

NewEvangelists.org

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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.

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We should be planting trees the tree of life [at Leaven For The Loaf]

(Original version posted June 23, 2013.)

Bishop Joseph Libasci sees a storm coming as religious liberty is challenged in today's America. In his June 22 homily in Manchester, New Hampshire at a Mass dedicated to the Fortnight for Freedom, he declared "the winds have begun to blow, and they are coming with gale force....***Fighting for freedom includes standing for the freedom to stand before God in clear conscience.***"

- **The Affordable Care Act's contraceptive mandate.** "The mandate of the Department of Health and Human Services forces religious institutions to facilitate and/or fund a product contrary to our own moral teaching. Further, the federal government tries to define which religious institutions are religious enough."
- **Threats to Catholic foster care and adoption services.** "Boston, San Francisco, the District of Columbia, the State of Illinois, have driven local Catholic Charities out of the business of providing adoption or foster care services by revoking their licenses, ending their government contracts, or both, because those charities refuse to place children with same-sex couples or unmarried opposite-sex couples who cohabit. [This] cut[s] down the tree of civility, and indeed cut[s] down the tree that is the healthy, good, life-giving, charitable alternative to abortion."
- **Threats to State immigration laws.** "Several states have recently passed laws that prohibit what they deem as harboring of undocumented immigrants and what the Church deems Christian charity and pastoral care for these immigrants. And I know it's a hot topic. ...The fact of the matter is when the winds blow strong enough that we become refugees, and don't think it can't happen, ...could we find ourselves in great need? 'Blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy.'"
- **Barring use of public facilities by people of faith.** "New York City adopted a policy that bars the Bronx Household of Faith, a small community, and other churches from renting public schools on weekends for worship services, even though non-religious groups could rent the same schools for many other uses. This is still in the courts, still eating up the little money they have." [2014 update to this case [here](#).]
- **Threats to programs aiding victims of human trafficking.** "After years of excellent performance by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services, administering contract services for victims of human trafficking, the federal government changed its contract specifications to require migration and refugee services to provide or refer for contraceptive and abortion services, in violation of Catholic teaching."

Bishop Libasci repeatedly used a metaphor from the 1966 film [A Man for All Seasons](#), about St. Thomas More, onetime Chancellor of England, martyred for his faith. In the film, More addressed a young protégé who expressed impatience with the law. As recalled in the Bishop's homily, More counseled caution. "If you cut down all the laws, it's like the trees in a forest. You begin to cut them down until you cut them all down, and when the winds begin to blow, where will you run then for shelter?"

Back to the Bishop's own words: "**We should not be allowing others to cut down the trees, and God**

forbid we help cut them down. Instead, we should be planting trees. The tree of life. The tree of salvation. The tree from which hung the Savior of the world.”

“We can and we do lobby for just laws, and for the overturning of those laws, the repeal of those laws, that are unjust. But whenever it is unsuccessful, we are called to make those laws obsolete. ... We’re probably not allowed to do something about tying up our horses outside on Lowell Street. There must be some law somewhere. But it’s useless. **Such must be the unjust law.** That we have grown beyond such things... because we live in such a time where adherence to God’s law has turned us away from discrimination, murder, inordinate living, disordered belief, and the shame of a people who no longer value the true dignity of human life. Let us grow beyond, so that where Jesus said I have come to set one against the other, in that balance of justice, the justice and the mercy of God will cause the others to float off into space.”

I looked around the Cathedral as the Bishop spoke. I saw no cameras or press. Perhaps a hundred people were there. In a secular environment, I’d have said that the man needs an agent. This was a church, though; a community of faith was present. Everyone there is the “agent,” so to speak, charged with getting out the message. In how many other churches will the same message be delivered in the coming days? From there, who knows where it could go? Small beginnings, perhaps, but with great potential and great hope.

This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2014/08/25/we-should-be-planting-trees-the-tree-of-life/>
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Do You Treasure His Presence? [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

My wife and I will be boarding a train later this afternoon to return home ending a nearly three week visit with our son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. I thank God that He blessed us with this unforgettable time together.



Unfortunately, my visits to the local Catholic Church here created a heaviness and sadness in my heart. There was no tabernacle in the main Church or Chapel. Our Lord was confined to a small room that accommodated only eight individuals.

The loud chatter and laughter before and immediately after the end of Mass each day made silent prayer an enormous challenge if not an impossibility. The conduct of those present gave no visible evidence that His Presence among and within them was of much importance.

When I later discovered that most of those at Mass that morning were teachers in the parish's school, I held little hope that any of the children in their care would ever come to really appreciate, value and reverence our Eucharistic Lord.

I pray and will pray that I am wrong.

I will also pray that they and anyone else who questions Christ Presence here on earth among us, will come not only to believe but treasure this Great Gift .

Perhaps, the following brief testimonies of those who spend at least one Holy Hour each week with Jesus will draw someone into His loving, ever-present, always welcoming and embracing Eucharistic arms:

“It is a mystery to me, why there are not more people coming to the Adoration Chapel. To me, I would be lost without it. To be able to actually come and talk with God is unimaginable to me, not just on my assigned time but whenever I feel the need.”

“The feeling I get from my visits surpasses all feelings of joy and gratitude. My prayers have been answered so many times. As I look at the book of Prayer Requests, you see how many people who come here to pray, not only for themselves, but for others also. It gives you the opportunity to pray for others that you did not know were suffering. The Adoration Chapel means so much to me. I pray that more people will sign up so that we will always be able to continue what God started.”

“There is an assurance and peace that comes with knowing God is always here. We are never on our own. Daily prayers brings us an inner quiet, one hour a week is the ‘cement’. I am so grateful for all the love and joy that has come into my life and that is what I concentrate on - what He has given me – love, family and Himself.”

“My husband passed away a year ago in May. My Church and the Adoration Chapel help me. I prayed and asked God to help me and He did. The Adoration Chapel is a very peaceful place. You can talk to God and cry if you need to. Coming to the Chapel has helped me get through each day, one step at a time, It has helped ease the pain. Thank you Jesus for your help and for the Adoration Chapel.”

“Perpetual Adoration is the highlight of my week - the quiet and peaceful time I have to spend with Jesus without interruption. I can share with Him all my problems and joys. I have had many prayers answered, large and small. I tell Him I love Him and I know He hears me.”

“Adoration has become a corner stone of my life. I have learned so much about my Faith during my Chapel time because of the books and materials available. More importantly, I have learned about Jesus’ Real Presence in the Eucharist which has enabled me to draw closer to Jesus and know God’s presence in my daily life and the life of my family. I can’t imagine life without Adoration.”

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2014/08/do-you-treasure-his-presence.html>
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Arkeology [at Smaller Mannhattans]



not exactly

Every year in our journey through the Bible and the Mass, the kids learn about All the Arks. Like everything else in our Salvation History curriculum, I cover them as they come up. But the theme of Arks teaches a useful Catholic lesson that can be covered in a single class period like this:

0. Prelude: the Garden of Eden.

Per Genesis 2 and 3, Eden isn't the whole of the Earth, but a distinct, separate place:

"And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers."

[I draw a quick picture of God, Adam, Eve, the Tree, and the Snake; and show them contained within the Garden.]

God dwelled in Eden in some physical way with Adam and Eve:

"And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

So even though Eden is not an ark, it prefigures arks:

- a. God is present in Eden in a way that he is not present outside of Eden. In more general terms, what's inside of Eden is better than what's outside of Eden.
- b. Eden is relatively small, and holds precious things inside: God's Stuff. That is, the Tree of Life; and Adam and Eve before they sinned.
- c. It's protective.

1. Noah's Ark

"God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch."

[I draw the Ark with people and animals sticking their heads out.]

Right off I ask the kids what an ark is. Someone will say a boat, which is the starting point for looking at what an ark is, because it's not always a boat. In the case of Noah's ark and Moses' ark, the Hebrew word is

tebah. Tebah

is only used in these two cases, but no-one is sure of its meaning. To keep it simple in class, I say

tebah

means container. And if the container floats, then it must be a boat. Then we discuss the Ark's 'arkiness'. It contains God's Stuff, precious things, i.e., Noah's family and the animals; things are better inside the Ark than outside; it protects; and it separates the relatively good inside from the sinful outside.

2. Moses' Ark

Exodus 2 says "1 Now a man from the house of Levi went and took to wife a daughter of Levi. 2 The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. 3 And when she could hide him no longer she took for him an ark (Hebrew-

tebah

) made of bulrushes, and daubed it with bitumen and pitch; and she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds at the river's brink. 4 And his sister stood at a distance, to know what would be done to him. 5 Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, and her maidens walked beside the river; she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to fetch it. 6 When she opened it she saw the child; and lo, the babe was crying."

The kids will jump all over this Ark because they already know about Noah's Ark: baby Moses is precious; he's God's Stuff; he's better than what's outside of the Ark; he's protected. The Ark floats so it must be...a boat, yes, but in general an ark is just a container.

3. The Ark of the Covenant

Before getting to this Ark, the kids have to know about Moses and the Israelites' exiting Egypt, and becoming nomads for 40 years. Being nomads, they live in tents. So if God is going to dwell among his people again, he needs a tent, too; what in Latin is called a tabernaculum, a little house:

"And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. 9 According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it."

[I draw the outline of a big tent, just walls and roof. Then as I continue to read, inside the tent I draw the ark; the rings and poles; the seat; and the cherubim and their wings.]

"They shall make an ark of acacia wood; two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. 11 And you shall overlay it with pure gold, within and without shall you overlay it, and you shall make upon it a molding of gold round about. 12 And you shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. 13 You shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. 14 And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark by them. 15 The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. 16 And you shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you. 17 Then you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. 18 And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. 20 The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. 21 And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. 22 There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel."

Now we learn the contents of the Ark: a pot of Manna, Aaron's staff, and the Commandments. The kids once again can explain the arkiness: only God's Stuff goes inside; the Stuff is protected; it's better than what's outside the Ark; it's separated from the sinful stuff outside. If your kids don't know about the contents already, you'll have to give them some background before you start on the scripture bits above. We learn a new Hebrew word *arown*, which means chest, and the word always used to denote the Ark of the Covenant. I point out it's another word for container, kind of like

tebah

. (You can skip the Hebrew if you want to.)

Time permitting, I'll draw how Solomon's Temple placed the Ark in a cube-shaped Holy of Holies, a box-in-a-box concept of sorts.

4. The Ark of the New Covenant

[I draw Mary and Gabriel]

"In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, * the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ...And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" 35 And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."

[I add a dot to Mary's tummy.]

Through guided discussion/ Q&A the kids sort out:

The dot is Jesus. Jesus is contained in Mary's tummy. He will dwell in Mary for 9 months. [I show Jesus growing bigger inside Mary.] Jesus is way precious, more valuable than just God's Stuff- Jesus is God Himself. If Mary is containing Jesus then we might refer to her as an Ark, the Ark of the New Covenant. Because Jesus has no sin, and lives in Mary, connects to her through his belly-button, Mary has no sin either. She and Jesus are separate from the rest of the world in that way.

5. The Tabernacle

[I draw the east end of a church interior, basically an altar, some candles, and a big crucifix.]

I get the kids to quickly tell me Jesus' story in stages: Jesus was born, became an adult, founded his church, died for our sins, resurrected, and went to heaven. But Mary's not the last Ark, nowadays we have one in every church. If the kids can't guess what it is, I re-read this bit of Exodus: "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it." They then can connect the tabernacle, the little house in that Exodus passage, to the tabernacle in the Church. [I add the tabernacle to the picture, and always show it as a little house with a gable-roof.] We see how they are related, and also how like Mary, the tabernacle isn't just a container for God's stuff, but a little house for Jesus to dwell in. It's close to how God and Adam and Eve dwelled in Eden together, but Jesus doesn't talk or walk around in the afternoon like God did in Eden. If a child asks why we don't call the Tabernacle an Ark, I remind them a house is a container that people live in. So Jesus' container is called a tabernaculum, Latin for little house, or tent, like the one God dwelled in among the nomadic Israelites.

6. The New Jerusalem

But remember as we say at Mass, the Church is a pilgrim church, which means it's on a journey. At the Second Coming, we will have reached our destination, and we won't have the Church anymore. In the Book of Revelation, St. John says: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; 3 and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them."

So what sort of place will this be, where a few billion of us (one hopes) will dwell with God? Let's see: "And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal...The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angels. 18 The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass."

Kids don't know what a stadion is. Now I draw and talk, "Let's see how big this New Jerusalem is...a stadion is about 1/10 of a mile long, so it's about one thousand two hundred miles long...and this dot is a person...and "its length and breadth and height are equal" like so...and the kids figure out as I draw that

the New Jerusalem is a huge cube. Why, it's just a big container, a huge...Ark! So at the end of our long journey from Eden, we'll live with God in a big Ark, where all of us can fit. We won't be separated from God ever again.

Then we do a quick review of all the Arks. If the board is big enough I don't have to erase, so I can point to all of them. And I remind the children to always think of all the Arks whenever they think of one of them.

Cube photo by mytho88.

This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2014/08/arkeology.html>
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But God was not in the Earthquake... [at Journey to Wisdom]

Do you see God in nature? Do you see God in cataclysmic events? I love to watch storms. They are beautiful and terrifying, and wonderful to watch from the safety of indoors or from far away. One hopes, sometimes desperately depending on the severity of the storm, that no one is hurt by the storm, and it is saddening to learn that property or homes were damaged.

At the mountain of God, Horeb,

Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter.

Then the LORD said to him,

“Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD;

the LORD will be passing by.”

A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains

and crushing rocks before the LORD—

but the LORD was not in the wind.

After the wind there was an earthquake—

but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake there was fire—

but the LORD was not in the fire.

After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.

When he heard this,

Elijah hid his face in his cloak

and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Of course God is present in all places, and in everything, so we know God was in the wind, was in the crushing rocks, and in the fire, but Elijah did not hear or see God in those events. Elijah heard God in the tiny, whispering sound. This is how God was speaking to Elijah. Elijah learned to cut through the "noise" and hear the voice of God, not in the dramatic thundering surrounding the giving out of the commandments, but in the asking us to love one another through obeying his commandments to love one another as he loves us. In the Gospel, Jesus walks through the noise of the storm, speaks, and through his speaking calms the storm and Peter's fearful spirit.

Aren't we the same way? When tragedy strikes, when a so termed "Act of God" weather event destroys people's lives or homes, we do not hear God in the violence of those events. We know that God loves us and wants good for his children, wants good for people of all faith and for people of no faith. We know that God will come to our assistance, come to our aid in putting lives back together. We hear God in the whispered healing of the agencies, friends and neighbors who come in to assist people getting back on their feet. It is easy when one is a victim of a damaging storm or accident to ask God why. "Why God, why did you let this happen to us?" It is normal to ask and wonder, and a part of the process of coming to terms with an unwanted and unpleasant shift in one's life, an unfair hand dealt from the hand of life, and it is okay to ask God these questions. Sometimes there are no good answers, sometimes what is is simply what is, and sometimes the answers come in time, through receiving and accepting the gentle ministrations of others who come along beside you, those who say "we know, we don't understand why either, but we love you and are here for you." Those that like Jesus in the Gospel reading, reach out their hand to us and say "It is I, do not be afraid." Sometimes the damage can be prevented in the future, as when we learn more about how to implement safer building codes, or improve our warning systems.

Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss.

Our faith life can go through storms, and there is a place of safe retreat. When we have doubts or fears about God and our relationship with God, we too can improve our warning systems, "hide our face in our cloak", stop looking out at the storms of doubts and learn listen for God's quiet reassuring voice. We find a quiet place of refuge to meditate on God's goodness in our lives, and draw strength from that "storm shelter". As we grow and mature as Christians, as people of faith, we learn to be less afraid of the storms. We learn to accept help from others when we lack faith ourselves. We can see the warning signs and retreat safely into the arms of God, dodging the worst of the storm. We can sit with God and watch the storm pass, notice its awesome and terrible beauty, pray that no one will be hurt by it, and stand ready to offer comfort and healing.

When we see others going through the storms of faith, like St. Paul in the passage from Romans, we can have great sorrow and anguish in our hearts for them, learn to empathize, even acknowledge the desire that we could take the storm's "beating" instead of them, and reach out our hands, be the hands of Christ for them as so many have been the hands of Christ for us. When we turn our selves toward Jesus, turn our spirits inward to the quiet voice saying "this too shall pass, all will be well" and wait, we will find that eventually the storm does pass, and God was with us in the storm all along.

In Christ,

Gazelle

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2014/08/but-god-was-not-in-earthquakereflection.html>
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Why I don't date men who are 'willing' to save sex for marriage

“There’s something I need to tell you,” I said to a man on his couch in a Tampa apartment. He — then in his late 20’s and interested in me — nodded, and waited for me to say it. I, then in my early 20’s, breathed in before I did: “I’m saving sex for marriage.”

I breathed out while he silently processed what I had said. Then he turned his face toward mine and spoke: “If you want to wait, I’m willing.” But waiting had never been part of his world. He agreed to abstain from sex with me because he knew that if he didn’t, I wouldn’t date him. He agreed to behave *as if* he practiced chastity, but was only bound to nonmarital abstinence by my prohibition of nonmarital sex.

He respected my boundary, until he didn’t — until he mocked my decision to save sex and chalked it up to “immaturity,” in effort to manipulate me into changing my mind. He said “no guy will wait that long,” and begged me to break my promise to practice chastity. Instead, I broke up with him. I learned a lot in that relationship, including this:

I’d never date a guy again who was only “willing” to save sex. Here’s why:

Because I don’t want a man who *acts* chastely; I want a man who *is* chaste. We who practice chastity have apprenticeships in self-mastery. We promise to govern our appetites instead of being governed by them. A man who is “willing” to save sex in order to date me isn’t a man who governs his appetites. He’s a man who makes chaste girlfriends do that for him. If I date him, I govern two sets of appetites, which makes me an enabler: he doesn’t have to practice self-mastery if *I* master him.

Because a man who doesn’t practice chastity doesn’t define sex the same way I do. We who practice chastity believe sex is a sacred, physical sign of the the commitment spouses made to each other on the altar where they were married, ultimately designed to bond them and to make babies. A man who is “willing” to save sex — but would have nonmarital sex if he had my permission — does not by default define sex the way I do. How can we be united by sex in marriage if we can’t agree on the purpose sex serves?

Because a man who would forsake virtue (*his or mine*) if only I gave him permission is a man whose standards are too low. A man who is “willing” to save sex is a man whose choice to abstain from nonmarital sex likely isn’t underlain by much other than the absence of my consent. He’d be as content — or more — dating a woman who doesn’t practice chastity. But I don’t want to marry a man who settled for a chaste woman. I want a man who *wants* a chaste woman, who holds a high bar for me because he wants me to become the woman God designed me to be.

Because men are capable of more than the world around them says they are. “No guy will wait that long” is a lie, and boys who are taught that turn into men who believe it. But I hold up a higher bar than that for men because I think my future kids deserve a dad who can reach one, because I believe men *can* reach one, because I believe God created them able to do it.

This contribution is available at <http://arleenspenceley.com/willing-to-save-sex/>
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Front Row with Pope Francis [at Mother of the Fiat]

Unity among Christians is a gift from God. Christians must pray for it.

Pope Francis begins His weekly audience with a call to Unity among all Christians. He states: " We affirm that the Church is one and she is holy. Holy since she is founded by Jesus Christ, enlivened by his Holy Spirit, and filled with His love and salvation.

While we, the members of the Church are sinners, the unity and holiness of the Church arise from God and call us to daily conversion." All Christians are children of God and united to God we are all part of One family. As Christians we are not isolated, but are members of a unique Body the Mystical Body of Christ. "So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of of another." This is Christ's priestly prayer, that all may be one.

Pope Francis goes on to say: "Unfortunately, we know well the sins against unity-jealousy-envy-antipathy- which come about when we place ourselves at the center and which occur even in our parish communities." What then we ask ourselves is needed to stop this anger and envy all the war we see in the world and in families and yes so very sadly in the church our Holy Mother on earth, Oh how Jesus weeps. What can we do? Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John, "A new commandment I give to you that you love another: even as I have loved you, that you also love another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."(John 13: 34-35.)(CCC.1822-29.) How did Jesus show His love. Look at the Cross. He gave His life for us. On the cross as he hung in pain he cried out to His Father, "Father forgive them they know not what they do." And with His Blessed Mother standing beneath the cross she looked to her son as he was dying and she silently gave her "Fiat" again. In this is love and unity. We must die to self in order to love our neighbors with the Heart of Christ. The church has been compared to Christ's tunic which was without seam, woven from top to bottom,(John 19:23.) " The Church should not be divided because it also is without seams." St. Augustine."

We must all pray for unity for the whole church. That with obedience and promptness we obey our Holy Father Pope Francis and all the bishops in communion with him. If we do this we may fall, but we our on the right path. We may suffer, but we will suffer in union with one another, we may feel the pain of poverty but, as Christians we give without counting the cost. We May not always like or agree with the teachings of the church, but we all pray in one voice: " Open our eyes Lord to see the truth. Open our hearts Lord so we can hear your silent whisper that says; " Take up your cross and follow me." Give to me the courage and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to defend in all places Your truth. To live according to your Holy will, whatever it may take from me. To stand for the sanctity and dignity of all human life created in your Image and likeness. Help us respond to your call to pray without ceasing for all those persecuted for their faith throughout the world. To refrain from gossip and speech that wounds another, in this Jesus we remain united with our Holy Mother the Catholic Church and she will lead us home.

" Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the will of Christ."(Galatians 6:2) (CCC 1965-70)

Let us call upon our Blessed Mother, the Mother of Unity. " You who are the first handmaid of the unity of Christ's Body, help us, help all the faithful who feel so keenly the tragedy of historical divisions of Christianity, to seek persistently the path to the perfect unity of the Body of Christ through unreserved fidelity to the Spirit of

truth and love. Pope Saint John Paul II.

Let us all stand with Mary our Mother at the foot of the cross and say in unison



“Thy will be done Lord, not mine.”

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Most Beautiful Thing [at A Spiritual Journey]

There are many beautiful things to see in our world. You might find them in a fashion show, a Cirque du Soleil performance, a fine art exhibit, or in nature and the stars. But the most beautiful thing may only be seen by God ~ *it is doing his will!* For only anything done for the sake of God is truly beautiful. It pleases the Lord, adding to your treasure in heaven and making *you* more beautiful in the process.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2014/08/most-beautiful-thing.html>
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The De-Sanctification of Sunday [at A Catholic Life]

Picture an average Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon. The temperature is warm or at least pleasant. Sunshine fills the sky. The morning's calmness is punctuated only by the transcendent and alluring Church bells which toll throughout the morning during the Consecration at the Holy Mass. Holiness pervades the air and the day is characterized by Christian charitable works, meetings of apostolates, authentic family time and other like activities - in one word, the day is set aside for leisure.

But this is how Sunday is in a Catholic nation.

Instead nowadays we find something far different - few if any Catholics go to Mass. The bells no longer toll during the Consecration of the Mass. In fact, few people even attend Mass and far, far fewer attend the reverent and beautiful Traditional Latin Mass. Sacrilege takes place on a wide scale with Communion in the Hand. Divine Justice is not offered an august and immaculate victim; rather, the Triune God is angered by the indifference, injustice, and impiety of a people who have fallen from the True Faith.

And all the while the day is characterized by the sounds of lawnmowers, power tools, and mundane machines.

It's not hard to find. Any Sunday in the year you will find people mowing their lawns, painting their homes, repairing household items, cleaning their cars, and doing other mundane activities that we are explicitly forbidden to do by the Third Commandment. A Christian commits a sin by so doing unless he receives explicit dispensation from a priest (e.g. to fix a leaking pipe, etc).

Has holiness gone from among men? Does no one care any longer for the sanctity of Sunday?

"And shewing mercy unto thousands to them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain. Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day. [9] Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" (Exodus 20:6-10).

Have we forgotten the words of Our Lady of La Salette?

Melanie Calvat and Maximin Giraud were two children from Corps, France, near the town of Grenoble in the southeastern part of France. When Melanie was 14, and Maximin was 11, they were watching cattle in a pasture when they saw a globe of light that "opened" to reveal a most beautiful woman, clad in long dress and apron, with a shawl that crossed in front and tied in back. Around her neck was a Crucifix that depicted the instruments of the Passion, and on her head were a cap and roses. She sat on a rock with her face in her hands weeping. The Lady said that unless the people repented of working on Sundays and of blasphemy, she'd be forced to let go her Son's arm because it had grown so heavy. She said that crop blights and famine would follow if her wishes weren't heeded.

If we have forgotten the message of Our Lady of La Sallette, have we also forgotten the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title Our Lady of the Willow Tree?

The follow story is a powerful one. It is quoted from the

[Society of St. Pius X's Canadian website:](#)

Many years ago in the village of Plantees, France, there lived a farmer named Pierre Port-



Combet, who used to work on Sundays and Feast Days. At one time he had been a Catholic, but he had fallen away from the truth Faith and joined a Protestant religion called Calvinism. He had a great dislike for Catholics and anything about the Catholic Faith.

Pierre had married a devout Catholic woman named Jeanne. They had six children and Jeanne tried to raise them as good Catholics. But even though Pierre had made a vow to allow his wife to raise their children as Catholics, he gradually led their six children into the Calvinist religion! Jeanne was broken hearted about this because it meant that her husband and children were in great danger of loosing their souls. And since Pierre would not listen to her pleadings, the best she could do was to go to Mass, pray, and make sacrifices.

This area of France was very Catholic at the time. There was a law that all people should not work on Sundays and on special Holy Days, so that they could go to Mass and spend the rest of the day in prayer and holy reading. But Pierre loved to break this law, especially on Our Lady's Feast Days, because he did not like the Catholic religion!

On March 25, 1649, the Feast of the Annunciation, Pierre showed his dislike for the Catholic Church by working near a road where villagers could see him, as they traveled on their way to Mass. He pretended to work, by using his knife to cut into a willow tree, which grew beside the road. But as soon as he cut into the willow, the tree bled! Pierre was shocked as the blood flowed out of the tree and splashed onto his hands and arms. At first Pierre thought he was wounded, but finding that he was not injured, he stabbed the willow tree another time, and again the tree bled!

Around this time, Pierre's wife passed by on her way to church. Seeing that her husband's arms were covered with blood, she rushed over to help him. While she was looking for the wound, Pierre tried to explain to his wife what had just taken place. Jeanne tried to calm her husband and cut the tree with his knife, but nothing happened. When Pierre noticed that no blood came from the tree, he grabbed the knife from his wife and cut off a willow branch. The blood came gushing out of the tree!

By now Pierre was terribly frightened! He called to Louis, a neighbour who was just passing by, and begged him to come and see what happened. But when Louis took the knife and tried to cut the tree, no blood came out. As the other villagers passed by they began to realize that the blood from the tree was a warning from God to Pierre, so that he would come back to the Catholic Faith and not work on Sundays.

Before long, Pierre was brought to court for working on this special Feast Day and he had to pay a fine. And when the Bishop heard about the miracle of the bleeding willow tree, he ordered some priests to look into the matter. Pierre and others who saw the miracle were questioned. In the end it was decided that this miracle was a stern warning from God to Pierre, so that he would mend his ways!

Pierre had a change of heart and realizing that he was wrong, he would often go to pray near the willow tree. But when some of his Calvinist friends saw him, they threatened to hurt him if he left the Calvinist religion. Because of this Pierre refused to go back to the Catholic Church.

Heaven was watching over Pierre and after seven years, on March 25, 1656, Our Lady appeared to him. On that day, Pierre was working in the field and saw a Lady standing far away on a little hill. The Lady wore a white dress, a blue mantle and had a black veil over her head, which partly covered her face. As the Lady came toward Pierre, she suddenly picked up speed and in a flash, she stood beside him. With her beautiful, sweet voice, the Lady spoke to Pierre, "God be with you my friend!"

For a moment, Pierre stood in amazement. The Lady spoke again, "What is being said about this devotion? Do many people come?"

Pierre replied, "Yes many people come,"

Then the Lady said, "Where does that heretic live who cut the willow tree? Does he not want to be converted?"

Pierre mumbled an answer. The Lady became more serious, "Do you think that I do not know that you are the heretic? Realize that your end is at hand. If you do not return to the True Faith, you will be cast into Hell! But if you change your beliefs, I shall protect you before God. Tell people to pray that they may gain the good graces which, God in His mercy has offered to them."

Pierre was filled with sorrow and shame and moved away from the Lady. Suddenly realizing that he was being rude, Pierre stepped closer to her, but she had moved away and was already near the little hill. He ran after her begging, "Please stop and listen to me. I want to apologize to you and I want you to help me!"

The Lady stopped and turned. By the time Pierre caught up to her, she was floating in the air and was already disappearing from sight. Suddenly, Pierre realized that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary had

appeared to him! He fell to his knees and cried buckets of tears, "Jesus and Mary I promise you that I will change my life and become a good Catholic. I am sorry for what I have done and I beg you please, to help me change my life..."

On August 14, 1656, Pierre became very sick. An Augustinian priest came to hear his confession and accepted him back into the Catholic Church. Pierre received Holy Communion the next day on the Feast of the Assumption. After Pierre returned to the Catholic Faith, many others followed him. His son and five daughters came back to the Catholic Church as well as many Calvinists and Protestants. Five weeks later on September 8, 1656, Pierre died and was buried under the miraculous willow tree, just as he had asked.

Fr. Fais, the parish priest from the nearby town of Vinay, helped a lady to buy the field where Pierre had spoken to Our Lady. In time the chapel of Our Lady of Good Meeting was built on the spot where Our Lady had spoken to Pierre. Soon, a large church was built over the spot of the miraculous tree, and named in honour of Our Lady of the Willow. Some good person also carved a statue of Our Lady similar to the way Pierre had described the Blessed Virgin Mary. When this statue was placed in the church, many people came to honour Our Lady of the Willow.

But alas, because of the sinfulness of man, this beautiful shrine did not last and was ruined by members of the horrible French Revolution. These wicked men took the statue of Our Lady of the Willow and chopped it to pieces! Oh, what a terrible way to treat Our Lady's image!

However, all was not lost! A good lady gathered up the pieces of the statue and hid them until the French Revolution was over. A piece of the willow tree was also saved from the hands of these wicked men.

After the horrible French Revolution, people came again to honour Our Lady of the Willow at this sacred spot. The statue of Our Lady was repaired and in time the shrine was placed in the hands of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Now some priests were caring for the shrine and could help the many people who came there.

In 1856, two hundred years after the apparition of Our Lady to Pierre, Blessed Pope Pius IX decreed that the statue of Our Lady should be crowned on September 8 of that year. More than 30,000 people were present at the shrine for the crowning of Our Lady of the Willow, and at least four hundred priests were also present at the ceremony. And this same Pope ordered that another crowning should take place in 1873!

On March 17, 1924, Pope Pius XI declared that Our Lady of the Willow Church was now a minor basilica. Here the statue of Our Lady of the Willow is venerated. A box containing a piece of the old willow tree lies under her altar and Pierre's grave is at the foot of the altar.

Many people come to honour Our Lady of the Willow at this shrine and many have left little plaques in thanksgiving to Our Lady, for some special grace which she has given them. Also more than a hundred miracles are reported to have taken place at this shrine. Thank-you Jesus and Mary for your great mercies.

Our Lady of the Willow, Pray for Us!

We have a moral obligation to stand against the onslaught of sin in this world. Next time you see someone

cutting the lawn, painting their home, etc on a Sunday remind them to stop. It is a spiritual work of mercy to admonish sinners. Doing so with prudence and charity is the key. Standing against sin is necessary lest we too participate in their sin by our quiet acceptance of it.

If you have a concern about approaching the person or truly believe it would not bring about their conversion, at least take the time to leave them an anonymous note in their mailbox or print off a page such as this one (

<http://www.fisheaters.com/lordsday.html>

) and drop off the information in their box.

In the words of the Holy Father Pope Pius XII in

[Mediator Dei](#)

: "How will those Christians not fear spiritual death whose rest on Sundays and feast days is not devoted to religion and piety, but given over to the allurements of the world! Sundays and holidays must be made holy by divine worship which gives homage to God and heavenly food to the soul...Our soul is filled with the greatest grief when we see how the Christian people profane the afternoon of feast days...."

As a final recommendation, considering reading

[The Land Without a Sunday by Maria Von Trapp](#)

O Lord, deliver us from evil!

This contribution is available at <http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2014/08/the-de-sanctification-of-sunday.html>
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The Didache [at Favorite Prayers And Scripture]



The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations

Chapter 1 – The Two Ways and the First Commandment

There are two ways, one of life and one of death, but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself, and do not do to another what you would not want done to you. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward is there for loving those who love you? Do not the Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy. Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts. If someone strikes your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect. If someone impresses you for one mile, go with him two. If someone takes your cloak, give him also your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours, ask it not back, for indeed you are not able. Give to every one who asks you, and ask it not back; for the Father

wills that to all should be given of our own blessings (free gifts). Happy is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is guiltless. Woe to him who receives; for if one receives who has need, he is guiltless; but he who receives not having need shall pay the penalty, why he received and for what. And coming into confinement, he shall be examined concerning the things which he has done, and he shall not escape from there until he pays back the last penny. And also concerning this, it has been said, Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know to whom you should give.

Chapter 2 – The Second Commandment: Grave Sin Forbidden

And the second commandment of the Teaching; You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit pederasty, you shall not commit fornication, you shall not steal, you shall not practice magic, you shall not practice witchcraft, you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born. You shall not covet the things of your neighbor, you shall not swear, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not speak evil, you shall bear no grudge. You shall not be double-minded nor double-tongued, for to be double-tongued is a snare of death. Your speech shall not be false, nor empty, but fulfilled by deed. You shall not be covetous, nor rapacious, nor a hypocrite, nor evil disposed, nor haughty. You shall not take evil counsel against your neighbor. You shall not hate any man; but some you shall reprove, and concerning some you shall pray, and some you shall love more than your own life.

Chapter 3 – Other Sins Forbidden

My child, flee from every evil thing, and from every likeness of it. Be not prone to anger, for anger leads to murder. Be neither jealous, nor quarrelsome, nor of hot temper, for out of all these murders are engendered. My child, be not a lustful one, for lust leads to fornication. Be neither a filthy talker, nor of lofty eye, for out of all these adulteries are engendered. My child, be not an observer of omens, since it leads to idolatry. Be neither an enchanter, nor an astrologer, nor a purifier, nor be willing to look at these things, for out of all these idolatry is engendered. My child, be not a liar, since a lie leads to theft. Be neither money-loving, nor vainglorious, for out of all these thefts are engendered. My child, be not a murmurer, since it leads the way to blasphemy. Be neither self-willed nor evil-minded, for out of all these blasphemies are engendered.

Rather, be meek, since the meek shall inherit the earth. Be long-suffering and pitiful and guileless and gentle and good and always trembling at the words which you have heard. You shall not exalt yourself, nor give over-confidence to your soul. Your soul shall not be joined with lofty ones, but with just and lowly ones shall it have its intercourse. Accept whatever happens to you as good, knowing that apart from God nothing comes to pass.

Chapter 4 – Various Precepts

My child, remember night and day him who speaks the word of God to you, and honor him as you do the Lord. For wherever the lordly rule is uttered, there is the Lord. And seek out day by day the faces of the saints, in order that you may rest upon their words. Do not long for division, but rather bring those who contend to peace. Judge righteously, and do not respect persons in reproving for transgressions. You shall not be undecided whether or not it shall be. Be not a stretcher forth of the hands to receive and a drawer of them back to give. If you have anything, through your hands you shall give ransom for your sins. Do not hesitate to give, nor complain when you give; for you shall know who is the good repayer of the hire. Do not turn away from him who is in want; rather, share all things with your brother, and do not say that they are your own. For if you are partakers in that which is immortal, how much more in things which are mortal? Do not remove your hand from your son or daughter; rather, teach them the fear of God from their youth. Do not enjoin anything in your bitterness upon your bondman or maidservant, who hope in the same God, lest ever they shall fear not God who is over both; for he comes not to call according to the outward appearance, but to them whom the Spirit has prepared. And you bondmen shall be subject to your masters as to a type of God, in modesty and fear. You shall hate all hypocrisy and everything which is not pleasing to the Lord. Do not in any way forsake the commandments of the Lord; but keep what you have received, neither adding thereto nor taking away therefrom. In the church you shall acknowledge your transgressions, and you shall not come near for your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life.

Chapter 5 – The Way of Death

And the way of death is this: First of all it is evil and accursed: murders, adultery, lust, fornication, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, witchcrafts, rape, false witness, hypocrisy, double-heartedness, deceit, haughtiness, depravity, self-will, greediness, filthy talking, jealousy, over-confidence, loftiness, boastfulness; persecutors of the good, hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing a reward for righteousness, not cleaving to good nor to righteous judgment, watching not for that which is good, but for that which is evil; from whom meekness and endurance are far, loving vanities, pursuing revenge, not pitying a poor man, not laboring for the afflicted, not knowing Him Who made them, murderers of children, destroyers of the handiwork of God, turning away from him who is in want, afflicting him who is distressed, advocates of the rich, lawless judges of the poor, utter sinners. Be delivered, children, from all these.

Chapter 6 – Against False Teachers, and Food Offered to Idols

See that no one causes you to err from this way of the Teaching, since apart from God it teaches you. For if you are able to bear the entire yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you are not able to do this, do what you are able. And concerning food, bear what you are able; but against that which is sacrificed to idols be exceedingly careful; for it is the service of dead gods.

Chapter 7 – Concerning Baptism

And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.

Chapter 8 – Fasting and Prayer (the Lord's Prayer)

But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week. Rather, fast on the fourth day and the Preparation (Friday). Do not pray like the hypocrites, but rather as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, like this:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily (needful) bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or, evil); for Thine is the power and the glory for ever..

Pray this three times each day.

Chapter 9 – The Eucharist

Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks this way. First, concerning the cup:

We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of David Thy servant, which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever..

And concerning the broken bread:

We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge which You madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom; for Thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever..

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist, unless they have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for

concerning this also the Lord has said, "Give not that which is holy to the dogs."

Chapter 10 – Prayer after Communion

But after you are filled, give thanks this way:

We thank Thee, holy Father, for Thy holy name which You didst cause to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which You modest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant; to Thee be the glory for ever. Thou, Master almighty, didst create all things for Thy name's sake; You gavest food and drink to men for enjoyment, that they might give thanks to Thee; but to us You didst freely give spiritual food and drink and life eternal through Thy Servant. Before all things we thank Thee that You are mighty; to Thee be the glory for ever. Remember, Lord, Thy Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Thy love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Thy kingdom which Thou have prepared for it; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God (Son) of David! If any one is holy, let him come; if any one is not so, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen.

But permit the prophets to make Thanksgiving as much as they desire.

Chapter 11 – Concerning Teachers, Apostles, and Prophets

Whosoever, therefore, comes and teaches you all these things that have been said before, receive him. But if the teacher himself turns and teaches another doctrine to the destruction of this, hear him not. But if he teaches so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord. But concerning the apostles and prophets, act according to the decree of the Gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain more than one day; or two days, if there's a need. But if he remains three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodges. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet who speaks in the Spirit you shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not every one who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he holds the ways of the Lord. Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the prophet be known. And every prophet who orders a meal in the Spirit does not eat it, unless he is indeed a false prophet. And every prophet who teaches the truth, but does not do what he teaches, is a false prophet. And every prophet, proved true, working unto the mystery of the Church in the world, yet not teaching others to do what he himself does, shall not be judged among you, for with God he has his judgment; for so did also the ancient prophets. But whoever says in the Spirit, Give me money, or something else, you shall not listen to him. But if he tells you to give for others' sake who are in need, let no one judge him.

Chapter 12 – Reception of Christians

But receive everyone who comes in the name of the Lord, and prove and know him afterward; for you shall have understanding right and left. If he who comes is a wayfarer, assist him as far as you are able; but he shall not remain with you more than two or three days, if need be. But if he wants to stay with you, and is an artisan, let him work and eat. But if he has no trade, according to your understanding, see to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he wills not to do, he is a Christ-monger. Watch that you keep away from such.

Chapter 13 – Support of Prophets

But every true prophet who wants to live among you is worthy of his support. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, you shall take and give to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if you have no prophet, give it to the poor. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets; and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

Chapter 14 – Christian Assembly on the Lord’s Day

But every Lord’s day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord: “In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.”

Chapter 15 – Bishops and Deacons; Christian Reproof

Appoint, therefore, for yourselves, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proved; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers. Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honored ones, together with the prophets and teachers. And reprove one another, not in anger, but in peace, as you have it in the Gospel. But to anyone that acts amiss against another, let no one speak, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents. But your prayers and alms and all your deeds so do, as you have it in the Gospel of our Lord.

Chapter 16 – Watchfulness; the Coming of the Lord

Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come. But come together often, seeking the things which are befitting to your souls: for the whole time of your faith will not profit you, if you are not made perfect in the last time. For in the last days false prophets and corrupters shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate; for when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and betray one another, and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do iniquitous things which have never yet come to pass since the beginning. Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and shall perish; but those who endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself. And then shall appear the signs of the truth: first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven, then the sign of the sound of the trumpet. And third, the resurrection of the dead – yet not of all, but as it is said: “The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him.” Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven.

This contribution is available at <http://faithofthefathersprayers.blogspot.com/2014/08/the-didache.html>
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O Gloriosa Domina / O Gloriosa Virginum [at Breviary Hymns]



[O Gloriosa Domina](#)

is the second half of the hymn:

[Quem Terra, Pontus, Aethera](#)

. It was composed by

[Venantius Fortunatus](#)

(c.530-c.600/609), the Bishop of Poitiers. In 1632, in accordance with

[revisions](#)

made to the hymns of the Divine Office by

[Pope Urban VIII](#)

(1568-1644), it was altered and changed to

[O Gloriosa Virginum](#)

. Both versions are shown below. It is sung in the

[Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)

of the Roman Breviary. It is said that

[St. Anthony of Padua](#)

(1195-1231) was always singing this hymn. His mother sang it to him as a baby, and even on his death bed after receiving Extreme Unction, he intoned the hymn.

O Gloriosa Domina

O GLORIOSA DOMINA

1. O Gloriosa domina

excelsa super sidera,

qui te creavit provide,

lactas sacrato ubere.

2. Quod Eva tristis abstulit,

tu reddis almo germine;

intrent ut astra flebiles,

sternis benigna semitam.

3. Tu regis alti ianua

et porta lucis fulgida;

vitam datam per Virginem,

gentes redemptae, plaudite.

4. Patri sit Paraclito

tuoque Nato gloria,

qui veste te mirabili

circumdederunt gratiae. Amen.

O Gloriosa Virginum

O GLORIOSA VIRGINUM (1632 Revision)

[Listen](#)

1. O gloriósa víginum,

sublímis inter sídera,

Qui te creávit párvulum

lacténte nutris úbere.

2. Quod Heva tristis ábstulit,

tu reddis almo gérmine,

Intrent ut astra flébiles,

caeli reclúdis cárdines.

3. Tu Regis Alti jánua

et aula lucis fúlgida,

Vitam datam per Vírginem,

gentes redémptae pláudite.

4. Jesu Tibi sit glória,

Qui natus es de Vírgine,

Cum Patre et almo Spíritu,

in sempitérna saécula. Amen

William Byrd's 'O Gloriosa Domina' performed by

[Cantum Barbum](#)

This contribution is available at <http://kpslaw.blogspot.com/2014/08/o-gloriosa-domina.html>
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Shame on you - Adventists, dishonesty and the Catholic Church [at Catholicism and Adventism]

Out there in real life and on the internet there is a huge collection of anti-Catholic propaganda waiting for gullible Catholics, and others, to ensnare them.

When a Catholic meets a certain type of Adventist, this sort of propaganda abounds. Adventists have a reputation for their dishonesty, and not just among Catholics.

Why? I have some theories.

In all the years I've had this website, I've had hundreds of Adventists e-mailing in their responses. In fact, I started this website because of my exposure to dishonest anti-Catholic "evidence". In all that time, I've found it very rare to have an Adventist deal truthfully when the Catholic Church is the topic of discussion. Occasionally one will apologise for the terrible untruths told about the Catholic Church. For those Adventists, I am grateful. I don't know what percentage of the denomination is the honest type. I do know that the denomination itself has a lot to answer for.

Examples of misrepresentation of Catholicism:

- Catholics worship statues
- Catholics worship Mary
- Catholics believe the pope is God, or greater than God
- Catholics changed the 10 commandments and deleted the 2nd commandment
- Catholics don't read or believe the Bible
- Vicarius Filii Dei is a papal title, and it adds up to 666
- The Pope changed the Sabbath to Sunday
- The Catholic Church considers Sunday to be its mark of authority over Protestants
- The Jesuits have an oath that includes bashing in babies' heads

Very often, and usually in the case of the last 5 on the list, Adventists will produce bogus quotes or quotes from unofficial Catholic sources like parish bulletins.

The [appendix to this post has some examples](#) from recent discussions. I'll quote one here.



Deut 5:20

**Neither shalt thou bear false witness
against thy neighbour.**

Jesus doesn't like lies being told about Christians.

Adventist: Sunday is the mark of the beast [shows an image with Pope Benedict XVI over a quote supposedly by Catholics claiming that Sunday is the mark of Catholic authority, and holding up a sign saying "Sunday must be enforced".]

Catholic: Bogus quote. And nowhere does the Bible say Sunday is the mark of the beast. Should we celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Saturdays?

Adventist: Where in Bible Paul or others celebrate resurrection? You need to be sober

Catholic: So we should rather celebrate the old creation than the new creation, and we should rather celebrate the symbolic freeing from sin than the actual event? It's about priorities. Catholic priority – Christ. Our worship centres around Christ. We celebrate his birth, his resurrection, his baptism, his ascension. We've moved beyond the shadows of the Old Testament.

Adventist: You are child of Satan, that's why you have many ways to reject God's word, MARK 7:6-9

Catholic: Thanks. I will pray for you too.

When Catholics debate Adventist teachings, do we do the same? By and large, no. Adventism isn't very high up on the radar of the Catholic Church at all, and that goes for most Catholics too. Some of us pay more attention to Adventism because of the problem of Catholics (and others) being taken in by the lies.

So then we disagree with Ellen White, for example, we quote her in context, showing that context to be valid, and our showing supporting evidence as to what she believed when she wrote what she did is not dishonest. Maybe we make a mistake occasionally, but then show us where our mistake is. I've dumped 75% of the arguments against Ellen White because I don't think they're sound. But more than enough remain to make a case against her.

The difference is that when Adventists quote Catholicism they do so selectively, choosing only what suits them, and usually not anything official. Indeed, they often can't quote anything official, because most of what Adventists claim the Catholic Church teaches was never written down in any official document simply because it's not what Catholicism teaches. Actual evidence from official Catholic documents

usually gets ignored, because it doesn't fit the Adventist world-view that Catholicism is corrupt and unscriptural and claims all sorts of nonsense.

In general, Adventist claims about Catholic admissions do not hold up under even minor scrutiny. They end up being real papal quotes ripped from context and re-interpreted as only Adventists know how, or they're not official Catholic statements at all. Any Catholic can say anything, but that doesn't make it official Catholic teaching. For example, the Catholic Church officially teaches (not in newspaper clippings) that the Apostles began Sunday observance. So only ignorant or deliberately dishonest Adventists can claim that the Catholic Church teaches otherwise. History shows that 538 AD was a non-date in the history of the Ostrogoths. 538 AD was somewhere in the middle of a 20 year war they were involved in. Yet Adventists have their own version of history, just as they have their own version of Catholicism.

Think about someone standing on the street corner shouting to all who can hear that the Jews kill babies and drink their blood. That is how Adventists sound to the rest of Christianity. And there is little to support their credibility.



Pope Benedict in retirement

What happens when the facts are explained to Adventists?

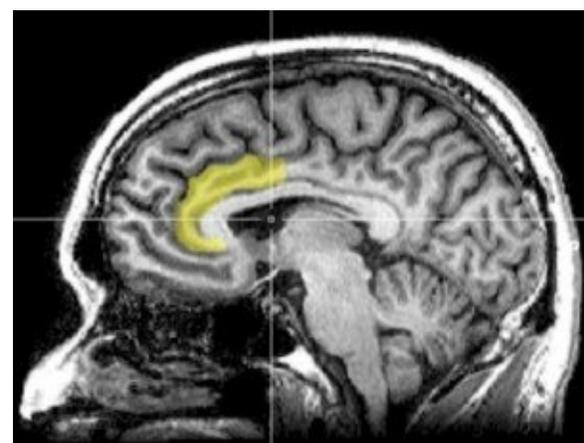
Take a Catholic practice or doctrine. It's foreign to Adventists, AND it's Catholic, so they automatically assume it's satanic or pagan. They conveniently ignore the biblical basis for this, and don't give us the benefit of the doubt when we say we find it in the Bible. Hardly the basis for intelligent discussion. So what next? Presenting them with the biblical and historical evidence doesn't work. They usually just go into denial.

Why is this the case?

I think half the problem with dishonesty is this: they believe without questioning the absolutely infallible teachings of Ellen White passed down through their pastors and teachers. Their world-view is so narrow, and it has been entrenched in them so deeply that many are incapable of dealing with the possibility that things could be different. So when confronted with facts indicating that diverge from their world of

possibilities, they close off and go into denial. And because those facts are about something they have been taught to hate and despise, they often react with venom.

In other words, if they're told that Catholics don't worship Mary, or that Catholics read the Bible and are not slaves to every word of every cleric or pope, it's the same to them as being told that the moon doesn't exist and is painted onto the sky. It's an absolute impossibility in their minds that what they've been taught could possibly be wrong. To consider such a thing would undermine a world-view built on anti-Catholic misunderstandings, and that is something more central to their faith than most other things, and more so for Adventists than the average anti-Catholic because the reliability of their prophetess, and their entire faith, would fall without it.



Anterior cingulate cortex, involved in cognitive dissonance

This is called [cognitive dissonance](#), which Wikipedia defines as follows:

In psychology, cognitive dissonance is the mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values.

This basically means that when an Adventist is confronted with facts they don't like, because it is so contradictory to their world-view, they can't process it properly, and react badly.

And, interestingly enough, this is one of the characteristics of a cult.

The solution?

The only way to get through the barrier is a slow, persistent flow of information that eventually will allow questions to be asked.

The ideal conclusion to a discussion between Adventists and Catholics goes like this:

Adventist: Catholic, I understand now why you think XYZ is biblical, but I disagree with your interpretation of the Bible, and think ABC is the correct interpretation.

Catholic: Adventist, I see why you think ABC is supported by biblical evidence, but I still disagree and think XYZ fits the Bible best.

That is something I've only seen once or twice.

I'd like to see more Adventists willing to acknowledge that most of what Adventists claim about the Church is drivel. Those Adventists exist. They just don't frequent groups like the ones I've been on much because they see little need in antagonising Catholics. These Adventists are probably the type of Adventist many here would consider to have forgotten the importance of some of their so-called truth – I've seen them accused of this before.

The communal problem

A further problem on the various forums is that, when one Adventist is shown to be giving dishonest information, it's rare to see another Adventist reprimand them. When one Adventist clearly blatantly lies about someone one has just said, not even then do they chime in and say anything.

Why is this? Wikipedia's entry on [cognitive dissonance](#) includes the following: "*Students judge cheating less harshly after being induced to cheat on a test.*" And double standards – Adventists expect Catholics to be honest, but they don't expect or demand the same level of honesty amongst themselves. This is another characteristic of a cult.

What are the characteristics of a cult?

The [Cult Information Centre](#) in the UK needs the following 5 criteria. The criteria are in red, and my commentary indented in black after each point.

- It uses psychological coercion to recruit, indoctrinate and retain its members
 - See my discussion of the creation of cognitive dissonance (above) and poisoning the well (below)
- It forms an elitist totalitarian society.
 - Adventists believe they are the true church, an elite called-out group. Yes, other groups believe they are the true church too, but not with the same sort of psychological grip as Adventism and Jehovah's Witnesses and others.
- Its founder leader is self-appointed, dogmatic, messianic, not accountable and has charisma.
 - Ellen White declared herself to be a prophet, is considered to be inspired and therefore cannot be questioned, and her plagiarism goes unacknowledged by many Adventists (basically she copied from other people's writings, and even copied from them and claimed that these were visions)
- It believes 'the end justifies the means' in order to solicit funds recruit people.
 - Partially applies, because the dishonesty in their portrayal of the Catholic Church (and Protestantism) is a form of "the end justifies the means" reasoning.
- Its wealth does not benefit its members or society.

According to this definition, Adventism is not a cult, but it certainly has some of characteristics of one.

[CARM lists the following characteristics of a cult](#) that fit Adventism:

- Leaders are often seen as prophets, apostles, or special individuals with unusual connections to God. This helps a person give themselves over psychologically to trusting someone else for their spiritual

welfare.

- Exclusivity
- Persecution complex
- Special Knowledge
- Salvation
- Group Think
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Shunning

The poisoned well

Another problem with Adventism, highlighted recently [by Tesa Beem on Facebook](#), is that of poisoning the well.



James and Ellen White

Tesa highlighted it in the context of Ellen White, who poisoned the well in such a way that contemplating leaving Adventism would be horrendous.

It is a type of ad hominem trick that makes one suspicious of another person. ... Many people today use the term a little more loosely, they may say that “poisoning the well” is for anything that can be pre-corrupted through suspicion. ...

She made the statement that there would be those who would come and seek to discredit her and something to the effect that you can know they are in error by the fact that they seek to discredit her.

Boy, can you imagine a politician saying that? “There will be those who come in and seek to run against me. You can KNOW they are corrupt and evil because they seek to unseat me....”

However, for many Adventists, Ellen has so effectively poisoned the well, that they are fearful of questioning her prophecies or writings. My husband expresses this with the idea that she had booby trapped all the exits.

The same can be said for the way Adventism has poisoned the well of Catholicism. By indoctrinating her

followers to the extent that serious cognitive dissonance results when they are exposed to the truth about what Catholicism teaches, they have effectively poisoned the Catholic well, making it even harder to a) treat Catholics fairly in a discussion, and b) consider their own errors in their understanding of Catholicism.

As someone pointed out in the comments on Tesa's post:

On my journey to the Catholic Faith, my greatest fear as I was beginning to understand exactly what Catholicism actually believed and taught (as opposed to what Adventists and Amazing Facts said Catholicism believed and taught) was that I was being deceived by satan. There is not enough space here to describe how deep and painful that fear and struggle was, but suffice it to say, much prayer and an open mind and God's mercy and grace allowed me to see that most of what I believed about Catholicism as an SDA was false and untrue. Even if a person were to not become a Catholic after discovering what Catholicism actually teaches, an honest person would have to at least admit that what they previously believed about Catholicism was an error, and that they were wrong.

It's a difficult journey for Adventists towards understanding what Catholicism really teaches, and because of the harm done by Adventism. it must be many times more difficult to eventually accept the Catholic faith as truth. Yet many have. They're both saints and martyrs.

And also from the same person:

This is one of the hallmark characteristics of a cult...if anyone disagrees with the leader they are in error and the enemy of the "truth" espoused by that leader. Result: Close your mind, trust no one....and develop creative justifications for doing so.

This phenomenon of both dishonesty and cognitive dissonance [was also described](#) by Dale Ratzlaf in his book "[Truth Led Me Out](#)":

This is why I am continually being accused of leaving because I wanted to live in open sin. When I respond that I left because of thorough Bible study and a desire to be true to my conscience, I am often met with a blank, questioning stare.



Crucifixion, from Polittico di Valle Romita

Disclaimer

Not all Adventists are like this. My contact with Adventism is mostly online, and biased in favour of the dishonest type, and the semi-honest type that sits back and watches the dishonesty without giving a reprimand. However, most Adventists I know in real life harbour the same idea of Catholicism – the imaginary Catholicism of Adventism. My understanding is that Ellen White’s sway is declining, and the anti-Catholicism is lessening. But it’s still a strong, and powerful, and probably majority movement in Adventist activism.

Here is an interesting admission from [Adventist Today, back in 2010, Loren Seibold](#):

Ellen White fingered Catholicism in a very different world. Historians have shown that 19th-century American anti-Catholicism grew out of a general anti-immigrant nativism. In an era when we have had and could again have a liberty-loving Roman Catholic president, when Catholic immigrants have become our young work force, why can’t we preach the gospel without identifying Roman Catholicism as Satan’s exclusive tool?

– [Letting Roman Catholics off the Hook](#)

Adventists can, and should, abandon a culturally-based unjustified and dishonest anti-Catholic attitude.

Is there any use to which this dishonesty problem amongst Adventists can be put?

Yes – since their theology is, to a very significant extent, built on misinformation about the Catholic Church, this means that simply showing it to be false fairly rapidly destroys any further consideration of the theology by people looking into it.

When Adventists misrepresent the Catholic faith in order to make themselves look better, instead of just acknowledging the truth, it’s the sort of thing that is the most powerful witness against Adventism.

When one religion has to lie about another religion in order for itself to look Christian, you know there is something seriously wrong with it.

Bishop Fulton Sheen: **“Not 100 in the United States hate the Roman Catholic Church, but millions hate what they mistakenly think the Roman Catholic Church is.”**

And to close, a reminder from their prophetess Ellen White:

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor’s reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.

– [Ellen G White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p309](#)

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Verso L'alto [at Dancing in the Rain]

We started the steep ascent quickly, which brought on slightly labored breathing and the friendly reminder I was outta shape. We were supposed to be hiking. We were climbing quickly. I knew there was going to be some scrambling involved. I didn't realize exactly what that meant. As I pinched my two feet together in a foot hold, I reached to the right and then to the left hoping to decipher which angle was going to give me the best leverage in order to continue the climb. There was a point where my feet nestled in between two rocks, I leaned into the rock face and reached straight up. As I was praying I also recognized "If this goes wrong, I'm screwed." It wasn't exactly the rock climbing gym.

The crazy thing though is that as dramatic as that sounds and as dramatic as the climb looks, it actually was exhilarating. It wasn't a moment of fear but rather focus. "Failure" wasn't an option. What happens when you're on the ledge?

Looking at the iconic picture of Pier Giorgio you see an athletic young man climbing to the heights, daring greatly and reaching boldly. However, I would say its fair to guess that as he was in the midst of his climb, he recognized there was nothing more important than the next right thing. It wasn't about how far he had come nor was it about how far he had to go. Simply, he seemed to understand the simple genius that many of the saints lived. As we ascend toward the heights of Heaven, the only way to get there is one foot in front of the other, trusting Providence to show us the way.

Pier Giorgio, intercede before the Blessed Mother that we may know the joy of climbing towards Heaven while recognizing the blessings of today. Help us to see the beautiful gifts unfold that as we climb closer to Christ we can come to recognize and know there is so much more that we don't understand. Let us see this as it is: a beautiful invitation to Climb On.

Cause when push comes to shove you taste what you're made of

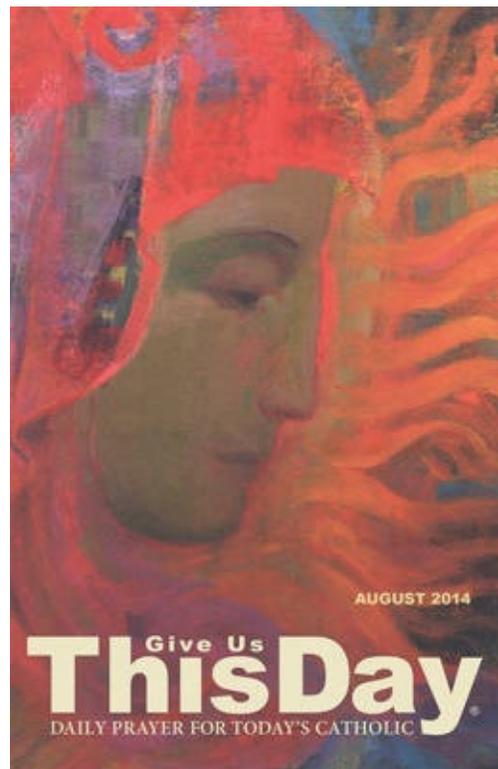
I've learned the path to heaven is full of sinners and believers

Draw me a little closer, take me a little deeper, I wanna know your heart.

This contribution is available at <http://dancingintherain401.blogspot.com/2014/08/verso-lalto.html>
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7 Questions: Mary Stommes, editor of Give Us This Day [at Catholic Bibles]



Mary Stommes joined Liturgical Press as managing editor in 2006 and became editor of [Give Us This Day](#) in 2010. You can obtain a free sample copy by visiting their [website](#).

1) First off, thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. How did you come to work for Liturgical Press, in particular your work on the personal prayer periodical Give Us this Day?

You are welcome. Thank you for asking. The short answer to both questions: God's providence. While working in a parish religious education setting, I took a Scripture course taught by Father Daniel Durken, a monk of Saint John's Abbey (Liturgical Press is an apostolate of this Benedictine abbey). Father Daniel encouraged me to get my degree in theology, which I did. Realizing early on that I loved both writing and theology/Scripture, I added English as a second major.

Father Daniel had been former director of Liturgical Press and was a senior editor here at the time. Neither he nor I would have guessed that I would land here after completing my undergraduate work. I began in 2006 as managing editor in our book publishing division. In that capacity I was part of the research and development team for *Give Us This Day*. "If we launch this, I want you to be editor," Peter Dwyer (publisher and director of Liturgical Press) said. Here I am.

2) Could you give a little of the history of GUTD?

In a very real sense, *Give Us This Day* has its roots in the liturgical pioneer Father Virgil Michel, OSB, who founded Liturgical Press in 1926. Father Virgil insisted that liturgy was not just for priests and religious, and not just for academics. His vision was to provide resources that would help all Catholics—clergy and religious, as well as laypeople--discover the riches of the Church's liturgical life. Liturgical Press's current mission statement is, in part, to "proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to a richly diverse Church." People long for that, long to be drawn in, to enter more deeply into Liturgy, Scripture, and the sacramental life. It is a hunger and longing for communion with God and with others.

Not long after I came to Liturgical Press, and drawing on years of earlier research and planning, we began more intense research and development on what would become *Give Us This Day*. "Listen," begins the Rule of St. Benedict. We listened to thousands of people across the country—from bishops and priests to religious and, of course, laypeople—to develop the resource you hold in your hands today. We launched in August 2011 and are celebrating our third anniversary of publication. I think Fr. Virgil must surely be pleased.

3) For my readers who are not familiar with GUTD, what would someone expect to find in each monthly edition?

Daily content includes short prayer for morning, followed by a short profile of a saintly witness (Robert Ellsberg writes these pieces), the complete Mass texts, a short reflection (many are newly commissioned pieces, and about 1/3 are previously published texts, both ancient and contemporary), and then prayer for evening. Additionally, there is a popular weekly feature, "Within the Word," that takes us more deeply into a person or theme in the week's Lectionary. Each issue opens with a feature essay, followed by Father James Martin's "Teach Us to Pray" column, and a section of prayers and blessings. The Order of Mass is included each month, as well as a section of hymns.

4) The unique Morning and Evening Prayers for each day are modeled after the Liturgy of the Hours, but not as long. How are these organized, particularly in the choosing of a Psalm and Scripture passage for each Morning and Evening prayer?

Sr. Irene Nowell, a Benedictine from Atchison, Kansas, selects the Psalm and Scripture passages. Psalms are cyclical, giving readers a broader selection than they are accustomed to hearing in the Lectionary. The Scripture texts are selected with an eye and ear on the Lectionary texts, allowing readers to pray

thematically from morning to night.

5) Could you talk a little bit about the impressive list of advisors and contributors to the periodical, most notably Fr. Jim Martin, Sr. Irene Nowell, and Fr. Ronald Rolheiser?

Our editorial advisors and contributors are a blessing, not just to us but to the entire Church. To a person, they love the Church, they love Scripture, they love Jesus!



Our contributors are passionate about the mission and vision of *Give Us This Day*. They are excited to be part of something they see to be so important: leading others more deeply into communion with God and each other through the practice of daily prayer, to help people realize the need to “come away and rest awhile.” None of our writers would want to be put on a pedestal. They, like John the Baptist, simply want to point the way to Christ.

6) Those who use the other popular prayer devotional Magnificat will notice some similarities between the two publications. What would you say makes GUTD unique in comparison between the two?

There are a number of other popular prayer devotionals, each with distinctive features. What readers tell us they most appreciate about *Give Us This Day* is the wide range of voices each month. Additionally, *Give Us This Day* is very much influenced by Benedictine spirituality, encouraging readers to establish the practice of *lectio divina*. There is no end to the ways in which God speaks to us if we sit with

Scripture and let it speak the words we most need to hear.

7) How has been being a part of this publication, and I assume using it yourself each day, helped you in your own personal daily prayer?

This is a very good question. One of my hesitations in accepting the editor's position was that it would "interfere" with my established practice of daily prayer. That is, I wondered if having seen all these texts in various stages of editing and proofreading, if working simultaneously in many seasons—if all of that would be a deafening cyclone of words. But God is good! I have for years prayed with the daily Lectionary texts. That hasn't changed. In praying with *Give Us This Day*, I discovered that morning prayer is a helpful addition, particularly since it serves as another entry point to the daily Mass texts. Moreover, morning and evening prayer have made me appreciate even more how the psalms "say it all." What else? The daily "Blessed Among Us," together with the wide range of reflection writers, makes me keenly aware of how we are all in this Body of Christ together. Each day brings something new and helpful and hopeful. Each day there is a word of challenge and comfort, a call to conversion and the assurance of God's unfailing love in Christ.

Extra question: GUTD is current available in both regular and large print paper editions, as well as being accessible to subscribers on the website. Is there any thought to creating a mobile App which would make accessing GUTD even easier?

More than a thought, our mobile App is in development and coming along nicely! We hope to launch it later this year. (I think Father Virgil Michel would be pleased about that too. Our publisher thinks Father Virgil would have had the app out sooner!)

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicbiblesblog.com/2014/08/7-questions-mary-stommes-editor-of-give.html>

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Parenting Adult Children Who Have Abandoned Their Faith [at Plot Line and Sinkers]

Recently, I spoke with several older couples about the challenges (and joys) of parenting adult children. One mother shared her sorrow that her son not only has fallen away from his faith, but is actively antagonistic towards the Catholic faith and to her. A father of four adult sons talked to me about the frustration of finding out that his older son (who spent years serving as an altar boy and who had once considered a vocation to the priesthood) has stopped attending Mass. Yet another woman shared the sad situation of her daughter's same sex relationship. All three of these parents, faithfully practicing Catholics, asked "What do we do now?" And "Where did we go wrong?"

I'm not an expert, but I do have some experience with parenting an adult child who has abandoned his faith. Here are some reflections that my husband and I have come up in dealing with adult children who have abandoned their faith.

1. Unconditional Love (Love the sinner, hate the sin)

This might seem like an obvious one, but I know some parents who've shunned adult children because they've stopped going to Mass or are engaging in immoral lifestyle choices.

My gut reaction to that is, "How are they ever going to learn to change if they don't have your example to follow?" Also, how are they going to experience God's unconditional love without a parent's unconditional love? You can love without encouraging immoral lifestyles. If a son or daughter is cohabiting, when they visit your home, separate sleeping arrangements should be in order. If you have younger children, this shows them that you don't agree with their lifestyle choices, but still love them and welcome them into your home... a home that does not condone cohabitation.

2. Pray for Your Children Every Day

This is also obvious, but a parent's prayer for his or her child is a powerful one. Our Lady is a powerful intercessor. St. Monica (whose son, St. Augustine, made immoral choices) prayed for her son's conversion (and it eventually happened!)

3. Look for Opportunities to Dialogue

This can often be awkward. Most adult children of faithful Catholics know what their parents are going to say, but sometimes it still needs to be said. Take the opportunity whenever you can to reiterate your love for them and your disagreement with their choices to live a life contrary to the Catholic faith. However, avoid engaging in conversation if you know they might be antagonistic, especially in front of other family members.

4. Be a Virtuous Example

You can teach your kids all about the faith, especially in the areas of marital sexuality, but if you are not living that faith, these truths may be lost or ignored. This also goes for even more basic virtues like patience, fortitude and hope.

5. Hope, Indeed!

I've seen adult children convert very late in life; I've witnessed imperceptibly slow conversion resulting from a child's experience of steadfast parents. Don't lose hope. Don't underestimate the value of your

prayers for or your personal effect on them.

Parenting adult children who have fallen away from their faith can be challenging. Love them unconditionally, pray for them every day, look for opportunities to dialogue, be a good example and remain hopeful that they will return to the faith.

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Homosexual Madness - Is It Affecting the Church? [at Designs by Birgit]

Campaigns supporting the homosexual lifestyle and 'rights' seem to be all the rage these days. In a world gone mad, this biologically and morally repugnant type of 'relationship' is being touted as just another type of loving union. Yet we, of the Catholic faith, have always had an unbroken line of teachings that prompt us to love the sinner but hate the sin. We are encouraged to make judgments, every day, about actions - all the while not judging the souls of others. So what's going on with some prominent figures in the Catholic landscape?

It has just been announced that the LGBT crowd will be allowed to march under a banner, for the first time in the 250 year history of the St. Patrick's Day parade in NYC. Although these groups have never been prevented from marching, the fact that they are now able to further, and ever more obviously, flaunt their deviant lifestyle is abhorrent. It's small comfort that pro-life groups will also be allowed to march under a banner as well. Yet Catholic League's

[Bill Donohue](#)

seems blasé.

"Never in the history of New York's St. Patrick's Day Parade have homosexuals been barred from marching, anymore than pro-life Catholics have, but in both cases they were not permitted to have their own unit. I have been assured that the rules have been formally changed to allow both of these groups, as well as others, to march under their own banner. That being the case, there should be no controversy. One would hope that all the new entries will conduct themselves in a manner that honors St. Patrick, lest another round of controversy emerges."

Since when are the LGBT advocates and pro-life champions of equal moral heft?

Timothy Cardinal Dolan of the Archdiocese of New York appears to be unconcerned as well. He will carry out his plans to act as

[Grand Marshall](#)

of the parade.

I found encouragement, however, from the reaction of Monsignor Charles Pope of the Archdiocese of Washington. He penned quite the post on the diocesan website, concerning both the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Al Smith Dinner. Sadly, and rather discouraging, his piece was promptly taken down. It was fortunate that he had given

[LifeSiteNews](#)

permission to share his piece as well. Along with a screenshot of the original entry,

[BuzzFeed](#)

also shared his words. And faithful words they were!

Concerning the

[Al Smith Dinner](#)

he lamented,

"...we are being asked to raise toasts and to enjoy a night of frivolity with those who think it is acceptable to abort children by the millions each year, with those who think anal sex is to be celebrated as an expression of love ..."

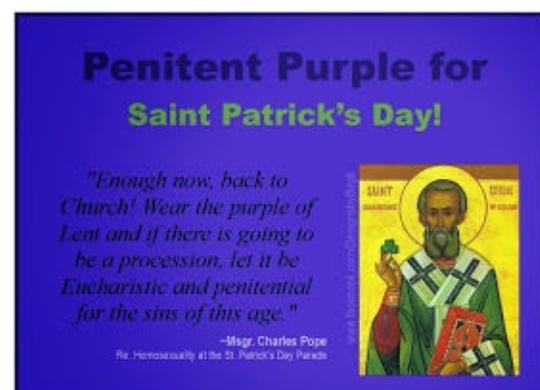
He added,

'...the St. Patrick's Parade is becoming of parade of disorder, chaos, and fake unity. Let's be honest: St. Patrick's Day nationally has become a disgraceful display of drunkenness and foolishness in the middle of Lent that more often embarrasses the memory of Patrick than honors it.'

His admonition to

'cancel the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Al Smith Dinner and all the other "Catholic" traditions that have been hijacked by the world'

is sound on the face of what they have become.



Catholics, faithful to the teachings of Holy Mother Church gain sound advice as he added,

"Enough now, back to Church! Wear the purple of Lent and if there is going to be a procession, let it be Eucharistic and penitential for the sins of this age."

What we appear to have here, is a failure to communicate Christ's true teachings, on the part of some, and the silencing of those who seek to uphold it. Perhaps I'll wear purple this Lent - especially on Saint Patrick's day. It's only right to offer reparation for the sins of this mad, hypersexualized world.

Pray for Msgr. Charles Pope
A true shepherd, unafraid to speak Christ's TRUTH!

... are you being called to rise above and to step a light of Christ's truth in the midst of a world that is dark and cold? ...

... the St. Patrick's Parade is becoming a parade of blasphemy, chaos, and false unity. ...

... We hope to see you at the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the St. Patrick's Day Dinner ...

... For the sake of His sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world!

This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2014/09/homosexual-madness-is-it-affecting.html>
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The Drama of the Individual [at Irish Papist]

Some years ago, I contributed

[my conversion story](#)

to the website Why I'm Catholic. (It might be the most widely-read thing I've ever written, since the site says it has clocked up almost fifty-eight thousand views.) In that account, I was rather harsh upon the religious education in my Catholic school, writing this:

*The religious instruction we received was poor, apart from our first year, where an old and intensely loveable nun taught us about the mysteries of the rosary, the Fatima apparitions, the story of Maximillian Kolbe, and other solid fare. After that, religion class became, more or less, a succession of inspirational videos (mostly feature films like *Shadowlands* and *Not Without My Daughter*) and pop psychology. I don't really blame our religion teachers for this. My generation had become so hardened to religion, through the propaganda of television and pop culture, that catechesis had become almost impossible. Whatever doctrine the teachers did try to impart was met with taunting questions and smirking incredulity, for the most part.*

The funny thing is that some parts of that religious education-- and, ironically enough, the very parts that I singled out for criticism here-- have stuck in my memory, and have been coming into my mind a lot lately.

The inspirational feature films that I complained about, for one. I don't remember a thing about

Not Without My Daughter

, but

Shadowlands

has become one of my very favourite films. The memory of

On Golden Pond

also remained with me, and I bought the DVD recently. Then there was

The Brady Bunch Movie

,

Ironweed

and

Regarding Henry

.
Over time, I've taken more and more pleasure in the memory of those viewings. I don't know if it was anything I felt at that time. It must have been latent, I assume, or I would have forgotten all about them.

It was the

context

in which we were viewing them that makes me remember them, and hark back to them with pleasure. The whole reason that these films had an impact upon me was that

we were watching them with a moral purpose

-- they were supposed to be good for us. Chesterton says somewhere that adults err when they suppose children hate moralism in stories. In fact, children

love

moralistic stories. Well, I was hardly a child when we were being shown these moralistic feature films-- I was in my mid-teens-- but I certainly enjoyed, even if it was at an unconscious level, being shown movies for the good of my health. Ultimately, I think the reason this appealed to me was very simple and very ordinary-- it was simply the feeling that somebody

cared

.
But it went deeper. It was the idea that life was

a big deal

. It was the idea that life, the human experience, was worth analysing-- not academically, not theoretically, but as one wayfarer on the journey to another. I said in another post that, back when I was not practicing a faith, I always felt a strange hunger for sermons, and wanted to be sermonised. Well, this is the same principle-- I yearned for pastoral guidance, for paternalism, for somebody to give me advice and admonition and encouragement. I wanted a hand on my shoulder. But I didn't just want it for myself. I wanted it to be

out there

. 'Live and let live' I still consider to be one of the most depressing philosophies imaginable. I consider that staple of newspaper cartoons, the fellow carrying the 'End is Nigh' placard, to be a public benefactor. I admire graffiti artists who scrawl anarchist slogans on walls. I think crackpots obsessed with the Freemasons are to be lauded for their public spirit. And I guess this blog is my equivalent to all of those things.

Anyway, the memory of those films-- which were a kind of filmic hand in the shoulder, if only in the spirit in which they were shown- remains with me.

Another thing that remains is the very 'pop psychology' I complained about in the conversion story, too.

Once we were asked to draw a picture, incorporating various elements like a tree and a house. The teacher came round to look at each of them and comment. She told me that the tree I'd drawn was very large and it represented my perception that finding a life partner was very important to me. I remember how hideously embarrassed I felt at that moment. And yet even then I knew that, whether it was coincidence or not, the test was right. Ever since I was a little boy, I'd craved love of that kind, so that even looking at scenes of domestic life in advertising filled me with a wistfulness I hardly understood.

Another time, we were given the questionnaire (or a questionnaire-- I don't know if there's only one or not) for the Myers-Briggs personality test. This is a personality test based on the theories of Carl Jung. You fill out a questionnaire and the answers tell you what personality type you belong to. The personality types are all permutations of four different letters. My questionnaire answer revealed me to be an INFJ. I liked the description, and I especially liked the fact that INFJ was the rarest of all the types. (I've subsequently read that self-testing is very unreliable.)

In any case, I was rather besotted with the idea of being an INFJ-- with the whole idea, in fact, of personality types. Or even of personality itself. There is something mysterious, even mystical about personality. A person has so many drives, impulses, desires, appetites, principles, whims, and so forth, that there seems something miraculous in the fact that these do not add up to complete anarchy, but that there is instead a unity running through them all. And the fact that it is an enigmatic and elusive unity only makes it more fascinating.

In fact, I am fascinated with what I might describe (as I did in my blog post) as the drama of the individual. One human being-- one heart, mind, pair of legs, pair of arms, set of memories, etc.-- is, as the Midrash puts it, a world entire. There is no end to the things that could be said about each and every one of us. An event, an atmosphere, a relation takes on infinite importance simply because

it is happening to somebody

. We are like glow-worms that throw out, not light, but significance-- and an endless radiance of significance. An enormous painting of a landscape takes on a whole new meaning if one solitary, tiny figure is shown against it. The tiny figure makes the landscape far larger than it would have been otherwise.

And the internal landscape, the landscape of an individual soul, is itself almost inexhaustible. I like the Neil Sedaka song 'The Other Side of Me':

Why can't you see

What's on the other side of me,

The side of me that reaches out to you?

Sweet thoughts and dreams,

Like drops of rain on rippling streams

That wind and bend,

Rivers with no end,

Flowing on the other side of me?

Not just rivers with no end; but mountain ranges, oceans, caves, cities, deserts, jungles, plains, and the tracts of space...all inside one human soul.

It isn't only the thought of the

immensity

of each human soul that captivates, but the thought of its

drama

. Human life is so inherently dramatic. Even someone who is house-bound all her life, who never meets more than a handful of people, lives a life of such intensity, and such variety, and such range that all the resources of metaphor-- space travel, war, mythology, exploration--- strain to express it. Sometimes, indeed, the whole outer world seems to me like little more than a projecting screen for the mysteries of the human spirit. The world is smaller than the soul.

This inherent drama of the human soul is, I think, built into some of our most habitual activities-- principally storytelling, dreaming and (to go its very foundations) imagination itself. And, the more you think about these activities, the more strange they become.

By storytelling, I mean it in all its senses-- from writing a novel to daydreaming about the person sitting beside you on the bus. I think human beings can no more stop telling stories-- to themselves, as well as to others-- than they can avoid breathing. We live our own lives as stories.

Dreaming, too, is very strange. Think about it. Every night we slip into a private reality, which we

think

is real at the time. (At one time in my childhood, this idea suddenly terrified me and I was frightened to go to sleep. I didn't want to be deluded.) But the really surprising thing about dreams is their creativity. I can easily imagine a state of things in which we didn't dream at all. But, given the existence of our dreams, you might expect them to have a certain plausibility--- to occur in the same settings as our everyday lives, to be concerned with the same round of daily activities. Instead we dream of kayaking with Dracula, and being chased by mastodons, and so forth. Indeed, I've had dreams that would be impossible to describe. (By the way, I hereby copyright the phrase 'kayaking with Dracula'.) I often wonder if this extravagance of our dream life is what took us from being the wimps of the Pleistocene era to masters of the world and explorers of the solar system. Perhaps we conquered reality through the road of fantasy.

Ultimately, though, both our propensity for storytelling and our dream life are rooted in that more basic capacity-- the imagination itself. The human imagination must be one of the most sublime of all subjects for thought. It was a favourite theme for poets, back in the eighteenth century. ("The Pleasures of Imagination" by Mark Akenside is one of those poetic 'hits' which have been forgotten utterly by popular taste.) As with dreams, the more we think about the imagination, the stranger and more miraculous it

seems.

The human mind can travel from the bottom of the sea to the furthest reaches of the universe in a flash. Indeed, it can be in both places at once-- or it can combine them-- or it can create 'a new Heaven and a new Earth'. But even the most simply operations of the imagination-- the ability to see a face that is not before our eyes, or the memory of something that happened five minutes ago-- is awe-inspiring in itself. The human mind can give existence to that which does not exist, presence to that which is not there.

When you walk past a stranger in the park, or stand behind a stranger in a queue, you have no idea what is happening inside that stranger's head-- whether they are remembering picking blackberries as a child, or imagining torturing their boss, or totting up a weekly budget, or composing a poem, or accepting an Oscar. There is something exhilarating about that radical

openness

The

privacy

of the human mind is another of its wonders. Even if a person is locked away in a tiny cell, they still have an endless territory of their own, which nobody else can share unless they are invited. Like Hamlet, we could be bounded in a nutshell, and count ourselves king of infinite space. This is the cosiest of all thoughts.

All this, to my mind, raises the dignity and the drama of the individual to dizzy heights.

As a Christian, I often find myself wondering if the doctrine of death to self, and of being reborn in Christ, means we must cast away all talk of personality, of 'finding ourselves', of 'discovering who we are', of self-actualization. I hope not, since I find that human drama-- repeated in every human life-- to be infinitely fascinating. I love movies that take this drama as their theme, from

Regarding Henry

to

The Vow

. I'd like to think that Christian life only raises this drama onto a higher level, and into a wider expanse.

This contribution is available at <http://irishpapist.blogspot.ie/2014/08/the-drama-of-individual.html>
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The Running Father [at The Encouragement of Scripture]

Want to be encouraged? This Scripture in Luke is written just for us. -----

Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons . . . (Luke 15:11).

During one of his live performances, singer/songwriter Steve Angrisano talked about the Prodigal Son. “It is not only about the Prodigal”, he said, “but it’s also about the Running Father.”

You can find the well-known story of the Prodigal in Luke 15. The young man had asked his father to divide the inheritance he and his brother were to receive. He wanted his share now. He was tired of living under his father’s rules and authority. He wanted to get away, to live on his own, do as he wanted, when he wanted, with whomever he wanted, for as long as he wanted. In a few days, he packed his bags and left with a bag full of money, and soon surrounded himself with drunkards and prostitutes. Until a famine fell across the land, and it wasn’t long before the young man found himself broke, hungry, homeless, alone, and despondent.

We don’t know how long it took, but eventually he came to his senses. “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!” he said to himself. “I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands”” (verses 17-19).

And so he set himself on the road home. I can imagine him, in my mind’s eye. Shoulders slumped, filled with remorse for having left home in the first place, offending his father, wasting his inheritance on sin and rebellion, wondering now if his father would even speak to him. Dread and apprehension smothered his spirit. He would not even lift his eyes from the dirt road as he shuffled along. Dust swirled at his ankles. Sweat beaded on his forehead. He wiped it away with his ragged cloak.

Onward he walked. For hours. Perhaps days. Edging closer to his father’s home.

Had he been confident about his father’s love, the prodigal would not have been looking at his feet as he drew close to the place of his birth. Instead, he would have seen his father in the distance, standing at the perimeter of their property, scanning the horizon, hoping his son would one day return.

But the prodigal didn’t look up, and so did not see his father running toward him –almost at a sprint – arms open, face beaming, cloak flapping behind him as he raced toward his son. Not until he heard his father’s sandals slapping the dirt, did he look up and see.

What did the young man think when he beheld his father’s radiant smile and dancing eyes? What did he think as his father embraced him, as he held him close in a long, so very long, lingering embrace?

“Father,” the prodigal began, “I am so sorry. I was wrong. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Please, make me as one of our slaves” (see verse 21).

But his father seemed to not even hear him. “My son! My son! You were lost, Oh, but now you’re found. You were dead, but you’re now alive. Oh, thank God, you’re alive. Come into the house. Oh, my son, you’re home!”

He was dead, and is now alive. He was lost, and is now found.

What about you? Have you made a mess of your life? Not wanting to live under your heavenly Father’s rules and authority, you left Him to do what you wanted to do, when you wanted to do it, how you wanted to do it, for as long as you wanted to do it?

And now you see your great error?

Jesus told the story of the Prodigal Son to make an important point for you and for me about the Father’s love – about His great, overabundant love – for us. An important point perhaps especially for those of us who wonder if we have been gone so long and drifted so far that He won’t now even talk to us.

The prodigal “came to his senses” and made his way home. Why not do the same? And as you take your first step, look up and you will see your heavenly Father scanning the horizon from the edge of heaven. Keep looking, and you will see Him running toward you, His arms outstretched, face radiant, as He embraces you. “Look!” He will shout at the angels. “My child was lost, and now is found! My child was dead, and is now alive!”

Don’t you want to go home?

This contribution is available at http://theencouragementofscripture.blogspot.com/2014/08/the-running-father_13.html
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Disappointment crept into my heart when I failed to land a plum writing assignment. This came after I visualized my writing glorifying God and my work becoming significant. I thought that would help me become significant. It got me thinking about how we become significant and how we judge the significance of others in our life.

I remember hearing someone say, “The more you love, the more significant you become.” God is Love, and he is huge compared to me. Not because he is bigger, stronger and more powerful, but because he gave his Son for love of me.

How significant is God in your life?

Measure that by how much he loves you. Can you measure God’s infinite love for humanity and specifically for you? The cross points out how much.

Don’t wait until you grow into that charming, loveable person that you visualize everyone can love. God created you the person you are right now, his beloved child. You are already that loveable person because he already loves you unconditionally. You can’t earn God’s love by trying to acquire more holiness. You can only allow his holiness to come forth through all the clutter of your fears and self-expectations by embracing his love for you.

How significant are you?

Jesus took a child in his arms and taught us that the smaller, more child-like we make ourselves, the greater we make ourselves. Humility is what he wants from us, and he shows us how.

He leads by example. In the Incarnation, he made himself so small, so insignificant compared to his eternal power and glory, that he became like us. He humbled himself so that we could become great. What makes us significant is how God loves us. *What makes us unforgettable is how we love others.*

The more we give away God's love, the more significant we become. That's because the more we love, the more we *can* love, not on our own, but with the love of God. So how do we become significant? By allowing God to love us to overflowing. Our greatness comes when we allow God's love to overflow from our hearts.

Let's not insist that everyone must love us before we can love them. Let them respond to the love of God we extend to them and see what happens. Those who reject us, reject God. But what if God's love persists through us and the person responds in love? Then we have won a great victory for God's kingdom, with the everlasting consequence of becoming significant in his kingdom.

Let God layer it on!

God has so much to give us of his life, so much to reveal to us of his many-faceted love for us. We can only process so much of that revelation at a time — layer by deep layer — by staying close to him. Prayer, Eucharist, Adoration, and devotions help us find his presence, stay in his embrace and praise him for the new awareness of his life and love in us. We can let him whisper to us through prayer, circumstances and relationships as he reveals himself and his ways of loving to us.

The more we experience his mighty power in us the more he can accomplish through us. The more we can love with his love, the more significant we become to others and the less we care how important we are.

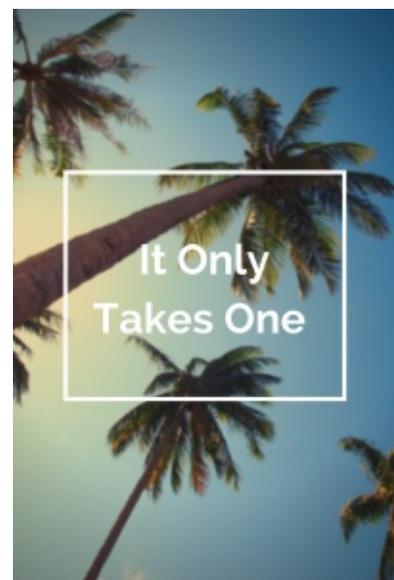
- How open are you are to receive as much of God's love as you possibly can?
- Are you becoming more significant to others by letting God's love overflow from within you?

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It Only Takes One



It only takes one smile to offer welcome and blessed be the person who shares it. It only takes one moment to be helpful, and blessed be the person who will spare it. It only takes one joy to lift a spirit, and blessed be the person who will give it. It only takes one life to make a difference, and blessed be the person who will live it. Amanda Bradley

I have always been impressed with the power in the number one. It only takes one person, one kind word, one thought, or one good deed to change the world.

One is a very powerful number.

Remember that one teacher that stands out beyond all others. The one who believed in you, took a special interest in you, and helped you gain the confidence to succeed.

Remember that one coach that pushed you harder than anyone else on the team. Remember the day when you realized that he did so because he thought you were special and had the potential to be a college or professional athlete.

Remember that one friend who has stuck by you all these years, through college, marriages, families, moves to other states, good time and bad times. The one friend you could really count on.

Remember the one employer or older associates who shared her knowledge and experience with you and you now credit for guiding and mentoring your career.

Yes, one is a powerful number!

Do you know that you can be that one person for someone? You never forget the person that was there for you when no one else was. You can be the one person they will always remember.

It only takes one negative comment to kill a dream, but one encouraging word can set a person on a course of success and the fulfillment of lifelong dreams. One moment can change everything!

For me, these people and their kindnesses are etched in my mind. I can remember the moments as if it were yesterday. I recall the exact words that were shared, the encouragement, the special feeling of the moment.

And, I'll bet that you can remember the people and moments that changed your life, as well.

There are some people who never hear words of encouragement, never have someone that will believe in them, sticks with them, mentors them, and loves them. They live their lives under a constant barrage of negativism.

There is an old saying it takes one tree to make a thousand matches, but it only takes one match to burn a thousand trees. That's what happens when you spew the venom of your negative comments on your spouse, your children, your friends, coworkers, and fellow students.

Let's remember that there is power in your words. Negative words can kill a dream, but positive words can start the journey to a dream come true.

“Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. –Isaiah 41:10

And, what about your faith journey, there is power in one as well? It only takes one faith, one savior, one baptism, to change our lives forever. To be born again by water and spirit, to be sons and daughters of the one true God. We will never forget the people, especially the one person that brought us to a better understanding of our faith, and helped us to find forgiveness, redemption, and salvation.

Yes, God is the One that can change our lives forever. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And, if we follow Him, put our faith in Him, He promises to be that friend that is always there for us.

Yes, you never forget the ones that helped you on your journey. And, you'll never forget the ones who brought you to the Lord.

Let's all strive to be that one person that will make a difference in the life of a friend.

This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2014/08/it-only-takes-one/>
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Writing our legacy



When James Foley became a martyr this week, I didn't know much about him. I vaguely remember the news of his capture in 2012, since he is from nearby New Hampshire. We all have learned more about him quickly, just as we've learned more about Syrian politics, more about radicalization, hate and terror from the hideous actions of his murderers.

When I saw that he had gone to Marquette University I felt that familiar excitement of learning someone admirable is a fellow Jesuit-school alum. I was even more moved to read [the piece he wrote about faith and prayer in Marquette's magazine](#) after the end of his first imprisonment abroad.

If nothing else, prayer was the glue that enabled my freedom, an inner freedom first and later the miracle of being released during a war in which the regime had no real incentive to free us. It didn't make sense, but faith did.

Not the words the world expects from a seasoned, weary, Gen X-er.

When he wrote that, did he have any idea what a large audience it would someday have? Probably not. When he lived a life of generosity and faith did he know that one day people would look carefully at his life for consolation? Doubtful.

If someone were to look back at my words – if the world were suddenly paying attention – would they find inspiration? Do I care enough about being a person of faith to be one even when no one is looking?

We write our legacies every day, in blogs and social media, in letters and texts. We write it in the way we live our lives, often in an obscurity that can be deceptive.

I am grateful that James Foley wrote a legacy of faith before the eyes of the world were on him, so that our eyes could be opened.

Image: [Writing a letter](#)” by [Petar Milošević](#) – Own work. Licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#) via [Wikimedia Commons](#).

This contribution is available at <http://margaretfelice.com/2014/08/21/writing-our-legacy/>
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The Truth About the First Day [at Campfires and Cleats]

So, the First Day. It's happening. It's happening on the face of the clock and the page on the calendar and we want more time. Time to get ready; time to know ...for them, for us, for the Lord. Because we want this. You want this.

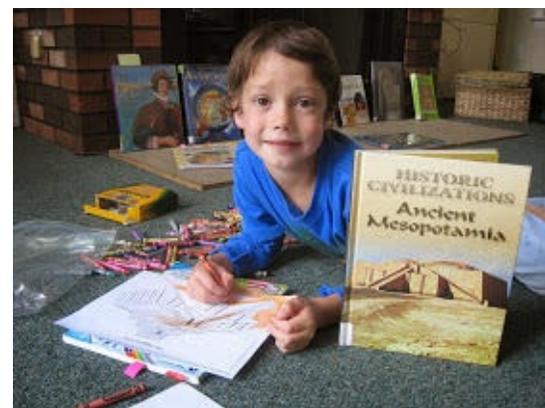
It's not enough, you think. September is creeping, sneaking, approaching. Oh, the schoolroom is set. The books are ordered. The plans are done. The schedules are written. Whether it's your first year or your eleventh, as it is ours, or you're on this journey even longer.....you feel trepidation. You feel tenuous. You feel...inadequate. Am I right?

But you...your strengths, your standards, your drive for excellence.... heck, your pride, your ego. ...they fall short. Or so you think.

This..... is where you're wrong. This and only this.

Because your sins and your shortcomings? They will never drive a wedge between you and the Lord. Between you and His plan.

You think you're not enough for this Mommy thing. This wife thing. This homeschooler thing. You think you can't meet His expectations?



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

Don't forget to subscribe to Campfires and Cleats

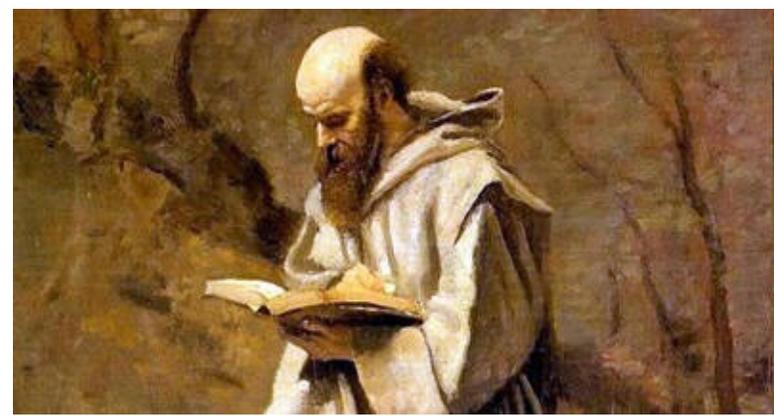
by scrolling to the *subscribe* button at the top left sidebar.

I'd love to stay in touch regularly.

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2014/09/the-truth-about-first-day-my-september.html>
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The Divine Office: Together We Pray [at The Cloistered Heart]



I used to have very little appreciation for the Liturgy of the Hours.

I considered it ‘too structured,’ ‘too formal,’ and a mere recitation of words

other

people had written.

It could be spoken while the speaker’s mind wandered anywhere and everywhere (I decided)... so wouldn’t such a practice just lead to dry, lifeless prayer?

I could not have been more wrong.

The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the ‘Divine Office,’ is an official group of prayers used by priests and Religious.

It is a primary part of the daily schedules of monks and nuns.

The Divine Office

is the same for people throughout the Church, throughout the world.

On the very same day, Father O’Neill in Dublin and a group of monks in Sydney and a monastery of nuns in Toledo are praying the exact same words.



And I can pray with them, if I wish.

[As I wrote here a few weeks ago](#)

, the Liturgy of the Hours helps my prayer stay on track. In it, scripture is right before me; thus I have

['grillwork'](#)

for my day. I am praying with the whole Church, right along with Father O'Neill and the monks in Sydney and the Toledo nuns. And, if I'm tempted to bypass prayer, I get help to carry me past my (laziness, in my case).

Do I, personally, pray the entirety of the Liturgy of the Hours? No. But My goal is to work toward that. I'm making a commitment to at least pray part of it every day. I hope to pray more and more of it, to 'baby step' my way into staying solidly

[on its tracks](#) throughout

the day.

In my haphazard life (and my very nature is 'haphazard'), I definitely need some of that structure I once dreaded. Otherwise, I wind up wasting entire days.



I find that those 'words others have written' often turn out to be cries and groanings from my very heart.

Does my mind wander while I pray in this way? My mind wanders no matter

how

I pray. The Divine Office helps call the drifting mind back.

Does the Liturgy of the Hours lead me to the dry, lifeless prayer I feared? No. Sometimes I feel dry and lifeless, yes, but again: that would happen no matter how I pray. The printed words help me stay focused.

In some key ways, the Liturgy of the hours is a lens that helps me zoom right in on the presence and reality of God.

Where can we find the Liturgy of the Hours?

A WONDERFUL resource is

DivineOffice.org. ***I cannot recommend this highly enough.***

It is free, it has all of the hours available for reading or for listening to, and it's a marvelous tool for those of us who have trouble finding our way through the books themselves.

It's all right there for us.

The one and four volume breviaries are available for purchase at this site as well.

And for an excellent explanation of this kind of prayer, check out



This contribution is available at <http://www.thecloisteredheart.org/2014/08/the-divine-office-together-we-pray.html>
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St. Teresa's Transverberation by Josef de Obidos (Wikimedia Commons)

Last winter on social media, I came across another Catholic author who was promoting yoga. Not as an exercise program, but for spiritual growth. I was shocked. I asked her why she wasn't promoting prayer instead. She answered, "Meditation is prayer!"

Nope.

Two months ago, my brother forwarded an email from a colleague, asking about Centering Prayer. A friend was pushing it relentlessly. I looked at the website of the Catholic group that promotes Centering Prayer and found this in the FAQs:

This form of prayer was first practiced and taught by the Desert Fathers of Egypt ... the Carmelites St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and St. Therese of Lisieux...

Nonsense.

The other day a new reader asked in the comments about meditating on Sacred Scripture. "Is this the same as the method of Fr. John Main, who has adapted an Eastern mantra method for Christian meditation?"

Uh-uh.

[I have written a little on this topic before](#), but I think it's time to revisit it. Let's start with Teresa of Avila.

Teresa of Avila's method of prayer

Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross are Doctors of the Church. They are THE experts on Christian prayer. So what method of prayer did Teresa teach? Are you ready to be surprised?

None.

Now that you've picked yourself off the floor, let me clarify that a bit. A passage in Teresa's *Foundations* does explain briefly how her nuns should practice meditation. But you won't find a word about this in her classics on prayer *Interior Castle* or *Way of Perfection*. Why not? Teresa was not concerned with *methods* of prayer, but with *stages* of prayer. She never taught that meditation was a necessary prerequisite to contemplation, let alone the same thing as it.

She had good reasons. In *Way of Perfection* she mentions a nun who was unable to meditate, but became holy by praying the Our Father slowly and reverently. Teresa herself spent years unable to pray unless she had a book to read, because constant distractions plagued her.

In other words, she knew that everyone was different and that one method of mental prayer would not suit all souls.

Don't just take my word for it. Here are what others have said:

What we find in Ss. Teresa and John and in Scripture is a very different message... as far as I can find, not a single sentence ... speaks of methodology as a means to deep communion with the God of revelation." (Fr. Thomas Dubay, *Fire Within*, 111)

A few paragraphs later Fr. Dubay says:

While St. Teresa was well acquainted with methods of meditation and wished her young nuns to be instructed in them, she emphatically insisted that the primary need for beginners is not to find the ideal method but to do God's will from moment to moment throughout the day."

Pere Marie Eugene, OCD, writes in *I Want to See God*:

For Saint Teresa, mental prayer—the door of the castle and the way of perfection—is less a particular exercise than the very practice of the spiritual life..." (53 in the combined 2-volume work with *I Am a Daughter of the Church*)

Here are the words of Teresa herself:

Mental prayer, in my view, is nothing but friendly intercourse, and frequent solitary converse with Him Who we know loves us." (*Way of Perfection*)

Shortly after quoting this definition, Pere Marie Eugene explains further:

According to temperaments, the intercourse of friendship will assume an intellectual form, or an affective, or even sensitive one. The child will put its love for Jesus in a kiss, a smile sent to the tabernacle, a caress for the infant Jesus, an expression of sadness before the crucifix. The youth will sing his love for Christ and will encourage its growth by using expressions and images that strike his imagination and his senses, while waiting until his intellect can provide strong thoughts to form a more spiritual and more nourishing prayer." (55)

Prayer is accessible to all

Do you see how important this is? If true mental prayer, the necessary preparation for the gift of

contemplation, requires an elaborate method, it is elitist. Such a way bars the ignorant, children, and those of certain temperaments or psychological weaknesses from being contemplatives. It bars them from intimacy with Christ. It makes holiness the possession of the few who know enough and who have the right natural gifts. This is not the Gospel!

Children can become saints. Some have. For St. Therese of Lisieux, spiritual childhood was the way to reach the heights of holiness very quickly. And we are supposed to believe that she taught a form of prayer that was reserved for the few?

On the contrary, the essential element is not a method, but the loving friendship between the person praying and God.

St. Therese's method of prayer

St. Therese speaks in a similar way as her patron saint and spiritual mother:

With me prayer is a lifting up of the heart, a look towards Heaven, a cry of gratitude and love uttered equally in sorrow and in joy; in a word, something noble, supernatural, which enlarges my soul and unites it to God.... Except for the Divine Office, which in spite of my unworthiness is a daily joy, I have not the courage to look through books for beautiful prayers.... I do as a child who has not learned to read, I just tell our Lord all that I want and he understands." (*Story of a Soul*, Ch. 11)

Do you see any indication there of a method we should all follow? In contrast to this, those who want to learn Centering Prayer are encouraged to attend a retreat or workshop or take an online course. But the proponents of Centering Prayer still insist it's not a technique! It doesn't take a workshop or a class to learn to speak to God from the heart. Moses spoke to God "as a man speaks to his friend." That is mental prayer.

Are methods useless?

Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't practice any method of prayer. Methods help us stay on track. They help us not sit idly in our prayer time. Some methods are better than others. But the key is this: no one method of prayer is required to prepare us for contemplation. And no method at all can *make us* contemplatives.

Contemplation is the goal. And contemplation is not an altered state of consciousness. It is not peaceful feelings. It is a supernatural gift. It is God drawing the soul to Himself on His own initiative. It is a progressive union with Him.

Well, some are

So, why do I say that meditation is not prayer? Prayer can be practiced in many legitimate ways. One of them is meditation. But not Buddhist/Hindu/yoga meditation. Those have a different goal. They are not prayer at all! Christian meditation always centers on Christ. There are many traditional means of Christian meditation. [Here is one example.](#)

Do not look for God in pagan religious practices. The Church gives us all we need and more, without the dangers of dabbling in foreign religions.

As for Fr. John Main, the criticisms I have read of his method are very similar to criticisms of Centering Prayer. It too originated in pagan religions, trying to make their practices Catholic, and failing. Christ, not a mantra, is the focus of our prayer. Fr. Main's organization has been accused of [syncretism](#). He apparently learned his method of "prayer" from a Hindu Swami.

If you want to know what Carmelites mean by contemplation, [read the two posts that begin here](#). God willing, I will speak about prayer further next week.

Connie Rossini

This contribution is available at <http://contemplativehomeschool.com/2014/08/29/teresa-avila-teach-centering-prayer/>
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Sneaking Shuteye [at One Thousand Words a Week]

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to sleep ([Prov. 6.10](#)).

Insomniac? Me, too. Let's swap coping methods. Benadryl or Ambien? Yoga? Counseling? What about caffeine: Less? *None at all?*

Maybe you've had better luck than I have with stuff like that. Unfortunately, I've pretty much resigned myself to an inadequate night's sleep on a regular basis – catching up on reading in the wee hours, or *I Love Lucy* reruns on [TV Land](#), or even doing dishes on occasion – and so *my* challenge is figuring out how to make up the sleep deficit during the day.

Napping is the obvious stopgap remedy, but hardly a real solution, especially when it comes to the more serious effects of sleep deprivation. Michael Twery of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, [says](#) that naps “may reduce the feeling of sleepiness but do not help the biological rhythms associated with long-term health.” Better sleep – good sleep, *long* sleep, at night preferably – is what's really needed. Right. I know that. It's a work in progress.

In the meantime, of course, naps are imperative, but not always convenient. Depending on where you work, it might be frowned upon to simply spread out on the floor for a refreshing doze. Consequently, unless you work in a part of the world where afternoon siestas are *de rigueur*, sneaking some sleep on the



sly becomes an alternative form. Probably you're already an old hand and already know all the tricks, but here are a few pointers if you're a sleepless newbie.

1. Car naps – Let's be clear from the get-go on this one: The car *must* be stationary before napping occurs. In fact, car naps are a great way of *preventing* nodding off when the car actually *is* in motion.

That being said, I put this one first because, although seasonal, it's *very* convenient. Seriously, what could be easier (when the weather is clement) than stopping in a parking lot, making your way to the outer rim (where the well-heeled park their Lexus sedans and shiny new SUVs in hopes of avoiding car dings), and camping out for a spell. You put back your seat, insert a couple earplugs, and then cover your eyes with a handkerchief or bandanna. Bring along a small pillow for your neck's sake, and perhaps a light coverlet in the fall and early spring. Five or ten minutes, tops, and you're ready for that next meeting or financial report!

A variation on this method is what I call the “River Nap.” This was a favorite when we had babies that

weren't all that great at sleeping themselves. I'd secure the wailing child in a car seat, and we'd go for an extended drive all around town until the wails gave way to lullaby land. Next, I'd find some quiet, picturesque spot to park the vehicle (often a spot by the [St. Joseph River](#) – hence the name), lock all the doors, and put my seat back to join my son or daughter in a restful slumber. Dad gets a nap, baby gets a nap, *and* exhausted mom of nursing newborn gets a nap (hopefully) at home. A non-REM trifecta – sweet!

2. Library naps – Did you know you're not allowed to sleep in public libraries? It's true, and now my kids have been alerted accordingly.

We were in our neighborhood branch the other day. My teens went off to find bo



ooks and movies and music, and my younger children plopped down in front of the computers to play games (which they normally don't get to do at home).

I found a poofy chair within eyeshot of the computer bank and settled in. Then, after the librarian making her rounds had passed me by, I leaned back, covered my eyes with a cloth, and caught a quick snooze. Five minutes is all it takes usually, sometimes even just a couple. [Sleep experts](#) say that cat naps are better than daytime full-fledged deep sleep anyway. It's just a recharge, and then back in the game.

Later, on the way home, I mentioned to the kids that I was glad I wasn't caught napping or else I might've been thrown out. It was hyperbole, of course, but my youngest daughter thought it was a curious comment. "Why would you get in trouble for sleeping in the library?" she asked.

This was a tough one, because we're pretty much talking homeless folks here, and the no-sleeping rule is designed to prevent libraries from becoming drop-in centers. And, as I recall, that's one of the main purposes for drop-in centers: To catch up on sleep in a safe, climate-controlled environment.

In Chicago, I remember getting kicked out of libraries pretty regularly for sleeping – the [Bezazian](#) branch on the north side was the first. I was brand new in the city and on a February urban plunge. I hadn't slept much in the rescue mission the night before, so I was pretty beat, plus cold and sick. I just wanted a warm place to sit and snooze a bit, so when I came across the Bezazian branch, I went in, sat down, and dropped off to sleep. It couldn't have been more than a minute or two before a librarian shook me awake and let me know I'd have to move along – surprise!

Next time you're in a downtown library, look around. You'll see men and women (mostly men) slouching in chairs with strategically placed books to forestall the inevitable tap on the foot or shoulder. It was true in Chicago, and it's true here in South Bend. It's telling that I've never been nailed for napping in our



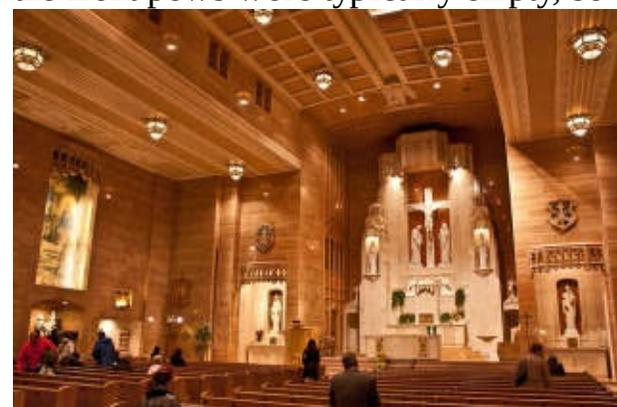
neighborhood branch in the subdivision, but downtown I've been called on it at least a couple times. And it's apparently a pretty common library protocol nationwide – even in [Seattle](#), where the public library has intentionally reached out to the homeless – but I'm glad to know that [librarians wrestle with it](#) when called upon to enforce it.

3. Church naps – Unlike sleeping in the library, sleeping in church is acceptable. In fact, I even had a priest give me implicit permission once. “The least important part of the Mass *by far* is the homily,” he said. “If you have to duck out for some reason or catch forty winks, that's the time to do it.” He well knows that I've taken him up on his advice many times.

Yes, I'm a notorious Mass-napper, I admit it. In fact, we have a saying in my family – OK, not a “saying” so much as an inside joke, and the joke is on me. You've probably heard the musically inclined [quote](#) St. Augustine: “He who sings, prays twice.” Our family gloss on that saying is this: “And he who falls asleep, prays three times.”

But napping in church doesn't have to be reserved to worship alone. If you can find a church that is open for prayer and adoration all day, then your drowsiness problems are over!

The key here is adopting the proper *attitude* of prayerful sleep – “attitude” as in positioning in the pew. My favorite napping church is still [St. Peter's in the Loop](#) in Chicago. When I lived at the [Catholic Worker](#), and got desperate for a break and some Z's, I'd hop on the 'L' train (another good sleeping venue, but not to everyone's taste), get off at Madison, and walk over to St. Peter's. Like most Catholic churches, the front pews were typically empty, so I'd usually pick a spot a few rows b



ack from the Mary altar to the left of the sanctuary. I'd half kneel/half sit, and lean my head forward on the pew in front of me. I could stay in that position a good 15 minutes, and then wake up refreshed and ready to head back into the do-gooder fray, with only a big red mark on my forehead as evidence of my AWOL respite.

So, church napping is not only liturgically acceptable (during the homily), and socially respectable (as long as you don't snore too bad), but theologically appropriate as well. Sleep is like death according to

the Scriptures – especially in [St. Paul](#):

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

And what's the goal of the Christian life after all? To die in Christ, right? For to die in Christ is to be rise with him on the last day. St. Paul gets at this from the negative point of view in his first letter to the church at Corinth:

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep ([1 Cor. 15.16-18, 20](#)).

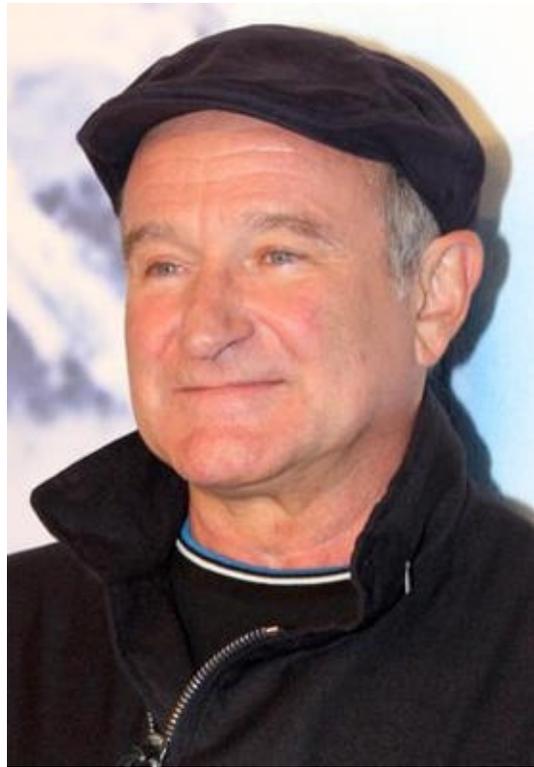
We're all going to die, short of the Parousia, and hopefully we'll die in Christ with hope of resurrection to follow. If [Christ is the church](#), why not think of sleeping in church as a display of [Maranatha](#), "Come, Lord Jesus!" spirit?

In any case, please give me the benefit of the doubt. Next time you see me nodding off in church? Think of it as a theological statement and an affirmation of faith....*Zzzzz-zzzzzz*.....

This contribution is available at <http://onethousandwordsaweek.wordpress.com/2014/08/03/sneaking-shuteye/>
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What is the Role of God in Mental Illness? [at Catholic How]



Wikipedia

By Claire McGrath

Mental illness has been the subject of much discussion recently due to the tragic loss of Robin Williams. His death reminds us of the devastating effects of mental illness, and the need to address this problem. Mental illness is a result of chemical imbalances and physical abnormalities in the brain, as well as one's environment, and it affects the mind, body, and spirit—it's all encompassing. I think the issue begs an important question: what is the role of faith in mental illness? Of course, I don't have the definitive answer. What I can offer are my thoughts on the subject, based on my own experiences.

In a 2012 survey It's obvious that mental illness is a major issue in our society. I have experienced my own struggles with anxiety during my time in college, and have received professional treatment. Anxiety is a fairly prevalent issue among college students. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health problems for college students. When I was struggling the most, I felt very distant from God. I was frustrated with myself, and I believed that if I only worked harder on my relationship with God, then I wouldn't be in such a dark place. I thought that a lack of faith was part of my problem.

I've realized that this kind of thinking leads to guilt and self-blame; the reality is that mental illness is such a complex issue caused by many different factors, and a troubled relationship with God does not "cause" mental illness. Our God is not a God who would punish us for our shortcomings by inflicting us with a brain disorder, just as He would not punish our sinfulness with other diseases. It's true that we find our emotional well-being often reflects our relationship with God. However, there is a significant difference between a temporary emotional state and an actual illness. Everybody experiences anxiety from time to time, but when I realized that my anxiety was starting to affect my decision making, impair

my ability to concentrate, prevent me from doing things I enjoyed, and interfere with my happiness, I recognized that something more serious was going on. A mental illness is a disease, just like any physical ailment, and our relationship with God does not prevent or bring on diseases.

However, just as illness affects one's relationship with family and friends, it can also affect one's relationship with God. I found that it was hard for me to feel close to my loved ones and to God when I was so distracted by feelings of despair, frustration, and anxiety. It's not that these things created a gulf between God and me—no force can prevent God from reaching any of us—but they clouded my vision, preventing me from recognizing God's presence right beside me. Mental illness can take people to a very dark place, as it did with me. But...God accompanies us down that dark path, giving us the strength to continue on in our journey toward the light.

I realized that I could not heal without God; however, God's aid came to me in many different forms, and at a time when I didn't even know what I needed, I found myself surrounded by supportive people who guided me in the right direction. I recognize God's presence in the therapists, psychologists, doctors, and other medical professionals whose vocation is to provide hope to people experiencing mental illness. He's present in support groups, in therapy, in counseling, and in the countless other tools used to heal mental illness. He's present in the family members and friends whose support is strong and unconditional. And He's there in the depth of our pain, united with us in our suffering.

As I work to overcome my struggles with anxiety, I've found healing in counseling, in confiding in loved ones, and, yes, in prayer. Mental illness, like any other illness, is not something that anybody chooses. I did not choose to experience anxiety, and I could not choose to heal myself on my own. I simply did not have the capability to overcome anxiety by myself—I relied on an entire network of people, from licensed professionals to family members and close friends. What those of us who have experienced mental illness *can* do is choose to ask for help and then accept it. And even in the depths of our suffering, we can seek solace in the fact that this isn't a path that anyone has to walk alone. God is there whether we feel Him or not.

Some people have not experienced healing, and the results are tragic. I don't understand why mental illness sometimes makes people so hopeless that they take their own lives, just like I don't understand why people die from cancer or heart attacks or other diseases. But I do know there isn't any illness, mental or physical, that has the power to separate us from God, and I believe that we are called to walk with others along their paths, to be lights when all they can see is darkness. We may not be able to "fix" those who are suffering—we may never even understand their illness—but we can serve as constant reminders of God's love and we should patiently and steadfastly reflect His presence. The journey is not an easy one, but I believe in a God who accompanies us always—even through the darkness—gently guiding us toward healing and light.

This contribution is available at <http://catholichow.wordpress.com/2014/08/27/god-and-mental-illness/>
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A Few Quick Things [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



I told you in my last post, I'd post this recipe!

White Pizza

Pizza Dough

1 cup plain Greek yogurt

1 cup self-rising flour (actually you will need much more)

Mix and knead the dough for 5 minutes

Here's where you'll need more flour, keep adding it

til you can make a good dough

Roll it out

1/2 Tbsp olive oil, drizzled on top

1/2 tsp course sea salt

(I also added course pepper, ground onto it)

Mozzarella cheese (about 2 cups)

Ricotta cheese (about a cup, maybe more)

Dollop the Ricotta cheese all over

Bake 450 degrees for 10minutes or til golden brown like above!

I made 2 of these, and on the other one,

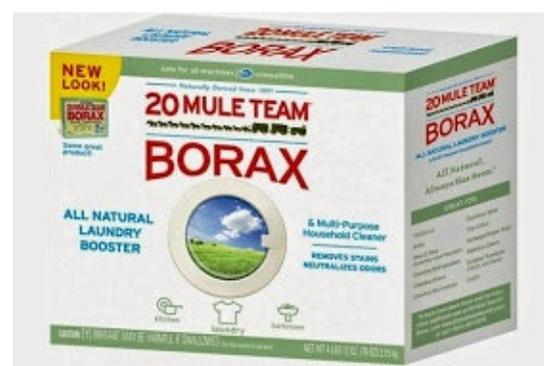
I put fresh minced garlic and sprinkled some fresh red pepper flakes on before the cheeses.

Everyone voted (and we had extra kids(boys) here that night)

Verdict:

The recipe above, no added spices, surprising, huh?

Sounds kind of plain, but it wasn't, it was delicious!



Borox cleaned my shower!!

Actually, I cleaned it using Borax.

(and it was bad, really bad)

I thought it would never come clean,

I thought we'd need to buy a new shower in order to sell our home.

I was wrong.

is something I pinned a long time ago

and finally tried.

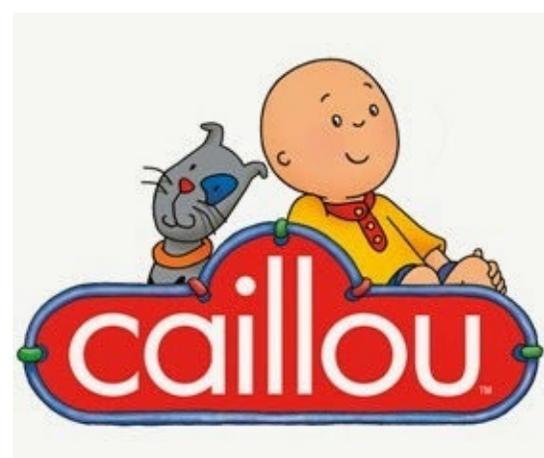
It

(the dirt and grime and shower soap scum)

came off like butter.

Really, I kid you not.

OK, not really butter, but it was really easy.



Seriously, is there any parent out there that actually likes this 4 year old bald kid?

Well, when my 2 year old says,

"Ci Woo, Mama, Ci Woo, Mama"

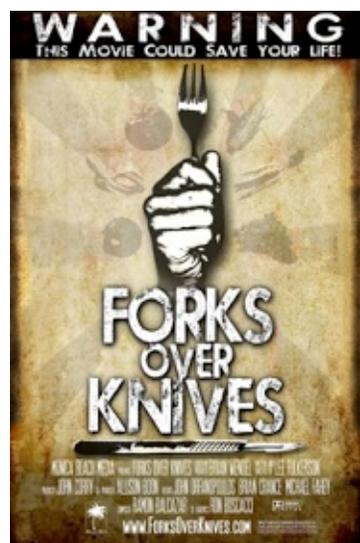
I melt and give in and let him watch the stupid show.



Why does the donkey have so many names?

1. Donkey
2. Ass
3. Mule
4. Burrow

Do you think Adam had a hard time deciding what to call this animal?



Has anyone seen this?

I watched it the other night.

It has me thinking, it really has me thinking.

If beans didn't make me fart so dang much,

I might give this vegan thing another shot.

Really interesting, I give it a thumbs up.



Movie review!!

Good movie, pretty good movie

Especially if you like Kevin Costner



And I do, so I liked it.

I didn't like the weird boss lady he had though, that was a really weird part.

Other than that, it was a pretty good movie, with some cute stuff to make it light hearted



Why do cookies get flat like this sometimes?

I rarely bake homemade cookies

so when they do this, it bugs me

(no one complained)

I could google it, but I thought it would be more fun to see what you'all would say.



My baby boy.

He's a cool dude.

He's so fun and busy right now



and not that red anymore.

(yes, that's a bruise between his eyes...he got hit with a frisbie)

I just want to keep him like this forever,

fun and busy and in love with his mama.



This little girl, my baby girl will be 5

(YES 5)

on Sunday

My heart is sad, I admit it.

I don't want her to grow up.

(I'm selfish that way)

She's spunky and full of giggles and she says funny things

and wants to do anything FUN.

And she's a cutie pie.

I mean, look at those curls!



Have you heard of this "ice bucket challenge" thing?

I've never heard of this before this year.

It's for ALS, to raise money to support research for ALS

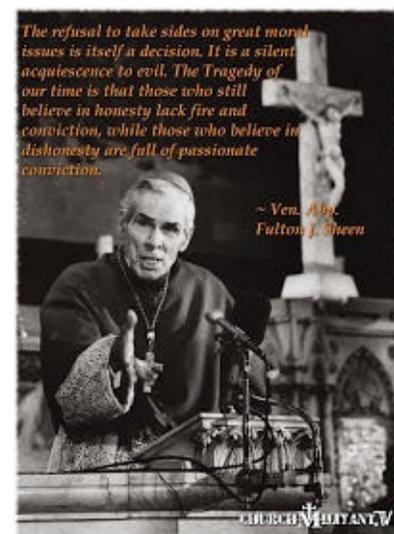
explains the type of research they do

Now when I read something like that,

I have this moral conscience thing that will not let me let go of it.

I can't read something like that and ignore it, like it's not a big deal.

It's a big deal!!



We need to do our research before donating to an organization that might be using embryonic stem cells.

You can go

for an updated list of organizations that do this.

(their website is down, but the address is there)

Integrity demands
that I do what's
right even if it's
unpleasant and
unpopular.

 Dr. James Dobson.org
#yourlegacymatters

It's issues like these that I get tired of being unpopular.

Why don't people care about this?

Don't get me wrong here, I really think the bucket challenge thing was an awesome idea, what a media frenzy!

What a way to spread the word.

It's just the particular organization that is profiting is not so up on the up and up.

SO, what is a person to do?

Go

[HERE](#)

There are options, a few different options.

And remember...

IF YOU FIND
YOURSELF A BIT
IRRITATED OR OVERWHELMED,
IT'S A SIGN
THAT YOU'RE SPENDING
LESS TIME WITH
GOD
AND MORE TIME
WITH THIS WORLD



Spending our time at the beach, where there are no distractions,
just the beauty of young hearts enjoying summer.

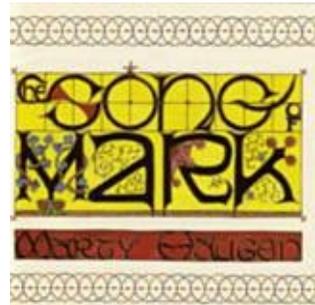
This contribution is available at <http://makemeasaint.blogspot.com/2014/08/a-few-quick-things.html>
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So Good to be Here [at FranciscanMom]

A big part of the Transfiguration story is the reaction of Peter, James and John, who were Jesus' companions on the mountain that day.

James and John were not called the Sons of Thunder for nothing, by the way.



The song “So Good to be Here” from Marty Haugen’s cantata [Song of Mark](#) is an excellent portrayal of their characters. The tune reminds me of circus music, which fits in perfectly with the atmosphere they wanted to create by building tents and staying there forever. When I listen to this song, I picture these big guys drinking a toast to their plan to stick around the mountain with their buddy, Jesus.

It was good for them to be there, but the message of the Transfiguration is that you need to get ready to leave that isolated place and take the message of Jesus wherever you go.

Three years ago, my children and I participated in a performance of *Song of Mark*. It was good to be there—an incredible opportunity to perform with amazingly talented musicians and vocalists. [Watch, if you like](#)—and think about the Transfiguration.

This contribution is available at <http://franciscanmom.com/2014/08/06/so-good-to-be-here/>
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One word you need in your life right now [at Mercy Me!]

The transition from summer to fall is always difficult for me. September through December is jam-packed with, you know....*everything*.

Seriously, if I listed it all out, you would be breathing into a paper bag right now. I know because I just wrote about half of the activities here and had to run to the kitchen to look for a bag. Of course, I could only find plastic bags, which seems like a suffocation hazard. So, I decided it would be better to just delete that paragraph and save you all from hyperventilating and searching in futility for a paper bag.

Bracing myself for the upcoming chaos, I tried something last month that I had not done before.

I picked a word.

It was not just any word, either. It was a word that conveyed a feeling of “*you’ve got this, boss.*”

To find your word, ask yourself what you need in your life right now. What do you want more of – or less? What do you want to remember? Or forget? What do you wish to cultivate in your life and what do you need to make that happen?

It could be peace, friendship, forgiveness, faith, gratitude, strength, compassion, healing, or determination. It could be anything. But, it has to be *yours*.

What is it that *you* need?

I love all those words. Still, the word that I thought of was confidence.

I knew I needed confidence to juggle all I had to do during the upcoming month – not just the to-do lists, but all those unplanned moments both welcome and unwelcome which make up a life.

Confidence was my word. It was my comfort. Everyday I would think about it. I did not set aside time to do it. I simply kept it in my company – a polite companion with which I traveled.

Whenever anything went wrong, I thought of confidence.

For instance, I was on deadline to turn in a news story and had 3 percent charge left on my laptop. I went to plug my computer into the charger, only to realize that my darling cat used the cord for a chew toy. A tantrum, a trip to Best Buy, and \$90 later, I had a new cord and turned in my article – *with confidence*.



During the same month, I also made a huge decision to switch my middle-schooler from the school he had been attending since pre-kindergarten. I needed confidence that I was making the right decision, and that if I wasn't – if I was making a huge mistake, it would be *okay*. I could come up with a new solution.

Because the truth is, I knew I could. I always step up. I always get things done. Most often, things work out. I needed to honor that and have more confidence in my abilities to juggle the demands of life.

It's not like having the word changed the way I handled anything, but it made me believe more in my capacity to cope.

I told a friend of mine with a recent cancer diagnosis about what I was doing and the word I chose. He thought it was a great idea and chose discipline as his word. He needed it to follow the healing regimen assigned by his doctors.

His daughter heard us talking about it and decided her word would be strength. As an athlete she meant it in the physical sense. But she also said she wanted strength to deal with the pressures of high school.

I thought the simple act of picking a word worked so well that I decided to do it again this month.

I chose positive. Three days in – I can tell you, I *hate* the word.

However, the fact it challenges me to understand what I am supposed to feel positive about when I am cleaning my child's vomit off the floor at 5 a.m. (because nothing says back to school like the stomach virus) makes me feel like I chose the perfect word.

So what is your word going to be? I hope you will share it in the comment section. I would love to check back next month and see if choosing a word helped any of you.

I am positive it will.

See, it's working already.

Book Review - Sacred Fire: Practicing Devotion to the Heart of Jesus [at This That and the Other Thing]



About the Book:

On the night before He died, Jesus called His disciples to abide in Him. This startling invitation to an intimate relationship with God is a great gift to all generations. The devotion to the Sacred Heart gives Catholics a practical way to respond to this invitation. Each of us can experience the love of Jesus in a way that transforms our own hearts. Sacred Fire illuminates the rich scriptural roots of the Sacred Heart devotion and recounts how it has evolved through the centuries. More importantly, it provides steps anyone can take to experience the infinite blessings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Embracing the Sacred Heart devotion brings the believer into a dynamic, personal relationship with Jesus. Lukewarm souls become fervent, and fervent souls enjoy ever greater blessings of Divine Mercy that begin in this life and last for all eternity.

My Comments:

I'm not big on practicing a bunch of devotions but one year my parish was pushing Sacred Heart Enthronement so we did it. Now we have pictures in our living room but other than that, there was no long term change in our lives. Nevertheless when asked to review this book I figured I'd give it a shot.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is titled "A Heart Open to All of Humanity" and it goes through the stories of the Sacred Heart including those of its devotees St. Gertrude the Great, St. Margaret Mary, St. Theresa Margaret, St. Teresa of the Andes and St. Faustina. While I found the writing style to be somewhat simplistic and reminiscent of a high school term paper, the information was interesting.

The second part is titled "Elements of Devotion" and discusses the Eucharist, the Litany of the Sacred Heart, Reparation to the Sacred Heart, Scriptural Foundations and the Promises of the Sacred Heart. Those looking to practice devotion to the Sacred Heart will find a lot of possibilities.

I'd like to thank the author, Philip Michael Bulman, for sending me a review copy of the book. I'm not expert enough in theology, scripture etc. to determine whether the book comports with Catholic doctrine. I have not been able to find any information about the publisher (Laudate Press) and it looks like a self-published book. There is a substantial bibliography. Grade: B.

This contribution is available at <http://rannthisthat.blogspot.com/2014/08/book-review-sacred-fire-practicing.html>
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He Doesn't Need More Time [at The Veil of Chastity]

“To the wrong person, you’ll never have any worth. But to the right person, you’ll mean everything.”

I’d like to address the **time factor** in dating. I get emails from women from all over the world and usually their writing to me is prompted by a feeling of confusion. They are dating a “*great guy*” but things are not moving forward toward marriage in a timely manner. These women stay in the relationship in the hopes that *more time* will allow this *great guy* to make up his mind in her favor. In the meantime, she gives and gives and grows more anxious and resentful.

He Has Enough Information

I just want to simply say that more time does not usually help a man decide to marry a woman. He often has enough information, pretty early on, to make his decision to marry. But, under certain circumstances, fails to decide for marriage and instead makes the decision to **sit on the fence**.

These circumstances include him having everything he wants without the need to commit. He can also tend to reject the things about her that are inconvenient or troublesome but does not break things off. Leaving her off-balance.

The Perpetual Audition

In the meantime, the girl feels the need to *audition*. She feels the need to be on her *best behavior* so as to not rock the boat. It makes it hard for her to be herself.

Everyone Has Hang-Ups

Everyone has some level of neurosis (a funny word to me). We all have our issues. I remember when Gregg and I were engaged and I was visiting him in Kansas City. We went to a NASCAR race with a bunch of his friends and family. For some reason, our clothes were wet. Maybe because of rain? I can’t remember. Anyway, all the girls told me that I could borrow their clothes when we got back to their house. But, I wanted to wear my own clothes. So, Gregg drove me back to his house which was completely out of the way. I could not explain why I needed to have my own clothes and he was not real happy about it. But, I felt free to express my needs and, out of love, he accepted this about me. Even today, he jokingly says “*I should have known.*” whenever one of my weird hang-ups surfaces. And surface they do. But, he puts it all in perspective. I guess it is all that [Superabundance!](#)

Chastity

One of the *many* benefits of [Chastity](#) is that it **moves things along**. It also prevents the angst that comes with *the audition* and the potential rejection after giving yourself, body and soul. It prevents all the head games, testing, disrespect, mistrust and manipulation that result from trying to control a situation that feels very out of control.

Here is what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says about Chastity

- **2338** *The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech.*

Here is what the [Angelic Warfare Confraternity](#) tells us about Chastity:

- *“Chastity is the virtue that brings the sexual appetite into harmony with reason. It requires, not the renunciation of sexuality, but the **right or reasonable use of it**..... Reason is a light that illuminates what we are doing so that we can **behave in a way that is consistent with our best interest**.....*
- *One of the fundamental problems that unchastity brings about is **a blindness** that leads directly to acts of imprudence. A person who is inflamed by lustful desires is **hardly in a position to do what is good for himself or anyone else**.*
- *Unchastity tends to destroy prudence and to **prevent a person from maintaining the self-possession or integrity he needs in order to “be himself”** in the proper sense of the term.*
- *In the absence of chastity, a person is **easily seduced** into doing things that are **beneath his dignity**, things that are **shameful**, things that do not accord with who he truly is.*

Unchastity leads to a feeling of betrayal and, at the same time, the participating in the betrayal of oneself. In the words of Archbishop Fulton Sheen:

“The greatest betrayals come from within.”

He Knows

Guys know a lot earlier than they let on when they **don’t** want to marry a girl. If things drag on, then that is usually because he has already decided that he is not going to marry the girl. **Time**, in this case, **is not going to help**. Therefore, he does not need more time.

Additional Reading

May I recommend a post which contains this snippet? [Are You A Priority Or An Option?](#)

*“So, I encourage you to ask yourself this question about your current relationship: **Are you a priority or just an option?** If you are just an option, **break up and don’t look back**. Don’t delay your opportunity to be treated like a priority by the right man. Don’t tie up your heart on a man who could take you or leave you. Keep your heart free so that the Lord can move in your life and so that you can follow His will. Keep your emotions holy so as to not deepen the crevices of anger, mistrust, self-blame and disappointment.”*

If you need encouragement to do this, feel free to write to me at: theveilofchastity@gmail.com

God love and bless you!

This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2014/08/25/he-doesnt-need-more-time/>
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Priest or Christ? [at Convert Journal]



Hamburgers do not have ham. English muffins are not. Strangely, an alarm goes off when it is on. Language can be very misleading indeed. As a convert, I noticed that Catholicism has added to this list a good bit!

One rich area of saying one thing while meaning another is on the role the priest fulfills in the sacraments. We say things like:

- The priest absolved my sins in confession.
- Father Joe confected the Eucharist at Mass.
- They were married on Saturday by Father Paul.

Strictly speaking, it is not the priest who absolves your sins or who confects the Eucharist. He does not have the power, but he does stand-in for Christ who most certainly does. By virtue of Holy Orders, passed in an unbroken chain directly from Christ Himself ([apostolic succession](#)), priests are uniquely configured to the one High Priest. It is Jesus who, in these examples, absolves our sins and transubstantiates ordinary bread and wine into His Body and most Precious Blood.

“Stand-in” is not the best way to describe the priest’s role. More precisely we say that he is acting in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*). He is, to put it another way, acting sacramentally for Christ (“another Christ” or *alter Christus*) from whom sanctifying grace is conferred. It is Christ and His power at work, through His ministerial priesthood (we are all in His common priesthood via our baptisms).

The distinction is important. Consider a confession where the penitent knowingly omits a mortal sin (a/k/a a “bad confession”). The priest, if given no reason to suspect this, will say the words of absolution. Never-the-less, the sins are NOT absolved and the penitent remains in a state of mortal sin. Priests can be deceived, Christ can not. The priest acts for, not in replacement of, Christ.

The traditional words of absolution were actually clearer than the current formula:

May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve you; and by His authority I absolve you from every bond of excommunication (suspension) and interdict, so far as my power allows and your needs require. [making the Sign of the Cross:] Thereupon, I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, + and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

My third example (marriage) is a tricky one. In this case, the priest is not the minister of the sacrament – just a witness. It is the couple themselves who are the ministers... even if they are not Catholic. Barring impediments, every validly baptized man and woman enter into a sacramental marriage (whether they realize it or not).

Back to my main point, when a non-Catholic says only Christ, no man, can forgive sins they are correct. It is Christ working in the confessional who absolves our sins, doing so through the ministerial priesthood He commissioned and ordained.

This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2014/08/priest-or-christ/>
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Veiled in Mystery [at Catholic Chapter House Blog]



Written By: Gregory Watson

Dear Jesus, bless our efforts at modesty. Grant that how we dress and carry ourselves may veil what should be veiled, and give us the strength to resist evil fashions and the glamour of sin (from the daily prayers of the *Angelic Warfare Confraternity*).

In my [last article](#), I discussed how the virtue of modesty pertains to more than just how we dress, but to a general attitude and perspective of dignity for ourselves and for others. Of course, this holistic approach does include our clothing, so I figured I'd address the issue of modesty in dress, especially as the hottest month of the year begins today.

I want to briefly approach the issue of attire from two different perspectives as they pertain to modesty: 1) the perspective of psychology and the effect that clothes have on us and others, and 2) the perspective of spirituality, that is, why do we cover ourselves at all?

First, the old adage, “the clothes make the man” has a great deal of truth to it. The effect that formal wear has on a person, as opposed to every day jeans-and-a-t-shirt, say, serves to emphasise the dignity and solemnity of the formal occasion. The white wedding gown is the quintessential case-in-point of this principle. There is a reason why a bride searches for so long and strives so hard to find and fit into that perfect dress, paying often exorbitant fees for a dress she will only wear once. It is a symbol with so many rich layers of meaning distilled into one garment. For myself, I stand taller, slouch less, and generally feel more confident and mature (if not more comfortable) in a suit than in street clothes.

Our choice of clothing affects our state of mind (and our state of mind affects our choice of clothing). While virtues may eventually become automatic habits, until that happens, modesty requires effort and intentionality in living. While even the Catechism recognises that there is an aspect of cultural influence in standards of modesty, making hard-and-fast, once-size-fits-all rules about wardrobe nigh impossible, prayerfully asking what a particular outfit “communicates” about you, and whether that message is one you want to be projecting, is a useful guideline.

What we wear does communicate a message about us. When it comes to modesty in attire, beyond simply “wearing too little”, consider asking why you want to wear this outfit, and not that. Does your outfit indicate to others that you believe in your own dignity, and the dignity of others? Or are you communicating a contrary, carnal message by drawing superficial attention to your body? While modesty is about more than simply not causing others to have lustful thoughts, that is still an aspect of it. But, again,

there's more to it. Modesty in dress also has to do with dressing appropriately. We dress differently lazing about the house than we would when going for a job interview; or when at the beach as opposed to when attending Church—or, we should!

The second perspective to consider is what clothes are for. Obviously, they provide insulation and protection from the elements, but if that were the whole story, we would eschew them altogether in favourable weather. We do typically wear less in the summer and more in the winter (at least here in Canada), but even the legal system acknowledges and enforces the requirement to keep parts of ourselves covered. While countries and cultures may differ about how much or how little needs to be hidden, the notion that clothes are mandatory is universal. Even people and groups who reject and flaunt this norm do so in private areas separated from public view.

According to Genesis, our first parents were naked in the Garden, but felt no shame. After the Fall, however, they recognised their nakedness, and felt shame about it—to the extent that this was the reason they gave God for hiding when He was looking for them. Their shame at being naked was what led to their admission of eating the forbidden fruit.

Interestingly, their state of being naked hadn't changed before and after eating the fruit, only their attitude toward nakedness had. After the Fall, mankind's appetites and passions became disordered, no longer governed by the intellect and will. The automatic impulse in the appetites for what is good now needs to be reigned in with effort, distinguishing between greater and lesser goods (and even between actual goods and evils masquerading as good, or else objectively good things that are harmful in the wrong contexts).

Of the goods most perverted by the Fall is that of our sexuality. But this makes a certain sense, since in the right context, sex strengthens the bond of love, cooperates in the creation of new life, of new souls pro-created in God's image—and, in the context of Christian Matrimony, is a sacramental sign and source of Christ's grace for the couple as they live His love in the world. All of this, and it's incredibly pleasurable, as well! It is little wonder that our passions are so strongly tempted in this regard. Sex, ultimately, is sacred.

And this is why modesty is so important. This is why, before the Fall, Adam and Eve, full of grace, were naked without shame, but after the fall, they desired to hide themselves both from each other (by sewing fig-leaf garments) and from God. Sin cuts us off from what is sacred, or else profanes it—or else what is holy destroys that which is sinful. Because of the need to protect ourselves from profaning the sacred or being destroyed by it, the holiest items of the Old Covenant were hidden in an Ark, and the Ark was hidden behind a veil in the Tabernacle, and later the Temple. Moses wore a veil to diffuse the radiance of his face after speaking with God at Sinai, and God Himself had veiled His presence behind clouds and smoke. In the New Covenant, Jesus comes to us veiled under the appearance of bread and wine, and that Eucharist is reserved behind a veil in the church's Tabernacle.

That which is holiest is kept veiled until the proper time and context, just as even to this day, the bride veils herself on her wedding day, and is only unveiled at the moment of the sacramental giving of the spouses to each other (an unveiling that is completed when the marriage is consummated).

Clothing, then, is our daily veil covering that aspect of our bodies that is most sacred in its purpose. Thus, veiling our bodies in modest dress and behaviour dissuades lustful passions from being inspired in others, and protects the sacred dimension of sexuality from being profaned. Let us then strive, by God's grace, to love modesty and live modestly, reminding the culture around us of the dignity of a person, and the

sacredness of their sexuality.

Read the first part of this mini-series “[Everything You’ve Been Taught About Modesty Is Wrong](#)”

Suggested Reading:

Check out our [Theology of the Body](#) section

[For Men](#), [For Women](#), [Modesty](#), by Catholic Chapter House.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicchapterhouse.com/blog/2014/09/05/veiled-in-mystery/>
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40 Beautiful Days [at mommynovenas Catholic Book Club]

Life presents us with so many complex decisions. The "options" we have to choose from may appear to benefit us in the present life. Nonetheless, the consequences of our choices may be contrary to attaining life, forever enveloped in the glorious presence of our Heavenly Father. Jesus, as we know, is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father without Him. The Blessed Virgin Mary, ever obedient to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, is the most perfect example of absolute trust in Jesus and surrender to the will of God.



During the 40 beautiful days of [***Total Consecration to Mary***](#), we learn how to free ourselves from the lures of this world. Contemplation upon selections from Holy Scripture and the Imitation of Christ (Thomas a Kempis) as well as other sacred readings, prayers, hymns and litanies, provide us with spiritual and mental redirection towards Heaven.

At the end of each 40 day cycle, I am always amazed at the immense transformation which takes place in my life and the lives of my loved ones. I have truly enjoyed this little manual, as it has been a source of comfort, hope and the tranquil assurance that within the loving embrace of Jesus, I can face anything.

This contribution is available at <http://mommynovenas.blogspot.com/2014/08/40-beautiful-days.html>
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Edge Cases [at Steve Gershom]

It didn't seem weird to me as a kid¹ that one of the things I loved to watch was Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung, the version my dad, the most accomplished music appreciator I have ever known, taped from PBS.

The scene that stands out in my mind is the one between Alberich and the Rhinemaidens, recounted below — I looked up the names so I don't sound too dumb, but the rest of the scene is straight from the memory of a grade-school me.



So Alberich the dwarf is crouching and grumbling and shuffling around, just being generally gross and ugly. Meanwhile the sexy, sexy Rhinemaidens (I knew sexiness when I saw it: I'd seen Bugs Bunny seduce Elmer Fudd) are guarding the magical gold and talking amongst themselves — well, they're *pretending* to talk amongst themselves, but they're talking kind of loud so Alberich can overhear them. Because the Rhinemaidens are jerks.



They are saying, “Oh, isn't this gold beautiful and powerful, and I bet that ugly dwarf wishes he could have it! But ha ha, joke's on him! Because the gold is magical and the only way to get it is if you renounce love forever. And NOBODY would do that, so Alberich is never ever going to get the gold.”

And then Alberich says, “Ha HA, joke's on YOU, stupid sexy ladies,” and leaps forward, all ugly and wrapped in rags, making the Rhinemaidens shriek — “I hereby renounce love...Forever!!” Surprise! And he wraps his arms around the big hunk of gold like he's hugging it, and the Rhinemaidens scatter while the orchestra gets even more dark and dramatic, which is hard to do, since it's already Wagner.

Dreadful things probably happen then — maybe Alberich becomes a fearsome lord of powerful dark magic and lays waste to the land, or something? I don't remember, but I'm pretty sure things don't end up well for him.



Reconstructing, I theorize that I remember that scene so vividly because of what came not long after. At fourteen, when I realized that gay was exactly the word for what I was and am, I saw myself as a kind of Alberich: twisted, all-wrong, and stranded forever without any possibility of achieving the one thing that no sane person would ever choose to live without, the one thing without which any kind of happiness you might achieve would always be provisional and second-best: romantic love.



Having grown up in the United States in the late twentieth century, by the time I was fourteen, I had a well-developed theory of happiness. I didn't make it up, I never vocalised it, and I can't nail down exactly where I got it from. It was just there.

It went like this: the way to be happy is to be a basically normal human being (like most people are) who is basically good (like most people are). Then you marry the person you love (like most people do), who is also basically normal and basically good. Then you stay in love with them till you die (like most people do). And you are happy.²

Who belongs in the “normal” category? Easier to say who doesn't. Subtract people with severe disabilities, especially if those disabilities make them physically repulsive. Subtract people with mental illnesses, especially if those illnesses make them hard to get along with. Subtract people who are cripplingly shy.

Only normal people get to be in the category of those destined for happiness. The others have to get by however they can.

Who belongs in the “good” category? Easier to say who doesn't. Subtract addicts — if you are one, you should just ; if you married one, you should have looked closer. Subtract religious people, because they're all bigots. Subtract people who are scared of the opposite sex, or never move out of their parents' basements, because they're cowards and weaklings. Subtract the people who never make it out of poverty, and whose poverty turns to mutual bitterness. They weren't trying hard enough.

Only good people get to be in the category of those destined for happiness. The others have to get by however they can.

How do you stay in love with your spouse until you die? I'm not going to touch that one, but Cosmo has some ideas, and you can tell that magazine is written by happy, happy people. Oh, also, Cialis.



In software engineering, there's a concept called “edge cases”. If your software works under normal conditions, where the user is computer literate and his computer doesn't malfunction and he never clicks anywhere he shouldn't, then you've got a program that works for maybe 0.01% of users.

A good program, on the other hand, is bulletproof because you've already taken the edge cases into account — you've expected the unexpected. So it works even if the user is a colorblind orangutan with acute carpal tunnel syndrome. Who's running IE6. Under Vista.³

If your philosophy of happiness doesn't account for the edge cases, it's not a very good philosophy. And

the further you get from being fourteen years old, the more you realize we are all edge cases; that nobody you meet is particularly normal, or particularly good;⁴ and that you yourself are certainly neither of those things.

You, of all people, should know that you are neither normal nor good. After all, you're privy to the kind of things that go on in your head, where nobody's listening.

The universal plan of happiness — that one I breathed in from ages 0-14 — is a good philosophy, if you're sane, rich, straight, white, healthy, American, and a saint, and so is your spouse.⁵ For everyone else, it stinks.



What does that mean? It means that fourteen-year-old Joey was oppressed, lied to, and bound with intolerable burdens. And, bucko, it wasn't by the Catholic Church.

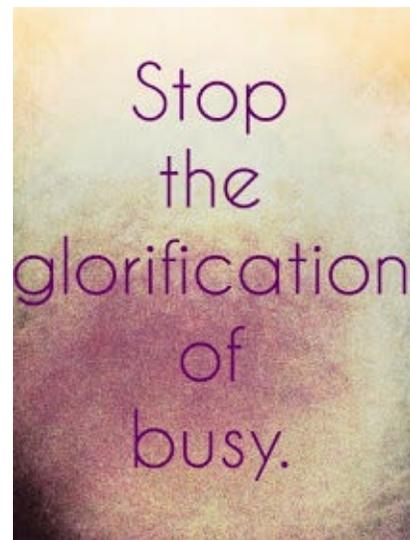
1 And it wasn't. 2 Also you both have pretty good teeth. 3 If you get this joke, you may be a web developer! 4 cf. [Luke 18:9](#). 5 Also you both have pretty good teeth.

This contribution is available at <http://www.stevegershom.com/2014/08/edge-cases/>
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From My Heart [at Afternoon Coffee & Evening Tea]

I saw this quote on Pinterest. I could not find an author, nor do I claim to be. I do agree with it. One hundred percent.



Stop the glorification of busy. These days people wear the word "Busy" as if it were a badge of honor. More often than not, when I ask people how they are, I hear instead how BUSY they are...how much they run from activity to activity...how crazy their lives are... how they are never home. I hear how they have to run their child to soccer practice followed by dance class and flag football before a weekend basketball tournament two hours away. For sixth graders. And yet, I hear it spoke with a sense of pride, as if being busy is a symbol of status in our world today.

When Rhett was younger, I tried to have a birthday party for him. It was next to impossible to get any of his friends to attend on a Sunday afternoon, as they had flag football and soccer practice. They were seven years old! One mother told me she didn't even show her son the invitation, because he had a flag football game that day, and he would want to miss it to come to the party! That broke my heart.

I know I sound judgmental. And perhaps I am. But it is more than that. I have very strong feelings about the importance of family...The importance of allowing children to slow down and be kids. I feel strongly about living in the moment and allowing our children to experience their childhood in a state of peace. I urge young mothers to know they have a choice. It is possible to say no to the chaos, the craziness, the anxiety filled commotion that society portrays as the norm. It doesn't have to be. In our house, it isn't. And we are happy. Very happy.

Society wants us to believe that to be happy, to be successful, to be accepted, families must be busy... Busy running here and there...Busy sending four year olds to soccer camp and basketball tournaments...Busy attending every single party and wedding and get together held...Busy practicing high school sports twelve months out of the year, for a season that lasts six weeks...Busy signing children up for three activities every season, and eating dinner in the car in between events...Busy joining every committee and group we can.

I am here to say that is not true. You do not have to fall into the trap of sacrificing your family life for

society. For anything. Because childhood goes by so quickly. And no matter how busy you are, how many sports or activities your children participate in, how many games you attend, how many committees you serve on, your children grow up. And childhood ends. I am speaking from knowledge given to me from friends and family, and have spoken about this to many parents whose children were all part of the glorification of busy. More often than not, they have regrets. They regret the fact that their children's childhoods were spent running from practice to practice, game to game, all in a blur of activity. And in the end...their children grew up. In the blink of an eye. And the thing they missed most? They missed the family time...The too few and far between moments of simply being together with their kids...Sitting around the dinner table, taking a walk after dinner, playing a game of kickball in the yard.

What is so wrong with allowing kids to play outside after school...riding bikes, playing chase...catching bugs...shooting hoops...just for fun? What happened to providing our children a childhood that consisted of playing outside, washing up, and sitting down to dinner at the family table? Unscheduled activities lead to freedom and imagination...and that is as important as schedule and competition. Society is producing a generation of youth who lack the ability to relax and fill time with fun, unscheduled activities...A generation that does not value family and peaceful, introspective time spent with loved ones. That is a scary thought.

I don't expect everyone to agree with me. Some families are naturally active. Asking them to stop activities would be the equivalent of asking me to hike the mountains every weekend. That is not going to happen! What I am suggesting that we make an effort to preserve the sanctity of family. We must allow our families to come first...Before sports and activities and parties and practices and craziness and running around. I am hoping that we can allow our children to find comfort in the quiet, unscheduled, peaceful, routine of family life. How can we do that? Simple. Eat dinner together. Take walks together. Play games together. Watch television together. Bake cookies together. Laugh together. Be together...in moments of peace. These are the moments our children will tuck into their souls and pull out years from now. These are the moments they will recreate with their own children someday.

Stop the glorification of busy. Allow yourself to take a stand. To say no to society. Say yes to your family. And you will find a true peace...peace not only in your home, but also in your heart. How do I know this? We have done it. And we have found it. And it is good.



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Dirty hands [at walk the way]

How we greet people is very important and often shows what we think of the person we are meeting.

One thing I've noticed here in Honduras is that in public men usually shake hands with other men, but not often with women or children. There is also some deference to those with power, money, or influence.

So I've taken up the custom of shaking hands with everyone – men, women, and children. I want them to know that I value them, even if I can't remember their names.

Sometimes this gets a little tricky. The young mechanic with greasy hands or the worker with dirty hands are often reluctant to shake hands, apologizing for their dirty hands.

I reply that the only dirty hands are the hands of the corrupt and proceed to try to shake hands. They sometimes offer me their arms instead of their hands.

I had forgotten where this response came from until this morning when I picked up *Dom Helder Câmara: Essential Writings*. There are two quotes that describe a similar experience.

I think about the man I saw working in the street, emptying dustbins. I had caught his eye. He didn't dare offer me his hand. I virtually had to force him: "Work isn't what soils our hands, friend. No hand was ever soiled by work. Self-centeredness is that soils them." (p. 121)

I know a priest who likes to shake hands with the trash collectors when they are loading the refuse onto the truck. They try to clean their hands on their clothes. The priest, rightly, says: "No work stains human hands. What makes hands dirty is stealing, or greed, or the blood of our neighbors!" (p. 143)

Today is the fifteenth anniversary of the death of this Brazilian bishop, friend of the poor, apostle of nonviolent liberation.

Dom Helder identified with the poor, recognizing their dignity. He also identified with the Lord Jesus who became flesh as a poor man.

He would get up at 2 am each morning to pray and he would open his own door when someone knocked.

His simplicity, his willingness to touch the hands of the poor, inspires me to be even more committed to prayer and to solidarity with the poor.

Hands joined in prayer should be hands that embrace the poor.

As For Me and My House ... [at Renew The Church Blog]

The growing darkness and moral evil in the world today has at least one good effect on us: we are forced to choose. Where are we to go, for shelter from the storm? Where are we to stand, when we are called to declare who we are, and what we believe, and what we live for, and where we draw the line and say to this world, “No! – no further will I go with you – here our paths diverge, and here I make my stand.”

Compromises with the ways of the world often come incrementally, gradually, almost imperceptibly. Conscience suffers in the process, with the shades of gray that don’t seem so bad when taken in small steps, small doses, small denials of clarity and light. But evil can overplay its hand, in this satanic game of deceit. Evil can sometimes get presumptuous, thinking it has us, when it really doesn’t. Sometimes evil drops its masks completely, and its insane horror is so plain that it cannot be denied anymore. The human soul must shout in the face of it, No! No more. “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Josh 24:15)

We need such clarity and insight into the simplicity of truth. All of us face a choice every day, to decide who we are, where we live, what “citizenship” do we hold. Are we members and citizens of the City of Man, or are we members and citizens of the City of God? Yes we must live in this world – but no we must not be of this world. Persons in Christ have citizenship beyond this passing world, in the eternal, where He is Lord and King. Persons in Christ are aliens and exiles as in a foreign land, in this passing world. Peter wrote for us:

1Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1Pet 2:10 Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

1Pet 2:11 Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.

The radical jihadist group ISIS – now calling itself the Islamic State – is terrorizing Syria and Iraq, and explicitly threatening the U.S. as well. They are sending a chill into the hearts of innocents all around them, with a message – to convert or die – being broadcast with examples of beheadings, crucifixions and mass executions to horrify and terrify. Their hatred for Western civilization goes beyond a mere desire to replace it – they want to obliterate it. At this moment America seems to be stirring into action – but very, very reluctantly and half-heartedly: hardly a response that troubles or concerns such zealous and committed fanatics.

What is now known as Western civilization is no longer what it used to be. What was once a sanctuary for Christianity has morphed into its “post-Christian” phase. The West is no longer a friend of Christianity, but has become a secularist culture resentful of its Christian beginnings, detached from the moral anchor of its Judeo-Christian roots, whose tolerance of a truly Christian world-view has worn thin. Western culture has become “free” of God, and free to be whatever she chooses. And her choices are now made with no regard for or remembrance of the God of her fathers. She has become, in other words, unashamedly the City of Man.

The strange result we have, in these days, is this: Radical Islamism is the enemy of Western culture (the City of Man); the City of Man (modern secularism) is the enemy of the City of God. If “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” were to hold for Christians today, then a Christian might conclude that “the enemy (radical Islamism) of my enemy (the secularist City of Man, modern Western culture) would be my friend.” But ISIS is no friend of Christianity! ISIS seeks to obliterate Christianity along with Western culture.

The book of Revelation suggests an explanation for this strange alignment of hostilities and hatreds. To understand this chapter of Scripture, in this difficult book, we must understand the “great harlot” who has seduced kings and commoners with her pleasures – the harlot “Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth’s abominations” – as that City of Man that has opposed the City of God from the beginning of mankind outside of the Garden. The City of Man was given a name, in the Genesis account of the building of the Tower of Babel. (Gen 11:1-9) The City of Man thus has the name, through salvation history, as the city Babylon.

Rev 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters,

Rev 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk.”

Rev 17:3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

Rev 17:4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication;

Rev 17:5 and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth’s abominations.”

Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her I marveled greatly.

Rev 17:7 But the angel said to me, “Why marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.

Rev 17:8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition; and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

Rev 17:9 This calls for a mind with wisdom:

.....

Rev 17:12 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.

Rev 17:13 These are of one mind and give over their power and authority to the beast;

Rev 17:14 they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”

Rev 17:15 And he said to me, “The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.

Rev 17:16 And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,

Rev 17:17 for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

Rev 17:18 And the woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

The harlot city Babylon represents the seducer of mankind: man led to forsake his vocation to the City of God, to instead build a city for himself, glorifying himself – a city for man “free of God” – a secular and godless city. Secularism is the driving force of the West today, in this “enlightened, post-Christian” era.

One might think that the harlot Babylon – the secular West, the godless City of Man typified by such actual cities as New York City, Chicago, London or Amsterdam, for some examples – would be a great friend of satan! Secularism seduces men away from God! That ought to delight satan; he ought to be well-pleased to see the dominance of godless secularism over Christianity in the modern West! But Scripture reveals a different response, in the satanic “beast” on which Babylon rides – for this beast she rides upon is of the evil one. Scripture reveals this strange turn of events (and note the “horns” of the beast are particular leaders of the earth):

Rev 17:16 And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,

Rev 17:17 for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

Evil leaders of men, in the spirit of satan, will turn against the secular city to hate it and to destroy it, because “God has put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose.” The beast will not destroy the Lamb! God will not abandon His people! But God has purposed to allow hatred into the hearts of evil leaders (“horns of the beast”), hatred for secular Babylon, the harlot enemy of God’s City. God has purposed to use the hatred and evil desires of agents of the evil one, to destroy the evil City, the harlot City Babylon. Thus the kingdom of evil will be divided against itself; thus will its kingdom fall. (Lk 11:17-18)

ISIS hates the West, the secular City of Man. The secular City of Man hates the call of God into His City of God. Is God now beginning the fulfillment of this prophecy of Rev. 17? Is God about to use ISIS, driven by their hatred, to destroy satan’s rider, the harlot city Babylon? Will He thus allow ISIS – or some equivalent group – to turn the secular West into a burning rubble – to “make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire”? In this nuclear age, it is physically possible.

But the literal destruction of the West is not inevitable! It is not necessary! Prophecy can predict what can happen, if man does not repent, and return to God. Can the secular West ever repent, and return to God? Is that possible? Yes it is possible! But before the West can repent, first the Church must do so. First the Church must find herself, she must come to herself, and must again know whose she is, and why she is, and rediscover her vocation in Christ.

We who are called into Christ are citizens of the City of God – and thus we are strangers and aliens in the culture of the secular West. We are outsiders, and we are not loved by them. But we have something that God wants them to see, and hear, and come to know. He has given us of Himself. He has given us His light, His truth, His love – for them! We must become who we are, and work and pray for the world. God does not delight in the death of any man, but desires the salvation of all. Church! Stop your slumbering, and taking of your ease! Wake up! The day is coming to its close.

This contribution is available at <http://renewthechurch.wordpress.com/2014/08/24/as-for-me-and-my-house/>
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Black Jesus (TV Series) Review [at My Catholic Tube]

The Synopsis:

On August 7, 2014 the ‘[Black Jesus](#)’ comedy series premiered on Adult Swim, which is an American cable network that shares channel space with Cartoon Network, both of which are owned by Turner Broadcasting Systems division of Time Warner. The creator of this television series is Aaron McGruder and Mike Clattenburg. Aaron is best known for his writing and drawing of ‘The Boondocks’, a Universal Press Syndicate comic strip about two young African-American brothers, Huey (named after Huey P. Newton) and his younger brother and wannabe gangsta Riley, from inner-city Chicago now living with their grandfather in a sedate suburb. In 2005 ‘The Boondocks’ also became part of the late-night programming block on Adult Swim.

The ‘Black Jesus’ series, which is set to broadcast 10 episodes in 2014, is a live action scripted comedy that features an imposing Black Jesus Christ figure who is living in present day Compton, California. This Jesus character is said to be on a mission to spread kindness, love, compassion and the will of his ‘Father’ throughout the neighborhood. Assisting him in this work is a small and loyal group of locals.

2014 Full Cast & Crew:

Mike Clattenburg, Director

Series Writing Credits –

Mike Clattenburg, Aaron McGruder (creator), Mike O’Neill

Series Cast -

Gerald “Slink” Johnson as Jesus Christ, Charlie Murphy as Vic, Corey Holcomb as Boonie, Kali Hawk as Maggie, Andrew Bachelor as Trayvon, Andra Fuller as Fish, John Witherspoon as Lloyd, Angela Elayne Gibbs as Ms. Tudi, Valenzia Algarin as Dianne, Christina Chong as Lilah, Antwon Tanner as Jason.

What’s Redeeming about Black Jesus?:

Despite all of the negative reaction to ‘Black Jesus’, and beyond all of the reasons why one could be completely offended by the development the Jesus character, there is a great deal of commentary that can be said about the overall message being conveyed here, that can only be conveyed in a post-Christian society.

What is absolutely true about Jesus in what the writers are conveying is that Jesus does meet people where they are and in whatever they are doing. Jesus does want people to elevate their attention beyond what is passing and transient, as this character does throughout the series. He does work miracles. Jesus does do the will of His Father. He does speak to people in a language they can understand. Jesus is someone who is like us that relates to us on the deepest of levels. He does know things about us that only God knows. People do create for themselves a Jesus who agrees with them; who they hope backs them on

things that are immoral or unethical. Some people are angry with him and fight him and curse him. There are those who see Jesus right there in front of them everyday, such as when they see their neighbor, and there are those who cannot see Jesus anywhere. Some people only want Jesus around when they need help. Art, for nearly 2,000 years has depicted the human side Jesus as like one of their own. In every culture He has been the great like-us and the great un-like us.

What is redeemable about 'Black Jesus' is that it has the potential to reach people on a cursory level that is needed in a post-Christian society. There is a mixed bag of Jesus sayings in this series, but the ones that are good and true have the potential to present questions in the mind of the viewer that the society they live in might not have every inspired them to ask.

What is Non Redeemable about Black Jesus?:

What is non redeemable about 'Black Jesus' is the extremes that it takes in regards those things that Christians can agree with. For example, as I wrote above, Jesus does speak to people in a language that they can understand and relate to, but Christians do not know a God who uses vulgar language. Again, Jesus does meet us precisely where we are, but Christians do not know a God who cooperates in theft and drug dealing as 'Black Jesus' does. Despite the fact that there are obviously people who have told themselves a story that God is with them in their evil works, this portrayal of Christ Jesus isn't something Christians can condone.

The 'Black Jesus' character seems to me to be quite indifferent to things that are important to Catholics. For example, we have yet to see Jesus point anyone to Church or the sacraments, nor have any of his missions had any connection to the great commission that we read about in sacred Scripture (Cf. Matthew 28:16-20).

Overall Take on Black Jesus?:

I've always appreciated Aaron McGruder's attempt to shock people out of their comfortable little boxes. I don't know if it is fair to judge this work of his based solely upon its consistency with the narrative we find of Jesus in sacred Scripture. Nor can we be utilitarian about this comedy, and judge it based upon its end, rather than its means. The greatest danger about the 'Black Jesus' character is if people don't recognize it as fiction. If someone takes this character and his saying seriously and never read the Gospels on their own, they're in big trouble!

There is also the big issue of sacrilege that we can't be indifferent to. The writers of 'Black Jesus' are carelessly showing a lack of respect and honor to God, and by doing so they are facilitating a climate of casual mocking of Jesus. We are use to such reckless mockery of Christ in a post-Christian culture. He's an easy target for cowards who wouldn't dare create a show called 'Black Muhammad' that mocked the prophet of Islam.

That being said, 'Black Jesus' is nothing more than a fictional satire that is very loosely based upon Jesus of Nazareth. No boycotts from me! I'm personally going to take an Acts 5:38-39 approach to it, but I'm interested in what you have to say!

Suicide, anger and fear [at Catholic Deacon]

When I first read Henry Rollin's

[LA Weekly](#)

article on Robin Williams' suicide it kind of pissed me off. But then I thought of my own personal and pastoral experiences with suicide and remembered (I had forgotten because the news of Williams' death came during a summer that has been positively miserable for me) that anger is a sane and somewhat normal response to someone's suicide. Who is Henry Rollins? He is punk singer, formerly the front man for the thrash punk group Black Flag. He has recorded a number of spoken word albums, hosted a radio show, and is generally a kind of counter-cultural figure. In short he's a guy I have always respected and usually find worth listening to even though we have some quite fundamental disagreements.

Apart from anger, I think the other common response to suicide is fear, which usually remains unexpressed. Very often fear comes in the wake of someone's suicide that nobody else saw coming. This is not helped in the least by the insidious assisted suicide proposals that are becoming so common. In response, many people worry that maybe life will become so unbearable for them that they will seriously consider, or possibly commit, suicide. Let's be honest about this because we almost never are. I have been to wakes, memorial services, and funerals of people who have committed suicide where how their lives ended was not even mentioned. My cousin Mark's funeral would be one of those. This is not an elephant in the room, but a Argentinosaurus!

Such would not be the case at any service at which I preside, preach, or give a prayer. Why? Because it isn't pastoral. I believe it is important to speak to reality, to the circumstances we presumably gather together to face, one that presents a huge challenge to (what Don Giussani might call a provocation) to our Christian faith. In his article, Rollins gives some very good reasons for understanding the reality of suicide by dealing with its aftermath, which gives you many reasons to resist whatever self-destructive impulses you may experience, or not even consider it at all, to see it for what it is.



Here's the bit in Rollin's piece that caused such a backlash:

When someone negates their existence, they cancel themselves out in my mind. I have many records, books and films featuring people who have taken their own lives, and I regard them all with a bit of disdain. When someone commits this act, he or she is out of my analog world. I know they existed, yet they have nullified their existence because they willfully removed themselves from life. They were real but now they are not.

I no longer take this person seriously. I may be able to appreciate what he or she did artistically but it's impossible to feel bad for them. Their life wasn't cut short — it was purposely abandoned. It's hard to feel bad when the person did what they wanted to. It sucks they are gone, of course, but it's the decision they made. I have to respect it and move on

He later apologized for writing these words. It's okay to be angry about suicide for awhile, but then all of the other things Rollins mentioned earlier in his article come into play, things he wrote about with great awareness and understanding:

I know some people will disagree. And I get that you can't understand anyone else's torment. All that "I feel your pain" stuff is bullshit and disrespectful. You can appreciate it, listen and support someone as best you can, but you can't understand it. Depression is so personal and so unique to each of us that when you're in its teeth, you think you invented it. You can understand your own, but that's it. When you are severely depressed, it can be more isolating than anything else you have ever experienced. In trying to make someone understand, you can only speak in approximation. You are truly on your own.

Everyone handles their emotional vicissitudes in their own ways. I am no doctor, but I think the brain is always looking for a sense of balance and normal function so the body can operate efficiently. Some people medicate accordingly, in an attempt to stay somewhat even. That pursuit can lead one down some dark paths. Someone who is an addict might not be an "addict" in the pejorative sense but merely trying to medicate and balance themselves

I agree with that and I also wholeheartedly agree with what Henry wrote about the vampire media- "Sites such as Huffington Post swim in their own brand of hyperbole. They call it news and culture, but often, it's just content." I also endorse the two word title of Rollin's

[piece](#)

When I first read Rollins' article I thought to myself, "Sounds like it was written by someone who struggles himself." In his

[apology](#)

, Rollins wrote, "That I hurt anyone by what I said, and I did hurt many, disgusts me. It was not at all my intent but it most certainly was the result." He went on to write, "I have had a life of depression. Some days are excruciating. Knowing what I know and having been through what I have, I should have known better but I obviously did not. I get so mad when I hear that someone has died this way. Not mad at them, mad at whatever got them there and that no one magically appeared to somehow save them." So maybe it was both fear and anger. Anyway, while it may cause him to either cringe or chuckle, may God bless Henry Rollins and all who suffer mentally, physically, existentially.



Another piece that comes at Robin Williams' death from a perspective worth considering is Damian Thompson's article

["Human beings aren't built to handle 'celebrity.'"](#)

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2014/08/suicide-anger-and-fear.html>
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Where does your community live? [at Working to be Worthy]

Guest post by Jeremy before he forgets the recent events that moved him to want to write.

After we decided

[not to move halfway across the country](#)

, I entered an "OK, God, now what?" period. I've had a few of these before - my freshman year of college when I hated both the school and my major and shortly before college graduation when the job I'd lined up fell through both come to mind - but this one has been different. In both of the above situations, I essentially made a snap decision (transferring and following my girlfriend to Buffalo, respectively) which worked out fairly well and, because they involved a dramatically different environment, forced me to change simultaneously.



Obviously had to follow this lady.

In some ways, this period has been the exact opposite: my original issue was with my environment, and that has generally remained the same, so I suspect that's why it's been much more difficult to figure out what to do - and, at 9 months and counting, been much longer lasting.

I've had a few friends move into the area, so my social life has slightly improved, but none of them share my faith, and I know that the lack of spiritual connection I've had since college has been a significant contributor to my dissatisfaction with the area. Liana has had great experiences with the Moms group, but there's been very little interest among their husbands in any sort of gathering. Our new town has been friendlier and the general vibe of our new parish has been more welcoming, but I've still not been able to meaningfully connect with anyone. All of the failed attempts at finding community from before we decided to move still loomed large, and I was reluctant to put myself out there yet again.

Two weeks ago, I attended a Cursillo Weekend. I stumbled upon this inadvertently when I found a group posted on a Syracuse men's conference website that formed out of people who have attended these weekends, so I went with my lowered expectations with the goal of finding at least one person with whom I could connect. "Lowered" isn't entirely accurate - I had no idea whatsoever what to expect. They were a little more secretive about it than I was comfortable with, to the point that I didn't want to go other than as a means to the end of trying to meet people.

It's not exactly a retreat; the leadership will hastily correct you if you refer to it as such and say that it's a "movement", but I don't think that's a helpful descriptor either. The word "cursillo" is Spanish for "short course", and that's precisely what it is: a roughly 40 hour series of talks over the course of a single weekend. (Since I don't suspect most people would voluntarily attend a series of 15-hour-day classes, I'm not surprised they prefer "movement".) The talks are all given by local members of the leadership, both ordained and laypeople, and give a pretty high-level overview of aspects of the good Christian life, interspersed with stories from their personal experiences. There wasn't anything there I hadn't heard before from a theological standpoint, but some things were a good reminder, and it was packaged better than most conferences I've attended over the years.

I don't think it's for everyone, but I'm glad that I went. There were positive and negative things about it, but I think the good outweighed the bad. Some of the things that bothered me were apparent during the weekend, and others came to light after the fact when I found out the degree to which the weekend is scripted. Even little things that I had assumed were personality quirks of the leaders or simply incidental seem to have been preordained, and controlling the experience that tightly bothers me. I suppose since my attendance was rather Machiavellian, I can't judge them too harshly for taking the same approach - but at least I was up front about it when asked.

I still couldn't quite put my finger on what bothered me the most until I was reading a discussion online about it. One of the more vocal critics was claiming, among other points, that Cursillistas (those who have attended Cursillo) are more connected to each other than to their parishes. One of the defenders of the "movement" told this story: their spouse was about to have surgery, and they contacted their parish and local Cursillo chapter. The parish did nothing; the Cursillistas brought meals and came to pray with and for the person before and after the surgery. If the connection is stronger, they concluded, it's because the faith is greater.

It was then that I realized that my problem wasn't exactly with Cursillo, but with our parishes.

If our parishes were doing their job, things like Cursillo wouldn't exist, because they wouldn't need to.

Liana doesn't have any interest in getting involved with Cursillo, but she's getting pretty much all of the same benefits out of the Moms group - which was founded because of one mother's inability to make meaningful connections at her parish. I don't want to romanticize the past - I genuinely have no idea if parishes ever had more than a small percentage of active participants - but I'm pretty sure that they were communities at one time, and not necessarily even that long ago. Nature abhors a vacuum, and apparently the Church does as well, since these other groups have rushed in to fill this void.



This reminds me of a coffee hour I was at once.

The most common sentiment about Cursillo I found online was something like: "I don't know that I like all the aspects, but I usually judge these things by their fruits, and I've seen some really great fruits come from folks who're involved with Cursillo." This is about where I'm at as well. In a lot of ways, I did get what I wanted from the weekend. This week will be the second meeting of our new men's group at our parish. I've also found a great community-within-a-community at the 6:45 daily Mass, which I would not ever have considered attending had I not been encouraged to do so during the weekend. I'd been hoping to find some people my age, and still haven't, but the vast majority at least

[don't treat me like a child](#)

, so I'll consider that a victory.

If nothing else, I got to spent a weekend with 50 other men honestly trying to grow their spirituality. The weekend ended with a Mass where hundreds of men and women from all over the diocese came to celebrate with us, and had palpable joy and enthusiasm.

When was the last time you saw something like that at your parish?

Sending Warm Fuzzies to Overseas Troops [at The Hill Country Hermit]



What To Put In A Care Package????

My son is in the midst of a one year Navy Reserve duty in Africa. Sometimes I feel compelled to send him care packages as a way to brighten up his days. However, they really get everything they need over there and getting too much stuff just isn't appreciated. So, I try to keep my ears open and listen for clues. He was pretty clear about one thing. Seamus brought a koozie that I had once crocheted for him to Djibouti. Because it is so collapsable, lightweight, and portable, he keeps it in one of his pockets and pulls it out whenever it comes in handy.

Crocheted Koozies Are A Hit!

It turns out that some of his friends really like his crocheted koozie! So, he requested that I send some to share. There are about 4000 troops and civilians stationed in Djibouti ... making that many koozies is quite impossible! But I did send a batch ... and hopefully I'll send another batch later on. At least he can share with some friends who have expressed interest.

If you like to crochet, this pattern is pretty easy and they do come in very handy!

[Nonnavita Soap](#)

In one package, I threw in a random bar of soap from a

[local Poor Clare Monastery](#)

. This too was an unexpected hit! He requested an extra bar for a buddy of his. Who would have guessed!?!?



Treats For Local Children

A San Antonio resident and 15 year Navy Reservist, Laura Aranda, is also stationed in Djibouti and spends time with children at a homeless shelter. Evidently, these kids LOVE her attention ... and getting their picture taken! Obviously, these kids have VERY little and little goodies sent to them via Laura fosters a sense of goodness and brotherhood between the citizens of Djibouti and the Americans stationed there.

If the Spirit is Moving You ...

and you would like to help lift up those separated from their families in service of our country ... or offer goodies to children of struggling areas near the military bases, below are a few ways to send something.

Address For Djibouti, Africa:

Camp Lemonnier Public Affairs Office

PSC 831 Box 0040

FPO AE 09363-0001

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5 Reasons All Christians Should Pray for ISIS [at ChurchPOP]

You've hopefully already been [praying for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ in the Middle East](#). But have you been praying for the members of ISIS?

I obviously don't mean that you should be praying for their success or for God to bless their violence. I'm talking about praying for their souls, that God would have mercy on them, and that they would find forgiveness and new life in Christ.

When crimes are committed, it's usually our first instinct to pray for the victims – and that's good. But we should also remember that, when viewed from eternity, the consequences are ultimately far worse for the perpetrators.

How wonderful would it be if the ISIS militants – the same ones who have terrorized, beheaded, and even crucified Christians – found redemption in Jesus! What a witness it would be to the saving power of God!

Here are 5 reasons all Christians need to be praying for the ISIS militants:

1) Jesus told us to love our enemies and to pray for our persecutors

Jesslee Cuizon / Flickr

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and **pray for those who persecute you**, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5.43-45)

This teaching is just as radical today as it was when Our Lord first gave it to us 2000 years ago. And yes, [Jesus meant exactly what he said](#): we should *love* our enemies and *pray* for those who persecute us – and that includes the members of ISIS right now.

While this may be hard, this actually goes straight to the heart of the Gospel: Jesus came not simply for justice, but for *redemption*. As Christians, we should be working and praying for the same thing.

2) Remember that St. Paul was originally a persecutor of Christians

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Saul, as St. Paul was known originally, was a zealous persecutor of Christians: Scripture says he was “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.” (Acts 9.1)

While on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians, Jesus appeared to him, literally knocking him to the ground, and asked him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9.3ff)

When Jesus told the Christian Ananias that Saul would be coming to him, Ananias was scared: “Lord, I

have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” (Acts 9.13-14) But Jesus explained to Ananias: “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.” (Acts 9.15)

St. Paul went on to be one of the greatest Apostles, taking the Gospel across the Mediterranean world, and writing half the books of the New Testament.

Just imagine the incredible good God could do for the Gospel today if the leading ISIS militants were converted to the Gospel.

3) We’re all sinners saved only by the grace of God

Thomas Hawk / Flickr

For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3.22-24)

If we have a relationship with Christ, it’s not because we it, but only and entirely because of God’s grace.

The ISIS militants are not worthy of God, but neither are we, and that’s why we all need Jesus.

4) Christ died for them, and God desires all people to be saved

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[God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. (1 Timothy 2.4-6)

So, how many people does God desire to be saved? And for how many people did Jesus give himself as a ransom?

All people. Everybody. And that includes the members of ISIS.

If God desires for them to be saved, then we should, too.

5) Hell is a terrible place, Heaven is sublime – and both are permanent

John Martin / Public Domain / Wikimedia Commons

“Weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8.12, et al.), “the lake that burns with fire and sulfur” (Revelation 21.8), and “eternal punishment” (Matthew 25.46). These are just some of the ways that Scripture describes that terrible but real place, hell.

The Bible describes heaven, on the other hand, as wonderful: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the

former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’” (Revelation 21.4-5)

You obviously want avoid hell and go to heaven. You should want everyone to do that.

The ISIS militants could be earning for themselves a particularly bad place in hell. But they, like anyone else, can find redemption in Jesus and change the destiny of their soul for all eternity.

We should be praying that they do. We should be praying that everyone does.

God have mercy on us all.

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My True Treasure [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]

A well known legend about St. Lawrence of Rome has persisted since the third century. As deacon in Rome, Lawrence had the responsibility of distributing the Church's alms to the poor. Thinking that Christians had great riches, the prefect of Rome, a greedy pagan, demanded that Lawrence hand over to him all of the Church's treasure. Three days later Lawrence returned but instead of bearing with him piles of gold and silver, Lawrence led a great multitude of the blind, lame, leprous and poor of the city. He lined them in rows before the prefect and announced, "These are the treasures of the Church." Holy Lawrence understood well that these people were the face of Christ, a reflection of God the Father's love and as a result were worth more than anything else he could ever present to the Prefect.

This prompted me to think about what I might do if I was asked to assemble the treasures in my life. I thought immediately of the members of the Pauline Family: consecrated men and women who have dedicated their lives to serving God and his people. Blessed James Alberione, founder of the Pauline Family, at the first light of the twentieth century, "felt deeply obliged to prepare himself to do something for the Lord and for the men and women of the new century with whom he would spend his life" (*Abundantes divitiae gratiae suae*, #15). Furthermore, Alberione believed that in the new century generous people would experience what he was feeling and that together they could combat evil with good. In the years that followed, right up to the present day, thousands of generous souls including clergy, religious and laity have walked in his footsteps and brought the Gospel message to a world in need. Each new member that has taken up this mission has been a gift to the Church and, I can say without hesitation, a precious treasure in my life.

The summer of 2014 has helped me to understand ever more deeply the value of this treasure. I have participated and will participate in a number of celebrations, such as silver and golden jubilee anniversaries of Paulines who have dedicated many years to the mission, as well as new professions that are a blessing for today and a promise for the future.

The summer began in early June with two Pauline celebrations in New York. The first marked the 100th anniversary of the official founding of the Pauline Family. Guests from various parishes joined with members of the Pauline institutes on this happy occasion. Everyone had reason to celebrate, as we all could attest to the countless ways that the Pauline Family has brought the presence of Christ into our lives.



The second event commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of priestly ordination for Father Edmund Lane and Father Ignatius Staniszewski. These two priests of the Society of Saint Paul have faithfully served the

Pauline mission in various roles. Fr. Edmund has been a longtime editor and publisher for St. Pauls and a pioneer in using personal computers for the apostolate. Fr. Ignatius has served in a number of capacities, from being a teacher and formator at the seminary to being a publisher and editor of books and magazines. The gems these men have offered over these past fifty years has been their wisdom and pastoral sensitivity in the dissemination of religious materials through various social media.

A few weeks later in early July, I led a day of retreat for members of the Pauline Holy Family Institute. This Institute is an organization of Catholic couples and those who are widowed who wish to live their lives in a more consistent, God-oriented way. The goal is the sanctification of family life. They commit themselves to allowing the love of Christ to reign in their hearts and in the hearts of their children. The retreat day included Holy Mass, Eucharistic adoration, spiritual talks, religious themed games, a family barbecue, and great fun. Two families that were central to its success were the Fedaks with their ten children and the Jakubs with their nine. By consecrating their own lives to Christ in the Holy Family Institute, Dave and Kate Fedak and Rob and Keisha Jakub place Christ at the center of their lives and teach their children to do the same. In this way, while raising their children to enjoy typical activities of kids in our society, such as sports, dance, music, and art, they become the first witnesses of faith to their children. They also have helped me as a priest become more dedicated to serving families, the domestic Church.



As August began, I participated in another jubilee celebration. This time it was for the Daughters of Saint Paul. Sr. Mary Domenica Vitello, Sr. Sharon Anne Legere, and Sr. Barbara Gerace celebrated fifty years of religious profession, while Sr. Nancy Michael Usselmann and Sr. Maria Grace Dateno celebrated twenty-five years. These sisters have been instrumental in my own vocation. It was their energy and commitment that first attracted me to the Pauline life. They have served in countless ways: as book store and media center managers, local community superiors, vocation coordinators, media workshop presenters, and much more. However, even more importantly, they have been my friends, helping me to draw closer to Jesus, the Way, Truth, and Life. Each sister brings her unique gifts to the Pauline Family. They are pearls, emeralds, and rubies that fill up the Pauline treasure chest.



Finally, at the end of August, I will participate in one more Pauline celebration. Two young women, Sr. Cheryl Galema and Sr. Theresa Noble will make their first profession of vows. I have watched them grow as postulants and novices, along with Sr. Julia Karina, who will be making her first profession in September in Mexico.



I have witnessed how they have jumped in with both feet onto the Pauline path of discipleship. They remind me that Jesus keeps filling up the Pauline treasure chest. As much as we keep taking from it, it will never be empty.

St. Lawrence presented the poor and weak of the city of Rome as treasures, because he recognized that they were an antidote to the problem of corrupt and selfish leaders who saw worth only in material pleasures. I consider the Pauline family members, including the Cooperators, as treasures, because in their desire to live in a spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience and in their commitment to apostolic zeal, they are illuminating the world with the presence of Christ and in their own way offering an antidote to our media driven society that seems to have largely forgotten God. They remind us that there are things far more precious than automobiles, houses, and electronic devices. Treasures in heaven: things we should value and want to have, because they come from God, bring us close to God, make us better people, and prepare us for our eternal reward. Click on "Comments" below and tell me who or what *your* treasures are. _____ Fr. Michael Harrington is a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston and a member of the Pauline Institute of Jesus the Priest. An economics and political science major, he worked in finance for five years, before entering the seminary in 1994. He was ordained in 2000 and has since served the Church as parochial vicar, state chaplain to the Massachusetts Knights of Columbus, and for the past several years, assistant director of the Office of Vocations and director of the Office of Outreach and Cultural Diversity. Fr. Michael made his first profession of vows in the Institute of Jesus the Priest on November 22, 2009.

This contribution is available at <http://paulinelaitiy.blogspot.com/2014/08/my-true-treasure.html>
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A few thoughts on honoring Mary as a part of our Sacred Tradition [at La Joie Inattendue]

As this is the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, I thought I would share how I came to understand and accept the Church's teachings of the Mother of God's role in our faith. Honoring and praying to the Saints was probably the biggest jump for me crossing the stepping stones to get to Catholicism. If Christ was central to our faith, then why does praying to Mary matter? And would praying to Mary detract from Christ being our number one? I am not a theologian, nor am I attempting to write anything that hasn't been stated or explained before. I am simply explaining how this stubborn Protestant finally wrapped her head around this concept of revering the Mother of God. It may be short and basic to the learned theologian, but it is nonetheless personal. For cradle Catholics, hopefully I can shed some light as to why Protestants balk at this aspect of faith. As for non-Catholics, perhaps my explanation will, in the very least, point to a window that leads to a whole other dimension of Christianity.



The first obstacle I had to negotiate was terminology. I had to understand the meaning of “praying to Mary”, and that *prayer does not equal worship*. As with praying to any of the Saints, we are ultimately asking Mary to pray *for* us, as opposed to presuming she is a divine being. The Hail Mary, for example, concludes with “pray for us”. Whereas Christ was both human and divine in nature, Mary is only human in nature. I’ve heard some Protestants scoff, “Mary never proclaimed herself to be a goddess.” I agree 100%, and she would too. Remember the wedding at Cana? All she said to the servants was “Do whatever He tells you.”

We ask for Mary to pray for us because we believe she is alive. If we believe that God saves His people after their life on this earth is over, than surely Mary is alive in heaven. In asking for her prayers, I am essentially asking a trusted friend to intercede on my behalf. And since she is in heaven with Christ, I can assume that she is closer to Him in both the spiritual and physical sense. I can still pray directly to Christ, and asking Mary to pray does not detract at all from Him being the essence of my being. Quite the contrary: praying to someone whom I believe to be alive with Him confirms my belief that Christ rose from the dead. He conquered death not only for Himself, but for us all.



The Assumption of Mary and the Immaculate Conception are two traditions that were not as simple for me to unpack, but to understand one I had to grapple with the other. At first glance it would seem that Mary being conceived without original sin, and then to skip death altogether put her into a category of divinity. In a different perspective, however, the profundity of both the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption supports more fully the divinity of Christ.

The Incarnation was a mysterious combination of natural and supernatural forces, because Christ was fully man and fully God. Catholics and Protestants agree that Mary was a Virgin when she bore Christ; both sides of the Reformation agree that this was miraculous. God created Mary for the purpose of bearing His only Son. He formed her knowing that she would be the Mother of the Savior of the World. Mary was the pure vessel in which Christ was carried and nurtured. Just as a mother can pass both nutrients and toxins to an unborn baby, Mary had to have been created without original sin so as not to pass anything on to her son. She was “full of grace”, not just “a really good person”. (As a Francophile, I have to point out that the French translation of the Hail Mary is *pleine de grace*, and the word *pleine* can mean both “full” as well as “pregnant”. The language nerd in me found that thoroughly fascinating.)

Christ was born of a woman (natural), but the woman was without original sin (supernatural). If Mary was indeed without original sin, then her manner of death would also be different than the rest of mankind,

for Adam and Eve's original sin (passed down to us) brought natural death. The history of Christianity supports this tradition. Eastern Orthodox Christians, for example, believe Mary fell asleep. It was only post-Reformation, i.e. after 1500 years of Christianity, that Christians abandoned the idea.



I will admit that having a prayerful relationship to Mary was awkward at first. I could not fully appreciate why devotion to her was important, or even necessary. I am slowly learning that this beautifully humble and gracious soul is the very reflection of Christ himself, like the moon is to the sun. She is not the source of light and energy, but reflects the radiance of the Son. Since she is closer to Him than any human to have walked this earth, it would be wise to walk close to her, in order that I may get closer to Christ Himself. *Ad Jesum per Mariam*. To Christ through Mary.

Thanks for reading.

This contribution is available at <http://kimsununexpectedjoy.blogspot.com/2014/08/a-few-thoughts-on-honoring-mary-as-part.html>
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The Glory of Islam: Putting the Beheadings, Crucifixions and Rape into the Context of the Quran [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

by Lawrence Fox

This past month, the last Christian limped out of Mosul, faced with death, forced conversion to Islam or payment of a “protection” tax. These are typical penalties all unbelievers (Christians, Jews, pagans, and even those deemed impure Muslims) face when Muslims gain control of an area.

Christians in Iraq were faced with three options once the *Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham* (ISIS) moved into Mosul: convert, be killed, or pay the (jizya) tax -- three steps which are literally spelled out in the Quran (Surah 9:29): *“Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”*

“For the first time in the history of Iraq, Mosul is now empty of Christians,” concluded the Iraqi Patriarch Louis Sako, sorrowing over the loss of one of the world's most ancient Christian communities.



But that proved to be only the beginning of the horror. Five hundred men, women and children of the ancient Iraqi minority Yazidi (syncretic form of Zoroastrianism) were shot in the head, crucified, raped and had their limbs amputated by the Sunni-led ISIS.

Killing resisting Jews, Christians and pagans are approved practices of the Quran. However, the Muslim book, Quran, whose name means “recital,” warns if you kill fellow Muslims you will end in hell.

Yet the dirty secret of Islam is that even Muslims can be defined -- at will -- as unbelievers then killed, taxed or converted, especially if they fail the test of other forbidden practices such as befriending Jews or Christians.

Members of the Sunni Shaitat tribe were rounded up and marched to their deaths in Syria by ISIS, and the whole event was documented in a series of horrific images posted online by the victorious jihadists.

Dare we hope the Shaitat Sunni tribe were impure Muslims -- newly-defined Muslim “unbelievers” -- because they resisted ISIS’ plans for an Islamist state or caliphate in Syria and Iraq? They didn’t want to be ruled by *that* batch of Muslims?



If so, too bad. True Muslims put them to death. ISIS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi called on the “soldiers of the Islamic state” to fight alongside his jihadist group, telling them: “If you have faith, you will conquer Rome.” ISIS’ plans also envisage expansion of the Islamic state into Europe and across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

The foundation of ISIS’s belief in themselves is the Quran, and they are following its precepts honestly and literally to *“Fight those who believe not in Allah.”*



ISIS are better Muslims -- more beloved by Allah: *“Do you pretend that he who gives a drink to the pilgrims and pays a visit to the Sacred Mosque is as worthy as the man who believes in Allah and the Last Day and **fights (jihad) for Allah’s cause. These are not equal by Allah. He does not guide the wrongdoers. Those that have embraced the faith and fled their homes and fought for Allah’s cause with their wealth and their persons are held in higher regard by Allah.**”* (Surah 9:19-21)

The reason this catastrophe is taking place in Iraq and Syria is best summed up by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Paleologus during the Islamic siege of the City of Constantinople in 1391:

"Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new to religion, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached."

And if you are horrified reading that famous quote, which got Pope Benedict in so much trouble when he repeated it in 2006, then you are part of the problem. The ideology of Islam is primarily to blame for the bloody mess in the Middle East, but so is Western Society's inability to grasp that fact, and its insistence on treating the whole problem as a political issue. The moral vacuum in the West ensures that's the only way it can be treated.

The roots of the violence begin in 622 AD when Mohammed fled to Medina to escape assassination, and encountered contradiction, ridicule and rejection from the Jewish scholars there.

This began in human history a wave of political and religious violence, which has steadfastly grown and has not contradicted the reasonable assessment made by Emperor Manuel II Paleologus.

The Quran is peppered with the call to jihadist violence: *"Believers (Muslims) why is that when it is said to you, 'March in the cause of Allah,' you linger slothfully in the land?...If you do not fight, He will punish you sternly and replace you by other men."* (Surah 9:38) and *"Unbelievers are those that say, 'Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary.'...None shall help the evil-doers."* (Surah 5:17 & 5:71-5:75)

Are the members of ISIS not fulfilling the literal rendering of the Quran? Aren't the Christians in Mosul "evil-doers"? Where are the soldiers from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, Jordan, Pakistan, and Iran rising up in defense of the defenseless? Does not their silence indicate acceptance, no, even support?

Allah purportedly speaking through the angel Gabriel recites to Mohammed: *"Do you suppose that you would enter Paradise before Allah has proved the men who fought (jihad) for him.... Many large armies have fought by the side of their prophet (Mohammed). They were never daunted by what befell them on the path of Allah: they neither weakened nor cringed abjectly, Allah loves the steadfast."* (Surah 3:142-149)

The Quran make is quite clear, those who support and go to war in the name of Allah are of greater value in Islam than those who stay at home indifferent to the cause. In fact, The Quran promises to those who wage war in the name of Allah greater goods, *"The believers who stay at home – apart from those that suffer from a grave impediment – are not equal to those who fight (jihadist) for the cause of Allah*

with their goods and persons...He has promised all a good reward; but far richer is the recompense of those who fight for him..." (Surah 4:95-96)

The images of honor killings, rape, burnt bodies, beheadings, executions, slavery, abductions, cutting off body parts, and the burning of churches – in the name of Allah - from Sudan, Nigeria, Mali, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, East Timor and increasingly occurring in Europe, Canada, and America confirms the reasonable assessment made by Emperor Manuel II Paleologus.

Tragically, the socialist, materialist, and progressive West still looks at these events through the eye-glasses of "political-issue." These fools have yet to grasp that religion and politics are not separated in the Quran.

Despite the mindlessly Obama-like hashtag, "*Islam is a religion of peace hijacked by wicked men,*" there remains the insidious reality that a great number of persons embrace the idea that "the whole of the Quran" must be implemented in every age and in every land.

They would force the whole world to submit to Allah under Sharia Law which includes child marriages, blood revenge, imprisonment and execution for apostasy, and relegation of women and unbelievers to second class citizenship, or have them face taxation, displacement and cruel death. All this is being financed by the desert princes across the Middle East.

Yes, there are secondary causes for the catastrophe in Iraq. The Administration of U.S. President George W. Bush did not grasp the consequences of Americans entering into a war in Iraq, and then eventually leaving it in the hands of a people who have been at each other's throats since the seventh century.

Mohammed died on June 8th in 632 AD and immediately afterwards his followers broke into two warring factions: Sunni and Shia, one led by a father-in-law of Mohammed and the other led by a son-in-law.

Iraq is currently run by Shias. The Sunni-led ISIS is motivated in part by a hatred for the Shia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who has been unable to contain his bitterness towards all things Sunni and Kurdish. The same drumbeat of despair engulfs these peoples as it has for centuries, and tragically the Catholic Christians are again caught in the middle.

The Bush Administration never anticipated that the Muslim Brotherhood would seduce his successor, resulting in the deliberate demolition of structures within the Islamic World. The Bush Administration

naively embraced the notion that a society adhering to the “whole” of the Quran could give birth and build a Democratic Society – with American aid – just like the once Christianized Germany did after World War II.

Now comes the Obama Administration, whose goals have been closely aligned with those of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is the Muslim Brotherhood, who from their beginning in 1928 advocated the restoration of the Islamic Caliphate; and oh my, that was before there existed the State of Israel. So much for Israel being the cause of violence in the Middle East.

That “restoration” is now taking place out of the bones of the Iraqi people. ISIS has wrested control of Mosul and parts of Iraq, and is moving on to the Shia-controlled Bagdad. And by the way, ISIS is the group U.S. President Obama identified as nothing more than a “junior varsity team.”

The original Caliphate was established in the year 632 A.D. in the Arabian Peninsula, and ISIS’ goal is to turn Iraq into the new Caliphate, becoming the Sunni leader of a worldwide Muslim movement.



ISIS and the Muslim Brotherhood are allies in this effort. The events on 9/11/12 in Libya, resulting in the murder of U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens, have more to do with the secret movement of arms to the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria by the CIA than anything else that has been suggested, including the airing of an anti-Islamic video on YouTube.

And why was the U.S. involved in moving arms to the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria? Why, to assist the goal of a new Muslim Caliphate, of course.

In Egypt, Americans watched in horror as the U.S. chose to side with the Muslim Brotherhood. The US Administration alleged it was in pursuit of the so-called “Arab Spring” -- not to be confused with Irish Spring, which actually smells good. The Arab Spring was simply a ruse.

The Obama Regime did not expect the Egyptian Military's repulsion of the Muslim Brotherhood's advances; and so they were caught with their pants down.

The U.S. Media has still not grasped the narrative perhaps because it seems like the Obama Administration embroils itself in one crisis after another to distract us from the really bad crises – like what's happening in the Middle East.

Until the Islamic world re-evaluates adherence to the “whole” of the Quran, this brutality will never cease. The jizya tax was established by a human being named Mohammed – and not by Allah. It was never meant to protect Christians or Jews as argued by so-called “peaceful” Islamic Scholars. The tax was pragmatic. Islam could not compel Christians nor Jews to enter into Islamic jihad against other Christians stretching from Mecca to Turkey, Syria and Spain. And so the tax payment became Islam's version of mercy and clemency. Mercy in Islam proceeds from submission.

This is totally contrary to the Christian sense of mercy: *“But God demonstrated His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:9) and again *“For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”* (John 3:7) and again, *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who speak evil about you, and persecute you.”* (Matt 5:44 and Luke 6:27)

The jizya was implemented to force Christians and Jews to pay for the maintenance of Islamic Jihad. It is no different than the financial levies imposed by the Mafia, Mexican Drug Cartels or other gang-bangers raging across the world. The only difference is this jizya tax payment is one of the foundations of the “Religion of Peace.”

Do people not grasp this point? Ironically, the Democrat Party in the United States is copying this form of taxation, demanding that Christians - with moral consciences – support through their insurance and taxes Democrat-legislated forms of immorality.

They have studied Islam well. A U.S. form of the jizya tax is supported by Democrat Party “Leaders” like Senators Patty Murray (Washington), Mark Udall (Colorado), Chuck Schumer (New York), Harry Reid (Nevada), Barbara Boxer (California) and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (San Francisco).

They say to us: “We will be merciful to you dumb Catholics, who are morally obligated by Natural law, the Gospels, and Catholic Canon Law never to provide contraception, nor to perform abortion, sterilization, infanticide, euthanasia -- even in your hospitals.”

“As an expression of our mercy and clemency, we the collective of socialist gang bangers only desire to force you (even nuns) to pay for these vile practices through mandated insurance policies which you did not even vote for.”



So the whole world stands by wringing their hands, tsk tsking over the politics of the Middle East while watching the torture, murder and rape of innocent men, women and children. They do not recognize that what is needed is a bone deep conversion of the heart on the part of everyone in world.

Blessed Charles de Foucauld, who served and lived among the Muslims in Algeria, and then willingly suffered martyrdom at their hands, please pray for us.

---edited by Susan Fox

Don't Miss Lawrence Fox's Poem on the beheading of American Catholic Journalist James Foley.

See [LAMENT FOR WESTERN HUMANITY](#)

This contribution is available at <http://christsfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2014/08/the-glory-of-islam-putting-beheadings.html>
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The De-Sanctification of Sunday [at A Catholic Life]



IS CREMATION ALLOWED? History

The burial (inhumation) of the bodies has always been the most general and constant practice of the people. Egyptians and Persians buried their dead. The Egyptians even embalmed the cadavers of famous persons. Tacitus (History V, 5) says that the Greeks and the Latins buried the dead. In the Old Testament, Tobias is praised by St. Raphael the Archangel because he buried the dead at the risk of his life: “When thou didst bury the dead by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord” (Tob. 12, 12).

In the gospel of St. Mark, we see Joseph of Arimathea “buying fine linen”, and after that “taking down the Body of Jesus, he wrapped Him in the linen and laid Him in a sepulchre (...) and when the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome brought sweet spices, that coming, they might anoint Jesus” (Mk 15, 46; 16,1). At the time of the first Christians, cremation was spread among the Romans. It was a consequence of the decadence of the society for instance, at the time of Sylla and Marius the proportion between burial and cremation was one to fifty.

But the first Christians vigorously reacted against this practice. They buried their dead at the risk of their life. It was indeed very dangerous for them, because burial made them be recognized as Christians, and the persecuting Romans, when they discovered the cemeteries of the Christians, confiscated them and exhumed the bodies, as under the order of the emperors Valerian or Diocletian.

Such resistance has only one possible explanation: it came from a commandment given by the Apostles themselves.

Pope Saint Innocent I (401-417) said that the violation of this order is one of the most serious scandals, and it will never be changed. No dispensation can be given, adds the pope, except in the case of necessity (epidemic, war, etc.). When the barbarians converted to the Catholic faith, the Church obliged them to bury their dead and to stop burning them, even under death penalty as it was at the time of Charlemagne (eight century).

As Christianity spread, proportionally the practice of burial prevailed over cremation.

When cremation is used against the Catholic Church.

It is the French Revolution of 1789 which talked again about cremation. And in the last quarter of the XIXth century, the Masonic societies obtained from the governments of Europe the official recognition of this practice. It was accepted in Italy in the year 1876, in France in the year 1887.

The motives given by the advocates of incineration were hygiene, lack of space in the great cities to put cemeteries, risk of burying somebody alive. These reasons are still put forward today. But are these motives really serious?

Concerning hygiene, this objection is an insult to all the civilized nations, which practiced inhumations. Monastic orders, which buried their dead in the cloisters never had, because of this, infections, epidemic or stain in the water they drew nearby!

Concerning the alleged lack of place in the great cities, everybody knows that many dead are buried one over the other, and above all, what is this “progress” of the world which would make us now incapable to give a decent burial to our dead?

Not to be troubled by the argument of the partisans of cremation, let us quote the testimony of a witness of an incineration:

“It was the most poignant impression of horror I ever had. I have shivers, and cold sweat on the forehead when I remember this body twisting, these arms thrashing the air as to ask mercy, these fingers tightening, these black leg giving great kicks, catching fire as torches”.

Which son would dare to burn like this the body of his mother, or of his father! Bishop Freppel (bishop of Angers in France, last century) called this action savagery, and said “How can we make disappear the cadaver of our beloved parents which such violence on the day of their funeral?”

How can we pray in front of a funeral urn containing the ashes of our parents? Cemeteries, where they quietly rest, waiting for the general resurrection, are on the opposite a continual invitation to pray for the repose of their souls.

But we understand better the profound motive of this campaign for cremation when we read, in an advertising leaflet for this practice. “To choose cremation is to enter in the universal humanistic chain of union attached to the defense of human values” (Cremation Association of the Basque Coast). Here, it is no more question of hygiene, lack of space, etc. but we find the objective of Freemasonry, this occult society whose goal, under the pretext of human values, is to destroy Catholicism and all the orders put by God in the world.

Doctrine of the Catholic Church

The first intervention of the Holy Office against cremation date from the period when Freemasonry began to revive the pagan custom of cremation: January 12th 1870; May 19th and December 15th 1886; July 27th 1892; May 3rd 1897.

When Canon Law was promulgated in 1917, it summarized the previous condemnation of cremation in the following three canons:

Canon 1203: “The bodies of the faithful must be buried, and cremation is reprobated. If anyone has in any manner ordered his body to be cremated, it shall be unlawful to execute his wish.”

Canon 1240, 5° says that “Persons who have given orders for the cremation of their bodies are deprived of ecclesiastical burial, unless they have before death given some signs of repentance.”

Canon 2339 says that “Persons who, in violation of the prohibition of Canon 1240, dare to order or force the ecclesiastical burial (of those who are to be deprived of it) incur excommunication ipso facto; and persons who of their own accord give ecclesiastical burial to the above mentioned, incur an interdict from entering a church.”

In an Instruction dated June 19th 1926, the Holy Office said that the Last Sacraments could not be given to a person who is asking for cremation for itself. It adds that, entering in a society for cremation linked with Freemasonry makes this person incur the penalties for joining Freemasons, especially excommunication. Public Masses for the repose of the soul of persons who asked for cremation, are also forbidden. It comes from Canon 1241, which forbids public Masses for persons having been deprived of ecclesiastical burial.

Obviously let us not forget that the Holy Church permits cremation in exceptional circumstances, as in times of epidemic, war, etc. (same Instruction)

WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE CONDEMNATION OF CREMATION BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

The first reason comes from the particular circumstance which made cremation having been newly promoted by Freemasonry. Because of this fact, cremation becomes a public profession of irreligion and materialism. But it is important to understand that it is not the most important reason. The Catholic Church does not condemn cremation only because Freemasonry promotes it.

The Holy Catholic Church condemns cremation because it is a barbarous custom opposed to the respect and piety that one must have for our dead, even on the natural level. And in the eyes of faith, by burial, the body laid under the earth where it will wait for its resurrection. St. John Chrysostom says that the cemeteries are as dormitories where the dead are waiting for the day of resurrection. Only exceptional reasons (as in epidemic or war, etc.) can obliged for the burning of the bodies

Conciliar modernism and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. In the new Canon Law promulgated in 1983 (n. 1176 paragraph 3), the actual authorities of the Church do not forbid anymore cremation “unless it was chosen because of reasons opposite to the Catholic doctrine” (for example, denial of the dogma of the resurrection of the bodies).

But isn't it in fact a great help given to all these associations for cremation founded all over the world now to spread this practice? These associations are inspired by Freemasonry which is now spreading cremation to fight the Catholic Church and its beliefs.

Even if the new Canon Law continues to deeply recommend the burial of the bodies, its new politics of no-condemnation favors once again the action of the enemies of the Church who, by their diabolical hatred of the creation of God, kill the fetus by abortion, the sick and the old people by euthanasia, and savagely destroy the bodies of the dead by cremation.

One can also add that cremation endangers the practice of the veneration of relics.

Practical Conclusion

In the churches and chapels of the Society of St. Pius X, as we teach the traditional doctrine of the Catholic Church, we also keep its traditional practices. Therefore, we continue to follow the teaching of the traditional Canon Law of 1917, which expresses the constant thought of the holy Catholic Church:

S The bodies of the dead must be buried - cremation is forbidden.

S Ecclesiastical burial will be denied to those who asked for the cremation of their bodies.

Let us honor our dead by burying their bodies with respect in a cemetery, and taking care of their souls by Masses, prayers and sacrifices. N. B. What is said about the bodies must be applied to the members of the body (if cut by surgery for example) or to the dead fetus: they must be buried and not incinerated.

- Quoted From an article of Fr. Pinaud, SSPX published in “Le Sel de la Terre.”

This contribution is available at <http://acatholiclife.blogspot.com/2014/08/catholics-cremation-why-it-is-not.html>
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Mass on a Whim [at Declaring the Whole Counsel]

I do not think that I am doing anything very special in the manner that I say the Mass. It is not a "flair" or a "style" that I have; it is merely the rubrics. All that I am attempting to do is obey what I have been commanded to do. As has been said many other places: "say the black, do the red". It is not all that complicated. Yet, in spite of this, I regularly have visitors to one of my parishes say "I like the way you say Mass", as though it were a unique event. The general tenor of documents like "Redemptionis Sacramentum" point in the direction of reverence and awe for the miracle that is occurring on the altar in the Mass. In fact, it tells us, "The Mystery of the Eucharist 'is too great for

anyone

to permit himself to treat it according to his own whim, so that its sacredness and its universal ordering would be obscured" (emphasis mine).

I am forbidden to choose to do anything according to "my own whim" in the Mass; this applies to all clergy and laity. Hence, when I hear that phrase "I like the way you say Mass" I appreciate that people are moved by reverence, but I feel a bit of agony that it is not something that is more common. Redemptionis Sacramentum goes on to tell us that when a clergyman adds something into the Mass that is not authorized, then he creates "uncertainty in matters of doctrine" which will always "confuse and sadden many of Christ's faithful". Innovation in the Mass is an evil, and it must be repented of. I believe that it is something that our descendants, a few centuries from now, will look back on and be shocked at.

In fact, Redemptionis Sacramentum was issued primarily because of certain "abuses" that had arisen and the Congregation for Divine Worship said that these abuses "must cease" because they had become habitual. They called these abuses a "plague" on the Church. Strong words, and we should pay close attention to it when the Holy See chooses to speak so directly. We are not talking about the method that we mow the lawn, we are speaking about the most significant thing we do on this Earth: commune with our Lord and with one another in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Dear people, pray for priests. Pray for your priest (even if he already says Mass in accord with the rubrics--it is a horrible temptation to be innovative). Pray for all priests (especially the odd ones). Pray for your brothers and sisters in the pews, that they will feel the conviction to worship God with reverence and awe. Pray for the Holy Father, that he would lead us to love God more and more every day, and show our love in how we approach Him in the Mass. Pray that Jesus will be merciful to us, and give us the time and wisdom we need to restore reverence in the Mass.

This contribution is available at <http://declaringthewholecounsel.blogspot.com/2014/08/mass-on-whim.html>
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Dear Teacher, my son will be late for school this year... [at Catholic Review]

Dear Teacher,

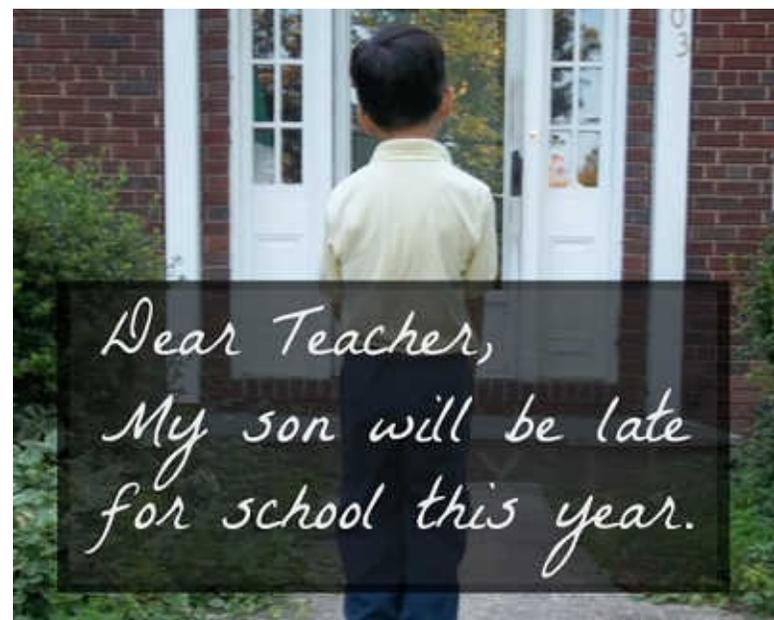
Apparently it's August. Didn't summer vacation start just a few weeks ago? I can't stop the calendar pages from turning, and I can't make the world stop spinning, so here's my plan.

We are going to be late for school.

No, I don't mean 10 a.m. on the first day.

I mean October.

It's the only way we can continue to enjoy this magnificent summer.



Just look outside! The sun is shining, a gentle breeze is blowing, and we have so much left to do!

Our inflatable pool is still mostly intact. We're learning to hit and throw and catch, and no one (yet) has poked an eye out with the light sabers.

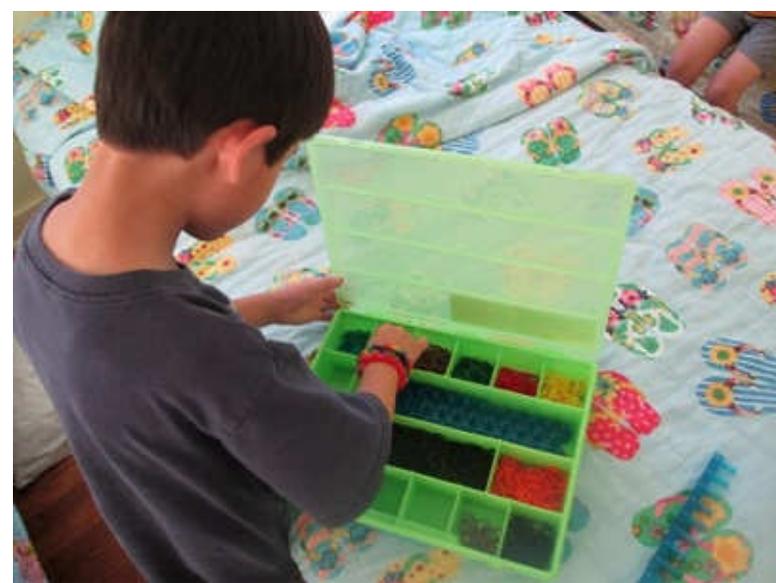
We have bottles of bubbles to blow and a pristine box of sidewalk chalk.

There are snowballs to eat and ice cream cones to lick.



There are bugs to find and wiggling worms to watch and bicycles to ride.

There are books to read and games to play and rainbow bracelets to make.



There are Lego cities to build and puzzles to assemble.

And I don't think we know the name of every single obscure Transformers character.

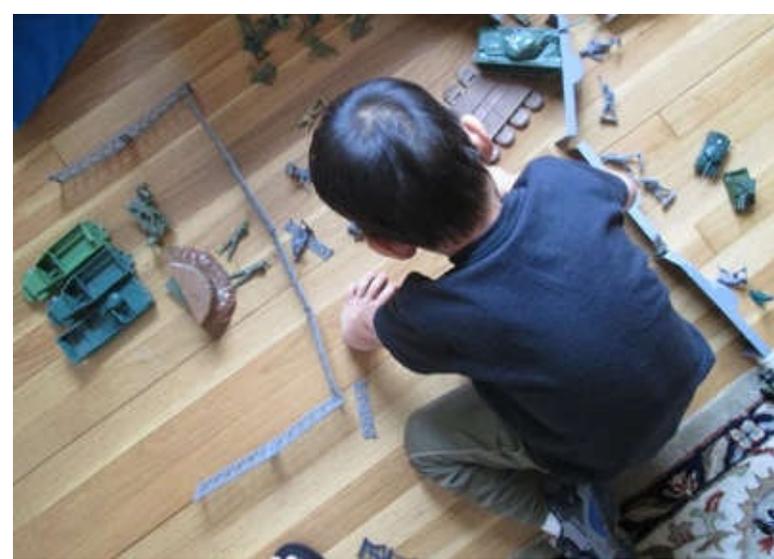


But there's still time to change that. We just need to push back the first day of school.

I promise we'll keep learning and discovering and growing and having lots of summer fun.



I can't promise we'll work on that bridge book we tossed aside three days after school ended in June.



But it should give me time to figure out the school supply list and track down new uniforms and shoes.

And maybe, just maybe, one day we'll work on those two book reports. But we definitely can't do that unless we have an extra month or so.

So we're coming. We're on our way. We just might not get there until...maybe...Halloween?

Sincerely,

A Mother Who Doesn't Want to See Summer End

P.S. You can give an A to my talented sister Treasa Matysek for the graphic she created.

8/7/2014 9:53:44 PM

By

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2014/08/07/dear-teacher-my-son-will-be-late-for-school-this-year>
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by Susan Fox

When I was living in the Alps in Grenoble, France, in 1974, a group of school children – following their adult teacher -- skied off a cliff and died.



So go the lemmings behind the American Psychological Association and similar organizations around the world, which say that same-sex couples can raise mentally healthy children equally as well as opposite-sex attracted married couples.

“The research shows that same-sex couples are similar to heterosexual couples in essential ways and that they are as likely as opposite-sex couples to raise mentally healthy, well-adjusted children,” the APA said in a brief challenging the California Marriage Protection Act, Proposition 8, which was overturned in the U.S. Supreme Court June 26, 2013.

The Supreme Court overturned the marriage act -- passed by a majority of California voters to uphold marriage between one man and one woman -- but it did not impose gay marriage on the entire U.S. population. Nevertheless, the court hinted that they might do so in the future – just as they did with abortion in 1973 -- if the right case was brought before them. Wink. Wink. It's coming soon. Cases are winding their way up to the Supreme Court and 19 states have same-sex marriage.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

Gay “marriage” -- right or wrong -- is a critical issue for our time because marriage always comes with the right to “have”



children. I say “have” and not “bear” because for obviously reasons, gay couples cannot “bear” children. Nature has not given them this ability.

So should they be allowed to marry and “obtain” children through in-vitro fertilization, surrogate mothers, sperm donors, adoption or inherit them as often happens when a divorcee moves in with a same-sex partner?

Increasingly, it is becoming more difficult to hold the opinion that gays should not be allowed to raise children. Witness what happened to Barilla Pasta when Chairman Guido Barilla said that children should be raised by a mother and a father. Now he is busy apologizing to the gay community while his pasta is boycotted.

Yet the people who are most outspoken against gay marriage and gays raising children are the very children the gays raised. “I have heard of the supposed ‘consensus’ on the soundness of same-sex parenting from pediatricians and psychologists, but that consensus is frankly bogus” bi-sexual Robert O. Lopez told Life Site News.

SAME SEX PARENTING IS CHILD ABUSE

Lopez – raised by two lesbians – says same-sex parenting is child abuse, nothing more, nothing less. “I don’t have a silver bullet for suddenly making low-information Americans aware that all the same-sex parenting propaganda is really a cover for systematic abuse (of children). My hunch, however, is that it might be time simply to drop all the masks, and just state the uncensored truth. If you think child abuse is wrong, then say so.”

EVEN "GAY" PARENTS QUESTION "GAY" ADOPTION; HOW DID THE APA GO WRONG?; FINALLY A STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT STUDY ON GAY PARENTING; AND HOW GAY PARENTHOOD TURNS FATHERS INTO DONORS AND MOTHERS INTO INCUBATORS. READ THE REST AT

Emotional Virtue - Thinking Deeper [at A Still Small Voice]

I posted a while back about the importance of emotional purity and little did I know that at the time “emotional purity” was being looked down upon for certain reasons - which is why I’m writing [this](#) post.

If we go back to my latest post and observe the definitions I think we could come to understand that the emotional purity that I’m talking about is not the same one everyone else is ranting about and if it is let’s look back to the definitions. Emotional purity is the freedom of contaminated thoughts and feelings considering selfishness, lust, jealousy, greed, envy etc. (not excluding to whom these thoughts are directed toward).

I have no idea the apparent traumas others have been through dealing with this topic and I’m heartily sorry. However, it’s not about ‘saving your heart’ rather it is more so practicing virtues internally through the emotions of the heart.

1. “It’s a False View of Love”

The point is made by how love cannot be divided but rather multiplied - and I agree, but to the extent in which way you are loving. The English language has a vague meaning of love since we only have one word for it. However, the Greeks distinguish love in these four ways:

Storage

- a love as “affection” in modern day. It’s used to describe a parent to child relationship and even described as when one “puts up” with someone. Funny how that’s in the same definition as the parent to child relationship since

it's very often that my parent's most definitely put up with me simply because they love me, and I to them.

Philia

- a love as in "mental". Describes friendship and loyalty to them, as well as family members, community and enjoyment of something. It's described as "give and take; virtuous love; requires virtue, equality, and familiarity."

Eros

- a love as "physical". Focuses on passions and the sensual; Romantic,

pure

emotion

without

logic. However it does not always start or need to be in the sexual nature. *Plato suggested that although eros is initially felt for a person, with contemplation it becomes an appreciation of the beauty within that person, and could even become appreciation of beauty itself. *

Not including or excluding physicality.

Agape

- a love as "spiritual". Reaching that this type of love is not about the attraction and feelings as in eros but rather a deeper sense of what is meant by one that loves unconditionally. This love is selfless, sacrificial and spiritual. This is not a give and take sort of love like philia, rather it is give and then give some more.

I have heard about the term agape through various retreats I've been on and it's also described in the highest regard of the unconditional love God has.



Whenever emotional purity is attacked in a way of “it’s a false view of love” it’s important to ask the question

“In what way are you viewing this love?”

Of course when the example of having multiple kids comes up this love should never be divided but only multiplied BECAUSE it is a giving of yourself fully and selflessly first to your spouse and then to your kids, which you have created out of LOVE.

What’s conflicting is you don’t see anyone encouraging (hopefully) their spouse, girlfriend/boyfriend, son/daughter, and friend to go sleep around with the next person they are attracted to.

So we must be careful in which ways we are talking about this “emotional purity” - for the mind, the heart, and the body work together.

You should never think of the opposite gender as bad, or dangerous or anything of the sort as some have stated from the outcome of emotional purity. Rather you should look at them as good, but in the different meanings of love, give thought to the greater in its due category.

2. “It Cultivates Self - Centeredness”

This can be true, however, determining for what reasons is it that you are practicing emotional purity. The point that people are missing is that it's not about the comfort and the safety of it all but rather it's about the virtue in which you are practicing. It's not about how pure I am, it's not about ME ME ME ME ME and let's not forget about ME. Emotional purity is cultivating chastity within the mind for the greater purpose of leading your thoughts back to the goodness and beauty of God. * Back to Plato's comment *

Any type of virtue can very easily be considered “selfish” because what are we trying to attain when we practice virtue? Surely it is for the sanctity of self but we cannot forget the value we have as people who are cherished by their Creator and Lover. And also we cannot forget the

we

as in many. We must strive for holiness because not only is that our calling but it's also for the sanctity of others. The saints surely, while on earth and in heaven, inspired many saints and still do. This is also a multiplying love.

However, one seeking emotional purity surely cannot “condemn those who fall short” unless they are condemning themselves. We all fall short. That's a given. But if you were in this boat for the sole reason of whatever selfishness then that's a different story.

It really all boils down to for

WHOM

are you practicing this?

3. “It Forgets Jesus and Limits Love”

Emotional purity should not and will not be labeled as forgetting Jesus and limiting love - the person in whom I seek to accomplish this is JESUS and the outcome in which I seek is selfless thoughts, so that Jesus in me may produce selfless love to others.

The whole point of emotional purity is so that you're thoughts (which can also lead to actions, right?) will

not be about YOU but rather be about the other person's good and for the glory of God.

It's said "Thus, the love of Jesus working in us through the Holy Spirit is not finite either. As believers, we do not have a limited amount of love to give and once we run out, it's over" which is so completely true. However our love is not perfect. The reason why first, we must let the Holy Spirit make his home in us. We must acknowledge that God does not intrude or invite himself in - He is knocking on a door that has no handles on the outside. It is our choice to open the door.

We can so easily say that this door could also be a representation of our hearts.

Emotional purity is not all about getting rid of selfish (and all of what I stated above) thoughts but first focusing your thoughts on Jesus so that He will give you the strength and the courage to overcome the vices of purity that can and will encompass the mind if we do not take heed and focus our thoughts on virtuous things.

This is not about "keeping your heart in one piece" it's about virtue. It's about prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice of the mind and of the heart. This isn't about how you can't have a crush. It's about the modesty in which way you think about him/her. It's not about guarding your heart for the sake of self. It's about guarding your heart because it's meant for someone else.

The attractions we have to people are good, but it's in the way we can so easily emotionally invest in someone that could hurt us. Let's face it - not everyone you are going to be attracted to you are going to marry or even date. Dating isn't a sport for me. Dating is looking at the possibility of marriage.

The attractions and interactions we have with others is not at all bad - let me repeat - AT ALL. Of course, some interactions can definitely be off putting but on the topic of emotional purity simple interactions with the other sex is healthy. (I advise others to have healthy interactions with others of the opposite sex.) It's important that one doesn't get a screwed up idea of the other sex because of such "emotional purity".

There is just so much to say and it's already lengthy. . . but a great portion of where I'm coming from is

Theology of the Body

, so please look into that if you wish!

I can say that the only reason I'm writing about this again is for the clarification of what emotional purity means by going further down into it. By using what I've read by others to give (hopefully) a better meaning of emotional purity FOR others.

And let's remember that these words are not infallible. I am not a Theologian nor am I a Philosopher. I am a young woman who is going through the same battles, the same temptations that the majority of young people my age are dealing with.

I only hope to shed light on this topic.

“Freedom consists not in doing what we like,
but in having the right to do what we ought.”

- Saint Pope John Paul II

Let us all strive for the freedom of our hearts, our bodies, our minds and our souls.

Also let us keep our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted in our prayers and strive to offer up our daily sufferings, complaints and persecutions for them.

God bless and Mary protect.

“Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.”

There is no comfort in the shade
of shadows thrown.

This contribution is available at <http://zoejumonville.blogspot.com/2014/08/emotional-virtue-thinking-deeper.html>
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A young priest's first important decision: a beard or girlfriend? [at Blog of a Country Priest]

Ironically enough, the revised title was out of date the very day it was printed, since I shaved my beard yesterday. (I still have no intention of getting a girlfriend.)

Several months after ordination in 2011, I started my first permanent assignment just in time for the school year. My first official duty was to celebrate the Opening School Mass. Next day, the grade ones were invited to write a story about their weekend. One of the students wrote this:

“On Sunday, I went to church. I was running late. My dad and [my brother] came with me. I was very excited ... We sang a song, then I listened to the boy who was talking.”

In the course of correcting her work, a teacher made some enquiries about this boy. Was he one of her classmates chatting during Mass? “No, I mean the boy up the front.”

You mean one of the altar servers? “No. The boy was dressed in Fr Paddy’s clothes.”

News travels fast in the country. By the end of that first week in the parish, the nickname had stuck. I was now ‘The Boy.’

I had also learned one of the most valuable lessons in life: “Fools and children speak the unvarnished truth.”

More recently, I had occasion to visit this student’s class — they’re grade threes by now — and speak to them about the Holy Spirit and the Church’s mission.

The lesson was formatted as an open Q&A, with me in the hot seat. I fielded many of the questions one expects in this situation: “Why did you want to be a priest?” “How long does it take to become a priest?” “Which footy team do you support?”

But there’s always a few curveballs lobbed in such circumstances, and one question especially struck me with its poignancy.

“Why are priests so kind?”

This question was asked by a nine year old who has encountered four priests in his life. There’s Fr Paddy, the parish priest; ‘old Fr John,’ who is a retired priest in residence; ‘young Fr John’ (otherwise known as ‘The Boy’); and Fr Mark, who is chaplain at the MSC secondary school next door. We three diocesans priests make every effort to be in the parish school every week, and the students frequent weekday masses.

So this child’s question — “why are priests so kind?” — was borne from the experience of priests who had only shown kindness to him, to the credit of those four priests I enumerated.

My own childhood view of priests was more complex. I esteemed the priests in my parish because I

observed my parents listen attentively to them at Sunday Mass. But I admit I was dark on one priest: Fr George Pell.

Fr Pell was school chaplain when I was in grade prep, and I vividly remember a school mass at which he preached, and preached, and preached some more. Or so I thought at the time — a view I shared with my cousin, who was sitting next to me.

Unfortunately, our teacher caught me in the act, and not content with simply moving me some place else, she humiliated me some more back in the classroom, where I was singled out for bad behaviour. Being something of a goody-two-shoes (just ask my long-suffering brother!), I was not accustomed to such treatment. As hotly as my cheeks burned red, that incident burned into my memory. In my childish malevolence, I absolved myself and blamed Fr Pell's loquaciousness for my humiliation.

Not long afterwards, Fr Pell was appointed rector of the seminary in Melbourne, so he ceased to be our school chaplain, and it was many years before I met him again. In the meantime though, he was denied any opportunity to demonstrate priestly kindness, so as a grade one at least, my view of priests was not as universally positive as this grade three's.

Twenty-eight years later, none of this crossed my mind as I contemplated the question before me. "Why are priests so kind?" What did occur to me — and perhaps it occurred to every other adult in the room too — was the question's correlative: "Why aren't *all* priests kind?"

"A priest's job," I replied, "is to be just like Jesus Christ. Actually, that's *everyone's* job. We're all called to be holy. God wants us all to be saints, and we do that by loving as Jesus loved. So if a priest is kind, he's doing his job well. He's acting just like Jesus, who was always kind."

The grade threes and fours faithfully transcribed my answer, and apparently took it to heart. A few weeks later, I returned from my holidays sporting a beard.

The 3/4s whole-heartedly approved: "Jesus had a beard, and your job is to be just like Jesus, so you should keep the beard."

The grade fives and sixes, however, who hadn't had the benefit of my theological reflection, were more divided in their opinion of the beard. 'Fools and children,' you will remember, 'speak the unvarnished truth.' One grade five girl — who's no fool (in all seriousness, she sometime startles me with her spiritual depth) — ventured her opinion.

"No offence Father John," she said. No offence? I steeled myself.

"No offence Father John, but if you want to get a girlfriend, you have to shave the beard."

Fools and children.

When life threatens your Peace and voles steal your Joy [at Making It In Vermont]

I planned my flower garden a few months ago. I was so excited for the flowers I chose from the little garden shop up the road, different colors and varieties from what I had ever had before. Kevin graciously planted them for me as my pregnant old self was not feeling up to it. It was beautiful and I could just imagine how it would look in August when all the plants truly came into themselves. Every time I left or came home or even just rested on our front porch I would be able to look over and enjoy all the loveliness and all would be right with the world.

I went to bed that night content.

The next day I noticed a few of the flowers looked a little less full and saw a couple of blossoms had actually broken off. I investigated a little and after calling together the boys and asking them if any of them did it (they were convincing in their denials) I noticed some snap dragon flowers tucked into the crevices of the stone garden wall. Hmm. I had seen that we had a vole living under the porch as it would duck in and out occasionally, but it hadn't occurred to me that it would like flowers.

Well little by little 3 varieties of flowers in the same way lost their blooms. I had chosen three types that the thief did not apparently like, two purple ground covers which thrived and a type of white zinnia that managed to eek along either not enjoying our soil, it's daily amount of light, or something else. So the garden wasn't quite what I expected, but I lived with it and enjoyed the flowers that managed to succeed.

I had mentioned to Kevin later in the summer possibly getting more flowers to renew the space, perhaps some cold hardy varieties that would last through the end of summer and fall, but I hadn't done it.

About a week and a half ago, when I was feeling a bit down Kevin came back from the store with 6 pots of flowers. There were marigolds, yellow mums, and purple mums. They were the perfect colors to revive my garden and I felt loved and appreciated and thought of by the gift of them. Kevin immediately got to work and planted each in the spots I directed. The garden again looked beautiful and I could imagine fall with color and beauty.

It started the next day with a couple of the yellow mums stems broken... That same day I noticed the broken stems, I spied a brazen vole skitter up to one of the mums, sniff it and run away. After I had regained my composure I decided to take the "clippings" and use the closely cropped blooms to place at the foot of the statue of St. Mary in our kitchen.

It was a tangible way to show love for this woman living eternally who listened and responded so openly to God during the time she called earth her home. Putting flowers at her feet is a way to honor her like I would my own mother, an acknowledgement and appreciation for someone who inspires me, knows me well, and wants the best for me. It made me feel a little better.

About a week later we were heading out the door to church. The whole crew was in the car, everyone but me. As I headed out of the house and walked past the garden I peeked in. The destruction was complete, the vole had taken all but a couple of blooms from the new flowers and every last one of the purple mums

which had been my favorite of the recent bunch.

My face contorted and I stifled a cry. It all felt so cruel.

I had been struggling the last few weeks with feeling hopeless, overwhelmed, and exhausted. Each day a chore to get through, my spirit was fragile. The garden stood as a reminder of the peace and joy that was eluding me.

However as I finished walking down our path to the car and my family it was like a light had slowly turned on.

I couldn't give Mary any more of those flowers as the vole had taken them, but I still had something to give, my persistence. I can live without the flowers (yes, I thought earlier about an untimely end for the voles, but somehow it didn't feel right). The destruction in my garden had managed to renew me and remind me to persistently turn to God, even when it didn't feel good.

What does that mean? For me it means taking time each day when my littlest ones are napping and the big kids are outside for the afternoon, to read what He/God has to say, and listen in my heart to what that means in my life. To take time for silence because it is only in silence that I can hear His whispers. It means to let Him take my worries, my anxiety, my exhaustion, and stop giving the world a lift on my shoulders. It means making the effort to eat better and get more sunshine. It also means to take pockets of empty time to pray for other people, family, friends, and those I don't know and to reach out in concrete ways to lots of different people. Looking outside yourself when you are feeling low can be so healing.

I've been feeling better and am now kind of proud of my garden with its' lack of blossoms and rickety zinnias, and persistent purple ground covers. It is not for its' outward beauty, but because my garden is now a living reminder that the voles can certainly lay claim to my flowers, but with Him by my side they cannot take my joy.

Love to y'all.

~Lisa

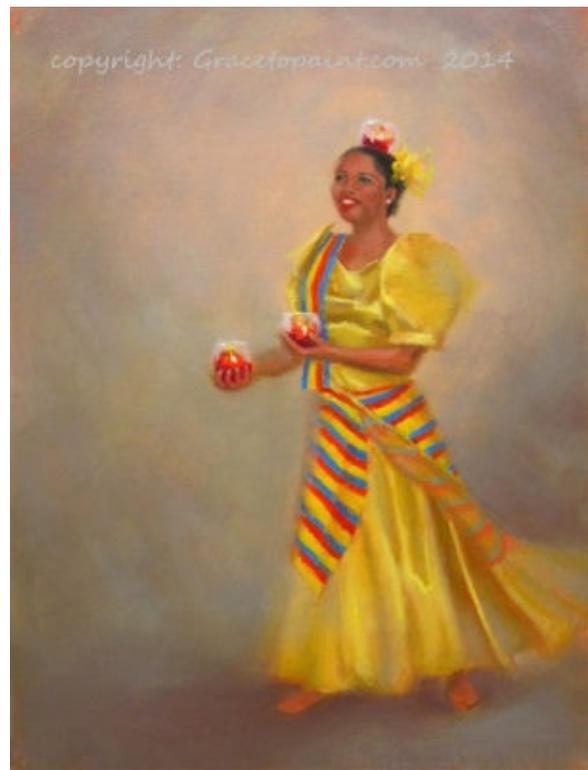
This contribution is available at <http://www.makingitinvermont.com/2014/08/when-life-threatens-your-peace-and-voles-steal-your-joy/>
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Candle Dance [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on September 4, 2014 · [2 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)



9×12" oil paint on canvas panel; use “comment” below to inquire.

Over the summer, we celebrated our annual “Diversity Day,” and this year, the Filipino Community enriched us with their traditional clothing, food, dance, and some of their history. The “Candle Dance” radiated light, grace, balance, and beauty by two of the ladies who performed it. Above is one of the dancers I captured with my camera.

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2014/09/04/candle-dance/>
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Disturbance [at bukas palad]



Year A / Ordinary Time / Week 21 - Sunday

Readings: Isaiah 22.19-24 / Psalm 138 (R/v 8c) / Romans 11.33-36 29-32 / Matthew 16.13-27

“I am disturbed.”

“I am disturbed,” declared Jeremiah, a student of ours at SJI. He was answering the Education Minister who visited our school last Tuesday and asked, “What makes studying at SJI special.” “Disturbed,” Jeremiah said, “because SJI opened my eyes to really see the world and to know that I have a responsibility to do something and make it a better place for others, especially those with minority voices.” Jeremiah was referring to his experience of interacting with migrant workers as part of our Lasallian leadership camp. For Jeremiah, this meeting forced him to ask, “What is my Josephian education for?”

“I am disturbed.”

I’d like to imagine that this is how Peter and the apostles might have felt when they were confronted by Jesus’ question, “But who do you say I am?” Disturbed because this encounter, like Jeremiah’s with the migrants, must have challenged them to find an answer about this man they followed.

As a people of faith, I think it would be small minded of us to interpret Jesus’ question to only be about recognizing or affirming identity. Rather, it is a question that opened up the disciples—as it should also open us up—to relationship. It is an invitation to relationship that can be phrased like this: “Do you want to enter into deeper friendship with me?” And any response we make must invite us to consider the quality of our self-giving to another.

We have all experienced this moment: recall how when someone asked you, “Who do you say I am?” and it led to a deeper relationship. Perhaps, it was when an acquaintance in school asked it and a friendship for life began. Or, when your romanticized infatuation with the woman or man of your dreams concretized into that promising reality of committing yourselves and settling down into responsible lifelong partnership. Or, when at the end of life, you and I will ask this same question of our loved ones, trusting that their grateful answer will assure us that we can let go of a Christian life well spent only to enter more fully into God’s eternal embrace. Can you, can I, recall such a moment, such an invitation into deeper friendship? I can with a good Jesuit friend; what about you?

“Who do you say I am?” Jesus asked his disciples in today’s gospel story. Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Peter might have been disturbed by Jesus’ question. He might even have been unsure that he was giving the correct answer. But he nevertheless replied from the depths of his conviction. Peter may not have been fully enlightened at this moment, but he took a stand and declared what he really thought. That was all Jesus wanted. Peter’s conviction was good enough for Jesus to work with, and to transform Peter from a fisherman into a fisher of men and women.

I’d like to suggest that Jesus’ question is very good for us too as we continue our Christian journey in ordinary time. It should make us pause and really take stock of our friendship with Jesus. His question comes today at a time when the ordinariness of our everyday life and our liturgical calendar sweeps us along a rhythm of life that seems the same, day in and day out. A rhythm that can also comfortably lure us into complacency: nothing needs mending; everything is fine; I come to Sunday mass; I go to confession if I need to; I pray when I can; I give to the poor when I am asked.

Jesus’ question should stop us in our tracks through everyday life because it is demanding an honest evaluation. We are being asked how willing we are and how much we want to let Jesus transform us even more in our everydayness. Our answer will shape the kind of Christian life we want and the kind of Christian charity we hope to share.

The peaks in our liturgical year—the expectant advent joy and the delight of Christmas, the sobriety of Lent reflection and the Easter rejoicing, the solemnities and feast days—always afford us time to reflect and evaluate. But in ordinary time we tend to get carried away by our everyday life, our daily chores and our weekend recreation that we can often forget to attend to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am?”

“Who you say I am?” Jesus is asking you and me right here, right now. He wants us to seriously consider how deeply we have entered into friendship with him. Or, whether we are desirous of entering even more. Or, perhaps, why we are standing by, waiting for the right time. Or even, if I am slowly stepping back and away?

Wherever we are in our friendship with Jesus, the grace of today's gospel passage is that this question (which we know so well) is giving us another chance to answer: Who do we say that Jesus is in our lives? What is our conviction about Jesus who promises to be with us to the end? What is our faith in Jesus who has already forgiven us by his death and won for us eternal life by his resurrection?

"I am disturbed."

I'd like to imagine these are the words you and I will utter if we are truly listening to Jesus asking us, "Who do you say I am?" Why? Because when Jesus asks this question, he leaves himself vulnerable, knowing that we—like the disciples, like the many he preached to and healed—could reject him. His vulnerability should disturb us because as God-with-us he gives himself over to us in trust, believing that in our dignity we will answer freely and rightly, and so let him transform us. All he asks of us, as he once did of Peter, is to take a stand and declare who he is in our lives.

I'd like to suggest that our faith would be richer if we begin to appreciate Jesus' question as his heartfelt invitation for us to enter more deeply into friendship with him. And in this space of relating to one another, we can experience God's salvation more fully. This involves embracing the saving grace that his question always is. And if you agree with me that the best response we can make to this grace that Jesus' question is is to do as Peter does and to confess, "You are the Christ," then, shouldn't we not welcome his question? Jesus' disturbing but saving question that will transform how we live and what we do as Christians?

Perhaps, it is good that we pray this prayer:

Disturb us, O Lord, when we are too well-pleased with ourselves; when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little; when we have arrived in safety because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, O Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess we have lost our thirst for the water of life; when, having fallen in love with Time, we have ceased to dream of Eternity; and in our efforts to build the new earth have allowed our vision for the New Heaven to grow dim.

And then as our prayer draws to its close, wouldn't it right and just for us to end it with this coda: "Yes, Jesus, you do disturb me, and it is very good that you do. Amen"?

Preached at St Ignatius' Church, Singapore

photo: from Internet

This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.sg/2014/08/homily-disturbance.html>
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Today's find: A cabin called Joy [at With Us Still]

At my beloved's suggestion, I tried something new this past week: Ending our annual summer vacation with a couple of days of quiet 'retreat time.'

Honestly, I wasn't completely sold on the idea. I guess it's because, on some level, I like to keep my 'spiritual' side separate from my 'recreational' side – both in their own nice, neat compartments.

I could feel my reluctant heart softening just a bit, though, as we drove into the grounds of the [Loretto Motherhouse](#) in Nerinx, Kentucky. For one thing, I knew we were in 'Merton country': [The Abbey of Gethsemani](#) is just a few miles away.



Thank you, Sisters...

For another, the entry road takes you right past the Loretto Community's cemetery, where hundreds of stone markers stand in silent tribute to lives spent in praise and service. I'm a sucker for cemeteries like that—in large part, because my own life has been so deeply blessed by the work of religious sisters and brothers.

Still, it was a bit of a struggle for me to be there...at the end of a vacation. It felt like I was trading the prospect of 'fun' for 'discipline' – and I mean, really, what kind of bargain is *that*?

I discovered, though, that my beloved often knows what's good for me long before I do. It turned out that she had booked us into a cabin called Joy, at [the Cedars of Peace hermitage](#) tucked into a wooded area of the motherhouse grounds.

'Simple' quickly became the order of the day. Simple meals (because we were miles from the nearest restaurant). Simple amusement (because there's no TV or satellite dish to be found anywhere around). So I pulled out a couple of the books I've been meaning to read for many months now, and dug in.



‘Joy’ is the address: So smile already, will ya?

I had time to read the entries in cabin’s guest-books, too – all three of them, with comments stretching back to 2007 or so. And I was struck by how desperately so many of the previous occupants had wanted to be there...*needed* to be there...in order break free from their routines, or in many cases, from their anxieties...stresses...and pains.

‘Joy’ worked on them, I realized. So it’d be kinda dumb to squander the chance for ‘Joy’ to work on me, too.

I let go...releasing my reluctance, and opening my heart to a different possibility.

Before long, an unexpected gift arrived in the cabin, as my own guest-book essay started to take shape in my mind – and I had this latest bit of ‘found spirituality’ to share.

—



Could this KY knob have been one of the steps in Merton’s 7-Storey Mountain?

We strolled out to the end of “Farm Road” this afternoon – and I got what I came for: There, in the distance, a genuine Kentucky knob—just like the ones Merton wrote about (in Sign of Jonas?). Of course, this part of the country was Holy Ground long before Merton ever got here. A walk around the Loretto cemetery is testament to that.

But what makes it ‘holy’? Not the scenery, surely. More spectacular sights are but a few hours away.

What, then?

Why are we drawn here?

Why do so many, from so many walks of life, seem to find what they’re looking for (peace? inspiration? quiet?) here?

Is it not because we are a pilgrim people?

The Master says 'Follow me.' And so, we must go. We must set our feet in motion, to discover the truth in what the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote,

*for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
to the Father through the features of men's faces.*

(Had Hopkins come to Loretto, no doubt he would have recognized Christ in women's faces, too – like the women with whom we celebrated the Eucharist today, on the feast of the Assumption.)

We go someplace new, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Holy One, perhaps in the face of the retired Sister we meet along the way.

A cabin called Joy is not a bad place to begin the journey anew!



At Cedars of Peace: An invitation to find Joy in the journey...

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

IHS

This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2014/08/17/todays-find-a-cabin-called-joy/>
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My notes on "Exorcism: Encounters with the Paranormal and the Occult" by Fr. Syquia [at The Catholic Chic]

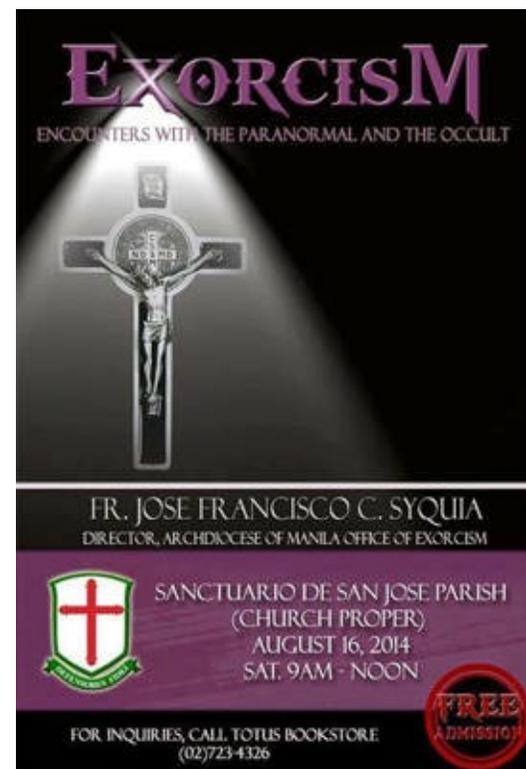
"It is the enemy who should fear us, and not we him."

- Saint Faustina

"If we are at war with the devil, we are at peace with God."

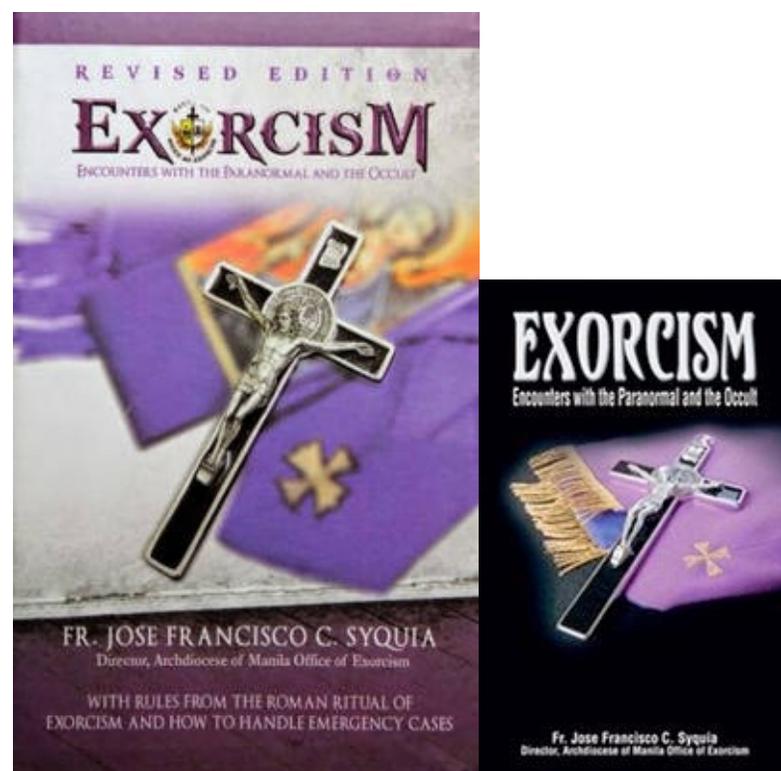
- St. John Chrysostom

--- The parishioners of the **Sanctuario de San Jose**, together with the **Defensores Fidei Foundation** (DFF), a Roman Catholic lay foundation, organized a talk entitled "**Exorcism: Encounters with the Paranormal and the Occult.**" It was held last August 16 at the Sanctuario de San Jose Parish in Greenhills, San Juan. The speaker was **Fr. Jose Francisco "Jocis" Syquia**, the director of the Office of Exorcism of the Archdiocese of Manila.



I learned about Father Jocis when I got a hold of his book **Exorcism, Encounters with the paranormal and the occult** way back when I was in college. It is one of my favorite Catholic books until now because I learned a lot about the workings of evil against Christians and how I could defend myself and others

from oppression.



Father Jocis authors other bestselling books - **Exorcist, a Spiritual journey** and **Exorcist vol. 2, Spiritual Battle Lines**. I highly recommend these books to all Catholics who would like to learn more about combating evil in today's world.

The program started with some welcoming remarks from the founding head of Defensores Fidei, Henry Siy. It is then followed by a brief introduction of Fr. Jocis.



It was my first time to see Fr. Jocis Syquia in person and I was surprised that he looks quite young! Another thing I learned about him is that he has a licentiate in Spiritual Theology from Angelicum in Rome where he finished as a Magna Cum Laude. Awesome!

Anyway, here are some of my notes on the lecture of Fr. Jocis. I pray that you'll be guided by the Holy Spirit as you read on:



Who is the source of your suffering?

Sufferings and trials are a part of life. I never really reflected about where my sufferings come from or who gives it to me. I just accept its existence and try to solve it as best as I could. Most of the time, people blame God for the sufferings they have in life. According to Fr. Jocis, we should consider the fact that many of our sufferings come from the devil. He said:

"Sufferings which come from the Lord should be life-giving.

If it is not, it is caused by evil."

Are our sufferings life-giving? Let's take time to reflect on the cause of our trials. For all we know, they may not have come from above. **Remember that the devil wants to be hidden from our awareness, to deceive us that our sufferings come only from ourselves or from God.**



The acts of fallen angels Uncertainties in life and the **Loss of Faith** opens us humans to temptation, sins, and the occult. Fallen angels use these situations in our lives as a way of getting nearer to us. Fallen angels cause oppression, obsessions, infestation, and ultimately, possession (Read more about it [here](#)). According to Fr. Jocis, more Christians have experienced forms of oppression. Some of us may not even be aware of it but we are already being oppressed by the enemy at this point in time. Specifically, demons can cause physical, emotional, and psychological problems.

I realized that I have experienced some forms of oppression previously enumerated by Fr. Jocis. Some of them include persistent nightmares, waking up at 3 am, and having gory and bloody dreams. These happened when I neglected my prayer time before going to bed. Only when my husband and I started to diligently pray before going to bed and adding the Prayer of Humility and Hail Mary in our prayers did I stop having consistent nightmares.

My dad had the same oppressions before. He sleeps in the room next to ours. When he started wearing blessed sacramentals, aside from praying before sleeping, did his nightmares stop.



The reality of hell and the battle for the soul.

In the apparition of the Lady of Fatima, she showed the children who saw her, the reality of hell. Hell was described as a sea of fire beneath the earth, a place where souls and devils are together for eternity. Father Jocis discussed further that the devils look like loathsome, animal-like creatures, pitch black in color, and transparent in form.

On earth, God protects both good and evil people from the snare of demons; but once a soul goes to hell, God is not there and satan can do with the soul whatever he wants.

According to Fr. Jocis, **it is impossible for a Christian to be left untouched by satan.** Therefore, we should be steadfast in this battle for the soul. **The more we battle the evil one, the more God is glorified.**

An important step in this battle is to first detect the opponent. Remember that he is very deceptive so always pray for **discernment** and **strength from Christ.**

We should also be sure that we are on the side of the Lord. Fr. Jocis reminds us that even good people can be used by the deception of satan.

Exorcism 101

Exorcism is an act of **reconciliation with God**. This process removes satan who attaches to our soul, body, and in the environment.

In the time of Christ, He has used the **Ministry of Liberation/ Exorcism** out of **charity**. If you read your bible, you would find numerous accounts of Jesus freeing people possessed by demons. He also allowed his apostles to perform this charitable work to help others.

Fr. Jocis reminds us to see satan in the eyes of Christ. **If we have the mind of Christ, we will not be afraid**. He added, Jesus combated the devil as a human being too. This fact should empower us that we too, as long as we are united in Christ, can defeat the devil as He did. **Only through Christ can we expel a fallen angel**.



Syncretism in Filipino Christianity

Syncretism in our country is evident among Filipinos who combine their pagan past with the practice of Catholicism and Christianity.

There is a certain split-level Christianity when we believe in Christ and yet we also believe in feng shui, lucky charms, other gods, new age beliefs, etc.

I was struck when Fr. Jocis said something like, *Sunday Catholics* are still pagan. Sunday Catholics are those who attend mass on Sundays but do not really practice their faith beyond mere attendance. I realized that we should challenge ourselves to **practice our faith** in our every day living and also become more active in parish activities and even in Catholic lay organizations. We are to act with the heart of the law, and not by simply going through the rule of the law without understanding what it means to be truly Catholic.



The Sacramentals

Sacramentals include Holy water, Holy oil, Exorcised salt, Blessed candles, St. Benedict's medal, Rosary, Scapular, Holy cards, and Statues of the Saints among others (Read about their effects on evil spirits [here](#)). These sacramentals **should be blessed and prayers must be used with it** to become more effective. Be reminded that sacramentals must be blessed because spirits can attach themselves to the sacramentals too.

I also learned that when we bless the food we eat, these become sacramentals as well and is used by God to heal us of physical ailments and bless our bodies.





I am also not aware of the **Saint Michael prayer**. Thankfully, this was introduced in the lecture and it is effective in battling the advances of satan (Learn more prayers [here](#)).

Saint Michael, the Archangel,

defend us in our hour of battle.

Be our protection

against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

May God restrain him, we humbly pray;

And you, O prince of the heavenly host by the power of God,

*Cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who wander through the world
seeking the ruin of souls.*

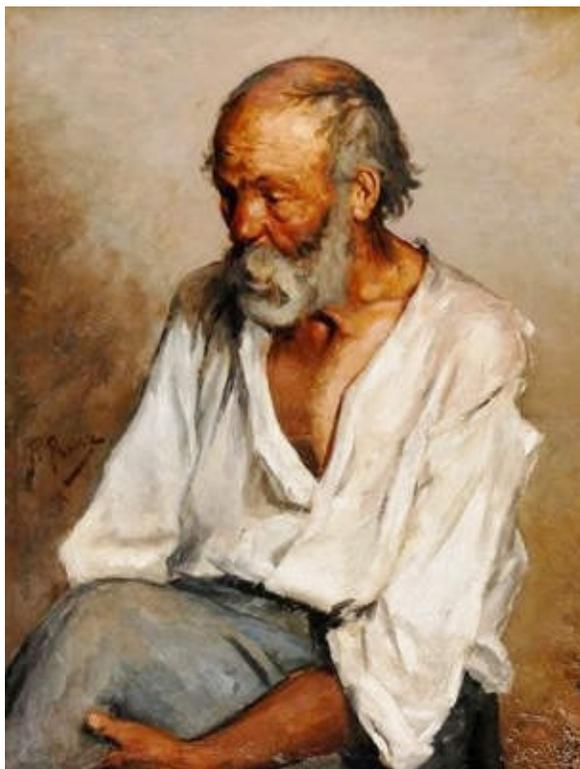
--- I hope you enjoyed reading my notes. What I've written is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the topic of exorcism. If you want to learn more, I suggest you buy the books of Fr. Syquia in bookstores near you. I personally bought my copy from St. Paul's bookstore.

For online information, please visit the Office of Exorcism of the Archdiocese of Manila website at www.exorcismphilippines.org. Also, listen to Fr. Jocis' radio show at Radio Veritas. His show is entitled "Kristo, Liwanag sa Dilim" and it is aired every Saturdays from 6 - 7 pm. *Note: All pictures of the books of Fr. Jocis were taken from Google images and St. Paul bookstore website.* Yours in Christ,
The Catholic Chic

This contribution is available at <http://mycatholicchic.blogspot.com/2014/08/my-notes-on-exorcism-encounters-with.html>
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Picking Grapes [at salliesART]

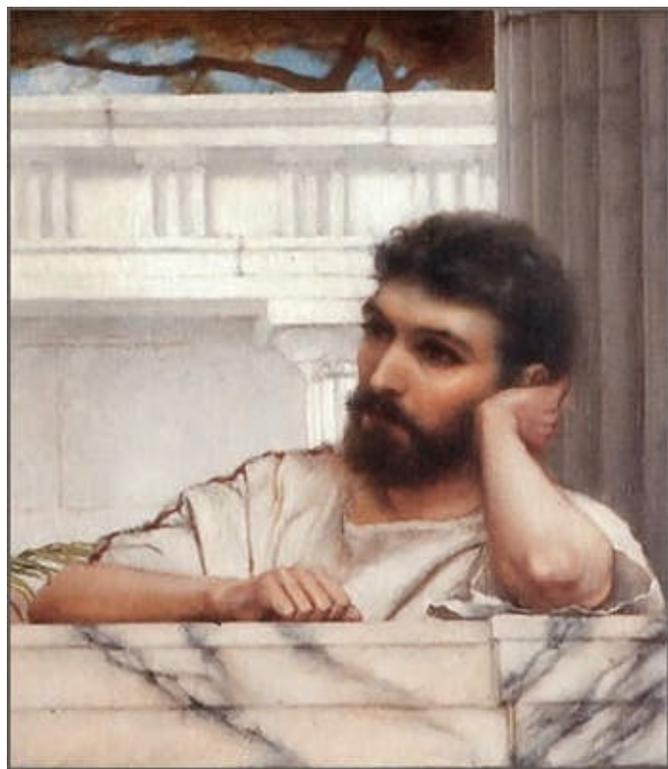


Today's drawing was inspired by one of the works of an artist by the name of John William Godward (1861-1922). He was an English painter from the end of what is called the *Pre-Raphaelite/ Neo-Classical* era. His style of painting fell out of favour with the arrival of artists such as Picasso. Godward, tragically, committed suicide at the age of 61 and is said to have written in his suicide note that "the world was not big enough" for him and a Picasso!

"In Godward's work we see the final summation of half a millennium of classical antique influence on Western painting ... It vanished during Godward's generation – killed, as it were, by contemporary nihilistic philosophies ... [such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche]. What Godward does represent is a microcosm for all classicists during a period aptly called *The Twilight of the Gods* or *The Eclipse of*

Classicism.”

Vern G. Swanson



At the time of his death, he was already estranged from his very conservative family who had strongly disapproved of his becoming an artist. As well, they were extremely ashamed of his suicide and, upon learning of it, burned all his papers. No photographs of Godward are known to have survived as the family is said to have cut Godward's picture out of every group photo and burned those of Godward alone; however, there is a self-portrait of the artist as a young man in one of his paintings. One of his best known paintings is "Dolce far Niente" (1904), which resides, currently, in the collection of Andrew Lloyd Webber.

The Godward work which inspired me to do the drawing at the beginning of this posting ("*Our Lady Picking Grapes*") is entitled simply "*Autumn*" and shows a young woman, in classical dress, picking grapes in a grape arbour.

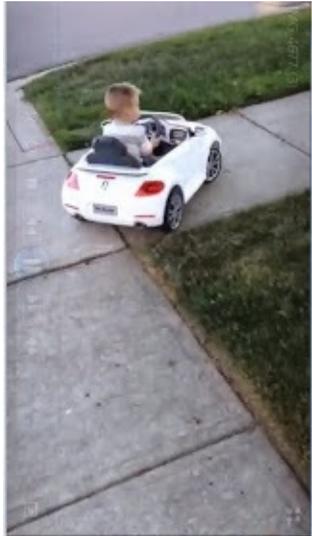
At first glance, it was the pose of the woman that caught my attention -- especially the slender arm reaching upward. Next, Godward's painting made me think about Our Lady and how the home she shared with St. Joseph and Our Lord most likely had its own grape arbour. If so, Our Lady would certainly have spent time sitting in its shade and, at the end of the summer, gathering the ripe grapes -- a task that Our Lord would have, no doubt, helped her with as he grew older.

And, so, as we come closer to the end of our own summer season, I give you a drawing of "*Our Lady Picking Grapes*".

Much of the above information was taken from various sources on the Internet.

BRADEN GOES FOR A DRIVE

I believe that Braden received this "electric" car for his birthday, but I am not certain. Anyway, whenever he received it, it hasn't taken him long to become a very good driver! Notice that he made a very nice right-hand turn and moved over smartly when the pedestrian came along the sidewalk. I predict that he is going to be an excellent driver by the time he is old enough to get a licence! Unfortunately, the photos are not that clear because they were "captured" from a video, but you can still get a good idea of how well he was doing.



SUKI AND SALLIE



I am loathe to admit it, but Suki has been extremely well behaved this past week! I have no idea why and, I must admit, it is making me very nervous. As the days pass with no real bad behaviour on her part, I find myself waiting "for the other shoe to drop" -- so to speak. I keep asking myself: "What is she up to?"

Examples of her current "good" behaviour include such things as:

- allowing me to sleep until a reasonable time each morning;
- allowing me to feed her at the proper times without making a big fuss about it;
- allowing me to talk on the phone without insisting on my holding her in my lap at the same time (this can be very painful); and,
- allowing me to stay on the computer without insisting on sitting in my lap (also very painful) or on the keyboard!

So, I think you can see why I am nervous. I am trying to enjoy all this while it is going on, but my joy is tinged by worry -- worry that Suki is preparing something really, really outrageous while appearing to be so well behaved. I mean we all know just how clever she really is.

So, if there is no posting next week, please check immediately with the hospitals in my area -- especially the psych wards!

As for how I am doing otherwise, all I can say is that I never really knew until now what people meant when they talked about experiencing chronic pain. Perhaps this is why Suki is being so kind to me. Maybe there are no ulterior motives on her part and she is just aware of how bad the pain can be for me these days.

Thankfully, I am getting through it and managing it the best I can. I will be seeing the Pain Clinic doctor in September at which time we will once again discuss the possible options of spinal injections and/or

surgery -- neither of which sound very promising to me.

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



"In the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea, and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It's me! Don't be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' Jesus said, 'Come.' Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but then noticing the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord,' he cried, 'save me!' Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'You have so little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.' "

Matt. 14: 25-33

Well, at least St. Peter had the courage to try! I am sure that I would have just cowered in the boat, hoping it would all be over soon.

St. Peter, pray for us -- pray that we, too, may have the courage to step out onto the water with you. Hold onto us tightly so that we don't sink in the roaring waves and bring us to the Lord.

May peace be with you all, dear friends.

Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://salliesart.blogspot.ca/2014/08/picking-grapes.html>
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Death of a Journalist [at Quiet Consecration]

One of the reasons I take my time before I comment on a situation is my attempt to practice 'restraint of pen and tongue'. Too many times I have reacted only to be given information later that changed my opinion or, at the very least, gave me a different way to interpret the events.

Thus when I got the news that James Foley had been beheaded by Islamist currently torturing, crucifying, murdering, raping, and otherwise behaving exactly like they have always behaved when given half a chance, I kept quiet. I felt such grief, such anger, such incredulity at the response to this whole situation by the rest of the world that I was afraid I would open my mouth and just start spewing. I did not want to do that; it is unCatholic and it is wrong.

I am glad I did refrain, because today I can look at that horror through the eyes of Faith and I can see why God allowed that evil to happen.

James Foley is a saint.

He is a martyr to freedom of the press, to the ideals of American culture that shaped his upbringing and to his Catholic Faith.

That's right, people. James Foley was a Catholic.

James Foley was not just a Catholic - he was a Catholic during his imprisonment under Ghadafi and he was a Catholic under the lash of the evil now pervading the Middle East. He was a Catholic, praying the Rosary out loud with fellow prisoners and doing so because that is what he had been taught by his Catholic parents. He did not walk away from Jesus in the Eucharist because The Church did not embrace whatever political agenda or current social fad is the grooviest. He stayed faithful in the face of the sword.

Was he perfect? Of course not. No saint is perfect and despite what some believe the saints are not proclaimed simply to make the rest of us feel bad about ourselves. The Church proclaims saints for us to look to and emulate - St. Monica, struggling with alcoholism and the feelings of abandonment and betrayal brought about by the behavior of her son, Augustine. St. Theresa of Avila, dealing with migraine headaches and dumb male members of the clergy questioning her desire to reform the Carmelites because her family were

conversos

. St. Catherine of Siena, struggling with her own personal vanity and her lack of formal education in an Order that prizes learning. These people, saints one and all, struggled every day to stay faithful to teachings they did not always understand and may not have even agreed with but they did it because for them how close they could stay to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was more important than getting their own way or 'being fed' by a homily.

James Foley, Jesuit educated and Catholic to the core, stood strong under conditions I am blessed with not having to endure. What can I learn from him?

I can stay faithful despite being scorned.

I can stay faithful despite the loneliness.

I can stay faithful despite being misunderstood and misjudged and disliked.

In other words, the little slings and arrows I experience as a result of being active and Catholic Out Loud in a culture that looks at that as some sort of personal attack cannot become my focus. I must be willing to put on the armor provided me by the Sacramental Life of Holy Mother Church. I must be willing to speak and to ask for help and to pray without ceasing when I am told what I do is not very valuable.

My heart goes out to the Foley family. What I hope is that they know the time they spent instilling the proper values into their son was not wasted time. What I hope is that other parents do not become discouraged when they are laughed at or scorned for doing the same thing. What I hope is that they know they will see their beautiful boy again, and that when he went to the gates, that son of theirs heard the words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the kingdom".

St James Foley, pray for us.

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2014/08/death-of-journalist.html>
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Why Matter Matters [at Peace Garden Mama]

Recently, I attended an event

that brought some fresh Christian voices my way. The Catholic Answers conference in my husband's hometown of Glenwood, Minn., left me feeling enlightened and gifted with new ways of articulating things about the faith I've known but haven't been able to describe easily to others before.

Some of the most profound insights for me came in the opening talk, given by Dr. Charles Bobertz, who is also a Catholic deacon. Bobertz teaches theology at The College of St. Benedict's and St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., all-women's and all-men's Catholic colleges in our neighboring state to the east.

His talk, "How Catholics Read the Bible," helped me understand different approaches not only to Scripture but in how faith and religion are lived out, particularly from the Catholic point of view, and why our version differs at times from the Protestant version.

The subject matters to me because I have so many Protestant brothers and sisters who, while they profess and believe in the same God as I do, have a different approach to faith than my Catholic one. I think it's important to grapple with our differences in order to understand one another better, so we can continue to work together to build the kingdom of God.

His talk began with an explanation of

the ancient world, and how people in Jesus' time understood the world in general and faith in particular. During the time of Jesus' death, two different approaches to faith emerged: the spiritual view, and the spiritual-plus-earthly view.

The most debated question in Christian circles following Jesus' death was, according to Bobertz, "Did Jesus rise from the dead in the body or in the spirit only?" This led in turn to the two different approaches to the Christian faith; one focused mainly on the spirit, and the other, on the intermingling of both earthly and spiritual matter.

Now, consider for a moment all of the "stuff" that makes up the Catholic faith -- the bells and whistles, the incense, the vessels, the chrism oil. Think of the physical aspects of the sacraments (water, rings, robes,) and the bodily movements (genuflecting, sign of the cross, kneeling). Think of how we approach the body even after death, along with Lent and its ashes and fish.



These elements of our Catholic faith help us express our faith and can bring us closer to the Lord. But some of our Christian brothers and sisters tell us this "stuff," this earthly matter, is superfluous to what we need to live out the Christian life.

It's true, ultimately we don't need these things to get into heaven. But do they matter? Yes, we believe they do. Can they enliven and increase our faith? Yes, we have known this to be the case.

Think again of that hotly

debated question: just spirit, or spirit and body? In the Jewish faith, the body was part of the deal; an emphasis on "matter" evident. It mattered to the Jews then, and now, and it matters/ed to Catholics, too. We brought with us the Jewish emphasis on the physical and its relevance to the life of faith.

Dr. Bobertz also mentioned the widely popular YouTube video from a few years back, in which a young man boldly claims that he is "spiritual but not religious." Many in the Christian world cheered his proclamation. But many Catholics scratched our heads because we don't see religion as a bad word. Religion gives form to all of those "things" I mentioned above. Religion respects and invites matter to be a part of the equation, and the body to join with the spiritual.

And therein lies this whole different approach to faith that explains some of our current divisions. "To be Catholic is to be religious and

then

spiritual, because God is in the world," Bobertz said. "God is in the world, making the world sacred." God is in us, too, making us sacred. And this vision of faith, he added, "affirms the sacredness of the Church."

Consider the question, "Are you saved?" This sends many Catholics into a tailspin, not because we are uncomfortable with the question but because we sense there is something more to our answer than a

simple yes or no, and we also sense that if we try to give it, we'll be immediately misunderstood.

To some Protestants who

subscribe to the "spiritual only" view, all you must do to be saved is "believe in your heart." But to the Catholic, the earthly matter matters, too. Baptism is the beginning point of salvation to us, and includes earthly matter: the words of the priest, which is really Christ speaking through that human vessel, "I baptize you in the name of the father, son and holy spirit;" the water poured over the child; the chrism oil placed upon the child; the white garment worn; the baptismal candle lit.

Not only are these "things" not irrelevant but we believe our conversion is set in motion at this point and continues throughout our earthly lives.

This earthly-spiritual view also affects our approach to Scripture, according to Bobertz.

"Catholics take the liturgy, the material sacredness that is in the world, and we then apply that to Scripture," he said. In other words, when we read Scripture, we are doing so from a different perspective than some Christians. "The whole understanding of what it means to be Christian in the world is different for Catholics."

This is why, too, a wedding on a beach won't do. And why it's not enough to just experience God in nature, though of course we do and can. But the church building, though not an end in itself, does contain a sacredness that cannot be found anywhere else, and that is why we reserve the sacraments for these holy buildings. God is there in a particular and special way and we honor that. We honor the earthly.

Bobertz didn't really

tell me anything I didn't already know, but he said it in a way I'd never heard before, and at the thrilling realization of a new insight, I knew I'd been blessed.

The Eucharist also can be explained through this viewpoint. "The Eucharist is really the resurrected body in our midst," Bobertz said. Pretty profound.

Some young people in my life are going to these colleges, or are already there. Some will end up taking one of Dr. Bobertz's classes -- lucky them. I feel certain they'll come away with a clearer understanding and deeper appreciation for their Catholic faith.

Our faith and perspective is a treasure, and Bobertz reminded me of that in sharing his perspective, which really comes down to these two simple words:

"Matter matters."



Q4U: Does matter matter to you?

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/08/faith-family-fridays-why-matter-matters.html>
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Some Pro-life thoughts from St. Augustine

Today is the Memorial of Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, and one of the greatest and most beloved Saints of all time. Several years ago, I purchased a copy of his *Confessions*, a true classic. The book has short chapters, which are easy to review from time to time.

So today I decided to bring the book out again and read an early chapter; Chapter 6 – Questions about Infancy. Many of his reflections are truly delightful. St. Augustine is known as a great scholar and theologian...but to see him reflect on a baby's behavior made me smile.

“Thus, little by little, I began to perceive where I was, and I wanted to declare my wants to those who might satisfy them, and could not; for my wants were within me, and the people were outside me, nor could they by any sense enter into my mind. Therefore, I made motions and sounds as signs to express my wants, the few that I could with my limited ability, **but they bore very little resemblance to what I wished.**”

Yes, indeed! Countless parents and grandparents have spent hours looking at the baby in their arms, asking “What do you want????”

Augustine continues:

“When my will was not complied with, either because I was not understood, or because what I desired was potentially harmful, I grew angry with my elders for not submitting to me, and with those who did not offer me any help even though they had no responsibility to do so, **and I took my revenge upon them by crying.**”

Okay, I have to admit that when I read this today, I laughed! A baby doesn't “take revenge,” but I can imagine how a brilliant scholar pondering the life of his infancy may have attributed this motive, which would credit the baby with a very active will and intellect. His writings do show a profound understanding of the humanity of the child...having wants and needs, trying to communicate. I'm reminded of cartoons with babies and young children talking way beyond their years! But I find these next words even more amazing, especially considering Augustine's earthly life spanned the years 354-430.

“Whence could such a living creature derive its being but from You, O Lord? Could anyone be the source of his own being? Does there exist any channel, by which being and life can flow into us, that can derive from any other source than You Who created us, O Lord? **In You, being and life are identical, because Supreme Being and Supreme Life are one and the same.**”

Being and Life are identical. The unborn human being has life, and that life comes from God alone! Yes, God permits us to participate in that life-giving power through the marital embrace of husband and wife (or even unmarried people as St. Augustine himself experienced.) Yet it is ultimately God's design and plan that brings a new baby into existence. What a tremendous gift!

When I read *Confessions* years ago, I wasn't thinking about it from any pro-life perspective, but I thank God for nudging me to take another look. The beauty and the gift of life is something all the great Saints understood. I can hardly wait to see whose writings will inspire me next!

This contribution is available at <http://gabrielsmom.com/2014/08/prolifethoughtsstaug/>
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Et et [at The Road Home]

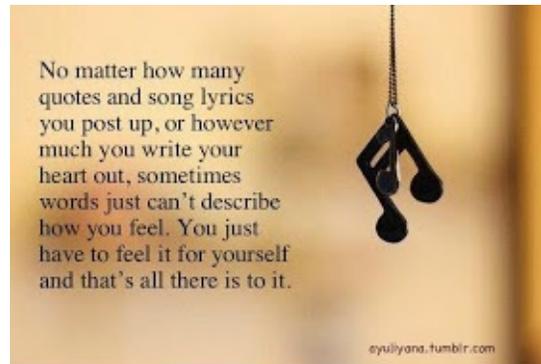
Et et.

Both/and.

It is one of the things about being Catholic that most often pierces and heals me all at the same time. So much of the faith is about seemingly incompatible realities - God is *both* One *and* Triune; Christ is *both* human *and* divine; and more. So often when I am stuck, and cannot figure something out, it comes back to this truth of both/and. *Et et.*

So too it has been this week.

I will insert a disclaimer here. This is written with brutal honesty from the perspective of a woman who is on the eve of the 4th anniversary of TTC. Never in a million years did I ever imagine this would be my life. Just this evening, The Man said to me "I wish I could make you happier." No amount of words on a page will ever explain the sadness that has overwhelmed me in recent weeks. No amount of words will ever describe the emotions I am feeling.



As part of this disclaimer, I will say that all of what follows is emotion. Fr. D. has been working with me to get me to separate fact from feeling. I realize this is emotion; I realize there are facts at play. Neither realization changes my subjective experience of this. Not today. Not yet.

Last week, [Polkadot was brave enough to write about](#) how sometimes even an IF gal feels feelings that bring forth guilt and sorrow at another IF gal's BFP announcement. I left a comment on the post, but it seems blogger ate it. My comment basically said "you are not alone; I have felt this way too." It was a comment that was hard to write, so when blogger ate it, I just clicked away, too exhausted emotionally to write it again. (Sorry, C :(.)

It's actually been more recent that I've had these feelings and to say that guilt accompanies them would be the biggest understatement of the century. I'm not sure which is worse, the sorrow I feel at the announcement or the guilt. There truly is no way to explain the complex emotions that surround a fellow IFer announcing she is pregnant or adopting. And there seems to be a lot of that happening lately. But yesterday, a specific one of our own, one who has been a source of hope and inspiration to so many of us finally got her miracle. Yes, I am referring to [Amy at TCIE](#).

It was Amy's comment on my first IF post that made my heart leap, I'd admired her for years before I even knew I was IF and to see her take a moment to comment meant the world to me.

It was Amy's blog that I spent hours upon hours reading the archives, seeking for a way to survive this. And when I got her text that she had emailed. I knew.

And the subject line of her email. I knew.

And I rejoiced. I was working and so I could not shout from the rooftops, but I could rejoice.

Joy. Nothing but joy as I celebrated for and with this beautiful friend of mine.

Both/and.

Et et.

When I read [her post](#) was when the rest of it happened. The tears came. The sobs came. The guilt came. When the both/and came to be.

I've spent much of the past 24 hours trying to figure out what it was that caused the tears. The sadness. The guilt. And here is what I've come up with.

Something about seeing it on her blog was what made it touch my infertile heart. Before that, it was a friend who I have prayed for, yelled at God on behalf of, and asked that her prayers be answered before mine. Hence the rejoicing.

But the rejoicing didn't stop [my pain](#). And this time it was different. I was not sad because Amy is pregnant and I am not, no, there is only joy there. I sent this in an email to her, never intending to make it public, but honestly, I think it needs to be here. It is such a part of this road, and reminds me so much of a post Amy herself wrote about why does God give us a support system only to take it away?

You see, once upon a time, when she still had a public blog, B at Hebrews wrote about Infertile Island. About how we are here, and we all want to get off this island and we rejoice when someone leaves, but it still leaves those of us here, right where we are. We have no way of getting ourselves off this island, it is God and God alone who can do that. And when one of our sisters leaves, we rejoice and at the same time we are sad to see her go. Because the island is a little less now.

And so, here is what I said to Amy:

The island of infertility is a little less fun because you are off it, and I am so glad you are gone, but I already miss you.

I miss you so much it hurts.

And I feel awful for that, because I miss you, but as much as I miss you, I am infinitely more glad you are gone from this island.

Because no matter how much any one of us wants to deny it or explain it. Those of us who do not have children, who have never seen a BFP, who have never had the phone call. For us, there is nothing to soothe our hearts. There is no promise, that even in the worst case scenario that we will be reunited with our children in heaven. As Amy said, she is forever more *a mother*. (And please, I am not comparing the pain of primary infertility with miscarriage, this is a fact. I am aware it brings no consolation.) We are left on this island, ever aware that it is not up to us if or when we will get to leave.

When we leave this island, it is a cause for joy. For rejoicing. For enjoying every. single. moment. of motherhood that comes. Be it a short time on earth or a lifetime. I do not begrudge any one of you who has experienced motherhood, if even only for a moment, any of your joy. Please - rejoice. Dance. Praise God. Give thanks. Celebrate. All of it. For every moment that you rejoice reminds me that all of this pain is real. That it is not made up in my head. That it is justified. That infertility is awful.

That no matter how this turns out, the joy of children is all that I imagine it to be and more. That no matter how fruitful my marriage is, no matter how much joy I experience without children, the joy of children is just as joyful as I think it to be. No, I do not mean that it is the most joyful thing I could experience, that can only be done in fully living God's will for my life - and if that is a life without children, then that is where I shall find true joy. But, this does not mean that a life with children is any less joyful. Both/and.

Et et.

And so, tonight I try to wrap my mind around the fact that this island is different. Forever changed.

Somewhere there is a new woman shedding her very first tears over a BFN, wondering if anyone else feels like she does, joining us on this island. Changing it in her own way. And one who has encouraged us and supported us and helped to us to embrace this island, to

embrace this cross

, has finally left.

And so, to you, my dear friend, in addition to all that I said in the email I sent you, I say this:

Congratulations!!! Rejoice and be glad. Thank you for the countless prayers, posts, emails, texts and conversations. Thank you for showing us all how to do this. Thank you for loving us all and embracing each one of us as we got off the boat and slowly, fearfully found our place on this island. Celebrate every moment and feel no guilt, for now you can show us that motherhood is both as wonderful and as hard as we imagine it to be. Both/and.

Et et.

I have never been so happy to be so sad in all my life. This island will not be the same without you and I am so so glad you are off of it.

Deo gratias.

 Rebecca

This contribution is available at <http://theroadhomewv.blogspot.com/2014/08/et-et.html>
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Finding Grace: Shelved and Reviewed [at String of Pearls]

I try not to talk about my Catholic novel

Finding Grace

(or the WIP called

Erin's Ring

) all the time on this blog, because it feels like self-promotion and that makes me really uncomfortable. (I also worry that readers will get bored and say, "Okay, okay; we've heard enough already about your books!") But my publisher encourages me to use any and all social media at my disposal to get the word out, because the bottom line is that this is not about me at all. It's about Him. And He deserves all the promotion He can get--anywhere, anytime. Especially in this increasingly God-less world of ours.

Dreams of fame and fortune, or of 7-figure movie deals, are not what motivated me to start writing fiction. (Good thing, too!) Aside from the fact that I enjoy the process (I just love to edit and re-edit, to switch words around until they sound the way I want them to!), the main reason I write is to give greater glory to God. The last thing I want to do is to write something that's "popular" or a "bestseller," if it includes storylines that I'll be ashamed to explain to Him on Judgment Day. I might not have had this focus if I'd tried to write a novel when I was young, so I'm actually glad I never had the inclination (or the time!) to work on one until my sons were almost all grown up. Having raised children, and having been a witness to all the ways the world comes at them with lies and half-truths meant to destroy their souls, is what gave me the inspiration to write Catholic fiction for teens and young adults--fiction that tells a good story, but more importantly, ends up inspiring them to have the courage to stand up for what is right and to fight the good fight. Fiction that inspires them to ultimately become saints in Heaven.

When I decided back in the summer of 2007 that I wanted to write the novel I'd dreamed about writing my whole life, this was my prayer during a daily Mass with my husband: "God, if I'm meant to do this--and it will be for the good of my own soul and for Your greater glory--then please inspire me." That very day, I started to write. When my husband and I got home from church, I furiously typed up about 20 pages of notes. Within 2 months, I'd written the first 8 chapters. True, it took me over 4 years to finally finish the next 24 chapters; but I was just taking my sweet time--with weeks off here and there if I needed them, because back then I had boys coming and going around this house. Besides, I never really thought it would be published.

Finding Grace

was just going to be for me, and for my family. I pictured running off copies for my grandchildren. I never in a million years thought it would be sold on Amazon, and I certainly didn't imagine that copies of it would show up on a shelf in an actual bookstore.

After more than 2 years in print, I now have proof that

Finding Grace

has made it onto a bookstore shelf. Not too long ago, my daughter-in-law Regina sent me this picture, which she took while visiting a bookstore in downtown Kalamazoo, MI.



(Actually, my sister-in-law in FL said a friend of hers who owns a Christian bookstore was selling it last year, but I never saw the photographic evidence.)

I know this doesn't mean that I'm going to find

Finding Grace

listed in the

New York Times

alongside YA fiction supernovas like

The Fault in Our Stars

or

The Hunger Games.

But if even just one young person (or adult--it's for big people as well) picks it up and not only enjoys it, but is edified by it, that makes me the happiest writer on God's green earth.

Endorsements of

Finding Grace

make me happy, too--like

[this recent review](#)

by Tiffany over at Life of a Catholic Librarian. Tiffany's lovely

[blog](#)

has a Catholic Book Club on Wednesdays, and if you love to read as much as I do, you might want to check it out.

Thanks for indulging me here, once again. I promise I won't turn String of Pearls into one big advertisement!

This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2014/08/finding-grace-shelved-and-reviewd.html>
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Sunday Recap [at parishpriest]

This past Sunday I spoke a little about Happiness.

Fill in the blank: I will be happy if_____.

What does that blank consist of in your life. I suspect that if we have to put something extra in to our life or take something out of our life in order to be happy then we will never be happy.

Why do we put conditions on our happiness?

In large part we have bought in to the lie of secular society that has told us from early on that we need to add this or that in to our life for happiness. Secular society has fed us the garbage for years. ANd we have equated happiness with things outside of us.

What is the greatest obstacle to happiness? A mentor of mind, bishop, once said that he thinks the greatest obstacle to happiness is the fact we try to control what will make us happy.

As long as we try to control what will make us happy then we will always be dissatisfied.

We need leave ourselves open to surprises. Pope Francis often speaks about God being a God of surprises and we are too closed in on ourselves to realize the beauty of those surprises.

We have to stop manipulating our life and the lives of those around us.

God invites us to leave ourselves open to the unexpected, unimagined, inconvenient. If we can do this we can begin to experience happiness.

Like Peter in the gospel we cannot get in front of JESUS but we must stay behind and learn to pick up our cross daily. The cross is about opening ourselves up to the unexpected, unimagined, inconvenient.

Does we can think like God not like man. Man consumes himself with himself. We all want to be at the center of our lives: self preservation self-serving.

God always thinks of the other first regardless of the conditions. The cross of Christ reveals that God is self-giving, seeks the good of the other, he is one of service.

If we can flip our mind set, have a true renewal of the mind, happiness will be no longer at our finger tips but in full grasp.

This contribution is available at <http://parishpriestblogger.blogspot.com/2014/09/sunday-recap.html>
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My Day with Jesus [at His UnEnding Love]



Lord, I know this day is going to be a difficult one. Help?

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

2 Corinthians 12:9



I'm already biting my lip. I think I need to say something.

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?

”

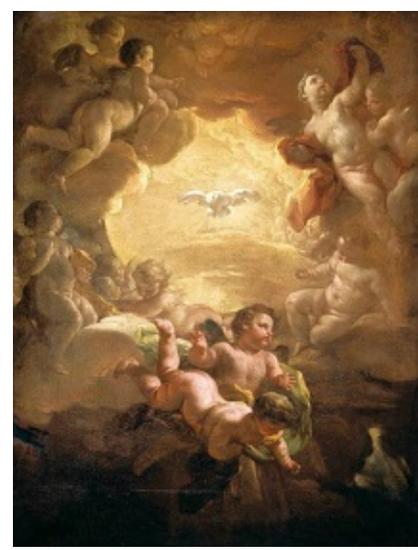


I'm worried about what's going to happen tomorrow.

“But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.”

Matthew 6: 33-34



Lord, well, I'm stumped on this one.

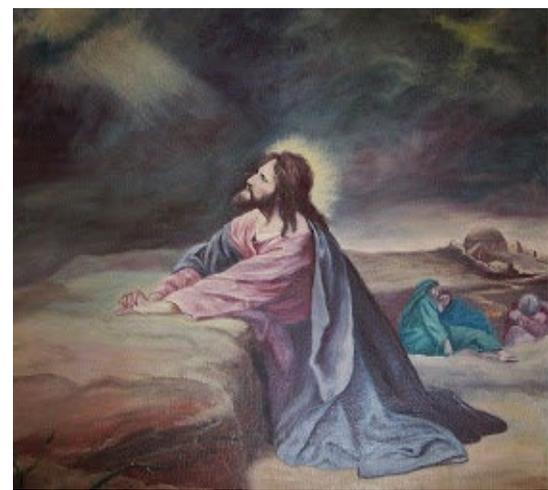
“Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”
Ephesians 6:18



Lord, this world of ours. Where is the peace?

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. “

John 14: 27



Lord, how do you want me to pray?

“Pray then in this way:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,**

**on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,[b]
but rescue us from the evil one.[c]**

**For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you;
Matthew 6: 9-14**



Lord, It was a far from perfect day. So many things happened. I know, things could have been worse, but, still...

**“For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”**

Psalm 91: 11-12

This contribution is available at <http://hisunendinglov.blogspot.com/2014/08/7-quick-takes-my-day-with-jesus.html>
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Three Ways Marvel Produces Entertaining Movies With A Human Heart



Marvel Studios is doing something right. *Guardians of the Galaxy* raked in about \$94 million on its first weekend, making it the largest opening for any movie released in August, even beating out the opening weekend of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. This is not their first success and it won't be their last. What began as a simple set of comic books has turned into a multi-billion dollar movie industry. The lucrative business of making comic book movies has no end in sight and appears only to be on the rise. In fact, Marvel has plans for many years to come and will continue to produce movies as long as they can be successful.

But why are their movies so popular? What makes these comic book movies stand out? While Marvel's films attract many teenagers because of its numerous fast-paced, action-packed sequences, they also draw in people of all ages because they showcase **true heroism, human characters and simple fun. Marvel provides a rarity nowadays; entertaining movies with a human heart.**

True Heroism

We all want someone to admire and emulate. Whether it be the grade-school teacher who truly loves the children she teaches or the soldier who sacrifices his life and is sent off to war; we want to imitate their inspiring example.

It is then no surprise that our culture is captivated by superheroes. These extraordinary humans (and other species) are men and women who live life in the extreme and use their gifts and talents for the greater good of society. We are drawn to them and their examples, even though the situations they are portrayed in are outlandish and impossible in the real world.

One reason why we are still drawn to these fictional characters is their constant example of self-sacrifice and true heroism. The prime example of this is Steve Rogers, also known as *Captain America*. In the 2011 movie *Captain America: The First Avenger*, Steve Rogers is portrayed as someone who simply wants to do what is right, no matter what the cost. During boot camp, he purposefully lands on a grenade dropped by the drill sergeant in order to shield everyone from the blast. The grenade was a test and Rogers proved his character. In his most recent movie, *Captain America: Winter Soldier*, Steve Rogers again chooses to sacrifice his own life, in hopes of rescuing a friend from the seduction of the enemy. Other examples of heroism include Thor, and even Iron Man, who almost died in an effort to save the

world in *The Avengers*.

Most recently, Marvel showcased the unlikely heroism of Peter Quill and his companions in *Guardians of the Galaxy*. At first it seems like this group of misfits are more concerned about themselves than saving other people. It does not take long, however, for each character to have an opportunity to lay down their life for their friends. By the end of the movie, each one is a true hero and has been redeemed by their acts of courage and self-sacrifice. There is even Christian symbolism (whether intended or not, I do not know), when the crew's life is saved by the sacrifice of a tree.

Human Characters

At the same time, while these heroes give us extraordinary examples of heroism, they are also shown to be authentically human (even if they happen to be a talking raccoon). While they may have many extraordinary gifts, they are not perfect and that is a good thing.

One of the most obvious examples is Tony Stark. Besides having an amazing intellect, and a large array of high-tech machines, he is one of the most flawed superheroes. He is prideful, vain and has a long past of taking advantage of women. Over time, however, he proves his own ability to “grow-up” and lives for others rather than himself.

Also, the ragtag group of heroes in *Guardians of the Galaxy* are quite imperfect and you even wonder if they are good or bad. Over the course of the movie they surprise you and change their ways through their acts of heroism. By the end they are still not perfect, but they all have a new purpose in life and desire to fight for the good of the galaxy.

The imperfection that these heroes display is what makes them attractive. Often we can get discouraged in life, thinking that you must be perfect to do anything good in this world or in the next. We think that saints are people who were perfectly clean from birth and never sin. On the contrary, saints (and real-life heroes) are regular people who make a conscious choice to fight the good fight and overcome their faults. Just think of Saint Augustine or Saint Peter the Apostle. Both saints had their blunders and that is why they are so popular. We want to have hope that we too can become a saint, however imperfect we may be.

Simple Fun

Last of all, these movies provide great entertainment that is simply fun. Often films can be too dark, overly sexualized and have an overabundance of crude humor. It is true that Marvel's movies are not perfect, but they overall focus on entertainment that is enjoyable without losing your soul.

For example, in *Thor: The Dark World*, I could not help from laughing at the abundance of great humor that was very clean. I was surprised and did not feel that I traded my soul after leaving the movie theater.

Even in *The Guardians of the Galaxy*, while it did have moments of crude and inappropriate humor, it contained a large number of hilarious sequences that anyone could enjoy. The scene where they are gathered in a circle, deciding what to do next and listening to Peter Quill's “plans,” was a highlight and summarizes well the “simple” humor the movie possessed.

In the end, Marvel Studios is on fire right now and has produced some great movies. Not only are they entertaining and fun, but more importantly they highlight the beauty of sacrifice and showcase true

heroism. In a world where too often we sell our soul at the movie theater, Marvel has shown us that it is possible to make a film that is successful and uplifting. Let us pray that they continue to recognize the source of their success and inspire us with heroes who show what it means to be a hero in this life.

This contribution is available at <http://www.philipkosloski.com/marvel/>
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Caesar, Civilization, Dealing With Change - and Building a Better World [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

After nearly five hundred years, the Roman Republic had grown from a small city-state to a major world power: and it was a mess.

I'm not talking about the chronic SNAFUs perpetrated by America's Congress.

If America's government was like the Roman Republic's, we might see the

[House ways and means](#)

committee lead an armed assault on the Senate: while their assassins took care of a filibuster the hard way. Yes: things could be worse.

Run-ins like the

[Catilinarian Conspiracy](#)

and

[Second Catilinarian conspiracy](#)

made the worst Washington mudslinging seem like a sedate poetry reading.

The Roman Senate finally named one of their members "

[dictator perpetuo](#)

" ("dictator in perpetuity") — hoping that Julius Caesar would solve their problems.

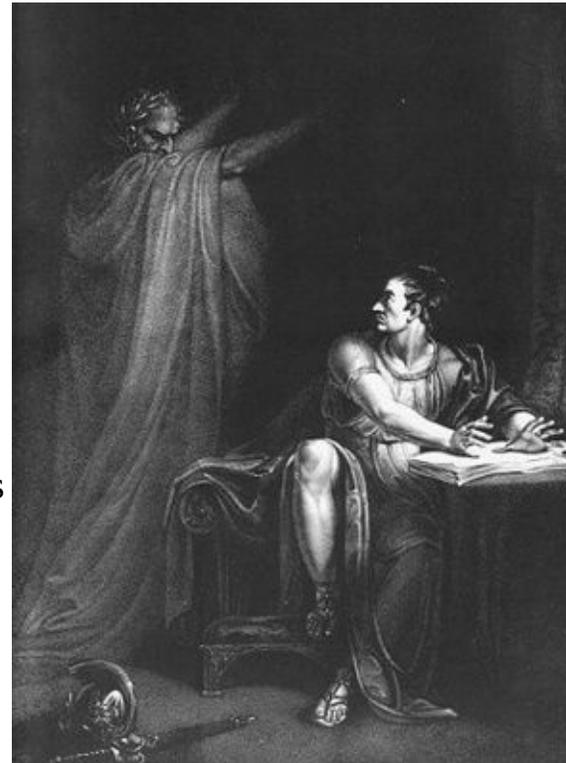
A few Senators got nervous: cutting the term, and Caesar's life, short.

*"...And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords:
Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,
And waving our red weapons o'er our heads,
Let's all cry, 'Peace, freedom, and liberty!'"*

(Brutus, in "[Julius Caesar](#)," Act III, Scene I; William Shakespeare [Hudson edition]; via Project Gutenberg)

That's fiction, of course: based on what happened on the

[Ides of March](#)



, 44 B.C., in Rome.

I'm willing to assume that Gaius Cassius Longinus, Marcus Junius Brutus, and the others involved, thought they were saving the

[Roman Republic](#)

from a tyrant.

The Republic went down anyway.

Julius Caesar's

[assassination](#)

left Rome with the same massive social, political, and economic

[problems](#)

, a Senate that couldn't stop fighting itself; and no effective leadership.

After two decades of civil war, Rome finally got another emperor: and the

[Roman Empire](#)

lasted nearly five centuries: about as long as the Republic.

We can look at the past in quite a few ways.

Poems, Movies, and Slow Progress

Folks in the 19th century often idealized what

[Edgar Allen Poe](#)

called "the glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome."

In movies, the Roman Empire has been shown as an emblem of depravity and excess, a source of order and prosperity, and sometimes little more than a cool setting for the actors.

There's a bit of truth to 'all of the above.' The ancient world, like today's, wasn't all good or all bad.

On the 'down' side, Greece and Rome, along with all the ancient world, practiced slavery. It was a bad idea then, and still is. (Catechism of the Catholic Church,

[2414](#)



)
It took nearly two millennia to convince folks in some parts of the world that owning other people is wrong. I was around when America cleared some of the last vestiges of legalized slavery from our laws: and human trafficking is still an issue here.

It's slow progress: but we

are

making progress. (

[May 6, 2012](#)

)

The Grandeur that was Rome

On the 'up' side, Rome's

[Constitution](#)

,

[Senate](#)

, and

[laws](#)

gave many folks a measure of freedom: and some rights. Slaves were considered property, not people: but under Roman law, a slave could

[buy freedom](#)

; unlike some other systems.

Don't misunderstand me: slavery is a bad idea, and we shouldn't do it. But I think it's prudent to remember how the institution actually worked in different cultures and different times.

Romans were also very good engineers. We're still using some of their roads and aqueducts: partly because they used (what else?)

[Roman numerals](#)

, not the

[Hindu-Arabic numerals](#)

we adopted; partly because they apparently didn't see the point of building structures that weren't *permanent*

If the ancient Romans had known that folks would be driving multi-ton vehicles more than sixty miles an hour: we'd probably be using even more of the old Roman road network, and that's another topic.



(From MM, via Wikimedia Commons, used w/o permission.)

"

The Appian Way (Via Appia), a road connecting the city of Rome to the southern parts of Italy, remains usable even today.

"

(Wikipedia))

Fear, Flappers, and Europe Flambé

This post was going to be about something.

Let's see: Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar;" Edgar Allan Poe; movies; slavery; constitutional law and the Roman Senate. Really durable roads. Right.

After

[World War I](#)

, some folks were more than a bit apprehensive — understandably.



Someone shot

[Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria](#)

in 1914. Assorted diplomats, royals, and politicians stirred national pride and diplomacy into a marinade of old assumptions.

Europe's leaders baked that ragoût in a system of

[interlocking treaties](#)

— and about three months later, you had Europe flambé.

Ironically, the treaties were supposed to prevent a large-scale war: as I recall.

That's an enormous oversimplification, of course.

World War I left quite a few folks with the impression that the world would never be the same again.

*"...Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..."*
("The Second Coming," W. B. Yeats (1919))

They were right, but the situation wasn't quite as bad as it seemed.

It's the End of Civilization as We Know It: And About Time!

Since then, we've survived

[jazz](#)

,

[flappers](#)

, the

[Great Depression](#)

,

[World War II](#)

,

[disco](#)

,

[polyester leisure suits](#)

, and

[Thighmaster](#)

commercials. Europeans killed each other in wholesale lots again, about two decades after the 'war to end all wars:' but have acted in a refreshingly civilized manner since, for the most part.

I don't think the

[European Union](#)

is perfect: but it's better than the mess we had before.

Maybe the Internet will do what the telephone and television didn't: bring humanity to its knees. I don't think so, and that's yet another topic. (

[February 20, 2014](#)

)

Occasionally, I run into someone who seems convinced that it's the end of civilization as we know it: and see that as a bad thing.

I think it's the "

[end of civilization as we know it, and *about time*](#)

," and that's

not

another topic. (

[February 9, 2014](#)

)

If I thought the world couldn't get any better than it was in the 1950s, I'd be terribly upset. As it is, I

remember

the 'good old days,' and they weren't.

I was one of 'those crazy kids' in the late 1960s and 1970s because I was convinced that humans could do better. A lot better.

I wasn't a Catholic at the time, and wasn't your standard-issue hippie,



[peacenik](#)

, or red-white-and-blue-blooded 'regular American.' It's not that I don't like conformity: I'm just not good at it. At all.

I didn't

[become a Catholic](#)

because the Church agreed with me. But after I (grudgingly) joined, I have been learning that what I thought made sense in conservative, liberal, and other, ideologies is what the Church has been teaching for two millennia.

The Code of Hammurabi, Plus 3,700 years: Looking at the Big Picture

"Human nature will not change. In any future great national trial, compared to the men of this, we shall have as weak and as strong, as silly and as wise, as bad and as good."

(Abraham Lincoln, Response to a serenade (November 10, 1864))

"² But man himself begets mischief, as sparks fly upward. "

([Job 5:7](#))

I talked about

[positive law](#)

, human-made rules; and

[natural law](#)

, universal principles;

[Friday](#)

Basically, positive law — the name doesn't mean that it's "positive" in the sense of good, affirmative, or constructive. The term comes from Latin, *ius positum*, and derives from the verb to posit — are human-made laws defining how folks may act, and what rights they have.

Sometimes positive law works. Sometimes it's the 'outmoded morality' some of my contemporaries didn't like. (

[August 29, 2014](#)

)

When positive law works, it's consistent with

[natural law](#)

: universal ethical principles built into the universe.

Positive law changes: and must change, as conditions we live in change. It varies from one culture to another, too. We're not all alike, we're not supposed to be, and that's yet again another topic.

Natural law is the same now as it was when Abram moved out of Ur.

Theft, for example, was wrong then: and will still be wrong when the

[Code of Hammurabi](#)

,

[United Nations Charter](#)

, and whatever comes next, are seen as roughly contemporary. (Catechism,

[1954](#)

-

[1960](#)

,

[2259](#)

-

[2262](#)

,

[2268](#)

-

[2270](#)

)

Part of our job is bringing the positive laws of our cultures closer to natural law. (Catechism,

[1928](#)

-

[1942](#)

)
I don't think we'll have a perfect society two millennia, or ten millennia, from now. But I think we have a reasonable hope of building a better world. We certainly must try.

"...We ... have a mandate to maintain what is true and just in our societies, change what is not, and build a better world for future generations...."
([May 18, 2014](#))

These posts may be better-organized than today's, or maybe not:

This contribution is available at <http://catholiccitizenamerica.blogspot.com/2014/08/caesar-civilization-dealing-with-change.html>
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Holding Hands [at Busy Catholic Moms]

My son just entered 6th grade this fall. Officially a middle schooler now, I've been struggling a little with where the time has gone. I think that he is struggling a little bit too. He still likes to be close to us and sweet, but he also has the very natural desire to fit in with his friends. One place that his struggle has become evident to me is in holding hands. Only a few weeks ago, we all went on a family walk. The girls grabbed their daddy's hands so the boy was stuck walking by his mom. He slipped his hand into mine in a comfortable sweet little boy way and we walked like that for several blocks. Even though he is only about a half foot shy of my height, it's nice to know that on the inside, he still needs his mom. As we walked and talked, we noticed a group of kids around his age playing around in their yard up ahead. He nonchalantly removed his hand from mine and kept walking. I didn't say anything about it, knowing that I was lucky to have an 11-year old who wanted to even be around his mom, let alone hold her hand! After we passed out of the kids' sight, he just as casually slipped his hand back into mine to finish the walk.



Spending that walk with him got me to thinking about how our hand-holding changes through our lives. When we are very young toddlers, just learning to walk, we have to hold on to parent's hand in order to stay upright. We stay close to that mommy or daddy with our little fists wrapped around their one big finger, trying to take those first steps. Eventually, we do let go and toddle off on our own, but our parents are never far away even if we are not holding their hands. As we become big preschoolers, we don't need hands to help us walk, but we do need hands to help us – keep us safe as we cross the streets, guide us to where we are supposed to go, pull us back from danger. Then as we get a little bit bigger into school ages, we don't always have to hold our parents' hands, but it's nice to slip our little hands into bigger ones to feel that love and security that can come from just an affectionate squeeze.

Then come the teenage years where we wouldn't be caught dead holding our parents' hands, but we are more open to holding the hands of others – a boyfriend or girlfriend let's say. So now, we are holding hands to express new feelings of affection, rather than those secure feelings of love from home. In married life, we hold hands to give one another support, remind each other of our love, and bring us closer together. As parents, we reach for our children to do the guiding and protecting.



Over the course of our marriages, the hand-holding may not be as frequent as it was at the beginning of an exciting new relationship, but it's not always holding hands but always having a hand to hold that really matters. And near the end of our lives, we hold hands as old, beloved forever friends, knowing that one squeeze can recall years of loving marriages, parental acts of sacrifice and joyful times.

I noticed too how the evolution of our hand-holding through our lives also reflects our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

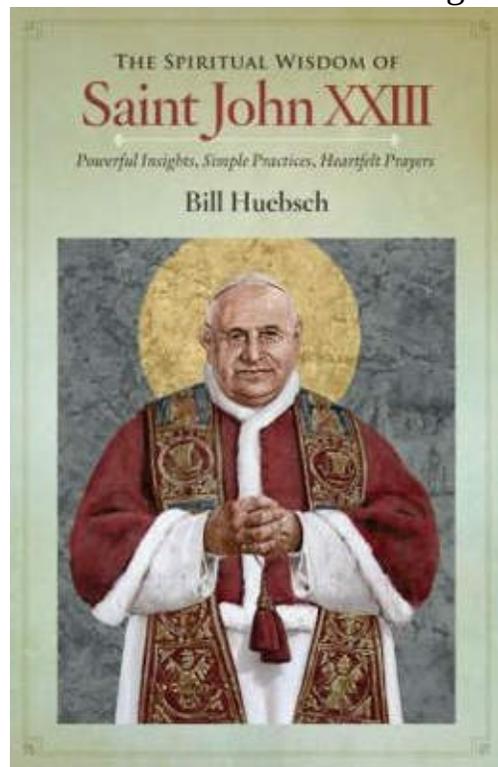
Some times in our lives cause us to hold on tight to God as we step through life with wary, wavering steps, afraid of losing our grip. We step out, depending on God to catch us if we stumble or miss a step. Other times in our lives, we think we can make it on our own and that we don't need His help. We take off through life, but He lovingly and patiently grasps our hands, guiding us past dangers and leading us down His paths. During comfortable, happy times, we can feel that we are doing the Father's will but it's nice to slip our hands into His to get an affectionate squeeze of affirmation. We have times in our lives when our spiritual life seems to be created anew, reaching greater depths of God's love for us. In those times, slipping our hands into His can be like holding hands with a new love, full of excitement and delight. And those times can turn into hand-holding through a deeper, more intimate relationship with God, knowing that we too must then use our hands to reach out to help others.

I pray that at the end of my life, when I slip my hand into the Lord's, one loving squeeze will fill me with all of the memories of our hand-holdings through the years and all graces He has blessed me with throughout my lifetime.



Walking with Pope St. John XXIII - Lord, May Your Will be Done [at Annie Go Lightly]

The Will of God, for me, is to do His work. We are each called whether in great ways or small, to do His Will. Even Jesus acknowledged that he was sent to do the Father's Will, not just his own (John 6:30)



To follow His Will is to love. How imperfect our love and actions are when we stumble in our efforts. But, we are human; how could we not stumble? Fear, the great weapon of Satan, is always there waiting to block our efforts to serve. Prayer, only prayer and communion with He who loves us without restriction can help us to overcome and defeat Fear.

When we feed on the food of God (John 4:34) we consume the food which is His Love and Will. Our work, however small, is complete and completed when we do the work in God's name.

A recent viewing of the movie "Of Gods and Men" is the perfect illustration of men called to serve in a way that might end in their deaths. They struggled with their personal fears privately, with each other, and they prayed, at times desperately. They had no way of knowing their fate but they suspected and then accepted the Will of God. With acceptance came peace. They trusted in His love to sustain them as they continued to obey His Will and serve.

Not all of us will be called to martyrdom but each act of service teaches us more of love and God's Will for us. And, we are strengthened. With this strength, we are enabled to follow in Jesus' footsteps to the knee of God, the Father of us all.

In the words of John XXIII, from his diary in 1947, we read, ". . . liv(ing) in continual obedience gives me courage and dispels my fears".

Dear Father,

Help me to greet each day without fear and with the expectation that you will show me opportunities to serve others in your name. Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://annieelf2012.wordpress.com/2014/08/28/walking-with-pope-st-john-xxiii-lord-may-your-will-be-done/>

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Total Consecration to Mary [at Semper Discipulo]



Total consecration to Mary is one of those things that many Christians, including some Catholics, are confused about. But for me personally, this is one of the things that has made all of the difference in my life. Consecrating ourselves completely to Mary brings us closer to her Son, Jesus. Consecrating ourselves completely to Mary increases in our lives the graces of contrition, repentance, holiness, and love. Consecrating ourselves completely to Mary leads us more surely to eternal life. But what is total consecration to Mary? Below are some of the most common questions and answers on this issue that I would like to share.

What is total consecration to Mary?

The word "consecrate" means to be set aside for sacred use. In consecrating ourselves completely to Mary we are setting ourselves completely aside for Mary's use. We are entrusting our prayers, our thoughts, our emotions, our bodies, our gifts, our everything, to Mary's care and love, and promising to obey her in all things.

Doesn't this take away from our consecration to Jesus at our baptism?

Not at all. In fact, it does the opposite. It enhances and strengthens our consecration to to Jesus. You see, committing oneself to someone or something else does not take away from a Christian's commitment to Christ. For exmple, does the commitment that a Christain husband or wife make to their spouse take away from their commitment to Christ? Not at all. Does the commitment and oath that a Christian soldier in the United States military makes to obey their superiors take away from their commitment to Christ? Not at all. In the same way, commiting and consecrating ourselves to Mary does not take away from one's commitment to Christ.

St. Pope John Paul II, who had consecrated himself completely to Mary, once said, "From Mary we learn to surrender to God's Will in all things. From Mary we learn to trust even when all hope seems gone. From Mary we learn to love Christ her Son and the Son of God!" St. Pope John Paul II had discovered, as does all who give themselves totally to Mary, that consecration to Mary automatically leads one to a deeper faith and love of Christ. Our commitment to Christ does not in any way suffer when we consecrate ourselves completely to Mary. Instead, it is enhanced and becomes stronger because of it.

Does one have to totally consecrate themselves to Mary?

No, no one is required to consecrate themselves completely to Mary. But my question is, with all of the spiritual benefits of doing so, why would one NOT want to do it?

How does one consecrate themselves to Mary?

There are numerous ways and methods to consecrate oneself to Mary. The two most well-known ways were promoted by St. Louis de Montfort (which includes a 33-day preparation period) and St. Maximilian Kolbe (which is a 9-day preparation period). But no matter what method or way that you choose, all that is absolutely necessary is the intent of your will to give yourself to completely to Mary. That, in reality, is enough.

What do I do after consecrating myself to Mary?

Once you have consecrated yourself completely to Mary, you should develop a personal devotion to her. There are many devotions to Mary out there, but the important thing is to spend time with her each day, take your every need to her so she can pray for you, and get to know her as your spiritual Mother and Queen. The more time you spend with Mary, and entrust yourself to her, the more you will come to love her, but more importantly, the more you will come to love her Son, Jesus.

"The Immaculate alone has from God the promise of victory over Satan. She seeks souls that will consecrate themselves entirely to her, that will become in her hands forceful instruments for the defeat of Satan and the spread of God's kingdom."

~Saint Maximilian Kolbe~

God's Band-Aids [at Blogging For A Better Life]

Not so long ago, I was in dire need of a Band-Aid.



It happened while I was attempting to speed walk.

In my haste of trying to burn calories in a short time frame, and not paying attention to the uneven sidewalks I was traveling on, I literally tripped over my own two feet, landing on my knees.

The concrete did not give. I went through two boxes of Band-Aids, and have the scars to prove it.

Although the Band-Aids helped, I'm pretty sure my knees will be scarred for life.

The gentle way my husband cleaned, and nursed my sore, bleeding knees brought comfort alongside the pain I was experiencing.

I'm ok. I've learned to slow down; watch where I'm going, and I've learned how a little TLC goes a long way.

When someone you love dies, it hurts deep in your heart; it can hurt so much it feels like your heart is bleeding and won't ever stop.

Then someone enters your life and they become a much-needed Band-Aid. They will never be a replica of

your beloved, deceased spouse, or mother, or brother, or friend, but they can bring some TLC back into your life.

Are they the Band-Aids God uses to help us when we can't stop hurting?

God's Band-Aids bring comfort where sorrow has been growing; they can provide friendship and love in times of deep sadness.

They come to us, maybe by chance, or through a mutual acquaintance, ready to help us mend our shattered, broken heart.

I'm not sure if I've ever been a Band-Aid, but I know quite a few beautiful souls who have become much-needed Band-Aids to me and others.

I know they are sent from God simply because they don't try to cover up the holes in our hearts. They never try to take over the place in our hearts reserved for those we are mourning for.

They fill a void for sure, and help ease the pain, and continually encourage us to carry within our hearts the cherished memories we have for our loved ones who have died before us.

God's Band-Aids come when least expected, and most needed.

This contribution is available at <http://blogforabetterlife.blogspot.com/2014/08/gods-band-aids.html>
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The Golden Hail Mary [at Veils and Vocations]

I once had a prayer card with a beautiful poem entitled "The Golden Hail Mary." After many years and several moves, I can no longer locate it, but I always remember reading it over and over some days. I have searched high and low for that poem online and have not been able to find it again. The gist of the message was though, that a simple Hail Mary said in haste is worth more than many other

prayers repeated at length.

The Hail Mary is a

perfect

prayer, it not only calls upon the Blessed Mother's intercession but extols her Holy Son to his proper place of being within the middle of every act of worship.

Hail Mary, Full of Grace

The LORD is with thee

Blessed are thou among women,

and blessed is the fruit of thy womb

Jesus

Holy Mary, Mother of God

Pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death. Amen

The name of Jesus, that is above all names, that is the source of all strength and peace, within which when two or more gather, God is present; is the very center of this prayer. It is not a worship of Mary but an acknowledgement of her holiness because she was chosen to carry the Savior, the Messiah, the Christ, the Great I AM. Mary is our garden path to the treasure of Heaven, our stepping stool to the heights of the Holy, Holy, Holy. Christ is our Redeemer, but without Mary, our salvation would not be. We know little of Mary's life apart from her carrying, delivering, and rearing the LORD on earth. She is a constant throughout His earthly journey and ministry and there at His last moments on the cross. However, consider that she may have been an accomplished baker or sought after seamstress. She may have earned accolades through the community for her sweet singing voice or creative mind. There are many facets of her life that may have been, yet we know little of them. Why? Because her entire being is wrapped up in

the fulfillment of prophesy and salvation. It is not important what else she did, because she did the greatest of all acts by fully giving herself over to God for his express plan and purpose. As St Catherine of Siena said, "Be who you were created to be and you will set the world afire." At her Fiat, her autonomy ceased, and her servitude began. However, it was not a slavery of drudgery but of joy. She became the living Tabernacle and through her tenderness Christ learned to love His Bride, the Church.

In this prayer, the Name of Christ is placed directly between the biblical passages that compose the first half and the catechetical affirmation of her true identity, mother of God. In that exact position is where Christ lives, between biblical prophecy and the tradition and growth of the Church. He is the connection between the God of the old covenant and the two millennia of the Catholic Church, the hierarchy and laity, the past and the future, the Church at rest and the Church militant.

In these days of persecution when we feel evil and darkness all around, many may be searching for the prayer that will land sweetly on the Father's Ear. The Hail Mary is that prayer. She is our mother, eager to soothe and console her broken children, but she is also the mother of God and who could love Christ more than her, other than the great God of love that passes all understanding. In this persecution it is not just believers that are being broken, but her precious Son, Himself. In hating Christians, Christ is being defiled. Mary is the mother of the Son, Spouse of the Spirit and Handmaid of the Father. She is the most intimate of saints to the Heavenly Trinity.

There have been reports of the Marian statue in St Joseph's Church in Iraq weeping tears of oil that turn to blood. This is not a substantiated claim and there are plenty of cynics, but you can bet that Mary is weeping even if her statue isn't. She is crying for the mothers who have watched their children die, for the children lost and longing for their mothers, for those who are huddled scared of terror coming for them in orders to kill the followers of Christ, for those who have fled to an unknown land to try to protect their family with nothing but the clothes on their backs. She has been all of these people, she knows the pain of torment and torture, of being a refuge, of being hated and hunted.

Let us all turn to our Mother and beg her intercession and request her gently caring upon all who mourn and weep. May St Michael defend us and Our Lady of Victory pray for us!

No greater pain [at A blessed mess]

It took months, moments and confusion to realize.

T

here is no greater pain imaginable than seeing someone you love suffer.

There I said it and I can barely believe how true it really is. Having suffered from things like anxiety and the darkness of depression I thought I knew pain. I really did.

Only seeing people I love suffer I have realized that my personal pain is nothing compared to seeing someone I love suffer.

It is hard, it is messy, it is tough and sometimes you almost hate it. Because it hurts so much.

Only within it all there is the greatest gift you could ever receive.

That of sharing in and knowing a little bit of the pain of our Heavenly Father. As well as our Mother Mary.

After all God the Father let his son die. A horrible death and I think that hurt Him even more than it hurt Jesus.

That sword that pierced Mary's heart, that was the pain of seeing her beloved son suffer.

Moreover we are also beloved sons and daughters of God! When we suffer he feels our pain more

deeply than we can imagine.

There is no greater pain but there is also no greater joy than to share in the suffering of God our Father.

He knows our pain. He feels our pain and he holds us gently in his arms to carry us through it all.

This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.com/2014/09/no-greater-pain.html>
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Fearless Love Has a Price [at Small Paul]

As Christ's continues to take over my behavior change my desires, I am becoming aware of a problem that He has had with me. For most of my life I have not fully accepted God's love and all of God's gifts. I felt that I didn't deserve them or for some reason I should not be allowed to be loved that much with a disproportionate amount of reciprocation. God gives us everything and wants nothing in return. He has helped me overcome my own dysfunctions so that I might feel His love better.

He is now unleashing His, and my, love for others. He has helped me overcome my fear of what would happen if I really expressed my love for others. For example: I have made a few new friends in the past two weeks and I have made it clear to them that so long as their request is not an ethical or immoral, then my answer is yes before they even asked. This is real. In the past I would be afraid of getting burned. Now I just don't care because I trust God. I will help them move, babysit their kids, help them with yard work, give them advise etc.

My new friends, and a lot of my old friends, simply don't know how to take this. I suspect they wonder what my angle is or what I want in return. I don't push advice or show up at their door to help them. I am waiting for them to ask. Isn't this what God does to all of us.

I can't count the number of times where I have been aware of his gifts (such as confession, advice, a friend to help me do a physical task, the ability to forgive and let go etc.) and simply not asked Him to help me. He does not push. He simply waits. I think the only reason that He reminds me of the fact that He is waiting for me to ask for help is because He knows I love him. I have laid out my willingness to help my friends in any way and made it clear to them that I want nothing in return. Now I wait. This sucks! I get joy out of helping people. Like Christ I am aware of their dignity, so I do not push my will on them. Simply put, I can't make someone let me do them a favor.

People have not changed that much from the time of Christ.

I take comfort in the fact that no one will ever stop me from praying for them and submitting my will to God for their benefit.

The Sexual Epidemic [at Catholic Girl Problems]

A few blog posts ago, I was chastised for “giving myself to other men.”

The anonymous commenter declared no decent, Catholic man would ever want such a one as me – soiled, defiled, not pure – which is fine. I have long since confessed my sin to the only man I truly love and need – Jesus Christ – and should I spend my entire existence shunned by “decent, Catholic men,” I will remain at peace, for I know I am loved by Love. Nevertheless, the elephant remains in the room.

I am not a virgin.

Growing up without a father, I spent my years searching for male approval and acceptance. As a little girl, I would taunt my crushes with unwanted attention, unable to understand why little Benjamin wiped my kiss off his cheek as though I infected him with the Bubonic Plague. As a teenager, I began to understand the power the female body possesses over the opposite sex, so I began to exercise such power. My dress became more promiscuous (or as promiscuous as I could sneak past my mother), and with my dress, my behavior.

Unlike little Benjamin, however, I discovered teenage boys were far more receptive to my advances. I gave, and what I gave was readily taken. The only problem, however, was I received nothing in return. My body – and with my body, my love – was consumed like a Big Mac...a few generous bites of delicious satisfaction, to be quickly digested and long forgotten. When one boy was rid of me, I tended to my broken heart with another boy, hoping he would be different and love me.

He never was nor did.

Thus I entered a vicious cycle – seduction, sex, rejection – which would last well throughout my twenties, and all for one purpose...to find love. With every rejection, I became more and more convinced I was hideous and unlovable. Men took pieces of me until there was nothing remaining to take, and worse, with my permission. Before long, I became empty. The devil was working overtime on me, and he chose my sexuality as his main weapon.

When a woman is raped, she seldom goes to the police. Although she is the victim, not the perpetrator, she nevertheless feels shame. The offense to her body leaves a scar upon her spirit, and she wouldn't dare

reveal the scar to others. Her human dignity becomes reduced to a dish rag – filthy and torn from use – and the dishonor prevents her from speaking out. Better to endure the pain in silence, like a bullet which will never be dislodged.

I know, because I carry the bullet.

The night he raped me, however, was the best night of my life. Yes, you read me correctly. I changed after his attack – my ways, my company, what was important to me. The first year after his attack, I became isolated. The people I once considered friends took his side and rejected me, which was fine. I had no desire to socialize – only to lock myself behind the safety of my apartment with my dog and my shameful secret. I was stuck and alone – like a prisoner with no purpose because she has no future – accompanied only by silence...

Until He broke in.

A voice within my heart said, “*You should go to Church.*”

The rest (as they say) is history.

The Greeks have two words for love – *eros* and *agape*. The former means to *take* love, while the latter means to *give* love. Healthy relationships rely upon cooperation between the two loves – a continuous cycle of give-and-take which ensures both persons are happy and solidifies the partnership. Should one person only give while the other only takes, the relationship will fracture and ultimately fail. Such are the limits of human love.

God’s love, on the other hand, has no limits, as He demonstrated upon the Cross. Agape was nailed to the wood, while eros stood beneath and received. Christ emptied Himself of blood and water for the sake of His beloved, and His beloved reaped the rewards of salvation. The scene at Golgotha was the only point in history when love was given without being returned, and the relationship grew stronger, not weaker.

The Crucifixion shows us love in the flesh – sacrificial, humble, and even painful.



I am too young to remember the Sexual Revolution, but I am not naïve. I see the movement's effects on today's culture, and I am overwhelmed. We have omitted agape from the formula, reduced love to nothing but eros – feel good, take more, and be merry. Never mind sacrifice or commitment. Want sex without a baby? Use contraception. Contraception fail? Your body belongs to you, not God, and the baby inside you doesn't belong to Him either, so have an abortion. Sleep around and create broken families, because your pleasure is most important.

A co-worker offered to fix me up with her friend, and I accepted the challenge. She showed me some pictures of him, and he was cute. She assured me of his character – kind, hard-working, funny and all the other qualities one seeks in a mate. Girl talk ensued, and I asked her if he had any children.

“Oh,” she looked somewhat horrified. *“If you want kids, he's not the guy for you.”*

My mind swirled, and I wondered how she could forget to omit such an important nugget of information. To her, I suppose, love without commitment is a norm. I, on the other hand, wondered what the point is. To have a fling, a good time? I can have a good time gardening, baking, or watching a movie.

“So he doesn't want kids?” I prompted her.

“No,” she continued. “*In fact, he got a vasectomy just to make sure.*”

My head nearly exploded.

I found myself disgusted, appalled, and certainly no longer interested in her friend. The moment she confessed he didn't want kids, I knew he wasn't the guy for me, yet I continued to ponder the drastic measure he took. Why would a healthy man – 35 years of age – castrate himself? I heard of condoms, “pulling out,” and other measures against reproduction, but to kill the most vital part of you – with complete abandon – was too much for me to wrap my head around.

I was obsessed with how revolted I felt, and after much contemplation, I think I know why. I was not revolted by the fact he didn't want kids, because a lot of people don't want kids. Rather, I was revolted by the fact he wanted as much sex as possible with the surety of never reproducing. How much sex does he have, anyway? Certainly not enough to require such a permanent form of birth control, but my gut told me otherwise. The vasectomy was an “insurance policy” against fatherhood, much like State Farm is an insurance policy against car accidents.

You don't need insurance if you don't drive a lot.

I mentioned the rape not for sympathy, but rather, to illustrate a point. One cannot separate the soul from sex, for the two are one and the same. Our sexualities are how we are made in God's image and likeness, so we cannot abuse them without spiritual implications. Rape is referred to as “soul murder” for a reason, and we have become a nation of rape victims.

Don't believe me? Consider the countless stories of [young people committing suicide](#) after images of their naked bodies – sexted for the objects of their affections – were circulated and mocked. The deepest desire of the human heart remains love, for the human heart was designed by Love Himself. Christ, through His Crucifixion, demonstrated love's true essence. We must respect our bodies and the bodies of others as sanctuaries for the soul, not props for pleasure.

The Sexual Revolution, it seems, has become the Sexual Epidemic.

Christians still suffer, but with hope in God [at In the Breaking of the Bread]

It is an inescapable reality to both enjoy life and to suffer it. Our very capacity to enjoy makes us capable of suffering to the same degree. As difficult as it is to personally suffer from various conditions and circumstances, It is so very difficult to stand by helplessly as someone we love suffers. I know this from personal experience – it is unavoidable for anyone who loves – how difficult it is when in the face of a loved one in pain all our desire might be to make it better or simply take all the pain away. From our roman catholic and orthodox Christian faith traditions we have come to find four ways to better endure the intense pain of loss and separation, all the more painful when it is compounded by sudden and inexplicable tragedy.

The **first** “way” is common to all Christians. We remember that God so loved us that the Father sent his willing Son to come among us that we might no longer be alone or struggle against such great odds by ourselves. We realize we still have Jesus as our captain, our champion, just a step ahead of us. He braved the worst of what can befall any of us and shows us the way forward. He lifts our gaze up to see our Father and his immeasurable love for us. There is no better comfort than to feel something of that love.

The **second** way is also common to all Christians... it is Jesus Himself. He is the living Word of God – the divine Son – and we can draw great strength and comfort from pondering this Word in the Sacred Scriptures. At times as we ponder and pray over lines from the Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels, Letters, and so on... it is as though He speaks to us, to me, personally.

With this living food our spirit mobilizes our flesh to go on and take a few more steps.... A growing intimacy that the Word brings about within us lifts us up into the living God in ways that words cannot tell, as Saint Paul put it, and though our pain remains, it is slowly absorbed into God. In ways that are unique for each person, our pain can become “glorious” or “radiant” as Jesus’ own wounds have become. That is, we find we are able to experience comfort, hope, confidence of being loved, even hope for the future – while still caught in the pain of our losses – and this simultaneous suffering and unearthly joy becomes life giving to others around us as they too behold what is happening to us and they get caught up in it....

The **third** way is partly common to all Christians and is also Jesus from a different perspective, as still present and active among us and within us. **Baptism** is common to all Christians, a new life, an infusion of divine life in us by the presence and work of the Holy Trinity, that begins to reshape us into children of God. There is a true yet ever mysterious pouring out of the divine life of the Trinity into us and an ongoing presence and action of the divine persons that enables us to progressively experience, think, speak, act, and behave more and more as Jesus did. This too becomes life giving for others to see. We are given much comfort and hope as we see the living God so mysteriously yet so tangibly be present and act within us, lifting us up, slowly transforming us, and also acting for others through us.

What our catholic and orthodox tradition offers us as seven “sacraments” are stable and life giving mysterious encounters with the living God in the person of Jesus. As we stumble in our weak human flesh and fall in our personal sinfulness, we encounter Jesus in a personal way – much as people in the Gospels did – in what we call **Reconciliation**. As we confess our sins before a priest, it is to Jesus that we confess, and through the priest it is Jesus Himself who says to us “Your sins are forgiven you. Go, and sin

no more.” Because much of our grief is pain exacerbated by our sins and often by regrets, experiencing personally Jesus forgiving touch is incredibly healing and comforting.

In our experience of the **Holy Eucharist**, the Bread of Life and Chalice of Salvation are so real, so very much the living Body and Blood of Christ, that we receive nothing less than a “transfusion” of divine life when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion. He takes us by the hand and enables us to more willingly and eagerly give our life for others as He does for us. **Confirmation** strengthens us in our walk of faith much as the Father’s voice did for Jesus, calling Him his beloved Son. When we are sick or injured, the **Anointing of the Sick** brings us the healing touch of Jesus himself... this is how we experience it. The sixth and seventh sacraments or mysterious encounters with the living God are vocational: **Holy Orders** in which Jesus makes for himself deacons, priests, and bishops to pastor his people, and **Marriage** to introduce married couples into a life of Matrimony to experience the mystery of God’s spousal love for his Church, for all of us baptized, as for his Bride. All of these are the third way.

The **fourth** way is about the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, whom in the creed we call “Lord and Giver of life”, and of whom Saint Paul had much to say, the promise of Jesus. We believe it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to perceive the presence and action of the Holy Trinity within us and to cooperate with God for our own good and transformation as well as for the good of others. As we become more familiar with the three divine persons, as they progressively reveal themselves to us personally, it is not that our sufferings in this life are less, if anything our capacity to suffer them is enhanced – our sensibility or sensitivity increasing causes the pain in a way to become more “exquisite” – however, the increasing place of the Holy Trinity within us and our progressively being drawn more deeply into the life and love of the Trinity begins to make our personal suffering pale or diminish in proportion.

Our entire perspective comes to life and changes. Like God, we also become better able to tolerate the pain of others, to see it is their journey that they travel as they must, but we can with peace allow them to go on suffering and walking on, knowing they are not alone, that their God is with them, and that somehow, our willingness to bear some of their pain in some way diminishes the intensity of it for them. They know and sense that God also comforts them through us.

This contribution is available at <http://www.paxcaritas.net/2014/08/christians-still-suffer-but-with-hope-in-god/>
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Canoeing down the Lynches River [at Bethune Catholic]

Update

: We actually took only one picture on this trip as we were too busy working the river. However, here is the picture. It is Nick preparing supper riverside. (Its not that great, taken with my stupid-phone.)



My oldest son, Nick bought a used aluminum canoe this summer. He went 43 miles down the Wateree River with Connor in about 10 hours (overnight trip). He went 45 miles down the Congaree River with Matthew in about the same time. It took Nick and I 8 hours to go 15.5 miles down the Lynches River-and it didn't take so long because I am now an "old man". Basically we encountered 20-25 if not more log jam blockages like the one pictured below (not our picture).



We got on the river at Highway 15 landing at about 6:00 PM on Thursday night. We paddled for about 2 hours and then found a campsite for the night. It is lucky we didn't move on, it was probably the best looking campsite we encountered the entire trip. I hadn't been on a river in almost 30 years, but there are some things you never forget how to do. I manned the back of the canoe and Nick was the lookout. The log jams came immediately. We either had to lift the canoe over, portage, or do gymnastics with the canoe and our bodies to get by these obstacles.

In days gone by, cotton was floated down the Lynches River to Charleston (via the Great Pee). I have to imagine that they must have had river clearing crews keeping the Lynches clear. Nothing like this today. I

wonder how much SCDNR would pay me to go down the Lynches with a chainsaw and cut channels.

So we camped for the night riverside. Nick cooked us a rice, cheese and sausage meal. Very tasty and filling. The student became the teacher. Nick made all the decisions on the trip and made the calls on how to get around the jams. (I did veto one of his ideas once when there was a clearly better option.)

On day two, early out, I saw a head or eyes moving perpendicular to the river. Once we got close, the gator dove to the depths. The river level varied from over 6 feet to less than a foot. Certainly if the river had been 8 inches higher, some of the log jams could have been passed easily. On the other hand, a few would have been more difficult, if not impossible, to navigate under with higher water.

There were times we had to go to the left bank to avoid a tree and then immediately go to the right bank to avoid the next obstacle, in a matter of feet. A few times we went under a log and had to lay flat to get under. Once when we were stuck on a log, Nick was under some branches. He cried "wasp!" and dove into the water. I asked him why he dove out of the boat just because of one wasp. He told me there were many! He had swatted at the wasp right under its nest in the branches and 10 or more attacked him. When I saw the nest (being still in the boat) I told him to drag me out of there!

Earlier we had just gotten around an obstacle where the current was pretty strong and we got slammed into another jam. It knocked me right out of the canoe, with Nick to follow. The canoe filled with water. We managed to get the canoe over to a small sand bar in the middle of the river and empty the water. It was actually refreshing. In fact the most boring part of the trip was toward the end when we actually had some 15 minute stretches with no obstacles.

By the time we hit the boat landing at 401, my back and bad shoulder were on the way out-me being an old man.

The whole time on the river we only saw 1 other person-a man by the river bank-probably on his own property. We saw (and in fact followed down the river) 4 of what appeared to be snowy egrets. Nick saw a bald eagle, but I missed it. No snakes, no wild boar, and just the one gator-and oh yes, wasps!

I am so glad Nick bought this canoe. The trip was fun and very challenging-a great way to end Nick's summer as he goes back to Wyoming Catholic next week.

Oremus pro invicem!

This contribution is available at <http://www.bethunecatholic.blogspot.com/2014/08/canoeing-down-lynches-river.html>
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On September 11: The Reason for Our Hope, Mychal, and the Priesthood [at Catholic How]



By Matthew Janeczko, OFM Cap.

One of the regular attendees at the 6:45 mass mentioned to me yesterday that she didn't envy me. "Why?" I asked. "Because you need to preach tomorrow. It's 9/11." And yet, there is no place I think I could be otherwise than at the altar, at the ambo, immersed in God's Word, sharing God's Table with the always faithful People of God.

The only way the tragedies of our world can possibly be endured (for they will never make sense: of this I am certain) is precisely because we gather around the Word and Sacrament each day in defiance of the powers and principalities that wish God didn't care about the world, about the flesh.

All of the horrific instances in our world, from those of the largest scale, wretched men turning transportation into flying weapons of terror, to those experienced every day, the unwanted child, the abused mother, the jobless and despondent father (and every combination therein), do not receive their meaning from the Cross. Rather, our response to them – all of these damnable marks of a broken world – finds its origin in the Christ and His Cross. For within our worship of the Crucified God, we find our only source of strength, our sole means of our endurance, and the single most illogical reason for our continued hope:

It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:34)

—
And so, idiosyncratically, narrowly, what in the word does this mean for me, a priest?

I read something that Jorge Mario Bergoglio wrote last night and it perhaps gave me the answer to this question:

I don't think the hands of a priest should simply go through the routine gestures when baptizing; rather, they should tremble with emotion because at that moment he is performing decisive gestures

that become a foundation.*

The job of the priest, it seems to me, is to tremble with emotion when with the people: whether it be in the sacraments, in a simple conversation, in counseling the despondent – anything at all. Priests must continue to tremble because they find themselves situated within the greatest web of grace: a conduit (unworthy as they are) between the Crucified God and the Crucified People.

On this day, this anniversary that I wish didn't happen, this remembrance that is marks the beginning of a state of war that is, quite plainly, the only life my high school students have known, I remember that I'm a conduit of the grace of God. I think of men I didn't know, but wish I knew, like Father Mychal Judge, OFM, the priest they call the Saint of 9/11 (and a saint before that even) precisely because he himself knew the Crucified God so well and couldn't stop himself from being Crucified with his firefighters, with his parishioners, with women and men who believed themselves forgotten by the Church, and who died, not raised up, but buried.

And yet then, as now, from being buried beneath the rubble, he is raised upon the Cross, still crucified, but raised no more to die: a servant who lived with his people and died with them.

Mychal Judge, pray for us. Pray for me.

—

* *Open Mind, Faithful Heart, "Joy and Perseverance, 20-1.*

This contribution is available at <http://catholichow.wordpress.com/2014/09/11/on-september-11-the-reason-for-our-hope-mychal-and-the-priesthood/>
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Baby Days [at Raising Angels]

Babies – oh how sweet they are. They are cuddly and squishy and funny and loveable in so many ways. That’s how they look from the outside. That’s how the outside sees them.

Babies are also demanding and exhausting and challenging. That’s how we see them. The we, that is, who are in charge of their feeding and changing and care.

God makes them cute so we don’t kill them. Seriously. And interestingly enough, He endears them to us so that as they grow out of that innocent cuteness, they grow into a kind of beautiful maturity. This saves the older ones from extinction as well.

I recently read something a mother wrote about how she understood how a mom could shake her baby. I thought, finally, someone is speaking the truth. Then I read the hundreds of scathing comments about how dare she.

I have held screaming babies in the middle of the night and thought the same thing. Therefore but by the grace of God go I.

Now before you begin firing off your “how dare you” comments to me, understand that I am not saying that it is in anyway okay, under any circumstance, to shake your baby. I am saying, however, that I’ve been in that moment of sleep deprived desperation where I’ve had to put that screaming baby back in the crib and take a breath for a moment or two.

I’m not proud of it.

The combination of raging hormones, a recovering body, long-term sleep deprivation, and a screaming ten-pound kid can make you crazy.

Somehow, in the light of day, I stare at that same kid the very next morning and think how amazing this tiny

human is. I gush over the cuteness (See? Saved.).

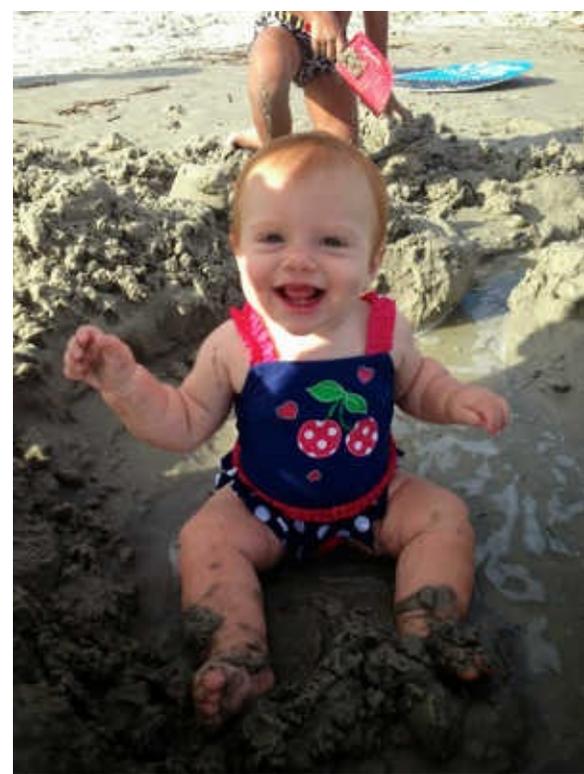


God brings me to the edge and then lets me step into His hands.

This has been a long, hard season preceded by a long, hard pregnancy. This baby has brought me to my knees crying out to God on many, many nights. It's been so bad that I've wept in front of people other than my mom and husband. It's been obvious enough that a few of my friends offered to take the baby and all the kids so I could get away (that's when I kind of knew that I was not holding up the façade as well as I hoped).

I don't write this for sympathy. I'm okay – really I am. I write this for all you moms out there. Especially for the moms of many, the moms who had babies in their “later” years, the moms who have big gaps between their babies.

If you follow me on Instagram or are friends with me on Facebook, what you've seen is the sweetest, happiest baby on the planet. My goodness, the rolls, dimples, AND red hair – total strangers stop me to gush. I post the good pictures for goodness sakes.



What I need you to know is that those first six to seven months were some of the hardest of my life. I went to more doctor's appointments than I care to remember because she was so fussy, I just knew there had to be something wrong, only to leave the office disappointed that she was perfectly healthy. Don't get me wrong, I'm very grateful for a healthy child, she was just so incredibly fussy that I didn't want to admit that there might be nothing wrong and I simply had a baby who cried...a lot...for no apparent reason.

Somewhere along the way, I realized that I set myself up for disaster.

I had an unexpected pregnancy. I felt that would be rewarded with a dream pregnancy. It was anything but.

I had the worst of my five pregnancies. I kid you not when I say, if it could go wrong it did. I suffered the entire time. I thought because of this suffering, I would have the perfect, peaceful baby as a reward. Not so.

I complain about this current generation's entitlement disease and yet, I have the same attitude with God. I deserve an easy pregnancy. I deserve an angel baby.

Goodness gracious, thank God He doesn't give me what I truly deserve.

God didn't promise me a rose garden. This is not the end. This is the means to our end, whatever that end may be. Some days I wonder if "raising angels" is going to get me to Heaven or send me to Hell. Depends on the day. The point is that this world is not Heaven. It's not perfect. It's meant to be a trial to help us get there.

I know all these things. I've known them all my life. I knew them that glorious moment I became a mother for the first time just like I knew them as I held this screaming baby for months. Don't think I haven't asked God...begged Him in fact, to show me what I'm supposed to be learning from all of this. Don't think for one moment I haven't consistently asked Him to let this cup pass me by. I have...many...many...many times.

The writing is not on the wall. I've heard no trumpets, seen no flashes of light. I have no idea what the point is – yet. But today, as I put Felicity down for her nap, and she looked at me, rolled over, grabbed her elephant, and went to sleep, I stared in disbelief. I was absolutely overwhelmed with gratefulness for this incredible gift. I felt blessed beyond measure to have the opportunity to be given this wonderful responsibility. This baby is mine, part of me. I stood there, stroked her chubby cheek and thanked God once again for allowing me to share in His creation.



Felicity turned eight months old on the 18

of July. Sometime, over the last two months, she has changed. Her eczema has disappeared. Her reflux is under control. Her sleeping has finally become peaceful. Those smiling pictures are now a reflection of who she is rather than glimpses of who I hope she'll be. When I realized this, I also realized that those last six or seven months are quickly fading away. I am telling people what a good baby she is instead of convincing myself I won't jinx it if I say she's had a good day.

But before that happened, I wanted to share it with you in hopes that this will help other mothers out there. I want you to know that I never, for one second, stopped loving Felicity. However, there were moments, even days, when I didn't like her very much at all. And perhaps, I love her even more because I had to work so hard at it in the beginning.

You are not alone. You are not crazy. You will get through this. You will be better for it. You are a mother. You are amazing.

And that sweet little one of yours, he or she is amazing too!

This contribution is available at <http://raisingangels.blogspot.com/2014/08/baby-days.html>
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Thy Will Be Done! [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]



Thy Will Be Done!

[As He was praying in Gethsemane Jesus told His Disciples...] “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”. Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, “My Father, if this [cup] cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done.” And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. (Matt. 26:41-42)

My Fellow Pilgrims in Christ Jesus,

Like the disciples, our flesh is weak and sometimes our eyes get heavy especially when we are praying to discern God’s will for our lives. It is certainly a challenge of faith.

There are certain faith challenges that all Christians face regardless of our tradition or denomination. The most basic of these is discerning and obeying the Will of God in our lives. Not just God’s “declared moral will” and precepts as promulgated in the Word of God, but God’s specific will for each of us individually.

In order to proceed further we should all be aware that there are three aspects of the Will of God that need to be understood: 1) His Sovereign or Hidden Will, 2) His Perceptive or Declared Will, and, 3) His Permissive or Perfect Will.

Regarding the first aspect, the Lord has told us that “... My ways are not your ways , nor your thoughts My thoughts”. Unless the Lord reveals certain aspects of His Sovereign Will, it is hidden from us. This expression of God’s will is what God has decreed to happen in His creation regardless of what we or any created being may think, and is assured to happen as decreed. We humans can only view His Sovereign will in retrospect and, then, only when He reveals it to us.

His Perceptive or Declared Will, on the contrary, does not always occur and sometimes appears to

diverge from His Sovereign Will. We are not responsible to fulfill God's sovereign decree. But we are responsible to obey His declared or revealed will, which is plainly laid out for us in Scripture. This expression of His Will that is revealed is called "His Perceptive Will" or His "Declared Will" and, it is binding for us who believe, in context with its conditions and qualifiers as found in scripture'. This is the second aspect of God's Will. It is this Will, which requires compliance from every member of a Christian community, and is the basic foundation for Judaeo-Christian moral and community precepts.

The third aspect of God's will that we see in the Bible is God's Permissive or Perfect Will. This aspect of God's Will is more oriented to that obedience to His will which gives God pleasure. It is also called God's Perfect Will because it is intended to bring forth the perfection of in those who respond to His Loving intent. In that sense, it results in what pleases God the Most. It is NOT, what some may think, as a permission to sin. No it is merely an expression that God has a "perfect" plan for everyone's lives but our circumstances in life do not always permit an easy transition to that "perfect" plan, so through prayer and spiritual counsel the Lord will "permit" a gradual transition to His perfect plan for you – but it will involve a personal struggle which the Lord uses to bring you to the perfection He desires. (see [#The Two Wills of God](#)).

In Summary, here is a reprise of what this discussion may mean to you...

The basic approach of the average Christian man or woman to living out God's will in their lives is to be submissive to His Declared will. That is, to be faithful to God's Word and His Commandments to love God and our neighbor, avoid temptation, attend worship regularly, contribute to your church and community through your sharing of your time, your talents and your treasure. And, that, through obedience to the precepts, you stay within that frame-work, you will be complying with God's moral will for your life.

In general, such an approach will keep you within the bounds of God's Righteousness and permit us to lead a life that reflects the virtues of the life of Jesus that is in us through baptism. What is not usually understood is that keeping the moral Law and the general will of God for Christian society does not necessarily enable us to comply with the Lord's specific or perfect will for each of us personally in this life.

While keeping God's Declared Will may suffice as far as satisfying moral justice, we also need to be motivated by LOVE (agape) and His permissive will as well. That is, to do everything for God and your fellow human beings motivated by Love (agape) and not by coercion or obligation, because that is what is most pleasing to The Father. Sometimes this confronts us with a dilemma between fulfilling God's Declared will and His Perfect or individual will for us, The dilemma we are faced with is how can we fulfill two or more "good" things we are being called to do in order to please His personal will for us.

To do that, we need to have an active personal relationship with Jesus and a Holy-Spirit-empowered awareness to enable us, not only to maintain that relationship through prayer, but also to discern and be obedient to the individual directives the Lord provides us through our interactive relationship with Him. If we do not have this level of spiritual awareness we cannot fully function as disciples, because disciples cannot function properly unless they are able to hear the "Shepherd's" specific voice for us as individuals and obey it (John 10:27)!

We need to understand that the Lord has created each of us not only to live morally and in fellowship in our communities by loving one another and doing good, but that He also has a unique calling and purpose

for each of us to be His partners in bringing forth His Kingdom not only in the community but also in the world at large. This unique calling and purpose is also God's will but it is a "permissive" or "non-coercive will". That is, we are free to accept this type of specific calling without any condemnation or sin. Such is the call to discipleship.

The Lord's reason for this is made clear in scripture; He wants to partner with us in certain missions He has for us as individuals. But in order for us to be His partners as disciples we must freely accept this level of calling with out any coercion or compulsion – we must act out of a pure "agape" or selfless Love so He, through His Holy Spirit can work His purposes in us and through us – not just around us.

The Lord Jesus Himself is our primary model and example. He Gave Himself totally to the Father to the point of sacrificing Himself on the Cross for our sins. At Gethsemane He prayed painfully to that Father that if possible He would take this Cup from Him (Matt.26:36-46) but, in the end, He surrendered Himself to the Father's will and accepted the role that fulfilled the Father's will for Him personally, praying...
"My Father, if this [cup] cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done."

When Jesus was to be baptized by John, and John resisted, He told John that it had to be thus in order that the Father's Righteous Will for Him personally be fulfilled (Matt.3:15). Even at that point in the initiation of His Ministry, He was accepting the initiation into Cup of God's Will for which He had been destined – He was always free during His walk in Ministry to move away from taking the Cup but, because He was free to do so, He gave Himself totally to the Father out of "agape" Love which is the only way His self-sacrifice would have been acceptable before God!

That is why, when Jesus told His disciples what was in store for Him (Matt.16:22-23), Peter said, "***... it shall not be so with you, Lord***", that Jesus replied, "***depart from me Satan***", for instead of helping Him accept the Cup of God's will, Peter was tempting Him to walk away from His calling!

Mary, His mother, was also called into discipleship when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that God's specific will for her was to be the Mother of His Son. Even though she knew her pregnancy would go against the social norms, she accepted her calling by just saying, "***be it done to me according to thy word!***" (Luke1:38)

I could go on to list others who likewise received their calling to God's Perfect Will, such as Joseph, Mary's husband, Peter, Paul, and others who are clearly delineated in God's Word. What is clear is that each of these received an individual calling and each received their calling by denying their own self-will and taking up the "Cup" of the Father's Will for them. In essence, they took up the cross of self-denial so that God's will could be fulfilled in their lives through the Power of the Holy Spirit that dwelt in them! That is what true discipleship entails!



The Way of True Discipleship

“There are very few people who realize what God would make of them if they abandoned themselves into his hands, and let themselves be formed by his grace.” (Saint Ignatius of Loyola)

Now, the Lord is asking you to quiet your hearts and listen to His Voice and see if He is knocking at your door. If He is, then open your heart to Him in prayer and receive Him as your Lord and teacher by deciding to follow Him and Him alone! Then and only Then will His Perfect Will be truly and fully fulfilled in Your Life! Praised Be His Holy Name!

“For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you.

You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart,” (Jer.29:11-13)

...

Your Fellow Pilgrim and Servant In Christ Jesus ... Bartimaeus

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10 words from St. Alphonsus Liguori to the 21st Century on the Assumption of Mary

This Thursday is the Dormition of the Theotokos for the East and Friday is the Assumption of Mary into Heaven for the West. As we celebrate this great Marian Solemnity through [both lungs of the Church](#), I am reminded how important this event is in Salvation History.

The Assumption of Mary (or Dormition) is the natural, or should we say, *supernatural* progression of Her Immaculate Conception. Since Mary is “Full of Grace” and the Ever-Virgin Mother of God, the Assumption is what completes the life of Our Heavenly Queen here on Earth. She now resides in her Heavenly dwelling interceding and praying for us.

Knowing the importance the saints have played in the life of the Catholic Church throughout the centuries, it has always been a goal of this blog to provide you with the lives and words of the saints. Because of his great love for the Blessed Virgin Mary, I give you 10 words from St. Alphonsus Ligouri to the 21st Century on the Assumption of Mary -

1. “But God was pleased that Mary should in all things resemble Jesus; and as the Son died, it was becoming that the Mother should also die; because, moreover, He wished to give the just an example of the precious death prepared for them, He willed that even the most Blessed Virgin should die, but by a sweet and happy death.”
2. “There are three things which render death bitter: attachment to the world, remorse for sins, and the uncertainty of salvation. The death of Mary was entirely free from these causes of bitterness, and was accompanied by three special graces, which rendered it precious and joyful. She died as she had lived, entirely detached from the things of the world; she died in the most perfect peace; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.”
3. “Mary certainly could not be tormented at death by any remorse of conscience, for she was always pure, and always free from the least shade of actual or original sin; so much so, that of her it was said: ‘Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.’”
4. “But what joy must the Divine Mother have felt in receiving the news of her approaching death! She who had the fullest certainty of the possession of Divine grace, especially after the Angel Gabriel had assured her that she was full of it, and that she already possessed God. ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee . . . thou hast found grace.’”



5. “If Mary, then, loved no other good than Jesus, He being in heaven, all her desires were in heaven. Taulerus says, that ‘Heaven was the cell of the heavenly and most Blessed Virgin Mary; for, being there with all her desires and affections, she made it her continual abode.’”
6. It would seem just, that the Church, on this day of the Assumption of Mary into heaven, should invite us to weep rather than to rejoice, since our Mother has left this earth, and we no longer enjoy her presence. As Saint Bernard says, it seems that we should rather weep than exult. But, no, holy Church invites us to rejoice: “Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a feast in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”
7. “Now, behold, Mary leaves the earth, and calling to mind the many graces she had there received from her Lord, she looks on it affectionately. And now Jesus offers her His Hand and the Blessed Mother rises in the air, passes beyond the clouds and arrives at the gates of heaven.”
8. “The glory of Mary, which was full and complete, is different from that which the other saints have in heaven... Mary in heaven desires nothing and has nothing to desire.”
9. “Let us rejoice, then, with Mary in the exalted throne to which God has elevated her in heaven. And let us rejoice also for her own sake, since if our Mother has ceased to be present with us by rising in glory to heaven, she has not ceased to be present with us in her affection.”
10. “And with this love of our Mother Mary, I leave you, my readers, saying to you: Continue joyfully to honor and love this good Lady. Try also to promote the love of her wherever you can; and do not doubt that, if you persevere in true devotion to Mary, even until death, your salvation is assured.”



Let us Pray: As we celebrate these great days in the life of the Church at the end of the week, let us pray for our fellow Christians throughout the Middle East that are suffering and enduring

overwhelming persecutions because they believe that Jesus the Nazorean is the Christ. We ask that the Holy and Immaculate Theotokos continue to pray for them and for all Christians around the world. Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2014/08/11/mondays-with-mary-10-words-from-st-alphonso-liguori-to-the-21st-century-on-the-assumption-of-mary/>
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