature. God never asks us to do something without giving us the grace and means to do it.

In fact, if we love Him more than our loved ones here on earth, we will be loving them in the most efficacious and effective manner and exactly as God intended us to do.

Knowing this Truth will not necessarily make it any easier to live it.

So we pray: Lord God forgive us for the times we have placed ourselves and others ahead of You or insisted that members of our family do so. Please give us and our families the courage, wisdom and grace to always put You first, trusting that by doing so, You will work out everything for the best.

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2014/07/one-of-those-difficult-questions-do-you.html>

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Marriage in Heaven? Will We Know and Love Our Spouses in Heaven? [at Defenders of the Catholic Faith]

My dad died almost two years ago. Mom misses Dad and was discouraged about Mark 12:25 which her paraphrased Living Bible improperly rendered “will no be married” in heaven. I wrote the following to comfort my Mom.

Giving talks in Steubenville Ohio and stayed up until 2:00 AM doing a bit of work on this. I know it is important to you since Dad’s death as you look forward to eternity and speculate about relationships in heaven. It is important to me too, knowing I want to be with Janet in heaven.

It is the “Living Bible” translation – which is not a translation but a paraphrase – that renders the words “they won’t be married.” The paraphrased Living Bible takes great liberties and is quite inaccurate.

The King James Version renders it:

“For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.”

New American Standard Bible says:

“For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”

New International Version (NIV) says:

“When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”

No reputable translation translates this in a way to deny there are people continuing in love with earthly spouses. The original Greek language says there is no giving or taking in marriage. In other words, there will be no weddings in heaven.

Interestingly it says that before the flood the people were “marrying and giving in marriage” until the flood came. But after the flood Noah and his wife in the ark were still married :-)

There will be male and female distinctions in heaven. Jesus appeared as male after his resurrection. Mary is seen in heaven as a woman (Revelation 12:1). Marriage will be known in heaven since the Church is the Bride and there will be the great marriage in heaven with Jesus the Bridegroom and the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

The Pharisees set up a trap for Jesus in Mark 12:18-27. They propose a situation with seven brothers. The first marries a wife and dies with no children. The second brother “takes” the

woman to procreate children for his brother. This was the law of the Jews — a brother must take the wife of his dead brother to preserve his brother’s name in the land by propagating offspring for him with his widow.) This happens seven times. Who’s wife will she be in heaven.

The woman who was the wife of the seven brothers did not marry the seven brothers. She married the first and was given to the six in order to procreate children in the name of the first. All their children would be credited to her first husband who was her true love and spouse.

Jesus is not intending to teach on relationships in heaven but he is refuting the Sadduces’ denial of the existence of angels and the resurrection. He is cleverly eluding their question and in no way denies husbands and wives will know and love each other in heaven. This is not a treatise on relationships in heaven but a clever response to his opponents about the existence of the supernatural world.

The purpose for marriage was companionship and procreation. The propagation of children and the population of the earth was God’s plan for marriage on earth. The meeting of sperm and egg will not be needed in heaven.”Marital love” to produce children will not happen in heaven so marriage in that sense will not exist. But that does not eliminate the continuance of earthly relationship.

We will recognize each other in heaven just as the three disciples recognized Moses and Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration and John recognized Mary in heaven (Rev 12:1).

Family and matrimony are very important in Scripture and the way God fashioned the universe and created man and woman to be one flesh. There must be spiritual discernment here. The reason why the Jews buried family members together is because they will rest together in heaven. There is a spiritual permanence to family. And an extraordinarily strong spiritual permanence to matrimony. This is why it is described as “one flesh”.

We will not know and love less in heaven – we will know and love more. And can we comprehend that God would command us to love each other down here and would expect us to forget or deny that love in heaven?

Nothing in Scripture leads us to believe that relationships between spouses will be eliminated. There is every reason to believe relations will be maintained in heaven though for different reasons – enhanced reasons which we will understand when we get there.

We cannot understand our new spiritual bodies and heavenly existence any more than a caterpillar can comprehend what it will be like to be a butterfly. We cannot anticipate how personal relationships will flower in glory any more than an acorn can anticipate standing 50 feet tall.

I’m convinced you and dad will have a wonderful and much better relationship. It will be different. We cannot even comprehend how much better or more in love we’ll be with our spouses, any more than an unborn baby can speculate about the taste of a delicious steak dinner.

Referring to Jesus' words J. Vernon McGee writes, "This doesn't mean that a man and a woman who were together down here can't be together in heaven. They won't be together as man and wife. They are not establishing a home up there, nor are they raising children. That's the thing that He's saying to them here."

Marriage is an earthly word to serve an earthly purpose. Marital relationships, on the other hand, will transcend time because love is forever. Faith and hope will pass away but love will never pass away (1 Cor 13:13).

Dad is sitting in his favorite chair having coffee with Our Lord Jesus waiting for you to arrive to love you better than ever before. In the meantime he is praying for you and very intent on your we'll being.

(Thanks to De Maria for suggestions and insights which I have included)

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicconvert.com/blog/2014/02/15/marriage-in-heaven-will-we-know-and-love-our-spouses-in-heaven/>
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Book: Gay & Catholic by Eve Tushnet

You may remember Eve Tushnet from the wildly popular article,

[*I'm Gay, but I'm Not Switching to a Church that Supports Gay Marriage*](#)

, which nearly every institutional/mainstream Catholic aggregate website and blog promoted. Well, now the Catholic Channel Patheos blogger is set to release her first book, entitled,

[*Gay and Catholic: Accepting My Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith*](#)

. The anticipated release date is October 20, 2014.

Eve, born in 1978, converted to the Catholic Church when she was a twenty year old sophomore at Yale University. Her exposure to religion prior to that included some Jewish influences. The reason why Eve says she wrote this book was to fill a void in this area. While there are a number of books already that address the personal experience of being 'gay' and Christian, and written from a perspective that is faithful to historical Christian teaching on sexuality, there currently aren't any books she found that addressed the idea of vocations for 'gay' Catholics.

The first part of the book consists of her personal story, "but then the rest of it goes through a lot of different paths: devoted friendship, service to your family of origin, service to people in need, service to your community — basically a lot of different ways you can have a life that is fruitful, loving, that is surrounded by people who love and care for you." The above quote came from Eve's [July 3, 2014 book interview](#) with the Jesuit [America](#) magazine. For more background on Eve's ideology also see [Coming Out Christian: how faithful homosexual are transforming our churches](#).

A great deal of what Eve has to say in her book can aptly apply to any Christian seeking to follow God's call upon their life. Essentially, she is simply offering her input on the 2,000 year old question, 'How Do I Serve Christ Jesus?'. Particularly, she wants to answer the question, 'How Do I Serve Christ Jesus as a Gay-Celibate', and dangerously couched in her 224 page response to that particular question is her idea that being 'gay' is a permanent condition; that same-sex attraction is not a deep-seated tendency and an objectively disordered inclination, as the Catholic Church defines it (Cf. [CCC. 2358](#)). Eve believes that she is 'gay' now and always will be 'gay', regardless of the interest of God's transformative grace to do something else with her, and she wants to foist her personal resolve to her inclination onto the world, just as the 16th century 'reformulator' Martin Luther did with his personal resolve towards not feeling good enough to be loved by God. For Luther it was 'faith alone' and for Eve it's 'gay always'.

In my article [Homosexuality: A Creeping Catholic Heresy](#), I spent a respectable amount of words on this ideology of homosexuality that Eve wants to press forward in this book. I told you

then what their agenda was, and told you why writing books and articles was going to be their primary path to get us to buy into this lie of homosexuality being nothing but a natural human orientation. To be clear, homosexuality is where Catholicism diverges into naturalism.

Gay & Catholic: An Exercise in Abortive Intellect & Faith

Many of you who are familiar with my [conversion story to the Catholic Church](#) know that I spent almost six years in prison for embezzlement. What I have told very few people up to now, that I am about to tell thousands is that I've always suffered from an inclination to steal, for as long as I can remember. When I was five years old I remember being in the grocery store with my Mother and Grandmother and I saw one of those sailboats that float in the bathtub. I took it off the hook and continued walking around the store with it. When we arrived at the register to pay for the groceries I just kept it in my hand, as I eyed the cashier to make sure she couldn't spy it. When we walked out the store, the little white sailboat was still in my hand. When we got to the car and opened up the trunk to put the groceries in, I excitedly said, "Look ma," as I proudly and triumphantly raised the sailboat in the air. She asked where I got that, and I told her from the store, then Grandma said, "Gwen! Take that back in there," and Mom took it out of my hand and took it back in the store. I always wondered what would have happened if I had been disciplined at that moment . . . But what a rush that was! Even though that was nearly thirty-seven years ago, I can still remember what a thrill it was to walk out those grocery store doors knowing I had just gotten away with something.

I can't remember a time when I didn't look for opportunities to get away with taking something that didn't belong to me. Through every age; through high school, through college, through my twenties, I was always looking for that rush I only got from stealing. Sometimes it was something bold like a television or a computer or a man's girlfriend or wife; other times it was a snickers or a can of spray-paint. Mind you, I didn't grow up in poverty. I wanted for nothing as a kid. I always worked, even in college. Stealing was just what made me feel good and it came natural to me. Then, when embezzling money from my employer became something I felt I didn't have control over anymore, I did everything I could possibly think of to stop, but nothing permanently worked for me until October 31, 2003 when I got down on my knees, even though I was an Agnostic, and told God that if He is real, then He should be able to help me stop stealing money. From November 1, 2003 on, I never again felt that same inclination to steal that had plagued me my entire life. I had no appetite to procure that rush that came from getting away with taking something that didn't belong to me. In fact, I still get a hint of nausea at the even at the thought of stealing. That's God's grace at work!

Now, I don't pretend to be able to relate completely to having an inclination towards same-sex attraction as some have had all their life. Neither do I pretend to presuppose God's grace to work as others as instantly as it did for me. Sometimes God delivers people from their trials, and other times His grace just carries them through it or around it, but His work is always accomplished on His perfect schedule, and not on ours.

I know this one thing as well; that Jesus is not a liar. He didn't lie when He said "Ask and your

shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you” ([Matthew](#) 7:7). He didn’t lie when He said, “If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it” ([John](#) 14:14). He didn’t lie when He said, “Those who persevere to the end will be saved” ([Matthew](#) 24:13).

So whatever you are going through and however long you have been going through it, don’t give up on God. Giving up on God’s grace is an exercise in abortion. You’ve committed an abortion of your faith and your intellect when come to believe that God is done with conforming you into the image of His Son. I beg you! Do not give up on God, because He has not given up on you!

This contribution is available at <http://www.davidlgray.info/blog/2014/07/review-eve-tushnets-book-gay-catholic/>
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Liturgical Guide: Office of the Dead [at Breviary Hymns]



The hymns selected for use in the

Office of the Dead

express the Church's hope in Christ's victory over death and in each Christian's share in that victory.

[Paragraph 958](#)

of the

[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

explains Communion with the Dead in this way: "

In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins she offers her suffrages for them. Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.

" The Office for the Dead is believed to have come into practice no early than the 7th or 8th century, but scholars are divided on it's exact origins. It is the proper Office for

All Soul's Day

(Nov. 2). It can also be used as a

[Votive Office](#)

, an optional devotion outside of the regular Liturgical calendar that can be prayed (except on Solemnities, Sundays in Advent, Lent, and Easter, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, the Octave of Easter, and All Soul's Day) for a deceased loved one, religious, or member of community etc. at appropriate times, such as the day of death, funeral, or anniversary of death.

Reflection by the

[Apostleship of Prayer](#)

. See:

[Lumen Gentium](#)

(VII:49)

LITURGY OF THE HOURS (1975)

[98. Keep in Mind](#)[106. This I Ask \(John 15\)](#) [120. Christ the Lord is Risen Today \(Wesley\)](#)[139. Come to Me](#)[172. For All the Saints](#)[175. The King of Love My Shepherd Is](#)[184. O Radiant Light, O Sun Divine](#)[185. May Flights of Angels Lead You On Your Way](#)

DIVINE OFFICE (1974)

[61. Remember Those, O Lord](#)[62. Merciful Saviour, Hear Our Humble Prayer](#)

This contribution is available at <http://kpshaw.blogspot.com/2014/07/office-of-dead.html>
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Book Pre-Review: Gay & Catholic by Eve Tushnet

The third installment in Pope Francis' series of interviews with atheist reporter Eugenio Scalfari took place on Thursday, July 10, 2014, and was published the following Sunday (07/13/14) in

[La Repubblica daily](#)

. Being that Scalfari doesn't record these interviews on tape, but, rather, re-prints the dialogue based upon his memory of the interview, we can only say what the Pope Francis 'allegedly' said in them. One of the things that the Pope allegedly told Scalfari is that he wants to continue these interviews is because he

“believes that an interview with a non-believer is mutually stimulating.”

Typical of Scalfari's interviews, Catholic bloggers will be spending the next few weeks talking about what Pope Francis meant to say in this one also. In the instant case, what Pope Francis allegedly said about the origin of priestly celibacy is sure to cause Catholic apologists to beat their head against a steel wall.

For centuries Protestants have been claiming and publishing tracts that say that the Catholic Church didn't start teaching priestly celibacy until around 1079 A.D., and in refutations Catholic apologist have been pointing to Church documents, as far back as to the the second century, to prove that celibacy for the clergy has always been a discipline of Catholic Church in the West. Now comes along Pope Francis to give Protestant anti-Catholics the proof of what they have been telling Catholics along – that priestly celibacy is a modern innovation. Below is my translated text of that portion of the interview:

SCALFARI: “An hour passed and I got up. The Pope embraces me and gives me hopes to heal as soon as possible. But I still have a question: Your Holiness, is working hard to integrate Catholicism with the Orthodox, Anglicans ... I stop continuing: “With that the Waldensian which I find religious of the first order, with the Pentecostals and, of course, with our Jewish brothers and sisters. Well, many of these priests or pastors are regularly married. What happened overtime in that becoming a problem in the Church of Rome? ”

FRANCIS: “Perhaps you don't know that celibacy was established in the tenth century, that is, 900 years after the death of our Lord. The Eastern Catholic Church has the faculty now that its priests marry. The problem certainly exists but is not of great magnitude. It takes time but there are solutions to be found.”

SCALFARI: “We are now out of the doorway of Santa Marta. We hug again. I confess that I was moved. Francis caressed my cheek and the car started.”

Is it true that priestly celibacy was established in the tenth century; that is, 900 years after the death of Christ Jesus? Absolutely not! Despite what the Pope said, you are still on very solid ground to defend the Church teaching as always being part of Catholic tradition.

It is still true that in the fourth and fifth centuries four different Popes decreed celibacy (Damasus I in 384, Siricius in 385, Innocent I in 404, and Leo I in 458). In that same period four local councils issued edicts imposing celibacy on the clergy (Carthage, Africa in 390 and 401-19, Orange, France in 441, Tours, France in 461, and Turin, Italy in 398). It is still true that the Synod of Augsburg in 952, and the local Councils of Anse (994) and Poitiers (1000) all affirmed the rule of celibacy.

Where Pope Francis seems to pick up in the long history of the tradition of a celibate priesthood in the Western Catholic Church is with Pope Gregory VII in 1075, who forbade married priests or those who had concubines from saying Mass or performing other ecclesiastical functions. Pope Gregory's edict was followed by the First Lateran Council in 1123, which mandated celibacy for the Western clergy, and the Second Lateran Council in 1139 that decreed Holy Orders as an impediment to marriage. Both of these Lateran councils were ecumenical councils.

Rather than saying that, "*celibacy was established in the tenth century,*" what Pope Francis probably meant to say (charitable me)/should have said (me being quite frank) was that celibacy for the clergy was officially mandated as a discipline in the 12th century by an ecumenical council for the first time.

In the document, [*Priestly Celibacy in Patristics and in the History of the Church*](#), Ukrainian Greek Catholic theologian Roman Cholij, affirms that the general law of celibacy long outdated the Lateran councils:

"Of the numerous synods convoked throughout Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries to enforce with rigour the neglected law, the most notable are the First Lateran Council (1123) and the Second Lateran Council (1139), considered as ecumenical in Roman tradition. Lateran I made into general law the prohibition of cohabiting with wives (c. 7). Lateran II, c. 7, reiterating the declaration of the Council of Pisa (1135), also declared marriages contracted subsequent to ordination to be not only prohibited, but non-existent (... *matrimonium non esse censemus*). At times, this Council is wrongly interpreted as having introduced for the first time the general law of celibacy, with only unmarried men being admitted to the priesthood. Yet what the Council was doing, in a more pointed way, was re-emphasizing the law of continence (... *ut autem lex continentiae et Deo placens munditia in ecclesiasticis personis et sacris personis dilatetur...*)⁶⁰ Subsequent legislation, however, continues to deal with questions relating to married men ordained *secundum legem*, not *contra legem*."

Other early statements concerning the discipline of celibacy for the clergy include:

- **Council of Elvira (c. 305)**

(Canon 33): “It is decided that marriage be altogether prohibited to bishops, priests, and deacons, or to all clerics placed in the ministry, and that they keep away from their wives and not beget children; whoever does this, shall be deprived of the honor of the clerical office.”

- **Council of Carthage (390)**

(Canon 3): “It is fitting that the holy bishops and priests of God as well as the Levites, i.e. those who are in the service of the divine sacraments, observe perfect continence, so that they may obtain in all simplicity what they are asking from God; what the Apostles taught and what antiquity itself observed, let us also endeavour to keep... It pleases us all that bishop, priest and deacon, guardians of purity, abstain from conjugal intercourse with their wives, so that those who serve at the altar may keep a perfect chastity.”

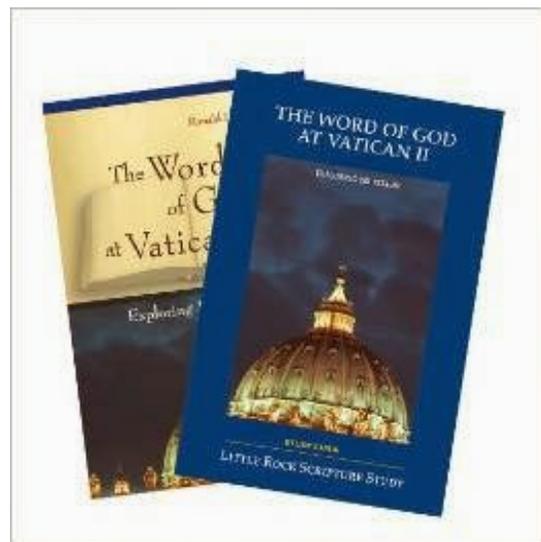
- **St. Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403)**

“Holy Church respects the dignity of the priesthood to such a point that she does not admit to the diaconate, the priesthood or the episcopate, nor even to the subdiaconate, anyone still living in marriage and begetting children. She accepts only him who if married gives up his wife or has lost her by death, especially in those places where the ecclesiastical canons are strictly attended to.”

This contribution is available at <http://www.davidlgray.info/blog/2014/07/pope-francis-priestly-celibacy/>
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The Word of God at Vatican II by Fr. Ronald Witherup [at Catholic Bibles]



Dei Verbum

is the most important Church document concerning Scripture since Trent. One of the important objectives of those council fathers who composed this document was the encouraging of all Catholics to make reading and studying the bible a normative part of daily life (DV 22,26). Now this is not to say that prior to this that officially the Church was discouraged her people from reading the Bible. (This is quite evident in the often found indulgence notice in the back front cover of many Douay-Rheims Bibles.) Yet, it must be recognized that there were places where Catholics were discouraged, instead to take up the

Baltimore Catechism

. While I was born more than a decade after the council, and so don't know this by personal experience, I have heard from numerous people while leading Bible studies and teaching classes that this did indeed happen in some places. With that being said, there is no excuse now. The Church has made it abundantly clear that she wants her sons and daughters taking up the Scriptures everyday for spiritual nourishment. All of our previous Popes, most notably Pope Benedict and Francis, have regularly reminded us to do this. What greater example could we have than the great scriptural writings of Benedict!

Now, while there have certainly been scholarly volumes devoted to

Dei Verbum

, very little has been published for the average Catholic. Yet, with the 50th anniversary of its publication coming in 2015, we are beginning to see some fine resources being published. I am very happy to report that Little Rock Scripture Study's

[The Word of God at Vatican II: Exploring Dei Verbum](#)

is extremely helpful and easily applicable to either personal or group study.

Written by noted Catholic biblical scholar

[Fr. Ronald D. Witherup](#),

who was one of the main editors on the lovely

[Little Rock Catholic Study Bible](#)

, this 85 page volume provides a short overview of all the main points concerning the council document. It is broken into three sections: 1) A Brief History of

Dei Verbum

; 2) A Brief Commentary on

Dei Verbum

; 3) Ongoing Interpretation and the Fruits of

Dei Verbum

. Scattered throughout are various charts that cover a wide range of topics, most notably the different theories on Inspiration, comparison of the two main drafts of the document, the major scripture documents that led up to Vatican II, and church documents after Vatican II. Witherup does an admirable job in providing context and content to this document. He reminds us that "virtually all church documents have been influenced in one way or another by previous church teachings.

Dei Verbum

is no exception (7)." His chart on the documents that led up to Vatican II begin with Trent and

Sancta Mater Ecclesia

of 1964. In each case, he gives a brief summary of each document and indicates which paragraphs of

Dei Verbum

were influenced by them.

In addition, he also recognizes many of the important figures who contributed to this document. A

certain Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict) is mentioned more than once. He notes that Pope Benedict's poetic

Verbum Domini

is the most "comprehensive and important" document since the council (68). Other works of scholars like Brown, Murphy, and Fitzmyer are rightly noted as being some of the great fruits of Vatican II. (Little Rock Scripture Study is of course mentioned as well.) I would have perhaps liked to see others mentioned as well, for example some of those scholars associated with the

[Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture](#)

.

I will conclude with what I think is the real heart of Witherup's work, that being his paragraph by paragraph commentary of

Dei Verbum

found in chapter 2. The commentary is aided by the fact that Witherup included the actual document. So, you don't need to flip between this book and the council document. It is right there for you. (And yes, the footnotes from

Dei Verbum

are included as well.) Encompassing over 40 pages, Witherup takes you through each section of the document providing helpful commentary on the main issues. These range from one to five or more paragraphs each depending on the issue. As you can guess, there is more of an extensive commentary on the interpretation of paragraph 11. As Witherup notes, the issue of inerrancy is an issue still being debated and discussed today. Pope Benedict asked for the issue to be studied by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and its findings are due to be released quite soon.

The Word of God at Vatican II

is a great resource. It comes with a study guide for individual or group study. An answer book can be purchased as well. I plan to use this throughout the year and next. If I had my wish, I would love to see a collection of essays published by contemporary Catholic scripture scholars, from a wide variety of schools, looking back at the importance of

Dei Verbum

.

Thank you to the fine folks at Liturgical Press for providing me a review copy.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicbiblesblog.com/2014/07/review-word-of-god-at-vatican-ii-by-fr.html>
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Wanting Revenge [at Working to be Worthy]

-1-

Last night, Anne and Peter fell asleep at 8:30 and 9ish, respectively. For the first time in a very long time, Anne slept through the night. She woke at 6:30 to nurse, then went back to sleep until 10:15. Peter came into my room about 7:15, then fell asleep next to me until almost 10:00. Neither of them are sick, but they had no naps yesterday and are stressed about Daddy being out of town. Still, I took the 13 hours of sleep as a portent of a good day.

-2-

They had breakfast and got dressed in enough time to get to the 11:15 communion service, where they did fairly well, until the very end. Peter got mad at me and took off his sandal in protest. (It's just something he does. Maybe because at some point I'll put it back on?) I ignored him, then scooped up him and his sandal after the closing song, took Anne's hand and power-walked out of the sanctuary. He was thrashing all the way, then let go an ear-piercing squeal just as we got to the hallway. A woman (who has made pointed comments in the past about me bringing my children to church) gave me a dirty look and - to her credit - muttered, "God bless you," and stalked out.

-3-

The day didn't particularly improve. He was pushing every limit and encouraging Anne to do the same all afternoon. We made it through dinner fairly well, had a fun and happy bathtime, and then it was bed time. For over an hour. The initial trigger was my refusal to read a book after he threw it on the floor, then escalated when he kicked me and I left his room. He followed me into my room, screaming and pulling things off the bed.

-4-

I should have physically stopped him and helped him regain control, but I'd had it by that point. What I

wanted

to do was slap him, so what I did was barricade myself in our walk-in closet and pray. I prayed for grace to get through this and for the ability to let go of my anger. What I wanted was revenge, but that would teach him nothing. When God had helped me regain control and restored my relationship with Him, I tried to do the same with Peter.

-5-

When he reached another calm in his storm, I told him it was time to fix the bedroom. I gave him one instruction at a time and helped tuck in the sheets and straighten the comforter when he asked politely. Then we moved into his room where we repeated the process with the toys he had strewn during a tantrum earlier this week. As he put the environment back in order, he got himself more in control, too. Finally, we were ready to snuggle and talk.

-6-

Are you sorry you wrecked things?

Well, that was just me saying that even if you did still love me, I didn't love you.

Do you love me now?

Yes.

Good. I love you, too.

Are

you

sorry you got angry at me?

Yes. I'm sorry for being angry at you. Will you forgive me?

Yes!

[bedtime prayers and lullabies]

me: I love you. I'll always love you. (a prompt for what follows)

P: Even when I kick you?

Yes. I don't like what you're doing, but I still love you. I'll always love you.

P: Even when I'm angry at you?

Yes, I still love you. I'll always love you.

P: Even you're angry at me?

Yes, I still love you. I'll always love you. Do you still love me when I'm angry at you?

P: Yes, I still love you. I'll always love you. (ends that 'script') Do you know how much I love you?

How much?

P: Up to Heaven.

Oh good. Goodnight, sweet boy, I love you.

P: Mommy, will you love me until you and me both die?

Yes, always.

P: OK, goodnight.

-7-

I know he got off his sleep schedule, didn't eat much lunch, and desperately misses Daddy, especially at bedtime. I know I didn't respond well to the warning signs earlier in the day. I know I could have been a better parent. But tonight, I'm not feeling guilty or even particularly worn-out. I am grateful. I am grateful for God's grace and forgiveness. I am grateful for the opportunity to teach instead of punish. I am grateful for the love of my son, a love strong enough to survive even our bad days.



This contribution is available at <http://workingtobeworthy.blogspot.com/2014/07/wanting-revenge.html>
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Fill in the Blanks [at The Breadbox Letters]



Lord God, You are holy and merciful and _____

I thank You for _____

The people I bring before You today are _____ Please

forgive me for _____

Please help with _____

I would like to talk with You about _____

I adore You because _____

Throughout this day _____

May You be glorified in me, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Painting: Anna Ancher, in US public domain due to age ([PD-US](#))

This contribution is available at <http://thebreadboxletters.blogspot.com/2014/07/fill-in-blanks.html>
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Stepping out [at With Us Still]

‘Who is this person?,’ I thought when I got a photo-text from high above the streets of Chicago the other day. ‘And will someone kindly return my wife to me?’

You see, my beloved spouse spent the past week at a conference in the Windy City (or more precisely, [Romeoville](#))...and apparently, the participants didn’t keep their noses to the grindstone the entire time they were together.

Wednesday afternoon was designated ‘free time,’ which Gerri (somewhat uncharacteristically) turned into the chance for a big-city adventure. She and a newfound buddy took a commuter train downtown—in itself a challenging escapade for those used to four-wheel modes of transportation—and then headed off to Willis Tower to [experience the Skydeck Ledge](#).

Now you have to understand: This is a woman who keeps the car’s door handle in a death-grip anytime we travel on a mountain road. She tends to get upset if I (or any member of the family) wanders within six feet of the railing on a bluff or at canyon’s edge.

And yet, here’s this photo.



On top of the world...in the Windy City

It sure *looks* like my wife, seated in a flimsy glass box...perched 103 stories above Wacker Drive. But I notice that she doesn’t seem to be scared at all. In fact, she’s got a beautiful smile on her face—like she’s actually *enjoying* the experience.

Today, I heard more details about that little adventure when the two of us attended a day of reflection with other members of our parish. The day was focused on the [Psalms of Ascent](#)

(Psalms 120-134) —in essence, the songs Hebrew pilgrims sang when they traveled to Jerusalem. Our pastor opened the day by inviting us to reflect on memorable decision-points in our lives, situations that called for us (like pilgrims) to step out of our comfort zones, to take a risk.

In that context, Gerri described her urban escapade to the folks at the table, noting that it did in fact have a spiritual dimension—showing her, among other things, how we draw strength and energy from our companions. ‘I never would have gone downtown on my own,’ she said. ‘But Mary Jo made it easy. We knew we could rely on each other, bounce ideas off each other. We didn’t have to wander into that unfamiliar territory alone.’

So it came to be that Gerri was able to step out onto the Skydeck Ledge last Wednesday, and gain a whole new perspective on that part of the world.

And she’s given me something fruitful to ponder, as well:

How often do I allow fear or reluctance to derail the good things the Lord would have me do?

And: How open am I to nurturing new relationships...or to exploring the idea that perhaps God puts certain people in our lives precisely so that we will have the companions needed to ease the most difficult parts of the journey?

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

This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2014/07/19/todays-find-stepping-out/>
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Chasing Fireflies [at Busy Catholic Moms]



One of our 4th of July traditions is to watch the fireworks.

Now, we try to balance this with avoiding the crowds. We don't choose to go up close by the launch site but instead back off a bit and arrive early. This gives us ample time to enjoy some of our other pre-fireworks traditions, throwing the football or Frisbee and chasing fireflies.

This last weekend, that is what our youngest was intent on doing. She had spotted a firefly and was so focused on trying to get it, she didn't want anything else. But as you know, fireflies flash only intermittently and that kept the firefly safe from her little fingers. She would spot its bright light and dash toward it, only to lose it when the light went out. Then, it would flash again, some distance away from her, and she would take off only to lose it again! Once, the firefly took a dive and landed on the ground. So she ran to where it was located and looked for it. However in the dusk, a non-glowing little bug is hard to spot. So she looked at her sister and me to say that she couldn't find it at the exact second when the firefly light flashed. We exclaimed and pointed at the ground for her to see the firefly, only to have her look a moment after the light went out. Three times, she looked away perfectly timed to miss the bright little flash!

Finally, she saw it and reached down to capture it. We tried to help her not squish the small bug in her fingers and finally got it cupped in her hands. Then it crawled all over her fingers but would not light up. No amount of coaxing from her would get it to show its little blaze. At last, all of her waiting paid off and she was rewarded with two little blinks of light before it flew off into the night.

Beautiful moments like these always make me think of how they can be reflected in our own lives.

Sometimes we see something we want, something we think we need – whether it is attention, a job, a relationship. And we chase it! We follow it through tall grasses and over little hills. We think that we know where it is going and we follow after it, but oftentimes we lose sight of where it is. We forget our motivation for finding it and are all consumed by the chase itself. We catch glimpses of where it may be but we always look away right when the location of the desire may be revealed. Many times, we just barely miss what it is we think we want and need. We get distracted and look away.

When at times, we actually do acquire our heart's desire, our own actions and sinfulness can take

away from the beauty of it, nearly squashing it. And other times, we have it right there in our grasp but it is not working out the way that we want it to. We aren't getting that flash of light that we so wanted. And when we finally do get that little glitter of light, it is perhaps less than we hoped for and often fleeting so that we don't get to hold on to whatever it is.

But it is at those times, we need to remember just to sit back in our chairs, watch the little fireflies blink by, and settle in for the bigger fireworks of God's dreams for our lives. They are so much more spectacular and amazing than any little firefly we have been chasing after. God's plan for our lives can be explosive and beautiful, sparkling in the dark night long after the fireflies have blinked out.



This contribution is available at <http://busycatholicmoms.com/our-kids/chasing-fireflies/>
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Why Prince Charming is a lie, but real men aren't... [at For Such a Time as This]

If you've never heard the song 'Lead Me' by Sanctus Real, listen to it now! At this point I could easily stop writing and let the lyrics speak for themselves...

I LOVE this song, but I can't listen to it without getting emotional. My friend and I cried to each other over the phone when we first heard it.

Why?

Because it hits a sore spot. It hits that wound in all of our hearts that bleeds the phrase '**how come there are no real men anymore?!**' Most of us have heard it asked. Nearly as many of us have asked it ourselves.

God created us for union and communion with each other. His unmatched creativity is such that he designed us to fit together perfectly in every way. Our lives are the most fruitful and we feel the most fulfilled when we're exercising that complementarity. We need men in our lives – not just husbands, but fathers, brothers, friends – and they need us. We unlock an extra level of potential in each other.

Sometimes as women we put far too much pressure on men to become the ideal we think we need. We're often guilty of underestimating just how difficult a job they have! Supporting us and leading us takes an immense amount of strength. But that strength comes from God alone, and must be continually renewed through prayer and abandonment of self.

Disney has taught us to expect perfection and settle for nothing less. **But Prince Charming is a lie.** No wonder the divorce rate is rising so rapidly: we're in for a serious shock if we marry with the false belief that the men who swept us off our feet and carried us to the altar in their strong arms will retain that guise of perfection for long.

No man is flawless (neither are we!), and expecting them to solve all our problems will only end in more heartache. Christ called us to love one another as He loves us. That means that the most fruitful relationships will be built on grace and mercy rather than pressure and judgement. We're called to love each other *including* our flaws, because without that merciful love no relationship can survive.

Disney's version of 'Mr Right' may be far-fetched and idealistic, but deep down we do have a natural longing to be supported and guided by a strong man – spiritually, physically and emotionally... and that's no coincidence! What we long for is actually the root of what men were intended to be, we just don't realise it. We want them to be strong and gentle and decisive and loving all at the same time... and they can be! But to benefit from that, we have to allow them to develop those strengths. To have a 'real man', we have to *allow him* to be a real man.

Culture insists on mourning the loss of 'real men', but perhaps it's simply the definition used that needs challenging. A real man isn't one who works out twice a day, earns a six figure salary and buys extravagant presents with money he won't miss.

A 'real man' is one who will lead you with strong hands even when that means humbly admitting his mistakes.

One who will discerningly make sacrifices for the greater good of your family.

One who seeks guidance from his heavenly Father instead of relying on his own strength.

One who'd rather walk you to Heaven than drive you around in his Porsche.

One who looks at your heart before your physique.

One who prays for you, not just pays for you.

One who strives to protect your purity not conquer it.

One who loves you as Christ loves His Church.

... and these **REAL MEN EXIST!**

This contribution is available at <http://forthisverymoment.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/why-prince-charming-is-lie-but-real-men.html>

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Join the Mission! [at For Such a Time as This]

A few months ago I wrote about my struggle with discerning my vocation in a guest post over at [UKCatholicgirl](#). Around a year ago God showed me that the ideas I had about my life and my career post-university were not the same as His ideas. He never does anything by halves, and almost overnight He wiped out all of the plans I'd devised, leaving confusion and frustration in their place. As I grew closer and closer to graduating without a solid plan for the next step, I found myself learning the hard way that God is sovereign over all things!

Anyone who knows me knows that I *hate* not having a comprehensive plan, but as my acceptance of my own lack of control over my future slowly grew I began to realise that God's plans for me will always be bigger and better than any I could dream up for myself. **Into the darkness, God brought light...**



From the **20th August** I'll be joining the [Sion Catholic Community for Evangelisation](#) on their [Youth Foundation Year](#), along with several other young people. Over the course of 11 months I'll be taught, guided, challenged and hopefully moulded into being more like the person God wants me to be. I'll also have the opportunity to take the Gospel to over 10000 students in high schools around the country... and I've honestly never been more excited about anything in my whole life!

This is where you come in...

The community invests **£4500** a year (equating to just under £450 a month) into each of its foundation year members – which covers accommodation, food, mission resources, community transport, formation and prayer days – but to do so they rely entirely on God's providence. Approximately half of the funding of the community comes from donations from individuals –

either one-off donations or regular monthly donations. Regular monthly donations are hugely helpful to the community as it provides a stable income to allow planning for future months!

Here's how you can get involved...

- Share in the mission through prayer and intercession on our behalf.

‘Brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honoured. (2 Thes. 3:1)

- Commit to providing a certain amount of money each month.

‘Honour the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all you produce.’ (Proverbs 3:9)

- Pray about what you can offer as a one-off donation.

‘Each one must give as he has decided in his own heart.’ (2 Cor. 9:7)

- Join our journey and receive regular updates on how God's been at work.

‘Give, and it shall be given to you.’ (Luke 6:38)

If you'd like to team up with *For Such A Time As This* and join the mission this year, drop me a message at estherrich@outlook.com to let me know (and so that I can send you updates throughout the year!), then **post cheques addressed to 'Sion Community'** to:

Esther Rich

The Ark of the Covenant

Potters Green

Coventry

West Midlands

CV2 2AN

If you're a UK tax payer, I can also send you a gift aid form so that we can claim an extra 28p for every pound you give!

Thank you so much for all your prayers and support.

May God bless you all abundantly!!

This contribution is available at <http://forthisverymoment.blogspot.co.uk/2014/07/join-mission.html>
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Lighting a candle



Is it OK to be confused?

When we walked into the Church of John the Evangelist in the resort town of Monterosso al Mare, the first sight was the array of candles.

I love candles for décor, but never understood them as part of religious practice. As a child, arriving early for mass, I was perplexed by those who took the pilgrimage down the side aisle of our plaster walled post-conciliar church to light a votive beneath the abstract windows awash in primary colors. The flames were small. And what did they do exactly, other than cost a dollar?

God loves us, candles or no. God can't be bought off with a few coins. Yet I found myself in San Giovanni longing to light a candle, and confused by my desire.

I always thought I was comfortable with mystery. I love the Trinity, after all! But that was before mystery burrowed into my very body: *we don't know what causes your disease. We don't know what will make you feel better. We don't know what your prognosis is.* So now, when I turn to God's own mystery I do so pining for certainty. Remove the questions. Make me well.

In this new church, far from home, that was my prayer, and I wanted to light a candle. I wanted to dip its wick into a flame and cause that flame to double as sure as I was standing there. I wanted to put 1€ into the box marked *offerta* and be healed. I was ashamed.

Just as all that swirled inside me, making me want to disappear into the black and white marble floor, he stepped beside me and said simply "I want to light a candle for my mom."

I almost wept with relief and admiration. How is able to make things so simple? He wanted to

commit an act of love, of literal enlightenment, and he was able to do it without overthinking.

“I’d like to light one for my health,” I whispered. So he drew out a 2€ and let it fall into the box where it landed with a clang.

We stood shoulder to shoulder, our intentions wordlessly merging. My prayers were made muddier and more mysterious by my gratitude for standing so close to someone who still helps me learn to pray.

This contribution is available at <http://margaretfelice.com/2014/07/11/lighting-a-candle/>
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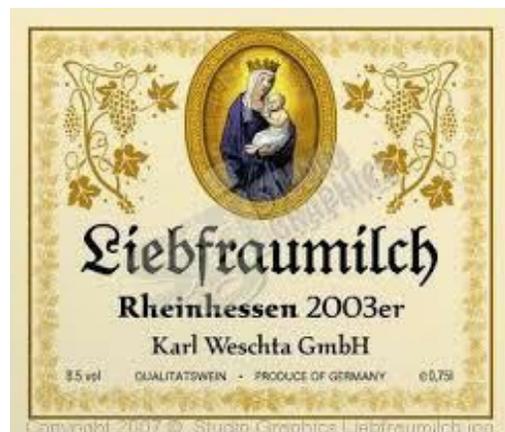
Of White Wine and Breast Milk [at The Back of the World]

During the final week of the World Cup, I was rooting for Germany. It partially had to do with my deep fondness for Pope Benedict, partially to do with the fact that I have a little bit of German ancestry on my mom's side... I went to the grocery store to get some German beer, but their selection was pretty pathetic. So I decided to check the selection of German wine. The store was running a sale on a wine I'd never heard before: **Liebfraumilch**.

I bought a bottle and brought it home. It was pretty good.*

I was looking at the label, and thinking to myself "*hmm, I know Germans like to string a bunch of nouns together into a bigger word... the meaning of "Frau" is obvious. Not sure what "Lieb" is, but "Milch" sounds like it might be a cognate of the English word "milk"...*

Then I looked above the wording on the label and saw the picture of the Madonna and Child. "**It can't be...**"



Not the actual brand I purchased, but it will serve to illustrate the point...

Yep, it can be.

“Liebfraumilch” literally means “**Beloved Lady’s Milk**”. It was originally produced in the vineyards of the Church of Our Lady near Worms in the Rhineland.

And I have to say, for a few moments, I felt a bit... *uncomfortable*.



Clearly, the idea did not make Andrea Solari uncomfortable...

And I got to thinking (a dangerous past-time, I know...): *what is it that makes me feel uncomfortable thinking about the Virgin Mary nursing?*

After all, it's undoubtedly an historical fact that the Virgin Mary nursed Our Lord (there was, of course, no formula in those days...). And the Nursing Madonna was a common subject for religious art for many centuries. **There's even a (possibly apocryphal) story that St. Bernard of Clairvaux had an eye infection cured by Our Lady's breast milk.** This seems pretty natural: after all, Mary is Mother of the Church...

Historically speaking, Catholics clearly have not been squeamish about this... so why was I?



I'm thinking the story about St. Bernard has got to be apocryphal, but maybe that's just my modern prejudices...

I'm not the only person made uncomfortable by breastfeeding, of course... Here in the US, nursing mothers are often under heavy criticism. [Remember that news story about the poor mother in Starbucks?](#)

But there's an obvious hypocrisy to the American attitude: breasts are everywhere in this country. Women in revealing tops walk down every sidewalk in this country. You can't get on Facebook without being shown ads with tons of cleavage. Every grocery store sells "men's magazines" with pictures of breasts, and almost every gas station has pornography behind the counter.

So why, in a country filled to the brim with images of human mammary glands, are we so darn uncomfortable with breastfeeding?

And I got to thinking that maybe this has something to do with our contraceptive mentality. You see, in addition to widely-available breast imagery, we've also got widely-available birth control. It's not just porn that's easy to obtain at gas stations... you can also pick up prophylactics while you're there. Sex is purely about pleasure in this country. Sure, maybe you have a kid or two when you're well into your thirties and you've "had your fun", but generally speaking American sex is all about the moments of pleasure.

Maybe, just maybe, we've divorced sex from its procreative purpose so much, that we think of a woman using her body in a procreative manner as being... well, as being gross. Maybe we're totally ok with lust-inducing images of breasts, but totally not ok with images of nursing, because we've completely forgotten that sex is meant to make babies. Somewhere along the line we decided to disregard the command to "be fruitful and multiply", and now anything remotely maternal offends us.



Da Vinci sure didn't find it offensive...

At least, that's what I think. If you disagree, perhaps we can discuss it back at my place over a

nice glass of Liebfraumilch*.

**Yes, I am now aware that Liebfraumilch is considered cheap swill by People Who Know Wine. I have terrible taste in wine. Sue me.*

This contribution is available at <http://backoftheworld.com/2014/07/28/of-white-wine-and-breast-milk/>
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Why The Book Thief Is A Horrible Book [at This Felicitous Life]

And a sign that we are doomed.

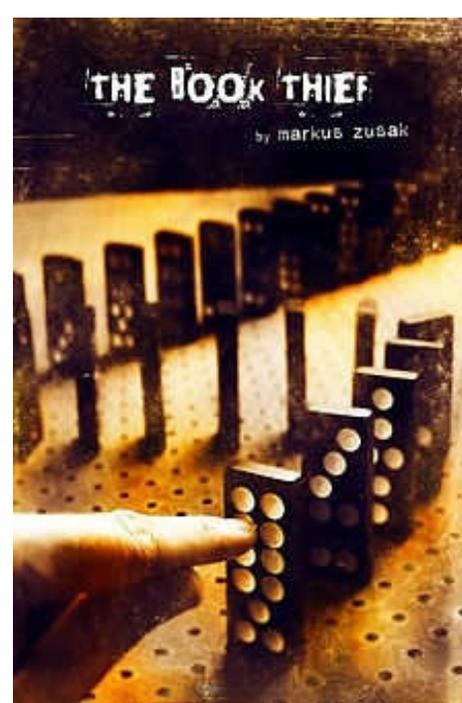
Reason #1: Because it has lines like this:

“In years to come he would be a giver of bread, not a stealer, proof again of the contradictory human being. So much good, so much evil. Just add water.”

and this:

“When I recollect her, I see a long list of colors, but it’s the three in which I saw her in the flesh that resonate the most. Sometimes I manage to float far above those three moments. I hang suspended, until a septic truth bleeds toward clarity.”

Blech. The author uses a unique narrative style that is supposed to be all innovative and such. It’s really just dumb. (Hilarious parody [here](#)).



Reason #2: Here’s where I get really heated (so please excuse me while I get melodramatic)–

Adding yet another fictitious book or movie about the Nazi Holocaust to the hundreds that already exist is not a good idea, *at least not while there is a dearth of works about the other genocides of our time.*



Here's why:

In Constitutional Law class, one of my law school classmates made the following analogy (I forget what it was about):

“Maybe it wouldn't be like Nazi Germany where, you know, they kill you. Maybe it would be more like Stalinist Russia, where they just take your property.”

It took me a few moments to retrieve my jaw from off the floor.

In Stalinist Russia they *just* take your property.

This is what my generation thinks.

This classmate of mine is and was intelligent, educated in fine Catholic schools and a prestigious private university. But our generation, and those that followed, have been fed a steady diet of books and movies like *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Night*, *Schindler's List*, and (now) *The Book Thief*.

We have read *nothing* about the 30+ million people killed in the Bolshevik Revolution.

Nothing about the 40 million killed under Mao Zedong.

Nothing about the horrors under Pol Pot, about the Armenian genocide, and precious little about the horrors occurring in North Korea to this very day.

And here I can't help but become a bit of a conspiracy theorist and think that we know less about those other atrocities because they were committed by the political left. Hitler, being on the political right, is a more comfortable target for journalists, moviemakers and writers, a majority of whom (I think) hover left of center. It's so dumb to think in those terms, really, because as far as I can see, political ideologies don't form a straight line so much as a sphere. The extreme right and extreme left meet in the middle as far as their effect on the unfortunate populations ruled by them.

In our ignorance, we dress our kids in tee-shirts with Chairman Mao's image on it, and let them frolic around in public, without a care in the world about public condemnation. (Seriously, I saw this with my own eyes.)

Can you imagine anyone in mainstream America putting their kid in a tee-shirt with Hitler's image? No. Of course not. God forbid.

A recent survey showed that [only 48% of people worldwide under age 35 know about the Nazi Holocaust](#). That ignorance is shocking and disturbing and unacceptable. But if any significant part of that 48% includes moderately to well-educated young people from mainstream America, I'll [make like Mr. Grimwig](#) and eat my head. Like my Con Law classmate, we know *all* about the Holocaust and precious little about the rest of history.

I don't want people reading and writing any less about the Holocaust except insofar as it gives us a myopic sense of the Nazi Holocaust being the one, unique event of its kind.

It's not *not not* that I think we should be any less aware of the incomprehensibly horrific Nazi Holocaust. And certainly, by the numbers, it was the worst or one of the worst ever. By focusing on it to the exclusion of other genocides, however, we have become over confident.

We (and I'm speaking for my peers here) think we know what evil looks like. It's Hitler. We understand him (or at least we think we do), and we would never make the same mistake Germany did in electing such a monster to power. We would never turn a blind eye when a certain minority group is targeted. We would never fall sway to a megalomaniacal demagogue. We. Know. Better.

But we have no idea about the other "Hitlers" of recent history. About Mao and Pol Pot and Stalin and the genocides in Armenia and Rwanda and the Congo.

They say those who are ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it.

We are doomed to repeat it.

(But first

Expectations vs. Reality in Motherhood [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



I was chosen among some amazing women to be a part of this project set up by

It's a year long effort to better our lives

You can check it out

[HERE](#)

I'll show you who the other lovely ladies are, in this blog hop,
at the end of this post.

Amy asked several of us to write for the kick off for this fun project and the first
topic is:

Expectations VS Reality

in My Motherhood

(Make that *Thankful Reality* for me please!)

I always knew I wanted to be a wife and a mother.

I think I have been surprised by it all!

Motherhood is not as I imagined it,

yet, **so much more** than I expected or hoped for.



I am most surprised in my motherhood by

How good I am at it.

And at the same time

How bad I am at it.

I think in motherhood, no matter who you are, we are all faced daily

(if not hourly or even moment to moment)

with our accomplishments **and** our shortcomings

I'm not as skinny or organized as I'd like to be,

supper is always late, there are toys all over the place,

a ton of laundry to do at any given time,

my floor is always dirty,

my kids don't nap and they all go to bed way too late.

I wish I had more time each day to spend with each and every child alone,

There never seems to be enough time and I'm always chasing after more of it.

I'm not as patient as I'd like to be and yet

I'm surprised at how patient I am.

I could go on and on and tell you what **I'm NOT**.

I know a priest,

that, during Confession, he says, every single time,

"Praise God for all the good you do!"

(Fr Herron)

God has entrusted these children to me.

ME!

He does **not** make mistakes.

He knows I am what they need and they are what I need

for my journey to sainthood

(we are all called to be saints with Him in heaven)



So stop comparing yourself to others

Your kids love you just the way you are!

We can choose to dwell on our failings

or we can try our best to overcome our weak areas

and Praise God for all the GOOD.



Thankful I actually like myself!

I'm not that bad!!



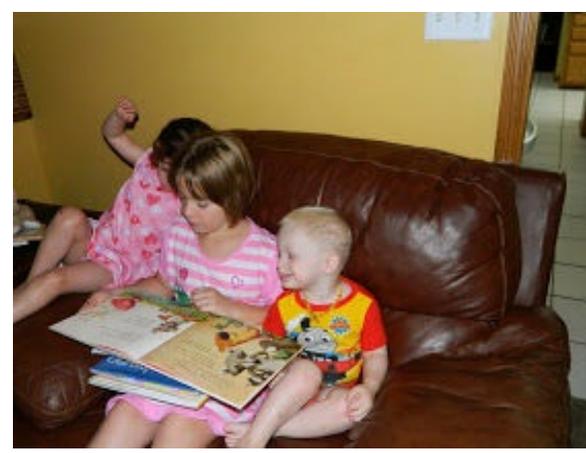
Sure, I wish I were thinner, but I'm OK with ME.



Give yourself a break and love who you are
and the way you look!



Thankful for messy fudgsicle faces



for big kids reading to little kids in jammies!



Thankful for warm park days and silly kids



Thankful for girls with freckles



And girls with dimple chins and rosey cheeks



Thankful for wonderful summer camps for the girls



(Sisters of Schoenstatt Camp)

This is part of my van load



And Vocations Camp for boys



Thankful for summer foods...



Slumber parties with some awesome boys



Thankful for this sweet boy.

After being away from home for 2 1/2 days,

Vocation Camp ended with Mass outside with the Bishop

(yes, that was really cool)

All the other boys (about 30 of them)

sat *away* from their families,

this boy sat *with* his family.

(Awwwwwww)

Yes, he's very very sweet

and I'm **Thankful**.



Thankful for my Grandma (she turned 92 in July)

my sister and cousins...



and aunts and parents (that's my dad with 4 of his 7 sisters)



Thankful for a new 12 year old
who is beautiful, talented and just an awesome kid!



Thankful for new recipes

(I'll have to do a "recipe" post)



Thankful for vacations with grandparents

for moments like these are treasures in our hearts



Lots of fun memories from vacation



Beach time



and pool time (with cousins)

(and Spike the Dragon)

Thankful for my wonderful husband in charge of them all!



Thankful for reading time on the porch with my oldest

(we are reading *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy)



Thankful for my view from the porch



and my view of the porch



A closer look
(you're welcome)



Thankful

for this girl that took on the job of watering my flowers this year



Thankful for mailboxes and the hope they bring

(we got home from vacation to find that deer had eaten the whole right side there!)



Thankful for little boys too tired to go any further...

(because of that no nap thing)



Thankful for swim lessons

(isn't this the cutest swim group ever?)



Thankful for sisters with a growing relationship



and littles that do everything together



Thankful for 14 year old boys



And girls not afraid of anything



not even BUGS



or ziplines....



Thankful for kids that are not afraid to try anything
(as hard as that is sometimes!)



Thankful for running 2 year olds
(really fast 2 year olds)
And the busy-ness of life.



SO, sit back sometimes,

enjoy the view



Be **Thankful** for your life



And

"Praise God for all the good you do."

Check out these other lovely ladies and see how their expectations and reality come together!

This contribution is available at <http://makemeasaint.blogspot.com/2014/07/expectations-vs-reality-in-motherhood.html>

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Catholic Hippy Homeschool [at CF Family]

Note: I use the word “hippy” loosely; that is, while I am distrustful of government, buck current sexual norms (by embracing traditional gender roles!), and like to eat close to the earth, I am not presently nor have I ever engaged in promiscuity or illegal drugs. OK, then; let’s have a little fun with this!

1. We spend a lot of time outside: yard gaming in the grass, fighting, exploring, and magical games in the woods; coaxing vegetables out of the garden; and caring for the hobby farm animals. We turn this into language arts, science, social studies, and art by writing, researching, photographing, sketching, and labeling. We actually do make daisy chains, cook up dandelion flowers, and brew spruce tea. We are flower children.



2. When the weather pushes us inside (excepting farm chores), we build stuff like classic forts, train tracks, lego creatures, and obstacle courses. And books, books, books. The most encouraging thing I have ever heard in fifteen years of homeschooling is this:

A curious mother and a library card can give a child an excellent education

. I make sure to have great books here, from board books to picture books to novels to textbooks (most titles found in the appendices of programs far too tightly ordered for me!) so that whatever strikes their interest will be excellently fed. It’s a beautiful bag.

3. We rap about culture, politics, and religion regularly. We explain, draw charts, and break out the catechism and Bible to read. Our Holy Faith is reasonable and touches every aspect of life while bathing our hearts and minds in the tempering love of Christ. So we can discuss a certain law or program or news story or homily with all the volume and hand-waving my Irish roots revel in; and in the same conversation bring it back to *How Should We Then Live?* (usually thanks to my quieter husband). Right-on activism.

4. We love the earth (see #1). We are masters at recycling and reusing out of financial and space-necessity. Any plastic container gets washed and joins the ranks of Ken's camping supplies; any cardboard becomes a fort or art project (see #2); our backyard animals provide milk and meat and their pens provide fertilizer for the field and garden. Stroller walks always amass trash that the children collect and discard and our cars and clothing are someone else's cast-offs. Love, baby.



5. Even our mathematics is laissez-faire. We keep half a dozen programs here that they float among (Singapore, Teaching Textbooks, Life of Fred, Oak Meadow, Dragon Box, and Khan online) and enough buckets of manipulatives to ruin a week's worth of midnight bathroom visits. If someone is having a particularly tough time, they're dispatched to help a toddler build with Cuisenaire rods or design with pattern blocks. Peace, man.

The delightful

[Elizabeth Foss](#)

wrote that “

We are educated by our intimacies”

and this is our way of helping our children (and who am I kidding, us parents, as well!) be intimate with God's creation ~ the earth, the family, the Faith ~ in our own Catholic hippy groove.

“Far more important, my dear Catholics, is not what we are going to do but who we are to become: that we become men and women of God and saints of God, the presence of Christ in this world. That is the object of education: who we become.”

Bishop Carl Mengeling in

[The Catholic Homeschool Companion](#)



(Also published at Catholic Sistas today.)

This contribution is available at <http://www.northernfamily.blogspot.com/2014/07/catholic-hippy-homeschool.html>

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Married deacons, married priests [at Catholic Deacon]

I offer these thoughts on the diaconate with one important caveat - these are my ideas and mine alone. I am not claiming any authority on these matters apart from my own experience, study, and involvement in on-going discussions concerning these matters. So, as with everything on Καθολικός διάκονος, take it for what it's worth.

Observation: A lot of married permanent Roman Catholic deacons seem to be fervent advocates for the Latin Church normatively ordaining married men priests (the Church does now in exceptional cases), thus doing away with what is mistakenly called "mandatory" celibacy (mistaken because celibacy can only be freely chosen, not imposed). At least on the surface, this does not seem too difficult to figure out.

I guess my view, as one who seriously considered a vocation to the priesthood as a much younger man (particularly becoming a Dominican friar), and, only years later, with a lot of encouragement, discerned a vocation to the diaconate, I see being a deacon, serving as a deacon, especially as a married man with a family, as a distinct vocation, not as a consolation prize. Having written that, let me state that it is easy for me to understand that married deacons in the various Eastern Rite Catholic Churches throughout the United States might have a different set of concerns, given the normativity of those churches ordaining married men priests outside the United States, according to the ancient tradition of those Churches. Thankfully, it is becoming more and more common for some Eastern Rite Churches in the U.S. to ordain married men priests. Just as it is important for the various Eastern Churches in communion with Rome to resist "Latinization," we're on shaky ground, it seems to me, when we seek to "orientalize" the Latin Church.

In my view, the diaconate will not succeed in forging a mature ecclesial identity until the issue of the diaconate being a distinct vocation starts to be resolved. To this end, one concrete proposal I believe has a lot of merit, something of which I have long been in favor: doing away with the so-called transitional diaconate and making diaconal ordination part of episcopal ordination. This means doing away with the

cursus honorum

, which the Latin Church adopted from Roman polity.

Cursus honorum

literally means "course of offices." It refers to the sequential order of public offices held by aspiring politicians in both the Roman Republic and the early empire.



Applied to holy orders, the
cursus honorum

means going from deacon, to priest, to bishop. This practice often results in bad theology, which I have heard expressed by a few of my brother deacons along the lines of, "He's been ordained twice and I've only been ordained once." Our current practice does not strike me as all that consistent with the development of these orders in the New Testament and earliest Church. In fact, one can make a pretty good argument that the office of deacon existed prior to the office of priest. This change would also have the effect of bringing into even bolder relief the deacon's unique and, yes, special relationship to his bishop.

In addition to more clearly distinguishing deacons from priests, I believe such a move would clear the space necessary to have an intelligent and conclusive discussion on women and the diaconate by doing away with slippery slope concerns about women becoming priests, which, for Catholics, is off-the-table. I don't mind saying, for the sake of clarity, that I am okay with the non-ordained office of deaconess, which would be conferred by institution, not ordination. This office would permit women to be of pastoral service primarily to other women.

The issue I am indirectly getting at is addressed in the USCCB's

[*National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons*](#)

, approved by the Holy See and subsequently issued in 2004:

Underlying the restoration and renewal of the diaconate at the Second Vatican Council was

the principle that the diaconate is a stable and permanent rank of ordained ministry. Since the history of the order over the last millennium, however, has been centered on the diaconate as a transitory stage leading to the priesthood, actions that may obfuscate the stability and permanence of the order should be minimized. This would include the ordination of celibate or widowed deacons to the priesthood. "Hence ordination [of a permanent deacon] to the Priesthood . . . must always be a very rare exception, and only for special and grave reasons . . . Given the exceptional nature of such cases, the diocesan bishop should consult the Congregation for Catholic Education with regard to the intellectual and theological preparation of the candidate, and also the Congregation for the Clergy concerning the program of priestly formation and the aptitude of the candidate to the priestly ministry" (par 77)

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2014/07/married-deacons-married-priests.html>
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The single best way to reduce abortions

When Lisa Selin Davis told a cabdriver she was going to have an abortion, he pulled the car over on the Brooklyn Bridge in a blizzard. He begged her not to do it. Davis, then a 22-year-old aspiring filmmaker, had conceived the child with a married man she met at a film shoot. But she “didn’t want that baby, with that man,” she wrote in an essay that printed in the *Perspective* section of the *Tampa Bay Times* on Sunday.



The story is sad but bold. When Davis resisted the cabdriver’s appeal, he took her to the clinic to which she had asked him to take her, where after it was over, she woke up sobbing in pain and a paper gown. She was sure she would never be a mother. She was wrong. Fifteen years later, she wrote, she gave birth to a daughter and later, to another. And, she added, “I want my daughters to have the option of safe and legal abortion, of course. I just don’t want them to have to use it.”

Davis’s is one of countless voices that roots for the right to choose to abort despite an admitted distaste for abortion. Abortion is regarded and protected by many as a “necessary” evil — a procedure to be avoided, but to be accessible for when other options are undesirable. Davis wants her daughters to have the right to choose to abort but she doesn’t want them ever to have to exercise it. In the essay, she doesn’t say what her daughters can do to avert ever feeling like they need to. Other voices like hers have made suggestions:

In the essay’s combox, a commenter wrote that abortion can be avoided by teaching “safe” sex, and making it easier for people to access contraception. In a recent [tweet](#), fellow author Rachel Held Evans issued a reminder “that the single best way to reduce abortions is to make birth control more accessible and affordable.” These suggestions are problematic because they propose – rather ambitiously – that the path to the prevention of abortion can begin at sex.

But that implies that conception is the problem, and that “not using contraception” is what causes it. It doesn’t consider the possibilities that conception *isn’t* the problem; that contraception — which has created a perceived gap between sex and procreation — is *part* of the problem; and that sex’s status quo in our culture can and should be transcended. It dismisses the true single best way to reduce abortions: practicing chastity.

Chastity acknowledges that “not using contraception” does not cause conception, and that sex at just the right time does. It acknowledges that consent alone doesn’t make sex safe, and condoms don’t make sex safe — that who you’re having sex with and when and why affects sex’s safety, too. Chastity acknowledges that the path to the prevention of abortion cannot start at sex, but must start at birth or adoption, when we’re chosen; that it must continue in our homes, where our parents are supposed to start our sexuality education; that the prevention of abortion does not depend on contraception, but on the the definition of sex (which — for chaste people — is a sacred, physical sign of the commitment spouses made to each other on the altar where they were married, ultimately designed to bond them and to make babies).

Chastity eliminates extramarital pregnancy because it eliminates nonmarital sex. Chastity eliminates unwanted pregnancies within marriage because married couples who practice chastity also practice [NFP](#), because pregnancy is never not valued for people who practice chastity, even if achieved when a couple that uses NFP planned to avoid a pregnancy. Chastity eliminates conception in rape because a person who practices chastity does not rape.

But chastity is widely dismissed. It is sometimes scoffed. It is a cure that a culture rejects because using a Band-Aid is easier, because we are desperate to prove we can have our cake and eat it, too.

Chastity accepts that we can’t.

Click

[here](#)

to read Davis’s essay in full.

Chastity requires us to respect “the unity of the person” by accepting and honoring a person’s fertility (CCC 2338). It “includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom,” because we govern our passions and find peace or we are governed by them and unhappy (CCC 2339). Chastity “seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason” (CCC 2341). It “represents an eminently personal task (and) involves a cultural effort, for there is ‘an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society’” (CCC 2344).

To Men in Holy Orders: A Cri de Coeur [at V for Victory!]



I know it's easy for me to say this. I also know that what I am about to say will sound harsh. But I am going to say it anyway. Those of you to whom this does not apply know who you are, and know I am not talking to you. If it *does* apply to you...you also know who you are.

I hear it often said that, despite the headline-making scoundrels in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, there are nevertheless many faithful bishops, priests and deacons.

Where are they?

As I shade my eyes with my hand and scan the ecclesiastical landscape, straining my sight toward the horizon, I find it hard to make very many of them out. As I cup my hand to my ear, listening with all my might for the rolling thunder of the Gospel, I hear an isolated voice here and there; but mostly, what I get is the chirping of crickets.

You orthodox men in Holy Orders, why are so many of you undetectable? Why are you hiding? What are you afraid of?

Are you afraid of being suspended? Are you afraid of being called on the carpet by the bishop? Are you afraid of trumped-up accusations? Are you afraid the contributions will dry up? Are you

afraid of the powerful feminist crowd at the chancery? Are you afraid of being transferred to a remote corner of the Dry Tortugas?

Of course, nobody *wants* to have to face any of these things. But facing up to such was part of the deal you signed up for; and in the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Orders, you were given the supernatural assistance *and the authority* you need to do it. Why don't you use these? Can you really serve the Church from under your beds? Are you really doing your flocks and the Church any good by neglecting the graces you were given, and allowing yourselves to be muzzled in order to avoid repercussions?

Redemption and salvation are founded upon suffering. Does Christ not enjoin us to take up our crosses and follow Him? St. Paul rejoiced in his sufferings, filling up those things that were wanting in the sufferings of Christ in his flesh, for His Body, which is the Church (Colossians 1:25). And Tertullian is credited with the saying that martyrs are the seedbed of the Church. Has the Church ever taken root in a mission field, from Rome to the Americas, that was not first consecrated by the suffering and even blood of Christians, especially priests? What if these martyrs had refused suffering?

If you men in Holy Orders have to suffer for Christ's sake, do you honestly suppose God cannot make anything out of your sufferings? Do you honestly suppose God will not support you in doing the right thing? Do you honestly suppose He will not reward you for doing the right thing, either in this life or in the next? Have you forgotten about the supernatural order, in which your sufferings draw down graces upon your flocks? Put it another way:

Do you do your sheep more good by suffering unjustly; or by letting us see you stand around, mute and impotent, wringing your hands, while the wolves run riot amongst us?

I get that you have to pick your battles. But many of you have gotten so used to passing up opportunities to fight in the name of "picking your battles" that now there is *no* battle you will fight. Many of you have gotten so used to keeping your mouths shut that now silence is your default setting, even when you should speak up. So the wolves do whatever they want, secure in the knowledge that there will be little or no push-back from the shepherds.

Let me ask you this: what if ALL the priests who labor under the rule of modernist bishops did the right thing? If these bishops order you to *suppress* the Gospel you were ordained to preach, are you bound to obey them to that extent? They can't send you ALL to the Dry Tortugas. What if ALL

faithful bishops did the right thing without fear or favor? Even if they take ALL of you out, do you really think your courageous example will not inspire others to spring up to take your place?

We live in a time when charity has run cold and very many Catholics -- even many who attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days -- simply do not believe the content of the Catholic faith. This is obvious from the way they conduct their lives. Our enemies outside the gates do not fail to notice this, and to plan accordingly. This is no time for you who are supposed to be shepherds to be shrinking violets. By keeping your head down and your mouths shut, men in Holy Orders, you avoid repercussions -- for now. But the repercussions that you avoid for yourselves fall on your sheep. How do you expect to explain this to God, when you stand before Him in judgment?

This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2014/07/to-men-in-holy-orders-cri-de-coeur.html>

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Weekend ministry with missionaries [at Hermano Juancito]

Saturday morning I went out to Plan Grande to facilitate a workshop with the base community leaders of that sector of the parish. 38 people came from five different communities.

We spent time talking about base communities and the new process Padre German has started -

a process that, I believe, tries to help the communities deepen their relationships with Christ and with each other.

Each week of the month the base communities have a different type of meeting. The first week is study of a theme from a booklet. The second week is a time to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and more. The third week is a meditative reading of scripture. The last week, the group looks at their village and sees what might need to be done to make it better; they then decide what to do.

In the third week the community does a short of Ignatian imaginative contemplation of a story from scripture. To help them experience what this is I used the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in John's Gospel (6: 1-11).

We start with rhythmic breathing which creates an incredible silence in the room. Then I read the passage and asked them to picture themselves there and pay attention to what they are seeing and feeling and hearing – their personal experience. After a few minutes of silence, I ask them to share with the persons next to them and then share to the whole group.

From what they shared I can see that this has been, for at least some people, a way to encounter Christ in a different way. It has also been a way to open up the Bible for them.

I tell them that they are not looking for a message, but opening themselves for a meeting with Christ.

I emphasize that this is only one way to read the Scriptures. Maybe next year we can have them learn how to do

lectio divina.

The workshop also included sharing some ice breakers - *dinamicas* – to break the monotony of sitting.



After the workshop, some sisters I know drove out to Plan Grande to see the work on the house we're building there.

Then I went to San Agustín (about 30 minutes away) for a meeting with the youth there. I had prepared a theme – trust – but they had something already prepared. Next time I'll call the young leader a week or two before.

There were 28 young people meeting, which is great. But I think they need a bit of help since they don't have a real sense of their common identity as members of a community. They are more like a gathering of 6 different groups of young people. But that is not uncommon here – or anywhere. We tend to stick with those we know.

On Sunday morning I was back in Plan Grande. (Yes, I need to live there as soon as possible.) A group from Plan Grande was going to the village of La Torera to lead a Sunday Celebration of the Word.

The people of La Torera had been going to San Agustín for celebrations but one leader from the nearby village of Descombros had come to visit them and they have decided to try to organize themselves. To assist this, each Sunday a team from one of the villages of the sector goes to lead a Celebration of the Word and to prepare parents and godparents for the baptism of nine children.

I took the Plan Grande group in my truck – at least 15 of them.



Two delegates of the Word from Plan Grande led the celebration in a house and they asked me to do the reflection. I managed to make it participative and under 13 minutes!



It was marvelous to see this small group of people who really want to live their faith. I can see some real leadership emerging among them and I do hope that they can reach out to the young

people in their families. (As usual there was a small group of single young men just outside the house where we were meeting. As usual I made an effort to talk with them a bit.)

The people there are also hoping to build a little church. There are only about eight Catholic families in the village. Most people there are evangelicals and there are two evangelical churches there. The Catholics would like to have a small church. So they are collecting donations as well as seeking other ways to raise money.

Going to La Torera with the people from Plan Grande, it was also marvelous to see and hear of the sense of mission that people in this sector have. If I hadn't been there, they may have tried to find someone to take them there, but I think they would have walked about an hour to get there,

I feel blessed to be a part of their missionary work.

This contribution is available at <http://hermanujuancito.blogspot.com/2014/07/weekend-ministry-with-missionaries.html>

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The Evolution of the Selfie [at Catholic Girl Problems]

I was waiting at Gate C23 of the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, excited about visiting family in Syracuse, and somewhat impatient to get the flight going, when I witnessed the most peculiar of human conditions...

Passengers were filing out of a plane which just landed, hauling heavy carry-ons which (let's be honest) should've been checked, but who the heck wants to pay \$25 per bag? I could tell each was tired from the flight and eager to get somewhere, when out of nowhere, the exodus from the plane came to a screeching halt. A tall teen wearing basketball shorts exited the jet way, removed his cell phone from his pocket, held the device up to his face like a mirror, and proceeded to seduce it...no doubt to publish the fact he had landed to Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or whatever. While I bet he garnered a "like" or two from the Internet, I am positive the backlog of passengers which nearly crashed behind him felt otherwise.

I, personally, have never taken a selfie. I've taken a *twosie*:



And maybe even a threesie or foursie from time to time, which does not qualify as a selfie, as the image features others. Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying selfies or those who take selfies are bad, but the trend certainly indicates society's newfound obsession with the self. We update Facebook and Twitter with the most boring of factoids – what we're eating, *where* we're eating (lots of eating), or what kind of day we had at work – as though the fate of the world depended upon such knowledge. Scroll through your newsfeed and count the number of selfies, and you will likely be astounded. We put our lives on display for the tiny, red emblem at the top of our page

indicating someone(s) approved of us, and heaven forbid *no one* take notice.

I know, because I feel the same way.

What is the point, you're no doubt wondering. The point is we have become a society of narcissists, to one degree or another. No more does a person need a biological personality disorder to be consumed with the self, for the self rules online. Our online obsession with ourselves leaks over to our real lives, where we can't be bothered talking on the phone (text me), blare our horns at each other behind the safety of our cars, and at the most extreme end of the spectrum, end the life of an unborn child because said child would interfere with, well...our self.

There's a scary movement in America, called the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). The group's premise is "separation of church and state," which is nothing new. The United States was founded under such a principle, but the FFRF aims to go much further. The FFRF does not fight to prevent religion from interfering with government, but rather, the FFRF aspires for government to interfere with religion. The group will never admit to such a motive, of course, but read between the lines, and you will see the writing on the wall, or rather, the posters...



I especially love the sign to the left. So mature and gentile, don'tcha think?

The latest uproar from the FFRF, of course, is the Supreme Court's June 30, 2014 5-4 ruling which favored national craft-store chain Hobby Lobby's religious conscience over the Obama Administration's Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate of employer insurance to cover abortion-inducing drugs. Almost as soon as the ruling reached the public, the storm of disapproval erupted:

"My uterus; my business!"

"Keep your laws off my body!"

"I asked God. She's pro-choice." (Hardly)

Oh, and I found this gem on Facebook:



Oh, I'm sorry. Did you not get the memo? The Catholic Church is the fifth, largest charitable organization in the world, according to *Forbes Magazine*. More than 5.5 million patients are admitted into one of the Catholic Church's 629 (domestic) hospitals annually, which employs an average of 531,000 full-time and 235,000 part-time employees. Total 2010 income to Catholic

Charities USA amounted to \$4.69 billion, \$4.22 billion (90%) of which went to fund 5 million social-support services, 7 million food services, and 500,000 housing-support services, just to name a few, and not to mention others worldwide.

The remainder of the funds went to overhead, cause charity ain't cheap.

There's also the countless ministries found at every Catholic parish across the world, serving an array of causes - Saint Vincent de Paul, which helps those struggling financially to pay bills and stay afloat; food pantries; thrift stores to raise money for those in need; mission trips to third-world countries; elderly care; hospice ministry...the list could go on and on. Don't forget about the weekly tithing by thousands of believers - all of which goes to fund the Church's public outreach efforts. So knock it off with the Facebook memes, walk your talk, and come with me to my Catholic mother's soup kitchen at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Atlanta, where she and so many others sacrifice their time and energy to feed over 500 homeless people a week. How's that for being "pro-life?"

Geez.

Whenever people slam the Catholic Church for "not being with the times," I indulge in a face-palm. These people drank the media Kool-Aid – ate the litany of lies served by the mainstream, much like a former co-worker of mine. He went to Catholic school, but he never attended Mass because he was not – in fact – Catholic.

He detested the Catholic Church.

What he failed to realize was he received the greatest gift of his life from the Catholic Church... education. He is able to read, write, and do mathematics because the Catholic Church cared enough to set up a public school – taught by nuns – in the Chicago ghetto where he lived...and where the government dared not tread. Ghettos don't produce tax dollars, so why would Uncle Sam give a hoot? He didn't, but the Church did.

Back to abortion: I have always wondered about the women in pro-choice picket lines. Each seems so angry – so militant about the cause. Have any of these women actually *had* an abortion? I would bet no, and should I be wrong, I would relish the chance to interview such a woman who would champion the cause of killing her creation.

I, for one, have never been pregnant, much less aborted a pregnancy. I have, however, spoken to women who were the victims of abortion, and I use the term “victim” because, well...these women described themselves as such. Prior to going through with the procedure, each said there was the uncertainty which no doubt accompanies such a decision, but nothing could’ve prepared them for the aftermath. The guilt, the emptiness, the nightmarish visits from the unborn child which would wake them up covered in sweat...

The wound which never heals.

No, I assure you not one pro-choice, poster-board toting woman intimately knows abortion. While the babies die physically, the mothers die spiritually – forever changed, which is the greatest sadness of all. The devil has tricked us – made us believe democracy means “being able to do whatever you want without responsibilities or consequences.” Unfortunately, such a rule does not exist. There are always consequences to selfishness, which brings me to another point.

What kind of social cause is “reproductive rights” anyways?

Women’s Right to Vote, The Emancipation of Slaves, The Civil Rights Era – these and so many other movements made the history books for one reason...love. The focus of each was not on “me, myself, and I,” but rather, others. The objective of The Suffragettes, Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and so many more was to serve neighbor and country, put the welfare of those less fortunate ahead of the self, and thanks to their fortitude, we enjoy a better life. Such sacrifices deserve the praise and commemoration received today, but “my body, my choice?”

I realize I’ve gone all over the place, and I apologize. Were I to guess what the point is, I would say we have become a nation (a world, even) of “selfies” – people who can barely see past our own noses to care about how our actions impact anyone but ourselves. The selfless abandon of The Cross is such a foreign concept to society, or worse, a ridiculed one. No more does God sit upon the throne of hearts, for more often than not, we consider ourselves to be God. To hell with morals, to hell with other people, and to hell with love as a sacrifice.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicgirlproblems.com/2014/07/the-evolution-of-selfie.html>
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The Sign of the Cross [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory . . . (Psalm 115:1)

My earliest recollection of seeing anyone make the sign of the cross was when I watched Bing Crosby in “Going My Way” and “The Bells of St. Mary’s.” Of course, as a Jew, I never thought much about the practice. I figured it was a “Catholic” thing. And besides, Jews prayed differently. So when as a young adult I discovered my Messiah, Jesus, I prayed to Him in the only way I knew to pray: eyes closed, and just talk to Him.

But when I became a Catholic thirty-three years later, I started my prayers with the sign of the cross because, well, that’s what Catholics do.

In those days as a new Catholic, I traced the cross over my chest. I did it slowly. Thoughtfully. Reverently. I focused on each Person of the Trinity as I prayed, “In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” I knew during that short introductory prayer I was entering into the presence of Almighty God – the One who created me, who nurtured me, who protected me, and who sent His Son to die on a cross that I might live with Him forever.

But like with many rituals, in time I fell into a pattern of thoughtlessness. I became comfortable with the movement of my right hand from my forehead to my abdomen, to my left shoulder, then to my right. Without realizing it, I began mouthing the Names of the Persons within the Holy Trinity without thinking about Whose I was and to Whom I belonged. I made the sign without reverence. Or purpose.

The prayer became perfunctory.

Of course, ‘perfunctory’ is not really that surprising an outcome when we do things over and over. It is a danger everyone faces, regardless of the church they attend. But while the danger of ‘routine’ is an important topic for all Christians, it is not the point of this essay.

Christians have been prayerfully making the sign of the cross for two thousand years. Tertullian, a 2nd century theologian and apologist, wrote: *"In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting of our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupies us, we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross."* In the fourth century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote similarly of the sign: *"Let us then not be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Be the cross our seal, made with boldness by our fingers on our brow and in everything; over the bread we eat and the cups we drink, in our comings and in goings; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we awake; when we are traveling, and when we are at rest."*

Clearly, tracing the cross over ourselves as a mark of reverence for God has two millennia of historical precedent. So why did I, for more than thirty years as a Protestant, avoid making that sign during my prayers? For two reasons: First, I did not know its long and precious history. And second – and most troubling to me – I did not make the sign because it was too “Catholic.”

Too Catholic?

What kind of a reason is that? To follow that line of logic, I should have also avoided prayer, or obeying Scripture, or attending church, or singing hymns because all of those things were also done by Catholics. For me to do likewise would make me – what? Catholic?

Worse things could happen.

Anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of Christian history knows it was the Catholic Church that defined and preserved for us the canon of Scriptures. It was the early Catholic Church councils that defined and defended essential doctrinal truths such as the trinity, the deity of the Lord Jesus, and the deity of the Holy Spirit. Christianity would be unrecognizable today were it not for the various Catholic Church Councils’ protection and preservation of Biblical doctrine.

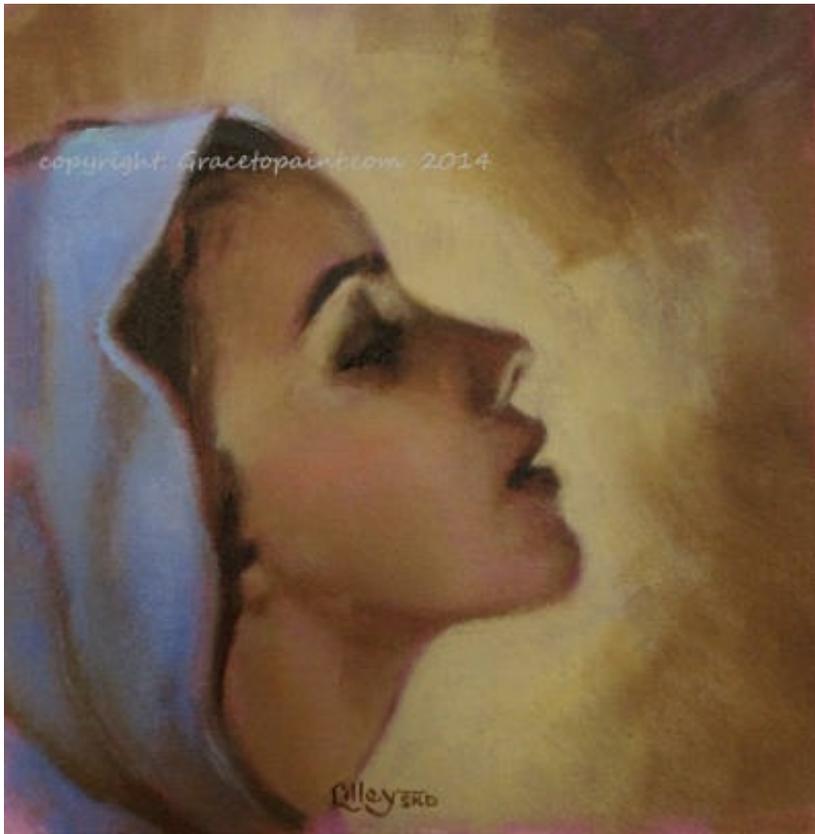
I am sometimes overwhelmed when I think of how my prejudice against Catholics and Catholic rituals robbed me of something that has now become precious to my relationship with Christ.

Oh, Lord! In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, continue to open my eyes – to open our eyes – to your eternal truth.

This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2014/07/the-sign-of-cross.html>
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Ad Sum [at Grace to Paint]



8×8” oil paint on canvas panel; a few more images of Mary can be found by clicking on “Art Store” above.

“Here I Am” or Ad Sum is the title for this image of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Ready, carved, and open, she allowed the Breath of God to blow through her flute-like soul.

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2014/07/11/ad-sum/>.
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Lost Sheep and the New Evangelization



“I want to tell you something. In the Gospel there’s that beautiful passage that tells us of the shepherd who, on returning to the sheepfold and realizing that a sheep is missing, leaves the 99 and goes to look for it, to look for the one. But, brothers and sisters, we have one. It’s the 99 who we’re missing! We have to go out, we must go to them! In this culture—let’s face it—we only have one. We are the minority. And do we feel the fervor, the apostolic zeal to go out and find the other 99? This is a big responsibility and we must ask the Lord for the grace of generosity and the courage and the patience to go out, to go out and proclaim the Gospel.” –Pope Francis

In 1950, over 80% of all Catholics attended mass every Sunday. The same was true for most Protestant denominations. Today, church attendance is less than 30% and as low as 22% in some research studies. Any way you spin it, that’s a loss of over 50% in the past half century. And, that is a problem that won’t be turned around with pious platitudes or wishful thinking. We have failed to communicate with an ever growing population that is becoming more and more secular every day.

Some will say that the Church is still growing, but the growth in the Church since 1960 has been fueled by Hispanics. 71% of all growth of the Church is Hispanic. About 10% of the Catholic population in 1960 was Hispanic. In the 1980’s it was 25%, and today 40% of all Catholics have a Hispanic heritage. Yet, 75% of parishes across the U.S. have no form of Hispanic ministries.

Pope Francis recognizes this. It is why he has asked us to be a missionary church, to get dirty, to reach out to the 99 lost sheep.

Some are criticizing the pope. They are content with the doing what we have always done. But it is NOT working. We have failed to keep Catholics active and in the pews. And, we can’t reach them by preaching to the choir. We’ve got to get to them, where they are, and reach them with God’s message of mercy. We have got to change our approach!

Change is difficult for most people. A close friend of mine says that the only people that like change are wet babies! It’s true. But, we must change.

People are more apt to turn away from their sins when they realize that God is a forgiving God and ready to embrace them, forgive them, and bring them redemption and salvation.

Our missionary role is to make good Catholics great ones, to get the indifferent Catholics, who are in the pew on Sunday but not much else, to be good ones, and the get lapsed Catholics to become active again. Then, we can reach out to Non-Catholics and invite them in to the beauty of our Faith.

Pope Francis' approach is different. We need to ask these questions; What is my parish or diocese doing to embrace these changes? Are we keeping up? What am I doing to aid the pope in this effort? Am I ready to break out of my comfort zone and help the Pope with this important evangelization?

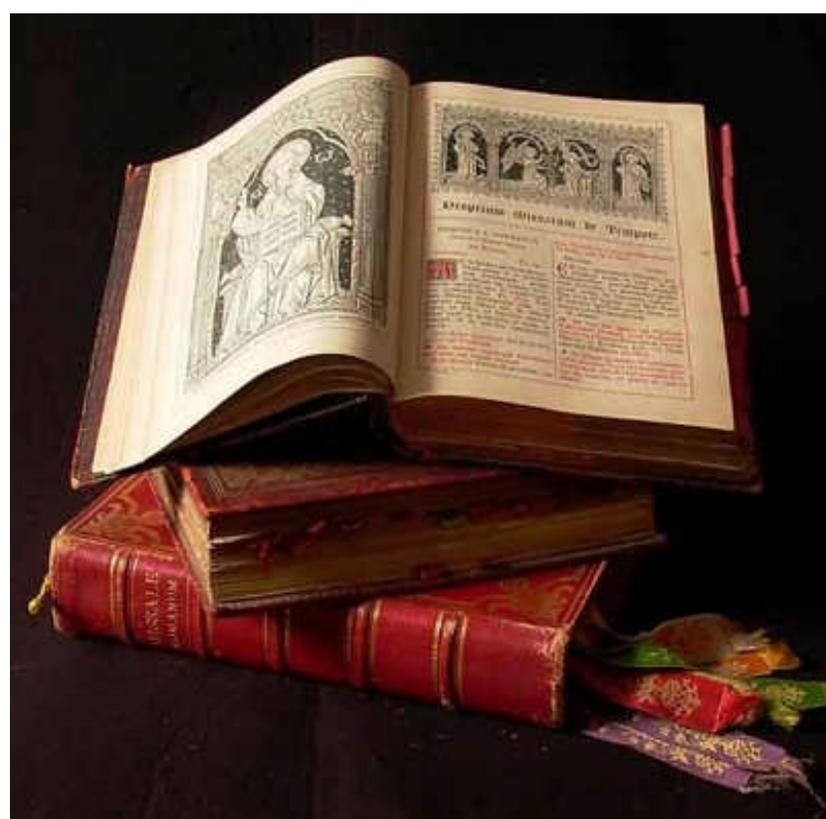
Let's quit the criticism and support Pope Francis in this important effort. We must go after the 99 and bring them back to the beauty of the faith.

Source of statistics: National Study of Catholic Parishes with Hispanic Ministries, Boston College, Dr. Hosffman Ospino, Ph.D.

This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2014/07/lost-sheep-and-the-new-evangelization/>
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A meditation on rediscovering a wider understanding of Sacred Liturgy



One of the greatest liturgical shifts in the last 60 years has been in the area of language and the spoken word. The almost complete disappearance of Latin is to be lamented, but the use of the vernacular has arguably produced many positive effects. The augmentation of the Scriptures used has also been notable and helpful. In addition, greater emphasis has been placed on preaching and preparing the clergy to preach well.

Great controversy and debate have accompanied these changes. The earliest debates concentrated on the use of Latin vs. the vernacular. Other debates centered on the nature of the Homily (or was it to be called a sermon?): its length, its content, and whether it should be rooted in the Scripture readings or catechetical themes. Almost everyone agreed that Catholic preaching was rather poor. The most recent debates surrounded a twenty-year struggle in English-speaking lands to get authentic translations of the Latin texts promulgated. All of this emphasis and debate on the texts of the Liturgy may well have been necessary and had good effects.

However, this focus on the texts has tended to reduce the Liturgy to its texts alone. Other areas such as architectural and aesthetic beauty, music, the *ars celebrandi* (the manner in which the clergy and ministers conduct themselves in the liturgy), and deeper theological understanding and appreciation of the Liturgy have all suffered. To some extent, we have reduced the Mass to the proclamation of a text. To many, it seems to matter little if the building is awful, the music is poor, or the meaning of the Liturgy arcane. Just make sure that the priests and others pronounce the text well, that it is intelligible, that the acoustics are good, and that the Homily is “meaningful.”

Perhaps a quote from Uwe Michael Lang would be helpful here:

The sacred liturgy speaks through a variety of “languages” other than language in the strict sense. [These are] non-verbal symbols which are capable of creating a structure of meanings in which individuals can relate one to another... It is my conviction that these non-linguistic or symbolic expressions of the liturgy are, in fact, more important than language itself.

This would seem especially pertinent in today’s world where images are omnipresent: on TV, video and computer screens ... We live in a culture of images ... Today the image tends to make a more lasting impression on people’s minds than the spoken word.

The power of image has long been known in the Church’s liturgical tradition, which has used sacred art and architecture as a medium of expression and communication.

But, in more recent times [there is] observed a tendency to see liturgy only as text. And to limit participation to speaking roles ... It certainly applies to a broad stream of liturgical scholarship that has largely focused on liturgical texts that are contained in written sources from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages ... This approach is legitimate, at least to a large extent, because the Church’s public worship is ordered to the official texts she uses for it.

However ... it is sometimes forgotten that the liturgy is not simply a series of texts to be read, but rather a series of sacred actions to be done ... words, music, and movement, together with other visual, even olfactory elements. (Quoted in Sacred Liturgy: The Proceedings of the International Conference on the Sacred Liturgy 2013, Ignatius Press, pp. 187-189.)

Lang goes on to affirm the preoccupation with texts (developing them, translating them, and giving recognition to them) I note above.

Necessary? Sure. But things have gotten a bit out of balance and it is time to focus more on other aspects of the Liturgy for a while. Even a text translated authentically and well delivered can fall flat in an atmosphere of sloppy liturgy, ugly and uninspiring buildings, and poor music. And thus we do well to spend some time now on visual and other non-verbal aspects.

But here, too, a key error is to be averted. For even if the text and all the non-verbals are in relatively good form, without proper liturgical catechesis for both clergy and the laity, the true meaning of the Sacred Liturgy can still be missed altogether and be reduced simply to an aesthetically pleasing action rather than an act of worship.

For example, almost no one asks at the end of a Mass, “Was God worshiped?” Many other questions and concerns will occur to clergy such as, “Were the lectors good and well trained?”, “Did the Homily go well?”, “Were the servers well trained?”, etc. The laity will often rate the Liturgy on the quality of the Homily, the prevalence of favorite songs, the style of worship, hospitality levels, etc. But almost no one asks the key question, “Was God worshiped?”, or more personally, “Did I worship God.”

Sometimes the honest answer is “No.” People largely went through motions and focused more on themselves and what they were doing, or on others and what they were doing, or on whether they “liked it” or not. God was barely considered at all. He may have been spoken to and referenced, but he was not really worshiped.

And this is why liturgical catechesis is so important today in addition to recovering the fuller range of issues beyond the texts themselves. So thanks be to God for our Sacred Texts. But now it seems time to, while still following them, fix our sights on wider issues such as the critical non-verbal, non-textual aspects of the Liturgy. Above all it is time to rediscover God at the heart of every Liturgy.

This contribution is available at <http://blog.adw.org/2014/07/the-liturgy-is-more-than-a-text-a-meditation-on-rediscovering-a-wider-understanding-of-sacred-liturgy/>

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Saint Bonaventure Shows Us How It's Done [at Never Give Up]



"He, therefore, who is not illumined by such great splendor of created things is blind; he who is not awakened by such great clamor is deaf; he who does not praise God because of all these effects is dumb; he who does not note the First Principle from such great signs is foolish. Open your eyes therefore, prick up your spiritual ears, open your lips, and apply your heart, that you may see your God in all creatures, may hear Him, praise Him, love and adore Him, magnify and honor Him"

(Saint Bonaventure,

The Journey of the Mind to God

I:15).

As has become my habit, I have celebrated the feast of St. Bonaventure by "doing some theology." Or rather, to put it more simply, I have read, pondered, and written a bit, and I will offer a few ramblings here.

When reading St. Bonaventure, I am inspired by his meditations, in which the mystery of the

Trinity is found everywhere, and the origin and destiny of all things resonate deeply. Bonaventure's *Journey of the Mind to God* is full of illumination until the point of the final abandonment of self in an ecstasy of love that leaves everything "behind," even the understanding. It is the darkness of losing one's self, of being conformed to the Cross of Jesus.

I also read with all the proper interest -- and all the strange, ambivalent instincts -- of the *professional theologian*. I am perplexed by Bonaventure's philosophical anthropology, where Augustine, Anselm, and Aristotle all meet and mix. The presence of God to the soul (and therefore to the intelligence) appears to be the presupposition for *all* knowledge. Yet this is not *ontologism*, surely. This is something else: something like Augustinian divine illumination and Anselmian apriori certainty of God, combined to serve as the light that bathes the mind and everything else with a wisdom that grows brighter and brighter for those who seek it. St. Bonaventure is describing how a human mind redeemed by Jesus and following Jesus experiences reality. He is describing how *he* experiences reality.

Nevertheless, the Seraphic Doctor is practitioner of the medieval scholastic method. He speaks with the ordered discourse of the University of Paris. We can't resist the urge to "take him apart," and isolate theoretical presuppositions, and perhaps we're not entirely wrong in this effort. Is Bonaventure advocating a dynamic intellect with some sort of "*a-priori*" luminousness of Divine presence and action impelling the mind to go out to meet reality (and return to itself)?



I can be forgiven, I think, if I find some affinity here with the epistemology of the enormously significant twentieth century German Catholic theologian Karl Rahner (1904-1984). I'm not the only one to compare Rahner with Bonaventure. Rahner appears to clarify how an approach like Bonaventure's can avoid ontologism by presenting this presence of God not as an innate *object* of knowledge, but as the (a-priori) *condition of possibility* for the knowledge of everything else. Rahner took in many directions his highly original effort to bring together classical Christian thought and modern philosophical approaches. His work was brilliant, yielding fascinating insights, opening new and fruitful perspectives, but also weighed down by an ambivalent project to rescue from itself the subjectivism of post-Kantian philosophy.

It has been argued (by, among others, his fellow German theologian Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI) that Rahner's intellectual system led him in the direction of certain theories and tendencies that gave priority to subjective experience over the objective encounter with Christ in the Church. The ultimate effect of Rahner's project on Catholic thought remains to be assessed, but in Europe and North America (at least) there hasn't been much to applaud so far (hashtag *#Understatement*).

Unlike many Rahnerians and post-Rahnerians, St. Bonaventure doesn't end up in a metaphorical cul-de-sac (or off a metaphorical cliff). Why is that? I think it's because Bonaventure didn't worry (the way *we do*) about "Bonaventurism." He didn't care about his "thought;" he cared about Christ! He was attentive to his task: he preached the faith, he taught it, he pondered it... because he loved Jesus.

We may try to tease out Bonaventure's theory of knowledge, but we must remember that for him it was never a matter of bare epistemology; it was always part of the Christ-centered, graced and mystical journey of the soul to union with God. It was always about *his journey* to God. As Gilson points out, the context of mystical theology shapes all of Bonaventure's thinking. Hermeneutics are important.

A mystical hermeneutic may be what we need to draw out the profound and enduring insights of Karl Rahner, the fruits of his own attention to his task over forty years, and his own journey to God, his love for Christ and the Church, his sorrow for the great alienation of the human being in the twentieth century. He found it necessary to enter into the "dark night of the world," to preach that the love of God draws close to the human person in the darkness. People are obsessed with the things of the world, and yet these things fall short of their desire; these things say, "go beyond us" but people do not see anything in this "beyond" -- our society has buried God and left him in

the past. What, then, is this *abyss* beyond all things?

Here Bonaventure might say that the darkness seems like nothingness because people have allowed themselves to forget God -- that they only *fear* "darkness" because it seems to be an absence of the "light" that they (somehow) already "know" and therefore *expect* to find and want to possess forever. "Non-being is the privation of Being," Bonaventure says, and therefore "it cannot enter the intellect except through Being" (*Journey V:3*). As in Bonaventure's time, so also in ours, "when [the mind distracted by limited things] looks upon the light of the highest Being, it seems to see nothing, not understanding that darkness itself is the fullest illumination of the mind" (*Journey V:4*). Rahner would agree, and he sought ways to communicate this to people in a darkness deep and thick, an abyss that stretches beyond all of the unparalleled frenzy of dissatisfying activity and disorientation.

It is not my intention here to write an intellectual tribute to Karl Rahner, a theologian with whom I have significant disagreement, and about whom I've written and spoken with criticisms that I think are valid (even though they have not always been entirely fair to the complexity of his thinking). Rather, I am celebrating the feast of St. Bonaventure by studying and pondering this work we call "theology," a work that I have been called to lay aside for a time, for reasons that I do not understand but that I believe are good. In this darkness there is a light.

There is Jesus, who helps us by being present in the places where we seem to see nothing. He fills these places with His wounds.

For

"one cannot enter into the heavenly Jerusalem through contemplation unless one enter through the blood of the Lamb as through a gate..., by the cry of prayer, which makes one groan with the murmuring of one's heart..., the cry of prayer through Christ crucified"

(

Journey

Prologue:3-4).

An Ant in the Garden [at Making It In Vermont]



I've been a bit grumpy, tired, blob like, and out of necessity pared down and focused. You are likely to find me laying on the floor while our youngest Mr. ~G (17 months) does his little pivot butt motion that he has discovered gets him quickly wherever he wants or he may be using his new "traveling" powers to traverse the landscape of couches, chairs, and walls. He is getting gloriously and frighteningly close to walking. Yes, I am slowing down at 29 weeks pregnant with our 7th son as Mr. ~G is getting quite zippy!

Just getting Mr. G's diaper changed is like running a marathon. He doesn't want to pivot over to me as I cloyingly call to him with diaper and wipes in hand. He knows better by now, but quite frankly I am dangerously close to feeling cemented to the floor by the weight of this new child I am growing. Sometimes one of the older boys will take pity on me and bring Mr. ~G to me so I can catch a chubby leg and tackle him down till he is clean again.

Right now the smallest things take such effort. I still have over two months till this newest little fella makes his way from my belly to the world, and I just want to yell "no fair no fair!".

With limited fuel in my tank, each day my main focus is these six kiddos, feeding them, making sure they are relatively clean, sometimes entertained, engaged in participating in the household necessities of living in our large family, and above all that they each feel uniquely and fully loved.

Many days lately all this has felt beyond me. My energy level just isn't there. I feel a bit pathetic and think of the things I miss. I'm not going to list them here, honestly I think it would be counterproductive, but there are many things as many of you know that are put aside when you have young children and/or are pregnant and I've had young children for 12 years now, and been pregnant for almost 7 of them.

In this quite limited sphere I have felt uninspired to write or even let one stroke of paint fall on the blank canvas that has been sitting in my studio for months now. Plans for a redesigned website for [Little Lisa Studios](#) go no farther than the planning stage and then the re-planning stage. I'm feeling stuck into a very tiny, albeit very important role.

It is in this state I have visited Facebook, normally a domain of joy and sharing, that when I feel stuck becomes something quite different. The job you busted your butt working towards, your promotion, your new degree, new job, all these great things I really want to rejoice in for you, instead make me question my life and its' importance.

It's not Facebook's fault, (though it does seem easier and more pervasive than before), I did the same sort of comparison when I was 21 and had just finished college. I was ready to take on the world, or at least become the art teacher I had studied to be. Instead I substitute taught by day and worked at a local convenience store by night. It was not an easy period of time for me, I constantly felt the pressure of what "everyone else" was doing. When I finally recognized that "everyone else" was not me, I started to feel ok in my own skin again. I accepted that life sometimes takes times and my life apparently did.

How do I deal with Facebook comparing today? I try to take little breaks from checking my newsfeed, a day or two so I can truly "be" in my non virtual world and love it for what it is again before I sneak a peek into yours.

I have many many many blessings in my life. I won't list them here, but I am certain that we all do if we care to look close enough. My blessings may not look anything like yours and vice versa...

And my challenges may not look anything thing like yours. No matter how hard I kick and scream through them, it is the challenges in my life that have forced me into the person I am today.

So I encourage us all to own our struggles, they are, though it is often hard to see, our own unique blessings. Curl the weight of those struggles like the world is your gym and biceps your soul.

Go forth each day knowing that your kind word will help that butterfly fly stronger or that tree grow taller. It doesn't matter if that butterfly already has it all going on being able to fly or that the tree is already wicked tall and your just an ant. Be the ant!

Here Saint Therese says it way more eloquently than me:

"I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would no longer be enamelled with lovely hues. And so it is in the world of souls, Our lord's living garden."

— Thérèse de Lisieux

Love y'all and congratulations on all your new jobs, promotions, etc. and solidarity to you if you

are feeling a bit less than and stuck, us ants are important to the garden too!

~Lisa

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Jesus is in the House! A Consideration of How Jesus? Teaching Must Take Place in the Church



In the 13th chapter of Matthew's Gospel, which we are currently going through in daily Mass, there are a number of parables that Matthew seems to have collected from Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Among them are the parable of the sower, the parable of the wheat and tares, the parable of the mustard seed, and the parable of the yeast.

Another structure employed by Matthew, likely recording the actual practice of Jesus, is the mention of "the house." Chapter 13 begins with Jesus going "out of the house," and speaking to the crowd in parables. Midway through the chapter (verse 36), Jesus goes back "into the house" and explains the parables to his disciples at their request. While the exact location of "the house" is not mentioned, it seems reasonable to assume that it is Peter's house in Capernaum, which was Jesus' home base for his ministry in Galilee.

With this background we do well to consider a four-staged teaching of Jesus on the centrality of the Church in evangelization, catechesis, and understanding the Word of God.

I. The Place of Pedagogy – Plainly put, the Church is the place of pedagogy, the place of teaching and experiencing the deeper mysteries of Christ. While Jesus' teachings and words may in fact go out among the multitudes, it is necessary to come "into the house" in order for them to be fully understood and explained at length. Outside the house there are parables, snippets, riddles, and puzzling stories, if you will. But inside the house there is teaching that respects the subtleties and extended meanings of the sayings, parables, and utterances of Jesus.

And if we can allow for the identity of the house as being that of Peter, then we are not just

talking about any old house, or any gathering place. We are talking about Peter's house, the Church.

More on this in a moment, but first let us consider what takes place "outside the house" and why it is important to bring people "inside the house." To do this we must ponder the paradoxical quality of comparables, and the sad picture painted by Jesus of the condition of many.

II. The Paradox of Parables – Early in Matthew 13 the disciples approached Jesus, who was still outside the house, and asked him, *Why do you speak to the crowds in parables?* (Matthew 13:10)

Their question may puzzle us just a bit. For the fact is, we moderns tend to think of parables as ingenious devices by which to teach. And it is true that parables can and do contain memorable teachings, at least to us who have had 2000 years to ponder them. Thus, we expect Jesus to answer the disciples simply by saying, "I use parables in order to teach them."

But the question of the disciples presupposes another dimension of parables less familiar to us, who have had these many centuries to ponder their meaning. And Jesus understands the puzzlement of the disciples, who see parables as a sort of inferior brand of teaching, and he will answer them accordingly.

What is inferior about parables? Stated plainly, the aspect of parables that we often miss is that parables are largely like riddles that have to be figured out by those who hear them for the first time. Consider the following "parable" by me and note to some degree how it is like a riddle.

A man went out to clean his car. And as he went, he took with him a bucket, water, and soap, along with some sponges. And as he washed the car, some dirt came off immediately; some dirt came off only after scrubbing. But some dirt remained even after he was finished. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear this.

Note how this parable has something of the quality of a riddle. In some sense, you know what I'm talking about, but you're not exactly sure. The parable makes you think, but you may well struggle to apply it perfectly to your life or to your situation. If a group were to hear me relate this, people might become rather divided over the root meaning of the parable. While most to present might understand dirt as a metaphor for sin, many would struggle to understand the fact that some of the dirt remained, even after the washing. Is this concupiscence? Is it impenitence? Is the man who washes the car Jesus? If so then why did he fail to get all the dirt off? Perhaps then the man is a human who can overcome some but not all of his sins. Debates and opposing camps might well set up among those who heard my parable.

And thus parables are a bit like riddles: ultimately most of them need some explanation. As already noted, most of us moderns miss this aspect of the parables of Jesus because they have been explained to us for over 2000 years now. But of themselves, parables, like riddles, need some explanation.

And thus the question of the Apostles as to why Jesus speaks to the crowds so often in parables is both poignant and instructive for us. The parables, indeed the whole of the Word of God, cannot simply be presented or announced to the multitudes; they require extensive teaching and careful explanation. The parables and all the Word of God cannot be simply published as a book. It is a Church book and must be read within the Church and in the context of the lived experience and faith of the Church.

Therefore, Jesus goes on to say to his Apostles in response to their question, *The knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them, it has not been granted* (Matthew 13:11). So inside the house there is instruction, and knowledge as to the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is granted there; outside the house this knowledge is not granted. In the house of the Church there is knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but outside there is not. And this leads us to the third point that Jesus makes.

III. The Picture that is Painted – Jesus goes on to paint a rather sad portrait of those who are “outside the house.” His portrait is not merely a picture of their condition but it also serves to explain why most of them remain outside the house.

Jesus says of those outside, *They look but do not see, and hear but do not listen or understand* (Matt 13:14) He goes on further to quote Isaiah in reference to them saying, *Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, lest they hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, so that I would heal them* (Matt 13:15; Is 6:9-10).

And here Jesus describes the sad condition of many who willfully remain outside the house. And the number today is large. Being outside the house, they hear the Word, the utterances and positions of the Church and Scripture, but they do not understand. Frankly, most do not *want* to understand.

And being outside the house, and thus lacking understanding, they ridicule God’s Word. They often misquote it and/or quote it out of context. Further, they ridicule the Church, speaking of her as being out of touch, old-fashioned, intolerant, bigoted, etc.

Much of this dismissive arrogance toward the Word of God is explained by the fact that many in the world simply do not understand the Word of God. They do not understand it because they are outside the house, outside the Church.

Perhaps a brief reflection on the meaning of the word “understand” will help explain why this is so. The Greek word translated here as “understand” is συνίουσιν (syniousin), which more literally means to put the pieces of something together, to synthesize (*sýn*, “together with” + *hiēmi*, “to put, or send”) . There is a modern expression, “to connect the dots.” So, “understanding” is an act of knowledge whereby one patiently acquires the many pieces that make up a teaching and, almost like a puzzle, put the pieces together and see the picture emerge. This is understanding.

One can see that with faith, as with any discipline of knowledge, long study and patience are often required in order to master the material, in order to understand it properly. One does not pick up the discipline of particle physics through sound bites, but rather through long, careful study of all the elements, which are gradually pieced together and bring understanding to the one who masters the material. It is this way with faith as well.

Thus many outside the house, outside the Church, lack understanding of our teachings because, they have not undertaken the careful and lengthy study required. This struggle is common even to many inside the Church. Too many today, both inside and outside the house, want to reduce the faith to sound bites, to bumper sticker slogans, and so forth. Yet the faith does not consist of a collection of clever sayings, but rather it is a whole discipline of life, mind, and heart that must be mastered after careful study. Through this study one approaches understanding through *syniosis* (the synthesis that is understanding), by collecting the pieces, connecting the dots, and seeing the picture emerge.

Jesus sadly notes that this is a discipline many are not interested in shouldering. For many this is too much work, and the whole topic is not that interesting to them anyway. If they go to Church at all, they want simply to be entertained with clever little stories, quick sayings, and so forth. But to do the careful work of a disciple, to study the teachings of Jesus over a lifetime and come to understanding is too much work for many.

So Jesus describes them as having hearts that are gross, that is, heavy and weighed down with passions and preoccupations. Elsewhere God describes us as being stubborn and stiff-necked, as having necks of iron and foreheads of brass. It is a lamentable diagnosis of so many in the human family. It is something that can only be remedied through the power of grace, leading us to fulfill the fourth aspect of what Jesus teaches here.

IV. The Prescription for the Problem - To his Apostles, Jesus turns and says, *But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear* (Matthew 13:16). This is more than mere flattery; these words of Jesus' amount to a prescription for the problem.

In effect, the Lord announces that the problem of the lack of understanding is resolved by coming "into the house," coming into the Church with open ears and heart, listening carefully and with faith, and having our eyes open to behold the mysteries of God. This takes place "in the house," in the Church.

This is exemplified in verse 36: *Then Jesus left the crowds, and went into the house; and his disciples approached him saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field' ...* (Mat 13:36). Jesus then goes on to teach at some length as to the meaning of the parable which, outside the house, seemed to them as a kind of riddle. But now, inside the house, it is carefully explained.

Therefore Christ's prescription for our problems—our lack of understanding, our spiritual deafness and blindness, our darkened intellect—is to come into the house, into the Church, where there will be careful and persistent teaching. It is not enough to have parables and proclamations,

to have a biblical text sitting on a bookstore shelf that someone opens. Alone, this is insufficient, though it may have something of an inviting quality, something of the quality of the seed. But more than proclamations, more than parables, there must be what the Scriptures call *didache* (teaching).

And thus in our evangelization we cannot simply put information, tracts, or paperback Bibles into people's hands. We must invite them "into the house," where Jesus teaches; we must invite them to Peter's house, the Church.

Put another way, we must invite them into a life-changing transformative relationship with Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus is found in the Church, in Peter's house, where He teaches and celebrates the mysteries for us. And the Church contains the whole Christ, not the head only, but also the members of His body, us, the Church.

To evangelize is not simply to get the Word out, although that is a good beginning. Without understanding, many fall away from the Word, or even outright ridicule it. To evangelize is to invite people to a lifelong walk with Jesus in His Church, head and members together. True evangelization summons everyone "into the house," where Jesus is found and is teaching; it summons all into the Church.

To those who say, "Yes," comes the blessing of Jesus: *But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear.*

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Passions of The Heart [at Quiet Consecration]

The Catholic Church teaches:

1772 The principal passions are love and hatred, desire and fear, joy, sadness, and anger.

1773 In the passions, as movements of the sensitive appetite, there is neither moral good nor evil. But insofar as they engage reason and will, there is moral good or evil in them.

1774 Emotions and feelings can be taken up in the virtues or perverted by the vices.

1775 The perfection of the moral good consists in man's being moved to the good not only by his will but also by his "heart."

As always, Holy Mother Church cuts right to the chase and demonstrates how much God the Father respects His Human creatures.

To understand that there is neither good nor evil in the passions we have is a comfort. We feel. We feel because we are human. We are human, made in the image and likeness of God and so our feelings, our passions, cannot in and of themselves be either good or evil.

Ah, but when those passions engage our reason and our will, then either good or evil can manifest. Our emotions can be either virtuous or perverted by vice. It is our choice.

I am sure we have all met that grown up Catholic who tells us that they were taught that 'thinking about committing a sin is the same as committing it'. I can vaguely remember being taught that as well - and thinking the same thing as a child. Shoot, if thinking it is the same as doing it then why not just do it...I am in trouble either way.

However, as a mature Catholic I can start to understand the difference between thinking about wanting to grab that person's stuff and running off with it and then stopping my thinking and realizing doing so is a sin and just sitting and dwelling on taking that stuff. Playing with the idea. Planning the heist. Thinking over and over how much I could use it, how they don't deserve it and I really really want it. Even if I pull myself back from the brink and do not commit the act, I have taken myself so close to the edge of sin it is important to go to God and ask for forgiveness.

Why?

Well, the obvious answer is because I offended God. The less obvious answer is that I receive the Sacramental Grace to not go there again. I receive what I need to unite my thoughts more firmly with the Will of God the Father, my sufferings with the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and my actions in adherence with the Love and Will of God The Holy Spirit. I become more likely to live

a Trinitarian, Sacramental life.

I have less chance of hurting someone. I have a better chance of forgiving those who may hurt me. I have a GREAT chance to be appreciate what I have, what great gifts I receive every day in the form of friendship, laughter, opportunities to serve.

I have a better chance of living as I should live - as a Catholic Out Loud.

Have a wonderful weekend, everyone!

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2014/07/passions-of-heart.html>
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Europe's High Court Needs to Air Mail Ruth Bader Ginsburg a Giant Eraser. Here's Why. [at CatholicVote.org]

I've been making the rounds on [global](#) [+1:49:10] and [national](#) [+51:33] radio this week, talking about a recent ruling of the European Court of Human Rights that defended traditional marriage. Earlier this month, I [commented](#) on the significance of that ruling for Americans.

Others have been buzzing about that ruling, too. Writing on behalf of C-FAM, the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, based in both New York and Washington, D.C., Stefano Gennarini, J.D. [explained](#) that the ruling “shattered hopes that [the European Court of Human Rights] would judicially impose same-sex marriage.”

That's great news for supporters of traditional marriage in Europe. But, how does the court's decision affect conservatives stateside?

Enter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg. She's no conservative, that's for sure; but, she points out one reason the European high court's ruling is significant.

Remember her dissent from the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Hobby Lobby v. Burwell*? (Read Alito's, Roberts', Scalia's, Thomas', and Kennedy's opinion, [here](#).) Well, while she dissented from the court this summer, last summer she stood with the court in two landmark cases. *National Public Radio*'s news service [recounts](#) that

On June 26, [2013,] the Supreme Court issued a pair of 5-4 rulings that bolstered same-sex marriage. The first struck down a key provision of the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which had denied federal recognition of same-sex marriages.

The second left in place a ruling that California's anti-gay-marriage Proposition 8 is unconstitutional.

Ginsburg joined the slim majority in both rulings.

Just two months after she and the four other justices handed down the court's opinion in those two cases, Ginsburg [officiated](#) at the same-sex marriage of her friend Michael Kaiser.



That wasn't all she had to do with same-sex marriage that summer. According to *Politico.com*, in the same month that she officiated at the wedding, she “[told](#) a Philadelphia audience ... that growing acceptance of gay marriage reflects the ‘genius’ of the U.S. Constitution.” On the first Friday in August 2013, she said that “I see the genius of our Constitution, and of our society, is how much more embracive we have become than we were at the beginning.”

But, while she's been agitating for wider acceptance of same-sex marriage, she's also been calling for a higher level of awareness about foreign court rulings. Back in 2009, Ginsburg spoke before a gathering of legal practitioners and scholars at the Moritz College of Law at Ohio State University. The *New York Times* [covered](#) that event at the time.

In her remarks at Moritz College, Ginsburg told her listeners that “I frankly don't understand all the brouhaha lately from Congress and even from some of my colleagues about referring to foreign law.” She wondered aloud: “Why shouldn't we look to the wisdom of a judge from abroad with at least as much ease as we would read a law review article written by a professor?”

Well, here comes one of them foreign rulings.

Commenting on the holding of the European Court of Human Rights' Grand Chambers in the case of *Hämäläinen vs. Finland*, Stefano Gennarini, J.D. [explained](#) to readers over at *Life Site News* that

The court confirmed that the protection of the traditional institution of marriage is a valid state interest—implicitly endorsing the view that relations between persons of the same sex are not identical to marriage between a man and a woman, and may be treated differently in law.

The judgment says that European human rights law recognizes the “fundamental right of a man and woman to marry and to found a family” and “enshrines the traditional concept of marriage as being between a man and a woman.”

So, sure. Please take note of that ruling, Justice Ginsburg. And, in the process, please feel free to revise the court decisions from last summer?

Kinda stings, don't it, Justice Ginsburg? 😊

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicvote.org/europes-high-court-needs-to-airmail-ginsburg-a-giant-eras/>
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Global Church news and views



President Barack Obama speaks in Belfast, Northern Ireland, June 17, 2013. (CNS photo/Paul Faith, pool via Reuters)

I called it. One month ago, [I warned readers](#) of CatholicVote.org about a new executive order that would be coming out from the Obama White House. The article garnered more than 45,000 views and in excess of 5,600 Facebook “likes.” Then, [I took to the air waves](#), appearing on the EWTN Global Catholic Radio network and the Relevant Radio network, among others, to warn listeners about the forthcoming order. I said this was going to be serious stuff. At first, out ahead of the curve, I was a lone voice. But, I ended up being right on all counts.

Yesterday afternoon, President Obama signed into law further amendments to Executive Orders 11478 and 11246. His amendments will come into full force in 2015. These new directives should concern Catholics deeply.

The first of those orders establishes, “It is the policy of the United States to provide equal opportunity in federal employment for all persons, to prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, color, religion, national origin, handicap, age, sexual orientation or status as a parent, and to promote the full realization of equal employment opportunity through a continuing affirmative program in each executive department and agency.” Furthermore, that order dictates, “This policy of equal opportunity applies to and must be an integral part of every aspect of personnel policy and practice in the employment, advancement, and treatment of civilian employees of the federal government, to the extent permitted by law.”

In essence, Executive Order 11246 mandates the same measures, but with respect to federal contractors and subcontractors. According to the US Department of Labor, the second order (11246) “prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors and federally-assisted construction contractors and subcontractors that generally have contracts that exceed \$10,000 from discriminating in employment decisions on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national

origin.” In addition, that order “requires covered contractors to take affirmative action to ensure that equal opportunity is provided in all aspects of their employment.”

Complete text of the new mandates, signed yesterday, [can be read online](#). But, in a nutshell, the amendments broaden the measures of equal employment opportunities to include “sexual orientation, gender identity” instead of just “sexual orientation.” Moving forward, this means that the federal government as well as federal contractors will be prohibited from discriminating against persons who are homosexual or transgendered.

At first blush, the orders might seem innocuous. Even the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* warns about discrimination against homosexuals, stating, “Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided” (CCC 2358). But further examination of the amendments signed into law yesterday expose the problems latent in them.

FOX News reports, “The executive order would prevent Christian and other religious organizations with federal contracts from requiring workers to adhere to the tenets of their religious beliefs.” The implications of such a directive are far-reaching.

In an interview with FOX News’ Todd Starnes, Peter Sprigg, the Senior Fellow for Policy Studies at the Family Research Council, explained, “If religious organizations cannot require that their employees conduct themselves in ways consistent with the teachings of their faith, then, essentially, those organizations are unable to operate in accordance with their faith.” Sprigg noted, “This level of coercion is nothing less than viewpoint blackmail that bullies into silence every contractor and subcontractor who has moral objections to homosexual behavior.”

To take just one example of how the new amendments to Executive Orders 11478 and 11246 will hit Catholics hard, consider the cases of Catholic adoption agencies and Catholic colleges. Catholic adoption agencies that contract with the federal government to provide important social services would either have to forfeit their contracts or meet the demands of the executive orders. Agencies choosing the latter path would have to place children with same-sex couples. And Catholic colleges or universities with federal contracts would violate the amendments to Executive Order 11246 if those schools fired a homosexual who for example agitated against Church teaching while on the job.

Already, Catholic leaders in Boston and Washington, DC have encountered similar scenarios. In 2010, the Archdiocese of Washington, DC, led by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, was forced out of the adoption social service for refusing to place children in the homes of same-sex couples. Boston’s Cardinal O’Malley faced the same problem in 2006. At the time, the cardinals were battling local discrimination laws. Now, dioceses and adoption agencies across the nation will have to deal with federal executive orders.

As the amendments to the two executive orders come into effect over the course of the next 12 months, here are three things Catholics concerned about religious freedom and the truth about marriage, the family, and the human person should know right now.

1. The Obama White House set to work on the amendments to the two executive orders at the same time it was battling its most considerable political challenges and judicial setbacks to date. At mid-summer, the Obama administration suffered a number of setbacks at the US Supreme Court. And recent months have witnessed an explosion of global crises. Without doubt, the Obama White House needed to reenergize its base of liberal progressives.

On July 21, the same day President Obama signed the executive orders, John Zogby of Zogby Analytics assigned a grade of “F” to the president, observing, “It just seems that even those who have been so hopeful of this president are finally just giving up. Things just appear to be out control [sic], at least out of his control.”

The same day John Zogby made his comments, Gallup published a report that corroborated his claims. The afternoon the president signed the directives, Gallup reported that President Obama “averaged 43.2 percent job approval during his 22nd quarter in office, from April 20 through July 19.” Gallup noted, “That is a minimal increase from the prior quarter’s 42.4 percent average, but still ranks among the lowest for Obama to date.”

At this juncture, President Obama is grasping at straws, attempting to galvanize and re-inspire his base. Time will tell whether these newest directives will resolve Obama’s polling problems.

2. But there is reason to believe that the directives will not accomplish their political goals. As a matter of fact, while the liberal news media has been presenting the new amendments as a win-win for the Obama team, the truth of the matter is that there are those among the president’s own allies who are opposed to the new measures.

As Michelle Boorstein of the *Washington Post* reported at the beginning of this month, “Fourteen prominent faith leaders including some of President Obama’s closest advisers want the White House to create a religious exemption from his [then] planned executive order banning federal contractors from discriminating against gays and lesbians in hiring.” The list of those who requested special consideration for religious groups included Michael Wear, the former director of President Obama’s outreach to faith groups during the 2012 campaign and former staffer in the White House Office for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; Stephen Schneck, the former co-chairman of Catholics for Obama and the current director of the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies at the Catholic University of America; and Joel Hunter, a Florida mega-pastor who is a close spiritual advisor to the president, among others. The White House ignored [the letter](#) despite the fact that it bore the signatures of some of Obama’s most vocal faith-based supporters.

3. While the president’s newest directives concern the federal government and federal contractors, including a roster of faith-based federal contractors, it is possible that similar measures could be applied to federal grant recipients. Even the left-of-center *National Catholic Reporter*’s Father Thomas Reese, SJ warned, “So far, the executive order deals only with contracts, not grants. ... But there is little doubt that if the administration is successful dealing with contracts, grants will soon be on the firing line.” Father Reese notes, “This is important because most of the money

going to Catholic charities to help the poor comes in the form of grants, not contracts.”

That means that Catholics concerned about the freedom of the Church and Church teaching about marriage and the family need to keep on top of this developing news and action item now.

Defenders of traditional marriage might have lost this round. Let’s not lose the next.

This contribution is available at
http://www.catholicworldreport.com/item/3265/obamas_executive_order_and_what_it_means_for_catholic_organization
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What Rejoicing Looks Like, Revisited [at The Road Home]

A little over a week ago, I wrote about

[What Rejoicing Looks Like](#)

, I had seen a negative pregnancy test and was fighting to rejoice in light of it.

Today, my new cycle finally started.

The week between has been just the roller coaster you might imagine. All together, I took four, yes four, pregnancy tests. That is more than I have taken in the previous 3 1/2 years combined. All negative. And yet. No new cycle until just moments after the 4th negative on Monday morning.

Or so I thought. Tuesday morning I awoke to nothing. The spotting of Monday was gone and there was nothing.

Monday I spent the day clinging to the prayers of so many, all of my dear friends in the FB group and a few others I reached out to, and Fr. D. Mass at Noon was a small reprieve from the work day and after I work I went to see Fr. D. for an emergency spiritual direction session. I was unraveling and could feel it. I sobbed in his office for at least 10 minutes before I could have an actual conversation.

A conversation that was intense and has led to a long list of new questions for him. But that's another story for another day.

So Tuesday and Wednesday came and went and all signs of AF were gone. I emailed my doctor's office to ask what they thought and based on my chart agreed that it was possible I might have misidentified peak day and that I wasn't as far post-peak as I thought. I was left with instructions that if no new cycle on Friday to test, and to call with results to get an order for blood work either way.

We are leaving for the beach tomorrow, so I emailed again and was able to get my order for my blood work today, so that I would have it just in case I needed it.

I will not need it. AF is definitely here. (And just in case anyone is wondering or wants to ask, yes the thought: was I pregnant? has entered my mind, and honestly I do think the FCP at my doctor's office is correct in her analysis - the questions she asked me were the exact questions I'd have asked someone if I was looking at a chart objectively. With 4 negatives and exactly what we expected to happen if I wasn't pregnant happening, I do not think this is an early miscarriage.)

I am weary. I am numb. I am finally off the roller coaster, but my head is still spinning, I still feel

like I'm trying to get off and I can't. It will all sink in later, I'm sure.

But, as Father helped me see on Monday, rejoicing in the midst of pain doesn't mean I rejoice in what brought me pain, rather it means I rejoice in that which I have cause to rejoice even though I feel pain.

And so, tonight, though I am more numb than anything else. Numb and sad. I rejoice in the many people who quite literally carried me through this week in prayer; I rejoice in the texts and emails and FB messages; I rejoice for not having to see another BFN tomorrow morning and go through blood work; I rejoice for a week at the beach starting Saturday.

The sadness is overwhelming. The numbness almost more so.

But.

He is the same. He is trustworthy. And I continue to rejoice in that.

Keep Making Me

~The Sidewalk Prophets~

Make me broken

So I can be healed

'Cause I'm so calloused

And now I can't feel

I want to run to You

With heart wide open

Make me broken

Make me empty

So I can be filled

'Cause I'm still holding

Onto my will

And I'm completed

When You are with me

Make me empty

'Til You are my one desire

'Til You are my one true love

'Til You are my breath, my everything

Lord, please keep making me

Make me lonely

So I can be Yours

'Til I want no one

More than you, Lord

'Cause in the darkness

I know You will hold me

Make me lonely

'Til You are my one desire

'Til You are my one true love

'Til You are my breath, my everything

Lord, please keep making me

'Til You are my one desire

'Til You are my one true love

'Til You are my breath, my everything

Lord, please keep making,

I know you'll keep making

Lord, please keep making me



This contribution is available at <http://theroadhomewv.blogspot.com/2014/07/what-rejoicing-looks-like-revisited.html>

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Jesus' grandparents [at Peace Garden Mama]

When people ask the

name of our parish, and I answer, many scratch their heads. "Who are Sts. Anne and Joachim?"

When I tell them they are Jesus' grandparents, I often get even more befuddled looks.



What's so interesting to me is the fact that despite the Christian belief that Jesus was truly and fully human, many Christians don't consider that, just like every other truly and fully human out there, he had grandparents!

Yep, grandpa and grandma, pappy and nanny; who knows what he called them but he had them!

This gets interesting, though, because the names of Jesus' grandparents are not recorded in the Bible. So to many Christians, especially those who believe that the Bible alone contains all we need to know about faith, Anne and Joachim, parents of Mary and grandparents of Jesus, just don't come onto the radar.

But Catholics have a

little more to draw from. We've got Scripture, which is our go-to book above all others, and then we've got tradition -- all the things that were passed down orally from the time of Jesus that are

every bit as much a part of our faith as the Bible. In fact, the two complement one another, and there is an incompleteness to each one on its own. Or so goes the Catholic view.

And yes, there has been a lot of contention over this point through the years, but to me, it just makes sense. We have our lived experience and our recorded experience. Why would it be different for Jesus? I mean, at what point did Jesus say, before he ascended, "Put it in the book, and whatever isn't in the book isn't true." It would take a hundred books to record everything anyone has ever known about Jesus' life!

Case in point: you don't find Anne or Joachim in Scripture, but they existed, they were real, and our tradition goes a step further and says they are bonafide saints. And why wouldn't they be? They're Jesus' grandparents after all. Mary was a special gal, and it goes to reason her parents would have been faith-filled examples to such a young lady; a girl who would someday bear the very son of God!



Our parish was named after these saints because we are a younger parish with a lot of families, and Sts. Anne & Joachim are the go-to people for families. They know what it takes to have faith, to teach faith, and to live out faith. And it's not easy, but we can rely on them for help when we falter. They've been there before, after all. No, they're not God. They can't effect miracles. But they can pray for us.

Thursday night, we

gathered for our parish's annual celebration in honor of our patron saints. We started with Mass. Afterward, I thought it the perfect time to grab some shots of Sts. Anne & Joachim as depicted in the painted mural on the back wall of our altar. I just love this depiction. It says love, and faith, and commitment, and it's beautiful besides. Look at the way Mary is humbly accepting her special mission.



From there, we moved outside for our yearly picnic. I was too busy enjoying being with my family on a nice summer day to take photos, but the line for the brats, hot dogs and hamburgers was very long. We enjoyed catching up with some friends we hadn't seen in a while, and having some Dippin' Dots ice cream. We had to leave before the magic act, unfortunately.

I also enjoyed reading the reflection about Sts. Anne & Joachim in this month's Magnificat; the author is Pope Francis: "According to a second-century tradition, Anne and Joachim conceived Mary as a gift from God after years of fertility. Devotion to Anne dates to around 550, when Emperor Justinian built a church in her honor."

According to the pope's summary, Anne is frequently shown teaching Mary to read the Scriptures. "Sts. Joachim and Anne were part of a long chain of people who had transmitted their faith and love for God, expressed in the warmth and love of family life, down to Mary, who received the Son of God in her womb and who gave him to the world, to us. How precious is the family as the privileged place for transmitting the faith!"

Sts. Anne & Joachim, pray for us! **Q4U: What are your thoughts about Jesus' grandparents?**

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/07/faith-family-fridays-jesus-grandparents.html>

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False doctrine is toxic bread [at Blog of a Country Priest]



On Tuesday, Ballarat's *Courier* published [an article about St Columba's Parish in Ballarat North](#).

Hundreds of parishioners were surveyed. Almost half had no objection to homosexual behaviour and supported gay marriage. An overwhelming majority supported IVF and favoured divorce and remarriage without annulment.

I bet this article resonates with every one of us. We all struggle with the "hard sayings" of Christ and his Church. That's why they're called "hard sayings." [The parable of the wheat and the dandelion](#) addresses this.

Dandelion is a common weed in the Middle East. It resembles wheat so closely that even the farmer's practiced eye cannot distinguish it until the stalks begin to mature. Dandelion is toxic to humans, and if mixed with wheat flour, it will ruin bread.

Many Church Fathers understand the dandelion to be a metaphor for false doctrine, which is not easy to distinguish from the truth, especially at the beginning. But when error is allowed to flourish, it has catastrophic effects on the people of God.

We can see how relevant this parable is today. While Christians have slept, the enemy has sown bad seed with impunity. There's practically no truth of the Catholic Faith which hasn't been undermined.

The Courier quoted a parish spokesman, whose words are a good mix of wheat and dandelion. Consider this quote from the article:

I've always found the Catholic Church to be a rather broad umbrella in which a multitude of views are contained. It seems to me that some non-Catholic commentators see Catholics as unthinking automatons, blindly following decrees from the top. I don't think it's ever been like that, to be honest. People have always made up their own minds, and continue to do so.

The Church is a broad umbrella. Catholic means, “here comes everybody.” And Catholics can’t be unthinking automatons. Blind servility offends God. He gave us reason, and He gave us freedom, and we honour God when we exercise these gifts.

But, as Catholics we are also obliged to *assent* to our Lord’s teachings, and the teachings of his Church. St Peter is our model in this. When Jesus insisted we must eat his flesh and drink his blood to gain eternal life, many of his disciples left him. It was a moment of crisis in our Lord’s public ministry.

He turned to the apostles, who were probably as bewildered as everyone else. Maybe even scandalised. “What about you?” he said to them. “Do you want to go away too?”

Peter spoke for the Twelve. He speaks for us too. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

This is our model of assent. Blind servility, no. Humble faith, yes. When we struggle with one teaching or another, we can’t accept it without thinking, but nor are we free to discard it. We must grapple with it. Pray with it. Ask for Peter’s faith.

Here’s something else the parishioner said:

A lot of people, as we become more educated, are accepting of the modern realities of life. It’s not enough to say “you’ve done this wrong and we don’t agree.” It’s about how we continue to include people who are part of our family or part of the Church ... not cutting them off because of their sexuality or decisions.

How true. Isn’t that the crux of our Lord’s parable?

When you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest.

Even while we insist on the truth of our faith, and reject false doctrine, we never write people off, or abandon relationships. We must keep open the channels of grace. It’s not our task to weed out the darnel. Occasionally, it *is* the task of the Church to “isolate” parts of the crop.

Pope Francis did this last year, [when he excommunicated an Australian priest](#) who defiantly celebrated public Mass when his faculties were withdrawn, and repeatedly endorsed gay marriage and the ordination of women. He isolated another part of the crop last month, [when he declared members of the mafia were excommunicated](#).

Excommunication isn’t a nice business, but this act of quarantine takes seriously the second part of today’s Gospel:

At harvest time I shall say to the reapers: ‘First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.’

Darnel ruins bread and false doctrine ruins souls, so we must be judicious. Where is the darnel in my own heart and mind?

This contribution is available at <http://www.acountrypriest.com/false-doctrine-is-toxic/>
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Gay Catholic Romance Novel Shows Sacrifice is the Heart of Love [at Can We Cana?]



Just as the movie

Brokeback Mountain

paved the road for widespread acceptance of homosexual love affairs, the novel

[The Lion's Heart](#)

is poised to do the same for the Catholic view of homosexuality. Almost certainly the first of its kind, this gay Catholic romance novel was written by Dena Hunt (also author of

Treason

) and published by Full Quiver Publishing, a small Canadian company dedicated to promoting St. Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body ("TOB") mainly through the medium of fiction.

The love affair between the two main characters, Paul and Max, is real, raw, and tragic. Paul is an art gallery director comfortable in his homosexuality, but vaguely dissatisfied with his life of one-night stands. Max is the husband of an art gallery employee and father of two children. When the two men meet, Paul is drawn to Max because of Max's maturity, stability, and deep-rooted

intuitive grasp of the values of marriage and family. With deft skill, the author depicts a romance that is tasteful rather than crude. As the relationship between Paul and Max progresses, the affair erodes the qualities in Max that made him so appealing in the first place. Max's views on love, parenthood, and society descend into a torturous confusion that even Paul cannot abide. "Falling in love with a man does not justify re-writing all of history," says Paul. But for Max, it does.

The Lion's Heart

is part of a growing effort of faithful Catholics to reach out to the gay community. As admitted by the recent video

[The Third Way](#)

, featuring TOB experts Chris West and Jason Evert, the Church has not done a good job welcoming those with same-sex attraction. The idea of "love the sinner, hate the sin" does not resonate with

[those conditioned to believe that what they do is synonymous with who they are](#)

. Since serious hatred itself is a sin against the Fifth Commandment, perhaps we should dispense with the language of hatred altogether. There is a similar problem with the terminology of disordered attraction. It shuts people down and makes them unwilling to hear.

The Lion's Heart

acknowledges that homosexual desire feels like normal desire to those experiencing it, and homosexual love feels like true love. Where

The Lion's Heart

sharply departs from the secular viewpoint is its message that true love requires what's best for the beloved, and in the case of homosexual love, as dramatically depicted in the story of Paul and Max, what's best for the beloved is to walk away.

The book is endorsed by the Executive Director of

[Courage International](#)

, the Catholic organization dedicated to helping people with same-sex attraction lead a chaste life. Despite or perhaps because of its fidelity to Church teaching on homosexuality, Courage comes under intense hostile pressure from Catholics and non-Catholics alike. For example, Courage

made it into the news recently as the focus of a

[controversy involving Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx](#)

. The school had arranged for speakers from Courage to make a presentation about homosexuality to parents, but some prominent gay alumni objected and the presentation was postponed indefinitely.

As public acceptance of homosexuality and homosexual relationships increases, the Church's message of chastity and self-denial as proclaimed by groups like Courage gets thrown by the wayside. When confronted with the open homosexuality of a friend or family member, many people respond by encouraging those with same-sex attraction to enter into love affairs in the mistaken belief it will bring them happiness. This increasingly common reaction took center stage in 2013 when

[Ohio conservative Sen. Rob Portman reversed his stance on same-sex marriage because of his son's homosexuality](#)

. Portman said he followed his heart in reaching the conclusion that he wants all of his children, including his gay son, to have the joy and stability of long-term marriage. As a nation, we are in love with love, particularly romantic and sexual love, and we can't see the possibility of joy or fulfillment without sex to go along with it.

But the Church teaches that personal fulfillment comes from mastering our desires, not giving in to them. Chastity is demanded of all, not just the gay or unmarried. In our society, artificial contraception has perpetuated the myth of constantly available sex and disrupted the previously crystal-clear connection between marriage and the creation of the next generation of children. When the Church speaks out against the use of artificial contraception and in favor of methods that require periodic abstinence, it reminds us that marriage is more than religiously-sanctioned sexual pleasure. We as human beings are capable of intimacy that supersedes the sexual.

True love can exist between fathers and sons, and between mothers and daughters. True love can even exist between best friends. But true love never willingly harms the object of its affection. As anyone who has been in a bad relationship knows, a sexual bond with the wrong person – regardless of gender – can cause incredible psychological, emotional, and spiritual damage, even if it feels like love at the time. *The Lion's Heart* treads a narrow line by vividly depicting the inherently destructive nature of the characters' homosexual relationship, while evocatively portraying their love and affection for one another. In the end, it is love that pushes them to

sacrifice for the good of the other.

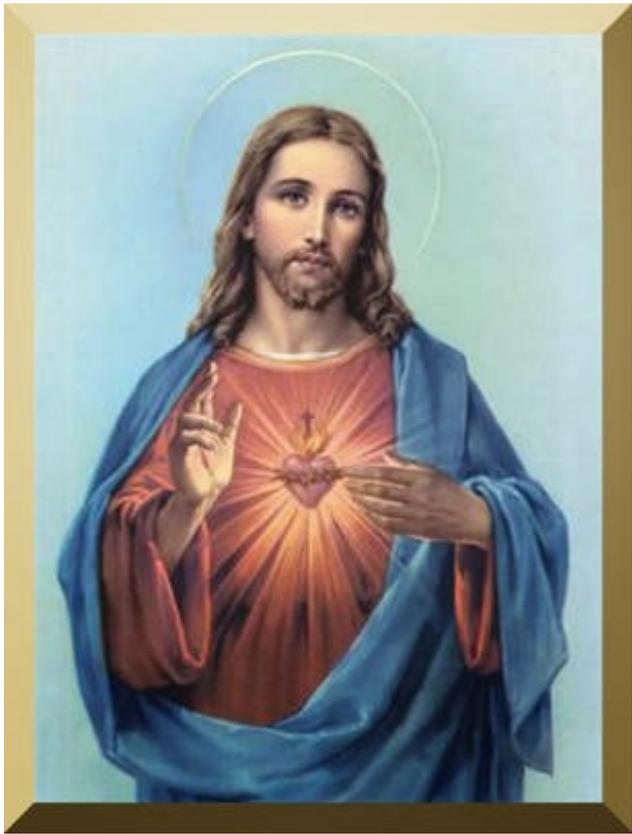
Multi-dimensional and complex, *The Lion's Heart* has something to attract and discomfit people at nearly every point along the spectrum of religiosity and sexuality – which is a good thing. At one juncture, I had to put the book down and walk away because it was too painful to watch the character of a good man slowly crumble. But I'm glad I returned to observe the romance's bitter-sweet conclusion. If I had to pinpoint one flaw in the book, I would say that the ending has too much gratuitous tragedy for my taste. The love triangle between wife, husband, and gay lover is tragic enough on its own. But *The Lion's Heart* is well worth reading for its bold and audacious challenge to prevailing perceptions and misperceptions of homosexuality. With broad enough exposure, the book may succeed in changing more than a few hearts.

If you enjoyed this post, we highly recommend:

This contribution is available at <http://canwecana.blogspot.com/2014/07/gay-catholic-romance-novel-shows.html>
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Act of Consecration of the Human Race to the Sacred Heart of Jesus [at Favorite Prayers And Scripture]



Most sweet Jesus,
Redeemer of the human race,
look down upon us,
humbly prostrate before Thine altar.

We are Thine and Thine we wish to be;
but to be more surely united with Thee,
behold each one of us freely consecrates himself today

to Thy Most Sacred Heart.

Many, indeed, have never known Thee;
many, too, despising Thy precepts,
have rejected Thee.

Have mercy on them all,
most merciful Jesus,
and draw them to Thy Sacred Heart.

Be Thou King, O Lord,
not only of the faithful who have never forsaken Thee,
but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned Thee,
grant that they may quickly return to their Father's house,
lest they die of wretchedness and hunger.

Be Thou King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions,
or whom discord keeps aloof
and call them back to the harbour of truth and unity of faith,
so that soon there may be but one flock and one shepherd.

Be Thou King of all those who even now sit in the shadow of idolatry or Islam,
and refuse not Thou to bring them into the light of Thy kingdom.

Look, finally, with eyes of pity upon the children of that race,
which was for so long a time Thy chosen people;
and let Thy Blood, which was once invoked upon them in vengeance,
now descend upon them also in a cleansing flood of redemption and eternal life.

Grant, O Lord,
to Thy Church,
assurance of freedom and immunity from harm;
give peace and order to all nations,
and make the earth resound
from pole to pole with one cry:
Praise to the Divine Heart
that wrought our salvation:
to it be glory
and honour forever.

Amen

Feeling blessed in my vocation as a working mother [at Catholic Review]

I was always sure that I would be a stay-at-home mother, especially when my children were young.

It was only after becoming a mother that I realized that those were just hypothetical plans, not based in reality.

The truth is that not every family can afford to live on a single income.

So when we became parents, John and I realized we had no choice. I had to work. People talk about how some mothers choose to stay home and others choose to pursue careers. For many mothers there is no option. There are groceries to buy and a mortgage to pay.



So I kept working. And I worried. Should I be spending more time with my son? Was I missing all the best moments of his childhood? Would he come to love other people more than he loved me? Was he getting all he needed?

Gradually, bit by bit, I started to see my answer. And I began to feel God's hand reassuring me that everything was fine--and maybe better than fine. Because whenever I look at my son--and now when I look at his younger brother--I can see that our children are thriving.

Would I love to spend more time with our boys? Absolutely.

Would I enjoy being a stay-at-home mother? Of course.

Do I worry that I could be a better mother than I am? All the time.

But do my sons need me and only me at this moment? No. They have a network of people--teachers, extended family, and others--who are supporting them, educating them, celebrating them, and partnering with John and me in helping them become the men we hope they will be one day.

I came to realize that for me, the desire to be a stay-at-home mother had much more to do with my personal hopes than with our children's needs. And when I saw it that way, I started to come to peace with it. Because if it's a matter of giving up what I wanted, and it's not that our boys are suffering as a result, then that's something I can handle.

We all have crosses to bear. We all find ourselves on paths we didn't expect to walk. God gives us the strength for those journeys. When I see it in those terms, my yoke feels easy, and my burden light.

The truth is that I am serving my family, just not in the way that I expected. I do wish I could work less (doesn't everyone?), but I have a fantastic job that is meaningful and rewarding. And, as our

older son started kindergarten last fall, I found myself realizing that as they get older, they are more independent, and I am even more at peace with the path God has chosen for me.

It's not always easy. In fact, it can be incredibly hard. I feel scattered and disorganized and tugged in different directions. Some days I can't believe how much I am doing for so many people, including the three most important people in my world. And I know I fall short in so many ways.

But I am so, so honored to have been given this role as a wife and a mother. And I am also extremely blessed to have a job working in a family-friendly workplace where I am valued and can make a difference through my work.

As I look back on my first five years as a mother, I can see God's fingerprints everywhere. And I know I am where God wants me to be, both in my career and in my role as a mother of these two magnificent children.

I am filling a role He carved out for me. And, as I place my trust in Him, I feel an overwhelming sense of encouragement, strength, hope, and peace.



7/20/2014 11:04:14 PM

By

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2014/07/20/full-of-grace-feeling-blessed-in-my-vocation-as-a-working-mother>
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Pray for Sarah Harkins and Her Family [at Rambling Follower]



When I was in high school, I had the role of Laura in Tennessee Williams' play

The Glass Menagerie

. I remember our drama teacher, Mr. Stewart, discussing a scene with us, a scene in which Laura's brother, Tom, does not say a word. "Why isn't he speaking?" Mr. Stewart asked us. "Because he is so full of emotion he cannot speak."

And so it is with me, following the sudden death Monday of Sarah Harkins, 32, of Fredericksburg, Va., a friend I never met face to face, but a woman who has helped to guide my journey for several years. Sarah, who was carrying her unborn child, Cecilia, died after an allergic reaction to many stings from a yellow-jacket hive disturbed in her backyard. She is survived by her husband, Eric, and four children.

On my long walks in Vermont this week, I have started writing a post about Sarah many times in my head. I just can't find the words.

For right now, I am linking this page to two pages that have been set up to help her surviving children and her husband. You can donate

[here](#)

and

[here](#)

. In time, I imagine, words will come to me so I might express my gratitude for Sarah's life.



Sarah was a

[rosary maker.](#)

She crafted the beads in her rosaries from clay. I'm going to close with part of a prayer Sarah wrote for a mothers' love bracelet she created for two of my teacher friends with new babies.

"Sweet Jesus, I thank you for the gift of eternal life. Help me remember that life is a gift and that the lives of my children belong to you. May I never take any moment of life for granted. "

This contribution is available at <http://ramblingfollower.blogspot.com/2014/07/when-words-fail-pray-for-sarah-harkins.html>
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What to Do When You Lose Your Cool [at Fatherly Ish]



Being a good husband requires great amount of patience. As we all know, marriage is not purely a fun ride. There will be problems or disagreements or petty quarrel or even a big war with the wife. The virtue of patience will be very helpful in avoiding all of these.

There were times, however, that we lose patience. I admit that it happened to me a few times already, especially now that Lei experiences mood swings due to her pregnancy.

Some people would say that it is fine to let out our temper a few times because we're just humans. These people are correct but we can (and should) strive to be better humans (and husbands).

Here are some things that you can do when you lose your cool:

Say “I am Sorry”

Saying “I am sorry” should be the first that you should do. Apologize to your wife sincerely. Practice the virtue of humility and tell her that you are in the wrong.

Your wife may not immediately accept your apology but what's important is that you apologized.

Pray

Another person that you should apologize to is God. He expects you to act as a good husband because it is part of your solemn marriage vows at His altar. Pray to God for forgiveness and also ask Him to help you to be a good husband.

Aside from praying to God, it is also good to pray to our heavenly intercessors (a.k.a the Saints). I personally pray to Saint Joseph since he is known to be the best father and husband that ever lived. You can also pray to other saints that you want. I also suggest that you pray to your guardian angel for help.

Reflect on What Happened

You should also think about what caused you to lose your patience. Was it entirely your fault? Did your wife do something that displeased you? Think about what happened objectively. Don't let your anger or other emotions cloud your judgment.

Talk about It with Your Wife

Big wars between husband and wife do not occur spontaneously. It is a result of little disagreements or petty quarrels that were not resolved. These little things accumulated in the heart and was left there to fester.

To preempt the big wars, you and your wife must resolve the small quarrels. Don't be afraid to open the line of communications and talk about what happened. However, you must do this prudently and with humility because doing otherwise might spark another confrontation.

Practice and More Practice

Being patient doesn't come overnight. It requires, like other virtues, continued practice. To be a more patient husband you must become a patient employee, and a patient father, and a patient jeepney passenger, and a patient MRT rider --- in short we should practice patience in all areas of our lives until it becomes a habit.

There are other things that you can do when you lose your patience with your wife but what I posted here are the vital things.

Always remember that there will be friction between you and your wife. It is painful (and at times will wound you deeply) but you must make your love grow bigger than all the problems that will come. Love your wife and honor your marriage vows.

Saint Joseph, model of good husbands, pray for us!

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Pessimism, Optimism, Hope and Change [at Catholic Stand]

Over my lifetime, I have been called many things, some of which are printable. Within the last six years' worth of blogging, I've had a little mud slung at me, which if nothing else proves I can occasionally write well enough to provoke a reaction, and maybe even a thought, in those who disagree with me. However, of all the tags with which I've been yclept, the most puzzling is that of *pessimist*.

I don't say it's puzzling because I see only good in the world and can't understand how someone would believe I think otherwise. If I tried to make such an assertion I would be a blatant liar. Rather, it's puzzling because, even as an *ad hominem* attack, it's pretty insubstantial. It implies that every fault I see with modern society would disappear if only I take a course of antidepressants and listen to some Zig Ziglar talks. Not only is the road to Hell paved with good intentions, you can have some really pleasant experiences along the way. It's much easier to get there if you don't pay attention to which direction the road is going.

Catholic Pessimists, We Aren't!

Catholics, you may have been told, are a "both-and" people. It's difficult to put us into either one of any set of binary categories (liberal/conservative, rational/emotional, positive/negative) because you're bound to trip over aspects that belong to the other of the pair. The Catholic mind is also more attuned to truth expressed as paradox. When you can grasp the idea of Christ holding his own body in his hands at the Last Supper, you can more easily see the truth in expressions such as "The more things change, the more they stay the same," or, as in di Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo*: "In order for things to stay the same, some things have got to change."

So, it is with *optimism* and *pessimism*. Logically, the glass can't be half-full without being half-empty at the same time; to find the silver lining in the dark cloud, you must first acknowledge that the cloud is dark. But to recognize that there are demons in the world is not necessarily to forget that there are also angels.

Perhaps, though, our objector is making a more subtle argument: By focusing only on the negative results the present system creates, we miss out on all the positives it has already created. The objector then suggests that perhaps the negatives are simply the costs of achieving the positives. This is a persistent feature of defenses of free-market capitalism: the degree of inequity it produces is set off by the improvements it has brought to both rich and poor alike. The "wealth gap" itself is then a sort of "opportunity cost" ... regrettable but necessary, and not really so evil as it's been painted.

At this point, though, the objector must face the unenviable task of showing, rather than merely assuming, that the positives could not have been gotten in a manner that wouldn't have led to the negatives (or at least not to so great a degree), or that the positives really are unalloyed boons with no downside to them. Such arguments are generally fruitless, because they depend on both sides knowing what *would* have been when at best they can only guess what *could* have been. But more to the point, to assert that the defects came packaged with benefits is not to prove that the defects neither need nor admit of correction.

Now, I cheerfully admit that to read or listen to someone who's constantly harping on What's Wrong with the World Today isn't something you want to do 24/7. Fortunately, you don't have to — you can pick my rants up whenever you're in the mood, and when you're not you can play some Beatles, watch some *Ren & Stimpy* or do whatever gets your happy on (keeping it morally licit, of course, he said with a grin).

However, I remain puzzled by the *pessimist* charge because, in my lexicon, a *pessimist* isn't just the formal word for a "Negative Nancy". Pessimism not only sees What's Wrong with the World Today, but doubts that it can be changed, and even wonders if it's worth the trouble since all things human eventually go sour. It's so inapposite I react much like : "You keep using that word. I don't think it means what you think it means."

Hope Motivates Change

Catholics don't call for change because they've lost hope. Rather, the hope motivates their demand for change. It's one of those paradoxes that hope is a virtue only to the degree that reasons for hope are missing. An optimist has no hope because he has no need for hope; to hope for the future, you must first recognize that the present isn't optimal. By contrast, the pessimist has no hope for the future because he demands rational grounds for an irrational feeling.

There is, after all, little reason to believe an obscure fellow with no special qualifications could produce any significant changes by writing in a blog. [The Mouse That Roared](#).

In this respect, the optimist is as intolerable as the pessimist, because neither recognizes a need for reform: for one, all efforts will fail, while for the other, things will work out of their own volition. The pessimist, having fallen out love with his country, sees only her faults; the optimist, in love not with his country but with an idol that wears her face, sees only her virtues. The Catholic sits between them, alternately agreeing and disagreeing with each, reminding the pessimist of the good left uncorrupted and the optimist of the evil gone uncorrected.

What good left uncorrupted, you ask? The other day, I saw a video clip of a police officer who blocked traffic with his/her cruiser so a family of ducks could cross the intersection. How can anyone see that and not have hope for the future?

Today, my limited-mobility mom and I stopped at a RaceTrac for some coffee. When we were leaving, the fellow behind Mom put his hand on the door to hold it open even though I was already

holding it. Again I ask, how can anyone see that and not have hope for the future?

Hope For Humanity

Finally, Catholics demand change not because we don't love our country. Quite the contrary; if we hated our country, we'd only wish to destroy it, while if we didn't care about it, its flaws would be of no concern to us. Love may "cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8; cf. Proverbs 10:12), but it doesn't pretend they aren't sins. We need not only the wisdom to discern what can be changed and the courage to change what we can, but also the love to *care* whether anything can be changed.

The love interest in *The Fault in Our Stars* calls love "a shout into the void". But the truth is that all life is a fight against the tug of entropy on the universe. And our Catholic faith tells us that this fight has, in a sense, already been won for us by Christ. Whatever else Catholicism is, it isn't a religion for pessimists.

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5 Ways to Live Your Life to the Fullest [at The Catholic Chic]

My Notes on Fr. Joel Jason's Talk at the Mercy Cafe

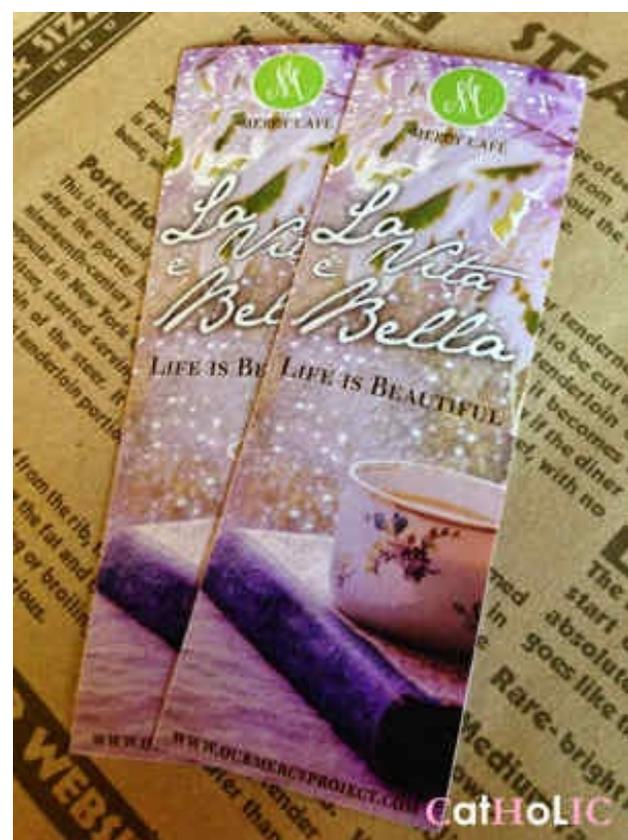
We love because He first loved us.

1 John 4:19

-----Last weekend, the **Mercy Cafe** hosted its 6th talk entitled **La Vita e Bella** at the Grills N' Sizzles bar at Examiner street, Quezon City.



The invited speaker was Rev. Fr. Joel Jason, the Dean of Studies of the San Carlos Graduate School of Theology.



This workshop was very timely because I am also in search of how I could live my life to the full. This workshop gave a fresh perspective because rather than suggesting the usual *traveling, rock climbing, or bungee jumping* advices I got from other blogs on *how to live my life to the full*, it targeted my inner self, my heart, and my soul. Here are my notes on the discussion. Fr. Joel started with the **5 Signs You are NOT Living Life to the Full (or you are Dying Spiritually)**, each followed by specific steps on how to live life to the fullest. Happy reading friends!



5 Signs You are NOT Living Life to the Full

Sign 1. When Church Services bore you.

When we become bored during our prayer time, worship, doing service in the parish, and most especially when celebrating the Eucharist, chances are we are not focusing on Christ but ourselves. God becomes a rival or competitor in our "Me" attitude. When we realize that God is

not our competitor, then worship becomes joyful and becomes our life. And when we worship, we become more alive. There are instances when our ego or the self, fears its disappearance when we surrender ourselves to God. However, Fr. Joel reminded us of the Theodrama of reincarnation, that when the Creator comes to the creature, the creature will be brought to a fuller life. It is a kind of life that the creature cannot achieve on its own power. **How to combat sign 1: Make your work your worship.** Work here pertains to everything you do, from waking up in the morning, brushing your teeth, eating breakfast - everything! It includes your thoughts, desires, words, and actions. There should be no separation of what we say from what we do. We have to live our faith. Our whole life will become our worship and we will weld our life to glorifying God even in the simplest, most mundane tasks.



Sign 2. When Noise attracts you more than Silence.

All of us need our silent or alone time. According to Fr. Joel, silence is the language of God and of love. We hear His messages to us more clearly when we sit in silence with Him a few minutes a day. We speak more calmly with others too if we are at peace with them. If you prefer noise more than silence, then there is a certain possibility that you fear hearing the voice of your own heart and what you truly feel inside.

How to combat this: Give yourself the "Silent Treatment" once a week

Try to not use your cellphone or refrain from going online in your social media accounts. Once you are comfortable hearing the sound of silence, then you are ready to live life fully.



Sign 3. When the words of a celebrity attract you more than the words of Christ. Do you have social media accounts? Check out who you are following. If you prefer to follow more secular accounts than Christian or Catholic accounts, then maybe you need to refocus where you're getting your inspiration and guidance from. Maybe it's time to refocus on Christ. **How to combat this: When you voluntarily immerse yourself in the word of God daily (i.e. Bible and the daily readings).** Remember to feed your soul with God's word daily. Your soul needs that most. If we put God's word in our hearts, then sin will have no place in it and evil will not have a hold on our hearts. Remember Christ was tempted in the desert three times and he used scripture three times to combat the evil one (*Activity: Read Deutoronomy and search for Christ's responses*). Christ has the words of eternal life and words have the power to describe and CREATE reality. Let Christ create your reality. Be immersed in His words (*Activity: Read Psalm 118 and be inspired*).



Sign 4. When Ambition attracts you more than Mission. Ambition points to the glorification of the self while Mission aims for the welfare of others. Is your ambition consistent with your mission? Is your ambition aimed for service? Do you work for money or out of love for your neighbor? Once our ambitions conquer our life and we neglect to serve others, maybe it's time to do a little rain check and refocus on what really matters. **How to combat this: Perform your profession in the Spirit of Mission.** No matter what our profession is, let's see it as a way for us to become Christ to others. Perform your best out of love.



Sign 5. When the Story of the Cross no longer moves you.

When the story of the sufferings of Christ no longer stir us, then how can we become true sufferers with Christ? Remember as Christians, we are to die to ourselves for the sake of our brethren. We put them first before our selfish needs.

How to combat this: Acknowledge your God-given gifts and talents, then give them away.

How can I be a true sufferer with Christ? The best way to live with Christ is to share our talents with others. All of us have gifts and talents, whether we believe it or not. Always remember that every gift is meant to be given away. Our lives are temporal and the way we share in the glory of the cross is to also share what we have and who we are for the betterment of the lives of others.---

-----I hope you enjoyed reading my notes. And I sure do hope we see each other on **August 9, 2014** for the **7th Mercy Cafe session** again at **Grills N Sizzles, Examiner Street, Quezon City!**



The next Mercy Cafe (session 7) will be on **August 9, 2014**. If you are interested to join, please check out their Facebook page: **Mercy Cafe**.



Thank you and May God be with you!

This contribution is available at <http://mycatholicchic.blogspot.com/2014/07/5-ways-to-live-your-life-to-fullest.html>
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Tears During Mass [at String of Pearls]

I often find myself in tears during Mass. Not always, but sometimes. And these tears come out of the blue, when I least expect them. If I don't remember to tuck some tissues into my purse before I head out the door, chances are I'm going to be in trouble. I'm going to be wiping my nose on my sleeve like a five-year-old.

Sometimes it's the lyrics of a particularly moving hymn that make me cry, or the stirring music combined with the unequalled beauty of a Catholic church's interior. Sometimes it's just that in those particular surroundings, I feel closer to God, and that nearness hits me just so and goes right to my core--to my very soul. And I am left feeling vulnerable and unworthy of His love, and yet profoundly loved by Him.

I've talked before about how seeing my sons dressed in tuxes, standing on the altar in the role of groomsmen at one another's weddings, reduces me to tears. But even when there isn't something particularly noteworthy going on, such as the singularly wonderful experience of witnessing one of my boys exchanging vows with his soul mate, I can be moved just by the sight of any or all of my sons. Anywhere, anytime. And looking at them in church, during the Mass--watch out! There will be tears, and hankies, and nose-blowing. It's almost guaranteed.

This past Sunday, my husband and I went to the 11:00 a.m. Mass with our baby, who is finally home for a few weeks after spending most of the summer off doing Army stuff. (He's an Army ROTC cadet, about to begin his senior year at the University of Notre Dame.) After we got seated, he was asked to help out with the collection when the time came.

So I happened to look at him, as he strode to the front of the church carrying the long-handled basket, dressed nicely in khakis and a blue and white-striped button-down shirt, and looking very much like a grown man on the verge of flying away from the nest for good (like his brothers have already done). He was still sporting his short, Army-regulation haircut, and his normally pale Irish skin was tanner than usual, after weeks spent training outdoors at Fort Knox. He's a tall, broad-shouldered lad, and he carries himself like an officer and a gentleman, with his shoulders back and his head held high. "So handsome!" I thought (without a speck of bias, of course). "And how did he ever get so

old

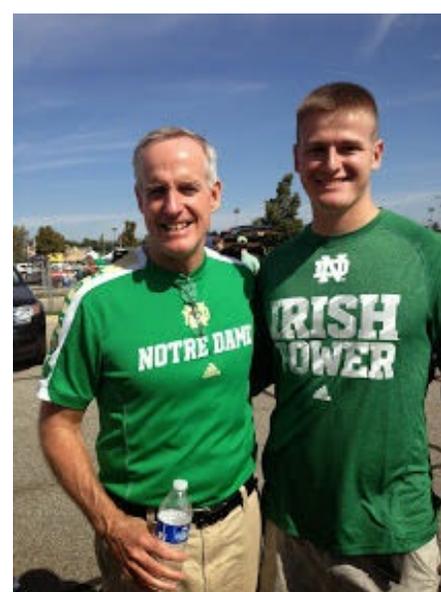
?"

Just looking at this vision of calm, responsible, Faith-filled

manhood

, I started to choke up and my eyes got watery. My mini-pack of Kleenex came out of my purse. But then it got worse.

I started to think about how this boy of ours had lived his whole life in this town, and how before too long, he would be living who-knows-where. How he'd signed on to be an altar server when he was about nine, and then had served every single 9:00 a.m. Sunday Mass at this church, from 8th grade through his high school years (unless we were out of town), taking his role as head altar server very seriously. How he often used to ask us on Friday nights if we could give him a ride to church the next day, so that he could go to Confession. People were always asking him--and us--if he was considering becoming a priest. He isn't; but the strength of his faith has been an inspiration to his father and me, ever since he was just a little guy.



Anyway, just as I was getting my subtle tears under control, our boy passed the collection basket down the pew that held his old pre-school teacher, Mrs. B., and her husband; and I suddenly felt like I was going to lose it--as in

break down and sob

, right there, in the middle of Mass! It hit me that Mrs. B. was a piece of his life that was now part

of his distant past--a past he barely remembers, but which is still so clear in my mind.

So many thoughts converged in my brain at once, so many emotions: the way the years have flown since he was a dinosaur-obsessed little boy; the humbleness I feel because God chose me to be his mother; the gratefulness I feel for having been blessed with not just one exceptional son, but five; the sadness I'll feel when he no longer has college breaks and summer vacations, and he can only get back home when work allows; the realization of the huge privilege, but also the huge and sometimes terrifying responsibility, of raising the five souls that God entrusted to our care; the fear I feel when I remember that because they are human, they will die someday--but the hope that when they do, they will go straight back to their Father in Heaven and become saints; and finally, just the enormity of it

all

--of motherhood, of human love, of God's unfathomable love for each and every soul He has created...

It was truly all I could do to keep my shoulders from shaking, and from literally "boo-hoo"-ing, right then and there. And all that emotion was caused by simply sitting in a pew, watching my youngest son pass the collection basket at Sunday Mass.

God is everywhere, I know that; but when the Body and Blood of Our Lord are right nearby, He feels closer than ever. And boy, I sure felt Him all around me this past Sunday. I pray that I continue to feel His loving presence during the coming year, as my baby gets ready to spread those wings of his and fly.

This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2014/07/tears-during-mass.html>
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What Would You Ask For [at The Wayward Catholic]

It's Sunday which means it's time for Reflections on the Mass Readings! Today's readings are brought to you by God, and they are [1 Kings 3:5, 7 – 12, Romans 8:28 -30 and Matthew 13: 44-](#)

"You say you cannot be happy to live like everyone else, with the faith of the crowd. — Indeed, you have to have a personal faith joined to a sense of personal responsibility" - Furrow,

#956

Jose Maria Escriva

[52.](#)

What would you ask for? If God came to you and said "I will give you anything you want, no strings attached?" what would you ask Him for? Would it be for riches, fame, health, to be a winning professional golfer? In the first reading this is what God asked of Solomon.

"The LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, 'Ask something of me and I

will give it to you.’”

Solomon could have asked for anything, but all he asked for was wisdom. He was looking for the wisdom to be able to govern God’s people, to judge them fairly, knowing the difference between right and wrong. How many of us would ask for this today? I am willing to guess probably not many. Yes, I know I am cynical, but I believe that so many of us have been living in a world full of materialism, individualism, hedonism and minimalism that we would think of “things” first, not wisdom. As I have said before in this blog, we no longer distinguish [between right and wrong](#), I fear we may no longer know the difference.

Elsewhere in Matthew we are told:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor decay destroys, nor thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” – [Matthew 6:19 – 21](#)

Yet most of us would still ask for treasure, for things, believing they would make us happy. Since finding my way back to God, (I know you get sick of me telling you that) I have truly come to realize that “things” are not the most important things in life. There have been times when I have had nothing, and I thought things could get no worse. Yet, I got by, something always would happen to get me out of the hole I was in. That thing was Jesus. As the passage from the top of this blog says, God won’t let us fall so far we can’t get back up.

We spend all our time gathering things, things that we can’t take with us when we go. I don’t remember where I heard this saying, but it goes: “I have never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer.” I often think if I had read the Word of God when I was a lot younger, I would not have made the mistakes I did. There are some passages especially which I wish I had learned, studied and understood. The whole of Matthew, Chapter 6, being one of them. I spent a good part of my life, pursuing “things”, trying to gather treasures here on earth, instead of trying to gather treasures I could store in heaven. Because of this, I wasted much of my life, not taking the time I needed for my wife and family. It was always work, work, work. We need this, we need that. And no matter what we had it was never enough.

Now, I realize there are things that are more important. Faith, love, hope, charity, family and friends just to name a few. In my case I have alienated my family and never had time to make true friends, but I am working on these and the others as well. and how did I get from Solomon asking for wisdom to this? Hmmm, I am not sure, sometimes I think the Lord just makes my bone weary fingers type things.

Actually, there is a connection. I should have asked God for the same thing as Solomon did, for Wisdom, to know right from wrong, to know what is good, and what is important. Not that God ever asked me what I wanted, but I could have done this through prayer, as I have been doing for the last few years. I truly believe this would have made my life different. But, then, maybe I had to

go through all I have to get to where I am now, closer to God.

After all, God does have a plan for all of us.

You can support the Wayward Catholic by clicking on this link and making purchases from Amazon:

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Veiling - Do It For The Right Reasons.... [at Em's Estuary]

+++JMJ+++

“All the things in this world are gifts of God, created for us, to be the means by which we can come to know him better, love him more surely, and serve him more faithfully.”
— St. Ignatius of Loyola

Happy Tuesday All. I haven't blogged in almost three weeks. I've missed it, but we have been super busy.

Usually on Tuesday, a new lady tells her veiling story. But today, I have some thoughts I want to share. I got this quote in my email this morning:

Fresh Opportunities

God's job, I think, is to keep lovingly disrupting our lives, and our job is to see if there are fresh opportunities for faith hidden within those disruptions. As a result, God keeps finding fresh ways to shake up our complacencies and challenge us to resist the seductive temptation to play the victim.

— from [Startled By God](#)

This resonated so much with me. I have hesitated for a while to post these particular thoughts. I hope and pray they are well received. Here they are...

Why Do You Wear a Veil or Head Covering?

Real quick – I call it a veil because I don't wear hats, headbands, tichels or whatever else in place of the veil. That's not to say women can't cover how they see fit, but I don't wear the other things. So please, when you read this, know that by veiling, I mean head covering too and I don't have to keep saying veiling/headcovering. You'll just know I mean that. ok?

Back to my question – WHY do you veil?

I get that there is a discernment process to wearing a Veil. As I was coming fully into the Catholic Church, I started wearing a veil to Mass. The Parish I went to, was not accepting of veiling, so I switched Parishes. In some ways, I wish I hadn't because God calls us to be different and to stand out – and in some ways, I feel I let him down. BUT – once I made the decision to wear the Veil, I never faltered on it. My husband and my son have embraced it fully. One time I was chatting before entering the Church and my husband said, “Em, Veil-up!” Ha. Love that man.

Veiling is not about what someone else thinks. Veiling is not about what color the veil is. Veiling is not about the style of covering... Veiling is about a personal choice to cover in the presence of Our Lord. Veiling is a lifestyle choice. And once you make that choice, I can not imagine for the life of me why you would stop – IF you were doing it for the right reasons all along. As Mother Angelica would say “that’s a cop-out”. HA! I love her.

I know women who never stopped veiling. They’ve veiled all their lives, even after the Church stopped making them. They did it and taught their daughters and grand-daughters this fantastic devotion.

More than that – There is a veiling revolution going on in the Catholic Church. How exciting is that? Our Lord is AGITATING us – he’s making us think. He’s making people question veiling and they are continuing to veil because they know it is for HIM they veil. Not for the social media public. Not for their friends or family or whomever.

A lady in the veiling group – Tatiana – said the other day:

My friend [Mike](#) said something really profound today... he has cerebral palsy, and is in a wheelchair. He always dresses to the nines (suit, tie, polished shoes) for mass though, because he can’t kneel or stand during the mass, and he said that dressing well is the one way he can outwardly show respect to God and especially to the Eucharist. This really resonates with me, because that’s the same reason that I veil- I’m also disabled (degenerative joint disease,) and can barely walk some days, much less kneel or stand for more than a minute or so at a time. I veil because it’s the greatest way I have to show respect to God in mass. Thankfully, though, as Mike said, the Lord reads the heart rather than the external.

ETA- something he also said- “Offer Our Blessed Lord the DESIRE to stand or kneel or genuflect and it would probably be even more appreciated than if you could actually do it!”

Lily posted a blog post about it in a post titled Putting into [Perspective Our Doubts and Worries About Veiling](#). I tell you Lily is such a talented writer. The love she has for veiling is refreshing and beautiful.

One of my favorite lines from Tatiana’s post in the veiling group is this:

I veil because it’s the greatest way I have to show respect to God in Mass. Thankfully, though, as Mike said, the Lord reads the heart rather than the external.

I love all the lively discussions about veiling. It helps me realize this is NOT a passing fad. If it were, the devil himself would not be sneaking into people’s hearts and minds to make them say and do ugly things with regard to veiling.

You might say – well Lily owns a veil company, she has to talk it up. [Karen](#) too. [Birgit](#) too. [Gail](#) too... [Robin](#) too... and so on. Well, I submit that these ladies LOVED the veiling devotion first

and then started their businesses. Trust me, they are not doing it to get rich. They are giving, lovers of Christ and our Catholic Faith. They pray for one-another and all of us, and probably all of you!

There are many opinions on veiling out there. MANY blog posts about it. There have been for years, decades even. I think lately it's become popular, for some – for the wrong reasons. Perhaps they think they should veil because their friends do. Perhaps they think they want to drive traffic to their blogs. Who knows what false reason the evil one put on their hearts to start and stop veiling. But I know this – if you veil for the right reasons, you won't stop – no matter what ANYONE thinks or says that is negative. If the walk you walk is in God, you may stumble, but you won't leave it.

If you are struggling with discernment, I urge you to come to our group. Fellowship with the ladies. Sure – there are some that are wackadoodles (probably myself included on some days) but we quickly squelch them and move on. Hey – we're human. I just wanted to be honest about that. But mostly it's a safe place for those discerning, for first-timers and for those who have done this forever. The range is broad and beautiful.

The [Catholic Women's Veiling Group](#) is a strong group of women, growing daily. The call to veil has lead these women to:

- be closer to Our Lord and His Mother.
- dress more modestly.
- really think about how they present themselves in public.
- make veils for others.
- lovingly guide their sisters in Christ.

And much more. Truly. I have seen women make veils or just give their own extras away to women who can't afford it. I've seen the power of prayer heal others in this group.

Sure, it is true, we made the group Catholic. Not to discriminate, but to give our Catholic sisters a safe place where we don't have to argue doctrine. You might be shocked to know that we don't tell people they HAVE to wear a veil in our group. We don't allow folks to tell others they are wrong for not wearing a veil. We don't allow folks to tell others that their daughters can not serve, or that they have to kneel or receive the Eucharist on the tongue. If the Church allows it, we have to be loving about it or we end up sinning. We don't want to debate WHY we veil with other religions. It's truly that simple.

Let me restate the quote from above...

Fresh Opportunities

God's job, I think, is to keep lovingly disrupting our lives, and our job is to see if there are fresh opportunities for faith hidden within those disruptions. **As a result, God keeps finding fresh ways to shake up our complacencies and challenge us to resist the seductive**

temptation to play the victim.

— from [Startled By God](#)

Are you playing the victim in your life? I have been three from time to time. But as I get closer to our Lord, I realize it is the wrong way to live. We say “WHY LORD? WHY ME?” and He says “because I called you! AND you are to obey me!”

My bottom line – veil or don’t veil. But don’t be wishy washy about it.

Next week, we will continue the veiling stories. I hope and pray this post has touched you and helped you in some way, especially if you are struggling with this devotion.

Love, Hugs & Blessings,

Em

This contribution is available at <http://emilysestuary.wordpress.com/2014/07/08/our-ladys-image-veiling-do-it-for-the-right-reasons/>
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Powerful Love [at crucesignatiblog]

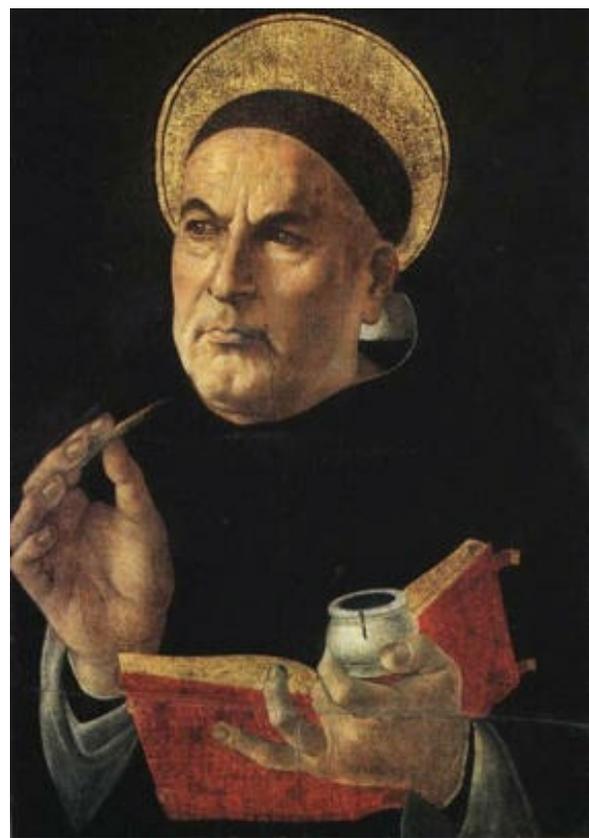
I was at Adoration a few nights ago and I was reflecting on something that happened when I was eleven or twelve. At that time my mom was expecting her sixth baby and she was having a few health problems, so of course, our whole family started praying for her and the unborn baby. Her health problems became a bit more serious and I got really angry at God. First I thought He didn't care about our family and He was just ignoring our requests, but over time I became more angry and quit believing in Him. I ended up getting very depressed. I kept the hurt inside of me and put on a happy face when I had to, but when I was alone I cried everyday and wanted to die. When my baby sister was born about four months later, I felt that maybe there was hope. All glory be to Him who knew that my conversion would have to be based in the intellect! I found my little sister to be truly miraculous. Anyone who has seen a newborn baby has likely marveled at the tiny fingers and toes, and this was true for me as well. Deep down I knew that something so small and perfect had to have been created; it could not have happened randomly or by mistake. In this way my belief in God was restored. God moved my soul in many little ways that summer until finally, about a year after I originally denied Him, I committed my life to serving Him alone.

Anyways, as I was reflecting on this a few nights ago I realised something. Jesus KNEW that I would deny Him when He offered up His Body and Blood at the Last Supper and on Calvary, yet He suffered it anyways. I was absolutely blown away by this thought. Love like this is powerful and basically impossible to comprehend! Just thought I would share this little thought with everyone....God bless!

This contribution is available at <http://crucesignatiblog.wordpress.com/2014/07/12/powerful-love/>
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Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle: Morality and a Means to an End [at The Paper Gryphon]

Each and every moment of our waking lives involves a choice. That choice can be made for the glory of God or for our own personal gratification. It could be argued that in pursuing personal gratification we may also



work toward the glory of God, but this debate is self-defeating in that the action ceases to be selfish when it is done with Godly aspirations. With these thoughts we enter a centuries long dialog about the teleological nature of man. Like many of the great theologians of antiquity, Saint Thomas Aquinas was particularly taken with Greek philosopher and scientist, Aristotle. The Aristotelian tendencies found in the works of Aquinas are tempered by the influence of Saint Augustine and others, but there is no doubt to the great effect that Aristotle had on Thomistic moral philosophy. Both Thomas and Aristotle deliberated exhaustively on the nature of ends, means, and goods. In studying these teleological viewpoints we must understand the basic arguments that these philosophical luminaries were making and take into account how they are illustrated in our own lives.

Aristotle, and therefore Aquinas, both believe that human activity and aspirations are teleological. What this means is that our behavior is driven with a goal in mind. Aristotle deemed this goal, or

end view, as “good.” More importantly, he believed that there was a “chief good” which served to inform the whole of our decision making with that goal in mind:

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics 2).

The ultimate objective which Aristotle was alluding to was none other than eudaimonia-happiness. He believed that happiness is achieved through the pursuit of good. The destination is reasoned to be good, because of the necessity for moral decision in pursuing this end point and what he believed to be our natural inclination toward moral behavior. Being that the errors of humanity are apparent and many, we run into the necessity for clarification between “apparent good” and “real good.” An apparent good is a goal that we undertake with the belief that it is going to help one achieve happiness only to find that it is, in fact, not. An example of this from my own life (that I have thankfully overcome) is gluttony. I understood that food tasted, and made me feel, good. Unfortunately, my pursuit of the next great meal resulted in poor health, damaged self-image, and ultimately, sadness. “Real good” is a goal that we set that, in the end, is virtuous. To better illustrate this I will once again borrow an example from my own life. As a young marine I sought to foster and create a healthy relationship with a young Catholic woman who shared the same religion, moral ideologies, and family plans. Today we have been married for eight years and have two happy healthy young boys. The end goal was, and is, good. Naturally, in following this path, several aims were met. Multiple different ends came together to inform the greater goal. While my end was virtuous, I could have easily been led down the path of unrighteousness had the means by which I attained my objective been morally circumspect. Had I chosen to lie my way into what has become a fruitful relationship, the fruits that I have come to enjoy would surely not have come to be. In order for a farmer to yield a bountiful crop he cannot forego irrigation, fertilization, and hard work. Thomistic teleological arguments follow Aristotle insofar as he believes that an ultimate good is our end point. His moment of divergence comes when he suggests that true good and happiness is unattainable in this life, and may only be found in God. It is only through the attainment of the universal good that we can achieve solace. God alone is universally good. Therefore, God is our one and only true path to happiness.

This contribution is available at <http://www.thepapergryphon.com/2014/07/thomas-aquinas-and-aristotle-means-to.html>

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St. Mary Magdalene and Three Things We Can Learn from Her Life

Today, in both the Eastern and Western lungs of the Church, we celebrate the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene. Her name *Magdalene* derives from the tradition that she hailed from a town in northern Galilee called, Magdala. Along with the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. John the Apostle, and other female relatives, it is revealed in the Sacred Scriptures that St. Mary Magdalene was at the foot of the cross as Jesus was crucified.

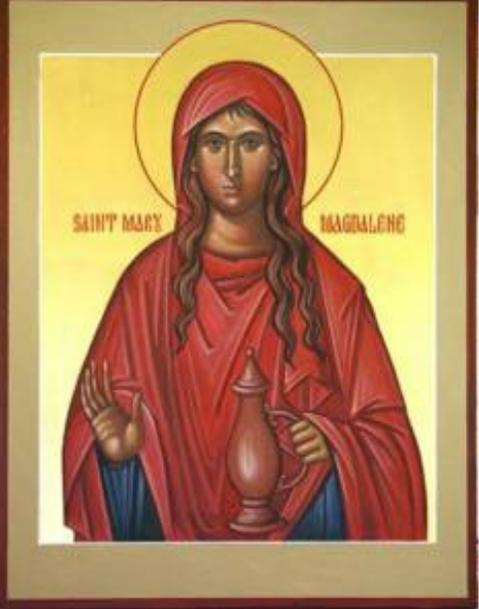
Although there are quite a few traditions surrounding the life of St. Mary Magdalene, it is believed universally by the West that she was the woman that Jesus Christ drove seven demons from in the Gospel of St. Luke: “And the Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out...” (8:2; see also *Mk* 16:9).

The writings of St. Clement of Alexandria and others also teach that the woman who anointed Jesus with an alabaster flask of ointment and wet his feet with her tears in Luke 7:37-38 is St. Mary Magdalene –

“And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was sitting at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”

In other traditions, some see St. Mary Magdalene as the sister of Martha and Lazarus. This tradition even has her traveling with her brother, sister, and some of the other disciples of Jesus Christ to Marseilles, France, after they were exiled from their home region by the Jews for believing in Jesus Christ. It is taught in France that she lived in a cave for 30 years, speaking with the angels often until her death. Tradition also teaches that Lazarus became the first bishop of that area.

The Eastern Tradition has her traveling to Ephesus with the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John the Apostle and remaining there for the rest of her life until her death at an old age. The East adheres that her relics were transferred to Constantinople in 886 A.D.



Although all these traditions have their own important value, we see her importance in *all four gospels* (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:9; Lk 24:10; Jn 20:11-18) where it is revealed that Jesus appeared to St. Mary Magdalene on the day of His Resurrection, Easter Sunday. In two of the four gospels, St. Matthew and St. Luke, other women accompany Mary Magdalene. Since it is St. Mary Magdalene who first professes to the Apostles the Resurrection of Jesus, she is often referred to as the “Apostle to the Apostles.”

So what we can learn from the life of this important saint?

First, like St. Mary Magdalene, all Christians are called to wait with faith and trust in God.

So many of us want God to work quickly in our lives, we forget that God works at His pace and in His time. We must have faith that He knows exactly what we need despite our own desires. Just as St. Mary Magdalene heard the words of Jesus and trusted that he would rise from the dead, so we must also hear the words of Jesus in the Sacred Scriptures and trust in all that he professes.

Second, we must stand outside the tomb seeking Jesus Christ.

As Catholic Christians today, we must establish a personal friendship with Jesus Christ. It is great that we know about Jesus Christ and His Church, since they are one and the same, but do we truly have a deep friendship with Him? Do we speak to Jesus on a daily basis? Standing outside the tomb waiting for him always will keep us focused on what truly matters in this life and in the life to come.

Third, we must have the ability to repent of our sins and be humble in the face of God.

Although St. Mary Magdalene is not the prostitute in the scriptures some have claimed, she at one point must have confessed her sins to Christ, where upon he then forgave her of those sins. To be a follower of Jesus Christ, a intentional disciple, one must confess the wrongs he/she have committed in life and be humble enough to say – “O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.” As Catholics, reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is fundamental and should be practiced often.

Let Us Pray: O God, you gave St. Mary Magdalene the important duty to tell His apostles and

others the news of Easter joy. Through her intercession, may we have the courage to spread the gospel message to all we encounter daily.

Saint Mary Magdalene...Pray for Us.

This blog post is dedicated to the clergy, staff, and parishioners of St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church in Gilbert, AZ.

This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2014/07/22/st-mary-magdalene-and-three-things-we-can-learn-from-her-life/>

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Just Say Thank You [at A Catholic Heart For Home]

I have a really bad habit. It's not really intentional, it happens automatically and then I'm like
Nooooooooo.

I am very bad at receiving compliments. Worse I tend to point out every flaw I believe I have that makes the compliment untrue. Sometimes there is the awkward silence after I finish my tirade of flaws and oppositions then I feel awful because here is this person being genuinely nice and I'm shoving it back in their face. Poor people don't know what to say next

I used to tell myself it was humility but it's just downright humiliating to me and the poor kind soul who noticed something about good/nice about me and commented on it.

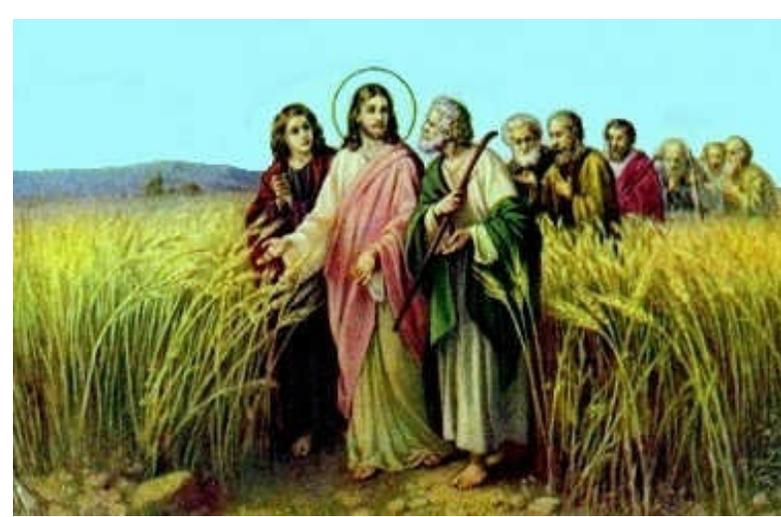
Thank you. I don't know why that is so hard.

It's like every negative comment I have ever heard about myself rushes up and I just have to correct this poor misguided soul who dares try to see something different in me.

I'm trying to change that. I am trying to just say thank you.

This contribution is available at <http://acatholicheartforhome.blogspot.com/2014/07/just-say-thank-you.html>
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The Weeds in the Wheat [at A Catholic Moment]



The parables Jesus taught are timeless. When he taught the parables, it puzzled everyone who heard them, including his disciples who approached him after the crowds left in today's gospel. They asked Jesus to explain the parable about the weeds and the wheat to them, because they didn't understand what he was talking about either. Notice Jesus's patience in explaining this parable to them. He is clearly a master teacher and his disciples looked up to him, trying their best to understand his teachings, because they knew he taught the truth.

Jesus used such simple, everyday images to teach complicated subjects. Modern people who have a high intellect, or an advanced education could learn a few things from Jesus's simple methods of teaching.

The images that Jesus used in the parables, and the story that forms in the mind when we hear them, are timeless. People of all ages, man or woman, from different cultures and walks of life, can relate to them. Over 2,000 later we can still relate to them. Isn't it amazing that the parables apply so perfectly to everyone and yet we never outgrow them?

The images in dreams are like a universal language too. If you remember, Joseph in the old testament had a gift for interpreting the images in dreams, especially the Pharaoh's dream about the fat and skinny cows.

Visual images are an important way of understanding and transmitting the faith to this day. The stained glass windows in our churches portray Jesus, Mary and Joseph's life and the lives of the saints, because many years ago people couldn't read the bible for themselves. Even today, if you visit a Catholic church in another country and can not speak the language, the images, statues and visual elements of our Catholic faith are still easily understood by everyone, especially at mass. The images are a universal language.

The parable about the weeds in the wheat is pretty self-explanatory though. The only additional insight into this parable might be to realize that only Jesus knows the weeds from the wheat, because sometimes what looks like a weed, is actually a plant that is not fully developed yet. Some people are late bloomers. Anyone who gardens has seen plants that are not quite as developed as the others, but with the right growing conditions, that plant may one day bloom or produce fruit too.

Sometimes the wrong soil, light, or water inhibits the growth of plants. Little plants will sometimes spring up underneath a bigger plant, that blocks out most of the sunshine that they need in order to grow and mature properly. Sometimes big plants will drain the nutrients out of the soil that surrounds them, and this too, can affect the growth of the little plants.

Jesus talks about the remedy that will take place at the end of the age. The angels will separate the weeds from the wheat then. A person can't help but think of the Eucharist in this parable though. We consume the Lord's body at every mass and we are scattered throughout the world. When he gathers the wheat into his barn, maybe that is what he means. He will gather his own to himself.

It makes us really sad to think that not everyone will be gathered into the safety of his kingdom though. We should never tire of planting the seeds of faith in our family, with our friends, classmates, coworkers, neighbors, the community we live in and even the random strangers we encounter in our lives. We work for a lot of things in life that are temporary and do not last, but a person's soul is eternal. Eternity is the horizon we should keep our focus on, while keeping an eye on our steps as we travel through this life.

The last sentence in the first reading for Mass today might actually be a good way to end this reflection on the scriptures:

"... you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins."

We plant the seeds, but God gives the growth. But, a lot of our growth stems from the mistakes we make in life, especially if we are sorry for our mistakes and learn something from them. It is the same for all those we love as well. They go through some of the same processes we do. Jesus is the hope for all of us though, to make it safely to our Father's kingdom.

Daily Mass Readings:

Wisdom 12: 13, 16-19 / Psalm 86 / Romans 8: 26-27 / Matthew 13: 24-43

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The man to marry.... [at A blessed mess]

The kind of man I want to marry.

This is something that I give a lot of thought too probably for the sole reason that I believe my vocation is to marriage.

That of course means that you need someone to marry. In fact the man or woman you marry is your vocation. Since I am not aware of having met him (my vocation) just yet I have to at least know what it is I am looking for.

Not that I need to be searching. But in a world and a culture where love is shoved in my face as having to do with sex, physical attraction and sex, I need to know the truth.

The truth of what makes a good spouse.

Someone who is so good, someone who just amazes you daily. Just by who they are as a person. The kind of person who you really just cannot believe exists. Not to say that they are flawless but someone who embodies goodness better than anyone else you have ever met. You marry this person because you are convinced that you will never meet someone else this awesome!

Someone who calls you on to holiness constantly. Actually this one is kind of uncomfortable but this person should be so good that you are almost forced to be a better person. If he or she does not call you on to be a better person just by who they are and how they live their lives then that is a clear sign that he or she, is not the one. They should inspire you to be better without even saying a single word.

They should be the person you cannot live without. I seem to have my own romantic notions, many of which I do not trust. But this was something my Aunt said. It was clear that her husband was someone she loved so much that she did not

want

to be apart from him. She just loved being with him.

This last one is a Jason Evert quote, "You don't just love them you love who you are when you are with them."

That is the man I want to marry. One who makes me be a better version of myself with him than I am without him.

That is not to say that attraction does not play a part. I do believe that God gives us attraction for a

reason. But these are the

qualities

that matter.

Now I just have to pray really hard to become the kind of woman that he deserves. Believe me, I have a

long

way to go. Only it is worth it because I love him already even if I have not met him yet.

This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.com/2014/07/the-man-to-marry.html>
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Protecting Yourself - Emotional Purity [at A Still Small Voice]

In the sexualized society of today we are continually reminded, no matter the age, to protect yourself - either from babies and/or STDs. We are warned to have safe sex (selfish sex) in which there would be no 'real' outcome.

However, the point I'm looking to reach is not about sex, or even the emotional (not excluding physical) attachment when one (two) participates in the act. The point of this post is for those who strive to rid themselves, with God's graces, of

all

impurities, specifically emotional impurity (not with the attachment of sex).

Emotional purity can be defined along the two words it's made up of:

Emotional

- arousing or characterized by intense feeling and

Purity

- freedom from adulteration or contamination.

Now there were multiple definitions for both words but the one's that I chose interested me more than the others. What caught my attention was the word 'adulteration' in purity's definition. Adulteration means to render (something) poorer in quality by adding another substance, typically an inferior one.

And what's happening when one is emotionally unchaste is the feelings, or 'arousments', one gets when either thinking, talking, stalking etc. the person he/she likes and running with them - leaving the person with no control of their feelings.

Obviously, the feelings we naturally get when one encounters the other they are attracted to is not bad - It is not evil. The attraction is good; it's actually very good. However, it seems that in this generation we were never taught how to deal with these attractions. We are taught to either repress them or let them completely submerge you, with no even distribution.

When you repress these feelings and/or attractions completely they come back full force and when you are submerged in them you are literally suffocating in your own thoughts that you've created for yourself. And none of the above is a healthy way of dealing with your feelings and can really hurt you, especially when they no longer become thoughts but actions.

The Confessions of Zoë:

For me, emotional chastity was a really big cross of mine. I never let my thoughts become actions in

any

way; however, I did do all of the above.

There was this guy (that's how it all starts out, jk) and I really liked him and the natural attraction I had for him was pure to begin with but then I started to think about him a lot, more than what was necessary, and about 'us'. I was always left anxious and worried of what might happen in the future and so forth and so forth.

You understand - I thought about him and also of the thoughts of thinking about him way too frequently. It hurt me spiritually and emotionally and as I already stated, I was never left with such peace but worry and doubts.

So what did I do next? I completely repressed him and everything related to him. I didn't even like hearing his name. I just wanted those feelings to be completely done with and I didn't want anything to do with them because it was clear to me that drowning myself in thoughts and words

was not the path of purity.

But then one fateful day they came back like a thousand of bricks that had babies and brought their babies with them. And dear friends, pure love should never be labeled as such burdens. (Which I think that label is a new one ;))

So, I went back and forth with these 'outings', if you wish, and never found peace with any of them. I was getting beyond frustrated with myself, these feelings and what was God's purpose through all of this.

And there is still so much in this story that happened, so many thoughts and questions that weren't expressed, but you can most probably figure them out because I know that I am not the only one who suffered/suffers with this sort of impurity.

So what I did next is the reason why I am able to write this post . . .

I picked up my cross and united it with Jesus'. I wasn't afraid of letting the selfish feelings go anymore and the 'what ifs' that came with them. I started to understand what it meant to love in the truest matter and that is to will the good of another. I started to want what was the best for him, even if that didn't mean me.

One night I knelt down, with my tiny wall crucifix in my hands, and gave everything I was bearing to Jesus. I gave Him my numerous emotions, I gave Him my thoughts, I begged His will be done no matter how difficult it would be for me to let go and I gave Him the guy.

The cross that I built for myself was united with Christ's. Not so that I may not have to suffer, but that I wouldn't struggle through this alone and without redemption. Even though my cross was built because of my feelings towards this guy, I now had the opportunity to offer this cross I was carrying for him and for his holiness. To give my cross to Jesus, and through Jesus, with His help, gave the guy to Him.

I've learned that when you don't emotionally invest in someone(s) your mind is truly not bound with thoughts that are selflessly taking from others. Thoughts that I desire only to think of my husband. And they do not have to be lustful thoughts to be impure, it wasn't lustful thinking that encompassed me, but rather it was the amount of thinking that encompassed me.

Anywho, that's my confession and I pray that you truly take to heart what I went through and desire more for yourself, your husband and more importantly your relationship with Jesus.

Now to further along - - -

In the Diary of St. Faustina there's this section where there are Q and A's about the vows and the virtues they amplify based on the Catechism of the Vows.

The question asked was “

What are the means by which this virtue (chastity) may be preserved?”

The answer: “

To conquer interior temptations with the thoughts of the presence of God, and moreover to fight without fear. And for exterior temptations, to avoid occasions. There are, in all, seven principal means: to guard the senses, to avoid occasions, to avoid idleness, to remove temptations promptly, to remove oneself from all - and especially particular friendships, the spirit of mortification, and to reveal all these temptations to one's confessor

.”

But it doesn't stop there - it goes on to guide us on how to preserve the virtue:

humility

,

the spirit of prayer

,
modesty of the eyes

,
fidelity to the rule

and

a sincere devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

All are great means to driving out all the vices of purity and for protecting yourself from getting emotionally attached. The last one though is extremely important, you should find out why.

If people don't know this about me already - I'm

mostly

an Augustinian. And to narrow down this whole thing I'm going to ask myself, and you, this questions that St. Augustine asked himself:

What do I love when I love my God?

Generally - Am I loving my God when I am doing this, thinking this, saying this? Am I giving God glory and thanks by my thoughts, words and actions? Am I growing more and more in love with God and if not what's holding me back?

However, one should never go into despair, for despair doubts God's infinite goodness, love and mercy on one's soul. Reconcile and begin anew today - resolve to give glory and honor to God by anything and everything that defines

you,

even your thoughts.

Protect yourself beginning today.



& -

Nunc Coepi

- Now I begin.

God bless and Mary protect.

Keep my eyes fixed on You, oh Lord.

"Turn away from the passions of youth,
concentrate on uprightness,
faith, love and peace,
in union with all those who call on the Lord with a pure heart."

- 2 Timothy 2:22

Ulysses - Josh Garrels

This contribution is available at <http://zoejumonville.blogspot.com/2014/07/protecting-yourself-emotional-purity.html>

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John Paul II on the Dignity of the Human Body in Art



Recently I came across a powerful music video by musician Colbie Caillat. This video has been making its way around Facebook and is profound in its ability to highlight the dignity and beauty of the human person as expressed through our bodies. Colbie Caillat said in a [recent interview](#) that she was upset because she was “getting a lot of pressure to be someone I’m not, both musically and image-wise.” She relates how women in our society so often try to please others and hide who they really are. She says that “everyone is trying to hide their faults” through make-up or using Photoshop to digitally alter their appearance.



Perfection

Colbie said that there is a lot of **pressure to be perfect and to look perfect all the time**. She said that “When I see gorgeous models and singers and they look perfect on their album covers, it makes me want to look like that too, and it makes me feel like if I don’t Photoshop my skin on my album cover, I’m the one who’s going to look a little off and everyone else is going to look perfect. And that’s what everyone is used to seeing.”

After shooting her music video “Try”, Colbie now says that she is excited at the chance to be in the public eye without any make-up. She said that “it also felt really cool to be on camera with zero on, like literally nothing on. And then when it got to the full hair and makeup, I actually felt gross.”

In the end, this experience helped her realize her own beauty, and that she is beautiful no matter what. It doesn’t matter if she has tons of make-up on, she is beautiful just the way she is. That is a powerful message, one that our society of the “perfect” image badly needs.

Dignity of the Human Body

All of this reminds me of **Saint John Paul II and his “Theology of the Body.”** In it he stresses the dignity of the human body and the reality of our own innate beauty. One passage that I am reminded of is in regards to portraying the human body in art. John Paul II writes,

It is well known that through all these elements [artistic quality, mode of reproduction or artistic representation of the human body] the fundamental intentionality of the work of art or of the product of the respective media becomes, in a way, accessible to the viewer, as to the listener or the reader. **If our personal sensitivity reacts with objection and disapproval,** it is because in that fundamental intentionality, together with the concretizing of man and his body, we discover as indispensable for the work of art or its reproduction, his **simultaneous reduction to the level of an object. He becomes an object of “enjoyment,” intended for the satisfaction of concupiscence itself. This is contrary to the dignity of man also in the intentional order of art and reproduction.** By analogy, the same thing must be applied to the various fields of artistic activity—according to the respective specific character—**as also to the various audiovisual media.** (*St. John Paul II, [Ethical Responsibilities in Art](#), emphasis added*)

Colbie was right to react with “objection and disapproval” in regards to the excessive use of make-up and Photoshop. Instead of highlighting the dignity of women, it makes women “objects” to be looked upon and only valued for their perfect beauty.

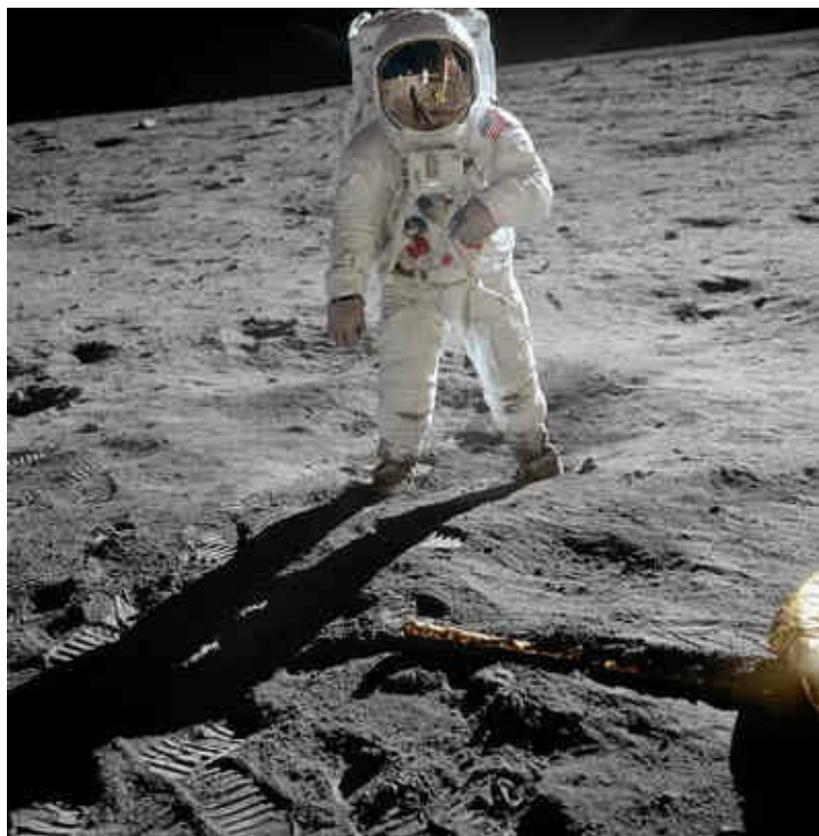
In the end, I commend her for doing what she did. She gives us all a very important lesson: that we are all beautiful in the eyes of God, just the way we are and we are not meant to be objects for other people’s pleasure.

Here is the video in case you haven’t seen it yet:

Here is another great video that shows what all is involved in preparing a magazine cover:

This contribution is available at <http://www.philipkosloski.com/beauty/>
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The Catholic Church and Space Exploration [at Justin's Corner]



Today we celebrate the 45th anniversary of the historic Apollo 11 lunar landing, when astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first-ever human persons to set foot on the moon. But did you know that three months after that great achievement, as part of their world tour, all three of the Apollo 11 astronauts got to meet the Pope? That's right: On October 16, 1969, Armstrong, Aldrin, and command module pilot Michael Collins and their wives had an audience with Pope Paul VI in the Vatican. In

[a brief address](#)

, Pope Paul lauded them for their courage in breaking a new barrier, and for the spirit of service to humanity and the spirit of peace in which they accomplished their scientific mission. He congratulated them on behalf of the whole Church and praised the "genius, dedication and perseverance" that went into "this magnificent undertaking." He also thanked the president and people of the United States for making possible this feat of exploration, "with typical generosity of spirit, for the good of man and the world." He prayed that such exploration of God's creation would enable us to more clearly see God's power, His infinity, and his perfection, and that this knowledge would draw humanity--His children--closer together "in fraternal love, in peace and in prayer." Finally, Pope Paul thanked God for the successful achievement of this space mission and for the astronauts' safe return to Earth, and invoked God's blessings on them and their families.

Some 45 years later, these noble words of Venerable (soon to be Blessed) Paul VI remind us of what the manned missions to the moon were really all about. God has put within man a natural desire to explore and learn about His creation. That's the whole point of science--it's a search for the truth about the natural world around us. The Catholic Church gave the world the principles on which true science rests, and it was a Catholic who invented the scientific method. Thus it should be no surprise that the Catholic Church is and always has been supportive of genuine scientific investigation, including space exploration, so long as it is conducted in the proper spirit and oriented to the true good of the human person and society.

Sadly, the generosity of spirit, nobility of purpose, and sound scientific principles that marked the Apollo lunar explorations are largely missing in the United States today, as our country continues to drift further away from God and thus from reality, as selfishness replaces a spirit of service, and as corruption and pseudo-scientific attitudes have diverted much of science and astronomy away from the search for truth and into the sustained defense of increasingly problematic--and often untestable and illogical--hypotheses that violate the laws of physics yet are widely accepted as scientific fact, such as the Big Bang, the Standard Model, constantly accelerating expansion of the cosmos, dark matter and dark energy, black holes, the "multiverse theory," and the random evolution of the universe and of life on earth over billions of years. Generally speaking, we've abandoned the scientific method and are living in a self-constructed house of mirrors. Given the abysmal state of so much of modern science, is it any wonder we haven't returned to the moon to build on the foundation courageously laid by the Apollo astronaut pioneers (and have no plans to do so anytime soon)?

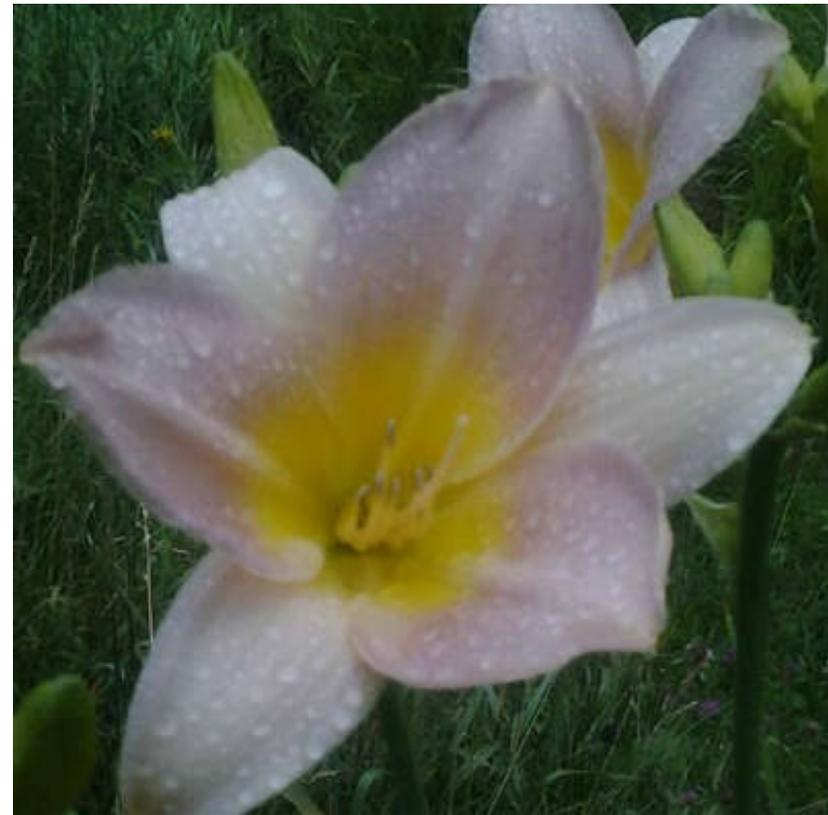
As a nation, we're dropping the ball on scientific exploration here in the twenty-first century because 1) we no longer believe in God the Creator, 2) we see the universe He created as merely a random product of meaningless evolutionary forces, 3) we doubt that there is any such thing as objective and absolute truth except as determined by the individual person, and 4) we no longer care about the common good. America needs conversion! We need to be shaken out of this radically secularist mentality and get back to the basics about God and science. We need to recover the spirit of service to the common good and the genuinely scientific approach that made the Apollo missions such a remarkable success. May our recollection of those outstanding achievements and the sacrifices that went into them inspire us as Catholics and as American citizens to work together to support and undertake genuine scientific exploration in the footsteps of the Apollo astronauts for the glory of God and the good of the human family.

This contribution is available at <http://justins-corner.blogspot.com/2014/07/the-catholic-church-and-space.html>
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Only God [at mommynovenas]

Whenever something wonderful would happen

My grandmother would say "Only God!"



Whenever there was a great need

My grandmother would pray "Only God!"



Whenever, in the midst of tragedy, miraculous transformation emerged

My grandmother would praise "Only God!"

This contribution is available at <http://mommynovenasdelora.blogspot.com/2014/07/only-god.html>
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Consolations from God [at His UnEnding Love]



I've written before about consolations from God. Life is not always easy, and when I am shaken, knowing that more disappointments and fears will attack on my journey, I often ask God to send me a consolation. I never know

IF

He will send me a consolation. Really, what more do I need than He who is I AM? However, my faith waivers, so I ask for something solid and substantial to help me through the storm.

Monday was a day when I needed a consolation. I needed to know that I was not on my journey alone. I needed something that would show me that

GOD LOVED ME

! I needed to know that He was walking with me on this journey.

I wrote down, what I know.

- 1) God is omnipotent.
- 2) God can do anything.
- 3) God has a plan for each of us.
- 4) God never promised us that our lives would be easy. He only said it would be worth it.
- 5) When we entrust our lives, our children's lives, and all those we love to Him, we do all for His

honor and glory.

6) God will be with us through everything.

7) When we fall, God will pick us up.

8) Life is only a dash, a comma in eternity.

9) God will be close to us through all the storms of life.

10)

More importantly than anything else,

God is Love.

God is madly in love with us.

God turns evil into good.

God uses all we experience to sanctify us.

God wants us to be with Him in Paradise.

So, on a day when my faith was weak and I could only feel pain, I asked God for a consolation.

When I took my dog out for a walk, I looked down, and saw the heart shaped rock. God answered my prayer.

Thank you, Lord! Thank you!

Pro-Life? Support Paid Maternity Leave [at Catholic How]



By Michael Lewis, Guest Contributor

President Obama made a splash on June 23 when he took four working families out to lunch at Chipotle after [announcing his support](#) for some kind of paid maternity leave in the United States. In his statement, the president said that the U.S. is the only developed country that does not offer working women any sort of paid leave to give birth or spend time with a newborn. In fact, President Obama said, “many women can’t even get a paid day off to give birth—that’s a pretty low bar.”

The President’s announcement of support received little media attention as he failed to back a concrete piece of legislation to back up his support for paid maternity leave. His political opponents—many of them champions of the pro-life movement—dismissed the idea as another unnecessary, expensive government program. Obama walks the walk on paid leave, however—White House employees receive six weeks paid leave to give birth, a policy instituted when the President took office in 2009. Perhaps the disinterested reaction is not a result of our lack of caring for new mothers, but a reflection of the low value American society places on having children.

It used to be men and women married at 20 or 21, the husband had a good job that paid well, and they bought a home and had babies. Such was the American dream when our parents were growing up in the ‘50s and ‘60s. Dad worked to pay the bills and put food on the table, and Mom took care of the kids.

Now, however, many young people of prime childbearing age are pursuing advanced degrees and careers—and thereby delaying pregnancy—partly out of ambition and partly out of [financial necessity](#). The widespread use of contraception makes it easy to remove the procreative aspect from sexual love, and many women are finding that when they get around to trying to conceive, their years (or decades) on the pill permanently altered their bodies, making conception difficult.

In addition, today's economy makes it hard for families to survive on one income, and as the President said, taking time off to have a baby can be a financial burden for many middle class families. The Family Medical Leave Act provides employees with up to 12 weeks of medical leave, but for the vast majority of workers, this benefit is unpaid, and again, many cannot afford to lose three months of income. In contrast, [countries](#) such as Canada offer up to 17 weeks of leave, with compensation of 55% of wages up to 15 weeks. Sweden offers 480 days per child, at 80% of salary. Other nations such as Poland, Germany, France, Slovakia and other Eastern European countries offer varying levels of benefits for new parents, paid for by Social Security programs or national health funds.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut has proposed a paid maternity leave program, which would be financed by an additional payroll tax of 0.02%, or a measly two cents on the dollar. Thus far, the President has declined to endorse DeLauro's bill, perhaps out of concern of breaking his promise not to raise taxes on the middle class. Others say a new government program is a nonstarter, citing out of control debt and spending in Washington.

It seems to me, as a pro-life, pro-family Catholic that some kind of paid maternity leave would have more economic benefits than downsides in the long run and help reduce abortions, as low-income families wouldn't face financial ruin from having a baby. It could be an opt-in program where employees choose to pay extra payroll tax. Seems to me that if we as pro-family conservatives hold life as precious and view motherhood as a most honorable vocation, this ought to be a no-brainer, as a new individual, in the course of a lifetime of output and taxes paid, is a net economic gain.

If we as pro-lifers truly want to create a culture of life in the U.S., we must place a premium on motherhood and fatherhood, and equip our brothers and sisters with the tools necessary to avoid making children a financial burden. If parenting is indeed the most honorable vocation which God can bestow on us, we must work not only for laws which protect the sanctity of human life, but laws necessary to sustain the dignity of family and economic life. This may require getting our hands dirty, so to speak, but as Pope Francis reminded us in his March 13, 2013 homily, "Politics is a noble activity. We should revalue it, practice it with vocation and a dedication that requires testimony, martyrdom, that is to die for the common good."

In an interview with America, the Holy Father said, "There is a 'holy middle class,' which we can all be part of... "I see the holiness in the patience of the people of God: a woman who is raising children, a man who works to bring home the bread, the sick, the elderly priests who have so many wounds but have a smile on their faces because they served the Lord, the sisters who work hard and live a hidden sanctity. This is for me the common sanctity."

Let us work to ensure that our family values pervade all of our social and policy endeavors.

This contribution is available at <http://catholichow.wordpress.com/2014/07/29/guest-opinion-pro-life-support-paid-maternity-leave/>
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Weeds and Wheat Together -- at Least for Now [at From the Pulpit of my Life]



If you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest.

Matthew 13: 29-30

Jesus' parable about the wheat and the weeds highlights the coexistence of good and evil in God's Kingdom, the "field" the LORD is planting in the here and now. The Church and everyone in it, regardless of status, are imperfect because diabolical forces are also sowing in the same field. This situation will remain until the end of time. Ultimately, however, justice will win. In the meantime, however, there is opportunity for conversion.

Scholar and theologian, [John W. Martens](#), puts it this way:

It seems that in this parable the church is being cautioned to patience and tolerance with those whom we are just aching to condemn. All of us are in fact a corpus mixtum [mixed body], created good but with proclivities to our own peculiar sins. None of us are wheat without God's help, and the improper rush to create a pure church, excluding those who do not sin the same way we do, or do not think like us, is bound to fail. We must patiently allow God to work in us as we prepare for the end of the age.

Jesus speaks clearly to his disciples when he tells them about the final judgment, and the picture Matthew paints of that event is terrifying. As weeds get burnt at the end of the harvest; likewise, evildoers will meet a similar fate. The righteous, on the other hand will "shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

LORD, may we hear your Word and cherish it! May we shine, now and forever.

6 pack abs - I can't stomach it [at Mercy Me!]

While at the beach this summer I indulged in one of my favorite guilty pleasures – reading magazines; only this time, I found the contents with their emphasis on losing weight hard to stomach.

Right on the cover, it teased of a *Total Body Plan*. At 41, I am still trying to piece together some semblance of a life plan. I had no idea my body needed a plan too. I wondered if they made special Day Planners for these kinds of plans with separate tabs for each of my limbs.

Under the name of the celebrity on the cover was another teaser *Her Body & Career*. While the career seemed valid enough, I couldn't help but think it was just tacked on as extra appendage to what was really being showcased – her body.

Also on the cover, there was the question that has undoubtedly been asked since the time of great philosophers such as Aristotle and Aquinos– the answer to the timeless quest of how to lose the last 5 pounds. Finally, in the July issue it would be revealed. And in case you were just a tiny bit skeptical about their claim, right underneath it assured readers they were indeed, *for real*.

For real?

I didn't know whether to be angry or just bored. Either way, I am weary of our society's obsession with weight.

Sitting on the beach I thought about how most of us out there (myself included) were more naked than not, giving me ample opportunity to study the different bodies. Some were sculpted, some sagging, others a combination of both. There were bulges and curves. I saw dimples and D-cups. I saw elderly bodies with lines and patches of gray, and the creaseless bodies of children who seemed oblivious to things like body plans.

And, I decided it really wasn't that interesting. Any of it.

For real.

What was kind of cool was watching the agility of the surfers as they balanced on their boards; the tenacity of youngsters as they got knocked over by the force of the waves and not only got back up but like warriors ran straight into the waves again undaunted by their tumble; the people riding bikes catching up with friends or taking leisurely strolls perhaps enjoying the solitude as much as the surf; and the uber-athletes running sprints in the soft sand to train for their next race.

I marveled at all the human bodies. Not what they looked like, but what they could do.

They are the vessel by which we experience the world.

Perhaps, they should have a Day Planner. After all, the things they allow us to do are phenomenal.

Still, it's weird to think how our bodies become ways to define ourselves instead of simply the vehicle we use to define the world with our unique gifts.

For me, the cover of that magazine is just another reminder that most of us don't get that things from this world will pass away.

Yes, even the last 5-pounds.

God doesn't care if my abs look like a 6-pack or that I just drank a 6-pack. He really doesn't.

He does care that I love my neighbor even if I really don't want to. He cares that I allowed my body to stretch beyond the size of a giant beach ball to experience the miracle of life. He cares that I teach the lives I brought into the world to live a life according to *His plan*.

I don't think washboard abs were on his mind when he died on the cross to wash away the inequities of sin.

And so I don't sound like a Pharisee, let me be clear – I have been as guilty of this kind of vanity as anyone else. While I have always been thin, I have never been perfect physically or otherwise. I have obsessed over my imperfections.

I don't know the totality of time wasted by humanity striving to weigh less so they can feel like their value is more. Nor can I fathom the dollars spent on this endeavor to conform our unique selves to the selves of a select few.

But it has all become tiresome to me, and for that I am grateful.

Eating healthy, exercising and otherwise respecting and caring for our bodies is to honor God. If in the process, we end up with 6-pack of abs, so be it. But Body Plans and articles on how to get a better-looking bum seem to make people feel bad not better.

Later that same evening, I was on the beach watching my kids play with their young cousins. I once again marveled at not only the magnitude of the ocean, which never tries to shirk from its wide girth, but the many people on the shore. Regardless of age or imperfections they seemed too enchanted with the sea to do anything other than feel happy.

It made me think of the cover of that magazine again and how it offered not only the answer to that timeless quest to lose the last 5 pounds, but 137 ways to feel happy all summer.

For real, 137 ways!

I watched my nephew, who is almost 2 years old, run with abandon, determination and wonderment right by this elderly woman, who was brown, wrinkled and worn. She was relying on her walker to navigate herself through the sand. As my nephew precariously balanced to stay upright while racing along, she did the same on her walker — all the while holding tight to the handle of her kite that swayed effortlessly above them.

With the gentleness of the wind and in their own unique way, they both flew.

So now I had reason 138 to be happy: no body plan would have ever strived for a moment so flawless – a moment that had nothing to do with looking perfect but everything to do with being beautiful.

And it was my dear friends, *for real*.



This contribution is available at <http://mercyme40.wordpress.com/2014/08/05/6-pack-abs-i-cant-stomach-it/>
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Faith Comes By Hearing! [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

Faith Comes By Hearing



He who has Ears ... Let Him Hear

“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)

“My words are Spirit and they are Life” (Rom. 10:17)

But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news! But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes by the Word of God.” (Rom. !0: 8-17)

“He who has [spiritual] ears to hear let him hear” (Mark 4:9, Matt. 13:9)

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As a fellow Pilgrim it expedient for me to share my personal struggles along the way of discipleship so that my witness may, in some way, help you avoid some of the hindrances that I

have encountered – hindrances which could cause one to stumble if the awareness of these were not brought to the fore.

Primary Hindrance – Hard of Hearing

Initially, in my Christian life, I was very spiritually disoriented. In fact, I was so disoriented I could not distinguish between religiosity and true spirituality. I was a religiously compliant Catholic so I thought that that is all there was to being a good Christian. I was spiritually disabled but did not know it. I routinely heard God’s Word spoken every Sunday at mass but somehow it never reached the very depths of my spirit. I was a believer but most certainly I was also hard of hearing!

I was in a state comparable to what Jesus said of the Pharisees of His time...

‘... seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says: `You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.’ (Matt 13:13-15)

I stumbled along with this spiritual disability for many years, keeping what faith I had, only by the Grace of God and my marriage to a wonderful Christian Lady – a woman who was the Lord’s instrument in permitting God to bring my spirit to life through His Word.

And, it was through the preaching of a Charismatic priest, whose meetings my wife had been attending, that was I delivered from my spiritual hearing disability and brought through the ‘narrow gate’ to an encounter with the person of the Living Christ! Thus began my transition to a truly fulfilling spiritual life.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12)

It is my intent to share my experiences of my transition to a true spirituality with you for your edification and to raise your level of awareness so that you may bypass my mistakes and progress more rapidly towards the holiness to which we have all have been called in Him.

Coming to Spiritual Awareness (and Hearing)

One of the first and greatest impediments I had to overcome was that I could not, out of my own human nature, or any one else’s, come to life in the spirit. And, being spiritually deaf, the Word of God could not take root in me. For, as Jesus told Nicodemus, ***“flesh begets flesh and Spirit begets spirit”***. Only the Holy Spirit of God working through the inspired and empowered Word of

God (Rhema) could bring me to a new life in the Spirit.

St. Peter confirms this in his first epistle, where he tells the church, ***“You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. (Understanding that...) you have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord abides for ever.” That word is the good news which was preached to you.”***(1 Ptr. 18-18; 23-25)

When I, responded to the Word in faith, and became sensitive to the Life of the Spirit that was in me, I was able to spiritually “hear His Word” in my spirit and then, obeying the Word, I yielded myself to the Spirit so that through my willing cooperation He could begin the work of transformation in me – the work of conforming me to the image of Christ through His Word and empowering me to accomplish His Purposes in me for His Glory. Praised be His Holy Name!

In attempting to summarize my experience I can only say that, as a cultural Christian, I was roughly at the same intermediate stage of belief that the Samaritan villagers were when they heard the witness of the woman at the well (Jn. 4:39). That is, I believed the witness of the church in which I was raised based on the reasonable grounds on which the Good News of Jesus Christ was presented to me but not because the Word had reached my heart and enlivened me in the Spirit. Therefore, the Word did NOT have its full effect ***“because it was not mixed with faith”***(Heb. 4:1-2).

Unlike the Samaritans, I was not motivated to seek out Jesus personally, because I was never presented with that option in my training. It was only later in my life that the Word of God reached me with power (as Rhema) and, then and only then, I sought out a personal relationship with Jesus who, through His Holy Spirit, empowered the Word of Salvation to enlighten my heart. It was only then, that I could say, as the Samaritans who sought out Jesus, told the woman at the well, ***“... now we believe not because of your testimony but because we have heard for ourselves and KNOW that this indeed is the Savior of the World!”*** (John 4:42)

Upon my spirit being reborn through the empowered Word, My spiritual ears were opened to truly Hear the Word of God clearly speaking to my heart so I could now also hear the voice of Jesus, my Shepherd, guiding me and leading along the narrow path of the spiritual journey. Within that first year, I was so excited in being able sense the Spirit of the Word that, in that first year, I read through the entire bible twice.

“The Word of God is a spiritual book written under the direction of the Holy Spirit. It was not written to our head but to the innermost part of our heart. This is why some people find the Bible so hard to understand. They are trying to comprehend it using only their mind. The Word of God has to inspire our heart before it can enlighten our mind.” (author unknown)

Secondary Hindrance: Not Understanding Discipleship

Once past my spiritual disability of not being sensitive to the Spirit of God within me, the Lord led me to understand that there was yet another hindrance keeping me from totally fulfilling His purposes for me. That hindrance was that of entering into a true and continuing discipleship with Him. Now that I could listen to the Lord through His Word, I began understanding spiritual things as I never had before. However, as I found out in my progress, there were still veils keeping me from a full awareness of the spiritual truths that are embedded in the Word. One of these is “discipleship”.

The veil that hindered me from understanding this truth was that of custom and culture. In our Christian culture we tend to form a world-view about Christianity that prevents us from seeing ourselves as God sees us. We tend to see ourselves as our religious culture sees us. In my case, I made the naïve assumption that now that I had been enlightened and begun a personal relationship with Jesus, my savior, that I was in fact also a disciple. So whenever I read the Gospels speaking of disciples, I assumed that I was one.

One night, while meditating on the scriptures about discipleship, I sensed the Holy Spirit putting the following thought in my mind: “when did you make a commitment to become a disciple and do you know what is involved in that commitment?”. As I pondered that thought, I began to realize that my becoming a true believer did not necessarily imply that I was a disciple. Yes, I not only believed who Jesus is and now have a relationship with Him, but just as the young ruler who came to Jesus (cf., Lk. 18:18-25), His spirit in me was saying to me: “... ***yes, you also are very near to the Kingdom [being a disciple], you only lack one thing ... you need to put aside your earthly attachments (including your own will) and come follow me***”.

You see, what I had not realized because of my self-centered veil, was, that although I had been redeemed and cleansed by Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, I had not yet freely given myself to Him in loving response. Instead I was attempting to live a holy life in obedience to the Word and My conscience, but doing it under my own will and effort. Because of the veil I had placed over myself, I did not realize that, in order to be a true disciple of Jesus, I needed to rend that veil of self-centeredness and become a living sacrifice to the Father, so that I would not just be trying to imitate Jesus, but so that Jesus Himself could manifest Himself in me and through me! Praised be His Holy Name.

St. Paul also came to this realization and exhorted his followers with the following words...

“I Beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”
(Rom. 12: 1-3)

and ...

“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)

Jesus, himself told those following him that there was a cost to discipleship and they should assess the cost before making a commitment (Luke 14:28). Regarding this same matter, He also said, “... ***many are called, but few are chosen***”. (Matt. 22:14



Francis accepts his call to discipleship

Entering into discipleship (the Kingdom) requires us to make a decision in selfless agape Love – a decision to relinquish our right to our selves and giving ourselves totally to God. There is no condemnation if you decide not to but there is a cost if you do – you must deny your very self and give your “self will” to Christ because of the agape Love for Him welling up in your spirit.

It must be a decision made without any compulsion or coercion. It is a decision, apart from our decision to accept Jesus as our Savior so that it does not affect our salvation and thus is freely given, as all sacrifices must be! All of us are called to be His disciples but not all of us choose to do so.

That is the decision that the Holy Spirit confronted me with and a decision I freely made before God in the Spirit. And, this is the decision I now pose to you. Consult with the Holy Spirit in prayer, meditating on the Word deeply and sincerely before you make any decision, remembering there is NO condemnation whatsoever!

Whatever decision you make, I ask the God’s Peace and Blessings fall upon you as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus – for He will still be your fortress and support in this life and we all are still united in Him as His Body!

Praised Be The Lord Forever!

Your Fellow Pilgrim ... Bartimaeus

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Prayer of Commitment (revised):

Lord Jesus, I believe that you, the Son of the Living God came down from heaven to reveal the Father's Love to me by suffering and dying for my sins. I believe that through your death and resurrection you have brought redemption and life not only to me but also all else who believe in you. I further believe that it is only through knowing you in a loving personal relationship of discipleship that I can know the Father.

It is because I have a burning desire to know you and abide in you that I now yield myself completely to you and your love. I open the door to my heart so you can come in and sup with me and thus begin the special relationship with you for which you died and for which I hunger.

At this moment I also totally yield myself to your love by giving you the rights to my very self, in gratitude, so that you, and only you, will be the center of my life – and so that, through you, the Father's Will shall be done in my life. With this declaration, I take your yoke of discipleship upon me; enter in and activate my spirit with your Holy Spirit so that I can go beyond just mere intellectual belief in you to a personal spiritual knowledge of you and the Father so that His Will may be accomplished in and through my life for His Glory.

Lord, cleanse me from my sins and make me a fit vessel for your presence and your purposes. Permeate my entire being with your life and your love so that I can truly be your instrument in this world. Be my Lord, Be My God, Be my King to rule and to reign in me. In faith and by your grace, I receive you and I receive your Word. Abide in me just as you abide in the Father and the Father in you! Thank you for giving yourself for me, now take me for yourself so that You may live in me and through me, I am yours forever for the Glory of the Father. Amen

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

<> If you do not feel that you are ready to make this full commitment to discipleship, don't worry the Lord will take you as you are as long as you are willing to enter into a relationship with Him and be empowered by His Spirit. Once you let him into Your Heart He will do the rest by His Grace. To that end, I refer you to the following links:

[Prayer to Receive the Holy Spirit](#)

[Discipleship: Accepting the Challenge](#)

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

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I Saw Jesus Yesterday [at Blogging For A Better Life]

I saw Jesus yesterday and He was wearing a veil, actually it was more elaborate, a disguise so real I would never have suspected it was Him that I was looking at.

I saw Him yesterday, and I looked away.

He was old, and had trouble walking, and looked as if He was missing a few teeth. I didn't want to smile at Him, and have Him possibly smile back. I didn't want to have someone I know drive by and see me talking to the likes of Him.

I saw Jesus at the ballgame. He was in a wheelchair with no legs. I took one look at Him and thought "Thank God that's not me!" I didn't acknowledge Him as a real person with wants and needs. He seemed too crippled and out of it.

I saw Jesus and He looked like a female, one who had recently been crying. I wondered what all the tears were about, but didn't want to complicate my life with someone else's problems so I never gave her a second glance.

Once again, I looked away.

Later that night I tried to sleep, but I kept seeing Jesus.

Then I remembered something I read.

“I was hungry but you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink; I was a stranger but you would not welcome me in your homes, naked but you would not clothe me; I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me.” (Matthew 25:42-43)

I tried turning the other way, but instead in my mind, I heard these words:

“I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me.” (Matthew 25:45)

Guilt set in as insomnia took over.

I prayed to Jesus and He removed the veil.

I know today I will see Jesus. I will see Him disguised in many ways.

He will be someone hungry, someone lonely, someone less fortunate, someone sick and in need of care. He will be in the prisons and jails needing comfort and hope.

“I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!” (Matthew 25:40)

Oh, Jesus...continue to help me see.



This contribution is available at <http://blogforabetterlife.blogspot.com/2014/06/i-saw-jesus-yesterday.html>
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Sand, Sand, Sand... and what it has taught me about God! [at Veils and Vocations]

We are right, smack in the middle of swim season, which should be more aptly named sand season. As I have mentioned before, we are blessed to live on a beautiful lake with a lovely beach. My children take swim lessons five to six days a week, but more important than the lessons is the fun and friendships they have at the beach. However, the sand!!!

Sand, Sand, Sand...and what it has taught me about God!



I have tried everything over the past nine years of living here. I shower them as we exit the beach, we take our shoes off on the deck, I brush off their feet, we hang towels outside, they go directly to the shower when they enter the house, I even once kept a bucket on the deck to rewash feet. No matter what I do, the house gets full of sand. I have been known to chide my children that if they want a beach to go back to they must leave some of the sand behind. Alas, it is sand season...

However, the other day as I was yet again sweeping up mounds of sand and beginning to grumble about it, I had a thought, a God thought. We try hard to leave the sand at the beach, sure we like that nice "healthy glow" at summer's end and all the fantastic memories. We enjoy recounting the swimming and fishing tales and make it well known that we are blessed to live a mile from the beach, but we don't want sand to leave the beach. When it creeps into our cars and our homes, we grumble and fuss, we bemoan and belittle the beach that we love so much. Why can't it just stay where it belongs? Yes, we belong to the beach but it doesn't have to follow us around. And besides, does the whole world need to know that we live on a beach by the stray sand we seem to lug everywhere we go?

That is when I realized, how often do I do that to God? He is everywhere and we are proud to comment about our relationship with God and the church we attend, but do we really want Him everywhere? Do we try to keep Him in one place or another, on one day or another, in our prayer time and our Bibles, but not in our cleaning and entertainment. I realized how much I wanted God everywhere, I want Him to stick to me and follow me and be very difficult to get rid of. BUT, that means I need to live every moment as if I am on God's beach if you will. I need to accept that things aren't always perfect and pretty, but that is God working and the fact that much is being expected of me is a sign of how much He trusts and loves me. I also need to take Him with me and

not try to sluff Him off or contain His presence. Every moment, every room, every task should be at the feet of God, because whether we like it or not, He is there and watching. So this is my challenge for the next month, as I prepare to say so long to summer and sand, to find God in every spot and to let Him be in every breath and motion. I want God to stick to me like sand and me stick to Him the same way. Perhaps heaven isn't a garden nor a cloud, maybe it's actually a beach!

How do you bring God with you throughout your day and travels?

This contribution is available at <http://veilsandvocations.blogspot.com/2014/07/sand-sand-sandand-what-it-has-taught-me.html>

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The Motion of Grace [at Mere Observations]

“I think the world today is upside down. Everybody seems to be in such a terrible rush, anxious for greater development and greater riches and so on. There is much suffering because there is so very little love in homes and in family life. We have no time for our children, we have no time for each other; there is no time to enjoy each other. In the home begins the disruption of the peace of the world.” – Mother Teresa

Continuing with the fables of Aesop...



Disney's "The Tortoise and the Hare" (1934)

The Hare and the Tortoise

There was a hare who was rudely poking fun at a Tortoise for being so slow, and at the same time bragging about his own speed in running.

“All right, all right,” said the Tortoise, “let’s have a race and settle this thing. I’ll race you for five miles and bet I win.”

“Ho! ho!” said the Hare, “that is a bet.”

So they picked the Fox as a judge and off they went.

The Hare started off like the wind and was soon so far out in front he stopped and laughed and

laughed while he waited for the slow old Tortoise to come into sight.

He waited so long and he thought he was so safely ahead that he said, “Well, I’ll just take a quick little nap here by the side of the road on this grass.” The grass was soft and comfortable and he fell sound asleep. The Tortoise, meanwhile, kept jogging along slowly but steadily without a stop.

When the hare woke, he jumped up with a start and streaked down the road, but he was too late. The slow old Tortoise was crossing the finish line and had won the race.

The Moral: *Slow but sure is the quickest way in the long run.*

Much has been written on the pace of our lives these days and our desire to slow down. Yet we ignore these longings of our hearts. We’ve convinced ourselves that we need to stay on the treadmill, or in the maze, and keep running faster else we get left behind. Depending upon which truth you have chosen to follow, this is a lie. You can disconnect your cable or satellite television. You can survive without a Smartphone. You don’t have to work all those extra hours.

We’re all journeying along a track. There is a finish line awaiting us all at the end. We can choose whether to run it as a sprint, a jog or a leisurely stroll.

You can choose how you wish to get to the finish line.

There is more to life. It depends upon where it is you are going and whose race you are running.

*The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,
The sickness of one of my folks, or of myself, or ill-doing, or loss or lack of money, or
depressions or exaltations;
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the fitful events;
These come to me days and nights, and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself. – from Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman*

I have found that when my brain is running a million miles an hour and have put several irons in the fire that my heart does the same. Too often my heart follows my head instead of the other way around. Yet it is ultimately the heart that must provide the circulation through the pumping of blood, energy, motivation and *life* that will fuel my race. If I am not careful to keep my heart focused and disciplined I will not only fail to get to the finish line I will get lost along the way. In chasing the world and its enticements I am no longer “the Me myself.”

It is also my experience that by running at the world’s pace we no longer make time to think. To contemplate. The results are bumper sticker slogans and internet memes. Twitter wars of 140

characters. We shout at and past each other. It is a colossal waste of precious time and bears no fruit.

On Monday morning I read these lines from [*The Imitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*](#) (pages 86-87):

When unguarded, it (the heart) slips forthwith away, it runs to and fro, it is carried toward different objects, according as it is swayed by different impulses of nature.

It is never at rest: when it escapes from one object, it is entangled in another. It is excited by curiosity, it is allured by cupidity, it is misled by vanity, it is defiled by pleasure, it is wasted by sadness, it is tortured by envy, it is disturbed by love and hatred, it is worried by its own misery, and by worrying itself it is broken down.

Thus is my heart busied, thus it is defiled, when I watch not over it, or when I am careless about it.

O Lord, how great the need of being vigilant! How great the need of guarding my heart! It must not only be made to stay at home in recollection, but it must also be kept busy, yet only with Thee or for Thee.

I must examine, then, by what it is impelled, whether by nature or by grace: how it acts, whether according to Thy good pleasure, or according to its own natural likings; what it has ultimately in view, Thee or itself.

And I must watch constantly, until my heart, in some manner, has grown accustomed, sweetly and courageously to follow, for love of Thee, the motion of grace.

Slow and steady.

The motion of grace.

This song was inspired by Walt Whitman's poem *Leaves of Grass* and speaks to my heart.

*A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms;
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag;
The delight alone, or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides;
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun. –
from Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman*

Pessimism, Optimism, Hope and Change [at Catholic Stand]

Pope Francis has repeatedly urged us to evangelize. His oft repeated message calls us to share the word of God where we are, saying, “The Church must be in the streets”. As a passionate pro-life advocate, my participation in this call often centers on the sanctity of life. As His creatures, God’s first gift to us is our very being. In as much as He is the author of life, we owe Him our utmost effort in preserving it.

Evangelizing by Sharing a Personal Story

Our family has had its share of opportunities for ‘walking the talk’ when it comes to the pro-life message. One such [story](#) – finding myself to be a pregnant 14-year-old – has been a past topic. Another is the [experience](#) our daughter, Erika, lived when she was diagnosed with breast cancer at 20 weeks pregnant. Sharing her story has been a valuable tool for reaching out to those in similar circumstances – a surprisingly significant segment of society. That she was given only two options – abortion followed by treatment or waiting until after birth for treatment – is typical of advice most frequently given across the country. Often we see [stories](#) of a virtuous, heroic mother who forgoes treatments in deference to the life of the child she is carrying. What isn’t as commonplace is the medically advanced, morally sound option of treatment while pregnant. This is the alternative I feel a spiritual pull to share. After all, both mother and child deserve the best chance of survival!

Knowledge is a Powerful Ally

Unfortunately there’s much misinformation out there. For this reason, our daughter, a molecular biologist, Howard Hughes research scholar, and former forensic biologist did her share of research when presented with two unacceptable options by local doctors. What she found was that chemotherapy during pregnancy does not raise the risk of miscarriage or [other problems](#). In fact, the oncologists who treated her at M.D. Anderson in Houston had been [successfully](#) using this method for over 20 years. Although these children continue to be closely monitored, there have been [no incidents](#) of detrimental effects to date. This option is as safe for the unborn child as that of no treatment. Even though our daughter was high risk for miscarriage (4 occurrences prior to her second live birth), her doctor assured her the option of chemotherapy treatment would not increase her risk.

According to Erika, “The maternal-fetal doctor I saw in Houston told me that the biggest ‘risk’ of chemo treatments while pregnant was the increased likelihood of early contractions. However, she again assured me that a) any time a pregnant woman is stressed, she’s likely to have contractions

and b) those contractions are rarely productive”.

So what causes all of the misconceptions and why isn't this scientifically proven method more commonly shared? Perhaps doctors poorly explain or fail to acknowledge the truth. It's also possible that doctors aren't as familiar with chemotherapy during pregnancy as they could be. Every woman presented with a cancer diagnosis while pregnant is free to choose what she feels is best, but being armed with the facts – all of them – should be a vital part of that decision-making process.

A Happy Outcome for Both

As is typical, the outcome proved to be win-win when our healthy, full term granddaughter was born on Thanksgiving Day 2009. She joined all of the other 'chemo babies' of the past 25+ years, whose mothers had an increased chance of surviving a cancer diagnosis during pregnancy. Today, Rachel is a precocious 4-year-old who ranks in the 90th percentile in height and weight for her age group. She's a beginning reader who aspires to out run her rambunctious 6-year-old brother. Whenever we are out and about, her disarming smile is sure to garner comments and begin conversations. In true evangelizing style, we never miss an opportunity to express our gratitude to God for this living miracle of ours. Many a stranger has walked away from a checkout line or gathering, knowing that a cancer diagnosis while pregnant doesn't have to be a death sentence – for the child or the mother.

(l) Rachel, born healthy after Erika received chemo while pregnant. (r) Three generations of breast cancer treatment survivors!

Erika has just passed her 5th 'cancerversary' and continues to beat the odds with which our gene pool has burdened her. As the fifth generation of women with the BRCA1 breast cancer gene, she has now outlived all but one of her predecessors after diagnosis. I'm the other, with eight years of survival. In all likelihood, had aggressive treatment been denied, our children would be without mothers now.

The recurring tales of mothers who unselfishly choose to forgo chemotherapy are undeniably virtuous and, yes, heroic, but they tragically fail to acknowledge the valid scientific facts of what my daughter and granddaughter are living proof. According to Jennifer K. Litton, MD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Breast Medical Oncology at The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, “Not offering treatment during pregnancy has the potential of causing significant harm to the patient, and thus the fetus, as delay of therapy may cause further tumor spread both locally and distally, decreasing the overall chance for cure”. Thus armed with scientific support, it's our life-affirming mission to educate in any and every way possible – so that others may benefit from what we have experienced. After all, who wouldn't want what's best for both mother and child if given a viable and moral choice?

This contribution is available at <http://catholicstand.com/evangelizing-life-chemo-pregnant/>
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Premarital Sex or Fornication? [at TASTE and SEE]

I say all this from a simple place. That is, I didn't do anything like research the etymologies of the words involved.

I like to call "it" premarital sex rather than fornication. (Just check my labels for this blog.) First, most people I know do not have the word, fornication, in their every day vocabulary, so it's definition is not second nature to most of the world (most of the world I know, anyhow. ;) Second, premarital sex is a more direct reminder that sex is tied to marriage, marriage of the two people involved, who may already be married to someone else.

Having said that, I recently read a blog post you will want to read:

[***I will not teach my kids about safe sex because there is no such thing***](#) by Matt Walsh

It's a little on the long side, but it's worth reading the whole thing, and then forwarding it to others you know, even those that participate in premarital sex while living together, or not. Use your best judgment.

This is my favorite way to respond in these situations:



image - <http://www.bible.ca/oral-birth-control-NO.gif>

This contribution is available at <http://www.tasteandsee2.blogspot.com/2014/08/premarital-sex-or-fornication.html>

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The Aroma of Love [at warriorsworlddad]



Daily Offering Even non-coffee drinkers seem to relish the aroma of fresh ground, fresh brewed coffee. Its essence evokes feelings of warmth and comfort, especially on cold damp days. For those of us who drink coffee, that first sip of the day fortifies us for the challenges ahead.

Imagine now if that same coffee that steels us for the tasks ahead can also help provide for the most basic needs of the poor living in the Third World. Our morning beverage can provide for life sustaining food for children and the elderly, job training programs that enable the needy to become self-sufficient or even provide access to medical and spiritual care.

Coffee, or as its aficionados refer to it, *the nectar of the gods*, can be the means to participation in the Corporal Works of Mercy promulgated by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Even Tea Drinkers may join in without violating their palate. That is if the coffee is Saint Basil Fair Trade Coffee.

The Ground Floor Saint Basil Coffee was started by Jim and Mary Margaret Boyles and their children in 2004 at the urging of Fr. Vincent Thompson, a Basilian Missionary working with the poor in Bogota, Columbia. Fr. Thompson urged Jim to use his Gift of Creativity to aid the missions. After much prayer and research the idea of selling Fair Trade Coffee to raise funds percolated to the top. Since 2006, the all-volunteer company has provided nearly \$400,000 to the missions around the world.

Brewing Hope Coffee lovers know the ecstasy of a bottomless cup of coffee. A nod of the head and a raised cup produces another round of joy. The crew at Saint Basil Coffee does their best to mimic that alert waiter by answering the needs of others. Just this year as of September 19, 2013, they have distributed \$36,500 to the missions from the sale of their coffee and from donations by generous benefactors. That's \$36,500 from total sales of \$61,350. In February, Saint Basil Coffee sent money to The Congregation of Saint Basil (The Basilians) to fund a Saint Vincent de Paul

program in Cali, Colombia and to Medellín, Colombia to purchase much needed equipment for a carpenter job training program for youths.

In May, funds were sent to the Basilians for Fr. Oscar Soto in Bogotá, Colombia for his project to feed children and the elderly.

In June, Saint Basil Coffee sent money to The Congregation of the Holy Spirit to purchase a 4WD vehicle for Saint Joseph's Nyamirama Parish in Kabale, Uganda. The parish is very remote and roads are nearly non-existing and a 4WD vehicle is necessary to provide pastoral services and transport the sick to medical facilities.

Money was also sent to a school for girls in Arusha, Tanzania operated by the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro. The funds are to be used to purchase a mill to hull and ground maize for food at the school and to provide some income from a nearby village.



For every pound of coffee we sell we can distribute about \$5.00

Please Put on Another Pot

Besides the Boyles family, others are stirring the savory blend of coffee and faith into action. The aroma of love has spread to St. Anne's Catholic Church in Houston, Texas where volunteers sell the coffee once a month after Mass. Sales average about 70 pounds



which yields an income of about \$500 on gross sales of \$980. Like the vineyard owner in the gospel, Saint Basil Coffee hopes to recruit more workers. If 10 churches more would do as St. Anne's does, that would yield \$5000 in real benefits to the needy. Or if 100 churches would just purchase 10 pounds of coffee per month to use as they see fit,

the same \$5000 gift would materialize.

A Nourishing Substance Many churches may not be able to use 10 pounds of coffee a month at their parish but there are opportunities for growth. My mother use to spread coffee grounds in her garden to fertilize the plants. Parishes could purchase a supply a Saint Basil Coffee and donate it to a local Senior Care home, maybe even a retirement home for Priests and Religious. If a Parish is offering a Bible Study on Social Justice, serving Saint Basil Coffee with the Donuts is a perfect blend. Offering the coffee for sale during Advent provides the perfect stocking stuffer for that coffee aficionado on your list.

Grown from Organic Arabica Beans

Sharing a Cup! Blessed John Paul the Great called on all Christians to be missionaries in his World Youth Day talk of 2001. Our current pontiff, Pope Francis, has urged us to not forget the poor. Saint Basil coffee provides a means to do that without traveling far from home. The Fair Trade coffee helps small coffee growers and the profits benefit others who need help the most For those concerned with the environment and social justice the coffee is produced from Organic Arabica coffee beans and purchased through a Certified Fair Trade agreement. This causes the prices to be higher than mass produced coffee, but the product is of the highest quality and the profits go to helping the needy.

Not the Last Drop

Nearly everyone knows a coffee lover, it could be your spouse, brother, sister, BFF, boss or significant other's parents. Show your appreciation for them and make a contribution to a truly worthy cause at the same time. Offer up a cup of Saint Basil Coffee, or better yet one of those 100 cup urns that's in the church's pantry.

Saint Basil Coffee can be purchased on the Internet at

www.saintbasilcoffee.com or by calling 713-880-9090.

This contribution is available at <http://warriorworlddad.com/>
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The Transfiguration [at Thu, 07 Aug 2014 12:00:00 EST]

Here is the magnificent mosaic of the Cross in the semi-dome of the apse of Sant' Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, made around 549 probably by many of the same artists who made the mosaics at San Vitale in the same city. The Cross appears as a giant emblem of gold and jewels floating in a blue nimbus filled with stars. Below it is the figure of Saint Apollinaris, a sainted local bishop buried below the altar. On either side is a procession of sheep, symbols of the faithful. The Cross is the center of an unusual version of the Transfiguration, told entirely in symbols. Flanking the Cross at the top are figures of Moses and Elijah. The hand of God comes down out of the very top indicating the voice that spoke out of the cloud. Three sheep appear just below the Cross, one on the left and two on the right. They stand for Peter, James, and John who witnessed the event.



This mosaic is an example of the variety of Byzantine art before the Iconoclastic Controversy. Compare it with the almost contemporary version of the same subject in the apse of the monastery church of Saint Catherine in the Sinai.

The Greek Church instituted a feast of the Transfiguration long before it was adopted by the West,

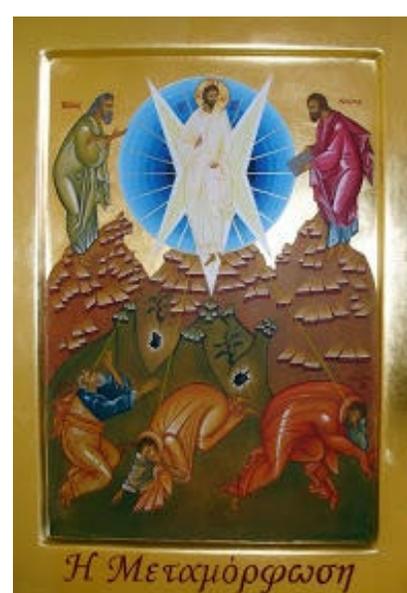
fixing the day to August 6th, forty days, the length of Lent, before the Exaltation of the Cross. This association of the Transfiguration with the Passion is beautifully expressed by the early Byzantine mosaic in the apse of Sant' Apollinare in Classe near Ravenna, built in the mid-6th century. The witnesses of the Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah above, the Apostles Peter, James and John below, represented as three sheep, are standing around a great jeweled Cross, rather than Christ in His glory and majesty; only the face of the Lord appears, within a small medallion in the middle of the Cross, an expression of the humility with which He accepted the Passion.

The three witnesses of the Transfiguration, Ss. Peter, James and John, often appear together in the Gospels as the disciples closest to Christ. Along with Peter's brother St. Andrew, they were the first disciples called to follow Him, and were present for the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4, 38-39); they were also the witnesses of the healing of the daughter of Jairus, (Mark 5, 37) and the agony in the garden (Mark 14, 33). They alone receive new names from Christ as a sign of their mission, (Mark 3, 16-17) Peter, "the Rock", being the name given to Simon, James and John receiving the name Boanerges, "sons of thunder". But at the Transfiguration, as in so many other places, it is Peter alone whose words the Evangelists record for us, words which the church of Rome sings this days at his very tomb, "Lord, it is good for us to be here.

The Transfiguration of Our Lord:

a commentary on the icon,

by Dom Alex Echeandia O.S.B.



Size: 70.5cm by 49cm Texts: Matt. 17: 1-9, Mark 9: 1-9, Luke 9: 28b-36 **This icon was written in the Monastery of the Incarnation, Peru, based on an icon written by Theophanes the Greek in the Cathedral of the Transfiguration in Pereslav at the beginning of the XVth Century, now in the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow**

This solemnity commemorates liturgically the consecration of the basilicas on Mount Tabor. In spite of the fact that it is a less ancient feast than that of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, it takes its date from that feast. According to an ancient tradition, the Transfiguration of Our Lord took place forty days before the Crucifixion. Thus the feast of the Transfiguration is forty days before the Exultation which is on September 14th. The connection between the two feasts is shown by the fact that, from August 6th, the Church sings hymns about the Cross.

The feast of the Transfiguration dates from the end of the Vth century, and already in the VIth century, we find enormous depictions of the Transfiguration in the central apses of basilicas at Parenzo, in Saint Apollinare in Ravenna and in St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai.



In the Orthodox Church, every iconographer, after his hands have been consecrated to practise the wonderful ministry to reproduce Beauty and to be a messenger of the light that is revealed through the icon, begins his service by “writing” an icon of the Transfiguration of the Lord, because every icon is a reflection of the luminous and glorious face of Christ as he appears on Mount Tabor. The iconographer has to manifest in colours and by symbol the interior image contemplated by him in his own prayer and to communicate to others by means of his art, as they ascend their own interior mountain to pray, something of the glow of the divine rays of light that illuminated the

apostles.

The icon is very true to the Gospel narrative and focuses our attention on the scene as a whole. Some icons show Jesus ascending the mountain with his disciples on one side, and descending on the other side, telling them not to reveal anything that has happened. However, more often, all the attention is given to the central episode which reveals this mystery before our eyes most directly, with emphasis on the protagonists in this meeting and on the two spaces that appear to become one: heaven and earth.

The central figure is Christ who directs his gaze on the person who is contemplating the icon, with the desire to transmit his glory as Son of God, shining with a light that illuminates every part of the icon: the faces and clothes of all who are there, the rocks in the countryside, all and everything are illuminated by the light that has its source in Christ. His clothes are white, as at the resurrection, an explosion of divinity, of light, of the light that is "the light of men." The white clothes show who is the source of that light, "God from God, Light from Light," as we confess in the Creed. It is the shining whiteness that the author of the Gospel describes with such wonder. Christ is at the centre of a circle of light which stands for the Glory, the Divinity, the Infinite. The sun at dawn breaks upon us, as we sing in the Benedictus of Zechariah.

In some icons of the transfiguration, Christ appears in the middle of a geometric pattern called a "mandorla". It represents the "luminous cloud" that covered him. In the Bible this cloud stands for the presence of God, and it is a symbol of the Holy Spirit who is within Jesus, who covers him and who fills the whole of humanity in a veiled way, and who at the resurrection shall appear in all his strength.

In Christ the whole Trinity is both revealed and hidden:

The Father who says, "This is my most beloved Son. Listen to him.

The Beloved Son, revealed as Word and as pleasing to the Father.

The Spirit is the cloud which stands for the Glory and the Presence the hangs over the Son as in the Incarnation when he covered Mary with his shadow as a cloud.



Jesus is accompanied by two figures, an old man who is Elijah and a younger one who is Moses. Moses is carrying a stone tablet which signifies the Law. The Law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah) bear witness to Jesus. The two are friends of God, men of the mountains and of prayer, the man of Sinai (Moses) and of Carmel and Horeb (Elijah). The two represent the whole of mankind, the dead (Moses) and the living (Elijah) because, according to biblical tradition, he did not die but was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire (merkabah). Jesus is Lord of the living and the dead. They both sought the face of God but did not see Him. They now contemplate the face of Christ who is the image of the Father. Before the Christ of the Transfiguration, the Law gives way to the supreme Law. Here the Lord does not manifest himself as the gentle breeze as on Mount Horeb which surprised Elijah; rather as the full revelation of the Word of the Father. Moses and Elijah represent the Old Testament which is fulfilled in the New.

In the lower part of the icon are the three chosen disciples of Jesus, Peter, John and James. They enter into the same Glory of Jesus. The contrast in their posture is clear. Jesus and the two figures from the Old Testament seem to show the peace of eternal life.



The disciples, on the other hand, are prostrated on the earth by the sheer glory of the Lord, struck down in a posture of holy awe because no one can see God without being totally dumbstruck by the force of the vision. They are disconcerted by the light and the voice. They are witnesses who have experienced the stunning force of a full theophany.

Peter turns to Jesus and have enough presence of mind to suggest to him, "Let us construct three tents..." a then seems to be overcome by a tremendous joy. John, the youngest of the three, witness to the Word, appears in complete consternation; it looks as though he wishes to escape. He covers his eyes with his cloak as though the light is blinding him more effectively than the sun. James, also on the ground, covers his face with his cloak, unable to look on his Master face to face. These three are witnesses to the glory of Jesus, as they will be of the agony of Jesus, subject to the fears of death.

This event shows us the divinity of Christ who, passing through his death, resurrection and

ascension, manifests himself to us as the shining Glory of the Father, having offered himself for us voluntarily (Mark 9: 2-0).

When you were transfigured, Oh Christ God, on Mount Tabor, you revealed your glory to your disciples according to their capacity. Let your eternal light shine on us who are sinners by the intercession of the Mother of God. Oh Giver of Light, glory be to you.

Transfigured on the mountain, your disciples have seen you and have contemplated your glory, oh Christ, you who are God; then when they saw you crucified, they understood that you did what you did because of your love, that your passion was absolutely voluntary, and they could preach to the world that you are the Splendour of the Father. (Troparion for the Transfiguration)

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Why the Church is Opposed to Masturbation [at Even the Wilderness]

The Catholic Church identifies masturbation as a sin. And so should we all. The issue of self-gratification is somewhat covered-up in comparison to the pornography epidemic (please don't think I'm downsizing the gravity of the latter), but it remains a widespread problem.

Some churches and religious groups deny that the action is evil, and its even supported as a healthy exercise in many secular circles, but no matter how much sugar we pour onto it, how many frills we don it with, or how many excuses we come up with, the fact remains: masturbation is sinful.

"How could that be?" one might ask. "It can't hurt anyone. And its consequence free! No unplanned pregnancies, and you can retain your purity while getting a pleasure fix- its practically the perfect solution to premarital relations and infidelity. Why doesn't the Church *support* it?"

Whoa, buddy. Let's break this down. The Church has not, is not now, will never, and cannot support the action of self-gratification because:

It does hurt someone.

Like all drugs, it hurts the user first- dopamine, the happy-drug chemical reaction in the brain, is highly, highly,

highly

addictive (think cocaine), and things like pornography and masturbation cause it to rush through like the wind in quick doses. As masturbation is

virtually accessible at all times

, that shot of dopamine easily becomes a crutch that you cannot do without. Eventually, you need more, and more, and more, and there you go- a full-blown addiction. What do addictions do? They drag us away from God. They make us neglect prayer, neglect our studies and chores, neglect relationships; they draw us away from Mass early (or keep us from going at all), they turn Confession into a nightmare (and we therefore avoid it like the plague), and slowly tighten themselves around us like the chains of evil that they are. As Jackie Angel once intoned, "When you can't say 'no' to something, you're addicted to it". When you can't deny an urge, after a while it takes over the place that God should have in our hearts. And so, there it is- idolatry, plain and simple (for more information on the effects of brain chemicals when related to lust, I found

[this article on pornography](#)

to be quite concise).

It is not consequence free. Masturbation can cause physical injuries of various degrees, depending on what method is used to get high; but even more common for the men who engage in it are (a) erectile dysfunction and (b) premature ejaculation (I'm focusing on the men's symptoms because the women's are less obvious). Which doesn't sound like a big deal, but... suppose that a man who has been administering pleasure to himself for several years meets the girl of his dreams. They don't sleep together until their wedding night, whereupon... nothing happens. That relationship will take a huge kick, because not only are they prevented from consummating their marriage after months of patient abstinence when they had been so looking forward to it, but the bride will probably be able to guess, if the groom doesn't tell her, that the reason is either pornography or masturbation, two of the most common causes of erectile dysfunction. As for the second physical consequence, what happens when a couple is wanting children, but that gets difficult because the husband's semen is not reaching the wife's cervix, as he ejaculates too early? Every time that frustrating instance occurs, the relationship is going to be struck a Dolorous Strike. Add all of this to the fact that he's cheating on her with himself, and... well, how long do you think the marriage will be healthy?

You cannot retain purity while living a masturbatory lifestyle, anymore than you can retain your purity while regularly engaging in intercourse with someone you are not married to, anymore than you can while watching pornography everyday, anymore than you can while supporting prostitution, anymore than you can while using contraception.

'Purity' is not code for 'virginity'. 'Purity' is synonymous with 'chastity', and chastity means the integration of soul and body, striving for holiness with one's body, and treating one's body with holiness (I talked more about chastity

[here](#)

, if you aren't embarrassed enough by now). A sexually-active woman can be purest of the pure, whereas any virgin can be totally unchaste. To give yourself pleasure through sexualized fantasies and genital movement is a mockery of sexual union, and, like 'sexual expression', premarital relations, and everything else that debases and disgraces the name of sex and marriage, kills purity.

Masturbation is not the solution to anything.

Self-gratification stems, primarily, from lust (an inordinate hunger for sex, and the willingness to use people/things to get a similar experience; viewing people as objects and so on), loneliness, and selfishness. Ergo, it creates a whole mindset, a lifestyle, of lust, loneliness, and selfishness. Lust weakens one's capacity for real love, loneliness prevents us from truly being intimate with Our Lord or one another, and selfishness keeps us from the acts of self-giving and unconditional compassion that make us into saints.



So, what can be done?

- **Confession.** Frequently, properly, reverently partake of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There is nothing like Confession to help us heal from sin, and a healthy sense of shame from wrongdoing helps us to resist temptation in future.
- **Eucharist.** Our Lord in the Bread of Life nourishes the soul, strengthening us to fight against 'Satan and all other evil spirits who prowl about the world, seeking the ruin of souls'.
- **Pick up the pebbles.** While masturbation may be the biggest boulder blocking the road, strengthen yourself by picking up the pebbles. Pray for purity, keep Christ company in Adoration, and work on being selfless in small, seemingly-insignificant areas.
- **Get help.** There are many online services ([RECLAIM](#), for instance), and I'm sure you can find a support group or counselor to help you reclaim your purity.
- **Find another release.** Writing. Exercising. Start dispensing of your excess energy which is usually funneled into self-gratification by doing something healthy and satisfying.

And always, always, always, always pray for the strength, prudence, love, and mercy to get back up, shoulder the cross that is leaving a vice behind, and follow Him.

Lots of love and prayers,

Grace

This contribution is available at <http://garlicgraffiti.blogspot.ca/2014/07/why-church-is-opposed-to-masturbation.html>

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The Way, the Truth, and the Light [at Come to the Water]

It was a great blessing to celebrate Pentecost and Trinity Sunday masses in the Holy Land. Our pilgrim group celebrated Pentecost at *The Beheading of John the Baptist Church* in Madaba, Jordan. The following Sunday we celebrated Trinity Sunday at *Annunciation Church* in Beit Jala in Palestine.



Of course, these masses were spoken in Arabic, because of the beautiful change of Vatican II that mass is said in the language of the people. Listening to the sacred liturgy of the universal Church in a foreign tongue was an extremely spiritual experience! Far from feeling “lost” I felt more connected to the Body of Christ than at any other mass. EVER. Let me explain...

Since I could not understand the words, I focused totally on the music, gestures, and ritual of the Mass; the familiarity and consistency was present throughout the liturgy. God showed me how truly ONE we are in our worship of Him. For example, on Trinity Sunday, the opening hymn was *All Creatures of Our God and King* sung in Arabic, but to the tune familiar to so many Christians. The communion hymn, *Holy God We Praise Your Name*, and the closing hymn *Immaculate Mary*, are so familiar to me I was able to sing along in English.

The Eucharistic celebration is the source and summit of our faith. The structure of the mass is uniform throughout the world. I knew where we were at every point, because of the gestures that are so habitual and natural. From the Introductory rite of the greeting and penitential act (striking

our breasts three times “through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault,” and the Kyrie (for the first time I really pondered why we say “Lord Have Mercy, Christ Have Mercy, Lord Have Mercy” in Greek – still don’t know), to the Gloria sung by the choir, I intuitively knew every word being said because they are written on my heart. It became really fun, during the Gloria, to try to follow the refrain in my head in English. I had the readings of the day on my Kindle, so I was able to read along silently in English to the Living Word spoken in Arabic.

There are some traditions in the Latin Patriarchate mass that are different than our liturgy defined by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Incense is used at each Sunday liturgy, and the ambo and Gospel book are incensed before the Gospel reading. My favorite variation is at communion. When young children approach the priest (no lay Eucharistic Ministers are used), he places the chalice on top of their heads for a blessing. How beautifully this communicates that, although you are too young to receive the body of Christ on the tongue, Christ is fully present in you and over your entire being.

There are many differences within the American and Christian Arabian cultures, from what we eat and the music and dance we enjoy to how we drive, grocery shop, smoke tobacco, apply make-up, etc. But, one thing is the same: our faith. We are exactly the same in our understanding of the mercy and love and salvation that we receive through Jesus Christ. Seeing how united we are in the common beliefs of the Catholic Church was made more powerful in relation to our different life experiences. Praise the Lord that we share the knowledge revealed in the scripture verse carved into the ambo at Annunciation Church:

“I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE” John 14:6.





This contribution is available at <http://coffeenapsandbooks.wordpress.com/2014/07/22/the-way-the-truth-and-the-light/>
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The Annunciation Revisited II [at salliesART]



In my blog posting of Sunday, June 22nd, I wrote the following paragraph:

[This week's] drawing, entitled "Annunciation to Our Lady", was inspired by another John William Waterhouse painting. The Waterhouse painting, entitled simply "The Annunciation", is a large canvas with the two figures (Our Lady and the Archangel Gabriel) placed in a horizontal frame. I, however, decided to do two separate drawings showing a single figure in each vertical frame. Thus, today's drawing is of Our Lady at the moment the Archangel appeared to her. Very soon, I plan to begin working on a drawing of the Archangel Gabriel as shown in this same Waterhouse painting and will probably be posting it a couple of Sundays from now.

As I promised above, this week I am posting the drawing of the Archangel Gabriel inspired by the same Waterhouse painting -- *The Annunciation*.

I have posted not only the new drawing showing St. Gabriel, but the previous drawing of Our Lady. I did this because I wanted you to see both individual drawings so that you could better appreciate the third drawing included in this section -- a combination of the two single drawings into one.



Of course, the combined drawing is a bit forced as I have always found it difficult to exactly match two separate drawings when combining them --even when I have purposely worked at making the two fit. Each drawing occurs in a different time and state of mind and so it seems, to me anyway, that they never really quite fit. Maybe at first glance it appears that both pieces were drawn as one, but a closer look reveals the differences -- not only slight mis-adjustments, but a lack of balance especially in the figures.



Of course, I may be making more of these seeming discrepancies because I know each drawing so intimately. I can't help seeing all the mistakes and aspects of each and then when I combine them, all the problem areas just seem magnified.

SUKI AND SALLIE



Suki has had a difficult week!

First there was the strange man who came to visit and stayed well past Suki's midday feeding time.

Suki really does not enjoy having unknown people in her home and this person stayed for over two hours! Even worse, I stayed with the man, talking and talking, which meant that Suki had to stay in the same room since she insists upon being wherever I am. Oh, did I mention that this strange man was a computer repair person? Sorry, I thought I had already said something about why he was here, anyway....

My computer had developed a couple of unpleasant problems and even though I had tried my best to correct them, I just couldn't seem to manage it. So, I called in a professional. It turned out that the problem was some very stubborn malware (malicious software). Fortunately, the computer guy knew all about it and was able to boot that old so and so right out of my hard drive and clean up some other junk while he was at it!

To add insult to injury, as far as Suki was concerned, this strange man stayed until about 20 minutes past noon (he arrived at 10 a.m.). Suki has me well trained so that she always gets her midday meal by noon at the latest. As each second passed after the kitchen clock struck noon, I could see Suki becoming more and more upset. The moment the man left, Suki begin to cry piteously. I fed her immediately.

The second reason Suki had a difficult week was due to the fact that the building's fire alarm went off at about 8 p.m. Thursday. Suki was well into that deep sleep that occurs within a couple of hours after a meal (she had her supper at 6 p.m. as usual) and so she jumped about a foot in the air when the alarm sounded. She then made a mad dash for the bedroom closet and dove into her "bolt hole" (a storage box with old towels in it) in the very back of the closet!

Suki and I both truly dislike that fire alarm -- it is terribly loud, almost painfully so. I quickly followed her to the bedroom as the sound is just a bit less intense there than elsewhere in the apartment. Fortunately, the fire engines arrived quickly and soon after that the alarm was turned off. I did not smell smoke, hear any running in the hallway and no one came knocking on my door so it was, I assume, another false alarm.

Suki took no chances, however, and stayed in the back of the closet until after 10 p.m. Ever since the time the alarm sounded within an hour after going off the first time, Suki has become seriously cautious about the whole matter!

As for me, I have had another quiet week with no appointments of any kind. The visit from the

computer repair person was tiring, but worth it.

This coming week I have a couple of appointments, but I do not expect either to be too difficult as they are both just for follow-up. Otherwise, everything remains pretty much the same with me -- only a few new aches and pains -- nothing major.

14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

This Sunday's Gospel reading contains one of those statements that gives such comfort in times of trial and difficulty:

Come to me all you who labour and are burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy and my burden light. Matt. 11:29-30

I pray that we may all experience that comfort which comes from resting in the Lord.



This Scripture passage reminds me of one of my favourite Irish blessings:

May the raindrops fall lightly on your brow. May the soft winds freshen your spirit. May the sunshine brighten your heart. May the burdens of the day rest lightly upon you and May God enfold you in the mantle of His love.

Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://salliesart.blogspot.ca/2014/07/the-annunciation-revisited-ii.html>
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*After our trip to Alaska, I published a summary of our vacation at **Musings of a Catholic Mom** in one long post, in the form of Seven Quick Takes ([“7 Long Days: The Alaska Edition”](#)). I had planned to do something like that this week but I think I’ll break it up into several posts—and like I said the other day, I’ll try very hard not to bore you....and perhaps I’ll give you more than one post a week after all.*

It was the first day of summer. We had spent most of the previous day in the car, and everyone was exhausted. I woke up at 4:30 am to find sunlight peeking through the curtains in our condo in Smuggler’s Notch, Vermont—which is a ski resort in the winter, and a fun place for a getaway during the summer. I realized that we were quite a bit farther north than where we live, and it was in fact the longest day of the year. After downing a cup of coffee and a little bit of food I threw on my running clothes and headed out the door. I ended up running about six and a half miles, a little bit farther than I had planned, but what a beautiful morning it was, in such a beautiful place! And there was a [geocache](#) just over three miles down the road—which was a good excuse for a 6+ mile out-and-back. When I returned, everyone was still sleeping.

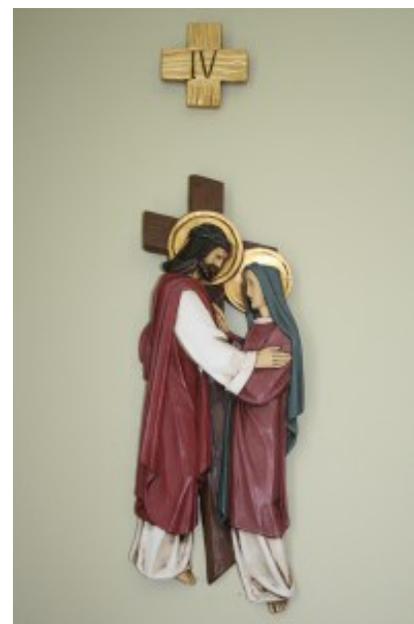


When we go on vacation, we’re usually leaving on a Saturday, which means arriving late in the day and going to church on Sunday morning. It’s nice to start a fun-filled week with Mass. After I showered and we dragged the boys out of bed, we found this lovely little church a few miles away.



At the beginning of Mass when the lector got up and said “Good Morning, and welcome to St. Mary of the Assumption Church,” Joe and I looked at each other and grinned. When we lived in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, we attended [St. Mary of the Assumption](#)—it’s where I was received into the Catholic Church, in fact!

If you’ve been following my blogs for a long time, you probably know that when I attend Mass at a church other than my own, I like to take pictures and post them here. So after Mass when Joe and the boys waited in the car, I stayed behind for a few minutes to snap some photos. A nice gentleman asked me if I was vacationing from out of town, and I said yes, and that I like to take pictures of the churches where I visit. He said, “Welcome to our little country church!” And a lovely little country church it was, too; almost as little as [Our Lady of the Valley](#), and [Immaculate Conception](#) in Alaska—and every bit as lovely.





After Mass we stopped by [a local winery](#) to sample some of their fare (just me—Joe was driving), and the wine-tasting guy told us we should check out [Burger Barn](#) for lunch. Just a little trailer with a few picnic tables outside that served 100% local grass-fed beef. A long line and a long wait for our food (this blog was once called “Eating Slowly,” after all), and totally worth it!

In the afternoon we played our first ever game of disc golf. We opted for the nine-hole easy course instead of the more difficult eighteen-hole course nearby.



Later while the boys checked out the water park at the resort, I decided to head toward town (actually a village—[Jeffersonville](#), pop. 731) and check out a couple of geocaches down the road. To my delight I discovered that they were hidden near an old covered bridge that is still in use. I found [one geocache](#) in the woods off a nearby trail, and looked for the other one underneath the bridge but couldn't find it.



After grabbing pizza for dinner at the resort Joe and I left the kids in the condo to play their video games and watch TV or whatever it is they do, and went to a pub to listen to some live music for a while.

What did we do the next day? Climbed a mountain. And another one the day after that. I'll tell you about those adventures in a future post. Thanks for visiting!

This contribution is available at <http://eatingslowly.wordpress.com/2014/07/15/get-thee-to-church-st-marys-cambridge-vermont-or-new-england-vacay-day-1/>
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Dive In [at Dancing in the Rain]

I'm a sucker for the beach and will go through bottles of sunscreen in order to stay and play because life is good and yet, life is better at the beach. A few weeks ago I was headed out to Jones with some friends. Preparing for the trip I was excited; however, every time I'm actually on the beach it's as though it is a novel adventure. For amidst the certain and familiar, the ocean always bears some slight unpredictability.

Driving out someone mentioned the rip tide being strong on this particular day. As we played in the waves, this became apparent. We kept looking up to make sure we were in line with the lifeguard chair. We always were; however, it's a slight problem when you haven't realized that the guards have been moving down the beach. Translation: the undercurrent was dragging us more than we realized. Besides it resulting in a long walk back to the umbrella, it made me think about the synonymous times in life where we are aware of difficult situations and are "doing" the right things to make sure we are still swimming within the realm of the lifeguard's careful watch. And yet we can still get swept away. What are the undercurrents in your life that drag and pull you off course? What brings you out to sea or drags you away from where you intended to be?

As the tide was rising, the waves took on a different character. Waves that were innocent enough to "duck under" earlier in the day took on new momentum, resulting in me tumbling along the ocean floor. As we figured out the change in the tide, we recognized the need to swim against the current more aggressively, while also recognizing that some waves are easier to dive instead of ducking under. Isn't it true in life as well? When there are situations and circumstances we can't circumvent, we can try and duck and hide or we can plunge forward, diving through.

We don't always get to choose the turn of the tide; however, when we learn how to read and see the waves as they are we can learn to play instead of hide. It can be a great game instead of spiraling mess. Let us see with eyes of faith the adventure of uncertainty and dive in, fully trusting God is always with us and that His angels and saints sit on watch so that no matter where we go we may know He is always near. Let us plunge into the mysteries of our faith and the most Sacred Heart. Let us dive in.

Mother Mary, show us how.

Verso l'alto,

Kathryn

It's time to take the leap of faith so here I go I'm diving in I'm diving deep

I'll keep you safe on my watch tonight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJesfljJ1vk>

This contribution is available at <http://dancingintherain401.blogspot.com/2014/07/dive-in.html>
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Everything You've Been Taught About Modesty Is Wrong [at Catholic Chapter House Blog]



Written By: Gregory Watson,

(Well, incomplete, anyway.)

“Purity requires modesty, an integral part of temperance. Modesty protects the intimate center of the person. It means refusing to unveil what should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity.” (CCC §2521).

I promised a friend that I would write an article about modesty. She was offended by the seeming preponderance of modesty talks that are directed toward women that tell them that “men are visual creatures and so women must cover up to prevent their brothers from sinning.” This message bothers her (and should bother you, too) because this limited understanding of modesty can lead us to some worrying conclusions: a) that men can’t control their lusting, so women have to eliminate the possibility through how they dress; b) that modesty is primarily *about* dress; and c) following from a and b, that modesty is specifically a women’s issue.

When the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* discusses modesty (in paragraphs 2521 to 2524), clothing is mentioned just once, “It inspires one’s choice of clothing (§2522), and women are never singled out. While our attire is certainly one aspect of modesty, the *CCC* makes it clear that modesty as a virtue encompasses the entire person, and, indeed, his or her relationships with others. Modesty *is* a virtue of protection, in that it defends both the modest person’s purity, and the purity of those with whom we interact. While on the one hand, it is degrading to suggest that men (or all people for that matter) are slaves to our baser lusts, the reality of The Fall is that our lusts do often war against our desire to do what is right (cf. Romans 7). There is a sense in which modesty (as with the Cardinal Virtue of Temperance, of which modesty is a daughter virtue) is about reigning in our passions and strengthening our wills against them.

Ultimately, though, modesty isn’t about wearing too much or too little (though again, this is

certainly part of it). It's about the dignity of the person, of our own dignity, and of the dignity of others as subjects, rather than objects. If humility can be defined as not thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought, modesty could conversely be defined as not thinking more lowly of ourselves and others than we ought. Made in the very image of our Creator, we must never use others for our gain, nor should we present ourselves in such a way that lowers our own dignity and projects a message that others can or should desire to use us. This projection of ourselves, our "image", so to speak, includes our comportment, our actions, our speech, and, yes, our wardrobe. Being civil with others, patient with their faults, polite and well-mannered, discreet with regard to secrets and confidences, refusing to gossip, and dressing appropriately are all dimensions of what it means to be modest. They are all aspects of "refusing to unveil what should remain hidden," as the *Catechism* puts it (§2521).

There's a scene in one of the later episodes of *Firefly* where Kaylee, the ship's mechanic, is trying to figure out why Simon, the rich doctor-turned-fugitive, still speaks and behaves so well-mannered. She insists that such formal manners "don't mean nothin' out here in the black" of space. Simon objects, saying that they do, in fact, mean more out in the lawless places, and tells her that his politeness, his manners, his "proper" behaviour, is the only way he has of showing her how much he really likes her. Simon, you see, understands what modesty means. In our world of increasing decadence, the virtue of modesty is the clearest sign that we have of our love and respect for others.

Clearly, modesty isn't "just a women's issue". In fact, for men, it used to be referred to as "chivalry". Far from letting it die, it's time for a new generation of Ladies and Gentlemen in the truest sense of those terms, to rise up and present themselves in such a way that men and women everywhere will be reminded of their dignity as human beings, created in God's image, and not simply as carnal brutes with impulse-control problems.

In my next article, I'll explore a little more what that looks like. See you in two weeks!

Suggested Reading:

[If You Really Loved Me: 100 Questions on Dating, Relationships, and Sexual Purity](#)

[Raising Pure Teens](#)

[Pure Freedom \(MP3\)](#)

[For Men, For Women, Modesty](#), by Catholic Chapter House.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicchapterhouse.com/blog/2014/07/18/everything-youve-been-taught-about-modesty-is-wrong/>
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