

NewEvangelists.org

new
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New Evangelists Monthly #23

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Forward

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

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

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

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A Slice of Liturgical Life: Celebrating a Few October Feast Days [at A Slice of Smith Life]

As we enter a new Fall season on our calendars, I've been thinking a lot about another type of calendar: [the liturgical Catholic calendar](#) .

Similar to our traditional calendars that are marked with four seasons, 12 months, 365 days, holidays and celebrations, the liturgical year is also marked with special seasons and feast days.

However, the difference between our traditional 12 month calendar and the liturgical Catholic calendar is summed up well

[HERE](#)

at

[cyberfaith.com](#)

,

The purpose of the Liturgical Year Calendar is not to mark the passage of time, but to celebrate and understand more fully the entire mystery of Jesus Christ, from his incarnation and birth until his ascension, the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of his return in glory. During the course of a year, the paschal mystery—the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus—is viewed from different angles, in different lights."

I hope one day to be more organized with the celebrations and feast days in our family's life and here on my blog. I especially love how Nicole at

[Just Like Mary](#)

organizes her blog with the Liturgical Year icons and tabs! Hmmmm...that gets me thinking on even more [changes](#)

I want to make to my corner of blog land here!

Here are a few October feast days we have celebrated in our home in hopes that we can make these celebrations a yearly tradition.

This was the first year I made small homemade chocolate cupcake "roses" with my children. We whipped

up some homemade cream cheese icing and swirled a little red food coloring in them to get the flower effect. They were delicious!



Here is a simple art project my 10 year old and 6 year old daughters made for this feast day that I saw Patty do with her children from

[Reasons for Chocolate](#)

. Thank you Patty for the inspiration!



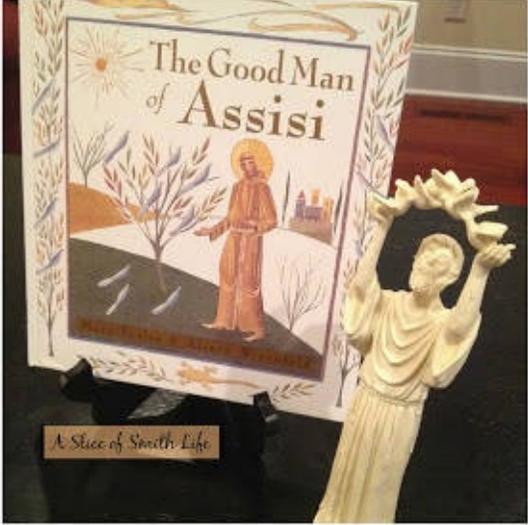
Our guardian angels lighting and guarding and ruling and guiding to celebrate this Feast Day of our Guardian Angels! They work over time in our house. :)

Angel of God,
My guardian dear,
To whom God's love commits me here,
Ever this day,
Be at my side
To light and guard
To rule and guide.
Amen.

I really enjoyed reading

[The Good Man of Assisi](#)

to my 6 year old to celebrate this Saint who loved all of God's creatures, great and small!



October 7: [Our Lady of the Rosary](#)

I first saw this idea with chocolate chips and M&M's on

[Kendra's blog at Catholic All Year](#)

and it inspired me to try it this year for the first time. We used 2 pretzel sticks with a dab of peanut butter to keep the pretzels together for the cross. Each of my children said a decade of the rosary and as they said each prayer they ate the candy piece. I must say I had a difficult time not eating the entire decade all at once, just like my children! :)

I found a Facebook link from

[Word on Fire Catholic Ministries](#)

about this feast day. Click

[HERE](#)

as "Father Steve Grunow explains the unexpected origins of this feast of our Blessed Mother and how we are to understand the invocation of Our Lady in the midst of conflict."



One of the many reasons I love being Catholic is that we have feast days and celebrations throughout the entire year! It is my hope that by remembering special Saints like Saint Therese, Saint Francis of Assisi and our Blessed Mother in the Holy Rosary, our family will grow in our faith with many liturgical year celebrations and traditions!

How do you celebrate the liturgical year? I'm always ready to learn how other families celebrate the Church calendar in so many fun and creative ways!

Have you signed up to receive my posts in your email inbox to keep up with "A Slice of Smith Life" happenings? If not, just enter your email address here:

You can also follow my blog page on Facebook

[HERE](#)

!



This contribution is available at <http://asliceofsmithlife.blogspot.com/2014/10/a-slice-of-liturgical-life-celebrating.html>
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Dare 10/24/14 [at Campfires and Cleats]



Welcome to [FME](#), where a huge tribe of writers write on a one word prompt for five minutes.

No over-thinking, no editing, no stressing over grammar and punctuation. I'm happy to join the tribe this week *and*

I'm so happy YOU are here!

Let's set a timer and here goes:

~~~ **DARE** ~~~

Dare to remember....

Dare to recreate...

*The tapestry of our family history, here, in this serenity? Often it comes crashing with such ferocity, I am back again. It is 1973 or it is 1978 or it is 1982. And I am here as a child.*

*Or it is 2010 or it is 2014..... And these squealing, splashing, fishing, frolicking kids are mine.*

No matter.

*There is a rickety redwood picnic table. There are bare, sandy feet. There are stacks of books and board games. And up on Route 9, there is the comforting fixture of our American flag waving, though largely unnoticed. There is homemade potato salad and a plate stacked with slices of tomato and cucumber. There are fishing rods leaning by the cabin door; haphazard piles of sandals and flip flops alongside.*

*Today there was dock jumping and row boating and mussel hunting. Then as the sun dipped low behind the mountains ringing Schroon, after a day all too fleeting, there is the whisper-y fragrance of citronella and hickory barbeque and the familiar July crescendo of cicadas.*

*And most vividly, there are hushed, happy voices, familiar lilts and inflections, saying nothing of huge importance, but enveloping me in safe-ness. Just as now, in the present, I hope we are creating a haven that shrouds our kids in much the same...the safety, the memories, the goodness.*

And yeah, this is taking me longer than my allotted five minutes,

but I have to stick a picture from one of these many summers~

Hope it's ok if I go beyond that five minute mark!



2008



2014

thank you for stopping over and  
spending some of your precious time



here at my home on the web! And hey:

Have you signed up to receive my posts in your email inbox?

If not, just enter your email address here

so we can be in touch regularly!

You might wish to follow on [Facebook](#) as well.....

Post dividers and general cutesies, courtesy of [Shabby Blogs](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2014/10/five-minute-friday-dare-102414.html>  
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# It Happened on a Double Decker Bus in Rome [at Equipping Catholic Families]

The biggest influence on my Faith and prayer life has been a special priest I have known for almost 22 years. In these years of friendship, homilies and spiritual direction, I've picked up a pretty prominent theme from his teaching and from his example.

I believe Fr Roger...that we can each have a personal relationship with Jesus.

We can encounter Him, speak and listen to Him and experience His infinite, compassionate and unconditional Love for each one of us.

To that end...I have tucked in my desire, my plea to know Jesus, feel His Presence and know His Love....pretty much every time I pray from the heart. That's a lot of requests over 20+ years!



When I was in Rome, I was blown away by the beautiful Churches, the sacred sites and the witness of the Saints at their tombs and relics.

Each day, I marvelled at this extraordinary opportunity I had been given.

I knew that without the generosity of [Mike and Sue](#)....and the hard work of my husband Bill and my Mom, this trip would absolutely not have been possible.

It was a complete gift....and other than blogging about it...no strings attached!

In contrast to my regular life.... I had no responsibilities other than to walk around Rome, *try to follow the group*, try not to get pick pocketed, take pictures, bask in the Italian sun...and enjoy.

I know...in my brain...that Jesus loves me. I've reflected on the blessings I have received and in my gratitude....concluded that Jesus has blessed me in many ways and provided me with a special vocation of marriage and motherhood...with some [creative projects presenting our awesome Catholic Faith](#), on the side!

My job is just to remember to rely on His strength, not just get frustrated with my weakness....loving my husband and working with him to form our kids in the Faith and try to get us all (and our loved ones) to



Heaven.

I have had moments when I recognized Jesus' Love for me. I have had many other moments where I plodded along trying to earn His unconditional Love even though I was told I already had **It**.

This trip to Rome was however a spectacular....dare I say, superfluous gift!

Although I'm sure I don't understand the impact of all I have seen and am still processing...on my prayer life, on my Faith and on my vocation...it seems to me that it was an over-the-top, extraordinary gift. It was a gift that I certainly didn't earn or deserve and one that I will continue to reflect on for years to



come....probably forever.

As I rode on the top of the double decker bus, snapping pictures of the inspiring Churches and monuments, soaking in the Italian sun...I wondered how I had won this awesome adventure.

My answer was an overpowering, enveloping sense....

that **WOW, Jesus really loves ME!**

In a single shot, it was suddenly an experience in the heart: not just a nice thought I had been told, I had read or I had rationalized to believe. Smiling from ear to ear....I realized that I was at that moment experiencing exactly what I had been asking for....for over 20 years:

**Jesus was showing His love for me and I was experiencing His Holy, loving and awesome Presence...right on that bus.**



Just like His Infinite Mercy ...I had done nothing to earn or deserve this extraordinary experience of His Love....or this trip of a lifetime to Rome, Florence, Assisi, Naples, San Giovanni Rotundo and Lucca.

While I have an inkling of my responsibilities and best response to His Will with regard to His other gifts to me of my husband, kids, parents, brother and friends...I can only hope that the experiences I treasure from the last two weeks will inform and guide, affirm and strengthen my trust in Jesus and my resolve to do His Will.

I remain...His Pilgrim.

More posts about My Pilgrimage to Rome...coming soon!

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This contribution is available at <http://www.equippingcatholicfamilies.com/2014/10/happened-double-decker-bus-rome.html>  
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# The Mind of Islam: On Family Life, the Messiah and How to Treat Non-Muslims [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

by Lawrence Fox



In the Quran, God can argue like a wild desert chieftain. For example, the Quran asserts that Jesus, Son of Mary, is not the Messiah -- not the Son of God. From Surah (*chapter*) (5:14-21), "*Unbelievers are those who declare, 'Allah is the Messiah, the Son of Mary.'*"

*Say: 'Who could prevent Allah from destroying the Messiah, the son of Mary along with his mother and all the people of the earth?' His is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. He creates what He will and has power over all things.'*

The argument is brutal and circular at best; certainly not divinely inspiring. Children make such arguments, "My father can kick your father's butt and so he is better!" At first, it seems like a non-sequitur – a statement which does not logically follow the previous statement - but after further reflection the argument “Who could prevent Allah from destroying all peoples...” does logically follow the divine deception, submission, and jihadist spirituality which streams throughout the Quran.

Too bad almost all public comments on Islam don't reflect that understanding.



Islamic scholars identify the speed in which the “sword” carried the Prophet’s message across the Middle East and Northern Africa as evidence of the Quran’s Divine Inspiration. Submission through violence summarizes the meaning of Islam (Arabic word for submission). Yet authors, radio newscasters and politicians politely step around that reality and call it a “religion of peace.” They fear to offend. Few have read the Quran. Few have heard of its convoluted illogic.

In the Quran, (meaning recital in the Muslim mind, a literal dictation from Allah to Mohammed), there is a

story which depicts Allah speaking to his created angels, commanding them to kneel down and prostrate before the man (Adam) created from clay. Satan (the unbeliever) refuses to bow down out of pride.

Allah, says to Satan, “*Why do you not bow down to him whom my own hands have made? Are you too proud or do you think he is beneath you?*” (Surah 38: 65-76) Satan replies that he is nobler; that angels are made from fire and man is made from clay. The recital is meant to provide insight into the sins of pride and deception and yet it is Allah who places before the angels that which is contrary to Divine Revelation, that is Allah is asking Satan to commit idolatry. “*I have sworn by my own name; I have spoken the truth, and I will never go back on my word: Every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will confess allegiance to me.*” (Isaiah 45:23) (Admonition against idolatry in the Old Testament)

Allah places upon Satan a curse until the “Day of Reckoning.” Satan replies, “Reprieve me, Lord until the Day of the Resurrection.” This dialogue between Allah and Satan, which devolves into anachronistic polemics, identifies Allah as a “Voluntaristic” deceiver. Allah is making decisions solely based on his will, and not on his intellect. This is contrary to God’s own nature, which is both Good and Reasonable.

Satan’s request that Allah’s judgment be postponed until the Resurrection is putting the cart before the horse in time. Mohammed set the story of this dialogue in history before the Fall of man, and the Biblical understanding of the Resurrection does not clearly exist until the time of Christ. How would Satan know of the Resurrection before the Fall of man? The understanding of human resurrection (body and soul) in the Old Testament Salvation History is extremely hidden. There are glimpses in the Book of Job, Ezekiel, and Maccabees II. It is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb which reveals to His disciples the meaning of the words “Resurrection of the Dead.”

God’s merciful promise of salvation and resurrection are in response to Adam and Eve’s rebellion in the Garden of Eden. God warned Adam and Eve that by placing their hand to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the result would be their death. This discourse in the Quran (Surah 38: 65-76) in which Satan speaks of the “Resurrection” prior to the fall of Adam and Eve demonstrates Satan as possessing knowledge of events prior to their causes. Such a knowledge makes Satan omniscient along with Allah. In other words, Satan speaks of an event (resurrection of humans) which is contingent upon a deception which Satan himself will cause and a prior knowledge of God’s will and response to that deception.

Adam and Eve’s placement of their hands to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is in response to Satan’s deception, “You shall be like God knowing good and evil.” Satan clearly tells Allah that “*I will seduce all men except your faithful servants.*” If that statement be true, then Adam, whom Allah commanded Satan to worship, was NOT one of Allah’s faithful servants from the beginning since Satan tempted “Adam and Eve” or else Allah had no idea that Satan was lying. In other words, ALLAH demand the angels to worship him (Adam), which is not one of Allah’s elect. This recital is most un-inspiring since it demonstrates no coherence of thought.

Satan said to Allah, “*I will seduce all men except your faithful servants.*” This is a point of controversy in the Islamic culture since by tradition, the prophet Mohammed was seduced by Satan to write down verses which did not come from Allah, but Satan himself. This Islamic tradition was “resurrected” and popularized within Western Society by the author Salmon Rushdie in his book titled, “The Satanic Verses.”



Few understand the implications of the Satanic Verses within Islamic tradition that teaches that the Quran is the word for word dictation to Mohammed by God through the Archangel Gabriel. Islamists did and do. Ayatollah Khomeini, the figure which launched the Islamic Revolution in Iran, issued a fatwa to “kill” the author Salman Rushdie. Cat Stevens the recording artist and convert to Islam garnished to himself quite a bit of angst when opined that the fatwa was just. I read the book – which was not well written and full of obscenity – and it manages to remind the Islamic world that their Prophet was seduced by Satan who is recorded as saying in the Quran, *“I will seduce all men except your faithful servants.”*

The deduction is obvious and problematic, if Allah allows Satan to deceive the “infidels” and Satan successfully deceives Mohammed, then the Prophet is not one of Allah’s faithful servants.

Christianity witnesses that through pride and envy, death entered into the world. Adam’s sin brought about death. Jesus’s obedience brings about forgiveness, restoration, and resurrection. Christianity rests on the foundation of the historical life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The Quran denies Jesus’ death and resurrection.

In the Quran (Surah 38: 65-76), Allah commands the angels to worship the man of clay since he is made by Allah’s hand. This is a dubious request since Allah could reasonably request the same degree of worship of every creature made by the hand of God, including: angels, stars, plants, animals, believers, and infidels for all things are made by God. For God to command the angels to worship man (because He said so) and then command the Prophet to murder unbelievers (because He said so) and to forbid divorce (because He said so) and then command divorce (because he said so) and to forbid polygamy (because He said so) and then to command polygamy (because He said so) demonstrates that the Will of Allah is not governed by Truth, Goodness, and Love but solely by the Will itself. Islam introduced into Western Society (by way of the Quran) a philosophical concept known as Voluntarism which has been most devastating.

Voluntarism begins with the question, “Is God bound by anything?” The Quran and the Voluntaristic philosopher/theologian answers that God is not bound by anything, “God does whatever he wills.” Catholicism teaches that GOD cannot act in a way, which contradicts His own Nature (His own being). God cannot will that which is in contradiction to His intellect, His Love, His Goodness. Such a contradiction would demonstrate change in God; an absurd position to say the least. ISLAM which means “submit” emphasized God’s WILL over his intellect. The Catholic counter argument would be as follows: “If a rational will was really independent from the good and applied to systems of political power, the level of devastation and human suffering would be tremendous and ongoing.” (Blessed Duns Scotus) An objective review of devastating effects upon humanity stemming from systems of power rooted in post-modernism, materialism, atheism, communism and Islamic jihadist theology demonstrates that pure voluntarism is satanic.

The cause of Satan's rebellion and his taking a third of the angels with him is not explicitly detailed (word for word) in Christian Scripture, but can be inferred. The deception which Satan places before Adam and Eve, "*You shall be like God knowing good and evil*" reflects Satan's own natural desire "to be worshipped." Prophets, mystics, and saints throughout Salvation History intimate that "Satan willed to be greater than God."

Isaiah the Prophet states: "*How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! ... You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of ... I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.'*" (Isaiah 14:12-14)

Jesus told his disciples that "*I saw Satan fall like fire from the skies*" in response to their preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He sent seventy-two disciples, who returned with joy and said, "*Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.*"

He replied, "*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*" (Luke 10:17-20) Jesus identifies his disciples as those having their names written in the Book of Life. Islamic Scholars argue that Jesus' disciples were deceived by the apostle Paul and did not understand the gnostic message proclaimed by Jesus, so they fabricated the gospels. The Christian message that through the gift of faith and baptism, a person becomes a child of God is rejected in the Quran.

In the same Chapter of the Quran (Surah 38: 65-76), Allah asks, "*If Christians and Jews were God's children, then Why Does (Allah) punish them?*" This argument is made by modern day atheists as well, who reject Salvation History bearing fruit in the Person of Jesus, "*Who humbled himself and became obedient to death; even death on the cross.*" (Philippians 2: 8).



We are reminded of St. Paul's reflection: "*The Cross of Jesus Christ is folly to the Greek and Scandal to the Jew.*" As a result of the Muslim understanding that suffering is evidence of Allah's displeasure, the Quran emboldens persecution of Jews, Christians, and pagans – all non-Muslims. If the Allah revealed in the Quran is not the Lord God of Israel, then the pre-supposition would be most reasonable. Ironically, Muslims do not understand they suffer more than anyone else because of their indifference to Truth. Sin is sin.

The Quran has no redemptive theology which encompasses suffering. In the Quran, struggle (jihad) is good when inflicted upon the unbeliever, resulting in his pain. The reward for such action is great, "*But for those who fear the majesty of their Lord... They shall recline on couches lined with thick brocade. They shall dwell with bashful virgins whom neither man nor jinee will have touched before... In each*

*there will be virgins chaste and fair...Dark eyed- virgins sheltered in their tents...*" (Surah 55:54-78)

Heaven is obviously not the dwelling place of God, nor a state of beatific vision but a return to an Eden resembling Solomon's sin of polygamy, *"The righteous shall return to a blessed retreat. They shall enter the gardens of Eden whose gates shall open to receive them. Reclining there with them will be bashful virgins for companions, they shall feast on abundant fruit and drink."* (Surah 38: 47)

The Catholic understanding of suffering based upon Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition is much different. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: *"God allows evil in order to draw forth some greater good."* St. Augustine wrote: *"Almighty God...because his is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works if he were not so all-powerful and good to cause good to emerge from evil itself."* St. Paul writes: *"that the troubles of this present world are considered as nothing when compared the glory that awaits those who love God."*

People with little or no faith despair when evil enters their lives. The Old Testament begins with the cause of evil and then goes on to explain that evil happens to the good and the bad. The Book of Job is Israel's classic struggle with God over the question, "Why does God allow evil to fall upon good people?" Scripture demonstrates time and again that, "God brings good out of evil."



Think about the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. His brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. But he rose to a position of authority and was able to save his own treacherous family from starvation in the midst of famine. *"As for you, you meant evil against me,"* Joseph told his brothers, *"but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."* (Gen 50:20)

Paul writes, *"We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28) Jesus said, *"Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."* (Matthew 5:12) Peter writes, *"But rejoice in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed."* (1Peter 4:13) In essence, the Quran demonstrates very little inspiration as it relates to temptation and suffering. It also demonstrates very little inspiration in relation to eschatology (last things) and human sexuality.

The Beatitudes which Allah gave to Mohammed include: *"women are your fields (tilith) and so go in amongst them"* and *"Blessed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, who avoid profane talk, and give alms to the destitute, who restrain their carnal desire (except with their wives and slave-girls, for these are lawful to them)..."* (Surah 23:1)

The Quran is peppered with Mohammed's need for women. Allah tells Mohammed, *"It is unlawful for you to take more wives or change your present wives for other women, though their beauty pleases you, except where slave-girls are concerned."* (Surah 33:52). I am greatly surprised to read Islamic

Scholars argue these verses as evidence of Mohammed's sense of purity and chastity. So Mohammed cannot take any more wives, he is not restricted from fornicating with female slaves. There is in the Islamic Hadith a reference to the angel Gabriel giving Mohammed a crystal clear drink which increased his staying power. If he had waited several centuries, he would have learned that Nitrous Oxide does the same thing.

Later in the Quran, Allah scolds two of Mohammed's wives and tells them that he (Allah) can replace them with better wives. The two wives were jealous over Mohammed's sexual encounters with his slave-girl Mariam the Copt after he promised them that he would stop the practice. Allah comes to Mohammed's defense, *"If you two (wives of Mohammed) turn to Allah in repentance for your hearts have sinned, you shall be pardoned; but if you conspire against him, know that Allah is his protector and Gabriel and the righteous among the faithful. It may be well if he divorce you, his Lord will give him in your place better wives than yourselves, submissive to Allah and full of faith, devout, penitent, obedient, and given to fasting; both widows and virgins."* (Surah 66:4) The two women being mentioned are Hafsa and Aisha. Allah says to Mohammed, *"Prophet why do you prohibit that which Allah has made lawful to you, in seeking to please your wives."* (Surah 66:1). In other words, "Mohammed why are you choosing not to have sex with your slave girl(s) simply to please the emotions of your envious wives?" The Muslim does not understand that the Quran at times reads like Playboy and not like Divine Revelation.

Mohammed married the wife of his adopted son Zainab bint Jahsh. This was a great scandal except Allah comes to the rescue and informs Mohammed that He (Allah) does not recognize adoption, *"Mohammed is the father of no man among you."* (Surah 33:40) In Jewish oral tradition, you can disown your natural born son, but not your adopted son.

Islam and adoption are now estranged. The Islamic argument forgiving Mohammed's continual lust is *"that Solomon had many wives and was loved by God."* Solomon was loved by God because as John the beloved disciple writes, *"God is love."* (1John 4:9) It is most unfortunate such a miniscule number of Muslims read the Old Testament or New Testament. In my opinion, if they did they would recognize the numerous contradictions between the lives of the Old Testament Prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, the Apostles and their Prophet's decline of moral character. Of course according to the Quran, the Old Testament (Book) and New Testament (Gospel) have been corrupted and superseded by the Quran. (Surah 10:37)

Pope Saint John Paul II aptly observed that the overall content of the Quran demonstrated a reduction of Divine Revelation not an increase or correction. The content of the Quran represents a retreat towards something pre-Abrahamic.

In the Quran, God is merciful, but God is not love and God is certainly not Father. As a result, Allah's mercy is not rooted in love but solely in the Will. People in the West with a Judeo-Christian foundation read the words, "Mercy and Compassion" and think, "We do have something in common."

We may have something in common with the Muslim who has discovered mercy and compassion based upon a spiritualized reading of the Quran but very little in common with disciples who share Mohammed's literal presentation of "Allah's Mercy and Compassion." Well, maybe a double-predestination Calvinist might have something in common with them. According to Calvin's theology of double predestination, God created some persons for heaven and some persons for damnation and hell. The decision is totally in the Will of God and nothing to do with culpability, or justice, or goodness,

reason, or love. *“I swear by your glory,” said Satan, “That I will seduce all men except your faithful servants.”* (Surah 38:76-88)

Regarding the Islamic argument justifying Mohammed’s lust by equating him with Solomon, the Old Testament says something contrary. God warned Solomon not to multiple wives, chariots and gold (6 6 6). Solomon did all three of these things and this led Solomon and the nation of Israel into idolatry. God said to Solomon, *“I will rip your Kingdom from you and give it to your servant...only leaving you two tribes for the sake of David your father.”* And God raised up an enemy to Solomon. (3 Kings 11:9-14) Within one generation of Solomon’s death, the Kingdom was ripped in two. The Quran seems oblivious to that fact.

Mohammed’s lust is never constrained in the Quran. His last wife, a Jewish woman who was widowed as a result of the Muslim slaughter of her Jewish tribe - ends up spicing Mohammed’s supper with poison. Mohammed never fully recovered from the incident and eventually died in the arms of his child bride Aisha, who was the ultimate cause of the Sunni and Shiite civil war which has lasted more than 1300 years. I guess by analogy, Allah eventually raised up a Jewish bride as a thorn in Mohammed’s side; she poisoned him leading to his eventual death as a Prophet of Allah and ever since the Religion of Peace has been in a perpetual state of civil war.

Imagine the epitaph: “Here lies Mohammed, a prophet poisoned by a woman from a tribe of people that he slaughtered in the desert.”

Truly not inspiring.

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This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2014/10/the-mind-of-islam-on-family-life.html>  
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# The Marks of the Church [at A Faith-Full Life]

The Church which Christ established has no name other than that of its founder. It is known simply by His name and that of His followers; it is known solely by the name of Christian. While it has no “denominational” name to identify it, it does possess identifying marks. Historically and Scripturally there have been four marks by which the Christian Church identifies itself.

## [The Church is One](#)

After establishing His Church, Christ’s prayer is that the Church will be one. *“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”*<sup>1</sup>

The first mark of the Church, and according to Christ, ***the way by which the world will know that the Father has sent Him, and that the Father loves us***, is oneness. Not just oneness, but that we become *completely* one. In case we are unclear he repeats himself. It seems essential then to ask – is this how the world sees the Church? Do they perceive the Church as being *completely one*?

St. Paul returns to this theme frequently writing that, *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”*<sup>2</sup> Indeed this unity of the Church appears to be a common theme throughout the New Testament, and it is a unity which is fundamentally *Eucharistic* in nature. *“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”*<sup>3</sup>

## The Church is Holy

In the very next chapter St. Paul speaks of the Church’s holiness when he writes, *“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.”*<sup>4</sup>

We often struggle with the idea that holiness is one of the marks of the Church. After all, we’ve witnessed the numerous failings of both the Church and her members over the many centuries since Christ. Pope Francis addressed this very objection last year when he said,

*“We thus affirm the holiness of the Church, and this is a characteristic that has been present ever since the beginning in the conscience of the first Christians, who called themselves simply ‘the holy’, as they were certain of the action of God, of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the Church.”*

*“But,”* he asked, *“How can we say that the Church is holy, if we see that the Church throughout*

*history, during her long journey through the centuries, has experienced many moments of darkness? How can a Church be holy if she is made up of human beings, of sinners? Of men who are sinners, women who are sinners, priests who are sinners, nuns who are sinners, bishops who are sinners, cardinals who are sinners, popes who are sinners? Everyone. How can a Church like this be holy?"*

*Almost echoing the words of St. Paul, he went on to say that the Church is holy because, "...she comes from God Who is holy, Who is faithful to her and never abandons her to the power of death and evil. She is holy because Jesus Christ, Son of God, is indissolubly united to her; she is holy because she is guided by the Holy Spirit which purifies, transforms, and renews. She is not holy by our merits, but because God makes her holy."*

*"Do not be afraid of holiness," concluded Francis, "of letting yourself be loved and purified by God. ... Let us allow God's holiness be transmitted to us. Every Christian is called to holiness; and holiness does not consist, first and foremost, in doing extraordinary things, but rather in letting God act. It is the encounter between our weakness and the strength of His grace."<sup>5</sup>*

### **The Church is Catholic**

It is important to note that the word "catholic" means universal, and that this was a mark of the Church which Christ founded long before it was ever its "name."

*"It refers as much to the fullness of the faith which it possesses as it does to the undeniable extension in both time and space which has characterized it virtually from the beginning...The Catholicity of the Church in any case resides as much in the fact that the Church is for everybody at all times as it does in the fact that it was indeed destined to spread everywhere throughout the whole world."<sup>6</sup> The Church which Christ established is the Church universal, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."<sup>7</sup> It is the Church in Rome, in Hong Kong, in Kenya, and Detroit. The Church as the Body of Christ is not limited to a time, place, race or culture.*

### **The Church is Apostolic**

This mark of the Church is foundational from her very inception. "Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve?"<sup>8</sup> In establishing His Church He creates it apostolic when He says, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."<sup>9</sup>

This apostolic structure is further reinforced when Christ passes on the same authority to the rest of the disciples just two chapters later saying, "If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."<sup>10</sup>

This apostolic nature of the Church is reflected in Christ's plan for the transmission of the faith seen in the Great Commission,<sup>11</sup> and in His prayer that we began with, "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one."<sup>12</sup>

## The Witness of the Early Church Fathers

Writing around AD 190 St. Irenaeus writes of his master Polycarp, himself a disciple of the apostle St. John, “[he] taught only what he received from the apostles, what the Church transmitted, and what alone is true.”<sup>13</sup> As St. Polycarp died he prayed, “for all the Catholic Church.”<sup>14</sup> And St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote that, “Wherever the bishop appears, there let the people be, as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.”<sup>15</sup>

By the First Council of Constantinople in the year AD 381, we see the formation of the Nicene Creed, and with it the statement: “[We believe] in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”

Indeed, this [creed](#), along with the four identifying marks of the Church, are still being professed by the faithful throughout the world every day, and at every Mass.

Also check out our latest [podcasts](#)!

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1. [John 17:20-23](#) ↵
  2. [Ephesians 4:4-5](#) ↵
  3. [1 Corinthians 10:16-17](#) ↵
  4. [Ephesians 5:25b-27](#) ↵
  5. [Pope Francis, General Audience Vatican City, October 2, 2013](#) ↵
  6. [Kenneth D. Whitehead Four Marks of the Church](#) ↵
  7. [Matthew 28:19a](#) ↵
  8. [John 6:70b](#) ↵
  9. [Matthew 16:18-19](#) ↵
  10. [Matthew 18:17-18](#) ↵
  11. [Matthew 28:18-20](#) ↵
  12. [John 17:20](#) ↵
  13. [Against Heresies 3.3.4](#) ↵
  14. [To the Philippians 7](#) ↵
  15. [Letter to the Smyrnaeans](#) ↵
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## Make Babies [at Smaller Manhattans]



*Yes, that is a *Platytera*. It's OK to laugh.*

6th-grade catechism class naturally covers a lot of Catholic themes during its year-long trip through the Bible. One of them is marriage and children. I don't ever stand in front of the kids and say, "marriage and babies are good, and divorce and abortion are bad," I let them figure it out as we go, helped along with personal testimony from me. I don't intend to form consciences; but I do intend to create the opportunity for the kids to form their own consciences themselves.

Here's a list of Bible bits that kids learn about and discuss, my intent being to help them develop a Catholic worldview without being didactic about it:

1. Creation. God's last and greatest creation is a man and a woman together, creating babies. But not just any man and woman, a husband and wife, a marriage: one man, one rib, one woman, one flesh.
2. After all, the first commandment is to "be fruitful and multiply," more pithily expressed in class as "make babies."
3. The Flood. As soon as Noah steps out of the Ark, God reminds him and his family of the first commandment: "Be fruitful and multiply."
4. Abraham and Sarah become the parents of a nation.
5. To accomplish #4, Abraham and Sarah have a miraculous pregnancy. They're so happy that their love has at last made a baby that they name him Laughter.
6. Pagan peoples living around Abraham kill their own firstborn children and offer them to strange gods, but God doesn't require that of Abraham right off. But when God does ask for Isaac's sacrifice, Abraham must feel as though he's been asked to kill all the laughter and joy in his life.
7. Isaac and Rebecca have a miraculous pregnancy, and Rebecca bears Esau and Jacob.

8. Jacob and Rachel have a miraculous pregnancy, and Rachel bears Joseph.
9. Manoah and his wife have a miraculous pregnancy, and she bears Samson.
10. Elkhanah and Hannah have a miraculous pregnancy, and Hannah bears Samuel.
11. Psalm 78 says God "appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children; 6 that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God." So even kids not yet born or even conceived still matter to God.
12. In Psalm 128, David reflects on the joy of family: "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table."
13. Israel falls on hard times, and some parents kill their babies to appease Molech: "Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit, you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree; who slay your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?"
14. But God still loves his children in both fatherly and motherly ways: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands."
15. God knew Jeremiah, and had a job for him before his mom was even pregnant: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."
16. Baby-killing continues in Jeremiah's day: "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,"I will let you dwell in this place if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt. The people have forsaken me, and have profaned this place by burning incense in it to other gods; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents, and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal." The kids figure out on their own how such passages relate to abortion.
17. Zechariah and Elizabeth have a miraculous pregnancy, and Elizabeth bears John.
18. Mary has the most miraculous pregnancy, and bears Jesus.

This is not an exhaustive list, just the things we have time for in catechism class. By the time we get to Mary, the children can place her at the end of a line of mothers that stretches all the way back to Eve; and have acquired a holistic Scriptural basis for a pro-life conscience.

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## Theology & Dogma: St John XXIII, Balthasar and Romano [at Catholic Deacon]

This afternoon I (finally) had the chance to do some undirected, that is, not-required reading. I chose to delve into reading Hans Urs Von Balthasar. In addition to making progress in his short book

[\*Who Is a Christian?\*](#)

, I re-read the introduction to volume two of his theological aesthetics

[\*The Glory of the Lord: Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles\*](#)

. The short chapter from the first book complemented a striking passage from the second.

The third short section of Part III of

[\*Who Is a Christian?\*](#)

is entitled "The Crucial Point." The "crucial point" is the Incarnation. The Incarnation of the Son of God is the incarnation of divine love. According to Balthasar, "what is revealed of the nature of this love in the existence of the Son is the renunciation of self-ownership. This renunciation alone is what gives the fulfillment of his mission its unheard of dramatic impact" (66-67). The dramatic impact is made manifest in Jesus' abandonment to the Providence of the Father, which "relieves him of any obligation to calculate, to measure out, to be diplomatic, and gives him endless energy that need care nothing for the walls of contradiction, pain, failure, and death, because the Father is leading him and will bear him up, even at the farthest end of the night" (67). In this, Balthasar asserts, we "can see how dogmatics, in its two fundamental pillars - of Incarnation and Trinity - is likewise the embodiment of the Christian doctrine of life" (67).



How we have lost sight of this in our loss of transcendence, in the forgetfulness of our destiny: "Dogma and existence go together"! (67). We need to re-read Von Hildebrand and books like August Adam's

*Tension and Harmony: About the Value of Dogma for Personal Life*

, or perhaps even Balthasar's short work

[\*In the Fullness of Faith: On the Centrality of the Distinctively Catholic\*](#)

. I am convinced that this deficiency plays a large role in the confusions we seem to constantly experience these days. So as not to sound too passive-aggressive, in nothing perhaps more than when it comes to marriage.

Today marks the fifty-second anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in Rome by Pope St John XXIII, whose liturgical memorial (the first since his canonization earlier this year) the Church observes today in honor of this event. In his

[opening address to the Council](#)

, Papa Roncalli stated,

The manner in which sacred doctrine is spread, this having been established, it becomes clear how much is expected from the Council in regard to doctrine. That is, the Twenty-first Ecumenical Council, which will draw upon the effective and important wealth of juridical, liturgical, apostolic, and administrative experiences, wishes to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion, which throughout twenty centuries, notwithstanding difficulties and contrasts, has become the common patrimony of men. It is a patrimony not well received by all, but always a rich treasure available to men of good will

In his great work,

## [Iota Unum: A Study of Changes in the Catholic Church in the XXth Century](#)

, Romano Amerio noted during the time of great confusion after the Council (which time persists):

Some authors deny the existence of the present confusion in the Church or else deny its specific character by attributing it to the duality and antagonism inherent in the nature of the world and of the Church. This denial seems to us inadequate, because the essential opposition here is not between the Gospel and the world which Christ comes to save, that is, the world understood as the totality of creation, but rather between the Gospel and the world for which Christ does not pray, that is, the world inasmuch as it is *in maligno positus*, infected by sin and oriented towards sin (2)



Turning then to the introduction to second volume of

### [The Glory of the Lord](#)

, in which Balthasar picks five representative "clerical" aesthetic theological styles- Irenaeus, Augustine, Denys, Anselm, and Bonaventure- he discusses the difficulty inherent in theology:

At first this bewildering variety of styles alarms one, and there arises the suspicion that between the glory of the divine revelation [culminating with the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity] and its imitative expression there can be achieved no kind of convincing correspondence. Is not perhaps then the paradoxical pointer, consciously intending shock and offence, the only possibility? A human word, which, in witnessing to God's word, witnesses itself to its own inappropriateness, even contradictoriness? Were that all, then the Word of God would not have become flesh. So there is a twofold mediation to be considered: the general phenomenon of the freedom of human expression in spiritual utterance and the humanity of the historical revelation of salvation (26)

This leads Balthasar to identify three "fixed points of reference" for Christian theology freely expressed, if it is to be considered Christian theology at all. The middle point is "the teaching of the Church, which has the duty of proposing the binding ground rules of such hermeneutics and to which each orthodox theologian has to conform, for the Church as such possesses the Holy Spirit of interpretation and the theologian only in so far as he undertakes to express himself in the spirit and in the name of the Church." In this regard it certainly bears mentioning Ratzinger's

### [The Nature and Mission of Theology: Approaches to Understanding Its Role in the Light of the Present Controversy](#)

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# Fear [at The Veil of Chastity]

*But even when I am afraid, I keep on trusting you. | Psalm 56:3*

I believe the Holy Spirit has been leading me to write this post about **Fear** for a while. I was holding back because I don't want to admit how much Fear played a role in my life. But, when the Holy Spirit wants something, He lets us know and it makes it awful hard to avoid His gentle promptings.

I was at Mass on Friday and as I mentioned in my 7QTs, it was the feast day of **St. Ignatius of Antioch**. Our priest, Father Ray, based his whole homily on fighting Fear and how St. Ignatius of Antioch is our model in doing so. As you may know, he was martyred for his Catholic Faith in the year 107AD. He was empowered with such courage because of the grace he received from Jesus in the **Eucharist**. He, like all Christians of his day, knew the Eucharist is the body and blood of Jesus. He died, rather than renounce this truth. Now, that is a man with Fortitude!

## Fortitude

Back in the late 90's, I belonged to an on-line group of girls called the WUMTHS (Waiting Until Marriage To Have Sex). My code name in the group was *Fortitude*. Not because I had so much fortitude but because I wanted to have it.

You see, I knew that Fear was an issue for me. Sure, I was afraid of never getting married but for me, the fear I experienced had more to do with getting married.

Yes, I was afraid to get married.



## Paralyzed By Fear

I was emailing with a girl recently who is dating a nice catholic guy. He has a job, interesting hobbies, friends, nice family, is cute and practices his faith for real. So, what is the problem? The problem is that she is not sure if she feels a spark or not.

As I have stated before, romantic love cannot be explained. It is mysterious and beautiful and confounding. It cannot be manufactured. However, as I was writing with this girl, I felt the Holy Spirit's prompting in asking her about her **fears**. Could her fears be keeping her from getting serious with this guy?

I do think our fears can paralyze us. I felt that intense paralysis as a single girl. I wanted to be married

but I felt stuck because marriage requires so much intimacy and exposure. I am not just talking about the marital embrace. I am talking about everything!

This dear girl responded saying that yes, she does struggle with fear and that she struggles with perfectionism.

## **Perfection**

I understand the pressure to be perfect. I was one of those girls who struggled with it and just could not imagine being loved with all my faults. I believed that if I could just get rid of my faults, then I could get over my fears!

## **Humility**

You have faults too. Maybe you are not the best housekeeper. Maybe your legs are not silky-smooth. Maybe you have cellulite and hair all over your body. Maybe your double chin becomes pronounced in your sleep. Do you have strange eating habits? Maybe you are not always kind or positive. Do these faults make you fearful of 24/7 intimacy with a man? Do you believe you will be rejected once the faults are discovered (and they will be in marriage)?

Even with these faults, you can be loved by a man. In fact, these ‘faults’ may be exactly what endears him to you. These ‘faults’ give you that beautiful human dimension which will do two things. First, they will calm down the fears your husband has about himself. Second, they will give you the daily dose of humility needed in marriage.

## **But what should this girl do?**

To be continued.....[here](#)

Next week I will continue this post. In the meantime, will you ask yourself if your fears are keeping you paralyzed and keeping you from trusting God? If so, let’s discuss some potential causes. I will then share how the Lord healed me.

And of course you are welcome to email me at [theveilofchastity@gmail.com](mailto:theveilofchastity@gmail.com)

God love and bless you!

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## Saintly [at parishpriest]

Rev 7:2-14; Ps 24 Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

Today we commemorate All Saints Day. We look at those men and women who we believe are with God in heaven as a model for us as we continue to journey forth in faith.

We call them holy men and women or saints of God. Think about that word for a moment, "Saint".

In english we say saint or holy but in greek it is haggios, in hebrew it is kodesh, in latin, Sanctus.

We often apply the word holy to people, place, or even a thing that is generally considered sacred, such as the Holy Bible, or the Holy places in Jerusalem, or Saint Peter or Saint Paul.

In english when we sing the Gloria, there is a phrase that states "you alone are the holy one" or latin, "You alone are the saint."

Holiness is truly an attribute of God. It rightly belongs to God, he is holy. In hebrew the word kodesh is properly applied only to God. It refers to God's essence. Anything that was considered holy was due because of its relation to God himself, his presence. The holy place was holy because it was considered to be a reserve or preserve of God's presence.

No individual human is holy. Holy is holy because of its association with God by God's call or election. The Sabbath is holy because of God's special presence, as are the tabernacle and the temple. Israel is holy because God chose to dwell among them as his chosen people. Such is the same for the ARK of the covenant, the law, the priestly vestments. Men are just and perhaps even righteous but no man is called holy or a saint in hebrew scripture.

However in the prophet Daniel there seems to be a change of attitude. In Daniel's vision of the Son of Man who comes to rule and who share his rule with the people of earth who are called "saints." Daniel 7:18,27

These "saints" that Daniel speaks of are in a vision of things yet to come, a kingdom yet to come. Daniel sees the Messiah as human yet able to act with the power of God.

Which brings us to the gospels. When Jesus is conceived the angel note that the "child to be born will be called holy." This child possess a quality that belongs to God alone. Through Jesus flesh we now have access to the holiest of holies. In fact we are made holy by the blood of Jesus.

Jesus' holiness is communicable. Holiness breaks into the world when the Word becomes flesh and it breaks out in unexpected places. No longer is it reserved in the precincts of Jerusalem or exclusively to the people of Israel or confined to 24 hour period of the Sabbath, holiness erupted in ordinary lives of ordinary people everywhere. (The above is summary taken from Scott Hahn's book Angels and Saints: A biblical Guide to Friendship with God's Holy Ones)

This is what is different about following Christ. Holiness is now shared with us. We belong to the in

crowd. Think about today's gospel. Jesus sits down on the mount of Beatitude to deliver his first sermon. The crowds were gathered watching Jesus' every move. So Jesus seeing the crowds sits down. The next line is always telling, "his disciples came to him."

We have to be willing to step out of the crowd if we are going to be true witnesses of God's goodness and bearers of his holiness. This is what St Paul means when in the letter of Romans he addresses all the members of that community as "saints." The title saints seems to be a synonym for being called Christian.

In fact the cause of this holiness is the fact that we are in Christ. We have become partakers of divine nature as St Peter exhorts us (2 Peter 1:4). We share in God's nature because he has chosen to share in our human nature. Here is the source of holiness we celebrate on All Saints Day.

In Jesus Christ our humanity has become a bridge that unites us to the holiness of God transforming us and transforming the world around us.

In Christ we are children God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. God, what he has by nature has shared with us through grace.

It is through Baptism that this is accomplished as St Paul tells us in Galatians 3:24-29, "For all you who are baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

As we celebrate the saints of old, be reminded that we are called to be saint a new.

The Saints above invite us saints below to transform the world by the presence of God we take with us as we go.

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# Atheists: Compassion Not Condemnation [at joy of nine9]

It is easy to become self-righteous or defensive when I feel attacked by atheists. It is a natural, human reaction. However indignant rants which bludgeon the unbeliever with the 'truth' treats them as objects and not an intelligent people who are also loved by God. When I am secure in the Love of God, I can love and respect everyone because I do not feel threatened. Then it is possible to encourage real dialogue which actually listens to the crux of atheists' concerns and doubts. Such dialogue opens the door for the Holy Spirit to become the Divine Moderator of the discussion.

## 1 Corinthians 13:

<sup>4</sup> Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, <sup>5</sup> it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. <sup>6</sup> Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth.....<sup>9</sup>**For we know only imperfectly...** <sup>12</sup>**Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face.**

My words alone will not convince atheists. Catholics need theology and apologetics but these disciplines will not convert anyone because Christianity is not primarily a moral theology or a philosophy but a relationship of love. By focusing upon the reality of our Christian experiences as they truly are, Christ becomes a living Messiah not only to us but a visible light to others.



Many believers still cling to a false idea of a God with a white beard on a throne. This image is a finite human creation, not the real, infinite Creator of the universe. Of course intelligent atheists reject false, naive views of God. My own personal experience of the Holy, Immortal One, is often closer to the mystical apophatic tradition. The Christian contemplative leads a life of gritty prayer, not one of rigid perfection and certitude. Christianity is a life which involves inner struggle, growth and healing, as we journey deeper into the Mystical Body of Christ. Honest life in Christ is rooted in humility not pride because we are constantly aware of our own sinfulness and wounds.

The contemplative learns about deep trust and complete abandonment to One he knows to be beyond all understanding. The mystic does not have all the answers; he is not afraid to admit that he does not understand everything and he certainly does not berate or belittle those who are searching. The true mystic experiences God as unknowable, not an object nor a thing to be studied. God cannot be boxed in, defined because He is a mystery. Such experiential faith reveals itself in the ground of our being. This is where dialogue with atheists can begin because God dwells at the core of our selves, atheists and indeed of all life.

Ultimately it is God who reveals himself to the atheist. A brilliant young friend was an atheist, although when I asked what he had read on spirituality or Christianity he simply replied, “The library” .We were praying while David relaxed on the margins of the group when he suddenly started to laugh. Our eyes popped open in surprise. The quiet, subdued young man was beaming.

*“I’m hot all over, especially inside my chest, my heart really. It feels like a glowing, golden mist all around me, inside of me...but it was there all the time; I just couldn’t feel it or see it. All of a sudden I am plugged into a circuit board of power that has been here the entire time. God is real. He exists. I can’t believe it. Why did I not see something all around me, in my face? I feel this energy flowing between everyone in this room and connecting to me as well, like electrical currents,like invisible bands or cords. I want to jump up and down and start yelling on the top of my voice that God exists and He is right here.”*

God converts atheists while our condemnation and self-righteous preaching drives them away from the Church. What God really needs in every situation is just one open window, one landing strip, one antenna to perform His miracles.



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## **Our Lady of the Rosary, Adoration and My Friend Mike [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]**

Today we celebrate the memorial of our Lady of the Rosary, instituted by Pope Pius V. He attributed the naval victory over the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 to the Blessed Mother's intercession after the Christian world sought her aid through the Rosary. The Nashville Dominicans provide an interesting summary of this miraculous event and of Pius V. I encourage you to read their article [here](#).

As a Lay Dominican, I have come to treasure the rosary, contemplating the richness of its mysteries every day.

From the inception of the Adoration Chapel in our parish and without interruption for nearly five years until a few days before his death, this gentleman came every Saturday morning. Initially, he came for two hours each week – from 3 A.M. to 5 A.M. Eventually, another person lent a helping hand by coming in a half-hour early each Saturday morning. That hour and a half was not enough for Mike – he added another hour each week when he joined his wife in the Chapel each Monday evening.

He learned to pray the Rosary there. Oh, how he enjoyed praying the Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament!

Nothing kept him away – not snow, not ice, not radiation treatment, not chemotherapy, not even a terminal illness. Just weeks before his death, he came in at 3 AM in obvious discomfort. He was coughing and had some difficulty breathing. But how devoutly he tried to genuflect and bow his head before his beloved Lord. After awhile, he settled in his chair, pulled out his favorite little meditation booklet and began to pray the Rosary.

He knew that others were willing to cover his hour and half for him. But he did not want to “inconvenience anyone”. Despite the cancer that was raging through his weakened body, “there was no reason for him to give up his hour yet,” he said, “except that he was getting a little lazy.” His fellow Adorers reminded him of all the prayers being offered for him during this difficult time and of their desire to be helpful to him and to his family. He appreciated everyone’s prayers and concerns and simply told us that he did not want to get angry with God. He never did.

“It was okay for you to leave,” he said to the person he was relieving. “No need to stay. I’ll be fine.” Mike was at peace – one with his heavenly Father and Mother. We should have all thanked him then for teaching us how to live and how to die – with absolute trust and faith in a God Who always knew what was best for him.

My friend spent his last hour before the Blessed Sacrament with his wife five days before he passed away. He died at home surrounded by his loving family and on the feast day of Our Lady of the Rosary. How great is our God! This simple and humble man would have been the first one to admit that there was nothing of any value that he ever did on his own. Anything of value that he did (and he did much of eternal value) was only by and through the grace of God. How abundantly willing He is to provide that grace to

those who love Him!

God does not promise those who love him a life here free of trials and tribulations. Time before Him in the Blessed Sacrament is no guaranty of a struggle free life. But He does promise sufficient graces to carry our daily crosses **and** eternity with Him for those who love Him.

Mike loved to visit Him. You will too! Our Lord is waiting for you! Please do not disappoint Him - so many who claim to be His followers have and continue to do so.

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# Savor Your Season: Living Abundantly [at Cherishing Everyday Beauty]





*"The sun shines equally both on the cedar and on every tiny flower."*

~ St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Perhaps every other time I see one of my sisters, she asks about any new developments in my love life. And every time, the answer is the same: "No new man in my life these days." "Well," she says, "Have you socialized with any men lately?" I grin and, though I know she's right -- how am I supposed to meet a man if I never talk to them? -- her questions do invite me to ponder this season of life.

Truth be told, I'm not in any real hurry to get married. Do I want marriage? Of course I do. Do I notice men? Duh... I'm alive, ya know. But I'm not about to leave my house and embark on some kind of a "man hunt".

A few years ago, my spiritual director reminded me that **it's not my job to pursue a man**. It's *his* job to pursue **me**. Therefore, I might as content myself with living abundantly and focusing on becoming the best, holiest, and most virtuous woman of God I can be *now* because *that* should be what ultimately attracts him to me anyway.

I'll enjoy life and even make myself "available", especially if a particular man catches my interest, but I'm not going to lose any sleep wondering where in the world he is.

Jesus wants me to be happy and, oh! how easy it is to be when He's painting the world around me with such magnificence!



**Live abundantly in every season of your life.**

This was especially hard for me while I was a student; try as I might, I

*did not like*

being a college student -- and I lived at home for most of my college career! Thus far, though becoming more involved in my own slower way, I'm loving this new season of young adulthood. I'm making new friends (mostly girl friends, if you were curious) through attending these events and certainly enjoying their company in real life. \*smiles\*

Some recent favorites of the adventures I've been on in the last month: hiking, wine tastings, horseback riding, and eating dark chocolate in the country while taking in the amazing sights of the mountains that seem to encircle us.

**This life is beautiful.**

Though it is beyond me why God calls some people home long before He calls others, I'm going to cherish these moments that I have now, delight in the beauty around me, and

*praise the Lord*

for His goodness and love.



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# The Poison of Pornography and the Effects it has had on my Life [at beautiful thorns]

The use of pornography among men and even women is staggering! What is even more shocking is the use of pornography among Christian men! You can read more about that

[here](#)

I have personally been affected by pornography because of the loved ones in my life. I was first introduced to it when I was a little girl. A close family member would look at pornographic magazines right in front of me. Unfortunately this family member was also a workaholic and paid little attention to me. Naturally what I subconsciously concluded from that as a little girl is that men were superior to women and the only thing women had to offer of value was their bodies. This was reinforced to me when at the age of 6, I was also molested by an older boy. This sent me down a road of sexual curiosity and I would often sneak the pornographic magazines that were in my home along with my friends and cousins. It is hard to put into words how damaging this was.



At the age of 19 I discovered God's love and I gave him my life. Through his grace, I underwent several years of inner healing of these past memories. When I was 23, I got married to a man who was 21. We were so very young and also immature. Those first years of marriage were very tough and stressful. My husband would shut me out and I felt all alone. This was compounded by the fact that I got pregnant on our honeymoon and it was a very difficult and complicated pregnancy. I later found out from him that the reason he shut me out was because he had a problem with porn. Especially when he was stressed, he would turn to pornography. He also had a fear of intimacy which would cause him to turn to porn instead of me. You can read more of his story

[here](#)

My husband has worked hard to overcome his addiction. He has taken advantage of the Sacrament of confession and has allowed God's love and grace to transform him. He is a different person than the one I married. He is better able to love me and be emotionally available to me. It has taken me a while however to be able to receive his love and let him love me. All those years took a toll. I have had to work

through a lot of anger but haven't had anyone to talk to about it because I didn't want to make him look bad. I also put up walls to guard my heart and got used to it being just me and Jesus. What I am now realizing is it didn't need to be up to me to guard my own heart. Jesus would have been more than capable of guarding my heart for me if I would have fully entrusted it to him. As he is calling me to a higher level of surrender and I am letting go, those walls are coming down. I am finding healing and a greater level of freedom. Jesus truly is able to redeem anything especially when darkness is brought into the light. I am very proud of my husband for sharing his struggles. I trust that God will restore the years the locusts have eaten and I look forward to what the future holds with my love!

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# The Brightness of the Son



I often drive east in the morning these days and we have reached that time of year when the sun is at just the right angle so as to be dangerously blinding. Knowing that all the other cars around me are experiencing the same view makes me nervous because we are all blinded as we speed down the road.

As I was driving this morning, the similarity struck me how the bright sun in my eyes can be like the Son in our lives. Some days, the sun is bright and shining, casting a bright light without a cloud in the sky. In the same way, we have days when the love of God is easy to see. We can feel His love and grace in our hearts. We can see His love shining through others around us. On other days, the sun is obscured by clouds all day and things seem gloomy – even our mood can be affected. We see the same in our lives when our day goes wrong, our life derails, or the clouds of sin and suffering obscure Christ’s love in our lives. But just like the sun behind the clouds, God is always watching over us, ready to shine his love down on us, even when we cannot see him.

And sometimes when we are driving down the road unable to see exactly where we are going because of the brightness and glare of the sun in our eyes. In a similar fashion, when our lives feel out of control or down an unexpected path and we can’t quite see where we are going, we become anxious and afraid. But if we look closer, we can realize that it is actually the light of the Son that is so bright and working so strongly in our lives that we can’t see or understand the direction of our lives until we get there.

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This contribution is available at <http://busycatholicmoms.com/sample-page/the-brightness-of-the-son/>  
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# Why is embracing diligence so important?



How can we win the good race without embracing diligence? Diligence is the driver for succeeding in acquiring all other virtues through practice, so that the desired virtues in question can become habits. Through the perseverance of faith Saint Paul tells us: *“I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for His appearance”* (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Saint Paul, by embracing diligence, kept the end goal always in mind – that being entry into Heaven. His words are guiding us to do the same. We can’t be slothful (lazy) about completing our tasks, and we can’t allow ourselves to get overwhelmed due to lack of organization. By embracing diligence, we are able to persevere in faith. We are able to run and complete a good race.

If you want to get to Heaven, then embracing diligence in all that you do for the glory of God is an important tool. It’s that simple. Without the diligence to pray, to seek the good in all that you do; without persevering in your faith, especially during the dark times, without acquiring virtue, we stand very little chance of making the claim that Saint Paul makes in 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Therefore, I am embracing diligence. I want to run a good race.

What does embracing diligence mean to you in your everyday lives? What could you be doing better? What should you persevere at that you are currently not attending to? How could you be running a better race? Give that some thought, then consider what changes need to be made in your life.

How does one practice diligence? We’ll discuss the answer to that question in our next reflection on the virtue of diligence. Don’t miss it!

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This contribution is available at <http://virginialiето.com/embracing-diligence/>  
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# Slow Down, It's a Priest! [at Adam Introvert]

Priests and police officers have a lot in common, and it isn't just the spiffy uniform.

Think about this: You're cruising down I-35 or MoPac, when traffic isn't bumper to bumper if that's possible, and in your mirror you notice a police car behind you. The officer isn't after you — no lights and siren — but what do you do? Slow down and drive carefully, of course.



Image Credit: Scott Davidson

Even if you're already a law-abiding citizen behind the wheel, chances are you are still going to be a little on edge and be on your best behavior when you are in view of an authority figure who can pull you over and slap you with a citation.

And then what happens when the police car passes you and disappears into the traffic ahead? You relax a little bit, go back to normal, hit the gas pedal and pick up the pace again.

Now let's change the scenario from cop to clergy. After a long and hectic day at work, you decide to join your coworkers at happy hour to unwind. Your favorite Austin restaurant is crowded, and the tables are close together. Maybe you and your friends are complaining about the job or even the boss. The people at the next table leave, and a priest sits down. I think many people would be little more careful with their actions and words knowing that they're sitting right near a priest.



Image Credit: openclipart.org

I love asking priests this question: When you are out and about in the community, is it noticeable how differently you are treated when in priestly garb compared to regular clothes? The answer is almost always a resounding yes. One priest even joked that he always wears his collar to the barber because he gets a free haircut that way. If he were just another customer, he'd be paying full price.

When a priest is in regular clothes and running a quick errand, to those around him he's just a stranger. But when he's dressed as a priest, many people shape up and act differently.

I asked a similar question to a law enforcement officer: When you are in a police car on the highway, how obvious is it that everyone around you slows down? He said it happens all the time and even causes traffic tie ups because some drivers slow down abruptly or drive below the speed limit when they see a cop.

The different treatment that authority figures receive when in uniform makes me sad. I always try to be on my best behavior in front of a priest. But shouldn't I be on my best behavior in front of everyone? Just the same, I try to drive extra carefully and safely in front of a police officer. But shouldn't I drive safely and carefully in front of everyone?

Maybe we should assume everyone we encounter is a priest. Or better yet, we know that priests act *in persona Christi*. So we would all be better human beings, Christians, Catholics, and yes, drivers, if we remember to see the face of Jesus in everyone.

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# Weddington Way is the Fantasy Football of Weddings [at Super Swell Times]

Last week, a lady named Alex from [Weddington Way](#) asked me to engage in a fun little blog challenge. Here's what she asked me to do:

The challenge is this: If you were the Maid of Honor and the bride asked you to help her style the look for her big day, what would you suggest? You can include color and accent color recommendations, hair ideas, makeup looks, jewelry, clutch/purses, shoes, etc!

At first, I thought it was hysterical because I don't really think of myself as a fashion-y type lady. In fact — and you could poll *any* of my bridesmaids about this — I left most of the critical “style” decisions for my wedding to my mother and my own bridesmaids. To me, the most important thing about my wedding (*other than, you know, the actual marriage*) was that everyone was comfortable and felt happy.

So you know, I didn't quite understand why I would be asked to do this.

Then I thought about it a little bit more and it **does** sort of make sense. I didn't have a lot of critical opinions about my bridesmaids' styling for *my* wedding, so it seems perfectly logical that a future bride would also hand off the decision-making to her matron of honor.

Since I'm that imaginary matron of honor, it looks like I've got some imaginary decisions to make.

## [First, the dress.](#)



### ALFRED SUNG D503

Bridesmaid Dress

FABRIC: Peau De Soie

\$220

★★★★☆ 3 reviews

SEE MIX AND MATCH STYLES

DRESS COLOR: Paradise



#### CUSTOMER PHOTOS



#### PRODUCT INFO

Style D503 is a sleek, full length, bridesmaid

I chose a [dress](#) that seemed appropriate for a fall or winter wedding. The color seemed fun but also flattering for a variety of skin tones. I also really like the neckline and pleating. (*I'm a little biased*)

though, I absolutely **loathe** strapless dresses.)

## The Accessories and Accent Colors

I very strongly believe that the **only** responsibility one has as a bridesmaid is to show up clean, sober and wearing the correct dress, so I'm less-than-comfortable demanding that the bridesmaids accessorize with anything other than a smile.

**However**, if I were hard-pressed to offer my opinion, here's what I would suggest for flowers:



White flowers with green accents for the bridesmaids. Since it's fall or winter in this fantasy wedding of my imagination, the white would help keep things seasonally appropriate.

For a jacket/cover up:



Most people would go with a shawl or fancy scarf, but since it's an imaginary winter wedding, I think a formal black swing coat would look really slick. Plus, it would contrast well with the flowers and dress for photos.

For shoes:



I chose these because I like heels like this. And if I'm the matron of honor, I'm not going to suggest a pair of shoes that people can't wear again.

## The Important Stuff

Now that we've covered all the fun fashion-y stuff, let's get down to brass tacks. If I were the matron of honor for a friend, I'd have a lot of advice about things that *weren't* shoes and centerpieces. Here we go:

- It's *not* about the wedding. It's really, really, really **not**. It's fun to plan a ceremony and a fun party, but you should *really* be using your engagement to prepare for your marriage.
- Take advantage of whatever pre-marriage prep is available at your church/parish/synagogue/house of worship/sundial emporium. It might seem hokey (it is, a little), but it's **definitely** worth it.
- As a general rule, weddings will bring out weirdness that you didn't even know existed from your friends and family. People will call you with strange pronouncements about whether or not their significant other thinks coming to the ceremony is a good idea. You will discover that family members are **passionate** about the presence of a head table. The guest list will cause strife and anxiety. Let it all roll off your back — *like a duck or something* — because it doesn't matter in the long run.
- Every wedding vendor you meet will gush about how it's "*your special day.*" Don't let it go to your head.
- You don't need a unity candle.
- You don't need a sand ceremony.
- You don't need a peanut butter and jelly sandwich ceremony.

- You don't need a unity candle.
- You don't need a unity candle.

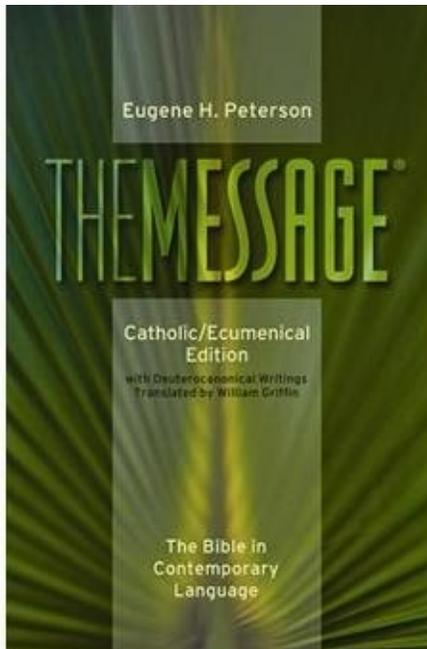
*What advice to you have for future brides? Also, what do you think of my sick fashion skills?*

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This contribution is available at <http://superswelltimes.wordpress.com/2014/10/16/weddington-way-is-the-fantasy-football-of-weddings/>  
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## Sunday's Message [at Catholic Bibles]



*I am continuing a new weekly series which will be posted every Sunday morning called "Sunday's Message." Here, I will reproduce the readings for Mass from [The Message: Catholic/Ecumenical Edition](#). I want to thank Greg Pierce at ACTA for giving me permission to do this weekly post. While this is not an "official" Catholic edition, one of my hopes for doing this new series is to have a lively discussion on the renderings, compared to the more formal ones we are use to reading and hearing at Mass. Is there a place for a translation like this? Could this be a good Bible to give to a Catholic "seeker" or young adult?*

### **Isaiah 5:1-7**

I'll sing a ballad to the one I love,

a love ballad about his vineyard:

The one I love had a vineyard,

a fine, well-placed vineyard.

He hoed the soil and pulled the weeds,

and planted the very best vines.

He built a lookout, built a winepress,

a vineyard to be proud of.

He looked for a vintage yield of grapes,

but for all his pains he got junk grapes.

“Now listen to what I’m telling you,

you who live in Jerusalem and Judah.

What do you think is going on

between me and my vineyard?

Can you think of anything I could have done

to my vineyard that I didn’t do?

When I expected good grapes,

why did I get bitter grapes?

“Well now, let me tell you

what I’ll do to my vineyard:

I’ll tear down its fence

and let it go to ruin.

I’ll knock down the gate

and let it be trampled.

I’ll turn it into a patch of weeds, untended, uncared for—

thistles and thorns will take over.

I’ll give orders to the clouds:

‘Don’t rain on that vineyard, ever!’”

Do you get it? The vineyard of God-of-the-Angel-Armies

is the country of Israel.

All the men and women of Judah

are the garden he was so proud of.

He looked for a crop of justice

and saw them murdering each other.

He looked for a harvest of righteousness

and heard only the moans of victims.

## **Psalm 80**

You prepared the good earth,

you planted her roots deep;

the vineyard filled the land.

So why do you no longer protect your vine?

Trespassers pick its grapes at will;

Wild pigs crash through and crush it,

and the mice nibble away at what's left.

God-of-the-Angel-Armies, turn our way!

Take a good look at what's happened

and attend to this vine.

Care for what you once tenderly planted—

the vine you raised from a shoot.

And those who dared to set it on fire—

give them a look that will kill!

God, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, come back!

Smile your blessing smile:

*That will be our salvation.*

## **Philippians 4:6-9**

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.

## **Matthew 21:33-43**

“Here's another story. Listen closely. There was once a man, a wealthy farmer, who planted a vineyard. He fenced it, dug a winepress, put up a watchtower, then turned it over to the farmhands and went off on a trip. When it was time to harvest the grapes, he sent his servants back to collect his profits.

“The farmhands grabbed the first servant and beat him up. The next one they murdered. They threw stones at the third but he got away. The owner tried again, sending more servants. They got the same treatment. The owner was at the end of his rope. He decided to send his son. ‘Surely,’ he thought, ‘they will respect my son.’

“But when the farmhands saw the son arrive, they rubbed their hands in greed. ‘This is the heir! Let's kill him and have it all for ourselves.’ They grabbed him, threw him out, and killed him.

“Now, when the owner of the vineyard arrives home from his trip, what do you think he will do to the farmhands?”

“He'll kill them—a rotten bunch, and good riddance,” they answered. “Then he'll assign the vineyard to farmhands who will hand over the profits when it's time.”

Jesus said, “Right—and you can read it for yourselves in your Bibles:

The stone the masons threw out

is now the cornerstone.

This is God's work;

we rub our eyes, we can hardly believe it!

“This is the way it is with you. God's kingdom will be taken back from you and handed over to a people who will live out a kingdom life.”

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## Called to Evangelize

*“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.” –1 Peter 3:15-16*



As Christians, as Catholics, we are called to witness. We are called to share our faith with the people around us. The joy of forgiveness, redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ should be an easy task. After all, we are thankful for our faith and our own forgiveness, redemption and salvation.

So why is evangelization so hard for most Christians? Why are we so afraid to share our beautiful faith with others?

I'm not talking about door to door evangelism, or standing on a street corner with a John 3:16 sign. I'm simply talking about seizing the opportunity to speak to someone about Jesus when the opportunity arises.

Ask people how they came to know Christ and most will tell you it was a one-on-one experience. That someone, not a TV evangelist or a great sermon, or a book, but someone shared their faith.

Often, it's a friend or co-worker, teammate, or acquaintance. Sometimes it begins with a simply inquiry as to why you seem so happy, joyful, so different? It's a perfect time to gently evangelize, but all too often we freeze. We simply remain silent out of fear and miss the opportunity.

*“Sometimes I ask myself, “Do I have the courage to do the right thing when it matters most?” And that answer, I'm afraid, is silence.” — Jarod Kintz*

We are fearful that we don't know what to say, or that what we have to say won't be accepted. It might be taken incorrectly, it might be rejected or it might not be politically correct. And so, we remain silent.

As Christians in a secular society, we are always fearful to speak out. We no longer say “Merry Christmas.” It's been replaced with “Happy Holidays.” When someone sneezes, we no longer say “God bless you,” after all, they might be an atheist and we wouldn't want to offend or be politically incorrect. We fear rejection, but even Jesus was rejected.

In Matthew 19, a young man approached Jesus as asks what he must do to gain eternal life. When Jesus told him to sell what he had, give it to the poor, and follow him, the young man left saddened because he

had many possessions.

If even Jesus was rejected, then why should we be so fearful to share our faith? Earlier in Matthew 5, we learn that our reward will be great in heaven for the rejection we receive on earth.

*For, I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes*  
*. --Romans 1:16*

Yes, but I don't know what to say? In Luke 12:12, we are given the comfort of knowing that "*the holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say.*"

And, it's true! You might not even remember what you said to someone (I rarely do), but through the Holy Spirit you will always have the right words. And, that is a real comfort.

There is a story of a man waiting to enter the gates of heaven when he sees a friend being condemned to hell. As their eyes meet the friend says quietly, "Why didn't you tell me?"

The most effective preachers of the gospel are often ordinary lay people whose lives have been transformed by God's grace. Let's not let fear keep us from opportunities to share the reason for our faith!

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# Mystical Contemplation is for All



Sometime ago I wrote a blog on what I called ‘mystical premonitions’ or ‘touches of God’, nevertheless I would like to write something further to make myself a little clearer. In that blog I used St Augustine to make my point, this time however I would like to make my point by describing common experiences that we have all had particularly in our youth. Here are a few examples to show you what I mean. You may be at a party, having a good time with your friends. There’s plenty of fun and games, plenty of food and drink. There’s music and dancing and everything is in full swing when suddenly it happens – ‘*A touch of God.*’ It’s not a physical, but a spiritual touch, that amidst all the merriment makes you suddenly feel alone. It makes you feel that you don’t belong, makes you want something further, something higher, something nobler, though you’d be hard put to give a name to what you really do want if someone pressed you. But if you were pressed you’d probably say, ‘*God*’.

On the other hand, you might be sitting by the sea, listening to the waves lap against the shingle on the shore; the sun bloods the sea red as it settles down to rest behind the distant hills. There’s a gentle caressing breeze, the sound of the curlew piping over the marshes – then it happens again! A ‘*touch*’. When this happens you can close your eyes. You have no need to gaze at the scene any longer to savour the One who has reached out and touched you through what you have seen. Then you find yourself enveloped by deep melancholic sadness that is worth all the joys of the world ten times over.

When I was in Paris I was taken to see the opera *Aida*. It simply bowled me over. The music wasn’t entirely new to me, but the overall effect of the production was beyond all my expectations. When the curtains fell at the end of the *Grand March* I was literally entranced. I didn’t want to go to the bar with the others for a discussion on the merits or de-merits of the current production. I just wanted to be transported back into the solitude of my own room to savour what I had received. Somehow, through the medium of the composer’s music, I had been able to experience something of the beauty, something of the glory and majesty of God, and I didn’t want the experience to be dissipated by a lot of cultural claptrap. A moving film, a beautiful piece of music or an artistic masterpiece can have the same sort of effect. Intense study can lead to a similar experience.

The question is why should God suddenly decide to reach out and touch us in this way? Remember, St John said that '*God is love*'. I think it would be more accurate to say that God is '*loving*,' and he is *loving* all the time. The reason why we don't experience his loving all the time is because we are so lost in ourselves. Then, all of a sudden, by the combination of some powerful external stimulus and an inner receptivity of mind and heart, we are able to experience for a short time the love of God that is there all the time.

I call these experiences '*mystical premonitions*' because that's really what they are. They are an experience in advance, of the mystical awareness of God that eventually becomes far more commonplace, for the true contemplative who has been sensitized to God's presence through a long spiritual purification. These touches actuate a sort of holy restlessness that enables a person to know by experience, what St Augustine meant when he said, '*Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*' Now they want to search for the One who has touched them, to experience in ever fuller measure the love without measure that has briefly reached out to them. Sometimes these experience are mistakenly interpreted as a call to religious life. But that is not true, it's not a special call to the religious life, but to the fullness of life and that's for all.

Long before my father met my mother he knew all about the experiences that we've been talking about. The geography master at school had interested him in astronomy and he used to stay up to all hours on the school roof gazing at the stars. To start with, his knowledge was purely academic; to end with, it was purely mystical. He didn't bother with the telescope when the grandeur and majesty of the heavens spoke to him and touched him with the sort of knowledge that you don't find in books. The same thing happened with mountaineering. He started to climb the highest peaks he could find, because, as Mallory said, *they were there*, but he ended up climbing them because he experienced that Someone else was there. His mother told him he'd fallen in love with love when she saw him daydreaming, and she was right, he had. But he didn't see his experiences as a call to religious life, and it never crossed his mind for a moment that he should be a priest or a religious. But he did want to know more fully and experience more deeply, the One whose presence had touched him in those mysterious moments that made him mourn for his Maker. That Presence reached out to him in a new and unexpected way the day he met my mother. She was to be for him an even greater and more perfect embodiment of the One he was searching for.

You see, it is not man, but mankind that is created in the image and likeness of God, man and woman together, who in their mutual loving manifest the most perfect embodiment of God's loving. The masculine and the feminine that are perfectly balanced as one in God, are manifested as two on earth, so that man and woman, in entering into the other through love, experience God in a unique embodiment. When my father met my mother, he came to experience through her, something of the beauty, the goodness and the truth of God, clothed in a feminine form that excited his heart, his mind and his body and led him on into an experience in which God's Presence made itself felt more fully than ever before. It was an experience that became more and more perfect as, with the passing years, the selfishness that still kept them apart, was gradually purified through the suffering and self-sacrifice involved in bringing up a family together.

For the success of this journey in the sacrament of love another parallel journey is called for at the same

time. It is an ever deepening journey into the fullness of love that we come to experience through prayer. This journey is made in with and through Jesus, who while leading us on towards the fullness of love in heaven, gives us the help and strength we need to encounter that love here on earth in the sacraments of love. Remember the words of Jesus at the Last Supper – ‘*Without me you have no power to do anything.*’ So please do be clear about this – everyone is called to the mystical life, because the mystical life is the expression used by Christian tradition to describe the experience of being plunged ever more fully into the love of God. This is for all, whether they are married, unmarried or celibate. The journey begins here on earth and is brought to completion in heaven, where there are no longer any need for the sacraments.

In this life they were essential to enable us to glimpse the uncreated love of God through his creation, but in the next life these signs, these symbols, these shadows disappear. They disappear as the full splendor of God’s love blazes out from all eternity and to all eternity to draw all he created on earth into his uncreated love in heaven. When at last it dawns on us that it was for this glorious destiny that we were created, then it is time to act. It is time to use every moment of every day striving towards the destiny for which we have been created in with and through Jesus, in whom the journey begins here on earth, and in whom it is completed hereafter in heaven.

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In case it wasn't clear, I'm really bad at praying the Rosary.

*Really, really bad.*

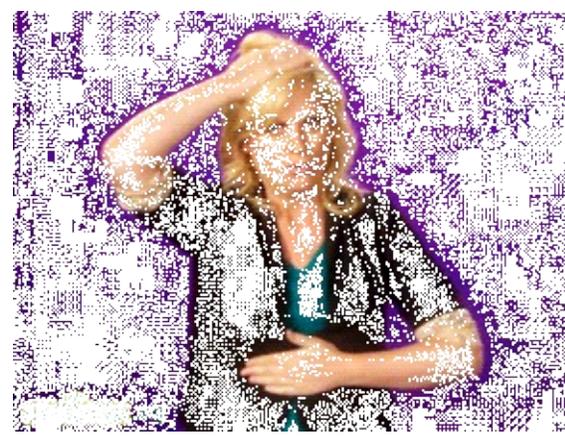
Catholics are sometimes like “you should pray the Rosary every day!” And I'm like, “yeah! And then I'll take my flying pig for a walk!”

If you find the Rosary easy to pray, praise God for that! For me, however, it's been hard to learn the words (I have think carefully about what they are) and hard to remember the mysteries. ([Words? Mysteries? Confused? You need to go here.](#))

Most of all, it's hard to pray words and meditate on them at the same time. [As Michelle Arnold at Catholic Answers pointed out,](#)

Learning the prayers and how to move around the string of beads is simple enough; it is the meditation on the mysteries that can be difficult. Sometimes it can seem as challenging as the old brain exercise of patting your head and rubbing your belly at the same time.

Um, *exactly.*



So this is my advice for my fellow Amy Poehlers of Really Bad Rosariers. (It's a word. Look it up.)

## 1. Chill

The Rosary is a beautiful, profound, meditative prayer but it is *not* the be all and end of all of Catholic prayer. It's okay to pray it badly, it's okay to pray it rarely, it's okay to never pray it at all. By that, I mean that our salvation does not rest on the Rosary. It is always and only by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus. This is Christianity and it is the constant teaching of the Catholic Church.

Sometimes Catholics (and possibly popes too) get a little carried away in All the Rosary-ness. The Rosary is a gift, a beautiful gift, but one gift among many. It holds a special place in our Catholic prayer life and so it should.

Still, it's not the gospel, it's not salvation, and if you're like me and just really struggle with this particular way of praying, that's okay!

Really!

## 2. Be Open

If some Catholics are in danger of over-emphasising the Rosary, it's because it has borne miraculous fruit in their lives. Our popes, bishops, teachers and all sorts have consistently urged Catholics to pray the Rosary. This is not a quirk of history. It's because approaching, learning from and following Jesus through His mother can transform us.

No human being knew Jesus as well as His did and no Christian accepted Him as fully, freely or as faithfully as the Virgin Mother of God. We do not live the Christian life alone and there is no better person to walk alongside us, taking us by the hand, to lead us to Our Lord Jesus than Our Lady.

So be open to the Rosary!

Take the time too to ask yourself why you struggle with it? Is it a practical issue or a doctrinal one? Does it make you feel uncomfortable to be praying *that* many Hail Marys or is it that your mind wanders like crazy? Do you find it boring or do you think you're doing fine being a Christian without it, so why bother? This post isn't going to answer those questions but it's good to know what's really going on inside.

### 3. Take it a Day at a Time

I tend to be an all-or-nothing kind of person. Over the past few years, I've had a number of times we've I've decided, okay! This is it! I'm going to pray the Rosary! Every day! All the mysteries! All the time! You can imagine how long that lasted...



The Rosary is the prayer of Our Lady who is our Mother. Like all mothers, she is delighted with the tiniest, babyest of steps. So take it slowly, a decade and a day at a time.

At the moment, I'm trying to just do one decade a day. This is actually a lot more manageable. One decade prayed well is better than five prayed badly — but then of course, I also have to remember that one decade prayed badly is better than none at all.

### 4. Make it Your Own

This one decade deal still leaves me in a quandary over the mysteries though. The current custom is to pray the Joyful Mysteries on Mondays and Saturdays, the Luminous Mysteries on Thursdays, the Sorrowful Mysteries on Tuesdays and Fridays, and the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesdays and Sundays.

When you can only pray a decade a day though, this gets tricky.

So I pray the mysteries over weeks, each one after another, completely ignoring the days assigned. ('Cause I'm a rebel like that.)

You can also mix it up in other ways. For example, I don't pray most of the "extra" Rosary prayers. This is often how it goes down in Laura town.



1. On the Sign of the Cross, I just pray the Sign of the Cross. (Genius!)
2. On the first bead, I briefly mention the things I'm praying for.
3. On the three little beads, I pray the Jesus Prayer three times. (This is a new decision when I realised that if I prayed Hail Marys, I'd be praying 13 Hail Marys. I might be a rebel but I'm a superstitious rebel. And seriously, 13 Hail Marys just feels wrong!)
5. On the big bead, I pray the Our Father and begin to think on the mystery I'm up to. If I'm feeling super energetic or pious (okay, so there was this one time...) I'll also read a few pertinent verses of Scripture here. This is something I want to do more of but that requires planning.
6. On the ten little beads, I pray ten Hail Marys.
7. On the chain afterwards, I finish with a Glory Be.

Is it exactly what you're "supposed" to do? No. Is it doable for little, old me? Yes!



## 5. Focus on Life & the Virtues

One friend is awesome Rosarier and she says her secret is to focus on the virtues. Sometimes, the

mysteries can feel so distant and routine. Oh yes, Jesus carried a cross... that's sad.

By connecting the mysteries to the virtues, however, we see more clearly how we can follow Christ in our own lives. It's not just that Jesus is carrying a cross but how am *I* going to demonstrate and grow in patience today? What crosses is Christ calling me to carry with Him, patiently and calmly, with my eyes fixed on Him and the joy set before me?

Because that's ultimately what the Rosary is about. It's *not* about notching up a certain number of prayers.

It's about entering into the mysteries of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

We pray the Rosary *by* the grace of the same Spirit who overshadowed Mary. We pray the Rosary *through* her eyes, the Mother who was at the cradle and the Cross. And pray *so that*, treasuring all these things in our hearts like she did, we might do what she says:

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:5)

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us and on the whole world.*

*Our Mother, Queen of the Rosary, pray for us.*

*St Louis de Montfort, pray for us.*

How to Pray  
the Rosary  
when you're  
Really, Really  
Bad  
at Praying  
the Rosary

CATHOLIC CRAVINGS



Aaaand one last one for good measure. ;)



+JMJ+



# The Beauty of Purgatory [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]

## A doctrine of hope: purgatory and the holy souls

My late brother, a Catholic priest, was born on November 2, and my mother used to refer to him as her “poor soul,” as he was born on the feast of All Souls. I envy him that he was born on such an important feast. As a priest, he loved All Souls Day because...it is the one day in the Church year when priests can wear black! But that doesn’t mean it is a sad day.

I have come to share his love of this feast day of the Church, as it reminds us of one of the most beautiful teachings of our faith, the doctrine of purgatory.

Now, a lot of people don’t like to talk about purgatory, and I have encountered some Catholics who think the Church stopped teaching this doctrine, or that it is an antiquated belief held only by little old ladies. I, for one, am grateful that God in His mercy provides an opportunity to achieve the perfection that may be lacking in a holy soul at the time of death.

The analogy I like to use with people who have difficulty with the concept of purgatory is to ask them to name a famous person they greatly admire or would like to meet. Now imagine that you are working in the garden, filthy with dirt, grime, and perspiration, and the said person arrives at your doorstep wanting to have dinner with you. “I can’t meet them like this, I have to clean up,” you might say. Well, purgatory gives us the opportunity to ‘clean up’ so that we can meet Jesus in perfect splendor.

## What is purgatory?

All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. (CCC1030).

“...the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.” Hmmm. This reminds me of a quote from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine: “Heaven is not heaven except to the holy.” I had never thought about that before. An unholy soul would not be happy among the perfect, any more than a mischievous child on the playground would want to associate with the well-behaved kids.

## Praying for the holy souls

The Catechism goes on to talk about praying for the holy souls in purgatory:



“This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: “Therefore (Judas Maccabeus) made atonement for the dead that they might be delivered from their sin.” From the beginning, the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in suffrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of penance undertaken on behalf of the dead.” (CCC 1032)

The souls in purgatory are often referred to as ‘holy.’ They are holy because they have been deemed worthy of salvation. But despite true contrition and forgiveness in confession, atonement for the damage done by our sins is needed. The best example I can give, which you may have heard, is of the feather pillow. Imagine that your unkind word or sinful act is like a feather pillow that has been opened in the wind; while you may be truly sorry for what you have said or done, and have been forgiven, you can never know where your words were repeated, how your actions have affected countless others, and what damage you may have done, any more than you can retrieve all the feathers that were released when the pillow was opened. If we go into eternity with this woundedness, blessed are we who can be healed in purgatory! The prayers and good deeds of our loved ones when joined to the sacrifice of Jesus and offered on our behalf, are the “medicine” we need for this healing.

As the communion of saints that we are, the doctrine of purgatory gives us hope that we can assist one another on our path to salvation, not only during our earthly life, but by praying for those who have died and are enduring their final purification before sharing in that ‘beatific vision.’

Blessed James Alberione wrote the following prayer for the holy souls in purgatory, which also includes an intercession to help us in using the media for evangelization in our world. His

[prayer](#)

is as follows:

Jesus, Divine Master,  
I thank you for having come down from heaven  
to free us from so many evils  
by your teachings, holiness and death.  
I plead with you on behalf of the souls who are in Purgatory

on account of the press, films, radio and television.  
I am confident that these souls, once freed from their suffering  
and admitted into eternal glory,  
will intercede with you on behalf of the modern world,  
so that the many means you have granted us  
for elevating this earthly life  
may also be used as means of apostolate  
and life everlasting.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.  
May they rest in peace. Amen.

As I shared in the beginning of this post, my brother is no longer with us. He died suddenly 15 years ago, and I pray that he is sharing in that beatific vision. He so believed in praying and offering sacrifices for the holy souls in purgatory. The prayer cards distributed at his funeral offered this quote from St. Thomas More, which beautifully conveys the unity that we share with the holy souls in purgatory and the hope that it gives us:

“Pray for me, as I will for thee, that we may merrily meet in heaven.”

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# Beads of Grace: the Story of My Rosary [at Even the Wilderness]

This is inspired by

[Haley's post](#)

on what the physical object of the Rosary tells us. I was surprised and intrigued by her take on something I'd never thought of before- that the actual Rosary, as in the object, can tell us things through shapes, figures, and colours. And it got me thinking... what does my own Rosary tell me? As today is the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, I thought I'd jump on the Rosary-analyzing bandwagon.

My Rosary was custom-made for me by

[the ever-talented and wonderful Allison](#)

, and one would think that the colours, center, and Crucifix I chose would have some significance, and that there would be a spiritual reason for my choosing them. Nope. I picked red, pink, and white because they're pretty, and I picked the center and Crucifix for rather the same reason. Had I subconsciously designed it to represent something? What was my Rosary telling me when I had not had it made to tell me/remind me/represent something?

Well, I thought and prayed. And now I know. Without further ado, here is the message my Rosary sent me.



What immediately came to mind when I considered the red beads was the blood of the martyrs, that is the seed of the Faith (and waters the meadows of France). The honour and beauty of martyrdom only began to resonate with me when I was well on the way to Confirmation, and I think more and more about the martyrs as time goes by. How does one become like Saint Maximilian Kolbe? Like Blessed Jose Luis Sanchez del Rio? Saint Margaret Clitherow, crushed to death in public for harbouring a Catholic priest? Saint Edmund Campion? Or the 'white martyrs', who weren't murdered in bloody ('red martyrs') or cruel acts of violence, but who suffered internal martyrdom by surrendering themselves completely to Christ (obviously white martyrdom isn't the same as red martyrdom and these are red beads we're talking about, but just by topic association...)? Not-so-oddly enough, one common thread linking most Saints is that they

had lively devotion and love to the Blessed Mother, whose Rosary this is!

“[The] Blessed Mother... is the safest, easiest, shortest and most perfect way of approaching Jesus”  
– St Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*

As for the white beads, most people would, I think, associate them with the classic 'purity colour', but the representation of the colour white as meaning purity is more than a prosaic cliché or, as some people desperate for conflict might put it, some vague medieval racial slur. When I think of white as representing purity of heart, I think of Isaiah 1:18:

“Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” -English Standard Version

*Though your sins are scarlet, they shall be as white as snow*

. White as a symbol of purity should mean that for us: that, despite each past transgression, we have been washed by the Blood of Jesus, and are as clean as freshly-fallen snow. And, yes, such a symbol should be reminding us to get to Reconciliation more often...

As for the pink beads ("Nope, Grace, you're Catholic, the name of the colour is 'rose'."), they rather made me think of the virgin martyrs, probably because I keep seeing pictures of them wearing pink, or just very rosy and bright-eyed. While it does sound as though we've just covered this, purity and virginity are not the same thing. Virginity is merely a part of purity outside of earthly marriage. I see the pink beads, and I remember the noble sacrifice made by the virgin martyrs, and by our consecrated religious in the world today. It is a reminder to pray for them, and to pray that the message of chastity reaches more people through the example of the Saints, namely Mother Mary.

The center, called

*Italian Madonna and Child,*

is quite moving. Christ is just a tiny baby pressed to His Mother's shoulder. They might have been going to sleep, Mary singing a lullaby as the Saviour of the world dozed off in her arms. Mary herself looks young but mature, and a little tired, yet They both radiate. This reminds me that (a) Jesus came to earth helpless and small, a weak little Child, to share in the human experience because He loves us, and (b) that Mary is truly my spiritual Mother,

who cares for mankind with a love untainted by sin.

Finally, the Crucifix. It seems simple enough, but I find that, looking at it, I see the larger, slightly flourished outline of the Cross first. When I don't focus on the Body, I fail to see the point of the Crucifixion; yet, when I focus on the Body, I see the entire, sheer

*bigness*

of the Cross, and the magnitude of that Sacrifice is more impressed on me.

That is the story of my Rosary. How about yours?



Love and prayers,

Grace

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This contribution is available at <http://garlicgraffiti.blogspot.ca/2014/10/beads-of-grace-story-of-my-rosary.html>  
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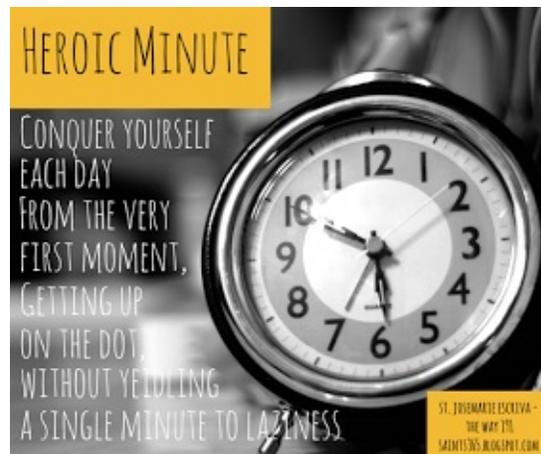
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## Lessons Learned from the Heroic Minute [at Saints 365]

I would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in the

### [14 Day "Heroic Minute" Challenge](#)

. Honestly, I really had no clue how things would go when the challenge began. I just knew that I personally needed to work on incorporating some self-discipline and order into my daily life. I have always loved St. Josemarie Escriva and his concept of the Heroic Minute and so the challenge was born.



**Here are 7 of the many lessons which I have learned from the challenge.**

-1-

**The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Mt 26:41)** It is no surprise to me that Jesus said this to the Apostles who had *fallen asleep* while he was in agony praying in the garden. Overcoming my fleshly desire for 10 more minutes of sleep every morning is no small feat. At some points during the past 14 days I thought that climbing Mount Everest might be easier than forgoing my snooze button for one more day.

-2-

**We need to be realistic in our goals.** It is no secret to my family and friends that I am an ambitious person. My first grade teacher remarked on my report card that I was a "keen competitor"! The object of my competition is, most often, myself. At the start of this challenge, my personal goals went far beyond the scope of St. Escriva's initial exhortation - I looked down the road and saw myself up at 5AM, praying for 30 minutes, exercising, doing laundry and more. Did any of those things happen? Not exactly. My goals were completely unrealistic. Through the challenge I have learned the wisdom of setting one goal at a time and to ensure that it is an attainable one - this does not mean that reaching the goal won't be challenging, only that it is realistic. Which brings me to number 3.....



Do everything with **Love**

Thus, there will be no little things: everything will be big.

Perseverance in little things

for love is **heroism.**



-3-

### **Heroism happens in the little things**

. My initial zeal was marked by a gross misunderstanding of heroism, virtue and holiness. Stories of great "heroic" saints like St. Joan of Arc and St. Perpetua have always inspired me, but somewhere along the way I lost the value of the concept that little things, done well, with

[the proper motives](#)

, can build virtue as effectively as the great acts of courage and self-sacrifice demonstrated by these heroic martyrs. St. Escriva's writings are filled with a focus on performing the smallest task at hand, with the greatest devotion and attention. I am slowly starting to realize that folding that pesky pile of clothes, or cooking dinner, or cleaning the bathroom, when it needs to be done, without complaint, does in fact constitute a "heroic" act.

-4-

### **Success in the morning begins the night before.**

I learned the hard way, early in the challenge, that being able to live out the Heroic Minute in the morning requires that I have lived out a series of Heroic Minutes

[the night before](#)

- including going to be at a reasonable time and ending my evening in prayer. In fact, the concept of a single Heroic Minute each day is really a misnomer. In order to live out any one single Heroic Minute, we need to be striving to live out every minute of the day in a heroic, Christ-centered way.

-5-

### **The Lord's mercy is renewed every morning (*Lam 3:21*).**

The bottom line for me is that this challenge, like many things in my spiritual life, was hard...

*.really hard*

. I think that I bounced out of bed on only one out of the 14 days, and on that particular day I was challenged to set aside

[my own "success" for the greater good of love](#)

. More than ever I am grateful for the mercy of the Lord, which he pours out upon us whenever we humble ourselves and ask for it. As a Catholic, I am especially grateful for the gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. There is nothing more freeing than admitting all your failures out loud to another person and having those failures and struggles be met with love, mercy and the beautiful words of absolution.

**We are in good company.**

From the

[Proverbs 31 Woman](#)

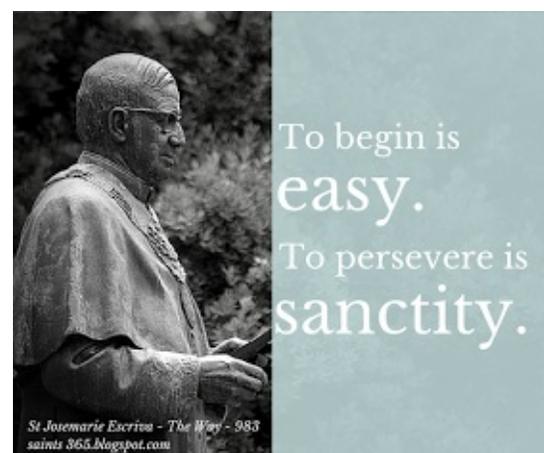
in the Old Testament, to one of the Church's most recently canonized saints,

[Pope John Paul II](#)

, to the

[Lord Himself](#)

- it seems that all those "in the know" live out the Heroic Minute by beginning their day well before dawn, in prayer. How's that for some positive peer pressure!



**Beginning the challenge was easy**

. There was an excitement and newness to the whole endeavor. Even when it was a struggle not to hit the snooze button, I still maintained the attitude that I could do anything for 14 days. I have never believed these words of St. Escrivá to be more accurate than I do today on the last day of this challenge. The true test of virtue is not in starting strong, but rather in staying consistent and persevering over the long run.

As we end this challenge, my prayer is that the Lord will provide all of us with the grace to persevere, through the struggles and difficulties, as we try to live out His will.

## On the Corruption in Parishes [at Yard Sale of the Mind]

Recently had an interesting discussion with a dad regarding his 3 year old daughter. She had been expelled from her preschool for biting. Now, having been father to 5 preschoolers, and having been involved in a number of preschools for a number of years, a couple things sprang to mind:

- This is probably not a single-incident thing. 3 year olds are working through a bunch of complicated social development (that's what preschool is for, or should be for) and will do any number of inappropriate things. Experienced staff have seen it all, everything from hitting and pushing and using potty talk and refusing to keep their clothes on. So, a one-time incident of a kid biting would demand a certain amount of attention, but not usually an expulsion, unless it were take-a-chunk-outta-ya level.

- Some kids bite. If they can't be convinced to stop, they can't be allowed around other kids. I don't want my kid getting bit, even if no real physical damage is done. It ruins play for everybody if the other kids have to watch out for little Suzy because she might hurt them. This is a 'Life isn't fair' moment – the lesson the biter must learn, despite being too young to really understand, is that she doesn't get to play with her friends if she bites them. No way around it.

- All kids are different, and we seem to have hit the lottery on well-behaved from a young age kids in our family, so maybe I'm wrong here, but: I'm more than a little worried about a kid who hurts other kids in this way and can't be convinced to stop. If the screaming and crying of the other kids doesn't discourage them, or they find the resulting adult intervention desirable, there's a problem. For acting out older kids, it's real clear there's a problem. Not totally sure about 3 year olds, but I suspect it.

- Of course, in the old days, she'd have gotten decked. Moms and dads, without much fear of repercussion, would have told their kid the victim to hit the biter in the face as hard as they could until she stopped. Probably work, and has the added advantage of not making an appeal to an outside authority. Nowadays, there's no hitting allowed. I don't know this is an improvement.

Anyway, the punchline: the child in question is a 'person of color'. The majority of the preschool staff are not. The staff voted to expel, according to her dad, along racial lines. How he knew this, I don't know.

This happened in the Bay Area, the most enlightened, progressive place on the planet, as anyone here will tell you. The chances that the staff at a preschool are biased \*against\* 'children of color' is pretty slim.

Unless: there's unaddressed microaggression within the preschool power dynamic! Then the issue isn't whether or not, in the judgement of the staff, it's safe to allow a 3 year old biter around the other little kids – no, now the issue has grown monstrous, the 'R' word, and the biter, rather than being a perp, is a victim. The kids who got bit – well, they don't really have a place in the narrative, unless – well, of course! – their getting bit is a result of the power dynamic as well. I'll leave it as an exercise for the reader to come up with how, exactly, that would work. My head's beginning to hurt.

He went there. Not in the colorful, yet direct, way I just did – but he went there, with a little implied 'check your privilege' for good measure.

Now, what has this got to do with parish life? I think sometimes we look to some sort of global mega-

issues to swallow up what are in fact local, and even personal, problems. This was brought to mind by our infatuation with the recent synod. Do we really need another synod to tell us we need to be more loving, kind and gentle with each other? The 30% or so of Catholics who show up every week more or less – do we not get this? Have we not at least occasionally awakened for the readings and the homily?

Let's take an extreme example from dear Dr. Boli. [Here's](#) how he describes Pope Leo X's position regarding to Luther's issues with the selling of indulgences:

The problem with Luther's plan was that the pope in question was Leo X, one of the Three Worldlies. Leo was not strongly motivated to reform the Catholic Church. It wasn't that he didn't care about the Christian religion; it was just that there were more important things that he cared about much more—things like, for example, Leo X. The corrupt and unreformed Catholic Church had been very good to him. He really had no complaints. As a lifestyle, being pope had considerable attractions. Why would he want to give up a life of luxury and set an example of monkish abstemiousness? What was in it for him? Had his father Lorenzo the Magnificent bought him a cardinal's hat so he could live in a Motel 6 and eat celery? Had he schemed and backstabbed his way through the College of Cardinals for a bowl of lentil porridge? Was he even now making the papal military the terror of Italy so that he and his extended family could live in becoming poverty? No! "Since God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it"—those were his words on ascending the throne of Peter. Or at least those were his reported words, though he may have said something more like "Party time!"

We should thank God with tears of gratitude in our eyes for the last 150 years or so of Popes. Saints! We've even had saints in the Chair of Peter! As Belloc put it, the Church is

An institute run with such knavish imbecility that if it were not the work of God it would not last a fortnight.

Amen. So, when we have bishops and a pope who can do \*anything\* right beyond not screwing up dogma, it is more than we deserve.



Parishes exist in a place and across time. They are incarnational yet full of human flaws.

Applied Catholic theology tends to be a bit fractal: images and duties repeat at intervals of scale. Thus,

we have the Holy Family as the model for our family lives, and call each other brothers and sisters in our parishes with God as our Father and the priest as His agent – acting in the person of God, most especially in the Mass. The Bishop serves that role at the diocesan level; the Pope at the level of the Universal Church. We all have the duties of children at some levels; few of us have any other role outside our own families. .

Now look at the lamentable Leo X. We would expect, people being people, that the Church corruption he personified to likewise be fractal – that we'd see the monumental selfishness, self-indulgence and dereliction of duty repeated in [bishops](#), priests and households. The ill effects will be seen in dioceses, parishes and homes.

It certainly doesn't help us live better lives when the shepherds are doing ill. Two things to keep in mind: nobody makes us fail – that priests, bishops and popes fail to live holy lives doesn't touch on our responsibilities to live holy lives; and there's always a crowd of people who like it however it is. Dr. Boli slyly mentions the expectations of the extended family – it's not like only Leo was corrupt, there was a regular army of people who benefited from the way things were.

Finally – and this takes a bit of effort to get my head around – a lot of bad things we see done up and down the Church's structure are done by nice people. They think they're helping. Leo X probably thought the Papacy having a big army was a good thing, required by the fallen world we live in; that making sure Medicis were in charge of things simple prudence – you wouldn't want those crass Borgias running things, would you? And what's the harm in giving indulgences to people who donate toward the new and grand St. Peter's? It's a good deed, indulgences are to be giving in response to good deeds, and we all get to use the nice church we get out of it. What's the big deal? Of course, lamentable things might have to be done...

And that's the ticket. I have come across a couple out of control egomaniacs in my dealings with my parishes – over half a century, it would be amazing if I hadn't. But far, far more common are people who think they are merely trying to hold things together and move them forward. The innumerable parishes that purged their libraries of anything pre-Vatican II because those old books just weren't applicable any more; the countless 'music' leaders who decided that we needed to sing more modern songs about us and less old hymns about all that fuddy-duddy stuff; all those religious ed instructors who felt it more important to get in touch with the god within than teach any doctrine; all those liturgists (like 'educators' a new species created ex nihilo to fill a new need) who just wanted to get people more actively participating; all the old ladies who got used to whatever is was Fr. X was doing – he was such a nice man! – that they make life hell for Fr. Y, who has to pick up the pieces – all these folks see themselves as doing good stuff.

That's not even counting the people in the pews – me, for example – who fail to do what needs doing, or do things that need to not be done. A smile and a nod in greeting is a good thing; a quick catch-up conversation after mass on the steps or over donuts and coffee is a good thing; remembering people's names is a good thing; talking to people who seem lost or new is a good thing. In other words, treating people like guests in your home – at the appropriate times and places, of course – is a good thing, and is the absolute minimum required of us sheep.

Making a spectacle of your disdain for goofy songs and practices – not good. Think of St. Thomas More, who struggled mightily to see if there were any way he could sign the King's oath – he wanted, if at all possible, to go along. You only take your stand and get your head chopped off (and deprive your wife of a

husband and children of a father) for actual martyr-worthy causes.

Singing *Be Not Afraid* and holding hands during the Our Father do not rise to that level.

Returning to what I thought was the point of this post when I came up with the title (funny how that works, isn't it?) the worst attitude of all is that the problems in your parish are not the result of us people in the pews failing to be charitable and loving, but rather due to some Cosmic Issue with the Church. We become, in our minds, not the perps but the victims. Our actions are not the real problem, no, it's what our priest told the parish council, or some goofball bishop said at some synod, or some evil Cardinal did at Vatican II, or some Pope failed to do once when somebody asked him a question.

All those bad things that happen in the church – and they can be very bad, I often imagine the millstone factory on triple shifts, just to keep ahead of demand – they just aren't our problems. At worst, they become crosses we must bear, such as when our parish priests seem hellbent on making the Mass as much a rap session/birthday party as they can.

Our problems are the ones we can actually do something about. As part of the church, we are victims of exactly one global conspiracy – the efforts of Satan to be our master and destroy us. But even there, we are willing victims, and we do not fight, but rather cooperate with our own enslavement when we think we're victims of the hierarchy's knavish imbecility rather than active participants in our own sins.

Something like 30 million Catholics split from the Church for Protestantism, and Leo X – may God have mercy on his soul! – carries some large part of the blame. Some similar number of Catholics in the US today have stopped going to mass, stopped listening at all to anything the church teaches that is contrary to what their buddies say at school or work, yet see no conflict with the church except insofar as a bunch of celibate old men keep saying stupid stuff about things they don't understand.

We don't fix this – New Evangelization, anyone? – by whining about how we are victims of bad decisions in the church. We don't fix it at all – God does. But we pray fervently, and love passionately, and suffer meekly – and don't blame anybody else when we fail.

St. Monica, St. Padre Pio & St. Philip Neri, pray for us!

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This contribution is available at <http://yardsaleofthemind.wordpress.com/2014/10/31/on-the-corruption-in-parishes/>  
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# A Look Through a Platonic Lens - The Beautiful Music Challenge [at The Beautiful Music Challenge]

When you are a church musician there is a very fine line between prayer and performance. Sometimes it's pretty hard to see that line when you're working. And even the term "working" is problematic.

What is it in the context of the Liturgy that makes music a prayer versus a performance? Is it the attitude or mindset of the person singing or playing? Is it the text of the song? Is it a little of both and how do you keep your balance?

This summer, while doing my reading for Philosophy class, I read Book X of Plato's Republic. I read the first five books Spring Semester, and in the course of those sections, Socrates (the main character of Plato's dialogue) lays out his plans for the perfect curriculum. In this curriculum, poetry and music figure heavily as a way to train the youth of the city to learn to distinguish between good and bad and as a way of gentling of the spirits of those destined to be guardians and rulers in the city. Though he makes some rules about what kind of poetry is appropriate.

However, in Book X, Socrates makes a more wholesale condemnation of poetry for the masses. The reason, he explains, is that poetry is merely a poor imitation of reality. So, if I sing you a love song, for example, I'll be singing all sorts of pretty images about the moon, beauty, the butterflies in your stomach...all kinds of metaphors and similes come into play. But, the reality of being in love is not reflected accurately in those lyrics - it's only one dimension of what it means to be in love. Not even when coupled with the music does it really get at the heart of the hard reality of love.

Socrates goes on to talk about how the reality of knowledge can be better achieved through the use of an item. He uses the analogy of a flute-maker and a musician. The musician knows more about the reality of music than the craftsman who made his flute. And the craftsman has even more knowledge of the reality of music than, say, a painter, who paints a picture of a flute. So the poet is like the painter in terms of his knowledge of the Truth.

As we know, being in love is a very different experience from singing a song about it. That's why when you're in love, all those love songs finally make sense. And why, if you base your relationship expectations on those song lyrics, you are bound to be disappointed.

So, Socrates' summation is that because poetry is an imitation it should be used very carefully, using only poetry that is historical and not imitative (in the onomatopoeic sense,) and most of it should be put aside as dangerous to the life of the city. But Socrates, as usual, leaves the discussion open for argument. That's good, because I had questions.

Hi. I'm Katie and I'm a singer.

I use poetry (set to music) every day and this line of reasoning poses a whole set of problems for me. First of all, where do I fit in terms of this line of degradation of the Truth? Am I where the craftsman is? Does my interpretation of a song lyric give those imitations of Truth more reality or does it remove me one step further?

Secondly, what does this mean in terms of music for the Liturgy? Are our words a mere imitation of the Truth? I can't accept that. So, of course, discussion ensued.

First question: Where do you think you fit?

Answer: I think it depends on the song that I am singing and my disposition while singing it.

One of the critiques that Plato gives is that poetry is designed to evoke feelings. On one hand, that's helpful in training children the difference between good and ugly, but in another sense, you can get lost in the feelings and never find your way to the truth of what's real because it dulls the intellect. In other words, using our love song as an example, you stop at the imitation and get all lost in wonder then forget about learning what it means to really love someone. There is a rational dimension to love, a decision that you must make from time to time, that just simply isn't sexy to sing about.

So, I think that when I am singing a secular song and placing myself into the "character" of the speaker, I am imitating the feeling. I can tell you, that if I mine the depths of my own experiences, the song has much more power in the performance. There is a kind of stereotype of the "suffering artist" that really does come into play. Folks, you can't sing the Blues effectively if you ain't been blue. And if you've never been in love - really, madly, passionately, deeply in love - your love song performances will fall flat, too. Experience and therefore knowledge does play a part in bringing a piece of music to life.

Okay, so, that brings me to the second question: What does this mean in terms of Liturgical music?

This is a tougher question to answer because there are two extra dimensions to Liturgical Music that don't exist in secular music: communion and prayer.

In the context of Liturgy, the members of the community, actively engage one another in communion at Mass through our common prayer. Part of that prayer is the music that we use.

Let's be sure we're all speaking about the same things when we use the words, community, communion and prayer. A community is a state of being in proximity to one another. Communion is the conscious action of coming together as one. And prayer is a conversation with God.

Okay, with all those definitions out of the way, let's dig into this.

I have talked about the difference between

[praying the song and singing along](#)

. And I have talked about the

[objective nature of music](#)

for the Mass and why the

[text is the most important part of what we communicate](#)

as liturgical musicians. But, this concept that poetry is only an imitation of the Truth is what gives those arguments real urgency. If what we are singing is merely an imitation, does it foster knowledge through an

authentic connection with God or is it simply making us feel good?

Here's what I think, and I could be wrong:

If we, as a body, are chasing a conversation with God (thus, an authentic connection with the source of Truth) then, if we are properly disposed to prayer through the music, liturgical music is, necessarily,

**not**

an imitation. It is an authentic dialogue which fosters Knowledge because we are in direct connection with Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Love - well all good things.

So, music does not serve the same function in liturgy as it does in secular settings. It is not about exciting your feelings. If it merely makes us feel good or uplifted, or sad and depressed, then we've fed ourselves, but haven't stepped any closer to real knowledge. Liturgical music is designed to help you

**know**

God, so that you can

**love**

God and

**serve**

Him effectively.

That being said, music and poetry does, by its very nature reach places that the intellect does not. As whole human beings with a body, mind and spirit, should we be anxious to leave our emotions and bodies out of the liturgical music experience? I don't think that's quite right either.

St. Teresa of Avila once wrote:

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

Instead of trying to transcend the reality of human existence, we are called to embrace it fully as a communion of souls - as the body of Christ. It is a unity of purpose, not the disparity of taste that we must bring to Mass to facilitate that union.

I understand the idea of meeting people where they are but are we drawing them to something that is real, or simply an imitation of what it means to know God? And how do we move forward? I think that's where our challenge lies with liturgical music.

*What do you think? Do you think that Plato has a point? Do you think it applies to liturgical music?*

[through.html](#)

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## Don't Be Spooked by Hallowe'en [at Designs by Birgit]

Once we realize the origins of Hallowe'en, we will find that this is a day to celebrate, not to frighten. In that vein, we Catholic Christians choose to dress as saints or other characters we admire, as well as poking a bit of fun at the devil. After all, his battle has already been lost; Jesus Christ the Savior won that victory when he became man and dwelt among us. He even allowed the devil to tempt him, as an illustration of the power of light over darkness.

Sometimes the eve of October 31st, as well as the days of November 1st and 2nd, are unofficially called the "Days of the Dead" - after all these are the days we pray for or remember those no longer dwelling on this earth. We celebrate all the Saints in Heaven All Saints' Day (also known as All Hallows') on the evening of October 31 and November 1st. Then, on the day after All Hallows', we remember the saved souls who are in Purgatory being purged of the temporal effects of the sins committed during their lifetime, before they can enter Heaven.

It might be good to look at these three days of Hallowe'en as follows:

- October 31 - Hallowe'en (All Hallows Eve) is a time to recall the reality of hell and work through the best ways to avoid it. We remember that there are damned souls and vow not to join them. Many Catholics will attend Mass on the evening of this day as a fulfillment of their All Saints Day obligation. This is also the evening that many children dress up and collect sweet treats from neighbors and friends.
- November 1 - All Saints Day is officially a Holy Day of Obligation. We honor the Church Triumphant on this day by recalling our great saints as well as those uncanonized saints not known to us.
- November 2 - All Souls Day, while not a Holy Day of Obligation, is when we remember to pray for the Church Suffering - those souls who are still in Purgatory. Remembering our deceased loved ones and having a Mass said for them is a Corporal Work of Mercy.

Originally, the earliest form of All Saints Day was celebrated on May 13. As it has been since the 300's, this is still the case in some Eastern Churches. Initially, only the martyrs were commemorated, but by 741, all of the saints had been included. It wasn't until the year 844 that Pope Gregory III transferred the Feast Day to November 1st. This was the year he consecrated a chapel in St. Peter's Basilica to All Saints - this should put to rest the theory that the date of All Saints Day was fixed because of the harvest festival of the Irish pagans.

All Souls Day originated with the Bishop of Cluny, who in A.D. 1048, decreed that the Benedictines of Cluny pray for the souls in Purgatory on this day. The practice further spread until it was recommended for the entire Latin Church by Pope Sylvester II.

In Irish popular piety, the evening before, Hallowe'en (All Hallows or "Hallows' Eve") became a day of

remembering the dead who are damned. These customs spread to many parts of the world, thus initiating the popular focus of Hallowe'en as the reality of Hell. As a result, scary characters, focus on evil and how to avoid it, and the sad fate of damned souls captured the imagination.

Traditional circles find the celebration - even whether or not to celebrate it at all, to be a controversial topic. Often, we hear that Hallowe'en is a pagan holiday" - quite contrary to the meaning and origin of Hallowe'en as explained above. All Hallows' Evening, is a Catholic holiday with roots in remembering saints, sinners, and the damned. Although some say that the holiday actually stems from Samhain, a pagan Celtic celebration, or is Satanic, this simply isn't true. It's also rather amusing that October 31 is also "Reformation Day" in Protestant circles - recalling Luther's having nailed his 95 Theses to Wittenberg's cathedral door.

As with many Church celebration, commercialization/secularization of the holiday and popular myths proclaiming the origin is pagan, find some refusing to celebrate Hallowe'en at all, etc. Others celebrate without trepidation while though keeping their celebration Catholic and refraining from the ugliness that has marred the day in the secular world. Hopefully, whatever your family decides, it's vital to keep the facts straight, and to refrain from judging others who decide to celebrate Hallowe'en differently or not at all. As in all instances of our lives, charity is key.

If your family would like to celebrate Hallowe'en, here's a bit of trivia and some suggestions:

- The customs of Hallowe'en are a mixture of Catholic popular devotions, and French, Irish, and English customs all mixed together.
- The custom of dressing up comes from the French.
- Carved Jack-o-lanterns, come from the Irish, who originally carved turnips.
- English Catholics initiated the custom of begging from door to door, which was a purer form of "trick-or-treating." Children would go door to door begging their neighbors for a "Soul Cake". In turn, they would say a prayer for those neighbors' dead saying,

"A Soul Cake, a Soul Cake,  
have mercy on all Christian souls for a soul cake!"

- Customary foods for Hallowe'en include cider, nuts, popcorn, and apples - and are best eaten around a fire.
- Bobbing for apples on Hallowe'en is an old Celtic custom.
- Dressing up as a [saint](#) can be a springboard for learning about their lives and their special graces.
- Using the opportunity of costumes to teach others about those who loved God so much.
- Incorporating the wearing of costumes into a visit to a nursing home - to bring a bit of joy to the elderly and lonely.



If done with an eye toward faith, Hallowe'en can be an enjoyable holiday for your family. It offers an opportunity to teach children about the reality of evil and hell, the reassurance that evil was conquered by Jesus, and the hope of Heaven for those living holy lives. After all, Satan has no power over those who live in Christ. In balance, we must teach them to protect themselves from all things occult - Ouija boards, casting spells, and calling down spirits must not be attempted or tolerated. These things only invite the devil into our lives.

Instead, remind them the power of the Holy Name of Jesus, sacramentals, and prayers such as the St. Michael Prayer. And don't forget to pray for the intercession of the saints - that those who don't know Jesus will come to know His love and mercy. This God-Man, who loved us so much that He allowed himself to suffer and die for us!

+ + +



www.facebook.com/DesignsByBirgit

Note: I made the Saint Elizabeth and Snow White costumes. The Saint Cecilia costume was purchased at Cracker Barrel. Saint Elizabeth will carry bread and roses in her cloak, while Saint Cecilia will carry a harp. The girls had a good time learning about the saints and we focused on Snow White's heart of service.

UPDATE: I created the following meme to share a Catholic view of Hallowe'en. Feel free to share it by following

[this link](#)



This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2014/10/dont-be-spooked-by-halloween.html>  
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# My job is to inform, not to convince [at Leaven For The Loaf]

*My thanks go out to Catherine Adair for permission to reprint one of her recent Facebook posts. She recounts a brief conversation between two people who each could have dismissed the other as “one of THEM.” Instead, they chose another course.*



Catherine Adair

While walking with my family today we were greeted by two young men wearing Planned Parenthood t-shirts trying to raise money to “fight back.” I engaged one of them in conversation and was able to plant some seeds. He didn’t know that Hobby Lobby offered 16 types of contraception, he didn’t know that Planned Parenthood commits over 300,000 abortions a year, and he didn’t know that their CEO makes almost \$500,000 a year.

He was a very nice young man who attempted to stop the conversation a few times by saying his mind wasn’t going to be changed about Planned Parenthood BUT I could see his demeanor change immediately when I told him (an African-American) that blacks make up 12% of the population but over 35% of all abortions. He was genuinely shocked.

I then said to them, “No woman wants to have an abortion. They want support and help. We need men like yourselves to stand up and say you will do whatever it takes to help, because she will be haunted by that abortion for the rest of her life”

I said thank you for listening to me, told him he was a real gentleman (he was) and we hugged each other.

Always keep in mind what St. Bernadette said, “My job is to inform, not to convince.” If I had argued with them, or gone into a rant, or tried to convince them abortion is wrong I would have gotten nowhere. By taking a reasoned, kind approach we can plant seeds. I know that young man is going to look into what I told him, and when he finds out it is true, maybe, just maybe, his conversion will come.

Please pray for all of those who are deceived, that they may learn the truth about abortion.

**About Catherine:** “I used to be prochoice and worked for Planned Parenthood. Now I speak about the horror of working in an abortion clinic, and my personal experience with abortion. I hope to be able to bring more people to the truth!”

This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2014/10/13/my-job-is-to-inform-not-to-convince-guest-post-by-catherine-adair/>  
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# Success! Report for Christ the King 2014 Mass with St. Patrick's Gregorian Choir [at Servimus unum Deum]

Hello Everyone,

Summorum Pontificum is continuing onward, regardless of those within and outside the Church, who dare to see that Her Tradition, and `traditions, are discarded. The Devil roams about like a bloodthirsty lion, wishing to sow dischord, deadly sins such as acecia, and many other sins in this unstable time, even among those in the Church who are practicing Catholics or even Latin Mass Traditionalists. Many of us who are wired to our computers and smart phones, got to see this infighting (particularly on ``C``atholic blogs) during the recent 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Marriage and the Family.

Did I forget to add that the Devil REALLY, HATES, the Latin Mass for its order and truth. and will use whatever or whomever he can to stop it, if the Latin Mass cannot be abused to his will in any manner? However, he, nor any machination of his, can stand up to the Mighty King that is our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, whose ultimate sacrifice redeemed us all and defeated him on the Cross.

Yesterday, October 26, 2014, was another example that our Lord and Sovereign King, Jesus Christ, prevailed once again, through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Extraordinary Form, with the assistance of the St. Patrick`s Gregorian Choir.

And must I say that the fruition of this Mass was indeed, extraordinary, occurring against all odds. Allow me to explain how our Holy Sovereign gave His mercy and his royal blessing today, by giving a little snippet as to what made this possible. The Latin Masses take much skill and effort to do, with undo pressure, and don't just appear out of thin air. While others might not like these sort of details to be revealed on the Internet, perhaps you readers, by seeing this, will see what it takes, and that it is many hands, much time, even money, and prayer, that allows these beautiful and Holy liturgies to exist in our current Church today.

Despite the loss of our initial site and celebrant

*due to circumstances beyond the control of SPGC*

*and of no fault to the choir,*

we were forced to scout both a neutral, "Glad Trad" priest, and an alternative parish to hold the Latin Mass. With a request from the choirmaster, I assisted alongside my fellow altar servers, with a number of phone calls, in not only finding a parish to hold the Mass, but the chaplain of my Knights of Columbus council (of which I was recently ``knighted`` in the first degree Oct 6th,) agreed to do our Latin Mass.

Numerous questions came up as the process went on ... is there a Missal available? (Thankfully, the priest has his own 1962,) will there be an Asperges? (Yes, and thus, did the parish have the aspergillum + aspensorum, which they did)? What is the parish stocked with? Are we doing the Leonine prayers at the

end (YES!), can you assist the priest for transportation? ... and so forth. Thankfully the choir has amassed a number of items such as the altar candles, an altar stand, etc. However such items to buy outright, are not cheap, e.g. new altar candlesticks from say, DiCarlo, would be anywhere from lowest, close to \$400-500

**EACH,**

to much higher, the fancier the set you want. Antiquated ones can cost much more if you do not want to try your luck on internet bidding. So between candles, fasteners for them, altar settings, vestment sets ... you cost to hold these Extraordinary Form liturgies will be heavy, though the items would be permanent to keep in the long run.

After many calls and questions answered, a Friday night altar practice, quickly rearranged choir practice repertoires now that the Mass was happening, and even a transportation issue for our good Holy priest of Christ ....

**The 2014 Mass of Christ the King was back on at the Catholic Church of St. Pius X, in the Archdiocese of Toronto at 330pm this fine day that has past.**

Yes, aside from our collective efforts, one could say that the Lord was willing to allow us in His Holy Graces and Mercy, to have this Mass. Even when it looked liked the Devil had thrown many roadblocks and stresses on top of our work and social lives (and in my case, marital preparations), we pulled off a beautiful, solemn, and reverent Sung Latin Low Mass, with three

\*

servers, and the majestic and heavenly tones of the St. Patrick`s Gregorian Choir.

What points, could be gleamed from today's Mass, particularly, the homily? One of the attendees who frequents the St. Patrick's Latin Masses had this to say:

- Fr. Burns talked about being a Canadian citizen, but that

**we are citizens of the Kingdom of God by virtue of our Baptism.**

- Having celebrated the Novus Ordo the prior week (and likely, most people present there had gone to the Novus Ordo the prior weekend,) he also related today's Gospel readings with last week's Gospel readings..."render unto Caesar what is Caesars and render unto God what is Gods." [ed. note: I personally see here a little hidden nugget of the forms mutually enriching each other, as Pope Benedict wished when releasing Summorum Pontificum]

- Fr. Burns said that the Kingdom or Reign of God does not really work like a modern democracy where citizens vote to choose their elected officials. Since monarchs inherit their power and authority from their bloodline/parents and not by vote,

**Jesus Christ as King gets his power and authority from God, his Father.**

- He also discussed the topic of inheritance within the context of the Kingdom of God.

If there was any point to me where our Holy King had triumphed (and we were a part of this victory,) and the success and truth of this Holy Low Mass was evident, it was when our Holy priest dismissed us at the **ite missa est.**

The power, strength, beauty, and tone of his voice was that of a perfect reflection of our King, regal and royal. For all priests of valid and licit ordination are

*alter Christi*

, ``other Christs.`` How fitting then, nourished by the Eucharist consecrated in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, was our Priest, like Christ, our King, giving us soldiers of the Church Militant our orders to go out into the depths and peripheries of the world to proclaim the Gospel. No sooner had our

*Alter Christi*

given us this dismissal, than the sacred tones of the SPGC choir resonated in reply with

**Deo Gratias**

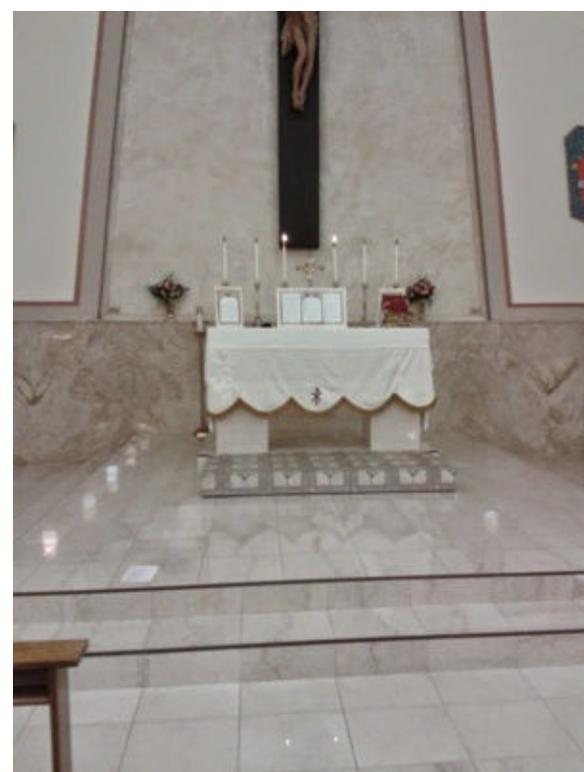
in a symphony of similar reverence, beauty, and thankfulness.

If there is anyone to thank in all this though, first and foremost is Our Lord Jesus Christ, High Priest and Sovereign King, whose eternal dominion we acknowledge and pray on in the EF, and will be done in the OF in a month`s time.

Secondly, we thank both the pastor of St. Pius X, Fr. Min-Kyu Park, who graciously and in a short time frame, allowed us to use the church for the Holy Mass, and our celebrant, Fr. Leo Burns, C.S.B. Fr. Burns is a Basilian priest who was ordained in the EF in 1964, just before the storm of the liturgical, philisophical, and theological changes that changed much of the Church`s operations in today`s world.

Without these two holy priests, we would have had no Mass today. Christ was here through his ``others.`` It is priests like these, older and younger, who will help carry out the New Evangelization and the ``reform of the reform`` that Benedict XVI hoped to achieve.

As per usual, I have a few photos to share with you of our event. The first are, as normal with my reports, pictures of our altar fully set up for the Mass (taken prior to, NOT DURING, the Mass). The last two are of our basic translational document we provided for the Mass, containing the liturgy`s propers and the major readings in Latin and English, and even some music in chant notation for the Allelulia.



The altar set up for Low Mass



Inside our Mini-booklet



Front and Back page of our mini-booklet

To end this report, it is only fitting that I post the post-communion translated in English from my 1962 Baronius Press missal, for after we were fed his Holy Eucharist:

^^

*We have received the food of immortality and beg, Lord, that we who are proud to fight under the banner of Christ our King, may reign with Him for ever in His realm above.*^^

I, Julian of Servimus Unum Deum, alongside my serving allies, and with the St. Patrick`s Gregorian choir, will continue to fight under his banner. Christ wants the salvation of all souls under his kingship and to join him in Heaven. We will continue our King`s mission, to do our best to help in His cause, through the provision of the Holy Sacrifice in the Mass in the Extraordinary Form in the Archdiocese of Toronto. **PAX TIBI CHRISTI, JULIAN BARKIN, ON THIS THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING 2014.**

\*

I have done this before, at St. Lawrence the Martyr for either a Requiem Mass or Christmas 2012. While excessive amounts of servers are not appropriate, I do not know of any rubric or outdated liturgical law that says 3 servers at a Low Mass is unacceptable, or violates the licitness or validity of the Holy Mass. Do your research before you contest this fact and have a Fr. Z speckled-filled nutty and the combox filter is on with my blog rules intact.

**[minor edits made 27/10/2014].**

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This contribution is available at <http://torontotlmserving.blogspot.ca/2014/10/success-report-for-christ-king-2014.html>  
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*(This entry from my journal describes one Sunday in 1988 on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with John Michael Talbot. As it does now, the world churned in turmoil with war surrounding the holy sites.)*

**Sunday, March 20, 1988**, was a day of connecting to the Christians in the Holy Land and to the Lord. On our way to Mass with the local Christians of Ibillin, in Galilee, we saw our first signs of war: armed khaki-clad street soldiers and transport vehicles full of soldiers. Something we have never had to bear. Among the many olive trees stood burnt out houses, some abandoned and some occupied.

[Father Elias Chacour](#) said Mass at St. George Melkite Catholic Church. Some know Fr. Chacour as the Ghandi of Galilee because he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times. This self-proclaimed Christian pacifist speaks out in a non-violent way, urging the living of the Beatitudes. He built a school to teach the children the way of the Beatitudes to bring lasting peace to his country. He wrote, "Blood Brothers" a story of the relationship between the Jews that returned to their homeland as refugees during the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Palestinians who housed and cared for them.

What a contrast between the military presence among the desolate buildings and this pacifist priest celebrating Mass with total confidence in God's sovereignty

The church holds about 200 people. That day more than 300 crowded in and around the pews, many of us from visiting groups. It reminded me of Christmas Masses crowded with unfamiliar faces.

The men and boys sat in front and the girls and women in the back of the church. All during the service the men kept bringing in chairs—as we sometimes do at prayer meetings or Midnight Mass. It was raining, and some hunks of plaster fell down on the chairs behind some of the women a few rows in front of us, splattering plaster on a their heads.

Ceiling fans and mismatched antique chandeliers decorated the church. The artwork resembled Greek Orthodox except for a striking contemporary depiction of an angel knocking Paul off his horse. This image could hang appropriately in most churches in our country.

The music and native language (with English and French translations) was the closest possible today to that of Jesus' time—Aramaic and Arabic with a few Greek responses such as the "Kyrie Eleison." Hearing the Mass in Jesus' native Aramaic touched the depths of my heart as I imagined him saying many of the prayers, especially the consecration of the bread and wine into his Body and Blood.

Fr. Chacour's talk before Mass was in English, his homily in Arabic, English and then French. He reminded us that to God a thousand years is like one day. "Day before yesterday it all started in Galilee.

Jesus came to Galilee from Jerusalem. Those from Galilee spread the word to all the world, as witnessed by so many nations represented here at Mass."

We celebrated what happened at the Resurrection—no more Jew, Palestinian, man or woman, all called as adopted children of God, to whom we will answer.

Fr. Chacour told the story of a clean white paper among the colored paper and pens. That white paper was so proud of his clean appearance that the colored pens and paper were threatened by his boasting. He remained clean and white and empty. Then Fr. Chacour said, "The Lord will not ask, 'How long did you keep your hands clean?' but 'How often did you dirty your hands to serve?' Be a little stone in the beautiful castle of the Kingdom of God. Share our confusion, our fear and our life." I thought how stones are solid, steady, persevering, united to other stones for strength to bear a common load.

The unleavened bread soaked in wine, taken on the tongue or a spoon, gave us a new communion experience. The crowded aisles meant lack of order in receiving Communion as we made our way to the altar and back again.

The parishioners took home the extra bread, distributed at one of the exits after Mass. How quaint? How practical! The privileged poor took bread home as though Jesus had multiplied it to provide for those who need it. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Jesus came to us that day in the mystery of the Eucharist, in the murmur of our lips worshipping him, responding to prayers said in his native tongue. He soothed the aching in our hearts to join as one with him and Christians of Galilee and all nations, ready to dirty our hands to serve.

Today's news is tragic for Christians in the Middle East, and I pray for them and for those in Ibillin, who suffer still.

Can you imagine hearing the words of the Mass in Jesus' native language?

Can you unite your prayers with the suffering of persecuted Christians?

(Continued in [One Sunday in Galilee, part 2: Storm at Sea.](#))

(Art: Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*, from [Restored Traditions.com](#))

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This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/one-sunday-in-galilee-part-1-mass-with-the-christians-of-ibillin/>  
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## Holy Matrimony [at Bethune Catholic]

We are (and have been) in a crisis concerning marriage for many years, but the crisis is peaking. Yet at this critical time some bishops are seriously considering weakening the sacrament and institution of marriage in the Holy Catholic Church instead of standing firm and proclaiming the beautiful truth about faithful marriage.

Recall that only ONE bishop in all of Catholic England would stand for Truth in the time of Henry VIII. Do we have any courageous bishops today?

1. There is no mercy without Truth! Mercy is given to those who are sorrowful, not those who persisting in sinful living.
2. There has been a proposal that divorced and remarried couples could come and be blessed at Mass instead of receiving Holy Communion. I wonder; my catechism said if you are not in the state of grace (and are in fact persisting in mortal sin), such a blessing has no efficacy.
3. Instead of making the obtainment of annulments easier (as some are proposing-further weakening the sacrament), why isn't the proposal made that uncatechized and/or immature couples would not be allowed to be married .... and then make a major and continuing effort to catechize the faithful on marriage.
4. Admittedly there are those whose spouse had abandoned them and their children. While no one wants another to suffer, we must realize suffering joined with Christ brings salvation. Yet some bishops would deny the innocent spouse the opportunity to further sanctify their life and join their suffering with that of our Lord, offering all for the offending spouse. This may be hard, but our Lord was clear that all of us must take up our cross. No cross - no crown!
5. The proposals which are being floated and discussed will make troubled marriages collapse all the sooner because their will be little incentive not to seek an easy annulment or 'regularize' a second marriage.
6. I just don't understand why the Church would help the forces of the evil one further destroy the domestic church. This is big and could rend the Church apart.

There is suffering; there is injustice; there is struggle. But if you believe in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, you must believe His promises. His promises involve the cross. His teachings are not always easy, but if we have faith and follow Christ, true, lasting joy will be ours.

We bring people to the fullness of Communion by giving everything we have and teaching the Truth-with gentleness and understanding (if not for the grace of God, there go I), not by making excuses and diluting the Truth. Only the Truth will set us free.

**Oremus pro invicem!**



## One of Millions [at Declaring the Whole Counsel]

"There are not a hundred people in America who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions of people who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church — which is, of course, quite a different thing." This quote by the late Archbishop Fulton Sheen is vital for understanding evangelism today. It is my opinion that when people reject Christ, they are really rejecting a misunderstanding of Christ. If they truly knew who Christ is, and knew who they themselves are in creation, it would be impossible to reject him. No, I am not saying that it is only a matter of technical knowledge, because the heart must want Christ and His salvation also, but when we recognize how beautiful the truth of Christ is, then our hearts are drawn to Him.

I am sure that there are variations and other factors involved in a person's individual conversion experience; more than we can describe here. Yet, we all know that this is a major factor in evangelism; if the person does not know the truth of Christ, how can they submit themselves to Him (Romans 10:14)? I was one of the "millions" that Archbishop Sheen referred to for many years. I had been told what the Catholic Church teaches by numerous scholars and authors. They explained it in detail, even quoting various official Catholic sources (catechisms, encyclicals, quotes from Popes and bishops, etc.). I believed that I had it pretty well clear in my mind. I was wrong.

I had been told that Catholics believe that Mary is divine, that hypocrisy is allowed as long as you go to confession, that idolatry was no longer a sin, and that the Pope was sinless. It should be obvious how that will drive any protestant away from Catholicism. I certainly cannot attribute motives to those who told me these things. I do not know what was in their hearts; I only know what they told me. Holding this understanding of the Catholic Church kept me from giving any consideration to looking deeper into what she really taught. I do not tend to fall for "conspiracy theories" but this misrepresentation about Catholicism has been perpetuated for so long, that many have come to believe it without ever verifying the facts.

I recall once (right before my reception into the Church) telling a protestant friend that we had been taught wrongly about what the Church said in regard to the Blessed Virgin. I even showed him, as an authoritative source, what the Catholic Catechism said. He said to me, without hesitation, "Actually, I found out that the Catholic Church hides their true beliefs and only publishes in books things that are easier for people to accept". After hearing that, I realized it would be useless to ask him that if the Church did not publish her real teachings, how did he find out? It is this very type of stubborn resistance to the truth of the Catholic Church that keeps many people away from conversion. This is precisely what we need to overcome in our evangelistic efforts.

I worked as a pastor in protestant congregations for 17 years before I became a Catholic priest. During all that time, I never once met either a protestant or a lapsed Catholic who actually understood what Catholicism teaches. That is a powerfully significant factor for us to consider. Lack of knowledge both keeps people from converting, and has a part in Catholics falling away. If you do not believe in the cure, you will not seek it out. In my experience, I did not have someone who came to me with the truth and helped me to understand it. Rather, it was a matter of my slow and regular studies into the protestant faith that caused me to see the truth of the Catholic faith (as odd as that may sound).

The protestant faith, as a rejection of several Catholic dogmas, is an inconsistent system that is quite easy to poke holes into. The more that I saw these holes, the more it made me consider the possibility that the Catholic Church had been misrepresented. I had studied protestant teaching very well for years, and knew it inside and out. Each doctrine of protestantism that I found to be in error brought me a step closer to Catholicism. While I was a Baptist pastor, I found myself thinking more like a high-church Presbyterian. Once I finally became a Presbyterian, I found myself thinking more like an Anglican. Each of these are steps on the road to Catholicism because all of the protestant denominations are merely gradations of separation from Rome.

The last step before my actual "conversion" was when I joined the Anglican Church. Although this did not happen in actuality until 2006, it had happened in my thinking many years before that. I was still a Presbyterian minister and found that I was gravitating to the thinking of a number of Anglo-Catholics (those Anglicans who are very traditional, and are quite similar to Catholicism in many respects). It was this similarity to Catholicism, without actually being in communion with the Catholic Church, that allowed me to delve deeply into the Catholic faith in a safe (and still protestant) environment. In fact, it was while looking seriously at the Catholic faith, that I saw many of the beauties of her teachings. They are a consistent system that not only holds together, but also flow perfectly from the historic faith of the past.

That was the point at which I saw for the first time the beauties of the Roman Catholic Church. I saw her faithfulness down through the years; which existed in spite of all the trials and problems that she went through. I saw the richness of the faith. I saw how deep the truths of Catholic teaching were--after all, Catholics have been building on their theology for 2000 years; something no Protestant can come close to claiming. As a matter of fact, every time Protestants break off and start a new denomination, they almost have to start all over again with determining what their theology is. I still remember the first time I read a Catholic who said that Protestantism was simply "Catholicism in truncated form"; it hit home like few other things could ever do. I realized that I was holding to the Christian faith in reduced and limited fashion, and that caused an immense thirst in me for the fullness of my faith.

By this time, it was clear that I needed to do more than appreciate the Catholic faith; I needed to become Catholic. This meant the possibility of giving up serving as a pastor. I knew that other former Anglican pastors had been ordained as Catholic priests, but that did not mean that I would be also. Yet, because of being able to understand Catholicism in its fullness, I had already settled this in my mind. I had to be Catholic, because it was the right thing to do. It did not ultimately matter whether I could become a Catholic priest or not. If God called me to serve as a priest, then He would reveal that to the Church and I would be called. That, however, was merely a bonus in the larger calling of simply being Catholic.

Today, I thank God that I am a priest, and that I am allowed to serve Him by serving His people. I rejoice that my entire family followed me in this journey (which is another story in itself). I cannot express just how much I have been blessed to have discovered the truth about the Church. I am no longer one of "the millions" who hate the Church, because now I know what the Church really is. I know what the Church teaches, and it is a beautiful truth. We must work to bring this truth to others; not just to our Protestant brothers and sisters, but also to those who do not know God at all. That is what evangelism is all about.

## The Leper [at Bible Meditations]



*A leper came to [Jesus} begging him, and kneeling he said to him, “If you choose, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” Mark 1:40-44 NRSV*

Once determined “unclean” by the priests, lepers had to live outside the camp, wear torn clothes, and leave their hair uncombed. As if that wasn’t enough to keep others away, they had to call out, “Unclean, unclean!” to make sure people kept their distance. (Lev13:45-46) What a lonely, miserable way to live! It’s bad enough to be isolated, but forced to wear rags and give up personal grooming? That’s adding insult to injury, literally.

Many of us choose to isolate ourselves when we’re having a rough time for any number of reasons. We voluntarily treat ourselves much like the leper. We stay home in dirty pajamas or a ratty bathrobe and pull the covers over our heads. We don’t shower or comb our hair. We transmit the message loud and clear that we want to be alone. We determine that we are unclean, unfit for the company of others. The spiral of isolation continues in its downward trajectory every time we look in the mirror.

We don’t share our problems because we fear others will reject us. Instead, we beat them to the punch and reject ourselves....Our friends, loved ones, or even professionals may not have the power to heal us of our troubles instantly. What others can do is help us break out of the self-imposed isolation that makes the problems we’re struggling with loom larger.

Prayer: Trinity of Love, we’re called to live in community. Melt the barriers of fear and pride that isolate me from others.

Reflection for sharing: What isolates you from others? What would it take to be healed of this isolation?

Excerpts from:

“Your Faith Has Made You Well: Jesus Heals in the New Testament”

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## Good News People [at Working to be Worthy]

-1-

Shauna - who is quite rather pregnant, mother of two youngsters, and just moved into an old homestead seriously in need of cleaning - took an hour out of her day to go visit a mother at the hospital. You may remember her from last week's prayer requests; she was admitted with health complications. She gave birth via C-section to a bitty but

*healthy*

baby boy earlier this week. Anyway, this mother was in the NICU during the entirety of Shauna's visit, but she was not at all irritated. She was simply glad to know the mother was getting the support she needed to breastfeed her new baby.

-2-

Jaime launched another Livefitmama challenge this week, including an optional Level 2 this time. She has made such positive changes in the lives of so many women and their families through this program! I'm proud to know her in real life. :-)

-3-

Tanya volunteered to bring homemade scones as a snack next week. This might not seem like a big deal to you, but that's because you have never eaten these scones. You would never again be content with what grocery stores pass off as scones.

-4-

Nathan drove well over an hour to cheer up a friend who'd had a terrible day at work. While out at the bar, he also paid for his friend's meal and my lemonade with the excuse, "It just seemed easier for me to pay for everything." Wouldn't want people to know he was a good guy at heart.

-5-

Dorina, as always, has been filling our newsfeeds and chat windows with laughter and reasons to praise God. Such a breath of fresh air! Everything she posts is guaranteed to at least make you smile.

-6-

Fr. Michael spoke inspiringly on Ephesians 1, reminding us of the joy of our salvation. We come to Confession not to focus on our failures, but for God to fill us with His love.

-7-

So next time you are overwhelmed by the monumental evil in the world, remember the good souls out

there living the Good News one day at a time. And take courage, for He has overcome the world!



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## A New Friend in Heaven - Blessed Chiara Badano [at Grace of Adoption]

I am so excited to share one of my new favorite saints, Blessed Chiara Luce Badano.



After recently learning of Bl. Chiara, Mike and I have begun asking for her intercession. Mike is the one who first found out about her and ordered a

[documentary](#)

on her life.

Bl. Chiara's parents prayed for children for eleven years, until she was born in 1971. She grew up in a small Italian town, where her parents taught her the faith.



As a typical girl Bl. Chiara had many friends, enjoyed listening to music, and liked playing tennis. As When she was a child Bl. Chiara's mother encouraged her to go through her toys and select some to give to those less fortunate. Bl. Chiara choose her newest and nicest toys to give away. She also collected money for children in Africa.

In her late teens, Bl. Chiara

developed osteosarcoma, a painful tumor. A

t first Bl. Chiara was saddened by her illness, but after a short time she said "Yes" to Jesus and accepted her sufferings. She refused pain medication so that she could offer her sufferings to Jesus.

Bl. Chiara died in 1990. More on her life

[here](#)

and

[here](#)

Here are a few quotes from Bl. Chiara:

- “I have rediscovered the Gospel under a new light: as it is easy for me to learn the alphabet, so it must be to live the Gospel.
- “If you want it, Jesus, so do I.”
- “I can only offer my pain to Jesus. It’s all I have left.”
- “For you, Jesus . . . if you want it, I want it too!”

Because Bl. Chiara's parents struggled with infertility for so long, it's comforting to ask for her prayers. Also her simple faith and "Yes" to accepting her cross is amazing. I want to love Jesus like she did.

Bl. Chiara's feastday is October 29. I am planning to start

[this novena](#)

on October 21st, asking Bl. Chiara to pray for us to grow closer to God and be blessed with children. Please let me know your intentions too!

Thanks for stopping by. God bless your weekend!

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## Should Kids Hold Pro-Life Signs? [at Domestic Apologist]



Between the two of us, my sister and I have five (going on six) kids. For a couple of mornings a week, we try and make it over to the local abortion clinic to pray--taking three of those kids (ages three and under) along.

[Insert joke here about herding cats, squirrels, whathaveyou.]

Our one and only goal is to complete a lightning-speed rosary while maintaining a semblance of control over our little rascals. Since it's the

### [fall campaign of 40 Days for Life](#)

, there's always a handful of other people there too, either praying peacefully or doing sidewalk counseling.

On one such morning full of kid wrangling, rushed Hail Marys and lots of hip swaying on my part to try and convince my bladder that I didn't need to IMMEDIATELY find a restroom for the third time that hour, a sidewalk counselor sweetly asked when I was due. I told her I had about another month.

"Oh!" she said, "well, it'd be wonderful if you could be out here on Wednesdays or Thursdays, because that's when they do abortions, and you'd be a terrific witness for people to see."

I know that she was not trying to be funny--and that hers was a honest, heartfelt request--but I had to stifle a laugh. Because really, ma'am? I don't

*feel*

like a terrific witness. I

feel

like a NFP-mom who's heavily pregnant at the time of her life when she's still chasing after another baby-like person, and doing so with little to no grace or elegance. I feel like a walking billboard for motherhood in the trenches. I

feel

...like I need to pee.

Not exactly inspirational.

During our conversation with her, Amby found the "Women Do Regret Abortion" sign that leans against our stroller while we pray. The sign is just about as tall as he is, so when he holds it up, all you see of him are two shoes and 10 clenched little fingers around the edges.

Him holding the sign made me uncomfortable. I don't like my kids wearing clothes with words on them in general, and I especially don't like those words to deal with adult issues.

Images of the showdown in Texas this summer (over a proposed late-term abortion ban) flashed through my mind. In that setting, pro-choicers had children hold signs like, "

**If I Wanted the Government in my womb, I Would f\*\*\* a Senator!**

"



Classy.

Don't forget the

**six-year-old holding**

a

## coat hanger sign

, too.



Using kids as political props isn't new. But is that what's happening, when Amby holds a pro-life sign? Am I using him, or letting him unknowingly be used, as a mouthpiece for what I believe?

Maybe I'm asking the wrong questions. Children are, by their very nature, witnesses to life. They already are little pro-life billboards. And when it comes to showing the humanity of an unborn child, you can't always show someone an ultrasound picture--but you can show them a child of any age, full of spunk and sweetness and life.

So maybe the question is not "Should kids hold pro-life signs?" but

*does*

a child even

*need*

to hold a pro-life sign? Isn't it redundant? A child, with his presence, says to the world:

Life is precious.

Protect me.

Defend life.

Smile! My mom chose life.

and...

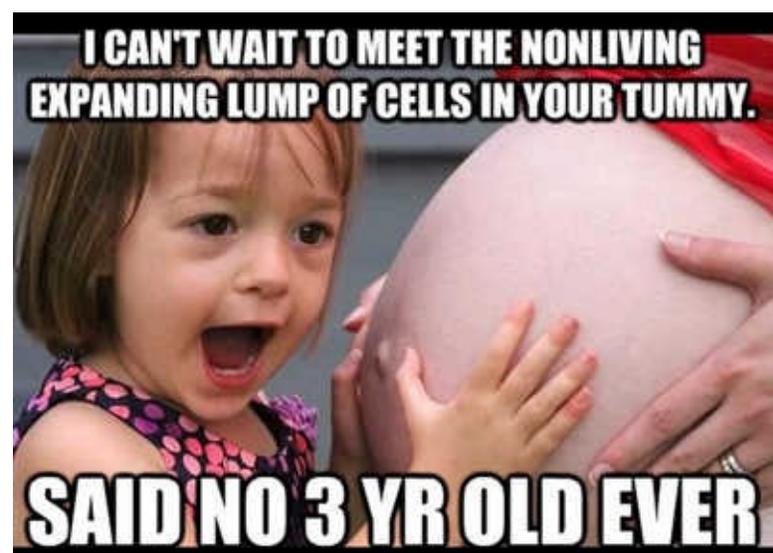
Women

**do**

regret abortion.

I think the rub comes with the actual word "abortion," because the word signifies such violence--and the sort of violence that seems inconceivable (and emotionally unexplainable) to children. I tell both of my boys that we go "pray for the babies" at a "bad doctor's office." I do not say that within those walls, unborn children have their skulls crushed, their little limbs ripped from their bodies, their organs sucked out of their mommies with a hose. They're not ready for that reality. None of us should be.

But you know what kind of reality they are ready for? The reality of what's happening in my body, right now.



They are ready to testify to

*this kind*

of pro-life positivity. Their exuberance for babies, children, and all things innocent are what give the pro-life movement its youth, its energy, and its unparalleled grassroots activism--something the pro-abortion lobby would desperately like to replicate.

This week, Amby and I are going to get some poster board and cover the back side of my "Women do regret abortion" sign.

In big yellow letters, we're going to write up his own little message. It will say "We love babies."

It will be covered in dinosaur stickers.

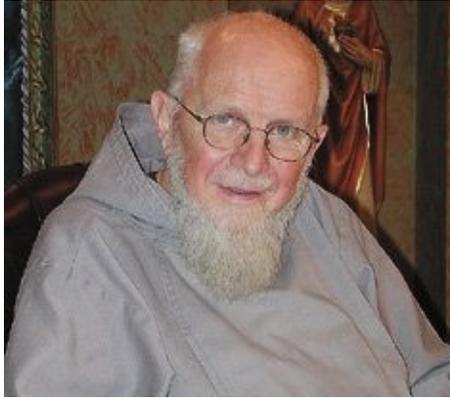
And I will be so happy to see him holding it.

This contribution is available at <http://www.domesticapologist.com/2014/10/should-kids-hold-pro-life-signs.html>  
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## The Day I Drove Fr. Benedict Groeschel to the Pittsburgh Airport

In a matter of hours, the body of Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. will be laid to rest here on earth following the Funeral Mass at the Cathedral-Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark, New Jersey. When I heard that Fr. Groeschel passed away last Friday, I quickly said a prayer for the repose of his soul and also remembered the forty-five minutes I spent with him in a car from Steubenville, Ohio to the Pittsburgh Airport.

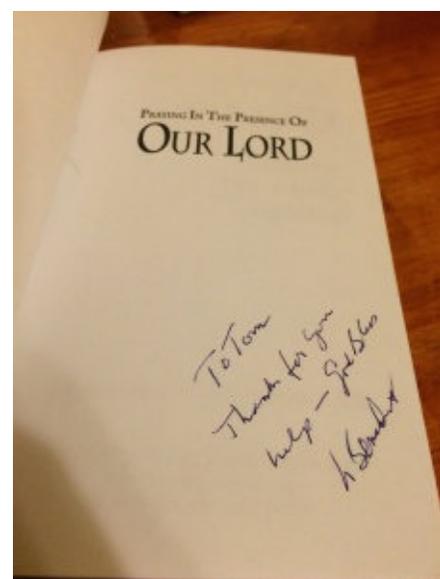


In the Summer of 2009, as a graduate student in Theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville, I worked as a driver for the transportation division for the Franciscan Summer Conferences. As a driver in transportation, one of the perks was picking up and dropping off speakers at the Pittsburgh Airport. Out of all the people I drove that summer, which included [Steve Ray](#) and [David Currie](#), when I was asked to take Fr. Benedict Groeschel to the airport by my supervisor, Alex Hart, I nearly jumped out of my skin with excitement and joy. Being that I was one of the older drivers, she knew that she could trust me to be at his hotel at 5:00am to pick him up.

Within hours, my friends found out that I was taking Father to the airport, either by me telling them or others telling them. At once I started to receive rosaries, medals, scapulars, holy water, and just about every other sacramental you can think of for Fr. Groeschel to bless on our ride to the airport. By the time I arrived at his hotel at 5:00am, I had three medium size zip-lock bags full of sacramentals, plus the book I bought, [\*Praying in the Presence of Our Lord – Prayers for Eucharistic Adoration\*](#) by Fr. Groeschel.

I barely slept that night, woke up around 4:00am, and arrived at the hotel at 4:30am for the 5:00am pickup. It was a humid, rainy, very early summer morning in Steubenville. My heart was pounding fast...I was so nervous! Then all of a sudden, walking with a cane and with the assistance of a young CFR who traveled with him, Fr. Groeschel came walked into the lobby. I introduced myself and told him I was taking him to the airport. He shook my hand with his left since he did not use his right hand.

With the assistance of the young CFR, we got him into the front passenger sit and put his bags in the trunk. The first question he asked me was if I had a wife, after I said no, he replied, “Good. Neither do I.” We laughed and I realized my anxiety was gone. Noticing the bags of sacramentals on the dash, he blessed them and signed his book for me (see picture below).



After saying a short prayer for our drive to the airport, Fr. Groeschel said to me, “Where are you from?” I replied, “Phoenix, Arizona.” He said, “not with that accent!” After the three of us laughed, I then said, “I am originally from New Jersey.” So he said, “where in New Jersey” and my response was Bergen County. He then nudged my right arm with his left and said, “come on?!...where in Bergen County.” I then said I was born in Newark, where my parents were from, but that I lived for nine years in the town of Wood-Ridge. He then nudged my right arm, a little harder this time, and said, “come on?!...I lived in Woodridge as baby for a short time.”

We were both in complete shock at this point. I remember him saying that he had never met anyone on his travels before that was from Woodridge, N.J. We also learned that the church he was baptized in, Our Lady of the Assumption, was the same church I received my First Holy Communion (he nudged my arm the hardest after learning this information).

As we continued our drive on U.S. 22, he asked me many questions about being a graduate student in Theology at Franciscan. I shared my thoughts and how I came to Franciscan after teaching high school theology for four years in Phoenix. Eventually the conversation ended up on the Early Church Fathers and how important they are in the life of the Catholic Church. I remember thinking to myself in the car, “I AM TALKING TO FR. BENEDICT GROESCHEL ABOUT THE CHURCH FATHERS!!!” When I applied for the driver position in May, it never came to me that I would find myself in this experience.

As quickly as the drive began to the airport, it was quickly over. Once I stopped the car, the young CFR shook my hand, said thank you, and told Fr. Groeschel that he would get his bags out of the trunk. Fr. Groeschel then shook my hand and asked if he could pray for me. I said yes and he quickly recited a short prayer, blessed me, and said, “I will talk to the Blessed Mother about you today.” I thought to myself at that very moment, he probably actually has conversations with her.

As the young CFR came over to the car with a wheelchair and just as Father was about to exit the car, he turned around one last time and said to me, “You will do great things for the Church very soon.” I think I said thank you but who knows! I was truly at a loss of words. It was one of my those experiences that just sticks with you. Every time his name has been mentioned around me since that day, I tell this story.

So on this day, October 10, 2014, let us pray for the soul of Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. and that he, like St. Therese of Lisieux, will do more work for us from Heaven than he did for us here on Earth.

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This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2014/10/10/the-day-i-drove-fr-benedict-groeschel-to-the-pittsburgh-airport/>  
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## Are you Living God's Love? [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

*Are you Living God's Love?*

<> *Letting God's Divine Love work in us and through us.*



***“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*** (John 13:35)

My fellow pilgrims ...

In walking the narrow path of discipleship with our Savior and Master, Jesus the Son of the Living God, we must remember that the utmost characteristic of a disciple is “Love”. Not just a brotherly type of love, but a God-ordained type of Love, “agape” or selfless Love. This type of love is the “Love” that characterized Jesus; it is the Divine Love of the Father Himself that is in us through our immersion in His Spirit, through baptism (cf., Rom. 5:5).

This is the “Love” defined by Jesus: **“As the Father has loved me so I have loved you”** (John 15:9) and **“Love one another as I have loved you”** (John 13:34). It is the manifestation of this type of love, in us and through us, that distinguishes us as true disciples. It is NOT a love that we can release out of our own human efforts. It is a love that must flow from the Spirit of God that is in all baptized believers. But the problem being, that not all believers have come to the point in their faith-lives where they have released that spirit of God’s love into their everyday lives.

Unless we can place the love of our brothers and sisters in Christ above our own lives we cannot lay claim to that kind of love as guiding our everyday lives. As an aspiring disciple, the most I can say is that, on certain special occasions, the Spirit of God working in me has unexpectedly brought me to that point, but upon realizing it I become aware that it was not me, so much as the Spirit of Christ working in me and through me, that manifested in a particular instance. I constantly struggle against my flesh to bring Christ into every moment of my everyday life so that His Kingdom of Love may manifest itself continuously through me.

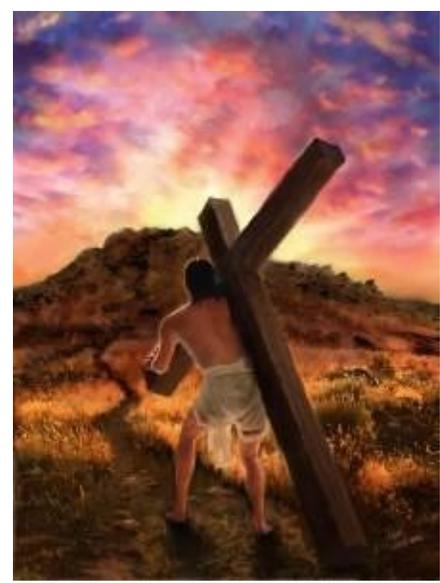
It helps me to understand that Peter, the apostle, had to struggle with this as well. Before Jesus’ Passion and Crucifixion, Peter, out of his inflated ego and pride, attempted to stake out his love for Jesus by saying that he would defend Him to the end. To which Jesus, knowing Peter full well, responded, **“... Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.”** (Mark 14:30)

Later, after Jesus’ resurrection when he appeared to the disciples as they were fishing, He took Peter aside, to help him overcome his self-guilt, and asked him, **“Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?”**(John 21: 15). Note that here, Jesus addresses Peter as, “Simon”, and uses a verb derived from the Greek word “agape” for “love”.

Peter, now humbled from His prior denials and recognizing that Jesus was inviting him to restore fellowship, responded ... **“Lord, you know that I love you”**, but using a derivative of the Greek word “phileo” (ie., brotherly love) for the word “love”. Thus now indicating that he could not, at this point, overextend himself by stating that he, in his human weakness, was able to commit himself to the divine level of “agape love”.

Jesus, after asking again, then asked the third time **“... do you love me?”**(John 21”17), but this last time He used the verb “phileo” for ‘love” thus indicating to Peter that He was accepting His response at the level he could offer because he was being sincere and placing the level of love he could genuinely muster. However, Jesus also, at the end of that conversation, told Peter that at the end of His Life his “love” for Jesus would, by the Spirit be brought to the ‘agape” level because he also would be crucified as a manifestation of that “Love”.

As it was for Peter so it shall be for us, if we also respond sincerely to begin our walk with Jesus at the level of love that we are confident we can offer. It is with that level of love, then, that we begin our consecration to our master, with the door of our spirit open to the work of the Holy Spirit in us to conform us to the image of Christ and move us into the “agape” level of love.



## The Way of True Discipleship

Yes, just as in Peter's case, personal suffering will ensue. Because 'agape' love always means carrying our cross of denying our own self-will and ripping off our attachments to the "world" and to "self". This is part of the cost of discipleship. For as Jesus said...

***"If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple."*** (Luke 14:26-27)

and ...

***"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."*** (John 15:19)

<> ***If we abide not in His Love we can do nothing***

Jesus made it clear that if we do not abide in Him and His Love we will not be able to bear fruit for His Kingdom ...

***"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."*** (John 15:4-8)

Of course the inherent interpretation is that without the empowerment of His Spirit of Love abiding within us, and obedience to His Word, nothing of spiritual value for His Kingdom can be accomplished. We may be very pious and religious, but if we are not acting out of selfless Love they will not be of service to the Lord and His Kingdom. In other words, in order to serve the Lord, our will must be submitted to Him and not our own ambitions and purposes.

But the saying may also be understood to indicate that we, as believers, are only branches of His Vine of His Love, and, if we do not maintain an intimate relationship with Jesus, who is the Vine, nothing of spiritual value for His Kingdom can be accomplished since He alone is the source of Divine Love.

St. Paul reiterates this principle of the need for a disciple to abide in “agape Love” in his first letter to the Corinthians (Chap. 1 vs.1-3) ...

***“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”*** (1 Cor. 13: 1-3)

Since it is clear that agape Love is essential to discipleship, the question remains as to how is this type of Love manifested in a believer that distinguishes him/her from those in the “world” ?.

Again, Paul tells us how the fruit of true Love is manifested through those who maintain their attachment to the Vine...

***“Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude.***

***Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.***

***Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.***

***Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.***

***For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.***

***So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*** (1 Cor. 13:4-13)

**<> *Activating the Divine Love that is in us***

Now, being made aware of the Father’s purpose regarding abiding His Love, we come to the challenge of assessing whether we are living our lives in accord with His purpose for us.

First of all, we must ask ourselves if we are in an intimate personal relationship with Jesus and are we submitting ourselves in love to His Love so that the Father’s will may be done in our lives as it is in Heaven. Are we walking in such a spiritual commitment and are we involved with a constant dialogue with Jesus as we perform our daily activities in this world. If not, then the first thing we must do is enter into such a consecration.

The consecration that I refer to is termed by St. Paul as that of dedicating ourselves as a “living sacrifice”



This contribution is available at [http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2014/10/26/\\$-are-you-living-gods-love/](http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2014/10/26/$-are-you-living-gods-love/)  
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Reports in mainstream media related to the recent *Synod on the Family*, based partially on an erroneous, misleading, unapproved draft report – have done much to confuse the Catholic faithful and non-Catholics alike. The official, approved, final report is excellent but is likely to be largely ignored by the media.

The purpose of the synod is to focus on a broad array of challenges to the family. That is a family formed by a “traditional,” faithful, permanent union between a man and a woman. Also to be considered is the pastoral needs of those in “re-marriage” situations and forms of homosexual unions. The headlines have unfortunately been only on this subset and have generally been very inaccurate.

### **Will there be changes in doctrine?**

No. None whatsoever. Not on this or any other doctrinal issue, ever.

The Church can not change truth. No meeting of Synod Fathers, the Magisterium, bishops, cardinals (princes of the Church), or the Pope (the Vicar of Christ) can change doctrine. It is simply impossible. In other ecclesial communities (e.g. Protestantism), it is common for meetings to be held and official changes to belief enacted (typically by vote). This is not so in the Church established by Jesus, protected by the Holy Spirit and led by successors to the Apostles.

### **Marriage and Sex**

*Valid marriages* (formed without impediments) persist until the death of a spouse. No earthly power can set aside a valid marriage. Jesus said “I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.” ([Matthew 19:9](#))

All people are called to *chastity*. Sexual union within a valid marriage, open to life, is a beautiful and proper response to God’s vocational call. All other sexual relations are non-chaste and gravely sinful. This includes promiscuity, cohabitation, “re-marriage” and any homosexual unions.

Civil authorities do NOT have the power in God’s eyes to set aside a valid marriage. Nor do they have the power to redefine marriage as anything other than the permanent covenantal union between a man and a woman.

## **Is divorce a sin?**

Not necessarily. That may surprise a lot of folks.

The civil act of divorce, as a last resort, is sometimes necessary for the legal protection of a spouse or children. Contrary to what the state says, it can not end the marriage. The “divorced” person remains married and is not free to attempt another marriage. There are many faithful Catholics, in good standing, who are unfortunately separated from their spouse in this way.

Since those in valid marriages who civilly divorce remain married in the eyes of God, marrying another is not possible. Those who do, or more properly put – *attempt* another marriage, remain married to their “first” spouse and are at the objective level, persisting in an adulterous relationship.

However, it is possible (for many reasons) that a marriage — upon very careful and thorough investigation — may be found to be invalid due to impediments at the time it was entered. For example: a brother marries his sister, a person marries someone who is already married, a person is coerced into marriage, or even if a person enters into marriage without fundamentally understanding its nature. In such circumstances that marriage would not be valid and thus never actually existed. The Church provides a means for such investigations and when invalid marriages are confirmed, can issue a *decree of nullity* (an “annulment”).

## **Is attraction to others of the same sex sinful?**

No. That also may surprise a lot of folks.

All people have equal human dignity. We all face temptations. We are all sinners, who sometimes yield to temptation and sin – damaging or breaking our communion with God. Thus, all sin is disordered. Through our Lord’s sacrifice, we are not condemned by our sins **if** (and *only* if) we are sorry for them and seek forgiveness.

We can not “accidentally” sin. All sin is by our consent and purposeful (mortal sin is also of a grave matter). Temptation, not acted upon but rejected, is NOT sin. People who are attracted to the opposite sex, but do not act sexually on that attraction outside of marriage, commit no sin. This is an important distinction between desire and action. Likewise, people who are attracted to the same sex, but do not act on it sexually also commit no sin. There are many faithful Catholics, in good standing, who suffer from attraction to those of the same sex.

## **Are homosexual unions sinful?**

All non-chaste sexual acts are gravely sinful. Sexual acts between people of the opposite sex who are not validly married are gravely sinful. For example: promiscuity, cohabitation and “re-marriage.” Since it is not possible for two people of the same sex to be validly married, sexual acts between them are always gravely sinful.

## **What can be done about non-chaste unions?**

The world wants to change the Church to accept and even celebrate non-chaste unions (so long as “nobody is hurt,” or something like that). The Church exists not to be changed by the world, but to change the world. To lead people away from the false promises of sin and to Christ, to true happiness and eternal peace.

The solution was offered by Jesus to the woman caught in adultery. Our Lord did not bless her sinful union, but offered forgiveness that she “[sin no more](#).” Where there is no contrition, no repentance, no intention or attempt to stop sinning — the separation from God is chosen and the sin not forgiven.

The Church ~~invites~~ humbly begs all sinners, including those in any form of non-chaste union to return to God. Only in Him can we find [the peace that surpasses all understanding](#).

## **Is the Church homophobic?**

Jesus Christ (God) and His Church (inseparable from Him) is not homophobic. That is absurd. Quite the opposite, people with same sex attraction are loved equally to everyone else. It is in genuine charity for all sinners that the Church speaks in truth. When people you love act in ways contrary to their own good, being truthful with them expresses that love. Remaining silent to avoid unpleasantness, awkwardness, name calling, legal action, physical threats, and so on means avoiding those things are more important to you than expressing real love.

The Church wants only the best for all people who are attracted to those of the same sex and for all people suffering other temptations. The universal call to holiness is to all of us, including rejecting temptation to sin – and seeking forgiveness and amending our lives when we fail. When we are judged, we will be judged in mercy for the sins we repented that we may hear “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.” ([Matthew 25:23](#))

Some regretfully, have treated our brothers and sisters suffering with same sex attraction poorly. In doing so, they have themselves sinned. There is no excuse for that — only the same properly ordered response to all sin (contrition, amendment, reparation). Note that the Catechism says the following:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.

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## **Church Teaching on Homosexuality**

My comments above are little more than a summary. So much more could be said! Likewise, the content below is but a sampling.

### **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

Always the gold-standard for understanding our faith, the Catechism contains the following excellent text

on homosexuality.

**2357** Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity,<sup>141</sup> tradition has always declared that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.”<sup>142</sup> They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

**2358** The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

**2359** Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

Included in the text are references to two footnotes, #141 and #142. #141 is 4 scripture references: [Genesis 19:1-29](#) which is the entirety on the *Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah*. This section as properly interpreted by the Church, is on people engaged in homosexual acts. Since it is long, I have not included it here (follow the link to review it). It has sometimes been incorrectly re-interpreted by those not in communion with the Church as being about “hospitality” (really!).

The other three verses are as follows (bold highlights are mine):

Therefore, God handed them over to impurity through the lusts of their hearts for the mutual degradation of their bodies. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Therefore, God handed them over to degrading passions. Their females exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the males likewise gave up natural relations with females and burned with lust for one another. Males did shameful things with males and thus received in their own persons the due penalty for their perversity.

Do you not know that the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor **boy prostitutes** nor sodomites nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.

We know that the law is good, provided that one uses it as law, with the understanding that law is meant not for a righteous person but for the lawless and unruly, the godless and sinful, the unholy and profane, those who kill their fathers or mothers, murderers, the unchaste, **sodomites**, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is opposed to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

Footnote #142 is from the *Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* entitled *Persona Humana*

## — Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics.

At the present time there are those who, basing themselves on observations in the psychological order, have begun to judge indulgently, and even to excuse completely, homosexual relations between certain people. This they do in opposition to the constant teaching of the Magisterium and to the moral sense of the Christian people.

A distinction is drawn, and it seems with some reason, between homosexuals whose tendency comes from a false education, from a lack of normal sexual development, from habit, from bad example, or from other similar causes, and is transitory or at least not incurable; and homosexuals who are definitively such because of some kind of innate instinct or a pathological constitution judged to be incurable.

In regard to this second category of subjects, some people conclude that their tendency is so natural that it justifies in their case homosexual relations within a sincere communion of life and love analogous to marriage, in so far as such homosexuals feel incapable of enduring a solitary life.

In the pastoral field, these homosexuals must certainly be treated with understanding and sustained in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their inability to fit into society. Their culpability will be judged with prudence. But no pastoral method can be employed which would give moral justification to these acts on the grounds that they would be consonant with the condition of such people. For according to the objective moral order, homosexual relations are acts which lack an essential and indispensable finality. In Sacred Scripture they are condemned as a serious depravity and even presented as the sad consequence of rejecting God. This judgment of Scripture does not of course permit us to conclude that all those who suffer from this anomaly are personally responsible for it, but it does attest to the fact that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of.

### **Some Additional Scriptural Quotations**

(Note: all quotations in this piece – above and below – are from the *New American Bible* and the links are to the USCCB website.)

Likewise, Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding towns, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual promiscuity and practiced unnatural vice, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; such a thing is an abomination.

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, they have committed an abomination; the two of them shall be put to death; their bloodguilt is upon them.

### **Some Statements from the Early Church Fathers**

This is a particularly brief sample from a large number of statements.

“You shall not commit murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit **pederasty**...”

[pederasty is sexual relations between a man and a boy]

“Conversation about deeds of wickedness is appropriately termed filthy speaking, as talk about adultery and pederasty and the like.”

Clement of Alexandria (AD 193)

“All other frenzies of the lusts which exceed the laws of nature, and are impious toward both [human] bodies and the sexes, we banish, not only from the threshold but also from all shelter of the Church, for they are not sins so much as monstrosities.”

Tertullian (Modesty 4, AD 220)

“effeminate manners are disapproved.”

“He who is guilty of unseemliness with males will be under discipline for the same time as adulterers.”

Saint Basil the Great, Doctor of the Church (AD 367)

Certain men in church “come in gazing about at the beauty of women; others curious about the blooming youth of boys. After this, do you not marvel that bolts are not launched, and all these things are not plucked up from their foundations? For worthy both of thunderbolts and hell are the things that are done; but God, who is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forbears awhile his wrath, calling you to repentance and amendment.”

Saint John Chrysostom, Doctor of the Church (AD 391)

“All of these affections... were vile, but chiefly the mad lust after males.”

Saint John Chrysostom, Doctor of the Church (AD 391)

St. John Chrysostom also argued that homosexual acts are worse than murder and so degrading that they constitute a kind of punishment in itself – and that enjoyment of such acts actually makes them worse.

“Those shameful acts against nature, such as were committed in Sodom, ought everywhere and always to be detested and punished. If all nations were to do such things, they would be held guilty of the same crime by the law of God, which has not made men so that they should use one another in this way.”

Saint Augustine, Doctor of the Church (Confessions 3:8:15, AD 400)

Saint Thomas Aquinas (AD 1225 to 1274) considered homosexuality unnatural, since it involves a kind of partner other than the kind to which the purpose of sexuality points. He considered it second only to bestiality as an abuse of sexuality.

## **Some Statements from Recent Popes**

“At stake is the identity and survival of the family: father, mother, and children. At stake are the lives of many children who will be discriminated against in advance and deprived of their human development given by a father and a mother and willed by God. At stake is the total rejection of God’s law engraved in our hearts. Let us not be naive: this is not simply a political struggle, but it is an attempt to destroy God’s plan. It is not just a bill (a mere instrument) but a ‘move’ of the father of lies who seeks to confuse and deceive the children of God.”

Pope Francis (as Cardinal Bergoglio speaking on homosexual “marriage”)

“Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is more or less strong tendency ordered to an intrinsic moral evil, and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder.”

“There is no denying the crisis that threatens it [the family] to its foundations – especially in the Western world. When such commitment is repudiated, the key figures of human existence likewise vanish: father, mother, child – essential elements of the experience of being human are lost.”

“People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given to them by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves. The manipulation of nature, which we deplore today where our environment is concerned, now becomes man’s fundamental choice where he himself is concerned.”

“It is legitimate and necessary to ask oneself if this is not perhaps part of a new ideology of evil, perhaps more insidious and hidden, which attempts to pit human rights against the family and against man.”

Pope Saint John Paul II (speaking on same-sex “marriage”)

Certainly no pope, but even the “father” of the Protestant revolution minced no words:

“The vice of the Sodomites is an unparalleled enormity. It departs from the natural passion and desire, planted into nature by God, according to which the male has a passionate desire for the female. Sodomy craves what is entirely contrary to nature. Whence comes this perversion? Without a doubt it comes from the devil. After a man has once turned aside from the fear of God, the devil puts such great pressure upon his nature that he extinguishes the fire of natural desire and stirs up another, which is contrary to nature.”

## **The Synod on the Family, FINAL Report**

In conclusion, I return back to where I started on the Synod of the Family.

“There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family.”

Synod on the Family  
(approved, final report)

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This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2014/10/homosexuality-marriage-and-chastity/>  
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## Mission and the Little Flower [at walk the way]

Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, died at the age of 24 in a cloistered Carmelite monastery in northwest France. She had entered at the age of 15. Yet this cloistered nun is one of the patronesses of the missions.

It is true that she had a great admiration of Catholic missionaries in Viet Nam and had hoped to be transferred to a new Carmelite convent there.

But I think there is something more about her life and spirituality that speaks to mission.

She is known for her advocacy of “The Little Way,” the way of living out one’s love of God and neighbor in the quiet deeds of everyday life.

“I applied myself above all to practice quite hidden little acts of virtue; thus I liked to fold the mantles forgotten by the Sisters, and sought a thousand opportunities of rendering them service.”

It may come as a surprise to many that one of her most ardent devotees in the twentieth century was Dorothy Day, the US Catholic advocate of the poor, the cofounder of the Catholic Worker, and advocate of justice and peace. Day even wrote a book on her life, *Therese*, in which she noted:

The significance of our smallest acts! The significance of the little things we leave undone! The protests we do not make, the stands we do not take, we who are living in the world.

The work of being a missionary, even being a missionary in our homes and home towns, begins with faithfulness and love in the little things and in deep love and respect for others.

It is so easy, especially for me, to be caught up in the large schemes of mission or in the desire to get things done that I am not always attentive to the people around me or get annoyed when things do not go as I wanted.

In such cases I need to recall the witness of the Little Flower who, loving God and her neighbor, filled with a sense of mission, did not neglect to be lovingly attentive to those around her, even when they inadvertently splashed water on her as she washed clothes.

God wants us to love in the little things – so that from them our loving God can spread love to all God’s creatures.

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This contribution is available at <http://walktheway.wordpress.com/2014/10/01/mission-and-the-little-flower/>  
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## Simple Children Asking Our Loving God for Great Things [at Children's Rosary]



Recently I received a wonderful little note from our Children's Rosary group leader at St. Mary's Church in Corvallis, Oregon. The group leader is a father and began the group on November 2nd of 2013. Since beginning the group, only his two children have attended. They meet each Saturday at 9AM PT in a little library within the Church. The children kneel before a large picture of Our Lady. Despite the fact that their group has remained small, just the two of them, the children have remained faithful to their meetings.

This past weekend the children had a wonderful surprise another little girl joined them. They were so excited and the family shared that they would like to attend each week. Such a gift for the two sweet children and their father who have always hoped more children would come. The father spoke so beautifully in his note of the grace he has come to experience through the Children's Rosary. I asked his permission to share his note:

"It feels like God's grace is like a flood ready to pour out and He gives us the little latch of simple, confident prayer to open the floodgates."

"It is beautiful that God wants to pour out so much grace upon this world, but He respects our free will and He also wants us to share and collaborate in His work of redemption, so He does not force His grace upon the world. Rather He asks us for simple things like prayer and sacrifice as the little keys that unlock the gates and allow the flood of grace to pour out into so many souls. Once we see that God has given us these little keys, we feel bolder and stronger to ask bold and great things from God because He wants

them. We are not trying to twist His arm to help us rather we are confidently asking our loving Father for all the good things that He wants to give to us, knowing that all He wants for us is to ask with trust and be patient and persevering to allow God to act in His time. This is the beauty of the Children's Rosary is that it is simple children asking our loving Father for great things that His heart so wants to give to us."

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This contribution is available at <http://childrensrosary.blogspot.com/2014/10/simple-children-asking-our-loving-god.html>

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## Discouragement and keeping the faith in this time [at crucesignatiblog]

With the synod going on in Rome and all of the disparaging reports coming out of it, I feel extremely discouraged. This is not like my usual self. On most days, I am joyful, eager to do God's Will, and full of energy. The past few days have left me very worried and sick about the division among the cardinals. So instead of wasting all my time on worrying, I made a list of little phrases and thoughts to encourage me and keep me going. I would like to share them with you.

-Have courage!

-The Church has survived this far.

-Christ will not abandon His Bride and leave Her to the wolves.

-Fidelity...*fides*...faith...

-Be hopeful.

-There are still some who defend the Truth.

-**“Christ will guard His own!”** St. Agnes

-The bishops and the Holy Father may not have a solid plan of attack, but God does!

-**“Remember, I am with you always until the end of time.”** Matthew 28:20

-Pray and fast, giving glory to God.

-**“...and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.”** Matthew 16:18

-Trust in God's plan.

-**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”** Proverbs 3:5

-Keep busy serving the Lord.

-**“Even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...”** Psalm 23:4

-Love beyond limits, imitating Christ.

-Thank God and praise Him for His goodness!

-Be a saint every minute of the day.

Also, [this](#).

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This contribution is available at <http://crucesignatiblog.wordpress.com/2014/10/16/discouragement-and-keeping-the-faith-in-this-time/>  
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# The As-Yet-Unpublished Erin's Ring, The Longest Ride, and Unbroken [at String of Pearls]

Is there still a What We're Reading Wednesday link-up? Is that still a thing? I've been out of the loop so long, I'm not even sure what's going on in the blog world anymore!

Tell you what: I'm going to do a WWRW post just in case, and afterward I'll head on over to

[Housewifespice](#)

and see if I can link up with my fellow bookworms. If not, well hey--no harm done, because I love to talk about books! I love everything about books. I love to read them, I love to review them...and amazingly enough, in my old[ish] age, I even love to write them.



Right now, I am currently hunting down typos in my second YA Catholic novel for

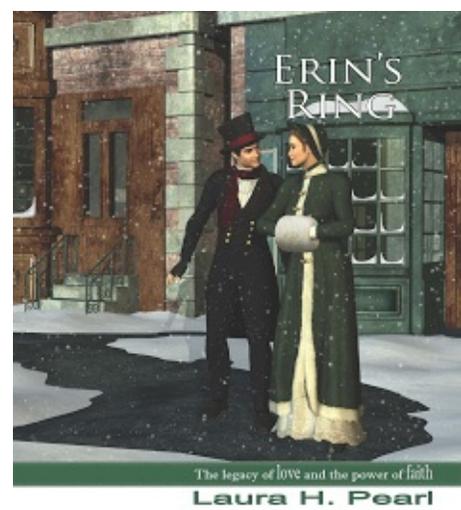
[Bezalel Books](#)

*Erin's Ring*

. The writing (let's call that the "easy" part) is done; now for the editing--and after the publishing, the promoting and marketing...

But let's not get ahead of ourselves, shall we?

The cover of this soon-to-be-published book is a winner, in case you haven't seen it yet.



This cover artwork, chosen by my

*uber*

-awesome publisher Cheryl Dickow, is so evocative of a particular scene in the book (a very romantic scene between two characters I became incredibly fond of over the course of the past five or six months-- a scene that will make your heart go pitter-pat, yet is very chaste at the same time) that it's positively uncanny!

What has been so satisfying for me this time around is that there isn't even a smidgeon of semi-autobiographical content in this novel, as there was in

*Finding Grace*

(which was set in my girlhood hometown and included a female protagonist who, though definitely not me or much like me, happened to start high school in 1973, just like I did, and had a major crush on a handsome, gap-toothed charmer, who was sort of a dead ringer for my then boyfriend/now husband). The characters in

*Erin's Ring*

came completely out of my imagination and don't resemble anyone that I know in real life, so I was able to--at the risk of sounding heretical--"play God" and make them in exactly the image I thought they should be. Once the characters become "real," however, they actually led the story in directions that were different than those I'd planned. I began to know what they'd say or do in various situations. This happened with

*Finding Grace*

, too; but in that book, I actually tweaked some real-life events and conversations to fit them into my story. Not so with

*Erin's Ring*

.

When I was a young, starry-eyed, impressionable teen and pre-teen, I read just about any novel I could get my grubby little hands on. Some were great (

*Wuthering Heights*

,  
*Gone with the Wind*

,  
*To Kill a Mockingbird*

); but some were way too adult and inappropriate for my young psyche to handle. I remember at 13 or 14 reading

*The Godfather*

, a paperback copy of which my parents had left where I could find it, on a bookshelf in our house. (I doubt they knew I was reading it, and I think they might have taken it away from me if they had.) I remember being shocked by that book--not just by the violence, but by the R-rated content. It was a huge mistake for me to read it. What I needed then is what all young people need (and older people, too, because we

*all,*

regardless of age

,  
should be edified and inspired by what we read): I needed stories that were entertaining yet chaste; I needed to read about people in love who weren't falling into bed together without the Sacrament of Marriage to bind them; I needed history and adventure and characters whose courage, fortitude, and faith would inspire me to be a better version of myself. But where to find these sorts of books? Well...

If there is a book you  
want to read but isn't  
written yet, write it.

*Sheila Stein*

BRIGHT  
DROPS

You could say that I wrote this new book, a book I would have liked way back when, about 40 years too late for myself and gals my age; but apparently statistics show that the fastest growing reading audience is

### **adults who read YA fiction**

. That can only be good news for

*Erin's Ring*

.  
If you're still reading this (bless you!), and you already read

*Finding Grace*

(bless you again!), please note that

*Erin's Ring*

is less than 200 pages long--and those pages are a good bit smaller in size than the oversized pages of

*FG*

, with a larger, easier-to-read font to boot. It's a quick read, and my publisher feels very strongly that it will appeal to women aged 16 to 60.

Okay, enough said about that (for now!). I haven't been reading much the past six months, since I've had to devote most of my time to writing instead. But on plane trips, I always have a paperback with me. And here are my thoughts on two I've read recently.

On trips out to the Midwest and back for Notre Dame football games, I read Nicholas Sparks'

*The Longest Ride*

. It's okay. I admit that I couldn't stop reading it, because I was curious to see how it would all get tied up and resolved. There were two love stories going on simultaneously: one between a ninety-year-old man, trapped in his car after it skids off the road and lands in an embankment, and his beloved long-dead wife; and the other between a college student and a bronco-riding cowboy whom she meets at a bar. I particularly liked the story about the older couple, because the man's wife appears to him as she looked at different ages in their long marriage, and you find out the history behind their touching love story. The younger couple's story didn't grab me the way it should have, because I didn't end up caring enough about either of them. So I can't believe I'm going to say this...but this is one book I believe would be better as a movie (and I have little doubt that, given Sparks' history, it will be coming to a theater near you one of these days), because I have a feeling that depending on the actors who are cast, the young couple could be very compelling.

Here's my beef with Sparks: He does write touching stories, about people who mostly try to do the right thing. His books are usually Christian in tone. But in this novel, like in the few others of his I've read, the couples in love end up in the sack in pretty short order. In

## *The Longest Ride*

, I can almost believe it of the younger couple, who probably cut their teeth watching T.V. shows like "Friends." But it doesn't ring as true for the older couple, whose marriage begins in the WWII era. I know that human beings have always been tempted to sin, and I'm not naïve enough to think that pre-marital sex didn't exist before the dawn of cable T.V. I just wish that Sparks--a Catholic father of five, and a Notre Dame graduate, too--would use his formidable talent and popularity to write novels that show the beauty of his own Catholic Faith and its teachings. That's all. I'd probably get all kinds of hate-filled comments for dissing Nicholas Sparks, if it was the norm to get many comments on this blog; but I just had to say it.

Although I usually pack works of fiction in my carry-on bag, on a recent trip I also read a non-fiction spell-binder: a bestseller called

### *Unbroken*

, by Laura Hillenbrand. Wow. Incredible. A must-read of the highest order. This story is so, so,

so

heart-breaking and inspiring, it's hard to put it into words. It is a testament to the strength of the human spirit--the spirit of an Olympic runner and WWII POW named Louis Zamperini. This amazing man refused to be broken, despite having to endure the most indescribable torture and suffering. Get yourself a copy; you won't be disappointed. And the movie version, sure to be a great success, is coming out in December.

That's it, I promise. This post is finally coming to an end. Now I'm heading over to

[Jessica's](#)

to see if there's a WWRW post today. Happy reading!

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This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2014/10/wrw-as-yet-unpublished-erins-ring.html>  
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## Eight Steps to a Cloistered Heart [at The Cloistered Heart]



A person stepping into the physical enclosure must move forward. She does not become cloistered simply by standing outside the door looking in. She does not wait for someone to pick her up and carry her.

She walks to the enclosure door and steps inside.

If I am to be cloistered in heart, I must step as well. Not just once, but many times. I must step toward the cloister, then over the threshold, then ever more deeply into the cloister of God's will. I am to do this in every circumstance of my life.

Each step is a step away from self-will and toward the will of God.

Perhaps I can look at some of the steps I have seen so far. In the interest of full disclosure, I will say that what I'm sharing here is an adaptation of the 'steps' outlined in the book *The Cloistered Heart* (yes, there is a

[book; it can be found by clicking this line](#)

). The 'steps' were originally written in my journal, and at that time there were thirteen of them. Because I like to keep blog posts as short as possible, and because what I've 'seen so far' extends (now) twenty-two years beyond that first seeing, I am condensing and adapting this content.

Let's look at what eight 'condensed' steps might look like today; now that they've seen a bit more wear....

### **1. Attraction.**

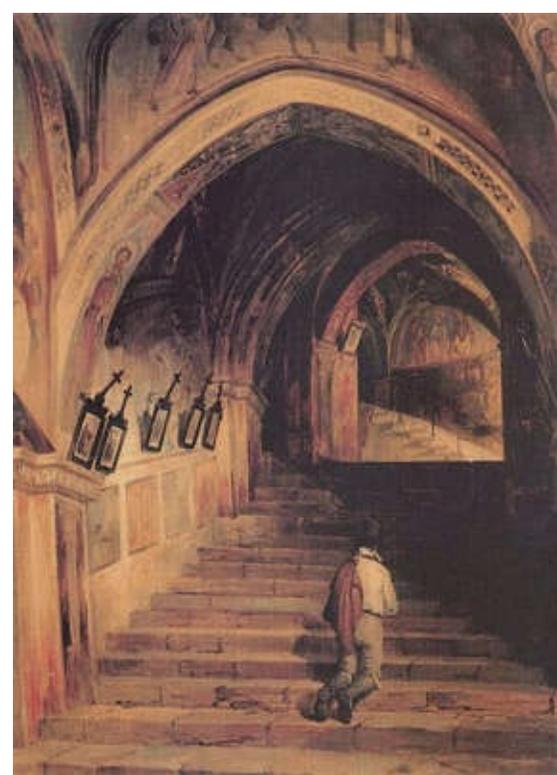
My attraction is to God. I am drawn to God as a Person, to the one true God Who has revealed Himself to us in Scripture and in 2,000 years of authentic Church teaching. I am drawn to the Person of Jesus Christ. I want to know Him, love Him, serve Him. I want to live for Him, entirely.

## **2. Recognition**

. I recognize the truth that I'm a sinner, that I fail. I recognize the fact that I cannot take one step toward God without His help. I recognize my need for His grace every day of my life.

## **3. Realization**

. I realize that living entirely for God, and thinking of myself as 'cloistered' in Him, is more than simply picturing myself enclosed with Jesus. It is making a specific decision to live within God's will. It is in this step that I realize that heart cloister carries a real price. Cloistered life is a life of real surrender, real death to self, allowing oneself to be made into a total yes to God. Am I willing to accept God's grace that I may pay such a price?



## **4. Admission.**

I admit that I do not, by nature, love the will of God. I do not, by nature, want to be

['enclosed' in it.](#)

I admit that I really want to be in control of my own life, that I may even feel I'm entitled to such control, that I am frightened to say yes to God unless I know in advance what He will ask of me. I may feel powerfully drawn to give God an unconditional yes, yet part of me keeps holding back.

## **5. Asking.**

Having admitted that I do not, by nature, want to live 'enclosed' in the will of God, I ask for grace to say yes anyway.

## **6. Choosing.**

By an act of my will and with the grace of God, I choose to surrender totally to Him and to live [enclosed in His will.](#)

With this choice, I am 'stepping into the enclosure.'

## **7. Living**

. I live for Jesus in the midst of the world. I learn what it means to view every circumstance [through the 'grillwork' of God's will.](#)

I do not do this in my own power, but with the grace of God. This step is a kind of 'natural novitiate,' in which I learn to live more and more for God. I cannot do this without spending time, each day, with Jesus in prayer.

## **8. Shining.**

Because my life is being lived in God's love, I find myself

['carrying the fire'](#)

of His love and truth into the lives I touch. I spread love by my actions, my words, my continued choices to live in God's will. These choices will be seen by others, and at times they may not be popular. But I have made my decision, and through the grace of God I want nothing other than to stick with it. I now wear the habit of a cloistered heart.

*'Fear not and do not stand in awe of what this people fears. Venerate the Lord, that is, Christ, in your hearts. Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully.'* (1 Peter 3:14-16) Text not in quotes © 2014 Nancy Shuman. All Rights Reserved.

[thecloisteredheart.org](http://www.thecloisteredheart.org)

Paintings: Caspar David Friedrich (woman on stairs)

Kovács, Stairs at Subiaco.1844

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This contribution is available at <http://www.thecloisteredheart.org/2014/10/eight-steps-to-cloistered-heart.html>  
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## Prayers of Love - the Holy Rosary [at Plot Line and Sinker]



This is the month of the Holy Rosary. I'd like to repost an updated article I wrote as a guest post for another blog years ago:

*“When lovers are together, they spend hours and hours repeating the same thing: I love you! What is missing in the people who think the Rosary monotonous, is Love.”* Sister Lucia of Fatima

I have been a Catholic for my entire life (55 years), but it is only in the last 30 or so years that I have had a devotion to the Holy Rosary. I attended Catholic schools until high school. As a teenager, I would have identified myself as Catholic, but between television and secular influences, I didn't totally embrace my faith until after I was married, and this was because my husband insisted that we not use contraception during our marriage.

As we dialogued back and forth in those few months before our wedding day, I still didn't know why the Church taught that married couples shouldn't use contraception to avoid pregnancy. In fact, I remember thinking that the Church just ought to come out of the Dark Ages and get more in line with the modern world.

In the end, I decided to trust my husband (and the Church). In the next year, we read *Humanae Vitae*, as well as other church documents, and I became fully convinced that the Church was indeed speaking the truth when she declared that contraception was a grave sin. Before we were married, we learned NFP and we are now a CCL NFP Teaching Couple Specialist (and have been teaching NFP for 30 years).

During that first year of our marriage, a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses came to our door. My husband and I welcomed them and dialogued with them. Most of their questions centered on Mary: “Why do Catholics worship Mary?” “Why do you say such a monotonous repetitive prayer?” “Why is Mary so important to Catholics?” First, we gently explained to them that Catholics don't worship Mary, we honor her. As for the other questions, I realized that I didn't really know the answers, so I did some research.

To the question “Why is Mary so important to Catholics,” what I found out could probably fill an entire book. However, my own thumbnail answer is this: Jesus honored his mother. We, as Catholics, are called imitate Christ. He honored his mother and so we should do the same. Also, as Jesus hung on the cross, He gave his mother to the whole world when He said to John, “Behold your mother.”

Mary is indeed our mother and, as our mother, she desires us to be closer to her Son. The rosary is the ideal way for us to become closer to Him, because as we say the repetitive prayers (with love), we are

meditating on His life.

I have found that saying the rosary has brought me closer to my husband and to Christ. Even after 32 years of marriage, we continue to say “I love you,” just as we continue to say the rosary together, with love.

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This contribution is available at <http://ellengable.wordpress.com/2014/10/06/prayers-of-love-the-holy-rosary/>  
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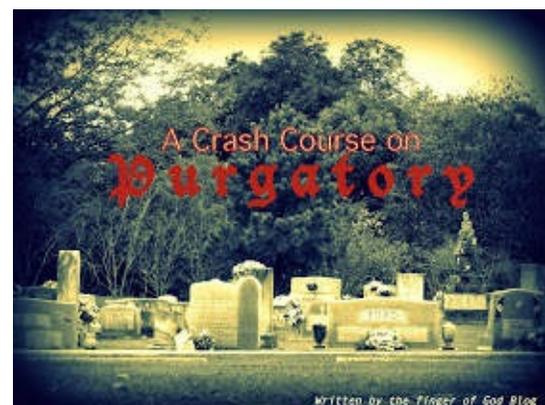
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# A Crash Course on Purgatory (or why you should care about purgatory) [at Written By the Finger of God]

I've been in jail more times than I'd like to count, and certainly more times than I intended. I've forgotten the names and faces of incarcerated clients, but I remember vividly the feeling of walls on every corner of a cell entombing me, the menacing glint of ankle cuffs, the *fwoosh* of an airtight door sealing the silent screams in my head, and the stench of urine mixing with un-showered detainees. Every visit, I trembled with anxiety because it jolted me aware of a human being trapped by the consequences of a crime, waiting powerlessly for the wheels of justice to turn, and entrusting their freedom to my mercy.

Jail visits made me painfully aware of a Catholic dogma that I once took for granted: purgatory.

I'm hardly the first person to allude to purgatory as prison. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi referred to her mystical experience as a "visit to all the prisons of Divine Justice." St. Faustina Kowalksa, who also experienced purgatory, called it "the prison of suffering." The lawyer St. Alphonsus Liguori, in citing St. Bernardine of Sienna named it "the prison of souls." And in scripture, Matthew 18:32-34, a parable of Jesus originated the first hint: "and in anger, his lord delivered him up to the jailers till he should pay all his debt."



## What exactly is purgatory?

The Catechism explains purgatory as a state where those who have died in God's grace and friendship (members of the Church Suffering) expiate their sins and undergo purification to achieve holiness necessary to join the perfect inhabitants of heaven (members of the Church Triumphant). The saints refer to purgatory as a cleansing fire where the soul's earthly attachments and are purified, sins atoned for and prisoners are released as reformed Jean Valjeans. Purgatory is at once a manifestation of God's justice and mercy.

Since we Catholics profess that we belong to the "Communion of saints" in the Creed, we should also be cognizant that our privileged membership of this community (as the Church Militant- still earning

our salvation) invites and enables us to help out the Church militant by our prayers and sacrifices.

**Why should we assist in delivering the souls of purgatory?** Because the Catechism and the Bible encourage us to.

The Council of Trent in 1545, decreed: “The Catholic Church, having taught in the Councils and in this Ecumenical Synod, instructed by the Holy Spirit through the Sacred Scriptures and by the ancient tradition of the Fathers, that there is a Purgatory and that the souls retained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful, but above all by the Sacrifice of the altar.”

2 Macabees 12:45 highlighted: “it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins.”

If those are not persuasive reasons, we ought to consider devotion to the souls in purgatory a sound investment. One: being sinners, all of us will likely detour through a pit stop at purgatory before we enter heaven, and from eyewitness account of saints and blessed, we’ll all want to get out of there as soon as possible so we can enter into the beatific vision. The souls we help relieve and release will be aiding us from their vantage point when we serve time. Secondly, if we foster a devotion to the souls in purgatory among our living family and friends, we pass along the mission of mercy to them, and they will, in turn, remember to pray for our relief and swift liberation when we form part of the Church Suffering.

**How can we help the souls in purgatory?** We can offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the dead and earn indulgences for our dearly departed. Catechism 1478 states that:

“Through indulgences, the faithful can obtain the remission of temporal punishment resulting from sins for themselves and also for the souls of Purgatory.”

Indulgences can be partial (part) or plenary (total). Analogously speaking, one is like a parole; the other, a “Get Out of Jail Free” card. Indulgences suffered for the dead is an act of charity.

Recently, I finished a novena for the souls in purgatory. The novena consisted of nine days of praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet, St. Bridget’s prayer, and the Litany for the Poor Souls before the Blessed Sacrament (at Adoration, before the Tabernacle, or even online Adoration when I couldn’t leave the house) and offering up pregnancy back pains. In exchange, I asked for prayers from the souls, banking on St. Pio’s promise: *“It is impossible to know the intense gratitude of souls for those who help them. They respond with an immense desire to return the favors received. They pray for their benefactors with constant and intense fervor.”*

Without going into specifics, let’s just say at the end of the nine day period, most of my concerns at the beginning of the novena were resolved, and at the whisper of sunrise one morning, I received a distinct signal grace. (Why, no there was no haunting involved.)

Let your prison ministry reverberate into the afterlife. Pray for the poor souls, and they will volunteer their intercession.

\*\*\* For the course on Purgatory 102, read: "Read me or Rue it" by Fr. Paul O Sullivan, "The Book of Indulgences", "Purgatory by Marino Restrepo, and Prayers, "Promises and Devotions for the Souls in Purgatory" by Susan Tassone.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.anabellehazard.blogspot.com/2014/10/a-crash-course-on-purgatory-or-why-you.html>  
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## Even When He Tells You, It's Still a Mystery [at God-Haunted Lunatic]

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” ([Mt 19.14](#)).



On the way to Mass last Wednesday for the feast of St. Thérèse, Nick and Katharine were in the back seat having a debate about God’s relations.

“God doesn’t have a mother,” Kath lunged, apparently in response to something Nick had said.

“Yes, he does,” Nick parried. “Jesus is God, and Mary was his mother.”

Not bad for a ten-year-old, and pretty much the reasoning of the Council of Ephesus. In 431, the Council confronted the Nestorian heresy by adopting a Marian title proposed by St. Cyril: *Theotokos* – Mother of God. Really, it’s a name that boils down to a simple syllogism: (a) Jesus is truly God; (b) Mary is Jesus’ mother; (c) thus, Mary is God’s mother. [Q.E.D.](#)

“I meant God the *Father*,” eight-year-old Kath answered Nick, unwilling to yield. “God the Father couldn’t have had a mother because then he wouldn’t be God.”

Touché.

**In fact, Katharine’s objection is a fairly common one**, and it summarizes very neatly a complicated philosophical [argument](#) against the “Mother of God” appellation. It’s an argument that involves differentiating between function and ontology, and it requires a grasp of formal logic that is beyond me – and, presumably, way over the head of my two grade-school theologians sitting in the back seat...or maybe not.

In any case, I diplomatically affirmed *both* children, and praised them for their acumen and orthodoxy. They’re the youngest of our seven children, and they’re the best of pals. They play and fight, giggle and argue, but even when they disagree, there’s an amiability between them that serves as a constant bond.

That's good, because they live in a household full of big ideas, loud opinions, and strong personalities. Nick and Kath's friendship provides them with an oasis of mutual support and age appropriate interaction amid the maelstrom of a domestic environment otherwise populated by teens, pre-teens, and aging, cranky parents.

Yet, despite the intense and sometimes conflicting messages regarding school and work, politics and religion, and just plain *living*, I'd like to think there's an underlying framework of faith that connects it all,



even when it doesn't always make sense. It's not a forced framework – it just *is*, even when we disagree with it or rebel.

That my youngest children have at least integrated this idea somewhat was made clear when Kath made her parting shot as we arrived at church. "It's all a mystery anyway," she observed. "You can never figure it out, because even when he tells you, you're going to get confused."

**Ah, yes, that standard aphorism of Catholic apologetics: *It's all a mystery*.** It's also a parenting expedient – I don't know about you, but we trot that one out pretty regularly with our kids. "*But, WHY?!*" comes the plaintive cry of the rebuffed adolescent suppliant. "It's all a *mystery*," I'll sometimes reply, especially when I've tired of the standard, "Because I said so."

I should be more careful, I suppose, because "*It's all a mystery*" is also the conclusion of many a dinner conversation that drifted in the direction of convoluted doctrinal conundrums. "How can God be outside of time and still become incarnate?" It's a mystery. "Why do we pray if God already knows what we're going to say?" It's a mystery. "If God really all good and all powerful, then why is there so much suffering and evil in the world?" It's all a mystery.

My Protestant students also get used to hearing this phrase once they find out I'm a practicing Catholic and they get up the courage to ask hard questions: How can Mary be sinless if the Bible tells us that everyone is a sinner? What about purgatory and indulgences – what's the point of praying for the dead if they're already destined for heaven? And do you *really* believe that wafer is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity? *Really?* How come Catholics don't *act* like they believe it?

All good questions – my students are a smart bunch – and I do my best to explain, but more often than not, I'm forced to come down to the old stand-by: It's a mystery. It's never satisfying, of course, and they roll their eyes – as do my teens. But, look, all of us who profess any kind of religion get to the same place eventually, right? Even if you limit yourself to Christianity, consider the biggies we all hold in common – Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, the Blessed Trinity. They all require a shrug in the end, and a demurral that, ultimately, they're matters that are beyond our human understanding. In essence, that's exactly what Katharine voiced: You can't know everything, so don't expect to.

**But it's faith, after all, not math.** There's always a [leap](#) involved, as Kierkegaard insisted, and there's

no guarantees that we'll figure it out this side of heaven.

And perhaps it's no mistake that I overheard Nick and Kath's exchange on the feast of St. Thérèse – the Doctor of the “Little Way.” As Monsignor later explained in his homily, “The essence



of St. Thérèse's Little Way is this: Let God love you, and let God love others through you.” Should we devote ourselves to theological inquiry? Should anyone invest time and energy in deciphering the mysteries of God? Yes, to be sure, but not at the expense of adopting the childlike surrender of Thérèse. She [wrote](#):

I leave to great souls and lofty minds the beautiful books I cannot understand, much less put into practice, and I rejoice that I am little because children alone and those who resemble them will be admitted to the heavenly banquet.

**Anyway, Nick and Kath and I arrived at Mass**, found our seats, and waited for God to appear. There, up in front of the church, the lector would enunciate God's word, and then, after that, the priest would turn bread and wine into the Bread of Life. This is all a big mystery; we can never figure it out; we still get confused.

And it's alright.

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

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This contribution is available at <http://godhauntedlunatic.wordpress.com/2014/10/05/even-when-he-tells-you-its-still-a-mystery/>  
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## Today's find: Chump change [at With Us Still]

This much I know: I absolutely HATE being ‘chumped.’

In my book, it’s the unforgiveable sin—for someone to take advantage of my good nature, or to fail to take a matter as seriously as I do.

Although I’m working to amend this defect of character (among others), last weekend I received a reminder that I have a ways to go. My spirit can still spin quickly out of balance if I happen to experience a perceived indignity or personal affront.

That’s true even in situations where I’m making a conscious effort to walk in God’s grace—as I was at the beginning of our [Kairos Weekend](#) at Menard.

We’d just wrapped up our opening session with the inmate participants on Thursday evening, and the team was exiting the prison. Following protocol, we team members turned in our volunteer badges...and then retrieved our driver’s licenses (and other personal items) from the storage lockers nearby. Only when I got to the team’s shared locker, ***my license was missing.***

Now, understand this:

- *I am 100% certain that my license was IN the locker when we’d entered the prison a couple of hours before, because you can’t get your volunteer badge without presenting a photo ID...nor can you enter the prison with anything in your pockets.*

And this:

- *There was a frenetic energy among my teammates as we prepared to leave for the evening. The guys were listening, but not really. Several had launched rogue missions to expedite the exit. Within a few short minutes, our well-oiled team had devolved into something resembling the proverbial herd of cats.*

And this:

- *Unless my license turned up after this frenzied free-for-all, I was facing a three-hour round-trip home to secure my passport as a substitute ID...in order to re-enter the prison in the morning. (Not to mention the post-retreat hassle of having to obtain a replacement license.)*



Menard #8 Team Members gather near the visitors entrance.

So as you'd expect, we did our best to work the problem: *Two times*...as we gathered on the parking lot outside the visitors entrance...and *once more* before dinner in the Methodist church fellowship hall...we begged the team members to check their pockets for my license. But each time, the hunt turned up empty (as had a thorough scouring of the lockers and trash cans inside the visitors entrance at the prison.)

With each fruitless search, a righteous rage ratcheted up another notch inside me. While many teammates shared my concern over the missing ID, others were (at least in my opinion) treating the situation rather cavalierly. *Especially* since the circumstances suggested that one (or more) of them was the likely culprit.

Sure, on some level, it was irrational – but I couldn't help feeling that somebody had been *chumped* in the license distribution process...and that somebody was *me*.

Fortunately, I was spared the three-hour round trip when someone remembered that we had a late-arriving teammate...who could be asked to swing by my house and pick up my alternate ID. *Thank heaven for small favors*, I thought – even as I continued to steam about the teammates nearby who were, I suspected, the cause of my distress.

Come Friday morning, the re-entry routine proceeded without further incident. I presented my passport, obtained my volunteer badge and walked toward the storage lockers...when out of the corner of my eye, I recognized a familiar face – my face – on the driver's license in the palm of a teammate's hand.

'TJ,' I said, '*that looks an awful lot like my license.*'

With that, he donned his spectacles and said, '*Wow – guess I should have put on my glasses when I was checking my wallet last night!*'

\* \* \*

They say God has a sense of humor, and I suppose God must – because as it happened, I was scheduled to read these words to the Kairos participants later in the day:

'Lord, if my brother keeps sinning against me, [how many times do I have to forgive him](#), seven times?'

And this:

In the end, for our own sake, and in obedience to the Lord, we make the decision to forgive, even when we are boiling with anger.

And this:

God can change our hearts about the people we hold in unforgiveness. I know that, because He's changed *mine*...

Imagine that: Being asked to *read* – and called to *live* – these words of forgiveness, all within the span of a few hours.

It's the kind of hint even a chump like me couldn't miss.



The call to forgiveness: For me, anyway, It gives a whole new meaning to the expression 'chump change'

*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/2014/10/30/todays-find-chump-change/>  
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## Decluttering my heart [at Kitchen table chats]



I just returned from a visit to my father's house. It is still hard saying, "to my father's house" instead of "to my parents' house". This February will mark four years since my mother died. For some reason, I felt her absence in the house more acutely than I had on previous visits. Maybe it was because I was there with my daughter who as the only granddaughter held a very special place in my mother's heart.

As I do every visit, I picked a corner of the house and helped my Dad sort and purge. This time it was the room my mother had used as her office as she worked tirelessly for Gabriel Project or promoting the Divine Mercy devotion. Amidst the stacks of papers and prayer cards was the evidence of decades of service. I wish I had expressed to her my admiration of her work. Though in hindsight, I am not sure I really appreciated all she did. I was far too focused on our mother-daughter relationship to be cognizant of the world she inhabited outside her role as Mom.

Our relationship was complicated. But I don't think that is unique at all. Literature, television shows, and movies are quick to show the grossly dysfunctional relationships or the idealistically beautiful ones. What is rarely captured is the realistic messy day-to-day love of imperfect human beings. Mom and I loved each other but we hurt each other too. I don't think either of us were malicious in our intentions but we often struggled to forgive and move on. Yet in spite of our pride, selfishness, and insecurities we muddled through.

In today's me-centered ethos the psychologists would be quick to encourage each of us to protect ourselves from the hurts and leave the relationship. Don't let the other saddle you with baggage. You don't have to take this anymore. I have to admit it was tempting at times to follow that path. But in my heart I knew that I could not turn my back on my mother any more than she could really turn her back on me.

Walking through the house now, I am so grateful for the grace that kept us together. Perhaps because our relationship could be so challenging I cherish our loving bond even more. In every room there is some kind of memento of our times together. A birthday gift, an item purchased on one of our many shopping adventures, or a plant purchased when she visited my home all remind me of the joyful times we shared.

My mother was a bit of a pack rat so after one of these sort and purge sessions I always have the urge to return home and clean out one of my own closets. Clutter accumulates insidiously and it is easier to attack it early instead of waiting until the task is overwhelming. Today, however, I am thinking about more than the clutter of paper, old clothes, and worn out household items. I am pondering the clutter of my heart. I can look at several relationships in my life that are cluttered with old hurts, grudges, petty annoyances, and selfish pride. Perhaps it is time to do a little purging. I am under no delusions that these relationships will be easy or that I can just will away the hurts and hurdles. But what I can do is pray for the grace to forgive and to be open to reconciliation. I can love in spite of the mutual imperfections. I know it is possible because that is what Mom and I did. I can hope that one day others will do the same.

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This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2014/10/decluttering-my-heart.html>  
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## Stuff Manager vs. Steward [at Half Kindled]

Sometimes I fear that if I were to be given a job title it would be stuff manager. Read [this link](#) to see what I mean and as you read picture me as Luke finding out that Darth Vader is his father, “NOOOOOOO, it can’t be . . .that’s impossible . . . NOOOOOOOOO!”

I hate stuff. Basically it is like tribbles that breed in the corners of your house when you aren’t looking. See what I did there? I made a reference to Star Wars and Star Trek in the first few sentences, heck yes [I’m a nerd](#).



Tribbles seem like nice things to have around . . .until they take over your life!

Earlier this year I did a time log, and the results were a bit scary. I spend an average of four hours a day as stuff manager: cleaning our stuff, preventing the toddler from destroying our stuff, purchasing new stuff (of the babyproofing variety), rearranging our stuff , cleaning the stuff the toddler keeps getting into. Ugh.

In the spring we had a flood. OK I am being melodramatic, it was 1/2 inch over a few hundred square feet of living space. As a result I had to go through and throw out what amounted to about 12 boxes of stuff. With very few exceptions I was glad to be rid of it all. Stuff is burdening mentally, physically and emotionally.

In our old apartment I would amuse/ drive my husband nuts by going through all of our stuff every three months, and usually take a few boxes of stuff to Good will. For the most part we had just what we needed, no more, no less.

Now that we purchased our first house there are so many more things that need to be maintained, and tools necessary to do so. Now don’t get me wrong, we are so grateful for our home. sure Its a bit of a [fixer upper](#), its got a few flaws, (your welcome for getting the troll song from Frozen stuck in your head for the next hour), but it is a good fit for our family.

Its an unfortunate fact of life that stuff takes time to clean, maintain, organize, etc. All of that is time I

would rather be spending with my family, or reading or writing— stuff distracts from these things.

For a while I decided that the answer was to make sure that there were no more unused things taking up mental and physical space. Reading a book about the necessity of poverty in the life of the lay Christian, only fueled what became a somewhat scrupulous undertaking.

I began a massive purge with the result that fifty boxes given away or donated so far. I have no idea how we accumulated that much unnecessary stuff, its really is like tribbles I tell you!

Throughout the process, I discovered that an overly zealous commitment to getting rid of all unnecessary belongings can be just as dangerous as hoarding. The point at which you are frustrated with your spouse because they won't let you get rid of *all* of their stuff, you have a problem. Spending substantial amounts of time and energy deliberating the merit of keep ing each individual item at great length is time that could have been better spent.

When used appropriately in an attitude of stewardship, stuff can help foster relationships. Glancing around my living room, I see many things that aid in developing relationships or personal growth. Furniture provides a place for guests to sit and comfortably converse, books enrich the mind, and art is displayed to uplift the soul.

An unhealthy obsession with decluttering in the name of freedom from possessions just tightens the chains all the more. Whether you are obsessed with accumulating stuff or getting rid of it, you are still focused on your possessions.

I am striving to be focused on relationships instead.

***How about you, are you a purger or a keeper? Where do you think the proper balance lies? Is your stuff like Tribbles? Please reassure me that you know what tribbles are!***

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# Abortion, Haircuts, Heroes [at Peace Garden Mama]

## I was going to write

about Halloween today. I typically do that this time of year, and it was perfect, with Halloween landing on a Friday and all. I had some really neat stuff to share about the origins of the holy days that started the whole thing off and the roots of some of the customs.

But my plan came to a screeching halt when a good friend of mine asked if I wanted to join her downtown Wednesday to pray in front of North Dakota's only abortion facility, and this happened:



I'll explain more about the photo in a minute, but first, let me lay out the day.

This wasn't the first time we'd joined up to do this. Our city is just ending its 40 Days for Life initiative for the season, and my prayer partner and I wanted to make sure we did our part by taking time out of the busy to pray for these little babies and their hurting mamas.

The week prior, we'd actually been there with one of the world's leading pro-life advocates, Fr. Frank Pavone of Priests for Life. But the day we spent with Fr. Frank out on the sidewalk wasn't an abortion day. Good, because we didn't have to confront what happens at the facility on a weekly basis. But bad, because in the safety of not seeing it, we can be deceived, forgetting that it really does happen.



**We didn't necessarily seek**

out going on a Wednesday, abortion day, but that's the day that seemed to work best with our schedules. It's almost always tense on those days, and yet there tends to be a heightened sense of purpose, too, especially when women begin filing through those doors just beyond the green "carpet" that precedes the building.

Come to think of it, this really is an appropriate subject for Halloween. This abortion stuff is downright scary, and pretty dark.

Sometimes, we cry at the sight of those women being ushered in, the escorts flanking them to protect them from the pro-life "bullies." (They don't want anyone to know that what we mostly do there is pray and sing and offer a witness of hope.)

The friend who comes with me to the sidewalk is my hero, as are the others who gather there, especially on Wednesdays. It's hard.

We don't get filled up with emotion just because we know the women will be taking part in the killing of their own children, but because we also know that they are confused, hurting, and almost certain, in despair.

We want to be a face of someone who cares. They might not receive us that way, but speaking for myself, that's what I want to convey. There is usually only a short time when any kind of exchange is possible. We who are there praying know we only get a brief chance...to say a word of truth, to try to say a word of love, to give them information, perhaps, that will help them change their mind.

### **We know minds aren't**

changed often, but even one changed mind is worth our efforts, we feel. It means life. It means one more tiny person whose life was set in motion will have a chance to experience the wonders of living. It means one more mother will not have to live with regret; regret that is oftentimes stuffed down so deep it manifests in disguise, as something other than what it really is.

These Wednesday visits can get intense, but the tension this week was more acute than I'd experienced in the past. It started as we arrived and noticed the barriers from road work, which had the escorts scattered more and in greater numbers than what I remembered from times past.

The escorts seemed to be having a good time, laughing and giggling together. They'd brought out some snacks -- donuts and crackers -- and intermittently were jamming to music, dancing on the sidewalk.

In between the dancing and munching, they would stop to escort a woman inside, where she would get in line to await the extraction of her baby from her womb. (sad face...)

Now, back to the woman with the sign. Obviously, she was trying to mock us. I posted this on Facebook and there was quite a conversation thread over this visual.

At one point, she was inching a little too closely toward two people standing near the curb with their signs. From her actions, she seemed hostile, and I began to feel protective of the woman nearest her who seemed about my mother's age. I wouldn't have been okay with someone talking to my mom like that. I stepped up and in between them.

## Terse words were exchanged

, but even then, I tried to be loving in this difficult discussion, even as f-bombs were flying at me and the others. I know that these people protesting our prayerful protests are not the enemy. They are God's children too. But, The Enemy has them in his grasp. So I try to look for a sign of their goodness. I wanted this woman to know she is loved. She wouldn't accept my words.

I didn't feel threatened, though. I felt protected by the armor of Christ and Our Blessed Mother. I felt called to be bold, but not harsh. I wanted her to feel some spark of goodness, in herself or in me, even as she spewed hateful words my way.

After a while, a policeman came up to her. He'd driven by earlier and had seen her in a confrontational stance, it seemed, and asked her to tame it down while reminding her of where to stand.



It felt like a little sign from God. This policeman is my hero.

After he left and she quieted down, out of nowhere, it seemed, a tall man in a white jacket -- a doctor -- appeared. He stood next to the angry woman (whom I am naming Therese so that I can hold her in prayer with a name). For a moment I wondered if he was an abortion doctor. But when he turned around and caught my wondering eyes, he showed me his Rosary beads. So I knew he was with us.

And what a witness, really. What a beautiful witness. To take time out of a busy day as a physician seems a little more than ordinary. At one point he and "Therese" got into a verbal exchange, and he explained to her that, as a physician, he was there to uphold life, as he had promised to do when he took the Hippocratic Oath.



**This doctor is my hero, too.**

It's interesting in many ways. The newspaper for which I write as a columnist is located less than a block from the abortion facility. I know there's no way they can come over every Wednesday and cover what's happening at the sidewalk in front of the Red River Women's Clinic. But I can't help but think they might be missing out on some of the biggest drama going down in the city every week.

I'd rather it weren't the case. But until that light-filled day when we can, as a society, agree to alternatives other than death to address unplanned pregnancies, I'll keep praying, whether as a live witness on the sidewalk or wherever else I happen to be.

God be with us...

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2014/10/faith-family-fridays-abortion-haircuts.html>  
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# You Shall Love the Lord Your God [at A Catholic Moment]



It seems like Catholics do not pay very much attention to the Old Testament readings, because they are ancient, outdated, full of violence, and the people in these stories commit such terrible sins, like murder and adultery. God the Father often seems angry and upset with His people, because they keep turning away from Him to commit serious sins, and to seek other Gods. Who can forget how God destroyed the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and then turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt? His justice is terrible indeed. But, God's love for us far outweighs His justice, as long as we live by His commandments.

The first reading for Mass sounds strict, like God is imposing more rules on us to live by:

*“You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourself in the land of Egypt.”*

(This is a double-edged sword. We aren't supposed to mistreat foreigners or immigrants, but we often do, and we do forget that it wasn't that many years ago that our ancestors were immigrants too.)

*“You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry. My wrath will flare up, and I will kill you with the sword; then your own wives will be widows, and your children orphans.”*

(This verse calls to mind a common saying, that what goes around, comes around. What you give out, you get back. If we do not want others to gossip about us, for an example, then we shouldn't gossip about them. That kind of thing.)

*“If you lend money to one of your poor neighbors among my people, you shall not act like an extortioner toward him by demanding interest from him.”*

(This verse really makes you stop and think about it. Modern people act like they have never heard of this verse in scripture. Our modern society is filled with loan sharks and people with high interest credit card debt that they can't seem to get out from under.)

*“If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you shall return it to him before sunset; for this cloak of his is the only covering he has for his body. What else has he to sleep in? If he cries out to me, I will hear him; for I am compassionate.”*

(Pawn shops thrive in many cities, because people are desperate for money to make ends meet. They pledge their possessions in exchange for a small amount of cash that is usually spent for necessities like food, heat and rent. It just isn’t right for a person to pawn their wedding ring just to feed their children, but this happens sometimes.)

The overriding theme of the first reading for Mass today though, is that God sees the plight of those who suffer and those who are mistreated. He cares what they are going through. Their suffering does not go unnoticed. Every time someone mistreats us or takes advantage of us, God knows it, and it isn’t His will that we are treated this way. He loves us, and He cares about our well-being.

The first reading for Mass isn’t a set of rules after all. God is standing up for those who suffer, by telling those who cause the suffering that they will answer to Him. What a powerful advocate we have, in God the Father! How much He loves each and every one of us. The question is, do we love Him back just as much as He loves us?

The first reading was all about God, and that is what the greatest commandment in the gospel is about too. A scholar of the law tested Jesus by asking him, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus’s answer applies just as much to us today, as it did to the people of his time:

“He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and will all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: Your shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

It is so easy to get these commandments in the *reverse* order in our lives though. Do the priorities in your life ever resemble this?

1. Take care of me.
2. Take care of my family.
3. Take care of my relationship with God.

See how easy it is to get these commandments reversed? Do we spend most of our time, energy and effort in life on ourselves first, our family and other people second, and then whatever is left over we spend on our relationship with God? Isn’t God worth more than our left overs? Is He in third place in our lives? That is a good question to think about today.

Sunday Mass Readings:

Exodus 22: 20-26 / Psalm 18 / 1 Thessalonians 1: 5c-10 / Matthew 22: 34-40

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This contribution is available at <http://www.acatholic.org/you-shall-love-the-lord-your-god/>  
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## Just Breathe [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



We've had a week filled with a lot of little stresses.

You know, family things.

We all have them.

things we can't tell the world on a blog.



We've got anxiety issues and

depression issues.

We've got oppositional behaviors and ADHD

It's heartbreaking when you are the parent, the wife  
and are helpless  
except to deal with it as it comes.



We have 8 people living here each with a different personality.

Everyone needs some kind of attention

Some are needy and *show it*

Some are needy and *demand it*

Some are needy and *pretend not to be.*

We had cut fingers, runny noses and sick kids this week



I had one day this week where I really wanted to go to the noon Mass

but

one particular child made me late

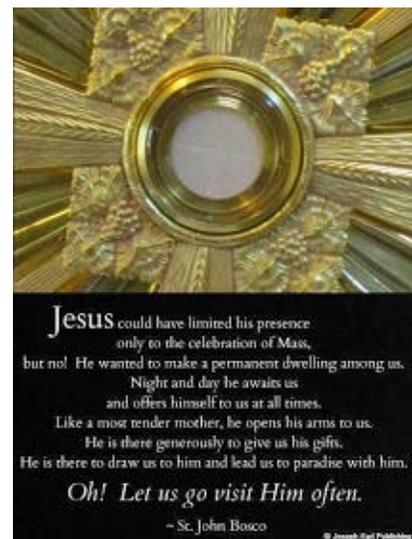
So late, I ended up leaving without her

but by the time I got to the church it was already 10 minutes after 12

SO

I decided to go to the Adoration chapel instead

(at another Catholic church)



I was mad, but as I got out of the van  
and started walking towards the chapel,  
the anger completely left and I felt it lift away  
as if Jesus took it away for me.

I knew in that instant, that I was not mad,  
it was *my own fault* I was late  
I am the adult here, I could have left sooner

(it was not this sweet girl pictured, just so you know)



Once inside, I kept hearing these words

Just Breathe

Just Breathe

And you know what?

I did.

(this is the song I kept hearing while in the chapel)

And Jesus filled me with

His Graces

His Joy

and

His Peace



Hard things happen to us all.

Every day



It's up to us to turn to God



Beg Him for His mercy

just waiting there for us to ask



And Thank Him for all the blessings He has given us

like these little ones



without a problem in the world.



Except those temporary runny noses, cut fingers and little kid things

Oh, and type 1 diabetes and a cleft lip/palate, but who's counting those?



Life is pretty great



Remember to

Go to God

He makes all things new.

Go to any Catholic church,

find the Tabernacle, and sit in front of it.

(you know the gold box with a red candle lit by it)

If your church has Adoration, go visit Jesus.

He waits for you and I

(this is in my neighbors backyard, perfectly in my view)

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## Sacred Tradition: Is It Really From the Apostles? [at Faith of the Fathers]



...**Yes!**

In an earlier comment some time back, a person asked the following question:

*“Can you explain why the Catholic Church claims that the doctrines of Sacred Tradition were handed down from the apostles when there appears to be no record of it?”*

Now, I don't know why this is a common thought among many people, but, there are records of the Sacred Traditions having been handed down from the apostles, and the evidence for such is found in the writings of the early ecclesiastic writers and the Early Church Fathers.

We must realize and understand, that it was the apostles who first spread the Christian faith throughout the world. Jesus Christ had chosen the Twelve Apostles as we learn from the sixth chapter of The Gospel According To Saint Luke:

*12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God. 13 And when day was come, he called unto him his disciples; and he chose twelve of them (whom also he named apostles). 14 Simon, whom he surnamed Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon who is called Zelotes, 16 And Jude, the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, who was the*

traitor.

So Jesus chose the Twelve, and later He ordained them as we can see from the ninth chapter of The Gospel According To Saint Luke:

*1 Then calling together the twelve apostles, he gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. ...6 And going out, they went about through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.*

Jesus also instructed the Twelve to spread the good news of His Kingdom as we see in the first chapter of The Acts of the Apostles:

*6 They therefore who were come together, asked him, saying: Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 But he said to them: It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in his own power: 8 But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.*

So, the Apostles followed the commandment of the Lord, and went throughout the “uttermost part of the earth” and led many people to Christ and established churches throughout the known world. From Asia Minor to Northern Africa to Europe the faith was spread, by the Twelve and then by their disciples and followers whom they ordained as deacons, bishops, and presbyters. The Sacred Tradition was most definitely handed down by the Apostles, and we must remember that what the churches established by them, taught by them, and handed down through their successors, were the *oral* traditions that they received as well as written traditions.

We know that the Apostles went to various regions of the then known world (from both Holy Scriptures and from the traditions of those areas), such as follows:

Saint Andrew - Asia Minor, Greece, and possibly in areas of modern Russia and Poland.

Saint Bartholomew - Asia Minor, Ethiopia, India and Armenia.

Saint James the Greater - Samaria, Judea, and Spain.

Saint John - Asia Minor, Jerusalem, Samaria, Ephesus

Saint Jude - Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia

Saint Matthias - Judea, Cappadocia, Egypt and Ethiopia.

Saint Matthew - Palestine, Ethiopia

Saint Philip - Greece and Asia Minor.

Saint Simon the Zealot - Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iberia

Saint Simon Peter - Palestine, Syria, and Rome

Saint Thomas - Parthia (western Asia), Persia and India

Saint Paul - Greece, Syria, Palestine, Asia Minor, Rome, and Spain

We also know, that in the early Church, there was a disagreement on the date for celebrating Easter. It seems that the eastern Church celebrated Easter according to the Jewish date for celebrating the Passover, which was the fourteenth day of the Jewish month Nisan, regardless of what day of the week it fell on. Several Early Church Fathers (Saint Polycarp for one) defended their choice of that date, saying that it was the ***tradition handed down to them by the Apostles***.

Following are some of the things written by the Early Church Fathers, other ecclesiastical writers of the early Church, and firstly from some of the Epistles of Saint Paul:

### **Saint Paul the Apostle:**

*I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you (1 Cor. 11:2)*

*So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter (2 Thess. 2:15)*

*Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us (2 Thess. 3:6).*

## **Pope Saint Clement I from his Epistle to the Corinthians:**

*The Apostles preached to us the Gospel received from Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was God's Ambassador. Christ, in other words, comes with a message from God, and the Apostles with a message from Christ. Both these orderly arrangements, therefore, originate from the will of God. And so, after receiving their instructions and being fully assured through the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as confirmed in faith by the word of God, they went forth, equipped with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, to preach the good news that the Kingdom of God was close at hand. From land to land, accordingly, and from city to city they preached, and from among their earliest converts appointed men whom they had tested by the Spirit to act as bishops and deacons for the future believers. And this was no innovation, for, a long time before the Scripture had spoken about bishops and deacons; for somewhere it says: I will establish their overseers in observance of the law and their ministers in fidelity.*

*Our Apostles, too, were given to understand by our Lord Jesus Christ that the office of the bishop would give rise to intrigues. For this reason, equipped as they were with perfect foreknowledge, they appointed the men mentioned before, and afterwards laid down a rule once for all to this effect: when these men die, other approved men shall succeed to their sacred ministry. Consequently, we deem it an injustice to eject from the sacred ministry the persons who were appointed either by them, or later, with the consent of the whole Church, by other men in high repute and have ministered to the flock of Christ faultlessly, humbly, quietly and unselfishly, and have moreover, over a long period of time, earned the esteem of all. Indeed, it will be no small sin for us if we oust men who have irreproachably and piously offered the sacrifices proper to the episcopate. Happy the presbyters who have before now completed life's journey and taken their departure in mature age and laden with fruit! They, surely, do not have to fear that anyone will dislodge them from the place built for them. Yes, we see that you removed some, their good conduct notwithstanding, from the sacred ministry on which their faultless discharge had shed luster.*

*It is our duty, then, my brethren, to follow examples such as these. For the Scripture says: Follow the saints for such as follow them shall be sanctified. And again, in another passage, it says: With an innocent man Thou wilt be innocent and with an elect Thou wilt be elect, and with one perverted Thou wilt deal perversely. Let us, therefore, associate with the innocent and law-abiding; these are God's elect.*

These items below come from Saint Jerome's "Lives of Illustrious Men" :

## **Saint Quadratus the bishop of Athens:**

*Quadratus, disciple of the apostles, after Publius bishop of Athens had been crowned with martyrdom on account of his faith in Christ, was substituted in his place, and by his faith and industry gathered the church scattered by reason of its great fear. And when Hadrian passed the winter at Athens to witness the Eleusinian mysteries and was initiated into almost all the sacred mysteries of Greece, those who hated the Christians took opportunity without instructions from the Emperor to harass the believers. At this time he presented to Hadrian a work composed in behalf of our religion, indispensable, full of sound argument and faith and worthy of the apostolic teaching. In which, illustrating the antiquity of his period, he says that he has seen many who, oppressed by various ills, were healed by the Lord in Judea as well as some who had been raised from the dead.*

### **Pantaenus the philosopher:**

*Pantaenus, a philosopher of the stoic school, according to some old Alexandrian custom, where, from the time of Mark the evangelist the ecclesiastics were always doctors, was of so great prudence and erudition both in scripture and secular literature that, on the request of the legates of that nation, he was sent to India by Demetrius bishop of Alexandria, where he found that Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles, had preached the advent of the Lord Jesus according to the gospel of Matthew, and on his return to Alexandria he brought this with him written in Hebrew characters.*

### **Papias**

*Papias [A.D. 120], who is now mentioned by us, affirms that he received the sayings of the apostles from those who accompanied them, and he, moreover, asserts that he heard in person Aristion and the presbyter John. Accordingly, he mentions them frequently by name, and in his writings gives their traditions [concerning Jesus]. . . . [There are] other passages of his in which he relates some miraculous deeds, stating that he acquired the knowledge of them from tradition" (fragment in Eusebius, Church History 3:39 [A.D. 312]).*

The remainder here come from the writings of just a few more of the Early Church Fathers and Ecclesiastical writers:

### **Eusebius of Caesarea**

*At that time [A.D. 150] there flourished in the Church Hegesippus, whom we know from what has gone before, and Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, and another bishop, Pinytus of Crete, and besides these,*

Philip, and Apollinarius, and Melito, and Musanus, and Modestus, and, finally, Irenaeus. From them has come down to us in writing, the sound and orthodox faith received from tradition" (Church History 4:21).

## **Saint Irenaeus**

*"As I said before, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although she is disseminated throughout the whole world, yet guarded it, as if she occupied but one house. She likewise believes these things just as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart; and harmoniously she proclaims them and teaches them and hands them down, as if she possessed but one mouth. For, while the languages of the world are diverse, nevertheless, the authority of the tradition is one and the same" (Against Heresies 1:10:2 [A.D. 189]).*

*"That is why it is surely necessary to avoid them [heretics], while cherishing with the utmost diligence the things pertaining to the Church, and to lay hold of the tradition of truth. . . . What if the apostles had not in fact left writings to us? Would it not be necessary to follow the order of tradition, which was handed down to those to whom they entrusted the churches?"*

*"It is possible, then, for everyone in every church, who may wish to know the truth, to contemplate the tradition of the apostles which has been made known throughout the whole world. And we are in a position to enumerate those who were instituted bishops by the apostles and their successors to our own times—men who neither knew nor taught anything like these heretics rave about.*

*"But since it would be too long to enumerate in such a volume as this the successions of all the churches, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner, whether through self-satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is proper, by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul, that church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the apostles.*

*"With this church, because of its superior origin, all churches must agree—that is, all the faithful in the whole world—and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the apostolic tradition".*

## **Clement of Alexandria**

*"Well, they preserving the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul, the sons receiving it from the father (but few were like the fathers), came by God's will to us also to deposit those ancestral and apostolic seeds. And well I know that they will exult; I do not mean delighted with this tribute, but solely on account of the preservation of the truth, according as they delivered it. For such a sketch as this, will, I think, be agreeable to a soul desirous of preserving from loss the blessed tradition" (Miscellanies 1:1 [A.D. 208]).*

## **Origen**

*"Although there are many who believe that they themselves hold to the teachings of Christ, there are yet some among them who think differently from their predecessors. The teaching of the Church has indeed been handed down through an order of succession from the apostles and remains in the churches even to the present time. That alone is to be believed as the truth which is in no way at variance with ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition" (The Fundamental Doctrines 1:2 [A.D. 225]).*

## **Cyprian of Carthage**

*"The Church is one, and as she is one, cannot be both within and without. For if she is with Novatian, she was not with [Pope] Cornelius. But if she was with Cornelius, who succeeded the bishop Fabian by lawful ordination, and whom, beside the honor of the priesthood the Lord glorified also with martyrdom, Novatian is not in the Church; nor can he be reckoned as a bishop, who, succeeding to no one, and despising the evangelical and apostolic tradition, sprang from himself. For he who has not been ordained in the Church can neither have nor hold to the Church in any way" (Letters 75:3 [A.D. 253]).*

## **Athanasius**

*"Again we write, again keeping to the apostolic traditions, we remind each other when we come together for prayer; and keeping the feast in common, with one mouth we truly give thanks to the Lord. Thus giving thanks unto him, and being followers of the saints, 'we shall make our praise in the Lord all the day,' as the psalmist says. So, when we rightly keep the feast, we shall be counted worthy of that joy which is in heaven" (Festal Letters 2:7 [A.D. 330]).*

*"But you are blessed, who by faith are in the Church, dwell upon the foundations of the faith, and have full satisfaction, even the highest degree of faith which remains among you unshaken. For it has come down to you from apostolic tradition, and frequently accursed envy has wished to unsettle it, but has not been able".*

## **Basil the Great**

*"Of the dogmas and messages preserved in the Church, some we possess from written teaching and others we receive from the tradition of the apostles, handed on to us in mystery. In respect to piety, both are of the same force. No one will contradict any of these, no one, at any rate, who is even moderately versed in matters ecclesiastical. Indeed, were we to try to reject unwritten customs as having no great authority, we would unwittingly injure the gospel in its vitals; or rather, we would reduce [Christian] message to a mere term" (The Holy Spirit 27:66 [A.D. 375]).*

### **Epiphanius of Salamis**

*"It is needful also to make use of tradition, for not everything can be gotten from sacred Scripture. The holy apostles handed down some things in the scriptures, other things in tradition" (Medicine Chest Against All Heresies 61:6 [A.D. 375]).*

### **Augustine**

*"The custom [of not rebaptizing converts] . . . may be supposed to have had its origin in apostolic tradition, just as there are many things which are observed by the whole Church, and therefore are fairly held to have been enjoined by the apostles, which yet are not mentioned in their writings" (On Baptism, Against the Donatists 5:23[31] [A.D. 400]).*

*"But the admonition that he [Cyprian] gives us, 'that we should go back to the fountain, that is, to apostolic tradition, and thence turn the channel of truth to our times,' is most excellent, and should be followed without hesitation" (ibid., 5:26[37]).*

*"But in regard to those observances which we carefully attend and which the whole world keeps, and which derive not from Scripture but from Tradition, we are given to understand that they are recommended and ordained to be kept, either by the apostles themselves or by plenary [ecumenical] councils, the authority of which is quite vital in the Church" (Letter to Januarius [A.D. 400]).*

### **John Chrysostom**

*"[Paul commands,] 'Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or by our letter' [2 Thess. 2:15]. From this it is clear that they did not hand down everything by letter, but there is much also that was not written. Like that which was written, the unwritten too is worthy of belief. So let us regard the tradition of the Church also as worthy of belief. Is it a tradition? Seek no further" (Homilies on Second Thessalonians [A.D. 402]).*

### **Vincent of Lerins**

*"With great zeal and closest attention, therefore, I frequently inquired of many men, eminent for their*

*holiness and doctrine, how I might, in a concise and, so to speak, general and ordinary way, distinguish the truth of the Catholic faith from the falsehood of heretical depravity.*

*"I received almost always the same answer from all of them—that if I or anyone else wanted to expose the frauds and escape the snares of the heretics who rise up, and to remain intact and in sound faith, it would be necessary, with the help of the Lord, to fortify that faith in a twofold manner: first, of course, by the authority of divine law [Scripture] and then by the tradition of the Catholic Church.*

*"Here, perhaps, someone may ask: 'If the canon of the scriptures be perfect and in itself more than suffices for everything, why is it necessary that the authority of ecclesiastical interpretation be joined to it?' Because, quite plainly, sacred Scripture, by reason of its own depth, is not accepted by everyone as having one and the same meaning. . . .*

*"Thus, because of so many distortions of such various errors, it is highly necessary that the line of prophetic and apostolic interpretation be directed in accord with the norm of the ecclesiastical and Catholic meaning" (The Notebooks [A.D. 434]).*

## **Pope Agatho**

*"The holy Church of God . . . has been established upon the firm rock of this Church of blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles, which by his grace and guardianship remains free from all error, [and possesses that faith that] the whole number of rulers and priests, of the clergy and of the people, unanimously should confess and preach with us as the true declaration of the apostolic tradition, in order to please God and to save their own souls" (Letter read at fourth session of III Constantinople [A.D. 680]).*

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## Question: Robbing Peter to Pay Paul? [at Quidquid Est, Est!]

We are back! Well, we're back with a QUESTION!!!!

Marcy asks: "Why was there a split between what I think of as the doctrine Peter and the doctrine of Paul? Was it a matter of 'money talks'? And, of course, why no married priests if Peter was married?" I don't know if Marcy is getting at the famous phrase "Robbing Peter to pay Paul." If she is, the best my research can show indicates that the phrase has nothing to do with these two Apostles. Most of the sources I've found in my research say that the "Peter" in question is actually Westminster Abbey (aka, the Abby of St. Peter's), while the "Paul" is St. Paul's Cathedral. Apparently, after King Henry VIII took over the monastery lands, including Westminster Abbey, in the sixteenth century, he used money from the monastery to pay for repairs to St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Thus Peter was robbed to pay for Paul. The phrase had nothing to do with the doctrines of the two disciples. There is evidence for earlier references to the phrase, but they always have to do with moving money around and nothing to do with the actual Apostles.

However, there is a deeper topic of discussion here. Marcy mentions the debate over the doctrine of St. Peter vs. the doctrine of St. Paul. Many Protestant theologians embrace the writings of St. Paul as an antidote to the theology of the Catholic Church, and since the first pope is St. Peter, these theologians set up St. Paul as an antidote to St. Peter. It is a hot topic in many interdenominational debates.

In order to approach this hotly debated topic, we must first get to know the two great men in question, Sts. Peter and Paul. Both men helped form the Church. If there was a divide between them, if one's beliefs were suppressed for the other, then perhaps the entirety of Christian history is a lie. That would be bad.

But first, a little about St. Peter.

He was a fisherman named Simon, a strong man, tough and weathered by years on the Sea of Galilee. He was like all of us, a sinner. He admits as much to Jesus when Our Lord helps him catch a miraculous net of fish. He was outspoken, saying his mind, a sometimes-flaw which Christ used to spread His Word. Christ did not choose him randomly to be the "Rock" upon which He would build His Church. Matthew 16 is clear on this; it was a defining moment in Church history, and as such merited the change of the Apostle's name from Simon to Peter. Yet this same man who declared Christ was the "Son of God" later tried to forbid Christ from going to Jerusalem. Christ's rebuke of Peter serves to remind us that though Christ works with us for our salvation and the salvation of others, He is in charge, we are not. Jesus used this man of conviction, in spite of his brash nature, to transform the world. It was Peter who, after Christ's Ascension into Heaven, stood up and took charge of the Apostles; Christ had, after all, left Peter the task (see Luke 22:31-32 and John 21:15-19). No one challenged him. When the Holy Spirit

descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost, it was Peter who addressed the crowd, and 3000 joined the Church that day. Peter was the leader, and the Church followed his lead.

Paul was similar to Peter in that he too had great faith and spoke his mind. Unlike Peter, Paul (whose original name was Saul) was well educated and, notably, a Roman citizen. He studied under Gamaliel, one of the most notable rabbis of first century Jerusalem. On fire for God, Saul joined the Persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. He was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians there when a blinding light knocked him to the ground, and Christ's voice announced that Saul was persecuting Him, not merely His followers. This conversion transformed Saul. After retreating to the Arabian desert for three years, Saul met with the Apostles in Jerusalem. During this time, Paul drew into Christ, and soon he referred to himself not by his given name (Saul) but by a Greek version of that name (Paul).

These two men are, as Fr. Robert Barron says in his Catholicism series, "the indispensable men" of the early Church. The Church would not exist as it does today if not for these men. They together formed a huge bulk of the New Testament. St. Peter wrote two letters contained in the Canon of Scripture, as well as working with St. Mark on his Gospel account. St. Paul is responsible for the bulk of the New Testament, penning the majority of the New Testament Letters, as well as working with St. Luke to write the third Gospel and Acts of the Apostles. These two men, Peter and Paul, presented to the Church an authentic understanding of Christ's mission and teaching. St. Peter helped spread the word to Jewish Christians; St. Paul's preaching earned him the title "Apostle to the Gentiles."

What, then, of this split between their teachings? Did they teach different doctrines? If so, who was right?

The controversy stems from a rather strong passage in St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (2:11ff). Here Paul describes how he went to preach to the Gentiles, as Peter, James, and John preached to the Jews. However, while in Antioch, Paul stood up to Peter "to his face" because Peter ate with the Jewish Christians but not the Gentile ones. Protestant scholars see in Paul's statement proof that he and St. Peter were at odds with each other, and that Paul had enough authority to counter the authority of Peter. Peter, it seems, taught one thing while Paul taught something else, and given the chance, Paul would reject Peter's authority. Does this mean Peter was not really in charge of the Christian Church following Christ's Ascension?

The answer lies in the Acts of the Apostles (side note: remember to read the Bible, especially St. Paul's letters, as one book; St. Paul's writings fit into the historical narrative relayed in Acts of the Apostles, and oftentimes the historical writings are helpful for making sense of Paul's writings). In Acts 10 there is the story of a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Cornelius was one of the "God-fearers," pagans who believed in the one true God, but didn't want to go through the rather painful process of becoming

Jewish. Cornelius received a vision telling him to send for Peter. He does this immediately. The next day, as the messengers from Cornelius approach the place where Peter stayed, Peter himself received a vision of a sheet with all sorts of animals, clean and unclean. Peter, though very hungry (it was lunch time), refused to touch the animals, saying “No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean” (Acts 10:14). A voice responded, “What God has cleansed, you must not call common.” This happened three times, and at the end of it, Peter was confused. Then he met the messengers from Cornelius, and things started to make sense. He went with the men to Cornelius, and long story short, Cornelius and his household were baptized, even though they were not Jewish. They became the first Gentile Christians, baptized by the hand of Peter himself.

Now as time progressed, many Gentiles became Christians. Some of the Jewish Christians (converts from Judaism) were upset that the Gentile Christians didn’t have to follow the law of Moses before becoming Christians. Other Christians said the law of Moses no longer had the authority it did before Christ. Christ fulfilled the law, the logic went, and so we don’t need the explicit law any more. Paul supported this latter view. The final decision on this question finally came at the Council of Jerusalem (the first council of its kind in Church history). There the Apostles decided that Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians were equal, and that Gentile Christians did not have to follow the Mosaic law (the whole story is in Acts 15). Peter not only supported this decision, it was his speech in the council that rallied the Apostles to agree. So there in Acts 15 Peter and Paul agree on this issue of Gentile vs. Jewish Christians. They are the same, and one can interact with both groups. All are one in Christ.

What, then, of Galatians 2:11 ff? Look at what Paul says he said to Peter. First, the context.

Chapter two of Paul’s letter begins by Paul saying how he went to Jerusalem to defend his ministry to the Gentiles. He gives a beautiful, reflective summary of the council in Jerusalem:

“When they [the other Apostles] saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles), and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised; only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do” (Gal 2:7-10).

Paul left the council with the blessing and prayers and support of Peter, James, and John (Peter = Cephas). However, the very next verse is the startling one: “But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.” Does Paul know better than Peter? Does a normal bishop dare stand up to the pope? The rest of the passage holds the answer.

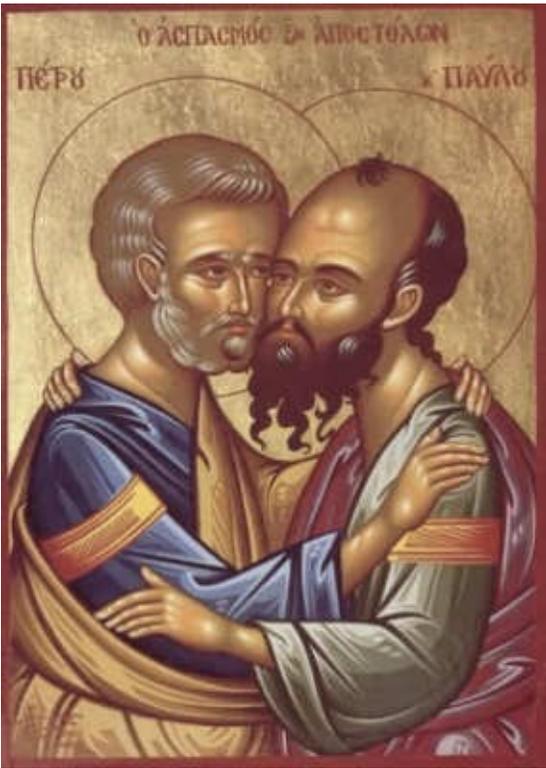
For before certain men came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified. But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose. (Gal. 2:12-21)

This isn't an example of a bishop (Paul) splitting off from the pope's (Peter's) teaching. This is a bishop reminding the pope of his own teaching. Paul does this reprimand not to break off from Peter or to try to take control of the Church, but to unite the Church, rallying the faithful around the teaching of the Apostles.

And before anyone gets too excited, no, this episode does nothing to diminish papal infallibility. Peter was causing scandal through his actions (a discipline-related matter), but he did not break from the set doctrine of the Church.

So there was no conflict between Peter and Paul. In fact, one finds in one of Peter's letters an endorsement of Paul's letters: "Count the forbearance of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability" (2 Peter 3: 15-17). Likewise, in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Paul lists Peter first among those who saw the risen Christ (1 Cor. 15:5). Paul also discourages the Corinthians from distinguishing between his teaching and that of Peter. As Paul states, "let no one boast of men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3: 21-23).

Peter and Paul together transformed the Church. It is no wonder that the Church celebrates both men together on June 29 (which, on a completely unrelated side note, is also my wedding anniversary).



Above: An Icon of Peter and Paul. See, they're bros!

One final note about Peter. Marcy asked why there are no married priests if Peter was married. We know that Peter was married because Jesus healed his mother-in-law (see Matthew 8, Mark 1, and Luke 4 for the story). Why, then, can't priests be married?

The celibate priesthood is a discipline of the Church. Disciplines can change. In the early church, some priests were married (as we mentioned in the post about the question of women priests in Church history), and this discipline is still practice in the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholic Churches. Likewise, in the Roman Catholic Church, certain clergymen who convert from certain Protestant groups (like former Anglicans) may, under certain circumstances, be ordained even though they are married. There are also permanent deacons in the Roman Rite who are married. However, there is a major condition for all of these men, whether they are Eastern or converts or permanent deacons: married clergy must be married prior to receiving the sacrament of Holy Orders, that is, before ordination. Married men can become priests. Priests can't become married men.

There is a lot more which could be said about this. I have a special section in the For More Information below concerning married priests.

For More Information

On “Robbing Peter to Pay Paul”

<http://idiomation.wordpress.com/2011/07/20/rob-peter-to-pay-paul/>

<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/rob-peter-to-pay-paul.html>

On Married Priests

Thurston, Herbert. “Celibacy of the Clergy.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 3. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908. Accessed June 8, 2014. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03481a.htm>

Catholic Answers. “Celibacy and the Priesthood.” Accessed June 8, 2014.  
<http://www.catholic.com/tracts/celibacy-and-the-priesthood>

“Clerical Celibacy (Catholic Church).” Accessed June 8, 2014.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clerical\\_celibacy\\_\(Catholic\\_Church\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clerical_celibacy_(Catholic_Church))

Cattaneo, Arturo. *Married Priests?: 30 Crucial Questions about Celibacy*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2012.

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This contribution is available at <http://quidquidestest.wordpress.com/2014/10/28/question-robbing-peter-to-pay-paul/>  
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## What no one tells you about pain



Around mile 10 of the New Bedford Half Marathon the course takes you beyond the hurricane barrier, and the wind suddenly assaults you, reminding you that you are running along the coast. If you are near the back of the pack, as I usually am, the spectators have gone in at that point, and you are left by yourself in the wind, exhausted from the first ten miles, not quite close enough to the finish to feel optimistic.

That's what I remember from my first half-marathon in the winter of 2006. I walked most of those last three miles, undertrained and in crummy sneakers, with a Walkman cassette player shoved in my pocket (yes, a Walkman in 2006). When I turned the corner toward the finish line the few remaining spectators on that dreary, cold day inspired me and I ran, smiling, through the finish.

That was the start: a truly miserable race that somehow made me want to do more. [I continued running almost against my will.](#) After that I started running the Hartford Half Marathon, [which I would run each subsequent year.](#) Tomorrow would have been my ninth time.

But I got sick instead. My Crohn's flared this summer, pain made running difficult, and severe anemia made working out nearly impossible. So I didn't train, and my body weakened, and I am working my way back. 7 minutes one day, 8 the next. I am up to 17:30.

I have told this story before. I want to tell it again. I want to shout out my heartbreak that I can't run this weekend. I want everyone to know that I have been wronged.

**No one tells you that there is no prize for hardship**, no matter how eloquently you tell people about it, no matter how tragic a figure you cut. In the end you are still complaining, and the purpose of sharing your story fades with every iteration.

**No one tells you that most of the time there is no one to blame for disappointment**, and even if there were you could never punish them in a way that would gain back any of what you have lost.

**No one tells you how badly you will want someone to punish.**

\*\*\*\*\*

“You are the expert on being super healthy and suffering anyway.”

Someone wrote that to me in an email a few years ago and it took my breath away. She was asking about food choices, special diets, and how they affect health. Her observation was an aside, followed by an emoticon indicating some whimsy in the statement. I appreciated the sentiment.

**No one tells you how much people will badger you about what caused your pain.** One acupuncturist was almost belligerent when I couldn't tell him that there was a trigger for the development of this disease in my thirties. I can't say I blame them; if they can find something that I've done wrong then it means they might be safe from such vagaries of health.

**No one tells you that life isn't fair.** No – I take that back, everyone tells you life isn't fair, but then they follow it up with lies about how we will be rewarded for the good things we do, which is the essence of fairness, isn't it?

\*\*\*\*\*

“I'm really glad you are feeling like yourself again.”

My doctor said that to me on the phone earlier this week. Its true: I am feeling more like myself. I am running and working out, I am writing and seeing friends, I am making my way through my to-do list and not collapsing on the couch in the late afternoon.

But my first thought when he said that was *How the heck would you know what “myself” feels like? You don't know anything about me other than that I am sick.*

**No one tells you that you might not want to be a “warrior”.** There were days when fighting was ridiculous, when I had to surrender, when I had to take a two-hour nap at 10 am after my shower. I do not regret giving in, and I do not regret spending what energy I had.

**No one tells you that coming back to health won't feel like a triumph, it will feel like justice.** It will feel like the world righting itself. It will feel like settling back into whoever you were, but maybe in a new skin, slightly changed, warped and distended by whatever stretched you to your limit, but full again with that which makes you yourself.

No one told me how much I would cry this week, knowing that this race, a personal challenge that had become a tradition, was going on without me.

How could I ever have been told? How could I ever understand such things without [pain and brokenness writing a new story across my body](#)? How could I glimpse such wisdom without having earned it?

No one tells you how much you don't know. No one tells you how much there is you won't be told. No one tells you that hardship enters you into a transformative mystery, and that exploring that mystery might be a key to survival. It might be the glimmer of reward. And even if it's not you might need to make it so.



# Memories of First Communion, Confession, Catholic School, and the Nuns [at His UnEnding Love]



As a cradle Catholic, by the age of 6 I was well schooled in learning how to please God. Every morning I would pray, “I offer you all of my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day.” I trusted that God would be with me, and He would bless me and protect me. I attended Catholic School, and Sister Mary Claudia was my teacher. I know it was she who blessed me with Fear of the Lord. I looked at Sister as she taught. She had to be more than 14 feet tall!

Sister drilled us well in the Baltimore Catechism, and we had to review the day’s lesson with our parents at home.

“What is the purpose of your life?” she would intone.

In our sing song voices we would reply, “Our purpose in life is to know God, to serve God in this world and in the next.”

We would say this with sincere hearts and souls, even as poked the kid in front of us, not that I ever poked or pushed anyone!

We attended Mass as a school once a week. We were expected to behave in a manner that would not embarrass our teachers or our parents. We were expected to genuflect with heads bowed when we entered our pew. We were expected to be quiet in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. We were expected to sit, stand, and kneel at the proper times in the Mass. We were expected to focus on the Mass without allowing distractions to enter into our time at Mass. If these things did not happen, our parents received the dreaded phone call about our behavior.

I can’t explain this, but there were times, for no reason, my best friend would dissolve into tears of laughter, unable to stop, because we knew we had to be quiet. I had to sit with Sister Mary Claudia many times during Mass, and, each time I did, the phone rang at my house! The school year ended, and we returned the next year as 2nd graders.

We were much more mature, at least we 2nd graders thought so. We began our preparation for the Sacraments of Confession and our First Reception of the Eucharist. We agreed with our teachers who reminded us that we had to set the example for the younger students. We did our best, but I was still

escorted to join Sister Mary Claudia in her pew. Sister had been moved up to teach 2nd grade that year. Yes, the phone continued to ring at my house.

In spite of these trials of learning not to laugh at the wrong times, Sister taught us well. We learned about the love of Jesus and how our living and true God would come to us when we received our First Communion. This was serious now. We were becoming true Catholics, almost adults. Sister taught us well. We learned that we would not be able to receive Holy Communion if we were in the state of mortal sin. The thought of mortal sin made me gulp, so I tried harder not dissolve into laughter when my best friend and I looked at each other at Mass. I did not want to commit a mortal sin. I wasn't sure if that was a mortal sin, so better safe than sorry.

My efforts were a penance. I was told to "offer up this sacrifice up to God so that I might become a better person and more worthy to receive Jesus on the day of our First Communion. Our efforts were hopeless. My best friend and I were not allowed to sit near other. Sister Mary Claudia no longer needed to escort me back to sit with her. It was just easier to sit with her and be done with it! I did not want to commit a mortal sin!

Our preparation continued through 2nd grade. We were so near the day of our First Communion and our First Confession. Sister taught us what we should say when the door on our side of the confessional would open. "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession." Later, Sister told us, we would say, "It's been 2 weeks, or however long it's been, since our last confession." We were also told to whisper since we did not want anyone else to hear our sins. We were taught the Act of Contrition. We were reminded that we needed to say the penance we were given immediately after we left the confessional. There was no way we would ever forget what we were taught. I could say it in my sleep, and I did on occasion.

My mother had bought my beautiful, white dress and veil for first communion. She said that if I did not laugh during Mass, yes, it was still an issue, she would have a candy bar ready for me to eat after Mass. This was in the days when we had to fast 24 hours before receiving Holy Communion. The day was nearing. We were so excited, but first we had to go to confession.

By now, I was walking with Sister Mary Claudia when we left the classroom to go to church. She had begun to encourage me to sit with my friends. I knew it was still easier to sit with her. I'd be asked, during Mass, to sit with her, anyway.

Part 2:: Stay Tuned, tomorrow.

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This contribution is available at <http://hisunendinglov.blogspot.com/2014/10/memories-of-first-communion-confession.html>

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## From My Heart [at Afternoon Coffee & Evening Tea]

Next month, my first born child will turn eighteen. As in eighteen years old. I have been a mother for eighteen years. I have parented an infant, toddler, preschooler, elementary school student, preteen, teenager, and currently, a young woman. Perhaps realizing this has caused me to reflect on the job my husband and I have done...and what we still have left to do for her and for all our children. I do not believe that eighteen is the magic number...The number that miraculously makes a child an adult...That our job parenting is done. No. We will parent our children, love them, guide them, and help them until the day we die.

I am, however, reflecting on the importance of this wonderful vocation called parenthood. I find myself thinking about the difficult task of instilling the things we desire into our children, while at the same time, allowing for each individual child to be just that...an individual. Steve and I make a conscious effort to expose our children to and instill into them the values we feel are important...faith, empathy, responsibility, honesty, integrity, work ethic, love. We hope to raise our children with the same core values we hold dear to our hearts.

At the same time, however, I realize our children are not mere images of ourselves. They are not simply three girls and one boy. Each of our children is an individual person with his or her own traits, wishes, dreams, and thoughts. Each has dreams and goals that may be vastly different from ours, or even from ones we would choose for our child. And thus...the challenge. It is sometimes difficult to keep a balance between the two. It is challenging to think you know what you want for your child, but realize he or she may want something else.

I realize my goal is not to create young people who think and act exactly as I do. Or ones who make the exact same life choices as I did. I am grateful that each of my children possesses traits and qualities that I do not. I am enjoying watching each grow into the person God planned him or her to be. Yet, I must admit, sometimes it is difficult knowing that eventually, my children will leave the comfort of the home we have created, and begin a life independent of us. As hard as that is to imagine, that is their job. To grow and learn and change and leave. Just as I did. Just as Steve did. And I am thankful to our parents for allowing us to follow our dreams.

What if my parents had not supported my desire to go to a college three hours away, and fulfill my dream of becoming a teacher? What if Steve's parents had not supported his decision to not attend college and begin working in the family business instead? What if they had not supported our engagement and marriage at such a young age?

But they did. They trusted that we would take all the values they had instilled in us and combine them with our own dreams and desires. They trusted us. They trusted God. And Steve and I will do the same. We will continue to teach our children all the things we value and at the same time attempt to nurture their individual characteristics, dreams, and goals.

Parenting is the greatest gift I will ever know. It is also the greatest challenge with the most awesome responsibility. I embrace it with every beat of my heart and every fiber of my being. I know that in the end, nothing I will ever do matters as much as successfully parenting my children. I pray I am worthy of

the gifts God has granted me...and that Steve and I are able one day to look back and say that we did it. We raised our children to be happy, healthy, caring, respectful, empathetic adults. And that they are happy living the lives they chose. Nearby, of course. ; )



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This contribution is available at <http://afternooncoffeeandeveningtea.blogspot.com/2014/10/from-my-heart.html>  
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## Teaching in Someone Else's Shoes [at FranciscanMom]

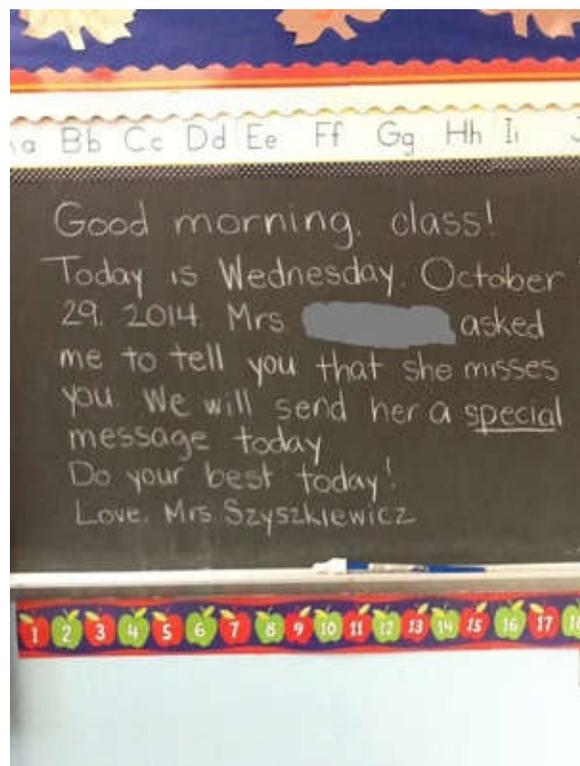
This past week, I've been substituting for one of the second-grade teachers at Little Brother's school. I'll probably be there for the next couple of weeks, which is a little terrifying.

**Substitute teaching is not just a job. It's a ministry. And it definitely isn't babysitting.**

**Substitute teachers minister to students** who are used to the way their Real Teacher does things. Subs try to maintain the usual routines, learning them as they go along and finding out halfway through a task that their Real Teacher does things differently. The kids aren't being rude or defiant—they're looking for the comfort of the routine their teacher has so carefully established. In second grade, it's all about routine. There's even a procedure for sharpening pencils. I'm a big fan of procedures, but the kids know them and I don't, so I'm at a disadvantage. This week has been Procedure Boot Camp in the second grade—*for me!*

**Substitute teachers minister to parents** who worry that without their child's Real Teacher, the kids will fall behind or miss out on learning key concepts. We're not doing busy work here; I'm not babysitting the kids. I am teaching them the next math chapter and helping them practice their spelling words. We worked on the Oxford comma this week (and I even taught them its official name, which was *not* in the book, but that's just a bonus you get when your substitute teacher has an M.A. in English Literature.)

**Substitute teachers minister to the principal**, who wants to make sure that learning is happening, the children are following the routines already in place, and no one's swinging from the light fixtures or getting hit by cars in the parking lot AKA recess playground (*yes, I've had to prevent that last from happening.*)



I love this teacher's custom of a Morning Message. It's a fun part of their daily routine.

**Substitute teachers minister to the Real Teacher**, especially when it's a long-term situation. The sub walks that fine line of making sure the Real Teacher knows that the sub does not want to replace her, but just wants to do the best possible job as an unrehearsed understudy.

The students and I pray for their Real Teacher every day, which is a lovely perk of working at a Catholic school. It's nice for me to be working, but I don't want to poach her job. I know she'd rather be in her classroom with her students, and I'm trying to make it as easy for her to be away from them as I possibly can. When she comes back, I want her to just be able to step back into her usual M.O.

We've had our challenging moments, like today when I was frustrated because we were assigning next month's classroom chores, and there was a dispute about whether someone could choose a job he'd already had in September, because "you can't have the same job 2 months in a row" means, to some children, "you can't have a job you've done before EVER." I made an executive decision and shut down the dispute fast, and half the kids were not happy. Oh well.

We've also had our sweet moments. If someone drops a crayon box, half the class hits the deck to help pick them up—unasked. One child has measured me for a rubber-band bracelet. And yesterday when they were answering some questions from their religion book, they reached one that asked, "Who helps you learn about Jesus?" and a few of the kids asked if I would write my name on the board so they could spell it and fill it in for that answer.

I'm following someone else's procedures and carrying out someone else's lesson plans. I'm trying to be fair to my grade-partner teacher who is shouldering extra burdens as she helps me pick my way across an unfamiliar curriculum and grade level. I'm going home each day with tired feet and a tired voice and wearing chalk-dust smears.

I'm teaching in someone else's shoes. They don't quite fit me, but for the sake of the kids, the parents, the principal and the Real Teacher, I'm doing my best to make it work.

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This contribution is available at <http://franciscanmom.com/2014/10/31/teaching-in-someone-elses-shoes/>  
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## Learning God Within Me [at Small Paul]

I said in one of my past posts, that I do not know myself because God lives in me now and I do not know God that well. I have been praying to the Holy Spirit about the discovery process. One of the revelations that came to me was that I should stop asking for God's will and start accepting His will being played out through me.

In prayer in the morning I always relive my actions from the day before. I reviewed them to see how I could have done things differently, how much good God did (with my cooperation) and always to find lessons or corrections that God wishes to reveal to me (what part of myself do I still need to get to God).

As you know from reading this blog my trust level in God is at an all-time high and I'm trying to get used to it. In this effort it appears to me that I may have been too pushy in wanting friendships, or deepening existing friendships. I have a good friend that was pushed by a church lady when he was a small boy. From that point on he rejected the church. Last week I actually apologize to some of my existing friends for wanting a deeper friendship at a faster pace than they were ready for or perhaps wished for. Their response was quite the opposite of what I expected. They said that they did not see it that way. Whether they were being polite or not, I may never to know. I failed to look at things from their perspective (as much as I can understand them).

In this reflection I also discovered that I love people so much, and respect their free will so much, that I just want God's will for them, whether I am in their life or not. Furthermore, I don't even care how much I am in their life as long as it's God's will.

Isn't that how God sees all of us? He says to us: "Here I am. I am your best friend. I will answer any question you have. I will help you anyway I can (because it's God provided it in your best interest). All you have to do is ask me." Then God it waits patiently. He loves us so much that He respects our free will. He may prod us.

I have to do the same thing with people. I admit I've had to learn this lesson many, many times over the course of my life. My love for people drives me. Because God lives in me, I am discovering that He loves them, and me, enough to wait for us to say yes to Him. I am now accepting God living in me. That means that people will see Christ in me and the Holy Spirit will guide my actions to them. It also means that I will get used to being patient because of my love and acceptance of who each individual person is. I must let all of my pushiness go. The Holy Spirit and God can prod each one of us according to God's will.

God living in me will show Himself to each individual I encounter as He sees fit. Then we wait. It is a proposition to each individual I meet.

“Here I am. I am your best friend. I will answer any question you have. I will help you anyway I can (because I am not God) provided it does not go against God. All you have to do is ask me.”

Then I give it to God and offer any pain as a prayer for them and for more me to trust in God more.

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This contribution is available at <http://goingdeeper-catholic.blogspot.com/2014/10/learning-god-within-me.html>  
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# Happy Halloween [at Quiet Consecration]

An Old Irish Tale states:

On route home after a night's drinking, Jack encounters the Devil and tricks him into climbing a tree. A quick-thinking Jack etches the sign of the cross into the bark, thus trapping the Devil. Jack strikes a bargain that Satan can never claim his soul. After a life of sin, drink, and mendacity, Jack is refused entry to heaven when he dies. Keeping his promise, the Devil refuses to let Jack into hell and throws a live coal straight from the fires of hell at him. It was a cold night, so Jack places the coal in a hollowed out turnip to stop it from going out, since which time Jack and his lantern have been roaming looking for a place to rest.

Now, I must admit I like this tale. I like it because it embodies some of my favorite things:

1. The Irish
2. Quick thinking Drunks
3. The Christian who thinks He has Heaven Sowed up (or Once Saved Always Saved)
4. The Come Upance of the Arrogant

Halloween has never been a problem for me as a Catholic Christian. I never worried about it being Satan's birthday or having pagan origins. In fact, none of the accusations that start out "That was a pagan holiday" has ever bothered me because I understand how True Evangelization works. The Church teaches that man has a natural inclination to search for God and may, in the absence of Truth, try his best to come up with ways to reach his Creator. When The Church comes to a people, it is Her responsibility to honor those customs that were the honest and natural attempt to know, love and serve God and to adapt those customs to Truth. Thus honoring The Creator Spirit at the end of harvest or recognizing that our beloveds go on to another life become the Feast of All Saints and the Feast of All Souls. We have some fun with the customs, we stick a light in a pumpkin instead of a coal into a turnip and we just have fun.

I will tell you I do not like the slutty girl look in terms of costumes but that is just me. I remember trying to participate that way when I was in college and I just always felt so uncomfortable - not that I had the courage to say that, heavens no! God forbid I stand up for myself and be authentic. Heck, I would have had no friends!

Which is not true, right? Right - I would have had friends, but I didn't trust God back then; rather, I trusted only my own fear and that God shaped hole in my gut that was fixed only when a good swallow of Cutty Sark hit my stomach.

Those days are gone. Today I enjoy my holidays and do not take them too seriously, unless they are supposed to be seriously taken.

Tomorrow, for instance, is a Holy Day of Obligation. I get to go to Mass.

Did you hear me?

I said, "I GET TO GO TO MASS".

I get to do something the brave women and men of Iraq and Syria and parts of Africa are being prevented from doing - I get to stand before God and say, "I Love You" and receive Him in the Eucharist.

How wonderful is my life?

Have a great night tonight, people.

Oh...yeah...

BOO!

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2014/10/happy-halloween.html>  
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## Yeats, Cthulhu and Synod 14 [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

Some mainstream news isn't "journalistic infotainment-like art-product," as

[Hyraxx](#)

, the alien reporter in Buck Godot, described her work.

That said, there's a reason for my concentrating on

[News.va](#)

, the Vatican's official news source, for Synod 14 coverage.

Outfits like CNN, Reuters, BBC News, and Mirror Online, depend at least partly on advertising to pay their bills. I've got no problem with that, particularly since I couldn't afford 'pay per view' news services.

But since they rely on advertising, their editors are obliged to focus on what attracts the most viewers: and advertisers. Most folks aren't like me, thank God, so we get news that's full of drama and suspense.

Some news services lay it on with a

[trowel](#)

, embracing the

[if it bleeds, it leads](#)

philosophy. Others present their emotionality in a more genteel manner: with, I think, the same fervor.

Emotions are part of being human. We're

*supposed*

to feel happy, sad, or whatever. But God gave us brains: and expects us to

*think*

, too. (Catechism of the Catholic Church,

[1704](#)

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[1731](#)



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[1762](#)

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[1769](#)

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[1778](#)

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[1780](#)

,  
[1792](#)

,  
[1951](#)

)

I have no problem with emotions: which is a good thing, since I'm a very emotional man. I've enjoyed shows like

[Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade](#)

and

[Revenge of the Cybermen](#)

, but that's entertainment.

I like my news, particularly news about anything I take seriously, to be heavy on facts and very light on feelings. That's why I've been following Synod 14 mostly through

[News.va](#)

, and I'm back where I started.

## **More than You Need to Know About Cthulhu**

*"New game: when reading blog posts today about the Synod, replace 'Synod' with 'Cthulhu's Return' and 'Relatio' with 'Necronomicon.' "*

(A tip of the hat to [Jonathan Sullivan](#), on Google Plus (October 13, 2014))

For the benefit of folks who have better things to do than read the sort of stuff I do:

## [Cthulhu](#)

is a cosmic entity imagined by H. P. Lovecraft, back in 1928. Cthulhu caught on, and has appeared in quite a few stories since.

In many stories, the problem isn't that Cthulhu doesn't like humans: it's that Cthulhu notices us the way we notice pond scum.



I think

## [Lovecraft](#)

's

## [fear](#)

of his civilization's imminent doom was understandable, that he deserves credit for imagining space aliens who didn't act like humans in monster suits, and that's another topic. (

[June 27, 2014](#)

)

## "...Things Fall Apart; the Centre Cannot Hold..."

If I thought this world was perfect in the 1950s, I might feel like Yeats did:

*"...Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity...."*  
("The Second Coming," W. B. Yeats (1919))

Yeats had a point. It was the end of civilization as he knew it.

Some folks see today's problems, think it's the end of civilization as we know it: and feel that this is a bad thing.

I agree with them, sort of. I think it's the end of civilization as we know it: and about time, too.

You see, I

## **remember**

the 'good old days,' and they weren't.

We don't live in a perfect world. Dragging the world back to an imagined 'Golden Age' isn't an option. But there's hope that we can build a better world. (

[August 31, 2014](#)

;

[August 3, 2014](#)

)

## Waiting a Year

I'm looking forward to reading any documents that come from Synod 14: the

***finished***

documents.

I'm not very interested in details of who said what about whose ideas. That's because I don't plan on making a study of the psychology, planning strategy, or rhetoric, of the Synod.

I do plan to write about what comes from Synod 14. But since I don't make "journalistic infotainment-like art-product," I'll wait until the document or documents are released before writing about what they said.

I'll have to be patient, though. Synod 14's job was discussing "pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelisation," and drafting a document for the Episcopal Conferences:

*"...we still have one year to mature, with true spiritual discernment, the proposed ideas and to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties...."*

*"...'One year to work on the "Synodal Relatio" which is the faithful and clear summary of everything that has been said and discussed in this hall and in the small groups. It is presented to the Episcopal Conferences as 'lineamenta' [guidelines]...'"*

(Pope Francis, from Vatican Radio, via [News.va](#) (October 18, 2014))

That's right: folks will be working on the "Synodal Relatio" for another year.

I'm quite confident that we

***won't***

have nine, or 11, Commandments in November of 2015.

I'm also pretty sure that some folks will be very upset about what Synod 14 said, didn't say, or — in their opinion — said the 'wrong' way.



I put a few excerpts from news.va at the end of this post.

[1](#)

Believe it or not, I cut a

**lot**

out of the first excerpt, and even more out of the rest.

Small wonder that most news services snip out the juiciest bits for their Synod 14 coverage.

## "Tensions and Temptations"

In Synod 14's closing speech, Pope Francis talked about "tensions and temptations, of which a few possibilities could be mentioned." This is my quick paraphrase of the Pope's list of temptations to:

- Hostile inflexibility
  - Wanting to close oneself within the written word
  - Not allowing oneself to be surprised by God
- A destructive tendency to goodness [Italian, "buonismo"]
  - Treating symptoms, not causes
- Transform
  - Stones into bread
  - Bread into a stone
- Come down off the Cross
- Neglect the 'depositum fidei' [the deposit of faith]  
(Paraphrased from Pope Francis' remarks, via Vatican Radio/[News.va](#))

That's a

**very**

quick paraphrase. There's enough in each of the five paragraphs I boiled down for another of these 'being Catholic' posts. At least.

## Change Happens

This isn't the 1st, 11th, or 20th, century any more. Change happens, some things don't change, and that's yet another topic. Topics. (Catechism,

[302](#)

,

[1954](#)

-

)

I said this last week: what the Church teaches hasn't changed in two millennia. How it's taught has been changing, and will continue to change.

Haven't had enough of me yet? There's more:

Background:

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Excerpts from News.va:

["Pope Francis speech at the conclusion of the Synod"](#)

Vatican Radio, via News.va (October 18, 2014)

*"At the conclusion of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family, Pope Francis addressed the assembled Fathers, thanking them for their efforts and encouraging them to continue to journey.*

*"Below, please find Vatican Radio's provisional translation of Pope Francis' address to the Synod Fathers:*

*"Dear Eminences, Beatitudes, Excellencies, Brothers and Sisters,*

*"With a heart full of appreciation and gratitude I want to thank, along with you, the Lord who has accompanied and guided us in the past days, with the light of the Holy Spirit.*

*"From the heart I thank Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod, Bishop Fabio Fabene, under-secretary...*

*"...I can happily say that – with a spirit of collegiality and of synodality – we have truly lived the experience of 'Synod,' a path of solidarity, a 'journey together.'*

*"And it has been 'a journey' ... there were also moments of desolation, of tensions and temptations, of which a few possibilities could be mentioned:*

*" - One, a temptation to hostile inflexibility, that is, wanting to close oneself within the written word, (the letter) and not allowing oneself to be surprised by God, by the God of surprises, (the spirit); within the law, within the certitude of what we know and not of what we still need to learn and to achieve. From the time of Christ, it is the temptation of the zealous, of the scrupulous, of the solicitous and of the so-called – today – 'traditionalists' and also of the intellectuals.*

*" - The temptation to a destructive tendency to goodness [it. buonismo], that in the name of a deceptive mercy binds the wounds without first curing them and treating them; that treats the symptoms and not the causes and the roots. It is the temptation of the 'do-gooders,' of the fearful, and also of the so-called 'progressives and liberals.'*

" - The temptation to transform stones into bread to break the long, heavy, and painful fast (cf. Lk 4:1-4); and also to transform the bread into a stone and cast it against the sinners, the weak, and the sick (cf. Jn 8:7), that is, to transform it into unbearable burdens (Lk 11:46).

" - The temptation to come down off the Cross, to please the people, and not stay there, in order to fulfil the will of the Father; to bow down to a worldly spirit instead of purifying it and bending it to the Spirit of God.

" - The temptation to neglect the 'depositum fidei' [the deposit of faith], not thinking of themselves as guardians but as owners or masters [of it]; or, on the other hand, the temptation to neglect reality, making use of meticulous language and a language of smoothing to say so many things and to say nothing! They call them 'byzantinisms,' I think, these things...

"Dear brothers and sisters, the temptations must not frighten or disconcert us, or even discourage us, because no disciple is greater than his master; so if Jesus Himself was tempted – and even called Beelzebul (cf. Mt 12:24) – His disciples should not expect better treatment.

"Personally I would be very worried and saddened if it were not for these temptations and these animated discussions; this movement of the spirits, as St Ignatius called it (Spiritual Exercises, 6), if all were in a state of agreement, or silent in a false and quietist peace. Instead, I have seen and I have heard – with joy and appreciation – speeches and interventions full of faith, of pastoral and doctrinal zeal, of wisdom, of frankness and of courage: and of *parresia*. And I have felt that what was set before our eyes was the good of the Church, of families, and the 'supreme law,' the 'good of souls' (cf. Can. 1752). And this always – we have said it here, in the Hall – without ever putting into question the fundamental truths of the Sacrament of marriage: the indissolubility, the unity, the faithfulness, the fruitfulness, that openness to life (cf. Cann. 1055, 1056; and *Gaudium et spes*, 48)....

"...Dear brothers and sisters, now we still have one year to mature, with true spiritual discernment, the proposed ideas and to find concrete solutions to so many difficulties and innumerable challenges that families must confront; to give answers to the many discouragements that surround and suffocate families.

"One year to work on the 'Synodal Relatio' which is the faithful and clear summary of everything that has been said and discussed in this hall and in the small groups. It is presented to the Episcopal Conferences as 'lineamenta' [guidelines].

"May the Lord accompany us, and guide us in this journey for the glory of His Name, with the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Saint Joseph. And please, do not forget to pray for me! Thank you!

"[The hymn *Te Deum* was sung, and Benediction given.]

"Thank you, and rest well, eh?"

More excerpts, even more drastically cut down to size:

["Message of the Synod Assembly on the pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelisation"](#)

VIS, via News.va (October 18, 2014)

*"This morning a press conference was held in the Holy See Press Office to present the Message of the Third Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops...Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture and president of the Commission for the Message and Oswald Gracias, archbishop of Bombay, India. The full text of the message is published below:*

*" 'We, Synod Fathers, gathered in Rome together with Pope Francis in the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, greet...*

*"...We offer you the words of Christ: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me'....*

*"...We recognise the great challenge....*

*"...We remember the women who suffer violence and exploitation, victims of human trafficking, children abused by those who ought to have protected them and fostered their development, ... 'The culture of prosperity deadens us.... all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us'. We call on governments and international organizations to promote the rights of the family for the common good.*

*"Christ wanted his Church to be a house with doors always open to welcome everyone. We warmly thank our pastors, lay faithful, and communities who accompany couples and families and care for their wounds....*

*"...Father, grant that we may all see flourish a Church that is ever more faithful and credible, a just and humane city, a world that loves truth, justice and mercy'."*

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["Synod on Family shows Church whose doors are always open"](#)

Vatican Radio, via News.va (October 18, 2014)

*"Bishops attending the Synod on the Family on Saturday concluded their two week meeting by voting on a final document which will form the basis for discussion over the coming year....*

*"...A lengthy standing ovation echoed around the Synod Hall as Pope Francis spoke of the journey that Synod participants have travelled since the opening Mass in St Peter's Basilica nearly 2 weeks ago. He talked of the enthusiasm and grace he'd experienced listening to pastors and to couples sharing their experiences of married life. And he talked of the disappointments, tensions and temptations that have been part of the conversations too. The temptation to be closed into the 'hostile inflexibility' of the traditionalist or the destructive temptation to be a liberal 'do-gooder.' But none of these temptations should discourage us, the Pope said, because this is the Church which is not scared of rolling up its sleeves to tend peoples' wounds, rather than standing aloof and passing judgements from an ivory tower. Following in Jesus' footsteps, it's a Church which is*

not afraid to eat with prostitutes and publicans, a Church whose doors are always open to help those in need....

"...'Keep in mind this is not a magisterial document....the Pope asked for it to be made available to show the degree of maturity that has taken place and that which still needs to take place in discussions over the coming year.'

"So that's all from the Vatican press office for the Synod on the Family for 2014 – now the real work begins of taking this document back to the dioceses and parishes, in preparation for the bigger and even more significant Ordinary Synod on the Family in October 2015."

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["Card Napier: Synod document highlights all main concerns"](#)

Vatican Radio, via News.va (October 17, 2014)

"Cardinal Wilfrid Fox Napier, Archbishop of Durban in South Africa, is one of the bishops participating in the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family that is coming to a close in the Vatican.

"He is also one of those appointed to the group drafting a final document for the Synod for submission to Pope Francis by Sunday....

"...In a conversation with Vatican Radio's Linda Bordoni, Cardinal Napier spoke of how the Synod has been an occasion to listen to differing ideas and concerns from across the world, and of how a climate of frank and open discussion has given life to a working document that reflects the core issues that have been addressed...."

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["Synod on the Family: Reports of English language working groups"](#)

Vatican Radio, via News.va (October 17, 2014)

"Below we publish the texts of the reports presented for consideration in the drafting of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops' final document or *Relatio synodi* from the English language Working Groups.

"*Relatio - Circulus Anglicus 'A'*

"Moderator: Em.mo Card. Raymond Leo BURKE

"Relator: S.E. Mons. John Atcherley DEW

"I present this report of behalf of the English speaking group Anglicus 'A'. The group has suggested a number of amendments to the *RELATIO POST DISCEPTATIONEM*, some are major amendments and others quite small, nevertheless they have significant meaning attached to them. In proposing amendments we have shifted the focus from particular situations described in the *Relatio* to the people involved in the situations, concentrating on the goodness to be found in them.

"We believed that there needed to be a new introduction to the *Relatio*...."

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This contribution is available at <http://catholiccitizenamerica.blogspot.com/2014/10/yeats-cthulhu-and-synod-14.html>  
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# Pray for Your Husband [at The Koala Bear Writer]

**When my husband and I met**, during the first days of our first degrees over a decade ago, he was in the seminary discerning a vocation to the Catholic priesthood. Friends have joked that I prayed him right out of the seminary. While it's true that I was attracted to him at our first meeting, I never prayed he would leave the seminary; I prayed only that he would know God's will for his life.



A year and a half later, when he left the seminary, he was wise enough to wait some time before beginning to consider a relationship. During my own time of [exploring the Catholic Church](#), I was grateful for his knowledge about the faith and ability to answer my questions. Now that he is the spiritual head of our family, I am grateful for the various opportunities for formation which he had.

**Too often, though, I leave the prayer to him.** He's the one who reminds me at the end of the day that we need to pray together. My prayers are usually a quick, "Lord, be with so-and-so" when I hear about a hurting friend. Yet I know he needs my prayers too. As other wives have mentioned during this series, our husbands work hard jobs. They need our support in many ways, and one way that we can support them while they are at work and we are at home is to lift them up in prayer.

"Praying for your husband changes the way he walks through life." ~ Kathi Lipp, [Praying God's Word for Your Husband](#)

**My prayer for my husband has always been God's best for him.** Over the years, as we've considered various moves and jobs and returning to school, I've prayed that God would open the right doors for him and for our family. I've prayed that God would lead him—and then trusted that God has. When I'm not sure how or what to pray for him, then I turn to Kathi Lipp's book [Praying God's Word for Your Husband](#) or to the Time-Warp Wife's [31 Prayers for our Husbands](#).

During the hard times in our marriage, I'll admit I found it very hard to pray for him. Jesus says, "Pray for those who harass you" ([Matthew 5:44 CEB](#)) but that's about the last thing that I think about when [I'm angry with him](#) (so it's probably the first thing I should do). It's really hard to stay angry at someone when you're praying for them. Lipp shares a few barriers to prayer and how to overcome them. She adds,

"There is no better, safer place to be in your marriage than in constant conversation with your Maker. I hope you learn to love God better in the midst of your prayers, and from there the abundance of love and peace and justice you are experiencing spills out on your husband."

Now, when we're praying for our husbands, it can often be easy to pray "at" them. "Lord, I wish my husband would learn to take out the garbage" or "Lord, please let him remember to pick up his socks." We want our prayers to effect changes in their lives. And prayer usually does—but maybe not in the way we'd like. Susan suggests looking at your husband as God does:

"When you go to God in prayer for (or at) your husband, you're talking to God about His son, too! This doesn't mean that you should sugar-coat or 'spiritualize' your prayers. Again, be straight with God. He cares about your heart's desires. But He cares about your husband's just as much. You are—both of you—precious to Him." ~ Susan at [Wisdom for Wives](#)

**If you aren't sure how to pray for your husband, ask him.** Try to see from [his perspective](#) and consider where he might need prayer today. My husband often asks me to pray as he's leaving for an interview or mentions that he has a big meeting in the afternoon. When I know that he's expecting me to pray, I'm much more purposeful about doing it throughout the day, whenever I think of it. A little text or email to let him know that you're praying can also be encouraging.



*How do you pray for your husband?*



Bonnie 

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This contribution is available at <http://www.thekoalabearwriter.com/2014/10/pray-for-your-husband/>  
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## A Golf Shot [at Dancing in the Rain]

The ball was buried in the bunker. It was up close enough against the lip of the sand trap that I couldn't place both feet in the bunker. My left foot was on the grass, my right foot in the sand. He said, "turn the club forward, close it down" Though the ball was enfolded in sand, I swung and popped the ball onto the green, leaving myself a putt for Par. "That was a golf shot," he exclaimed. It's one of the highest compliments I think anyone can receive on the golf course. It's my personal favorite.

Dad usually proclaims this affirmation after a "feel" shot - one that requires a seemingly effortless touch to obtain both the right speed and the right direction. (You might think that's obviously the goal, what's the big deal? Executing this combination is a hell of a lot harder than it looks). One of the things I love about a golf shot, besides the feeling of hitting the sweet spot, is that it exudes athleticism and ease while having a stack of knowledge behind the finesse. It's an acquired feel, usually earned after working through the unfeeling and wrong feeling of many previous attempts, coupled with the knowledge of the right weight and speed of how to best approach the shot.

True on the golf course, the process of learning and pursuing excellence applies also to the spiritual life.

A repetition of virtuous action is necessary for us to strengthen our spiritual and moral muscles. We need to cultivate our response but also our disposition of receptivity. Is prayer difficult for you? Feel like God doesn't hear or that you can't listen? It's like any relationship. Communication gets easier with practice. The other day Matthew Kelly subbed for me (via iTunes) and he spoke about starting out in prayer. He spent 10 minutes a day and in the beginning, he would sit in the Church planning his day. After a few weeks he moved to listing all he needed God to do, told Him to get busy, and he'd be back tomorrow. And then he had a decision to make and Matthew asked God what did He think he should do. He said that's when things changed. It's a relationship.

When I think about the beautiful gift of married love, especially amongst the old faithful, you can see they love with a "golf shot" kinda "feel" love. Not the Hallmark feelings kind of love but a love that is tried and true and instinctual. Do we strive to live this kind of love with God? When are you investing in your relationship with God today? For how long? Where will you pray? How will you pray/listen? Maybe it's just setting time aside to list three things you are thankful for, maybe it's a rosary without distractions, maybe it's a commitment to going to Mass and or going to Confession before receiving the Eucharist if you previously missed Mass. Maybe it's praying grace before meals. Maybe it's dusting off the Bible to hear His promises as a personal letter for YOU. Whatever it is - pick one. One place, one time, one way. And be open to the gift of change for "Our lives change when our habits change."

One of the things about a feel shot is that there is a tempo kind of timing to it - controlled and steady. Let

us consistently live lives of extraordinary generosity. Let us be thankful to God for all He has given and for the invitation to learn to hit the “feel shots” of moral and spiritual excellence. Let us be transformed by Love knowing anytime we give to the Lord it is returned exponentially as He desires our happiness and fulfillment more than we do. We can't love who we don't know and we can't know if we don't go - to Mass, Confession, the Bible, the classroom of silence. Let us go joyfully.

Mama said there'll be days like this  
There'll be days like this mama said

It takes a little time sometime

to get your feet back on the ground

Walk along the river, sweet lullaby, it just keeps on flowing,

It don't worry 'bout where it's going, ,no, no

Don't fly, mister blue bird, I'm just walking down the road,

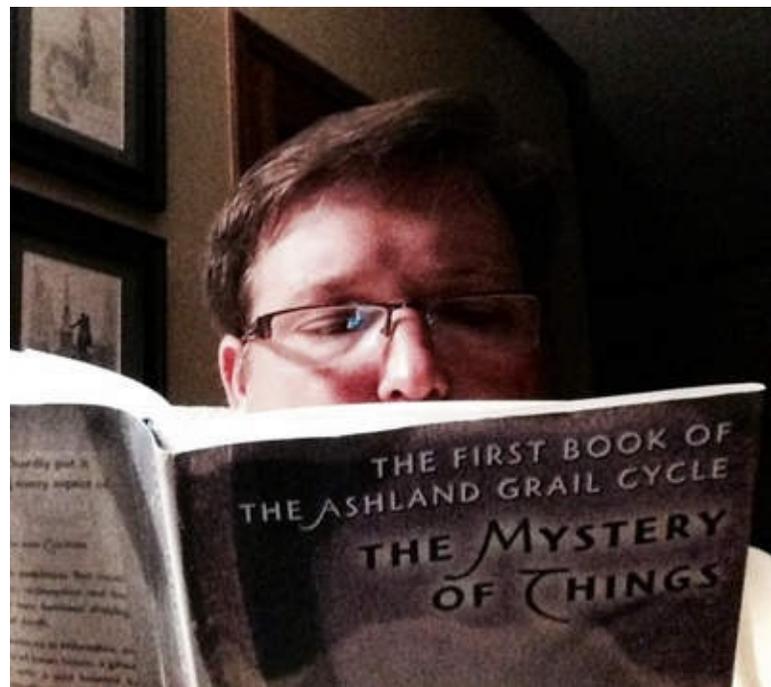
Early morning sunshine tell me all I need to know

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This contribution is available at <http://dancingintherain401.blogspot.com/2014/10/a-golf-shot.html>  
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## The Mystery of Things by Debra Murphy



Like good wine, sometimes a book is meant to be consumed in its time. Such was [The Mystery of Things](#) by Debra Murphy for me. Although I purchased an autographed copy in 2004 on its publication, the book was an intimidating 400 pages—intimidating because I had small children then and was lucky to finish novellas.

However, as the kids have gotten older, I've had time for little luxuries like sleeping in, watching complete television shows, eating the food I've prepared for myself, and reading long novels.

While seemingly overdue for both reviewing and reading, the author tells me the long-awaited second book in the *The Ashland Grail Cycle* should be out next year, which makes reading this first book of the cycle now just about perfect. I summered on the lake with *Mystery*. You should spend the autumn with it.

A suicidal college student walks off the eighth floor of Milwaukee's city hall with a photocopy of the Prophet Isaiah's description of the fall of Satan. Next to it, he has written "Introibo ad altere Dei" (I will go to the altar of God), the first words of the old Latin Mass.

This juxtaposition of the descent to hell and reaching for heaven sets the theme for the novel which takes place among humans—the only beings who can nearly simultaneously accomplish both. The suicide raises questions, but before they are answered, a priest is dead.

Then, women begin to die at the hands of a serial killer. What binds the women, the priest and the suicide together is a connection to James Ireton, an English literature doctoral candidate at a local graduate studies institute.

The murders are gruesome. The alibis are tight. The guilt is as deep and broad as Lake Michigan, the great inland sea on the shores of which the story takes place.

And, of course, there's Shakespeare. But, is it Othello or Hamlet or one of the lesser works Ireton and his fellow students are reading that will be the key to unlocking the mystery? Or will it be the poems of Edmund Spenser that reveal all to a 21st Century cast of professors, priests, police officers, prostitutes, and a penitent homosexual. Just to break the alliteration, there's also Lupe, James's unlikely but beautiful Mexican-Irish love interest, a dragon, and Our Lady.

In *Mystery*, Murphy accomplishes what many Catholic writers have set out to do over the past 15 years: She has written a compelling, Catholic novel that explores the real lives of Catholics, their culture, and those both coming to and running from the Church. There are no ready-made saints for Murphy, just sinners living in a fallen world.

If there is any weakness to this novel it is in the love story. While one is carried along completely by the murder mystery, it takes some concession on the part of the reader to see James and Lupe as romantically involved. The characters seem too different. It is also perhaps the case that there is an imbalance in how the characters were developed by Murphy. In the end, we fully know James Ireton, but it seems that Lupe Cruz has yet to come into her own. However, the concession is minor and the story is otherwise rich and intelligently written. It will take you through twists and turns that will keep you guessing until the end.

Some reviews have compared the writing in *Mystery* to Flannery O'Connor. I think *Mystery* is at the intersection of Agatha Christie and William F. Buckley, good mystery and a really smart read.

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This contribution is available at <http://brieflyliamferguson.tumblr.com/post/97109230572/review-the-mystery-of-things-by-debra-murphy>  
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## Thoughts about the family during this time of the extraordinary synod [at Southwest Ordinariate]



As we approached the beginning of the time of the Extraordinary Synod in Rome I was mindful of Pope Benedict's counsel about Vatican II: that there was a council of the media, and there was the real council. One cannot fail to appreciate the truth of this especially as a convert, for one encounters more and more Catholics who say, "well that changed at vatican ii" but who haven't actually

ever

read any document of Vatican II! So I have taken with a pinch of salt most of the reports we have received about this synod. I am waiting for the true result of the Synod, which of course won't be produced until part 2 of the synod has happened next year.

I have however read about the press conference with 3 Cardinals and an Archbishop

[here](#)

and share, if it is an accurate representation, disappointment at an opportunity lost. We desperately need our Shepherds to proclaim with confidence to the world the good news of Catholic teaching on marriage and sex. They should not be reticent about this. But I sometimes wonder if they know that Catholic teaching is indeed good news.

I entered the full Communion of the Catholic Church only a few years ago. Part of my relief in making the journey from being an Anglican clergyman to being a pastor of the Catholic Church was that at last the truth that I wanted to proclaim in my preaching and teaching about marriage, family and sex would be the teaching of the Church in which I was ministering. That prospect filled me with joy.

As an Anglican clergyman whenever I spoke about abortion, marriage, family size, population etc I would frequently be greeted with scepticism or outright opposition, and most of the time, a silence that spoke loudest of all. Rarely would I find support. What I found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church was an affirmation of what my wife and I had tried to live in our marriage, and I looked forward to being in full communion with the Church which had produced that Catechism.

Despite the ridicule, the 'jokes', and the embarrassment we obviously caused people, my wife and I have come to believe that the teaching of the Church regarding marriage and sexual morality is actually good news. Yet when expressing this belief amongst Catholics, including groups of Catholic clergy, too often I find people who are not so sure. There is a lack of confidence.

Only recently I spoke with a priest who essentially was trying to say we ought not to "burden" people with this teaching too much. My response was, "Well if you teach it as if it is merely a set of commandments, 'don't do that...' then of course it will come across as a burden. But we have the Catechesis of St John Paul on the Theology of the Body - we do not have to teach it merely as a set of commands." I went on to spell out why our culture is a culture of death and in part is because we have failed to proclaim the good news of the Catholic vision of marriage, family and sex. As a university chaplain I see some of the effects of this in the young men and women I try to offer pastoral care to. Whether it is the corruption of men's hearts because of a long-term use of pornography and masturbation, or women who have had multiple abortions; in every direction we see the terrible effects of a culture of death. What people need is the confident and joyful proclamation of the culture of life. The priest I spoke to was shocked. He had not thought about it in quite that way!

The Church has the treasure of the truth revealed by God for our salvation, and it is very good news - this includes the treasure of its teaching about marriage and about the most intimate part of marriage life, sex. This teaching is very, very good news! The Church needs to find those with a voice to proclaim this good news - perhaps this should not necessarily be cardinals and archbishops.

One of the most joyful experiences I have had in the Catholic Church has been on a campsite! For the last two years we have taken part in a camp for Catholic home-schooling families. It has been a very great privilege to offer mass at the home-schooler's camp. It is on such occasions that one can appreciate the very great joy of the Catholic vision for the family. Yes it is very hard work. Yes it means one has to renounce a lot of things for oneself. But isn't that the essence of

*caritas*

, of Christian love? Perhaps we home-schoolers should invite along some of our bishops and priests to see it too?

Sometimes I am referred to as Father Quiverfull! I don't mind. For Holy Scripture says, "Blessed is the man who has his quiver full of them!" The Lord has truly blessed me with ten children. And I am very blessed to have discovered the very good news of the teaching of Holy Mother Church.

My prayer is that the Church will find the voice to speak this good news confidently and joyfully.

Fr Ian

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This contribution is available at <http://swordinariate.blogspot.co.uk/2014/10/thoughts-about-family-during-this-time.html>  
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# Saint Halo Cookie Display (an easy and fun treat!) [at Catholic Inspired]

One day I was shopping for groceries and saw a box of [Italian Waffle Cookies](#) sitting on the store shelf. I thought to myself, "Wow! Those look like neat little halos!" So I bought a box and created this fun, saint inspired, treat to serve to my kids!



I bought our box of waffle cookies at our local Aldi store but

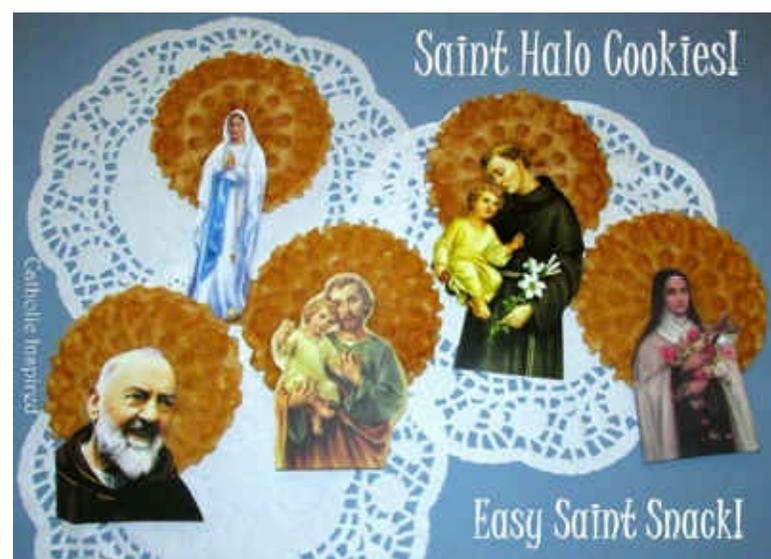
[THESE](#)

are similar, although they are more expensive. My kids all liked the vanilla flavored cookies, but some of them disliked the Anise flavored cookies.



The saint images were cut from old cards, magazines, calendars, or charity mailings. I always keep saint and holy images they always come in handy! But if you don't keep images like I do you can print a few

pictures from the internet.



These were easy to make and the kids were so excited to see the fun display with all the saints!



This idea could be used for All Saints Day and many different saints could be displayed, or use the idea for one saint on his or her feast day!

Have a blessed day!

~Jennifer

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# Finding hope through infertility [at Catholic Review]

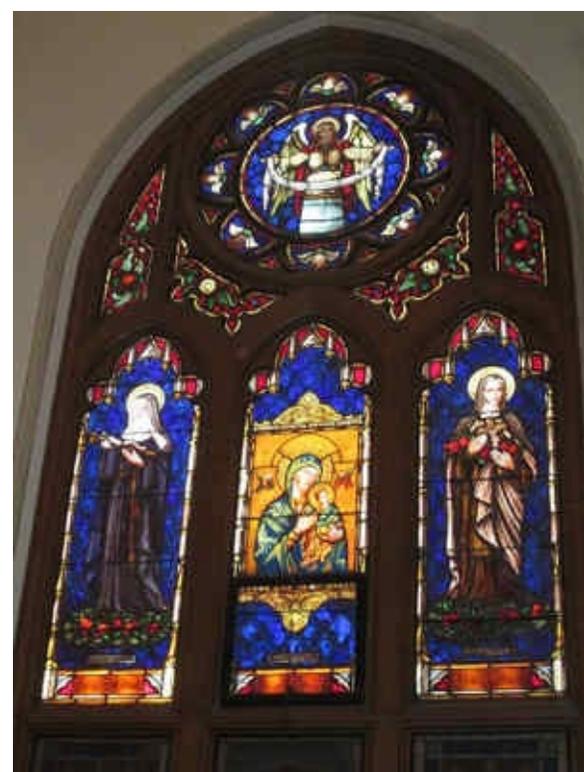
When the Archdiocese of Baltimore's Family Life office invited me to speak after a Mass for couples experiencing infertility, I was so honored that I said yes immediately.

I prayed about what to say, and wrote and rewrote and rewrote. This weekend John and I went to the Mass and prayed with the small group of couples who were there. Then I shared my remarks at a reception afterward.

I was a little sad that the group wasn't larger. Infertility is still a taboo subject. There's so much the Church can offer to couples facing infertility, and this Mass was a beautiful sign of that. But I absolutely recognize that it takes courage to be open about infertility.

I also believe that having the Mass was important even to--and maybe especially to--those who didn't attend.

I was nervous walking into the church. Then I looked up at a stained glass window and saw St. Rita.



*She's the one on the left. St. Therese is on the right.*

The patron saint of the impossible and my namesake? In a stained glass window right by our pew? How could I fail?

Then Fr. Jim Sorra, the pastor of St. Michael the Archangel in Overlea, gave the most beautiful homily, touching on everything so perfectly, and truly demonstrating that he understands the challenges couples are experiencing. I didn't give him a standing ovation, but I wanted to.

And John even made a few comments during and after my talk. His comments were, of course, fantastic and to the point. I wish I had a copy of what he said, but he spoke off the cuff.

**Here is what I said:**

Six or seven years ago if you had told me I'd be standing here speaking about infertility, I would never have believed it. The truth is that it took me a long time—and, actually, a few years of parenthood—to be able to talk about our infertility.

I have been thinking about what I could share with you today, and I realized my message is actually quite simple: What I would like to offer you is hope.

Not false hope. I'm not going to be one of those well-intentioned people who says, "Don't worry! You'll have a baby when you stop trying!" Or "Don't worry! You just need to try a little harder!"

That's not the kind of hope I mean. The hope I want to share with you is wrapped up in our story, a story that—like any couple's infertility story—involves grief. But our story also involves learning to trust, relying on God, and being open to His plan.

The hope I want to share with you today is what Pope John XXIII was talking about when he said, "Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do."

And there is so much that is still possible for each of us, no matter which doors have been slammed shut in our life journey. I write a blog for *The Catholic Review* called "Open Window", and I took the name from that line in *The Sound of Music* where Julie Andrews says, "When the Lord closes a door, somewhere He opens a window."



Today I want to tell you about the window God opened for us, and how we climbed through and became parents.

Every couple here has a story, and the story John and I have is nothing extraordinary. 11 years ago I was looking to connect with other Catholic singles, and I signed up for a Catholic dating site.

One of the first profiles I saw was of a man who lived on the Eastern shore of Maryland. He and I both had the same job description—doing media relations for a small college. I sent him a message, and he wrote back quickly.

A month later we had our first date, meeting on the steps of St. Mark’s Church in Catonsville for Saturday evening Mass. The reading that night was Ephesians 5—the one that says women, be submissive to your husbands; men, love your wives as Christ loves his church. That’s not much to discuss on a first date, is it? Afterward, we went to dinner in downtown Ellicott City, and he took me out for a root beer float.

Even before we were engaged, we talked about having children. John is the youngest of seven children and I’m the third of six, and we wanted very much to be parents. Even though we had no reason to believe we would have fertility problems, we talked more than once about adopting if God didn’t send us children by birth.

But I think we both assumed, as many couples do, that we would be more likely to have several children rather than having trouble conceiving. Either way, we knew it would be helpful to know natural family planning, so we took classes together and I started charting my cycles.



We were married in September 2004, and we assumed we'd have a child fairly quickly. But I didn't get pregnant. And as time went on, John and I realized it wasn't likely to happen.

We found jobs closer to my family and bought a house, always preparing our lives for the children we believed we would raise. I thought maybe God was putting the puzzle pieces together before he sent us a child, but even once everything seemed to be in place, we were still childless.

We owned a house with two empty bedrooms, located in a neighborhood full of children, and yet still had no child of our own.

I wondered what purpose God had in mind for me. I wanted so much to be a mother. Didn't He want me to be one, too? Wasn't that why he had called me to marriage? And John was so obviously designed for fatherhood. What did God have planned for us?

And, of course, everyone everywhere was pregnant. We couldn't go to Mass or the grocery store or out to eat without seeing a pregnant woman, or a father carrying a new baby.

My friends were all pregnant, and I was constantly throwing and attending showers—smiling through

them and then crying on the way home.

My parents were gaining grandchildren one after another. I threw a baby shower for one sister-in-law, and minutes after the guests were gone, my other sister-in-law announced she was expecting. And I was happy for everyone—truly happy. But it was also painful. I didn't want to be jealous, and I don't think jealousy describes what I was feeling. I just couldn't understand why it seemed to be so easy for other people to become parents, and it was so difficult for us.

But I also found moments of hope.



One day at a friend's baby shower, one of her older relatives had actually put her hand on my stomach and said, "So when will it happen for you?" I laughed it off in the moment, but I was angry and sad and confused.

I had a long drive home that day, and I laid it all out there for God. He didn't answer with words, but when I finally stopped talking, I came to a red light and looked at the sky, and I felt this moment of absolute peace. I realized more than a year later that our older son was already alive—in utero—at that moment.

I also found hope in unexpected places. Even though learning of others' pregnancies was so difficult, I was surprised to find that when the babies were born, and I was holding them in my arms, I didn't feel jealousy.

Holding my new nephews and niece, I felt only excitement and love. Somehow looking at them, marveling at the perfection of these new little lives, I recognized them as not being the children we were waiting for. They were wonderful, and I was proud to be their aunt, but they were not my children.

As I look back on that time, I realize what a gift God gave me to allow me to see that these children were not ours, but that they could bring joy to our lives—and that we could bring joy to theirs.

During that time, John and I also went to visit our friend, Fr. Tom, a Franciscan priest at a retreat center in Wilmington, Del.



Fr. Tom was always full of advice that was rooted in simple love. We didn't need to tell him we wanted to become parents. He knew our hearts well enough to know that we had been trying. He acknowledged that we must want to have a family.

He simply smiled and said, "I will pray for you." He talked about God's sense of time, and how different it is from ours. Then he introduced me to a group of women there who were making a retreat through Project Rachel that weekend. He said to them, "Rita is hoping to have a baby."

And they smiled and nodded and said they would pray. It was the first time I had heard those words said out loud, and it was strangely reassuring.

Today when friends tell me they are trying to conceive, the only thing I say is the only thing I ever found to be helpful. I tell them that I will pray for them.

There are, of course, all kinds of medical options available—some of which are options to faithful Catholics. My Ob-Gyn quickly suggested IVF, but we had left our family in God’s hands from the day we had said our vows.

We had entrusted Him with sending us children. To us, extreme medical intervention felt as if we would be saying to God, “Look, we trusted you when we got married, and we know you are the third person in our marriage, but this is going on too long. We’re taking control now.”



I absolutely understand how someone’s heart can be burning to become a mother. Trust me, many times I wished we could flip a switch or write a check to change everything. But the creation of our future family was too precious to attempt without God, and we were very cautious with medical intervention.

I am so grateful that John and I were always on the same page with how far we would go, and no farther. We both felt that if God wanted to give us a child, He would. We had to believe that. He had sent a child—His Son—to a virgin in Nazareth. He could make us parents if that was His will. We had to trust and pray and hope.

Even though it felt we might be letting another door close on our chance to be parents, John and I knew

medical intervention wasn't for us. We turned away from medicine and tried to trust in God.

Through this journey we always had a glimmer of hope, that idea we had discussed years earlier, even before we were married.



And as time went on, and it became clear to us that our hearts were feeling a tug toward a child—and not necessarily one who was biologically ours—we started to talk seriously about adoption.

At first it was just an idea. And then we started asking questions. I read a line somewhere that said, “When I was thinking about adoption, I found myself asking whether I wanted to be pregnant, or whether I wanted to be a mother.”

There was no question in my mind that what I wanted was motherhood. I didn't need pregnancy to make that happen.

But we had many questions, and we didn't know many families formed through adoption. It was definitely stepping out into the unknown. We went to an information session about adoption at Catholic Charities in Baltimore, squirmed on uncomfortable chairs, and listened to a whirlwind of information about domestic and international adoption.

We were already fairly sure we weren't going to adopt domestically, and that session just further

confirmed that that path wasn't right for us.

As I listened to the descriptions of the international programs, I felt drawn to two countries—China and the Philippines. But I was sure that John would want to adopt from Korea, mainly because at the time you could have your child escorted to you. You didn't have to travel. John does not like flying, and we had never actually flown together.



But I sat there listening to the description of the Korea program—a perfectly wonderful program, mind you—and I didn't feel any connection. And when the social worker said, “If you don't adopt a child from a Korea, that child will be adopted by another family,” I just didn't think that was for us. Adopting is not an act of charity and saving a child, but if we could bring home a child who might not otherwise be placed, why wouldn't we?

Would God lead us down this path to adopt a child everyone else wanted to adopt, too? That just didn't feel like part of the plan.

When the session ended, our heads were spinning. Who knew adoption involved so many medical, emotional, financial, and governmental issues? Maybe John would balk at the whole idea.

As we walked out, I turned to John and said, “What did you think?”

And he said, "I'm thinking either China or the Philippines."

I almost fell over.

If I had been waiting for a sign that we were on the right path, there it was.

Still, we had so much to consider. We started more research into adopting from China and the Philippines.

We talked with parents who had adopted from both countries. It was all so incredible and new and different, way outside our comfort zone.

But China quickly rose to the top. John can give you a powerful, logical explanation of why we went to China. For me, China just felt right. And we both had a sense that there was a little one in China who was waiting to become our child.



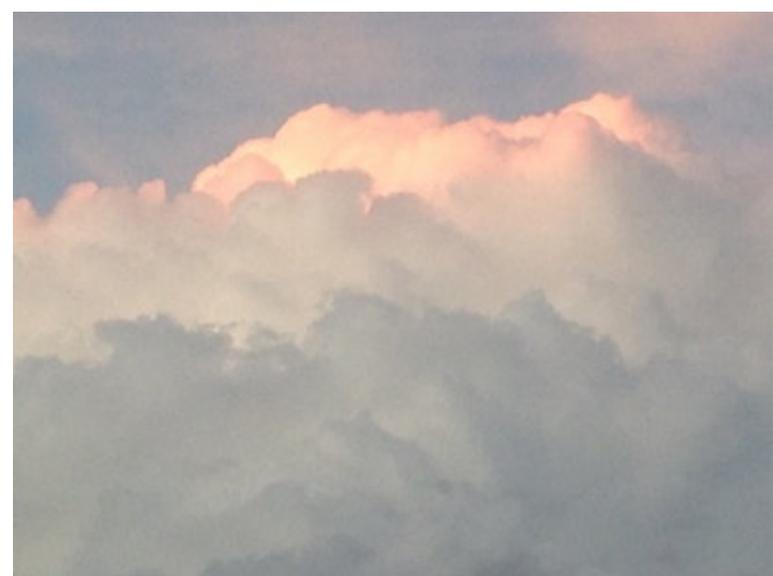
So we started on our adoption journey. There was paperwork and more paperwork. We were

fingerprinted and then fingerprinted again. There were interviews and inspections.

Some adoptive parents complain about the process. I loved it. For the first time I felt I was doing something productive, getting a step closer to a child—our child. And there were constant indications that showed us that God was with us every step along the way.

We finished our home study, the first big step in the process, and one day after Christmas my mother and I went to visit the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine in Emmitsburg. Meeting our child might be a year or more away, but I felt excited and yet at peace. So did John.

I had just started a new job and John was just about to start one himself. The wait would give us time to save up leave for the trip, time to save the money toward our adoption expenses, and time to get our house ready. For the first time we weren't feeling rushed to become parents. We knew we were on our way.



And then just four days later, on Jan. 4, 2009, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton's feast day, the phone rang.

It was our social worker. We had been matched! We were shocked—I actually told our social worker that she was wrong, that this couldn't be happening so soon. Then she started describing the child.

He was a little boy, 13 months old, living in Hunan Province. I scribbled down a few details and hung up. John and I just stared at each other.

You would think that a couple who had been trying to become parents for nearly five years would have been ready for this moment. Instead we were in shock. We finally found the courage to open the PDF with the little boy's file. When it finally opened, we saw a tiny black-and-white photo of this little boy—our son—for the first time.

Adoptive parents had told me, "You fall in love with a picture."

I never knew what they meant until that moment. We couldn't read the details. We could barely breathe. We just sat and drank him in, his little black fuzz on the top of his head, his open lips, his worried eyes, his little ears. He was gorgeous. And the little boy in this 1-inch wide photo could be our son.

We finally did read through the details—his favorite foods, his medical history, how he was growing. Then we realized there were large, full-color photos at the end. We could not get enough.

Eleven long months later we boarded a plane together for our first airplane flight as a couple—a flight to Beijing. We stood in a dimly lit government office as our little boy—who had just turned 2—walked into the room, into our lives, and into our hearts forever. It was scary, beautiful, emotional, and wonderful. He became part of our family as if he had always been our son.



We knew we wanted to go back to China at least once more to give our son a sibling, and because we were so in love with being parents. So a little less than two years later John and I met our second son in yet another government office in China.

It was similar but different, so incredibly special, and yet again we cried as we held our son for the first time. That was three years ago.

I could go on and on and on about falling in love with China and the people there, and how you find yourself wanting to adopt again and again and again.

I could talk for hours about how I love being a mother—how fulfilling and challenging and wonderful and hard and amazing it is to be the mother of these two little boys.

What I really want to share with you, though, is how becoming parents through adoption changed how we viewed our infertility. This probably sounds crazy, but John and I actually now see our infertility as a blessing. Now that we are the parents of these two magnificent boys who were born on the other side of the world, we can't imagine our lives without them.



And it's humbling to think that if we had given birth to children, we might never have met these two extraordinary boys who are our sons. I look back on our struggles and our wait to become parents, and I feel God was preparing us for this chapter of our lives.

I am not going to promise that one day you too will feel your infertility is a blessing. I am not sure that everyone reaches that point. Each of us comes to terms with the crosses we bear in different ways. What I will say is what Fr. Tom told me years ago: I will keep you in my prayers. Whatever comes, I pray you will find strength, comfort, peace, hope—and parenthood.

God's plans are not always ours. Being open to the possibilities He has in store for us is not always easy, especially when we feel He is calling us in a particular way.

There is a lovely Chinese proverb: "Keep a green tree in your heart, and perhaps the singing bird will come."



I pray that even during the most difficult, darkest times, you will be able to keep that green tree blooming in your heart. I pray you will know you are not alone on this journey. I pray that even in the darkest moments you will be able to hope. And I pray that soon you will find reason for great joy.

This is just my story—our story. Each of you will experience your own unique story. Maybe you won't be led to adoption, but no matter what path you take, your journey can be extraordinary.

I am here merely to witness to the fact that, when you trust God, wonderful things can happen. They might not be the things that you envisioned for yourself, but maybe—just maybe—they'll be even more amazing.

You might be going through a dark and difficult time now, but I pray that you will always be able to find hope.

Thank you again for having me here today, and please believe me that I will keep you in my prayers.



*10/26/2014 10:46:12 PM*

By

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2014/10/26/finding-hope-through-infertility>  
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## The Sign From Which Demons Flee [at ChurchPOP]

In the midst of the tumultuous 4th century, God raised up a smart and holy priest from the church of Alexandria, Athanasius. Near the beginning of his long career of defending the orthodoxy of the Church, he wrote a little book, [On the Incarnation](#), vigorously defending the core truths of the Gospel: the divinity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the logic of the cross, the historicity of the resurrection, etc.

**There's one argument that Athanasius makes for the Christian faith that is very peculiar**, at least to our modern ears.

“[T]hey who disbelieve in the Resurrection afford a strong proof against themselves,” he writes, “if instead of all the spirits and the gods worshipped by them casting out Christ – who they say is dead – Christ on the contrary proves them all to be dead.” (31) The dead have no power, he explains, yet Christ is daily changing people's lives, so he can't be dead. The pagan gods and goddesses, on the other hand, “show themselves dead at the presence of Christ, their pomp being reduced to impotence and vanity.”

Then he provides concrete proof that Christ is truly alive and more powerful than pagan gods: “[B]y the **Sign of the Cross** all magic is stopped, and all witchcraft brought to nought, and all the idols are being deserted and left, and every unruly pleasure is checked, and every one is looking up from earth to heaven...” (31)

In other words, *evil flees from the Sign of the Cross, therefore Christ really is Lord.*

**Athanasius repeats this argument throughout his work:**

– “Here's one proof of the divinity of the Savior: what mere man or magician or tyrant or king was ever able by himself to engage with so many, and to fight the battle against all idolatry and the whole demoniacal host and all magic? [...] For the same gods the pagans used to worship, they are now deserting, and the one who they used to mock as one crucified, him they worship as Christ, confessing him to be God. And they that are called gods among them are routed by the Sign of the Cross...” (53)

– “Whereas formerly demons used to deceive men's fancy, occupying springs or rivers, trees or stones, and thus imposed upon the simple by their juggleries; now, after the divine visitation of the Word, their deception has ceased. For by the Sign of the Cross, though a man but use it, he drives out their deceits.” (47)

– “Demons, so far from cheating any more by illusions and prophecies and magic arts, if they so much as dare to make the attempt, are put to shame by the Sign of the Cross.” (55)

– “And let him come who would test by experience what we have now said, and in the very presence of the deceit of demons and the imposture of oracles and the marvels of magic, let him use the Sign of that Cross which is laughed at among them, and he shall see how by its means demons fly, oracles cease, all magic and witchcraft is brought to nought.” (48)

– “Now if by the Sign of the Cross, and by faith in Christ, death is trampled down, it must be evident before the tribunal of truth that it is none other than Christ Himself that has displayed trophies and

triumphs over death, and made him lose all his strength.” (29)

**So why is the Sign of the Cross so powerful?** Because it represents Christ’s total victory over the unholy triad of Satan, sin, and death.

Demons are real and are active in the world. Scripture warns us, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5.8)

But Christ has overcome it all. So to every dark place in this world, let us confidently bring the power of his cross.

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# Sweet Simplicity II [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on October 28, 2014 · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)



8×8" oil paint on primed artist board; use “comment” below to inquire.

The paint was mixed, and so I did this second daisy painting very similar to yesterday's. I prefer loose, casual arrangements to formal, symmetrical ones.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2014/10/28/sweet-simplicity-ii/>  
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# I Call You Friends [at Journey to Wisdom]

A reflection on John 15:15

By Sharon Nelsen



“Let us rejoice and be glad for God has saved us,” was going through my mind. I remembered, “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3.17). I recalled Jesus telling us, “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. (John 10.9)

- What have you saved me from, Lord?
- How do you save me?

Dearest Friend Jesus whom I can address as friend because you called me as “friend” first. Thank you for wanting a deep and intimate relationship even as I have sought (and still sometimes seek) a relationship based on “I want,” “I need,” and “Please help me.”

All of that is human and good, but it is just a beginning. I may begin human friendships with needs – a need to be understood, a need for companionship, and a need for strengthening. But if the relationship

stays at that entry level, it does not develop and grow; instead, it slides into a child-parent relationship of neediness; it is unbalanced.

Friendship is reciprocal—we lean on each other’s strengths. I think, Dear Lord, you are wanting me to understand how I lean on You, and how You lean on me; how I depend on You, and how You depend on me. That thought alone is almost too incredible to grasp!

How do I lean on You, Jesus?

- For understanding – the enduring aspect and the temporal aspect in my part and in Your part as my life unfolds.
- For strengthening and courage on my journey and for boldness to speak up for truth.
- For Love – to know I am accepted “as is,” and to be able to love those who have hurt me, or use me, neglect me or abuse me.
- For forgiveness – of myself for my sins; of others who continually hurt me; of those who are annihilating whole groups of peoples through war, starvation, unemployment and greed.
- For joy – that cleanses me of the residues of sadness; that brings Your Light to my perceptions, enhances my perspective and celebrates our relationship.

And now, I ask You, Dear Divine Friend, how do you lean on me?

Beloved Friend, Beloved of My Heart-- Yes, I call you friend:

“I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.” (John 15.15)

I lean on you, dear friend to:

- Trust Me – entrust all needs, hopes, desires, and works to Me.
- Hear Me – take time to listen to my counsel before you begin any new work, whether it is writing, volunteering your services, taking a trip, running a meeting, whatever--I will not lead my beloved astray.
- Move for Me – to be my word, my hands, my healing touch, my eyes and my ears in the place where you are-- in these circumstances, with these people, for this purpose.

- Recognize your limitations AND gifts; My Power AND My Desire for you (The good, life-giving Will of Our Father)
- Remember and give thanks – When you do that, every good work grows. I can strengthen you for the next endeavor because you are open to My Way, My Grace.
- Rejoice and Celebrate with Me – Can anyone truly celebrate alone? Rejoicing with Me increases the power of God’s Deeds Done! The goodness spreads. That is why I have inspired you to write - to lift souls above the waves of despair into the heavens of hope.

Lastly, Dear Friend, I lean on you to let Me work through you; to save you in areas where you believe it is impossible. For “All things are possible with God.” (Mark 10.27b) As soon as you start to think something I have inspired in you is impossible, pray to Me for Truth to dispel the lie, and send the liar out.

I lean on you to let Me love you, now and forever,

Jesus, Your Eternal and Best Friend

Thank you Jesus, for letting “...your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.” (Psalm 80.4)

Thank you, that you tell me, “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.” (John 15.16)

May I place above all else our friendship, the friendship You have chosen -- especially when I am tempted to believe that I am “on my own;” that I have to do it all by myself.

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This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2014/10/i-call-you-friends.html>  
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## Father Benedict Groeschel, R.I.P. [at Justin's Corner]

Praise the Lord!

Father Benedict Joseph Groeschel of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal (1933--2014) went to his heavenly reward a few days ago on Friday, October 3, the eve of the feast of his holy patron Saint Francis of Assisi and the very same day on which Saint Francis himself died. I fondly recall my own personal encounter with Father Groeschel as a boy of eleven when he came to speak at Saint Joseph's High School in my hometown of Santa Maria, California, in July of 1997. My mom and sister and I had the opportunity to meet him in the outdoor bookselling area after his talk. I remember how I was impressed with what a humble, quiet, kind and gracious man he was--very Christlike in every way. He wanted to sign a copy of one of his books and give it to us but for some reason wasn't able to, so he just wrote his small signature on a copy of the

*Grayfriar News*

, his religious order newsletter, and gave us that.

Like millions of others, I watched Fr. Groeschel's television programs on EWTN for many years and benefited tremendously from his preaching, teaching and spiritual wisdom, which he also poured into dozens of books. His personal warmth and sense of humor made him an engaging speaker and author for people of all ages and backgrounds. He never boasted of his great learning as a priest-psychologist but always used it to serve the Church and human needs. His record of faithful service to the Church included working on the causes of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Servant of God Cardinal Terence Cooke; he also rigorously screened potential seminary candidates, helping to keep men with spiritual and psychological problems out of the priesthood. His decades of untiring humble service to the poor, the sick, and the outcast were truly inspirational. Furthermore, his Christian witness and ecumenical outreach drew millions of non-Catholics closer to the Church and led to many conversions to Catholicism (including Marcus Grodi, host of

*The Journey Home*

program on EWTN).

In his later life, Fr. Benedict's courage and patience in suffering were remarkably edifying to see, reminding us of the similar example of Saint John Paul II. If a "tree is known by its fruit", as Our Lord tells us (Matt. 12:33; Luke 6:43-44), then Father Groeschel was "a good tree" that produced abundant fruit in the Lord's vineyard. He was a true hero of the Catholic Church in America, undoubtedly one of the greatest priests and friars our country has ever produced. His shining example of personal holiness and radical fidelity to the Gospel of Christ will continue to inspire the Church here in America and around the world. Let us pray that his cause for sainthood will be opened in the near future. May he rest in peace.

[Click here](#)

for a ZENIT news article with a detailed obituary written by Father's fellow friars.

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# You are Unique [at In the Breaking of the Bread]

You are UNIQUE

From the world's beginning there has never been, nor will there ever be, anyone like you. No one else has your eyes, your smile, your hands or hair. Nobody in the whole universe can see things like you. You are unique.

Blessed be God our Creator who formed you from the first moment you existed in your mother's womb. He knew half of you when your mother was being formed with all her eventual eggs in her mother's womb – at her birth your mother already carried millions of eggs – these diminished to 40,000 by her puberty of which only 400 matured from puberty till menopause, and among them all, God picked you.

God knew the other half of you among the millions of spermatozoa – each existing for only 60 days before being reabsorbed – developed and carried over and over since puberty by your father. One unique egg developed since conception by your mother and one unique sperm briefly existing among millions in your father – each containing 23 unique chromosomes, half of you – had only 60 days to join. God saw them, He wanted you, and He brought them together to make you.

You are different from any other person who ever lived in the history of the world; you are the only person on this earth who has your specific collection of abilities.

In the whole world there will be nobody who can walk, speak, think or do things like you can. Your need to imitate somebody else is absolutely wrong because you are rare and this is your value, to be you, and with God, to become you fully.

You are unique and your life was not a mistake; please realize that God created you for a specific reason – for your own good, for the good of others, and for God.

He has a mission for you, which nobody can do as well as you can.

There are millions of activities which can be done in this world, but God has the right one for you. This is because you are unique and have the right combinations which God needs. Your life – your suffering, your love, your joy – is all in God.

That is you, an outstanding person created by an outstanding God. Love Him.

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# Love and Hate [at Blogging For A Better Life]

I have a love-hate relationship with my hair.

I hate it when my curls look too natural, but I love the natural look. I want curls, but then I don't. Every morning it is a test of wills...air dry or blow out...comb or brush.

It's love and hate; the two make me want to literally pull my hair out.

Love, you know it, the very thing that makes the world go around. Well, hate, rightfully so, can never be intertwined with love.

Here are a couple examples.

I can't love God and hate my neighbor.

I can't love God and hate life around me.

And, I can't love God if money, power, and greed rule my life.



**“Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal. Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. For your heart will always be where your riches are.”** (Matthew 6:19-21)

Some things, such as oil and water can't be mixed together. They'll never blend as one. The same goes for love of God and the love of money.

**“You cannot be a slave of two masters; you will hate one and love the other, you will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”**

(Matthew 6:24)

It isn't always easy to be content with what you have. But, money, power and the desire to have it all come with a price to pay.

**“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.”**

(Exodus 20:2)

Love and hate, when it comes to God, which one will you choose?

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This contribution is available at <http://blogforabetterlife.blogspot.com/2014/10/love-and-hate.html>  
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# Of Hypocrites and Holiness: the Struggle for the Survival of the Ideal in our Institutions [at Excavating Eden]

In this world, the tired moniker attributed to anyone who claims to uphold a moral standard but who cannot live that standard perfectly is "hypocrite."

Obviously, all of us want to see the integration of our authority figures:our leaders,governing bodies, and even our first teachers-our parents-"practice what they preach." It is as imperative to the mission of any institution as it is to evangelization and catechesis within the family.

But is this stringent notion of perfection possible in a fallen world?

To say no is discouraging, and to say yes is woefully disappointing.

But, if not, what does this say about how we govern the church, with all its very challenging moral standards that strike the Gentiles of day (and the faithful alike) as rigorously opposed to their moral malaise?

We are all on our way to holiness, and, in the meantime it is we same folk that are bequeathed the necessary social institutions that characterize a civil society.

As an idealist with enough disillusion to make me peppered with a certain bit of realism-I sometimes question my own expectation of perfect integrating my beliefs and actions.

In society, we blame church leaders and politicians for constantly professing a law that even they seem to not believe is possible to attain.

Does that make them "hypocrites?"

Maybe.

All too often this is in fact, the most applicable term and we should not be afraid to apply this word when necessary.

However, analogously, as a parent there has been many a time the words coming out of my mouth as I instruct my children serve to sear my conscience because I know I am asking more of my kids than I expect of myself and imposing standards that I cannot even master.

Some parents think that they cannot ask their kids to do something they would not do.It is with this fear of having "hypocrite" thrown at them that we have lost many a parents' authoritative voice,and thus, have an epidemic of undisciplined youth.Some of these youth are now the adults, these authority figures....

It is in fact a great safeguard God has built into parenthood-this desire to challenge our kids to the very best-because in effort to not be hypocrites, we are continually challenged ourselves every time we admonish our children.

We demand greatness and because of that, we must ourselves aspire to it as well.

But what happens when the authority figure misses the mark?

I have asked the question myself whether any authoritative body, whether it be judges at city hall or parents at the dinner table, should even expect integration of our idealistic laws because to do so would either cause the demise of authoritative bodies as they "come down to realistic level" or it would cause a posturing of triumphalistic phariseism in the ordinary folk who would be aspiring to appease authority they are subject to.

How do we avoid the breakdown of authority if authority cannot live in continuity with what they impose on their subjects?

Being that we need to uphold the authoritative infrastructures of society because their importance outweighs even the accusations leveled at them, it seems there is no way around the that dissonance that routinely separates ideal and reality.

Perhaps the better question is if we should allow authorities to \*make\* laws based on our weaknesses and our almost certain moral failures? Or if we continue to make rules that are out of the reach of those subject to them?

As frustrated as I become with myself and with the sometimes careless, "true" hypocrisy of institutions around me, I have asked too what would happen to authority as we know it if institutions over time changed laws to reflect current laxity of our mediocre, depressed culture?

This approach would never cease to erode society.

And very quickly it would accomplish anarchy.

This decisive time is coming in our age as it has to so many other great nations before us and yet the Dionysian intuitive calls out from the inmost core of us all when we see the rational Appolonian distort his own virtues into placing the law above human good.

The question must remain always active within the sphere of its interpretation, but never go so far as to corrode the the principle on which the law is based. Laws may be changed because a new application of it becomes necessary, but when the proposed new law is directly contrary to the principle virtue of its parent law, we have rupture, not continuity.

Authentic development of both civil and ecclesial law comes as result of understanding how to apply principles to a constituency who is far from the mind of their leadership, not changing the principles because no one can live up to it. Any new interpretations should foster momentum \*towards\* the virtue of a just, preceeding law.

The institutions we serve will endure long after we are charged with the responsibility to uphold them. We serve something greater than ourselves.

And often, in the name of mercy, we aim to placate mediocrity when we ignore what is known about the trajectory of human behavior and the likely outcome of natural human tendencies. Instead of allowing the failure to be named what it is, left understood and dealt with as an exception rather than the rule, we lower the proverbial bar and diminish the imagination of our youth by vaccinating them against utilizing their natural (and supernatural) aspirations for greatness.

Authorities both secular and in the church have a responsibility greater than many of its lay citizens can ever imagine. Certainly there are those who are two-faced, who speak out both sides of their mouths and then laugh about how they manage to pull it all off over tea.

These are hypocrites; persons who could never learn how to authentically interpret laws because they cannot even integrate their own rationale and behavior. Hypocrites do not uphold the law simply because they do not care to.

Then there are those of us who are simply poor mortals serving something greater than us and timeless; who care deeply for what they serve and give all they can until they have given it all. These servants who strive in good conscience to reform what within their institution is sour because they believe in its overall goodness. They are not hypocrites.

Instead of leveling this overly used accusations against, well-everyone, perhaps we should consider that some service occupations demand more than any human can consistently live..and these occupations endure because those serving them give all they can in their corner of the world and in their time until their efforts simply exhaust or affect change if necessary.

Let us admire the latter for what they did give to society for as long as they could give it. Because of them, ideals endure beyond their own time and place.

Those of us who are parents have our own authority to uphold. It challenges us to be consistent when we rule mightily over our kids' eating habits while still bringing soda in the house for ourselves. The kids will inevitably accuse mom of not doing as she pontificates, and, if mom loves her kids enough to want them to eat better, this will motivate mom to change. This lifts up the struggling sloth within all of us rather than instilling our sloth in our kids.

While we would do well to remember all persons of authority serve some institution greater than the individual who happens to be presently in the office of service, we also should know that our institutions will only fair as well as the authorities materialize the values they uphold with their lives.

And so the structures of our institutions must remain conservative in its demands while still dealing with individuals on an individual basis.

I have learned the importance of upholding the image of a strong institution whenever possible-whether it be marriage, church, state, or schools.

And I continue to learn the hard way how to be the most authentic interpreter of the values necessary in my own family institution.

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## General Thoughts [at V for Victory!]



Better thinkers and more diligent observers than I have already picked over and dissected the particulars of the Synod and its emanations. Herewith some general thoughts about what is going on right now in the Church and the world:

-- I have said many times before, and continue to maintain, that the majority of Catholics simply do not have the Catholic faith. This includes priests and bishops, as well as Catholics who attend Mass every Sunday. Too many Catholics are so busy trying to make friends with the world that they no longer feel obliged to believe the content of the Deposit of Faith. The most worrisome ones are those who still keep up the appearance and external observances of Catholicity. They will be the most impervious to repentance.

-- The current corruption in the Church set in more than a century ago, though it is only in the last 50 years or so that it began to be obvious. I think the attempt to bury the traditional Mass was the lancing of the boil. The beauty of the liturgy had covered up the fact that we were worshiping with our lips and not with our hearts. Once that was taken away, the infection was set in front of our faces. Yet this did not make us recoil in horror and repent. Instead, we rejoiced in the exhilaration of finally having our own way, as opposed to doing things God's way. Now, we are practically in a state of prostration, though there are still many who don't see this. But the reality is that evil is having its hour, both in the Church and in the world at large. We are so overwhelmed with evil that we try desperately to spin things that come out of Rome as harbingers of reform. We hail the tiniest victories as great successes and a sign that things are getting better. Yet these soon get swallowed up in the *status quo ante*, and before you know it, we are back to

square one. Proverbs 27:7: *A soul that is full shall tread upon the honeycomb: and a soul that is hungry shall take even bitter for sweet.*

-- This chastisement in which the Church finds herself was never going to play itself out until we got a Pope imbued with the "Spirit of Vatican II." Let us face the fact that Francis is that Pope. Francis can no more sink the Barque of Peter than could the most decadent and corrupt of the Borgia Popes; but he can -- and does -- give us a very rough ride. That Pope Francis does not get the effects of what he does and says is frankly laughable.

-- The Pope Francis effect, incidentally, is an example of one disastrous consequence of the current spirit of experimentation born of self-will, namely, the cult of Personalities. As long as doctrine and liturgy are givens, it doesn't matter nearly as much who occupies the Throne of Peter -- or, for that matter, who is bishop or pastor. But after half a century of tinkering with the liturgy, with doctrine also seeming to be "changeable" and "evolving," personalities take on an exaggerated importance. The same thing happens in secular society when the rule of law is undermined. That is how we get tyranny in secular society, and how we get chaos in the Church. When Liturgy ceases to be a given, the impression is created that Doctrine is also no longer a given; and when the givens disappear, so do vital checks on the behavior of those in authority. Thus we find ourselves constantly on the edge of our seats, wondering what new shocks our superiors are going to administer to us, and hoping and praying for slightly less sadistic new shepherds. We need to repent of our self-will and submit ourselves to the givens, and then personalities will shrink back down to their proper insignificance.

-- Meanwhile, the bishops, priests and laymen who are without the Catholic faith are openly declaring themselves, thinking -- wrongly -- that Pope Francis has sung a new church into being and ushered in the Age of Aquarius. The great sifting of men is well underway.

-- Bringing to mind the stanza from the *Dies Irae*, which our betters have tried so hard to bury along with the bodies over which it should always be sung:

*Inter oves locum præsta.  
Et ab hædis me sequestra,  
Statuens in parte dextra.*

With Thy sheep a place provide me,  
From the goats afar divide me,  
To Thy right hand do Thou guide me.

Things are so bad that only God can turn them around. We are long past the point of being able to rely solely on our own efforts. We must amend our lives, pray and do penance. Then, when the Holy Spirit does make His move, we will not need to wonder whether things are starting to turn around. There will be no doubt.

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## Enrolling in the School of Prayer [at Mere Observations]

With age comes experience, and with experience comes wisdom. I've lived long enough to know that my hope lies not in political answers being provided to solve the ills of this world. Indeed I no longer believe man is himself capable of solving them. He simply is not capable of getting out of his own way.

As Msgr. Charles Pope [wrote on September 30th](#):

At the end of the day, government cannot remedy our fallen tendency to be obtuse, rebellious, greedy, and licentious. It is really more the role of culture and the presence of a strong, prophetic, organized, and effective Church that must, by God's grace, work to remedy the worst of the ills we face. The notion of a large government role in creating a just society is too easily a form of utopianism.

Monsignor Pope goes on to say that

“Fulton Sheen once remarked that we have tried every means to change the world but one: holiness. Government cannot save us; only God can save us. And God works through grace and the transformation of the world—one soul at a time.

As one commenter in that article said: *Caesar gives us license; only God grants us liberty.* It is in wisdom that my experience has also taught me that I am, in fact, a Catholic first and an American second. I love my country very deeply. But if push comes to shove (and it appears that shoving is an integral part of the political landscape nowadays) I will stand with Christ and not with Caesar, no matter what political party he or she belongs to. I'm in full agreement with Heather King [when she wrote](#):

I've hitch-hiked across my country; our country. I've driven back and forth across it twice. I've camped, hiked, and walked its mountains, deserts and streets. I've prayed on its freeways, wept at its beauty, grieved at its struggles. But, bound by the First Commandment, I don't worship a flag. I don't kneel before a political system. I don't adore a military power.

I kneel before the altar in a Catholic church. I worship Christ.

I don't believe that it's a reactionary hyperbole to say that what I just wrote above can or will be used against me or my loved ones one day. In this age of endless war, unfettered government surveillance and drones flying over our heads can we honestly say otherwise? When the full force of the government can be used to force otherwise innocuous bakers into the courtroom [where they will lose not only their business](#) but their freedom by ordered into “sensitivity training” can we seriously say that there is no longer a risk to hold certain positions in this country and give voice to them? That is a world of “political truth”, which means only that the truth can change depending upon the zeitgeist of the day and whatever political party in power.

There are no political solutions man is capable of to alleviate the ills and injustices of our world. There is only holiness. There is only God. I can't tell you for certain when I realized this. In fact, it was many years ago. But I didn't *accept* it until the last year or two. It was then that my interest landed fully in the school of prayer. It was also then that I came to realize and accept the fact that living and professing a lifestyle of prayer will involve my learning to be more selfless and in a way selling myself out to this end.

There is no other way to go but “all in”.

As I’ve written before I’ve been reading many books and articles on prayer for the past year. But I’m also *doing* it. Not just reading, thinking, understanding, planning or imagining myself praying. I am participating in prayer. In his book [Prayer for Beginners](#) (Ignatius Press, 2000) Peter Kreeft warns us to “not be like the theologian who after death was given the choice between going to Heaven or going to a lecture on Heaven and chose the lecture.”

I choose Heaven.

Too often anymore we say to someone who is in pain things such as “sending positive thoughts your way.” Or “sending you positive vibes.” Or “my thoughts and prayers are with you.” Of the three, the last one is the worst in my opinion because the first two are New Ageist poppycock, but if you tell someone you are sending prayers their way you should at least make an attempt to follow up on it. But we cover ourselves in a security blanket by adding “thoughts” to that phrase. We won’t *pray* for you, but we’ll *think* of you. Or at least we will until we scroll down to the next headline or social media post.

Then again, perhaps that’s why so many revert to the “positive vibes” nonsense. They don’t want to be held responsible for their actions or to get involved. It’s easier and less incriminating to type a flippant bit of folderol and move on.

The very definition of prayer is a conversation with the Creator of the Universe. If you tell me you are going to have that conversation on my behalf shouldn’t you at least follow through? Besides, every time I see someone is sending out positive vibes I imagine them doing this:



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Below are some quotes I underlined in just the first four chapters of Kreeft’s little book. The pictures are from my visit yesterday afternoon to the [Holy Family Shrine](#) near Gretna, Nebraska on I-80. As you can see it was a rainy, overcast day. I’ve never been there during a sunrise, but I can tell you from experience that the sunsets can be nothing short of spectacular from that vantage point.



Eating keeps your body alive, and prayer keeps your soul alive. Praying is more important than eating because your soul is more important than your body. Your soul is more important than your body because your soul is you, your personality, your self. You will get a new body after death, in the resurrection at the end of the world. But you will not get a new soul; you will only purify and sanctify your old one, because you *are* your soul. The “you” that will get a new body *is* your soul. (p.11)



Why pray? Because *only prayer can save the world*. ... nothing else can ever cure our sick world except saints, and saints are never made except by prayer. (p.14)

[Prayers] correspond to our three deepest needs, the fundamental needs of the three powers of our soul: *prayer gives truth to our mind, goodness to our will, and beauty to our heart*. (p.15-16)



Prayer gives truth to our mind because it puts us in the presence of Truth itself, the divine Mind who designed our minds and our lives and our whole universe. ...we need to rehearse now for what we will be doing forever in Heaven, if we want to be utterly practical and realistic. (p.17)



Praying is like gardening: the growing of something alive—in this case, alive for eternity. It is gradual, and it is invisible, but it is the difference between life and death. ... Prayer is plant food. This plant—your soul—is going to be transplanted at death into an immortal, eternal garden. (p.18)



Brother Lawrence says, in *The Practice of the Presence of God*, “There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God. Those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it (Letter 5). (p.18)

Prayer is *the only way to spiritual progress*. (p.21)



We must pray in order to grow, and we must grow because Infinite Love will not, cannot, settle for less than the greatest joy of which his beloved creature is capable. Even good earthly fathers want the very best for their children; why do we expect our Heavenly Father to be any less demanding and leave us alone? That is what uncles do, not fathers. Christ did not teach us to pray, “Our Uncle who art in Heaven.” (p.22-23)



Prayer is necessary because without it we cannot attain *the meaning of life, the end and purpose of our existence*. Becoming saints is the meaning of life. It is why we exist. It is why God created us. (p.23)



Prayer is our first step in becoming saints. The second step is charity, a life of love, the ecstasy of giving ourselves away over and over again forever, as each of the Persons of the Trinity do. (p.24)



The single most important piece of advice about prayer is one word: Begin! (p. 25)

Life contains many hardships and pains, but prayer is not one of them. (p.26)



Prayer is love. To love anyone is to seek his presence, to seek intimacy and union. (You do not love someone if you do not want to spend time with him). Love is also communication. (You do not love someone if you do not want to talk with him and get to know him better.) (p.26-27)



It is true, as John Bunyan said, that God infinitely prefers a heart without words to words without a heart when we pray. (p.28)



The familiarity of prayer is wonderful because it is familiarity with *God*. (p.29)



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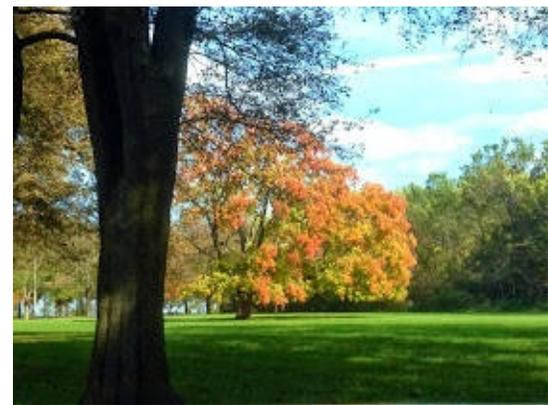
All photos taken by the author with an iPhone 5s.

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# The Healing Power of Silence [at Musings of a Missionary in the Modern World]



## The Healing Power of Silence

We live in a wilderness, a wilderness of noise. Noise is not just about sound. It has to do with the constant barrage of stimulation to our senses, emotions and even our intellect, (read information overload.) The problem with all this noise, pure and simple, is that it is an obstacle to our own inner order and peace, and more importantly, to a living communion with God and with others.

For some reason, many of us either seem afraid of silence, or, more likely, we have lost familiarity with the wonders of silence. Yet it is essential to our physical and spiritual well-being.

Authentic silence is not emptiness. Things come to us in the silence. We hear new languages. We are visited by penetrating peace, insight, God Himself, His wisdom, light, His perception and understanding. In authentic silence we hear new sounds and enter new worlds. In silence we come to know our own hearts.

It is interesting to note how often people observe that the sounds God has put in creation: wind rustling in the trees, birds chirping, the lapping of waves at the ocean, are a balm to the soul. This stands in stark contrast to the agitation and disturbance created by the sounds of the modern world driven by mechanical energy and a volume, a pitch that does violence to one's nerves, stressing them beyond what they are meant to endure. Silence is almost completely exiled from our modern culture. Yet it is exceedingly important for us.

Silence in fact is so important to us that it may be one of the main reasons God has structured us to sleep a third of our days. We know that when we can't sleep, when our bodies and minds are deprived of the stillness good sleep brings, we become sick. Anyone who struggles with insomnia knows the anxiety and frustration lack of sleep brings. "If I could just sleep, I would feel better," is the all too common cry. For those saints who were able to pray the night away and not be ill-affected, it was because they entered a deep contemplative silence that so rejuvenated soul and spirit, the body was refreshed and strengthened

by it...

In the Liturgy, given to us by God through Moses on Mt Sinai, and Jesus at the Last Supper, there are spaces for silence. That tells us that silence is part of a Divine Rhythm, part of the rhythm of life in Heaven...it tells us silence is a good thing, a medium for God's communication of Himself to us. The lives of Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph, in particular, bear striking witness to the inseparability of silence from great holiness.

In those who are progressing in prayer, in the inner experience of the presence of God, silence becomes a medium for God's deeper and deeper communication of Himself to the soul. St. Teresa calls one of the early stages of contemplative prayer, the Prayer of Quiet. God begins to suspend, or silence or still the human activity of the mind, the will, the memory, the imagination, the passions, so that He can communicate Himself more deeply. And in that, the soul itself begins to be healed of its defects and weaknesses and disorder. St. John of the Cross poetically describes this as: "My house being now all stilled..." He goes on to say that once there is this stillness (which comes through real purifications) the soul is now able to go out to find God without hindrance or distraction. This, by the way, is often something one sees in those who are going through the process of dying. They become strangely quiet in the months and weeks preceding their deaths. It is as if they no longer have words. In the activity of God in their souls, as they are being readied to enter eternity, they often go through, all at once, the purifications as well as the sweet visitations of the Lord, that the person who prays regularly, goes through over a period of time.

We are all interested in healing these days. This is the true healing we seek, that which comes to us from God Himself, the Divine Physician, and which heals us from the inside out and orders our inner being to bring it into communion with He Who is our ultimate bliss and fulfillment.

If we want to be healthy, we must cultivate spaces of silence in our lives. Not the isolating silence so many live in, but a silence that nurtures peace within and communion without. One place to begin is to keep our Churches as sanctuaries of silence, not places for chit chat.

Another concrete step is to actually set aside real time for silence. Silent prayer. Not vocal prayer but a prayer of presence, of being, in silence, in the presence of the Lord, even for 5 minutes a day, preferably in a place where there is no outside noise. (That may be early in the morning before the rest of the family rises.) Simply ask the Lord to take you into Himself for 5 minutes, to be still and know that He is God.

Over 100 years ago, Maria Montessori noted that children have an innate need for intervals of stillness and silence, silence for her, meaning the cessation of every movement:

"One day I came into class holding in my arms a baby four months old, which I had taken from the arms of its mother in the courtyard. ... The silence of the little creature struck me, and I wanted the children to share my feeling. ... To my amazement I saw an extraordinary tension in the children who watched me. It seemed as though they were hanging on my lips, and felt deeply all I was saying. "Then its breathing," I went on, "how soft it is. None of you could breathe as it does, without making a sound..." The children, surprised and motionless, held their breath. In that moment there was an extraordinary silence; the tick of the clock, which generally could not be heard, became perceptible. It seemed as if the baby had brought with it an atmosphere of silence such as does not exist in ordinary life. This was because no one was making the smallest movement. And from this came the wish to listen to the silence, and hence to reproduce it." Maria Montessori (The Secret of Childhood)

She created the “Silence Game” in which children begin practicing this kind of silence for small intervals at first (even 30 seconds), and then for longer periods. There is a joy the children, (and the teacher) experience, when they are able to do this. They later come to ask for the Silence Game when things become chaotic or noisy, recognizing that this silence has the power to restore their inner peace and equilibrium. Then, as a year progresses, the silence begins to happen spontaneously, within the whole group. The children will look up when this happens, smile, and go back to their work. The natural, contemplative spirit of the child, over time, is released.

It may seem like passivity to focus on silence when the world is screaming for answers and actions to address it’s many grave problems. Yet, “if The Lord does not build the house, in vain do the builders labor.” Likewise, the walls of Jericho would never have come tumbling down, nor would the people have persisted in the right action, if they had not consulted and stayed faithful to the Lord’s rather odd directions.

It has become an almost urgent necessity today, to ask Our Lord and Our Lady to lead each of us to the kind of silence we speak of. The release of a true contemplative spirit among us, one in which the Lord lives and moves us, will, in the end, be the key to the salvation of our modern world.

Sr. Anne Marie Walsh, SOLT

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This contribution is available at <http://missionaryinthemodernworld.blogspot.com/2014/11/the-healing-power-of-silence-we-live-in.html>  
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# *Judge a Book*



● by more than its cover ●

» [www.epiphaniesofbeauty.com](http://www.epiphaniesofbeauty.com) «



This is part of my series on [Judging a Book by More than its Cover](#), based on Harold C. Gardiner, SJ's piece "tenets for Readers and Reviewers." I [introduced](#) the topic here. We then talked about [using charity](#), and [how the parts of a book do not condemn the whole](#). But then, what *does* condemn the whole of a book? Is there something that *would* condemn an entire book?

*Psst.* Just to clarify, there is no *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* put out by the Vatican. That list of prohibited books has not been printed since 1948, and was ended in its entirety in 1966.

You weren't looking for a definitive answer anyway, were you? I mean, there isn't a checklist that says if there is adultery in the book, then it's bad. Because, where would that leave *The Scarlett Letter*?

We can't say that if someone breaks the fifth commandment – if they murder – then the book is bad. If we did that, where would that leave *Crime and Punishment*?

*Pride and Prejudice* breaks the commandments. Is it "bad"?

Gosh no! These books aren't bad at all. In fact, it's the sin in these books that makes them worth reading.

## **Sin creates the conflict in the story.**

No conflict, no story. And, there can't be conflict if there aren't values. And what are values but the way a person chooses between a good and an evil? And how is this choice between good and evil made? With the aid of one's morals.

So then, we aren't looking to see *if* there is sin. Literature is the reflection of life. So why *wouldn't* the reflection of our lives portray reality? Even when that reality is sin.

We need to be looking for something else then. And what we are looking for, is to see that sin is recognized as...sin.

Okay. What does that even mean? It means we should start by asking two questions.

## **Does the Author Recognize Sin for What it Is?**

If the answer to that is yes, Gardiner argues, then the book will be a great one. Think *Divine Comedy* great. Why? Because when we sin, we lose our friendship with God, which then allows for our repentance and restoration to Him. And what can make a better story than that? Isn't that why it's the Greatest Story Ever Told?

But. ahem. There aren't a lot of Divine Comedies out there. And we can't require all artists to be Dante. And certainly, not all authors are Christians so we can't look for parenthetical statements.

*(Warning: here's the part where the main character is going to break the 1st commandment. Don't get fussy, I'm sure you've done it, too.)*

But the thing about sin – even when someone doesn't call it sin but "a lifestyle," or "choice," or "freedom," or what have you – is that sin, by any other name, is still sin. And its effects will be the same.

Can the author see that an affair is sin? Maybe not, but does he or she recognize the havoc it has caused? The hurt it has inflicted? The confusion it has loosed?

Well then, the author has portrayed sin as, at the very least, a social folly.

As long as it is not suggested that there *is no* moral wrong.

Listen, I know we want to *say* that many of these books do just that. That they imply there is no moral wrong. But it has been my experience, regardless of the author's claim, that the conflict of these stories is a sin. And that this sin – whatever it might have been – has set the imaginary literary world of these books, just a bit off kilter.

The conflict of the story depends on it.

## **Do the Characters Recognize Sin for What it is?**

Gardiner says it doesn't really matter.

Huh?

Again, the sense that “some wrong has been done” will necessarily permeate the story, else there won't be any conflict. But we don't have to make sure the character is punished for his sin within the story. After all, this isn't always the case in real life. I mean, people, we have Hell.

The line is drawn, says Gardiner, when the character goes from moral lapse to moral lapse “without the least suspicion of evil in the action or its consequences.” Then we can condemn the book as “false in its portrayal of nature.”

## **Is sin portrayed, in some capacity, as being wrong?**

That is the overarching question: does the sin create some kind of conflict? Is sin shown to be, in some manner and however trivially, wrong?

Yes?

Then we're good.

Let's put this to test.

*The Scarlett Letter*: Is the sin shown to cause a conflict? Yes. The immorality of the affair is certainly a problem, but so is the lack of mercy. Lots of sin causing lots of strife.

*Crime and Punishment*: Is the sin shown to cause a conflict? Yes!! The character deteriorates – emaciates – before us as we watch him be ravaged by the sin he has committed.

*Pride and Prejudice*: Does the character recognize sin for what it is? Does Lydia Bennet recognize the sin? No. But she is unreliable and we can't trust her anyway. Mr. Bennet, Mr. Darcy, Jane, and Elizabeth are all terribly aghast at the situation. The sin most certainly sets the world of both Longbourn and

Pemberly off kilter until Mr. Darcy steps in.

This is how we do it. This is how we read – and then judge – a book. After, of course, we've moved past its cover.

Up next week: more talk of sin. Geesh, I can't seem to get away from it...

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This contribution is available at <http://www.epiphaniesofbeauty.com/judge-book-cover-sin-sin/>  
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## Confession: the struggle is real [at Faint Hue of Grace]

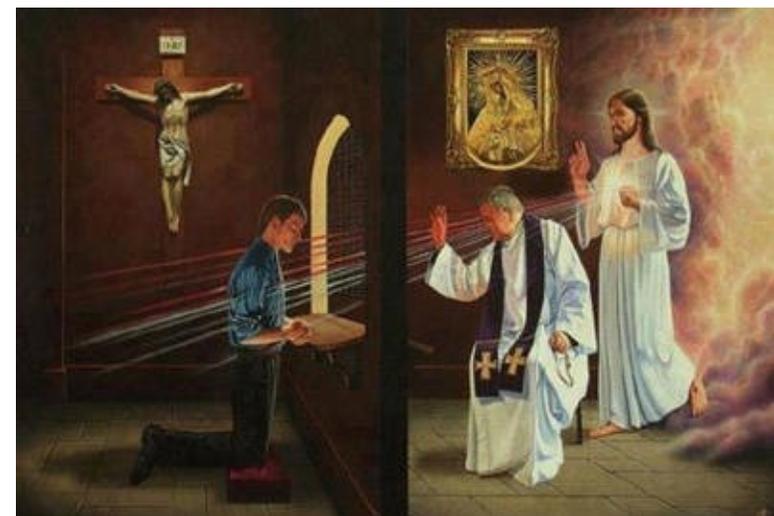
I'm really bad at Confession - as in, the sacrament. For example, until 18 months ago, I had no idea that apparently, the average person doesn't simply list their sins matter-of-factly and then stop, waiting for the priest to say something. Apparently instead, people speak as if in a conversation, and then conclude with some version of "for these and all the sins I have committed, I am truly sorry."

Who knew?

I remember learning this from my spiritual director in Austria, at which point I panicked that I would have to think of casual things to say in the middle of a very serious sacrament.

"And I'm just really struggling to believe such-and-such ..." or "It feels as though God is distant..." or anything else like that just seemed very odd for me to say. But I have learned, at least a little bit.

For the longest time, I had very strong opinions of how I wanted Confession to go. If I needed confession, I didn't want sympathy from the priest. I wanted him to be at least somewhat harsh. I had sinned, darn it! His words to me should reflect my failure! I remember a particularly kind priest who, after I unloaded my soul, was helpful and gentle and wonderful. "Why couldn't he have been meaner??" I complained to Fr. S, my spiritual director, later that week. "I didn't deserve the kindness he showed me!"



But I think that's the point of confession. That God knows what we need, and more often than not, He helps the priest to see what we need as well.

I experienced this just last night. I had been putting confession off for too long, and just really didn't want to go. It was one of those "Well, I haven't skipped Mass or committed murder, so surely I can put it off another week or two..." but then 3 weeks went by and the little things kept adding up.

So I dragged my sorry self over to the chapel a half hour before confessions started, because we're Catholic college students and the confession line is always pathetically and extraordinarily long. I got to the front of the line and then made my way across the sanctuary to where Father was sitting. He greeted me, and we talked casually for a minute because hey, why not. After I had confessed my sins, he paused a moment, and I sat in silence. Then,

"You really need to make sure that you're taking care of yourself. Go for a run. Take a walk. Have coffee with a friend on Saturday. Relax! Take time for yourself."

Ooh, man. That was the only thing he said, before giving me my penance. Normally, it would have killed me.

But you know what? *I finally got it.* Sometimes I don't need to hear more harsh words or scoldings.

Sometimes I just need to hear a spiritual father telling me what my Heavenly Father wants me to know.

It's not all necessarily about what I **do**, but rather who I **am** as a daughter of God. Simply *doing* all the time until I'm too busy to stop won't get me an inch closer to Heaven. It's instead how much I allow myself to grow that will make an impact, and will then effect my life, no matter how calm or busy I am. While I may think that I "don't have time" to take a walk or get coffee with a friend, it's these times of recharging that prepare me for my next task of doing the Lord's will.

As I prepare for this homecoming weekend, complete with 3 large-scale Masses and a Eucharistic procession, I will do my best to take a little time for myself, just enjoying the day. It is peaceful union with God that father encouraged, and that my Father desires.

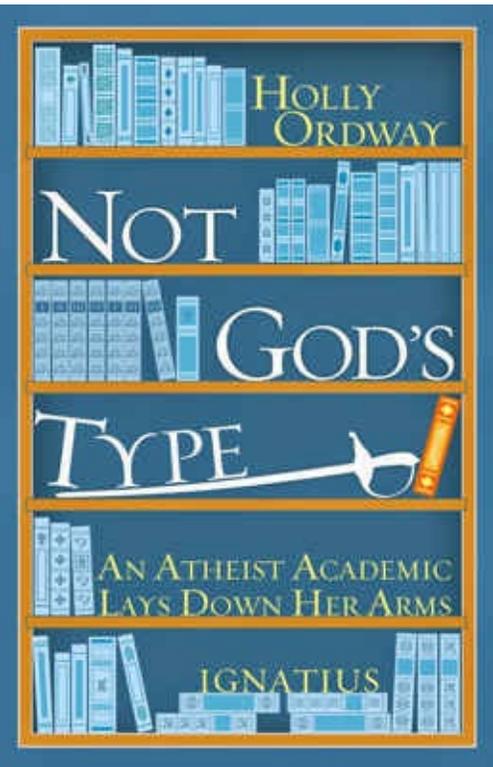
I not only received forgiveness of my sins last night, but the gentle nudge necessary to wake me up from my delusion.  
So I'd say it was a good confession.

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This contribution is available at <http://fainthueofgrace.weebly.com/thoughts-and-ramblings/confessio-the-struggle-is-real>  
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## Book Review: Not God's Type, An Atheist Academic Lays Down Her Arms [at Notlukewarm]



*Not God's Type, An Atheist Academic Lays Down Her Arms* by Holly

Ordway is a beautiful and amazing story. As a child she thought there was no need to put a capital G when spelling God, as an adult she saw "faith as nonsense" but felt "dissonance in my own life, in my understanding of the world". Ordway chronicles how she came to belief from unbelief and eventually came to the fullness of truth when she joined the Catholic Church.

As an academic and intellectual, Ordway comes to know God through the power of reason. She learns that a commitment to Jesus is not to be taken lightly nor is it easy. Her realization that the "Christian life wasn't something to be figured out, like a philosophical crossword puzzle, but a reality to be experienced. This Jesus, whom I dared to begin to believe had really been raised from the dead, said, "Follow me." is what leads her to become a Christian.

Ordway shares with us the depths of her soul searching journey quoting great literature and poetry. She tells her story with honesty and candor. I read the book almost in one sitting and when I was done, wanted to start it again right away. Ordway's story shows us once again that there is a God-shaped hole in each of us and we cannot run from the One who made us.

***If you read only one book between now and the end of the year, make it this one!***



## Synod on the Family 2014 [at timeofthechurch]



The Extraordinary Synod on the Family concluded over the weekend in Rome (5-19 October, 2014), bookended by the beatification of Pope Paul VI. It proved to be an eventful, even enthralling journey for the Church, two weeks of discussion, passionate debate and prayerful discernment about the way in which the Church can best bring the Gospel to bear on the lives of millions of families as diverse as they are complex.

Given the multidimensions of family life, the issues canvassed by the bishops and participants were also broad. They included the plight of refugees, the care of children with special needs, the situation of migrant workers and the unemployed, [the impact of the internet](#) on family bonds, and then there were the distinctive concerns of African bishops whose concerns differ in striking ways from those in the affluent West (e.g. the practice of polygamy and conditions of extreme poverty).

However, and perhaps inevitably, the focus of media and popular attention ultimately fell on two specific matters: the question of Eucharist for the divorced and remarried, and the Church's pastoral response to homosexual persons.

### Controversies of the Synod



As the first synod of bishops to meet under the leadership of Pope Francis, and affirming as it did many diverse views on the way in which Catholic faith speaks to human lives, the synod attracted not only generous media coverage for a Catholic get-together but wide-ranging interpretations of what was said, by whom and for what intent.

Of course, the synod discussions were pre-empted and almost overshadowed by Cardinal Kasper of Germany who in February 2014 advocated for access to communion for Catholics who have divorced and remarried. This was followed by a strong critique of his position by several other cardinals, including in the book-length reply, *The Gospel of the Family*, which contained a foreword by our own Australian prelate Cardinal Pell (the text of the Cardinal's introduction is available [here](#)).

(For those interested in the pre-history of the synod, preparations began in earnest in November 2013,

with a [survey](#) distributed by national bishops' conferences to glean the opinions of Catholics on a number of Church teachings. The survey was a commendable initiative and expressed a sincere desire to be consultative though it clearly suffered from limitations, including the formulation of the questions which could be difficult for the Catholic in the street to say the least e.g. 'How is the theory and practice of natural law in the union between man and woman challenged in light of the formation of a family?' This survey was followed in June 2014 by the [lineamenta](#) or preparatory document for the Synod which presented the results of the November consultation and set a platform for the synod discussions to begin in earnest).



As the synod officially got underway this month, one of the major causes of controversy was the mid-term or post-discussion report known as the [relatio post disceptationem](#). This was intended as a provisional snapshot of the views of the bishops thus far. However, many bishops objected to the content of this summary, noting that it was not only insufficiently grounded in Scripture and Catholic tradition but that it seemed to present the views of one or two particular bishops as the consensus of the whole assembly, which they were not.

The most strident and vocal objector to this interim report was the American cardinal Raymond Burke who argued, '[this document], in fact, advances positions which many Synod Fathers do not accept and, I would say, as faithful shepherds of the flock cannot accept'. Controversially, the interim report had included praise for the 'positive aspects' of what the Church has long considered 'irregular' situations, including civil unions and cohabitation, and even spoke of 'accepting and valuing' people of homosexual orientation (though with the notable disclaimer 'without compromising Catholic doctrine on the family and matrimony').

Criticism was particularly focused on the General Secretariat of the Synod which handled the information flowing out of the bishops' discussion, with accusations that its members, including Cardinal Baldisseri, had manipulated, or at the very least swayed considerably, the content of the *relatio* to reflect a personal and permissive agenda.

## Interpretations of the Synod



As is customary, and was the case following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the major media outlets interpreted the discussions and debates of the bishops through a political lens, with reports of 'conservative' and 'liberal' camps pitted one against the other (of course, Pope Francis was read as ensconced within the latter and undermined by the former, taken to be the majority).

Without denying the political nature of all human discourse, including the ordinary desire to influence outcomes and press one's case, the heart of a synod is not the political motivations that underlie the bishops' views but the *theological* arguments that are raised in accounting for those positions. Of course, the media is generally not interested in actual arguments, only *assertions*, and for the most part lack a theological background or concern.

In cherry-picking lines from the disputed interim report we have mentioned, as well as Pope Francis' powerful concluding address to the Synod Fathers, the Daily Mail and even the BBC were able to run histrionic headlines such as "Massive Vatican shift on gay sex" and "Pope Francis set back on gay policy".

The BBC coverage focused on Francis' critique of 'hostile inflexibility' among so-called traditionalists and intellectuals, and implied that these adversarial forces had undermined or 'setback' the Pope's more 'progressive' agenda on homosexuals and the remarried. Conspicuously, the report made no mention whatsoever of the pontiff's critique in the self-same address of those who have 'come down from the cross' to 'bow down to a worldly spirit instead of purifying it and bending it to the Spirit of God' (you can read the complete address [here](#)).

More locally, broadcasters tapped into the local response to the synod, including SBS which while perpetuating the BBC caricature of a Pope Francis opposed by backward bishops, at least tried to seek out a Catholic view of things.



In my fifteen seconds in the spotlight, I shared the view that the synod represents a healthy and vital discussion for the global Catholic Church and that the Catholic bishops are mindful of the lived situations of people from across the world and mindful also of what the Gospel can bring to those contexts. I tried to underscore that the range of issues being discussed by the synod as they relate to the family were broad and that the synod represents the Church's ongoing and sincere discernment of how best to accompany people in their life journeys, including divorcees, the civilly remarried, single parents, and gays and lesbians to whom the Gospel also speaks. (Other voices in the report included Paul Collins who can always be relied upon to express more than a healthy scepticism about Church matters).

### **Discernment is Not Division**

The key to an interpretation of the synod and its events is given to us, I think, in Pope Francis' closing address to the Synod Fathers which is a profound and striking statement (you can read it [here](#)). He provides us with 'the eyes of faith' to continue talking about these issues with confidence.

Firstly, Pope Francis is not at all unnerved by the differing views expressed in the preceding fortnight and accepts the rigorous debates in faith as an expression of the Church discerning how to enter ever more deeply into the heart of the Gospel by the *sensus fidei*, the sense of faith of the faithful. As he shared,

Many commentators . . . have imagined they see a disputatious Church where one part is against the other, doubting even the Holy Spirit, the true promoter and guarantor of the unity and harmony of the Church – the Holy Spirit who throughout history has always guided the barque, through her ministers, even when the sea was rough and choppy, and the ministers unfaithful and sinners.



What Francis is affirming by valuing debate over the silence of ‘a false and quietist peace’ is the capacity of the Church to receive God’s revelation faithfully and meaningfully by attending, together as people of faith in the Spirit, to tradition, including the teachings of the Magisterium, and the experience of Christian families in the world (I have written about the Church’s discernment of the Spirit [here](#), in relation to the 2013 papal conclave).

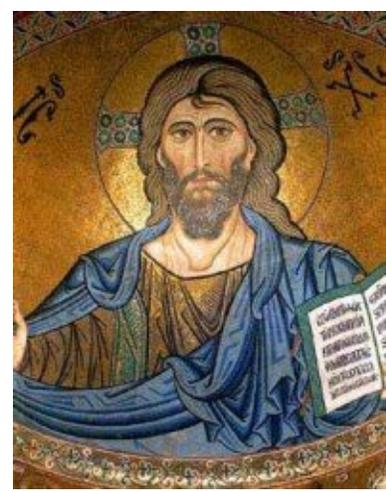
To teach and evangelise the Church must first listen, receive time and again the deposit of faith which constitutes our living tradition and attend to the complex realities of contemporary family life which too can be a source of theological knowing.

The guarantor of the Church’s ongoing faithfulness to Christ in this multidimensional process is the Holy Spirit, as Vatican II’s [Lumen Gentium](#) affirms and which Pope Francis cited in as many words,

The universal body of the faithful who have received the anointing of the holy one cannot err in matters of belief. It displays this particular quality through a supernatural sense of the faith in the whole people when ‘from the bishops to the last of the faithful laity’, it expresses the consent of all in matters of faith and morals (*Lumen Gentium* 12).

This discernment of the *sensus fidei*, a sense of the faith and the Church’s sense for the faith, should not be a ‘source of confusion and discord’, as Francis remarked in his address, but should be entered into with confidence, trust and utmost faith in the Holy Spirit’s capacity, through diverse and even imperfect people (like you and me) to lead God’s people to the truth and mercy of God (you can read more about this connection between the deepening of tradition and the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit in [Dei Verbum](#) 8 as well as the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) n.892).

As well, in the process of spiritual discernment that will continue until the General Synod on the family in 2015, Francis warns of temptations or polarities. The first temptation is to be fossilised in our faith, exhibiting a ‘hostile inflexibility’ which would in fact impede the ability of the Church to bring the Gospel to new and developing circumstances. This kind of fundamentalism or rigorism can manifest a *lack* of faith and trust in the Spirit that guides the Church (the Marian dogmas of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries stand out as instances in which the Church has developed a deeper appreciation of her own faith). ‘Traditionalism’ is in fact not traditional at all for the pilgrim Catholic Church understands development as a perennial and necessary deepening of her self-understanding in light of the Gospel, and never a departure from it (“Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life”; John 6:68)



The other risk named by Francis, the one that media outlets were less enthusiastic to report, was the capitulation or accommodation of the Church, and the Gospel it bears, to ‘a worldly spirit instead of purifying [the world] and bending it to the spirit of God’.

The Church must engage the world, as Francis has so often stressed, but it engages the world and contemporary culture with a view of what the world *really is* in Christ, a world of men and women made in the image of God and called to conversion or ‘likeness’ in Christ in whom we find our origin and destiny. Thus, Pope Francis critiques outright in his concluding address,

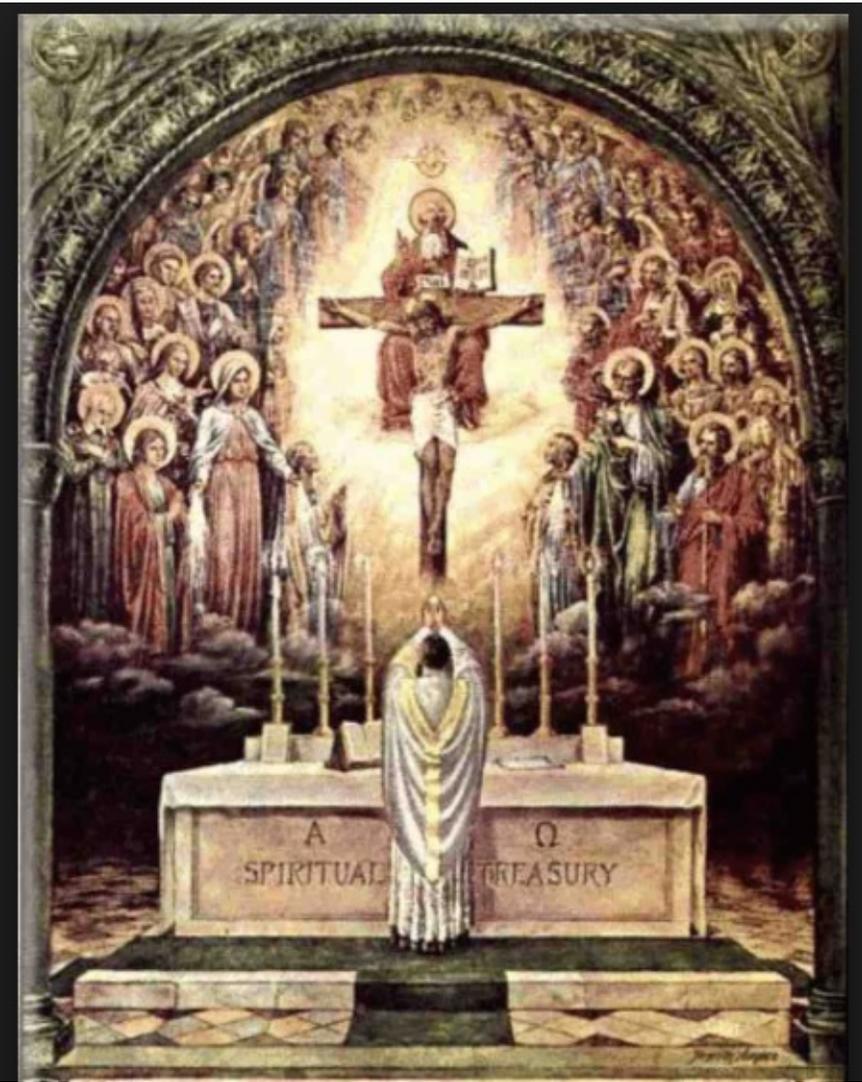
a destructive tendency to do-gooding, which in the name of a false mercy binds the wounds without first curing them and treating them, that treats the symptoms and not the causes and the roots

with the phrase ‘false mercy’ a nod to no less than St John Paul II. What does Francis mean by this? He means that we cannot truly serve people in their wounds and in their growth through crisis if we disregard the truth, if we cover over the truth with superficial or cheap dressings. As American Archbishop Kurtz put it, ‘Mercy without truth is not mercy’.

While the concrete solutions to the contemporary challenges that confront the family will be the subject of discussion over the next twelve months, the synodal process has already recalled two principles for our view of Church and mission. The first, that all people are called to Christ and the Church – as all are called to the King’s banquet in the parable of Matthew 22 – and second, that all people are called to conversion in Christ who is the source of true life – as was the guest at the banquet called to change before approaching the table. The Church must both open wide its arms to the sinner and invite a new creation in each one of us, no matter what our state of life or circumstances may be. This is the universal hope and universal challenge of the Gospel.

Much more will be said on family and life issues in the coming year, by each of the local churches (dioceses), episcopal conferences and the observing media. As Catholics, we are being invited by Pope Francis explicitly and the debates of the synod implicitly to trust in the Spirit-filled capacity of the whole Church, all of us together, to know what the faith is and to better accompany all people in their journeys with the promise and [joy of the Gospel](#).

## The Road to Hell is Paved With Indifference [at Archdiocese of Washington Blog]



The Gospel from today's Mass (Tuesday of the 31st week of the year) features the familiar Lucan version of the parable of a certain man (in the Matthew version (Mat 22:2), Jesus calls him a king) who gave a banquet. But when all was prepared and the servants were sent out to fetch the invited guests, many of them made excuses, preferring not to come:

*The first said to him,  
'I have purchased a field and must go to examine it;  
I ask you, consider me excused.'  
And another said, 'I have purchased five yoke of oxen  
and am on my way to evaluate them;  
I ask you, consider me excused.'  
And another said, 'I have just married a woman,  
and therefore I cannot come' (Luke 14:18-20).*

**Now it will be noted that none of the excuses is wrong or evil in itself.** None of the guests excuse themselves in order to be able to go off to see a prostitute, or to oppress the poor, or to wage war. Each goes off to do something good. However, as an old saying goes, "The good is the enemy of the best."

Oddly, the invited guests reject a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attend the banquet of a king for some good, but lesser thing.

**As such, they illustrate well the disposition of many today** who prefer the lesser and passing things of the world to the greater and lasting gifts of God and the things awaiting them in Heaven. While indifference and wrongful priorities are human problems, we in the modern age seem to exhibit these in greater abundance. This is likely due to the effect of having so many options and creature comforts at our disposal.

**Frankly speaking, indifference is a huge problem today.** Though there are some people who strongly resist, disbelieve, or even hate God, and while there are others who are engaged in very serious sins, there is also an even larger number of people who have simply fallen into indifference and drifted away from God and the things of Heaven. They veer off to the modern equivalent of inspecting their farm, checking out their livestock, or being with their wife: one goes off to detail his car, another goes shopping at the Home Depot store on Sunday, yet another is off to a family function or even to work. If some think of God at all or of the invitation/reminder to attend Mass, they dismiss the thought: “Ho-hum, so many other things to do ...”

**What makes this sort of rejection of God’s invitation so pernicious is** that, as in the parable, most of these people don’t go off to do terribly sinful things. Many today who live very secular lives, giving little or no thought to God, are actually very “nice” people. Many of them pay their taxes, don’t beat their wives, and are dedicated to any number of good causes. And thus we look at them and all too easily conclude that it’s “no big deal.” Though they seem to have no time for God or for the things of God, they are “nice” people. Surely everything is fine; they don’t really *mean* to reject God or the invitation to holy things; surely they will be saved in the end ... or so we think.

**The only problem is that the parable does not make this conclusion.** Our thinking that everything is probably fine is at odds with the Word of God, the very Word of Jesus. The teaching of this parable does not blithely conclude that rejecting the invitation, even for some good but lesser thing, is no big deal. The parable sets forth that their rejection has real and ultimately catastrophic consequences in their lives. The rejection of the invitation means that they will not have no part in the banquet! Jesus has the king say, *For, I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will taste my dinner* (Lk 14:24).

**So their indifference to, and rejection of the invitation has a lasting effect.** At the end of the day you’re either at the banquet or you’re not. Being “nice” or going off to do good (but lesser) things has nothing to do with it. Being nice does not get you into the banquet; accepting the invitation and entering by obedience to the summons of faith gets you in. Once in, there will be plenty of “nice” and good things to do, but you’ve got to obey the summons and enter by faith. That many today regard the summons lightly, preferring worldly things to the things of God is, as the parable teaches, very dangerous.

**Let us consider the reaction of the host (king) to the rejection by the invited guests.** We need to study it carefully. The text says,

*Then the master of the house in a rage commanded his servant,  
‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town  
and bring in here the poor and the crippled, the blind and the lame.’  
The servant reported, ‘Sir, your orders have been carried out  
and still there is room.’*

*The master then ordered the servant,  
‘Go out to the highways and hedgerows  
and make people come in that my home may be filled.  
For, I tell you, none of those men who were invited will taste my dinner.’”*

**Note three things about the king’s response:**

**I. Rage** - The word used in this translation is vivid. The king is described as being in a “rage.” Scripture says, *And without faith it is impossible to please God* (Heb 11:6). And again, *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him* (Jn 3:36).

**However, we must be careful here to understand the implications of the Greek word that underlies this.** The word is ὀργίζω (orgizo). And while it can be properly translated as “anger,” the word expresses more deeply a “settled opposition” to injustice. Therefore the word does not describe God as being in an egocentric rage, as if he were some sort of a jilted lover. Rather, this anger comes from a settled, serene stance in which God does not (and cannot) adjust Himself to the vicissitudes of sinners or change Himself to placate them. God’s stance remains unchanged. It is our stance that changes and makes us come to experience His love as wrath.

**The form of the verb in this text underscores this reality.** The verb form is an aorist, passive participle: ὀργισθεῖς (*orgistheis*), translated best as “having been angered.” Thus God does not change His principled stance of offered love; it is those who reject Him who change and experience His love as wrath. It is the result of human rejection that brings forth this experience. God’s settled opposition to the human refusal of love does not and cannot change. He is steadfastly opposed to our rejection. But it is *our* rejection of His offer that puts us in an opposing stance to Him, not an egotistical rage on the part of God. God will steadfastly desire His banquet hall to be filled; He does not change. And this explains the next the point to which we move.

**II. Resolve** - Having been rebuffed by some, the king’s “rage” merely intensifies his resolve to extend the invitation further until the hall is filled! He sends his servants (this means you) out again and again, and he will not stop calling until the full number of guests has been reached. Scripture says, *Then [the martyrs] were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete* (Rev 6:11). And again, *For the whole creation hopes for and expects the full revelation of the sons of God* (Rom 8:19). An old spiritual say, “Oh, preacher, fold your Bible. For the last soul’s converted!”

Thus God, who does not relent in His resolve or change His settled stance, continues to call until enough sinful, stubborn human beings repent and accept His invitation to the banquet.

**III. Respect** - The final line is telling. And though it sounds like a denunciation, it should be understood more deeply as in fact respectful. The king (God) says, *For, I tell you, none of those men who were invited will taste my dinner.* At the end of the day, God will respect (though not approve of) the “No” to His invitation. God has made us free and He respects our freedom even if, in His settled opposition to sinful and harmful choices, He regrets our decisions. Scripture says, *If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us* (2 Tim 2:12). Yes, God will at some point either accept and ratify our denial of His offer or He will rejoice in our enduring “Yes.” But in the end, the decision is ours. And it is a decision that will determine our destiny.

**We in the Church must become more sober in our appreciation of what a parable like this teaches.** We cannot allow ourselves to be carried away by unbiblical notions that most will be saved merely by being “nice.” There are lots of nice people in the world (however vaguely “nice” is defined). But the more critical question is, “Do you want what God offers or do you prefer the world and other offers rooted in the flesh or even in the devil?”

**There is a strange obtuseness to the human heart, which desires lesser things to greater things,** which is easily carried away by passing pleasures, which hates the discipline of the Cross. We must recover an urgency in our evangelization that does not presume that most will “make it in” by some natural “goodness” or “niceness.” We need to draw everyone to the definitive “Yes” that a parable like this teaches is necessary. Vague notions of universalism and of being pleasant, nice people cannot replace the biblical teaching of obedience to the summons to say “Yes” to God’s kingdom. Naïve and myopic notions cannot save God’s people or motivate vigorous and urgent evangelization. Only an obedience to God’s Word can do that. Presumption is a terrible thing and it stabs evangelization in the heart.

**The teaching here is clear: we need a sober,** consistent, urgent outreach to the many souls who prefer the secular to the sacred, the passing to the perfect, what is here to what is heavenly. Wishful thinking will not win any souls, only a sober seriousness rooted in God’s Word will do so.

The music in this video I prepared is by Fiocco and the text is: *Homo quidam fecit coenam magnam, et misit servum suum hora coenae dicere invitatis ut venirent: Quia parata sunt omnia.* (A certain man made a great banquet, and sent his servants at the hour of the feast to say to the invited that they should come: for everything is prepared.)

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This contribution is available at <http://blog.adw.org/2014/11/the-road-to-hell-is-paved-with-indifference-a-meditation-on-a-warning-by-jesus/>  
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# Honor Flight - The Art of Remembering [at Annie Go Lightly]



I rose at 5 a.m. this morning to accomplish a very special task. Don and I, plus goodfriend, Marie, met the dawn at Castle Air Base in Atwater, California. We were there to see off the 61 men and 4 women, all veterans of World War II, on the first Honor Flight to leave from Castle Air Base.

Honor Flight Network is a non-profit organization created solely to honor America's veterans for all their sacrifices. We transport our heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit and reflect at **their** memorials. Top priority is given to the senior veterans – World War II survivors, along with those other veterans who may be terminally ill.

Of all of the wars in recent memory, it was World War II that truly threatened our very existence as a nation—and as a culturally diverse, free society. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, an estimated 640 WWII veterans die each day. Our time to express our thanks to these brave men and women is running out.

As I stood there, facing the rising sun, I could not help but think of my father, a veteran of Pearl Harbor and Korea. I thought of my husband, Don, a Vietnam veteran. I wondered if he would be honored on such a flight someday. I thought of the sacrifice, in blood, of our young men, and wondered if there would ever be a time when we would have what we all pray for – “Peace in our time”. But in those thoughtful moments, it didn't seem really that important. What was important was that we are willing to keep the idea of freedom alive, will to fight for it, and will to die for it.

So, we remember.



## Never Forget

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This contribution is available at <http://annieelf2012.wordpress.com/2014/10/27/honor-flight-the-art-of-remembering/>  
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## Morning Prayer Snuggles [at La Joie Inattendue]

Tuesday was rough. Between the twins' squabbles over toys, potty training mishaps, Cheerios crunching under my feet from breakfast, and the random toys lurking in every corner, it all got to me. I found myself getting so angry at my kids' such slight misbehaviors. I started lecturing loudly about how they are supposed to listen and obey instantaneously. I blamed them for our being late (even though we were just a few minutes behind schedule) and ignored their innocent questions while I drove the car fuming.

By naptime I was DONE. I retreated to my computer after I had tucked them in, and I was still so worked up I couldn't even look at their picture that is on the background of my laptop screen. It wasn't that I was still mad at them, I was mostly angry with myself. I was too ashamed to see their beautiful bright faces grinning broadly back at me. I had lashed out on this innocent, lively pair, and had allowed their little brother to hear and see it all take place. Surely they had made some mistakes that had called for necessary parental intervention and instruction, but nothing had warranted such extreme moodiness and frankly, immaturity, on my part. I have little doubt that my increasingly frequent outbursts and their dramatic squabbles with each other are related.

So I started to brood in what I call my Dark Nest, a.k.a my husband's oversized armchair. Even though I knew it was not an uplifting activity, I resorted to Facebook. I snidely rolled my eyes at certain happy posts, and I quickly skimmed over darling pictures of happy families. I dismissed the smiles and became even just the slightest bit jealous, even though I knew that most people post pictures of the good times and rarely post updates of the crummy ones. Looking at Facebook allowed me to enter a state of jadedness; it was my virtual escape. But being in a constant state of "whatever" is not the same as a healthy habit of learning to sweat the small stuff... I felt like a complete failure, and the longer I brooded, the longer I remained frustrated with my inability to handle the stress.

I laid down on the couch for a nap, but I was too wound up to fall asleep. Needless to say, I did not feel rejuvenated when everyone woke up.

By bedtime I was running on fumes. The finish line was in sight: just one book, one half-hearted prayer, and lights out (cross your fingers they stay in bed). Elisabeth came back from the bookshelf with her book choice and I sighed deeply. She had chosen a children's book, written in German, based on folklore from my father's small hometown village in Switzerland. Normally I would have delighted in sharing a piece of our family's heritage with her, but tonight I just wanted a short and quick story. This particular story was on the longer side, and I usually read it to them in German, giving a brief summary after every page in English, which meant an even longer story. I debated just summarizing each page in English, but I knew they would not allow me to get away with short-cutting it.

So I propped up a pillow behind my back, took a deep breath, and started to read. They cuddled on either side of me with their legs curled up and leaning on my belly. Elisabeth had her two middle fingers in her mouth, a habit she has had since she was born. Even though I read in German, they listened intently, and I felt them relax against my body. Perhaps it was the artful illustrations, perhaps it was the cadence of my voice, or perhaps it was simply the end of a trying day and they were beginning to let sleepiness overtake them...or perhaps they started to relax as they felt

*me*

relax, as my angry and sarcastic words had to take a backseat to the clever words of the text. It was the most peaceful part of the day.

In the morning Elisabeth came into my bed to snuggle, as she does every morning. She climbed over me and buried herself deep in the blankets next to me, sucking on those same two fingers, her forehead nestled close to mine. Sometimes she narrates all the thoughts in her head, abruptly ending the morning slumber, but today she just lay there. I dozed back to sleep listening to her breath and finger sucking, the softness of her skin a gentle reminder of her presence. The only way I can interpret her action is that it was the softest and sweetest act of forgiveness, one of the most perfect acts a childlike faith can execute.

In that moment I started to pray. I didn't run down the list of things I need to do, should probably do, might do.....and add prayer to it. There are some days that I have the mental focus to order my day first thing in the morning, and on those days fitting in prayer is pretty easy, and my day goes well. But this particular morning I was still feeling overtired, upset, and with Elisabeth gently breathing next to me, undeserving. I was in no place to organize tasks in my head. I finally realized that despite the emotional and mental chaos, I can, and MUST, incorporate prayer into the day. And even though it may not fit perfectly on my agenda, prayer can be done amidst the dirty kitchen, unmade bed, and unfolded laundry. And yes, even during a morning snuggle.

*Especially*

during a morning snuggle.

Before kids, I used to get up with my alarm, sit with my hot cup of coffee (programmed from the night before), and pray through a running list of things in my head. I made sure everything was covered. With little ones I have opted for catching as much sleep as possible in the mornings, and therefore the set-time prayer schedule has been hard to pin down. Even though I know in my head prayer can happen whenever and however, it has admittedly been difficult for me to fully comprehend the power of unplanned prayer. I am beginning to realize that my day goes better when prayer is on my to-do list, because

*I*

am in control of my agenda. And yet, on the days when I feel hopelessly out of control, the desperate prayers at the random times get me through the day with so much more grace because it is my ultimate confession that

*God*

is in control.

So I prayed in the moment without any structure, without any memorized morning offering, without any mental list of the types of things I should pray for. I simply begged God for patience for the day, at least more patience than I had the day before. I told Him how grateful I am for this little body snuggled up close to mine, and even though she's here before the sun is up, I know that someday I will miss these moments. I asked St. Francois de Sales to pray for me, to pray that I would go through the day with a spirit of gentleness.

For the rest of the day, I was so much calmer . We went to the preschool story hour at the town library and the girls were wonderful. I didn't even bark at them when we arrived 10 minutes late. They let me help them with the craft activity without demanding they do it their way. They sat with the other kids and sang songs with big smiles. They politely ate their snack, and even cleaned up on their own, even though I was preoccupied with their little brother. Lunchtime went smoothly, and even that blasted transition from lunch to naptime was a breeze. I believe they sensed a calmer, more relaxed mom, and thus didn't have the need to push back or engage in a preschool power struggle. They knew they had my undivided attention (as opposed to my preoccupied, worrisome, overwhelmed attention), and therefore did not have to resort to getting my attention through bad behavior. Naptime was long and peaceful. I did not feel worn out, but had enough energy to pop in an exercise DVD. The house was just as messy, the disorderly piles of random clothes and toys still taunted me, but I let it go, because I had admitted that I can't do everything....and I allowed God to take care of the rest.

The beauty of prayer is that any and every activity can be consecrated to God, whether it be changing a poopy diaper, picking up broken crayons, and all the other mundane tasks that are a part of the day. It doesn't have to be a perfectly quiet and uninterrupted period of time. I am beginning to learn that there is much peace and even holiness in the daily chaos of motherhood. I like to think that God is more pleased with the desperate, I-can-only-get-through-the-day-by-your-grace prayers than the regimented I've-got-the-day-already-ordered-and-God-happens-to-be-the-first-thing-on-the-list-prayers.

Being a wife and mom has been the most unstructured, messy, and unpredictable chapter of my life, and it has been the greatest, most sanctifying blessing I could have ever been given.

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This contribution is available at <http://kimsununexpectedjoy.blogspot.com/2014/10/morning-prayer-snuggles.html>  
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## That all Christians be Truly One [at Mother of the Fiat]

Pope Francis calls all Christians to unity during His General Audience Catechesis. He challenges us not to remain resigned to this division, but to take the step towards reconciliation and full communion. ***“Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou has given me, that they be one, even as we are one,” (John 17:11)***

We live in a world filled with so much division, hate, and anger. There is a evil fueled by a desire to erase God from families, marriages, schools, and we go on as though nothing is wrong. We have become lukewarm, we want to remain in our ” comfort zone.” and Jesus is shoved aside.as families fall apart, marriages are destroyed, abortion is rampant, no one cares about the family. We stop praying and going to church because we think God doesn’t care. But it is our pride that has shoved Him aside.



***“Every attack against the unity of faith is an attack against Christ Himself” ( Saint John Paul II)***

What is the cause of the division? It is the desire to do thing’s our own way, without God. This causes a weakness in our souls because we can only see what we want to see. We fail to see the person that is in need sitting next to us. We refuse to listen to another’s point of view.We think we are right, division steps in. This individualism is the enemy of union. When we begin to live outside of God’s will, we say “Non Servium,” I will not serve. In refusing to serve our fellow man, we say no to Jesus. This then is where our prayer lives weaken and slowly diminishes This is when we must turn to the merciful heart of Jesus, and ask Him to teach us how to love the way He loved. We also must stand with the Blessed Mother at the foot of the cross, for the devil flees from the cross. Christ wants us to remain in union with the church, to help each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

***“Finally, you are one with Jesus as the body is one with the head. He must be your breathe, heart, love, life, your all. These great gifts in the follower of Christ originate from baptism. They are increased and strengthened through Confirmation. Through the Holy Eucharist they are brought to perfection.” -St. John Eudes***

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This contribution is available at <http://schuelketami.com/2014/10/13/that-all-christians-be-truly-one/>  
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## Can't Wait for It - Except For That! [at warriorsworlddad]

Our town just celebrated Trick or Treat. For weeks the stores have been hawking costumes both cute and horrid in anticipation of the Big Event. Trick or Treat is the custom associated with Halloween where kids head out to fill their bags with oodles of goodies.

My kids are too old to go Trick-or-Treating but they still get excited as the day arrives. They get a kick out of meeting the eager porch gremlins. They also look for an opportunity to grab a snack for themselves from our stash of Treats.

The run up to the holiday with all its anticipation can last a week or more and then in a mere two hours it's over. The porch lights go out, the streets empty and the supply of snacks disappears. As the blood sugar spike ends your energy crashes and along with it the euphoria of the long-awaited day ebbs to nothing. A period of quiet waiting begins until the next Big Day- Thanksgiving.

The anticipation around Thanksgiving is different than for Halloween. On Thanksgiving there are the Parades, the Football games or the Dog Show on television. There's the family gathering for the feast and a chance to just be together. And even though it may last hours longer than Trick-or Treat Night, Thanksgiving comes to an end with only the piles of dirty dishes to remind you of it.

But with the end of Thanksgiving we begin to anticipate Christmas. For those of us here in the U.S.A. Christmas excitement may begin sometime before Trick-or-Treat thanks to the commercials on television trying to convince us to Shop Till We Drop. Around Thanksgiving they begin to show the Christmas Specials like A Charley Brown Christmas or my favorite The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus. No Christmas Season is complete without The Miracle on 34th Street EXCEPT it is NOT yet Christmas Season. Christmas season begins on Christmas Eve, December 24th, and goes on for twelve full days until the Epiphany. However unlike Halloween which disappears after two hours or Thanksgiving whose remnants may last until the next day when you finally get the kitchen cleaned, Christmas decorations should remain present until Candlemas Day also known as the Presentation of the Lord, forty days after Christmas.

Most of us seem to spend our lives looking forward to the next Big Thing. Be it a Holiday, a Birthday, a Wedding or Anniversary. It may be the World Series, the Super Bowl or the World Cup. We look forward to happenings that momentarily distract us from our daily routines and drudgeries. For a few hours or days our lives are mostly filled with Excitement or Peace and Joy (except for those who succumb to depression during the holidays).

What we all are looking for is fulfillment in our lives where our hearts, actually our souls, are at total Peace. In our celebrations here on Earth we find it partially and briefly. But as Saint Augustine said, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee O God."

According to Augustine only in Heaven will we find what we are looking for in all our longing here on Earth. If we accept this as fact then we must ask ourselves, am I preparing myself accordingly. Compared to the effort we put into getting ready for Trick-or-Treat, Thanksgiving or Christmas, compared to the planning we did for Our Wedding or our vacation, how does our preparation for our last and most

momentous trip compare?

All of us will journey through Death. Some of us will arrive in Heaven where our Peace and Fulfillment is Eternal. Failure to properly prepare for this journey can cause one to end up in place that is not so hot (sarcasm intended).

The problem with Heaven is it requires us to die to get there and no one really wants to think about that for weeks, or days or even for a couple of hours. The thought of our death creeps most of us out.

We are schizophrenic about it, we can't wait for the bliss of heaven, for seeing our loved ones again and being happy forever but we don't want to talk about the "D" word. We even use euphemisms like Passed on or Went to Sleep. For those with a morbid sense of humor we may say Pushing Up Daisies, Sleeping With the Worms or Assumed Room Temperature. Any phrase can work as long as it's not Death or Dead!

But in reality, if we live our lives according to God's Plans for us, we should look forward to our death with more anticipation than any other celebration on Earth. For with death we receive the Gift That Keeps On Giving, The Joy That Never Ends and A Peace Beyond Telling.

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