

NewEvangelists.org

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New Evangelists Monthly #22

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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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Surrender, a Must [at A Spiritual Journey]

If we, as Christians, do not surrender to God, then we are not going all out, not getting the most out of our discipleship. Basically, we drag our feet in following God, making it impossible for us to love him with all our heart, all our mind, all our strength, and all our soul. And union with him becomes out of reach too. Know that every time you receive Holy Communion, it's the Lord inviting you to surrender to become one with him.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2014/09/surrender-must.html>
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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.

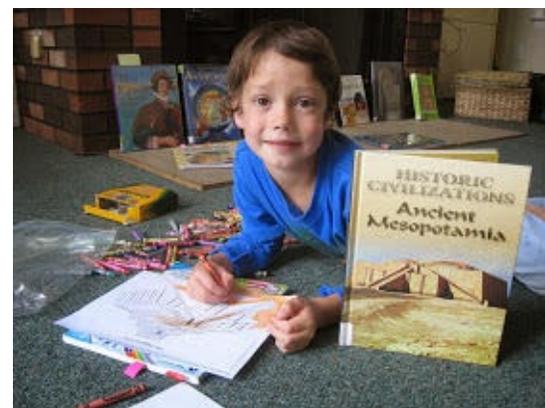
It's not enough, you think. September is creeping, sneaking, approaching. Oh, the schoolroom is set. The books are ordered. The plans are done. The schedules are written. Whether it's your first year or your eleventh, as it is ours, or you're on this journey even longer.....you feel trepidation. You 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 true remnant church cannot condone abortion.



A baby

A recent discussion I was part of on Facebook was about abortion and Adventism.

Adventists claim Catholics break the 10 commandments by not keeping Saturday as a holy day. ([See why that's nonsense here.](#))

Yet Adventism is pro-abortion. Some Adventist hospitals are abortion mills. Some of the most prolific abortionists are Adventist. Edward Allred claims to have performed **more than 250 000 abortions** in 12 years – and was subsequently honoured by La Sierra university, an Adventist university.

How does that work? Is the commandment against murder not one Adventists believe in? Ask them, and they'll say they do.

Adventist: Stop the habit of finding fault where there is none, the same practice of Pharisees who very strict on laws of which they themselves failed to keep.

Huh? No fault? People finding fault with the slaughter of innocents are like the Pharisees??

Adventist: The problem with this argument is that there is no commandment which says “You shall not have abortions,” nor is there one that says abortion is murder. However, the Sabbath commandment is perfectly clear, “REMEMBER the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...” The argument is often used that all abortion is murder, but the Scriptures themselves do not so define it.

Yes, there is a big difference, but it's that abortion causes the death of an innocent human being, and the sabbath is irrelevant. There is no commandment that says we shall not kill one-year olds either. All we need to do to justify that is determine that murder is killing of anyone older than one year. We can define many categories of sub-humans if we so chose, and that is been done many times in history. There are many examples in the Bible that show that in the womb there is life. Even assuming that the sabbath was applicable to Christians, if the deliberate ending of an innocent human life is acceptable under some circumstances, then the same applies to the sabbath.

Is Adventism the remnant?



Adventism claims to be the chosen remnant church, called out of the rest of Christianity, which they consider to be the Whore of Babylon and its daughters.

The identifying sign of the remnant, according to Adventism, is that they keep all 10 commandments.

They don't. Officially, Adventism condones abortion. That means, officially, Adventism cannot be the true remnant they claim to be.

From [their official statement on abortion](#):

Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness. The Church should offer gracious support to those who personally face the decision concerning an abortion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. ...

The Church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church. ... *[But they do for other reasons.]*

These guidelines were approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the Annual Council session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 12, 1992.

The Adventist church does not serve as conscience for individuals?

Abortion – no, it does not.

Sabbath – yes, it does.

Gambling – yes, it does.

Alcohol – yes, it does.

Pork – yes, it does.

Jewelry – yes, it does.

Dancing – yes, it does.

I [showed here that Adventism is based on misinformation](#), and that Adventists promote their religion by misrepresenting other Christians – often deliberately telling lies. I've often asked what value a religion would need to tell lies about other Christians in order to promote itself has. [This Adventist says something similar](#) about Adventism and abortion:

I used to give Bible studies to Catholics. I can no longer do that with a straight face. If I did that today, a Catholic would ask: *“What is worse, worshipping God on the wrong day of the week or*

killing innocent human beings for filthy profit?”

Adventism is not the true remnant church. Based on this alone, it cannot be.

Further reading:

[Adventists and abortion ... this blog](#)

[Facts and Fiction Regarding Adventists and Abortion ... Nic Samojluk](#)

[Investigation into our Adventist involvement with the Abortion Industry ... Nic Samojluk](#)

[Why Adventists Don't Make a Big Deal About Abortion ... Tesa Beem](#)

[SDA General Conference Abortion Decision 1970 -1971 ... Tesa Beem](#)

[Abortion And Its Link With Witchcraft ... Teresa Beem](#)

[La Sierra University's Edward C. Allred Center honors notorious abortionist ... David Read,](#)

ADvindicate

[Seventh-day Adventist University names new economics centre after abortionist ... LifeSite](#)

[Edward "Fast Eddie" Allred ... AbortionDocs.org](#)

This contribution is available at <http://blog.theotokos.co.za/>

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Thirty-first Wedding Festival with Flowers [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

I was sitting in Einstein Bagels one day when a middle-aged couple came in. She was using a walker, looked like she just had back surgery. Her husband followed her anxiously looking to catch her if she fell, and at a word from from her, he followed her to the ladies room, and held the door open. When they came out, I asked how long they had been married. It was only 12 years, but the husband said with joy, "I got the better deal." She disagreed, saying she was the lucky one. Marriage is like fine wine. It just gets better as it ages.

Came home,

lemonless, bereft and without ginger.

The poet was five pounds heavier;

Mattress didn't fit. Time zoned out.

Now the diet.



We went to the grocery store.

You wanted to give me flowers,

but they were withered, wilted, washed

out and totally achromatic

Their survival was problematic

Darling -- already so many blossoms!

like tea twined with cardamom --

wholesome drink of the deity!



When I landed at the airport: Tulips.¹



At home, cleanups galore.

Wild Daisies:² dramatic wood floor burnished to a lustrous gold.

Immaculate laundry: the fresh scent of dignified white Magnolia.³

Lovely purple lilac:⁴ dishes clean, towels folded

Golden Chrysanthemum:⁵ bathrooms gleam



A dusty pink Camellia:⁶ shower curtains no longer green.

Dark mystery of the African Violet:⁷

Weeds, once one hundred fold

Finally, on the rusty red pond of the Marriage Bed



³*White Magnolia: nobility and perseverance.*

⁴*Purple lilac: first emotions of love*

⁵*Golden Chrysanthemum: optimism and joy*

⁶*Camellia: the petals reflect the spirit of a lady, and the holder of the petals (the calyx) represents the man entrusted by the lady as her protector*

⁸*White lotus: Purity, Rebirth*

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2014/09/thirty-first-wedding-festival-with.html>

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Living in Today's Chastisement [at Suffering With Joy]

September 27, 2014



Winged demon, Exterior Relief, Catedral Nueva de Vitoria-Gasteiz. Wikimedia Commons

It seems likely that every demon in hell has been loosed upon this world. How else are we to make sense of the hatred and chaos all around us and the unconscionable suffering of our fellow man but to recognize the hand of the evil one stirring hearts against one another and the Lord? Make no mistake about this; **we are in a major chastisement for the sins of all nations.** Moreover, we delude ourselves if we think we will be spared the consequences of the sins of the world and our own nation just because we are personally doing our best to follow Christ.

A couple of years ago someone asked me where in the Bible does God show us that wars, bad weather, plagues, etc. are His punishment on us. After all, a lot of good people are hurt by these events. I gave the answers in a simple way, not going into much depth, but this past week I read an excellent [post by Rich Maffeo](#) explaining it all, complete with Bible quotes. Please read his commentary because it's quite clear and convincing and then come back here for my thoughts.

No Escape

We gain nothing and garner greater pain by denying what is right in front of our eyes and in our own back yards. The beheading this week, and not a one off case, of an employee at Vaughn Foods in Oklahoma City by a follower of Islam who reportedly shouted the Muslim cry repeatedly as he attacked her is a prime example of the bloodshed coming our way unless we as a nation perform a Nineveh (Book of Jonah) and embrace the Lord. But how likely is that to happen? The murder of innocents is enshrined now not only in Roe vs. Wade, it's in the Obamacare laws, and I'm speaking not only of abortion, but the denial of care to those most in need, especially the elderly, that has and will have the effect of their premature deaths if not outright murder. We could show many more examples of laws and rulings touching our everyday lives that not only produce evil effects materially, but also **violate our freedom to choose God before mammon.**

We are not going to be able to escape these evils any more than most Jews were able to escape Hitler's death camps because the depth and breadth of personal sin results in deathly harm to all. When enough people push an ungodly agenda it inevitably becomes law, and the law is used to justify expanding the sin by force. St. Paul minces no words in Romans 1:28-32 in describing the sins and the fate of those

who persist in them:

And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are disgraceful; Being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity, whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy. **Who, having known the justice of God, did not understand that they who do such things, are worthy of death; and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them.**

What to do

Unfortunately, living in a nation where these evils are now forced upon us shows how personal sin tortures the corporate body of society. So what shall we do, given that we who follow Christ are the *anawim* Zephaniah speaks to in Chapter 2:3? St. John Paul II gives us a hint in his [General Audience of May 23, 2001](#) where he expounds on Psalm 149:

5. There is a second term which we use to define those who pray in the Psalm: they are the *anawim*, “the poor and lowly ones” (v. 4). The expression turns up often in the Psalter. It indicates not just the oppressed, the miserable, the persecuted for justice, but also those who, **with fidelity to the moral teaching of the Alliance with God, are marginalized by those who prefer to use violence, riches and power.** In this light one understands that the category of the “**poor**” is not just a social category but a spiritual choice. It is what the famous first Beatitude means: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). The prophet Zephaniah spoke to the *anawim* as special persons: “Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of wrath of the Lord” (Zep 2:3).

First, we must embrace the suffering that comes from living in a Godless world the same way that Christ embraced His suffering for the sins of the world. Why? Father F. J. Remmler tells us in his book, *Why Must I Suffer?* that

Public and national sins must be expiated in this world for the very simple reason that they cannot be expiated in the next. In the world to come families, cities, provinces and nations will have no continued corporate existence. There, men and women will exist merely as individuals, without being united by those social, civil, political, and national bonds which are necessary in this life for the welfare and preservation of the human race. In eternity, they will individually enjoy the fruits of their life on earth – the good will possess the kingdom of God in Heaven, while the wicked shall suffer for their evil deeds in the unquenchable fire of Hell. But public sins require public expiation, and as this expiation cannot be made in this next life, it is clear that it must be made on this side of the grave....

The sufferings endured by the good have a much greater atoning value than those endured by the wicked. Hence, the more good persons there are to join in making the required atonement, the more quickly will it be made. Besides, God is easily moved, out of consideration for the sufferings of the good, greatly to mitigate His punishments, and sometimes even to cancel them altogether.

Such sufferings afford the good an opportunity of making full atonement for their personal sins. For there is no one so holy and so confirmed in grace that he has not committed some sins, such as

least as are venial. “Even the just man shall fall seven times,” i.e., frequently. But it is an unchanging law that every sin, even the smallest, must be fully expiated either here, or hereafter in Purgatory. But expiation made here is vastly more profitable than that which is made after death.

Second, we must constantly study God’s teaching in the Bible and its truths in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Knowing and accepting God’s truth gives us the power to call out and refute evil. It enables us to speak and live as a good example to others according to our state in life.

Third, we must frequent the sacraments and nurture the grace from them just as the good servant made the talents the Lord gave him grow from five to ten (Matt. 25). The Sacrament of Confirmation strengthens us through the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit to do what we ought and not shrink from necessary controversy.

Fourth, we must prepare ourselves to weather the onslaught through prayer, fasting, and self-denial, performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. If we are to die directly from the evils we face, we must make sure that we are in the state of grace and the confession of Christ is on our lips.

Finally, we must trust in God’s mercy and care for us personally, always seeking to see as God sees and to love others as He loves them. These are the ways that we can bear victoriously the onslaught of evil and join our King for eternity.

Psalm 149

Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle: let His praise be in the church of the saints.

Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: and let the children of Sion be joyful in their king.

Let them praise His name in choir: let them sing to Him with the timbrel and the psaltery.

For the Lord is well pleased with His people: and He will exalt the meek unto salvation.

The saints shall rejoice in glory: they shall be joyful in their beds.

The high praise of God shall be in their mouth: and two-edged swords in their hands:

To execute vengeance upon the nations, chastisements among the people:

To bind their kings with fetters, and their nobles with manacles of iron.

To execute upon them the judgment that is written: this glory is to all His saints. Alleluia.

This contribution is available at <http://www.sufferingwithjoy.com/2014/09/27/living-in-todays-chastisement/>
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[Ellen Kolb](#) September 11, 2014

Day of Remembrance for the Unborn [at Leaven For The Loaf]



“Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Mount Calvary Cemetery, Manchester NH

Several national pro-life groups have set aside a day of remembrance each year for children lost to abortion. This year, it’s Saturday, September 13. In Manchester, New Hampshire, there will be a service at Mount Calvary Cemetery’s monument to the unborn shortly after 9 a.m. Mass. (More information on [Mount Calvary’s Facebook page](#).)

Some churches in my area, including my own, have a small monument or marker on church property in remembrance of children who die before birth, not just from abortion but also from stillbirth or miscarriage. The monument at Mount Calvary is large enough to be covered with names on one side – the names of preborn children whose parents recognize their humanity, who recognize that the death of a preborn child is a loss.

My husband and I have lost three children through miscarriage. That’s probably why I felt such a wrench inside when I first saw the monument in Manchester. The loss is personal, yet it was comforting to see a tangible sign that we’re not alone in recognizing that our miscarriages were not simply medical events. Every time I visit the cemetery, a voice inside me says *somebody understands*.

For every name on that monument, who knows how many unnamed children are mourned there by post-

abortive women who stop by for silent prayer?

Join those women this weekend, in spirit if not in person. Remember their children.

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This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2014/09/11/2014-day-of-remembrance-for-the-unborn/>  
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## Spotlight on PJ Anderson and New Album RISE [at A Dreamer's Wife]



For those of you who have been reading my blog for awhile, you probably know by now that I love sharing about people who are using their talents and living God's will for their life. I also love meaningful music and catchy melodies. Today I get to combine these passions by sharing about Catholic artist, PJ Anderson!

Recently, I was fortunate enough to be able to listen to PJ's yet-to-be released fourth album, *RISE*. What I kept coming back to while listening to each track was that these songs come from such an authentic, truthful, and passionate place. It's a combination that can be rare to find, even among Christian artists. I love how the album kicks off with the anthem title track, "Rise". It really sets the tone for the rest of the songs to follow. I'm excited for PJ, because I think this album is going to launch him to another level in the music world!

Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to get to know a little more about PJ and what inspires his music. He generously answered some questions for me, but, first of all, I must share that he's a fellow midwestern native and Notre Dame fan! (GO IRISH!) He and his wife and two children also reside in Nashville, so I look forward to hopefully meeting them soon!

**1. Your 4th album, RISE, will be released soon, so the fall is going to be a pretty busy time for you! What does the rest of 2014 have in store?**

*2013-2014 has been such a blessing! I started writing a song a week last year and that is where the songs for RISE and my last album, Let Your Light Shine have come. I played a mega-workshop at NCYC (National Catholic Youth Conference) in November where 25,000 come to grow in faith and spent the year traveling for concerts, youth conferences and retreats.*

*This past summer I lead worship and music at Catholic Heart Work Camp for 7 weeks. I've spent the last 6 summers working with CHWC leading music at mission trips across the country. This fall has been packed with logistics and promoting RISE. 1400 copies have pre-sold prior to the official release*

mainly through pre-sales at CHWC, an exclusive release with <http://www.lovegoodmusic.com>. The first single, “Beautiful Mess” debuted at #40 on iTunes Christian Charts.

The album releases October 7 and is currently on [iTunes Pre-Order](#) for special pricing of \$7.99. The album release show will happen in Nashville at The Axis Church in Germantown (1423 2nd Avenue North) on October 10 with doors at 6p and show at 7p. Perfect opportunity for people to come listen and praise and then head over to Germantown’s Oktoberfest.

After the album officially releases, my year consists of traveling the country for youth conferences, concerts and retreats.

My wife, Rachel, and I also lead pilgrimages to Rome and Assisi for youth and adult church groups. I studied in Rome for a semester and returned for a year to work as a Resident Assistant at Loyola’s John Felice Rome Center. Since then, my love for Rome has led us to take others and hopefully encourage a love for Rome in others. Here is a link to a video from our last trip! Spoiler alert, our two kiddos were kissed by Pope Francis!!!! It was AMAZING! Here’s the .

We will return to Rome in April and then Catholic Heart Work Camp will start again in June.



## **2. How did you experience God’s call for you to pursue music? Any significant obstacles or “God moments” on your journey so far?**

*God was laying seeds to write and pursue music, but I wasn’t always listening. I was actually the kid who got in trouble with my Mom for not singing at Mass! I started playing guitar when I was in 5th grade where I learned from a nun, Sister Charita. I played from 5-8 grade at school Masses but stopped playing in high school to pursue my dream of being in the NBA! I put all my eggs in the basket of playing basketball. I’m not exactly built for the NBA, but I thought I was! But, I picked the guitar back up in college and started writing songs then. Many of my first songs came while I was studying abroad in Rome. I didn’t start out exclusively writing worship music, but God was always a part of my*

*music. I have now found a musical home in writing worship songs that lead the listener, the worshipper, into a close, personal space with our loving God. I am thankful for where God has led me. The path wasn't always easy, but he equipped me with the faith, inspiration and relationships to create an album that will lead others to closer to Him.*

*I was a Youth Minister for 6 years near Chicago with my wife, Rachel. Long story short, but when we were expecting our first child, Rachel had some serious pregnancy issues and had to be rushed to the hospital and she was put on hospital bedrest for 3.5 weeks. Trey (Paul John III) was born 6 weeks early and was in the NICU for 2.5 weeks. It was a very difficult season filled with fear and joy at the same time. I also lost my job as a Youth Minister because I was not able to be in the office as I was staying in the hospital with my wife. As difficult as it was, God led us through the darkness of that season and opened up many doors in music, especially in Nashville. Phone calls started coming in from groups that I had met at CHWC mission trips and they started asking me to come to their parishes and youth groups for concerts and retreats. Relationships with producers, musicians and youth ministers started blooming and gave us the courage to make the big move to Nashville. God made it obvious that my time as a Youth Minister at one parish was done, but that He wanted me sharing music with many people across the country, if that makes sense. So, I now joke that I get to be like the uncle that comes in and riles up the kids before they go to bed. I'm now the traveling "Youth Minister" who comes in plays music, shares stories and talks and then I go home! No paperwork here! Ha!*

*We are so blessed with the life we have in Nashville and thankful that God led us here to continue to minister and lead others into relationship with Him. I mean, I get to write and sing songs, travel the country sharing those, take care of my kiddos during the week and call that work. It's awesome!*

### **3. What draws you to working with, and motivating, teenagers and young adults?**

*I love working with high schoolers and young adults! It's the way God built me! He created me as an outgoing, extrovert that loves to interact, build relationships and laugh and love. Part of what draws me is the desperate need for hope amongst teenagers and young adults. There is a great sense of hopelessness at times in our world, especially at those ages. I was at a retreat where 3 witness talks in a row by 3 high school girls were all attempted suicide stories. That breaks my heart! That emptiness, that brokenness says there is no hope and that is the biggest lie of our generation. There is ALWAYS hope. And my goal and prayer is to make sure those that I minister with and to truly realize that. That "God loves you" isn't some cheesy thing your youth minister says, but that it's truth. He loves us so much that He has given and continues to give us everything. And we are called to give Him our everything. And that no matter how dark things get, how broken we are, God doesn't love us any less. One of the songs from RISE called "Grace Is Hope" says, "No sin is more hopeless than my Savior has grace. My Savior is grace." There is no sin, no brokenness, no pain that is too great for God to conquer. He is our grace. He is our hope. That is what draws me to working youth and young adults.*



#### **4. Do you have any favorite songs, books, Bible verses, etc., that you find inspiring?**

*Ooooh! Tough one. Favorite songs right now are:*

*“Lord, I Need You” by Matt Maher. This song is just a great reminder of our need for God, for the Lord. In a world that tells us that independence makes us strong, I think we forget that our dependence on God makes us even stronger.*

*“All The Poor and Powerless” by All Sons and Daughters. Oh man, this song! It’s been making me cry listening in the car! Ha! The need and calling for all of us to rise to God’s call to love and serve. That’s the theme of RISE and this song articulates that perfectly. “All will sing out hallelujah, We will cry out hallelujah” We serve and love the poor and powerless because that’s what Jesus did and calls us to do.*

*“Losing” by Tenth Avenue North – This song has helped me get through those dark seasons.*

*“Closer” by Bethel Music – Our desire and love Him more and to be closer to Him. That’s always my prayer. I stray from Him but want to be close.*

*Favorite bible verse is John 3:30. “He must increase. I must decrease.” This verse keeps my desire to serve the Lord close. This verse keeps me humble. This verse is how I try to live my life, not for myself, but for Him. Now, do I always do that? I fail everyday. That is why I need Him. That is why He must increase.*

**Thanks so much to PJ for answering some questions! I’m looking forward to attending his album release show in a couple weeks! Maybe I’ll see some fellow Nashvillians there, as well!**

**If you want to keep up with PJ’s music, check out his [website](#) and be sure follow him on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)!**

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This contribution is available at <http://adreamerswife.com/2014/09/27/spotlight-on-pj-anderson-and-new-album-rise/>  
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# Purgatory ~ Somewhere Between Heaven and Hell [at A Faith-Full Life]

Purgatory. Of all the many misunderstood doctrines of the Catholic Church, Purgatory may be one of the most lampooned by non-Catholics and most misunderstood by Catholics themselves. Last week, my wife and I published our first ever [podcast](#). On the show we discussed C.S. Lewis' book *The Great Divorce* and the concepts of Purgatory found within it. In this post, I thought I would examine some of the more common misunderstandings I run into when it comes to the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory.

To begin with, I want to start with a quote from Dr. Scott Hahn (an Evangelical convert to Catholicism), to help us clear up a pretty central issue. I really resonated with his statement, and quite honestly he says it much better than I would have!

*“On the one hand, as an Evangelical Protestant, I had firm convictions about the finished work of Jesus Christ; that He accomplished our redemption on the cross. Those convictions I still hold fast to. Every Christian, every Catholic must. The work of our redemption is accomplished. It is finished. But the application of that redemptive work of Christ by the Holy Spirit is another matter, one that I did not really come to grips with because it involves suffering which nobody wants to come to grips with — either suffering in this life or suffering afterwards to expiate or to repay or to provide restitution for the effects of sin...Christ has accomplished our redemption. It's over and done with. He has finished it. But then He sends the Holy Spirit to apply it, and the application of redemption is just as essential...Jesus said, ‘I come to baptize with fire and spirit.’ And so, when the Spirit comes at Pentecost, tongues of fire appear, and whenever the Holy Spirit appears, there is Holy Fire. When we are taken up into the Spirit, there we are consumed with a passionate, burning love, the furnace of Christ's heart, the reality of the Holy Spirit, the fiery love of God. That is not because Christ's work is not enough. It's rather the application of the work of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>*

Now onto some other misconceptions.

## — 1 —

### **Some Common Misconceptions About Purgatory**

The New Catholic Encyclopedia says: *“Purgatory is the state, place or condition in the next world which will continue until the Last Judgment, where the souls of those who die in a state of grace, but not yet free from all imperfection, make expiation, that is, restitution for unforgiven venial sins and mortal sins that have already been forgiven, and by doing so, are purified before they enter heaven.”*

1. Purgatory isn't a second chance. You either die in a state of friendship with God and in His grace or you don't.
2. Purgatory isn't a place per se, but rather a *process*. This process may take place “somewhere” or it may be merely a condition or a state in the afterlife.
3. Purgatory doesn't necessarily require time. Pope Emeritus Benedict wrote that purgatory may involve “existential” rather than “temporal” duration.<sup>2</sup>

## Church Teaching on Purgatory

The doctrine of Purgatory is covered in three fairly brief paragraphs in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. They are paragraphs 1030-1032 and you can read them [here](#). Simply enter the paragraph number into the search bar and hit enter, then click on continue to read more. Essentially the Church's teaching can be distilled into a few brief points:

1. The souls in Purgatory **are** saved, but they are being purified in order that they may stand before an all-holy God.
2. This purification involves some kind of pain or discomfort.
3. The teaching of the Church on this matter is based on the teaching of Scripture, and it's teaching on prayers for the dead.

So, where in Scripture do we see Purgatory?

## Scriptural References to Purgatory

The word Purgatory (much like the word 'trinity', or 'incarnation', or even the word 'bible') is never actually used by the Scriptures. But the concept of Purgatory – the purification from the attachment to sin and the things of this world; the removal of all works which are not done in and with and through Christ – that concept actually seems to be quite clear.

Perhaps the clearest reference in Scripture comes from St. Paul's writings where he discusses the concept of being saved "through fire." *"For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."*<sup>3</sup> Here St. Paul discusses a Day of Judgement which will reveal the eternal value (or lack thereof) of each man's works. He acknowledges the suffering that is a part of this judgement of the man's works, and his ultimate salvation – *"but only as through fire."*

And Christ Himself speaks of forgiveness for sins in the "age to come" when He says, *"Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."*<sup>4</sup>

## The Place of the Dead

There are multiple places in Scripture where a distinction is made between those, *"in heaven or on earth or under the earth"*<sup>5</sup> and St. Paul reveals to us that Christ is with these souls as He is with us when he

writes, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down) or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).”<sup>6</sup>

Scripture is full of verses referencing either Sheol or Hades. Both reference a place *other than Hell* – which is not Heaven. The words Sheol (in Hebrew), Hades (in Greek), and Purgatorium (in Latin) represent the concept of Purgatory as we have come to know it today.

We can see the story of Purgatory unfold as we examine Scripture passages beginning in the Old Testament and moving to the New.

*“Great is thy steadfast love toward me. Thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of sheol.”*<sup>7</sup>

*“Withhold not your kindness, O Lord from the dead.”*<sup>8</sup>

*“For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”*<sup>9</sup>

Purgatory itself comes to an end as we look at the book of Revelation which describes how, at the end of time, both death and Hades will be thrown into hell, saying that this is the second death, the lake of fire.<sup>10</sup> At the end of all things, there will be no more death; and once the purification of all souls has taken place, there will be no more need for Hades or Purgatory.

These and other passages have given rise to the Church’s understanding of the *three states of the Church* – “...some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating ‘in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is’ ”<sup>11</sup>

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## **Prayers for the Dead**

Prayers for the dead are attested to even prior to Christ in 2 Maccabees where we read, “So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous Judge, who reveals the things that are hidden; and they turned to prayer, beseeching that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.”<sup>12</sup>

This passage establishes, even for those who may not consider Maccabees to be Scriptural, that this was a common practice within Judaism prior to the time of Christ. We see an echo of this in the New Testament when Paul offers a prayer for a dead Christian named Onesiphorus saying, “*may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.*”<sup>13</sup> And indeed in the early Church we see an abundance of evidence for the practice of praying for the dead.

The inscriptions in the Roman Catacombs showing prayers for the dead range in date from the first century (the earliest dated is from A.D. 71) to the early part of the fifth; with the greatest number (of the several thousand which are extant) belonging to the ante-Nicene period, i.e. the first three centuries after Christ.<sup>14</sup> There are prayers of a formal character, in which survivors address their petitions directly to God the Father, or to Christ, or to the angels saints and martyrs collectively, or even to one of them in particular. Most frequently they ask for: peace, the good (i.e. eternal salvation), light, refreshment, life, eternal life, union with God, union with Christ, union with the angels and saints, and liberation from sin. Sometimes the writers of the epitaphs request visitors to pray for the deceased, and sometimes the dead themselves ask for prayers, as in the well-known Greek epitaph of Abercius which says: “*Standing by, I, Abercius, ordered this to be inscribed; truly, I was in my seventy-second year. May everyone who is in accord with this and who understands it pray for Abercius.*”

So overwhelming is the witness of the early Christian monuments in favour of prayer for the dead that no historian any longer denies that the practice and the belief which the practice implies were universal in the primitive Church, and in this there is no break of continuity between Judaism and Christianity.

Additionally, the testimony of the earliest liturgies is in harmony with that of the monuments. *All of them without exception* – Nestorian and Monophysite as well as Catholic, those in Syriac, Armenian, and Coptic as well as those in Greek and Latin – contain the commemoration of the faithful departed in the Mass, with a prayer for peace, light, refreshment and the like, and in many cases expressly for the remission of sins and the effacement of sinful stains. The following, from the Syriac Liturgy of St. James, may be quoted as a typical example: “*we commemorate all the faithful dead who have died in the true faith... We ask, we entreat, we pray Christ our God, who took their souls and spirits to Himself, that by His many compassions He will make them worthy of the pardon of their faults and the remission of their sins*”<sup>15</sup>

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### **There are Protestants Who Believe in Purgatory?!**

You really don't have to look much further than C.S. Lewis himself. Check out the following quotes.

*“Of course I pray for the dead. The action is so spontaneous, so all but inevitable, that only the most compulsive theological case against it would deter me. And I hardly know how the rest of my prayers would survive if those for the dead were forbidden. At our age, the majority of those we love best are dead. What sort of intercourse with God could I have if what I love best were unmentionable to him?”*

*“I believe in Purgatory. . . . Our souls demand Purgatory, don't they? Would it not beak the heart if God said to us, ‘It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter*

into the joy'? Should we not reply, 'With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I'd rather be cleansed first.' "It may hurt, you know"—"Even so, sir."

*"I assume that the process of purification will normally involve suffering. Partly from tradition; partly because most real good that has been done me in this life has involved it. But I don't think the suffering is the purpose of the purgation. I can well believe that people neither much worse nor much better than I will suffer less than I or more. . . . The treatment given will be the one required, whether it hurts little or much."*

*"My favorite image on this matter comes from the dentist's chair. I hope that when the tooth of life is drawn and I am 'coming round', a voice will say, 'Rinse your mouth out with this.' This will be Purgatory. The rinsing may take longer than I can now imagine. The taste of this may be more fiery and astringent than my present sensibility could endure. But . . . it will [not] be disgusting and unhallowed."<sup>16</sup>*

[= 7 =](#)

Finally, please complete my short (and anonymous) two-question survey – I want to know what you think!

Click here to take the survey: [Is Purgatory Real?](#)

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1. Answering Common Objections, Purgatory: Holy Fire, Dr. Scott Hahn [↔](#)
2. cf. Joseph Ratzinger's book Eschatology [↔](#)
3. 1 Corinthians 3:11–15 RSVCE [↔](#)
4. Matthew 12:31–32 RSVCE [↔](#)
5. Revelation 5:3, 13 [↔](#)
6. Romans 6b-7 [↔](#)
7. Psalms 86:13 [↔](#)
8. Sirach 7:33 [↔](#)
9. 1 Peter 3:17-22 [↔](#)
10. Revelation 20:14 [↔](#)
11. Catholic Church. (2000). Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd Ed., p. 249). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference [↔](#)
12. 2 Maccabees 12:41-45 [↔](#)

13. 2 Timothy 1:18 [↵](#)
  14. For detailed references see Kirsch, “Die Acclamationen”, pp. 9-29; Cabrol and Leclercq, “Monumenta Liturgica” (Paris, 1902), I, pp. ci-cvi, cxxxix, etc. [↵](#)
  15. Syr. Lit. S. Jacobi, ed. Hammond, p. 75 [↵](#)
  16. C.S. Lewis excerpts from Letters to Malcom [↵](#)
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## Response to Minnesota High School League Transgender Student Policy [at Fr. Ben's Biblical Blog]

In the near future, the Minnesota State High School League will discuss additions to the student policies for high school athletes in the state of Minnesota. Sadly, the major proposal in play deals with conforming high school venues (competitions, locker rooms, bathrooms, etc.) to transgender student athletes. Below is a letter I wrote to Dave Stead, the executive director of the Minnesota State High School League:

Dave,

I write this a former three-sport athlete who participated in Minnesota High School athletics from 1997-2002. I also write as a Roman Catholic priest as I am currently serving as a pastor in International Falls and Littlefork, Minnesota and I still compete in marathons, road races and triathlons today.

In many ways, I attribute my faith and vocation to the priesthood through my experiences in athletics. As a son of health and physical education teachers, and as a son of a basketball coach, athletics has been part of my life since I was a kid. It was through running, track and field and basketball that I learned teamwork, discipline, setting and achieving goals and the healthy atmosphere of competition. I firmly believe athletics and following Jesus are perfectly compatible.

I am disappointed in the proposed addition to the MSHSL Student Policy. In writing this, I am in no way condemning transgender students. I believe we are to work with any student in a spirit of love and openness and any forms of bullying or acts of bigotry are to be avoided at all costs.

However, I believe these additions will be harmful to athletic competition and the reputation of the MSHSL in several ways.

First, I have concerns about the rights of students who would disagree with lifestyle choices made by a transgender student. While such a student can make such a choice in our country, this choice should not impinge on the right to privacy in locker rooms or bathrooms of other students. The practical conclusions of such additions should be considered--will all students be comfortable changing, showering or using the bathroom with a transgender student? Should they be? (I think not). Will their fundamental rights to religion be impeded by such additions?

Second, the very choice to proceed in a sex-change is controversial and most religious organizations (including the Catholic Church) do not support them. The proposed adaptations to the student policies would go above and beyond the Minnesota State High School League's legal obligations to students in the state of Minnesota. In so doing, they would impinge on the religious freedom of schools participating in MSHSL competition. They would pressure students, teachers and schools to conform to situations in which society has no right to dictate. The last entity--schools--is of special concern to me as I am a pastor of an elementary school.

Third, athletics has always been a refuge to me from our polarized political culture. Sports gives me an

avenue to relax (when viewing) and compete in a healthy atmosphere. I have noticed that sports outlets--especially ESPN--have become increasingly political and that saddens me. Sports are meant to foster unity as they connect athletes from diverse cultural, economic, political and religious backgrounds. I do not want to see the MSHSL enter into political discussions or be bullied by special interest groups that do not account for the rights of all students, especially those who hold religious convictions.

This is all to write that I respectfully disagree with the proposed MSHSL Transgender Student Policy. I do not envy you or other members of the board who have been forced to address this question so publicly and will be keeping the proceedings in prayer. Know that you have many clear-thinking supporters who understand the difference between disagreeing with a choice yet being open to loving everyone. If the MSHSL was to reject these proposed changes, it would in no way reflect poorly on their support of high school athletes. On the contrary, I would see this as a sign you are doing just that--supporting all high school athletes.

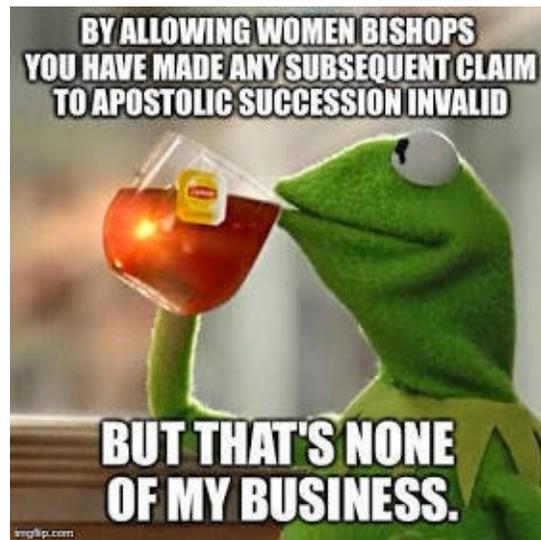
Respectfully,  
Fr. Ben Hadrich  
Pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Columban Catholic Parishes  
810 5th St.  
International Falls, MN 56649

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This contribution is available at <http://frbensbible.blogspot.com/2014/09/response-to-minnesota-high-school.html>  
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# Catholic Feminism 101: We Don't Ordain Women... and That's Okay [at Even the Wilderness]



In the words of Professor Moriarty a la

*Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*

, "Hidden deep within the unconscious is an insatiable desire for conflict."

So that was pretty macabre, but that is really the only reason I can think of for all the fuss made over the fact that we don't allow women-priests in the Catholic Church. Considering that we consistently promote devotion to a woman (Mary), have women as Doctors of the Church, and have people like Pope Saint John Paul II writing letters to womankind just about how awesome females are, and Pope Francis calling women the most beautiful creatures on earth, and a host of other titles given to us by other Catholics I could name, such as 'Crown of Creation' and 'walking Tabernacle', women writing books on doctrine and founding religious communities, devoting their lives to good works, and bringing forth life and raising families, I don't really think we're as repressed as

I can't name a single Catholic woman I know who considers herself oppressed. So why does everybody assume that we are?

Because we don't normally go to Mass and see a woman celebrating it.

And personally, I'm just fine with that reality.

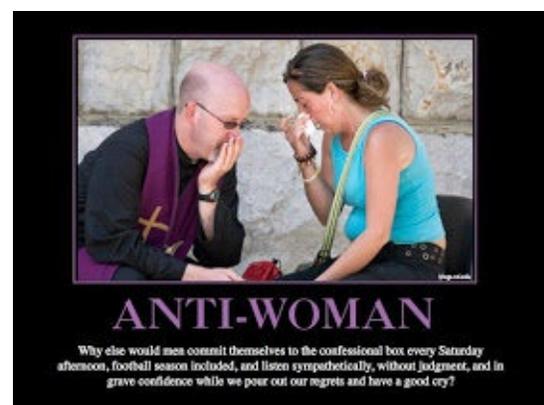
There are two kinds of priesthood, actually, so even if we're not vestment-clad, women still belong to the Priesthood of the Faithful. Apparently, that's not enough for some, so I will point out why it is that women are not Ordained Priests:

Christ is the High Priest, and *ordained priesthood models Him*. Celibacy? That can be done. Preaching

and teaching? Sure. Administering the Sacraments? You bet. Male? WHAT!

As Jesus was a Man, it makes sense that His 'successors' would be men. As much as it would anger the Tumblr Feminists to hear it, men and women, while equal in dignity, are hardly equal in nature. There are some things that, by and large, men are more suited to, and some things that women are more suited to. It just so happens that men are generally more apt to take on dangerous and consuming jobs, as well as more bursts of pure heroism, while women are more likely to have less potentially harmful employment that does not take up their lives in the same way, and are more likely to act heroically on an oftener, but smaller, scale (i.e, the man runs into the burning building to save a screaming child, while the woman is connecting family members and trying to find water. The man is more likely to die and/or be featured in the morning papers as a hero, but the woman was also heroic and self-giving, just in a smaller way, and that is fine.). And the priesthood is both consuming and dangerous. Priests are sent overseas as chaplains during wars. Priests celebrate Mass usually at least five days a week. Priests can be on-call for hospitals and counselling centers. They might be late because they were administering Anointing of the Sick or praying with a suicidal man or answering the countless complaints of crabby parishioners who don't approve of the new Mass schedule. They hear people air their sins, which not only range from venial to downright horrific, but for which they, too, do penance. Their holidays are minimal, their clothes and (depending on Order) bedtimes and eating is predetermined and strict, and on top of all this, they also teach pimply-faced youths about Confirmation, write homilies, and are spiritual directors. The priesthood, in its beauty and many sacrifices, certainly is consuming, and, indeed, dangerous. Priests are the ones who voluntarily stay behind on sinking ships, dive into pits of dying men to absolve them, and volunteer to starve to death in the place of others. It is naturally more suited to the sudden heroism and aptitude to the encompassing of men., and never was this more important than in the early days of the priesthood, when the Apostles (the first Bishops) were being crucified upside-down, slaughtered in the Gladiatorial Arena, boiled in oil, and decapitated, after leaving their families and livelihoods. Now all you have to do is read the news to hear of Christians being persecuted, both Ordained Priests and the Priesthood of the Faithful. Yes, priesthood is very dangerous and all-encompassing, like marriage/parenthood or the missionary life.

On top of this, as Jesus was a Man, His brain processed things in the male manner. Men and women process things differently; no better, no worse, just differently. Men can imitate Christ better, in this respect, than women can.



And on top of all this, **the Ordained Priesthood is a Fatherhood**. It is stamped onto the anatomy of males that they *initiate*, and the Ordained Priesthood is all about initiation, about giving. The priest serves the people by giving the Sacraments. He is a spiritual Father. He initiates, the congregation receives, and God is glorified.

Some may say, "But what if a woman feels *called* to the Ordained Priesthood?"

Well, what does she feel called to do, exactly?

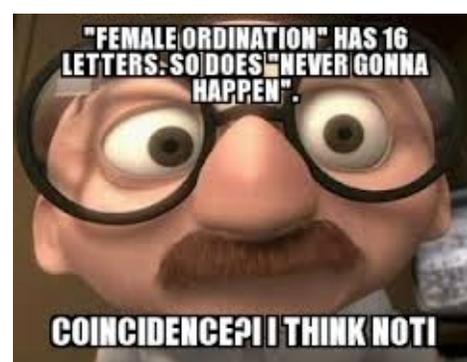
If she feels called to be in a closer relationship with the Eucharist, she can do that without blessing it at the altar, because we are *all* called to a close relationship with the Eucharist. She could even become a Eucharistic minister, if she were Novus Ordo.

If she feels called to chastity, poverty, and/or obedience, she might want to start looking into religious orders. Just saying.

So, I hope that cleared it up a little bit. Happy priesthood (of the faithful)!

Love,

Grace



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## The Prayers of Children [at Cherishing Everyday Beauty]

We're nearly finished with our fourth week of school at Montessori; this has easily been the best week yet! I'll be completely honest and admit that my environment had a slow and difficult transition back into the school year, but I think we're finally becoming more and more settled. Praise and thanks be to God!

I l.o.v.e. working at a Catholic school where I can be completely and truly myself and talk to the children about God and even say "God bless you!" to parents if I happen to see them as I'm leaving at the end of the day (and not being limited to only sneezes!). And to top it all off with the most amazing of them all: as of this week, full-day students and faculty attend Mass together **weekly!!** One particularly profound moment for me this week was during the penitential rite.

I confess to almighty God,

and to you, my brothers and sisters,

that I have greatly sinned

in my thoughts and in my words,

in what I have done,

and in what I have failed to do;

through my fault

through my fault

through my most grievous fault

Therefore, I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin,

all the angels and saints,

and you, my brothers and sisters,

to pray for me to the Lord our God.

I often find myself nodding as the words above in bold are spoken, simply to further acknowledge that I am asking for the prayers of the universal Church and to accept that I will pray in return. As we prayed these words together during Mass, I was struck by the reality that those brothers and sisters in Christ around me whose prayers I was requesting were primarily *children!* Have you ever prayed with children before? It is the most beautiful, simple, yet profound experience. Children are so innocent, so loving, so

precious, and Our Lord loves them so tenderly. To ask for their prayers and listen to them pray for you...  
**wow!**

Needless to say, I'm very much looking forward to our weekly Mass attendance this school year :)

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This contribution is available at <http://cherishingeverydaybeauty.blogspot.com/2014/09/fytd-prayers-of-children.html>  
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## 9/11, Dreams and Second Chances [at beautiful thorns]



On the anniversary of 9/11 every year when I am watching the footage of the twin towers being hit by planes on TV, I am reminded of a dream I had exactly three years earlier in September of 1998. At the time I had the dream and until 9/11 happened in 2001, I did not realize the dream was going to be somewhat literal. I even prayed about and came up with a symbolic interpretation.

Around the same time I had the dream, the Lord kept warning me that some storms were coming that would effect our nation. He impressed on me that even though he wasn't going to cause the storms, he was going to use these storms for his purposes and for good. Through them some people would turn to him and come to know him. Finally I had the following dream that gave a little more detail into the nature of one of the storms that was about to hit.

*Dream - I was in a room filled with other people and we were socializing. The room was at the very top of a skyscraper. A big storm was coming but the people were not too concerned. I looked out the window and I saw a huge demon coming across the sky in the form of a big fire ball and it was headed right for the skyscraper. I knew I needed to get out of the path of this storm so I got my family out of the skyscraper, put them in the car and we drove away to get out of the way of this storm.*



The way I interpreted the dream at the time, which I believe is still relevant in a spiritual sense, was that the skyscraper represented man's own efforts to become like God and get close to God without God, much like the people did with the Tower of Babel. In the Church it is using the forms of religion instead of a real relationship with Jesus, relying on his grace and mercy. In the world it is through technology and setting ourselves up as gods by the things **we** are able to create. I also felt at the time that the Lord showed me it was very important that things be founded on the solid rock of Jesus because everything was going to be shaken and whatever was not founded on him would not be able to stand.



When 9/11 happened in 2001, it was very sobering to realize that the Lord was warning me of something that was actually going to happen and maybe I could have helped lessen the severity of it if I had only prayed more. I am very grateful for his love and mercy and for second chances! Today I pray for all those people who were directly affected by this tragic event!

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## A Miscarriage: A Soul Acknowledged then Released [at joy of nine9]



I have always considered myself blessed with ten pregnancies

which resulted in nine healthy babies and only one miscarriage.

I thought that I knew how to handle a miscarriage, emotionally and spiritually.

I thought I had done everything right by this little one who died before birth.

I was mistaken.

Twenty-five years ago I was in a panic when I discovered that I was pregnant with my seventh. I had just reconciled with God and embraced this baby when I started to spot. An ultrasound revealed that although I was 12 weeks pregnant, my womb was only at 9 weeks in size and was empty. Apparently the body reabsorbs a fetus in spontaneous, natural ‘abortions’. This news shook me. I felt a sense of betrayal because I had experienced real, spiritual joy when I finally accepted that I was expecting again. My womb was empty, yet I KNEW, we had created a soul.

I had learned that it is important to name a miscarried baby. During prayer, we sensed that this baby was a girl. I chose *Ruth* because I love that name but my husband had been reluctant to call a living, little girl – Ruth. We dedicated Ruth to Jesus and commended her soul to God.



I rarely thought of her, with three more births quickly following this miscarriage.

Last week, after about 25 years, I discovered why my body and heart were usually tight, tense; I was holding on to this unborn daughter, refusing to let her spirit go to heaven. Ironically I really did not acknowledge her as one of my family. I had a sense that she was telling me off, ” **Quit saying you have nine kids; you have ten children!**”

Then I was filled with grief and tears as I thought, ” **This soul never got to experience life on earth. She completely missed out.**” I remembered the phrase by C.S. Lewis

**“You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.”**

and by **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

**“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”**

Ruth wanted to be acknowledged but then set free, released to go to heaven. Seems absurd that I had that much power but then I remembered the scripture-

**Matthew 18:18 -“Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”**

When I prayed and spoke the words out loud, letting go of control and letting go of my tight hold on her soul, I IMMEDIATELY had an inner picture of a tiny child spinning in delight with her arms outstretched, dancing in a beam of light.

My body relaxed, my shoulders actually slumped and my heart was filled with joy.

Ruth was finally in heaven.

Ruth was finally an accepted member of our family.

I have ten children.

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This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com/2014/09/24/a-miscarriage-a-soul-acknowledged-then-released/>  
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## Is Romantic Love A Decision? [at The Veil of Chastity]

*“Love is **not** love*

*Which **alters** when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no! it is **an ever-fixed mark**,  
That looks on tempests, and is **never shaken**;*

*Love’s **not Time’s fool**, though **rosy lips and cheeks**  
Within his **bending sickle’s** compass come:  
Love alters **not** with his brief hours and weeks,  
But **bears it out** even to the edge of doom.”*

William Shakespeare Sonnet 116

Some believe that a man ‘**decides**’ to romantically fall in love with a girl. I am not sure how a person would decide to have romantic feelings nor do I believe that this would be a good thing. Instead, I hope to convince you that romantic love is **sacrifice**, not a decision. Sacrifice is often the most revealing sign of romantic love.

### **Actions Are Evidence**

I hear from girls who are dating men who they hope ‘decide’ to fall in love and marry them. They write to me asking for my thoughts and I usually focus on his **actions** rather than his words. Is he following through on what he says he is going to do? Is he making changes in his life to accommodate you and invite you in? Is his job, the military, his sister, NASCAR, football or his mom more important than you? Is the drive too long to see you? Do you not fit in with his friends? Are the things that are important to you supported by him?

### **What Motivates Men?**

You see, men are motivated by something very **mysterious**. They fall in love **first** and then decide to make sacrifices for that love. A man, in most cases, does not decide to sacrifice in order to feel love. It is unlikely that he will think that giving up NASCAR will enhance his love for you. NASCAR will only be bumped down in priority when romantic love is evident.



Oh no!

*It is an ever-fixed mark.....*

## **An Ever-Fixed Mark**

Love cannot be explained. Note that Shakespeare mostly says what love is ‘not.’ Yet, his description of what it is, an ‘*ever-fixed mark*’, is perfect. Romantic love that leads to marriage should be unshakable. You should feel it is as dependable as the rising of the sun when you lay your head on your pillow.

## **Love is Sacrifice**

The book of Corinthians tells us that, “*love does not insist on its own way.*”

“*Love is patient and kind...It does not insist on its own way..*” 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Sacrifice is what you want to look for when assessing a man’s intentions and depth of romantic love. Sacrifice is the **evidence** that the man has found a *pearl of great price*. That does not mean that you are not a pearl. It just means that you are not his pearl. But, you are someone’s pearl.

## **Not Motivated By Me**

I dated a guy when I was just out of college who married the next girl he dated after me. For reasons I won’t go into, I was able to witness the sacrifices he made for her. I was **astonished** by the influence and say-so she had in their relationship. There was a number of times I was left with my mouth gaping because I did not think this guy was capable of sacrifice. Alas, he was. He was motivated by romantic love and he decided to sacrifice...for her.

## **Love Is**

To wrap up, here are some quotes from a past post, [\*I Knew\*](#):

“*True love and attraction are **mysteries**. Love just is or it just isn’t. It cannot be explained. No matter how wonderful we are, we cannot manufacture true love and attraction. And, this can be **exasperating**.*”

“*Love and attraction are a mystery. The mystery can **confound** you when it slips through your hands. But, the mystery will **completely overwhelm** you with joy, gratitude and **awe** when it is yours to behold.*”

“*Wait on the Lord. Wait on the mystery that is love. When it is yours, **you will know**. I know it is hard. You remain in my prayers.*”

Are you dating someone and find it difficult to assess his romantic feelings for you? Feel free to write to

me. I will be happy to help.

God love and bless you!

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This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2014/09/22/is-romantic-love-a-decision/>  
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## 7 Questions: Alice Camille [at Catholic Bibles]



*Alice Camille is an author, religious educator, and parish retreat leader. She received her Master of Divinity degree from the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, where she also served as adjunct faculty in ministry formation, preaching and proclamation. Alice has worked in parishes and campus ministry, supervised a shelter program for homeless women, and been active in ecumenical settings.*

*Alice writes the monthly commentary, "Exploring the Sunday Readings" (Twenty-Third Publications) and collaborates on the homily series, "Prepare the Word" and daily reflections for "Take Five For Faith" (both from TrueQuest Communications.) She is the regular "Testaments" columnist for US CATHOLIC magazine (Claretian Publications) and a regular contributing essayist to "Living With Christ" (Bayard, Inc.) and "Give Us This Day" (Liturgical Press.) She is currently working on a three volume lectionary commentary for ACTA Publications called This Transforming Word.*

**1) First off, thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions. I wanted to start off with a question about your personal involvement with Sacred Scripture. How has Scripture played an important role in your prayer life? Has it always been that way?**

From childhood on, I was a big reader and in love with stories. But I didn't take the Bible to heart till I was about fourteen. One Sunday I heard a really good lector read a passage from Jeremiah like he meant it. It was such a passionate lament, delivered so dramatically, it resonated with my teenage self. Jeremiah sounded the way I felt, most days! I admit I vandalized the missalette that day, tearing the passage out so I could spend more time with it. It had never occurred to me before that anything in the Bible had anything to do with me. All of a sudden, I knew that Scripture was meant to speak right to me.

Some years later in college as an English major, I studied the Bible as Literature and developed a sense of how it tells its Story. When I was 22, I made the commitment to read the entire Bible cover to cover. They always say that's the worst way to do it, but I'm a bit of a *kamikaze* once I commit to something. It took eleven months to read all the way to Revelation. By then, I felt like a different person. I saw God, the world, human history, and my place in it all in a radically new and significant way. Reality was on fire for me. Eventually, I made my way to a seminary program at the Franciscan School of Theology, to study

Scripture formally. I had no plan in mind to do anything with such a degree. I just wanted to know all I could about what had become a crucial Story to me.

**2) Greg Pierce, President and Co-Publisher at ACTA Publications, called you "a true treasure to the Catholic Church in the United States" for your ability to open up the Scriptures and make them come alive for the average Catholic. With such a wonderful endorsement of you and your ministry, I was wondering what you thought about the current state of Catholic Biblical literacy in the United States in 2014, particularly as we approach the fifty year anniversary of the publication of *Dei Verbum*?**

Greg Pierce is a gracious man. I hope not to be a liability to the Church, at least. I try to be clear that I'm not a Scripture scholar, but rather an eager student of these books. It's made such a difference in my life to have encountered Sacred Story that I've become evangelistic about wanting to share that experience. But are we there yet, all of us together, in terms of biblical literacy? We're certainly much, much better than we were before the Second Vatican Council. I meet lay Catholics all over the country who are in small groups reading and studying Scripture; lectors taking their calling seriously and becoming students of the texts they're charged to read; older priests who barely got introduced to Scripture in their seminary training who have since embraced the need to know these texts more intimately and thoughtfully. What impresses me is that, while many Protestants of my acquaintance have often memorized more Scripture and can summon up chapter and verse, practicing Catholics have internalized much more Scripture than they realize through their exposure to the lectionary. When a Catholic finally comes to Scripture intentionally, they already have an instinctive sense of how to appreciate what it's saying. Especially if they've been graced with good preachers in their parish!

**3) Recently, you have been involved in *The Message: Catholic/Ecumenical Edition* project by ACTA Publications. What attracted you to this project and this unique translation?**

A good friend gave me *The Message* years ago when it just included the New Testament and the Book of Psalms. The author, Eugene Peterson, expanded his unique translation gradually. At the time I got this older volume, I was writing mostly lectionary-based commentary that required the New American translation, and so I didn't have a professional use for *The Message*. I gave it away. Later on, I was leading a pretty sophisticated group of parishioners in a Bible study that lasted seven years. We started using different translations to spice things up. I got interested in Bible translations and how they inform meaning. The more I made textual comparisons, the wider my appreciation of a passage became.

When ACTA got involved with *The Message: Catholic/Ecumenical Edition*, I was very interested. One problem I'd had with some translations I favor is that there are "holes in the plot," so to speak. I love my *Jewish Study Bible*, for example, but it's only good so far as it goes, which is the end of what we call

the Old Testament. Some Protestant translations are interesting to use but without the Catholic books, the Deuterocanon, they leave me hanging in some of the work I'm doing. The chance to see *The Message* paraphrase translation "completed," from a Catholic perspective, was exciting. To be part of that completion, even in a small way as a first reader/consultant, was an adventure.

**4) What was your role in the new translation of the Deuterocanonical books done by William Griffin? Do you remember any specific renderings that you helped influenced to be included in the final, published version?**

As I mentioned, I'm no scholar and I don't read ancient Greek or Hebrew. The paraphrase translation of the Deuterocanonical books you see in the Catholic *Message* is entirely the work of William Griffin. I didn't and couldn't have written a word of it. Most of what I did was ask questions that I thought would concern the average reader. Such as: *is this macho-sounding phrase here necessary to be true to the text, or is it creative license gone a shade into the valley of testosterone?* Ancient texts are nearly always sexist-sounding from a modern perspective: it was a man's world back then, for sure. But translators can also contribute to and exacerbate that impact by their word choice. I compared each verse of the paraphrase to the more familiar New American Bible, which is based on different original materials than the ones Bill Griffin and Eugene Peterson employed for *The Message*. Where there were significant departures in meaning, I tried to discover why. Bill usually had a good reason; a few times he modified a phrase that was strictly playful, for the sake of cultural sensitivity or greater fidelity.

**5) Connected to your work with The Message, you are in the process of completing a three volume commentary on the Sunday and Feast Day lectionary readings called This Transforming Word. The volume for Cycle B of the lectionary calendar will be available for purchase shortly, and like the one for Cycle A, is keyed to The Message Bible. I have been enjoying reading your commentaries for Cycle A these past few weeks in preparation for Sunday Mass. I appreciated your reflection back in the commentary for the twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time on Isaiah 22, where you noted that God is the divine hand that hammers us in as imperfect nails into the walls of history. I was really taken by the image, particularly in the end when you related it to the nails of the cross. I am interested to know what your hopes are for this series of books and what inspires you when you are composing each reflection?**

I was first asked to write Scripture commentary for the Sunday readings twenty years ago. Not having a scholarly background, I could only write about them as a believer who deeply cares about these words and ideas. I made a promise that I wouldn't pretend to be smarter than I am, or to have answers I honestly don't. The goal wasn't to do what the scholars rightfully do with their special expertise. But I didn't want to go the devotional, sentimental, or pragmatic routes either: becoming the Ann Landers or Helen Steiner Rice of the lectionary! My job was to do what the thoughtful reader should do: allow the word of God to fall on my heart and to ask its burning questions of me. I read each passage. I let it talk to me. Then I try to faithfully transcribe that conversation for the reader.

What are my hopes for *This Transforming Word, Cycles A, B, and C*? Every book is an invitation launched into the unknown. Sort of like stuffing a note in a bottle and casting it out to sea. I hope people find it and read it. I hope it begins a conversation within them that brings them something useful, personal, and wonderful. I hope the encounter with Scripture becomes, for each reader, full of grace. I judge the success of everything I write by the one-sentence rule. If the reader finds in a book *one sentence* worth posting on the bathroom mirror or bulletin board, one idea that opens a door, then it worked.

**6) How do you think the average Catholic could best utilize The Message: Catholic/ Ecumenical edition and your lectionary commentary volumes?**

The Catholic edition of *The Message* is not going to replace the New American Bible—or the New Jerusalem, NRSV, or whatever folks are already reading. Until the day he died, my Dad preferred the Douay family Bible he'd had all of his life. Of course he did. It was the voice of God in his head. And I have a special affection for all of these translations and more, each for different reasons. No one should, or will, abandon all other Bibles for the Catholic *Message*. And yet—

—no one should disregard a new translation just because they like a familiar one. The cardinal rule to keep in mind is that *every* translation is an interpretation. There is no "right" Bible, and all the rest are somehow wrong ones. *Every* translation is an interpretation, so it can be fascinating to see what this interpreter discovered in the text versus that interpreter. Some translations have just the right solemnity and cadence to be declared in front of the assembly. And others sound friendly and engaging in a little gathering of friends, or with young people; on retreat, or for personal reflection. The folks who use *This Transforming Word* with its excerpted passages from *The Message: Catholic/ Ecumenical Edition* will most certainly be hearing those same passages proclaimed from the ambo that Sunday from the New American Bible translation. That will be a formal public encounter. *This Transforming Word* provides an intimate, personal experience. Ideally these two collisions with the Word will complement each other and make the Sunday encounter richer.

**7) Finally, do you have a favorite passage or verse from the Bible? Why?**

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# On Roman Catholicism and Freemasonry in 1738

[This

[collection and category of articles](#)

comes from papers I've written as a graduate student for a Master of Arts in Theology and Christian Ministry at Franciscan University of Steubenville. The goal of this particular assignment for 'Historical Foundations' was to write about a particular movement, conflict, or person in the Catholic Church between the years of 1500 A.D. to 1950 A.D.]

On June 24, 1717, at least four<sup>i</sup> pre-existing Masonic lodges of London, England came together at the Goose and Gridiron Ale-house (tavern) in St. Paul's Church-yard to form a governing Grand Lodge; electing Anthony Sayer as their first Grand Master. This organizational meeting was preceded by one previously held in 1716 at the Apple Tree Tavern in Covent Garden where they agreed to form a Grand Lodge. There is no immediate alarm to be had that these lodges met in taverns, as these establishments of food, drink, and entertainment were usually the only available public meeting places for assemblies at the time.

To be sure, this idea of a governing body over local Masonic lodges was a modern innovation in Freemasonry. While this 1717 organization was the first of its kind, by the time Pope Clement XII would release his Papal Bull [In Eminenti \(On Freemasonry\)](#) on April 28, 1738, there would be Masonic Grand Lodges in England, Ireland, France, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, and even three in new colonies (Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina). This small number of Grand Lodges does not account for the hundreds of subordinate lodges spread throughout Europe and North America that were beholden to them at the time.

There is no question to the fact that the creation of the Grand Lodge structure aided significantly in the explosive growth, longevity, and peace-from-within that the Masonic Order would enjoy for centuries to come.

Yet, there was no peace to be held from without in regards to the Catholic Church. Exactly two hundred years after the establishment of the premier Grand Lodge of world, the Roman Catholic Church would still have this to say about the Masonic Order in canon #2335 in its 1917 Code of Canon Law:<sup>ii</sup>

“Persons joining associations of the Masonic sect or any others of the same kind which plot against the Church and legitimate civil authorities contract excommunication simply reserved to the Apostolic See.”

This Canon and the one that would eventually replace it in 1983 are merely succinct capsules of a very long history of exhaustive statements concerning the perspicuous Roman Catholic position and interdicts against the global Masonic order (i.e. the systems, practices, principles, and institutions of Freemasonry).

Words and phrases in these canons, such as ‘Masonic sect’, ‘any others’ ‘associations’ ‘plots against the Church’, and ‘promotes or directs’ that we read in the canons cannot be rightly understood outside of their

original context found in the Papal bulls, encyclicals, constitutions, and allocutions that were written against Freemasonry. Indeed, these words and phrases are rooted the historical language of the Roman Catholic Church, as expressed in 17 documents, written by eight different Popes over a period of 164 years, from 1738 to 1902.<sup>iii</sup>

What happened? How did these institutions arrive at this point? How did the Masonic Order go from being a group of gentlemen meeting in local taverns in northern Europe to being, arguably, enemy number two (right behind Satan) of the Catholic Church?

This paper will explore the purpose and motives behind first historical document of the Roman Catholic Church on Freemasonry that would end up shaping the language and position of all future statements of the Church against Masonic order and all similar associations.

## **1738 – Freemasonry**

The Masonic degree system had been evolving for some time, but by 1738 the craft lodge system of three distinct degrees was in place, and the third degree (i.e. Master Mason) was becoming more popular throughout Europe and in the new colonies.

By 1738 there had been at least twelve exposes written about Freemasonry,<sup>iv</sup> but probably none more popular than *Masonry Dissected*, first written in 1730 by Samuel Pritchard, who styled himself as a late member of a constituted Lodge in London.

The Masonic order was growing quickly throughout the world; primarily through British maritime merchant activities and military soldiers. Prominent men from the aristocracy were becoming members. The Order was also making enemies just as quickly. By 1738 the Protestant governments of Holland (1735), Sweden (1738), and Geneva (1738) had all taken measures against Freemasonry. The next enemy it would make would be the Roman Catholic Church.

Anderson's Constitution, which was originally published in 1723 to be a rule book of the 1717 Grand Lodge of London and Westminster to standardize the rituals, membership, and organization structure of the lodges and Grand Lodge, was amended slightly and republished in this year after the premier Grand Lodge changed its name to the Grand Lodge of England. Yet, already, Presbyterian Reverend James Anderson's (c. 1679/1680 – 1739) rule book had become the first Masonic book printed in the colonies by Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia in 1734. Anderson's Constitutions are said to be based off of the old Masonic manuscripts (i.e. the Gothic Constitutions) and on the General Regulations, which had been compiled first by George Payne in 1720.

A key chapter in Anderson's constitution, in regards to this topic, is found in article one 'Of God and Religion'. Both the Modern (1717) and the Ancient (1751) Grand Lodge versions of the first article of Freemasonry were very similar, as well as the version they agreed upon at their merger in 1813 to form the United Grand Lodge of England, but the purposes here I will quote the 1738 version:

“A Mason is obliged by his tenure to observe the moral law as a true Noachide; and if he rightly understands the Craft, he will never be a stupid Atheist nor an irreligious Libertine, nor act against conscience. In ancient Times, the Christian Masons were charged to comply with the Christian usages of each country where they traveled or worked; being found in all nations, even of divers

religions. They are generally charged to adhere to that religion in which all men agree (leaving each brother to his own particular opinions); that is, to be good men and true, men of honor and honesty, by whatever names, religions, or persuasions they may be distinguished; for they all agree in the three great articles of Noah, enough to preserve the cement of the lodge. Thus Masonry is the Center of Union, and the happy means of conciliating persons that otherwise must have remained at a perpetual distance.”

This first article holds that Freemasonry teaches that religion is a mere ‘opinion’, that it is good enough to be good, true, honorable, and honest (i.e. “probity”), and that Masonry is the true source of reconciliation. It would have been this very first rule of Freemasonry that Pope Clement XII would have pointed to as proof that Freemasonry teaches indifferentism (that it is unsectarian), and by such, is an error, vice, and danger to (plot against) the Catholic Church.

## 1738 – Pope Clement XII

Pope Clement XII was born Lorenzo on April 7, 1652 into the Corsini aristocratic family that had produced a cardinal of the Catholic Church in every generation for one hundred years. They even had a saint in the family; Saint Andrew Corsini (1302 – 1373), a Carmelite friar and Bishop of Fiesole.

Lorenzo was educated at the Collegio Romano at the University of Pisa, and after his father and his cardinal uncle died in 1685, he renounced his inheritance as the eldest son and entered the clergy. By 1690 he was the Archbishop of Nicomedia, and in 1706 Pope Clement XI made him cardinal priest. Pope Benedict XIII elevated him to the headship of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. After Benedict XIII died in 1730 a four month long conclave ensued, which finally elected Lorenzo, who then took the name Clement XII in honor of his benefactor. He was seventy-eight years of age at the time, and would exercise his Peterine ministry until his death in on February 6, 1740.

Pope Clement’s first year in office was extremely productive. He worked to repair the finances of the Church, which were ruined by his predecessor, by bringing to trial and imprisoning Cardinal Coscia for embezzlement, and forcing Benedict XIII’s other assistants to repay the monies they had stolen. To further refill the papal coffers, Clement XII relaunched the lottery system, issued paper money, taxed imports, and created a free-port at Ancona. He also drained marshes and built aqueducts. By year two of his papacy he became totally blind and bedridden with gout and a hernia. He would spend the rest of his pontificate governing from his bed, but no less ambitiously, with the help of his nephew Neri Maria Cardinal Corsini (1685 – 1770).

One of the most lasting actions of Pope Clement XII’s papacy was the issuance of the Papal Bull [\*In Eminentissimis\*](#) (On Freemasonry) on April 28, 1738. Space here permits me to quote the second and last two paragraphs of this document, which are most essential to the topic of this paper.

“Now it has come to Our ears, and common gossip has made clear, that certain Societies, Companies, Assemblies, Meetings, Congregations or Conventicles called in the popular tongue *Liberi Muratori* or *Francs Massons* or by other names according to the various languages, are spreading far and wide and daily growing in strength; and men of any Religion or sect, satisfied with the appearance of natural probity, are joined together, according to their laws and the statutes laid down for them, by a strict and unbreakable bond which obliges them, both by an oath upon the Holy Bible and by a host of grievous punishment, to an inviolable silence about all that they do in secret

together. But it is in the nature of crime to betray itself and to show itself by its attendant clamor. Thus these aforesaid Societies or Conventicles have caused in the minds of the faithful the greatest suspicion, and all prudent and upright men have passed the same judgment on them as being depraved and perverted. For if they were not doing evil they would not have so great a hatred of the light. Indeed, this rumor has grown to such proportions that in several countries these societies have been forbidden by the civil authorities as being against the public security, and for some time past have appeared to be prudently eliminated.

“Wherefore We command most strictly and in virtue of holy obedience, all the faithful of whatever state, grade, condition, order, dignity or pre-eminence, whether clerical or lay, secular or regular, even those who are entitled to specific and individual mention, that none, under any pretext or for any reason, shall dare or presume to enter, propagate or support these aforesaid societies of *Liberi Muratori* or *Francs Massons*, or however else they are called, or to receive them in their houses or dwellings or to hide them, be enrolled among them, joined to them, be present with them, give power or permission for them to meet elsewhere, to help them in any way, to give them in any way advice, encouragement or support either openly or in secret, directly or indirectly, on their own or through others; nor are they to urge others or tell them, incite or persuade them to be enrolled in such societies or to be counted among their number, or to be present or to assist them in any way; but they must stay completely clear of such Societies, Companies, Assemblies, Meetings, Congregations or Conventicles, under pain of excommunication for all the above mentioned people, which is incurred by the very deed without any declaration being required, and from which no one can obtain the benefit of absolution, other than at the hour of death, except through Ourselves or the Roman Pontiff of the time.

“Moreover, We desire and command that both Bishops and prelates, and other local ordinaries, as well as inquisitors for heresy, shall investigate and proceed against transgressors of whatever state, grade, condition, order dignity or pre-eminence they may be; and they are to pursue and punish them with condign penalties as being most suspect of heresy. To each and all of these We give and grant the free faculty of calling upon the aid of the secular arm, should the need arise, for investigating and proceeding against those same transgressors and for pursuing and punishing them with condign penalties.”

## **Claimed Motives Behind *In Eminenti* by Freemasons**

Some Masonic historians posit that Pope Clement XII's objection to Freemasonry was not ideological at all. They say that it had something to do with the Pope attempting to reclaim influence Florence, Parma, and Piacenza, and reassert control over Naples and Sicily that had just been conquered by Spain. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francis Stephen (soon to be the Holy Roman Emperor) had become a Freemason, and Florence, Italy had a number of noblemen living there who had formed the first Italian Masonic Lodge in that city probably in 1733, which was being led by a protestant named Charles Sackville, Earl of Middlesex (soon to be Duke of Dorset).

At least one troubling problem with this claim is that out of one side of their mouth these historians say that the Pope couldn't have possibly known for himself anything about the teachings of Freemasonry being that he was blind, infirm, and bedridden. Even if a blind, infirm, and bedridden person were incapable of asking the right questions of the right people, this notion discounts the time that Pope Clement XII spent as head of the headship of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, which would have given him firsthand

knowledge of the emerging Masonic order. Being that the Pope was blind, infirm, and bedridden they then point to Neri Maria Cardinal Corsini as being the person in charge, yet simultaneously they point to a letter that Neri wrote to his uncle after the Bull on Freemasonry was published in which he assures the Pope that Freemasonry in England is merely an innocent amusement. Surely, if Neri was the secret Pope while Clement XII was blind, infirm, and bedridden then either Neri did not write such a letter, or he was not the secret Pope.

Moreover, I am not altogether sure what degree of interest some Protestant Freemasons from Britain would have taken with a threat of excommunication from the Catholic Church. Also, no papal prohibition against Freemasonry was ever registered with the French parliament, therefore, never legally binding in civil law. Evidence of all the Catholic clergy who were Freemasons prior to the French Revolution is evidence is that.

The other Masonic claim is a bit more credible. It says that the motive behind *In Eminenti* may have more to do with the disturbances and royal influence that Freemasonry was gaining in France and Italy, than it had to do with moral and/or religious objections. They point to an incident in Paris, France involving Freemasons. By 1736 Freemasons had increased in the city to the point of having nine different lodges. Among those numbers were the Prince of Cinti, all the Dukes of France and even the Count of Maurepas.<sup>vi</sup> By March 29, 1737 the police of Paris had forbidden taverns and meeting houses from hosting Masonic meetings, due to a “great Feast” that had caused degree of property damage.<sup>vii</sup> They also point to the Florence Freemasons who were quieter, but in 1737 had, nonetheless, earned a visit by the Holy Inquisitor who was sent there by Pope Clement XII to prosecute them at the request of the Duke of Tuscany. Of course this persecution went nowhere after Francis Stephen succeeded him upon his death in that same year.

### **The Motives Behind *In Eminenti* as Delineated in *In Eminenti***

According to Pope Clement XII, the motives behind *In Eminenti* to condemn Freemasonry and prohibit Catholics from associating with it in any positive manner were because:

1. Freemasonry is an error, vice, danger, and disturbance in the Catholic Church; being such the Orthodox Religion needs to be kept free from it; lest it (Freemasonry) breaks into the household of God like thieves, and like foxes seeking to destroy the vineyard.
2. Freemasonry caters towards/relies on/was established on natural probity (i.e. indifferentism) and its own law. It obligates men by an oath on the Bible and by a host of grievous punishment and silence about what they do in secret together.
3. Being that Masonic meetings take place in secrecy – lack of transparency – they cause rumor and the faithful to have great suspicious about it.
4. Societies like these disturb the peace of the temporal state and well-being of souls.

### **Conclusion**

For next three centuries the Catholic Church would continue follow these findings of Pope Clement XII and reaffirm her perspicuous positions against Freemasonry; most especially in regards to the charge of Freemasonry having a plotting indifferentism towards all monotheistic religions; particularly towards the true faith of Catholicism.

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## Endnotes

**i** There is dispute as to whether there were four lodges in attendance with some ‘unattached’ older Freemasons present, or whether there were actually six lodges in attendance that would account for all those who voted.

**ii** The 1917 Code of Canon Law was replaced with a newer version in 1983 which states, “A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; however, a person who promotes or directs an association of this kind is to be punished with an interdict.”

**iii** Constitution In Eminenti (1738) Pope Clement XII, Providas (1751) Pope Benedict XIV, Ecclesiam (1821) Pope Pius VII, Quo graviora (1826) Pope Leo XII, Encyclical Traditi Humilitati (1829) Pope Pius VIII, Mirari Vos (1832) Pope Gregory XVI. Six by Pope Pius IX include Encyclical Qui pluribus (1846), Allocution Quibus quantisque malis (1849), Encyclical Quanta cura (1864), Allocution Multiplices inter (1865), Constitution Apostolicae Sedis (1869), and Encyclical Etsi multa (1873). Five by Pope Leo XIII include Encyclical Etsi nos (1882), Ab Apostolici (1890), Encyclical Humanum genus (1884), Praeclara (1894), Annum ingress (against Italian Freemasonry) (1902).

**iv** A Mason’s Examination (1723), The Grand Mystery of Freemasons Discovered (1724), The Secret History of Freemasonry (1724), The Whole Institution of Free-Masons Opened (1725), The Grand Mystery of the Free Masons Discover’d, Wherein are the Several Questions Put to Them at Their Meetings and Installations, also Their Oath, Health, Signs, Points to Know Each Other by, etc. (1725), The Grand Mystery Laid Open, or the Free Masons Signs and Words Discovered (1726), The Mystery of Freemasonry (1730).

**v** Sources for these claims online can be found at <http://www.quintestalbans.com/freemasonry-controversy.php> (retrieval date: 05/01/2014), and <http://www.masonicnetwork.org/blog/history/proven-history-afer-1700ce/> (retrieval date: 05/01/2014).

**vi** Read, Will. The Church of Rome and Freemasonry. Ars Quator Cornoatorum Transactions. Vol 104. (1991).

**vii** Ibid.

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# The Giver (2014 Film) Review [at My Catholic Tube]

## The Synopsis:

Released on August 15, 2014, **The Giver** is a PG-13 rated 97 minute drama, sci-fi, heroes'-journey, social-science film starring Brenton Thwaites as the key protagonist, along with Jeff Bridges and Meryl Streep. The film was shot in Cape Town, Johannesburg, England, and Utah. It is loosely based on a 1993 novel of the same title by Lois Lowry.

**The Giver** is precisely what would happen if you mixed together **Pleasantville**, **Divergent**, and **The Count of Monte Cristo**. I enjoyed it.

The setting of this movie is 2048. After a great war a new society was formed that attempts to neuter what is believed to have been the root cause of human failure. In this new society there is no race, religion, color, envy, hate, pain, winners, losers, resentment, anger, fear, differences, popularity, fame, or feelings. The emotion of love has also been eliminated. Every citizen in this society must receive a morning injection to unknowingly suppress these intrinsic human qualities, so that everyone will be the same. The belief is that sameness brings peace. The weather in this society is controlled. There is no snow or any other inclement conditions. The thought is that non-consistent weather makes the farmers nonconformists, and if crops won't grow, people become hungry and malcontents. There is no music or dancing in the new society, because things such as these stir emotions. Society is governed by a Council of Elders, of whom Meryl Streep's character is the Chief Elder.

Being that there is no love and no emotion and no human sexual intercourse in this society, children are genetically created, and assigned to a 'family unit'. When they reach the age of nine they are given a bicycle, and when they turn eighteen they are assigned a role in community. They are told that all the training they received up to that point is to help them fit in and curb impulses that may set them apart from others. Those who have grown too old to be useful to society are 'released' (i.e. euthanized) to 'elsewhere'.

The story takes off when eighteen year old Jonas, played by Brenton Thwaites, receives the role of 'Receiver of Memories' at his advancement ceremony. He was given this role because he possesses all four attributes; that is, intelligence, integrity, courage, and the capacity to see beyond. To train for this role in society he must travel to the fringes of the community proper to visit with the societies' current Receiver of Memories, played by Jeff Bridges, who now assumes the role of Giver.

Through reading books and mind-melding (excuse the Star Trek term) the Giver, transmits to Jonas not only the facts of human history prior to the new society being born, but also the emotions he's had suppressed all of his life. Soon Jonas stops taking his daily injections so that he might more fully experience his emotions and senses. He is overcome with grief when The Giver transmits to him the emotion of pain from war. He begins feeling love for his baby brother and a girl (Fiona) that had always been just his friend. Jonas' breaking point is when he discovers that his baby brother is going to be 'released' because he failed to pass some sort of standardized testing for infants. This compels him to go on a journey to discover the truth that will set everyone free from the system of lies. Similar to Father Faria and Edmond Dantes in **The Count of Monte Cristo**, The Giver give Jonas the map so that the

young man might take the journey that he never could.

## **The Main Cast & Crew:**

Jeff Bridges as The Giver, Meryl Streep as Chief Elder, Brenton Thwaites as Jonas, Alexander Skarsgård as Father, Katie Holmes as Mother, Odeya Rush as Fiona, Cameron Monaghan as Asher, Taylor Swift as Rosemary, and Emma Tremblay as Lilly.

## **What's Redeeming about The Giver?:**

**The Giver** is an interesting convergence of the similar paths that Christianity has with socialism and communism. The former has faith in the coming of what the latter two attempt to engineer. That is, a world without war, pain, envy, greed, hunger, sickness, and etc. The former believes that we are all one in Christ, while the latter two strive towards the idea of sameness, which they attempt to hide under the word 'equality'.

There are a number of wonderful Christian ideas woven into **The Giver**, such as the idea that truth is found on the fringes of society, where Jonas had to travel to every day to find out what was real and what was not real. Jeff Bridges' character tells Jonas that faith is seeing beyond; that faith is like the wind – feeling by not seeing. He tells him that with love comes faith and hope. His belief that memories are the truth is something Christians can reconcile with the second part of Jesus' Great Commission (Cf. Matthew 28:20).

There is also a strong Pro-Life message against infanticide in this movie when Jonas fights for his baby brother not to be euthanized.

## **What is Non Redeemable about The Giver?:**

It was noticeable in the movie that whenever Jonas received memories regarding religion, all of the world's major religions were mixed together. The image of the child being Baptized was immediately followed by a large group of Muslims praying. One could definitely make the case that such a depiction tended towards indifferentism.

## **Overall Take on The Giver?:**

Meryl Streep's character said that whenever people have the freedom to choose, they choose wrong. Every elitist believes that.

**The Giver** is an excellent commentary on society; both past and present. Ever since The Fall, humans has been trying over and over again to recreate Eden or an Utopia – the perfect society. We do this because we are yearning deeply and impatiently for what is to come, and what we were created for. Yet, because we do it outside of Christ and without Christ, we can never achieve it. It always eventually crumbles under the weight of truth. That's the message of **The Giver**.



## Mature Believers [at Catholic365]

Mature Believers, on November 15, 1972, at a General Audience, Pope Paul VI said the following: "WHAT ARE the Church's greatest needs at the present time? Don't be surprised at Our answer and don't write it off as simplistic or even superstitious: one of the Church's greatest needs is to be defended against the evil we call the Devil."

It is worth reading the entire text of this address to understand, yet again, how the Lord is always teaching us exactly what we need to understand about the world in which we live. Pope Paul VI speaks movingly about the beauty of the Christian vision of the universe, as well as its dramatic history, gifted with the great treasures of Redemption. Yet, his focus in this address is upon the proper awareness, understanding, and response to the mystery of evil.

A question that begs answering is: why does so much evil go unchallenged? There are well-established evils already present in the world, abortion and pornography, to name a few of the many evils. But, there are also newly developing evils that scandalize us, yet don't seem to rouse enough of us to action. The barbaric activity of Isis in the Middle East is a current example of new evil, and there are others.

One of the fastest growing criminal activities in the world is human trafficking. Somewhere between 27 and 30 million people have already been enslaved by it. This is an evil that is unquestionably intelligent, organized, and has the darkest of forces behind it. There are many people addressing this abomination, including our own SOLT Sisters in Thailand, who have a "safe" house for young girls who come to the city to study, and who would otherwise be vulnerable to the sex industry there. But are there enough of us who see with a mature eye and play a decisive role in this battle of the Kingdoms?

Recently, one of our Sisters was on a plane from Corpus Christi to Kansas City. There were 4 young girls on the plane. The head flight attendant asked Sister to help her to find out where these girls were from and where they were going. Sister was able to obtain the requested information, which had marks of human trafficking. It was reported immediately to the Police. There was an emergency landing in Houston where these girls were recovered by the Immigration Officials. A man on the flight who acted like the protector of these girls was arrested at the next stop-over in Dallas. Sister was accompanied by a police escort the rest of the way to Kansas City to ensure her safety. The depravity of human trafficking is close to home, present among us. Are we alert to the evil that may be directly in front of us?

Christine Caine, a wonderful, spirit-filled, mature believer who is among those standing up to this evil, has found in her work with women, some horrific realities of the way human trafficking operates. She recounted the story of a young woman in Bulgaria who went out with her friend. A drug was put in her coffee. She woke up in a different country (Greece) chained to a bed, and forced to take 25 men a day. This went on for 3 weeks, at which point she was able to contact her mother through a cell phone she'd hidden. Her mother got hold of Chris Caine's organization, A21, and they were able to rescue the girl and get her to a safe house.

Human trafficking in that part of the world follows this pattern: the traffickers work the girls for two years. Then, those who are able, they impregnate. They then sell the babies to infant farms, who in turn sell the children to pedophile rings, illegal adoption rings, and begging rings. Begging rings use children

to get money ,and they often amputate limbs, because such children bring in more money. As for the girls, they overdose them with drugs and when they die, their organs are trafficked, another huge activity of organized crime. These things are beyond shocking. But this is what happens when evil goes unchallenged. It proliferates at incredible speed.

This is what happens when we refuse to become mature believers who stand up to whatever evil presents itself in our lives and the lives of those we love. This is what happens when we wallow in our own self-centered world, allowing ourselves to be endlessly distracted and deceived, and refusing to let Christ really detach us, cleanse us, strengthen us, and transform us into warriors for the Kingdom, into valiant men and women meant for such a time as this.

We were not set into this time by the Lord to be comfortable. We're meant to make a difference in the cause of Christ, in halting the spread of darkness and advancing the Kingdom of God in this generation. We have a lot of territory to reclaim. But we take heart that God will equip us for every good work (Tim. 3:17). Please, let us do the work we need to do to die to the "old" man (woman), so that we can authentically take up our positions in the battle, and in Christ, and help to free His people from the oppression of the evil one. May the Holy Spirit and Our Blessed Mother lead us as their little army, in all humility and docility to the complete victories of Christ.

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## We were on TV!!! [at follow and believe]

Oh man. Y'all this post is so fun to write. On one hand, I cannot believe that

[#NASBoston](#)

is already over, but I'm so excited to share all the deets with you!!

[grab some coffee or a snack, this one's gonna be long]

As a recap of how we got here, way back in May, Bonnie at

[CatholicTV](#)

reached out to us about being interviewed about building community after college and the

[Not Alone Series](#)

. Jen and I were so blown away and so excited for this opportunity to share the NAS community with more of the world!

So, we started making plans to fly out to Boston, where CatholicTV is located. Keeping this secret was SO hard! And then we finally got to share it with our

[#NASavannah](#)

ladies....then made

[the public announcement](#)

! The support received was incredible, and being able to have all of you share in our excitement made this opportunity that much more thrilling.

Ok, so enough with my recap before the recap! Let's get down to it!

Our interview was scheduled for Friday morning (9/12), so the only logical plan was for Jen and I to fly into Boston on Thursday evening. Unfortunately for me, flight options were not super flexible...since I

didn't want to take an additional day off of work for the trip, I had to leave after 5PM. This meant that the earliest I could arrive in Boston was 11:59PM.

But hey, I was coming from the Central time zone, so I hoped that this paired with my night owl tendencies would help me out.

The flight from Champaign to Chicago was uneventful...except that it began my **FIRST SOLO FLYING TRIP EVER!** Yes, I am in my mid-twenties and have never flown by myself.

Go to dinner solo? Check.

See movies alone? Check.

Roadtrip by my lonesome? Check.

But fly across the country by myself? This was a first!

My first leg of the trip was only 31 mins long...insane! And the clouds were so gorgeous!



...gorgeous.

By the time I landed in Chicago, the sun had set and I'd gotten myself in a tizzy over the fear of missing my

connection to Boston. Luckily, I made it to my terminal with plenty of time...until 2 minutes before boarding they announced that the plane was deemed unfit to fly and we needed to move to a different terminal.

Cue mad dash to a terminal clear across the airport. Because that's convenient. Oiy.

It all worked out and our ETA was only pushed back by a couple minutes.

Well, poor Jen had already arrived in Boston and upon deciding to wait at the airport for me to get in so we could share a cab, had found out from an employee that my flight might be delayed/cancelled. I was so frustrated that they told her that! Never did I hear any word of my flight being cancelled, so that worry was all for nothing! Sorry, Jen!

I finally arrived in Boston, found Jen, grabbed a cab, paid WAYYY too much for a fare, stayed up too late chatting with our amazing host Shae, and hit the hay.

Waking up Friday morning [suuuper early] was somewhat surreal. Was this really happening? Jen and I struggled to wake up, but had some coffee and got ready in Shae's amazing duplex. I wish I would have taken some photos! It was so cute and Shae is seriously THEE best hostess. By far.



Nervous and excited!!

Jen and I rush rush rushed to get ready and managed to take a quick pic before heading out the door!



Bonnie from CatholicTV picked us up a little before 9AM and we were off! After so many months of going back and forth with Bonnie, it was so nice to put a face to the name! She was super sweet and accommodating! Thanks again for everything, Bonnie!!!

When we finally arrived at the studio, that's when everything got real. I started getting super nervous and THANK GOD we had the opportunity to attend Mass because I don't know how I would have remained semi-calm.

Although, the multiple cameras recording mass LIVE didn't help me calm down toooo much. But, Jesus did :)



Most of Mass was spent praying that the Lord give me His words while on air...and that I wouldn't pass out. Ha! Please know that I prayed for you, too, and offered my Mass for all of you out there!

Post-Mass, we met the other gentleman being interviewed on This Is The Day, Jim Gorman from

[The Society of St. Vincent de Paul](#)

, and Bonnie gave us a quick tour around the studio.

Now, I don't know about anyone else, but I'm the type of person who needs a little time to get centered before public speaking. So when at 10:20, we were still looking around the studio...I was getting antsy. Like, checking-my-watch-isn't-anyone-else-worried?! antsy. This was when Bonnie told us that 10 minutes before showtime was lightyears in the TV business. Oiy!! I am NOT cut out for that!!

Taking pity on my poor nerves, Bonnie showed us to the set and OH MAN were we excited. AH!!

We got to meet one of the hosts of

[This Is The Day](#)

, Jay Fadden, who was great and assured us that we had nothing to worry about. Sweet, Jay, but I was still tweaking! Turns out that Jim was going to be interviewed first, so we had some time to chill out.

So Jen and I snapped a couple shots...



There's Jay!



Jen tried to take the first one....hilarious! But we did get a selfie with Jay! ha.

Before we knew it, Jim's portion was over and we were being ushered onto the big red couch! We met Kevin Nelson, Jay's co-host for the day since Father Reed was gone, who also assured us to just take a breath and it'll be fine. They both were so funny and normal, it was easy to forget that we were about to be interviewed ON LIVE TELEVISION. Actually...we forgot a little too soon and the guys had us laughing so loud the crew guys asked us to quiet down...oh right, the news segment was filming...whoops!

And then it was three, two, one.....

Ok, really. Those 6 minutes were some of the most fun I've ever had. Well, those and then the 10ish after the interview when we just sat and chatted with Jay and Kevin. Here are a couple more pictures from during the interview...



Jen and I! On TV!!!



Shameless screenshot from YouTube....IS THIS REAL LIFE?! THAT'S ME!!!

And now for my favorite part of the whole interview...





"WHERE. IS. HE."

Hilar. See?! They made us feel so comfortable! This is the kind of thing I would say to a friend...not intentionally on LIVE TELEVISION. But hey, I did ask God to give me the words to say what needed to be said, soooo.....

When we were finished with the interview, we just kind of hung out on set with Jay and Kevin, joking about how to meet guys in Boston. Somehow we got on the topic of whether buying us a couple "cups o' chowda" would be a smooth move, which is where I believe this shot came from:



Analyzing our expressions and gestures now makes it all look so staged, but I swear! Bonnie was taking pictures throughout and this one's completely natural!

Then we all took a group picture...



After this, it's all kind of a blur...I know we hung out with Bonnie in her office a bit, and then ended up back in the studio for part two of our interviews. Apparently, there's a monthly show that Kevin hosts called

[Encounter](#)

, so eventually our interviews will be featured on that as well!

This time, Jen and I were interviewed separately by Kevin...which allowed us to get some shots of each other getting interviewed!!

First I went...



Then it was Jen's turn in the hot seat!



We both had the chance then to do a little prompter work...basically just saying "I'm \_\_\_\_\_, and you're watching CatholicTV" ...but it was pretty cool! I've never used a prompter before, so realizing that the words are RIGHT OVER the camera blew my mind! I always envisioned the prompter being to the side of the camera!

Once these little segments were completed, Jen and I were ready to head out! But, not not before a couple more photo ops!





I'm totally blown away by our experience at CatholicTV. Not only was this an amazing opportunity to reach more people with the ministry that is the Not Alone Series, but Jen and I left the studios refreshed, re-energized, and reinvigorated with the passion behind WHY we started the Not Alone Series.

In the day to day, when I tell people that I have a blog or when I try to explain what the Not Alone Series is, I'm usually met with blank stares and polite nods. People aren't outright rude, but oftentimes I feel that the idea of "having a blog" is met with confusion. And the concept of a community built through an online forum is seen as being weird. Maybe this is my misinterpretation, or my own insecurities.

Either way, being at CatholicTV, all we were met with was openness, excitement, and interest. People who not only were genuinely interested in learning more about the Not Alone Series, but could recognize that there IS a need for it. And furthermore, the people we met AFFIRMED our mission to help others know that they are not alone.

Every single person we met at CatholicTV was great. And I'm not just saying that! They really were. We had some time in between things to talk to some of the crew, and there were all so cool and passionate about their work. The other thing that was really cool is how many young people work at CatholicTV! Of the people we encountered, I'd say roughly half were in their 20s or 30s. AWESOME!

I could go on and on and on and on and.....but I won't. I'll just say this: thank you, CatholicTV, for inviting us out to experience your ministry to the world. Keep up the amazing work, you're doing good for the Kingdom!

There is so much more that I want to share, but I'll save that for part 2...coming tomorrow!

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This contribution is available at <http://follow-and-believe.blogspot.com/2014/09/nas-boston-recap-part-1.html>  
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## Skirts are not modest [at Working to be Worthy]

-1-

Let's start with a definition. Modesty is defined as freedom from conceit or vanity, also propriety in dress, speech, and conduct. I would paraphrase to say that modesty means avoiding undue or improper attention. Modesty, therefore, is extremely culturally dependent.

-2-

I believe most people in the modesty discussion accept the modesty is cultural. We understand that being topless in some cultures is completely modest at the same time that showing one's knees may create scandal. Here's the problem: we Americans each believe our own culture is

*the*

American culture.

-3-

I function in a fairly insular culture. The vast majority of my social interactions are with observant Catholics, many of whom homeschool. In my culture, skirts - even long ones - are modest. However, I live in a suburban small town. I can tell you that wearing an ankle-length skirt around town is not modest. I attract much more attention just walking down the street. People notice me. They look more closely at me and my clothing. I make no assumptions about whether the attention is improper, but it is certainly undue!



-4-

We live in America, a land of many cultures. What is modest in one setting is not modest in another. We choose our clothing to send a message (even if the message is "I'm just wearing this because it's

comfortable"), but those receiving the message see us through their own cultural lens.

-5-

What about the idea that skirts are less sexual than pants? I mentioned this to my husband, who shook his head. "Skirts are always more sexy, unless the pants are basically painted on. But even a pair of fitted pants is never as attractive as a skirt. Think about a camera panning up a woman; when is she ever wearing a pantsuit? Skirts are feminine; femininity is attractive." We asked a male friend of ours who said it depends on the girl and the pants, but agreed that it is ridiculous to say skirts are less sexually suggestive across the board, even discounting short skirts. (... or across the board... hehe)

-6-

There is also the claim from the "cover everything" camp that women are responsible for protecting the men around them from their base instincts. This does a great disservice to men (see

[How the modesty police are hurting my son](#)

) and women. What at first glance may seem like a call to accountability and high moral standards can also pave the road for shaming and blaming the victim.

-7-

Finally, much of the cry for modesty smacks of gnosticism (all matter is evil). Since when did our bodies, made in the image and likeness of God, become a near occasion of sin? "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body." Our bodies are not shameful, meant to be hidden away, never admired, dismissed as not "the real us". In different bodies, we would not be who we are. Our bodies are temples. So yes, treat them with respect. Remember that God is living in you; dress, talk, and live in such a way that others can see Him. If you want, wear a skirt.

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This contribution is available at <http://workingtobeworthy.blogspot.com/2014/09/skirts-are-not-modest.html>  
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## Being on CatholicTV! [at Jumping In Puddles]

I wish I never had to come down from the high that was #NASBoston! But then... Monday happened, and it welcomed me very quickly back to reality. Ah, well. It's ok. :) What's reality vs being ON TV?!

You guys... it was incredible. Amazing. Fun. Encouraging. AWESOME.



I keep going back and forth if I should do a play by play of the weekend... and I suppose that's what I will do. It's more fun. At least I hope so! I will have 2 parts:

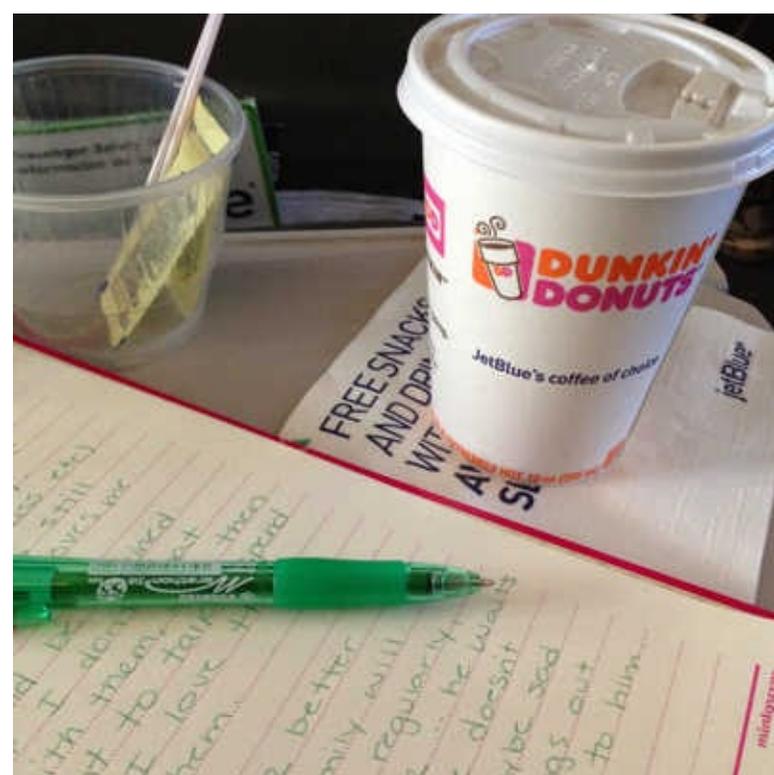
#NASBoston: being on TV (this one!)

#NASBoston: exploring the city (tomorrow!)

So... grab a cup of coffee, put your feet up and let's get started. :)



I was tweeting up a storm because besides talking my mom's ear off over and over and over again... it's all I really could do to contain my excitement and nerves. I AM FLYING TO BOSTON TO BE ON TV.. I wanted to run up to everyone and talk about it. But... that would be weird, and no one really cares.



My flight was uneventful... I was able to read and journal and think. Lots of thinking. I enjoyed some good coffee, and the amazingness that is JetBlue. If you can fly them, DO IT! Once I got to the airport in Boston, I walked around a bit, and then decided to head towards Morgan's terminal. After going back and forth whether to wait for Morgan or head to my friend Shaelena's house... I decided to just hang out at the airport. I read... drank more coffee... did a TON of people watching... watched the cops with the bomb dog to check out a bag that was left alone (at the end of the bench where I was sitting!)... and tried really hard not to fall asleep. A little after midnight,

[Morgan](#)

made it and we were OFF! :)

We got to the Brighton area around 1am... and Shae stayed up. {Let me just stop for a sec and dote on Miss Shaelena. SHE IS THE BEST HOST IN THE ENTIRE WORLD! She (and her roomies) let us crash on her air mattress, use the ONE bathroom, offered all of her food, listened to A LOT of God talk allll weekend, was excited to hear about our TV debut, made a Google map of all her fave things, played tour guide, hung out with us, laughed with us... and just made the entire weekend that much sweeter. Seriously, Shae... if you read this, THANK YOU! I am so grateful for everything that you did for us. The weekend wouldn't have been the same if you were not part of it. Looooove youuuu!}

Ok... so, we got in. Chatted with Shae. And, then... tried to sleep. Amongst the nerves... sleeping in the same bed with a friend that you have now just met for the SECOND time... and knowing we had to get up early... "sleep" was not what really happened. I think we just closed our eyes and tried really hard not to move and make the bed noisy. ;)

THE DAY HAS COME!!!



Eeeee!!! We got ready, had coffee, chatted more with Shae. Took some pics. That's what good bloggers do, right? I wish I had more selfies to share... but, alas! My screen is cracked, riiiiight in front of the camera. Boo.

Anyway... check out

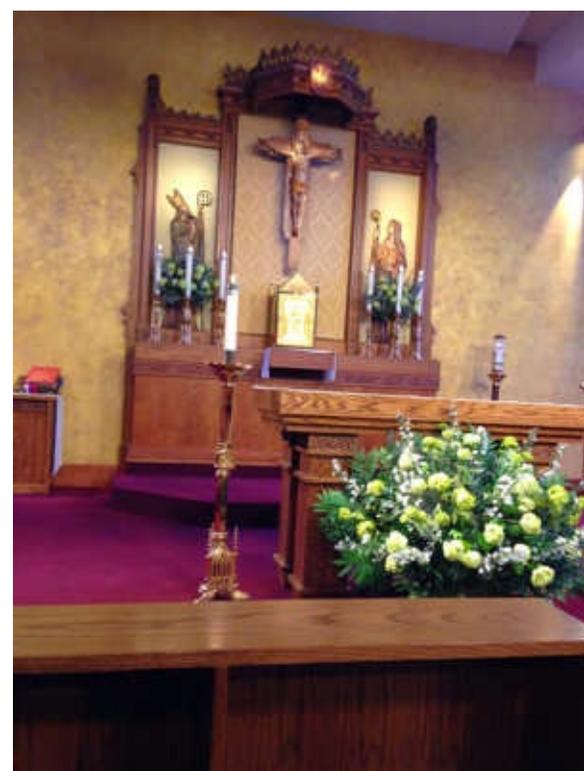
[Morgan's](#)

if selfies are yo' thing. :)

[Bonnie](#)

(the wonderful Director of Marketing and Programming) finally picked us up... and sh\*t got real, people. I like to talk a lot when I am nervous... and I was in the back by myself, and I felt like I couldn't really do that. So, I was just nervously twitching back there.

Maybe I wasn't, but that's what it felt like. The ride was pretty short and we got to the studios.



Bonnie showed us around a bit... and then we were able to go to Mass. The network airs Mass every.single.day. LIVE. It's really awesome. :) If you watched a little bit before

[\*This is the Day\*](#)

, then you may have see Morgan and I there. Let me just say, though... most distracting mass EVER. With the camera moving all around and the fact that WE were going to be on LIVE TV so soon... the fact that I was able to stand to receive the Eucharist was a miracle in and of itself. But, it was a nice calm, even if I was distracted. Jesus does have a way of doing that.

After mass, we chatted with a few people. And everyone was so nice and so welcoming. I mean, we felt like we belonged there just after stepping in the doors.

[CatholicTV](#)

, you have some amazing people working for you! Bonnie, then, took us on a tour of the actual studios. It

was neat to see behind the scenes. I know very little about the world of TV, so it was quite fun!

But, I wish I could say that I was really paying attention... I was so nervous. Morgan and I had no idea when we would be interviewed on the show. We didn't know where that was supposed to happen. We hadn't even met the people that would be interviewing us!

Freeeeaking out over here!

At 10:19, Bonnie finally asks what time it was! Morgan and I were VERY quick to let her know... and she was all, "oh! 10 minutes is like a million hours in TV time!"

Ha. Oh. Well, us newbies here don't know any of that! Can you please just take us to the place we are getting interviewed?!?!?!?

No... into the sound room we went. Oh man. Heart pounding, y'all. But, huge smile still on my face!

Ok, so... FINALLY into Studio A... where

*[This is the Day](#)*

is filmed. We are not on until the second interview. Ok.

Breathe.

And tweet. And text people. And take pics.



Allllll the crazy... and nerves... and excitement... and the OH MY GOSH IS THIS REALLY HAPPENINGS.... led to

:

*(And, I can honestly tell you... this is what is going on in my head right at the beginning: my MOM is watching. [Niki](#) is watching. [Alreen](#) is watching. [Beth Anne](#) is watching. It was terrifying and exciting all at the same time. People I know were actually watching. I really hoped I could make you all proud. I wanted to look at the camera and say HIIIIIIII! But, just couldn't.)*

Ahhhhh!!!! IT WAS INCREDIBLE! Jay and Kevin are THEE best. :) They made us feel so comfortable and were hilarious. They were ribbing each other before the show started, and I knew we would have a great time.

Here are some during the show shots... all taken by Bonnie, with permission to post here. :)





Annnnnnd, this! This pic is probably my absolute favorite! :) This was taken right after the show was done. We were all just chatting and the guys were telling us how guys get the ladies' attention in Boston: instead of buying them a drink, they walk up to them and say, "I bought you a nice bowl a chowda" with a wide grin, holding a steaming cup of clam chowder. Ha, it was hilarious! ;)

Oooooor maybe we were asking about a Catholic dating show. Hmm, that could have been it!



After we were done with

*This is the Day*

, we had the opportunity to tape some station IDs (where we look at the camera saying, "Hi! I'm Jen Cox, co-founder of the Not Alone Series and you're watching CatholicTV, America's Catholic Television Network" with a big smile!) and be interviewed separately for another show,

[Encounter](#)

, hosted by Kevin. At this point, I have no idea when that will air, but I will be sure to let you know. :)



And now that this is really long... and you want to throw your computers/phones out the window, I will begin to wrap it up.

I would like to say thank you so very much to all of the people at CatholicTV for such an amazing experience. As I said earlier, they made us feel right at home. We were welcomed with open arms and everyone was so pleasant and happy. We left there so encouraged and so on fire for what we were doing with the

[Not Alone Series](#)

The hosts and everyone we chatted with spoke to us as if we had something important to say. In a world where young people so often get looked down upon or people are just awkward around us, the people at CatholicTV spoke to us... just like the human beings that we are. Another member of the body of Christ. They wanted to hear about the struggles of Catholic singlehood, and even if they didn't know what to say our couldn't offer advice, they listened. And encouraged our ministry through the

[Not Alone Series](#)

So, all you ladies that we have gotten to know... thank YOU. Without you, there would be no series to talk about. Without your prayers and love and support and understanding of where I am in life... none of this would be possible. I am so grateful and thankful to God for this amazing community of women.

And thanks to

[Morgan](#)

for saying yes. Yes to the idea to start an online "something" for us single ladies. It's crazy to look back on those emails and realize that we really did have "high hopes and low expectations." And we mean it from the bottom of our hearts... if we continue to reach one other person, then we have done what we sought to do. If one other person feels encouraged and reminded that they are

*not alone*

, then God is continuing to do his thang with this ministry.

I wonder where He will take it next?!

*-Jen*

(Don't forget to come back tomorrow to see how the rest of our weekend went! I promise, more pics, less writing! :) )



## Wednesday's Word: Obedience [at Bible Meditations]



*Whether it pleases us or not, we will obey the Lord our God, to whom we are asking you to pray. All will go well with us if we obey him.” Jeremiah 42:6*

There are a lot of things we need to do, whether it pleases us or not, if we want things to “go well with us.” If we only did what we felt like, few of us would brush our teeth, go to work, or do a thousand other things that are in our best interests. How much more important is it to obey God, who knows what we need and loves us even more than we love ourselves? Wise parents teach their children to share, bathe, and use good table manners whether the children like it or not. The parents have the child’s long range well-being in mind, not just their momentary pleasure.

When I was in grade school, I hated math. I always did all my other homework first, putting off the dreaded computations until the last minute. My mom told me time and time again to do the hardest subject first, while I had the most energy. After countless frustrating nights of doing it my way, I finally followed Mom’s directions. I’m so glad I did. What I thought was the easy way out wasn’t easy nor was it the way out. Dealing with challenging tasks up front has served me well in any number of situations over the years.

We may not like what we’re called to do on any given day. It’s okay to feel whatever we do feel about it, but if we do what we believe God would have us do in those situations, we are not likely to regret it. God is good all the time. We might not experience immediate gratification, but we can believe that all will go well with us when we follow His promptings.

Prayer: Lord, grant me willingness to surrender to Your will.

Reflection: When have you seen things go well even though they didn’t go your way?



## Is Christ really living through you? [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]



***Living the Truly Christian Life – is letting Christ live through us ...***

*In order to truly live the Christian life we have to intentionally yield our selves to the Spirit of Christ so that He may not only live in us but also through us to the Glory of God the Father and the manifestation of His Kingdom in the world today!*

**<> Intentionally following Jesus begins the process ...** Jesus said to all, ***“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.”*** (Luke 9:23)

**<> Jesus emptied Himself to let the Spirit of God work through Him...** Paul told the Philippians, ***“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”*** (Phil 2:5-7)

**<> As we empty ourselves, the Holy Spirit conforms us to Christ our Master...** Likewise we also must empty ourselves so that He may increase His life in us and perform His Works through us (cf. John 3:30). For... ***“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.”*** (Rom 8:28-29)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of the main problems that we modern Christians have in really living out our faith is that we don't understand that, in order to truly live the Christian Faith in Christ Our Savior and Lord, we have to let Christ truly “live in us” and “through us”, not just “around us”. Because we incorrectly assume that, because we have received the Spirit of Christ at baptism, all we have to do to live the “Christian life” is through our own self-willed, efforts and diligence in living a “moral” and “sanctified life”. We never consider that this approach is not consistent with the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus preached. And,

that living a religiously compliant life under our own self-will is exactly what the Pharisees were doing in Jesus' time. Jesus is asking us to go beyond that.

The Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus preached indicated that, the Father, through His Son, Jesus, was opening the door for a new epoch in Man's relationship with God. A relationship that would involve an intimate personal interaction of God with us, such that by re-birthing His Spirit in us, He would bring us into partnership with Him in order begin the process of bringing His Kingdom to this world. Since Jesus, His Son, was to be the Way for Man to enter into that partnership, He had to become one of us, yet without sin, so that He could, through the sacrifice of His Life and Resurrection, be the source of the New Life in the Spirit for those who believed in Him and accepted Him as their Savior and King.

Jesus accepted His commission from the Father when He yielded Himself to the Father's Will and was baptized by John. In turn, we as believers, not only receive His indwelling Spirit at our baptism, but also the responsibility and honor of freely ratifying Jesus' commitment to the Father by yielding ourselves completely to His Spirit in us so that He, and He alone, could work in us and through us to bring forth the Kingdom of God in this fallen world.

We must further understand that we, even though baptized, cannot, out of our own self-willed efforts, do anything spiritual, such as bringing forth God's kingdom! It is only through the power and authority of the KING who dwells in us that anything spiritual may be accomplished. Remember what Jesus said, "... ***without Me you can do nothing***".

The only thing lacking for our full participation in partnership with Him, however, is our ratification of Jesus' commitment to the Father. We ratify Jesus' commitment and become His partners by yielding ourselves completely to His authority, and letting ourselves be empowered by His Spirit so that He, and He alone can operate in us and through us. And, by doing so, then we make it clear that it is indeed He who activates and empowers all that we do in His Name! ***"For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory, Forever and Ever. Amen!"***

Nevertheless, because we don't know any better, most of us neglect to make this affirmation or ratification of Jesus' Commission through the yielding of our lives to Him and thus fail to activate the work of the Holy Spirit in us to permit HIM to revive us spiritually and open us to a new awareness of the Spirit of Christ in us to move us towards the accomplishment of His purposes – not ours!

If however, when led by God's gracious Spirit, we do make such an intentional yielding of the right to ourselves, we continue our normal everyday, intellectually self-aware living of our lives but we begin a gradual transition to a life lived in a new, transformed awareness – a spiritual awareness completely apart from the awareness we receive in this material world, that is, from our physical senses and our intellect and reasoning powers and our emotions. It is an awareness that we, sadly, didn't even realize was available to all believers who have been converted and baptized into Christ.

I am speaking of a spiritual awareness where we can, without leaving our bodies, actually experience contact with the Spirit of God and His Holy Spirit and where we can experience a personal fellowship with the Triune God, who then, through this relationship, empowers us to live our lives, not for ourselves, but for Him, through the indwelling Spirit of Christ in us. ***To Him be the Glory forever and ever. Amen and Amen!***

<> ***What Jesus told Nicodemus about coming to a renewed Spiritual Awareness ...***



When Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, came to Jesus at night (to avoid being noticed), he admitted to Jesus that the testimonies he had heard about the miracles Jesus was doing in the community, caused Him to realize that God must be working through Him. Jesus, in essence told him that if He had come to the awareness that God was working through His ministry, the only way he could come to that awareness was that God had activated his spirit to that sensitivity.

Here is what Jesus said, “***Verily, Verily I say to you, unless the spirit of a person be re-born*** (or re-activated), ***that person would not be aware of the manifestation of His Kingdom.***” (see. John 3:1-18 for the entire discourse)

Nicodemus, like many of us, was incredulous, asking, “***How is it possible for a mature living person to be “re-born”? Can he enter into his mother’s womb a second time?***”

Doesn’t that sound like a lot of us when we first hear that our spiritual natures need to be re-activated in order to be aware of what God wants to do in our lives? Don’t we respond with. “well, I have been baptized, do I need to be baptized again?”.

Listen to how Jesus responded to Nicodemus’ question. “***verily, verily, I say to you, unless a person is not only baptized in water*** [like I was] ***but also baptized in the Spirit*** [like I was] ***he cannot participate in the Ministry of the Kingdom. Being born naturally does not activate your spirit, only the Spirit of God can re-activate a person’s spirit*** [so that you become a new creation and be empowered to minister in the Spirit].”

He continued to explain to Nicodemus (and to us), “***Just as you can sense when the wind is blowing in your face so also you can sense the leadings of the Holy Spirit. If you have not yet become aware of the leadings of the Holy Spirit working in your life, then you have NOT YET been born of the Spirit!***”

<> ***Would you like to go further in Following Jesus?***

Yes, brothers and sisters, we may have received our spiritual batteries at baptism, but have we, at the cusp of our maturity and free will, turned on the switch that turns on those batteries? Don’t you think it is time to do that and begin living our lives as instruments of His Love in us?

And say, that in the past you may have actually turned on the switch, but through the circumstances of your life, the switch was somehow turned off? Don’t you feel the Spirit urging you to turn it back on again?



Now, begin praising and worshipping God with all your heart. Release yourself from all the inhibitions you have and raise your voice in songs and psalms. Express those longings you have held in your heart for so long but were unable to let loose because of your inhibitions. As you sing and worship release yourself to the Holy Spirit so that He can pray and worship through you.

As you enter this time of praise and worship you will begin to experience a sense of the presence of the Lord. You will begin to lose your self-consciousness and you will sense that the flow of your prayers and song is coming as if from out of nowhere. In fact, as your praise increases you sense that you are uttering words that are no longer in your mother tongue. But you know in your spirit that these words are honoring God so your flow in these phrases increases. You have just received your prayer language. You are feeling so blessed, you find that you don't want to stop. Don't stop. Pray and sing your heart out, glorifying God!

*Praised be His Holy Name! You have now "Entered the Kingdom" of the Father! Walk in the leading of the Holy Spirit and be obedient to His call!*

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### ***Related Links***

[I Stand At The Door and Knock.](#)

[Has Jesus Arisen In your Hearts? \(Part 1\)](#)

[\(... Part 2\)](#)

[\(... Part 3\)](#)

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This contribution is available at [http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2014/09/29/\\$-is-christ-really-living-through-you/](http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2014/09/29/$-is-christ-really-living-through-you/)

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# I Thirst [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]

Perhaps it is because we are entering the last few weeks of summer and the forecast calls for the highest temperatures of the season in the next few days. Or, because many sections of our country are experiencing unprecedented drought. Or because I keep thinking of our Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East, being forced from their homes and villages, fleeing into mountains and deserts with barely the clothes on their backs.

All of these images keep bringing to mind the words of Jesus on the cross: "I thirst." (Jn. 19:28).



The human body is 60% water. Our bodies thirst for water to sustain life, to grow, to prosper.

When we don't get enough water, our bodies begin to shut down.

But is not only the body that thirsts. Our souls thirst, too. Often we don't know what it is we are thirsting for, or how to quench the thirst of a soul in turmoil, in despair, in doubt, in darkness, and in search of the joy that can only be found in Jesus.

"My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord, my God" (Ps. 63).

Recently we observed the feast of St. Augustine. For those unfamiliar with this great saint, well, let's just say he led a very colorful life, including fathering a child outside of marriage, before becoming a bishop and Doctor of the Church. In his acclaimed autobiography, *The Confessions* (Chapter 9), he states, "Whatever way the soul of man turns, it is fixed upon sorrows any place except in You."

How many times do we find ourselves empty, searching, unhappy, only to pursue a course that, while perhaps providing momentary pleasure or escape, leaves us even more thirsty? "I looked for love and I found none" (Ps. 69:20).

As St. Augustine began the process of his conversion, he wrote in Book 6, Chapter 11, "I loved the happy life, I feared to find it in Your abode, and I fled from it even as I sought it." We were made for God. Deep within us is an innate desire to go back to him, to become holy, to be the saints. He is waiting for us to be, but with sin and temptation all around us and the weakness of original sin, we fall, we get discouraged, and we lose our thirst for God. Another great saint, also a Doctor of the Church, Catherine of Siena, talks about thirst in *The Dialogue*, her guide to a deeper spiritual life. She states, "One who is not thirsty will not persevere."

And how do we become thirsty? St. Catherine talks of the three powers of the soul: the memory, the intellect, and the will:

- "The memory retains the remembrance of My benefits and My goodness.
- The intellect gazes into the inexpressible love that I have shown you by means of My only begotten Son.
- The will drives you to love and desire Me, who am your end.

"It is then that the appetite of the soul is disposed to thirst; for virtue, the honor of My name, and the

## salvation of souls.” **Our Lord Thirsts for Us**

As our hearts and souls thirst for God (even when we don't realize it), so, too, does our Lord wait for us, thirst for us. Blessed Mother Teresa, who died 17 years ago, September 5, has a beautiful meditation on the Lord's thirst for us, entitled, "I Thirst for You": "...No matter how far you may wander, no matter how often you forget Me, no matter how many crosses you may bear in this life, there is one thing I want you to always remember, one thing that will never change. I THIRST FOR YOU..."

Blessed James Alberione, SSP, founder of the Pauline Family, writes that the thirst of Jesus is both material and spiritual. He highlights the apostolic dimension of that spiritual thirst:

Anyone with an apostolic spirit feels the thirst for souls. The apostle has two aspirations: souls and the sanctification of souls. He desires the salvation of all, that the kingdom of God may be established over the entire earth.

"Therefore, in the Masses at which he assists, in his Communions and visits to the most Blessed Sacrament, the apostle always asks the salvation of everyone; he carries all in his heart."



## **Be the One**

In her private writings published as *Come Be My Light*, Blessed Mother Teresa encouraged her sisters to "be the one who will satiate His thirst...Instead of saying I Thirst, say be the one...do whatever you believe God is asking you to do to be the one to satiate him."

So, how can we "be the one" who quenches the thirst of Jesus?

- Unite our will to the will of the Father, in all things, in small things, in the everyday challenges of life. In being patient when things don't go as we planned.
- Spend time with our Lord, in prayer, at home, or in adoration in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Our parish (St. Columbkille) opened a perpetual adoration chapel in June 2012. It has been one of the greatest blessings to our parish and to my husband and me. That hour of peace and serenity when we can just 'be' with Jesus.
- Bring others to Jesus. St. Francis of Assisi is quoted as saying, "Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words."

We thirst for God. God thirsts for us. "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink" (Jn 7:37).



Bernadette Boguski has been a Pauline Cooperator for over 20 years. She is a member of St. Columbkille Parish in Parma, OH, where she serves as a Eucharistic Minister, cantor, and member of the music ministry. Bernadette holds a degree in journalism from Bowling Green State University and currently serves as the development director for Womankind, a nonprofit agency providing free prenatal care and support services for pregnant women in need.

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# Thank God for Crying Babies

*“Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” –Matthew 19:13-14*



I’ve learned to love it whenever I hear babies crying at church. I like it when a toddler asks his mom a question with a voice too loud to be church worthy. And, my heart is warmed when I hear the cooing, giggling, and silly baby laughter especially during the quiet time following communion. To me, it’s like the angels [speaking](#) from heaven.

Sometimes, I think that I am in the minority. Most people frown on crying babies at church, they look annoyed, and their righteous indignation is obvious.

Why don’t they leave! Why did they come to mass to disturb those people trying to concentrate? Why aren’t they in the cry room? I understand what they are saying. I’d prefer quiet too!

But, I think there is a bigger question here.

Do you know what it takes to bring children to church? I mean diaper bags, car seats, coloring books, crayons, and the never ending baggies of cheerios. Parenting at church is tedious, tiring and difficult. And, often times, the kids are wonderful for a while, but an hour is just too long to sit still.

A priest in the Archdiocese of Washington was in the midst of a homily when a child began to cry uncontrollably. He could tell that the congregation was getting annoyed. But right before people started to leave, he said to the parents, “Don’t worry about the crying child. All of that crying just means that the Catholic Church has a future.”

He continued addressing the congregation, “If you go into a church that doesn’t have a crying baby, the church is in trouble. It has no future. So, let’s thank God for crying babies.”

As I travel across the country for my job, I have attended mass at many different churches, big churches, small ones, and breathtakingly beautiful ones. But, in many of these churches I don’t see small children. In some instances, I have been the youngest person in the pews and I’m officially a senior citizen!

Our Lord loved children. In Matthew 19:13-14, when the children were brought to Jesus that he might lay hands on them and pray the disciples rebuked them, probably with the same annoyed righteous indignation that I saw at mass. But Jesus told his disciples not to prevent the children from coming to Him. He didn't relegate them to the cry room, the vestibule or outside. He said let them come to Him.

Do you think when Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount there was a cry room? I doubt it! As a matter of fact, I am certain that as he spoke, children were crying and farm animals were mooing and clucking.

*“Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, “Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the one who sent me.” –Mark 9:36-37*

The church is a faith community. And, children are a welcomed part of that community as well. I love the Marty Haugen hymn *“All are Welcome in this Place.”* It begins:

*Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live.*

*A place where saints and **children** tell how hearts learn to forgive.*

When young parents bring their children to church, it's a sacrifice. They do it to teach them of the importance of worship and praise. Kids need to learn, and we need to let their parents know that their hard work matters. We need to thank them. Thank them for keeping our faith alive and let them know that they are an important part of our faith community.

Yes, I heard babies crying at church today. Our church is alive! Allelujah, Praise God!

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This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2014/09/thank-god-for-crying-babies/>  
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# The kiss of Jesus [at Peace Garden Mama]

## I came to the Adoration

chapel empty, confused, hurting, worried, spent. I came hoping that God would have something for me. "Dear Lord, please speak to me. I need to hear you tonight," I said.

This past summer has been the summer from Hades, and brought me and my mother heart near the brink. Just when I have felt I could take not one step more, however, a sliver of grace has been given to get through that moment, that hour, that day.

It has been in the Adoration chapel where I have found the only solace at times, and this night was no different. I felt assured that at some point in the course of that Holy Hour, God would give me what I needed.

A little over a month ago now, I finally decided to dive into the "33 Days to Morning Glory" do-it-yourself retreat in preparation for Marian consecration. This whole consecration thing is a new idea to me, but I have become convinced of its merits, and my time of surrender was near.

It was August 27 precisely, and I turned to Day 15. "Lover of the Heart of Jesus;" the section of the retreat focusing on Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta -- a woman who held fast to Our Blessed Mother as she lived out her earthly life, always keeping her sights on Jesus.

## As I reached the direct quote

from this dear, humble, diminutive saint who lived in our own time, I knew that God had pointed me straight there. The revelation gripped my heart as I read Mother's account of suffering, and one way we might look at it.

"Suffering has to come, because if you look at the cross, he has got his head bending down -- he wants to kiss you -- and he has both hands open wide - he wants to embrace you."



Immediately, I was drawn deeply in. It was as if the Lord himself were cupping my face to get my attention.

"When you feel miserable inside, look at the cross and you will know what is happening. Suffering, pain, sorrow, humiliation, feelings of loneliness, are nothing but the kiss of Jesus, a sign that you have come so close that he can kiss you."

### **In that moment, I could**

feel something deep inside shift. It's like looking through a prism of colors and seeing one that you didn't know existed until that moment. I could feel my body respond, my breathing slow, the toxins that had been building up within begin to dissipate.

"That suffering has to come," Mother continued, "that came in the life of Our Lady, that came in the life of Jesus - it has to come in our life also. Only never put on a long face. Suffering is a gift from God."

I know it's hard to wrap our brains around that last utterance. A gift? But when you think of suffering as Mother describes it -- a gift from Jesus -- and consider the suffering he went through for us and in order to return to the Father, it becomes apparent that we, too, will have to experience suffering if we, too, are to return to the Father. Not that we should ask for suffering or enjoy it when it comes, but at the very least, we can take heart that the trials of this world will more surely orient us toward our good God, who awaits us on the other side of them.

I don't like it as it's happening. I don't want it, to be honest. And yet...when I think of it this way -- the kiss of Jesus, and a more sure way to God himself -- I can more easily accept it, and cling to Jesus and Mary for help in overcoming it.

### **Q4U: Have you been kissed by Jesus lately?**

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This contribution is available at [http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/09/faith-family-fridays-kiss-of-jesus\\_19.html](http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/09/faith-family-fridays-kiss-of-jesus_19.html)  
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# Teaching About Vocations and Occupations [at Catholic Stand]

## The Same Old Questions

Another semester is beginning, and I am back in the classroom, teaching young college students about the parts and pieces of the human body. I stand before them and introduce myself as “Dr. Hunnell, a family physician”. At some point in the coming weeks, I will begin to get the questions:

“Why aren’t you seeing patients anymore?”

“Don’t you feel like you are wasting your education?”

“Couldn’t you make more money being a doctor?”

They come every semester, and I still hesitate a little bit when I answer them. How do I encourage them to push themselves to reach their professional goals when I have walked away from my own career as a doctor?

Some may think these questions are too personal, and that students should not be posing such inquiries to their professors. But I want to answer these questions.

When I was studying to be a doctor, there were so few women practicing medicine that I had no role models. Most of the women I did see were either unmarried or married and childless. Even though I was not married at the time, I knew that was not the life I wanted.

There was one young female physician, in the Internal Medicine department at my medical school, who seemed more like the woman I wanted to be. I was so excited when she became pregnant. I peppered her with questions about how she was going to balance being a physician and being a mother. She didn’t have all the answers; but she was so gracious in sharing her thoughts, her challenges, her concerns, and her hopes, that I felt more confident that I would be able to balance work and family in my own future.

Now I am the teacher, facing a room full of mostly young women who are hoping to go into one of the medical or allied health career fields. I have a lot of opportunities for one-on-one interactions with my students; during the conversations that arise I share my thoughts, my challenges, and my responses to the demands of being a physician and a mother.

## Vocations Define Lives

I begin with explaining that the two roles are not equal. When I got married thirty years ago, I accepted the vocation of marriage. This vocation defines my life, in the same way the vocation of the priesthood or the vocation of religious life defines the lives of priests and sisters. *I am a wife.*

Within that vocation, I was blessed with a second calling: to be a mother. Again, *motherhood is a vocation* that permeates my entire life.

Being a physician, on the other hand, is an occupation. Just as religious sisters work as teachers, nurses, doctors, and countless other jobs, a wife and mother can work outside the home as well. But the occupation must always fit within the vocation. Life becomes disordered when the employment gains supremacy and the vocation is squeezed to conform to the occupation.

That doesn't mean there can never be compromises, or that outside employment is always an elective activity. Part of the vocation of parenthood is making sure your children have their physical needs met. Providing food, clothing, and shelter requires money. Working outside the home can be very much a part of living out the vocation of motherhood.

On the other hand, the essence of being a parent is doing your best to raise your children with love, and to instill the values and faith needed for them to step out into adulthood, prepared to journey towards Heaven. This takes time. It cannot be delegated to day care, or the school, or even the parish CCD program. This is *your* job.

## **Fitting the Occupation to the Vocation**

When my husband and I began having children, I was still a medical resident. Then I went in to the Air Force, to fulfill my commitment for a military scholarship. My husband was an Air Force pilot. There were not a lot of options. We both worked full time; and the kids were in daycare.

However, as our family grew, and after I left the military, we had more options. The children also had different needs. Since my husband was still in the Air Force, he did not have the same flexibility that I had, so we made the decision that I would work part-time.

This was not a gender-based decision. Both my husband and I agreed that I was better suited to meet needs of our children at home; and the loss of my employment income was worth the improvement in our family life.

Over the years, my husband and I constantly assessed the pros and cons of both our work lives. The primary metric has always been how our jobs supported our vocations of married life and parenthood.

For a time, even my working part-time seemed to be too much; so I stayed home full time. As the nest emptied a little, the opportunity to teach presented itself, and it was a good fit. I thought about the possibility of going back to medical practice once all the kids were launched.

Then my husband was diagnosed with cancer. The chemotherapy was grueling; but he is in remission for now. The diagnosis shook us both to the core. It certainly made me realize that there is no certainty in tomorrow. So now I choose to limit my occupation to something that allows me plenty of time to enjoy life with my husband and children and grandchildren.

When I answer my students' questions, I do not necessarily chronicle this entire life story. But I do tell them that I am not practicing medicine now because, as much as I loved seeing patients, it was an occupation, a job. My vocation, being a wife and mother, *always* comes first. I modify the occupation to

fit my vocation, not the other way around.

## A Vocation Lived Well

Education is *never* a waste. The experiences of becoming a doctor and practicing medicine shaped who I am. I am a better anatomy instructor because I can share the clinical ramifications of the organ systems we study. My medical expertise has been a blessing in dealing with the injuries and illnesses of my family. My professional potential has given our family options that would have been impossible otherwise, even if I did not maximize my career potential as a clinical physician.

And yes, I could make a lot more money practicing medicine than teaching anatomy and physiology to college students. But money cannot buy more time. The older I get, the more I realize that time spent with those I love is far more precious than any material good I can purchase.

So it is a worthy endeavor to work hard and strive for educational and professional goals. Just remember that these are merely occupations. You have a much greater calling to discern, whether it is to marriage, the single life, religious life, or the priesthood. Occupational success, no matter how great, can never replace the rewards of a vocation lived well.

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This contribution is available at <http://catholicstand.com/teaching-about-vocations-occupations/>  
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## A Little Peace, a Lot of Hope [at CF Family]



Only Clare and I went to church this past Sunday morning (Ken took the others to our usual service Saturday evening but we were tired of people from two outings that day). A minute after settling into a pew, a lady slid into the space directly in front of me and I clenched my teeth. She is publicly, happily pro-choice, once announcing that she finally became Catholic when she found out that she could be pro-choice and Catholic (oh yay).

*How can I possibly concentrate on Jesus with this person in view? Mass is ruined now*

. Then something worse dawned on me. Since we are not acquainted and she does not know of my disgust, she was probably going to turn around and extend her hand toward mine to wish me the Peace of Christ and I'd be expected to clasp hers and wish her the same thing.

*What to do? Where to go? How to avoid this?*

Going to the ladies' room wouldn't work because I'd visited right before church and Clare knew it and I did not want to explain to her that I was not going to shake that lady's hand. I thought about coughing here and there throughout the liturgy so that when the time came for the sign of peace, I could smile and shrug while mouthing,

*Coughing;*

but again, bad example to Clare. Plus I didn't want to smile. So I stewed.

I'd love to say that the Scripture readings and psalm singing convicted me to kindness.

I'd love to say that my beautiful surroundings soothed me to sweetness.

But it was a reminder of the prayers from a

[fiery priest that I'd spent the previous day with](#)

in a mini retreat that spurred me on to a better way. He called it "Healing Litanies" and it took us an hour to read through together. There were about fifty ladies, from young women in their twenties to white-haired grannies, all murmuring these words ~ most of us on our knees (Father Shields has pastored in Siberia for twenty years and told us that the Russians "love to suffer on their knees," so we competitive

Americans remained on our knees!

Some of the statements we prayed:

A Confession of Faith that included ~

\* Lord Jesus I trust in You

\*Lord Jesus I believe that out of love for me, You saved me

\*Lord Jesus I believe that Your gift of life brings peace

Please forgive ~

\*My doubt

\*My hatred

\*My indifference

Please heal ~

\*My mental anguish

\*My fears

\*My pain

I ask You, Lord ~

\*To open my heart

\*To forgive others

\*To desire Your will

I am sorry for ~

\*The times I have turned away from You

\*The times I have held resentment in my heart

\*The times I was not Your instrument of peace

I seek refuge ~

\*As I abandon my aggression

\*As I abandon my fears

\*As I abandon my worries

Jesus, let Your cross be my joy ~

\*When I am tempted

\*When I am not confident in Your mercy

\*When I am in misery

Holy Spirit ~

\*Fill us

\*Transform us

\*Comfort us

Grant us a compassionate heart, Lord ~

\*For the poor and homeless

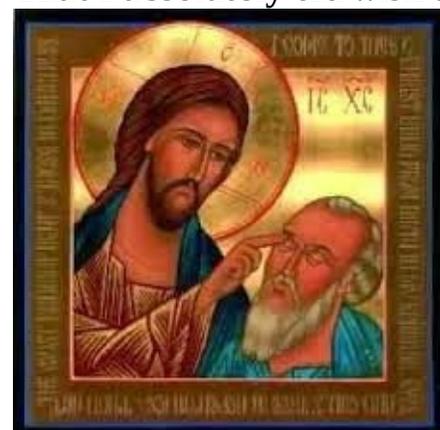
\*For victims of war and epidemics

\*For those whose faith is tested

(There were many more prayers under each heading. It was sobering, yes, but also hopeful to be a part of a large group of women praying to love Jesus more, to love His people more, to love all people more. The simmering pentecostal in me was very close to hollering some "Amen's" and "Yes Lord's!")

Back in Mass, I realized that I had already prayed for this lady the day before. That Jesus loved this lady. That she was sitting with me in church and we were connected. That shaking her hand did not mean that I loved abortion.

**That I absolutely did wish the peace of Jesus to be with her.**



When she turned around and held out her hand, mine was already stuck out to meet her, my smile was totally genuine, and I practically shouted, "Peace of Christ be with you!"

There is hope in peace. Even such a little bit of peace as a handshake. For the times I have not been an instrument of Your peace, Lord forgive me. He does and there is peace.

~Allison

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This contribution is available at <http://northerncffamily.blogspot.com/2014/09/a-little-peace-lot-of-hope.html>  
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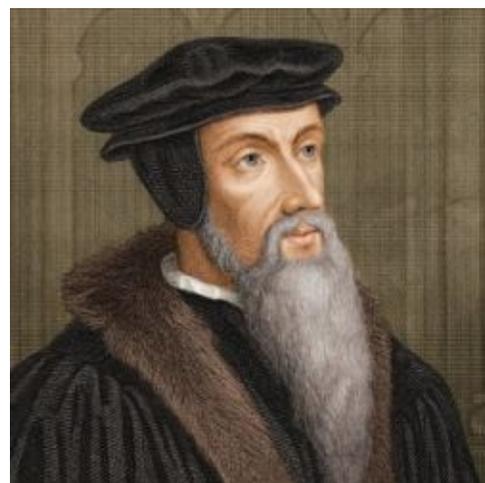
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## Ranking God's Word [at God-Haunted Lunatic]

Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught, either by an oral statement or by a letter of ours.

~ [St. Paul to the Thessalonians](#)

**A former student of mine is thinking of becoming a Catholic**, and she had a question for me. “I don’t understand the [deuterocanonical books](#),” she ventured. “If the Catholic faith is supposed to be a fulfillment of the Jewish faith, why do Catholics accept those books and the Jews don’t?” She’d done her [homework](#), and was troubled that the seven books and other writings of the deuterocanon had been preserved only in Greek instead of Hebrew like the rest of the Jewish scriptures – which is part of the reason why they were classified, even by Catholics, as a “second” (deutero) canon.



My student went on. “I’m just struggling because there are a lot of references to those books in Church doctrine, but they aren’t considered inspired Scripture. Why did Luther feel those books needed to be taken out?” she asked. “And why are Protestants so against them?”

The short answer sounds petty and mean, but it’s true nonetheless: Luther jettisoned those “extra” Old Testament books – [Tobit](#), Sirach, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and the like – because they were inconvenient. The Apocrypha (or, “false writings”), as they came to be known, supported pesky Catholic doctrines that Luther and other reformers wanted to suppress – praying for the dead, for instance, and the intercession of the saints. Here’s [John Calvin](#) on the subject:

Add to this, that they provide themselves with new supports when they give full authority to the Apocryphal books. Out of the second of the Maccabees they will prove Purgatory and the worship of saints; out of Tobit satisfactions, exorcisms, and what not. From Ecclesiasticus they will borrow not a little. For from whence could they better draw their dregs?

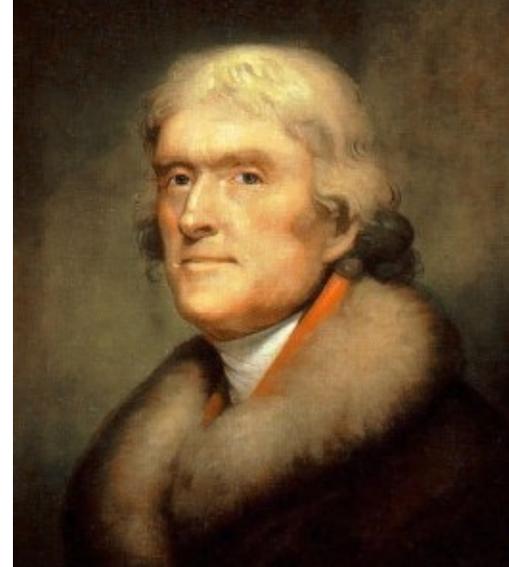
However, the deuterocanonical literature was (and is) prominent in the liturgy and very familiar to that first generation of Protestant converts, so Luther and company couldn’t very well ignore it altogether. Consequently, those seven “apocryphal” books, along with the Greek portions of Esther and Daniel, were relegated to an appendix in early Protestant translations of the Bible.

Eventually, in the 19th-century sometime, many Protestant Bible publishers starting dropping the appendix altogether, and the modern translations used by most evangelicals today don’t even reference the

Apocrypha at all. Thus, the myth is perpetuated that nefarious popes and bishops have gotten away with brazenly foisting a bunch of bogus scripture on the ignorant Catholic masses.

**Nothing could be further from the truth.**

To begin with, it was Luther and Calvin and the other reformers who did all the foisting. The Old Testament that Christians had been using for 1,500 years had always included the so-called Apocrypha, and there was never a question as to its canonicity. Thus, by selectively editing and stream



lining their own versions of the Bible according to their sectarian biases (including, in Luther's case, *both* Testaments, Old and [New](#)), the reformers engaged in a theological con game. To make matters worse, they covered their tracks by [pointing fingers](#) at the Catholic Church for "adding" phony texts to the closed canon of Hebrew Sacred Writ.

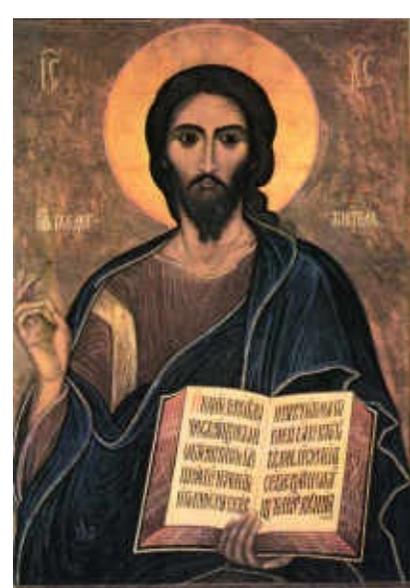
In this sense, the reformers were anticipating what I call the *Twain-Jefferson approach* to canonical revisionism. It involves two simple steps.

- *Step one:* Identify the parts of Scripture that you find especially onerous or troublesome. Generally, these will be straightforward biblical references that don't quite square with the doctrine one is championing or the practices one has already embraced. Mark Twain is the modern herald of this half of creative textual reconstruction: "It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me," [Twain wrote](#), "it is the parts that I do understand."
- *Step two:* Yank the vexing parts out. It's what Thomas Jefferson literally did when he took [his own Bible](#) and cut out the passages he found offensive – a kind of "scripture by subtraction" in the words of religion professor [Stephen Prothero](#).

The reformers justified their Twain-Jefferson humbug by pointing to the [canon of scriptures](#) in use by European Jews during that time, and it did *not* include those extra Catholic books – case closed! Still unconvinced? Today's defenders of the reformers' biblical reshaping will then proceed to throw around historical precedent and references to the first-century [Council of Jamnia](#), but it's all really smoke and mirrors.

The fact is that the first-century Jewish canon was pretty mutable and there was no universal definitive list of sacred texts. On the other hand, it is [indisputable](#) that the version being used by Jesus and the Apostles during that time was the Septuagint – the Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures that included Luther's rejected apocryphal books. SCORE: Deuterocanon – 1; Twain-Jefferson Revisionism – 0.

**But this is all beside the point.** It's like an [argument](#) about creationism vs. evolution that gets funneled in the direction of whether dinosaurs could've been on board Noah's Ark. Once you're arguing about *that*, you're no longer arguing about the bigger issue of the historicity of those early chapters in Genesis. The parallel red herring here is arguing over the content of the Christian Old Testament canon instead of considering the nature of authority itself and how it's supposed to work in the church, especially with regards to the Bible.



I mean, even if we can settle what the canon *should* include, we don't have the autographs (original documents) from *any* biblical books anyway. While we affirm the Church's teaching that all Scripture is inspired and teaches "solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings" ([DV 11](#)), *there are no absolutes* when it comes to the precise content of the Bible.

Can there be any doubt that this is by God's design? Without the autographs, we are much less tempted to worship a static book instead of the One it reveals to us. Even so, it's true that we are still encouraged to [venerate the Scriptures](#), but we *worship* the incarnate Word – and we ought not confuse the two. [John the Baptist](#) said as much when he painstakingly distinguished between himself, the announcer, and the actual Christ he was announcing. The [Catechism](#), quoting St. Bernard, offers a further helpful distinction:

The Christian faith is not a "religion of the book." Christianity is the religion of the "Word" of God, a word which is "not a written and mute word, but the Word is incarnate and living".

Anyway, with regards to authority and the canon of Scripture, Mark Shea couldn't have [put it](#) more succinctly than his recent response to a request for a summary of why the deuterocanon should be included in the Bible:

Because the Church in union with Peter, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15) granted authority by Christ to loose and bind (Matthew 16:19), says they should be.

Right. The Church says so, and that's good enough.

For it's the Church who gives us the Scriptures. It's the Church who preserves the Scriptures and tells us to turn to them. It's the Church who bathes us in the Scriptures with the liturgy, day in and day out, constantly watering our souls with God's Word. Isn't it a bit bizarre to be challenging the Church with regards to which Scriptures she's feeding us with? "No, mother," the infant cries, "not breast milk! I want Ovaltine! Better yet, how about some Sprite!"

**Think of it this way.** My daughter Margaret and I share an intense devotion to Betty Smith’s remarkable novel, [A Tree Grows in Brooklyn](#). It’s a bittersweet family tale of impoverishment, tragedy, and perseverance, and we often remark how curious it is that Smith’s epic story receives so little attention.

I was rooting around the sale shelf at the public library one day, and I happened upon a paperback with



the name “Betty Smith” on the spine. I took a closer look: [Joy in the Morning](#), a 1963 novel of romance and the struggles of newlyweds, and it was indeed by the same Smith of *Tree* fame. I snatched it up for Meg.

The other day, Meg thanked me for the book, and asked me to be on the lookout for others by Smith. “It wasn’t nearly as good as *Tree*,” she said, “and I don’t expect any of her others to be as good. But I want to read everything she wrote because *Tree* was so wonderful.”

See, she wants to get to know Betty Smith because of what she encountered in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. And all we have are her books and other writings; Betty Smith herself is gone.

But Jesus isn’t like that. We have the book, yes, but we have more. We still have the Word himself.

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A version of this essay appeared on [Crisis](#).

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This contribution is available at <http://godhauntedlunatic.wordpress.com/2014/09/28/ranking-gods-word/>  
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# Nothing to Fear from God [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

*While you did all this, I remained silent, and you thought I didn't care. But now I will rebuke you, listing all my charges against you. (Psalm 50:21, New Living Translation)*

I posted a video to one of my online social network sites which suggested 9-11-01 was part of God's judgment on America because of its many sins. One reader took great umbrage with that idea. He believes 9-11 was simply the sinful act of "misguided" men, and is unwilling to believe God would permit all those innocent people to die because of the nation's sins. Of course, that reader is not alone in his belief. I have witnessed the same idea promoted for years from pulpits and in religious magazines and newspapers.

I suppose the idea that God does not personally mete out judgment against sin can be traced to the God is Dead movement that gained ascendancy in America during the 1960s. "I'm OK, You're OK" became a popular mantra, followed by, "There are no absolutes: No absolute truth, no absolute right or wrong moral choices -- everything depends on the situation." As that philosophy slowly permeated the culture through the universities and the media, it ultimately found its way into the Church where, in the last few decades, parishioners hear from the pulpit more often than not, "God is Love" without the equally true biblical injunction, "Be holy, for God is holy."

The morning after my online exchange I sat in my recliner and began my usual time with the Lord. I opened the Bible to chapter 8 of 1 Kings to read Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple. The prayer extends from verses 12 through 53, but my attention focused on only a small section of the prayer. Beginning with verse 33, Solomon asked this of God:

*"When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy, because they have sinned against You, if they turn to You again and confess Your name and pray and make supplication to You in this house, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to their fathers.*

*"When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin when You afflict them, then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants . . . ."*

*“If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight or mildew, locust or grasshopper, if their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, whatever prayer or supplication is made by any man or by all Your people Israel . . . then hear in heaven. . . that they may fear You.”*

Solomon is not the only one in Biblical history to associate disasters – whether of nature or of man – with God’s judgment of sin. One cannot read Moses, or the prophets, or the epistles, or Revelation, and come away with a philosophy popular in much of today’s Church that God does not use nature or Man to judge sin – whether personal or national sin.

America has mercilessly killed more than 55 million babies in abortion clinics since 1973. Grasp the magnitude of that bloodshed. Fifty-five million. And in that time America has also elevated sexual perversions of all sorts to the place of protected legal status. We vote into political power men and women well-known for their deceit, thefts, murders, immoralities, treasons . . . and we love it so.

If we choose to believe earthquakes, floods, droughts, and other ‘acts of God’ are simply random acts of nature, and not God’s ‘wake up’ call to repentance, then there is no need for a sinful nation to repent, to change, and beg God’s forgiveness. If we choose to believe the tragedies caused by planes crashing into buildings on 9-11 were simply the work of evil men acting on their own free will, then we will not be open to the possibility that God is removing His protective shield over America because of our national sins. Therefore, there is no need to gather on our knees in churches across the land and repent, and change, because we have nothing to fear from God. After all, God is Love.

There is, of course, a better way to live, and that is in accordance with the historic teaching of the Church, and the historic teaching of Scripture, which can be summed up in this axiom: *When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.*

From one end of the Book to the other, Scripture tells us not only is God Love, but that He is also a Holy God. We say that sometimes too quickly and too easily. But let’s now say it slowly: God is Holy. Righteous. Sacred. Pure. Undeified. And He demands of us the same. When we choose to live otherwise, then we have good reason to fear, as the historic Church and all the Biblical writers have warned.

God is not one to be mocked, wrote Saint Paul. Whatever we sow, we will reap (Galatians 6:7). The writer to the Hebrews added: “Our God is a consuming fire”, (Hebrews 12:29) and, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

God is not dead. And He is not asleep.

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This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2014/09/nothing-to-fear-from-god.html>

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## Why is Ordinary Time - ordinary? [at Busy Catholic Moms]

Have you noticed the green vestments and linens in the front of church? It can only mean one thing – Ordinary time! Now my children used to think that this meant it was the boring part of the year in church – no exciting Easter season, no Lent or Advent to get ready for exciting holidays. But actually Ordinary time is anything but!

Our Church’s liturgical calendar is divided into several seasons – just like our own calendars hanging on



the wall!

It begins with the First Sunday of Advent – our “New Year”. These four weeks of preparation, seen in the church as purple vestments and linens, are to get us ready for the beauty and mystery of Christ’s birth at Christmas. Now, even though many a Christmas tree are kicked to the curb on Dec. 26 (sometimes literally), Christmas Eve is only the beginning of the Christmas season.

The Christmas season lasts well into January and ends after the Feast of the Epiphany usually on the celebration of the Baptism of Christ. During this celebratory season, white is the traditional vestment worn in church.

Now begins Ordinary time – the time that occurs first between Christmas and Lent. Shown by green vestments and highlighted by Jesus teaching in the gospel, Ordinary time is split by the Lenten and Easter season beginning again sometime in May.

Depending on the calendar year, Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, is to prepare us to celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ, is a time of prayer, fasting and alms-giving that starts sometime in March or April, lasting for 40 days. It culminates with Holy Week and then Easter Sunday. While the vestments are purple during Lent (for “preparation” again), Holy Week is celebrated with red vestments and on Easter, white vestments help bring the Church to new life in Christ again.

The Easter season lasts through to Pentecost forty days after Easter. Pentecost with the celebration of the Holy Spirit coming down upon the apostles has red vestments worn for the tongues of fire that came down to the apostles.

After the Easter season, Ordinary time starts back up again, with its green vestments and Gospels from Christ’s ministry and teachings. Ordinary meaning “counted” or “ordinal” is just a means of measuring

the days in the church.

So my kids may consider it the ordinary time. But if I look at my own life, much of it is also ordinary time – highlighted by celebrations and holidays. But the most of it is the daily grind of schedules, obligations, school, work. But it is in this time that the Church teaches times of learning and growth. We hear parables, healings, and teachings of Christ in the Gospels. We can dig more deeply within ourselves during these so-called “ordinary” times to grow and love more richly. And when we look back at the ordinary times of our lives, I hope that we will find times of great blessing and a rich spiritual life. Mirroring the green vestments, may our hearts grow rich and lush in the graces of God.



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This contribution is available at <http://busycatholicmoms.com/tools-of-our-faith/why-is-ordinary-time-ordinary/>  
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## Reflections on a Mother's Love: Milk, Cookies and a Carelessly Tossed Gym Bag [at Rambling Follower]



I snapped this photo this afternoon, shortly before leaving my parents' house after a brief overnight visit. The scene is a vivid reminder to me of what being a mother is all about.

I arrived at my parents' house close to midnight last night after driving from my graduate school class in Jersey City. My octogenarian parents were in their pajamas in the family room, waiting up for me, even though I told them they could leave the back door open and I could slip in. They turned off the television and my mom served us all milk and cookies.

We talked for nearly an hour, me sharing my tales from this fall's teaching, and they shared a story about one of their nine grandchildren, who recently found an excellent solution to a struggle.

I was settling into this four-poster bed in the upstairs guest room, when my mom knocked on the door. She told me she wanted to add a few details to her story. But first, she spied the purple gym bag, which I was using as my overnight bag, on the floor by the bed. "Be sure not to trip on that if you get up in the middle of the night." "Oh, I won't," I answered. Without a word she moved the bag to the chest at the foot of the bed and continued telling her story.

I'm nearly 52 years old, long past the time when I need anyone to pour me a glass of milk, serve me cookies on a plate or move a gym bag out of the way. Her gestures remind me that no matter how old our children become, we are always their mothers. This thought comforts me, both as a daughter, and as the mother of nearly grown children.

Mother-love is a powerful force and it will journey with our children long after we disappear back into

the Mystery.

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This contribution is available at <http://ramblingfollower.blogspot.com/2014/09/reflections-on-mothers-love-milk.html>  
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## From a Letter [at Bethune Catholic]

This is from a letter I received today:

*You all remain in my prayers always. I like to think that every time we receive the Eucharist, there is something like a lifeline connecting all Catholics together; almost like looking at the same stars at night. You are far away from each other, but somehow by such a seemingly simple act, you suddenly traverse distance. It actually goes deeper than that, though. Just as the stars we see are the same as the ones gazed upon by the pagan Romans, the Eucharist is the same has been received by Christians for over 2000 years. Thus we mystically traverse both distance AND time, the two barriers to fallen man.*

I was waiting for an overdue paycheck in the mail-but received this treasure instead.

***Oremus pro invicem!***

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This contribution is available at <http://www.bethunecatholic.blogspot.com/2014/09/from-letter.html>  
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## Why Shadows [at The Breadbox Letters]



'If God created shadows, it was to better emphasize the light.'

St. Pope John Paul II

*Painting: Peter Graham, Wandering Shadows*

## Take Three [at Blogging For A Better Life]

Take three deep breaths and call it a day!

Especially on those days, the ones where everything that could go wrong - does go wrong.

Taking a couple deep breaths helps make us relax, which helps us put things into perspective. When we are able to view the big picture of life we begin to realize just how lucky we have it, and how insignificant our problems really are.

I recently read a young mom's blog post whose words blew me away; so much that I never again want to take life for granted.

Dying at age thirty-six from bowel cancer she had asked her husband to publish her final blog post after her death. Here is a short version of some of her words:

**“As you read this, I will no longer be here.**

**You will look for the latest update on the blog. There won't be one, this is the final chapter.**

**I have so much life I still want to live, but know I won't have that.**

**I want to be there for my friends as they move with their lives, see my children grow up and become old and grumpy with my husband.**

**All these things are to be denied of me.**

**But they are not to be denied of you.**

**So, in my absence, please, please, enjoy life. Take it by both hands, grab it, shake it and believe in every second of it. Adore your children. You have literally no idea how blessed you are to shout at them in the morning to hurry up and clean their teeth.”**

Charlotte Kitley passed away September 16, 2014.

What a gift she has left. What a reminder her message gives to treasure each and every moment of life. Her blog continues on with the following message:

**“Embrace your loved one and if they cannot embrace you back, find someone who will. Everyone deserves to love and be loved in return. Don’t settle for less.**

**Find a job you enjoy, but don’t become a slave to it. You will not have ‘I wish I’d worked more’ on your headstone.**

**Dance, laugh and eat with your friends.**

**Surround yourself with beautiful things.**

**Life has a lot of grey and sadness – look for that rainbow and frame it.**

**There is beauty in everything, sometimes you just have to look a little harder to see it.”**

After reading Charlotte’s post, her words remain with me. And as I prepare to settle in for the night breathing deeply in and out, letting myself relax, it won’t be to call it a day, it will be sighs of complete gratitude for the beauty I had found all around me, for being so blessed to have shared time with loved ones, for waking up and having had a whole day to embrace and enjoy.

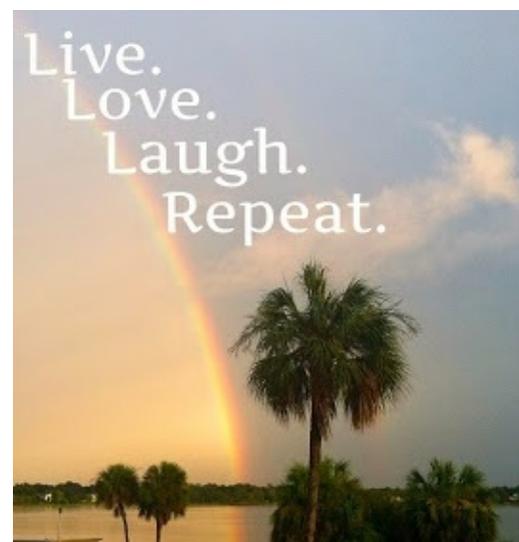
I so love her ending words.

**“And when you close your curtains tonight, look out for a star, it will be me, looking down, sipping a pina colada, enjoying a box of (very expensive) chocolates. Good night, Good bye and God bless. Charley xx”**

I read that Charley’s post has gone viral, that over two million people have read her words. To that I say CHEERS!

Thank you Charley for these penetrating words:

**“please, please, enjoy life. Take it by both hands, grab it, shake it and believe in every second of it.”**



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This contribution is available at <http://blogforabetterlife.blogspot.com/2014/09/take-three.html>  
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# The Duggars and The Joy of Having Children



Last week in the Russian capital of Moscow, the government sponsored an International Forum entitled, “[Large family and the future of humanity](#).” The forum was attended by an array of delegates from around the world, who all saw the need to promote large families in order to help sustain society.

This comes at a time when the demographics of most Western countries are below replacement level and the results of a world without children are beginning to be felt in the economy. That is why more than ever we are in need of promoting the value and beauty of having children. It is fitting then that one of the most watched shows in the United States is about a family with **19 Kids and Counting**.

The Duggar family has been the focus of a TLC reality TV show since September 2008. At the time of the first episode, the family had 17 children and were looked at as if they were apart of a circus sideshow. The average American family has 1-2 children and so a family that has more than that is quite strange and even bizarre. Yet, what TLC soon found out is that the Duggar family is attractive because their large family is not only unique, but a thing of beauty.

## The Joy of Children

While the Duggar family is not perfect, the main sentiment that comes across from watching the popular TV show is the joy of having children. From the joy of Michelle having her 19th child to the excitement of Jill expecting her first, being pregnant and raising children is a constant source of happiness for the family.

The joy that is showcased on the show is something rare in American culture. Often children are looked upon as more of a burden, than a key to a happy life. Abortion and the rise in use of chemical contraceptives by married women show to the world that a child is inconvenient and hamper the mobility of a young couple. Changing diapers and disciplining children are seen as too costly of a sacrifice and so numerous men and women decide to limit their family size.

At the same time, the fact that 2.8 million viewers tuned in to the season finale of 19 Kids and Counting in May, shows that the large family is doing something right. In fact, many of the avid fans of the series have

been influenced by the joyful witness of the Duggars and have in turn freely chosen to increase their family size.

The Duggars show the world that having a large family is actually a great blessing. What is always a beautiful sight to behold is how the Duggar children call their brothers or sisters their best friends. It is rare to find such love and affection among siblings and it is a direct result of having a large close-knit family.

**Now everyone is not called to have 19 kids and in many cases it would not be advisable to have that number of children.** Additionally, many married couples deal with infertility and would happily accept a large family, but are unable to fulfill their desires. **However, a married couple should actively discern how many children God desires to bless them with and not dismiss God's generosity (both naturally and by adoption).** It can be overwhelming to think about having even 4 or 5 children and yet God does not give us something we can not handle. The Duggars have shown us that it is possible to have a joy-filled large family and encourage us to do something counter-cultural.

In an age where the demographics of society are crumbling, God calls us to respond in whatever way we can to His original command to Adam and Eve in the garden, "Be fruitful, and multiply."

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This contribution is available at <http://www.philipkosloski.com/duggars/>  
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## God Bless America? [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

It is my privilege to introduce my friend and writers' group sidekick, Bernie Conklin. He is one of the most authentic Christian men I know. He and his wife Mary reside in upstate New York where, among many other things, they are very active in helping those in need.

Bernie loves to stir up passion for the Lord he loves and serves through his catchy, witty, insightful and challenging poetry. He also loves this great nation of ours and is ever ready to come to its defense and offer his opinion of what really ails it..

The recent remembrance of 9/11 attack on our country prompted him to share a poem he had written some time ago. If you like it, you'll enjoy his book, *A Potpourri of Poetry: Simple Poems by A Simple Guy*, available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

### GOD BLESS AMERICA?

God bless America, you ask of me?  
Why should I pour forth my grace upon thee?

Your hypocrisy is a crying shame,  
calling on me, then restrictions proclaim.

The hallowed halls I once considered home,  
I am no longer permitted to roam.

You know how much I love the children so.

Yet to me in school you now say, "oh-no!"

My mere presence is simply not allowed;  
with my relevance being disavowed.

Two minutes of silence at start of day

is forbidden for fear a child might pray.

An oath of office you swear on my name,  
then exclude me from the government game.

My Ten Commandments on the doors appear  
of the Supreme Court; they are very clear.

Yet others are forbidden, these judges say,  
those same guidelines to publicly display.

I played a big part in the pilgrims' pride.  
It was never required of me to hide.

For the sake of a few, you'd throw away  
all those virtues that made you great today.

When things get trying you become contrite.  
You appeal to me and my awesome might.

You have as a motto, "In God We Trust."  
Now to remove my name, you feel you must.

To strike God from public jurisdiction,  
Then seek my grace is a contradiction.

By belief in me was your freedom built.

Are you now content to let that faith wilt?

And in spite of how you have treated me,

I have forever shed my grace on thee.

America dear, I hereby submit  
there's a higher power than you admit.

Rest assured my friend, I'll always love you.  
But please search your soul, who really needs who?

Sincerely,  
**GOD**

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This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2014/09/guest-post-god-bless-america.html>  
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# Let me take care of you

September 23, 2014 by [Ruth Anne](#)



The writing prompt for this week's Confessions of a #Good Enough Mom is "Taking Care of Me, So I can take Care of You". I have been pondering this a few ways this past week.

For me personally, I have a tendency to try to manage everything (impossible, I know, but still I give it my darndest sometimes). The kids, things like meal planning, shopping, money management; those are all my household jobs. None of them bad, but I think I try to be in complete control just a little too much. Sometimes it takes things like God-incidences to get through to me and show me that I'm clearly not in control of all this stuff. Things like complaining to God about a situation saying "God, if only you would do xyz...." then having xyz happen, not once, but twice this week? God saying "Just Stop! **Let ME take care of YOU.** You don't have to do it all by yourself."

Now, that's all well and good but how does one actually go about "not doing it all"? How does one allow God to provide that needed rest? For everyone, the answer will be a little different. There is the obvious pray and read the Bible and/or do other spiritual reading, which shouldn't be ignored. But the rest of the time? For me, I have to make a conscious effort to use my remaining, fairly limited "free time" intentionally. Thoughts such as "why am I doing what I'm doing right now?" have been popping into my head all week. It's very hard not to feel guilty for doing something for myself. But I think it's definitely important to take those few minutes/activities, because I believe it's necessary for sanity. It's necessary so we don't loose track of our own sense of who we are.

I've been paying a little more attention to what I can do for me. One way that I know I unwind is to take pictures (as can be seen by the mostly photo posts of the last week). I also enjoy reading and crocheting amongst other things. But sometimes even my hobbies are not done totally for me. And while there's

nothing wrong with, say, crocheting something for someone (in fact there is a lot of satisfaction in making something that will be given away), always making things for someone else (and never for yourself) can start to build up to a “why am I doing this again?” sorta attitude.

To wrap this all up before it gets any later, I’ve been finding the importance of letting a few things go, relying on God, and resting in the aftermath. And, yes, it may have taken a good bit of shouting in my direction before I was able to hear that Someone get through to me. Has it made me perfect when I get up to care for the kids? Nope. Not even close. Sometimes it helps just knowing that I have a book waiting for me at the end of getting-the-kids-in-bed. Even if I am too tired to read more than a page or two :).

Blessings to all in your resting times.

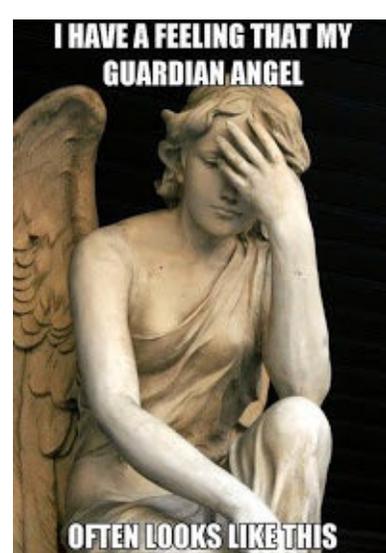
~ Ruth Anne

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This contribution is available at <http://hollowayfamilynorth.wordpress.com/2014/09/23/let-me-take-care-of-you/>  
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# October 2nd, The Feast of the Guardian Angels [at His UnEnding Love]



Remember this prayer?

**Angel of God, my Guardian Dear, to whom God's love, entrusts me here. Ever this day (night), be at my side, to light, to rule, to guide. Amen.**

Aren't we blessed? Every person ever conceived has been assigned a guardian angel to watch over them, to protect them, and to strengthen them in temptation. Defined as "beings of light," they are gifts of God to His children.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us this about angels::

328:

**The existence of the spiritual, non-corporeal beings that Sacred Scripture usually calls "angels" is a truth of faith. The witness of Scripture is as clear as the unanimity of Tradition.**

The Catechism continues::

329-330::

**St. Augustine says: "'Angel' is the name of their office, not of their nature. If you seek the name of their nature, it is 'spirit'; if you seek the name of their office, it is 'angel': from what they are, 'spirit', from what they do, 'angel.'" With their whole beings the angels are *servants* and messengers of God. Because they "always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" they are the "mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word". As purely *spiritual* creatures angels have intelligence and will: they are personal and immortal creatures, surpassing in perfection all visible creatures, as the splendor of their glory bears witness.**

Isn't this amazing? Each one of us has our very own, personal angel to take care of us!!! I am in awe of this gift from God!

And, yes, I'm sure my dear angel often looks like the picture. Tell me about your angel!

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This contribution is available at <http://hisunendinglov.blogspot.com/2014/10/october-2nd-feast-of-guardian-angels.html>  
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# Going Technical: My first CSMS experience!!! [at The Catholic Chic]

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,  
the conviction of things not seen."

-Hebrews 11:1

Last weekend, I participated in the 3rd Catholic Social Media Summit held at Lingayen, Pangasinan, Philippines.



Thankfully, many people from Ablaze communications and Singles for Christ volunteered to join the Program Team and invited me to be a part of them.



In all honesty, I have never joined the Program Team of any event, so my confidence level for this was near zero. The nearest I came to showing presentations was clicking powerpoint slides way back in college.

**He doesn't call the equipped but equips the called.**

I have heard this quote being said over and over in Catholic conferences, specifically in Singles for Christ and Youth for Christ conferences. I believe this as true and I felt it 100% during my service in Lingayen.



Like I said, I don't know the workings in the technical booth but I said 'Yes' to serve God and He placed me there.

The great thing about my emptiness and inexperience is God was the one who filled and equipped me to serve.

**Faith! He will take care of you.**

When I arrived earlier in Day 1, I was already having problems because I did not have a laptop that was compatible to the projector. Then come Alvin and Dea who had the perfect laptop and the perfect adaptors!



When speaker 1, Michael Lobrin, came in. I was also having difficulties starting up his presentation. Thankfully his personal assistant came in to help me. I wasn't able to get her name but I praise God she came in to aid us.

At lunch time, I remember Tricia and Jeff teaching me shortcuts for easier managing of the videos and presentations. We didn't have a "switcher" so we were organizing all presentations in one laptop and the transitions weren't presented as clean as we wanted. Nevertheless, they taught me techniques to make the presentations transition as smoothly as possible.



In timing presentations, calming me when I'm panicking, and being my sub during breaks, Dana and Dea, our Director and Assistant Director respectively, aided me through all that. They were also my support system during the technically tedious presentation of Bernard Canaberal.



All in all I praise God for the opportunity of serving Him in the CSMS and for allowing me to encounter His angels, the program team, as my guide. This experience was a baptism of fire for me but He nevertheless equipped me to fulfill my duties. I just had to jump in and say 'Yes' even if I was anxious.

Sneak: Program team "After Day 1" Party Dance. We praise and thank You for the joy of service!

And for that, may God be praised!

Love,

The Catholic Chic

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This contribution is available at <http://mycatholicchic.blogspot.com/2014/09/going-technical-my-csms-v3-experience.html>  
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# What you miss out on by adopting instead of giving birth [at Catholic Review]

You probably always imagined you'd give birth to your children. Now that you're realizing that isn't likely to happen, you're thinking about adoption. But you worry and wonder: Aren't you giving up some of the excitement that comes with giving birth to a baby?

I have to admit that I have never seen it that way. Quite a few years ago I realized I wanted to be a mother more than I wanted to be pregnant. And I have the honor and joy of being a mother to two magnificent children I would probably never have met if I had given birth.



But OK, since you are wondering, here are a few things you won't experience if you adopt rather than give birth (and keep in mind that I have only done one of the two myself):

1. **A positive pregnancy test.** Instead you'll have the memory of a phone call. You'll always know where you were, and how you laughed or cried or jumped into your husband's arms. You'll have a scribbled note where you wrote down all the details about your child.
2. **A sonogram photo.** Instead if you're like us, you'll receive pictures of your children laughing while

playing with a toy and rolling over on a bamboo mat. You'll look at the fuzz on their heads and marvel at their little feet and hands. Maybe you'll read about their favorite foods and practice saying their Chinese names. You'll show their pictures to everyone.



**3. Family and friends who are happy for you.** Actually, they will be so excited you won't know what to do with them. There's something about sharing adoption news--at least in our world--that generates more excitement than anything else we have ever done or will do. I could win a Nobel Prize or fly to the Moon and far fewer people would congratulate me.



**4. The physical discomfort of pregnancy.** You'll probably feel great, in fact, and you'll wonder why strangers can't tell that you're an expectant mother. But that's because you'll be drinking a glass of wine--or two or three. You won't need extra help carrying the groceries, and no one will run up to you and rub your stomach. Oh, and you will miss out on buying maternity clothes.

**5. Feeling your child move inside you.** You'll fall asleep at night and wake in the morning wondering what your child is doing, whether she is well-fed and happy and whether he knows about his future

family. You'll talk to his guardian angel and pray for the people caring for your little one. You'll feel so close to your child and yet so far away.



**6. Doctors' appointments.** Well, actually you'll see the doctor a few times as you work your way through your home study and dossier. You'll have bloodwork done and go through interviews and paperwork. But you won't have that horrible glucose test.

**7. A baby shower to celebrate the baby growing inside you.** You'll have a shower to celebrate the child you are waiting to meet! You can set up a crib or a toddler bed, wash and fold clothes, decorate a room, and imagine what your child will be like.



**8. Labor and delivery.** It's true. You are going to skip that part. And your husband will be your equal

partner in the process every step of the way through the paperwork and the packing.

**9. A birth story.** Here you are in luck, though. The story you'll have will be extraordinary, a story of how you learned you were about to meet your child--and then the story of all stories, the moment when you held your child in your arms.



**10. A hospital stay.** Instead we stayed in fantastic hotels in China and ate our way through unbelievable breakfast buffets with steamed dumplings and crispy bacon and hot oatmeal and fruits galore. We used room service, let a hotel maid keep our room clean, and had people doing our laundry. Suddenly I want to go back. How many moms say they want to go back to the place where they first met their children?

So maybe you'll miss out on a few things. But what will you experience?

You'll become a mother.

You'll fall head over heels in love with your child.



You'll know your child's story extends beyond you and your husband and yet see how the threads of the tapestry are woven together.

You'll celebrate birthdays and the anniversaries of the day you met and the day you found out you'd be a mother and the day your adoption was final and everything in between.



*Yes, it is supposed to be shaped like China.*

Maybe you missed the first breath or the first bath or the first steps. But there will be other firsts--and there will be many more milestones. And you'll be there for all of them, drinking them in, marveling that you get to parent this child.

Will it be different? Oh, yes. And it will be extraordinary.

*9/21/2014 11:41:42 PM*

By

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2014/09/21/what-you-miss-out-on-by-adopting-instead-of-giving-birth>  
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## St. Therese, Barbaric Baptism Practices, and Not Taking Your Kids to Mass [at This Felicitous Life]



Can anyone translate for me? **“Earth collected under the first coffin of the Blessed Therese of the Infant Jesus during her exhumation on the 6th of September 1910”**

Thoughts on a saint I don't get.

{Her feast day is October 1. I'm posting this October 2 but writing it the evening of the 1st. So there.}

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St. Therese was baptized two days after her birth. *Two days!!!* What are the odds her mother was present at the baptism? Slim to none, I'm thinking.

A lot of Catholic women I know—myself included—are drawn to the theological ideal of having your child baptized as early as possible.

At the same time, we adhere to the modern social conventions of *the mother showing up at all*. And getting dressed up. And being in a crowd (especially if several other babies are being baptised that day and/or it's done at Sunday Mass.) And hosting a party. Or at least attending a party. This all makes sense if a child is baptized at six months or a year, as is common in less-conservative religious traditions. It makes no sense when you're just a week or two or three out from giving birth.

A friend of mine passed out and started hemorrhaging at her baby's baptism—only a week after the child's birth.

This is madness. It's barbaric.

We ~~traditional(ish) Catholic~~ women (all women??) have a way of taking conflicting burdens upon ourselves.

Both my girls were baptized at two weeks. Both times Pat's and my sweet parents took care of all the entertaining. And we kept it really small the second time around. Still, I looked like crap and felt crappier. I should have stayed in bed.

I don't know what I'll do next time, but I can promise you it will be different.

---

There's [a line](#) early in Story of A Soul (St. Therese's autobiography): "On Sundays Mummy stayed at home to look after me, as I was too young to go to Mass."

I wonder if her mother was considered exempt from her Sunday obligation because she had to stay home with a young child? (There's a thought, eh?) Or if her mother went to a different mass?

In my circles, there's a lot of emphasis on taking one's children to Mass. A lot of frustration with those who aren't accepting of young children in church. And I'm 100% understanding of that. You want people to avoid contraception, you're going to have a lot of young children in church! Get over it!

This is a source of tension in our parish, where the pastor is less than fully. . . sympathetic.

For one thing, when a family lives half an hour or more away from church, it just isn't feasible for the parents to go to separate masses. Just driving to and from the church would eat up two hours of the day.

At the same time, I felt a lot of pressure for a long that that it was an *ideal* to all go to Mass together as a family. That I was taking the lazy way out if Pat and I went to different masses, leaving the girls at home.

Never mind that they were miserable and we were miserable. They weren't getting anything out of it, and dealing with the girls during mass was a *huge* source of tension between Pat and me.

I got over it a while ago. Pat and I go separately. We only live five minutes away from church. The five-year-old comes with one of us about half the time; the two-year-old, almost never. I love it. And that little line from Story of A Soul made me feel even better.

Maybe my kid still has a chance at becoming a doctor of the Church,

even if she doesn't go to Mass as a toddler.

---

I first read Story of a Soul back in high school, I think. It didn't sit well with me. I couldn't reconcile the idea of a "little way" that was supposedly so simple, with giving up your life at 15 to be a cloistered Carmelite nun. That seemed the hardest, least appealing thing I could think of. If that's the "little way," maybe I'll take the big way.

And melodrama, oh my goodness. St. Therese is full of that.

For instance: “I felt myself abandoned and there was no help for me on heaven or earth. . . . Nature seemed to share my misery. The sun never shone once during those three days and the rain fell in torrents. I have noticed that, at all the important moments of my life, nature has mirrored my soul.”

Um, it’s called seasonal affective disorder girlfriend. It’s *your* soul mirroring nature, not vice versa. Self-absorbed, much?

{Cue lighting striking me down dead for my irreverence.}

I re-read it a few months ago. I’m better able to appreciate, now, the idea that her words can have meaning for me, even if I don’t relate to how she applied them to her life; does that make sense?

---

My maternal great-grandmother’s name was (is) Theresa. (Spelled with or without an “H”? Can’t remember.)

She was of English/Irish descent, and some ethnic tensions existed in New England between her people and the French Canadians in the 1930s or thereabouts.

My grandmother (her daughter) once asked her, “Which Saint Theresa are you named after mom?”

She replied, “. . . *Not* the French one!”

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My maternal grandmother (“Meme“), nevertheless, developed a great devotion to the Little Flower.

She was over the moon when we picked “Teresa” as the middle name for one of our daughters. We talked on the phone and she told me how much the name meant to her: it’s her mother’s name, the name of a favorite saint, the name of her parish, the name of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, etc.

Come to think of it, it was one of the last cogent conversations I had with her before dementia took a stronger hold and, ultimately, she passed away.

I didn’t have the heart to point out to her our “Teresa” is without an H . . . *not* the French one!

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Meme gave me her relic of St. Therese (pictured above). It fell off the shelf recently, cracking the frame, when Girl 1 had one of her many wall-kicking sprees. (Fitting, perhaps, given St. Therese’s fiesty personality as a child?)

I still don’t really “get” St. Therese.

But I’ve put her relic on the mantle, cracked frame and all.

We have a connection, she and I.

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[practices-and-not-taking-your-kids-to-mass/](#)

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## How Much Reverence? [at Declaring the Whole Counsel]

I was having a debate with a friend, and although the subject matter was a hot topic, we were both keeping our cool. The issue was the differences (good and bad) between "traditional" worship and "contemporary" worship. I was speaking for the traditional position, and he was speaking for the contemporary. I am sure that many of you have heard the debates or been a part of them yourselves. Not much was different about this one. I talked much about "more reverence" and he spoke consistently about "relevance" and "appreciation". In the end, neither of us changed our opinion, but we both did believe that we heard the other position better than before.

One simple question lays this entire issue on the table and makes it clear. Is it possible to be "too" reverent towards God? Clearly, the answer is, "no", we cannot be "too" reverent toward God. Yes, we could certainly be too reverent toward one of God's creatures (this is called idolatry), but God is different than His creatures. He alone is the "Most High God", and we are His subjects. We are called to worship and serve Him, and Him alone. Therefore, it is impossible to be "too" reverent toward God.

The other side of the coin is not as pleasant a thought though. You

can

be too irreverent toward God. Let me bring in the previous paragraph and say this again:

*Although you cannot be too reverent toward God, you can be too irreverent toward God.*

Many people do not even give this fact any consideration. They automatically assume that there is no bottom to the move toward "contemporary" and "casual" worship. It is the opinion of some that you can just get more and more casual and there is never a problem with this. There is, however, a line drawn where irreverence toward God (especially when we are intending on worshiping Him) becomes more than a concern; it becomes a grave sin.

With this knowledge in hand, what do we want to do when it comes to approaching the Almighty Creator of the universe? Do we want to play on the edges of irreverence because we claim that it is "easier for people to relate to it"? Do we wish to risk dishonoring God so that we can feel more comfortable in worship? If we are coming to worship to feel comfortable, then we have completely missed the point of worship. The Mass is not the place to "feel good", it is the place to "be redeemed" and those two are not necessarily the exact same thing. Although being redeemed does feel good, not everything that feels good is a part of our redemption.

Imagine the highest and most reverent worship possible. It is what is already going on in Heaven right now (cf. Revelation chapter 4 & 5). Now imagine God saying "Wait! Stop! that is too reverent, too respectful and too God-honoring. You need to stop and be much more lax and disrespectful." Really; can anyone even imagine that happening without

*feeling*

irreverent (I felt uncomfortable just writing those words)? This is not really an issue between

contemporary and traditional. It is an issue between what is reverent and what is not. Is it reverent to be casual and relaxed in the presence of our Savior? It is reverent to have pop tunes used in our musical arrangements for Mass? Is it reverent to treat God like "just one of us"?

Yet, we can all imagine what happens when things go the other direction (and there are numerous biblical references to it). People can be disrespectful and rude towards God (either inwardly, outwardly, or both) in various ways. Let me list a few ways this can be done during Mass: chewing gum (which is breaking your fast, by the way), reading the bulletin, texting someone, dressing immodestly, arriving late or leaving early. These and many others are clear and obvious ways that we display and express an attitude of disrespect and irreverence. Now try to imagine God saying "I like this! Do more, and more of it. And, please teach your children to do the same." Yuck!

I am not talking about being stuffy and cold in life. I am talking about making a distinction between the holy and the common. If we show no more respect for God than we do for a movie, then our hearts likely do not truly love God. In my family we have a lot of fun; we joke, we laugh, we play tricks on one another. We can do this often because we can distinguish between the holy and the common. We can separate out places where we are supposed to be casual, and places where we are not. Then, as a result, we are able to come into Mass and offer proper reverence to God.

Parents, teach your children how to be reverent. Show them what it means to honor others (it is included in one of the commandments), as well as how to honor God. Exemplify it for them, not just in Church, but in your whole lives. Adults, if you find yourself irreverent, repent of it, go to confession (do not forget that part) and then chart a new course for life. Remember, you cannot honor God too much, but you can honor Him too little. Working towards greater honor of God is a good and godly thing to do; allowing less honor is a grave sin, and we must turn and do all we can to prevent it.

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This contribution is available at <http://declaringthewholecounsel.blogspot.com/2014/09/how-much-reverence.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.

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2014/08/death-of-journalist.html>  
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## Movie Reviews, Recipes and Other Things [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



This past week we went to the zoo!!

To the Zoo! To the Zoo!

(anyone have that book?)

Anyway,

Are my kids the only ones that do not know how to smile and look into the camera?  
(at the same time)

I mean, come on.

This was our first time going in over 14 years *without*

a stroller.

I felt kind of like I was forgetting something.

It felt really weird and kind of sad.

But it was really fun!

# SIMPLY DRAWING

Volume II  
ART CLASSES



By Artist  
Mrs. Ginger Himes

I ordered this for our Art this year.

*I love it!*

And better yet,

*The kids love it!*

You can order it



Guess what the 2nd lesson was?



Yep.

A mailbox!

They had me at *mailbox*.

I love that all ages can do this.

It's fun to see each of their levels of drawing the same thing.



Aren't these fun mailbox pictures?



Oh, don't worry, we caught them before they ran into the street!

One of the many reasons I love mailboxes, the excitement it brings.



Here's a close up  
*(you're welcome!)*



Local Farmer's Stand

I can't garden because we have so many deer  
so I buy local!

See that zucchini in the upper left of this picture?



Yeah, it became this.

Gave away a few loaves

I always pray that God puts the right people in my path to give my baked goods to.

I wanted to give a loaf to a homeless person,

but every time I drove anywhere with the bread, it was raining

and no one was out.

My recipe?



I saw this on Facebook this week and totally loved it!

Can you guess which one I am?

Oh, I love just about everything happy.

And Christmas is happy.

Even in September.



I've got to try this.



Country Fried Steak  
Almost my *whole* family's favorite recipe

but 5 out of 8, makes this a hit!

Recipe



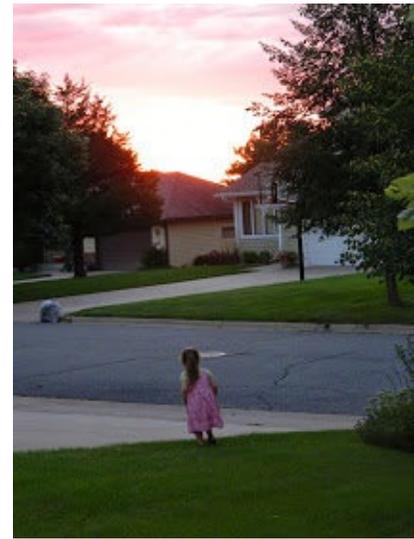
Am I the only one in the world that  
automatically thinks of this scene from The Office  
when people say "I'm going to get my hair done"?

One of the funniest episodes.  
Ever.



The sky is on fire!!

Oh, this has to go down as one of the most beautiful sunsets I've ever seen



This picture does not do it justice, it was amazing!

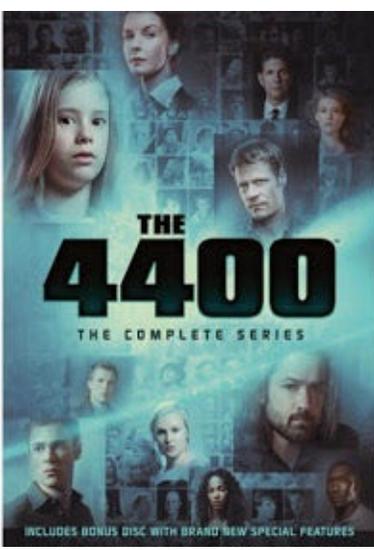


We watched this movie this past weekend!

Loved it!

Really good and clean

(it is PG-13)



My husband and I are watching this show, via Netflix.

We are on Season 2

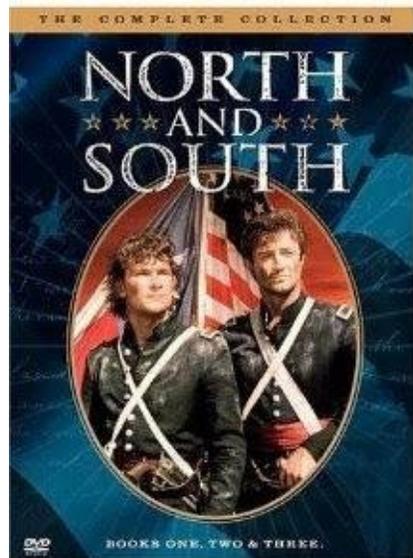
(Season 1 was a really short season)

We are really liking it.

We are waiting for the last season of Person of Interest to come out

in September!

(on Netflix)



I am watching this show!!

Did any of you watch it when it was a mini-series?

I remember parts of it

I don't remember it being this long

(it's like 8 discs)

Fun to see the actors now

(Patrick Swayze is not alive though anymore)

Kind of funny, this mini series was before Dirty Dancing.

I am loving this song!

I love the *CLEAN* version of course,

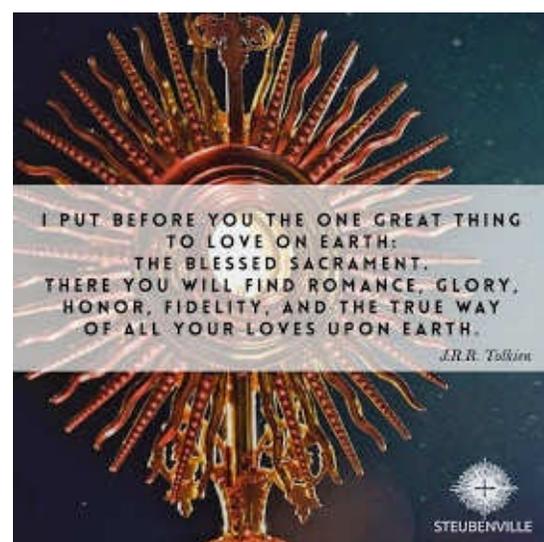
which is why I had to put this particular one on

What is wrong with singers nowadays?

Why do they have to push the limits and swear in every stinkin' song?

I call this song "Pretty Pretty Please"

You don't want to know the real name of the song.



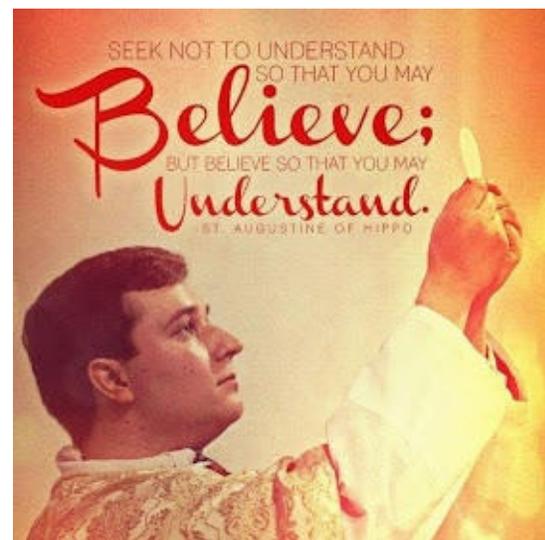
Any Lord of the Rings fans?

Oh, gosh, I live for Jesus.

I am on Fire for Him

I look so forward to my holy hour each week,

where I get to be with Him.



All the Saints had a great love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

"Oh, God, Thou art all powerful, Make me a saint!"

-St Alphonsus de Liguori

I have a beautiful girl turning 10 today!

I'll be back hopefully soon with pictures of her and her day!

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This contribution is available at <http://makemeasaint.blogspot.com/2014/09/movie-reviews-recipes-and-other-things.html>  
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# Formal Tea (Finish) [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on September 19, 2014 · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)



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

The elderly white-haired woman in this scene was celebrating her 83rd Birthday, and the younger woman was treating her to lunch at the nostalgic Tea Room. I cropped the scene from a photo I took that day, and perhaps I will do a larger painting of the scene in the future. I enjoyed the color and the design of darks in this small study.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2014/09/19/formal-tea-finish/>  
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# The Spark of God [at bukas palad]



Year A / Ordinary Time / 23rd Sunday

Readings: Ezekiel 33.7-9 / Responsorial Psalm: 95 (R/v 8) / Romans 13.8-10 / Matthew 18.15-20

A family. A band of friends. An estate of neighbors. A school of students and teachers. A group of working colleagues. A parish of believers. A nation of citizens.

Each of us inhabits several of these spaces everyday. In these spaces, we are not just individuals, distinct and separate from each other. Rather, we are individuals always in relationship. We are bound together by blood, race, language, religion, shared experiences, common history and citizenship. The word “community” best describes these relationships.

You and I know the benefits of living in community. It roots us. It gives us an identity. It nurtures our growth and supports our everyday life. It enables us to interact and to enjoy life. And it helps us to fulfill our aspirations.

But you and I also know how much living in community can be a struggle. We labour to overcome differences so as to be united in fellowship. We endeavor to value difference, to forgive hurts and to build up all. We strive for commonsense and common understanding. We seek to share our commonwealth so that no one is left behind. Sometimes we do these well and sometimes we fail miserably.

Community life is a theme in our mass readings in September. This is a challenging theme: it demands we make an honest evaluation of how we are living in community as Christians. These readings provide

contrasting sets of virtues and vices for us to consider this question: “Are you fostering or destroying relationships?” This is why they will encourage us to build up the community by being more willing to communicate and to forgive. They will also warn us of how jealousy and envy, pride and lust will tear the community apart.

"Why is it important to make an honest evaluation of the quality of our communal life with one another?" you may ask.

Paul provides an explanation in his letter to the Romans: it has to do with how we love as Christians. The lack of love causes us to sin against each other. The abundance of love empowers us to build up each other. When we withhold our love, we deny another life. When we generously share our love, we enrich another's life. How we love determines the richness of community life we have with one another.

If Christian love—the kind of love we profess we have because God loves us—is the fulfillment of the law, then, you and I would do well to make an honest assessment of how we are practicing it in community. Doing this allows us to let God perfect us even more to love one another as God loves us in Jesus.

But don't we already know this lesson about love? Haven't we learnt this in catechism as a child and as an adult? Don't we hear it in the many homilies about modeling ourselves on Jesus' love of God and love for neighbor? Aren't we challenged so often to live this kind of love by caring for the poorer amongst us?

I believe that we know what Christian loving is all about. And so it would be natural for us, as we hear this morning's readings, to ask: “What else can we learn about how to love as Christians in community?”

I'd like to suggest that Jesus wants to remind us today that to love is not just about doing. Rather, it is first and always about being--being present to and being with another. We hear this reminder in these words with which Jesus closes our gospel reading: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in your midst.” The following story can help us appreciate the reason behind Jesus' reminder.

There was once a monastery on a mountain. It was famous for the 101 monks and their holiness. For many years the people on the plains looked up and said, “Ahh, there God dwells.” Visitors sought out the monastery to heal their wearied souls.

Because of the monastery's fame, the monks grew jealous and petty with one another. Many visitors felt their animosity. Over time, many monks left. The people on the plains looked up and lamented, “Ohhh. The light of God is dying.”

The Abbot of the monastery was distressed. He didn't know what to do. So, he sought the advice of the wise hermit who lived at the foot the mountain. After listening to the Abbot's woes, the hermit said, "Go back and looked for the Messiah; he dwells among you." Then, he closed his door.

The Abbot was flabbergasted: what kind of an answer is that, he muttered to himself as he climbed back up.

When the few remaining monks heard the hermit's words, they grew silent as they began to look into each other's faces. Is this one the Messiah? Is that one the Messiah? Who really is the Messiah amongst us?

From that day on the mood in the monastery changed. The monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect, on the off chance that one of them might be the Messiah.

They began serving each other, looking out for opportunities to assist. They began seeking healing and forgiveness where offence had been given. They began loving again.

As one traveler, then another, visited the monastery word soon spread about the remarkable spirit of the place. People once again sought out the monastery and found themselves renewed and transformed. Now the people on the plains looked and exclaimed, "Ahh, yes, see how they love one another: God has come home."

And all this came to be because those monks knew the Messiah was among them.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in your midst." The monks enflashed this communion with Jesus by being in communion with one another.

The monks discovered this promise of communion by learning to be in loving relationship with one another. The people observed this in the monks. This morning, you and I also learn from the monks that the way of loving communion is indeed our path to salvation. Their way is indeed Jesus' way for Christians to live and move and have our being in community by being with God.

Why then is this a hope-filled lesson that we can take home today to live and to share with our various communities? In the words of the Brazilian author Paul Coelho this is why:

"One does not love in order to do what is good or to help or to protect someone. If we act in that way, we are perceiving the other as a simple object, and we are seeing ourselves as wise and generous persons. This has nothing to do with love. **To love is to be communion with the other and to discover in that other the spark of God**" (*By the River Piedra, I Sat Down and Wept*).

The spark of God and communion. This is why we love the way we do as Christians in community. It is Jesus' way of loving because in each one he met in gospels and in each one of us here whom he meets daily he does not judge the bad. Instead, he always looks for the spark of God in each of us, that spark that draws him into communion with us and with us into union with God.

How then can we not love as Jesus did by being more attentive to the spark of God in one another in the various communities we inhabit, and so savour God's life-giving love in our midst?

*Preached at St Ignatius Church, Singapore*

Photo: courtesy of St Joseph's Institution

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This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.sg/2014/09/homily-spark-of-god.html>  
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## The devil made me do it [at Convert Journal]



No he didn't.

Comedian Flip Wilson did a famous piece – *The Devil Made Me Buy This Dress!*. It was hilarious. Some people think the devil makes them do things too.

The [devil](#) is real. He prowls through the world like a roaring lion looking to devour, seeking the ruination of souls. He is very powerful and smart, but he is NOT in any way equal to God's might.

The devil can only tempt us. To sin, we must accept his proposal and be a willing participant. We have the power to say no (unless we are actually possessed, which is rare and itself required our cooperation). Sin is disordered, cooperating with evil (thus separation from God) and VOLUNTARY. We can not be forced to sin (although we could conceivably be forced to do sinful things against our will). Similarly, we can not sin accidentally.

A related, but flawed, theory many people have is that all temptation is from the devil. He certainly creates his share — particularly the most clever temptations custom tailored for our particular personal weaknesses. He is not however, responsible for all temptation.

There are two other sources of temptation: the world and the flesh. The world seems to be a hotbed these days, with immodesty and pornography everywhere, secular “values” and relativistic thinking. It is easy for the careless to follow the heard through the [wide gate](#).

The flesh means us. No blaming the devil or the world on this one. It is our disordered attraction to sin (concupiscence) passed on to us through original sin.

You were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you once lived following the age of this **world**, following the **ruler of the power of the air**, the spirit that is now at work in the disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the desires of our **flesh**, following the wishes of the flesh and the impulses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest.

To summarize, there are three things which tempt us (*tria autem sunt quae nos tentant*). These enemies of the soul are:

1. the world (*mundus*)
2. the flesh (*caro*)
3. the devil (*et diabolus*)

Finally, no discussion of temptation would be complete without mentioning the *Our Father*. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” I am aware of no better explanation for this important intention than that found in the Catechism:

2846 This petition goes to the root of the preceding one, for our sins result from our consenting to temptation; we therefore ask our Father not to “lead” us into temptation. It is difficult to translate the Greek verb used by a single English word: the Greek means both “do not allow us to enter into temptation” and “do not let us yield to temptation.” “God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one”; on the contrary, he wants to set us free from evil. We ask him not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin. We are engaged in the battle “between flesh and spirit”; this petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength.

2847 The Holy Spirit makes us *discern* between trials, which are necessary for the growth of the inner man, and temptation, which leads to sin and death. We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation. Finally, discernment unmasks the lie of temptation, whose object appears to be good, a “delight to the eyes” and desirable, when in reality its fruit is death.

God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings.... There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us.

2848 “Lead us not into temptation” implies a *decision of the heart*: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.... No one can serve two masters.” “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” In this assent to the Holy Spirit the Father gives us strength. “No testing has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it.”

2849 Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer. It is by his prayer that Jesus vanquishes the tempter, both at the outset of his public mission and in the ultimate struggle of his agony. In this petition to our heavenly Father, Christ unites us to his battle and his agony. He urges us to *vigilance* of the heart in communion with his own. Vigilance is “custody of the heart,” and Jesus prayed for us to the Father: “Keep them in your name.” The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to awaken us to keep watch. Finally, this petition takes on all its dramatic meaning in relation to the last temptation of our earthly battle; it asks for *final perseverance*. “Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake.”



## What I wish I had said [at crucesignatiblog]

I spent a good part of my summer at camp. By “a good part”, I mean six weeks. First there was [Camp St. Louis](#), then [Captivenia](#), then more Camp St. Louis, then [Ignite](#) to finish things off. It was a great summer. I met wonderful people and got to counsel a lot of great kids. They always make me reflect a little on my own life, too. In the younger kids I see the innocence of faith and the simple, pure love that Christ wants all of us to have. In the older kids, those in their early teens, I see that same struggle that I felt not so many years ago; that struggle for power within them. *“Will I serve God or not? What is my choice?”*

Many of these kids come from Catholic homes and no doubt, they hear it in church or at school: the Church has called for a New Evangelization. Of course, they don’t know exactly what this means, or how to carry it out. There is the evangelization that must take place outside of the Church, but there is also the evangelizing within the Church that must take place. The point that I want to focus on the most is the first one: showing those in the secular world the light and beauty of the Catholic faith.

The best way of doing this is by example. If you practice virtue and live as the best Christian you can, people will notice and take interest in your religion. You must practice your faith to the fullest! Become a living saint! That is how you draw people to Christ.

Now, I doubt that saying that would inspire them. More likely, they would run screaming in the other direction. So thank God I didn’t give them that lecture. But I wish I had said something to them, now that we’re after the fact; something along these lines: **when you are among others who know you are a Catholic, you become for them a representative of the Catholic Church.** There is a little food for thought. When an artist goes to paint someone’s portrait, he wants his representation of that person to be as true to life as possible. Likewise, we should try to represent the Catholic Church (or even further, to represent Christ Himself) to them.

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This contribution is available at <http://crucesignatiblog.wordpress.com/2014/09/30/what-i-wish-i-had-said/>  
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## Mourning [at The Road Home]

I wrote about our

[New Tension.](#)

And I wrote about how we arrived at and

[what this place of peace feels like](#)

Now it's time for the other side. For the mourning.

Again, this may be long and I don't really know where it is going. It is all part of this road home that we are on.

The Man and I had our discussion late on a Saturday night. Sitting on the floor of his workplace waiting for WVU Football game traffic to clear. It was just the two of us, for the first time in a while that we had nothing to do but chat with one another.

**And so, as it often does, our conversation turned to our infertility.**

I asked The Man if he'd had enough time to think and pray about where God was calling us and/or if he wanted to talk about what the road would look like moving forward. He had. He started the conversation by reflecting about how he wonders if maybe God isn't calling us to something different. How he just doesn't know why this is happening to us.

As he talked, I had a realization. When I think of 'why?' when we are having these discussions, I'm thinking of things like 'my tubes are blocked; I have PCOS; I have endometriosis; there is inflammation; etc' I hear his question and I go right to the physical answers. More the answer to "how come" than "why". Yet, as he talked, I remembered something he said a while ago one Sunday on the way home from Mass when he was telling me that a co-worker had asked him "why don't you have kids" and his answer was: "I don't know."

And honestly, while we have physical 'reasons', we ultimately don't know. No reason that I can come up with explains why we are infertile. Yes, it is part of God's plan. Yes, good has come from it, but surely good could come from us being parents as well.

And so I realized that in searching for his answer to "why?", The Man had started to wonder what else God might be calling us to.

**Are we to use our physically infertile marriage to be spiritually fruitful in a profound way?**

He reflected on the priest and seminarian friends who we have been able to have in our home and travel with us and how it is clear God is calling me to be a spiritual mother to priests.

And so, as we reflected on this and I asked the question about making a doctor's appointment and we both agreed that there was no need to do that, we realized that our road was changing.

Soon after that, we headed home. Sunday was spent with Mass, brunch, napping, and football. Monday and Tuesday, I was working out of town - ironically presenting the Catholic perspective on the Sanctity of Life to an ecumenical council of churches in WV - and so there was not much time to process. I was able to talk a bit with a friend, but not at length.

Wednesday, I was able to go to Adoration and Mass at Fr. D's parish after work. And it was sometime during evening prayer that it started to sink in. The dreams of the past 4 years started playing in my mind and the tears started to fall. In the reading, St. Paul declared that he would spare those who had not married the afflictions of such a state in life, and I longed to be spared this affliction of infertility. Before Mass, I had been writing in my journal, and I'd written the question "May I mourn?" It was the one thing I wanted to know from God.

**Was it/is it OK to mourn? May I finally acknowledge that my dreams will not come true?**

(As I said before, I realize that God is sovereign and life is a gratuitous gift that He can choose to bestow at any time. Should He choose to do so, we would welcome it joyfully and with gratitude.) There was silence. But through Mass, I felt my heart change, I felt the mourning start. And after Mass, Fr. D stopped to see if I was OK and I was able to barely choke out the words "we're done." And it was his words that gave me my answer, among other things, he said "these first few weeks are going to be especially difficult."

**And I was given permission to mourn.**

Here is what that has felt like.

It feels like someone has died.

**Like someone who never existed has died.**

More than anything I want to take a week off of work and have a funeral and say goodbye to these dreams. I do realize that there was no actual life. Only these dreams have had a life of their own. The hope I've felt over the years that has given me life; that has reminded me that there is something to hope for. It is gone. A new dream must be dreamed, but not before the first is mourned.

It is mourning the loss of the opportunity to...

see a BFP

tell The Man

have a blessing of a baby in the womb

hear a heartbeat

throw up all morning

tell our parents they will be grandparents

have a 4 generations photo taken with my mom, my Nan, me, and my child

hear "it's a boy" or "it's a girl"

pace the floor begging for sleep for us both

watch tiny fingers reach out for The Man's nose or beard - and see his eyes glisten with wonder at his own child

baptize our child

That is only as far as I made it today. To infancy. The awareness that in the coming weeks I must mourn the entire life.

**I must allow myself to let go of it. To say goodbye without ever having the opportunity to say hello.**

Not even for a second. I am under no illusion this will be easy or a linear process. Nothing about grief is. I just know that I must do it.

And the isolation of it all...if infertility is isolating - this is more so.

The reason for the sadness makes no sense to one who has not longed for a child. For how can it? How can I be so sad over the loss of someone who never existed? I went to work today because I had work to do. I could have taken the day off, but then I wouldn't have been prepared for this weekend's retreat for engaged couples, and I don't know how I possibly would have explained I needed the weekend off - which is quite honestly what I need. How does one say I am mourning when no one has died? And so the isolation grows; the fear of bursting into tears at any moment is immense.

Somehow, amidst all of this there is peace. I've learned to recognize it, I think. Because I do believe that it is always there, even when I don't feel it. But please, do not misunderstand -

**the peace has done nothing to lessen the mourning, the sorrow. If anything, it has made it more acute - more real.**

The peace has allowed me to feel these emotions fully, while resting in Him. When I resisted the emotions, when I sought the peace so desperately, there was a buffer of sorts.

**The buffer is gone**

. All that is left is grace.

**By grace alone**

, I will let go of this dream and learn to want only what He wants.

As with last time, I think this is enough for now. I will still write about where we are/left things medically. I will still share about spiritual motherhood. But for now, I must rest in this tension.

**I must cling to grace, the always-answered prayer of the last four years.**

He has led me here, kicking and screaming most of the way, but He has been patient. So now, without any choice but to kneel before Him and beg for His peace and His mercy,

**I lay the desires of my heart at His feet and ask Him to show me how to want what He wants.**

 Rebecca

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This contribution is available at <http://theroadhomewv.blogspot.com/2014/09/mourning.html>  
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## Why Don't People Get It? [at Faith of the Fathers]



Now I will be frank, and admit that I am not familiar with Mr. Evans work. When I am not at work, I suppose I spend far too much time on my computer, taking care of the blogs, researching for posts, reading the news, etc. I seldom read a book anymore, and I am out of touch with who writes what lately.

The thing I am talking about here though, is not about Mr. Evans writing, but a post he made and asked to be shared regarding a letter he received from an "anonymous" person from a church where he had in his own words: *"I came to your church to tell you about God's love for His children. And to talk about the beauty of His forgiveness. I don't think you heard me. Or, at least, believed me. You wrote in your letter that I had no place in a house of God, as I was clearly a sinful man and that my sins were "manifested across my face", revealed by my many facial tics."*

Now, I am not going to reproduce his entire response on this post, but you can [go read it here](#).

It makes me wonder, how the person who wrote him, deems themselves to be so qualified as to judge the heart of a person. How do they deem someone...anyone... to be sinful as being indicated by their "*many facial tics*"?

Did I miss out on something? Did Jesus Himself...any of the apostles...any of the many saints...any of the great Church writers... teach that we could always spot a sinner by his or her "*many facial tics*"? If having facial tics is proof that someone is a sinner, then who among us would not be constantly plagued with tics?

The "anonymous" letter writer apparently failed to read two very, very important passages from scripture. The first being about judging as found in **Matthew 7: 1-2** and the other from **1 John 1: 8-10** where the Evangelist warns us about saying we have no sin. It might also benefit anonymous to read **1 John 2: 9-11** as well.

The thing that also got me was the assertion from "anonymous" that Mr. Evans "*had no place in a house of God*" because Mr. Evans, in the view of "anonymous", "*was clearly a sinful man*".

How can anyone not know...not realize... that ***the House of God is a place for sinners***, and full of sinners. Jesus said to the Pharisees who caught the woman accused of adultery, "*Let he who is without sin cast the first stone*". I can't cast a stone. Can you? Can "anonymous"? Has "anonymous" ever read **Romans 3:23**?

We have all sinned. We have all fallen short of the Glory of God. The house of God is meant for sinners. It is full of sinners. If the house of God excluded sinners, who would be in it? Who could be in it? Not me, or you who are reading this. The house of God is meant for the sinners to come before God and to seek His forgiveness, and His Redemption through Jesus Christ. If a House of God excluded sinners, then there would not be any salvation for anyone. Indeed, a House of God would not even exist!

What "anonymous" also fails to see, is that Mr. Evans is bearing his cross in Christ. He has been given a cross to bear, and he bears it with conviction and courage. Many have crosses to bear...whether they be facial tics...mental illness...physical illness...spiritual weakness...all have crosses to bear and in different degrees. None of us are told that we will never have to suffer.

Our Lord suffered for us, so why should we think that since He suffered for all of our transgressions, we should never have to suffer at all? Saint Augustine of Hippo reminds us "*God had only one Son without*

*sin, but never one without suffering".*

Saint Ignatius of Loyola also tells us *"If God causes you to suffer much, it is a sign that He has great designs for you, and that He certainly intends to make you a saint. And if you wish to become a great saint, entreat Him yourself to give you much opportunity for suffering; for there is no wood better to kindle the fire of holy love than the wood of the cross, which Christ used for His own great sacrifice of boundless charity."*

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga also said *"There is no more evident sign that anyone is a saint and of the number of the elect, than to see him leading a good life and at the same time a prey to desolation, suffering, and trials."*

So "anonymous" willingly allowed themselves to miss seeing a man willingly bearing his cross, in unity with Christ bearing His cross. This person failed to do, what we should all do, and that is to see Christ in each and every person we meet.

For Christ is in all who believe and trust in Him, and follows His commandments.

To not see Christ in others...to only see Him in ourselves...is to deny Christ and His salvific power.

In the end, the letter from "anonymous" to Mr. Evans, says more about the serious spiritual work "anonymous" needs to learn about and practice than it does about anything else.

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This contribution is available at <http://faithofthefathers.blogspot.com/2014/09/why-dont-people-get-it.html>  
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## Today's find: Apple butter [at With Us Still]

I guess you could say I like to stir things up.

That thought occurred to me this morning, as I wrestled with the reality that – due to a family commitment – I was going to miss the apple butter cooking at our parish for the first time in about ten or twelve years.

Truth be told, my contributions to the [deeply-involved two-day process](#) have always been rather minimal. I show up right after 8:30 Mass...on what's typically a beautifully crisp Saturday morning in autumn...and stir the contents of the kettle over an open fire for a couple of hours.



Stirring the pot: Nice work, if you can get it...

By the time I get involved, dozens of other parishioners have already been toiling away since Friday morning – peeling and cutting apples...mushing it into applesauce... preparing the spice mixes... sanitizing the Mason jars...not to mention the hardy handful of brave souls who rise well before dawn on Saturday to stoke the fires and load up the kettles.

That's part of the reason I love apple butter cooking, I think: Because it *does* require a community effort... and there are ways for *anybody* to contribute, even in an admittedly low-skill position like pot-stirrer.

It's cool to contemplate, too, how we've been doing it this way at St. Joe's for 79 years now – preparing for the big annual parish festival, our Sausage Supper on the second Sunday in October. (Y'all come... [we'd love to see you on October 12!](#))

Apple butter cooking is a venerable tradition in the best sense of the word, an activity that bridges generations in our parish family and creates holy memories. (My favorite: A few years back, I asked one of our Golden Rulers how many Sausage Suppers she'd been involved with in total, and she replied "All of them." She'd grown up at St. Joe's...and actually did help out at the inaugural event as a young girl under her parents' guiding hands in 1935. And sure enough, I saw Dee there again today – supervising the jarring operations. 79 years and counting!)



Sigh...somehow, they managed without me....

Alas, duty calls me away from participating in the tradition this year (although I did stop by long enough to snap a few photos.) And in its absence, I've had a chance to reflect on the wisdom we've been hearing in the [readings from Ecclesiastes](#) the past couple of days: There is, indeed, a time for everything, but we'd best not take anything for granted.

Before the silver cord is snapped  
And the golden bowl is broken  
And the pitcher is shattered at the spring  
And the broken pulley falls into the well  
And the dust returns to the earth as it once was  
And the life breath returns to God who gave it.

The sweet smell of apple butter cooking – like every good thing in our lives – ought to remind us, ultimately, of God's providence. It's best to savor these things (while we can) as an invitation to gratitude and praise toward the One from whom they emanate.

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

*IHS*

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This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2014/09/27/todays-find-apple-butter/>  
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# The Fruits of Mission - Courage [at Annie Go Lightly]

A reflection on the prophet, Jeremiah

## **Jeremiah 20: 7**

I hid from you, Lord

Object of laughter, mockery

Foolish dupe, I am.

## **Jeremiah 20: 8**

Words spew forth. Outrage.

My messages an affront.

Perturbing. Vexing.

Distain is my alms

Hot violence follows me

Lord, now close at hand

## **Jeremiah 20: 9**

I hide, go quiet

Words burn in my breast, break free

I stand. You shield me.

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This contribution is available at <http://annieelf2012.wordpress.com/2014/09/02/the-fruits-of-mission-courage/>  
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## Quick Lessons from the Catechism: Truth, Beauty and Sacred Art

In recent days, I have had the privilege to view some new sacred art recently created in Northern Italy. To say that this art is beautiful would be the understatement of the month. As a child and adolescent growing up in the Catholic Church, I was subjected to some grim churches and art. It was as if we were trying to destroy truth, beauty and sacred art and replace it with relativism, ghastly, and ugly modern art.

In a time when the fruits of the Second Vatican Council are coming to fruition, let us also reap the bountiful beauty of the Church's sacred art and allow our parishes to be filled with art that reflects the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Communion of Saints. Catholic Churches should represent the Heavenly Kingdom and not the lower levels of the Inferno.



Stain Glass Window in Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Cottonwood, AZ

So what does the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teach on sacred art?

In paragraph 2513, it states: The fine arts, but above all sacred art, “of their nature are directed toward expressing in some way the infinite beauty of God in works made by human hands. Their dedication to the increase of God’s praise and of his glory is more complete, the more exclusively they are devoted to turning men’s minds devoutly toward God” (SC 122).

To read more on sacred art in the *Catechism*, please see paragraphs 2500-2503. I would also check out [The Foundation for Sacred Arts](#) and the June 23, 2014 [article](#) from Catholic News Agency.



Interior of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Jasper, IN.

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This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2014/09/19/quick-lessons-from-the-catechism-truth-beauty-and-sacred-art/>  
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## Mass boring? Can't focus? Let's Chat [at Ora et Labora et Maternitas]

Any Catholic parent knows that attending Mass with Tiny People Under the Age of 20 is heroic in and of itself. First, there's the struggle to get out the door without breaking 70% of the Ten Commandments. Then, the oh-so-pleasant ride to Mass, made memorable by the people who are still upset about the ritual of getting ready, and those who aren't still raving are downright sullen. Of course, Dad taking the turn into the parking lot on two wheels and almost hitting old Mrs. Reilly with the car doesn't help the mood much, either. And then, the fun begins! Race to the door! Bathe in the holy water! Stop pulling your sister's sweater off! Race to the pew! Genuflect towards Jesus, not the exit sign! For goodness' sake, GET IN THE PEW ALREADY! Sit! Kneel! Stand! Stop chewing on your hair! No, you can't go up and talk to Father on the altar right now! If you ask me if we're getting donuts after Mass ONE MORE TIME... GET BACK IN THE PEW! You should've went before we left home! Why do you have a stuffed snake?! WHERE DID YOU HIDE THAT THING?! No, it's not time to go home! Three more songs! And so on. Sound familiar?

Truth be told, in this season of life, making it to Mass really is a big deal. ~~Sometimes~~ Most of the time, it can feel like a Herculean task, and the Devil seizes this moment of realization to whisper "Why are you here? This is too hard. You'd be better off just staying home today. You can go next week. Or next month. Or next year." I know these thoughts; I know this temptation; I know what happens when you give in. It starts out "just this once," and before you know it, you've missed Mass several weeks, or months, in a row. We talk ourselves out of going to Mass, which is the "source and summit" of our faith, the greatest conduit of grace that we have been given – at a time when we are emotionally and physically exhausted, and need that grace all the more! Or maybe you are determined to attend Mass, but you wonder afterwards, after all the distractions and toddler wrangling, if it even really counted as attendance. You were physically present, but not so much mentally. There have been so many times I have sunk into the passenger seat on the ride home wondering what the heck the readings were about, whether or not I actually heard the Consecration, and who was the celebrant again? We've all heard the advice that "you get out of Mass what you bring to it," but how does that work when all the forces of Kiddiedom are working overtime to keep you thoroughly distracted?

First and foremost, remember that as a parent, your primary task is to help your children get to Heaven. Such a huge part of that God-given task is giving them the proper foundation on which to build their relationship with the Lord. The first, and best, step in this direction is attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every Sunday. *Consistently being present at Mass, week after week, is vital to their faith formation.* How can we convince our children that Jesus is Truly Present in the Eucharist if we are not putting Mass ahead of all of our other priorities and commitments? So, cut yourself some slack and know that just by walking through the door, you are reinforcing everything you're already teaching them. You are painstakingly laying a foundation, brick by brick, Mass by Mass.

Believe it or not, many kids are bored during Mass because they have no idea what's going on. They can't see because they're surrounded by tall people, and the whole thing is pretty confusing. One of the things we've found to be very helpful is to explain each and every part of the Mass to them, in real-time. On more than one occasion, I've channeled my inner Bob Costas and given a running commentary on the

Mystery unfolding before us.

\*In a hushed, Bob Costas melodramatic tone\*

ME: “And now, Father Troy will lift up the Chalice. He will pray. He will say ‘This Is My Blood.’ And the wine will turn into Jesus. Jesus will be here. [dramatic pause] [ringing bells]

\*In a slightly louder, animated Bob Costas excited tone\*

ME: “And now, JESUS IS HERE! YAY JESUS!”

You get the idea. We’ve thought of little things to keep them engaged – we give them each a dollar to put in the collection basket; they can flip through and “help” us find the correct page in the hymnal; they can “help” raise and lower the kneeler. These little things add up, keep them busy, and momentarily distract them from their shenangians.

So what about us, the parents? How do we [try to] stay engaged? What can we bring to Mass? There have been many suggestions I’ve heard over the years that can help mitigate the distractions for us as parents, and the wonderful Father McTeigue of Ave Maria University has [some great ideas here](#) for arriving prepared for Mass and being an active listener during the homily. Prior to Mass, he suggests reading the Scriptures ahead of time. He writes:

*“But surely just about anyone can get a subscription to [Magnificat magazine](#) where all the Scripture readings of the month’s Masses are found, along with fine commentary. Surely, we can take at least some time during the week to read prayerfully the Scriptures for the upcoming Mass. Surely we all can resolve to approach the proclaimed Word of God at Mass with a sense of expectation.”*

Reading the selections ahead of time, perhaps a few days before or in the bathroom that morning, can help focus our minds and hearts before we even cross the threshold of our church. Besides the *Magnificat*, there are numerous blog posts, homilies, and commentaries in print and podcast formats online each Sunday. My favorites are: [reflections by Fr. Cedric Pisegna](#) and his Passionist colleagues; reflections by the wonderful community of women over at [Blessed Is She](#); Scott Hahn’s [weekly commentary on the Sunday readings](#); the USCCB, which has [commentaries on readings](#) every day of the year; and [Fr. Robert Barron](#)’s and [Fr. Larry Richards](#)’ weekly homilies, which are also available as podcasts. In our family, we try to make it a point to listen to praise and worship music or Gregorian chant on the way to and from Mass, to help “set the tone.” [Actually, I do it so that I don’t walk into Mass with something like T. Swizzle’s “Shake It Off” running through my head during the second reading, yafeel?] We can also silently pray little aspirations during Mass when we find our attention wandering. “Mother Mary, help me to focus on your Son while I corral mine” is a favorite. Or just “Jesus, I love You!”

When all else fails, and I just feel so tired, so defeated, and so drained, it’s all I can do to just stare at the Crucifix above the altar. Sometimes, that’s all I can give. And you know what? It’s the image of All that Christ Gave. Looking longingly, lovingly at Him is enough. He knows. He loves you, and He loves that wiggly little saint-in-the-making in your arms. You’re doing a great job, mama.

Give me your feedback below! I’d love your suggestions and ideas for preparing our hearts and minds BEFORE heading into Mass.

This contribution is available at <http://cajuntexasmom.wordpress.com/2014/09/17/mass-boring-cant-focus-lets-chat/>  
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## 7 Tips To Endure A [Minor] Crisis

This has not been my best year, healthwise. Pain was frequent and unpredictable, I couldn't always guarantee I'd be well enough to follow through on commitments, and Crohn's got in the way of my activity and productivity. Though I hate to admit it because I like to be stoic and tough, I have been in what could be called "crisis".

At a certain point I realized I couldn't just grit my teeth and pretend that nothing was wrong (otherwise known as "being Irish"), and I tried to be more intentional and tactical about how I tweaked my life to get through this frustrating time. These are the things that worked for me.

### — 1 —

#### **Buy new pillows**



Occasionally after work all I can do is go home and plop on the couch. Due to my pathological aversion to surrounding myself with nice things, it took months of doing this before I realized that there were a few simple ways to make myself more comfortable on those yucky days when I have to crash. I bought two soft new pillows and a flip top ottoman that doubles as a side table. They were cheap, easy fixes.

Your easy fixes will certainly be different than mine, but there is likely some low-hanging fruit you can identify that will make things that much more pleasant during a temporary crisis. Need to be in the car a lot? How about podcasts during the drives? Spending time in waiting rooms? Books, sudoku, trashy magazines – all of these can be your friends.

### — 2 —

#### **Be as open as you want to be (without too much whining)**

Most people in my life know about my disease. Obviously I'm open about it or I wouldn't be blogging about it. I don't see any virtue in hiding the fact that I'm sick, though others prefer to be more private about things. Being honest about what I'm going through welcomes other people into my reality, and helps them to understand who I am and what I do. Also, I stink at keeping secrets.

Sharing what you're going through with *someone* is crucial, sharing it with *everyone* is not. Your support system kicks in when they know you need help, but bombarding strangers with woes might make them feel uncomfortable. I try to judge what I am going to share on this criteria: will it interest or amuse people (this is particularly helpful with Facebook posts)? Will it help someone understand something about me that they need to know in that moment? Otherwise it's probably whining, which I try to limit to my mom and significant other (lucky them!)

**Which reminds me of 2.5: acknowledge the people who help you. Thank them!**

— 3 —

### **Know what to let go of**

Around June I realized that I wasn't going to be able to run or jog for a while. My energy was low (I would later find out I was very severely anemic) and the pain often flashed so hard while I was running that I couldn't go on). It broke my heart, but I had to stop running until my flare got under control. This meant that I couldn't train for, nor compete in, the half-marathon I have done for the last eight years. It was a very difficult decision.

Some sacrifices are easier – this could be the time to finally beg off of that PTA committee! The sad reality is that crisis take time and energy, and that's a zero-sum game. Put a few things on hold for a while and use that time to manage whatever is going on (as well as your sanity). It doesn't have to be forever.

— 4 —

### **...and what to hang on to**



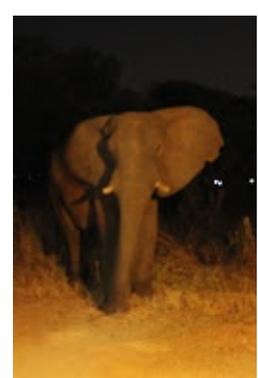
The scariest and most difficult decision I had to make this year was whether or not to go to Africa. I had the opportunity to travel with a group of colleagues to facilitate an Ignatian Identity Workshop at a Jesuit school in Lusaka, Zambia. We toured Victoria Falls with some of the faculty from that school and went on a short safari in Botswana. This was a once in a lifetime experience and I knew I couldn't turn it down, even if I was not feeling well.

I'm pretty sure everyone in my life disagreed with my decision, even if some were polite enough not to say anything about it. My doctor, because it is her job, was the most vocal about the danger of travel and the delay to changing my treatment plan due to certain restrictions in Africa (ie – I shouldn't switch to something that suppresses my immune system when going to a place where my body isn't used to the cooties).

There were a few times just before the trip when I legitimately scared. I didn't think I would have a life-threatening situation, but I worried that the pain and complications would keep me from doing what I needed to, or that I would be laid up the whole time I was supposed to be having this adventure.



I knew I had to go, and now I know I made the right choice. I learned to tie a chitenge from the principal of the school. I rode across Zambia in a big green van emblazoned with “Zambia-Malawi Jesuits”. I saw an elephant block the road to the Jesuit retreat house in Livingston, and waited for it to pass. I watched the sunset on the Zambezi River with a group of Africans and Americans and knew that God was present among us as surely as I knew that there were hippos in the water.

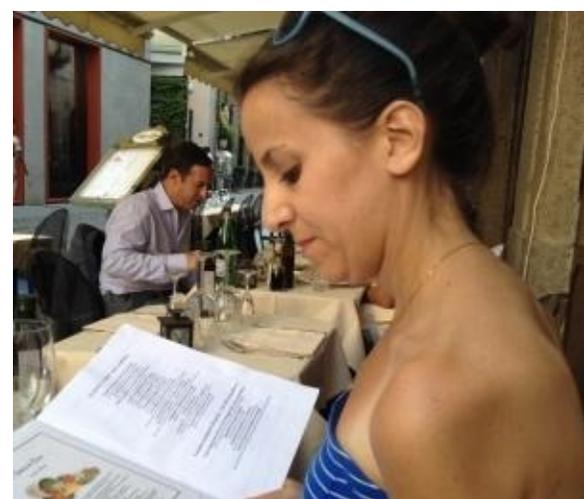


Going was a sacrifice, and [it was worth it](#). You don't have to drop everything even when it feels the world is dropping down on you. Trust your gut and if there's something you don't want to let go of, don't.

— 5 —

### **Eat, sleep, move**

My mother's standard illness advice is “feed a cold, feed a fever” which might be why every list of tips I have ever written has included the admonition to feed thyself. When you have a disease that messes with your appetite, that can be challenging, but I made healthy juices in my juicer, and filled myself with good things when my appetite was up.



I also set some boundaries around my sleep time, staying away from technology and television right before bed, developing a habit of reading or writing or finding another way to wind down before attempting to sleep. I also bought a sleep mask, which may be funny looking but has changed my life.

Exercise is important too – walking and gentle yoga were about all I was up to. All of this adds up to self-care, and when things start to hit the fan we have to be strategic about self-care. Things are hard enough without dealing with a crummy night of sleep.

— 6 —

### **Stop looking back**

It is highly unlikely that things will ever go back to the way they were before.

[\*\*throws self on the floor and weeps uncontrollably\*\*]

It took me a long time to be able to admit that. I kept dreaming of my before-life, with a full schedule, lots of commitments, limitless energy and not a care in the world. All of my prayers were directed at that one intention: give me back what I had before. My heart resisted, grieving the life I had, the life I loved. But I couldn't start buying new pillows, making decisions based on reality, and plotting out my *real* life until I let go of my past life.

— 7 —

### **...but keep looking forward with hope.**

Which isn't to say that I imagine things will be this hard forever. This is easier to say on days when I feel a little better, and easier still now that we have started adjusting my treatment and trying new things. Even on the really dark days, though, I tried to keep my eye on whatever my new beginning might be. Hope is not the same as optimism or delusion, it's the conviction that because grace is always present goodness always has a chance to win. Hope is a mystery, and a hopeful future is just as mysterious, but it's worth diving into that mystery and learning how to look for every drop of goodness I can find. [Something's coming, something good](#). Don't give up. Be well.

### **How do you endure a tough time?**

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## Heaven is for real; Earth is for miracles [at Mercy Me!]

You know that big spread in the high school yearbook where the senior superlatives tout the “most attractive,” “most athletic,” “best all around,” etc.?

Well, I didn’t get one.

Instead, I was on another page in our yearbook where there were more non-traditional, dubious superlatives assigned. Some were “Eddie Haskell Award,” “Biggest Flirt,” “Most Likely to Burn Down the School,” and “Could Give the Best Dirty Look.”

The one picked for me was “Most Gullible.”

I like to think it was a fancy way of calling me nice. Or, maybe someone just told me that is what it meant and I believed them.

In any case, I have not bought any swamp land, taken any wooden nickels or sent any money to Nigeria, so I think I am doing okay.

Still, when the book, *Heaven is for Real* came out and I learned the story of Todd Burpo’s son, Colton, who went to heaven during an emergency appendectomy, I believed it.

I believe in God, in miracles and in heaven, so to me none of it is too far-fetched.

Miracles are all around us. I think we just get kind of numb to them. We go to the beach and we forget to marvel at the vastness of the ocean teeming with exotic life. Someone has a baby and we may think to make a casserole, but we don’t stop and think how absolutely phenomenal it is that a man and a woman can create life.

But Colton went to heaven. *Heaven*.

The Burpo family gave a talk at a nearby church tonight and my family and I attended. I didn’t go as a skeptic, but as a believer.

Burpo talked about how angry he was with God when he thought he was going to lose his son. I loved that he went to God with his anger. I think our inclination is to turn away from God when we feel such rage.

As Burpo tells it, while he was raging on God, his son Colton was sitting in Jesus’s lap. I thought that was such a poignant image to think about. When we feel angry, ignored or betrayed by God, it rarely occurs to us that He is indeed with us, embracing us. We are always in His care.

Burpo, a pastor, spoke about his struggle with faith when he was confronted with his son’s account of heaven. Perhaps, that was what was hardest for me to grasp.

I had no trouble believing, why did he?

But then I think of what it is like before the book, the New York Times Best Seller's lists, the movie, all of which validated the possibility of this miracle. I thought of the clarity of Colton's claims, some of which go against traditional church teachings such as animals being in heaven. I thought of Burpo putting his career and reputation on the line to stand up to such an incredulous notion that a child that never even died went to heaven — not came from heaven, but went to heaven; sat on Jesus's lap; saw the sister who was never born; hung out with some angels and then came back to this reality which is not nearly as pleasant, but that we are all more comfortable believing.

And, I understood his doubt and was left in awe of his faith to work past those doubts, to take the risks that he did and to share his miracle with the world.

One of my most favorite things that I heard Burpo say though was that his son was not special. I believe him. I listened to Colton speak and I listened to him sing. I think he is a great kid. But so are my kids and so are yours and so are the ones in Africa, China and Timbuktu.

I believe in an extraordinary God and I believe in the ordinariness of His people in the sense that none of us are without sin. I believe in equality and although it is lacking on earth, I believe that God loves us all passionately and individually – but not one more than the other. I do not believe that He has favorites. I do not believe He gives out superlatives.

Colton experienced a miracle, and I bet you have too. We need to remember to look for the miracles in our lives because they remind us of God's enduring love. They strengthen our faith and help us get through times of doubt.

His miracles are never ordinary, but I dare say they are often. Whether they get shared with the world or not, whether you believe in them is up to you.

As for me, "Most Gullible, Class of 1990," I choose to believe.

*If you have experienced a miracle in your life, please share it in the comment section. If you believe in miracles, please share this post with someone. Praying for miracles today and the openness, the willingness to notice them.*

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This contribution is available at <http://mercyme40.wordpress.com/2014/09/19/heaven-is-for-real-earth-is-for-miracles/>  
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## **The Parable of the Prisoner [at Freedom Through Truth]**

There once was a little boy, born in a far off land. While he was still very young, his mother left him and moved to a distant country, and he was placed into the prison of abandonment. And the Father wept for His little beloved.

The little boy was taken in by family, but was put to work at a very early age, and so received no formal education. He was placed in a prison of ignorance. And the Father wept for His little beloved.

After many years, his mother returned with her husband from a distant country and took the little boy away with her to the distant country where he did not know the language, the customs or any of its people. He was placed in a prison of fear and confusion. And the Father wept for His little beloved.

His step father was an evil man and sexually abused him. Though he tried to run away he was brought back to the home of his step father, where he was continually abused. He was placed in a prison of revulsion and anger.

Finally, he escaped and lived on the streets until one night he was involved in the death of another man. He was convicted of murder and sentenced to prison. He was first in a prison of remorse, sadness, and hatred, and then was placed in a prison of the body. And the Father wept for His little beloved.

He was moved from prison to prison from cell to cell. So, added to the prisons of his life thus far, his circumstances had placed him into a prison of loneliness. And the Father wept for His little beloved.

But, unbeknownst to him, another man had been sentenced, for crimes that never happened, to the prison where he was finally settled. This man was a Catholic priest, and even though he himself knew the prison of abandonment, he did not allow it to define his life and so he befriended the young man from the far off land, and led him to relationship with Jesus Christ. And the Father leaped for joy to see His little beloved on the path to freedom, the path for which He had sent His Son to bleed and die, and then to rise again.

As time passed, the young man and his priest friend consecrated themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. They also discovered two very dear friends among the saints, Saint Maximilian Kolbe and Saint Padre Pio.

Under the protection of Our Holy Mother, the Blood of Jesus Christ and with the intercession of their dear friends the saints, the prison walls of both of their lives have been disintegrating, because they cannot stand against the virtues of Faith, Hope and Love.

This parable, like all parables is meant for each of us to ponder for we too have been placed in the prisons of our emotions by our circumstances, whether we were misled by others, or consciously took paths that led to these prisons. How we came to be in the prisons of our lives is far less important than how we can leave them behind.

You see, some of these prisons, the prisons of our minds are prisons that we have willingly entered in the hope of escaping the other prisons of our lives. But, exchanging one prison for another or adding another prison to our already tortured lives is not the answer.

Whatever the question, the answer is Jesus Christ. He was and is the perfect gift from the Father to you and to me, because He took on all our prisons and allowed them to be nailed to the Cross with Him. He returned them to their rightful place, Hell, and then He rose again from the dead.

Unlike most parables, this one is based on the true story of Pornchai Maximilian Moontri, and his mentor and best friend Father Gordon MacRae.

So, unlike most parables this one is before us every day for us to ponder, pray on, and then to accept the love of Christ, and the love of His Blessed Mother that has been bringing salvation to both Pornchai and to Father Gordon.

Let the Father leap for joy at your acceptance of His Son as your Saviour. Let the Father leap for joy as you give your heart to Jesus to repair and heal, and to Mary to love you as only a perfect mother can.

And turn to

[These Stone Walls](#)

and read as the parable continues to unfold.

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# Jesus Made Prayer the First Priority in His Life [at A Catholic Moment]



Saint Paul wrote in today's first reading for Mass:

*“Do you not know that the holy ones will judge the world? If the world is to be judged by you, are you unqualified for the lowest law courts? Do you not know that we will judge angels? Then why not everyday matters?”*

Then in today's gospel, we read that Jesus needed to make a practical decision about which of the disciples he should choose to become his Apostles. Perhaps he was also considering how many Apostles he needed, what their mission would be, and was thinking about the different traits of those disciples who were closest to him? Which of the disciples had been with him the longest? Which ones could he depend on, or who seemed to have the most faith in him?

Jesus had a lot on his mind, but he didn't sort through the decision making process on his own. The example of how Jesus handled this very important decision, is probably the best advice we could ever receive on the right way to make a good decision in our own lives too. Why do we go to so many different people, like our family members, friends or coworkers, to ask their opinion on what we should do? We should seek guidance from the scriptures, and seek to know God's will through some quality time spent in prayer.

Who is more qualified to give us advice? Who do we know that can give us an honest, unbiased opinion without any ulterior motives of their own? Everyone seems to have their own agenda, or see the world from the perspective of how it affects them, but God has no such selfish interests. He always wants what is best for us, or what is the right thing for our ultimate good. In other words, God is always on our side.

Did you notice that the gospel said that Jesus spent the entire night in solitude and prayer? How often do we use the excuse that we don't have time to pray? Jesus made prayer the *first* priority in his life. Sometimes prayer is the last thing on our mind when we have a problem, or need to make a decision about something. We muddle through it on our own, but everything seems so much more difficult. We aren't sure we are doing the right thing, or we second guess ourselves. Important decisions are often made on the

spur of the moment in our lives, without consulting God at all about it. No wonder we aren't sure if we did the right thing or not sometimes, because God wasn't included in the process.

It said in today's gospel, that after Jesus came down from the mountain after spending the night in prayer, he chose his twelve Apostles, and then a large crowd gathered to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases. The gospel said that:

*“Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and he healed them all.”*

Even though Jesus was half human and half divine, it seems like God also strengthened Jesus with extra graces during the solitary periods he spent in prayer. This was true during his prayers in the agony in the garden, but it was also true after John the Baptist was beheaded in prison too. Jesus retreated to the mountain to pray when he learned of his death, and ended up performing two miracles that day. He fed 5,000 men with the five barley loaves and two fish, and after praying alone on the mountain, Jesus walked on the water to join his Apostles in a boat on the lake.

The source of Christ's power already originated within him, but Jesus received extra strength, grace and support during the solitary times of prayer that he spent with his Father. Jesus didn't make any major decisions on his own, although he had every right to do so. God the Father guided his decisions on the right thing to do, and strengthened him with the grace to accomplish the tasks that lay before him. Will He do no less with us?

We too, have the ability to make our own decisions in life, but they turn out so much better when we carefully consider the facts of the situation, and seek God's guidance *first*, before we make any decision about it. We need God's grace and His strength, to see us through the challenges and difficulties we face in life. Without God's grace, our best laid plans could fall apart if it wasn't His will to begin with. It is better to start laying our plans, in accordance with His will, right from the start, just like Jesus did in today's gospel.

Daily Mass Readings:

1 Corinthians 6: 1-11 / Psalm 149 / Luke 6: 12-19

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This contribution is available at <http://www.acatholic.org/jesus-made-prayer-the-first-priority-in-his-life/>  
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## Happy Birthday Mary, Teach Me to be Lowly [at Journey to Wisdom]



I am re-posting a reflection I wrote a couple years ago, May the Mother of God bless us all today with her motherly love and guidance into the heart of her Son Jesus!

Today is the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary, whose immaculate conception was celebrated 9 months ago, was born on this September day. And as is the way of the Lord, this monumental day, this wondrous birth went quietly by in time, and still goes quietly by in our lives, we could easily miss it. In fact, we often do miss it. Yet, this feast day invites us to ponder the woman whose life modeled most fully how to allow the word of the Lord to be conceived in us and born through us, in our own words and deeds. Insignificance and lowliness are not barriers to these wonders, they are requirements.

Which is good, because I do not have much to offer. I am a Catholic who fails a lot in living my faith. I am a wife who fails a lot at being a wife. I am a mother, who fails a lot with her children (I have two crying, fighting and whining in my presence right now - thankfully they are only mildly annoying me, so I am ignoring them...). And, in a culture that is pragmatic, cliquy and materialistic, I am a stay-at-home mother of 8 who writes for an insignificant blog because I perceived a call to do it from Him, no money in it, no huge following, no "career" to validate me - nothing. I am nothing. And oh, how I have caused myself and others around me much pain in fighting that truth for most of my life.

When I was in high school, it got back to me that an acquaintance of mine had described me as a

"cipher"...a nobody. In her world, I was a quiet and fairly shy girl, who was not friends with her friends and who did not leave a huge impression on her friends. Since I was not terribly concerned with her opinion of me at that time, I was able to brush off the insult fairly easily...or so I thought. Because every once in awhile the words would come back to me, whispering to me that I was a cipher, a nobody. And I would fight that identity with much ferocity! I would deny it, offer proofs against it, but mostly I would fear it. The label became heavier and heavier.

But, one day I finally *heard* the words of Our Blessed Mother. My spiritual ears were opened.

*Luke 1:46-56: The Cantic of Mary. "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his **handmaid's lowliness**; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. **He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly.** The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our father to Abraham and to his descendants forever."*

Was I to accept that identity that was so thoughtlessly assigned to me? Instantly my spirit rebelled: "I am not a cipher! I am not a nobody, do not let that nasty girl be right!" The arrogant and prideful aspirations of my heart, which fed upon my fear of nothingness, did not yield easily. Yet a wave of grace washed over my heart as I thought of the words: "He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones;

**but lifted up the lowly.**

" My pride was dispersed, I was thrown down, and lifted up. In a moment I was confronted with all that I wanted to be, thought I should be and was failing at, and yet I was given an overwhelming sense of gratitude. Because I was nothing. I was nothing so that I could be lifted up; there is no other way.

That thoughtless comment of so many years before was instantly transformed, and the weight of it lifted. The Lord needed to show me I am nothing so I can be filled with His love, His Spirit, His life. So that he can lift me up, out of my mediocrity and into His heart, and I do not have to grasp at earthly honors, or rewards or recognition. Without Jesus I am nothing, without Him I will cling to false egos and false identities, and be let down by them, or even worse, I will be blindly self-satisfied! The heavy burden of that word "cipher" gave way to tearful gratitude and

**awe**

. In a world where wealth, popularity and honors are seen as indicators of goodness and worthiness Mary has shown me that it is only lowliness, nothingness, that can acquire the interior vision and wisdom to give Him our fiat, with complete trust in His compassionate love that will lift us up.

So Happy Birthday Mary, Queen of Heaven, who so gently taught me about lowliness. I still have to submit my fears and insecurities to God, I still have to have Him disperse pride and arrogance with His mighty arm. But I do not fear the nothingness as I once did, and I have come to see a little how God's kingdom conquers and transforms this world of shallowness and ugliness. I now look upon that dismissive, and shallow description of me so long ago through Mary's eyes, without the shame and fear that the world attaches to it. In those words came the might of His arm and revealed the true and eternal beauty of His Mother.

**Blessed Be God, and Blessed Be His Most Holy Mother!**

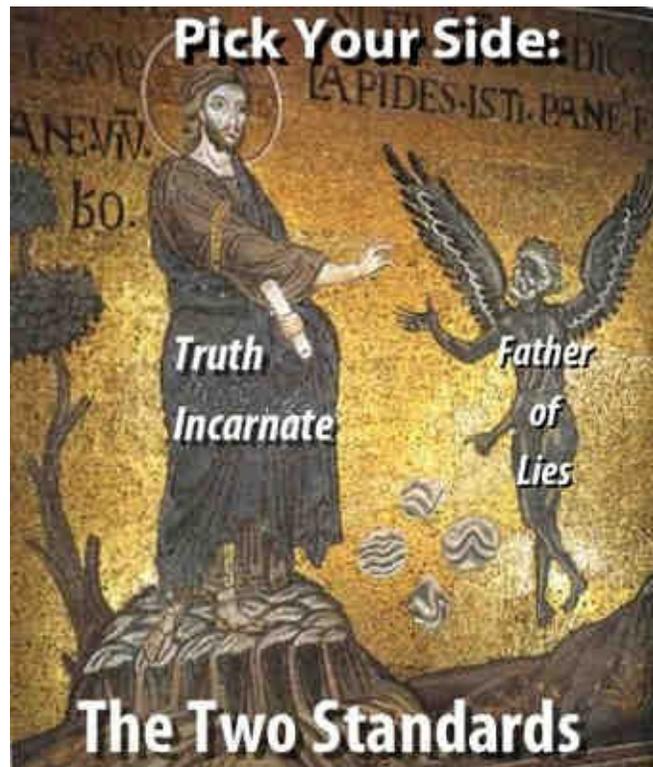
Blessings, Heidi

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## A Meditation on the Dramatic Battle in Which We Live [at Archdiocese of Washington]



A grave deficiency of modern times is the loss of the sense that our lives are caught up in a tremendous, epic battle. And yet here we are living in the midst of a great drama—in the greatest story ever told.

**Behind the scenes is a deadly enemy**, one of whom many rarely speak: Satan. Yet he is active and involved, manipulating both the world and the flesh (our sinful nature). We are on the front lines of a fierce spiritual war, a war that is to blame for most of the casualties you see around you. Yes, fellow Christians, there is a dragon, the roaring lion—Satan—who seeks to devour our souls.

**Ah! But there is also a Son, a Savior**, who is born to us and whom we call Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace (*cf* Is 9:6). And He shall reign forever. His hand is outstretched, first on the cross, but now outstretched to *you* to save you and to draw you up out of the raging waters, to deliver you from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of light!

**Will you take hold of His hand, or not?** This is the decision—your decision—in the great drama of your life and of every life; it is *your* chapter in the greatest story ever told.

**Yes, the battle rages all around us** and we are swept up in it! It's happening in our world, our culture, our families, and in our hearts. The sequence hymn from Easter says dramatically of it, *Mors et vita duello; Confluxere Mirando* (death and life at battle in a stupendous conflict)!

**The Book of Joel vividly describes the great drama**, not merely an eschatological battle, but a battle that is already around us in the decision we must make, in the war we must wage, with God's grace, against the evil that is in and around us. It is a vivid and dramatic war and we must choose sides. And our decision will one day be revealed in the great judgment that is coming on this world.

*Prepare war, stir up the mighty men! Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, "I am a warrior." Hasten and come, all you nations round about, gather yourselves there. Bring down thy warriors, O LORD. Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the nations round about. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the wine press is full. The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes! Multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision (Joel 3:9-14).*

**Text after text in the Bible describes the awesome drama** and the great decision we must make, a decision on which hinges our very destiny. Here are just a few:

- 1. I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you (Deut 30:19-20).*
- 2. Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own heart also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk 2:34-36).*
- 3. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I have told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I AM" (John 8:23-24).*
- 4. Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation (Matt 26:41).*
- 5. And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk 16:15).*
- 6. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph 6:12-14).*
- 7. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed! (Gal 1:4)*
- 8. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith (1 Peter 1:8).*
- 9. A great sign appeared in the heavens, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. And another portent appeared in heavens; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne ... And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth ... Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child ... The dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on*

*the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus (Rev 12, selected verses).*

10. *“Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!” And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon (Rev 16:15-16).*

**And so here we are in the Valley of Decision, in Hebrew, the Valley of Armageddon.** Here is the drama of our life! Multitudes in the Valley of Decision! All of us have a decision to make, an army to join, a direction to choose! *Tertium non datur* (No third way is given). There are only two armies on the field of battle; there are no demilitarized zones, no sidelines. Choose an army! What will it be, light or darkness, grace or sin, Jesus or Beelzebub?

**Yes, here is the immense drama in the greatest story ever told; it is *our* drama and *our* story.**

**And yet this drama is hardly ever discussed today.** In the very times in which the drama and the contrast between the two ways has never been clearer, never been starker, there is near silence. If anything, our times are marked by boredom and a kind of dull lack of awareness of the battle that is raging around us.

We have “spiritual ADHD,” endlessly fidgeting but never focusing on what matters. There is also a kind of “spiritual myopia,” in which the two armies are lost in the blur of perceived (but not real) “pluralism.”

**Put plainly, if you don’t think that this drama is real** and that the choice of one side or the other is required, if you think that the biblical texts I have cited are histrionic and hysterical, **you have been deceived.** You have been lulled to sleep by the spirit of this age. You’ve been deceived by Satan, as was Eve long ago when he said to her, “You surely will not die.”

**All of us must wake up to the battle that rages about us,** to the great drama in our life, a drama that is unfolding before our very eyes. If you insist on sleeping through the drama or ignoring the summons to wake up, beware! For Scripture says of such dreamers that there will come upon them *a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness* (2 Thess 2:11-13).

**Awaken to the drama! Choose the Lord!** Be a soldier in the army of the Lord! Only Jesus can save us from this “present evil age.” His grace and mercy are there for us in abundance, but His respect for our freedom means that our choices matter, they build in one direction or the other. This is the drama of our life and is also our dignity. Scripture pronounces a great blessing on those who choose the Lord:

*Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen* (Gal 1:1-2).

In tomorrow’s blog, I will explore how the themes of the drama and the warning are the basis of MOST of Jesus’ parables. There are sheep and goats, wise virgins and foolish ones, servants who are ready and those who are not, and so forth.

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This contribution is available at <http://blog.adw.org/2014/09/multitudes-in-the-valley-of-decision-a-meditation-on-the-dramatic-battle-in-which-we-live/>

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## We submit to every demand of Love [at Mere Observations]

Have you ever felt as if God is speaking to you? Leading you? Directing you? That He is trying to get your attention in some way by constantly bringing to your attention a subject, item or idea? This is how I've felt recently with regards to the Divine Liturgy – the Catholic Mass. While my work continues on studying and creating an outline about the Divine Office (more on that another time) the Mass has come to the fore. Most likely because the Divine Liturgy and the Divine Office are so closely related and fit so neatly hand in hand. It may be to awaken me from my malaise and to remind me of what I bear witness to each time I attend Mass; to shake me from complacency that may be setting in and succumbing to what Father Richard Heilman referred to as [spiritual lethargy](#).

It could also be that God is answering the prayer that I have prayed each day for the last three weeks, brought about by my recklessly immersing myself in and internalizing the overwhelming horrors from Syria and Iraq as I prepare for my own son's departure into the Marine Corps. Each day I pray for Fortitude, Wisdom and Hope. That has become my mantra, and I believe God is showing me where the answers await.

“I am convinced that the crisis in the Church that we are experiencing today is to a large extent due to the disintegration of the liturgy, which at times has even come to be conceived of *etsi Deus non daretur* (as though God were not there): in that it is a matter of indifference whether or not God exists and whether or not He speaks to us and hears us.” – Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)

***Lord, grant me the gifts of Fortitude, Wisdom and Hope. Make me salt, and make me light. Let me never be indifferent to Your presence in this world and in my life. Amen.***

Below are two passages about the Mass from books that I am currently reading. Or finished, as I completed my journey with *Christopher* late last night.



There was no indifference or complacency to be found at Iwo Jima at this Mass.

The first passage is from David Athley's [Christopher](#). It is from an email written to the book's protagonist by his long-time love. She is a devout and practicing Catholic. He, while Catholic, will only attend Mass and not receive Communion. Somewhat of a mystic, he refuses because he recognizes Holy Communion for what it is, and is not confident that he would be able to withstand the consuming of Christ's body and blood, soul and divinity. It is a beautiful summation of the Mass.

The second passage is an excerpt from [The Portal of the Mystery of Hope](#) by Charles Péguy.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Christopher,

Despite all the damage done by sinners in the Church, the Mass is the hope of civilization.

The Mass is the pinnacle of philosophy. Our minds approach the Holy Gifts in fear of God, the beginning of wisdom. Our hearts accept the Holy Gifts in love of God, the end of wisdom.

The Divine Liturgy is the epitome of language and poetry. It is the most powerful form of drama, a play that appears to descend into tragedy, yet ends in the height of heavenly bliss.

The Mass is housed in the most glorious architecture ever constructed. Not all churches are grand, but the world has been given the supreme cathedrals to remind us of the majesty of the Maker, who appears on the altars.

The Divine Liturgy is the grand unified theory of physics. Beyond all of the quarks, multiple dimensions, and dark matter is the greatest gift to science: Transubstantiation.

The Mass is the quintessence of agriculture – the simply fruits of the earth transformed into spiritual nutrition.

The Mass is the bloodline of the best art. From icons to stained glass to mosaics to statuary to all of the variations of paintings, the Sacrifice enlivens creativity.

The Divine Liturgy is a perfect education. It is reality. We kneel. We bow. We give up our rebellions and embrace the hierarchy of the created order. We submit to every demand of Love.

The Mass gives voice to the music of angels, the chant of nine choirs and seven heavens. It culminates in the most noble act of physicality. We accept into our bodies the Creator of all flesh, in whom we live and dance and have our being.

The Mass is the most personal relationship that one can have with God.

The Mass is the most heavenly occurrence on earth, and the most viciously attacked – from within the Church and without.

The Mass has produced the humble, superhuman saints, multitudes of heroic men and women, from the beginning of the Church to the end, miracle workers from every walk of life – patrons for every holy passion.

The Divine Liturgy of Heaven gathers the most purposeful community in the world, the assembly of Communicants. Beyond the goodness of human friendship, the friends of Heaven are perfected in the Feast.

The Mass makes life worth living. It is the gateway out of our self-inflicted pain, to fully enter into the death and resurrection of Christ.

Will you, in the name of Love, become a Communicant?

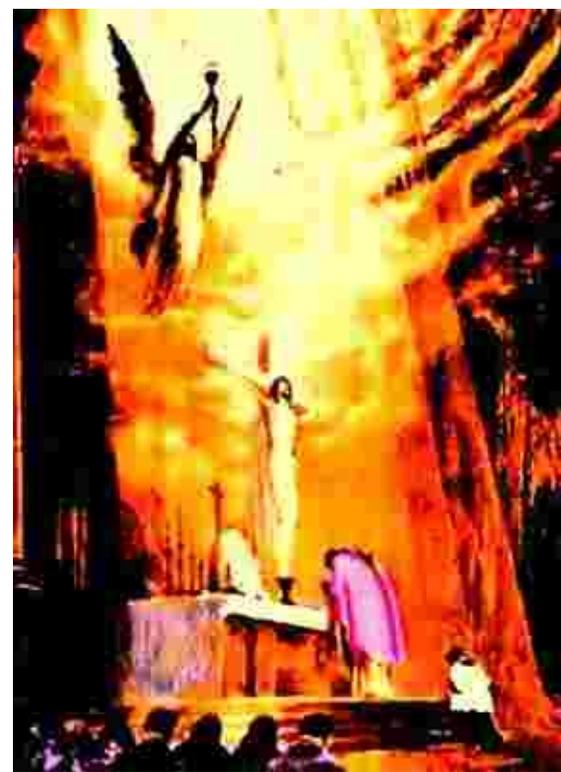


Photo credit: catholicbible101.com

I am so resplendent in my creation.  
In all that happens to men and to people, and to the poor.  
And even to the rich.  
Who don't want to be my creatures.  
And who take refuge.  
From being my servants.  
In all the good and evil that man has done and undone.  
(And I am above it all, because I am the master, and I do what he has undone and I undo what he has done.)  
And unto the temptation to sin.  
Even.  
And all that happened to my son.  
Because of man.  
My creature.  
Whom I had created.  
In the conception, in the birth and in the life and in the death of my son.  
And in the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

In every birth and in every life.  
And in every death.  
And in eternal life that will never end.  
That will overcome all death.

I am so resplendent in my creation.

That in order really not to see me these poor people would have to be blind.

\*\*\*\*\*

*“Hear Mass daily; it will prosper the whole day. All your duties will be performed the better for it, and your soul will be stronger to bear its daily cross. The Mass is the most holy act of religion; you can do nothing that can give greater glory to God or be more profitable for your soul than to hear Mass both frequently and devoutly. It is the favorite devotion of the saints.” – St. Peter Julian Eymard*

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This contribution is available at <http://jeffwalker.wordpress.com/2014/09/12/we-submit-to-every-demand-of-love/>  
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# Discerning The Call to Love [at Sacred Sharings For The Soul]



**“A man knows when he has found his vocation when he stops thinking about how to live and begins to live.” (Thomas Merton)**

To consider vocation one must first have the understanding that they have been created uniquely by our Lord for a purpose. There is a hunger today for advancements and for settling into many things that society deems to be definitive of what a 'successful person' is. It is alluring and tempting to tread through life in pursuit of success, rather than genuine and authentic fulfillment that can only be experienced by the giving of one's control into the hands of a loving God.

Through faith and trust in God one can have a clearer sense of vocation and to where God is leading them. It is a surrender of self that brings forth the fulfillment of self in the way that God intended. One's vocation is rooted in the love of God and pursuing the path that enables them to live out this love in the most genuine and selfless way.

Discerning vocation can be rather daunting. There are many things that can travel through one's mind and heart as they seek to fulfill the plans that God has for them. Many can be so wrapped up in the persistent search for God's will that they actually miss the very important point of fully resting in Him and allowing His will to patiently unfold. The pursuit of God's will is above all a surrender of patience and trust.

We do not chase, but cease our running and recognize that we have been sought after by a loving God who knows well the deepest desire of our heart. Trusting God is to trust His plans and to be assured that His providence will sustain us by providing the grace to live out the vocation to which we have been called.

Through faithful trust in God and the daily commitment to living out the call to love in our present circumstances, we can be lovingly led by the Holy Spirit to where we serve Christ best through our service in love toward others. - CC

**"In a society in which permanent commitments are not valued - and that applies to the priesthood and religious life as well as to marriage - it can take great spiritual strength, and is certainly counter-cultural, to renew each day a sacred lifelong commitment, trusting in the grace of God. That must be our path as Christians, and anything that tends (even unintentionally) to re-inforce a culture that undermines fidelity to sacred permanent commitments must be resisted" (Cardinal Collins)**

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## Conversion [at The Heart's Overflow]

Some

revelations

are instant, like lightning striking the heart, changing it forever.

That's not the story of my conversion.

My conversion has been more of a gradual transformation, over a long period of time. Picture weaving a tapestry, or chiseling something out of stone. Well, that's me. And I'm pretty sure I'm not finished yet.

I have been wanting to share this story for a while but have been hesitant because I know many of my non-Catholic family and friends follow along here and I don't want any of them to think that my Christian life pre-Catholicism didn't count for anything. It did. **I would not be the Christian, and person, that I am today if it wasn't for the faith I received first from my parents.** They taught me to know and love Jesus and that gift is the greatest heritage I could ever ask for. I've also been blessed with amazing friends and mentors who have influenced and shaped my faith during my most formative years. At an age when many people decide that the Christian life is not for them, my faith was alive and thriving because of these individuals. And they are still helping me grow today.

I used to hate it when people would talk about my "conversion", or call me a "convert" to Catholicism. To me that word nullified my life as a Christian up to that point, which, as I mentioned before, was an incredibly important part of my life. A more accurate description of what happened to me is that I was "fully received" into the Catholic Church. Technically a convert would be someone who had no Christian background at all. But it's quick and easy to say and all the evangelicals-turned-catholic that I know call themselves converts. It's just what we do.

Actually, conversion is something that should be ongoing, for the person who is new to the catholic faith as well as the 80 year-old cradle catholic. We all turn our backs on God in small ways every day, hardhearted and stubborn souls that we are. Each day we need to come back to the Savior and say "here am I, Lord, take all of me...once again.



If you'd asked me in middle school, or high school, or even my first couple years of college, if I thought I would end up becoming Catholic, I would have said never. Catholics were people who worshiped Mary and didn't read the bible and blindly did everything the Pope told them to do. Did they even know Jesus at all?

As anti-catholic as I was, however, there were a few very catholic things that always fascinated me and drew me in: nuns, kneeling, and beautiful churches.

**Nuns:** You see one walking down the street. They're plain, no make up, hair tucked in a wimple, big, black, billowy habit banishing any suggestion of a figure. But still, you can't take your eyes off them. They seem to radiate some beauty and power that's, oh I don't know, unearthly. As long as I can remember, I have always been in awe of nuns.

As I became older my fascination with nuns lead me to deeper pondering. Who are these women who choose poverty and celibacy over "real life"? Never getting married? It sounded crazy to me. But in a small corner of my mind their life style seemed appealing. To not worry about keeping up with the latest trends, no staring at your closet trying to decide what to wear each day. Bad hair day? Doesn't matter! Your hair won't show! Not worrying about guys noticing you, or not noticing you. Instead, being concerned with holiness and service and Jesus. Only. What a satisfying life.

I'm sure I'm romanticizing the religious life, a little bit like Anne Shirley. "*Wouldn't it be romantic to be the bride of heaven?*" I am sure the religious life has it's own difficulties and stresses. But in our world, it seems so simplified.

Then I went to India. Twice. My love for that country and the people I met there gave me a special bond to the now blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who spent her life pouring herself out to the very poorest of the poor. Everyone who has seen images of her cannot deny that she was love in action, lifting the dying

out of the gutters and rescuing abandoned babies. She saw Jesus in everyone that she encountered, and brought Jesus to everyone that she helped.



I wanted to be like her.  
And she was Catholic.

**Kneeling:** it's a posture that has always felt very right to assume.

The Lutheran church I grew up in had kneelers. I was young enough when they were removed that I can hardly remember them. But they had been there.

When I was a child my mom would make us kneel when we had family prayer time. When I became older I chose to do some of my own praying on my knees, in the privacy of my bedroom. But seldom did I kneel in public. And never did my entire church all kneel together before The Lord. The services at my church and on my Christian college campus were usually times of joyful,

exuberant

, high energy worship, and it was good to praise God that way, but my soul always craved the quieter moments, to kneel, or even be face down before the Lord.

The older I got the greater my desire for quiet reverence became. To the point that I stopped going to the chapel services at my college. The blaring music, worship leaders with celebrity status, lights and staging that rivaled a U2 concert- I couldn't handle the hype anymore. Instead of a pastor, we had a speaker, instead of sanctuary, an auditorium, instead of an altar, a stage. What was going on?

Church seemed to be following pop culture, trying so hard to make Jesus relevant and attractive to a modern generation.

When, shouldn't it be the other way around? Shouldn't our lives be changing to mirror His? I don't mean to criticize the modern church in America. Sometimes, this model of a worship service brings people in the door, people meet Jesus, and lives are changed. But to me, it was becoming entertainment, and I didn't need entertaining.



**Beautiful Churches:** I know that there are many very pretty protestant churches out there, but I think that we can all agree that when it comes to beautiful churches, Catholics brought their A game. The Cathedral of Notre Dame, St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, even our own Cathedral here in St. Paul - they are famous tourist attractions, world landmarks, architectural wonders; and they are all Catholic places of worship. Every single day of the year masses are offered in those spaces.

I have always loved being in these beautiful Catholic churches. Everything about the way they are built draws you in and lifts your eyes to heaven and your heart can't help but overflow in prayer. You can't help but ponder the greatness of God. If you ever feel like you are starting to think too much of yourself, go sit in the Cathedral for a while, God will feel appropriately great and you will feel appropriately small.

I had a couple trips to Europe during my college years and throughout all the sight seeing the Catholic churches always stood out as my favorite places. What I didn't know all those times I went into those Catholic churches was that yes, the height of the dome was awe-inspiring and the stained glass beautiful and the quiet calmness perfect for prayer, but on top of that - Jesus was there! Right there, in the tabernacle, every single time. And though I didn't know it then, He was drawing me.....



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## A Faithful Community [at Veils and Vocations]

Before our current parish, we belonged to a small, traditional, country parish. The priest was very devoted and devoted, and known for well developed, lengthy, serious homilies. His homilies contained a good deal of catechism but we're sprinkled with stories to drive the point home. Decades later, there are stories that my husband and I still repeat and reference.



One, particularly amusing story went like this. (Imagine if you will the following delivered in a strong Polish accent.) There was a man who went to church every Sunday, and then one Sunday he didn't come.

After three Sunday, his priest was concerned and decided to pay him a visit. The man lived in a big house on the hill over looking the village. It was dark, cold, and windy when the priest walked up to the house. He knocked on the door and the man opened it and welcomed the priest into his living room where there was a large, warm fire blazing. The man sat down in his armchair and started talking, "I know why you are here, Father. I just don't see why I need to go to Mass. Sunday is a day of rest, I say my prayers, I read my bible, why do I need to walk all the way to church to worship God?"

The priest said nothing, he turned and picked up the fireplace tongs and took a bright ember from the fire and placed it on the hearth. The ember glowed bright and seemed to grow in size, then it swiftly faded to grey and was just cold ash. The priest, then picked up his hat and coat and began to leave. As the man showed him out, he said, "Thank you for the fiery sermon, Father. I will see you on Sunday. The priest simply smiled and walked back to the Church.

The point is, without a community, worship begins to die out. You may begin all afire but just as swiftly begin to cool. Jesus promised that where two or more are gathered in his name, there He also will be.

He realized that we needed support and each other to stay the course and attain deeper worship. Our present parish has a church "motto" if you will, the begins with the phrase, "a community of believers."

That is our aim, to not be solely a collection of church attendees but a community, a family. Apart from fellow believers, it is difficult to maintain focus on the narrow path, to keep going when the going is tough. It is not to say that we go to church for the people, but we go for the collective worship. We each have a part in the worship, no matter what our role in the Church, if any, is. Our collective prayers are joined to those of the angels to form the highest of all prayers, the Mass. Even if we were unable to have the Eucharist present, Jesus would be there because we are gathered in His name.

However, we tread a fine line in building community and losing our sacred purpose. While we are a

family, our primary purpose of attending Mass is giving glory to God and receiving grace from the Eucharistic sacrament. Our sight is to be on the LORD, not each other. It is a joy to have such dear friends through our parish, but social circles are not the aim of Sunday obligation. Our first obligation is to God. We must remember this and strive to point others toward God that together we may grow in faith. So please, remember that Church is God's house, come and leave quietly and reverently. Dress in a way befitting of meeting the King of Kings intimately in the sacrifice of the Mass, so as not to draw attention away from our heavenward advance. Seek to not just get at the Mass but to give your whole self to Him who has given you all, not even sparing His only Son.

Let us be a community of believers striving evermore for holiness and grace. In little ways, with great love, we can revitalize our churches, but it is not found in greater comfort or ease nor more socialization. It is found in a deeper, collective purpose to worship and exult He who is above all, the Great I AM, our beginning and end. For why did God make us? God made us to know, love and serve Him, to show forth His goodness and to share with us His everlasting happiness in Heaven. (Baltimore Catechism) Let us show forth His goodness to every member of our worshipping community by coming together for the sole purpose of lifting high the cross and bowing down to our Loving Savior who from all good things come. God bless you!

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## Bluebird of Happiness [at salliesART]



Today's drawing, "*Our Lady with Bluebird by Clock Vine*", was inspired by a painting from the early part of the 20th Century, entitled: "*The Captive's Return*" by Henry Ryland (1856-1924). Of course, my drawing looks nothing like Ryland's other than the pose of a woman and a bird on her hand. This is not surprising considering that he was a British artist of some note who studied at the *Académie Julian* under such well-known figure and portrait painters as *Gustave Boulanger* and *Jules Joseph Lefebvre*!



Ryland's paintings established him as an important neoclassical painter, of his day, working mainly in watercolour. His subjects were typically two or three girls with soft faces, short dark hair, little expression or action, draped in graceful folds of cloth and shown relaxing on a marble terrace with birds and/or flowers (drawn with botanical exactitude) along with the occasional classical vase. Ryland also became a notable illustrator, designing illustrations for books and magazines (see the example above). Evidently, he also did some work designing stained glass windows -- something I wanted to learn to do rather badly when I was in my twenties, but, somehow, never got around to.

My drawing for today was, of course, done using my normal computer-graphic technique. I did do something a little different, however, in that I decided to include a portion of a previous drawing of mine from earlier this year of the flowering Clock Vine with its bright orange flowers. This, once again, calls for allowing a bit of artistic licence on my part as the Clock Vine is only native to Africa, Madagascar and southern Asia, not the middle east! However, as you well know by now, my motto is: any excuse for more colour in a drawing is allowable!



Suki... well, I really do not know what to say about her as she continues to be quite well behaved -- for a cat, that is!

She seems to accept, reasonably well, the discipline of only having a serving of her favourite food 4 times a day -- (I say "reasonably well" because she still makes a bit of a nuisance of herself in the half hour leading up to the time for feeding!).

Speaking of the "time for feeding"... I really wonder how she is able to tell time so very accurately? I mean, she doesn't start begging until exactly a half hour before the time I have told her she will be fed. I mean, she knows that her mid-day feeding time is at noon and at exactly 11:30 Suki appears and begins reminding me, for the next half hour, that it is almost time for her to be fed. She doesn't even own a watch! How does she do it?

Anyway, I am remaining on the alert just in case all this good behaviour is just an attempt to lull me into not paying close attention while Suki skillfully manages to open her own food cans when I am sitting and dozing in my recliner. This cat is too smart for her own good!

As for me, I am feeling neither smart nor comfortable -- but that is the way my life seems to be most of the time these days.

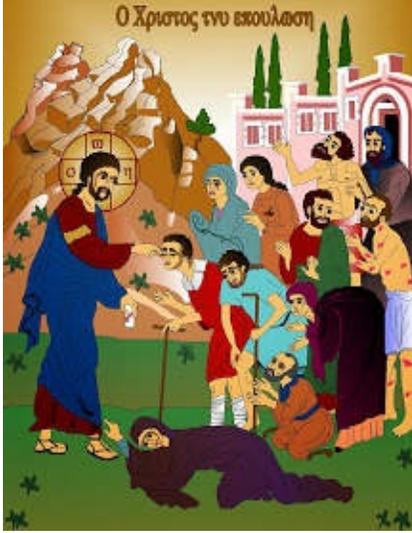
I did see a doctor at the pain clinic this past week. He, once again, suggested spinal injections for pain relief. And, I told him, once again, that I am not willing to try this option as the last time I had it done, the doctor accidentally nicked something and I ended up with more pain than ever!

So, all he did was increase the dosage for one of my pain medications and wished me well! I really think doctors don't enjoy dealing with older people who have chronic, incurable conditions. It must make them feel pretty helpless and nobody likes to feel that way -- especially people like doctors, who, as a group, usually enjoy the illusion that they are in control of things! Ah, well...

Thankfully, this coming week looks like another quiet one for me with only a visit from a dear friend on my schedule.

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**TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**



*In the evening, the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, starting with the last arrivals and ending with the first." So those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came forward and received one denarius each (the normal daily wage at that time). When the first came, they expected to get more but they too received one denarius each. They took it but grumbled at the landowner. "The men who came last", they said, "have done only one hour, and you have treated them the same as us, though we have done a heavy day's work in all the heat." He answered one of them and said, "My friend, I am not being unjust to you. Did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay those last hired as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why be envious because I am generous?" Thus the last will be first, and the first, last. **Matt: 20:10-16***

I chose to use the icon of Christ the Healer to illustrate today's Gospel because it shows Christ healing those who can give Him nothing in return except the possibility of their love. The poorest of the poor, reaching out in their neediness and being given absolute, healing Love -- even while Christ knows that many of those to whom He gives this gift will, perhaps, not love Him in return. This passage from the Gospel has always been a difficult passage for me because I am so used to rewards being given because of merit -- the more you do for someone, the bigger your reward will be. It is so difficult to remember that real Love doesn't work that way! Love, real love, is never based on what someone has done for us, what they will do for us or how much we are indebted to them. Love simply is and it gives to everyone the same. God is Love and whether we reach out for that love after a lifetime of service or after five minutes of prayer at the end of a "wasted" life, we will be given the same amount of love -- total, unconditional, absolute Love. Have you ever experienced anything close to this kind of love? I haven't -- in fact, I cannot even imagine the nature of such love. Surely to experience that kind of love would be "heavenly" and to experience it eternally would be an incredible gift. To believe that there might be the possibility of your receiving such a gift requires a faith so great that it, too, must be a gift. So, may I never forget that, like all mankind, I am a sinner -- always have been and always will be while in this mortal body -- and totally undeserving of that Love which is God. Thus, I deserve nothing. Yet, according to the Gospel, I, along with all of creation, am offered eternal, unconditional Love no matter when I may, in faith, accept it -- whether at the beginning of the day or an hour before quitting time! May this knowledge bring us all exceedingly great joy and hope. Amen.

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# Liturgy - The Ancient Universal Translator [at warriorsworlddad]

In the movie Close Encounters of the Third Kind the Aliens initiate communication with Earthlings using a series of harmonic tones. In real life the Voyager spacecraft is traveling out of our Solar System with a golden record on-board that contains the sounds of Nature from Earth and a graphical representation of Human Beings, our Solar System and the element Hydrogen inscribed on it. It is hoped that any aliens who encounter it will be able to translate its meaning and possibly establish contact with us.

First encounters are fraught with hazards. Misunderstandings can cause hurt feelings at the least and interstellar war at the worst. This was highlighted in several science fiction stories. In the Star Trek television series most interspecies communication difficulties were avoided by the invention of the Universal Translator.

Communication is a problem here on our own small oasis we call Earth. The United Nations has leagues of employees whose job it is to translate the different languages. In addition to different languages there is the whole other matter of cultural norms. Normal behavior in one culture is shocking to another and the more alien a culture is the greater the potential for misunderstanding. A super advanced alien race from outer space may find our ways repulsive and we may find their ways incomprehensible.

But what would happen if we encountered the greatest intelligence in the entire universe. How would we interact? What if this intelligence knew humanity intimately? Moreover what if humanity owed everything we have and everything we are to the primeval efforts of this intellect? How should we communicate so as to avoid an apocalyptic disaster?

Of course I am speaking not about some super alien race but of someone infinitely greater, I am speaking about God!

If you are invited to an audience with the President of the United States, a King or the Pope, there are protocols to be observed in how we address them. Moreover there are specific guides to how you are to act if your visit is one of mutual aid or if your visit is a plea for help. Often a third party facilitates the encounter to ensure that all decorum is observed so the meeting goes smoothly. Who tells us how to meet and talk to God?

The answer is God, in the person of Jesus Christ.

At the Last Supper Jesus first established the Eucharist as His means of remaining with us until He comes again. After His death and resurrection the Apostles and the first Christians continued to meet and re-present the Last Supper as their means of worship. That re-presentation is known as the Mass.

The Mass is our guide as to how we should communicate with God at the highest level possible. We enter into God's presence at the Mass and as it proceeds we are guided as to how we should present ourselves and how we should respond. God reaches through time and space and ensures that our communication with Him is clear and open. If it does not seem like that to us the problem is on our end of the line.

Within the Mass we even recite the Our Father – the prayer Jesus taught the Disciples when they asked Him to teach them how to pray. So we have a lesson within a lesson, a guide within a guide. The Our

Father clearly tells us that God is Our Father and also tells us how He expects us to live our life.

We are to adore Him – Hallowed be thy name

We are to Trust Him – Give us our daily bread.

We are to forgive as we beg Him to forgive us.

The Liturgy of the Mass is our universal translator as we seek to maintain the lines of communication with God. He is always on the other end. There is never a disconnection unless we cause it. The Liturgy instructs us as it also enfolds our whole being using all our senses into the most intimate contact two beings can experience.

At the end of our time here on Earth Viaticum is given to us prior to our last breath to nourish our soul on its journey. Reconciliation is offered to make us presentable before our most important audience. Finally it is within the Liturgy that we are beamed up on our final journey at the end of our earthly lives during a Funeral Mass.

The Liturgy then is not some stilted formalized ceremony but a highly precise means of sharing our thoughts, needs, fears and hopes. It is also God's means of giving to us all that we need to flourish and live life to the fullest.

Now that is what I call communication!

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## Quelle attitude, Chrétienne, Chrétien, face à la persécution

Vous voyez à la télé des gens, des femmes, des enfants décapités par des gens apparemment zélés pour leur religion et vous éprouvez le choc. Vous ressentez au-dedans de vous de très fortes émotions: colère, haine pour ces individus violents, dégoût pour leur mouvement, dédain pour leur fausse religion, sympathie pour leurs victimes, malaise pour toutes les populations en proie à cette violence extrême, crainte pour vous-même et pour le monde entier et sa paix fragile.

Que faire, vous vous demandez?

Vous n'êtes pas seule... vous n'êtes pas seul.

Votre réaction et vos émotions sont en effet généralisées, puisque ces sentiments envahissent toute l'humanité où les gens font preuve d'un minimum de conscience. Ce qui peut vous distinguer, surtout si vous êtes chrétienne, chrétien, est votre foi. Je pense aussi à toute personne de foi vraie, puisque nous vivons actuellement une grande crise de la foi par le monde entier, mais surtout en occident. Par foi vraie je comprends la connaissance que peut avoir la personne humaine de Dieu notre Créateur et la confiance en Lui qu'engendre cette connaissance personnelle qu'Il existe et qu'Il est bon, vrai et juste, et beau.

Même les persécutés et les victimes ne vivent pas nécessairement la "joie des martyres" qui furent "l'ensemencement de la foi" au début de l'Église aux mains des romains. J'espère, j'ose croire qu'il y en a beaucoup entre eux cependant qui vont à leur mort rendant gloire à Dieu, comme les Coptes en Égypte qui tout récemment ont déclaré qu'ils iront à leur mort plutôt que d'accepter que la loi islamique soit réinstaurée qui les rendrait des citoyens-esclaves avec le grand fardeau de la taxe des dhimmis et la honte publique et constante de se voir asservis au musulmans. Jésus dit à ces disciples "Je ne suis pas victime... on ne me prendra pas ma vie, mais c'est librement que je la donne, et tout aussi librement je la reprendrai."

Le Pape François a déclaré récemment que nous vivons actuellement, toute l'humanité, la 3e guerre mondiale, et ce, morceau par morceau dans le monde entier en sorte que nous sommes tous affectés. Il a raison. C'est comme le Grand Saint Jean Paul II l'avait déclaré, la guerre entre la civilisation de l'amour et celle de la mort.

Maintenant, je vous invite à considérer que les émotions que vous vivez sont en gros les mêmes que doit vivre Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ, ressuscité mais toujours homme. Après tout, nous sommes son Corps et Lui notre Tête, n'est-ce pas? Ce que ressent le plus petit entre nous, Jésus le ressent. Ce que nous faisons à la plus petite entre nous, nous le Lui faisons. Ce n'est pas de la poésie, mais la vérité existentielle et immuable; car Jésus tout en étant homme est aussi le Fils divin et éternel du Père. Alors, que faire?

Les émotions ne sont pas péchés... car la morale consiste en nos actes de volonté. Le péché pourrait être de ne pas obéir au commandement de Jésus d'aimer nos ennemis, de prier pour ceux qui font le mal, de désirer le bien pour ceux qui nous font du mal ou nous menacent, ou menacent ou font le mal à ceux que nous aimons, ou à ceux que nous prenons en pitié. Ce ne fut pas une suggestion, mais bel et bien un commandement, intimement relié au grand commandement de nous aimer les uns les autres comme Lui

nous a aimés en donnant sa vie pour nous tous, pour toute l'humanité.

C'est le don de sa vie en tant qu'homme-Dieu qui nous a fait frères et sœurs, rien d'autre, et voilà pourquoi beaucoup de musulmans ne connaissent pas cette dimension de la vie humaine désormais, après Jésus, et peuvent se voir à ce point endoctrinés par les versets du Coran dits "pervers" ou "violents" qu'ils en sont aveuglés par le zèle pour donner la mort qui à l'extrême ressemble à une possession par le démon, ou du moins, la haine effrénée de Satan lui-même pour toute l'humanité. Ces gens tuent même des musulmans qui sont d'autres sectes ou tradition. Ils semblent vivre à l'intérieur d'une bulle maléfique. Plus bas, je réfléchirai à ce phénomène de vivre dans une bulle.

Je ne doute pas qu'il y ait dans beaucoup de pays islamiques des Musulmans qui se disent "éclairés", qui vivent selon des "versets doux" du Coran, et qui cherchent à vivre avec leurs voisins chrétiens et d'autres religions des rapports ouverts, respectueux, et coopératifs pour le bien commun de leur société et pour toute l'humanité. Alors ces gens-là vivent actuellement le même drame que nous et aussi une grande crainte de se trouver envahis par ces fanatiques meurtriers.

L'agonie de Jésus qui se poursuit toujours dans son grand Corps mystique consiste justement en grande partie dans le fait qu'il y a plein de gens qui ne parviennent pas au seuil minimum d'humanité ou de conscience mais qui vivent comme des bêtes, sans le moindre mouvement intérieur d'humanité ou de véritable foi ou religion, souvent même sans le moindre sentiment de respect ou d'amour pour leur propre famille. Ces gens ne sont même pas parvenus encore au seuil de l'humanité, et en effet résistent à l'amour de Dieu, Lui refusent l'entrée en leurs cœurs, leurs esprits, leur pensées....

Toute leur pensée est dominée par des images d'un paradis dans lequel ils seraient servis à tout jamais par de belles femmes et de beaux jeunes hommes esclaves à leur moindre désir et plaisir charnel. Imaginez ce qu'ont à vivre les femmes et les filles en Islam là où les hommes ont un tel mépris pour elles qu'ils les violent en plein jour, sécures dans la primauté de la loi du Charia selon laquelle une femme pour se défendre en court a besoin de cinq hommes témoins en sa faveur, je pense, pour pouvoir offrir une défense. Voilà pourquoi les femmes victimes de viol sont souvent condamnées et punies comme les coupables, les criminelles.

Alors, chrétienne, chrétien, surtout si vous êtes catholique ou orthodoxe, si vous voulez toujours vivre la pleine et permanente communion avec Jésus en la Sainte Trinité, vous avez donc à Lui soumettre votre volonté et obéir à son commandement. Laissez vos fortes émotions de répugnance, dégoût, révolte. et colère vous propulser au sein de la Sainte Trinité faisant un plaidoyer constant pour tous ces individus, tous ces groupes armés, toutes ces sectes en proie à la haine et à la violence, toutes ces populations qui sont tenues captives par une parodie, une perversion de la véritable religion. Elle est fautive en autant qu'on s'en serve pour faire la volonté pas de Dieu mais de son ennemi depuis toujours, Lucifer, qui depuis toujours cherche la destruction de l'humanité et sa condamnation éternelle avec lui et ses anges rebelles et déchus en enfers. Jamais ils se repentiront, ces anges déchus, car contrairement à l'humanité, leur rébellion demeure celle de purs esprits, en pleine connaissance de cause et en pleine possession de leurs facultés et de leur liberté.

Chère sœur, cher frère en Jésus Christ, reconnaissez en vos fortes et violentes émotions une offrande que vous pouvez faire à Dieu le Père, comme Jésus l'a fait depuis Gethsémani jusqu'au Calvaire. En faisant cette offrande, dans des moments de prière formelle, ou à tout moment où elles vous envahissent, mais surtout durant votre participation à la Sainte Eucharistie, vous laisserez le Saint Esprit vous joindre à

Jésus, et vous ne ferez plus qu'un avec Lui dans son offrande de Lui-même au Père pour le salut du monde. Il n'y a pas plus grande communion avec Jésus ni plus grande solidarité avec son Corps mystique sur cette Terre.

Sombrier dans l'amertume et la haine ne sert qu'à nous joindre à Satan, l'accusateur de l'homme, et de lui permettre d'envahir jusqu'à nos esprits, nos pensées, nos âmes, et même nos corps. Notre seule issue, notre seule voie, demeure Jésus.... Il est le chemin, la vérité, la vie. En Lui nous avons vu et voyons toujours que Dieu aime toutes ces créatures, tous les hommes et toutes les femmes, même et surtout ceux et celles qui n'ont toujours pas atteint le seuil d'humanité où seulement avec ce minimum de conscience on peut reconnaître en autrui un frère, une sœur, une autre créature faite et aimée par notre grand Dieu et Créateur.

Offrir au Père avec Jésus toute notre souffrance en ces jours mais à tous les jours, voilà la véritable religion par laquelle nous nous laissons envahir et transformer, sanctifier, diviniser, par la Sainte Trinité en son amour indéfectible pour chacune de ses créatures, surtout celles qui ont le plus besoin de la miséricorde divine, celles qui ont été le plus défigurées par le démon, l'adversaire de Dieu.

C'est plus plaisant d'offrir à Dieu nos meilleurs sentiments et nos belle prières, mais c'est infiniment plus difficile de Lui offrir tout ce qu'il peut y avoir de laid, d'horrible en nous, suscité ou excité par les circonstances, les autres, les passions, le mal en nous et autour de nous, mais voilà justement l'offrande que Dieu le Père désire le plus que nous Lui fassions.

Vous êtes capable de faire avec Jésus offrande intégrale de vous-même, de tout ce qu'il peut y avoir en vous, à son exemple, et c'est en cela que consiste la vraie religion qui fait de nous un frère, une sœur en Jésus, et fille, fils du Père....Voilà la seule façon d'éviter de vivre dans une bulle....

**VIVRE DANS UNE BULLE** - il y a toutes sortes de bulles dans lesquelles les êtres humains peuvent se trouver captifs, aveuglés par rapport à toute l'étendue de la réalité en présence de Dieu et de ses semblables, le reste de l'humanité, ici sur Terre....

Évidemment, il y a des bulles beaucoup plus néfastes que d'autres. On peut dire banalement les uns aux autres, "Excusez-moi, j'étais dans ma bulle..." ou encore "Il est (elle est) dans sa bulle...." Cela revient tout simplement à se trouver absorbé(e) par sa propre expérience, ses propres émotions, désirs, passions, besoins, opinions, préoccupations, ainsi de suite.... Les extrémistes idéologiques sont captifs d'une bulle particulièrement meurtrière, mais toute bulle peut, si nous n'en sommes pas assez conscients, nous empêcher de nous ouvrir à la vie, aux autres, et même à Dieu.

De ce point de vue, nos bulles sont en gros le résultat de nos origines: notre ADN... notre culture... famille... éducation... circonstances de vie... contraintes socio-économiques, religieuses, idéologiques, ou autres.... En fait, tout individu de la race humaine est en quête de salut et en besoin d'un sauveur. On peut se réfugier auprès de toute religion, tout prophète, tout gourou, tout démagogue, ou tout chef politique ou religieux ou de toute entreprise humaine, mais en fin de compte, une question demeure.

Celui vers qui je me tourne, celle en qui je me confie, celui ou celle que je suis, me conduit-il ou elle dans la plénitude de toute vérité sur moi-même, sur la vie, sur Dieu, sur la mort et l'éternité? Sinon, alors je me laisse conduire vers une impasse inévitable. Il n'y a qu'un seul être qui peut et qui veut me conduire en toute plénitude de toute la vérité en toutes choses, et celui-là c'est le seul et unique, vrai Dieu, notre

Créateur de nous tous et toutes.

Il s'est révélé en toute définitive au peuple qu'Il a choisi et nommé Israël, et ensuite Il est venu parmi nous sur Terre comme un de nous, un homme né d'une femme, chez les hébreux et que nous avons connu par le nom de Jésus de Nazareth, fils de Marie. Il a eu la prétention de se revendiquer à la fois fils de Marie, et Fils divin et éternel de Dieu son Père. Sois qu'Il est fou, soit qu'Il est menteur, ou soit qu'Il est vraiment qui Il prétend être. Nul ne peut l'accepter qui ne se laisse pas mouvoir par l'Esprit Saint, troisième personne divine de la Très Sainte Trinité.

Union de prière.... Bonne continuité, fille ou fils du Père et bien-aimé(e) de Jésus notre Seigneur, et fille, fils aussi de Marie, Notre-Dame et notre Mère.

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# Patron Saints of Marriage [at The Koala Bear Writer]

There are times on this journey of marriage and making my husband happy that I realize **I can't do it alone. I need help.** I appreciate the women like Steph who've answered my plea for guest posts this month and come alongside to share their advice from more years of marriage. I also know I can turn to God for strength, for He founded the institution of marriage and speaks often to it in His Word.

**And then there are the Saints**—the great men and women of history who lived out their love for Jesus and remain shining examples of what it means to serve God. While we may think of saints as priests or nuns who lived celibate lives, many of them were also married (and parents) and lived in circumstances that look remarkably like our own. And so I find inspiration in asking them to pray for me, knowing that they've been through this too and they know how to ask for help for me.



## Saint Marguerite d'Youville

This Canadian saint was born in 1701 and lived and studied with the Ursulines in Quebec for a couple years. She married at age 21, but her husband proved unfaithful and when he died, left her with six children and his debts. Margeurite opened a store to support herself and her children, and often helped those poorer than herself. She founded the Sisters of Charity of the General Hospital of Montreal (also known as the Grey Nuns) in 1737. She died at age 70 and was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1990. She is the patron saint of difficult marriages and her feast day is October 16.

## Saint Thomas More

A lawyer and scholar, Thomas More was a friend to the great philosopher Erasmus and King Henry VIII of England. He was married twice; his first wife, Jane, gave him four children and then died young and his second wife, Alice, was a widow who devoted herself to his children. Both marriages were happy. He opposed King Henry's divorce and was eventually convicted of treason and executed for that in 1535. His feast day is June 22 and he is the patron saint of difficult marriages, large families, step-parents and adopted children, and widowers.

## Saint Monica

Best known as the mother of Saint Augustine, Saint Monica was instrumental in her son's conversion. Her husband was a bad-tempered, adulterous man for whom Monica prayed devoutly. He converted on his

death bed and Monica then followed Augustine from North Africa to Rome, where she was rewarded with seeing his conversion as well. She died in 387 in Ostia, Italy, and her feast day is August 27. She is the patron saint of difficult marriages, housewives and homemakers, married women, widows, and victims of adultery and verbal abuse.

Nothing is far from God. – Saint Monica

## **Saint Elizabeth of Portugal**

Born in 1271 and named for her great-aunt, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, this Aragon princess married the King of Portugal at age 12. He admired her devotion to the Church and gave her a large library, but was an immoral, unfaithful husband. Elizabeth prayed for him and continued to love, respect and obey him while also carrying out other charitable work, including offering marriage dowries for girls and founding a home for penitent women. She also interceded in family disputes, preventing several wars. After her husband's death, she joined a convent and died in 1336. She was canonized in 1625 and her feast day is July 4. She is the patron saint of brides, widows, difficult marriages, and victims of adultery.

## **Saint Priscilla and Saint Aquilla**

This couple assisted Saint Paul in his missionary work in Corinth, Ephesus and Rome and he called them his “[coworkers in Christ Jesus.](#)” They were instrumental in teaching the evangelist Apollos more about Christ. They are usually mentioned together in the New Testament, but Priscilla's name often comes first—unusual for this male-dominated society. They are also recognized as saints by the Orthodox and Lutheran Churches. Their feast day is July 8 and they are the patron saint of married couples.

## **Saint Zedislava Berka**

Zedislava was a Czechoslovakian / Bohemian saint who lived in the 1200s. She was married and had four children, but her generosity to the poor was frowned upon by her husband. She founded a Dominican priory near her castle, where she received the Eucharist daily (which was unusual for those times). Her holy death at age 32 is said to have brought about her husband's reform, and she appeared to him after her death. She was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1995 and her feast day is January 1. She is the patron saint of difficult marriages and those ridiculed for their piety.

There are many more patron saints of marriage, who can inspire us by their example of faithfulness, prayer and love. Check out the eight saints listed at [Together for Life](#) or the longer listing at [SQPN](#).

*What saints have inspired you in your daily life or marriage?*





## On a Positive Note [at Irish Papist]

I know I spend a lot of time on this blog (and elsewhere!) complaining about modern hymns, and I can almost hear the eyes rolling as I do so. So today I'm going to confound you all and say something nice about a modern hymn.

I'm just back from Sunday Mass, where there were a couple of nice surprises hymn-wise. The first was that the organ-player somehow made a muddle of the responsorial psalm (which is always a song adopted from the Psalms), and the choir were left singing unaccompanied for most of it. It sounded a lot better that way than it usually did-- but I didn't think it would be a good idea to suggest that they should drop the organ for all future hymns. The organist might not have shared my enthusiasm.

Secondly, there was one modern hymn, sung after the final blessing, which I thought was actually quite good. It's not the first time I've heard it, though I haven't heard it in a while. It's *Come to the Feast of the Angels* by Liam Lawton (as I've just discovered), and I hope it's fair use to reproduce the lyrics here:

Will you come to the feast divine?

Bread of the earth and fruit of the vine.

Come and taste the heavenly wine

Welcome the lost and the stranger

Come to the feast of the angels.

Make of your hands now a humble cradle

As once I came to a humble manger

Make of your hearts now a lowly stable

Now be born again.

Will you come to the feast divine?

Bread of the earth and fruit of the vine.

Come and taste the heavenly wine

Welcome the lost and the stranger

Come to the feast of the angels.

I quite like the air as well, which can be heard

[here](#)

I'm not saying this is a great hymn, mind you. It definitely has its flaws. The line "Welcome the lost and the stranger" seems badly out of place to me. It's fine metrically, and I like the stress rhyme of "stranger" with "angels." But the song is in the form of an invitation to the listener; mixing it up with an injunction to "welcome the lost and the stranger" is too much of a digression in such a short verse. (I suppose it could be a greeting: "Welcome, the lost and the stranger." But, even if that was what was intended, it sounds all wrong.)

Also, "make of your hands now a humble cradle" assumes that you receive the Eucharist in the hand. I don't, and I actually wish nobody else did, either (though I certainly don't judge those who do, or think myself superior).

But, aside from those complaints, I like the simplicity and even the stiffness of the lyrics. "The feast divine" is an appropriately dignified inversion. The parallelism of "Bread of the earth and fruit of the vine" is pleasing and has a Biblical air. And "come to the feast of the angels" is a magnificent line. ('Angel' happens to be my favourite word.) I realise that angels are incorporeal beings and that they can't eat in a physical sense, but we're obviously not talking about a big nosh-up here, anyway.

It doesn't bother me at all that this is a 'happy clappy' hymn. I even like that it is a 'happy clappy' hymn. I think it is entirely seemly for Christian hymns to reflect the whole range of the spiritual life, just as the Book of Psalms does. Happy exuberance has a place, just as high solemnity does.

No doubt next week it will be back to "He sent his son Jesus to set us all free, and he said, 'I'll never leave you, put your trust in me'..."

These terrible hymns depress me so much that I've seriously thought about going to another church for Sunday Mass. I rejected the idea, though, after mulling on it for some time. I am a fervent localist and I do think parish loyalty should count for a lot.

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## All the parts of the Body of Christ [at walk the way]

Today's first lectionary reading is from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 12: 12-14, 27-31a.

As I read it I noticed that a large portion of the chapter had been omitted. This is often done to shorten the reading. But in this case I feel something important has been left out.

In working with catechists and in materials for religious education here, I have used 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27 in a dynamic way.

I begin asking the catechists to draw a body and write the parts of the body on the paper. Then I read St. Paul in parts, emphasizing that we are one body in Christ, the Church.

But Paul is very clear that we aren't all the same; all of us have different functions. He even says that "the parts of our body that we must need are those that seem to be the weakest; the parts that we consider lower are treated with more care and we cover them with more modesty..." (1 Corinthians 12: 22-23).

We talk about how we need all the parts of the body. We get concrete talking about how we feel when we have stomach problems or a headache. Nothing seems to work.

We need all the parts of the body – not just those appointed to positions in the Church.

Then I have the catechists come forward and write their names on the part of the body that they feel most represents them and their work,



We then read and reflect on verse 27:

You are the Body of Christ  
and each of you is a member of that Body.

The catechists will do the same process with the young people they work with, helping them see that each one of us has an important role in the Church. This is extremely important in a society that looks down

upon the poor.

Finally we conclude with the prayer of St. Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body on earth but yours;  
no hands on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks out  
with compassion on the world.  
Yours are the feet with which he chooses  
to go about doing good.  
For as He is the Head of the Body,  
so you are the members;  
and we are all one in Christ.

Unless we remember this, we might forget the important role that everyone plays – from the Pope in Rome to the illiterate adolescent in a rural Honduran village. We all are part of Christ's Body – with a role, with a mission: building up God's Reign of Love in this world.

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This contribution is available at <http://walktheway.wordpress.com/2014/09/16/all-the-parts-of-the-body-of-christ/>  
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# Conversion Story: the lure of the daily Mass [at La Joie Inattendue]

In 2009 I landed a position as the French teacher for an

[all-girls' independent Catholic school](#)

. Previously I had been teaching in a small public school in a rougher part of the greater Boston area, and was fighting an ever growing problem with depression. The numerous dead-end interviews with other schools over the course of two years only added to my depreciating self-worth. Landing this job was more than a career move; it gave me back my confidence as a teacher and dignity as a professional.

The details of my hiring were marked with odd coincidences. In short, it was as if God was shining the spotlight on this "funny little school", as the dear chaplain fondly described it. I could not deny that God's hand had opened the doors wide open for me to enter. Upon my first visit, I found the school quite charming, and the teachers and staff members full of class and grace, so unlike the sarcastic and oppressing negativity that pervaded the faculty morale at my old school. I was asked to prepare and teach a lesson to a French 4 class, and the girls were simply a delight to teach. They were engaged, eager, and demonstrated an intellectual curiosity that fuels a rigorous education. Whereas I had been to other interviews with the feeling of something-just-didn't-go-quite-right, I left this little school doing a fist pump and chattering excitedly to my husband when I got home.

Nevertheless, I had some misgivings of this school, primarily because it had a strong Catholic

*ethos*

. I was unsure and uncomfortable at how this would affect my role as an employee. My denomination of faith had never come up in the hiring process, but my insecurities made me question if there would be an underlying prejudice among my colleagues if and when they found out I was not Catholic.

The first week of faculty orientation was both practical and inspirational. Not only did we discuss helpful teaching strategies for the upcoming school year, but we also analyzed a Rembrandt painting and discussed Plato's Cave Allegory all in relation to teaching the student as a whole person. It was refreshing to be a part of these discussions, and I thanked God all the more for enabling me to be a part of the community.

There was, however, one small detail listed on the orientation schedule that made me feel downright uncomfortable: an optional daily Mass for those who wished to attend. Do I refuse to go and reveal to my colleagues my non-Catholic convictions? Do I go despite the major theological disagreements I have with Catholicism? In the end I decided to go....I was not ready to reveal my identity as a Protestant, so I quietly ducked in the back of the chapel and tried to follow what the other attendees were doing. I was so

*nervous*

But no one seemed to notice, of course. The half dozen people who had decided to attend focused only on the altar at the front of the chapel. There was no music (which threw me off at first), and everyone knew the order of the Mass without the aid of a missalette (I clumsily leafed through one trying to find the

prayers being recited). At the end of Mass the lector read a prayer to St. Josemaria Escriva, the founder of

## [Opus Dei](#)

. I remember from my childhood days at Mass that people were itching to get out. But not here. People lingered. It actually felt awkward that no one got up to leave right away. And then I realized: everyone in the chapel was

*praying*

. This was a completely new, and yet riveting discovery for me, especially coming from 6 years of teaching in the public schools, where even the mention of God and faith would cause raised eyebrows.

The peacefulness of sitting in that chapel after Mass quieted my anxiousness. I may not have known when to sit or stand or kneel, but I knew how to pray. The women in this chapel may have had very different opinions of theology than I, but I was struck at how seriously everyone took this prayer time. It was exciting and energizing to know that I was part of such a faithful faculty.

Once the school year got underway, attending daily Mass became much less intimidating. I realized that I had more in common with my Catholic colleagues than not. Because I was so grateful to be working in a place that

*actually set aside 35 minutes of every workday*

to worship and pray to God, I attended out of my own volition. Even if I did not agree with everything that happened, I could

sing to God,

pray to God,

listen to His Word being read,

and linger in His presence.

I knew I was not obligated to attend Mass, and there were certainly some days that I did not, but hearing the a cappella voices of all the girls and teachers one floor above my desk was a reminder that a sacred meeting was happening. Correcting papers at my desk and "getting work done" seemed grossly irreverent. And yet, I wanted to maintain my proud stance that I was NOT a Catholic. One morning I told myself I would take the time out of my day to pray at my desk, instead of participating in Mass. I read from the Bible, I prayed quietly....and I actually found it very isolating. Instead of reaffirming my Protestant views, I felt my confidence in my theology waning. It highlighted my lack of confidence in my own faith, and underlined an

*anger for*

Catholicism instead of a

*love for*

God. The protest in my own heart was distracting me from the ultimate purpose of the Mass: getting closer to God.

And so I began attending as often as I could. It started to become a peaceful break and respite to the bustling and busy teaching days. There was something attractive in the daily Mass that I could not resist. Even though I was not taking Communion, the power of prayer and His Physical Presence broke down the stony walls in my heart and completely disarmed the anger and defensiveness I had been harboring.

God was preparing the soil for the seed to be planted.

Stay tuned for part 3....

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This contribution is available at <http://kimsununexpectedjoy.blogspot.com/2014/10/conversion-story-part-2-lure-of-daily.html>  
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## Seasons of Change [at Dancing in the Rain]

Change is a constant of life. There are times we seek it and others when it “just happens,” like the cool wind of Fall sweeping over the summer haze. It can be a good thing and it certainly can be uncomfortable. Like the new skin that grows underneath a scab, change can push us outside our comfort zone making us want to scratch the itch of it not feeling totally right.

I’m a routine person. It’s a family thing – early to bed, early to rise. I’m nicer when I follow a schedule (What’s up, understatement!). So when the schedule changes it’s slightly (eerrr...exponentially) frustrating waiting to find the new routine. As we glide into fall there are moments when it feels appropriate to be sipping coffee all cuddled up on the couch and there are other moments that have me running for the beach. In the midst of the change of seasons, it is an opportunity to see where we have come from and where we are going is only linked by where we are. Seasons of change bring up lots of “what should I be doing” moments. For me, the recent season of change has me asking the practical - when should I pray? How should I pray? When can I socialize? What’s my work schedule? And the ever-important questions: when can I play and when can I work out?

As these practical questions come to mind (and yes, they are important), I am encouraged first to answer “who am I to become?” From this flows what should I do, when should I do it, and how the daily “it’s” should be done? With peace, joy, and love I am called to be me - the best, unique and unrepeatable version of me. As God created me in His image and likeness I am called, by name, into His heart of mercy to be refined and strengthened by His love. I am called to more firmly hear His Truth: “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” I am called through the season of change to recognize we are constantly called to becoming more authentically ourselves. We are constantly called to greater freedom throughout life, which is itself a season of change from life to Life. Let us hold fast to what is unchanging in our lives, the inestimable and steadfast love of God, through any and all seasons of change.

Verso l’alto,

Kathryn Grace

“Laid down in grief/But woke with the keys/ To hell on that day/ First born of the slain/ The man Jesus Christ laid/ Death in his grave.” \*This is what's on repeat these days\*

Whatever way our stories end, I know you have rewritten mine ...

Who can say if I have been changed for the better? But because I knew You, I have been changed for Good.

One thing remains

“By day the Lord commands His steadfast love; and at night His song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.” Psalm 42:8

“It is what is unchanging in our lives that helps us make sense of change.” Matthew Kelly

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This contribution is available at <http://dancingintherain401.blogspot.com/2014/09/seasons-of-change.html>  
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## Forming the Adult Church [at timeofthechurch]



Next week I begin teaching a ten week course, an introduction to Catholic ministry, which forms part of a year-long course offered by the Institute for Mission, an adult education centre in the Diocese of Parramatta. Remarkably, the course has seen over 400 participants undertake studies in spirituality, Scripture, theology and ministry since its inception and includes spiritual direction, companioning groups as well as plenary days.

My particular component of the course attempts to situate ministry within the broader context of baptismal mission and the legacy of the Second Vatican Council, explores the ministry of Jesus as given witness in the New Testament, overviews the development of ministry from the Constantinian area until the present day, surveys the theologies of the ordained priesthood, the diaconate and lay ministry, relates ministry to Eucharist, before concluding with issues in pastoral practice and spiritual discernment.

Over the years I have tried to ground the course as much as possible in the touchstones of the *ressourcement* movement, and so the participants are exposed to the writings of the Church Fathers, the Scriptural testimony of early Christian life, and are invited to delve into the meaning of the Eucharistic prayers, including a nod to Eastern anaphora recognised by the Catholic Church (the most obscure of which is that of Addai and Mari, an Assyrian prayer distinguished for the absence of an institution narrative. See [here](#) for extended analysis of its use and context).

The growth in opportunities for such theological formation of lay men and women since the Second Vatican Council has been tremendous, meeting as these opportunities do the greater baptismal consciousness that flowed from the Council's reception, and extending the possibility of theological learning and reflection beyond the seminary and religious houses of formation.

Foundational documents in the area of adult faith education include conciliar documents such as [Lumen Gentium](#) (1962), [Apostolicam Actuositatem](#) (1965), [Gravissimum Educationis](#) (1965), and post-conciliar monuments including [Catechesi Tradendae](#) (1979), the [General Catechetical Directory](#) (1997), and the pastoral plan for adult formation authored by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* (1999; available [here](#)). This last document offers as its model the Emmaus story as a paradigm of encounter and accompaniment on the road to faith in Jesus, in a way which aligns well with the pedagogy outlined by Pope Francis in [Evangelii Gaudium](#).



It is worthwhile noting that the greater opportunities for theological formation of the laity in the contemporary Church reflects, in part, a shift in ecclesiastical culture over the last half century, away from a climate in which ‘religiosity’ was often identified with obeying the will of a superior as opposed to religious practice being the way to obtain our happiness and fulfilment. As the Canadian theologian John Lamont points out of that authoritarian atmosphere, one which extended well in the 1950s, ‘If faith is a matter of obeying orders, then asking questions about Catholic belief is insubordinate’.[\[1\]](#)

This climate also affected theological learning in general, producing an anti-intellectualism because asking questions about the faith was seen as smacking of disobedience rather than looking for new knowledge and a way of approaching God. The second opposite effect was that among the people who *did* ask questions, which were first the priest-scholars before the laity, there was a certain attitude of rebelliousness (e.g. Hans Kung, Herbert McCabe OP) which has been unhelpful at times to genuine theological development and for freedom of inquiry in other corners of the Church.

Today the possibilities for the faith education of lay men and women are much wider than available to previous generations and a commitment to critical research, historical studies and an awareness of how culture and a globalised context can illumine the mysteries of faith has provided Catholics ordained and lay with a richer theological horizon against which they can make sense of faith, *if* we are disposed to making use of the resources available to us.

In today’s Church, our Catholic universities continue to serve as the primary venue for formal theological education of lay men and women. However, it is also the case that many laity do *not* enrol in such accredited courses and degrees for at least two reasons. One is the expense of such courses which can be prohibitive, especially for those without recourse to student loan schemes; the other is that the spectre of rigorous assessments can also discourage participation at this tertiary level, especially for adults who have not studied for some time, even decades, and yet still seek some form of theological input and learning.



Participants at a recent Alpha Leaders Training Day (c) Diocese of Parramatta 2014

Hence, diocesan centres of adult formation, and the occasional talks, retreats, lecture series and programs facilitated by them ([Catholic Alpha](#), Life in the Spirit seminars, the Siena Institute’s [Called and Gifted](#) workshops come to mind) as well as opportunities provided by religious congregations, remain critical to

the education and formation of Catholics for mission. Online courses and other new media also offer sources of spiritual nourishment and theological reflection for those stretched for time in a work-a-day world.

Sadly, even in these less formal and more accessible settings for adult faith education there has been a conspicuous *decline* in the number of people taking up such opportunities. The low participation numbers in many diocesan adult formation initiatives brings into question the ability of the Church (at least the Australian Church) to communicate and deepen its faith and prepare its people for discipleship and outreach now and into the future.

As noted in previous blogs, while homilies, parish bulletins and the liturgy itself are the primary forms of formation experienced in the parish, these are rarely sufficient in themselves for working out that relationship between the faith we have received and the contemporary culture in which we are called to live it. As [Thomas Merton](#) remarks, as Christians we do not choose between Christ and the world as if they were utterly opposed. We choose Christ by choosing the world as it really is in Him.<sup>[2]</sup> However, this ‘catholic’ choice requires formation and discernment lest we choose one to the neglect of the other – either a self-enclosed identity incapable of speaking to the world in the light of the Gospel, or a generalised humanism without Christian substance.

When Christian faith is not deepened through *reflection* on faith, it becomes difficult to live out that life commitment in both an integral and world-engaging manner. It is true, as Pope Francis has pointed out, that we do not need theological degrees to be Christian but it also the case that ignorance of our faith is not a virtue. As Clement of Alexandria wrote in the second century, of those who do not bother to pursue an understanding of the riches of their own calling as Christians, ‘They demand bare faith alone – as if they wanted to harvest grapes right away without putting any work into the vine’ (Chapter IX, [Stromata](#)).

In a more contemporary key, the English theologian, Nicholas Lash, describes well the stagnancy in our midst in his 2002 Prideaux Lectures at the University of Exeter,

I never cease to be astonished by the number of devout and highly educated Christians, experts on their own ‘turf’ as teachers, doctors, engineers, accountants, or whatever; regular readers of the broadsheet press . . . occasional visitors to the theatre who usually read at least one of the novels on the Booker short-list; and who nevertheless, from one year to the next, never take up a serious work of Christian theology and probably suppose *The Tablet* to be something that you get from Boots the chemist (Lash, *Holiness, Speech & Silence: Reflections on the Question of God*, 4-5).



On his part, Lash attributes the decline in adult formation to the ‘systematic failure of the Christian churches to understand themselves as *schools* of Christian wisdom: as richly endowed projects of lifelong education’ (Lash, *Holiness, Speech & Silence*, 5).

There is much truth to this. As we have noted, our parishes do not largely understand themselves in this

way, as ‘schools’, and therefore depend too heavily on the ability of our people to make sense of their faith and give an account of their hope unaided, without the support of a community of kindred learners who sit at the feet of the kerygma and tease out together the implications for life in this world.

As Richard Lennan of Boston College has written, ‘A secure faith . . . does not merely tolerate questions and thought, but affirms their capacity to act as vehicles for an ever-deeper engagement with the God revealed in history’.[3] Without doubt, we need to grow the opportunities for adult faith education but we must first grow the *appetite* and *desire* of our people for such formation, so that they can fully realise their own vocation and make use of the gifts and capacities called forth in them.

To conclude, the tradition of the Church upholds that the ‘catechesis of adults must be regarded as a preferential option’, and that this ‘can bear fruit only *within the overall pastoral plan* of the local Church communities’.[4] To form our adults to be constructive participants in the life and mission of these communities, we need to place adult faith education once again at the heart of our intent and pastoral practice. Without such a focus, lay Catholics will lack the confidence to bear witness to the Gospel in a complex world and so the mission of the Church will be impaired on account of the undeveloped faith of the majority.

## References:

[1] John Lamont, ‘Why the Second Vatican Council was a Good Thing and is More Important than Ever’, *New Oxford Review* (July/August 2005), 35. You can read the text on this [blog](#).

[2] Cunningham, Lawrence, ed., *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master: The Essential Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 387.

[3] Richard Lennan, ‘”Looking into the Sun”: Faith, Culture, and the Task of Theology in the Contemporary Church’, *Australasian Catholic Record* 84/4 (2007): 467.

[4] COINCAT, *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community: Some Principles and Guidelines*, 29; available [here](#). Accessed 30 September, 2014.

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This contribution is available at <http://timeofthechurch.com/2014/10/01/forming-the-adult-church/>  
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## **Eucharistic power [at A blessed mess]**

There is so much power in the Eucharist. It is the source and summit of the Catholic faith and I know that I could not live without it.

So I wrote that a long time ago. I wrote that during a time that I did not go to daily Mass. I also did not have a desire to go to daily Mass. Looking back in some ways those first two lines seem like a lie.

I consider myself a devout Catholic. But how can I say that when I am not even attempting to go to daily Mass? Because if the Eucharist is the source and summit of my faith then I should

*desire*

to go every single day!

I think that if we do not have that

*desire*

then we are missing out on all that the Eucharist is-namely Jesus. Think about it. God comes to earth every single day and desires to come into you and become a part of you!

You have an opportunity to see God

*every single day*

. That is what the gift of the Eucharist means. So we somehow miss this if going to Mass is not something we

*desire*

to do. I say desire because our schedules can be crazy and mass times may make it impossible to go.

But what if we at least had the goal of going to Mass as often as possible? I think our lives would change and our appreciation of the Eucharist would be transformed.

I realize that if we truly realize what the Eucharist is then we would want to go to Mass as often as possible to experience that miracle. Namely

**God becoming a piece of bread so he will become a part of you!**

Every time we receive Christ he gives himself totally to you.

But there is only one way to grow in your devotion to the Eucharist. In order to grow in your love for the Eucharist you must go to adoration, go to daily Mass. We can learn these things intellectually but in order for them to change our lives we need to let Christ instill these things in our heart. So that we know them in an intellectual and in a spiritual sense.

But the intellectual part is also important so that we can share them with others. However we also have to have an inner conviction of what we believe in. This inner conviction is so important because a lot of the time the intellectual part does not make any sense and people just do not get it.

That was what I learned while explaining the Eucharist to a bunch of Protestants. I told them what the Eucharist was and I explained that I ate Jesus's body and I drank his blood. (I am sure they were thinking-vampire!) I am sure they were shocked after all I was claiming to eat the living body of

## **God**

and drink his blood too.

One girl's reaction was "Ewww . . . that's gross." That was my favorite reaction because it shows belief. That yes I am drinking the blood of God and eating his flesh. To me it is not gross it is beautiful. But to people who believe but have not yet experienced it-yes gross is the proper reaction. Because it is really his body that we are eating!

It is not just a wafer of bread it is the living God. I will never forget how God taught me that.

I had watched some awful scary TV show at my friend's house. It really freaked me out-in particular there was this horrible guy in the show and I could not stand to look at him. Some time later I went to my cousin's first Communion Mass. I looked at the priest and to me he looked like that creepy guy from the TV show. But I knew he was not-besides that had just been a TV show.

So I resolved that when I received Communion I would look straight into the eyes of that priest and I would see that he was good. But when I received I was surprised at what I did see in the eyes of that priest. I saw incredible love in his eyes-love for the Eucharist and I saw powerful conviction! As he said "This is the Body of Christ!" All I could think was "Oh my gosh, this is God! It really is His Body!"

God certainly works in mysterious ways. He used my fear of a TV character to teach me about the gift of the Eucharist.

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This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.com/2014/09/eucharistic-power.html>  
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## Spiritual Battle [at Small Paul]

As most of you know by now, I'm a deep thinker. If you read my last post, you know that I am feeling very joyful. This past week I have been under Spiritual attack.

The devil does not like anyone to trust in God enough to move towards Him. This past week all my weaknesses about everything in my life surfaced. The devil knows your weaknesses and he will take advantage of them. At the time I wrote my last post I had complete trust in God's agenda about everything in my life. This past week I have lost sleep, lost appetite, worried about everything and everyone in my life, and endured temptations of all sorts.

Why does God allow this? He allows it to see how we handle it. Many times in my spiritual growth and in my life, when bad things happen, I would resort to sin. This time was different. Three or four nights last week I could not sleep. I over thought, was tempted, and visualized worst-case scenarios in my in my work, with my friends, and with everything else in my life. I also got on my knees and prayed, hugged my pillow and prayed, visualized Christ in my heart, and visualized me in His heart. I did not submit to the temptations.

If you choose God in times like these, you get the lessons next. I prayed for God's perspective. He delivered. My behavior will be modified based on these new insights. When God teaches it is humbling. God is so beyond our perception, that I am overjoyed at being humbled.

My agenda for people, for my work, for my friends, for everything is back to being God's will. I am not smart enough to know God's will, so I do not know what is going to happen with anyone or anything (such as my job, the number of sales I get or lose) in my life. I don't even know what's going to happen in the next hour. Keep in mind that I am the guy with the "to do list."

Last week it also occurred to me, that there have been many instances where people have come to me, for advice or other forms of help and I did not have a clue as to what God wanted me to do for them. I just let God take over. A lot of these times were before I came back to the Church. It was as if God was showing me that He was working in me all of this time. I was aware of some of it because of one of my past occupations that remains a hobby to this day. He showed me how much He has helped others through me.

So now I'm in a place where my only desire for myself and everyone else is God's will.

AND:

I wrote this in the morning. I have been fighting the devil all day. When I was in adoration and Mass this evening, I was at peace. I must be doing something really good to have this much attention. My love for God is increasing and I am offering this up as a prayer for the conversion of souls.

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This contribution is available at <http://goingdeeper-catholic.blogspot.com/2014/09/new-paul.html>  
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## Death's Revelation of True Greatness [at Half Kindled]

February was a hard month. In addition to the bleak skies and restlessness that generally accompany the winter season, this year brought struggles of a decidedly more permanent nature.

Towards the beginning of the month, a friend from college died suddenly. When you are only in your mid-twenties, it is quite a shock when someone younger than you dies.

In the following weeks, my grandfather passed away from cancer. Thankfully, we had the comfort that he had lived a full and blessed life and the ripples of his legacy will continue to reach many.

In the next few days, I learned that the child of a dear friend had passed a way. The silence of this absence shouted volumes.

I found myself pounding the counter asking, no, shouting a single question to God: "WHY?!" I remember telling Him in no uncertain terms what I, the clay, thought of the Potter's plan, knowing full well I will take back my words some day.

My thoughts, too, turned to memories of the sort of lives my grandfather and friend lived and the legacy they left behind. Naturally, when confronting death one begins to ponder what sort of legacy they will leave behind.

When I am called before the throne of God to give an account of my life, how much wasted and ill spent time will I have to address?

How many wasted minutes and hours will have been spent aimlessly scrolling through my feed on facebook, while my precious children look up at me with eyes pleading for my attention?

How much effort will I have poured into decisions of such import as which particular shade of gray I should paint the bedroom?

How often will I have sought to find happiness in a carton of ice cream knowing full well that it is not going to fulfill me.

Now I don't want to come across as condemning social media, decorating, or ice cream. These are all things I do dearly enjoy and believe can have a place in a well lived life. It's just a question of how big of a place.

Facing the deaths that February brought reinforced my desire to examine life in general and try to discover what living, **really living**, looks like. I needed a reminder that this gift of life I have been given isn't meant for complacency, but for greatness.

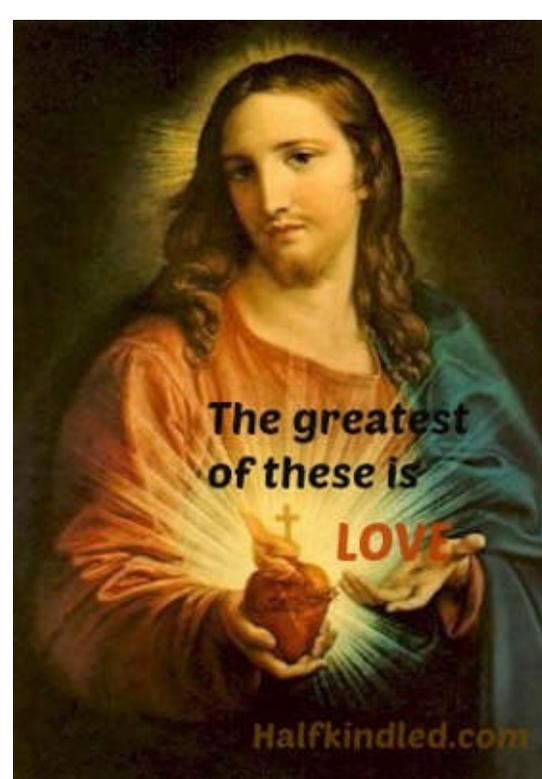
Up till now, I thought that greatness was illusive at this stage of my life. Here I am, a young mama to two little ones who demand so much of my time and energy. I yearn to do **great** things with my life, yet my daily duties often leave me confined to my home. How am I supposed to do anything important, when most of time is spent in childcare?

Filled with frustration, I turned my thoughts back to my deceased friend and grandfather. What was it about their lives that made such an impact on me? By the world's standard's neither had done anything astounding, yet their impact on others was profound. What they lacked on their resume of professional accomplishments, they provided in their quiet virtue and great love.

Their lives are my reminder then, that greatness is not achieved through intellectual accomplishments, athletic prowess, or artistic creation. It must be fought for on the battlefield of the will.

This variety of greatness is possible for me to achieve in my hidden life at home, albeit with more struggle than I should like. It is a type of greatness that the world often does not recognize or acknowledge.

These losses provided me with the powerful reminder that whatever goals I may hope to achieve, which one must take priority.



**Have you ever had this realization driven home? Did it take the death of a loved one, or did it come in a more gentle format?**

P.S. It took this post ( <http://modernmrsdarcy.com/2014/09/resume-eulogy-virtues/> ) from the ever insightful Anne of modernmrsdarcy, and the TED talk she referenced, to finally clarify my thoughts enough that they could be distilled into this post.

P.P.S. Check out the fantastic five minute TED talk here:

This contribution is available at <http://halfkindled.com/deaths-revelation-of-true-greatness/>  
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## Subterranean Homesick Alien [at Catholic Girl Problems]

The wind blew against my cheek the other day.

No big deal, I know...happens all the time. This time, however, felt different. Most of us don't notice the wind any more than we notice clouds in the sky, but this particular breeze practically demanded I notice it. The sensation was like a caress – a cool, gentle hand against my skin – and my thoughts immediately drifted to God.

In a surreal way, I knew the touch was His.

I'm not sure why He would do that, however, as I have been out of control lately. Without sugar-coating things, I will attest to being a Spiritual Sloth. I no longer pray my Rosary, much less pray, and I spend my evenings in leisure activities which shall only be revealed in a confessional (thank-you-very-much). I am by no means a saint, nor am I striving to become one anymore, and to be honest, I am out of communion with God.

I am a girl lost in the desert, surrounded by mirages. I reach for water where there is none, because I can't find the real thing. I know it's out there, but in the meanwhile, I thirst. I thirst for the same things everyone else does – love, happiness, fulfillment, peace – and I know Who ultimately provides those, yet I continue to feast on table scraps rather than the banquet.

But I don't deserve a banquet, not the way I've been acting lately.

I don't even deserve scraps.

I feel weird being at odds with God. That's something which has always bothered me, even at a young age. I remember [AshWednesdays](#), when the kids at school would pick on me non-stop for the smudge on my forehead. But I never washed it off, either. His eye was always on me – His presence always felt – and I couldn't bear the thought of breaking His heart.

Our relationship evolved during my [discernment](#), when I began to (quite literally) fall in love with Him. He was so generous during that period – generous to stoop so low and close as for me to experience a *hint* of what it is to truly be with Him. And a hint was more than enough for me. Any more, and my weak

and fragile human body might have crumbled to pieces. We had gone from friends to lovers, and all out of the blue.

Now I find myself wondering where He went.

And I find myself reaching for something – *anything* to fill the empty space in my heart. I look for something to replace Him, only to discover nothing on this planet can do that. The realization is maddening...like an addict in withdrawal, desperate for the only high which will make him feel normal. I find myself at Mass, surrounded by people I'm convinced are certainly much more worthy to be there than me. I approach the Eucharistic minister with arms crossed over my chest, like a scarlet letter. I am cast out, because I cast myself out.

But I don't know how to find my way back.

I am going to England next Saturday...by myself. I've never been overseas, and I was tired of waiting till "someday" to make the trip, so I threw caution to the wind and booked it. When I did, however, I reassured myself I wouldn't be alone...God would be with me. He would be my travel buddy – my tour guide – and the best at that. Just as His breeze sent chills down my spine, He would woo me by showing off more of His majesty which I've never experienced.

I'm going to Confession on Saturday...again.

They say sex is the closest we'll get to the sensation of being united to God, and if you think about it, the idea isn't so far-fetched. We are made in His image and likeness – “male and female, He created them” – and when a man and woman unite their bodies, they are (in essence) recreating the fullness of God. The result of their union is the very thing God produced...life. We are *made* for relationship, because we are made from Love itself.

We will never be satisfied, however, until we are reunited with God.

The Lover of our souls.

I don't know what the point of this post is; I just felt like writing. I apologize, however, for going all over the place, but that should give you some indication of what it's been like inside my head lately. I am a ship without its Anchor – a sheep gone astray, and I can't find my Sheppard. I feel weak from being lost for so

long – so weak, I can't even summon up the strength to try and find Him again. I miss Him terribly, however, for I remember how it felt to be close to Him.

I remember so much more than His breeze across my face.



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## It's Your Choice [at The Wayward Catholic]



Every once in awhile you hear or read something so profound you say to yourself “How can I steal that?” No, wait, I mean, “I wish I had said that.” Something will just hit you in the head like a two by four, and just make all kinds of sense, not that getting hit by a two by four makes any kind of sense, well at least not if you do it on purpose. Unlike most of what I write which makes absolutely no sense at all, here is what I heard today.

I was listening to one of my favorite Catholic radio shows, “Father Simon Says” on [Relevant Radio](#), and he made the following statement (and this may not be exact because I was unable to write at the time):

“God doesn’t send us to Hell, He rescues us and brings us to Heaven.” Fr. Richard Simon

Sometimes we will hear people say things like “God will send you to Hell for that” but what really happens is we send ourselves to Hell by the choices we make. We are the ones who decides where we will go, not God, not even Satan. We can choose to do right, or we can choose to do wrong, it is as simple as that. Satan will tempt us, but it is we who make the choice to follow through on the temptation. Read the following scripture passage:

Blessed is the man who endures the trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death. – James 1: 12 – 15

God does not tempt us, instead we are tempted by our own desire. Have you ever wondered why sins feel so good? It is because Satan wants to make them pleasurable so we will desire them. If any of you have committed adultery you will understand this. No matter how good your sex life with your wife may be, there is something about forbidden fruit that makes it taste so much better. Unfortunately, that pleasurable taste only lasts for a short time, but by then, the sin has been committed. Satan will tempt you again and again, and if you are weak (like a certain blog writer was) you will succumb to the temptation again. If you are strong, with faith and trust in God (like a certain blog author now) then you will be able to overcome the temptation.

Either way, you make the choice. God doesn't, Satan doesn't, you do.

Photo Credit: [Unsplash.com](#)

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# The Two Main Threats to Our National Security [at Justin's Corner]

Thirteen years ago on this day, America suffered a coordinated and devastating terrorist assault by wicked agents of a Middle Eastern foreign power. Today America is again under attack—not by violent religious fanatics from without, but by the forces of immorality and radical secularism from within.

“Immorality is un-American and a threat to national security!” Such were the words addressed by Father John Corapi to millions of Catholics across this nation in the years immediately following the tragic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Those words were true then, and they ring just as true today.

We live in a nation where immoral acts such as abortion, artificial contraception, the destruction of human embryos, extramarital sex, and homosexual acts are legally permitted, culturally tolerated, widely encouraged, frequently committed, and, in some cases, publicly funded and legally mandated—all in violation of the natural law written by God in the human heart.

Radical secularists want to kick God out of our national culture. They claim we’d all be better off without Him. They are blind guides leading the blind (cf. Matt. 15:14). Their totalitarian ideology is a recipe for national suicide.

Internal immorality and radical secularism pose a greater threat to our national security than all the external terrorists put together. Therefore, if we truly love God and love our country, if we consider ourselves religious and patriotic, we must courageously do battle with these twin enemies of our nation, both in our own lives and in the public square.

Sadly, two of America’s foremost Catholic cultural warriors—Cardinal Timothy Dolan and Bill Donohue—recently handed an olive branch to our country’s worst enemies: They publicly announced their approval of homosexual demonstrators joining the Saint Patrick’s Day parade in New York next year, for the first time ever in the history of this event.

Bill Donohue stated clearly in a press release that he had no problem with homosexual activists marching as a group with their own banner in the parade, so long as pro-life demonstrators were permitted to do the same. Apparently he felt that accepting homosexual activists’ participation in the event was a useful bargaining chip for getting pro-life activists into the march. But the end does not justify the means. You cannot compromise with evil in order to obtain a good.

Perhaps Donohue also believed that, in the name of freedom of speech and tolerance, these two very different activist groups were equally entitled to participation in this annual public event. But the Saint Patrick’s Day parade is an undeniably Catholic event, albeit open to the general public, so the rules for participation in it should reflect Catholic teaching. On this basis, it would certainly be appropriate to admit pro-life demonstrators to this event, but it would never be appropriate to admit homosexual demonstrators.

According to Catholic teaching, freedom and tolerance do not apply to immoral behavior; they apply only to what is true, good, and beautiful. The homosexual activists will be promoting a grave moral evil that violates God’s law and wreaks social havoc, while the pro-life activists would be defending the most

fundamental God-given human right to life of the innocent unborn, which currently is not protected by law in the United States. There can be no moral comparison or equivalence between two such radically different groups.

Cardinal Dolan has also declared that he has no problem with homosexual demonstrators marching behind him in the Saint Patrick's Day parade. It's bad enough when a prominent lay Catholic tolerates the public promotion of immorality in a traditional religious and cultural event designed to honor a great Catholic saint; it's far worse when the cardinal-archbishop gives such immorality his blessing in an official and highly visible public way. That's exactly what Cardinal Dolan is doing by agreeing to serve as Grand Marshal of the parade next year. By doing so, he is betraying Christ and the Church and surrendering to America's twin enemies of immorality and radical secularism—in exchange for what? A good time? A little notoriety or popularity?

Previous cardinal-archbishops of New York acted differently when their religious beliefs and moral convictions were on the line. Cardinal Terence Cooke, for example, declined to appear at the scheduled time in front of Saint Patrick's Cathedral to give the customary blessing to the marchers of the Saint Patrick's Day parade in 1981 because the Grand Marshal that year, Michael Flannery, was associated with a terrorist group in Northern Ireland. By deliberately appearing late, Cardinal Cooke took a stand and sent a clear, unmistakable message: The Catholic Church does not approve of violent attacks on innocent civilians.

Cardinal Dolan's jolly participation in next year's Saint Patrick's Day parade as Grand Marshal, with thousands of homosexual activists proudly marching behind him with their signs and banner, will be a sacrilege and a scandal. It will shout to New Yorkers and to the whole world through a megaphone that the Catholic Church approves of homosexual acts and activism. That is certainly how the major media will interpret this charade. It is a false and dangerous message to send. It is contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who calls all men and women, including persons with homosexual inclinations, to the challenge and true freedom of living chaste lives. And it is contrary to the example set by his fearless predecessors in the faith, who demonstrated the courage of their convictions by consistently preaching and defending the truth regardless of the winds of fashion and public opinion.

To his credit, Bill Donohue has announced that the Catholic League will not participate in the 2015 Saint Patrick's Day parade. Unfortunately, however, through his flawed approach to the issue, including his conditional approval of homosexual demonstrators participating in the event, he has taken one step back from the culture war, allowing a cherished symbol of our Catholic heritage to be tainted by immorality and radical secularism. Had he and Cardinal Dolan rallied millions of fellow Catholics to demand that homosexual activists be kept out of the march as they always have been until now, this whole debacle could have been avoided and the Catholic identity of the event preserved intact. Instead, thanks to their misplaced tolerance, the parade is now on a slippery slope toward increasing secularization and the promotion of every kind of immorality in the years ahead.

Vocal homosexual activists should have no place in a Catholic religious and cultural event such as the Saint Patrick's Day parade. They have every right to participate incognito just like hundreds of thousands of other marchers, but this particular event is not an appropriate venue for them to push an immoral and radically secularist agenda that conflicts with Catholic teaching and natural law. After all, their main reason for marching as homosexual activists is to demand that their immoral relationships be given legal recognition equal to that of heterosexual marriage, the Creator's own design and the foundation of human

society. Such immorality should not be legally recognized by any government of a civilized nation; still less should the attempt to gain this recognition be implicitly condoned by a high-ranking Catholic prelate such as the cardinal-archbishop of New York.

“Immorality is un-American and a threat to national security!” By approving the admission of homosexual activists into the historic Saint Patrick’s Day parade, Cardinal Dolan and Bill Donohue have done a regrettable disservice to God and country, compromising with America’s twin enemies of immorality and radical secularism for the sake of some temporary advantage. Let us pray for these two well-known Catholic leaders, that they recognize their error and work to repair the damage they have done. At the very least, Cardinal Dolan should follow Donohue’s lead in withdrawing from the parade. Through the intercession of Saint Patrick, our heavenly friend, may they both continue to fight the good fight as faithful witnesses to Christ and as loyal American citizens, remembering that religion and morality are the two principal guardians of our national security, prosperity, and well-being.

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## I Love Him, and His Mother Too

I have a fabulous Mother-in-law! Her name is Dorothy, and she is filled with joy! I rarely see her upset. She is down-to-earth, loves to laugh, is dedicated to her family, and is a feisty Euchre player.

She, and her husband, raised my husband Bruce quite well, thankfully. He is also pretty low-key (usually) and loves to laugh, even if it is at his own silly puns. He takes care of me in so many ways.

Sometimes when we go to a Padan family gathering, I sit near Dorothy and we talk about whatever happens to be going on. Our health, the latest cute things one of my new great-nieces or nephew have done, planting flowers...just about anything. She genuinely cares about me and I about her.

Now, when Dorothy and I get into a long conversation, perhaps laughing hysterically, do you think that upsets my husband? Of course not! Does he think that my time with her takes away from my time with him? No! Bruce is very happy that I get along with his mom, *because it actually helps me be closer to him.*

Today in the Catholic Church, we celebrate the birth of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. We don't know exactly when she was born, of course, but it is fitting to celebrate the birth of this very special woman. [The Church has been doing so for centuries!](#)

I realize that some people who read this page are not Catholic. Many think that attention given to Mary takes away from Jesus, but it doesn't. It enhances our relationship with Him. I am not a theologian, so I won't get too deep into this matter, but I just want to share a few highlights:

- As a faithful Catholic, I do NOT worship Mary. Worship is for God alone.
- When people say Mary is an ordinary woman I cringe. Could you look Jesus in the eyes and say to Him "Your mom is nice and all, but really she isn't anything special." I couldn't, and wouldn't, say that.
- After all, out of all the BILLIONS of women who have ever lived and who will ever live, she was the ONE chosen to carry the Messiah! That is AMAZING!
- Here is something I learned some years back. In ancient times, a woman didn't become Queen until her son became King. This was because Kings had many wives. The title was actually Queen Mother...and it was a title of high honor. Read these verses, 1 Kings 2:19-20

"So Bathshe'ba went to King Solomon, to speak to him on behalf of Adoni'jah. And the king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a seat brought for the king's mother; and she sat on his right. Then she said, "I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you.""

In this passage we see several things. First, the Queen Mother interceded on behalf of Adoni'jah. Second, the King actually bowed to his mother and placed her at his right...showing her great honor. Third, the King doesn't refuse his mother...after all, he loves her.

Jesus is the King of Kings! The fulfillment of all that was promised in the Old Testament. Of course, His Mother Mary would then be the Queen Mother!

So yes, we as Catholics celebrate Mary's birth. When we pray the Rosary or other traditional prayers, we are asking for her intercession. We are asking her to take our prayers to her Son...basically putting in a good word for us!

Jesus followed every commandment, including honoring His Father and Mother. Faithful Catholics around the globe and across time are simply doing the same!

Happy Birthday, Mother Mary!

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