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monthly

*June*  
*2015*

# New Evangelists Monthly #30

June 2015

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## Forward

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

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

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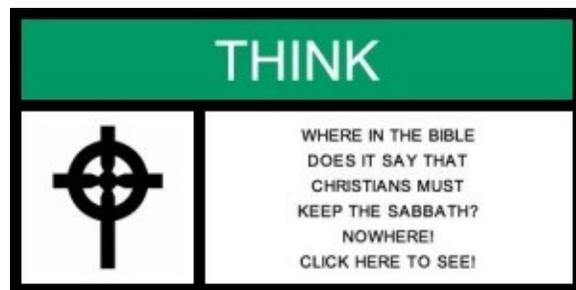
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# Will Catholics persecute Adventists for sabbath keeping? [at Catholicism and Adventism]

Seventh-day Adventists think that in the end times, they will be persecuted by Sunday-keeping Christians, and by Catholics in particular. Why? Because they think observing the weekly sabbath according to some, but not all, of the Old Testament sabbath laws, will be the test commandment, the test that shows they are the true followers of God.



Where in the Bible?

Why is this nonsense?

We can divide the problem into several sub-problems – resting, worship, work, and whether these are enforced by law or not.

- Resting in Sunday should not be a problem for Adventists – if it's enforced rest, they can do push-ups in secret with their curtains closed. And they can watch TV or even do their accounts on Sundays in secret.
- Enforced worship on Sunday should not be a problem – Ellen White said that they should devote Sundays to missionary work under such circumstances:

“The light given me by the Lord at a time when we were expecting just such a crisis as you seem to be approaching, was that when the people were moved by a power from beneath to enforce Sunday observance, Seventh-day Adventists were to show their wisdom by refraining from their ordinary work on that day, devoting it to missionary effort.”

– Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, Page 232

- Enforced work on Saturdays would never be tolerated by anyone – it's absurd.
- Enforced lack of worship on Saturdays would be problematic for the Jews as well, and highly unlikely to succeed. Catholics, who worship at Mass every day of the week, including Saturdays, wouldn't tolerate this either.

Read more here:

National Sunday Law – Fact or Fiction? [Chapter 5 – Is the National Sunday law a real threat?](#)  
[National Sunday Law](#) – RationalWiki

# [Dies Domini – Pope Saint John Paul II](#)

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# The Great Uncertainty - Problems with Individual Fallibility [at A Faith-Full Life]

Yesterday I listened to a two hour debate between Catholic author and apologist Devin Rose, and Nathaniel Taylor a graduate of Biola University, Westminster Theological Seminary, and a current philosophy student at Talbot School of Theology. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to their debate; hopefully



Devin and Nate will excuse me for weighing in with a couple of my own thoughts

During the debate, I found myself really struck by one of the main arguments that Nate made – namely that individual fallibility renders us all, whether Protestant or Catholic, *equally uncertain* about matters of faith.

— 1 —

## A Fallible Collection of Infallible Books

During the debate Devin had quoted R.C. Sproul who has said that, “*Roman Catholics view the canon as an infallible collection of infallible books. Protestants view it as a fallible collection of infallible books. Rome believes the church was infallible when it determined which books belong in the New Testament. Protestants believe the church acted rightly and accurately in this process, but not infallibly.*”<sup>1</sup>

Incidentally, it may come as a surprise to many Protestants that R.C. Sproul asserts that the best they can claim is a, “*fallible collection of infallible books*”! I’ve dealt with this very issue at length in a post that you can read here: [Sola Scriptura ~ Logically Flawed](#)

I found Nate’s response to be interesting though. Rather than dispute this point, he merely pointed out that in the same way that he as a Protestant must trust in a fallible church to provide him with the canon of Scripture, so too must Catholics rely on their own fallible intellects in order to determine which church is the *true* church in the first place. In other words, how is one position any better than the other? Both are ultimately dependent on fallible human beings with limited human intellects. This was a point that Nate returned to again and again during the vast majority of the debate, but I found it to be a deeply flawed position. Allow me to explain why.

— 2 —

## Does Certainty Exist?

Fundamentally this question revolves around whether finite and fallible human beings can know anything with any degree of certainty.

But, if we are not very careful we can slide into a sort of infinite regress. The question then becomes not just whether we can know with any degree of certainty whether the canon of the bible is true, or whether

the Catholic Church is true, but rather, “*Can fallible and finite human being know with any degree of certainty even whether or not God exists?*”

It seems odd in a debate between two Christians to have one debater defaulting to a fundamentally agnostic position – namely whether or not we can we trust in our limited and fallible human intellects in order to arrive at a knowledge of anything at all. Nevertheless, that is where Nate chose to spend most of his time. And at a certain level, it’s not that surprising. The agnostic position has become increasingly common in a society dominated by a philosophy of post-modernism and relativism as applied existentially. In a culture that questions our very ability to accurately perceive reality itself (do we even really exist?) – how can we know *anything* with any sort of certainty at all?

— 3 —

And perhaps that’s not really Nate’s position. Perhaps he was merely trying to point out that we are both limited by our fallibility. Perhaps he does believe that we can have an infallible certainty on certain issues. Perhaps.

Here’s the thing. I would agree that we have intellectual limits as humans. Some of us more than others



I often find myself frustrated by my own intellectual limitations when reading and re-reading the great philosophers and theologians of earlier times. And, while I would agree that we can’t have certainty about *everything*, I would vehemently disagree with a proposition that says that we can’t have certainty about *anything*. At one point in the debate Nate really hammered away at Devin asking, “*Can you tell me that you can infallibly know that the Catholic Church is the true Church?!*” The tone of his question made it clear that any answer in the affirmative would be the height of hubris on Devin’s part.

— 4 —

### **Divine Revelation Changes the Equation**

I wrote a post called [Thoughts on Absolute Truth and Certainty in a Post-Modern Relativistic World](#), where I pointed out the following:

Within Christian circles there are some who assert that man as a finite being cannot comprehend the infinite. And there is a certain element of truth to this. Werner Heisenberg said that, “*It will never be possible by pure reason to arrive at some absolute truth.*” and, it is for this reason that I think that it is necessary to add something to the equation at this point. As Christians, whether Protestant or Catholic, we would presumably agree on the following two points:

1. An infinite God chose to reveal Himself to finite man.
2. He did this by means of both General Revelation (i.e. creation, the natural order, the human soul, the human conscience – knowledge of moral absolutes, etc.) and Special or Particular Revelation (i.e. the Prophets, Incarnation, Scripture, His Church, etc.).

This presumes at least two truths:

- A. God wishes to be known.
- B. God can be known.

Therefore, as finite beings we can know “truth” because *the* Truth has chosen to reveal Himself to us.

We can presume that man was created with intelligence and reason to **facilitate the reception of Divine revelation**. We can further presume that Divine revelation makes it possible for men to know truth, because God wishes both to make Himself known, and to be known.

— 5 —

### Logical Inconsistencies

There are also logical inconsistencies with Nate’s position. Presumably we would both agree that Scripture is inspired – i.e. that God used fallible human beings in order to infallibly transmit His own divine words in such a way that the Scriptures are free from error in spite of being transmitted through *very human, very fallible*, means.

But where is the logic in asserting that God was *not* actively involved in the process of preventing error in the selection of the canon of Scripture? Why would God communicate His message without error but be unconcerned with whether or not we receive the “full” message? Or be unconcerned with whether or not there are “additions” to the message?

As Christians we would both agree that God rendered the divine authors incapable of error when He inspired them to write the holy Scriptures. Catholic Christians simply take the next logical step in believing that God rendered His Church incapable of error when compiling these writings into a canon. Is that really such a leap of faith for Mr. Taylor?!

But the Protestant position is just this:

There *may* be books *missing* from the bible because the Church did not infallibly define the canon of Scripture. There *may* be books which were mistakenly *added* to the bible because the Church did not infallibly define the canon of Scripture. Nonetheless, according to sola scriptura, the bible *alone* is the sole rule and guide for all matters of faith and morals in the life of the Christian.

The Protestant position is that God was so *concerned* that His message was infallibly transmitted that He worked through means of divine inspiration in order to render the writings of fallible men as inerrant. But He was so *unconcerned* with the transmission of this inerrant message that He provided no means of certainty whatsoever for whether or not the bible we hold in our hands today contains all of the word of God or just bits and pieces of it, or even portions that aren’t inspired at all.

Can you see the logical problems with this position?

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### Infallible Certainty

And here I would like to return to Nate’s question. If he asked *me* whether or not *I* could *infallibly* know that the Catholic Church is the true church – my answer would be yes.

I can know this with infallible certainty in the same way that I can know with infallible certainty that two plus two equals four. In studying science and mathematics and using the intellect that God has given me I can come to a certain and trustworthy knowledge about the world around me. In studying scripture, history, and the early Church fathers, I can come to a certain and trustworthy knowledge about the Church which Christ founded.

The fact that two plus two equals four isn't really up for debate within the world of mathematics in the same way that there is no essential disagreement as to the historical reality that Christ founded the Catholic Church on and through His apostles. The Catholic Church can trace her bishops all the way back to the apostles – all the way back to Christ Himself.

For the first thousand years of Church history, Nate's question, "Which church is the true church?" would have been nonsensical and anachronistic. Which church?! If you were a Christian during the first millennia after Christ then you were Catholic. There was only one Christian Church. It is only in the light of over forty thousand Protestant denominations some 2,000 years later, that Nate's question even makes any sense at all.

And it's not really a difficult one. We all know the answer when asked who founded a particular church. The Lutheran Church? Martin Luther. The Reformed Church? John Calvin. The Church of England? King Henry VIII. The Methodist Church? John and Charles Wesley. The Mormon Church? Joseph Smith. Calvary Chapel? Chuck Smith.

But when we ask who founded the Catholic Church, the only possible answer is Jesus Christ on and through His apostles. There is no real disagreement on this point by historians either religious or secular. I am as certain of this fact as I am that two plus two equals four.

—7—

## **The Gift of Infallibility**

But beyond this human certainty, I can come to an infallible certainty because of the revelation which God has given us which transcends human fallibility. In the same way that He inspired the fallible human authors of the Scriptures so that they might record His words without error; so too He rendered His Church infallible that she might without error compile the canon of Scripture and teach from those same Scriptures without error.

It is through these great gifts – divine revelation, inspiration, *and infallibility* – that I can move beyond *my own* human fallibility and trust in the infallibility that Christ has promised *to His Church*. Unlike Protestant scholars and theologians, I don't have to trust in my own intellectual ability in order to get it right. I don't have to be infallible in my personal interpretation. I have only to trust in the Church that Christ founded and gave His authority to. I have only to believe that in the same way that He gave us His Word without error, He has also preserved His Word without error.

As a Catholic, I believe that the bible is an infallible collection of infallible books, and furthermore, I believe that when the Church teaches dogmatically on matters of faith or morals she is infallible as well. That is a statement that no Protestant can make. The best a Protestant can claim is a fallible collection of infallible books which must then be fallibly interpreted by each individual personally.

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1. Source: R.C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology*, 58 [↔](#)

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# Sticky Sins [at A Spiritual Journey]

Our sins will hang on to us forever until Jesus takes them away.

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## He's Getting Married Tomorrow [at The Veil of Chastity]

I woke up early this morning after emailing with a girl last night whose ex is getting married today. Ah, those Friday nights before 'his' wedding. I remember them well.

This is the advice I gave her:

*“Keep breathing through the pain and tears. Talk yourself through it and reassure yourself it is going to be alright. Your pillow will be wet with tears tonight but there will be a Friday night in your future where you will feel excited for your wedding day.*

*I also recommend you share your feelings with God. He can handle it and your honesty is part of firming up your lifelong dependence on Him. I have a scripture verse I would like you to read tonight: Ephesians chapter 6:10-20.”*



### Keep Breathing

The pain can be excruciating when your ex marries another girl. Like giving birth to a new life without the hope of him in it, you must keep breathing thorough it. You may, at times, experience the rolling waves of hyperventilation in your chest. No doubt, tears will flow. But, just keep breathing. The morning will come and new hope will replace the hopelessness you feel.

This morning there are two funerals being held for locals in their early 40's. I don't know their circumstances but I do know that one of them hung herself. Why? We don't know. All we are left with is the fact that morning and new hope did not come and instead *“the flaming arrows of the evil one”* did not appear to be extinguished.

### Ephesians 6

During our bible study on Thursday night, we discussed **Ephesians 6**. I noticed that the Lord's expectations of us are pretty high. He doesn't just expect us to cruise through life in the hopes that the *“flaming arrows”* will not defeat us. No, He expects us to *“put on armor”* and *“fight.”* He expects us to *“stand strong”* and use our *“shields.”* He expects us to *“pray and send our petitions”*/requests/needs to Him. He expects us to *“be alert”*, to have *“done everything”* and *“stand firm.”* If we do, He promises to protect us.

### The Armor of God

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the **full armor of God**, so that*

you will be able to **stand firm** against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and **having done everything, to stand firm**. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with **truth**, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with **which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one**. And take the helmet of salvation, and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**.

With all **prayer and petition** pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, **be on the alert** with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:10-20

## Your Weapons

“...the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

Many interpret the “Word of God” to mean that we are to just read the Holy Scriptures. No doubt we are to read them but at the time that St. Paul wrote Ephesians, most of the New Testament had not been written or decided upon. Paul was referring to **The Word, Jesus**.

## The Word Became Flesh

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...”

John 1:1

Your weapon is the **Grace** that comes from the **Lamb of God** Who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus, The Word who became **flesh**. The gateway to grace is the Sacraments. I cannot encourage you enough to stay close to God by living a **Sacramental life in Christ**. The Sacraments are your weapons which extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. They are the “*having done everything*” in God’s expectations and referred to in Ephesians 6:13.

## Talk Yourself Through It

Self-talk may sound silly to some. But if your singleness is extended far beyond where you had hoped or if the one you still love is getting married to someone else, self-talk is a powerful skill. It is a type of inner prayer of confirmation. Tell yourself it will be alright. Tell yourself that there is hope and there will be a spark in your natural curiosity for what will happen in the future. What plan does the Lord have for you? Could it be that He is preparing the way for something you can’t even imagine right now?

## Preparing The Way

The “*lifelong dependency*” I referenced is the beautiful work that God does in our life. He heals us,

draws us to Him and makes us dependent upon Him. The beautiful work is done most effectively through the pain we experience in the letting go. The beautiful work is accomplished by breathing through the pain, arming ourselves with His truth and Sacraments and then talking ourselves through it.

My extended singleness was part of that beautiful work. It was a gift. It was a sweet time of mercy and healing and dependency. Did I feel that at the time? No. It is only something I can only look back and see. Never did I imagine I would thank Him for that time alone, together, which taught me to put on the armor of God, stand firm, seek truth, use my weapons, pray and extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one.

The Lord is preparing and strengthening you to do the same. Keep breathing, talk yourself through it, live a Sacramental life and trust that He is doing a beautiful work through it all.

Write to me anytime and be assured of my prayers. [theveilofchastity@gmail.com](mailto:theveilofchastity@gmail.com)

God love and bless you! Cindy

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## "I'm Shocked... Shocked!" Reflections on Rebellion in the House of God [at Arnobius of Sicca]

The other day, on *Facebook*, I saw a Catholic cheer that a Catholic candidate for President was given the highest rating in the field concerning the position of immigration according to a website. Going to the website, I saw that the issue in question was immigration, and that the views that the site saw as “good” was actually against the Catholic views on the subject. In other words, while the highest grade being held by a Catholic candidate was a sign of his being a conservative, it was not a mark of his Catholicity. So, what we were seeing here was a rejoicing that a Catholic candidate Catholic agreed with his or her position, and not a rejoicing that the Catholic position was the most widely embraced.

I was struck by the irony of people thinking this way and, at the same time, being shocked—*shocked* that 62% of the Irish voted to reject the teaching of the Church, when they were in fact guilty of thinking the same way.

**(“I’m shocked—*shocked* to find widespread disobedience in the Church!”)**

Now I’m not going to accuse that person of malice or willful hypocrisy. I don’t even know the person, let alone the state of his or her conscience. However, the trend today that troubles me is I see Catholics quarreling over the Church, the Pope and what teachings they *have* to follow. The fact is that many seem perfectly complacent with their own standing before God and His Church, even though they put themselves first and obedience to the Church is contingent on whether or not they approve of the teaching in question. If they do not approve of it, they find excuses to justify disobedience. In the meantime the rebellion of *others* is promptly pointed out and denounced. If anyone dares to point out that their own views are incompatible with the teaching of the Church, the response is to...

1. Deny that their actions are sinful.
2. Claim that the actions of others is worse and the Church should go after them instead.

Thus, we see a Church that is hated by both extremes and accused of sympathizing with the worst of the other side. For example, because the Church stands up in defense of sexual morality, she is accused of being “right wing” by liberals. Because she stands in defense of the poor, she is accused of being “leftist” by conservatives. Under such a view, the Church is seen as being in error—and therefore not to be obeyed—in every area where people dislike the teaching of the Church.

In other words, a goodly number of Catholics—including those who profess to be faithful Catholics—are

deceiving themselves into thinking the Church is in error and they are not. This isn't a new trend of course. Our Lord gave us the parable of the *Pharisee and the Tax Collector* and used the image of a splinter in another's eye and a plank in our own. The situation is not exclusive to this time, or to a specific political faction. We've had this attitude all throughout the history of the Church.

I think what makes this attitude dangerous in *this particular time* is the fact that communications can be widespread and instantaneous. An opinion over Church teaching can be easily published by anybody over the internet, and can reach a far wider audience than in the past. For example, according to different sources, this blog has been visited by over 11,000 different individuals and total visits to the site is many times that—and my blog is fairly obscure. Other blogs or websites out there have a *much* wider reach than mine. But there is no oversight over what I or others publish, and a person in error or deliberately intending to teach falsehood (May God deliver me from being in either category) may come across giving the illusion of being authoritative and get away with it—especially with a person confident with their own inerrancy who is convinced by a spurious argument.

This being the case, we are seeing false arguments justifying disobedience to the Church spread like wildfire. A false argument shows up on a social network or website and soon it is widely repeated in comments or blogs. It takes on a life of its own and soon people *believe* this is official Church teaching and begin using it to justify their own disobedience. Thus we see the SSPX and the modernists using *the same arguments* to justify why they can ignore the Pope or the bishop, slightly modified to justify their position.

What we have to realize is, no blog, website, Facebook “expert” or forum has the authority to set up a counter-magisterium to the Pope and bishops in communion with him. A blog written by a Catholic can only *legitimately* point to the authority of the Church and try to explain it. Such a site can only be trustworthy to the extent that it accurately does this. In fact, if it does not do this, it is not at all trustworthy. Moreover, if the source claims that the official magisterium can be disobeyed, it is not trustworthy.

Because it is easy to find people to reinforce one's rebellion without having to organize dissent, rebellion is running rampant in these times. In addition, organized dissent can use these people, encouraging them to dissent in their favor and giving the illusion that the whole Church is against the faithful Catholic who challenges them. When a number of people are making rebellious comments against the Church, it becomes harder for the truly faithful Catholic to express the truth—because forums tend to believe in numbers.

Yes, what happened in Ireland was shameful. It shows that the nation needs to be re-evangelized—as does the entire West. But it's not surprising. So long as the average Catholic puts his or her own preferences above the moral obligation to follow the teaching the Church, it's inevitable. Every one of us has the

obligation to spread the Gospel to all nations, bearing witness. But obedience to the Church is part of that witness—if we are unwilling to give it ourselves, the result is our witness is that this is not important.

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# Balthasar & Dante: compassion and a sacrament sans grace [at Catholic Deacon]

Yesterday evening I finished reading the first part of Dante's

*Divine Comedy*

. After completing the

*Inferno*

, I read Hans Urs Balthasar's theological commentary on it in the third volume of

[\*Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics\*](#)

. As one might expect, both Dante's poem and Balthasar's theological reflection were magnificent. By "magnificent" I mean both "excellent" and "impressively beautiful, elaborate, or extravagant; striking."

Referring to a work by German literary scholar Hugo Friedrich, in English entitled

*The Metaphysics of Law in the Divine Comedy*

, which seems to supply the basis for his look at the

*Inferno*

, Balthasar, after noting that Friedrich sought demonstrate that Dante is dependent upon the same cosmology ("of order and law") as Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas, observed: "Guilt or sin is contrary to right, and because it is the disruption of that ordered right or right order (

*rectitudo*

) implanted by the Creator in the nature of things, it contains its own punishment" (83). Hence, "the sinner himself presses toward the place of his punishment and eagerly embraces its particular form" (86). To support this, Balthasar cited

*Canto*

III, lines 124-126. I think it makes sense to back up to line 121:

"My son," the gentle master [the Roman poet Virgil, his guide through hell] said to me,  
"all those who perish in the wrath of God  
assemble here from all parts of the earth;

they want to cross the river [presumably Styx], they are eager;  
it is Divine justice that spurs them on,

turning the fear they have into desire"

(all translations of the *Inferno* by Mark Musa from [The Portable Dante](#))

"This," Balthasar insisted, "is why there is a confessional at the entrance of Hell [

*Canto*

V, lines 4-9]: "for the acknowledgement of one's own guilt... before the judge of Hell, Minos, and the apportioning of suitable punishment [instead of penance]; confession in the full sense, but without any love or absolution, a sacrament without grace" (86).



***La Porte de l'Enfer* (i.e., Gates of Hell), by Auguste Rodin (uncompleted)-  
began in 1885 and worked on until the sculptor's death in 1917**

Because it is the subject of much imaginative distortion, perhaps even including Dante's, Hell is difficult to contemplate."For Dante," Balthasar went on, "progress through Hell would... mean initiation into pure objectivity and his weaning away from an excessively human [as opposed to Divine, not Vulcan] compassion not yet in conformity with the supreme order of of the world" (87). Pointing once more to Friedrich, who, Balthasar observed, showed that compassion, which, for Augustine, is "subordinated" to "and rigorously brought into line by reason" (87), he insisted that, for Dante, compassion is only truly compassion "when the movements of the passions correspond to law and justice" (87). On this view, as a feeling, or emotion, "compassion in itself is neither good nor evil" (87). To be true, or truly good, compassion "must first allow itself to be guided by the

*cor rectum*

["right heart"] to the

*rectitudo*

[literally "rightness," but better "right order"] of divine order."

As Balthasar went on to highlight, Virgil upbraided Dante for feeling pity for the damned in

*Canto*

XX, lines 25-30:

Indeed I did weep, as I leaned my body  
against a jut of rugged rock. My guide:  
"So you are still like all the other fools?"

In this place piety lives when pity is dead,  
for who could be more wicked than that man  
who tries to bend divine will to his own

"The standard by which all these emotions are measured," Balthasar explained, "remains the will of God ruling over the damned. It is into the mystery of that [divine] will that the poet is initiated, and it is there that every human emotion finds its measure and limit. This is

*apatheia*

, which surpasses the

*apatheia*

of the Buddhist, for whom compassion is the supreme norm of morality..." (89).

It's interesting that yesterday I also came across this insight written by theologian Paul Evdokimov in his book

[Orthodoxy](#)

on Fr Kimel's blog,

[Eclectic Orthodoxy](#)

, in a post entitled "

[Apocatastasis: The Heresy that Never Was](#)"

- "The question remains open, the answer depending perhaps on human charity. St Anthony's explanation is one of the most profound: apocatastasis, the salvation of all, is not a doctrine, but a prayer for the salvation of all except me, for whom alone hell exists." Of course this echoes Balthasar's own view set forth in

[Dare We Hope That All Men Be Saved?](#)

, which, at least in my view, has rightly been described as "one of the most misunderstood works of Catholic theology of our time."

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This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2015/05/balthasar-dante-compassion-and.html>  
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## NFP Improves Marital Communication [at Plot Line and Sinker]



Couples using Natural Family Planning are accustomed to communicating deeply and frequently. According to researchers at [Marquette University College of Nursing](#), use of NFP improves a couple's overall relationship, but specifically focuses on communication. One couple said, "Since we speak about our fertility on a daily basis (my husband charts and asks my observations daily), NFP has helped our level of communication remain very deep and intimate and always above-board, open and honest."

Lack of communication is one of the leading causes of marital breakdown. For the NFP-using couple, honest communication is essential. Procrastination isn't an option. Each month, the NFP couple discusses whether or not they will be avoiding or planning pregnancy. In order to be successful at this, it's necessary to discuss the woman's signs of fertility and infertility. My husband has often said, "If you can talk about your wife's cervical mucus, you can discuss anything."

To briefly review how NFP works: husband and wife chart the wife's signs of fertility and infertility. (Note: the man is fertile every day of his post-pubescent life, assuming there are no health difficulties). The couple then determines the start and end of the fertile time (we call it Phase II). If they are avoiding pregnancy, they abstain during the fertile time. If they are planning a pregnancy, they engage in relations during this time. Although it sounds simplistic, there are various scenarios, conditions and more complicated issues that arise, so formal NFP classes (either live or online) are recommended.

One of the keys to each couple's success in using NFP is effective communication. NFP works best when the couple together study and observe the woman's signs of fertility and infertility. Ideally, each month, the NFP couple discusses whether they will be avoiding a pregnancy or achieving a pregnancy. Because NFP can be used both to plan and to avoid pregnancy, it's a good idea to have this conversation every month, even if the couple has decided that they will be avoiding pregnancy for a year or more. When internal shifts in emotional attitude are brought to the surface, the couple can unite in their efforts to carry out their plans regarding abstinence.

In over 30 years of using NFP, often one of us was more open to pregnancy than the other. Sometimes our monthly conversations were long and complicated; other times, short. The important point is that these types of dialogues are meant to take place well before — and not in the middle of — the marital embrace.

When the NFP couple is discussing intimate topics such as mucus and other fertility signs, it enhances their marital and sexual life, thereby increasing intimacy. This sort of communication should also continue

when the couple is postpartum (after having a baby) and in post-menopause (after menopause).

When they are avoiding pregnancy, abstinence can be difficult and challenging. Being able to freely talk to your spouse helps you to understand that you are not alone in the struggles and challenges of NFP. This can help to bring a couple closer together and can promote marital stability. NFP demands the kind of intimate and deep conversations that allow the couple to grow closer.

**Natural Family Planning has many benefits.** One of its most significant benefits is that it promotes deep, honest and frequent marital communication.

For more information on NFP, check out these websites:

<http://www.ccli.org>

<http://www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org/>

<http://www.creightonmodel.com>

<http://www.serena.ca>

<http://nfp.marquette.edu/benefits.php>

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# The Supreme Court on Stage: The Fate of the American Family Waits in the Wings [at It Makes Sense to Me]

## *IT MAKES SENSE TO ME*

By Larry Peterson

G. K. Chesterton said,

*"This triangle of truisms, of father, mother and child, cannot be destroyed; it can only destroy those civilizations which disregard it."*

June is upon us and so is the decision by the United States Supreme Court as to whether or not "same-sex marriage" is allowed under the U.S Constitution. Proponents have argued that "same-sex marriage" is guaranteed under the

### [14th Amendment](#)

. How the subject of

### [marriage](#)

came to be a topic for the SCOTUS is beyond me. There is NOT one word in the Constitution about 'marriage'.

A word not being used in the case before the SCOTUS or in the entire conversation is

### [matrimony](#)

. The civil and religious connections between marriage and matrimony are obviously in great disharmony within the secular world. Secular-World wants it all, including validation and approval by the Catholic Church. That will never happen. Now what?

How about the

### [10th Amendment](#)

which was added to assure the people that the Federal Government would not step outside the boundaries as set forth in the Constitution. This amendment states that if some power or authority is not specifically given to the Feds it is left up to either the state(s) or the people. When did marriage become a federal issue? What does marriage have to do with the equality and freedoms afforded the slaves by the 14th Amendment?

Can two men or two women EVER be equal to a man and a woman? The answer is NO! There are those who (using the "equality card") call banning same-sex marriage,

## [racism](#)

. How are two men or two women the same as a bi-racial man and woman? That is preposterous. But I am not an ivy-league academician puffed up with an all consuming sense of self (forgive me for being a tad sarcastic but, right now, I do not care). Bottom line--I believe this subject should have been left to the states and the people. (The links have been inserted above so you can read the two amendments yourself.)

With the proliferation of the "gay agenda" or "LGBT agenda" it seems that the nation has as many gay people as straight people. But if you take a look at the numbers they tell a different story. The

## [total LGBT population](#)

in the USA is 3.8% with the gay population at 1.6%. I took these numbers from the link inserted in the previous sentence. If those numbers are accurate why in heaven's name does the print and broadcast media and the Hollywood elite and so many politicians make it sound as if the world has transformed? Why are we watching the destruction of the traditional family? Why are people who simply DISAGREE with this lifestyle called

*intolerant, racist, or homophobes?*

Marriage between a man and a woman is a beautiful thing--if it is entered into for the right reason. I did not say reasons but rather REASON. For there is one primary reason to enter into this sacrament. The reason is to GIVE--give of yourself to your spouse. Marriage is the ultimate commitment to GIVING. Within that paradigm a family flourishes, thrives and grows.

Children are the result of the love shared between the husband and wife, shared willingly and joyfully, never under duress or out of a sense of obligation. In a family built on self-sacrifice to each other these children can grow up to be productive worthwhile citizens continuing the human race as God intended. I may sound like a "pollyanna" and, if I do, so be it.

Ah, but the human equation brings self gratification into the mix. Many times that does not matter because the truly committed manage to overcome their self wants for each other. But oftentimes, the outside world gets into the lives of a couple and manages to create doubts and anxiety and suggest to one or the other that they are not being "treated fair". Sadly, today's divorce rate is at 50%. These people never entered into a marriage intending for it to end in divorce. At least I hope not.

So, what happened? The outside world got into their world and they fell into the trap of "meism". And today, that outside world, overwhelmingly secular in nature, is everywhere. Armed with its electronic friends and fueling the fires of secularism, our society is crumbling before our very eyes.

In less than 30 days the future of our society may well be determined by nine people. The words of Chesterton should become ingrained in our psyche:

***"This triangle of truisms, of father, mother and child, cannot be destroyed; it can only destroy those civilizations which disregard it."***

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This contribution is available at <http://slipperywillie.blogspot.com/2015/05/the-supreme-court-on-stage-fate-of.html>  
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## First Teachers [at Declaring the Whole Counsel]

I explained how the catechism says that parents are children's first teachers. Everyone seemed to understand it and appreciate the concept. Then one woman said, "Seems like today their cell phones are their first teachers." Sometimes the most profound wisdom comes when you least expect it. She was merely making a simple observation from her personal experience. I am not sure what she has seen specifically, but I have seen much that I suspect is the same as what she was referring to. Children everywhere, heads bent over tapping the screen on their "smart phone", fixated on it like a drug.

Some of the parents I speak to say that they are afraid to say "no" to the children's cell phone addiction. They know that the children are spending too much time on their cell phones and yet they are unsure of what to do about it. In another setting, I know of a group of teenage children who were asked, "what is the one thing in life you could not do without?" The most common answer: "my cell phone". Only one child in the group said, "God". Whoever (or whatever) the children are spending their time with will influence them, and whoever (or whatever) they are spending the most time with, will influence them the most.

Parents, in a homily just recently, Pope Francis pointed out that you are your own children's first teachers. This is true whether you want it to be so or not. He was seeking to give confidence to parents so that they can be able to lead their children into the faith. What the Church does is supposed to be supplementary to the work that the parents do. Therefore, when a parent allows the children to spend more time with a smart phone than with the things of God, that parent is teaching the children a set of priorities that will effect them for the rest of their lives. Whatever we idolize, becomes our idol.

Children will learn from movies, cell phones, school teachers, and many other things in life. If the movies are filled with corruption and the parent does nothing to help the child discern good from bad, then the child's sinful inclinations will lead him to accepting corruption as good. If the child is addicted to the cell phone, and the parent does nothing to help them get past this, then the child's addiction will only grow. If a school teacher says that the world does not need God, and the parent does not counter this with the truth, then the child will eventually come to see this as a harmless point of view and may even come to accept it himself someday.

Parents, you are your children's first teacher, and as I have said many times, you are teaching them even when you do not want to. Help them to learn the things of God, and protect them from the influences that will lead them away. You have been given the Holy Spirit in your baptism and confirmation, and you can call on Him to help guide you in how to teach your children. If you need more specific help, then seek out someone who has wisdom and experience (specifically someone with children that are faithful and godly-not someone whose children have left the faith!). It is your responsibility, and it is for their eternal salvation.

# Why Satan Hates the Ascension of Christ [at BIG C CATHOLICS]

Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. It is a holy day of obligation. Forty days after his Resurrection, Christ ascended into heaven. His Ascension marked the end of his earthly ministry. Having conquered sin and death, Jesus ascended to receive the glory due him ([Philippians 2:8-11](#)), mediate on our behalf ([Hebrews 9:24](#)), send the Holy Spirit promised at the Last Supper ([John 16:7](#)), and prepare a place for us in eternity ([John 14:2](#)).

Since his Ascension, Christ's glorified body has sat at the right hand of the Father. The divinization of Christ and his incarnate body has profound implications for us. Jesus is the Exemplar, *par excellence*, of how we should live and what we ought to do. He also reveals our destiny, if we persevere in love.

Satan's lie in the garden condemned humanity to lives of sin, drudgery and inexorable physical death. Prior to the Fall, the created world and everything in it functioned precisely as God intended. It was in short, Paradise.

We don't often think of it this way, but before the first sin, the entire world was a temple in which human beings worshiped the one true God. Man fully possessed original goodness and original justice. With Adam's sin, the world at large stopped being a temple. It became necessary to build a temple where God could be worshiped. Furthermore, man had to sanctify or purify himself before entering this sacred space. Everything in the created world was profaned including human nature, our relationship to beauty, truth, and goodness, our relationship with the natural world, our relationships with each other, and our relationship with God. Paradise was lost.

## The Threefold Effect of Christ's Ascension

“Christ was made man that we might be made God.”

— Athanasius of Alexandria

Satan hates Christ's Ascension because, by virtue of it: 1.) the effects of Satan's lie were undone. Additionally, 2.) in eternity, the one thing Satan sought to hurt most, namely, human beings, will be elevated to a dignity and intimacy with their Creator far greater than that experienced by our first parents in Eden, and 3.) Christ's Ascension promises that the souls of the just will be reunited with their

glorified bodies. In his divinization, Jesus incarnate makes possible and prefigures our ultimate *Summum bonum*. Following the Last Judgment, the good will enjoy the Beatific Vision, see God face to face, and experience perfect happiness. Salvation history will cease, having achieved its ultimate purpose, love will triumph over evil, and darkness will be no more. Christ's Ascension sounds the death knell for sin, reminds Satan his days are numbered, and gives us infinite hope.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.bigccatholics.com/2015/05/why-satan-hates-ascension-of-christ.html>  
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## Jesus, Heroes, Marathons, and Us [at Making It In Vermont]

When I was a child, I remember being in school and having the question “Who is your hero?” presented to me at various times. It seems like an easy question, but I always had a hard time with how I should answer. Do I choose my parents? But the question always seemed to beg looking beyond my immediate family. Was it some sports star that I saw honored by the people around me? Was it someone who made an awesome discovery that changed the world in big ways? There just seemed to be so much to this question, so much implied, I never knew how to answer it.

We’ve all seen the courageous news story and the gut collective declaration of Hero when someone who without thought for their own needs puts the safety or worth of someone else first. It seems most of us agree that it is heroic, to put ones’ life on the line for another.

Even Jesus says in John 15:13 “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (He didn’t just say it of course, he did it.)

It truly seems the penultimate example of being a good human being to think less about ourselves and more about others. So why don’t we do it more often? Why isn’t it something we actively strive for?

It’s so easy to let the heroes of the world be the heroes and admire them from a distance. But, what if we were ALL heroes?

I know, I know, it sounds so overwhelming. It sounds impossible.

But what if we start small...

Now I’ve never run a marathon or a half marathon, but I have friends who have and if I’m not mistaken, you don’t train by running 13.1 or 26.2 miles every day. You start off small depending on your fitness level. You might run a mile 3 days a week and then up it to 5 days. On the days you don’t run, you do something physical and eventually eventually after months of training and upping your mileage, you run your marathon. Depending on who you are you may stop there and feel a sense of accomplishment, or if you are of a different sort, you start training after a short break and try to beat your previous time.

Now running a marathon sounds pretty exhausting to me, but not impossible. I have legs that work and if I had the time (and of course motivation) I’m pretty confident it could happen.

Why can’t being a hero be like training for a marathon?

Now unlike running, I have no idea if I can be a hero to be quite honest.

I vividly remember and am shamed by a particular occurrence when I was eight or nine years old. I was heading back from playing on the sand bar down the street from my seaside home with my neighbor and her little sister who was maybe 4 at the time. The tide was coming in and my friends’ sister, who we were helping get safely to shore, somehow went under water as simultaneously my flip flop was floating away. Instead of quickly helping this little girl get her head above water I instinctively went for my shoe. My friend helped her sister without me and rightly gave me an earful afterward.



Eight or nine and not so ready to run in socks, flip flops, and my Miss Piggy shorts.



At age 7 and looking ready to run for Jesus on the day of my First Communion.

I was selfish, I thought of myself first. Sure today I'm pretty sure I would help the little girl over retrieving my shoe, but there are lots of difficult or dangerous circumstances that I don't know how I would behave in, will I be truly courageous when it matters most?

I don't know, but I do know I am running. A mile a day at first with little breaks in between, and then two miles and then more, till my days are done.

Y'all peeps of the world are my practice drills.

My training ground is home with husband and 7 sons underfoot with agendas that are constantly messing with my own, or the grocery store when I'm in a rush, or just any person I meet along the way of life that might interrupt my plans, not act in a way that makes me "feel" good. How do I react? Do I get angry, defensive, scornful?

Is my "go to" reaction (like when I was little) to always come first? Because if I always come first I'm pretty sure I'm not going to act heroically when the moment presents itself.

So that's it, I'm running a hero's marathon and you all have an open invitation to run with me or ahead of me. We can talk about how the race went over drinks in Heaven (somehow I think by then we'll all be winners).

~Lisa

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## One to harbor, one to protect [at Peace Garden Passage]

Wednesdays have been teaching me a lot; more than I ever imagined when I agreed to take up a prayer post on the sidewalk of our state's only abortuary back in February.

Along with praying, I have been doing a lot of observing. It's the writer, the reporter, in me. I don't want to just do this blindly, without any thought or engagement. I want to make a small difference, and sometimes, I think, the biggest difference I can make is in simply sharing what I am seeing.

The sidewalk is a rather predictable place in many ways, give or take certain details and individuals who might come and go on any given Wednesday, abortion day.

Here are the main characters in this unfortunate drama that plays out every Wednesday downtown Fargo:

– Usually, a small group of prayer warriors gathers right in front of the building where abortions are performed, in between the nearby alley and the front door of the facility. That's where our Mothers Loving Mothers group generally lands. We are the last faces the women see before they go in, generally.

– Near us, usually very near the front door, the escorts for the abortuary hover in their bright-yellow vests. They have the very important job of standing between us and the clients to make sure we don't influence women to turn back. If they did, after all, there would be no profit. The doctors coming in from other states to perform this procedure would have flown in for nothing. This can't happen. So the escorts take their jobs very seriously and often wear very serious faces.

Well, we do too, for that matter. The sidewalk on Wednesdays isn't a lighthearted place by any means. There are times when the weight of it becomes unbearable, however, and chatter of a less somber nature pierces this solemnity, both on the prayer folk end and the escort end. One can hold in something so heavy for only so long.

– Directly across from the prayer circle, on the edge of the sidewalk closest to the street, two men stand most days with tall signs constructed of wood and poster board bearing hopeful messages with photographs of mothers and their babies. Their presence never fails to comfort me. I have spoken often to these men and they are kind and loving. They are not there to harass but warn and protect.

– To the east, at the end of the sidewalk near the street intersection, another man paces back and forth with a red-painted sign flanked across his front and back. The words he's drilled into the wooden sign are meant also to lovingly deter women from going through with what they have come to do. He is the first line of defense, and often attracts passersby who want to get into it with him about the topic of abortion. Often, the rest of us just watch these conversations from a distance, not able to make out the words but seeing, from body language, what is going on.

– In between the prayer circle and men with signs and the man at the end of the block, a woman who drives into Fargo every Wednesday from Valley City, 90 miles round trip, roams the space from the end of the block to the alley. This is an area where the women seeking abortions are most likely to appear first. She grips a pack of brochures from our local pregnancy help center, hoping she can give a few out, and maybe save a life. That's why she drives all this way after all. She does her work with astuteness, but

quietly, in whispers, hoping to show someone who has come in desperation that there is a better way; one she won't live to regret.

There are times women approach the facility and we stand ready with our words of hope, but then they bypass us, and instead, head into the taco shop next door. We all sigh with relief that it was tacos they were after and not the death of their children. This is always a happy moment for us, and we exhale together.

The placement of the men and women who have come to help, while it might seem haphazard, has a natural order about it; the prayer maidens and the floater woman more in the interior, and the men taking up their posts more on the exterior. It's an interesting construction of women harboring and hoping on the inside, men peacefully protecting on the outside.

What's especially interesting to me is that more often than not, when an individual drives by and shouts obscenities, or walks by and curses angrily at our presence there, or engages in a heated discussion with us, that individual tends to be male. Part of what makes that so interesting to me is that so many contend this is a woman's issue alone. If so, then why do men care so much?

I think part of the answer lies in the fact that men are natural protectors. And on some level, they must believe they are protecting women by their gestures and angry words. It's also possible they are expressing something deeper from their own lives that has been buried in some way. Without a doubt, there is a lot of emotion there, which tells me that the mantra that this is a woman's issue is simply a bold-faced lie.

Remember that a man took equal part in creating the situations that bring these women here, and an equal 50 percent of the child's DNA belongs to him. By making it a women's issue only, we encourage the common scenario of men sidestepping their responsibility. So many men don't "man up" and support their women in other ways than offering to pay for the procedure to make the problem go away. I find this a weak response. And in some way, we are all responsible for the failure to empower men to better protect the children and women in their lives. I also have to vouch for the fact that some men do try. I've talked to them as well.

Returning to the configuration on the sidewalk, I think again of the man at the end of the block, and those closer to the entry point with their large, hopeful signs and kind words, and the women praying Hail Marys on Rosary beads, and the other woman who floats back and forth with her brochures, and something occurs to me light a lightning bolt.

*This is why both women and men can't have babies.* If both men and women could have babies, we would lose out on this perfect arrangement of *one to harbor and one to protect*. Because just as the woman harbors the child in her womb *within*, the man protects from *without*. And if not for this arrangement, we would not thrive.



We need the guys for this, just as they need us. The men who realize this role of true protector and take it on and teach it to other, younger men earn my respect. And the women who see this as a good and empower men toward it also earn my respect.

Men and women each have distinct and invaluable roles to play in keeping this world flowing. If more men realized this role of protecting, this abortuary would be history. If more women realized this role of harboring, this abortuary would cease to exist.

And yet it remains, for now, because we are too scared to be brave, too scared to do what's right, and too scared to love and support one another in doing the thing that is hard now but will save us all later.

So how will we abolish abortion in our city? How will we help make it unnecessary? How will we bring enough love together to diminish its grasp, its hold on every one of our hearts? By each of us coming together, male and female. For it takes a woman and man to bring life into the world, and a woman and man to bring that life to fruition. One to harbor, one to protect.

Men, this is every bit your issue, too. To believe otherwise is to believe a lie. We need your protective arms, just as you need our harboring. Let's work together. This is the answer, to this and many other problems. We are distinct for a reason, and the reason brings life and goodness to the world.

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2015/06/one-to-harbor-one-to-protect/>  
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## O Sanctissima: Memories of May

My memories of May are bound to May altars and crownings. In the small Catholic grade school I attended, the May crowning was not an annual event as it is in my children's school. Instead of a solemn celebration in which several students are chosen to place a lovely, silk flower crown on the large statue's head, our small celebrations were held daily throughout May, with crowning duties rotating from one student to another. I anticipated my turn with a mixture of eagerness and dread.



Photo by Michael Astfalk.

I envisioned creating a sweet-smelling floral array befitting the animated Eve-like figure in the Clairol Herbal Essence commercials of the late 1970s. Birds, attracted to its natural beauty, would descend from the heavens, twittering and plucking blossoms from my handmade crown fit for the Queen of Heaven.

At the least, I hoped to create something that rivaled the professional-looking crowns created by my peers (or their mothers): blossoming lilacs delicately interwoven with wildflowers held together with sturdy floral wire.

Tears were shed as I cobbled together short-stemmed wild violets and floppy peonies. Stems and wilted leaves lay strewn across our kitchen table as I wrestled my pathetic, twisted blooms into a piece of tin foil for safekeeping on the trip to school.

Despite being crown-challenged (diadem dumb?), my devotion to Jesus's mother flourished as a child. A small, stone grotto sat behind the convent adjacent to my grade school. My friends and I often paid a quick visit to the grotto after lunch, before joining our other friends at recess. The words of every Marian hymn I knew were committed to memory.

My family didn't recite the Rosary together, but my mother said it privately, if infrequently, and I managed to develop at least some appreciation for the prayer. A small statue of Mary resided (and still rests) on the nightstand next to my mother's bed. She encouraged me to place flowers there in spring and summer.

What I lacked in crown-ability, I made up for with bouquets. I collected dozens of violets from the grassy hill in our yard and placed them in a shot glass (oh, the piety) in front of the statue.

I'm grateful for the simple but consistent models of devotion to Mary that were shared by my mother and the Sisters of Charity at our school. It's my childlike devotion to Mary that has sustained decades, allowing me to return like an affection-starved child to her bosom, seeking her intercession again and again. Like a true, but sometimes neglected friend, she is there when I need her, ready to pick up where we left off.

In the summer of 2002, my husband and I visited my home parish in Pittsburgh. The then-pastor of the parish had arranged for an after-Mass viewing of a traveling image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. My husband and I had been trying to conceive a child without success for about six months. While I was not aware of any medical impediment to conceiving and it had not been all that long, I was dogged by the feeling that a long and heart-wrenching period of infertility lay ahead. It seemed an ever-present specter among couples I knew, and I feared, with a certain amount of superstition, that it would be our cross as well.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

As I knelt before the image of Our Lady, I prayed with as much earnest concentration as I could muster that we would be blessed with a child. I heard, not with my ears, but with my heart:

***By this time next year, you will have a child.***

Our oldest son was conceived that September and born the following May. For someone whose spiritual life has been and is drier than the Sahara, it was a unique experience. One that reminded me of the constancy of a mother's love, despite the shortcomings of her child.

Like the limp dandelions and odd wildflowers presented to me by my own children, I like to think that the Mother of God sees beyond my wilted crown, my distracted prayer, and my spells of silence. That while she, like I, may discard those humble gifts when little eyes are averted, she treasures the love with which they were gathered. That she waits, modeling the gentleness and humility I lack, always ready to welcome me back onto her lap, always nudging me closer to her Son.

*Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe courtesy of [Restored Traditions](#).*

## **Did you participate in May crownings as a child?**

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This contribution is available at <http://carolynastfalk.com/2015/05/11/o-sanctissima-memories-of-may/>  
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HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Sat, 13 Jun 2015 15:46:36 GMT Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 Transfer-Encoding: chunked Connection: keep-alive Vary: Accept-Encoding Last-Modified: Sat, 13 Jun 2015 15:45:39 GMT Cache-Control: max-age=243, must-revalidate X-nananana: Batcache Vary: Cookie X-hacker: If you're reading this, you should visit [automatic.com/jobs](http://automatic.com/jobs) and apply to join the fun, mention this header. X-Pingback: <https://melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com/xmlrpc.php> Link: ; rel=shortlink X-ac: 1.dca \_dca

## My Conversion Story [at joy of nine9]



Christians are now dealing with a new obstacle to evangelism; we can no longer assume people know stories in the Bible or the basic tenets of the faith. Perhaps this dearth of spirituality in modern culture will serve to drive desperate people to the feet of Christ but more than ever seekers need basic catechism to lead them back into the arms of God and the Church.

A few decades ago, almost everyone knew the bible, even if they did not attend church because even public schools read the bible and prayed before classes started. I am a convert. As a Protestant kid who went to Sunday School from 3 years old, I grew up on the stories of Jesus, singing songs about His love and memorizing bible verses. I realize now that I was a prayerful kid; God was close to me.

I was raised in the cool, calm and Conservative Presbyterian church where *nobody* talked about a



personal relationship with Jesus, *no one* talked about accepting Christ's forgiveness, allowing Jesus to save me or committing my life to God.

Listening to an evangelical friend in high school stirred a desire in me for an intimacy with God. Like the idealistic teen that I was, I dared to stand up in front of a Conference of Canadian ministers, missionaries and elders:

*“After 11 years of faithful Sunday School attendance, why did no one tell me it was even possible to have a personal relationship with Jesus? Do I have to go to the Jesus People or the Pentecostals to learn how to be to be filled with the Holy Spirit?”*

Of course everyone clapped as I sat down with my heart pounding. A Presbyterian missionary, with her silver hair swept up in an elegant bun and her eyes twinkling with the love of God, asked,

*Have you accepted Jesus as your Saviour?*

I was baffled,

*I am not sure; I don't think so.. I am not sure.*

*Umm.. I am sure you already have because just now you spoke in the Spirit, with His power and clarity. Just to make sure, when you are in your room tonight, accept Jesus as your saviour by asking Him to forgive your sins and accepting the salvation He offers you. Then commit your life to Christ. Tomorrow we will pray together for the in filling of His Holy Spirit.*

That night, I felt foolish like I was speaking to thin air or the wall, but I said the words, committing my life to Christ. The next morning and, in fact, for the next few years, I was flying in the midst of the “honeymoon stage” that swept me right into the arms of the Catholic Church.

God pulled a fast one on me because He placed Mary in my heart and no self-respecting Protestant church would have me. Combined with a hunger for the Eucharist, God Himself converted me to Catholicism.

There is no greater joy than watching God work in someone's heart. Of course, the most important thing is to live in God and allow His Spirit to live in us. God can touch someone without us saying a word but we should know the basics about our faith and salvation to be effective servants in the marketplace. I was converted through direct intervention from God but also by knowledgeable Jesuit priest who answered all my questions and doubts with wisdom.

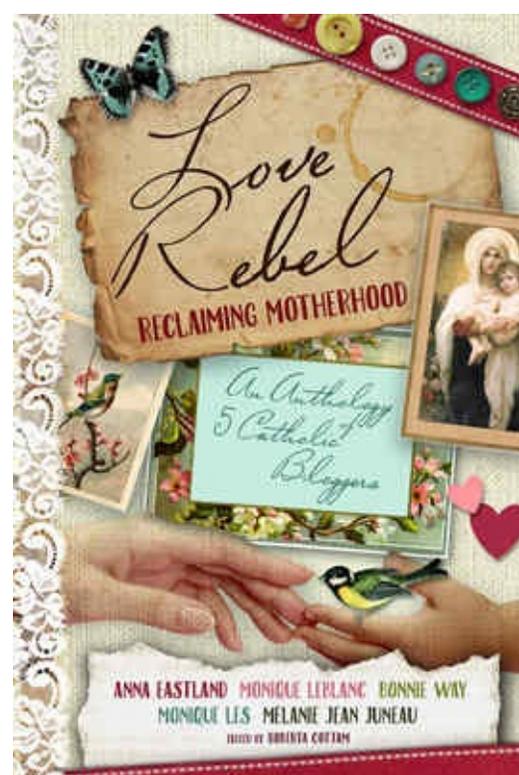
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# Love Rebel: Reclaiming Motherhood [at The Koala Mom]

I'm super delighted to finally be able to share the news about an anthology I'm contributing to! *Love Rebel: Reclaiming Motherhood* has been in the works for about a year now, but it's almost ready to hit the bookshelves! Along with four other Catholic bloggers, I've written about being a mom in a culture that doesn't seem to support moms anymore.



There's a bit of a funny story about this book. Last summer, my friend Ulrika sent me an email about an anthology project that a friend of hers was putting together. It sounded interesting, so I submitted a couple pieces. Then there were some changes and delays in the project.

In January, we [moved here to Vancouver](#). Ulrika and another friend of mine from the island said, "You have to meet my friend Anna." So Anna and I met and hit it off instantly—we're both [Catholic converts](#) and homeschooling moms with lots of girls who like to blog. Anna was the one who realized we were both contributing to *Love Rebel*.

A few weeks, Anna's friend Monique LeBlanc came to visit from Saskatchewan. Anna made sure we all got together and it was fun to chat about blogging and the anthology in person. [My friend Monique Les](#) lives on the Island, and I have yet to meet Melanie, but I'm excited to be part of this writing project with these lovely ladies. Here's a picture of Monique (left), Anna (right) and I.



## Meet the authors

While we're working on the final stages of publishing and releasing the anthology, I'd invite you to drop by the authors' blogs:

**Anna Eastland**—[Just East of Crazyland](#)

**Monique Les**—[The Hard of Hearing Mommy](#)

**Melanie Jean Juneau**—[Joy of 9](#)

**Monique LeBlanc**—[The Last Time Change](#)

## Here's a few advance reviews we've received:

“Full of earnest and joyful contributions that inspire and affirm, this exuberant anthology resonates with love and authenticity. It serves as an earthy and affectionate antidote to a world that suggests that motherhood should be considered an afterthought instead of a priority.” ~ Dymphny Dronyk, Q. Med., Senior Consultant & Manager at Communica Public Affairs, President of the League of Canadian Poets Council, and Editor/Publisher at [blue skies poetry](#)

“Pope Francis challenges moms and dads to dream about their children... and this little book is a great beginning. I'm a big believer in affirming what is good and in this short work, five spiritually alive mothers make the case brilliantly.” ~ Father Julio Lagos

“There are no cultural boundaries when it comes to love, faith and motherhood. Echoed with laughs and tears, I got inspired by each love rebel's own experiences, honest reflections and ordinary yet spirit-lifting deeds!” ~ Odilia Lee, monthly columnist of S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Evergreen News

“Love Rebel: Reclaiming Motherhood gives comfort and encouragement to its readers by reaffirming the value of their roles within their families, and as a child of God in their own rite.” ~ Lisa Whelton, [Made Just for You By Lisa Designs](#)

“Bonnie Way has a way with words in which you can't help but feel like you are actually there. This book

took me back to when my child was small and made me miss all of those things that makes raising a small child so memorable.” ~ Kristy-Lea Tritz, [Personal Coach](#)

“Go, rebel moms! Your lives of ‘motherhood as a choice and vocation’ will sow the seeds of love our culture needs: to encourage us all in a way of love, to challenge our 20th century feminist assumptions, and to remind us that a mother’s task is a gigantic act of love. These writers give a voice to the challenge and at the same time celebrate it.” ~ Mary Gallagher, [Ascend Online homeschooling coach](#)

“This powerful collection, written by moms worth looking up to, makes me want to be even more rebellious!” ~ Ulrika Drevniok, RN



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## Ego Craving [at Bible Meditations]



*Too much honey is bad for you, and so is trying to win too much praise. Proverbs 25:27*

It's not wrong to want approval. After all, confidence is built on positive feedback and encouragement. Like honey, praise is sweet. But, also like honey, craving too much praise is unhealthy.

Ironically, people who brag about themselves or constantly fish for compliments might not have big egos at all. If they were secure in their self-worth, there'd be no need to keep proving it. Showing off might be a cry for approval from others. Unfortunately, it generally has the opposite effect.

“People don't want to be impressed; they want to be appreciated.” Anonymous

Egotism gets old pretty fast. It can even drive people away. Rejection deepens the need to bolster shaky self-esteem. And so the cycle continues.

When we're starving, honey might taste sweet, but a steady diet of it isn't nourishing. A steady diet of praise won't nourish an under-developed sense of self-worth, either. How can we nurture healthy self-esteem? Someone said that if you want self-esteem, take actions that are esteem-able. When we think well of ourselves, our self-worth is less likely to be determined by other people's opinions.

Even more importantly, we can take time to be with the God who loved us into existence. God loves us right now as we are, with all our strong points and weaknesses, our successes and failures. His unconditional love invites us to love ourselves in a healthy way. As we do, we're better able to forget about the impression we're making on others. Instead, we can love them, too. When we do, we might find the loving relationships we were hungry for all along.

Prayer: Lord, help me trust that who I am is enough.

Reflection: God loves you right now, exactly as you are. Can you love yourself?

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# On Keeping Our Kids Catholic: The Indispensable Minimum [at God-Haunted Lunatic]

I've found that being a parent is about learning to embrace your inner hypocrite.

~ [Tom Kenny](#)

The word is out from [Rod Dreher](#) that “Catholicism is failing in America.” Dreher looked at an [interpretation](#) of the recent [Pew Research Center](#) report on American religiosity, and he paints a pretty bleak picture. Roman Catholics are already falling behind Evangelicals in terms of conversion and member retention, and within a generation or two we'll be a sorry minority. “If current trends continue,” Dreher writes, “Catholicism would come very close to collapsing in this country.”



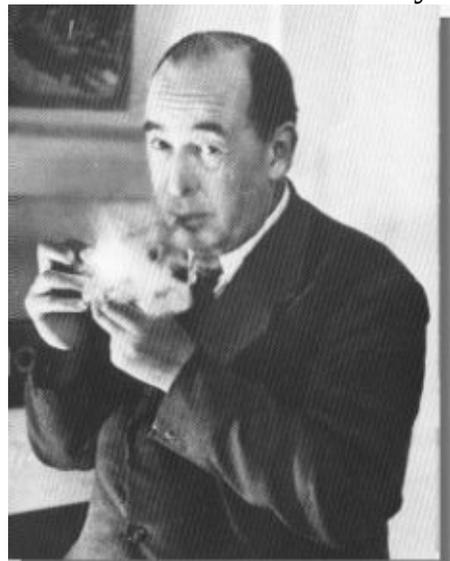
What to do? To the ramparts! Look at the Evangelicals – they're winning! So, we need more programs! More marketing! More jazzy youth meetings and young adult encounters. Guitar Masses and drums – or no-guitar, no-drum Masses, depending on focus group results. “Become all things to all men,” as [Paul](#) modeled, and then some! More internet! More streaming video! More tweets!

And Catholic families? All this hubbub is especially troubling to conscientious parents who strive to form their children in the Faith. Given the troubling stats and trends, it's understandable that we'd be reduced to hand-wringing and agonizing. “My teens are bored,” we opine. “They want something...else,” followed by the kicker question: “How are we going to keep our kids in the Church?”

But that's the wrong question.

This might sound callous, but I just don't think it's our job as parents to *keep* our kids in the Church, even in the short-term. That's God's job and, frankly, the job of our kids once they're making decisions for themselves. Our job as parents is a lot more prosaic – and, consequently, a lot more challenging. “Parents have the most grave obligation,” reads the [Code of Canon Law](#), “to do all in their power to ensure their children's physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing.” In other words, our grave obligation as far as the Faith is concerned is comparable to our obligations regarding food and shelter: Provide what is necessary for our children to thrive and flourish – to give them a good start on *making it on their own*. “Why?” Fr. John Hardon asks of this grave obligation to form our kids in the Faith. “In order to prepare them for eternal life in heaven. The only reason under God that parents even should bring children into the world is to prepare them for heaven.” Thus, it's not my job to *keep* my children on the straight and narrow trajectory toward eternal life, but rather to *prepare* them for undertaking that task themselves.

**For insight on how to carry out that grave duty**, let's turn to Dreher again. He writes that the average American Catholic worshiper "may find himself having to hold on to the truths of his faith by exercising



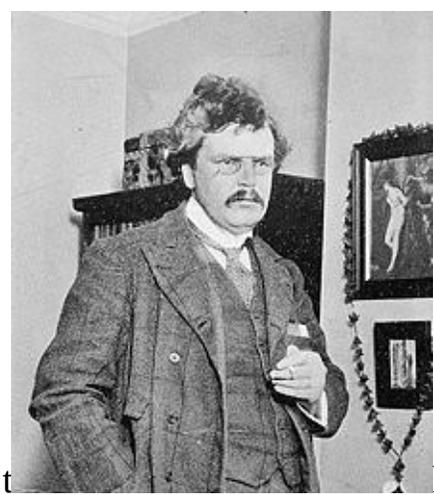
his will and his imagination to an extraordinary degree, because what he sees happening around him does not convey what the Church proclaims to be true." This might be news to Dreher and the folks at Pew Research; it ain't news to the Church.

Indeed, it's been that way from the beginning, starting with the Apostles themselves – including especially St. Peter, the first pope and betrayer-in-chief. There's *always* been a disconnect between the *visible* Church – the one we ourselves inhabit in the here-and-now, the one with fallible, petty, sinful human beings in it like you and me – and the *invisible* Church "spread out through all time and space and rooted in eternity, terrible as an army with banners," as [C.S. Lewis](#) described her. Using the voice of Screwtape, a senior demonic tempter, Lewis goes on to characterize the Christian's experience of that disconnect in this way:

One of our great allies at present is the Church itself... All your patient sees is the half-finished, sham Gothic erection on the new building estate. When he goes inside, he sees the local grocer with rather an oily expression on his face bustling up to offer him one shiny little book containing a liturgy which neither of them understands, and one shabby little book containing corrupt texts of a number of religious lyrics, mostly bad, and in very small print. When he gets to his pew and looks round him he sees just that selection of his neighbours whom he has hitherto avoided... Provided that any of those neighbours sing out of tune, or have boots that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes, the patient will quite easily believe that their religion must therefore be somehow ridiculous.

Sound familiar? Of course! It's a great description of what the average Catholic has to go through every weekend, and it's *precisely* why "exercising his imagination and will," as Dreher puts it, is so crucially important. We'll always come up against hypocrisy and dryness in the practice of the faith, regardless of location or epoch. Yet if, with God's grace, we persevere – *imagining* that God might succeed in making even us saints and *willing* to seek after truth no matter the cost – then neither circumstances nor setbacks can ultimately deter us. "If once they get through this initial dryness successfully," the more seasoned Screwtape warns his demon apprentice regarding a young Christian, "they become much less dependent on emotion and therefore much harder to tempt."

A religious upbringing thus rooted in both a moral imagination that aspires to holiness *and* a will determined to affirm even unpopular truth becomes a lifeline of grace that keeps even the most wayward Catholic tethered to God – and can help him find his way home again. [Chesterton's Father Brown](#), relating



his mediating role in helping restore a sinner to virtue, describes that lifeline as a “thread:”

Father Brown looked him full in his frowning face. “Yes,” he said, “I caught him, with an unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world, and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread.”

That thread, I think, should be our goal as parents: A thread of solid formation in morals and Church teaching that will keep even our most errant kids tethered to God – and which God himself can twitch to bring them back someday.

**Let’s say I’m right, and the thread is the thing.** Then the appropriate question to ask is not how to keep our kids *in* the Church, but rather this: How do we go about creating an ecclesial thread of imagination and will, and then getting our kids connected to it – particularly if, as sometimes happens, it might seem like our own thread is fraying. Speaking as a Catholic dad to other Catholic dads, let me cut to the bone with an answer: *If nothing else*, we need to daily attend to what the [Catechism](#) calls the “indispensable minimum” – otherwise known as the Precepts of the Church:

The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor.

The precepts are certain obligatory behaviors and attitudes that our families, young and old, should take for granted *because we ourselves, through our words and actions, take them for granted*. They include the obligation to attend Mass on *all* Sundays and holy days (without exception and no excuses); to receive the Eucharist at Mass when properly disposed and at least annually, and to receive the sacrament of Penance at least once a year as well (just standing in line for confession is a public testimony that we take responsibility for our screw-ups, so the more frequent the better for our kids); to observe the laws of fasting and abstinence during Lent (again, this is priceless public testimony that we take the Faith seriously); and, finally, to provide “for the material needs of the Church, each according to his abilities” – that is, *we tithe*, even when the money is tight.

Even when we don’t feel like it. In fact, *especially* when we don’t feel like it. And that goes for *all* those precepts and duties.

Ought we do *more* than this indispensable minimum? No doubt! Certainly, vigorous and thorough catechetical instruction along with full sacramental initiation is also required for proper religious upbringing. Plus, daily prayer, even daily Mass; family Rosary and other devotions; the practice of the

[corporal and spiritual works of mercy](#) – these are just a smattering of suggestions, but they all rely on the bedrock of those precepts and duties. When we enforce those, for ourselves and for our families, we silently, subtly, and powerfully shape the way our children navigate their worlds.

**This was beautifully expressed by R&B singer [Aaron Neville](#)** last week at Notre Dame. Neville was this year’s recipient of the University’s prestigious [Laetare Medal](#) that is bestowed on American Catholics who have made distinct and lasting contributions to the well-being of our society and the Church. “I hope I’m worthy of standing next to the people who have received it before me,” he said. “If it’s for me trying to get my life on the right track the way God wanted me too, then I am worthy, because I know, and God knows, that I’ve tried.” Neville went on:



My early life has been a preview of where I am now. It took who I was and where I came from to make me who I am. For that I have to thank my late parents, Arthur and Amelia Neville. They, along with the nuns at St. Monica’s Catholic School, especially Sister Damien, taught me morals and guidance. My Catholic upbringing helped me in some dark times.

**Dark times?** Yes, dark times that included drugs, larceny, and jail. Ah, but the thread was there, thanks to Sr. Damien and Neville’s parents – his parents who undoubtedly worried about their rebellious son and wondered how they could get him back to the Faith. It would probably come as a shock to them, but they had, in truth, already laid the necessary groundwork for that return years before simply by doing their job as Catholic parents: Teaching their son right from wrong, for instance, and, guiding him to respect the Church and Sr. Damien, not to mention the Blessed Mother and our Lord.

Then, in time, *twitch!* – and he was home.

Aside from continual and fervent prayer, I’m convinced that nurturing such an organic connection to the Church – however threadlike it might be, and no matter how threadbare our *own* connection may be – is the best gift we can give our kids. We hope and pray that they stay in the Church their whole lives, but if they stray? Let’s do everything we can *now* to ensure they can find their way home.

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

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## Oh, Lord, "It's Hard To Be Humble" [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]



A

nd Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word." Luke 1:38

One has only to look to Mary to see that it is in her humility, in her emptying herself of her own will and cooperating with God, that she was regarded so highly in the eyes of God to bear his son.

"...for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed: for he who is might has done great things for me, and holy is His name." Luke 1:48-49

Yes, but Mary was born sinless, you say. True enough, As the sinless Mother of God, Mary did not fall into the sins of pride that we must battle daily. But, we have other models to whom we can look for guidance.

Throughout history, women have played significant roles in the life of the Church, and their common denominators are humility, love and service. Through their willingness to be the clay in the hands of the Master, God has accomplished in them far more than they could have done on their own.

St. Catherine of Siena--the first woman to be named a Doctor of the Church, counseled Popes during one of the most turbulent periods in Church history.

St. Teresa of Avila--another Doctor of the Church, whose "Way to Perfection" and "The Interior Castle" have become staples of Catholic spirituality.

St. Bernadette Soubirous, a sickly, humble peasant girl who, in cooperating with Christ through His Blessed Mother, will be forever connected with the thousands of miracles at Lourdes.

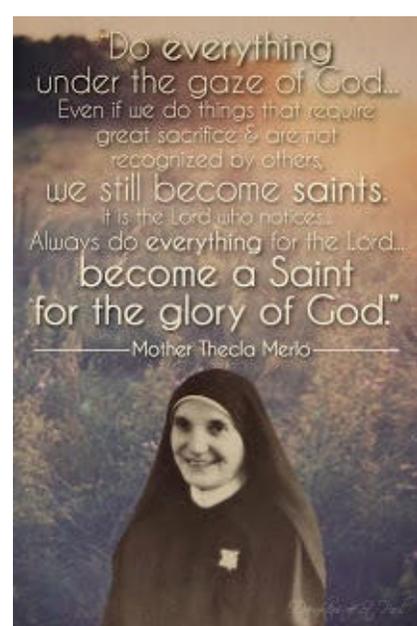
St. Therese of Lisieux, a young nun who wanted to please God in "little ways" each day, and sends roses to those believers who pray for her intercession.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who left her somewhat comfortable role as a teacher to begin the Missionaries of Charity and to serve the poorest of the poor.

Not one of these women sought power, fame, or glory. Each was fixed on doing the will of God, on surrendering their will to cooperate in God's plan for their life. In so doing, these women will forever be esteemed in the eyes of the Church and millions of pilgrims making their journey toward God.

While we have come to know these women as saints of heroic virtue, we also know of their humanity and their struggles in faith. With the exception of Mary, who was born sinless, we can find some of the struggles we experience in our own lives in the lives of these women; struggles with spiritual desolation, temptations, and frustrations.

But it is in their humility, their willingness to serve the Master, that allowed God to do great things in them and through them. Humility is one of the most difficult of the virtues to master, for the temptation of pride is all around us. It also takes great humility to be obedient, as these women were. In the "Dialogues," St. Catherine of Siena writes of this: "A soul is obedient in proportion to its humility and humble in proportion to its obedience." Wow, there's something to think about!



In our Pauline family, we have Mother Thecla as a model of obedience, humility, and docility. "Blessed James Alberione, Founder of the Daughters of St. Paul, saw Mother Thecla as a docile instrument in the hands of God, and a faithful collaborator in the development of the Pauline Family. A woman who obeyed "in an always more intelligent way," he said of her: "Everything was for God; everything was of God; everything was in God, whom she desired and loved above all things. I think this is the most beautiful testimony she gave us, because she never resisted the will of the Lord" (Fr. Alberione, 02.12.1964). Her deepest desire was to lovingly adhere to the divine plan in a spirit of total docility." (Daughters of St. Paul--

[Follow Mother Thecla](#)

)

As the song says, "Oh, Lord, it's hard to be humble, but I'm doing the best I can." I have found the

[Litany of Humility](#)

, written by Rafael Cardinal Merry del Val (1865-1930), Secretary of State for Pope Saint Pius X, to be

of great help in reminding me of all the little ways in which pride can creep into my interactions and keep me from developing a truly humble soul. I have a long way to go.

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**Bernadette Boguski,**

Development Director at the maternal and prenatal care center, Womankind, Inc. in Cleveland, Ohio, has been a Pauline Cooperator for the past twenty years and is a regular contributor to this blog.

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This contribution is available at <http://paulinelaity.blogspot.com/2015/05/oh-lord-its-hard-to-be-humble.html>  
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## Living {Life} As It Is [at follow and believe]

***"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."***

- John 15:5 -

"For those of you who are married, imagine your life without your spouse. For those of you with children, imagine your life, it's impossible, without your children."

My pastor began his homily on Sunday with these words. Well intended, to be sure, as he began to discuss what our lives would be without God and this comparison would help to conceptualize this lack for the congregation. Yet, unexpectedly, I was overcome with a wave of tears as I thought:

***"What about me?! I don't have any of that!"***

Immediately, my mind was swept away from the current moment, the beauty of the Mass, and taken to a place I long to be. A place where I hold a sweet child in my arms, a place where the comfort of my husband's arm encircles us both. Surrounded by my loving and vibrant parish community where seemingly hundreds of couples were living this reality with their hundreds of babies, I was overcome by my aching heart.

This is a constant struggle for me: presence in the current moment. How quickly am I able to forget about my present, my present which is very full.

I'm easily distracted by the lives of others. I constantly compare where I am to where friends, family, acquaintances, strangers, etc. are.

Other women my age who are having their first, second, third! child.

Other women my age who are getting engaged or married.

Other women my age who are moving up the corporate ladder, gaining prestige, wealth, and power.

Other women my age who are travelling to places I long to see, experiencing a life I wish I could afford the time or expense to live.

**I'm easily overcome with wishing I had what any, or all of them, have...and lose sight of how much I love what I have.**

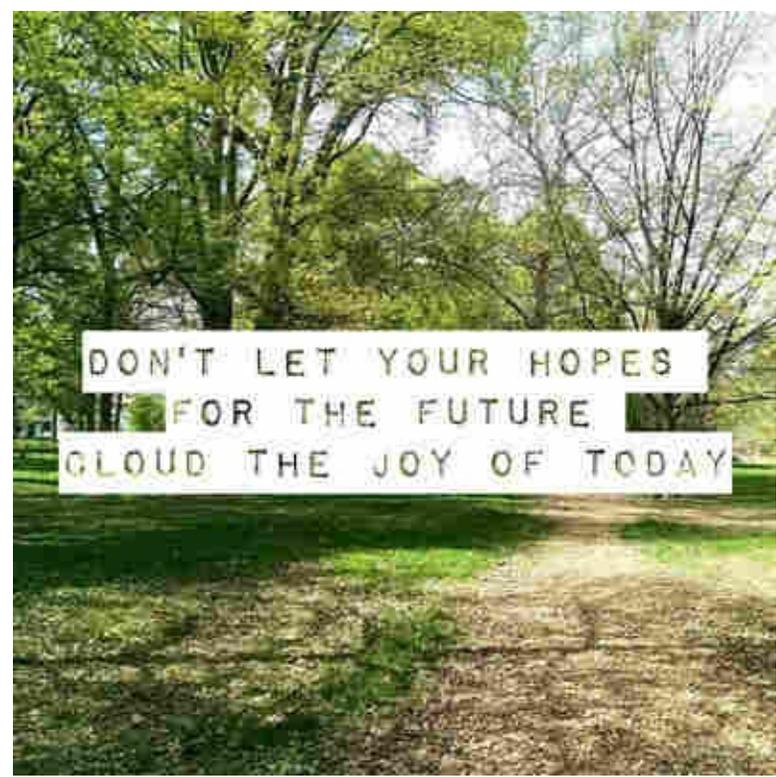
I love where I live; my town and everything it has to offer.

I love my work, my co-workers, and *why* we do what we do.

I love the travels I've taken, the opportunities I've had, and the trips I'm planning.

I love the relationships I've cultivated, the friends I've made, the stories we can tell.

I love the independence my current life holds, with all its unpredictability and freedom.



DON'T LET YOUR HOPES  
FOR THE FUTURE  
CLOUD THE JOY OF TODAY

The lives of other women my age are wonderful and beautiful and blessed.

***And so is mine.***

As a result of my recent birthday - 25! ah! - I've been hit once again with the reality that where I am in my life is not at all where I had hoped, or anticipated. But, this isn't an inherently sorrowful reality.

What would be a sorrowful reality is if I wasted these present moments living in and for the future.

I've finally, truly found a place in my life where I'm content. I know who I am, where I am, and where/who I want to be. Why can't I just sit in that and be content?! If I believe that He has a plan for my life, then I must also believe that this time is also part of His plan! These aches and pains are perhaps simply His pruning of the branches.

These desires of my heart, placed there by God, for marriage and children - ah, and these are such present desires! - are good and pure, but they are not the end-all-be-all.

I'm still coming to accept and embrace that my vocation, right now and forever, is to live fully as a

follower of Christ. This is not dependent upon my relationship status. Nor is the need for me to grow and evolve into the woman God made me to be.

Regardless of if I'm single, dating, engaged, or married, I'm called to live for Christ every day and love Him above all else. Losing sight of that will only make His pruning more difficult.

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# Two Terms We Must Be Able To Define For Skeptics [at Reasonable Catholic]



In my recent article, [Evangelizing The Difficult](#), I discussed the critical importance of defining terms in order to create healthy dialogue with unbelievers:

“There is nothing worse than two intelligent people arguing in an ever-diminishing circle because they misunderstand each others’ choice of language. Words can mean different things to different people.”

Two terms essential to the Christian religion are “faith” and “mystery”. While they are essential to Christianity, they are often scandalous to critics of religion—largely because of misinterpretation.

We must, therefore, know what these terms really mean and obtain a proper understanding of them in order to be able to effectively explain them with clarity:

**1. We must be able to define “faith”.** Let’s begin by looking at what faith is not: faith is not belief in something *contradictory* to reason—Catholics want no part of such foolishness. We, because we are committed to reality, are opposed to such illogical ideas as square circles and married bachelors. Even God is opposed to such logical contradictions—which are really nothing. It is not that God’s power is *limited* in creating “a rock too heavy for Him to lift”; He just cannot create nothing because nothing is, by its nature, uncreated. It is nothing—no thing; and as we know, nothing is impossible for God.

Thus, faith is not something we can know nothing about. What then is faith?

Faith, in the Christian sense, is a supernatural virtue—a habit powered by divine love within (see James 2:26). It is not merely something you *think*, but something you *do* because Christ is within you. It begins with Christ and ends with Christ. This is why St. Paul, who made the “obedience of faith” the central theme in his letter to the Romans, could write:

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” ( Gal 2:20).

Again, faith is a virtue—a habit—made possible by God’s life within us. C.S. Lewis writes that faith is “the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods.” It is the rocksolid state of acting out your “yes” to the reality of something not fully possessed. Many atheists have

never seen Mount Everest in person—but they believe in such a thing, unwaveringly. This is faith. They do not know everything there is to know about Mount Everest. They have never even been there; but they know *enough* to reasonably accept that its actual existence in reality is plausible.

Many atheists assume *science* is the only way to obtain knowledge about reality; but this too is an assumption built on faith, for no scientific experiment or academic journal can be named which has concluded so (and such a scientific conclusion would be highly problematic logically). Such skeptics have used philosophy to found their belief in science without knowing it.

No human walks without faith. We trust that the external world is real and not some highly complex illusion or dream. We trust that our past really happened though it cannot be reproduced, measured or directly observed. And we trust our immaterial minds.

G.K. Chesterton understood that faith is required to trust our thinking. He wrote:

“Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all.”

Faith propels us into a life of purpose and fulfillment. It is the first step towards sainthood. Boston College philosopher, Peter Kreeft, writes:

“Faith is the root, the necessary beginning. Hope is the stem, the energy that makes the plant grow. Love is the fruit, the flower, the visible product, the bottom line. The plant of our new life in Christ is one; the life of God comes into us by faith, through us by hope, and out of us by the works of love.” (from [\*Fundamentals Of The Faith\*](#))

There is so much more to be said about the meaning of this virtue. Two resources I recommend to go deeper on this topic are:

*St. John Paul the Great’s encyclical letter on [Faith & Reason](#) (Fides et Ratio).*

*The [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) on what “I/WE BELIEVE” means.*

**2. We must be able to define “mystery”.** A mystery is not something we can know nothing about. Nor is it a logical contradiction. A mystery is something we cannot know *everything* about. To illustrate, consider Frank Sheed’s imaginative description of what a mystery is:

“A mystery, in short, is an invitation to the mind. For it means that there is an inexhaustible well of Truth from which the mind may drink and drink again in the certainty that the well will never run dry...” (*Theology and Sanity*, p.38)

This definition, I think, opens new doors of understanding for believers and unbelievers alike (interestingly and as an example, the clarification of “mystery” was a key step in Dr. Holly Ordway’s [conversion](#) from atheism to Christianity). There is power in words.

Thus, when we see a mystery as “something we do not completely understand”, it suddenly becomes clear that both believers and skeptics live together in the same mystery-shrouded world—a sort of “fairyland”

as Chesterton mused. He wrote in [Orthodoxy](#):

“You cannot IMAGINE two and one not making three. But you can easily imagine trees not growing fruit; you can imagine them growing golden candlesticks or tigers hanging on by the tail.”

The world is as it is. But why? It seems it could have been differently. As Christians we can answer such a question with “because God loves us” and this would be true; yet there must be more to the story! We accept, however, that in this life we will not know it all because the “secret and hidden wisdom of God” (1 Cor 2:7) has not been made immediately accessible to us.

This applies to spiritual mysteries also—the unseen. We can know something about God, angels, heaven and hell, we just cannot *imagine* them. It is essential that we understand and point out the difference between the inconceivable and the unimaginable. Our imagination is limited to things we can sense—wardrobes, lions and elves can be imagined because they are physical ideas. But we cannot imagine pure spirits, like angels, because they are non-physical. We can, however, conceive their existence by the light of reason.

Thus, mysteries can be conceived partially, but not wholly. To possess a *whole* understanding of the “mysteries of the heavens” would be too much to handle in our current state of sin, for apart from a special grace, our feeble selves could not handle such an overdose of divine wisdom. Chesterton understood the importance of accepting (and appreciating) divine mysteries as they are:

“The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits.” (from [Orthodoxy](#))

The Christian is not repulsed by a world veiled in mystery. She understands that the world is as her all-loving, all-knowing God willed it, and so she joyfully accepts it as it is; she even *loves* such a world because she loves truth—she loves what really *is* despite any deficiency in her understanding of why what really is IS.

To be Catholic is to love truth, including truth decorated in mystery. For us, there is beauty in mystery; indeed the central mystery of Catholicism is Beauty embodied—the Holy Eucharist. This is why we so willingly accept miracles, which occur as exceptions to the laws of nature we are so committed to; or why we accept transubstantiation, the prayerfully manifested presence of God hidden in the form of ordinary bread and wine; or why we accept the Blessed Trinity, who is three persons in one Divine Nature (which, properly understood, is a logical combination of personhood and nature and not a mystery of mathematics). These are not matters of blind faith, but bold faith.

Put simply, we believe in mysteries as Catholics—like miracles, transubstantiation and the Trinity—because we have found good *reasons* to do so.

*I recommend you check out Dr. Holly Ordway’s conversion story, [Not God’s Type: An Atheist Academic Lays Down Her Arms](#).*





**BAD WORDS**

Language choice is key. What you choose to say to others is important. Using foul language, for example, has no place in any society, except to display the poor character of the speaker. We hear off color jokes, privately told at the water cooler, as well as routines on Comedy Central (cable television). We overhear snide remarks made to a co-worker. We hear defamatory lyrics that top the music charts. The choice to use foul language is pervasive; so also is the cultural norm to accept it as part of the fabric of our society – a stained fabric, but nonetheless, a fabric of our society.

How we speak makes a difference, not so much for others, but for ourselves, in the view of our own self-worth. With the use of foul language, the offender shows disrespect for others and for himself. The offender may think he/she sounds cool when cursing, but actually this person only sounds crass. Nothing good comes from using curse words. As with lewdness, this behavior also desensitizes the offender's conscience regarding prudent action, because the offender has sinned against his neighbor and against God and thusly, has moved further away from God. The offender loses sight of what is appropriate versus inappropriate use of language. The offender lacks the virtues of Temperance and Modesty.

## **Watch your mouth!**

The choice of language dictates whether one embraces the virtue of Modesty or not. If you say things to be deliberately offensive, or to sound “cool,” knowing that your choice of words will come across as offensive, then the Holy Spirit is telling you, by means of your conscience, not to say it! If on the other hand, you have respect for others, you will refrain from using foul, defamatory language, out of charity and kindness for others. You would be respecting the dignity of others and yourself. You would demonstrate high self-worth and others would be drawn to your goodness.

How does modesty of dress breed success? We'll discuss the answer to that question in our next reflection. Don't miss it!

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This contribution is available at <http://virginialieto.com/choice-language-speaks-volumes/>  
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# Strap on Your Bib, It's Time for Humble Pie [at Catholic Stand]

Never say never. That's what *they* have always said. And how true it is – both in this world and regarding Eternal Life!

If you're beyond a certain age and have children, you may already have experienced the phenomenon of becoming your parents. As a child, you resented their constraints and swore never to replicate that which had you straining at an imaginary leash. Your children, however, see a much different you. You, their parent, are full of odd sayings and rules and boundaries. Because you've grown, both in experience and knowledge, you are now able to see the wisdom of restraint.

Now might be a great time to thank your parents!

As parents, you might also have been on the receiving end of your share of humble pie. Maybe your first foray into tending to God's little souls found you with pliable, obedient children. Your self-worth (and pride) moved up a notch or two – because you knew how to parent. *If only those other parents out there would use such proven methods*, you thought. The arrival of a subsequent child or two might have had you singing a rather more humble song. You see, not all children get the memo. Great, tried and true, parenting skills aside, they march to a much different drummer.

Grab your fork – humble pie time!

Our adult life doesn't go unscathed by the copious supply of humble pie either. Have you ever said, “well, I'd never... (Fill in the blank)”, only to find yourself at the crossroads of rock and hard place? Unforeseen circumstances sure have a way of keeping us humble. What we once viewed as incomprehensible, may now be our best available course of action.

Humble pie!

So it goes with our spiritual life as well. Peter had a taste of humble pie when he asked Our Lord to lead him out onto the water, toward Him. All of his bravado quickly [faded](#) as he perceived the reality of what he had requested. In saying he would never [deny](#) Jesus, the huge helping of humble pie served by his three-fold denial must have been chastening, to say the least. Yet, even though we've read and heard about his betrayal multiple times, we all too often fall into doing the unthinkable ourselves.

It's time for [humility](#), closely associated with the Cardinal Virtue of Temperance.

When life hands us an unexpected trial, we are cast into doubt and fear. All semblance of hope fades and we become afraid. All this even though, He who [clothes the lilies](#) and feeds the sparrows, has promised us His Shelter from any storm.

When will we learn? That depends on us and our free will. How hard are we willing to work toward complete trust? Will we be able to 'let go, and let God' when it comes to our most difficult trials? The

answer lies in our motivation. Even then, our human nature can lead us into falling back into desperation at any time. The feeling that we're flying without a net is contrary to our mortal sense of self preservation. Spiritual strength, a determined will, and spiritual exercises are a great way to begin to overcome our human frailty and doubt.

As my own life leads my family into uncharted waters, I've taken the counsel of a good priest. A heightened prayer life, along with inspirational reading was his healing guidance. As he put it, "sometimes we need to read for inspiration, rather than information". He knows me well! It's time to supplement my studious side with some spiritual reading. At the request of Father I will be reading [\*Consoling the Heart of Jesus\*](#), by Father Gaitley. My goal? To find the spiritual strength and child-like trust to offer myself completely to Him Who created me. In humbling myself to God, I choose to consent to Him as He steers me toward the true path. I pray I won't falter.

*Be humbled in the sight of the Lord, and he will exalt you.* (James 4:10)

What are some of the ways you've been served a heaping helping of humble pie? What can you share to help others on their path toward successfully giving themselves to God?

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicstand.com/strap-on-your-bib-its-time-for-humble-pie/>  
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# The Suffering Christ and Christian Indifference [at Catholic Champion Blog]



One of the most sinister attitudes a person can take is indifference towards Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Revelation 3:16 communicates Our Lord's teaching on this attitude, "But because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." Surely, many claim to be Christians, but few there are who are "hot" and actually live how Our Lord teaches us to live. For example, how many there are who claim to believe in God, yet who will not live according to the Sacrament of marriage to which they have promised God to do. How many there are who support the worst forms of immorality and are glad to see others adopting a lifestyle that will destroy their souls.

Many create God in their own image and there are few who live according to the image God has revealed to us in the Holy Trinity. For most, Jesus Christ is not the God-man who suffered for us and who calls us to live according to His Revelation. Instead He is Christ the social worker who only wants us to have fun and enjoy life with no suffering or sacrifice. Surely the calling to live as Christ lived is the most difficult idea for the Christian. We want mercy no justice. We want pleasure but no sacrifice. As I walk around Quito and observe the beautiful churches and museums, I am constantly drawn to the image of Christ that is being extinguished from our culture in the US. It is the image of the humility and suffering of Christ, for our sins. When we contemplate the suffering of Our Lord, it is an image that we truly cannot fully grasp. Yet, just gazing and meditating upon the image of the suffering Christ can stir our hearts to hear His words and keep them.

It is only when we give our will over to God, and commit ourselves to live the life He has called us to live, that we avoid the state of lukewarmness. God gives us the grace to live as He has called us to live. He expects us to live and profess the one true faith revealed to us through His one and only Church, the Catholic Church. He expects us to stop sinning, as Our Lady has also asked us to do many times. We cannot please God if we do not worship Him at Mass on Sunday, and when we fail to do so we sin. Only indifference allows a man to sleep in on Sunday and deny the worship that is due to God. Only indifference allows us to uphold immoral lifestyles which lead to the ruin of souls. When we live the lukewarm life we are like those who mocked Our Lord in His passion. So let us meditate upon the suffering Christ and pray for the grace to live as Christ calls us to live, and let us also pray for the conversion of lukewarm "Christians" who have yet to actually embrace Christ's call to live the Gospel.



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This contribution is available at <http://catholicchampion.blogspot.com/2015/05/the-suffering-christ-and-christian.html>  
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## Does Praying for Others Really Help?



*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. James 5:16*

Not a week goes by that someone doesn't ask me for prayer. It could be a relative facing surgery, a friend with a bad diagnosis, or an acquaintance asking for prayer for another.

In this age of social media, we see Facebook posts almost every day with people asking for and in need of prayer. Reading the comments on the post we see, "I'll keep you in my prayers," "My thoughts and prayers are with you," and other comments from relatives, friends, and even casual acquaintances.

It causes some people to wonder if these responses are just cliché. Some people would argue that they are just platitudes and less than sincere. But are they? Do they have any effect on the outcomes? The answer is yes!

What do these prayers mean? Research suggests that they mean more than you might imagine. A University of Toronto study indicates that people who receive these prayers are more optimistic about their situations and that prayers promote hope, especially if they are from someone close to them.

Studies indicate that the prayers have benefit even if the recipients aren't religious themselves. Prayer works for everyone!

According to the 2006 Portraits of American Life study, two out of three Americans report having someone praying on their behalf. These recipients seem to be more optimistic about their future especially when they know that non-family members are praying for them.

What makes prayer unique is the appeal to a higher power, to God, to intervene. 75% of Americans believe that God has an interest in our health and well-being according to a Baylor University survey. Even the unbeliever doesn't mind the support. It can't hurt, right!

Prayer does some other things as well. In addition to giving hope and optimism to the recipient, it fosters

a sense of gratitude, helps us to forgive others, broadens our perspective, and gives a sense of security and comfort.

Don't be afraid to let people know that you are praying for them. Tell them. It might seem trite and cliché in this "politically correct" time that we live in, but do it anyway.

Years ago, an atheist friend of mine was facing major life-saving surgery. The night before, as we talked on the telephone, I told him that I would pray for him during his surgery. The fact that he didn't believe in God didn't stop me. His quiet response that night was, "thank you."

*"No man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me." — Charles Spurgeon*

The surgery was successful.

The following day, after he had returned to his hospital room following his time in recovery, he called me to tell me that things went well. It was a short upbeat conversation. As we finished our call, there was a pause in our conversation.

As my friend fought back tears, he said, "Thank you for your prayers. It meant a lot to me."

"You're welcome," I returned. "And, if I am ever in need, I hope I can count on your prayers, too."

His tears were accented with a chuckle as he responded, "You sure can!"

Asking an atheist to pray for me? It can't hurt, right!

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This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2015/05/does-praying-for-others-really-help>  
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# Spiritual help for your choleric child! [at Contemplative Homeschool]

It's release day for *A Spiritual Growth Plan for Your Choleric Child!*

Enjoy the slide show on the temperaments I put together for the upcoming Minnesota Home Education and Curriculum Conference. I included lots of photos of my kids to make you smile.

## Have you ordered your copy?

As always, if you buy five paperbacks directly from me, I'll sign them all and give you a sixth free—with no shipping cost. Email me at [crossini4774 at comcast dot net](mailto:crossini4774@comcast.net) if you are interested.

Within a few weeks many other online retailers should be offering the paperback as well. Visit my

[Book Table page](#)

for updates on availability. You can also easily access the links for all my books at various retailers, and read more details on that page.

Saturday, May 16. Interview with Macaela Darr at

[California to Korea.](#)

Please pray for the success of this book and the many projects I am working on next! **And could you**

**please share this post on social media, or with two of your friends through email? Thank You!**

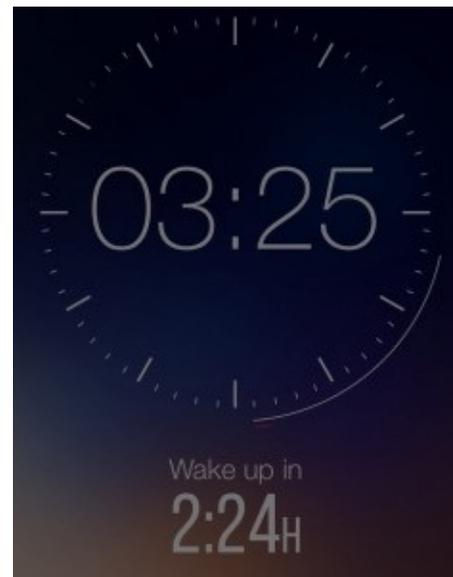
*Connie Rossini*

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# What comes at night



The nocturnal critters of discouragement and self-doubt came creeping out of the corners last night, not long after a loud noise startled me awake and nearly lifted me and my racing heart off the mattress. As soon as I was roused I knew that I wouldn't be falling back to sleep any time soon, but my mind kept churning through all of the daily frustrations and insecurities that we supposedly process in our dreams.

*I haven't met my duties at work. I haven't learned enough music lately. People gossip about me. My pants don't fit. I'm not writing enough. My skin is gross. I'm unhealthy and ugly, body and soul.*

It was a long hour with my silly sleep mask on, tossing and turning and trying to escape back into slumber.

Just after dawn slid out of bed and into my sneakers. My heart still held the residue of my bout with the demons in the [wee small hours](#), but the shining sun made the darkness of those hours feel as foreign as the other side of the world. I ran into that blinding sun and back.

Whatever haunts you in the middle of the night, whatever creeps up on you when you are startled awake, whatever lies you believe about yourself when your confidence goes missing and your insecurities take over, know that they are not the truth. You were made good – even perfect – just as you are.

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This contribution is available at <http://margaretfelice.com/2015/05/21/what-comes-at-night/>  
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## Half-moon Edger [at With Us Still]

I was about 20 minutes into the 25-year warranty on my brand-spanking-new half-moon edging spade... when the first crack appeared in the upper reaches of the blade.

‘Uh-oh,’ I thought. ‘This is not good.’

I spent the next few minutes in denial. ‘Maybe it’ll still be strong enough to last until I get the row done.’

But with each subsequent plunge into the turf, the allegedly tempered-steel blade weakened a bit more... and its effectiveness diminished considerably. Alas: The tool I had just purchased in the interest of efficiency was now costing me time.

And more: Upon closer inspection, I realized that the edger had been poorly designed from the git-go... the tip of the handle, inserted into the flange in such a way that it created a pressure point—making failure inevitable.

So back to the big-box home improvement store I went, seeking a refund. An exchange wouldn’t do, seeing as how the store carried only the poorly-designed spade. Which meant I’d be burning more daylight, too, in my quest for a tool that was adequate to this rather mundane landscaping task.



A tool with an edge up on the competition...

Then *more* frustration at big box store #2: The retailer offered six or seven different spades, but none of them a half-moon edger. So it was on to big box store #3...where at last, I found the edger I’d been looking for.

I really wanted to be annoyed by it all—the wasted hours spent shopping rather than digging. In truth, though, my frustrations pretty much melted away when the blade of the new tool sliced into the soil. It was SO much better than the edger I’d been using before. Zip...zip...zip—and the row was done!

And the whole morning turned into a God-wink when I thought back on the spiritual gifts I have received

in much the same manner over the past couple of years. From time to time, I stumble across [some really fine tools](#)—and discover how they can turn drudgery into a joy. On occasion, they've even led to [moments that took my breath away](#).



This bad boy really cuts through the clay...

This is a pretty heavy load, I suppose, to lay on a simple piece of steel.

On the other hand, I suspect I'm not alone in my appreciation of the benefit derived from having access to a proper (and high performing) tool. Could it be, perhaps, part of reason why [a certain carpenter's son](#) gave us sacraments?

There are pressure points in every life's journey, after all—points that make failure inevitable. But when the pressure's on, [the right sacramental tool](#) often can ease the burden: Baptism...confirmation... anointing... reconciliation...Eucharist. [Especially Eucharist](#).

Day after day, year after year, the sacraments are there for us – so familiar that we may not even notice the extraordinary beauty and power they usher in. And sure, you can probably get by without 'em. But the question is why?

Why deprive yourself of tools that are purpose-built...to open wide the door to grace?



*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/2015/05/07/todays-find-half-moon-edger/>  
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# A Meditation on Euthanasia and the Meaning of Suffering [at The Credo Experience!!!]

In our society, the issue of euthanasia is very much a debated one and when it is considered the first thing that usually comes to mind is this thing about suffering, about putting people out of their misery, not only for the terminally ill themselves, but also for their families as well, who suffer emotionally, and sometimes financially during those moments. When these are considered it is almost as if the physician assisted suicide is entirely within the place of love. In order to find out, we need to consider a few of these passages of scripture.

In Mark 10:32-34, Mark tells us that as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem with his disciples, he told them how he was going to suffer; to be betrayed, mocked, beaten and condemned to death and then rise again. But what was surprising was that James and John, as though they had not heard anything Our Lord had said came up to him and asked that they may sit one on his right and the other on his left in his glory (cf. v35-37). Are we not like those two sometimes, we quickly pass over the Lord's passion, and in a kind of opportunistic way, want to dwell with him in his glory? It is this mentality that advocates of euthanasia use to justify the assisted suicide as an escape or end to suffering. But is that the Christian message?



In another place, it was Peter who said, 'far be it from you Lord that you should go through all these', after which the Lord rebuked him for that (cf. Matthew 16:21-23), and strongly insisted that 'whoever must be his disciple must take up his **cross** and follow him (cf. Matthew 16:24). Where is the disciple of Christ? There also is his cross. Earlier in the encounter with James and John, Our Lord asked them if they were ready to drink the cup which he was going to drink (Mark 10:38). What other cup was he talking about but his cup of suffering (cf. Matthew 26:36-40)? In other words, to share in his glory, to share in the kingdom of God, we Christians would have to carry our crosses and suffer with Christ. We would have to share in Christ's passion in order to share in his resurrection. That is the Christian meaning of suffering, one that ceases to be detrimental but salvific because it is Christ suffering with and through us.

St. Paul explains this very explicitly in his letter to the Romans, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter where he spoke about Life in the spirit, in verses 15-17 he writes, 'For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear ;... For the Spirit gives testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: **provided we suffer with him, that we may be also**

**glorified with him.** This is the Gospel of Christ that Christian medical practitioners should bring to the sick and the terminally ill; that they can unite their sufferings with that of Christ and not flee by suicide out of fear, timidity and cowardice.

In fact, St. Paul tells us also that those moments of suffering united with Christ can be offered up as spiritual treasures for the people of God. 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church.' (Colossians 1:24). The excuse that such terminally ill people do not want to suffer their family members for no use is indeed human, but suicide as being the solution is not Christian. Medical practitioners should rather offer hope in such times of suffering, and help these patients not only unite their experiences with that of Christ but also, in true love, offer them up for their family members, for those who have not met Christ, for those who are obstinate in their sins, and so on. Indeed those times are good resources of divine grace. The more the Christian message is understood, the more the Christian meaning of suffering is understood, the more we realize that true compassion for the sick and the dying lies in sharing their pain. Those trying moments can also be moments of deep encounter with Christ for the family members of those who are terminally ill. If this continues, the fear of death will be conquered and Christ would truly take possession of the souls of both the ill and their families; such moments can indeed be a profound moment of conversion and renewal.

From your friend and brother: Chibuzor F. Ogamba

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This contribution is available at <http://credoexperience.blogspot.com/2015/06/a-meditation-on-euthanasia-and-meaning.html>  
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# An Answer to Prayer [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



If you haven't already heard or read,  
we've decided to move to Arizona!



After talking with one of the women in the Catholic homeschool group  
in the Phoenix area, we decided on these cities:

Mesa, Gilbert or Chandler

The homes listed in those cities alone, weekly,

is overwhelming.

How do we decide?

Where should we move to?

How will we know, all the homes are awesome, there are tons of parks, there are Catholic churches all around.



I asked, "Gilbert?"

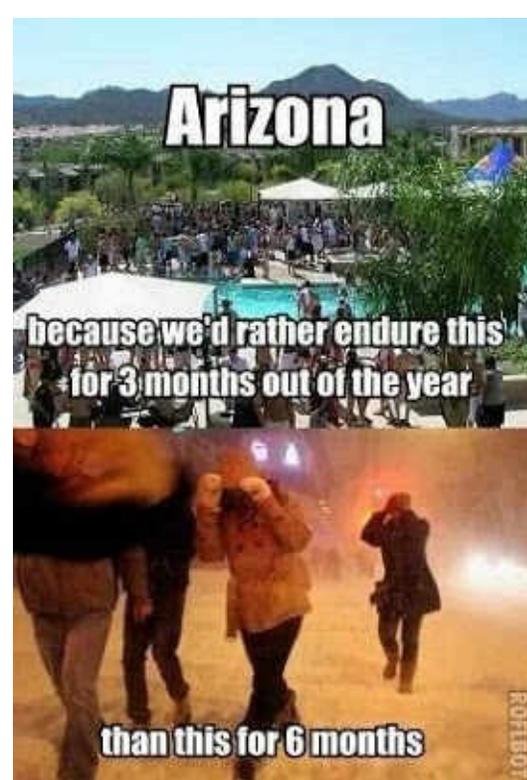
"Why Gilbert?"

"That is not the one I would have picked."

"OK, but I need a sign"

(because "Gilbert" going off in my head for an hour is not enough)

"Please give me a sign"



For all of you wondering why we are moving.

It is the sun.

THE SUN, FOLKS!

Yes, we know it's hot there.

That is why we are moving.



Plus, if we ever miss the snow (Hahahahahahah)  
we could always drive up north a couple hours and see it again  
(this picture is in Flagstaff, AZ)



So, after getting home and feeding my family,  
I decided to check on the parishes in Gilbert.  
They were amazing!  
The faith seemed so alive, it was very exciting to know  
that I could go to daily Mass, confession and Adoration whenever I wanted.  
(this is my number one thing I look up, when looking at cities)

during the school year, has Confession available from 6:20am-6:20pm 2 days a week,

and is also available 3 other days for like an hour and a half!

Plus 3 daily Masses.

(their summer hours are different starting June 1)

And 24 hour Adoration!

has daily Confession and Mass and Adoration after morning Mass

from 9am to 9pm

I was excited.

Now, for the normal person,

this probably would be enough of a "sign", right?

Not me.

I wanted a sign, that only I would know was for me.



The next day Simeon wanted to wear his "shark shirt"

We got it in Texas.

It's his favorite shirt.

I knew there were types of sharks on there, but never really paid attention until what he asked me next.

"Mama, read the shark's names!"

"What?"

"OK, Hammerhead...."

"No mama, their names!"

Me: "Oh, OK"

(I had not realized they all had names)

"Sammy, the Hammerhead"

(reading from left to right, top to bottom)

"Bubba, the Blue Shark?"

"Tony, the Tiger Shark"

"Marky, the Mako Shark?"

And

Brace yourself.



"Gilbert, the Great White Shark"

I froze.

I laughed.

I yelled.

(to everyone in the house to come see!!)

Everyone made fun of me.

So, I asked for yet, another sign.

I went to Confession and ran into a friend,  
Simeon's godfather, and he told me that Gilbert is a great saint!

Who knew?

(not me!)

Sure enough!

"OK, God, Gilbert it is!"

2 more reassurances happened this week,

Gilbert, Arizona, was listed as number 2, in the Top 10 safest cities over 200,000

And last, but not least,  
My good blogger friend,  
that I knew lived in the Phoenix area,  
actually lives in GILBERT!

The kids found a favorite house in Mesa, that has everything we are looking for,  
(including lots of citrus trees)

It is located on a corner, the street on the side of the home is "Gilbert Street"

Hmmmmm....the kids are trying to talk me into this being the house,  
even though, it's in Mesa.

On Gilbert Street.

God is Good and answers prayers.

I have no doubt He will lead us to where He wants us to be.

(whether that be in Gilbert or in Mesa on Gilbert Street)

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## I Don't Need Easy [at Cherishing Everyday Beauty]

In the movie *Soul Surfer*, AnnaSophia Robb, the young and beautiful actress who portrays Bethany Hamilton, says of the hard task laying before her of preparing for regionals post shark attack: "I don't need easy; I just need possible."

My favorite stories are those that involve people suffering from some misfortune (e.g., shark attack, disability, etc.) and have chosen to embrace that. Bethany Hamilton lost an arm to a shark and she chose to continue surfing, going on to professionalism and having the opportunity to embrace more people than she ever could have with two arms.

But even right in your own neighborhood there's someone living heroically in her situation. Just last week I noticed a mom at our Church, joyful and happy as ever, chasing after her children post Mass. She seemed perfectly normal to me. Then I realized that she has a fake leg. I don't know this mom's story, but it's obvious that she's chosen to live a life of joy.

Because I see their potential and the incredible GOOD that they are capable of doing, nothing irks me so much as when I see someone who is suffering from their misfortune and who has chosen to continue suffering from their misfortune. These are the types who, sooner or later, turn to others in hopes that they will alleviate their sorrows, do things for them, and make them feel good. They take advantage of the other's simplicity and sweetness. Yes, this is experience talking.

Pondering on this thought, Bethany's quote came to mind and I realized that I, too, have that choice: I can entertain the frustration I feel toward these people who have used me and other people and turn it inward until it boils over and I explode in outrage (those reading this who know me in real-life: I'm German/Irish. A full-fledge temper tantrum doesn't happen often, but I am capable of it). Or, I can choose to pray for these people (and all involved), asking for the graces to be able to forgive them and to continue praying for them. Meanwhile, I don't avoid them, I just try my utter best to be direct with them: sometimes the kind and loving answer is 'No'.

So, yes, these people do frustrate me. Immensely. But I have no desire whatsoever to carry a grudge. As St. Maria Goretti said heroically on her deathbed: "I forgive him! And I want him in Heaven with me."



# Dear Moms on My Son's Soccer Team: This Tired Homeschooling Mom is Way Beyond Your Drama [at Campfires and Cleats]

Dear Soccer Moms,

Remember me? The "new" mom to the league soccer "family?" No? Well, let me reintroduce myself. Because it seems I'm invisible lately. And, more importantly, my son is too. There was a time when he was into All Things Magic. So that disappearing act he seems to be pulling three times weekly - two practices and one game - would have been cool.

But, kids do grow up and get a sense of acceptance and exclusion. Know what I mean? True, my son joined the team *this* Spring, rather than *last* Fall, when you were all assembling. Getting to know each other. Forming bonds. He was with another soccer league for the past six seasons, gaining skills, having tons of fun. He departed for the higher level of competition in your league. Boy was he excited to get a spot on the team! You see, not only does he lovelovelove soccer, he was super psyched to make some new friends. He is most gentle soul I've ever known. He'd have been a good friend to your kids, you know. Humble too. Compliments? He deflects them by replying to general, "You're such a polite boy" -ish accolades with, "Thank you, Mrs So and So, but my parents deserve the thanks. They're the ones who taught me manners," and "Thank you. Your kids are just so polite, also!" Yeah, he's good kid all right.

But silly me. It took me half a century to unlock *this* great mystery: Ready? There's an inverse relationship between kindness and high skill level on the field. Did you know that? Well, you're the ones who taught me this, ladies. Thanks for the lesson.

Wouldn't it be an example of...oh, I don't know...*humanity* ? ...to show your boys about welcome, acceptance, inclusion?

Just a thought.

Isn't that a benefit of sports? You know, the whole friend component? Let's face it, none of our kids could hope to so much as throw a rock into the same realm that claims Pele, or even Carlos Mendes. Or any guy who even tries out for and gets rejected by any pro team within the NASL. Let's just wrap our brains around that for a sec. I'll be happy if my son makes the middle school team next year. And it's not lookin' too promising, despite his increasingly strong presence on D. And if he tries and doesn't make the cut, well that's life. Have you noticed that when he's on defense, by the way, The. Opposing. Team. Does. Not. Score? He's not a star, but he is an asset to the team, for sure. Even if he was dead weight...well, no excuses. Strong players and train wrecks on the field - - - they all deserve our respect and our kindness. Because, bottom line? The score isn't what matters. The assists. The defenses. The blocks. None of that. Nope. It's the unseen. The unapplauded. The small acts. The important stuff. ....this is the stuff that makes a life. So let's all get over ourselves, be happy our kids are developing positive sportsmanship, ( cough cough ahem) ball handling skills and ...hey...I know.....how 'bout making some friends?? Novel idea?

Maybe it's because I'm an "older" Mom that I notice the forced finesse with which you ignore my son, me, my husband, at games and practices. Moms, I'm too tired for this. I'm beyond the drama. The cliques. The whispered discussions about the goings on at that last PTA meeting. At this point, unlike you, I'm way past Judgey Mom status. C'mon. If I can admit that I was once there, you can admit to still being there. Yes, really. I don't care or even pay attention to your 3, 5, or 7 year old's whiney-ness throughout the game or her tantrums during half time. I don't care or look askance or even raise an eye brow to your 16 year old son's suspension because...well who cares why *or* your 17 year old

daughter's talked about pregnancy. Life is hard enough - - - - no one's family is white bread, picket fence perfect and anyway, who the heck am I to judge you? Sigh, moms, I'm just tired and way past. Way way past. Maybe I'm *used to* and because I've been homeschooling since 2003, *immune to* the 'Uh - how - do - I - interact- with - this - weirdo' mannerisms when you ask what grade my son is in or who his teacher is, trying to place why in our small district you don't know this 12 year old boy and wonder how I must have gracefully gotten out of volunteering for school bake sales since preK or all those Friends of the Arts car washes. Then you learn that we home school. Though if you went to church regularly, you'd see my son and his older brother on the altar and in the choir, setting up and cleaning up at the annual church barbecue, volunteering for VBS at prep week and as counselors for your little kids every August. They sold you a bus ticket to The March for Life last January and happily accepted your donations for our local Birthright a few times per year as members of our Respect Life Committee. If you went to library programs you'd have seen him in craft and cooking classes and bookclubs, oh, since he was 2 months old. If you patronized our local CYO as we did since 2006, when my kids were 6 and 3 1/2, you'd know him, his older brother and my husband, who coached three seasons of sports every year. You'd know me, too, from quasi- managing my sons' league divisions, ordering your kids' uniforms, setting up team pictures and trophy day. We haven't exactly been in hiding.

So maybe, soccer moms, we are shunned because you think we're "typical" homeschoolers? Do you think we're elitist and superior? We don't. And by the way, there are no "typicals" about educational choice and family lifestyle. We're not your mainstream media brand of wacko, unsocialized, vegan, organic, GF, denim jumper wearing, twelve seat van driving, Christian-fundamentalist, creationist, anti vax, anti establishment, scripture verse spewing, rosary bead wielding, mind numbed, Stepford Wife cookie cutter, homeschooling parents of 12 kids. Is that what you think? That's so far off the mark. I just can't even. But admittedly, since we're rosary bead junkies who pray daily, I guess we do exemplify some of your Catholic homeschool family "stereotype." And happily so.

Well, for that matter, I could pigeon hole you, moms of public school kids. Your children *must* cow tow to the institution, jump through hoops like trained monkeys, exhibit zero creativity, avoid drug dealers gunning to sell a baggie of white powder to them as they exit the bus each day, be little zombies who know only how to fill - in - the - blanks, living their lives yanked by the suffocating vortex of a school schedule.

No?

Really?

Well that's the inflamed consensus of opinion among homeschoolers about you.

Not true, is it? 'Course not.

I do have one kid in a brick and mortar real life public school and I know what goes on there. Some of it, decent. Some, actually pretty good. Some shameful. None of it, fantastic.

I taught for 15 years in public school too. Don't kid a kidder. Please don't. I've got the skinny on the good, the bad and the ugly at the local PS level.

So I'm not sure why the snub. I, frankly, don't care. I gave up caring about two decades ago, what the neighbors think, you know? Maybe back in the 80s or even the 90s or early millennial years, I would have given a thought and wondered if it was me, after all, exuding some sort of elitist homeschool vibe. But I know I don't. And hey if you got to know us and found that we're just not your cup of tea, because, heck, sometimes we're downright unlikeable...that's all well and good. Offering a chance is all.

I do, however, care for my son's emotional well being. He takes it as a personal rejection and it's all because you just didn't give him a chance. He would prefer to skip practices and games at this juncture in the season. Wouldn't you if you were 12?

Wouldn't you *now*, at your age...if you were being ignored, despite friendly overtures on your part?

Your son missed out on developing a friendship with an amazing, sensitive, athletic, bright, intuitive, creative, fun kid. All because your preconceived notions and your archaic formula for what-childhood-should-look-like got in the way. Your son would have been and still is, actually, very welcome here for a party, a game night, a movie fest, a campfire.

Next season, if you were worried about being pushed out of your comfort zone into hospitality, generosity of spirit or any of those really scary things you have difficulty with, don't be. My son won't be back to your league.

But we'll be thinking of you and we'll pray for you. Our kindness didn't touch you and that's a true shame. I'm sorry for that because life is short and drama is overrated.

"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue." < Proverbs 31:26>  
Can't resist. After all, we homeschoolers are known for annoyingly leaving a trail of Bible verses everywhere, right? Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience < Colossians 3:12>



Waaaaay back.... Fall 2009



And you, my friends and readers-----you're the best!

The sarcasm won't be regular here.

But desperate times call for...

well, you know.....snarkiness.

It's been eons since I've been back in my corner of the web.

Several posts sit in draft and

I'm eager to get back in touch with you!

I've missed you~~

Thanks for sticking with me. I'll be back soon.



thank you for stopping over and

spending some of your precious time

here at my home on the web!

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!

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This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2015/06/dear-moms-on-my-sons-soccer-team-this.html>

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## A Response to my Anonymous Friend [at On the Road to Damascus]

*“It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce’; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” – Matthew 5, 31 & 32*

*“He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Matthew 19, 8 & 9*

It is pretty clear from scripture that Jesus said that under certain circumstances that divorce was ok. Why then won't the Catholic Church allow me to divorce and still receive the Eucharist if Jesus allowed it? The answer may surprise you.

Can a divorced Catholic receive the Eucharist during Holy Communion? The answer is 'yes' as long as the divorce is biblical.

As Catholics we are encouraged to read our bibles and to gain inspiration from them. What we are not to do is to try to interpret scripture for ourselves. This is a prime example as to why. We moderns read scripture with a modern understanding and modern definitions of words. We see the stories through our modern cultural understanding. We are also reading a translation of scripture from its original language. Original intent and meaning is often lost in translation.

In Jesus day women were considered possessions. They couldn't vote. They couldn't testify in court. They went from their father's house to their husband's rule. The word betrothed to us means "engaged". In Jesus day betrothed meant that the man and woman were married but not yet living together. Once the woman moved into the man's house she was his property and responsibility.

*“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.” Matthew 1, 18 & 19*

In other words, Mary was married to Joseph, her husband, but had not yet moved in with him – betrothed. She was pregnant with a child that was not his – unchastity or immorality. According to the Law of Moses Joseph was going to issue her a certificate of divorce and send her away quietly so not to disgrace her. According to Jesus' own words in the first passage Joseph had every right to do this.

The problem is that biblical divorce does not mean the same thing as modern divorce. Biblical divorce does not undo the Holy Sacrament of Marriage. That can be undone by no man.

*“And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’ “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” Matthew 19, 4 – 6*

Biblical divorce is akin to a legal separation. There are reasons when a man and woman can no longer live together. Infidelity, immorality, and abuse are examples of these. A man was responsible for his wife as long as they resided in the same house. A woman could not move out of her husband's house unless he issued her a certificate of divorce. If a man and woman were legally "divorced" they were living apart but still considered married. Neither could marry again. If they did they were considered to be in an adulterous relationship.

Modern divorce effectively ends the contract of marriage and frees the two people up to marry again. For a Catholic, marriage is not a contract but a covenant. A contract is the exchange of goods or services for a set period of time. A covenant is the total giving of self for life. The Catholic understanding of divorce is in the biblical context that Jesus described it and not in the modern understanding we have today.

So, can a civilly divorced Catholic receive communion? Yes, if that Catholic has not moved on to another sexual relationship. If they have moved on into another sexual relationship, either pre-marital or through a second civil marriage, they are considered to be living an adulterous life, in mortal sin, and therefore cannot receive our Lord in the Eucharist. They have forfeit their life when they reneged on their oath to the death that being the Sacrament of Holy Marriage.

So what is an annulment? Isn't that just a Catholic divorce?

No. It's not.

An annulment in the Catholic Church is a very serious matter. The Church is basically ruling that a conferred sacrament was never really conferred in the first place. This is something they have to be absolutely sure about. If your first marriage was indeed a validly sacramental marriage and they allow you to remarry the sin is on the person who allowed it. I am sure there is no honest priest who wishes his soul be damned to hell just to let a couple he will likely never see again unknowingly commit adultery.

Because of this the Church has a very arduous, thorough and legalistic process that must be completed. Each spouse is appointed an advocate. Something a kin to a deposition must be completed by the person seeking the annulment as well as at least four witnesses who knew the couple before and after the marriage. The other spouse is given a chance to give their side of the story and contest the annulment if they so desire. The couple must also be civilly divorced before starting this process.

Once all of the paperwork is complete the advocates go over it and it is brought before a tribunal for review. If the tribunal feels that there are grounds to proceed the petition for annulment is then sent to a judge for a ruling. If the judge finds just cause to issue the annulment it is automatically sent to the court of second chance. There everything is reviewed once again and a final decree is then issued. If both judges come to the same conclusion a decree of nullity is issued and both parties are free to marry again. The original marriage was never valid and therefore did not happen.

Like I said, this is serious stuff. The Church has to make sure that it gets this right.

Anonymous rightly points out that the annulment process did not exist at the time of Jesus. At the same

time the Sacraments **as we understand them today** didn't exist at the time of Jesus either. If the annulment process is a sham because it was made up by man sometime after Jesus ascension to heaven doesn't that make the Sacraments a sham as well? The concept of a sacrament was borrowed from the Roman army. It wasn't a Jewish concept.

Jesus knew that as the Church progressed through time she would face new problems for which she had not received direct instruction on. Jesus gave His authority to the twelve, who passed on His teaching to their successors. He made the Church His authority on earth. We believe that the Pope is infallible when he teaches on faith and morals from the teaching chair of Peter when in union with his Bishops.

*"I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."* 1 Timothy 3, 14 & 15

Anyone who teaches something in contrary to official Church teaching is either led astray or is not Catholic at best and a heretic at worst. We are called to believe 100% of Church teaching when it comes to the faith and morals. We have been assured by Jesus Himself that His Church will not err in this arena. If we do not agree with Church teaching we are to repent, a word with the Greek origin (metanoya) meaning to change one's mind to that of God.

We are to believe first, then accept and finally seek to understand. We are never to put of own opinion before official Church teaching. Official Church teaching is the teaching handed down from God himself. To be opposed to it is to be opposed to God. This is nothing more than human arrogance and a tool the devil uses to separate us from God.

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This contribution is available at <http://damascusroadsojourner.blogspot.com/2015/04/a-response-to-my-anonymous-friend.html>  
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# Most Holy Trinity Sunday [at From the Pulpit of my Life]



Triquetra or Trinity Knot

I can't think of any doctrine more basic to Christianity than that of the Trinity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the Trinity in this way:

The mystery of one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The revealed truth of the Holy Trinity is at the very root of the Church's living faith as expressed in the Creed. The mystery of the Trinity in itself is inaccessible to the human mind and is the object of faith only because it was revealed by Jesus Christ, the divine Son of the Eternal Father.

In YOUCAT, the *Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church*, there is this distinction:

God is only one, but he exists in three persons. The fact that in English we have two terms, the Triune God and the Trinity for the same reality (one emphasizes God's unity, and the other the distinction of persons in him) is an indication of the unfathomable mystery of the Trinity.

St Augustine says, "Wherever there is love, there is a trinity: a lover, a beloved, and a fountain of love."

From St. Gregory Nazianzen:

No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the splendor of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the One. . . . When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.

Paraphrased remark attributed to St. Bonaventure: "The three persons of the Trinity are described as being in an eternal dance of love."

Here is a beautiful, inspiring Celtic prayer to the Holy Trinity, which I found in *The Essential Catholic Prayer Book*.

I am bending my knee in the eye of the Father who created me,

In the eye of the Son who purchased me,  
In the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me,  
In friendship and affection.  
Through your own Anointed One, O God,  
Bestow upon us fulfillment of our need,  
Love toward God,  
The affection of God,  
The smile of God,  
The wisdom of God,  
The grace of God,  
The fear of God,  
And the will of God,  
To do in the world of the Three,  
As angels and saints  
Do in Heaven;  
Each shade and light,  
Each day and night,  
Each time in kindness,  
Give us your spirit.  
Amen.

Other sources of reflection about our loving, but mysterious, Triune God:

This link is a rich resource to [“15 Things about the Holy Trinity Today”](#) by Kathryn Jean Lopez.

This link will take you to the essay I wrote in my parish bulletin for today. In it is an explanation of the triquetra or Irish knot. You will have to find [the bulletin for 5/31/15](#). It’s tricky: go to the left hand side bar and scroll down to “Go to Bulletin.” They are arranged by date, newest first.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.fromthepulpitofmylife.com/2015/05/most-holy-trinity-sunday/>  
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## Mourning Bela • Molly Oshatz



Last Monday, we decided it really was time for us to end the suffering of our beloved vizsla, Béla. Despite his medication he was in obvious pain, and he was falling often while trying to get around the house. His glands were so swollen from lymphoma that his breathing had become obstructed, and he tried to bite if he thought you might be planning on touching his throat. We had already cancelled two appointments after he appeared to rally, but we knew this really was it. The vet came to our house Tuesday morning. After Béla died, I laid down behind him and hugged him tight, which I hadn't been able to do in months for fear of hurting him. Watching them take his body away was the hardest part. He was going away and had no need of us to go with him any longer.

Our children have been taken aback by the depth of our grief. They keep reminding us, "But he's in heaven now, so you know he's happy and that you'll see him again. It's alright." At first I resisted these comforting words. They seemed too easy. I don't know any more than anyone else does where dogs go after death. I didn't know where he was. I didn't even know what to pray for. When a person dies, I know what to pray for. I have images from the Bible that give me a sense, although of course a vague, metaphorical sense, of where they might be. But for Béla, I had nothing. Well, there was the fact that the boy in "Heaven is for Real" mentioned that there were lots of dogs in heaven, but that wasn't enough for me to go on all by itself. Being a compulsive reader of all things Catholic, I had St. Thomas Aquinas in my head telling me that I was naïve and irrational to think that Béla had an eternal soul. I felt silly bringing my requests to God. "Lord, please bring Béla to heaven. Bless him. Let him chase dragonflies and ground squirrels and bark at airplanes, golden retrievers, and shirtless joggers again (he was a dog with many opinions). Let him press his cheek against yours like vizslas love to do. And please, let me walk again in the woods with him someday." I prayed it anyway, but it felt like a child's prayer.

Béla taught me a lot about Christian discipleship. No, I'm not saying my dog was Christian, although... We took him Mass once for the blessing of the pets when he was still a rambunctious puppy, and to our amazement he ignored all the cats, dogs, and even one goat around him and reverently faced the altar, the image of perfect dignity. He broke his composure only once to growl sternly at the liberal priest who offered him a purple dinosaur toy and chucked him under the chin, as if to say, "You're a man of God—get a hold of yourself! We are in the house of God here!" So maybe he was Catholic after all, and a

conservative Catholic at that, but let's leave that aside. (Now the St. Thomas in my head is rolling his eyes: "Tell me she did *not* just say that.") What I mean by saying that he taught me about discipleship is that he showed me what obedience and trust looks like. I could leave the door wide open and he'd never take a step outside without my permission. Without me training him to do so, he would wait for my nod before jumping on the couch. He was rarely anxious or frightened. He trusted in our plans and our provision.

That was the phrase that came to me last week in prayer: I trust in your provision. It finally occurred to me that it wasn't my prayer that was childish, but my refusal to trust my dog to God. How could I possibly love my dog more than God does? And how could I fear that God's plans for Béla were something less than I hoped, something less than what would bring joy to him or to me? I don't need to know where Béla is, because God is sovereign over all his creation, and God is love. God loves our pets more than we can, just as he loves our children more than we can. Whatever plans he has for them are better than we can imagine. When I offer God my grief over Béla, I know he is making something of my suffering that is far more wonderful even than all of my time spent here on Earth with my dear dog. I don't know what that is, and I don't need to. I have nothing to fear, least of all being disappointed by the God who loves me enough to sacrifice his only son for me. Like Béla, I can trust in my master's provision.

I imagine it's much harder to say that when you lose a spouse or a child. Mourning Béla has reminded me of the pain of mourning in a way that has opened my heart. As God knows, my heart opens best when it's broken. In the past I've made the mistake of avoiding people in mourning for fear of saying the wrong thing or adding to their pain. This week my heart has been aching for Sheryl Sandberg, who lost her husband Dave Goldberg to a freak accident, and for [Malia Watkins](#), a woman I read about in the paper whose hard-working husband was randomly murdered, leaving her broke with three young kids and nowhere to live. May God bless those who mourn. And may God bless Béla, a beautiful creature whose life blessed me.



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# On The Road With Saint Paul -- From Messenger of Satan to Ambassador for Christ [at PURE HOMILETICS]



## FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 9:26-31 *Barnabas reported to the Apostles how Saul had seen the Lord on the road*

Ps 22 *I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of the people*

1 Jn 3:18-24 *This is his commandment: that you may believe and love*

Jn 15:1-8 *Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit*

Saul witnesses the risen Jesus and boldly proclaims his Lordship (Acts). We proclaim our belief in Jesus by our love for one another (1 Jn). He is the vine and we are the branches (Jn). Together let us praise his name in our assembly of worship (Ps).

His name was Saul. In his young and undiscovered days, before he became Paul the Apostle, he worked as lead prosecutor for the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court in Jerusalem.

In those days Saul was eager to make a name for himself, to kill or to die to obtain notoriety. “Someday,” he thought, “I’m going to be somebody important. Someday the entire world will know my name.”

The Christians at Jerusalem feared the name of Saul of Tarsus because he persecuted the Church and tried to destroy it.

Saul’s conversion on the road to Damascus is one of the most famous stories in the New and Eternal Covenant. What happened to Saul immediately after he met Jesus remains a mystery, but I’d like to shed some light on it.

In his letter to the Galatians he writes: “When God, who from my mother’s womb set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me ... I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; rather, I went into Arabia, and then returned to Damascus (Gal 1:15-17).

Saul earned his keep. He paid his dues. In Arabia he dug deep into the Scriptures. To Arabia, yes, but to what part? We’re talking more than a million square miles of desert.

Saul was like the Israelites, John the Baptist, the prophet Elijah, even the Lord: all needed proving in the desert before they began their ministry. This is a common biblical template for the one who is called by God to preach the gospel.

Daily life can mimic the desert experience. All our days pass away into the glory of God. We are challenged to fulfill our calling: evangelization. You. Me. Them. Everybody.

Returning to Damascus, Saul, Greek bible in hand, preached Christ crucified and risen, that he was the Son of God. He spoke of Jesus with the entirety of his being.

He totally blew the minds everyone in the synagogues. “What’s he talking about? Isn’t this the man who in Jerusalem killed Christians?” And all who heard him were astonished.

But none so much as young Saul. Dig the change in the man. That’s life in the Spirit: we never know what we’re capable until we take a risk and speak openly about the truths of the faith in our hearts.

The Book of Ecclesiastes says there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. Saul rose to the occasion, higher than he could have imagined. Now he was thinking, “Someday the entire world is going to know the sound of my voice and then they’ll know how much I’ve suffered for the sake of the Name.”

The Jews from the synagogues and the governor of the city wanted him dead. His fists got hard and his wits grew keen.

Then God said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Move forward, take action, leave the results to me.

Escaping from Damascus wasn't easy. The officials tried to seize Saul but his disciples lowered him over the wall in a basket. He tumbled onto the ground and ran as fast as he could beneath a hail of arrows.

He got on that hot road again and traveled to Church headquarters. His arrival was ill-timed. Many suffered horribly because of the reign of terror he once led.

The Christians referred to him as the “Satan's apostle.” Once he relished that title. It bore imprimatur. Now he snuck into Jerusalem with his tail tucked between his legs. All he wanted was a hot meal, a warm bed, and a friend.

No longer was he Satan's apostle but would present himself to the disciples as an Ambassador for Christ.

But he lacked polish, nuance, gravitas. With his bull-in-the china-shop mentality the future apostle blundered into the city expecting to be received like King David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant, or, like Christ on the back of a donkey on Palm Sunday.

Yet he wasn't so finger-licking uncouth that he couldn't think this situation through. Rather than show up at Peter's doorstep he sought assistance from an old friend—Barnabas.

A generous man with a commanding presence, Barnabas, whose name means “son of encouragement,” took Saul aside, drew the entire story of his conversion from him and decided that it rang true.

Thus began the partnership of the greatest missionary team in the history of our Church.

What a difference a friend can make.

If Barnabas hadn't trusted Saul there would have been no Paul the Apostle. Barnabas introduced him to James and Peter. He reported to them that Saul had seen the Lord and that he preached in the synagogues at Damascus.

This was a pivotal moment in our faith: love, tolerance, and mercy replaced fear, loathing, hostility, and indignation. Saul was not just a noisy gong, a clashing cymbal. He was a fly in the ointment. A piece of bubble gum on a hot sidewalk. The Apostles trusted Barnabas and counted Saul among them. For now.

This portion of the story sort of has a happy ending. What happened? Saul met the same opposition that stonewalled him in Damascus. His abrasive personality got him in Dutch with the Greeks. Sincerity was one of his greatest qualities. Restraint, not so much.

Alas, in a matter of days he infected the city with the dread of his presence and infuriated members of the synagogues who plotted to kill him.

The malaise reached a fever pitch and forced the brothers to send Saul packing to his hometown of Tarsus, five hundred miles across the Great Sea and up the icy Cydnus River.

They gave Saul a time out.

His conscience was clear. He boarded the ship. He left the community in a better place than the day he arrived.

The moral of this story is that we never know how or when God is going to use us for service of the gospel. Or who he will put in our lives to help us accomplish the works of God.

The great Saint Paul didn't become a saint overnight but he overcame many challenges because he believed in the vocation to which God called him.

"The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in fear of the Lord and with the consolation of the Spirit grew in numbers" (Acts 9:31).

Saint Luke emphasis the peace and the consolation conferred on God’s church by the Holy Spirit and no human power can destroy her.

Not even one so as impetuous as young Saul, with his grace, style, impetuosity, and sincerity.

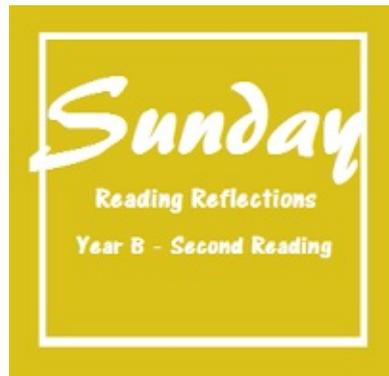
Dig the change in the man. Saul became important, second only to Mary and Peter in the Litany of the Saints. His achievement is substantial—he wrote half of the canonical Christian scriptures. Read his letters and you will hear his voice. He he prays for us. See, he changed the world.

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# God Loved You First [at In Caritas Christiana]

## 7th Sunday of Easter



For the seventh Sunday of Easter, the second reading will be from

[1 Jn 4:7-10](#)

So, we've been hitting John's first epistle really hard this Easter season, and he wrote extensively in this letter about love. So far, since Easter, we've talked about:

That's a pretty comprehensive grand tour of what love is, as a theological virtue. The Catechism states that the theological virtues "dispose Christians to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity" (#1812), and Love (

*caritas*

) is the virtue by which we love God "above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God (#1822)."

He's spent all this time on it. So... Why is love so important?

There is rather a lot one could say on that subject:

Love is important because out of love, God created you, allowing that you will not be what he hoped (that is, unfallen). Out of love, Jesus came into the world to save you from your sinful, fallen state. Out of love, when Jesus went ahead to advocate for you at the right hand of God, he sent the Holy Spirit to be your helper and guide along the way.

At the risk of sounding melodramatic, you would be doomed to experience God's justice, if it were not for his love.

This being the case, it is not only important that we have the theological virtue of faith (that which allows us to believe the things revealed by God in a factual sense), but also hope in him for salvation, and love

him in return and love others on his behalf.

Faith, without works, is dead. Love is that which brings our faith to its intended fullness and crowns our faith with action.



Let's pray:

Loving and Merciful Father,

Thank you for loving us in spite of all we do that makes us unworthy of your love. By your mercy increase your love in us, both for you, and for those you put in our lives.

Make us perfect in love that we might be your hands in the world, and love everyone we meet in just the way that you do.

Amen

PS: There are some popular misconceptions about Love. I'll talk about them

[next week](#)

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## God is Not a Genie [at The One True Faith]

"I've tried everything else, why not try prayer?" What have you got to lose?

My prayer group gets a lot of this type of prayer. Do people think God is a genie? He doesn't grant wishes.

When we pray for certain results, we are asking God to join us. He will be with us, listening, holding

You can't make God do anything. If you are paying attention to God, the Holy Spirit may change your perspective in accordance to God's will. Remember God sees things differently than you do. He has the whole picture; you see your immediate situation.



our hand. But don't tell Him what to do. We should listen.

Thankfully, Our God is generous. He gives us many many gifts and sometimes those gifts are exactly our size.

I often think when someone prays for someone's conversion to a certain point of view that perhaps God is working on the "prayee". Maybe God is working on their perseverance, patience, and love. Take praying for the health of someone. The sick person may not recover, but prayer is never wasted. Some good will come. The sick person received a blessing no one but he himself knows. The person praying receives a blessing. Just communicating with God is a gift. We are inviting God into the praying circle. Of course He wants our happiness, also. He wants what's good for us. Trust in Him.

That's what we have learned in prayer group. Praying for others' intentions have taught us to trust in Him. Most of the time, people don't come back and say thank you. God granted my prayer. And we don't expect that. It really doesn't matter if you got your wish. You can't compel God to do anything. St. Catherine of Siena reminds us, "God is God and you are not." But He is always waiting to hear from you and be invited into your situation. He has broad shoulders.

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## Is There a Christian Way? [at Travels of a New Christian]



I happened upon a blog post during a recent and rare trip to [New Advent](#); a Catholic site with an amazing assortment of subject matter and an archive of wonder. I say “rare” only in that I do grow tired of its futile emancipation of things incredibly shallow in nature. I can read only so many times, “9 Reasons Why Pope Francis Likes Vegetables”, before I want to throw up my vegetables.

Anyways, having gone through the Catholic RCIA program in 2013, that’s the Rite of Christian Initiation for all of you non-Catholics, I found this post of good interest. I’d have to say in regards to my own experience with RCIA, that it was far less frustrating than the type of one imagined in this post. It was, nonetheless, similar with the writer’s experience in the fact that the program I went through seemed to offer up nothing as an examination of why I ever came to RCIA and the Catholic Church to begin with. What was my motive? Why the Catholic Church and not the Latter Day Saints or the Assembly of God? Had I been called or was I searching? Was there any metaphysical substance within me that sought the here-and-now, just as much as the there-and-later?

Truly, if someone came to my door and said they were my long lost brother or sister, I’d be a bit curious as to their perceptions and intentions. Would not you? Or if, as a National League baseball team manager, a young man came to my office seeking to join the team, would I not want to know first, “Who are you?” and second, “What are your skills?”. Fortunately, a candidate entering RCIA does not have to qualify with a DRE or a priest, as my examples above noted. But, the DRE and the facilitators in any RCIA program should be very concerned about the spiritual state of the candidate, as anyone who is openly seeking God and His will would profess, that what is guiding them to the Church is more the spiritual matter within them, and not simply the thought that perhaps it’s a good idea today to become Christian, and they just happened to be driving by the ministry center anyways, so why not.

Now, for the baseball manager to inquire as to the skillset of the potential player before him, brings to mind the fact that being Christian – actually being Christian – likewise requires a skillset, and not simply the desire. Yes, it does. Beyond many of our perceptions and assertions, being Christian is a gift; a gift from God that lies before and beyond any initiation or practice, and I might suggest it’s just a matter of unwrapping the gift. I’ll cover this later. For now, back to my train of thought.

Ignoring any examination of my spiritual quotient, the emphasis of the RCIA program I submitted to, involved the processional unfolding of the magnificence and holiness of Christ's Church. It was a visually impressive process and I found it highly informative at times. It was not new to me though. The Catholic Church has been around awhile – a few years longer than my lifetime – and anyone who is caught in the societal stream of life these days knows well the strength and power of the Church. All good information, but it was just that; information, and I was sitting in the class there for other reasons. This RCIA program was enhanced by the presence of sponsors for each of us – witnesses – as well as well-selected individuals who brought to the meetings consistent viewpoints of the orthodoxy of the Church. Again, the information good, but only information. Nothing transformative or revealing that went past the material and intellectual, and into the sublime and spiritual. I remember reflecting on the whole of the program afterwards and counting my blessings that I had previously attended a charismatic, non-denominational church with an excellent school of ministry program. I can tell you that in such a context there is little hesitancy to address the issues of the spirit on a most personal level.

So, read this post, and then come back for my thoughts, please.

<http://redcardigan.blogspot.com/2015/05/the-full-magnitude-of-problem.html>

At times, I thought this post a little exaggerated. The comments by Agathonika, I thought, to be a bit over the top at times. There are some harsh declarations made that just might not truly represent the hopes and abilities of the DRE (Director of Religious Education) and the hierarchy beyond, but I do recognize the frustration clearly present in their words.

Since the first generation of Christianity, it has been practical and nominal to promote and visit religious practice with a long view that is designed – one hopes – to preserve and teach the perceived orthodox rather than the perceived heterodox of the faith. In such a context, it is consistent to regard any penetration of social change more as a random trend based on personal preferences, than on what could actually be a universal ascendancy towards truth, or a purified reformation of the original, undistorted truth. New thoughts can make people nervous. It is conjectured that curses, in all degrees, do emerge with the progress of man and so it is wise to judge carefully and resist any temptation to test new premises on unsuspecting and cherished souls, like those innocents in an RCIA program.

However, it is frequently forgotten that covenants, in all degrees, might also be refreshed with man's progress. Here is where authority, weaned by the first generation of Christianity, attempts to measure orthodoxy with a just and purified hand. Authority has very large sandals to fill with Jesus' ascendancy, and I'm sure the Apostles, Paul, and others had many concerned reflections as to whether they were getting things right. With all the effort through the following two millennia to preach and hold fast to the good news that Jesus brought to mankind, it turned out that order – an order based upon perseverance to the Word – would become the principle guide. Nothing new to this sober reality of course, as Peter's rejection of Jesus demonstrated the incessantly poor judgment and disappointing inclinations of man. But there it is.

Now authority does recognize that there are limitations to what they can offer and accomplish as an authority, and not as the Holy Spirit, in the governance of its programs, and so they tend to exclude those requisites of faith that exceed the bounds of authority's own capacity? Are there not certain mysteries of faith that lie beyond the mere process of practical content found in the Christian faith? Is there not a realm that is as God is; Spirit, and would it not be expectant that all answers to all of man's problems reside in such a realm? Christ was universal in His assertion that a relationship with God had nothing to do with

authority or fleshly practice, and everything to do with spirituality. So, what is true spirituality?

Perhaps a true relationship with God has nothing at all to do with social initiation and practice. Perhaps the very realm from which God transcends is a world so abstract from our physical world that even our most basic of social expressions cannot find substance and use in the realm of God. We express ourselves as one of God's creatures with our minds and bodies; both mortal elements that have no place in the next world until Jesus reunites us once again. Perhaps we have misplaced something central to our successful relationship with God's will, for while one might claim the mind and body as key to our free will and thus to love unconditionally both God and man, all evidence alludes towards another source.

The post's writer and commenter are both railing against the lack of spirituality in the Catholic Church; I get it, and agree. They assert that the Church has walked down a practical, bureaucratic path; processing rather than spiritualizing. Well, perhaps it is time to contest this bureaucratic path, for another thing I can agree with is the following:

*“You end up with a church full of people who have in common high tolerance for bureaucratic silliness, and lower levels of passion.”*

Down through the last two millennium, things “spiritual” have heaped in impressive, ordered, social fashion for the systematic consumption by good Christians: prayers, sacraments, liturgies, sermons and homilies, hymnals and ballads, praising & worshiping, rights-of-passage, workshops, retreats, bible studies, ministry classes, missions, charities, social programs, and pilgrimages; all for the good of one's soul. We call these things spiritual. There are few challenges to these perceptions and practices other than to debate possible arrangements and modifications, inclusions and exclusions.

In themselves, these spiritual things of man are endeavors that contain the potential of forming personal habits of virtues, and they certainly lift oppression in all of its forms. The world has greatly progressed towards human dignity by the hands and feet of millions of active Christians around the world. We each have our mission(s), should we truly recognize them. I confess, I find it inherent to sing in the choir, and to cantor. I know it is good ministry to those who attend Mass and yearn for the meditative and holy setting as they personally reach out in supplication to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. A Mass rarely goes by where a parishioner does not let me know of how I have helped them by my ministry of singing. I do this, though, not because I enjoy the physical performance (I do not), or that my mind loves doing it (it does not). I do it because my spirit loves it. I do it because God wills it; He gave me a gift and I am to use it. It's not an obligation or debt, it is simply the way things are; the way of God's will.

One can call it a sacrifice. I do not, yet I understand why so many Christians must talk of sacrifice. If one sees the world by the might of their mind and the strength of their body, all things might appear right; leaving one satisfied to proceed through life with a sense of fulfillment. I contend however, that in all likelihood, such a person's water jar is half empty and they do not even know it. In truth, there is still an estrangement from the full transcendence of God's will. One can sacrifice themselves to the regimen of righteous task or the enduring perseverance to prayer and meditation, but to do so by the mind and the body is like a mirage; that coke machine shimmering in the desert sun brings a hope of salvation, but by the time you get there, that coke machine somehow shimmers at another distance from where it once stood. The thirst is unquenched.

In the end, the frailty of the mind and body, brought by their mortality, induces their failure to lift themselves ultimately to God's will; for to them they fear that what they seek is less than who they are, as

one meant for but a short time in this world. And this is why our religious perceptions and practices can do much in this world, but cannot carry one to the next. And it is why so many of us abandon the effort all together, or fashion a likeness to Christ's way that, in truth, does not hinder their worldly path and thus gives them some sense of topical good.

I had said earlier that being Christian has little to do with initiation or practice. While certain sacraments are meant for the inclusion of one into the Christian faith, they are physical, visible representations of a soul's hope for true conformity with God's will. As such, these sacraments are incomplete. There is still the spiritual, invisible to contend with, and in this realm, there are no representations, only realities. I've harped on this before, but think of it in reference to Plato's concept of the form of things.

If you imagine the ideal form of a bed mattress, it is perfect, yet you will never sleep on such a one in this physical life. If you imagine the ideal mate, he or she is perfect, yet you will never meet such a one and marry.

The physical can do only so much to lead one to God because God is Spirit; He is perfect. He is the form and one cannot be united with Him by intellectual and physical means alone. One must give up on the intellectual and physical pursuit of God, by giving up the tools most commonly used by man in order to find God; one's mind and one's body. This is not to say that one should not engage the world with Christian practice. Of course, "Go out, go out, and tell the world" as the popular gospel song declares. Jesus calls us to engage the world with all that we are. It is by our actions that in the end gives us the sign of our devotion to God and man, but not to dynamically capture the will of God by the efforts of our intellect and body. Rather, Jesus calls us all to use the whole of humanity, in surrender to God's will, so that we might finally find God, and find the service that He has called us to by the gifts He imbued within each one of us.

In a sense, I am saying to put the cart before the horse. God's gift came before your intellect or your flesh was ever conceived. He knew who you would be before He "formed you in the womb". Your gift, while manifested in the world potential, is the immortal essence of God's Spirit and will. It is your spirit within you. You have one, you know.

There is much unresolved discourse on the matter of soul, spirit, mind, body and heart. The Roman Catholic Church has chosen to let such reside in the realm of gentle notion, rather than substance; not quite putting the matter into context of its import, or to rest. But to collect the parts and deduce a meaning; I might suggest the following:

That men and women are the sum of a unity of material and mutable with the immaterial and immutable; the former mortal and the later immortal. While the mortal is meant for attainment of its highest form and thus by condition must be susceptible to value or worth, the immortal is the form that the mortal seeks to attain and thus by condition unconditional. In other words, that which you seek is within you. And as the Church embraces, the immortal does not perish upon death of the mortal, but reunites with the mortal in heaven.

Thus, your cart – your spirit – is full of God's grace and love. And you need not pull it for it is already where you wish to go. However, little is said of such a gift in our daily religious discourse, with the effort always directed towards the mortal part of men and women, and their efforts to attain that which they already have. The problem is that man – through social authority and the law it governs by – has been instructed that the practice of faith is the domain of the physical rites, and not of the spiritual form. It

is self-defeating. So, if there is any semblance of truth in my suggestions, what is it that we do?

First, I want to return to my earlier conversation on the mind and body. These are the mortal elements of mankind. Yes, I acknowledge that catechism welds the mind to the spirit, creating a soul. I also acknowledge that St. Paul does not. There is confusion, and as such, I will continue to focus on my proposal; that the spirit is a separate element of man, placed there by God upon the conception of the child. Yes, there is unity, but no, there is not the calculated balance of power as God would desire. I further propose that man's fallen nature references a condition whereby his/her mortal state of mind and body has chosen, by its own free will, to recalculate that balance of power and thus subdue its immortal state of spirit. This is where things get ugly, because such a state yields the fallen man whose inclinations do more harm than good.

I mean, what was it that actually happened to the very being of man when he chose to exert his free will over God's will? It's not imaginary, certainly; nor illusion. No, it's real enough, and I find it sensible and logical to suggest that what changed within man had to do with a subjugation of what catechism states as the "form" of man; namely his or her spirit.

So, if we take this proposal down its logical path, we each have an interred spirit within us; seeking both release and its rightful share of control of the unity of the body. I mean, which part of our unity is one to trust in choosing God's will over our own expressed will. One's will, where their spirit is interred, is that of the mind and body; a cocktail well known for intoxication, while the will of the spirit can be only that of God's, for it is what God breathed into us at the beginning and its composition beyond dirt. This brings me back to the beginning of this post.

When I walked into RCIA in 2013, I was seeking what I have just referenced; we all do for that matter. We seek God. And to do so, means that our spirits must first, find release, and second, find its strength so it might lead.

This is the purpose of initiation into the Church; to hopefully be that catalyst or spark that renews the mind and body to the truth of the spirit. There is no real, lasting conversion without the disinterment of your spirit from under the hard hand of your mind and body. But to disinter means one must dig in the dirt; the metaphysics of man who was created by God from dirt. The glory of the physical structure of the Church is a wonder to behold, but to simply put it on display as a museum of process and progress is to ignore the actual work it takes to exhume the primal spirit; it's just too brittle an exoskeleton. The strength of the Church resides in the spirit of the body, not the body itself.

The author of the post, I suggested you read, noted at the conclusion of her post, "This is the first time I think I've understood the full magnitude of the problem." She went on to say that she did not quite know where to go from here, but it might be best we find it quickly.

I offer up the disinterment of our spirits as the answer to the dilemma. And one place where it is crucial that we engage such an activity is in any process where the rubber meets the road; where the Church engages the un-Church; especially with the seeker. RCIA should be a place where each candidate is given the full opportunity to explore why they are there. It is personal; very personal, for it challenges lifelong assumptions and habits that have been promoted by one's mind and body, yet promised by one's spirit. It is due time that the spirit receives a hearing for parole.

God Bless – Reese

This contribution is available at <http://travelsOfANewChristian.com/2015/06/01/is-there-a-christian-way/>  
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## That Ship Has Sailed [at Blogging For A Better Life]

Our son has a knack for taking tantalizing photos, which he has permitted me to use at my disposal. So thanks to him I have limitless access to pictures of unbelievable sunsets, ocean waves that look as if you could reach out and physically touch the lapping water, palm trees where the branches sway in such a way that his photograph makes you feel you as if you are there leaning against the trees. I stare with envy at serene pictures of empty park benches that make me want to escape whatever I'm doing and sit for hours soaking in the beauty of the visual image displayed.

For some reason or another I keep staring at this one particular photograph. It is becoming one of my favorite pictures of all-time.



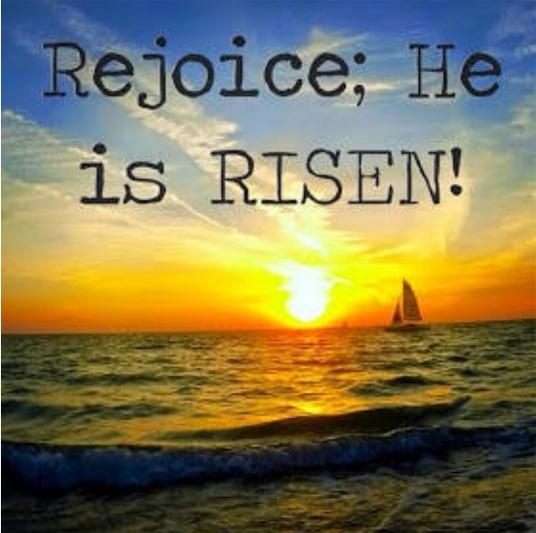
I see that boat out to sea and I think about all the events in my life that have past. That ship has sailed for me to experience what it was like to be barely sixteen with what seemed like my whole life ahead of me. Gone is the experience of a freshman away at college on my own for the very first time. Past is knowing what it felt like to carry a living soul for nine months deep inside me.

The more I stare at this photo the more I become immersed in wondering too where that boat is heading and what lies ahead for me in my life journey. I've already experienced being sixteen, and twenty, and thirty, (and so forth) along with all the things that happen in one's life as we age, but what I haven't experienced is tomorrow.

I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but I know that whatever I have done, and didn't do, I will experience God's mercy. That is enough to carry me through the seas of life.

**“The Lord’s unfailing love and mercy still continue, fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise. The Lord is all I have, and so in Him I put my hope.” (Lamentations 3:22-24)**

Now, I’m beginning to understand why I so love this picture. It reminds me what I need to know in life... that we have a merciful God who loves and cares for us so much that He has promised to all who believe, that they shall enjoy eternal life.



How about you? Have you discovered what you need to know in life?

(Photographs courtesy of Cullen O’Donnell.)

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# I Don't Get It! I Will Never Get It! [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

## I Don't Get It! I Will Never Get It!

[I will admit it - I am an appeaser, a coward, failing more often than not, to stand up for the Truth for fear of offending others. May God be merciful to me a sinner. But today, there is a kernel of gumption that has popped through this fearful man's being, so I will yield to its prompting. While I have been criticized before and no doubt will be attacked again, silence is not an option. Misguided contemporary thought notwithstanding, the supreme law of the Catholic Church - and its primary mission - is, has been, and always must be - the sanctification and salvation of souls - not such secular and nebulous concepts as social justice, universal health care, immigration reform, income or marriage equality, global warming, etc. - eternal souls - yours and mine.

I will not apologize if that forgotten Truth and this post makes anyone uncomfortable]

I understand that in a democratic society, the Catholic Church and its members must try to shape social and political policies and to have their voices heard on the pressing moral issues of the day. There is no doubt that an increasing number of recent actions (beyond the HHS contraception and sterilization mandates) taken by the current administration pose real and imminent threats to our God given and constitutionally recognized fundamental right - freedom of religion. Freedom loving people of all religious persuasions and those of no religious affiliation must stand up and defend this fundamental principle – one which no man, no government, no nation has the right to restrict.

Nonetheless, I am at a loss to understand how political strategizing and judicial skirmishes, no matter how well-intentioned and necessary they both may be, should take precedence over the Church's primary duty - the sanctification and salvation of souls.

The Catholic Church has a duty to preach Christ's Truths in their completeness, not just the more palatable and less controversial ones, **to all peoples**, not just those who identify themselves as Catholic. The fact that many if not a majority of Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic, may not believe abortion, contraception, gay marriage, sex outside a sacramental marriage, sterilization and in-vitro fertilization are intrinsically evil acts – neither changes those Truths nor exempts the Church from explaining and teaching those Truths **to everyone**. Jesus charged us to “make disciples of all nations” did He not?

Instead of using the present attack on our religious freedoms as an opportunity to simultaneously explain, with clarity, courage and love, why the Catholic Church teaches that the acts listed above are intrinsically evil, our current approach suggests we will defer that portion of our duty until after the public fight over our religious freedom has been resolved.

We may never have a better opportunity to save souls or a wider platform from which to explain God's teachings in these areas to a broader audience than that which God has presented us with now. In fact, we

may not have the freedom to do so at all in the future.

It seems to this simple man, that at least for now, too many are content to just preserve the rights of some Catholics to believe these Truths and wait to an unspecified time in the future to explain why all of us (Catholic and non-Catholic) should believe and live out these Truths in our individual lives. What of the lives ruined and the souls lost in the interim?

When was the last time you heard a homily on any of these evils? When did you last hear a priest preach on Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (Human Life) or on *Evangelium Vitae* (Gospel of Life) written by Pope John Paul II or suggest that you prayerfully read and study these documents? When was the last time you read an article in your local secular or diocesan newspapers or had a parish speaker explaining the compelling reasons behind these fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church and the eternal consequences to those who reject them?

The more than forty years of silence in local parishes and in many Dioceses on these issues goes a long way toward explaining why more Catholics are not engaged in this most vital fight to preserve religious freedom in this country.

Make no mistake – the Catholic Bishops are absolutely correct to warn us of this unprecedented attack on religious freedom and to call us to pray and fight to preserve this God-given right. They deserve our support and our prayers.

But let me ask you this: What if we are successful in preserving religious freedom but continue silently condemning untold souls to eternal separation from a loving God because we lack the courage to teach and challenge them to live the Truth?

Now is the time to end the silence!

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This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2015/05/its-worth-revisiting-wednesday-i-dont.html>  
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# The Eucharist--Nourishment for Life: Solemnity of Corpus Christi [at Fr. Ben's Biblical Blog]

Note--I recorded this homily twice this weekend because of First Communion. See below for my regular homily and the homily I gave with input from our First Communion students.

One of my favorite hobbies—my favorite sport—is running. I have run for many years and enjoy distance running, marathons and racing. Yes, I am a little crazy! It has been said that running is partly physical but mostly mental. I can verify this is true. While physical training is essential, often times it is truly mind over matter in a race.

What most people overlook about distance running—especially for someone who is not a runner or a beginning runner—is the importance of nutrition. I mean, if you are going to run a marathon, you have to drink water and eat something! I can't tell you how many times I have been ready to stagger off a course and die, when a glass of water, Gatorade and a bite to eat gave me a second wind.

Running has many parallels with life. Sometimes you cruise along, feeling like you could go forever. The sun is out, the wind is at your back and you're going down hill. At other times, things stink. Muscles are sore, it's raining, going into the wind or up a hill.

What is interesting for me—I don't have troubles remembering to eat something or drink water if a run is going poorly—I welcome a break for nourishment! However, if things are going well I may think, "I don't need to stop for water—I feel great!" But what happens four or five miles later? I'm on the side of the road with a cramp!

Often in life, we treat God the same way. If things are rough—we turn to Him. If life is smooth we may forget to allow God to feed us with His love.

Here's the point—wherever life finds you at Mass this evening, you must be nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ—the Eucharist. If you are cruising along in life—be nourished! If life has brought sadness, grief or difficulty—be nourished! This is what we celebrate at every Mass, but especially here for Corpus Christi.

Here are two promises of Jesus in two short verses. First, in Matthew 28:20 Jesus promised, "*Behold, I am with you even until the end of the age.*" Second, in John 6:54: "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.*" You can take these to the bank! How can you know? Because Jesus gives us his Body and Blood at Mass.

This is true of *every Mass*! Mass is not just about checking a requirement off a list. It's not just

about seeing family or friends. It's not just about eating a donut. It's about the Eucharist. If the homily is lame—the Body and Blood is coming. If Father has to lead the music and he is off key—the Body and Blood is coming!

This weekend I want to challenge you—let's increase our daily Mass crowd. We are very blessed with a faithful daily Mass crowd and I believe they make up the heart and soul of our parish. Join us—I don't just work on the weekends! We have daily Mass Monday through Thursday at 8:30. Summer affords many of you more free time whether you are a student, retired or on vacation. This can be a great opportunity to be fed by Jesus' Body and Blood on a more regular basis.

Know you are always welcome at Mass on the weekends—and even daily—to receive Christ's Body and Blood to nourish you no matter what life throws your way.

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# How writing is part of my faith journey [at Catholic Review]

Lately I have been thinking about why I blog.

I write to reflect. I write to remember. I write to connect.

I also write because I love words. Words help me make sense of the many thoughts I have swirling through my mind. Words bring order to the mostly wonderful chaos of my life. Words can bring tears and laughter. They can transport you to a different place or give you a new perspective. Words build a bridge from me to you—and sometimes back again.



I also write because sitting down to think and type in the quiet of the evening helps me focus on what matters most: my faith and my family. It helps me appreciate all I have been given. It forces me to recognize the many ways I am falling short as a wife and mother—and celebrate a few successes, too. In a way, this blog is my personal shared at a blogging conference a few weeks ago—“I’m a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world.”

Oh, to be God's pencil.



Many nights, as I'm trying to write, I have to tuck our younger son back in bed every few minutes. He always has a reason for getting up. He's scared of a shadow. He wants to take a toy to bed. The hall is too bright. The hall is too dark. He needs another hug. He's hungry. He's thirsty. He's giggling. He forgot to tell me what his friend said on the playground. He wants to call Grandma—again.

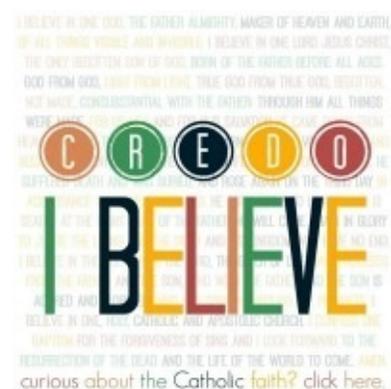
Tonight I realized that I am so much like our little boy. God places me somewhere and I try to wriggle out of it. He says it's time to sleep and I tell Him I have something better to do. He offers me what I need and I complain. I want a toy. Not that toy! I want it dark. Not that dark!



Again and again, God tucks me in, knowing His plan is better than mine, but also knowing that I have free will—and might make the same bad decision again and again.

My faith is far, far from perfect. I am no better a person or a Christian or a Catholic than anyone else. I don't write here because I am trying to teach you how to live your life. I'm still trying to learn how to live mine.

And I'm so honored we are on this journey—separately and together.



*I'm participating in The Credo Project. If you want to learn more about the Catholic Church, please feel free to reach out here or by email at [openwindowcr@gmail.com](mailto:openwindowcr@gmail.com). I am no expert, but I'm more than happy to chat.*

5/27/2015 11:08:10 PM

By

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This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2015/05/27/why-i-blog-how-writing-is-part-of-my-faith-journey>

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# The Essence of the Prayer of Jesus



The essence of the prayer of Jesus entailed dedicating every moment of every day to loving God with every part and with every fibre of his being (Lk 2:29. Jn 4:34). All his prayer was directed to this end. Pledging himself to love his Father come what may, day in day out, might be simple, but it certainly wasn't always plain sailing. In fact on occasions it became close to hell on earth for a person of such a delicate and sensitive nature, and sometimes excruciatingly painful, both physically and mentally. What is interesting is that on two of these occasions 'though he was alone in his prayer, Jesus took the trouble to tell others of how he prayed, and the inner anguish that this caused him, otherwise we would never have known.

Quite evidently he did this so that we could be in no doubt that prayer can be at one moment ecstasy, and at another moment agony, and all stations in between. That is why he told us, through his disciples, that at the prelude to his public ministry, when he prayed in the desert for forty days it was not one long prolonged ecstasy, far from it. He encountered terrible temptations, as the power of evil threatened to divert him from his purpose. The sufferings that he experienced there were intensified later when, in three terrible hours in the garden of Gethsemane, he had to endure three hours of spiritual and physical pain and suffering. Here his prayer became so agonising, so excruciating, that he sweated blood, not just at the thought of the terrible ordeal that was ahead of him, but much more. It was at the thought of how little, what he was about to endure, would affect those for whom he would suffer and die.

Perhaps the most moving prayer that he ever made was while he was being hammered to the cross, when he prayed for forgiveness for his executioners and for those who had ordered his death, and for those who were pleased to hear that he had been executed. They were not pleased because – 'it was necessary that one man should die for the sake of the people' but for the sake of their power over the people and for the privilege positions that they had enjoyed before his truth had threatened to undermine them and expose their hypocrisy. The truth is not a dainty dish to set before the most dangerous animal on earth, particularly if they have political or religious pretention. They prefer Ambrosia to eat and Nectar to drink that have little appetite for humble pie! If a person insist on proclaiming the truth no matter what, it will make their enemies cross, very cross, and when they are very cross they will crucify.

It would be naïve to think that the terrible temptations that Jesus endured were only experienced as isolated events that occurred at the beginning and at the end of his public life for the evidence is that his prayer to his Father must have continually been interrupted. One of the main themes in the four Gospels is the opposition of so many of the 'great and the good' to him personally, as well as to his teaching.

Needless to say then that, as he paused to pray at least five times a day, his prayer would have been continually disturbed with the thought of how to get through to the perverse and persistent hostility that greeted his every word. That it was backed up and reinforced by the sort of miracles that had never been seen before, nor would ever be seen again, in quite the same way, seemed to matter little. Remember Jesus saying that, *'even if a man were to be raised from the dead they would not believe'*. Nor would it be realistic to think that such distractions only arose in his prayer after he had made his first public appearance. As he grew up his supersensitive human nature and sharp mind would have long since seen, the cant, the hypocrisy and the humbug that prevailed everywhere in the religion of his forbears that he came to transform.

The perfection of human wisdom is love, and love does not just happen it has to be learnt. So like any other human beings Jesus had to learn too. He had to learn how to love his Father by repeatedly trying to love him with his whole heart and mind and with his whole body and with his whole strength. I say 'trying', because he was, as we have seen, not just distracted, but even tempted to do otherwise. Now having distractions in prayer is not a sin, nor are temptations for that matter, unless you give in to them. Jesus never gave in to them, but turned away from them continually to commit himself to his Father, to love him and to do his will, as can be seen so graphically in his prayer in Gethsemane. It was in this way that he had to do what other human beings would have to do, who wished to follow his example. They too would have to learn how to love day by day throughout their lives.

This is why many years later the Franciscan mystic and mother St Angela of Foligno said that prayer is in fact – the school where loving is learned – (*Schola divini amoris*). And that's why St Teresa of Avila said that you can't actually pray without distractions! There are no distractions, if you fall asleep, because you are doing nothing, and if you are in ecstasy you are also doing nothing, because God is doing everything. True prayer takes place between sleep and the ecstasy and there, there will always be distractions that enable us to learn how to love the Father, as Jesus did. Each time a person turns back to him in prayer they are in fact practising the repenting that St Peter said was the only way to receive the unique outpouring of God's love on the first Pentecost Day.

St Francis of Assisi said, what Jesus knew only too well before him, namely that it is *in giving that you receive, and it is in loving therefore that you receive love in return*. As Jesus continually endeavoured to love his Father, not just despite the distractions and temptations that he experienced, but because of them, he began to receive His love in ever greater abundance. And what He received was the profusion of the infinite love with which his Father was able to fill His human nature through His divine nature that had bound Him to his Father from all eternity. This divine nature was to remain with him throughout His life on earth, as the means through which His human nature was progressively divinized. Imagine an hour glass filled with gold dust to symbolise the love of God. So long as the empty half, symbolising the human nature that Jesus chose to embody, remained open, then the process of receiving the love of God continued until it was not only full, but full to overflowing. We are heirs and heiress to this supernatural superfluity of love that draws us up into the one the first Christians called Christ our Brother. Thence onwards, in with and through Him into our true and everlasting home, where we will experience to eternity, with all who we love and hold dear, the ecstatic bliss of basking in the vortex of love unlimited, as it endlessly revolves to and fro between the Father and the Son.



## God Does Not Mess with Our Heads [at V for Victory!]



Today I found myself reflecting on Protestantism, and it occurred to me that among its fundamental flaws is that it is okay with the idea of a God Who messes with our heads. This is because Protestants hold that Christ established an invisible church of true believers, rather than a visible Church of true teachers. In other words, God leaves us to figure out for ourselves what we need to do to save our souls.

The idea that God allows us to puzzle out our own path to salvation gives us way too much credit for brains, and God no credit at all for being a loving Father. What loving human parent allows a child to figure out for himself whether to stick his hand in a pot of boiling water, or light matches, or run out into traffic? What loving parent fails to pass on to the child wisdom and knowledge that the child cannot learn without being told? So God sets up visible authority figures for the child in the person of his mother and father in order to teach him the things he will need to know in order to survive in the world -- and also in order to give him a reason to *believe* what he has been taught without having to find it out through tragic experience. If God does this in order to secure our temporal good, why would He not, to secure our eternal good, set up a true Church of visible teachers with authority to teach in His Name? After all, the avoidance of hell and attainment of heaven is the paramount business of our lives. Nothing else equals it in importance. It is why we were created. Failure to achieve our supreme objective is catastrophic and irreversible. And, if we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that there is a reason Holy Scripture constantly compares mortal man to sheep. We are not very bright.

So why would anybody even *want* private judgment to be a true doctrine? Clearly, the purpose of private judgment is to allow us to rationalize doing whatever we want. It provides us with a built-in scorn for, or

at least suspicion of, authority -- especially the authority of the Successor of Peter -- that permits us to doubt and ultimately disregard any authoritative teaching that goes against our perverse inclinations. It blinds us to the truth by allowing us to replace reality with our own fantasies and stamping them with the *imprimatur* of the Holy Spirit. It gives us a basis to conclude that, after all, breaking our marriage or religious vows or neglecting our kids or accumulating an Everest of possessions or furthering the cause of socialism or apostatizing from the Catholic faith may indeed be our own personal path to salvation. In the end, private judgment must lead to a forgetfulness of salvation at all, in favor of idolizing the transitory happiness of this life. Private judgment is ultimately rooted in pride. This has to be why the confidence of its adherents is not shaken by the proliferation of contradictory and mutually exclusive judgments, each of which is held by someone claiming to have been inspired by God.

But God does not inspire chaos. He does not leave us without guidance in the pursuit of our most vital interests. He does not deprive us of light in our search for Truth. He does not make the most vital truths obscure and indiscernible. God does not mess with our heads.

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This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2015/05/god-does-not-mess-with-our-heads.html>  
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## “Working” Mom [at Busy Catholic Moms]

I have a confession to make: I am a working mom.... Wait a minute! If you are a mom then the word “working” automatically goes directly in front of it because without a doubt, all moms spend 99.9% of their day working – for their kids, for their husbands, for their families, for their school, for their church, for their community. There is no end to the work that moms do! And in that 0.1% that they aren’t working, they are probably thinking about what to do next.

So let me try that again. I am a “work-outside-the-home” mom. Not a perfect term either because much of a mom’s every day is spent outside the home working – shuttling to and from school and activities, running errands, volunteering at school....the list goes on.

So maybe I should call it “Employed mom” because that implies that I get paid in money rather than hugs and kisses.

This has been a tough confession for me to make – in small part, because I didn’t want opinions of me to change, but mostly because I have had trouble admitting it to myself. I have been part time since January of 2014 and became full time in the fall of 2014. And before that, for about 10 years, I was able to stay home with my kids.

And in the past year or so that I have been working, a number of my misconceptions and preconceived ideas have crumbled into dust. Having now been on both sides of this “working” wall, I can see that somehow, we moms have managed to create a dividing line, no less ominous than a giant brick wall, between us.

When we introduce ourselves as “employed” or “stay-at-home”, we automatically have ideas of what the other’s day must entail. But now I realize that this wall is self-made and continually perpetuated by us! By the moms who need each other most! So, I am definitely no expert but let me share with you some things that I have realized.

Stay-it-home moms have it rough. Their day begins before sunrise, tending to their kids, planning out the



day. They may throw in a load of laundry before the children are even out of bed. Then after breakfast and shuttling kids off to school, the mom faces a mountain of work to do. Piles of laundry, messes that seem to create themselves, diapers to change, sticky floors to wipe up (again), errands to run, and that’s just before lunch! For those moms with infants and toddlers, they are trapped in their house by nap schedules and random tantrums that would be too mortifying at the store. For preschoolers, we pressure ourselves to enrich our child’s life by taking them to the park, to the

library, to playdates. Sometimes, these can be combined with Bible studies or friend time, where the moms catch up on each other, try to talk about God in their lives, and wrangle their energetic children to keep them from mortal injury on the jungle gym. For those with school age children, moms experience a new kind of obligation – to help out at school – bake sales, dye cutting hearts and stars, copying papers, volunteering at recess. She pours herself into the work she has been called to do. Expectations that we place on ourselves are the most difficult to live up to. These room moms and party organizers run themselves ragged with what they think they should be doing. And afternoons are filled with homework, practices, activities and older kid expectations. By the time these stay-at-home moms fall into bed at night (usually past their bedtimes), they are exhausted, worn out, and not ready to face the morning.

Employed moms may have misconceptions about stay-at-home moms. Now whether these misconceptions are real or imagined by the “at-home” moms, they are no less damaging. I remember as a stay-at-home mom, I felt like working moms thought my day was full of free time. I felt like they thought I was sitting on the couch eating bon-bons and watching romantic comedies all day. And that when my husband got home in the evening, the dinner was on the table in our nice neat house, homework was done, the children were polite and well-groomed, and a pie was just coming out of the oven. Where the reality was that dinner was probably getting overdone, the house was a mess, kids were either throwing fits about homework or were outside covered in chalk dust and dirt. And the only dessert was the week-old cupcake from a school birthday party.

As a stay-at-home mom, I could feel the judgment, whether it was there or not! Possibly and likely, I invented it in my own head, but it was very damaging to my self-esteem as a woman and a mother.

Now let me tell you about employed moms.

Employed moms have it rough. Their day begins before sunrise, tending to their kids, planning out the



day. They may throw in a load of laundry before the children are even out of bed. Then after breakfast and shuttling kids off to school, the mom faces a mountain of work to do. The housework still sits at home but employment demands her attention, however fulfilling it may be. A different type of kid, much older yet no less demanding people require her time and efforts. This time she is not rewarded with hugs, kisses and snuggles, but an occasional thank you instead. She pours herself into the work she has been called to do. Trying to juggle employment and priorities for her family, she tends to school emails and silently laments that she is not up at school dye cutting and volunteering. She forgoes field trips and class parties for stacks of paperwork and endless lines of email. For moms of infants and toddlers, she wonders if they are eating okay and if someone is holding them when they cry. For preschoolers, she hopes that her child is listening to stories rather than watching television. For

elementary school and older kids, she tries to figure out how to slip in an errand to the craft store to pick up supplies for that soon due project. Expectations that we place on ourselves are the most difficult to live up to. These employed moms are always the first to volunteer to bring supplies for a class party because they cannot be there themselves. They worry so much about what they think they should be doing. Afternoons and evenings are filled with homework, practices, activities and older kid expectations. By the time these employed moms fall into bed at night (usually past their bedtimes), they are exhausted, worn out, and not ready to face the morning.

Stay-at-home moms may have misconceptions about employed moms. Once again, whether these misconceptions are real or imagined by the “employed” moms, they are no less damaging. As a working mom, I now feel like stay-at-home moms may think that I value my children less than they value theirs. I think that stay-at-home moms may think that my day is full of happy child-free, grown up time, while in fact I am sad that my day is full of child-free, grown-up time. I worry that others think I am selfish, going to work and not tending to my family’s needs. When in actuality, I spend most of my day thinking of them and how to still do everything that I expect myself to do.

As an employed mom, I perceive judgement when it is more than likely invented in my own head.

The bottom line is that whether we are employed or staying at home, we moms love our kids! We adore them! They are who God has called us to serve! God placed us in these beautiful families to be the glue! Through our loving service, we pour ourselves into our vocation as a wife and mother, filling up all the cracks between those we love. And we are all trying to do the very best that we can. Sometimes we fail. Sometimes we succeed. But most times we need to turn the worry and the misconceptions over to God and just love those in front of us!

And the next time we meet another mom, we need not ask if she is “working” because we all are doing God’s work in our lives!

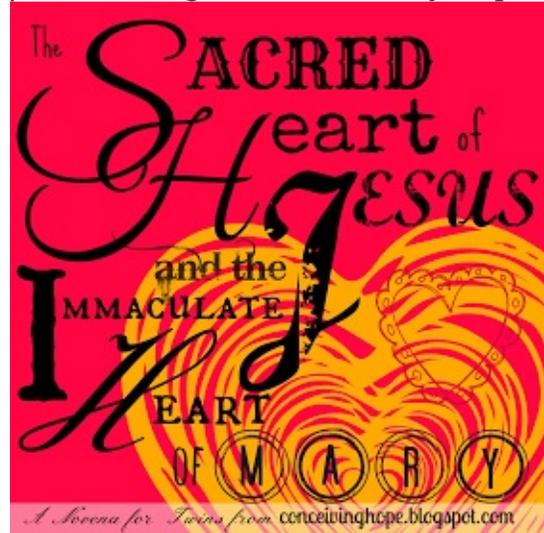
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## A Novena for Twins [at Conceiving Hope]

So it's that time again! Last year, I posted [a novena for those praying for twins](#).... but there was a twist. It's really a novena to the Twin Hearts. And even if you didn't get a chance to join along with me last year - you should consider giving it a try this year. I'm posting a new take on the novena this year, but feel free to use the version from last year if you prefer it. The novena starts today... and it's simple to follow along with... so will you pray with me?



The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is a *movable feast* on the liturgical calendar, which means that it depends on the date of Easter Sunday each year. The only constant is that it is always celebrated 19 days after Pentecost Sunday. That means for 2015, we'll celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 12th. The Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is celebrated on the Saturday after the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. So for 2015, we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on June 13th. (*Sidenote: If you happen to find this novena at some other point in the year than the lead up to the Feast Days discussed above - no need to wait - go ahead and start praying it! This is a novena that can be prayed any time of the year!*)

It would be difficult to meditate on the Sacred Heart of Jesus without also thinking about the woman who *conceived hope* for all of mankind, through the power of the Holy Spirit. It took an Immaculate Heart to do that. And that's just what God gave the Blessed Virgin Mary! So because of this beautiful Divine reality that we understand through Jesus and Mary - Jesus **through** Mary - meditating on the Twin Hearts seems meant for those with a special devotion to twins. Doesn't it? You will literally be praying two novenas concurrently... but starting with Christ. It's a beautiful double helix of a prayer...with the humanity of Jesus and Mary being intertwined with the divinity of the Triune God.

The truth about praying for twins is that it's not always going to manifest in birthing newborn twins biologically. A girl can hope though. **This girl certainly does.** While talking about herself in the *third person I might add!* More importantly - a prayer for twins is a sign of being open to God's will. Let it be done unto me doubly! Let me be the exhausted handmaid of the Lord! Step back for a moment and think about that. When we pray to both Hearts, we're asking Mary to understand our longing in a special way... but we're also asking Jesus for *mercy*. We're asking for Mary to pray *for* us and for Jesus to heal and soothe our hearts. So it seems a perfect pairing for those who have a special call on their hearts for twins to pray to these Two and to ask for intercession for the longing in our hearts. Join me in praying this year, and maybe next year, there will have been answers revealed in your life that will make this particular novena seem obviously fruitful. *Don't mind me while I daydream about the answer being actual, tangible, crying newborn twins. I'll just be over here in crazy-town dreaming my big dreams.....*

conceiving hope however I can. :)

[Send me a message if you are praying with me](#) and I'll include you in my novena! Also, don't forget to pray for [our Adopt-a-Blogger this month](#) (because every infertile girl could use a set of twins, amirite?! ;) ) And if twins aren't on your heart - pray for the intentions of the twin hearts involved in your marriage. And if you aren't married yet, pray for the twin heart that hasn't been sacramentally joined to yours yet.

It takes about 10 minutes per night and here's the plan:



The first day, you will pray one decade of a rosary and then say [the prayer to the Twin Hearts](#). This prayer will be prayed each of the **10 days** of this novena, with the addition of your intentions at the end of it. Be specific. Ask God what's on your heart. Give Him your pain. Once you've finished with your intentions, you will begin to pray [the Efficacious Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus](#). This prayer will be prayed for 9 days. On the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on 6/12, you will end the Sacred Heart novena with [the first decade of a Divine Mercy Chaplet](#).

On the second day of prayer, you incorporate the second novena. You begin the same, but you end it differently: Pray your decade of the rosary, then praying [the prayer to the Twin Hearts](#), then add your intentions, then pray the Sacred Heart Novena, and then you will begin the second novena. Do this by praying another decade of the rosary, then pray [the Novena Prayer to the Immaculate Heart of Mary](#). On the last day of praying (the 10th day), You are praying a decade of the rosary, [the prayer to the Twin Hearts](#), then adding your intentions, then praying [the Novena Prayer to the Immaculate Heart of Mary](#), and then you will end with the [Regina Coeli](#) (which can be found about half way down the page on that link).

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If you prefer to have a hard copy of the instructions, here's a free printable of this novena. Hover over the top right corner and click on the right button to "pop out". From there, you can download, print, or save it. Feel free to post this wherever you tweet, post photos, share, or like things!

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## Convert Journal Understanding mercy [at Convert Journal]



Pope Francis has declared next year (from the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 2015 through the feast of Christ the King on November 20, 2016) to be an *Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy*. The Holy Father said “I am convinced that the whole church – that has much need to receive mercy because we are sinners – will find in this jubilee the joy to rediscover and render fruitful the mercy of God, with which we are all called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time.”

Mercy is absolutely central to who we are as Christians. It is what Jesus merited for us upon the cross. It is also commanded *of us*. That second sense of mercy is often poorly understood. I will get to that, but first let's review God's mercy.

We have all sinned against God and the Body of Christ, the Church.

all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God.

If we say, “We are without sin,” we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

This is gravely serious and in justice, our rebellion deserves eternal separation from God for it.

For the wages of sin is death

It is through God's superabundant mercy that we live. Through that same mercy, we may remain in His fellowship by repentance. The judgment that we deserve for our sins is set aside if we, with contrite hearts and will to amend our lives, only ask for His forgiveness. That is God's amazing mercy.

As God shows us mercy through His love for us, we too are called to do likewise with others. It is compassion for others motivated by love. Saint Pope John Paul II wrote in his *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy) encyclical that “Mercy is love's second name” and is “the greatest attribute of God.”

Such love demands action. Let me offer an example. Imagine that we are on a bridge, near a person preparing to jump over the rail and end his life. What do we do?

We might back away, fearful that we could be accused of pushing him. It might occur to us that he has his reasons and after all, who are we to judge? We don't want to be intolerant or force our religious views (about suicide) on someone else. Then there is the risk to our own safety should we get too close and get pulled along. If we are able to pull him to safety, he may hate us for our unwelcomed interference. Maybe it is best to “not get involved.”

None of that reflects compassion and true love for this person. If we love him as we are called to, we do get involved as best we are able even if it might not turn out so well for us.

While we may not witness a situation like this, we are called to action in helping those who suffer including the poor, the oppressed, the imprisoned. We are also called to instruct and advise ([CCC 2447](#))

those committing spiritual suicide. Those who denounce God, have sex outside marriage (including adultery and all same sex physical relationships), support abortion and all other sinful acts as they are grave, self-inflicted harm.

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.

If we act out of love to help our brothers and sisters in these circumstances then we are showing them mercy. Such actions may never be self-righteous, preachy or condemning but show the love of Christ through us reflecting only what is best for the other – even when they themselves think otherwise and may condemn us for it.

Sometimes we see people throw our Lord's commandments "out the window." They rationalize and refuse to get involved. Worse, they may invent convenient and comfortable theology on the spot ("if there is a truly loving God..."). Often their idea of "mercy" is simply unbridled tolerance. That is no virtue, far from it.

To be clear: "accepting" / "tolerating" sinful action in the name of "mercy" is exactly the opposite of love and actual mercy. Actual mercy leads others to truth, to God and to salvation. It builds the kingdom of heaven, not reinforces the "wisdom" of the world.

Not every situation that presents itself is open to our help. Indeed, sometimes even planting a small mustard seed can not be reasonably achieved. We must use good judgment, wisely choosing where and how to help. If however we find our good judgment always leads to never getting involved, we may wish to reconsider our motivations.

"Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves.

But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans.

When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.

The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."



HTTP/1.1 200 OK Date: Sat, 13 Jun 2015 15:46:49 GMT Server: Apache Expires: Thu, 19 Nov 1981 08:52:00 GMT Cache-Control: no-store, no-cache, must-revalidate, post-check=0, pre-check=0 Pragma: no-cache X-Pingback: http://www.gracetopaint.com/xmlrpc.php Link: ; rel=shortlink Set-Cookie: PHPSESSID=aWoUGKQM%2CUZ-xeQLTbhnK2; path=/ Vary: Accept-Encoding Transfer-Encoding: chunked Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8

## Coo-dos 3: Tubing [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on June 3, 2015 · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)



6×8" oil paint on primed canvas sheet; use "comment" below to inquire.

Try to remember the last time you celebrated earth's waters like this.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2015/06/03/coo-dos-3-tubing>  
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## Oh those Beatitudes [at Quiet Consecration]

The Catholic Church teaches that the Beatitudes are at the heart of Jesus' preaching and yet there have rarely been a set of statements that have caused more confusion than those reported in the Gospels. Everyone from Emmett Fox to St Chromatius of Aquileia have tried to make these Teachings of Christ understandable to the average person.

Yet the more I read what others have written, and the more I delve into what The Church teaches, I realize that the foundation necessary to understand The Beatitudes can be understood in the individual answering this question:

Do you want to be Right or do you want to be Happy?

Now look, if you are like me you probably consider this a trick question. Of course I want to be happy; however, I also want to be right and damn it sometimes I AM right but no one will acknowledge that and when

*that*

happens I am not happy!

Every once in a while I just want someone to look me in the eye and say, "Yes, Leslie. You are completely right about this situation" and not continue that sentence with "but, does that really matter in the grand scheme of things?".

I'm not sure why I want this to happen. After all, nothing would change. The people who dislike me will still dislike me and the people who disagree with me will still disagree. Maybe all I want is a little bit of recognition that I am on the right path, that my thinking is straight and true and that I am walking towards heaven.

And if that is the reason well then heck, I get little God Shots (as we call them) all the time. A text from a man on the journey towards full communion with The Church thanking me for my direction and teaching. A hug from a newly baptized woman who tells me she would not have been able to go forward if it wasn't for the way I encouraged her. A girlfriend in pain who calls and asks me to pray with her, only to receive a rose out of the blue that same afternoon and acknowledges that our asking St Therese to help her out actually happened.

Jesus, through His Church, teaches that "The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness." (CCC 1718). Our desire for happiness itself is divine in origin, it is placed in our hearts by God at the moment of our conception. We yearn for Him, for divine communion, and we spend most of our time on earth scrambling madly to find that communion in all kinds of places. We look for it in sexual relationships, in work, in artistic expression - all of which can be beautiful expressions of the Love for the Divine. However, because of concupiscence, we also screw up our searching in much the same manner - thinking sexual pleasure is more important than sexual union, that personal expression is more important than caring for the group or that economic security is more important than meeting the needs of all in a just and proper manner. We can look for divine communion through the use of drugs and alcohol

and other people. We can twist the natural desire for happiness into something unnatural, making the mistake that getting what WE FEEL is right is the same as being HAPPY.

Pope Francis, when addressing the young people at World Youth Day in 2014, reminded us that Jesus 'asks us to follow him and to travel with him along the path of love, the path that alone leads to eternal life'. The Holy Father stated that this request came when Jesus proclaimed The Beatitudes. He also went on to remind us that no where in that proclamation did Jesus assure us that it was going to be a skip through daffodils. Pope Francis said, "We face so many challenges in life....but if we open the door to Jesus and allow him to be part of our lives...then we will experience the peace and joy that only God...can give."

Perhaps my wish that someone, anyone, tell me I am right sometimes is just a misdirected desire for happiness. Perhaps it is the sin of pride rearing its ugly head. Perhaps, when it happens, I should look to the ladder to heaven provided me by the heart of the Teachings, the foundation of Truth. Perhaps The Beatitudes will help me want only to be Happy - and stop worrying about whether or not I am right.

And maybe, if I can let go of that need, I can actually find the Happiness I seek.

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## Why do I remain Catholic? [at A Drop in the Ocean]

Once upon a time America was a place where mostly Christian values were the norm. But today some would argue that we're doomed. Just look at our society, and any marginally active Catholic could probably tell you how hopeless the horizon appears.

Some people throw their hands up in frustration. Some avoid the issue altogether. We could complain about a whole lot, that's for sure. But I'm not here talking about the pitfalls of Catholicism. I'm here to talk about [why I remain Catholic](#).

Being Catholic is part of who I am. It always has been. And unless the apocalypse actually happens and my mind is altered or removed, I plan on it staying that way.

I didn't always know a whole lot about my faith. Nor have I always cared as much about it as I do now. **I think not knowing a lot about your faith helps you to stay in that state of indifference.** But once you realize the beauty of Catholicism, the encounter it is with God Himself, there's .

From personal testimonies I've read, it seems that a lot of people who leave what they think Catholicism is **have never experienced true Catholicism**. Perhaps they were poorly brought up in the faith. Perhaps they knew a bad Catholic (not like any of us are actually perfect examples) who scarred them. You name it.

**But once a person experiences the person of Jesus Christ, your faith becomes more of a love affair than a theory** (fist bump to G.K. for that quote).

And that is why I remain Catholic.

It would be "easier" in a way to give in to society, I suppose. I mean, it's a ton of fun to get drunk on Fridays, wake up hungover, do drugs, sleep around, whatever it is that non-religious people use to fill the God-sized hole in their hearts, right?

Nope! Of course, I can't speak from experience. But I'm fairly certain that the fun I've had in college is way more fulfilling than getting drunk and hooking up.

And it's not because I am a dainty wee woman who likes being ordered around by old white dudes.

I am Catholic because life doesn't make sense without God. To say we're the result of anything else beside a genius of a Creator seems ignorant. And since everything I've learned shows me that the fullness of truth about God is found in the Catholic Church, that's why I'm here.

I am Catholic because there are absolute truths, and I believe this is where they are found in their fullness.

I am Catholic because even though people are imperfect, the Church has and will stand the test of time on the rock it was built on.

I am Catholic because the trials of life don't make sense without the cross.

I am Catholic because no other expression of faith offers you the opportunity to encounter God in the presence of the Eucharist.

I am Catholic because God loves me, and He loves you too. And he wants to be a part of all of our lives. Would you like to [explore my home](#)?

To Life,

*Laura*

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This contribution is available at <http://asingledropintheocean.com/2015/06/05/why-do-i-remain-catholic/>  
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# The Kingdom of God is at Hand ... [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

*The Kingdom of God is at hand ... are you ready to enter?*



His Kingdom is Near

***“The kingdom of God is within you, says the Lord. Turn, then, to God with all your heart. Forsake this wretched world and your soul shall find rest. Learn to despise external things, to devote yourself to those that are within, and you will see the kingdom of God come unto you, that kingdom which is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, gifts not given to the impious.***

***Christ will come to you offering His consolation, if you prepare a fit dwelling for Him in your heart, whose beauty and glory, wherein He takes delight, are all from within. His visits with the inward man are frequent, His communion sweet and full of consolation, His peace great, and His intimacy wonderful indeed.***

***Therefore, faithful soul, prepare your heart for this Bridegroom that He may come and dwell within you; He Himself says: “If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him.”***

***[From the Imitation Of Christ by Thomas à Kempis]***

## ***Entering the Kingdom***

My Fellow Pilgrims in Christ Jesus,

For most nominal Christians today, the term “Kingdom of God” is mainly a theological concept of the spiritual realm where God dwells and certainly nothing we can relate to in our personal lives in this world. Thus when we read in the Gospels Jesus telling His disciples to “seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness”, we have no idea what He is really asking them to do. One of the objectives of Thomas à Kempis in his book, “The Imitation of Christ” was to bring us to the recognition of just what Jesus was asking of His Disciples, and now, is also asking of us. The primary concept presented by

Thomas is that “The Kingdom of God” is a spiritual Kingdom that is within those who have admitted Jesus, their King, into the Temple of their spirit, through a renewed spiritual awareness brought about by Grace, through faith in Christ and His Redemptive Sacrifice on the cross and His Resurrection.

In the Gospel of John Jesus tried to explain to Nicodemus that although a person may be given a personal spiritual awareness of that Kingdom, in order to enter the Kingdom, that person must willingly make a commitment to enter into a deeper spiritual relationship with the King. The resulting spiritual awareness permits the Holy Spirit to transform us by initiating an intimate personal fellowship with the King that permits the Spirit to conform us to the image of Christ Himself. It is through this personal relationship with the King that we enter into His Kingdom. However, in maintaining our stay in the Kingdom our endurance in faith will be tested to ensure that, as a branch in the vine, we will “abide in Him” and thus bear fruit for the Kingdom.

### ***Staying in the Kingdom : The Endurance of the Saints***

Entering into a stronger spiritual awareness, brings us to a new area of testing we have not previously experienced. Here, we will face, if anything, even tougher problems than when we were spiritually naïve. For now our faith and our endurance will be severely tried in keeping our spiritual channels open. We need to maintain these open channels so that the revelation knowledge of God’s word can continue to feed and strengthen us. Maintaining this fellowship with the Holy Spirit is one of the greater challenges in the Christian life after you have come into this rebirth of your spiritual awareness.

There are many situations, which can break this fellowship with God. Most of them however, can be categorized as unbelief, disobedience, strife, rebellion, or deliberate sin. These causes are summarized in the letter to the Hebrews, where we read, ***“Today, if you (would) hear His Voice, harden not your hearts as at the revolt in the day of testing in the desert”*** (Heb. 3:7-8). The implication is that the “hardening” of our hearts presents an obstacle to hearing God’s voice and, of course, if we can’t hear God’s voice we cannot fellowship with Him. The problem is that today’s Christian finds it difficult to relate that passage to himself/herself. First of all, the terminology: “... harden not your hearts” does not carry much meaning for us except as a quaint old English expression. Secondly most of us are not willing to admit that we are in rebellion against God – after all haven’t we yielded our lives over to Him?

Once the deeper meaning of the words is understood, it is seen that all of us, even though we are deeply committed Christians, are susceptible to the hardening of our hearts and this comes to us in the most unsuspecting ways. Continuing with the reading from Hebrews we begin to see the cause for this “hardening” or dis-fellowship with God: ***“...your Fathers tested me and tried me and saw My works for forty years. Because of this I was angered with that generation”***. (Heb, 3:9)

In order to understand why God was so angered, remember that He was miraculously sustaining the Israelites every day that they were in the desert. Not only were they witnesses to His mighty power but they, themselves, heard the voice of God thundering from mount Sinai. Not only had they been protected by His Glory day and night, but they were also given food and water miraculously. Their sandals and clothing were kept from wearing out. Yet in spite of these things they rebelled against Moses (and therefore, against God) saying ***“why have you brought us out here to die?”***(Numbers 21:5). They even justified their rebellion by pointing out that their concern was for their wives and their children implying that it was their welfare they were seeking. Such was their unbelief that they did not trust God to provide for them, even though they witnessed the Lord’s protection every moment of every day. This unbelief came because their minds and their senses (the unspiritual man) could not feel secure unless they knew

(intellectually) from where their next meal and drink of water was coming.

***Ah! now we get the picture!***

And now it is not so difficult where we have similar situations in our lives where we despair of God's provision and thus excuse our unbelief as being merely a concern for the well-being of our families. Thus, we relegate God's Word, His providence, and His sustenance, which has been maintaining us all along, to a lesser place in our lives (if at all). We do this by attempting to resolve all of the difficult situations in our lives on our own energy and talent without any dependence on God.

Then the snowball effect begins: the more we complain the more we walk in unbelief and as our unbelief grows, the greater our anxiety grows. Of course, now that we are operating in unbelief, our prayers also go unanswered, which adds to our complaints, which adds to our unbelief, which adds to our anxiety. We are by then well on the way to dis-fellowship with God. We have permitted our anxiety to dominate us thus beginning the process of "hardening our hearts" and losing our spiritual channels to the father.

Yes, we are still His children. But when we behave in this way we are more and more like the prodigal son who left the father for a "far country" and have placed ourselves in the service of a citizen of that country (guess whom?). Letting our anxieties obstruct our ability to serve God and make Him and His Kingdom first in our lives was exactly what Jesus said we must avoid.

In His Sermon on the Mount He warned His listeners (and us) that, ***"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own"***. (Matt. 6: 24-34)

That is why the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, writing to a Hebrew-Christian community, concludes: ***"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first"***. (Heb.3:12-14)

It is for the cause of assisting us to maintain to the end our faith in Jesus the Messiah, that God in His providence has given us His Word, His Holy Spirit, and the mutual support we receive from the Body of Christ (His Church). These helps are the very Grace of God to assist us through the process of salvation and into the riches of Christ. Let us then, learn to enter into a true spiritual awareness that we may truly discern the Father's Will for our lives and thus enter into that true spiritual worship that is His due.

Paraphrasing Paul's prayer for the Colossians, it is my sincere desire and prayer to God for all who read my reflections that the Lord God... ***“fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding... in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”.*** (Col.1:9-11)

*Father let it be so, for it is your will in Jesus your Son, Amen!*

***“There is no Christianity without an encounter with Christ. Christianity is not simply a doctrine; it is a meeting, in faith, with God, present in our history with the incarnation of Jesus.”*** ( Pope John Paul II-World Youth Day 2004)

Your Fellow Pilgrim in Christ ... Bartimeus

© B.R.Timeo and Bartimaeus' Quiet Place, [2008-2015])

***Recommended / Related Links ...***

[\*Responding to the Spirit's Call\*](#)

[\*Hearing God's Voice and Obeying it!\*](#)

[\*Prayer to Receive the Holy Spirit\*](#)

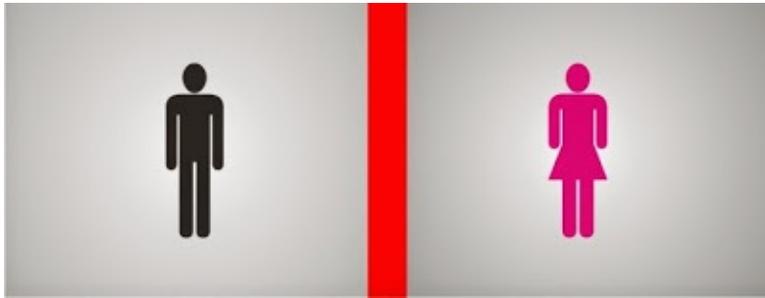
[\*Growing in the Spirit\*](#)

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This contribution is available at [http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2015/05/17/\\$-the-kingdom-of-god-is-at-hand/](http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2015/05/17/$-the-kingdom-of-god-is-at-hand/)  
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## More on segregated seating in Church [at LMS Chairman]



(A pre-scheduled post. Follow me on the Chartres Pilgrimage on Twitter: @LMSChairman )

Thanks to interactions on Twitter and in the comments of this blog, I've learnt a bit more on the history of seating in Catholic churches being segregated by sex. (For my previous post, see

[here.](#)

)

One of the things which has puzzled me about it is that, although recommended in the 1917 Code of Canon Law (Canon 1262.1), I've come across no literary references to segregated seating in churches. But I think that the practice was never re-established in Catholic churches in England after the Reformation; the disruption of having to worship in secret and so on caused the custom to disappear, and it was never something which people felt strongly enough about to make a special effort to restore. (I read in Archer's

*Two Catholic Churches*

that eyebrows were raised by some English Catholics at the restoration of such 'Italian' practices as the

*Asperges*

before Sunday Mass, in the early 19th century.)

As I've already mentioned, I myself have seen segregated congregations: in 1990, in the Cathedral of Tabora in Tanzania. At that time it wasn't practiced in the commercial capital, Dar es Salaam.

I've now heard from several people in Ireland who can vouch for it surviving in rural districts up to the time of Vatican II, and even later: the 1980s and 1990s. It is worth noting, as several did, that it wasn't

*enforced*

: like mantillas today, it just happened, where it was a custom, with the odd person in the wrong part of the church either through ignorance or out of conscious defiance.

[Here's a blog post](#)

talking about segregation in a church in Nova Scotia, Canada, up to the time of the Council.

I've also heard of churches in the Netherlands with pews featuring hooks for men's hats - only on the 'men's' side.

Finally, it is not surprising to hear that the medieval practice continued in the Church of England for some time after the Reformation. What is rather fun is to hear of an Anglican church

[where they still maintain it](#)

:

He

[a guide]

explained that two services a month are held in the church using the 1662 prayer book. There is a big congregation. The congregation is still segregated with the men on the right and the women on the left. Even the family sat on separate sides in the front pew. This is slightly larger with more elaborately carved woodwork and a metal latch on the door which could be locked. The cushions are the originals from the 17thC and the family pew has a gold edging round the deep blue cushions.

Unmarried girls and lads sat in the side aisles, and were kept well apart. The back corner of the south aisle was where the stable lads sat and is called 'graffiti corner' as a result of boredom during the service.

This in part reflects the customs which grew up with the installation of pews: family pews and the like. Until the 16th century, when pews began to appear, the location of members of the congregation must have been more fluid.

In the Middle Ages it would seem local customs varied a good deal: there are sometimes separate doors for men and women, and occasionally we hear of women sitting behind the men rather than to one side. In antiquity women were sometimes given a gallery, a '

[matronea'](#)

, and we also hear of physical screens dividing churches lengthways.

The practice is connected with the development of the kiss of peace: actually, in the West, an embrace (*amplexio*

). This could not, obviously, be given between the sexes, unless they were getting married to each other, and this was one reason for it being restricted to those in choir, or being replaced by the Pax Brede, a object kissed by each member of the congregation in turn. (See the Position Paper on the

[Kiss of Peace](#)

.)

I've found

[here](#)

(

*Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia,*

entry by Jane Tibbetts Shulenburg) a valiant attempt to link the medieval practice of segregation with misogyny. Men were on the right, and women on the left: the right is the side of the righteous at the last Judgement, right? Wrong. The men were on the South (Epistle) side and the women on the North (Gospel) side. They all faced East, from whence Christ would

[come to judge all nations](#)

. That being so, Our Lord would find the men on His left, and the women on His right, like the Good and Bad Thieves at the Crucifixion. Look at this picture: the blasphemous bad thief we know as Gesmas on the right (

*of the painting;*

on the left of his Judge) with the devil taking his soul, the repentant St Dismas on the left (

*of the painting;*

on the right of his Judge) with an angel taking his soul. The four holy women, the good centurion St Longinus and St John the Beloved Apostle cluster under Dismas; assorted mockers and unrepentant soldiers under Gesmas. Which side would you rather be on? Assuming this was an Altar piece, which it surely was,

**the men would have been lined up with the damned, and the ladies of the parish with the holy women of Mount Calvary.**

The painting in fact fits in very neatly with something else: that it was

[widely believed](#)

in the Middle Ages that women were more pious than men, and more likely to be saved. This fact is a little inconvenient for Shulenburg's analysis.

I don't know if there is a connection with the Last Judgement - I suspect Shulenburg just made that up - but I do know that when the celebrant at High Mass turns to face the people, he has the deacon on his right, the Gospel side, and the subdeacon on his left. By the same logic, when I am presenting candidates for their degrees in Oxford University's gloriously medieval degree ceremony, I (and my candidates) bow to the Vice Chancellor seated between two Proctors, then to the Proctor on

*his*

right (

*my*

left), and then to the Proctor on

*his*

left (

*my*

right).



When the celebrant faces the Altar, of course, the deacon is still on his right, which is now the Epistle (South) side, and you can see deacon and subdeacon shuffling over at certain points in Mass to maintain this arrangement.

The eagerness to present any differences between men and women in Christianity as evidence of the oppression of women is seen equally in the

[debate about altar servers](#)

and, of course, about ordination.



Readers need not panic that I'm about to start a Quixotic campaign to restore the tradition of segregated seating. What I am concerned about is the defence of our traditions, even those which have died out, if they have been deeply embedded in the tradition as a whole. The attack on these traditions is ultimately an attack on Tradition. Segregation by sex was practiced in the West from the very earliest times until, in historical terms, yesterday; in some places it even survives to this day. It is still found in at least some of the Eastern Churches, such as the Coptic Church. It is insisted on by Fathers of the Church, such as Cyril of Jerusalem. If we concede that it is wrong, and that the practice is only explicable by contempt and hatred of women, then we are conceding that the Church has been wrong in her most sacred and intimate moments, in her worship; that her worship, over centuries and even millennia, and all over the world, has been invaded by stupidity, hatred, and prejudice. We can't make that concession and expect people to take seriously the importance of maintaining any of our traditions. As traditional Catholics, we are toast.

Making this concession also allows the alleged stupidity of our Christian predecessors to be rolled together with cheap shots at Orthodox Judaism and Islam by people who dislike them, in the last analysis, simply because they are religions. To develop a point I have made before

[on this blog](#)

, we should never let our worries about Islam betray us into a mode of criticism of it which says that Catholics are only slightly less bad. Islam is certainly open to criticism, including in what it has to say about women. At any rate, unlike Medieval Catholics, Muhammad claimed (as recorded in the most authoritative Hadith,

*Sahih Bukhari*

) that

[more women are in Hell than men](#)

. But separating men and women in worship is simply a tradition Islam has in common with the other Abrahamic religions.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.lmschairman.org/2015/05/more-on-segregated-seating-in-church.html>  
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# Out of My Catholic Mind

*Out of My Catholic Mind*



Who Knows What Will Appear?

Around and around my mind:

Ideas

Words

God?

Oh yes!

Thoughts:

Impossible to stop them

Swirling around and around my mind.

Can they be set loose?

Out of my mind?

Shared?

Thoughts into words.

Words into stories.

Stories into posts.

Ideas flowing out.

Who knows what will appear?

Out of my Catholic mind.

Catholic?

You're out of your mind.

Crazy!

How can you think that?

Do that?

Say that?

Write that?

Out of my mind?

Yes!

Do you mind

If I'm...

Out of My Catholic Mind?

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## Get Ready for Rain! [at beautiful thorns]

It is easy to look at the state of the world and get discouraged and distracted. It would seem as if the devil is triumphing. It is often easier to lose faith and just focus on circumstances. However, where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more - Romans 5:12. I believe God would have us look beyond the evil forces at work around us and focus on him, his beauty, grace and goodness.



Imagine it is a beautiful, clear day. The sun is shining, there is a soft, cool breeze and you are canoeing along a beautiful river. You are taking in the beauty of God's creation and through this experience, you encounter him. This encounter brings you much joy. Then out of the corner of your eye you start to notice an alligator on the bank. Then you notice a couple more in the water. Instead of losing peace and getting distracted, you decide to continue to focus on God's beautiful creation and abide in joy. Ultimately that is what God is asking us to do in our everyday life and in this hour. Even though the storms of life rage, the waves are coming up over the boat and the world seems to be overrun by evil, we are called to abide and even rest in him.

This past Sunday's Gospel reading was from John 15 about the vine and the branches. Jesus is the vine and we are called to be branches that bear fruit. The fruit we bear is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness and self-control (Galatians 5:22). We bear this fruit when we stay connected to and focus on Jesus.

We are currently in a season of preparation. God is preparing his people for the times that are coming. He wants us to be able to stand even in the midst of adversity. He is preparing us to help bring in a harvest of souls when chaos ensues upon the earth. People are going to be looking for answers and we need to be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us - 1 Peter 3:15.

### Knowing the signs of the times

In 1998, while in prayer, I saw an image of Paddington Bear. He had his little raincoat, rain hat, and rain

boots on and I felt like the Lord said, "Get ready for rain!" This was his way of telling me that he had plans to pour out his Holy Spirit in an unprecedented way! I do not think it is a coincidence that a new Paddington Bear movie was released the beginning of this year. I believe it is going to happen soon!

Currently we are in a season where Jesus is calling us to himself and leading all his "sheep" through the sheep gate.

*"But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice.**" - John 10:2-4*

Jesus entered through the gate and is holding the gate open for his people to go through. Once this process is complete, he will walk in front and there will be a lot more clarity and Kingdom manifestations. It will be a lot easier to know what he is doing and to hear his voice. Miracles will be more prevalent!

Here is another analogy to describe the season we are currently in: Imagine you are standing in ankle deep water. The sun is behind you, reflecting on the water. You see something shiny on the bottom but because the sun is behind you, you can not tell what it is, due to the reflection and sun rays bouncing off the water.

These are exciting times! We are about to enter a season where there is going to be a lot more clarity because the Son will be out in front so to speak. What we will see, others in the past have longed to see! Now is the time to get ready!

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## The Cross Is Love [at Mother of the Fiat]

Dear Jesus I place myself at the foot of the cross, standing with your mother who is now my mother for in your suffering you gave her to us. Oh what love you bestowed upon us in giving us your mother. Thank you Jesus, you know how I weak I am, so at baptism She became the Mother of my life never to leave my side.

I compassionate you in your suffering my Jesus, oh how I wish I could do more, give you more. How I long to share in your bitter sorrow, and yet you speak silently in my soul saying "Your desire means more to me than the action." Jesus you are so merciful I do not deserve the gift you have called me to accept. The gift of sharing your cross and yet you placed the cross ever so gently upon my shoulders. I remember that day in February 5 yrs ago, it was lent and I heard your voice calling me to follow you.

Dear Jesus how I trembled in fear when I heard the word cancer. I said in my anxiety: Why Lord why this, you know this mother's heart and I cannot bear the thought of leaving my children. They are so young, they need me, who will take care of them? this cancer is rare and my chances of surviving are not good."

At that moment your passion and death became food for my soul, my prayer, my meditation. It was on the cross where you showed me where true love is to be found, in the emptying of myself of all that was not of God, of dying to self, of seeing myself for who I really am, of receiving your grace and realizing I cannot do anything without you. You called me to trust in you. Oh the graces you bestow on all your children who open their hearts and souls to your merciful grace. It consumes all fear and unites our souls forever in love. I finally came to understand that you are not distant from us when we suffer, you are with us in our suffering. You shed tears with us, you hold us close to your Sacred Heart when everything seems lost, you enter into our pain giving weak souls courage to go on. You show us that battle is not lost when we fatigue overwhelms us. Your love becomes a consuming fire. A fire that consumes our sins, makes our souls long for you, a desire to know you more, to love you to the point of death. How good you are Jesus! You first took upon yourself all the sufferings that mankind would have to endure and more so that we would never be alone in our sufferings. We can now say Jesus knows, Jesus is with me, I will never be alone. Jesus is within me. Your love did not stop there. You wanted to give us more, so you give yourself to us daily in the Holy Eucharist, You remain in every tabernacle in every church until the end of time waiting for us to come to you where you ease all pain and wipe away all tears. Where would we be without the Sacraments of the Church? I know I could not go on, my soul would die. We would not know love. Without the gift of your mother, how could I ever be a mother.

You have given me more than I could ever hope to ask for. I know now Jesus, that all that really matters is Love. Only Love makes one able to say "yes" to the cross. Love picks us up after every fall. Love nails us to the cross. Love is all, it is everything. The Cross and Love are inseparable. I would not change the course of my life for anything. I have touched love and there is no greater joy!



This contribution is available at <http://schuelketami.com/2015/04/03/the-cross-is-love/>  
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## Works of Mercy Bouquet [at Veils and Vocations]

This is the

[second](#)

in a

[series](#)

of posts on the works of Mercy and how to live them as a family. Today we will explore Giving Drink to Those who Thirst.



1

Like feeding the hungry, reaching out to the poor and homeless is a great first step. Food pantries can use donations of bottled water or other healthy drinks for those who frequent them. Likewise, soup kitchens need drinks to distribute to the hungry that pass through. It's a niche that is often overlooked.

Unfortunately, one of the greatest threats to the homeless is dehydration. It is very difficult for them to find adequate ran water supplies and they are most often provided with carbonated or sugary beverages. Soft drinks do nothing for the body in terms of hydration. So, the next food drive that you choose to support, please consider purchasing a case of water to donate. Or even better, distribute water bottles, free of charge, during the next heat wave, try to find a spot where homeless people frequent. If you have a local shelter, call and ask if you can bring cases of water to hand out to the homeless as they leave in the morning. Water is so vital, but we take it for granted.

2

The lack of water for our homeless is nothing compared to the lack of clean, potable water worldwide. In

fact, nearly 800 million people, about 11% of the world's population have no access to clean water. Significantly higher percentages have only occasional access to clean water. We are called the "blue planet" because of our vast oceans, but so many are thirsty. Here, a bottle of water will not help, we need to provide consistent sources of water to those in need. This past Christmas, I donated a bio- sand

[water filter via Gospel for Asia](#)

as a gift for my friend Mary. She said that it was one of the best gifts she ever received. Long after other presents would have been used up, broken, or disposed, the thirsty will be given water in Mary's name! Laying bricks in Heaven is the ultimate gift!

If you have the opportunity, there is an even more hands on way to help the thirsty.

[Catholic Missionary Trips, Inc.](#)

sponsors trips to build wells for those in need everywhere from Appalachia to Cameroon. I have added a trip with CMT to my long range "to do" list. I don't know how soon I'll get there but it's definitely on my radar.

3

Not all those who thirst need water. There are many who thirst for justice. The number of Christians jailed and/or persecuted for their faith continues to dramatically rise. The imprisoned are tried and convicted without a proper trial, lacking legal representation, and unsubstantiated charges. In many parts of the world, simply believing in Christ is a crime punishable by death. It's not just third world citizens who are subjected to this treatment.

[Pastor Saeed Abedini](#)

has been jailed for nearly 1,000 days in his native Iran for converting to Christianity--he is an American Citizen!

What can you do? First, stay informed. Sites like

[Voice of the Martyrs](#)

and

[International Christian Concern](#)

post the stories that get buried in main stream media. Next, sign petitions, write letters, post updates on

Facebook. Do not let these modern day martyrs suffer in silence. Being the light of the world sometimes means shedding a spotlight on injustice. Get the message out there and support efforts to free the imprisoned in any way you can. Lastly, pray for the persecuted and conversion of our enemies.

4

As many thirst for justice, many more thirst for love. The lost, forgotten, shunned, desperately poor, so many have never known the love of a neighbor. Share a simple gift and show the world's suffering that not only does someone half a world away love them, but God loves them and always will. There are many ways to do this but our favorite is

[Operation Christmas Child.](#)

By packing a little shoebox, our family has been greatly blessed in blessing others. For most children, this simple gift is the first gift they have ever received.

Organizations such as

[Cure.org](#)

and

[Mercy Ships,](#)

release child from the painful existence of being unaccepted in their society. Through routine surgeries, these children are filled with promise and shown God's love!

5

Lastly, there are too many thirsting for God. While the average American Christian household owns piles of Bibles, so many wait hoping that someday, somehow, they know will actually own a Bible.

Unfortunately, I have not found a single Catholic charity that distributes Bibles. I'm planning on investigating that further this summer to see if there are any missionary channels who will accept donated Bibles. In the meantime, The

[Bible League](#)

distributes Bibles to those thirsty for faith and knowledge. For less than a drive-thru lunch (\$5) a Bible will be handed to those most desiring to know Christ better.

As a child, my friend and I spent several summer's stringing rosaries for the missions. This is another way to preach the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. Making rosaries can be as easy or difficult as you want. Here

[are](#)

a

[few sites](#)

to teach you how. If anyone knows of a mission looking for rosaries, please comment below. I plan on reliving this part of my childhood this summer with my children, we are just still looking for a place to send them.

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This contribution is available at <http://veilsandvocations.blogspot.com/2015/05/works-of-mercy-bouquet-part-2.html>  
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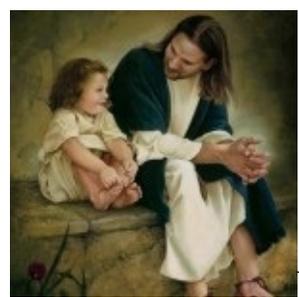
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## Follow [at Loved As If]

I've wanted to make "Loved As If" my magnum opus and answer all those who are amazed that I follow Christ even though my life has often been "[solitary, poore, nasty, \[and\] brutish.](#)"

Among other things, I'm a student of literature and especially of the stories we call myth and legend. Originally, they were simply the stories one generation handed down to another. Until fairly recently, humans weren't interested in empirical proof of the facts. We wanted to pass on truth. Aesop and Gilgamesh pass on immense truths that have been part of what it means to be human since the beginning.

"The Epic of Gilgamesh" is one of my all time favourite pieces of literature. It's also one of the oldest known to man. I've always been struck by Gilgamesh's lament when he first realizes he will die. He prays to the god Shamash because he sees [the bodies floating in the river](#); and realizes this too will be his lot. All that is left is to make [a great name for himself](#). He and his dear friend, Enkidu, undergo many trials and adventures and win great renown. Then Enkidu dies and [Gilgamesh loses himself](#). Death can do that to us.



When I lost my parents, I lost myself. I did not know who I was or to whom I belonged. Knowing that I didn't belong to the minister, that I gained no identity from him gave me a bit of information about who I was not but none about who I was. That knowledge came from my Friend, from Christ. He condescended to follow me and lead me through the horrifying labyrinth of my childhood. But eventually, I had to choose if I would follow Him. It made me cranky that I had to choose. Then I understood, Christ could not be a beloved magical teddy bear to comfort me, perform miracles when needed, and provide wisdom. He had to be my God as well as my Friend. I had to be willing to follow Him even if my life never became the image I had conjured in my mind and contained more heartache and pain.

He has always been so gracious to me. He has always been there. And I want to follow because of His graciousness and generosity but also because in Him, I know who I am; Christ gives me identity. It doesn't matter if the identity I have now is the one I would have had my life had been different. This is me. It is the Lord's doing and it is astoundingly marvelous in my eyes.

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# The Birthplace of the Church [at Journey to Wisdom]

Sunday June 7, 2015

A Reflection on Mark 14:12-16, 22-26 N.A.B.

By: Larry T



At a small group faith sharing meeting last year our parish pastor asked, “What does the Last Supper mean to you?” Red faced, the eight of us stared studiously at our hands, not daring to meet his eyes. To be sure, it wasn’t a fair question - the kind to be answered on the spur of the moment, because there is more than one good answer. Still yet, it is a thought provoking question. What *are* we to make of the Last Supper?

In the Gospel reading for this Sunday we read about the events leading up to the Last Supper, the meal itself, and the institution of the Holy Eucharist:

<sup>12</sup> *On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?”*

<sup>13</sup> *He sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water. Follow him.*

<sup>14</sup> *Wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’”*

- 15 Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. Make the preparations for us there.”*
- 16 The disciples then went off, entered the city, and found it just as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.*
- 22 While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, “Take it; this is my body.”*
- 23 Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it.*
- 24 He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many.*
- 25 Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”*
- 26 Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

Our attention is immediately drawn to the words of Institution (vv. 22-24) because they are a familiar part of the Mass, but there is much more to it than that. Is it possible that Jesus asks each of us, Where is my guest room where I may eat my Passover with you? And if His words and actions have caused us to spiritually prepare for Him, He will come to dwell within us.

Once the meal preparations were completed Jesus gathered his disciples and went to the upper room. Today, some two thousand years later, Jesus continues to assemble us (his disciples) in preparation for the meal.

Jesus abruptly departed from the traditional meal ritual when he broke the bread, handed it to his disciples and said, “Take it, this is my body” and then offered them the cup saying, “This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many”. They would have been both alarmed and puzzled at Jesus’ words and actions. They could not have immediately fully understood that with this act Jesus was providing them and all humanity to come with the gift of his body and blood.

When the priest elevates the consecrated host above the paten or above the chalice and says, “Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.” we might recall the words of Revelations 19:9 N.A.B.: “Then the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who have been called to the wedding feast of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These words are true; they come from God.” The image of a wedding feast is frequently used in Scripture to describe the Kingdom (Matthew 22:2, 9:15, 25:1-13). When we receive the consecrated bread and wine which are truly the body and blood of Jesus, we are in communion with him; through *it* our living God spiritually and physically receives us.

The early Church was founded on Jesus' death and Resurrection, which he anticipated in the gift of his body and blood at the Last Supper (v. 25), so we might even go so far as to say that this meal was the birthplace of the Church.

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This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2015/06/the-birthplace-of-church.html>  
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## Mary, Motherhood and the Family of God [at Musings of a Missionary in the Modern World]



Mary's motherhood, like motherhood in general, was lived out quietly behind the scenes. St. Pope John Paul II pointed out that "History is written almost exclusively as the narrative of men's achievements, when in fact its better part is most often molded by women's determined and persevering action for good." (Papal Message On Women's Conference to Mrs. Gertrude Mongella. May, 1995)

Mary achieved more than any other human being. This was done in the most intimate way in the context of Her Divine Motherhood, a role which God asked her to live, and which She joyfully assented to! She continues to bring souls to life in grace and to love saints into being, so essential and eternal is Her motherhood to who She is.

But just as God took His own flesh from the body of Mary, so every child comes into this world through the body of a woman. Every conception is a kind of annunciation, God asking permission of the woman to bring a new life into the world because His creative love has delighted in the thought of that particular and unique little one. He "entrusts the human person to her in a special way" (JPII) and asks every woman's immediate care and participation in the formation of the life He gives. Just as He sent His own Son to be His ultimate gift to a world dying from sin, so He sends every child to be a gift to a world in desperate need of His goodness.

Some are meant to show the face of Christ's mercy, others His compassion. Some will be teachers in His likeness, others will bring his miracles into people's lives. Others will spend and consume themselves to heal and unite us all into one Family of Our Father.

Every mother wants greatness for her child. That greatness will be measured by the part they play in the greatest drama ever, the drama of redemption, the battle for souls, the battle for the brothers and sisters of our own particular age. The call on every life is to participate in redeeming its own age. Every gift of Christ made incarnate in the lives of those born into this world is meant to serve this.

It should be no surprise then that the attack on family is so strong today. We have an enemy who fights ferociously to keep us from living the image and likeness of God, especially as mothers and fathers. He hates the reflection of the Incarnation in every newborn child. And he despises the communion of Trinitarian love that each family is called to live.

Mothers have a particular answer to this which is seen most clearly in the life of our Blessed Mother at the foot of the Cross. In Christ, all the joys and sufferings, sorrows and glories of motherhood are taken up into His own Mystery and become redemptive. Archbishop Fulton Sheen puts it this way:

“The pains which a woman bears in labor help to expiate the sins of mankind, and draw their meaning from the Agony of Christ on the Cross. Mothers are, therefore, not only co-creators with God; they are co-redeemers with Christ in the flesh.” (Three to Get Married)

There is likewise a Eucharistic reflection which St. John Chrysostom notes: "As a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, so does Christ unceasingly nourish with his own blood those to whom he himself has given life."

If we are to imitate Christ and become one with him in all things, Motherhood is truly a privileged place where, with Christ, a woman can fully say: "This is my body which is given up for you." The tragedy today is that so many women are saying instead: "This is my body and I will not give it up for you." They have not seen nor understood the greatness of their calling.

The work of pointing the way and leading people to the kingdom that is not of this world, is not an easy work. It requires death to self. But God takes even the most insignificant daily realities and makes them fruitful in this work. Mary did for Jesus everyday what all mothers do for their children, dressing them, washing them, feeding them, teaching them. It is hidden work but has immeasurable value.

Mothers know this better than others. They not only live out the Paschal Mystery in their own flesh and spirit, but they also live it out for and with their children. Their boundless love bleeds redeeming grace into the lives of their sons and daughters. Mary is the most profound example of this. But it is clearly seen in the lives of women like St. Monica, St. Gianna Molla, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, and countless mothers whose lives will never be known to anyone outside of their immediate circles, until they get to heaven that is, where they will be honored and esteemed for their deep and faithful participation in the creation of God's own Family.

Human motherhood, along with human fatherhood, comes directly from the hand of God. Both are, in fact, a reflection of and participation in God's own Fatherhood which is Divine. When God created man He considered what would be the human expression of the life He Himself lives. His answer was Family, and family constituted as mother, father and children.

In the simplicity of God, our life on earth is meant to be about what our life in heaven will be like. The real stars in heaven will be mothers, for without their "yes" to our existence, none of us would have a chance of going there. But the supreme star will be our Queen, our Mother Mary whose "yes" to God's love gave us our Savior and Redeemer, the chance to once again call God our Father, and the gift that every heart longs for: to live in the perfect family forever.

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This contribution is available at <http://missionaryinthemodernworld.blogspot.com/2015/04/mary-motherhood-and-family-of-god.html>  
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## The Blessed Virgin in Sacred Art

Today marks a very important day as a Catholic writer for me, for today is the third anniversary of “Mondays with Mary”, which coincides with the 150<sup>th</sup> blog post of the series. To be completely honest, I would have never thought that this series would last for three years nor did I ever think it would reach 150 posts. When I set out to begin this series in May 2012, it was initially designed to be a four-week series focusing on Mary during the Month of May after reading Blessed Pope Paul VI’s, [Mense Maio](#).

As I look back on the three years of this series, along with the other series’ that I have written on this blog, as well as the many other blog posts, it’s truly been the Divine Will of God in all of it from the very beginning.

My ability and love of writing began with my entrance into the Masters in Theology program at [Franciscan University of Steubenville](#), which in turn led to my Dad reading many of my papers, and since he thought my writing was as articulate and profound as the books he had read (maybe a slight bias since I am his son), it was Dad who encouraged me to start writing in the first place. Although he has left this Vale of Tears and watches over me and the rest of the family from a different plain on the other side of Heaven, I know he will be with me in the days, months, and years ahead, not just as I write but in general.

As we began the great Month of Mary a few days ago, I realized that although I have used a lot of Marian Art in my blog posts, I have yet to write on it specifically. Let me first say, as a disclaimer, that I have studied art in the past, however, I am by no means an expert, heck – I’m not even an amateur, but I do love Sacred Art as you would know if you have seen my home or office. Today’s blog post isn’t going to discuss the pieces of art as someone might examine an artist and their work, but it will focus on five pieces of Marian art and what those pieces give us in relation to Marian Theology. I only chose five, but there are countless Marian paintings.

The first piece is Raphael’s, *Madonna of the Chair*.



This piece from Raphael (1483-1520) is the renowned and distinguished painting depicting Mary, Jesus, and an adolescent St. John the Baptist. Many see Mary’s perfect Motherhood in this painting as well as the Baptist’s role model for children, since he would prepare the way of the Lord. The legendary

educator, Dr. Maria Montessori, used this painting as the icon for her children's houses that would take her name.

The second piece is Roberto Feruzzi's (1853-1934), *Madonnina – Little Mother*.



As he walked through the streets of Venice one day, Feruzzi noticed an image before him of a young woman holding in her arms her baby brother. He was wrapped in a shawl and he was close to her bosom. He noticed that the girl, although young, was a witness of maternal care that only mature women know. Originally, the painting was called *Madonnina – Little Mother*, however many today know it to be – *Madonna of the Streets*. It's a beautiful painting of Mother Mary and her infant Son. One of the Women's Household's at Franciscan University of Steubenville bears this name.

The third piece is Bartolomeo Murillo's (1618-1662), *Immaculate Conception*.



In this painting we view Mary surrounded by the angels known as cherubim. They surround her for they are raptured with the holiness she displays through her Immaculate Conception. Blessed Pope Pius IX declared the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception solemn in 1854 through an infallible statement (*ex cathedra*). The definition reads –

“...We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in

the first instance of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God and therefore to be believed firmly and constantly by all the faithful.”

The fourth piece is Johann Georg Melchior Schmidtner’s (1625-1707), *Mary Untier of Knots*.



In this painting, we see Mary standing on a crescent moon and stepping on the head of the snake, most commonly represented as the serpent from the Garden of Eden. As the Holy Spirit remains above, with angels surrounding her, Mary as the Untier of Knots loosens and unties the knots given to humanity through the sin of Eve (and Adam) from the Fall of Man in Genesis 3. To learn more about this image made popular through the devotion of Pope Francis, please read my post – [“Mondays with Mary” – Pope Francis on the “Faith of Mary.”](#) There is also a [novena](#) to Mary under this title.

The fifth piece is Raphael’s, *Madonna della Granduca*.



Although Raphael has given the world many beautiful paintings, his most classic, and arguably, his most beautiful of Mary is the *Madonna della Granduca*. This image witnesses for the entire world the true love that the Mother has for her Son, while also showing the humanity of Jesus Christ in the arms of his immaculate young mother.

As we commemorate the Month of Mary, I would encourage you to share with your family and friends this post and the many others I have written for the sole purpose to explain to Catholics the importance that Mary plays in Salvation History as the Mother of God. Don't be afraid to show her the exceptional veneration (*hyperdulia*) that the Church has authorized us to give her, never outweighing the adoration and glory of God.

I would also encourage purchasing the prints of these paintings and other paintings of Mary to display them in your residence as a witness to the beauty, love, and truth that is the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2015/05/04/mondays-with-mary-the-blessed-virgin-in-sacred-art-3rd-anniversary-150th-post/>

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## Peace Be With You [at These Joyful Mysteries]

I met up with a friend of mine this morning to go for a walk. We picked a place neither one of us was too familiar with. It was a park that had lots of different walking paths. There was a beautiful expanse of grassy areas with blooming trees all around. There were couples walking, joggers jogging, and a landscaper mowing. It was a beautiful spot to enjoy our chat with a side of exercise.

We made a lot of twists and turns but after a while we realized we couldn't seem to find our way out of the inner path and access the outer loop. My friend said, "This path seems like my brain does sometimes." I laughed and said, "Me too." And to myself I thought, "Only from above would we be able to see how this path is laid out."

### Only from above

You could say this year has been a year of discernment for me. When school started in September I was in a bit of a tizzy. Our youngest child started full day school. After being a stay at home mom for 14 years, this was a tough adjustment for me. I felt I was in a constant "What now?" frame of mind. I was being inundated with questions like "What do you do all day?" and that put me into panic mode. I felt that saying "housework and errands" wasn't a grand enough answer. I worried about what others thought of me. I felt that if I didn't reply "Busy" to the "How are you?" question, I must be doing something wrong.

The problem with this was that I was spending too much time worrying and feeling guilty about my life and what to do with it, that I was sucking out all of the joy I had in the here and now.

I was living the exact life I had dreamed for myself and my family, yet I was too stubborn to appreciate it to the fullest. I started asking God for help. I kept asking him to show me where he wanted me to be. I thought this prayer would be answered in a classified ad that read:

**"Help wanted. No experience required. Hours from 8:50am-2:30pm. Time off for snow days and school holidays. Summers off."**

But that never came. (believe me, I looked)

Slowly, over the last few months I have begun to see that as long as I keep moving forward and keep His plan for me at the top of my to-do list, I am okay. This takes a conscious effort each and every day.

In other words,

### Only from Above

will my answer come.

This year I started doing some volunteer work in the "education" realm. Teaching Matthew's religious education class, along with some light tutoring at the elementary school has opened a door I thought was locked for someone like me. Coming from a medical background, teaching is not my forte. I can't speak for my students, but for

*me*

it has been the biggest blessing, I cannot even tell you.

That's the thing with God...as long as you look to Him, he will lead you in ways you never thought you'd go. But more importantly than solid black and white answers, is the feeling of peace that happens within when you turn your heart, your thoughts, your actions to God. This, I believe, is the true meaning of peace. After all, we were taught at a young age that the reason we were created was to Know Him, Love Him, and Serve Him.

He wants us all to have that peace, but it comes -

**Only From Above.**

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## In God I trust, In Politicians I Don't [at The Wayward Catholic]

I know it is hard to believe, but the silly season has begun again. Yes, it's true, we are already seeing the dawn of the 2016 Presidential Campaign. We already have about 1,000 republican candidates who have announced their candidacies and three Democrats. And as always that brings up the question: How is a Catholic supposed to vote?

Now before you get all worked up, this post isn't going to be about any particular candidate, that will more than likely come later as it is still too early to pick. Rather it is about how we as Catholics can make a conscionable choice when we go into that voting booth. And let me state up front, not voting is not an option.



I don't remember where I saw this, but I know someone had a "Catholics Guide to Voting". It might have been from the USCCB, if it was it isn't there now (but there is this: [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#)) and it had a list of the most important Catholic principles a candidate should have. For example, the candidate should be pro-life. And therein lies the problem. What do you do when they only have some of them? How do you rank them in importance? Can you even do that? And even if a candidate met all the criteria, would (or could) they win?

And therein lies the problem. What do you do when they only have some of them? How do you rank them in importance? Can you even do that? And even if a candidate met all the criteria, would (or could) they win?

The first problem is that there are a lot of almost Catholics out there. What is an almost Catholic? It is similar to a Wayward Catholic except they haven't actually turned themselves around and realized the church teachings are right and they now embrace them. These are to folks like Nancy Pelosi, Joe Biden, pick a Kennedy, any Kennedy, who claim they are Catholic and think they are Catholic but don't vote their faith.

I live in Massachusetts and we just elected a new governor and he is doing a good job. He is Catholic, but when he was campaigning he stated he believed in a woman's right to choose. He said he was against abortion, but he said it was an individual choice. Can you be Catholic and pro-choice? No. Do you vote for that candidate? That goes back to the title of this post.

**"In God I trust, in politicians I don't"**

Even if a candidate were to claim to be for all things Catholic, would he or she still be when they were

elected? Or would they be corrupted by the power of the office? Unfortunately, I think they would be. Politics is all about power and money.

But let's say God decided to give me a billion dollars with the only condition that I run for president and I had to follow all the teachings of the Catholic Church. And let's assume I made it through the primaries and avoided all the smear campaigns and digging into my background (this is where I would truly need a miracle from God) and was nominated, could I win?

With over 78 million Catholics in the US, the largest single denomination in the country, if each one voted the Catholic should win, right? In theory they should but they probably wouldn't. Think of what would happen, the opposition party, led by Satan himself would spread so many lies about the Catholic candidate, that all those luke-warm Catholics, and fallen away Catholics, wouldn't vote for them. Satan would use his most potent weapon, temptation, to ensure that the other candidate would continue to promise more and more "free stuff" they would vote for that candidate.

Isn't that how it is? Hasn't Satan already been doing that? Enticing people with more and more goods, convincing them they are entitled to them and they don't have to work for them? Tempting them with evil pleasures?

Can we turn this tide? That remains to be seen. We will continue to discuss the elections and who the best "Catholic" candidate will be, but for now, I would love to hear your comments. What do you think? Can we make a difference?

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This contribution is available at <http://thewaywardcatholic.com/2015/06/09/in-god-i-trust-in-politicians-i-dont/>  
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# We are Many, We are One [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

One my favorite bits from the Bible is in this morning's readings:

*"...We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,*

*"Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome,*

*"both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.' "*

([Acts 2:9-11](#))

That was about two thousand years ago.

Some things have changed.

[Phrygia](#)

's land became part of Rome's holdings about a century after the "

[tongues as of fire](#)

" appeared.

Since then it's been in the

[Byzantine](#)

,

[Seljuk](#)

, and

[Ottoman](#)

Empires. These days, it's part of Turkey: and someone else will probably be running it two millennia from now.

[Rome](#)

is still a major city, but the

[last Roman Emperor](#)



died more than a dozen centuries back. My ancestors come from lands beyond the old Roman frontier.

I speak

[English](#)

, a

[West Germanic language](#)

that wouldn't settle into something like its

[current](#)

form until around

[Shakespeare](#)

's day.

Some things haven't changed, and won't.

I've talked about natural law, ethical principles built into the universe, before. It doesn't change. Positive law, rules we make to help us live in comparative harmony, can and sometimes must change: and that's another topic. (

[August 31, 2014](#)

;

[August 29, 2014](#)

)

Something else that won't change is the best news humanity's ever had: God loves us, and wants to adopt us. (

[John 3:17](#)

; Catechism of the Catholic Church,

[52](#)

,

[1825](#)

)

What we do about that news is up to each of us. In my case, I decided that

[becoming a Catholic](#)

made sense.

## Love and Blunders

The

[Shavout](#)

recalled in

[Acts 2](#)

was our 'grand opening' — when the Holy Spirit came, making our Lord's message available to anyone who would listen.

1

(Catechism,

[731](#)

-

[732](#)

,

[767](#)

)

Today,

[Catholics](#)

live on every continent except Antarctica. We speak Albanian, Brazilian, Japanese, Lebanese, and many other languages.

We worship in

[Kobe, Japan](#)

;

[Hannover, Germany](#)

;



[Westfield, Indiana](#)

; and

[Kunming, China](#)

.

We have lived under emperors, kings, chairmen, and presidents. Sometimes our native leaders let us worship in peace, sometimes they don't, and occasionally they try to take our Lord's place.

We are "

[one in Christ Jesus](#)

," united by the sacraments our Lord gave us: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, the Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. We celebrate those sacraments in many ways, reflecting our many cultures. (Catechism,

[1200](#)

-

[1206](#)

,

[1210](#)

)

That upsets folks who imagine that the universal,

[καθολικός](#)

, church should — for all people, in every millennium — look and act just like folks did in their home parish, a few decades back.

Some of us, as centuries rolled by, have acted as if making "

[disciples of all nations](#)

" meant forcing one culture or political system down everyone's throat. That's a huge mistake. We're still cleaning up the mess left by the Verdun massacre, and that's yet another topic. (

[May 18, 2014](#)

)

There is no one 'correct' culture or political system. (Catechism,

[24](#)

,

[814](#)

,

[1901](#)

,

[1957](#)

)

There are, however, a few basic principles we should all observe: Love God, love our neighbors, see everyone as our neighbor, and treat others as we'd like to be treated. (

[Matthew 5:43](#)

-

[44](#)

,

[7:12](#)

,

[22:36](#)

-

[40](#)

,

[Mark 12:28](#)

-

[31](#)

;

[Luke 6:31 10:25](#)

-

[27](#)

,

[29](#)

-

[37](#)

; Catechism,

[1789](#)

)

As long as we keep loving God and our neighbors, and acting as if everybody's our neighbor, we'll confuse and astound

[2](#)

— and upset folks who like the status quo. And that's yet again another topic.

Posts about:

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1

Definitions:

**"*HOLY SPIRIT:*** *The third divine Person of the Blessed Trinity, the personal love of Father and Son for each other. Also called the Paraclete (Advocate) and Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit is at work with the Father and the Son from the beginning to the completion of the divine plan for our salvation ([685](#); cf. [152](#), [243](#))."*

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, Glossary, [H](#))

**"*PENTECOST:*** *The 'fiftieth' day at the end of the seven weeks following Passover (Easter in the Christian dispensation). At the first Pentecost after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was manifested, given and communicated as a divine Person to the Church, fulfilling the paschal mystery of Christ according to his promise ([726](#), [731](#); cf. [1287](#)). Annually the Church celebrates the memory of the Pentecost event as the beginning of the new 'age of the Church,' when Christ lives and acts in and with his Church ([1076](#))."*

(Catechism, Glossary, [P](#))

2

"...the Church astounds and confuses...."

*"...Pentecost is the event that signals the birth of the Church and her public manifestation; and two features strike us: the Church astounds and confuses...."*

## [Regina Caeli](#)," Pope Francis, Solemnity of Pentecost (June 8, 2014)

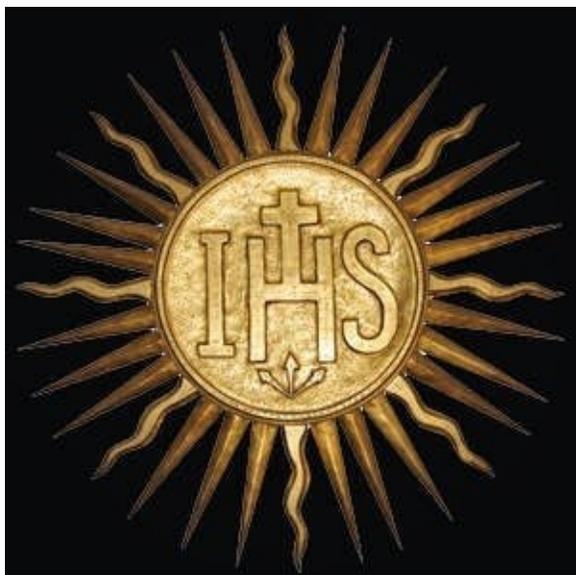
More:

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This contribution is available at <http://catholiccitizenamerica.blogspot.com/2015/05/we-are-many-we-are-one.html>  
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## Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam [at Kitchen table chats]



For many years I have been drawn to Ignatian Spirituality. Yet it has been somewhat of a [pushmi-pullyu](#)

relationship. My experience with the Jesuits calls to mind the nursery rhyme about the little girl with a little curl in the middle of her forehead. When Jesuits are good, they are very very good. When they are bad, they are horrid!

I once was part of a weekly prayer group. We used a book series of daily meditations that I found both quite helpful and quite troubling. I loved the essential principles introduced each day but their practical applications seemed twisted. Both the author and members of the prayer group were using these principles to endorse homosexuality, contraception, women priests, and general dissent from the Magisterium. It was only later that I realized this series of meditations was written by a Jesuit and based on the Spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius.

On the other hand, I have found many Jesuits who are brilliant and ardent defenders of the Faith. They apply the tenets of Catholicism to the everyday world with both charity and clarity yet never compromise the truth. Every encounter with these men, whether it is in person or through their writings, is an ennobling experience. They draw wisdom from the Spiritual Exercises without casting aside Church teaching. Their everyday lives exude the Jesuit motto:

*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*

--for the greater glory of God.

Perhaps prompted by both the election of Pope Francis and the urgings of the Holy Spirit I have found myself reading and thinking more and more about St. Ignatius and the Jesuits. This past Lent I used a

[devotional based on the writings of St. Ignatius.](#)

Currently, I am reading

[\*The Jesuit Guide to \(almost\) Everything\* by James Martin, SJ.](#)

This is an introduction to Ignatian Spirituality written in a very folksy style. I am not far enough into the book to give it a thorough review, but so far it rings true. It is definitely not a scholarly tome but there is plenty of material to make you think. I like the summary of the Jesuit charism:

1. Find God in all things
2. Become a contemplative in action
3. Look at the world in an incarnational way
4. Seek freedom and detachment.

I look forward to developing a deeper understanding of each of these points as I journey through this book. I will try to keep you posted on the progress.

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This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2015/05/ad-majorem-dei-gloriam.html>  
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# **Abortion cannot resolve pregnancy after rape [at In the Breaking of the Bread]**

## **THE DOUBLE OUTRAGE OF RAPE ON YOUNG GIRLS**

Much is being made in social networks and online advocacy and pressure groups about the pregnancy of a 12-year-old girl from Paraguay. I am so in sync with everyone over the great wrong of the sexual abuse of children. It is totally unacceptable in all places and at all times that anyone should forcibly impose sexual relations on a unwilling partner, most especially on minors and other vulnerable people. Rape in itself is an outrage, but the rape of a young child is a double outrage.

## **FAILURE OF HUMANITY, OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Those who do such things demonstrate a profound deficiency in their humanity. They are so absorbed in themselves that no others, not even vulnerable children, are persons to them... they are unable or unwilling to respect children as persons, to treat them with the most basic of respect as independent persons. Such people are very dangerous and are a menace not only to the vulnerable but to families and society as a whole.

## **WE MUST CARE, ALL OF US TOGETHER**

Young girls who are discovered to be pregnant require the most competent and sensitive of care. I am all in favor of doing all we can to support such girls and their families and communities. It was bad enough that they were in all likelihood traumatized by the experience of forcible sexual relations without their consent or even understanding of what was being done to them. It is imperative that we not add to their trauma by forcing upon them another traumatic experience, which abortion most certainly is, witness the countless women who have come forward in recent decades to relate the long term painful consequences of their abortions. When mature women experience abortion as a trauma, can you imagine how a young girl would experience it?

## **EXTREME CULTURAL VARIATIONS REGARDING SEXUAL MATURITY**

Regarding pregnancy at a young age, we must be careful of the cultural biases we all carry within us, myself included. We in the West consider women under eighteen too young to get pregnant. However, in different societies and different times, it was and still is considered normal for women to marry and bear children not so very long after puberty. Christians have no trouble accepting that Mary of Nazareth conceived Jesus at or around the age of fourteen. In Québec and many other nations until not so long ago young women could marry without special permission if they were fourteen or older.

## **DELAYED MATURATION OF MODERNS**

It is well known today that our commonplace "teenage" phase of life did not exist before World War II. It was the sudden affluence and leisure after the war that introduced "teen age" in our Western society. Before then, it was not unusual for children after puberty to be seen as adults and to leave go out to work and even leave home. My own parents entered the workforce at 13 and 14 years old, and my paternal

grandfather started his working life at only ten.

## ABORTION CANNOT RESOLVE RAPE

All people of good will acknowledge and agree that rape is an outrage. Regarding abortion there is not such a universal consensus. I thoroughly agree that stern action must be taken regarding rape under any circumstances, but I cannot be in sync with those who propose abortion as a solution to an unwanted or unexpected pregnancy, not even in the case of rape. I know, that sounds shocking to me too. Part of me freaks out at reading these words, let alone writing them; so I understand if they freak you out, but please bear with me for a moment and hear or read me out.

The child growing in the womb, even of that 12 year old girl, knows nothing of her being forcibly raped nor of our categories or ideologies or anxieties or inconveniences. No matter what might motivate us, to abort that unborn child would be a great wrong. That child is alive and deserves to live, and none of us have the right to snuff out that life. That is why abortion is a great wrong. One great wrong can never be considered a viable solution to another great wrong.

## A WRONG CANNOT BE MADE RIGHT BY ANOTHER WRONG

Aborting the child produced by a rape can never resolve the rape. The rape has already taken place and nothing can make it go away. Adding another great wrong will not make it any better but will only compound the consequences, making them even heavier. Imposing abortion on that girl or convincing her that abortion would be better for her would be to mislead her. Taking the life of the most vulnerable among us, the unborn being even more vulnerable than young girls, can never be a solution to any of our uncomfortable life situations, not even unexpected or unexpected pregnancy. To take the life of another, no matter the circumstances, carries consequences that are dire and permanent not only for the one killed but also for the one who snuffs out that life.

## HUMAN LIFE IS OF INESTIMABLE VALUE

The unborn child carried by that 12-year-old girl who was raped by her stepfather is nevertheless a human life with as much right to existence as you or me, and this right to life is the most fundamental of human rights. If we are unwilling to honor this right, then all our other rights collapse like a house of cards. The fact that we are alive at all to experience the difficulties we have in life is itself a great good, an inestimable value. Despite all our difficulties, life is eminently worth living.

## HOW ABORTIVE WOMEN EXPERIENCED THEIR NATURE AS WOMAN

This is without even saying anything about the harm that abortion does to the women or girls who undergo this procedure. When advocates of abortion first proposed it as a viable choice for women and girls decades ago, we didn't know then what we know now after so many women have come forward with their testimonies of dire repercussions they suffered following their elective abortions. I understand that those who are committed to the right of women to choose have great difficulty admitting the harmful effects and long term consequences of abortion, but denial doesn't make the truth evaporate nor the facts go away. Women who have suffered after their abortion tell us that the abortion violated them in all that is most fundamental to their identity as women, even though they freely chose the abortion themselves.

They realized too late that as a woman they have been designed to give life. Their whole body is geared

to nurturing and giving life, and when they interrupt a pregnancy - no matter the reasons or motivations - their whole body goes into suffering and grief over the interruption as a loss and over the decision they took and the action they have taken.

After one or more abortions, women tell us that they came to realize the truth that when their pregnancy was wanted, from the very first moment they realize they might be pregnant they relate to their fetus as a baby. It was only a fetus as long as they didn't know about its existence. In a completely different register of discourse, when their pregnancy was unwanted they were encouraged to think of the fetus as mere "product of conception". It was convenient for them, as they were convinced by others, to think of the fetus as though it were inanimate and impersonal. They were encouraged to think of it as a mere extension of their own body. As the saying goes, a woman enjoys exclusive freedom and authority over all decisions regarding her body.

The pain began for these post abortive women when the penny dropped, when they realized these two opposing experiences don't add up. They found here two outlooks that are completely divergent and contradictory while the biological reality and truth of the matter is only one. What is conceived by human beings can only be and therefore is a human person in the earliest stage of development, but an independent human individual all the same. Nothing further is added to it except for nourishment from the first moment of conception as the process of cell division and diversification attends to itself.

## ZERO TOLERANCE FOR RAPE AND ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Let us stop here for now and reiterate that it is incumbent upon all of us to do all we can at every level of society to enforce "zero tolerance" policies and taboos to strike the "fear of punishment" into those people who are so deficient in their humanity that they represent a real danger of rape for our vulnerable children and women.

## ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS DESERVE OUR COLLECTIVE CARE AND SUPPORT

We must also do all we can to support those women and even girls who find themselves with an unwanted or unexpected pregnancy. Pregnancy, birth, and child rearing are the responsibility and also the blessing of the whole human family, and we are all responsible to attend to the entire process. The burden of responsibility should never rest exclusively or even mostly on the shoulders of the pregnant woman or girl.

I am willing to continue this dialogue with those who may be interested to do so. Thank you.

You'll need Skype CreditFree via Skype

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This contribution is available at <http://fathergilles.blogspot.ca/2015/05/abortion-cannot-resolve-pregnancy-after.html>  
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# Ireland Creates Modern Day Babel: Same Sex "Marriage" [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

by Susan Fox

By an overwhelming vote of 2 to 1, Ireland legalized same



sex "marriage" on May 22, 2015, falling naively for the lie of "marriage" equality

"How have the mighty fallen," commented one British pundit, Christopher Woodford, pro-life agnostic. The Vatican called it a "Defeat for Humanity."

Undeterred, Catholic evangelists stared at the same devastation and concluded Ireland was ripe for the *New Evangelization*, which focuses on the naïve and un-catechized Catholic sitting in the pew next to you rather than the pagan baby in Timbuctoo.

"I was deeply saddened by the result," said the Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, on Tuesday. "The church must take account of this reality, but in the sense that it must strengthen its commitment to evangelization. I think that you cannot just talk of a defeat for Christian principles, but of a defeat for humanity."

Ireland is a nation of non-practicing Catholics. In 2011, 84.2 percent of the population identified themselves as Roman Catholic. But weekly Mass attendance has dropped steeply from 91 percent in 1972-73 to only 30 percent in 2011.

By voting overwhelmingly for same-sex "marriage" on Friday, May 22, 2015, Ireland put itself firmly on board for building the modern Tower of Babel. It joined 18 other countries that have legalized same sex

unions through legislation or the courts, but shockingly Ireland passed the new form of pseudo “marriage” by popular vote.

Modern man is locked in über hubris, literally redefining the human family in a manner completely unconnected to reality. He has decided that marriage exists only as he wills it, and not in objective reality independent of his will. So if I were treating my desk that way, I could close my and eyes, decide my desk was a soft fluffy pillow and throw myself on it. Ouch!

"At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life," wrote U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy in 1992 in *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*.

This definition turns the true nature of marriage on its head. “Owing to the exceptional complementarity and procreative potential of a husband and wife, the legal form for their relationship is likewise distinctive, and not replicable for other relationships that are neither complementary not potentially reproductive. To use the legal form of marriage for these latter associations is to transfer the goods proper to marriage to those to whom they are not proper. **This is an act of injustice – treating something as other than what it is,**” said Author Robert R. Reilly in his book, “Making Gay Okay.”

On Saturday, May 23, the day after the historic Irish vote, the Catholic Church quietly celebrated the Sunday Vigil Mass for Pentecost with a reading from Gen 11:1-9, the story of the Tower of Babel.



Here's one to the Old Tower:

At the time, the whole world spoke the same language and using the same words, understood each other. Fearing they would be scattered all over the earth, the people began to build a city “*and a tower with its top in the sky,*” so as to make a name for themselves.

The Lord came down to check out the city, and said, *“If now, while they are one people, all speaking the same language, they have started to do this, nothing will later stop them from doing whatever they presume to do. Let us then go down there and confuse their language, so that one will not understand what another says.”*

So the people of the earth got the very thing they feared – the Lord scattered them all over the earth, and confused their speech – that’s why the city was called Babel.

Talk to a same-sex “marriage” proponent today, and you will feel the same confusion of speech. A Christian speaks objectively about marriage, and the person advocating same sex “marriage” calls him a hateful “homophobe.” What?

I have had these proponents of same-sex “marriage” carefully find quotes in my copy like, “The Catholic Church believes that homosexual acts are sinful.” And they conclude I have called them a sinner.

The confusion occurs because in their minds, their activity is their identity. “I am gay.” Well I have many activities, but none of them define me. I’m a Catholic. I live in a nation that is not of this earth. My identity is found in my relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Irish people have forgotten that.

They are looking for their identity in sex, the local pub and soccer. Hence they fall for the oldest lie in the book. They are tempted by a false good. They think they are supporting justice -- marriage equality -- and they really are creating a Tower of Injustice, a modern-day Babel. They are destroying the family. The people building the Tower of Babel feared to be scattered over the earth. Their fear created the very conditions they thought to avoid.

Marriage comes with the right to have children. How does a same sex couple get children? Not naturally. They use adoption and commercial third party reproduction, including the buying and selling of eggs and sperm, the renting of a surrogate womb, and creating a special class of women called “breeders.”

“The medical process required for egg retrieval is lengthy, and there are serious medical hazards associated with each step in the process,” said Pediatric Nurse Jennifer Lahl in *Jephthah’s Daughters: Innocent Casualties in the War for Family “Equality*. Women risk their own future fertility, blood clots, and reproductive cancers. Both surrogates and egg donors die. “Multiple embryos are implanted into surrogates in order to increase the chance of live births. Women are treated as commodities, paid vessels, a breeding class,” Lahl concluded. Multiple children do not survive the process. It’s the old game of kill a baby to get a baby.

Children who are conceived by reproductive technologies are more likely to suffer from “premature birth, low birth weight, and fetal anomalies. There is a higher risk of fetal death and stillbirth,” Lahl said.

“Gamete donation creates children who will be intentionally separated from their biological identity, history, and extended family. Genealogical bewilderment is a phenomenon well documented in studies and in the testimonies of those born via donor conception.”

David Alexander writes notes on *Jephthah’s Daughters* on a web page run by The International Children’s Rights Institute. I discovered them one night linking to my blog. Alexander quotes a [poem](#) from Edward Hirsch, whose adopted son, Gabriel, died at age 22 of a drug overdose.

“...I pulled to the side of the road

When he announced that we bought him

From a special baby store...

...He wheeled his tricycle up and down

In front of the house in a rage

You’re not my parents...” (From Gabriel)

Then there is Manual Half, a European teenager who was conceived by a surrogate mother and raised by a biological father who self-identifies as homosexual. I remember reading the young man’s manifesto in the [English Manif](#), a blog created by Child Rights Advocate Robert Oscar Lopez’, co-editor of *Jephthah’s Daughters*.

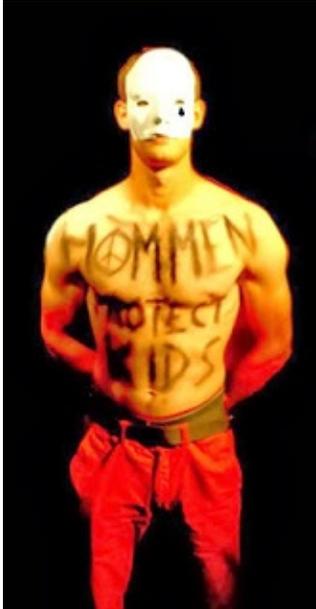


Manual, however, feels great anger at his father for “buying” him, erasing the role of his mother and exposing him to homosexuality in the home. Just before Mother’s Day in 2014, a veritable firestorm broke out between Pope Francis and Same-Sex “Marriage” Advocate Giuseppina LaDelfa, president of Italy’s “Rainbow Families.”

Pope Francis was so gauche as to defend “the right of children to grow up in a family, with a dad and a mom capable of creating a suitable environment for development and emotional maturation.” The pope reminded us that children, “need to mature in relation to masculinity and to femininity.”

La Delfa shot back, “**A child has no right to live in a family with a father and a mother.**” In fact, she argued, the father and mother are useless! The suitable place to raise a child is just about anywhere “regardless of who the parents are, of which sex, or of which sexual orientation, no matter whether they number one, two or 18. But one thing matters ... support and attention.”

Manuel Half responded by saying, “There must be some well of humanity hidden inside La Delfa to help her understand why boys



want to know their mothers,” Robert Lopez reported in *Jephthah’s Daughters*. “Then Manuel lit a candle in his window on Mother’s Day and said to his mother – whoever and wherever she was – that he hoped she might pass and see the flame to know he was okay.”

Ireland has blithely and ignorantly opened the door to these horrors. Will future generations ever forgive them?

The deliberations of Ireland’s professional body for solicitors, the Law Society of Ireland, gives us a clue to Irish thinking before the “Marriage Equality Referendum” was passed.

Similar to the American Bar Association, the Irish Law Society decided to support same-sex “marriage” based on the false justice of marriage equality. They focused on recent [court decisions](#) from the United States.

Specifically, they quoted the California Supreme Court, which in 2008 said there was “no compelling state interest” to justify the retention of the traditional definition of marriage between one man and one woman. California justices feared that “excluding same-sex couples” from marriage could imply that the government officially views same-sex “committed relationships of lesser stature than the comparable relationships of opposite-sex couples.”



They noted that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit Court said, “California’s ban on same sex ‘marriage’ serves no purpose, and has no effect, other than to lessen the status and human dignity of gays and lesbians in California.”

Oh, but they did study similar decisions from the state of Connecticut, South Africa, and Canada. The logic of these myopic courts caused the Irish Law Society to conclude: “What is the legal justification for denying equality to same-sex couples in relation to the civil institution of marriage? For any lawyer, the argument that ‘civil marriage has just



traditionally been that way’ cannot provide a sound and just legal justification for denying equal rights to Irish citizens.” Was there no one left in Ireland able to explain to the nation’s

lawyers the dangers of legalized same-sex "marriage" for civilization?!? Apparently not.

As Irish Minister for Justice and Equality Frances Fitzgerald said, "This is an opportunity for Ireland to demonstrate that it is truly inclusive, truly mature in its understanding of marriage."

No, these are not mature voices; they are the voices of Babel. Homosexual acts are not natural acts because people of the same sex are not structurally complementary and cannot create children naturally. Any civil law that violates natural law creates numerous other injustices by definition.

I haven't even covered the loss of religious freedom that results from legal same sex "marriage." Ironically, in Canada where same-sex "marriage" has been legal since 2005, a Christian Law School lost its accreditation because it had a chastity covenant with its students, who were asked to abstain from sex outside marriage and from all same-sex relationships. In other words, Trinity Western University cannot offer an accredited law degree because it doesn't recognize Canada's law allowing same-sex "marriage." The snake bit the lawyers in Canada.

But in homosexual unions, the primary victims are children. Strangers provide the products of reproduction and the children themselves. Surrogate mothers, egg and sperm donors are being used by same sex couples, who believe they have a "right" to a child even though they cannot make one by themselves. Robert Lopez's book demonstrates irrevocably (we'll cover this in another post) that adult children of same sex unions passionately and rightfully oppose same sex "marriage" even in cases where they loved their adult caregivers.

Nevertheless, same sex couples are crowding out opposite sex couples from adoption – an expensive process -- because they often have more financial resources than their opposite-sex counterparts. Same Sex couples offer no charity in adoption, nor in their exotic reproduction methods, which Lopez and his co-writers call "trafficking in children."



Lopez calls himself a “bi-sexual man” because he grew up sexually confused in a household headed by two same-sex women. Now he is living the life of a faithful husband and father. He understands that the problem of the homosexual is that he or she is averse to living with a member of the opposite sex.

“If there is one thing gay men have had in abundance, it’s imagination. It’s time for them to imagine something else, other than the dreadful agenda that’s been put forward by the fight over marriage. Gay men must find a way to live with women if they want to have children. If they can’t live with women, they should get a dog,” Lopez concluded.

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This contribution is available at <http://christsfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2015/05/ireland-creates-modern-day-babel-same.html>  
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## Lessons in Finding and Bringing Joy [at perfectlytara]



I am completely overwhelmed by the gift I've been given in my daughter. I watch the way that she brings joy to others and my heart soars watching this gift of hers while my stomach simultaneously drops as I realize the great responsibility I've been given in her formation. Maybe I should say, the great responsibility I've been given in not messing up the gifts Kateri knows how to use. Do you know the feeling?

My grandfather is in hospice care at a skilled nursing facility and we are blessed to have the ability to visit him every Wednesday. The nursing home often seems overrun by melancholy. It is heartbreaking to see so many people so profoundly sad. There are too many people who rarely or never get visitors, too many people whose only human interaction is with an overburdened, overworked nurse trying to make it through his or her shift.



The last time my grandpa was strong enough to hold Kateri was over a year ago.

When these residents see a little girl smiling and tottering towards them, babbling incoherently, the change in the room is palpable. She smiles and interacts with everyone – whether you are trapped in your own body as a result of a stroke, bound to a wheelchair by old wounds, or your mind is a puzzle you can't quite piece together due to dementia. **She places no qualifications on her friendship, she simply wants**

**to look you in the eye and acknowledge that you are there.** You are human, you have worth, and she is interested in you.

Oh how often I've looked away, failing to recognize the humanity in someone. Sometimes I look away because it's awkward – someone's asking for money and I don't have any to give. Sometimes I look away because I've planned too much in one day and giving a smile might ruin my schedule. Most times I look away because I'm uncomfortable. I don't know what to say to someone I've categorized as "other."

One of the most beautiful relationships I've ever witnessed is between Kateri and her friend D. I don't know much about D because he is non-verbal and I've only met one family member once. I do know that he's in his 90's and is confined to a wheelchair, his body contorted by some disease. He isn't able to speak, but he is able to wave, smile, and give a thumbs up. The joy on his face when Kateri comes to hang out with him is like nothing I've ever seen. It's also like nothing D's family has ever seen – the one time we ran into his cousin she was astonished at his joy. She had never seen him smile like he smiled at Kateri.



Kateri and D on a little lunch date.

Kateri reminds me that bringing joy doesn't take much. Sometimes it takes nothing more than a smile and a high five, an offer of a goldfish cracker and an incoherent babble. Bringing joy might just mean looking in someone's the eyes and saying hello. Bringing joy might just mean showing up. Yesterday, Kateri had D smiling for joy just because **she sat at his table and ate her peanut butter and jelly.**

Kateri is just happy to be around people – people of any age, race, or ability. It is as if she knows that each of these people are made in the image of our wonderful God. She is a constant reminder that **finding joy** is as easy as opening our eyes to the beauty of the world around us and bringing joy can be as easy as acknowledging the presence of those around us.



*This post is a link-up with [Blessed is She on the topic of Finding Joy](#). Check out the other awesome reflections and make sure to explore the rest of their website to discover a beautiful community of Catholic women.*

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This contribution is available at <http://perfectlytara.wordpress.com/2015/05/28/lessons-in-finding-and-bringing-joy/>  
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## Author Interview: Sherry Boas [at This That and the Other Thing]



I've

[reviewed several books by Sherry Boas](#)

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so

I was definitely interested when Catholic Word asked me if I wanted to interview her. Sherry's comments are in bold type below.

Hi Sherry! I'm a fan of your Lily books and I'm so glad you agreed to take time for this interview.

I looked at

[your website](#)

and the photos of your kids are great. I understand why you are vague on the details about them, but can you tell us a little about them--their genders and approximate ages (teens, toddlers, pre-teens, etc.).

**My children range in age from 9 to 16. They are awesome gifts from God and make our lives rich and joyful.**

All of your kids are adopted, and none of them were the healthy, perfect white infants that so many adoptive parents want. How old were your kids when you adopted them? Do you have any advice for parents considering adopting special-needs kids?

**We adopted all our children when they were infants. If you feel you may be called to special needs adoption, pray, research and have courage. Let love guide you, not fear. Love will determine whether each placement is right. Love doesn't require you to say yes to everything. Sometimes love means saying no. But fear is never a good decision maker. As our beloved St. John Paul II always reminded us, "Be not afraid!"**

Your website said you homeschool your kids. Is this something that you think you would have done if your kids did not have special needs, or is it something you chose to do largely because of your kids'

special needs?

**I was led to home schooling after seeing the fruits of home schooling in families I knew or read about. It seemed they had a very close bond and that's what I wanted for my family.**

In

*Until Lily*

, we learn that Lily works, uses public transportation independently and lives in a group home. What type of future do you envision for your children? I have a son who has autism and so far, I've found adulthood to be harder than the school years. I can't imagine having to worry about four kids with special needs and what they are going to do when I'm gone.

**From what it looks like now, thanks to so many miracles, I think most of my children will be independent. My daughter with Down syndrome is the one who will require help all her life. I think she will hold some kind of job and live with family or in a group home. Her older brother, who is now 15, has expressed a desire to help her through life, which I think is beautiful. If it doesn't end up working out that way, I pray God will send the right people into her life, and as she gets older, we will begin to make more solid plans. She is only 12 now. But I know it's a worry, and I hear what you say, loud and clear. Adulthood for people with special needs can be a real challenge. Perhaps we as parents must rely on God's providence even more at those times. And work very hard and pray for the strength to endure whatever suffering and sacrifices are necessary because that's what love requires.**

All the Lily books are published by Caritas Press, and your bio on their website says you are the owner of Caritas Press. As a book blogger I've started to learn about the business of books and I'm still trying to figure things out. What is the difference between owning a company like Caritas Press, and self-publishing? Is there a difference? Does Caritas Press publish books by other authors? Do you want to? Did you try to publish any of your books with other publishers?

**I started as a self publisher in 2011, when I published the Lily Trilogy, but my mission unexpectedly grew and now I have a small publishing company called Caritas Press. I do publish other people's work, including children's books, but I wouldn't be able to do any of it without my publishing partner, Catholic Word, which handles all my distribution, marketing, order fulfillment and accounts. Catholic Word is the reason I was able to make the cross-over from self-published author to publisher, so their decision to take on my titles has been a huge blessing.**

In my review of

*The Things Lily Knew*

, I asked my readers: If adults could take pre-conception pills to eliminate defective eggs or sperm, would that be a good thing? I'm not talking about something that would hurt an already conceived zygote, embryo or fetus; rather this hypothetical drug would work on gametes (eggs and sperm). What is your answer?

**Such a good question. It is the question that the main character in *The Things Lily Knew* has to face.**

**I would love for people to read the book and see if it helps them decide for themselves!**

In your books it becomes clear that for Lily's family she is a catalyst for salvation--both salvation in the everlasting sense and in an earthy sense, as the family was better off here on earth because of the interactions with Lily. Fast forward twenty years. A drug has just hit the market that cures Down's Syndrome or a condition that one of your other children has. I know you can't fix chromosomes but this hypothetical medicine provides what is missing because of that extra chromosome, and studies have shown that if people with those conditions take this medicine and then undergo extensive tutoring (because they were so far behind to start with) they can achieve normal intelligence/abilities. Would you give the medicine to your children?

**Another really good question. Probably similar to the question of cochlear implants for people who are deaf. If I were deaf, I assume I would sign up for that surgery. But I have heard some in the deaf community say that deafness is something that doesn't need to be fixed. For myself, if there was a magic drug that had no side effects and could make my memory better, I would probably take it. I think it would improve my quality of life to be able to remember where I put my car keys and what chapter contains the scene where Lily gets married, for instance, and I don't think it would change my personality. I think I might view medication for improving intelligence in those with intellectual disabilities the same way. On the other hand, one would have to wonder if such a medication would change one's personality, and then that becomes a tougher question.**

Your bio says that you spent ten years as a journalist. Now you are a novelist. How do the jobs compare? Why did you decide to switch fields?

**I quit my very demanding job as a reporter at a daily newspaper in 1998 when we adopted our first baby. I became a stay-at-home mom and have loved every minute of it. Then in 2009, I decided to try writing a book, and that turned into a trilogy, which I published in 2011, and then a series, and I began to see how I could publish other books as well. I have been blessed to be able to do it all at home, in the stolen moments between laundry and times tables, and late at night when everyone has gone to bed. It has been a blessed journey!**

I'd like to thank Sherry for taking the time to visit with us. I've enjoyed getting to know her and hope you enjoy

[her books](#)

as much as I do.

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# The Road Less Traveled [at A Catholic Moment]



*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you.”*

My wife and I encountered peace this past weekend. Not as the world gives peace in the material or the temporal, but we encountered peace in the grace of our marriage Sacrament that we share with God. We encountered each other again and rekindled that love and grace that caused us to express those vows 15 years ago. We attended a [Marriage Encounter Weekend](#) here locally that reaffirmed what it means to be married, and what it means to be married as a Catholic. Some ask, “did you fall back in love?” Others probably wonder – “What’s wrong with their marriage?”

You see, in today’s world, we wait until things are broken before we decide to fix it. It’s not that my wife and I are not in love. It’s not that we were having major problems. It’s that we are striving to be better. In society today, we often lose sight of our spouses amidst the hustle and bustle of life – our careers, families, finances, and various other communities or activities we are involved in. This high-tech world in the information age yields a high-volume, multi-task lifestyle in the home. Often, it’s our marriages, and our relationships with our spouses that take a back seat.

So, nothing is wrong with our marriage if you look at it in a worldly view. It’s normal. We love each other. We support each other. We have arguments from time to time, but hey, who doesn’t? But the thing is, you have an argument, and then you don’t communicate effectively, and you say things you shouldn’t, and you go and do things you shouldn’t, and people don’t want to give into their pride and seek forgiveness, nor do they want to forgive. And before you know it, this becomes a pattern – and [“Houston, we’ve got a problem.”](#) Your marriage becomes a rut that you’re stuck in, and you go through the motions, and many people start looking for a way out. The easy way out. They let their pride take over and refuse to see it from their spouse’s point of view and understand their feelings. They have to be right, and they have to win.

So many people are there. Are my wife and I there? No, we aren’t, thank goodness. Not yet. But you never know what could happen down the road, if you don’t take care of things in the present. Everyone has their breaking point, and marriage provides a lot of hardships. There are a lot of peaks in a marriage, but there are also a lot of valleys. Marriage is not easy. But anything worthwhile takes work. It takes discipline. It

takes patience. And it takes humility. And marriage – the Sacrament of Marriage – is worthwhile.

Working on your marriage, learning how to communicate and make each other better through God's grace is worthwhile. It's not the easy road. It's the road less traveled, and often there are huge ruts, holes, rocks, and other obstacles in the way. But the rewards of traversing this road are limitless. This is why we attended the marriage encounter this weekend – to do that preventative maintenance on our marriage for our trip down this bumpy and dangerous road.

St Luke writes today in the first reading from Acts of the Apostles, *“It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God.”*

What the disciples were doing was not easy. And they were undergoing many hardships, and it was only through God's grace that Paul was alive at all. And through all their struggles, they persevered through them, even at times when maybe they were just going through the motions and perhaps in a rut. Perhaps at times, the disciples wondered, is this all there is? Is this really what Jesus asked of me? How many married couples have asked this same thing of God?

*And when they arrived, they called the Church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Then they spent no little time with the disciples.*

At these times of heartache and struggle, they would come together as a Church, and look at all they had accomplished, and who they had become. And they spent time together, rekindling that community, that love, and that mission which brought them together. They recharged their batteries for the next leg of their journey down that bumpy road. We as married couples are called to do this. We need to do this from time to time.

Going into this weekend, I knew I love my wife. Of course I do. But I also knew that after 15 years, 7 of those with a son in the mix, life gets in the way. We love our son, and obviously would die for him, but at the same time, he came into our world. We didn't come into his. We need to take care of each other first and foremost – husband and wife – if we are to be the best parents we can be for our son. Renewal is an important part of everything in life. It helps you remember what is important and it helps you realize what you have, what you've been given, and what you can do. It refreshes you and helps you to see your current situation from a different perspective. Because life is all about perspective. Paul, Peter, and the rest of the disciples knew this. Jesus knew this, which is why we reconvene every week, and every day if you want to, to share in His great Sacrifice, and His great Grace.

This reflection started with Jesus talking in the Gospel today, and the rest of the reading goes as this:

*Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. I will no longer speak much with you, for the ruler of the world is coming. He has no power over me, but the world must know that I love the Father and that I do just as the Father has commanded me.”*

When the world bears down on us and corners us, we can take solace in that Christ will come back to us. He will save us from those evils that seek to destroy us – us as individuals, our families, and our marriages. All we must do is seek Him back. As married couples, we have the power to change the world

through God's grace he's given us. A loving marriage, one that constantly seeks to renew in our faith and embrace the Holy Sacrament to make each other better is one of the best defenses against evil. Satan knows that if he can break up marriages, he destroys humanity. Just look at the world around us. He's giving it his best effort. But Jesus proves that as long as we are obedient and subordinate to God and His will, we will receive His grace and we will overcome. We will prevail.

And this is nowhere more apparent than in a loving, graceful marriage. We must be subordinate to each other's feelings, if we are to truly experience the love that God shares with us in that bond with our spouse. Jesus comes back to us through the Sacraments, and one of the most powerful is Marriage. Let's embrace this fact, and seek to do His will as married couples, and take the road less traveled, for in it is the shorter path to Heaven.

May God Bless all you married couples out there across the world.

Amen.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.acatholic.org/the-road-less-traveled/>  
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## Inspirational Speaker

*Note: I am happy to say this has been published in The Catholic Post, the newspaper for the Peoria Diocese. The link to the article can be found [here](#).*



Twenty-one years ago, I celebrated Mother's Day for the first time as a mom myself. I was just two months into my pregnancy, but already wearing maternity clothes even though I really didn't need them yet. I was simply so excited about my new identity as a MOM, and could not help but tell everyone about little Baby Padan.

Twenty years ago, I celebrated Mother's Day for the first time as a grieving mom who lost her child.

What a difference a single year can make.

The full story of that single year is filled with some joy, but many tears. My husband and I wanted our baby; my pregnancy was intentional. We simply had no idea how many challenges we would face.

At the time I found out I was pregnant, I was working full-time as a music therapist at Danville's United Samaritans Medical Center. At 14 weeks gestation, I had a routine ultrasound. Bruce was with me, and we watched the ultrasound monitor with great joy. The next day, I brought my glossy 5×7 photo to work, showing off my baby's cute profile, with him sucking his thumb. The "Ooohs" and "Aaahs" were all that I had dreamed about.

But later that day, my dream began to change into a nightmare. Looking back, that term may be too harsh, but it is how I felt at the time. On the very day I was showing off my first baby picture, I received a phone call from the nurse. "Mrs. Padan, the doctor has found some anomalies on the ultrasound. He wants you to see a specialist."

The following Monday, I had a more detailed, intensive ultrasound at Indiana University Medical Center. Because it was an emergency referral, I got the doctor on-call. After scanning me, he said I was experiencing "amniotic band syndrome." It is rare, and there is no known cause, but because it happened during my first trimester, it was a very serious case. So much so that the doctor said "You need to consider your options."

I never thought I would ever hear those words. While I was not yet steeped in Catholic devotions outside of Mass, I knew and agreed with the Church's teachings on the sanctity of human life. In other words,

there were no “options.” The rest of the day is a blur to me now. I remember stopping in Rockville Indiana before going home to see my mother-in-law and Bruce’s youngest brother Chris. I remember crying a lot while Chris tried to console me. I remember calling my mom on the phone later that day, but I can’t remember how I broke the news to her. I simply remember being shocked, saddened, confused, and worried. From that day forward, everything changed.

But one thing did not change: I was still a MOM.

After many doctor visits, tests, and prayers, Gabriel James Padan was stillborn on October 6, 1994. Born just after midnight, he weighed just 2 pounds, 3.8 ounces. His frail body was unable to survive the process of birth. Despite his tiny size, he made a big impact on our family. Along with his mommy and daddy, Gabriel was welcomed by two grandmas, two uncles, one aunt, and even church friends all at the hospital. We arranged for a hospital chaplain to baptize him, since we know not when the soul leaves the body...and because I really needed the beauty of baptism to commend my little one to God. Two days later (the day before our first wedding anniversary,) St. Paul Church in Danville was packed for the funeral mass of a boy who never took a breath. When people say to me “I’m sorry that your baby did not live,” I quickly correct them. Yes he did. My son was alive for 33 weeks in my womb.



There are many details of this journey that I won’t share in this article. The reason I am sharing this story is to say that I know many women in our churches struggle with Mother’s Day. Some studies indicate that as many as 25% of pregnancies end naturally in miscarriage. Many women carry to term, but experience a stillbirth as I did. Still others suffer the anguish of losing a child to SIDS. There are many women who have experienced pregnancy, but their children are not around to make breakfast in bed, or pick dandelions from the front yard. To these women I say, “I get it.” This holiday can be tough.

But you are still a MOM. Whether God has granted you the blessing of additional children or not, you are a MOM. As prolife Catholics, we understand that human life begins at conception, not at birth. Every child ever conceived matters in the eyes of God! Every child conceived is gifted with a soul...and these innocent ones are in union with God eternally! As mothers, we miss our kids. But as women of faith, we can find peace in knowing that they are being taken care of by our Lord and the great family of saints in heaven. What joy there is in knowing that!

Years before I was married, a friend said something that has deeply impacted me to this day. She said she had nine children. I was confused; I only knew about the three kids I saw with her at Mass each week. “Oh Kim, there are just three here now, but I had six miscarriages. Those kids are just waiting for us in heaven.” How beautiful is that? In the years since, I have spoken to many women who have lost babies, and I encourage them in this way...Count your children. All of them. Born alive, miscarried...whatever the outcome, count your children. If we are to proclaim the Gospel of Life, let us boldly tell the world about every baby we have ever had!

Now, I realize also that there are women reading this who lost their babies by the choice of abortion. You are also mothers! You and your children are also precious in the eyes of God. As bad as abortion is, please hear me when I say, Jesus loves you and wants to heal you with His Divine Mercy! The Church wants you to know how important you are to the Body of Christ. I encourage you to contact a priest in your area and seek God's grace through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. If you have done this, but still struggle with sadness or guilt, please consider attending a Rachel's Vineyard retreat.

As a young woman, I always wanted to be a wife and mother. I am both. Bruce is the wonderful man who made me his wife. Gabriel is the little boy who made me a Mommy. That is worth celebrating every Mother's Day.

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This contribution is available at <http://gabrielsmom.com/2015/05/once-a-mother-always-a-mother/>  
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# Why Would Anyone Pray the Litany of Humility? [at Catholic365]

I love the Litany of Humility!

However, it was not love at first sight. I remember the first time someone mentioned the prayer to me. I wasn't familiar with it so I googled. I made the sign of the Cross and immediately began praying the prayer; but I couldn't digest the words. I had to switch out of 'praying it' mode into just 'reading it' mode so that I could get to the end without choking. The thoughts running through my head were along the lines of 'This is ridiculous! How could anyone pray this! If people do pray this then they are not being honest with themselves.'

I pushed the prayer aside for a length of time but eventually reason prevailed. The Litany of Humility is a spiritual classic written by Rafael Cardinal Merry del Val (1865-1930), Secretary of State for Pope Saint Pius X. The Cardinal has not been declared a saint yet but he is Servant of God and could very well be named a saint one day. Bottom line, this man was a wee bit holier than I. Also, his prayer had been recommended to me by people who are all a bit holier than I also.

I took some spiritual tums and prayerfully took a second look at the litany.

Indigestion in check, I saw the prayer with new eyes and I liked what I saw. In the first paragraph, I wasn't praying 'don't esteem me' as I had originally thought. I was praying, please take away the desire that I be esteemed. Don't let the desire for esteem rule my decisions and actions. And similarly, through the second paragraph of the litany, I wasn't praying 'humiliate me'. I was praying please free me from the fear of people humiliating and embarrassing me. Please don't let that fear rule my life. I began to imagine what my life would be like without these fears and desires and I liked what I envisioned...freedom! Freedom from fear and worry. I saw a life where honoring God's wishes was a lot easier because I was not distracted with worries of what other people would think about me or how they would treat me.

When I got to the third and fourth paragraphs the tums must have worn off because I started having difficulty again.

*"That others may be loved more than I ...Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it."*? That's tough. Okay Lord. I can see this is a good thing that I should desire. Please give me the grace. After all, I did just pray to be delivered from the desire of being loved.

When I got to the fourth paragraph I choked again. I choked because there was a difficult person in my life that I was trying to imagine into the prayer. So instead of praying 'that others may be esteemed more than I', I was praying 'that the difficult person may be more esteemed than I'. I think I was testing myself. Could I really do it? Was I sincere or was I just reading through the prayer on automatic pilot? I really didn't know. So I tried to continue through the lines of the prayer. I eeked my way to the last line and then thankfully, by the grace of God, it all came together for me. Upon reading the last line,

*"That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should...Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it."* " my first unfortunate response was a selfish "But she's *not* holier than me. That is the whole problem; she is *nasty*...to me!" And then the obvious struck me. If she were holier than I, then

there would be no problem. She wouldn't be so nasty anymore.

I had my answer; I could and do sincerely pray this prayer.

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, **Hear me.**

From the desire of being esteemed,

**Deliver me, Jesus.**

From the desire of being loved...

From the desire of being extolled ...

From the desire of being honored ...

From the desire of being praised ...

From the desire of being preferred to others...

From the desire of being consulted ...

From the desire of being approved ...

From the fear of being humiliated ...

From the fear of being despised...

From the fear of suffering rebukes ...

From the fear of being calumniated ...

From the fear of being forgotten ...

From the fear of being ridiculed ...

From the fear of being wronged ...

From the fear of being suspected ...

That others may be loved more than I,

**Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.**

That others may be esteemed more than I ...

That, in the opinion of the world,

others may increase and I may decrease ...

That others may be chosen and I set aside ...

That others may be praised and I unnoticed ...

That others may be preferred to me in everything...

That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should...

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholic365.com/article/1619/why-would-anyone-pray-the-litany-of-humility.html>

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## Doctor Moreau's Constitution [at Podcast]

Bruce *Caitlyn* Jenner is everywhere, the newspapers, Facebook, television, radio, Twitter, etc. He is discussed by politicians, church leaders, business leaders, celebrities and normal citizens. Such is the world of 2015.

*News Break June 12, 2027*

*Action movie star and animal rights activist Tasha Talon has announced that she will receive species reassignment surgery to correct a congenital birth defect.*

*“I was born human, but I’ve known all my life I am meant to be a cat. Anyone who knows me or has seen me perform in the movies knows I have catlike proclivities. My true nature is obscured by the error of my birth as human. I was meant to be a cat and soon will know the freedom of being who I truly am.”*

Logically, there is no reason now (2015) for such an event to not happen. It is established in popular culture that personal freedom means being who you want to be and doing what you want to do as long as you do not hurt others.

Bioengineers could design hip and knee replacements that would provide people with catlike abilities. Retractable claws could be artificial in the near term but with genetic manipulation who’s to say what would be possible in the next several decades.

The government and private corporations would actually have an incentive to fund the research and the surgeries. An Army comprised of soldiers with the lethal hardware of Tigers, or the strength of Mountain Gorillas. A Navy with sailors transformed into Mermen and Mermaids capable of remaining underwater indefinitely.

We would not have to be content to merely mimic nature, we could surpass it. A legion of enhanced workers who can see in near total darkness via light and sound waves, capable of lowering their oxygen needs to less than ten percent normal and many times physically stronger than an unenhanced human would enable companies to tap rich natural resources less expensively. There would be no need for machinery that breaks down in harsh conditions as replacement workers can be more cheaply grown in the lab than robots could build mechanical excavators.

Such enhanced workers could be culled from the unproductive chronically dependent members of society. They would get a feeling or real self-worth and society would receive a real benefit.

Trans-species reassignment is not only feasible but a necessary next step to creating the Utopia all humanitarians seek.

Caitlyn Jenner – thank you for thrusting us forward. Tasha Talon thinks you make a *purrfect* woman.



# Curious Thoughts on Catholics, Lawsuits, Cardinals, and Supposedly "Conservative" Bloggers [at Servimus unum Deum]

Hello Everyone,

Today while cruising "home base", the Society of Canadian Catholic Bloggers website, this shows up in the feed, with a hat - tip to Fr. Tim Moyle of "

[When the Rubber Hits the Road](#)

":

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/06/01/cardinal-pell-consults-lawyers-after-vatican-adviser-calls-him-almost-sociopathic/#.VWw9Y8lA49w.twitter>

Summary: There's a whole lotta infighting at the Vatican. A priest abuse survivor, Peter Saunders, a layman elected to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, launched a series of public slanderings and calumnies against known Conservative Cardinal George Pell, currently the Prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy. The worst claims are that ++Pell bribed someone to shut up about priest abuse the victim received, and that +Pell is "almost sociopathic."

Worse, Saunders threw away any credibility he had as a representative for the Vatican including his Pontifical Commission, by taking it to public air on the Australian television news program, 60 minutes. This may or may not be directly related to the American version. No surprise, this stuff is for ratings.

Because of this public defacement, the Catholic Herald states that "

"In the circumstances, the cardinal is left no alternative but to consult with his legal advisers." Hmmm  
.... This got

me thinking.

Recently, Certain Basilian and Jesuit priests have been threatening laypeople including bloggers with lawsuits. These people of course, used their blogs to fight back against the liberal, wayward priests, or had their lawyers use their wonderful legal skills to "smack down" said priests before the lawsuits left the ground running.

Not to mention, a certain prelate by the name of Cardinal Burke also weighed in on the matter of Catholics suing other Catholics, and basically put on South Park's "Don't Sue" panda costume. What does that panda advocate? "Don't sue."

Also, said bloggers and right-winged people of all strokes on the Catholic side of the blogosphere, have used a certain scripture passage (1 Corinthians 6-11 by the way,) to silence those with the Word of God as further weapons not to sue people and prove them right.

So clearly it's has been decreed wrong for liberal priests to sue Catholic bloggers and laity.

However, here's a "Traditional"/Benedict XVI/Conservative Cardinal" who is being unjustly attacked by someone who's also Catholic, and he is a victim of sexual assault from a priest. And yet, here is the conservative, supposedly spotless Cardinal, consulting his lawyers for legal advice .... of which one can rightly assume that a true and proper option would be to sue for defamation of character and/or libel.

So it seems, we have an interesting predicament here do we not????? Should Cardinal Pell sue?

If he does, he violates the Scripture thrown against Catholics to tell them not to sue, and he clearly is ignoring the advice of ++Burke and the other bastions of Catholic Truth, that right-wing Blog-o-sphere, that we shouldn't sue other Catholics. Clearly there is a hypocrisy, even if the lawsuit is just, that this Catholic is suing other Catholics for the right reasons.

This begs another question: If the right wingers/Radical Catholic Reactionaries/Conservative Cardinals were quick to condemn those liberal priests for their threat of lawsuit against other Catholics, will they do the same for Cardinal Pell, despite proper self-defense? Or will they remain silent in order to uphold their screed they have placed in public across the Catholic Blog-o-sphere? Or, will the blog-o-sphere become magically hypocritical save one of "their own" and rationalize their once "doctrinal" stance on lawsuits and Catholics? I suppose they might hide the turnabout in some sort of "clarification" or rationalization.

Now, should Cardinal Pell NOT sue, then yes, he clearly has upheld what ++Burke and company have said, and good for him .... or is it? They say that silence is assent, and that might actually make the world believe that Saunders and his emotionally/psychologically-fueled tirade is actually true, when clearly, right now there is no evidence proving his story is true. Therefore, as it stands, Saunders' story is false and a lie. It is further proven a lie as Saunders and ++Pell have never crossed paths, either in Australia, nor in their workings in the Vatican. If Saunders takes this further, and actually somehow gets validity to his story, placing Cardinal Pell under judgement, legal or clerical .....

then a new question arises. Will Pell's "conservative" blogging and clerical "allies" (I mean that loosely. It's more that they are not liberals in the Church but defend each other, blindly and without considering ALL angles to a case or story...) decry the injustice, and perhaps realize that there are just cases when a man should actually have a legal defense, and that just might .... gasp .... mean that a lawsuit is a valid legal defense for a truly calumniated man? Especially in this case, whereby it so happens it is a Catholic defending himself against another Catholic? Or will silence be the answer, just for the sake of upholding what is in the Catholic Blogosphere?

A quandary indeed .....

Hope you enjoyed my thoughts for today.

Pax, Julian.

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This contribution is available at <http://torontotlmerving.blogspot.ca/2015/06/curious-thoughts-on-catholics-lawsuits.html>

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## Deal or No Deal - Marriage or No Marriage [at Adult Catechesis]



**“Whatever marriage is said to be contracted, either it is so contracted that it really is a true marriage, in which case it carries with it that enduring bond which by divine right is inherent in every true marriage; or it is thought to be contracted without that perpetual bond, and in that case there is no marriage, but an illicit union opposed of its very nature to the divine law, which therefore cannot be entered into or maintained.”** (*Pius XI, quoting Pius VI, [Casti Connubii](#), 34*)

-by [Marc Barnes](#)

“The intention of perpetuity, or no marriage at all. Cold, Pope. Real cold.

But what it means is that, insofar as it is the law of the State to allow divorce, remarriage and pre-nuptial agreements, a civil marriage is no marriage at all. If a couple were to take as their inward intention what the State takes as a possibility — that their marriage could be dissolved, children split between them, and provisions made for this event prior to the marriage itself — then they would not, in the eyes of the Church, be married. They would enjoy the pleasures of an illicit union.

I am not arguing, of course, that the majority or even any non-sacramental marriages are illicit unions. I am arguing that, from the Catholic point of view, a couple is required to spiritually reject the very constitution of a civil marriage, to “fill it up” in their intention what is lacking in its legal structure — by committing to stay together. A State marriage is only a marriage if it is, in intention, anarchic; a rebellion against the dismal, defeatist proposition offered by the State, which, devoid of grace, can only ever plan for the worst in man — the inevitable boredom of his marriage and the dissolution of his promises.

If this is true, then the idea of “protecting State marriage” or “preserving the civil institution of marriage” against being altered in its very meaning by an alteration of definition from husband and wife to a sex-

blind affair — it seems paltry. Marriage is already, prior to any concerns over the manner in which the sexes constitute its essence, a rebellion against the State. To “save civil marriage” by maintaining it as “one man, one woman” would be to save an institution that the Christian, and indeed, every human looking to make one life out of two people, is called to reject. Any civil marriage, entered into as such, is an illicit union, no matter how stupendously straight or gloriously gay a couple has the pleasure of being.

This, on its own, should be sufficient to call into question the unfortunate position that Catholics, myself included, often take — that of the guardians of traditional marriage. Far from preserving and guarding an institution of the State, the role of the Catholic is to reject the State, question its foundations, and introduce something entirely new — entirely nontraditional. Indeed, it was precisely in rebellion against the human tradition of divorce and remarriage that that Rabbi, Jesus, said: “What God has joined, let no man tear asunder,” **and everywhere Christianity spread, it struggled to break the tradition of polygamy, religious prostitution, divorce and remarriage. Christianity, as we will see, murders the all-too-human tradition of solubility with the frightening call to indissolubility.**

Of course, one might argue that in preserving marriage as an institution of husband and wife is the preservation of natural law rather than civil law, but it is doubtful to me whether the violation of natural law is best corrected by the State, or, to say it positively, that “things acting in accord with their nature” is a goal achievable through the State — especially when our State codifies all manners of distortions of the nature of marriage long before any discussion of gay marriage. But we’ll get there: To start, I only want to disrupt the Good Traditional Marriage vs. Bad Gay Marriage narrative, to aim towards the possibility of a creative, fruitful separation of civil and sacramental marriage, or rather, **towards the acknowledgment that the Catholic and his State haven’t meant the same thing by the word “marriage” for quite some time. There’s some fresh air in this for the Catholic with the lungs for it. In a worldly city gone soggy with the separation of word from meaning, it is good to remember, in a desert-father fueled spirit of repudiation, that we do not do as the world does.”**

2 Cor 4:4

Love,  
Matthew

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This contribution is available at <http://soul-candy.info/2015/05/deal-or-no-deal-marriage-or-no-marriage/>  
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## A Moment From De Sales [at A Moment From De Sales]



Pope Francis loves to smile. It is his most attractive attribute. When he enters a gathering and beams his wholesome signature smile, it is as if a refreshing breeze has suddenly descended and everyone smiles in return.

Even when controversy swirls around him, he looks over the crowd present, his face lights up and peace descends on all present. One columnist wrote, “Long after we’ve forgotten what his position is on Catholic doctrine we will remember the serenity of Pope Francis—his self deprecating lightness of being.”

Besides his captivating grin, he has a sense of humor. And he knows how to use it on himself and on life’s situations. He told the Cardinals who elected him shortly after his election: “May God forgive you for what you have done.” Then he smiled and then they laughed. Ever since that first day, humor seems to cling to his white robes.

When he was asked what his secret to such serenity and happiness was he simply said: “*Slow down, take some time off, live and let live.*” He continued, “*Don’t proselytize, work for peace, work at a job that gives basic dignity, let go of negative feelings, move calmly through life, enjoy art, books and playfulness.*”

It doesn’t sound terribly difficult or even complicated. We simply have to know where we fit in and then allow space for others to find where they fit. Once this is accomplished, we then remember it’s not all about “me,” but about others too.

Pope Francis does this beautifully—it’s no wonder he is so serene! He lives his life and he knows how to let others live theirs. In this way everyone works for peace. Sounds like a great plan to inspire joy Maybe we should give it a try! **Ready, smile!**

## The Sacred Heart Of Jesus [at A JESUIT'S BLOG]

The feast of the Sacred Heart is a movable feast, but is always celebrated on the third Friday after Pentecost. Ever since the seventeenth century when St. Margaret Mary Alacoque was granted visions of the Sacred Heart and asked to spread this devotion, the Jesuits represented by her confessor St. Claude de la Colombière, played a fundamental role in spreading this devotion. Colombière, spoke with Margaret Mary a number of times and after much prayer, discernment and reflection became convinced of the validity of her visions.

In recent times, one of the most loved and admired Generals of the Society of Jesus Fr. Pedro Arrupe was instrumental in reviving this devotion and placing Jesuits once again at the forefront of spreading this devotion. This devotion according to Arrupe was “the centre of the Ignatian experience”. It is an “extraordinarily effective means as much for gaining personal perfection as for apostolic success”.

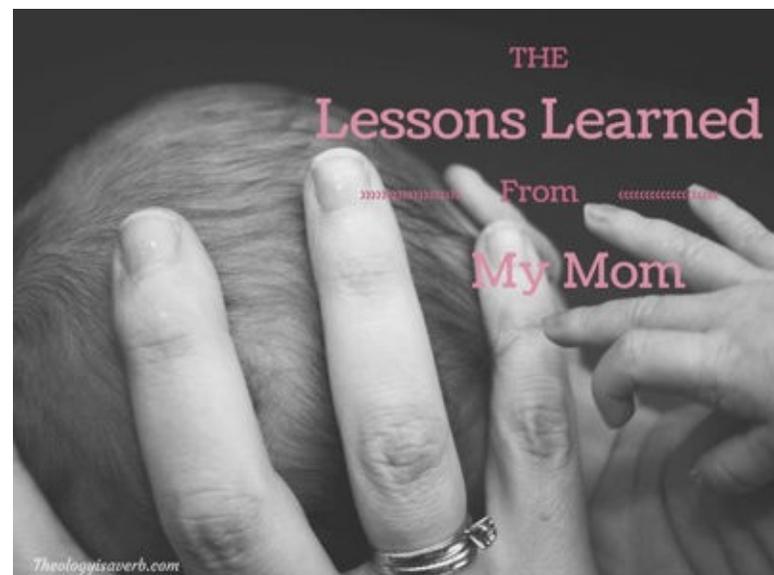
The feast of the Sacred Heart is to be celebrated as a privilege and grace. However, it is also a responsibility. First, the love that we receive from the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not a private possession, but one that must be shared with all. Just as the Father makes no distinction and makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good (Mt 5:45), so must we in our sharing of the love of Christ. Second, the concern that God has for us and our Universe must be a concern which we must show to our world. The wanton destruction of nature, excessive and abusive use of scarce resources like water, indiscriminate cutting of trees for selfish gain, unlawful and criminal killing of wild animals are signs that we are working against God’s concern.

If God cares for us so much, must we not care for our world? Third, the intimate connection of the Sacred Heart and Eucharist reminds us that just as Christ is so easily available to us, we must also be to each other. The Eucharist and the feast of the Sacred Heart ought not to be private and passive devotions, but celebrations that make us ready to reach out in service and availability to anyone who needs us.

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This contribution is available at <http://errolsj.blogspot.in/2015/06/the-sacred-heart-of-jesus.html>  
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## Lessons Learned From My Mom [at Theologyisaverb]



This morning as I awoke, I thought of both my heavenly and earthly mothers. With eyes closed, my lips whispered to Mary, “Thank you for your yes- to being the mother of Christ but also for remaining with me when my earthly mother could no longer do so. Please continue to guide me and all those I encounter till my own journey is done. ” Then, with a heart smiling full and complete, enveloped in love and gratitude, today I said Happy Mother’s Day to them mutually.

My mom, the second oldest of four and a high school teacher, met and fell in love with my dad within the span of two weeks. A whirlwind romance, fed by non-substantiating infatuation, they had met, married and divorced in a span of less than two years. Recognizing too late my father’s habits of drinking, and violent mood swings, there was cause for serious concern as she had discovered she was also pregnant with me. She had made the decision to raise me alone.



Her first picture as a new mom!

Though this was not what she had pictured, and despite several close friends advocating an abortion, her faith could not allow for her to make that choice. She felt that the life within her, me, was a gift from God and while unsure of what laid ahead she knew she needed to trust. That summer, as I came into the world my mom said goodbye to my father, never to be heard from again. Nonetheless, a part of my mom always hoped that he would find recovery and reconcile with me one day.



So the lessons I promised? Well, they are many but here are just a few...

**1. Trust-** not in what the world tells you are the choices before you, but in a bigger plan that only God is aware of. Though you do not have the strength to do it on your own, and when you wonder how you'll carry on- lean on Him.

“I raise my eyes toward the mountains. From whence shall come my help?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
the maker of heaven and earth.  
He will not allow your foot to slip;  
or your guardian to sleep.” (Psalm 121)

**2. Love-** the gifts given, delight in the surprises around you, seek God and you will most certainly find Him.

“See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19)

As a single parent, on a meager teacher's salary we did not indulge in big trips, but would go out exploring the world around us. Sometimes we would trip upon a free museum, pack a picnic lunch, go fishing, or drive out to the Mississippi river just to sit with our toes in the bank.

**3. Share-** what you have with others that are in need, both physically and spiritually. Growing up, I noticed that others certainly had more than me and yet there were so many that had less. One day, when I was about 8, my mom was approached by a young mom with several toddlers in tow asking for help.

Without hesitating, she had invited the family to stop by our home for dinner. The little faces that had been downturned and suspicious in the beginning all at once beamed at all the food that lay before them. Before they left, she packed up a few containers for them to take home with the offer to come back again. Upon noticing that there were a number of items missing with their departure, my mom was neither upset nor saddened. *“They are more in need of it than us Elizabeth”*. To which I learned what it was to give without expectation of return.

**4. Encourage-** the gifts in others, even those that they fail to see in themselves. My mom was my biggest cheerleader, and my most vocal critic. Sound contradictory? No not at all. You see, she knew that life could be difficult and how easy it is to settle or give in to an easy choice. She pushed me further than I thought I could go, and always pointed to the “more” in the world that God was calling me to do. As a teacher, she inspired her students who came from very difficult and impoverished backgrounds to continue with their education and challenged them to see their gifts. I cannot count the times, over the course of her life that former students would call her or run up with a hug to tell her the difference she had made in their lives. This is the teacher that I strive to be, thank you Mom for teaching me.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth".

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This contribution is available at <http://theologyisavverb.com/2015/05/10/lessons-learned-from-my-mom/>  
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## On the road to sainthood and not silent about it [at Tactical Catholic]



I had an interesting conversation with a [podcast](#) listener about a week ago. They had listened to some of the podcasts and were accusing me of being “holier than thou” when in fact I was a hypocrite. Their conclusion was that I was in no position to tell anyone anything related to faith and morals because of my own imperfections.

Were they right?

Saints did not get that way because God zapped them and suddenly all their imperfections were gone. They are saints because they cooperated with the grace of God and grew in holiness. Read their stories. You’ll find real people with real struggles. You’ll also find that they were still sharing their faith as they struggled. People didn’t only start listening to them after they had been canonized saints by the Church. Folks were listening to them the whole time, even in the tough times.

Here’s what I have to say to the ones wishing to point out my faults. Do I have them? Loads of imperfections and lots of mistakes are mine on a near daily basis. Here’s the difference: I don’t claim perfection. In fact, I tend to use my constant idiocy as proof that God’s grace and mercy still work. Listen to the [podcast](#) often enough and you’ll hear it. His discipline and correction in my life is proof to me that God still loves me and wants me to be part of his kingdom. Otherwise, He’d leave me alone to pursue whatever and end up dead and separated from Him forever. But He doesn’t.

I’m not perfect. I sin often. But I go to confession. I do penance. I work at growing in holiness. All the while I share the faith. I’m fortunate to have been taught a great deal by the saints, my pastors, my spiritual director, and scads of good books. When I fail I cannot plead ignorance. So I struggle on. God has been good to me, not only to forgive me and put me on the right path, but also to provide me with a community in which to grow.

For those who wish to be left alone and not be faced with a moral obligation, be it from me, the Pope, or anyone else, let me encourage you to avoid isolation. Let me further encourage you to seek Christian community where you can be challenged to be the person you were created to be. Community makes the difference, and you need it as much as I do.

Chances are good that there are opportunities for building community in your home parish, and there are good places online to find additional folks to help you with whatever you might be facing. Of course, you can always hook up with us at [The Tactical Catholic Podcast](#) or any of the programs at the [Fiat Ministry Network](#). We would love to talk to you, pray with you, and get to know you. Just don't go at it alone.

And don't wait until you're perfect before you share your faith. Your real struggles might be the key to helping someone else find the hope they need.

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This contribution is available at <http://tacticalcatholic.wordpress.com/2015/06/13/on-the-road-to-sainthood-and-not-silent-about-it/>  
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