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new  
evangelists  
monthly

*July*  
*2015*

# New Evangelists Monthly #31

July 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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I am not afraid!



Fear has no place in the heart, because it doesn't come from God. Fear is used by the devil to keep us from doing God's will. The devil will attempt to make us doubt our abilities, especially the ability to be courageous. How do we effectively shut the devil out and listen only to God? How do we become courageous?

We start with these five steps:

## Pray

Ask the Lord to make His presence known to you in your heart; so that you know He is always with you, and will never leave you. *"Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed; I am your God. I will strengthen you, and help you, and uphold you with my right hand of justice"* (Is 41:10).

## Stop Worrying

Worrying never changes anything. It only wastes your time; time that could be better spent by employing courage. Listen to Jesus: *"Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself"* (Matt 6:34). *"Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid"* (John 14:27).

## Do Not Give Up

Persevere in times of adversity, especially when all seems lost. If you give up, the devil will have won the battle. *"But as for you, be strong and do not relax, for your work shall be rewarded"* (2 Chron. 15:7).

## Face Fear

With confidence in Christ Jesus, conquer the fear that keeps you from being courageous by remembering

that with “*God, all things are possible*” (Matt 19:26).

## **Trust in the Lord**

Place your trust in God, and then act courageously, despite any fear; knowing that He always has your back. “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence rely not; In all your ways be mindful of Him, and He will make straight your paths*” (Prov. 3:5-6).

Now, go out there and do the Lord’s will. Face the fear and move beyond it. Be courageous and make a positive difference in this world!

Sometimes, we just need to be patient. We’ll begin discussing the virtue of patience in our next reflection. Don’t miss it!

[Association of Catholic Women Bloggers](#)

[Top Catholic Blogs](#)

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# Ben Carson, the next US President, and anti-Catholic? [at Catholicism and Adventism]

When John Fitzgerald Kennedy became US president, some Protestants were wary. Some thought that too much Catholic influence would be a bad thing.

Now, decades later, an Adventist is possibly amongst those running for the throne that is arguably the most powerful position in the world.

**Dr Benjamin Solomon Carson Sr.**, a retired neurosurgeon and a Republican, is potentially the next US President. And he is a Seventh-day Adventist.

According to [Wikipedia](#) and other sources, some of his views are:

- Medical care for the elderly – *“Decisions on who should be treated and who should not be treated would clearly require some national guidelines”* [1]
- Marriage – *“Marriage is between a man and a woman. No group, be they gays, be they NAMBLA, be they people who believe in bestiality, it doesn’t matter what they are. They don’t get to change the definition.”* [2]
- Evolution – *“I don’t believe in evolution...I simply don’t have enough faith to believe that something as complex as our ability to rationalize, think, and plan, and have a moral sense of what’s right and wrong, just appeared.”* [3]
- Affordable Care Act (aka ObamaCare) – *“the worst thing that has happened in this nation since slavery”* [4]
- Recreational cannabis – *“Medical use of marijuana in compassionate cases has been proven to be useful, but recognize that marijuana is what is known as a gateway drug– a starter for people who move on to heavier duty drugs. I don’t think this is something we really want for our society.”* [5]
- Abortion – *“There is no war on them, the war is on their babies, babies that cannot defend themselves. Over the past few decades, we have destroyed 55 million of them. And we have the nerve to call other societies of the past heathen. What we need to do is re-educate the women to understand that they are the defenders of these babies.”* [6]

He will, if elected, also be the first US President I’ve ever met. He came to South Africa in the 1990s to separate two siamese twins. He gave a talk afterwards for the local Adventists, and an Adventist friend invited me to go with.

My strongest memory of the event was him saying something about Catholics and [soul sleep](#) and the Adventists around me sighing and shaking their heads and saying how terrible the Catholic Church is.

## So. Why am I writing about him?

Do I think he is a good candidate for US President? Yes, I do – the pro-life issue makes it for me. In a world dominated by death, perhaps he could do some good.

Do I think he will win the election? I doubt he'll end up being a finalist. If he is, it's time the Republicans won again, so then it's a maybe.

What makes it an interesting situation is that he's an Adventist – [a member of one of the most dishonest and anti-Catholic religions around today](#).

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.

Why this is nonsense: [see here](#).



Devil, 13th century

Will Ben Carson be a devil and turn on the Catholics?

Well ... probably not. Catholics and Catholic institutions – and Christians in general – are become more and more subject to unfair discrimination worldwide when it comes to practising their beliefs. Carson may or may not support further legislation or court decisions that further this discrimination. He may, on the other hand, turn things around and help all Christians, no matter what day they keep, follow their consciences, as Adventism claims to be strong on. I don't believe he'll be rounding up Catholics for torture and execution the way the Adventist church teaches we will do to them in the end times.

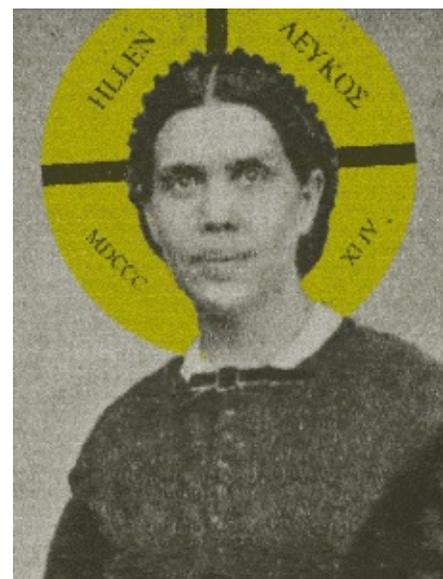
That said, I would like to know his views on the Catholic Church and her teachings. And whether he'd dare shake hands with the pope.

**So ... why AM I writing about him?**

Probably the biggest danger associated with him running for, or becoming, the next US President, is that people will focus on his weaknesses, or what they perceive to be his weaknesses, and one of those is his faith. It will be used against him, but Adventists and the Adventist church will use it in their favour – they will use it as an opportunity to evangelise, and they will end up poaching Christians from other

denominations.

Adventism, you see, is much like a wolf in sheep's clothing. It presents itself as a normal Christian denomination, and hides the fact that it's a semi-New Covenant religion, with a lot of Old Covenant mixed in – particularly the Sabbath. And other strange beliefs also get hidden from prospective recruits.



Ellen White icon

### Questions I would want to ask of Dr Ben Carson:

- Do you, like other Adventists, believe that the Catholics will persecute you in the end times?
- Do you, like other Adventists, believe that Jesus Christ is Michael the Archangel?
- Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God, the Second Person of the Trinity? Or do you, like many of the early Adventists, believe that he was a created being?
- Do you, like other Adventists, believe that eventually Christians will read through the heavenly records and judge God's decisions about who was saved and who was not?
- Do you, like other Adventists, believe that Jesus will one day stop interceding for mankind, and we will be left without an intercessor?
- Do you believe, like Christians, that Jesus bore our sins, or like Adventists, that Satan will?
- Do you, like other Adventists, believe that Ellen White is a true prophet of God?
- Do you believe that, even though her visions started after a head injury, her head injury had nothing to do with those visions?
- Do you believe Ellen White when she said that the prayers of non-Adventist Christians are an abomination to God?
- Do you believe Ellen White when she said that [certain races of men are the result of humans mating with animals](#)?
- Do you believe Ellen White was correct when she said that William Miller was right about Jesus returning in 1843 (and later 1844?)
- Do you believe that Ellen White was correct when she taught that wearing wigs caused insanity?
- Do you, like other Adventists and Ellen White, believe that Jesus had a sinful fallen human nature, or do you believe, like the rest of Christianity, that he did not?
- Do you, like other Adventists, believe that Ellen White could copy passages verbatim from other people's writings and then claim, correctly, that these things were revealed to her by God?

- Do you believe Ellen White when saw in a vision given to her by God that Jupiter only has 4 moons, and has tall people living on it?
- Do you believe Ellen White when she said that Exodus 35:2-3 contained “senseless restrictions”?

I could go on. And on. And on.

*“As people dig down in the weeds of Adventist beliefs, I think what they’ll find will be intriguing, perhaps curious and sometimes disturbing – and Dr. Carson will get associated with all that, whether or not it’s a belief he himself holds. It’s going to create some challenges for him.”*

– Kenny Anderson, cited at [Ben Carson is a Seventh-day Adventist: 6 predictions + rank best faith for president](#)

**The Christian world will need to wake up and educate Christians** about why Adventism is so far off track.

**The Catholic world will need to educate Catholics about Adventism**, and teach why the arguments presented by Adventists are not based on the Bible.

We’re going to see more of Adventism over the next few years, if Dr Ben Carson rises high enough in the US Presidential election game. **And we need to be ready for it.**

Hopefully this blog will play a role.

Footnotes:

1. [Ben Carson in His Own Words](#)
2. [Ben Carson: ‘I apologize’ for gay remark](#)
3. [Richard Dawkins & Daniel Dennett vs. Francis Collins & Benjamin Carson](#)
4. [Ben Carson: Obamacare worst thing ‘since slavery’](#)
5. [Ben Carson on Drugs](#)
6. [Ben Carson: Ridiculous How Abortion Activists Call Pro-Life People “Anti-Woman”](#)

**Further reading:**

[President Ben Carson, How’s That Sound?](#) – Tesa Beem, ex-Adventist, now Catholic

[Dr Ben Carson for President?](#) – commentary from the paranoid side of Adventism

[A Tale of Two Men and...Humility: The National Prayer Breakfast 2013](#) – praise by a Catholic for Carson’s prolife/moral issue views

[Ben Carson gives Political Speech on Sabbath](#) – Adventist criticism of Carson

[More Proof that Conservatives Won’t Win](#) – Discussion of the Southern Baptist rejection of Carson

[Ben Carson, POTUS, and the SDA](#) – Discussion of Carson’s Adventism, and Adventist history

[Church keeps distance from Carson's presidential bid](#) – Discussion of Adventism's reaction to Carson

[Why Isn't the Seventh-day Adventist Church Endorsing Ben Carson for President?](#) – Columbia Union explanation

[Johnson: Dr. Ben Carson needs to follow his own advice](#) – Adventist criticism of Carson's honesty

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## Forgive, We Must [at A Spiritual Journey]

In today's Gospel reading from Matthew 6, Jesus taught his disciples about prayer. He informed them: "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Remembering this bring us comfort and makes us feel close to God when we pray. After he taught the disciples the Lord's Prayer, he added, "*If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.*" These are "worrisome" sayings we must take seriously. As of now, I don't believe that many of us are ready to forgive everyone else yet ~ this means that the Father is not ready to forgive them yet, although he wants to. Therefore, it's absolutely necessary that we reconcile ourselves with God before we die, repenting all our sins we could not overcome! Naturally, doing it now is much better than doing it on your deathbed.

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# Agonizing Joy: the Conversion Experience [at Through the Eyes of the Faithful]

When most people think about conversion, especially folks outside of Christianity, we tend to think of extremes. We think conversion is typically born out of desperate circumstances like a brush with death or hitting rock bottom in life. Now I don't doubt that many authentic and inspiring conversions have come about in this way, but these stories are not the only kind of conversion and they tend to give people a very common misconception about conversion: that faith is something people put on like a warm and fuzzy blanket to comfort themselves. Certainly there is a joyful component to any conversion, but it's not the whole story. Being a Christian is a lifelong journey, and a rather difficult one at that. In this post I hope to paint a more accurate picture of what conversion is like.

## Speaking From Experience

So the obvious place to start is with my own conversion. If you haven't read my first post which tells my story you can check it out [here](#) to see how my conversion came about, but as I said, that is only the beginning. It all started with that moment of revelation. I stared in bewilderment at the words in front of me pointing out what had eluded me all my life: I had to make a choice about Christ. His own words declared that He was not just another nice man with some nice advice. He either is who He says or He's a bad man. The temptation is always to create the "domesticated Jesus" because the true figure of Christ is a very dangerous one. The reality of God become man is actually quite terrifying if you think about it. We want Jesus to be just another wise man in the long history of wise men because if He is who He says He is, we owe our whole life to Him and that is not something easily come to terms with. It certainly wasn't easy for me. As I said in my first post, the first book I read after that revelation was C.S. Lewis' [Mere Christianity](#). Before reading this and before having any feelings other than disdain for Christianity, I was like most people in that I thought I was a decent person. In fact, I imagined myself morally superior to Christians because I was being good and kind for the sake of it and not because I was trying to reach some candyland in the sky. But while the revelation of the existence of God is initially euphoric, it brings with it some other realizations that are not so pleasant. The beginning of my conversion played out something like this:

"Christ is who He says or He's a bad man. Hey, nobody ever put it like that before. I need to think about this a moment. Um...I'm not sure I like where this is going. This is just stupid, God become man? God doesn't exist! Wait a minute, did she say C.S. Lewis? I think I have that book...I DO have that book. I have to go find it!

\*days pass as I read the most intelligent, logical argument for God I had never heard in my life\*

"I was wrong. All this time I was wrong. God does exist...God DOES exist...and He loves me! He became man and died for me, and rose from the dead, and this is so amazing and oooooooooooooooooohhh, dear *God* I'm a horrible person!!!"

My whole life I thought Christians were a bunch of self-righteous snobs staring down their noses at all of us Godless heathens. The truth is, when you understand who God is and who Christ is you see how desperately you fall short of His glory and how woefully inadequate and unworthy you are. The best analogy I've ever heard is one from, you guessed it, Father Robert Barron. Think of a windshield. When you are facing away from the light, your windshield looks great, all is as it should be. But when you are driving toward the sun, you see every last speck and smudge and you see clearly what a mess it really is. Having realized the truth about God and that Christianity is true, I also had to come to terms with the fact that for all of my adult life I had been spreading lies and leading others astray. How many souls did I lead away from Christ in that time? How many people did I convince that what is good is evil and what is evil is good? I was, and still am, sick at the thought.

Of course all of the above is played out in super warp speed to make a point. Anyone who has read C.S. Lewis knows it's not exactly leisure reading, and anyone who has converted from Atheism to Catholicism (or Christianity in general) knows how uncomfortable it is. I can't tell you how many obnoxious remarks I made in my years as an atheist about Christianity, or how many disrespectful arguments I had with Christians. Imagine for a moment you've been arguing with someone that they took your pen. For the last seventeen minutes you've laid into them, called them every name in the book, insulted their intelligence and possibly even their mother. Now imagine you suddenly realized you were wrong and it wasn't actually your pen. That's right, let that hypothetical feeling of total humiliation sink in a bit. Now imagine it wasn't seventeen minutes, but years and over something far more important than a pen. You can now start to imagine how I felt upon realizing the truth about Christ.

And that was only the beginning. Once the initial shock wore off I had another startling revelation: my new-found faith left me having to reconsider every position, every stance, every decision about everything imaginable. I realized that I didn't know what I thought about *anything*. You see, being a Christian isn't just about where you spend your Sunday morning. It influences every part of your life. Some people think that's extreme, but think about it - wouldn't it be worthless if it didn't? If what you believe about the very nature of our existence, where we came from and why we're here, doesn't have an impact on how you live your life, what good is it? On the flip side of that you could also say that if you think what you believe about the very nature of our existence doesn't influence how you live your life, you're fooling yourself.

Some people have this silly idea that if we just take religious beliefs out of everything it will solve all the world's problems and disagreements. The truth is, that's impossible. What you believe influences everything, even if you claim to believe in nothing.

Next we need to consider that I was not going through this conversion in a vacuum. I was married with three children when this happened to me. I still can't imagine how my husband must have felt when his staunchly atheist wife of five years suddenly did an about face and declared she wanted to return to the Catholic Church. You mean the Catholic Church she previously despised with every fiber of her being?

Yep, that's the one. Seriously, I owe that man a case of beer and tickets to the Daytona 500 just for not dragging me off to the nuthouse. That's not to say it all came up roses. Our discussions about the Faith brought out a side of my husband I had never seen before - an angry side. We fought pretty much every time I brought it up and there were times I was pretty sure this journey was going to end with our divorce. I prayed and cried and cried and prayed...and cried. I realized the pain in my heart was nothing

compared to the pain I caused God and offered up my oceans of tears to Him.

And what about our children? This whole journey came about because of our decision to homeschool them. There I was, newly committed to my children's education and now this. What was I to teach them about the Faith? Would this be another fight? How do I even begin to teach them all this stuff when I barely understand it myself? But, as any Christian homeschooler will tell you, when you teach children the Faith, they really end up teaching you in the end.

By and by we figured it out. The fights turned to serious discussions and heart-felt honesty. In the end, it was actually our children who brought my husband back to the Church. But that's his story and I'll let him tell it if he wants.

## **A Lonely New Existence**

The dust settles and your head stops spinning and you wake up in a whole new world. You get back to your normal life, but it's never the same. More than once, when discussing the Faith and my conversion with my husband, I described to him the best analogy for conversion I could think of. Imagine you've been sleeping and when you wake up you're inside a burning building. You want to run for your life, but you realize that all around you are others who are still sleeping. You desperately want to wake them up. You shake them and scream, but they simply won't wake up.

Early in my conversion, I knew that the rest of my life must be dedicated to helping others see the truth. While I realized that my conversion would come as a shock, I was not prepared for the number of friends I was about to lose and the number of enemies I was about to gain. Surely, I thought, the words of such an unlikely convert would carry more weight than a so-called cradle Catholic. I honestly believed my friends would be eager to hear the story of my conversion and perhaps they would want to consider for themselves the case I found so convincing. Rather I found many people stopped speaking to me without so much as a word, and others stopped speaking to me after a handful of rather harsh words. More and more I realized I was living in a world that, quite frankly, hated me and everything I stood for. Among all the books I've read since my conversion, I've read nothing that so perfectly describes how it feels to be Christian these days than the following passage from Michael D. Obrien's Father Elijah:

"These are not easy times, Father Elijah. One needs the wisdom of Solomon just to get through an ordinary day around here. Much depends on keeping our wits about us."

Elijah reached out and traced the letters of Severa's name.

"I know what you're thinking", said the cardinal. "You think we should march straight to the Colosseum and tell the guards to turn the lions on us."

Elijah said nothing.

"A heroic martyrdom is fast, simple, glorious, isn't it? Blood washes away all ambiguities. Death breaks the intolerable tensions. You would like us to braid a rope and drive the moneychangers from the Temple, then go to the cross. Correct?"

"Is that so wrong? Isn't that the pattern our Savior has shown us?"

"Indeed it is. And I tell you that we *are* going to the cross. But it is not our right to hasten that day. We must work while the light lasts. We must strengthen what remains. **This is the long and lonely**

**martydom. It is the most difficult of all."**

### **A Little Help From My Friends**

If you still don't believe me that conversion is a rather painful and difficult process, let's take a look at some more noteworthy converts shall we? I'll start with my favorite: Saul. Now if you're not Christian you're saying, "Saul who?" You might know him better as Paul...as in Saint Paul. You mean the Saint Paul who had his head cut off for love of Christ? Yep, that's him. Check this out:

Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, and [in a vision] he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him, that he may regain his sight." But Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name." So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit." Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized...He stayed some days with the disciples in Damascus, and he began at once to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. - Acts 9:1-20

So one moment Saul is riding along uttering murderous threats and heading to bring Christians back to Jerusalem in chains and next thing you know he's proclaiming Christ as the Son of God in the synagogues. But surely he traded up right? Surely there was something *in it* for him. Oh you be there was:

Five times at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep.

- 2Corinthians 11:24-25

Now doesn't that sound like a swinging time? Conversion is a blast! This is not to mention the many times he was thrown in prison and of course, the grand finale of his beheading. Now you tell me, what is worth all of this?

Let's have one more for good measure, but this one is short and sweet. C.S. Lewis, if you didn't already know, was not just one of the best modern Christian evangelists, he was also a former atheist. And just like me, he wanted very little to do with all this God business and especially all this Christianity business. I mean, wouldn't it be easier to just throw on some deism and say, "Yep, God's there. He made all this and now he's doing his deity thing out there in the universe somewhere, but he doesn't need me to do anything. So...thanks for the sweet digs, God!" The quote from Lewis I'm about to share with you about his conversion is one I didn't discover until a bit later in my conversion, but I loved it then and years later it still makes me laugh every time I read it:

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. - Surprised by Joy, page 229

Dejected and reluctant? It sounds like a child who just lost a long and weary struggle with a parent over bedtime doesn't it? This is not a man who went looking for meaning and happiness wherever it best suited him. This is a man who fought relentlessly to avoid Truth. He didn't want this and yet he went on to be one of the most renowned Christian writers of our time. What's more, he did this in the shadow of World War I and held strong to his faith through the horrors of World War II. A measly pair of rosy colored glasses can't do that, folks.

So what? You could spend the rest of your life reading conversion stories thanks to the internet, but in the end what is the point? What does all of this mean? Do I expect everyone to read this post and fall on their knees repenting? No. Perhaps some will. I pray that even one person would read my story and be converted, but that's not up to me. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit alone and can only occur with consent. What I hope everyone can take away from this is the understanding that there is nothing glamorous about conversion to Christianity. There never has been and there never will be. Authentic Christianity is gut-wrenchingly painful at times. Yes, there is joy. There is joy beyond all the wonders of this world, but until we leave this world it will always be tempered by suffering.

Now, are there "fake" Christians out there? Sure. Are there "bad" Christians out there? Absolutely, just like there are bad doctors, lawyers, cops, teachers, mothers, and...hey wait, there's a common denominator here: PEOPLE. Perfection is not to be found in this world. But look to the ones who point to the Truth. Look to the ones who point us to God. How joyfully they suffer! Why? What do they know that you don't? Where else can you find people willing to be beaten, whipped, crucified, burned alive, and beheaded rather than denounce a claim? Can we posit with a straight face that for some two *thousand* years people have gone willingly to their horrific deaths for the sake of a delusion, for the sake of a lie? No, there is more. There is so much more.

Won't you consider it, my friends? Won't you wake up, sleepers?

"But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!' " - Mark 13: 32-37

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GO BACK  
YOU ARE GOING  
WRONG WAY

*"Today the Supreme Court is Wrong Again!" warns Archbishop Joseph E Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky*

The U.S. Supreme Court legalized same sex "marriage" in a decision called *Obergefell v. Hodges* on Black Friday June 26, 2015.



GAY  
MARRIAGE

It's another chapter in Grimm's Fairy Tales. Chastity remains a virtue and God made them male and female. (Gen 5:2, Mark 10:6) Fairy Tale Writers on the Supreme Court cannot change reality although they are creating a hostile living environment for believing Christians and innocent children. Any civil law that contradicts Natural Law causes injustice. It never fixes anything.

"Today the Court is wrong again. It is profoundly immoral and unjust for the government to declare that two people of the same sex can constitute a marriage," said Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, adding that forcing the states to license same-sex "marriage" is a tragic error that will harm the most vulnerable among us.

He went on to say, "Regardless of what a narrow majority of the Supreme Court may declare at this moment in history, the nature of the human person and marriage remains unchanged and unchangeable. Just as *Roe v. Wade* did not settle the question of abortion over forty years ago, *Obergefell v. Hodges* does not settle the question of marriage today. Neither decision is rooted in the truth, and as a result, both will eventually fail."

And guess what papal encyclical he quotes to prove his point? *Laudato Si*, the much maligned environmental scribbling from Pope Francis II!

“The unique meaning of marriage as the



union of one man and one woman is inscribed in our bodies as male and female. The protection of this meaning is a critical dimension of the “integral ecology” that Pope Francis has called us to promote,” Archbishop Kutz said.

Environmentalists, you can’t embrace homosexual “marriage,” and expect Catholics to think you actually love the earth! Tree-hugging heterosexuals, you can’t use contraception and expect us to believe you respect the environment. [Contraceptive hormones](#) appear increasingly in our drinking water causing fish populations to die in three short generations while people drinking hormone-laced water have unexplained plummeting sperm counts, soaring incidences of testicular cancer, infertility and childhood gender confusion.

The Catholic Church encourages every person -- whether they experience same-sex or opposite-sex attractions -- to live chastely, and in marriage to be fruitful. And with the recent publication of *Laudato Si*, we now know this is good for the environment.

While bathing the White House in Friday night, U.S. President Barack Obama applauded the Supreme Court decision saying the government was



committed to “equality and diversity.” He subtly suggested that those who have embraced the idea of same-sex unions should “reach back and help others join them.”

Obama’s speech before Notre Dame University’s graduating class of 2009 contained the same subtle hint that there was only one right side to the abortion question. While complementing the youth present for their pro-life values, which he opposes, he reminded them that they could become a “crossroads,” a person of faith who admits doubt. “Remember, too, that the ultimate irony of faith is that it necessarily admits doubt.”



U.S. Presidential Hopeful Hillary Clinton is not as subtle. She has said that “deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed” in order to protect access to abortion. What hubris! What makes her think she CAN think her way out of a paper bag?

Abortion and same sex “marriage” have now both been legalized through tyrannical judicial fiat in the United States. Both so-called “laws” need to be resisted in every setting in the United States – abortion mills, hospitals, marriage tribunals, notary public, licensing offices, wedding florists, bakeries, photographers, churches and all public media. The law won’t go into effect without the cooperation of U.S. Citizens. Don't cooperate.

Good Catholics actually don’t have a choice. “Human law is law inasmuch as it is in conformity with right reason and thus derives from the eternal law. But when a law is contrary to reason, it is called an unjust law; but in this case it ceases to be a law and becomes instead an act of violence,” wrote the prophet Pope Saint John Paul II in the Gospel of Life concerning legal abortion and euthanasia.

But same sex marriage is contrary to right reason as well from the simple fact that same sex relations are not structurally complementary, and cannot naturally produce children. “There is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws; instead there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection,” Pope John Paul II admonished us.

Detroit Archbishop Allen Vigneron along with Vatican advisor Edward Peters say that

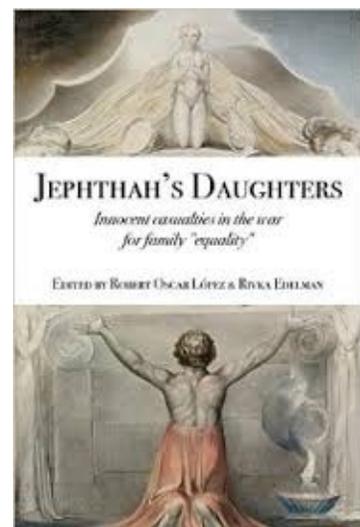


Catholics who promote same sex "marriage" should not receive Holy Communion. The Archbishop told the *Detroit Free Press* Sunday that Catholics who receive Communion while advocating gay "marriage" would "logically bring shame for a double-dealing that is not unlike perjury." About 30 other U.S. bishops have said that pro-abortion or pro-gay "marriage" Catholics should not present themselves for communion.

“Mandating marriage redefinition across the country is a tragic error that harms the common good and most vulnerable among us, especially children. The law has a duty to support every child’s basic right to be raised, where possible, by his or her married mother and father in a stable home,” Archbishop Kurtz said. See: [A Child’s Right to Mom and Dad: Why Kids of Gays Oppose Gay Adoption](#)

Pope Francis spoke about the same matter on April 8: “Children also pay the price for immature unions and irresponsible separations: they are the first victims; they suffer the outcome of a culture of exaggerated individual rights, and then the children become prematurely precocious. They often absorb the violence they are not able to “ward off” and before the very eyes of adults are forced to grow accustomed to degradation.”

A cursory reading of Jephthah’s Daughters:



*Innocent Casualties in the War for Family “Equality,”* demonstrates that parental chastity is essential for healthy human development, and a child should not be taken from his natural parents to satisfy the hunger of a same-sex couple for parenthood. *Jephthah’s Daughters* Co-Author Rivka Edelman, raised by a female same-sex couple, said, “Children are not a right.” Because of their difficult upbringing, Edelman – along with numerous other adult children of same sex couples – oppose same-sex “marriage” which comes with the right to same-sex adoption and surrogacy. The Catholic Church would add, “Children are a gift to marriage.”

However, many people, who self-identify as homosexual, do not understand this viewpoint. Why can’t two people who love each other get married and have children? They have created new hashtags on Twitter to celebrate the mindless *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision: #LoveWins, #LoveisLove, #IDo and #June26.

They see the matter simply as an injustice: Opposite-sex attracted couples can marry. Why can’t same-sex couples? Opposite-sex attracted couples can naturally have children. People who self-identify as homosexual must have the same right to children even though they are involved in a biologically fruitless activity. They look at the Church’s refusal to bless same-sex unions as a form of hatred.

I tweeted the opinion of Dissenting Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, who said the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision represents a “threat to democracy” and nothing but “judicial Putsch” – a violent and underhanded attempt to overthrow our government. And one man tweeted back that Justice Scalia “hated gays.”

This response makes sense if you understand that many confuse their activity with their identity. With respect to homosexuality, they often believe they were “born that way,” “can’t change,” and “I’m gay.” The Catholic Church encourages us instead to find our identity in Jesus Christ, or at the very least in our own personhood, i.e. I’m not “straight.” I am a child of God. I am a person.

“This is quite possibly one of the most difficult topics for people to understand,” said “Andrew” in [With Open Hearts](#) published by **Pursuit of Truth Ministries**. (*With Open Hearts* is approved both by the local ordinary and by Courage, an international apostolate of the Catholic Church, which ministers to persons with same-sex attractions and their families.)

“Many of us at one point struggled with understanding why the Church would ever try to prevent two people from loving each other. That is where our minds and hearts were at before we encountered Christ, who planted in our hearts an unceasing desire to grow in virtue and holiness.”

“Andrew” admits that once members of his ministry came to know Christ they “disengaged from unchaste romantic and or sexualized relationships of all types - including those with same-sex partners.”

“We share this to help people come to understand that we were motivated not out of "fear of misbehaving in the eyes of the Church" but rather because *we love Jesus Christ*,” Andrew said.

“With regards to same-sex marriage in particular, we again, came to realize that the Church was not inventing its own truth. Rather it was upholding objectively truths about the order of creation.”

Therefore **Pursuit of Truth** came to understand:

## **Male and Female Ideal for Fruitful Marriage**

“1. It is an objective truth that there is a particular type of union by which the intended purposes of our reproductive systems can be completely fulfilled. That is in a union between a male (XY) and a female (XX). **The Church doesn't invent this.**”

## **Chaste Living is necessary for Healthy Child Rearing**

“2. There is a particular type of union that provides the greatest potential degree of stability for child rearing, and that is a set of parents who are not damaging each other's neurochemical bonding mechanisms by having multiple partners, but who rather are enhancing their bonding to one another through the practice of chaste living. **The Church doesn't invent this.**”

## **A Female Cannot Give Perfectly What a Male Can & Vice Versa**

“3. Males and females have unique gifts to offer the world - AND their children - including conditioning on how to grow relationally with others, as the brains of males and females respond differently to the same relational stimuli. That is, a female cannot perfectly give what a male can give, and a male cannot perfectly give what a female can give.”

**Every Child Has the Right to a**

**Mother and Father**

“...As well, the Church recognizes that while it takes at the very least a male and a female for there to be the structural openness to new life, it takes *one* male and *one* female, to bring about the likelihood of the most stable and well-bonded *parental* relationship. And because a stable and well-bonded parental relationship leads to the highest likelihood of a relationally stable environment into which a child may grow, it is this type of family structure that the Church recognizes to be most beneficial for a child. **Again, the Church doesn't invent this.**”

So Pope Francis and Archbishop Kurtz comments do not represent hate speech against people who have chosen to self-identify as homosexual. They did not invent the facts on which our Catholic faith is based, nor did they create the way that our bodies work. But the Supreme Court has twice now violated the U.S. Constitution and disregarded children's rights in favor of selfish adults, both in *Roe v Wade* and *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

This fact was not lost on Justice Scalia, who



had many humorous and sarcastic comments on the idiocy of *Obergefell v. Hodges*: "If, even as the price to be paid for a fifth vote, I ever joined an opinion for the Court that began: 'The Constitution promises liberty to all within its reach, a liberty that includes certain specific rights that allow persons, within a lawful realm, to define and express their identity,' I would hide my head in a bag. The Supreme Court of the United States has descended from the disciplined legal reasoning of John Marshall... to the mystical aphorisms of the fortune cookie."

And he also said, "Really? Who ever thought that intimacy and spirituality (whatever that means) were freedoms? And if intimacy is, one would think Freedom of Intimacy is abridged rather than expanded by marriage. Ask the nearest hippie. Expression, sure enough, is a freedom, but anyone in a long-lasting marriage will attest that that happy state constricts, rather than expands, what one can prudently say." Laugh Out Loud. That's not my marriage!



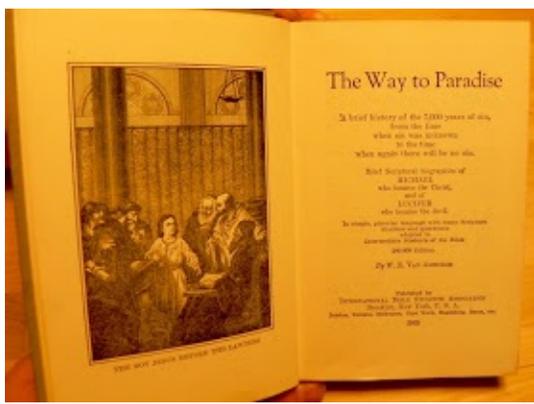
Archbishop Kurtz concluded his statement on the institution of marriage beautifully, “Jesus Christ, with great love, taught unambiguously that from the beginning marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman. As Catholic bishops, we follow our Lord and will continue to teach and to act according to this truth.”

“I encourage Catholics to move forward with faith, hope, and love: faith in the unchanging truth about marriage, rooted in the immutable nature of the human person and confirmed by divine revelation; hope that these truths will once again prevail in our society, not only by their logic, but by their great beauty and manifest service to the common good; and love for all our neighbors, even those who hate us or would punish us for our faith and moral convictions.”

“Lastly, I call upon all people of good will to join us in proclaiming the goodness, truth, and beauty of marriage as rightly understood for millennia, and I ask all in positions of power and authority to respect the God-given freedom to seek, live by, and bear witness to the truth.”

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This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2015/06/same-sex-marriage-another-chapter-in.html>  
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Somewhere during my life's journey I received a thin and delicate book titled, "The Way to Paradise," by W.E. Van Amburgh with an introduction written by John F. Rutherford, who is one of two key founders of the Bible Watchtower Society, also known as Jehovah's Witnesses.

The JW movement, first founded by Charles T. Russell (1852 – 1916) and Rutherford (1869 – 1942), remains in my honest estimation an assent of intellect and will to imagination under the guise of religion with no attempt of understanding the past.

It inherited this abhorrence of the past from the reformers who created Church history as a triptych: First came apostles, then (Roman Catholic) apostasy, and finally the Reformation later reformed by reformers and again reformed by even later reformers until you arrive at the Mythical Watchtower Movement.



The unchanging truth handed down to the apostles from Jesus Christ, known as the Deposit of Faith, has been jealously guarded by the Roman Catholic Church for over 2,000 years, but the reformers chipped away a little truth here and there until the Watchtower Society emerged as a totally non-Christian church that pretended to be Christian -- sort of. Even their Bible -- the New World Translation -- is different than all other Christian Bibles. As a result, the movement is a cradle for newly minted atheists -- so badly abused by what they think is a Christian movement that they are unable to find another Church. A branch of my wife's family joined JWs decades ago, and she has noticed her cousins stripping all religion from their lives upon leaving the organization.

"*The Way to Paradise*" was copyrighted in 1924 and published by the International Bible Students Association, Brooklyn, New York in 1925. The purpose of the book was to narrate for bustling members of the Watchtower Society, "A brief history of the 7,000 years of sin from the time when sin was unknown to the time when again there will be no sin along with Scriptural biographies of Michael who became the Christ and of Lucifer who became the Devil." What follows is a brief summary of the doctrines, themes, and notions describe in the delicate book along with a few personal observations. It is not my intention to answer every belief of the Jehovah's Witnesses in this piece.

## Way to Paradise in Summary

Jehovah's Witnesses taught that God is a monistic (solitary) being who dwells in a specific place where flesh and blood cannot enter. This is one of the arguments made in the book against the Christian Doctrine of Jesus' Resurrection from the Dead and Ascension into Heaven. Jesus' physical Resurrection is also rejected by Atheists, Modernists, Materialists and Muslims.

Contrast the tender image of St. Thomas, the doubter, touching the wounds of Jesus in the upper room after the bodily Resurrection of



the Incarnate Christ. Witnessed by John and the other apostles, they heard him passionately say to Jesus, *"My Lord and my God!"*

But the Modernists deny the Resurrection since the spiritual (non-material realm) does not exist. Modernists identify the gospels as being expressions of faith, but not history. In other words, the Jesus of Faith is not the Jesus of History. Muslims deny Jesus' Resurrection since they don't believe that Jesus actually died on the Cross. Islam borrows this notion from Gnostic sources: Jesus did not take flesh and therefore could not be put to death.

Jehovah's Witness deny Jesus's Resurrection due to an imagination which dictates that God is a solitary being who lives in a place that flesh and blood cannot inhabit; therefore Jesus Christ Incarnate cannot enter heaven with a Resurrected Body.

So what's wrong with that? God is not locked in a place that flesh and blood cannot enter. He is transcendent, outside time and place. God's inner life is not solitary like man's. He is one divine nature in a Communion of Three

Persons. This is demonstrated by God saying, "It is not good for man to be alone." A solitary God could not dream of a communion of persons existing within humanity as a good.

According to the Watchtower, Michael the Archangel was Jehovah's first creation and all things were created with the assistance of this creature also identified as God's Word. This Michael was not divine and immortal until he first proved his worthiness to receive such honors.

He agreed to a plan given by Jehovah to serve as a man. The example the author gives for this change is as follows: "Suppose a farmer owned a sheep that had been bad and was condemned to die. Suppose the owner of the sheep also had a fine shepherd

dog. And after explaining (to the dog) that the disobedient sheep



must die unless some other sheep die in its place, (he) would make this proposition to him (the dog): 'Trust if you will agree to let me transform you from a dog into a sheep, and then consent to die in the place of that sheep. I will then transform you into a man like myself.'

The dog ceases to exist and is made into a sheep. As a sheep, it dies and no longer exists. Then it wakes up recreated as a human without an abiding spirit or soul. The farmer knew the dog when it was a dog, as a sheep when it was a sheep, and now knows the sheep as a human like himself. This is not Christian incarnation, it's not even Hindu re-incarnation since with each transitional state nothing of the previous state existed except the farmer's memory of each transitional state. **The analogy given by the author is completely rooted in his imagination. It is not rooted in Divine Revelation (oral and written) nor is it rooted in reason.**

The Watchtower Society professes that



Michael was once a created angel and then re-created into the human Jesus of Nazareth, who died and was then was re-created into a divine spirit. Jehovah Witnesses hold that human's do not possess a living soul. The Watchtower clings to the idea that the understanding of the human soul is the work of Satan. Modernists, Atheists, Sadducees, and Jehovah Witnesses share a common notion: that the human person is a machine and not a hylomorphic being consisting of body and soul. Jehovah Witnesses somehow attribute Neo-Platonism - which taught that souls exist prior to the body - as formal Christian doctrine. The Watchtower demonstrates time and again a willful ignorance of Church History and Sacred Scripture.

They argue that humans have a physical mind capable of imagining spiritual thoughts, concepts, and abstractions without owning a soul or spirit. In this sense, they share the same faith as an atheist and

materialist. Strange bedfellows.

In other words, the material mind of man is capable of deluding itself into thinking that it possesses something spiritual. Jesus the man was capable of knowing the thoughts of men. It seems that the Witnesses believe that Jesus was interpreting human

electromagnetic waves, much like a lie detector measures physical responses to questions. Or possibly Jehovah interpreted men's electro-magnetic waves and transmitted their meaning back to Jesus by



another set of electro-magnetic waves. Atheists -- locked in the same material world -- have defined soul, spirit and moral goodness as "The God Delusion" or "The Selfish Gene."

Jehovah's Witnesses also believe the human does not possess a spirit or soul and therefore what goes back to Jehovah upon death is simply Jehovah's memory of that person. In other words, what Adam (the first man) received from Jehovah was life giving air and "that mechanism" (my words) which recorded everything Adam would do or say. Jesus the new Adam received from Jehovah this life giving air and "mechanism" capable of recording everything Jesus did and said.

Jesus of Nazareth was a man without a soul, who performed miracles by the will of Jehovah. Jesus was put to death and utterly died on the cross. Jehovah's recorded memory of Jesus is what was committed back into the hands of Jehovah at the cross. **Note that without a soul, there is no self-awareness in God's creatures.**

According to the Witnesses, Jesus' body was taken from the tomb by Jehovah and hidden so that Christians would not worship his body. This is the same reason Witnesses argue Jehovah took and hid Moses' body, which was never found by the people of Israel. It is unclear -- in the Witness theology -- what Jesus and his Apostles saw when they saw and heard Moses and Elijah on the Mountain of Transfiguration. One can only assume that both Moses and Elijah were spirit creatures at that point in time. Jesus' Transfiguration is a mystery in the Jehovah Witness theology since Jesus was a man without spirit or soul and bodies generally do not become brilliant on their own. I speak sarcastically.

Heaven is a place in the Witnesses's theology where a flesh and blood resurrected body could not enter. Therefore, after his death, Michael/Jesus was re-created as a divine spirit. In other words, what Jehovah's Witnesses do not understand is that Jesus had a glorified body after His Resurrection, therefore He was able to enter into heaven.

In the "Way to Paradise," Jesus death on the cross was only meant to substitute Adam's human nature as a

means of avoiding punishment. Jesus's death really had nothing to do with justification and sanctification (nor could it). Men cannot save men; only God can save men and since Jesus was not God Incarnate, nothing was really reconciled, justified or sanctified by Jesus through the Cross. In a material sense, amnesty was awarded to Adam's sinful humanity by the actions of another man. So in a strange manner, Jesus provided an excuse for Adam's sin.

Divine Revelation demonstrates, however, that as a result of the very real Incarnation of Jesus Christ, humanity now participates in God's divine nature. Men and women are now adopted sons and daughters of God in Christ Jesus. This is because Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) No detours, no Michael, no sheep nor dogs.

*"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."* (1John 3:2) This means that we cannot see God face to face until we have received the Spirit of Christ.

The "Wrong" *Way to Paradise* teaches that familiar anti-Catholic diatribe that after the death of Jesus, the true followers of the bible were persecuted by the Catholic Church and the world entered into Dark Ages. Yes, the Bible, which was formed and canonized by the Catholic Church, was hidden and burned by the same Catholic Church. It is again an abysmal reading of Church History. These Dark Ages remained in place, the JW's say, until the 19th century when bibles (by the Watchtower Society) were made available to peoples everywhere. The author noted that in 1924 a great Spiritual Enlightenment is growing in the world as a result of so many bibles being printed and distributed. A bible here and a bible there all translated and read and interpreted by everyone to mean just about anything one wants paradoxically devolves into a spiritual deadening, not an awakening. According to the author, Van Amburgh, Satan managed to convince Emperor Constantine of Rome to form a council of Bishops in 325 AD for the purpose of identifying Jesus as God, the Holy Spirit as God and the Father as God; all three Persons as "one Person," the Witnesses explain. Constantine apparently did this so that Christians would become heathens and fight for the Roman Empire. I am not sure what the abysmal interpretation of the Council has to do with Christians becoming soldiers. Anyway, it is argued in the most sophomoric sense by JW's, that  $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ , and 3 is not equal to 1 and that the son cannot be as old as the father. And therefore, Constantine created the doctrine of the Trinity so that the empire would have more soldiers.

This has to be the most ignorant reading of Church History and Church Doctrine ever devised. In reality, Christians were put to death because they confessed Jesus to be "Lord and God" long before Constantine's Council. Yet the Watchtower Society believes that all Christians were Arians -- precursors to Jehovah's Witnesses -- from the beginning. So much for history.

I guess the plethora of epitaphs, homilies, sermons, apologetics, epistles, and tessera sent between dioceses which identified the various martyrs as Catholic Christians is simply fiction. So sad.

Now, according to the Watchtower, the various epochs of the world can be interpreted from various tunnels and caverns located in the Pyramids.



God's plan for humanity was written in stone in the Pyramids. It is possible that Shem, the son of Noah, a faithful servant of Jehovah, was in charge of the construction of the Pyramids and detailed within them the deepest secrets of geometrical, geographical, astronomical and mathematical science. The tunnels supposedly tell the dates of the Exodus from Egypt, the date of the birth and death of Jesus and the date of the French Revolution and the great World War I. But this is pure pagan imagination.

According to the Watchtower, Christ returned invisibly in 1914. He had to come *invisibly* because it was foretold in the Bible in Stone (the Pyramids) that he would come, and then he failed to show up. Yes, the bible and Bible in Stone tell us that 1914 AD is the beginning of Jehovah's Invisible Kingdom on Earth. Yes, the Bible and Bible in Stone together confirm that by 1925-1926 there will be a great ouster of Satan's Kingdoms from the Earth, ushering in a new era. The tragedy is this is a literal written prophesy within the Watchtower Society. But instead of what they expected, what emerged were the atheist materialist movements of Nazism, Communism, Liberalism and Socialism. It seemed like the Bible in Stone predicted the return of Satan, not Jesus.

According to the Watchtower, there are two separate contracts with mankind. In one, some humans will live in heaven as spirit creatures. And in the other, the remainder of men will live as a perfect Adam on earth. Those living in heaven will number about 144,000.

Humanity will one day live on earth under the protection of Jesus (the spirit creature). In this state, man will learn not to lie, not to steal, not to murder, and begin to live longer because they will be living purer lives. Mankind will eventually be restored to Adam's original human perfection before the fall. Though how this will happen is a mystery as it's a materialistic religion, and people do not experience conversion of their hearts.

All those who died in previous ages will then be resurrected. They will be surprised, of course, to see airplanes, cars, telephones, lights and they will wonder what has transpired, "One moment we were sick and dying and the next moment we see such wonderful technology." Since they do not have souls they have no memory of death or being placed in the grave. *The Way to Paradise* then states, "We who are alive prior to their resurrection must prepare our homes and places to welcome all our loved ones who will come back to life."

Just like Atheism, Islam, and Mormonism, in the Watchtower Paradise, humans were not created to know, love, serve and be happy with God forever in Heaven. In other words, God is not the final end of His creatures. Like the 72 virgins in Islam, JW's look forward to a carnal blessedness.

That is because Jehovah is locked in a specific place and is not omnipresent, nor transcendent and man does not possess an eternal soul, nor any self-awareness (except in a mechanical sense). And everything in the Bible is not really clear unless first interpreted by the Watchtower Society.

This ends the "Wrong" Way to Paradise.



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## 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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This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com/2015/05/06/my-conversion-story/>  
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Posted by: **Thomas Richard** | July 3, 2015

## **The Church is Shrinking, the Faith is in Decline**

This title's sad conclusion comes by way of two polls – the Pew Forum, in their polls of American churches and beliefs, and a recent world-wide Catholic poll by Univision. The statistics are disturbing – or they ought to be! They ought to “disturb” our Church – clergy and laity – into action. Things need to change.

### **First, the Pew Forum Study**

Church membership has been changing. The Pew Forum (1) finds that religious affiliation among Americans shows the following changes, in the years from 2007 to 2014: (The percent given is the percentage of the adult American population):

Catholic membership (now 20.8% of the American adult population), has declined 3.1%.

Evangelical Protestants (now 25.4%), declined 0.9%. The Unaffiliated (now 22.8%), grew 6.7%.

Mainline Protestants (now 14.7%), declined 3.4%. Non-Christian Faiths (now 5.9%), grew 1.2%.

The study reports, from a broader perspective, that America is now less “Christian” than at the beginning of the study in 2007:

“To be sure, the United States remains home to more Christians than any other country in the world, and a large majority of Americans – roughly seven-in-ten – continue to identify with some branch of the Christian faith. But the major new survey of more than 35,000 Americans by the Pew Research Center finds that the percentage of adults (ages 18 and older) who describe themselves as Christians has dropped by nearly eight percentage points in just seven years, from 78.4% in an equally massive Pew Research survey in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014. Over the same period, the percentage of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated – describing themselves as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” – has jumped more than six points, from 16.1% to 22.8%.”

This is not a good sign! But even more concerning is that those still in the Church are less “Catholic” than they used to be. We are not only fewer; we are less: less faithful and obedient to the Faith that our name, “Catholic,” proclaims.

### **Concerning Matrimony**

The Pew Forum (2) has more recently reported a 10-year study of attitudes concerning homosexual “marriage.” Pew uses the term “gay marriage”, a term that does such violation to Truth that I cannot bring myself to using it. This study reports the following: Fully 85% of those who are religiously unaffiliated

favor same-sex marriage, up from 60% in 2005. Majorities of white mainline Protestants (62%) and Catholics (56%) support same-sex marriage; a decade ago just 39% of both groups supported it.

Again, Catholics have declined in both numbers and in the Faith of the Church! In the past seven years membership has dropped by 3.1% to now only 20.8% of the American adult population. And in the past ten years our adherence to the Faith concerning (for example) the meaning of the Sacrament of Matrimony (i.e. “marriage”) has withered from 61% down to at least 44% faithful, concerning only one issue of Matrimony, that is, whether “marriage” can rightly join two homosexuals! No doubt it is worse than that. No doubt more Catholics have separated themselves from the Catholic Faith concerning Matrimony because of other issues, contraception probably being the most likely divisive issue.

### **Univision’s Poll on Several Issues**

Univision (3) polled 12,000 Catholics in twelve countries across the world on modern issues of contention, to determine whether the Catholic supported or opposed the teaching of the Church. The questions included:

1) Question: Do you agree or disagree with Catholic Church policy that says: “An individual who has divorced and remarried outside of the Catholic Church, is living in sin which prevents them from receiving Communion”?

World-wide, Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 45% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 20% of those who seldom participate at Mass. In the U.S.: Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 36% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 18% of those who seldom participate at Mass.

2) Question: Do you think that women should be allowed to become Catholic priests?

Of course, the Church says “No!” on this issue. World-wide, Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 60% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 32% of those who seldom participate at Mass. But in the U.S.: Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 40% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 20% of those who seldom participate at Mass.

3) Question: Do you think that abortions should be allowed in all cases, allowed in some cases for example when the life of the mother is in danger, or should it not be allowed at all?

Of course, the Church does not allow direct intentional abortion in any case. World-wide, Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 40% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 17% of those who seldom participate at Mass. In the U.S.: Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 23% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 12% of those who seldom participate at Mass.

4) Question: Do you support or oppose the use of contraceptives?

The Church does not allow any use of contraceptives. World-wide, Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 24% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 8% of those who seldom participate at Mass. In the U.S.: Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 16% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 9% of those who seldom participate at Mass.

5) Question: Do you support or oppose marriage between two persons of the same sex?

The Church does not support any so-called “marriage” of same-sex partners. World-wide, Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 74% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 45% of those who seldom participate at Mass. But in the U.S.: Catholics who agree with the Church on this issue: 45% of those who frequently participate at Mass; 20% of those who seldom participate at Mass.

### **So What?**

Granted that interpretations of results of polls can be misleading, that important theological nuances can be blurred, and that questions can be leading, these results as they stand are deeply troubling to me, as a Catholic – although I must confess: I am not surprised by them, not any more. But in this Univision poll, in every one of these questions, *a majority of Catholics in the U.S. polled – even among those who “attend Mass frequently” – do not accept Church teaching!*

I have great joy and comfort in the assurance that the Catholic Church teaches and believes the truth of God in matters of faith and morals – that she has been entrusted with the truth of God’s holy revelation to mankind. But what about Catholics personally? What about the actual faith of members of His Holy Church? What about the witness of Catholics as they carry His Holy Name, and the Name of His Church, as they walk and talk and live among separated Christians and non-Christians and pagans and the lost of this world? What about the mission to be light in this dark world, entrusted to His Church? What about the honor of His Name, which we carry? What about the hope still flickering in the hearts of the lost, as they listen and watch for some sign of God who will save them?

The answer? We cannot make, or force, others to love truth – or to love truly – or even to hope in love and truth. The Church can, and must, proclaim the truth and live authentic love. Her light must be His light, so that men and woman can dare to hope, and to trust, in the saving Gospel that the Church is sent to preach and to teach. A major impediment, in my opinion, to the Church being Church in these dark times is that she is day-dreaming when she ought to be in training. The enemy is at the gate, and she is planning parish picnics. The enemy is advancing against every weak and easy target that can be attacked in the near future, and she is lounging in a reverie of days long past. He has plans, tactics, strategies, and ambition – and she ought to be preparing for the day of battle: it is close. Take a lesson from the rulers of kingdoms of earth: they form armies, they train them and arm them and prepare them for war. We ought to have their prudence.

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Eph 6:12 For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Eph 6:13 Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

Eph 6:15 and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace;

Eph 6:16 besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Eph 6:18 Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,...

Every Catholic adult ought to recognize the need! It may not be too late, not yet. Every Catholic parish ought to have faith formation programs in place for every Catholic of every age – programs evaluated and re-evaluated regularly by clergy, staff and lay parishioners. Do these programs help us to grow, to mature in Christ? Do they lead us to holiness – to Christ?

Eph 4:11 And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

Eph 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;

Eph 4:14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.

Eph 4:15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.

Church, wake up.

## Notes:

- (1) Pew Forum study <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>
- (2) <http://www.people-press.org/2015/06/08/support-for-same-sex-marriage-at-record-high-but-key-segments-remain-opposed/>
- (3) <http://www.univision.com/interactivos/openpage/2014-02-06/la-voz-del-pueblo-matriz-1>

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## 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 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?

— 6 —

## 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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This contribution is available at <http://adamncrawford.com/the-great-uncertainty-problems-with-individual-fallibility/>  
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## The Book of Tobit [at The Veil of Chastity]

Have you been enjoying this week's first readings from the [book of Tobit](#)? Tomorrow's reading reveals the marriage of Tobiah and Sarah. This holy Old Testament book has everything:

*"...fidelity to the law, intercessory function of angels, piety toward parents, purity of marriage, reverence for the dead, and the value of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.."*

It is funny because I have been thinking of doing a Summer "Rerun" series where I recycle posts from the past. This is a perfect way to kick it off! Enjoy this recycled post and the wonderful book of Tobit!



The Archangel Raphael escorts Tobias to Media

~ Originally Posted October 19, 2012

### ***Does God Arrange Marriage?***

Today, my husband and I celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. In [my book](#), I share my path through singleness. I also share the story of how God arranged for [me and Gregg](#), my Holy Spouse, to meet and marry.

The premise of my book and of this blog is the idea that we are all [covered by a veil](#) and that **only our Holy Spouse** can see us. All other suitors will reject us because they cannot fully see us.

I define our Holy Spouse as the one that God intends for us to marry. Given that definition, it is clear that I believe God arranges marriages. Is there any biblical evidence to support my belief? Let's look at the [Book of Tobit](#).

### **Book of Tobit**

This is a beautiful story of God's healing power and His providential hand in marriage. Goodness me, there are so many great lessons in this divinely inspired book! I will only be able to cover the highlights but I hope these fascinating events build your faith and confidence in God's intimate and tender care for

us.....

[Please go here to read the full post.](#)

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

God love and bless you!

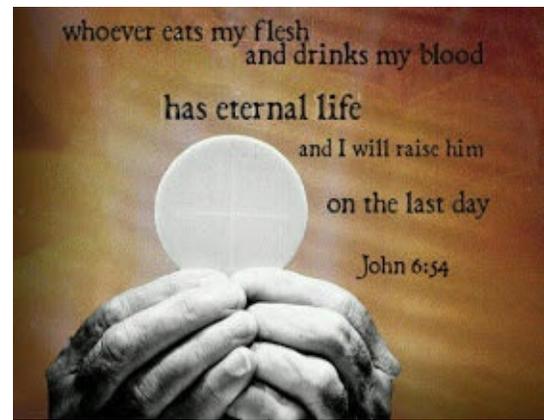
Cindy

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## Thankful [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



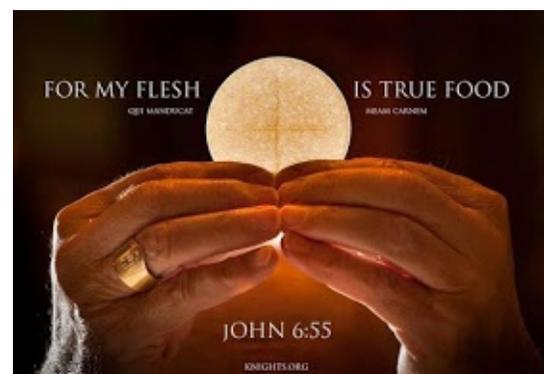
**Thankful** so very **Thankful** for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Today, we celebrated Corpus Christi, The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

I have to say, that the number one reason I *choose* to be Catholic  
and love my faith so much, is  
Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

My words are not even doing Him justice.

My words are inadequate for this Great Sacrament.



I'll let the Bible do the talking here.

Read John Chapter 6

Jesus says 6 times,

we must eat His Body and Drink His Blood.

6 Times.

He knew His words needed to be clear.

Many people walked away,

he was very clear, he did not change his words.

He did NOT beg them to come back.

He said His words clearly.

6 times.

He did NOT say, "Wait! It's only a symbol"

This is what He said--here's John Chapter 6:

47

In all

[truth](#)

I tell you, everyone who believes has eternal life.

48

I am the bread of life.

49

Your fathers ate

[manna](#)

in the

[desert](#)

and they are dead;

50

but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a

[person](#)

may eat it and not die.

51

I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread

[will](#)

live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the

[life](#)

of the world.'

52

Then the

[Jews](#)

started arguing among themselves, 'How can this

[man](#)

give us his flesh to eat?'

53

Jesus replied to them: In all

[truth](#)

I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of

[man](#)

and drink his blood, you have no

[life](#)

in you.

54

Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that

[person](#)

up on the last day.

55

For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

56

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person.

57

As the living Father sent me and I draw

[life](#)

from the Father, so whoever eats me

[will](#)

also draw

[life](#)

from me.

58

This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread

[will](#)

live for ever.

How can a person actually argue with that?

Seriously.

His words are very clear.

So very **Thankful** especially on this feasts day of Corpus Christi,  
for the Eucharist.

**Thankful** I was blessed to be able to go to a Eucharistic Conference  
this past weekend.

It was awesome.



**Thankful** for my new 9 year old!

OH, she is my "little love girl" as I call her!

So full of love and hugs and kisses.

She's warm and loving and does not have a mean thought or bone in her!

She wanted a "roller skating" birthday

so we got her some roller blades!



She went skating with a close friend at the same skating rink

I went to when I was a kid.

Same carpet too, can you tell?

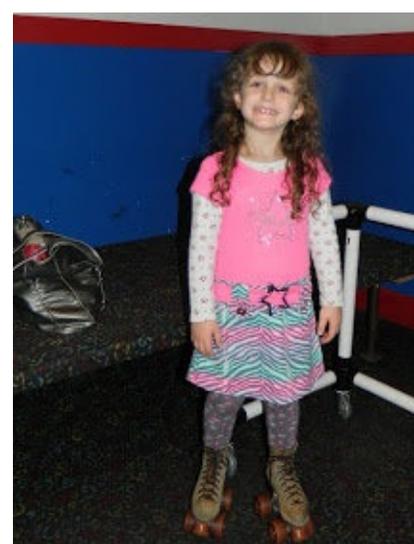


The girls had a blast!



And now they have these great walkers for little skaters!

Talk about cool!



Now, how cute is she?



Pretty sure these are also the same skates they had 35 years ago.



Her birthday is June 1

and usually the iris's are blooming, this year they were just about to open up!

(they did the next day)

**Thankful** for Iris's.

(not sure if Arizona will have them or not)



We've had a lot of rainy days lately.

When it's raining or snowing,

I always want to bake.

**Thankful** I now have a baker.

And she LOVES to bake.



**Thankful** for sweet 5 year olds with curls.

(humidity is good for those curls)



Oh, my gosh.

What's not to be **Thankful** with these two?



**Thankful** for warm park days



new roller blades



and ice cream trucks!!

Can you believe we have an ice cream truck in Minnesota?

If you listen carefully, you can hear me tell the kids "no".

Who brings money to the park?



**Thankful** for Fruit by the Foot.



Sometimes you just have to get fun food like that.



They loved it.



Again.

**Thankful** again.



**Thankful** for dandelion blowers



and sleepy 3 year olds!

(she was doing ABC Mouse here and he got bored watching I guess)



**Thankful** these 2 are still little and love each other  
and are closest friends.



**Thankful** for my awesome neighbor Jeanne and the CUTEST grandchild.



That she shares with us when he visits!



**Thankful** for summer swinging...



and this may just look like normal woods to you...



but inside,  
you'll find a fort filled with fun outdoor "food"  
and flower arrangements.



Doesn't this bring you back to childhood?

**Thankful** for childhood and all that comes with it.



**Thankful** for last piano recitals.

The oldest 2 have been in piano for 8 years.

They are really talented and I love music in our home!

(my 9 year old has been doing it for 2 years)



Mary here is our teacher and she is amazing.

We will miss her dearly



**Thankful** I just know our home will sell...

we've had a quiet past 2 weeks, but I know the right family is out there.

Blessings.

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# I Trust You, Mommy



My son is 12 now. He has gotten so tall that I am almost looking him in the eye! At 5'7" and a size 12 shoe, he seems like such a grown up young man and yet such a kid at heart. He still calls me "Mommy" when we are alone together or just with family, although in front of friends, I become "Mom".

Recently when we were walking through a crowd together, I had my girls by the hand but I turned around and realized I'd lost track of my son. I stopped in my tracks to look for him and he nearly walked right into me. I was still looking for a little boy and didn't realize he was right behind me!

He is maturing enough to know that I can't solve every problem and I don't know the outcome to every situation, while his sisters still think that mom knows everything and can fix anything. Because of this newly discovered lack of control in life, he has become a little more anxious about unknowns. He tends to ask me the same questions over and over again. "But what about.... Are you sure.... But what if... Do you really think...."

In a recently stressful situation, he asked me if I was sure about the outcome of something. I finally said that no, I wasn't sure. There were too many unknown factors to be sure of the outcome, several of which were completely out of our control. I would do my very best to do what I could but I couldn't guarantee that everything would turn out the way he wanted it to. But I continued by saying that this was a perfect opportunity to trust in God and His plan. In fact, God was inviting us to let go of the worry and have faith in His plan. My son nodded his head and said, "I trust you, Mommy." After that his anxiety disappeared although the situation was no less stressful. In his little boy way, this big kid turned over his worries and believed that everything would turn out for the best.

He was a beautiful example of how we need to turn to God in our greatest times of worry and with the faith of a child say, "I trust you, Daddy."

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This contribution is available at <http://busycatholicmoms.com/our-kids/i-trust-you-mommy-2/>  
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# And What About the Children? [at It Makes Sense to Me]

## *IT MAKES SENSE TO ME*

By Larry Peterson

The headline of the Tampa Tribune this morning (Saturday, June 27) was emblazoned with huge, bold letters that read, "

*Pride & Joy*".

The Tampa Bay Times shouted, "

**A Right For All**".

The Supremes have spoken and their decision is in the books. According to the headlines, the world is rejoicing. I just wish someone could tell me about the children. What about the children?

We all have an inherent need to know our background and where we came from. How often do we hear and/or participate in conversations about our grandparents and great-great grandparents and so forth. We will delight in talking about accomplishments of our dads and our moms. We revel in tales about uncles and aunts and grandparents and their grandparents and where they came from and their achievements.

War heroes, professional baseball players, movie actors, surgeons, jet fighter pilots, musicians, and a myriad list of very different people proudly (and sometimes not) fill the family lore of millions of families. Even adopted children have a need to know their roots. As they get older this need blossoms and they invariably begin a quest to find their birth-parents. It is all about "WHO I AM". And--they have an absolute right to know. They need to be "complete". Knowing their own family blood-line can fulfill that completion. That is just the way it is. It is an instinct, it is natural, it is GOOD. None of us came from a "cabbage-patch".

So, I ask again, what about the children? Yes, now that The SCOTUS has legalized the three parent family in the United States of America, what about the children that will be brought into families with same-sex parents? No matter what rule five empowered lawyers pass they cannot ever change the fact that a child must be the result of the procreation of a man and a woman. An infant may be brought home to two "married men" or two "married women" as their own child but is it really? There is a third parent out there somewhere.

Heterosexual couples who adopt become a mom and a dad. How does it work in a same-sex environment? Is the man who provides the sperm considered the father? Does the woman who provides the uterus for the sperm become the mother? When the child arrives at an age where they ask, "what can you tell me about my birth-mom or birth-dad", how is that handled? Will the sperm donor from 20 years ago be willing to come forward? What happens when two married women break up? Who gets custody? Do they keep accurate records of all donors?

Will a new "cottage industry" pop up for supplying sperm and eggs to people who might have a disease

and cannot get approval to acquire sperm? What if one of the "marrieds" decides that maybe they are not homosexual and want to take up with the opposite sex? And let us not forget genetic predisposition. Will the children of these "marriages" have their actual blood line available so they might be able to use genetic markers to see if they are predisposed to diabetes, breast cancer, heart disease, and even autism or mental illness? It reverts back to the question; what about the children? What does this do to the children?

There is an irrefutable fact of life and this is it. From the beginning of time, man and woman knew that marriage was peculiar to male and female. It is as natural as the rising and setting of the sun. We, as a species, have a need to survive. Continuing the human race is part of that survival instinct. Individual men and women are naturally attracted to each other and when they are they join together to form a family that reproduces and continues the species. It is the way of things and has been so for millennia. A ruling by five people cannot ever change natural law.

Children have "rights" too. And it seems to me that one of these basic rights is to be raised by a female mom and a male dad who have willingly joined together and started a family. Only as unique human beings of the opposite sex can this be done. I wish no malice to gay people. I do not hate gay people. I wish them all the best. If they choose to have a life together, so be it. But, in my opinion, this gay marriage revolution has forgotten about the children. They are an after-thought. Gay marriage is all about secularism's mantra of self-gratification. But what about the children?

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## **Our Lord's Words to Luisa Piccarreta [at The Shield of Faith]**

From the Church-approved volume six of her spiritual "Diary," the

*Book of Heaven.*

Imprimatur of Archbishop Joseph Leo and Nihil Obstat of (now Saint) Fr. Annibale Di Francia.

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"My daughter, when the soul does all of her actions for the sole purpose of loving Me, and wants no other recompense for her work but my love alone, she walks always in daylight - it is never nighttime for her."

"My daughter, true love forgets himself, and lives of the interests, of the pains, and of everything that belongs to the beloved."

"Indeed, there is no beauty that equals suffering for the love of God alone."

"My daughter, in the Creation I gave my image to the soul; in the Incarnation I gave my Divinity, divinizing humanity."

"Therefore, hold peace as your greatest treasure if you cherish being united with Me."

"Oh, how difficult it is to enjoy pleasures, to dress luxuriously on the outside, and to despise those things internally! On the contrary, the opposite occurs - that is, one loves in his interior, and enjoys, what surrounds him externally."

"My daughter, my Life manifests Itself in the creatures through words, through works, and through sufferings, but what manifests It more clearly are the sufferings."

"The Life of God in the soul is Hope, and the more you hope, the more Divine Life you contain within yourself. Therefore, hope -- hope always."



"In fact, if the soul lets herself be dominated by the cross, the cross destroys three evil kingdoms in her, which are the world, the devil and the flesh, and it constitutes in her three more good Kingdoms: the Spiritual, the Divine and the Eternal Kingdom."

"Not only this, but since the other things had been created for man, and man for God alone and for His Delight, as a consequence he was not only to encompass all creation within himself, but he was to surpass it to the point of receiving the image of the Supreme Majesty within himself."

"How much attention it takes so as not to let material things enter inside, if by necessity she has to deal with them! You, my daughter, be attentive; otherwise, if I see anything which is not divine in you, I will not make Myself seen anymore."

"Stability alone is what reveals the progress of Divine Life within the soul, because, since God is immutable, one who possesses Him shares in His immutability in good."

"Daughter, let everything in you be sealed by love. If you think, you must only think of love; if you speak, if your work, if you palpitate, if you desire . . . If even just one desire which is not love comes out of you, restrict it within yourself, convert it into love, and then give it the freedom to go out."

"Everything, everything should be enclosed in one single word: 'Love.' If the soul does not enclose everything in this, it can be said that she does not know a thing about loving Me, and according to how much the soul loves Me, so do I expand the gift of suffering."

"In fact, the mind nourishes itself with what it thinks, and by looking at God alone, of the things down here, she looks only at those that God wants, not bothering about anything else, and so she remains always in God."

"The weight of any action, be it even an indifferent one, increases according to the dose of love it contains, because I do not look at the work, but at the intensity of love that the working contains."

"Indeed that of the soul which pleases me most is perseverance, because perseverance is seal of eternal life and development of divine life."

"This is the order of my Providence, of my Justice and of my Love - that in each era I must have at least one with whom I might share all goods, and that the creature must give Me everything she owes Me as creature. . . This is precisely why I choose victim souls. . . During the time of My Passion I had my dearest Mother who, while I shared all my pains and all my goods with her, was most attentive as creature, on gathering within herself everything that creatures were to do for Me. Therefore in her I found all my satisfaction and all the gratitude, the thanksgiving, the praise, the reparation, the correspondence which I was to find in everyone else."

To learn more about the mystic Luisa Piccarreta, click

[Here](#)

Posted 06/18/2015 by Frank Rega, [www.frankrega.com](http://www.frankrega.com)

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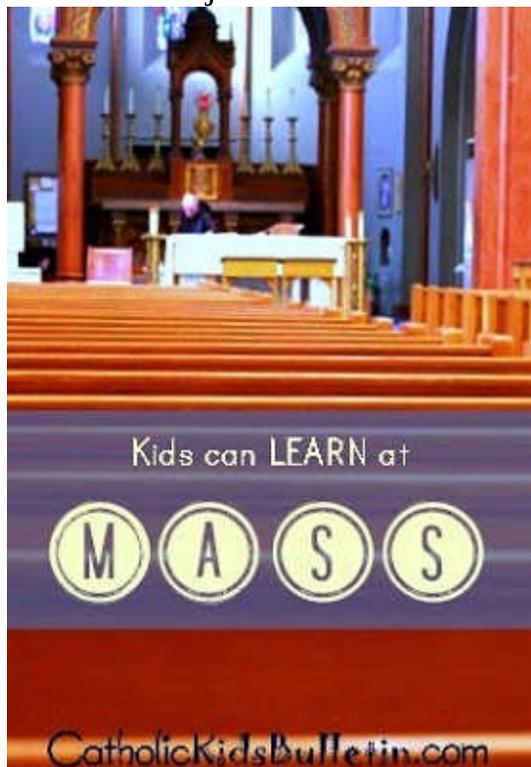
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# July 2015 Catholic Kids Bulletin [at Catholic Kids]

It's almost July--I can't believe it! I had these grand plans about getting ahead, and I filled my extra time with...hmmm, I have no idea what, but I'm not ahead yet. At least I'm not farther behind!

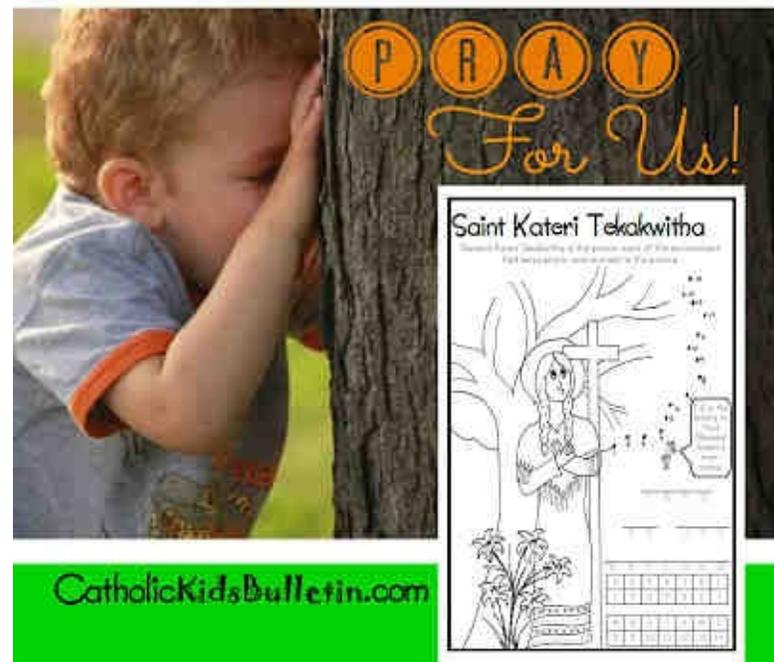


My goal this summer is to promote this blog like crazy and increase the readership--so, if there is anything you'd like me to work on, comment below, and please like/share/pin, etc. (It's probably not classy to beg for likes...so just think of it as a friendly reminder, not groveling.) Thanks!



This month we have a great roundup of saints...as always! We have Saint James and Saint Christopher who have been saints for-ev-er. We also have two newish American saints! Saint Kateri Tekakwitha and Blessed Junipero Serra. I believe Blessed Junipero is set to be named an official saint later this year! It's a wonderful opportunity for kids to see some of the recent Catholic awesomeness as well as the age-old traditions.

## Saint Kateri Tekakwitha,



On July 26th, you may notice that Saint James is standing in a slightly strange pose. In high school, I was a part of a terrific youth group, that did ridiculous things--as any good youth group does. We would pose by the Saint James statue at our church...usually standing like the statue. I don't know why the artist decided that Saint James would pose like this after fishing all day, but we sure got a TON of enjoyment out of it! When I chose Saint James for this bulletin, I had to include an inside joke for....myself?



Anyhoo...here are the bulletins!

[July 2015 Catholic Kids Bulletin](#) by [Theresa](#)



And...on Google Drive

[July 2015 Catholic Kids Bulletin Julio 2015 Boletín de Niños Católicos](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholickidsbulletin.com/2015/06/july-2015-catholic-kids-bulletin.html>  
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## Fruitful Pain [at Bible Meditations]



*“The Lord says] “I will abandon my people until they have suffered enough for their sins and come looking for me. Perhaps in their suffering they will try to find me.” Hosea 5:15*

“God whispers to us in our pleasures...but shouts to us in our pain,” as C.S. Lewis said. I don’t believe God wants us to suffer but our choices have consequences. Like a good parent, sometimes God allows us to experience the consequences of our actions so that we can learn and grow. I don’t have the answer for all the apparent needless suffering in the world but I have seen God bring good out of painful situations. He is always at work, even in our suffering. I’ve experienced it in my own life.

After a tractor trailer hit my car, I was bed-ridden for months and left with chronic pain. The following year, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I don’t think God zapped me with the accident or M.S. to punish me. Instead, I believe He used the opportunities to teach my heart things it couldn’t seem to learn in any other way. I had always prided myself on being a hard worker and how much I accomplished. I was always doing things for others—whether they wanted me to or not. After the accident and the MS, I could not physically do all that I used to do. That terrified me. My misplaced self-worth disappeared. I was scared that if I couldn’t do things for my family they wouldn’t want me around. That turned out not to be the case, but if it hadn’t been for the accident and the MS, I would never have known that.

While I would never have chosen either challenge, I can honestly say I am grateful for the experiences. As a result, my relationships have deepened. My self-esteem is no longer tied to how much I accomplish. I’m also growing in healthy humility that allows me to accept my limitations and ask for and receive help. I have a better understanding of others facing challenges. My sense of security no longer rests exclusively on my frail shoulders. Because of pain, I’ve been led in new directions of growth. It’s a fascinating journey. I now believe there are two types of pain. There is wasted pain; when I choose to wallow in it I can. There is also pain that bears fruit, like labor pains that lead to new life. When I look to find God in the midst of pain, it always leads to growth...whether I see it at the time, or not. If God can bring good out of the crucifixion, He can bring good out of anything.

Prayer: Lord, help us find you in our pain.

## Reflection: When has God brought good out of a painful circumstance in your life?

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## Why Do We Evangelize? [at Patheos]

When I wrote on [evangelization and discipleship yesterday](#), an old question came to my attention: How do we justify this behavior?

Very specifically, I want to talk about something that bothered me my from my tour through Protestant Evangelical world, and that I think is a reason many Catholics view “evangelization” with skepticism.

Think, for example, of this illustration I gave in my previous post:

And then, get this: After the mature Catholic hits “play” on the DVD, he or she steps out into the hall and sips on a beverage. And then this one parent wanders out, and the mature Catholic listens while the parent tells her tale of woe. Why she hates the Catholic church. Why she can’t get to Mass. Why her husband left her and her dog is ugly.

You create a situation where one person in your parish can actually be evangelized.

This is a very intentional behavior. We’re practically laying a trap, eh? Of course in my example, we’re in a Catholic church on religious education night, so no one can complain that you have the ulterior motive of foisting the faith on the unsuspecting.

But step out into the wider world, and there’s this thing evangelizing Christians do even in public: We order our lives and our relationships with the planned purpose of sharing the Gospel with others.

Before I reverted, one of the friends who patiently put up with my anti-Christian and pseudo-spiritual rambling was a student in graduate school at a local seminary. She was preparing for the mission field, and one day she got a homework assignment — a project for a grade. She and all her classmates were instructed to pick a non-believer and befriend that person for the reason of bringing them to Christ.

This is what missionaries do, so the assignment was preparation for her life’s work.

This assignment bothered me. It bothered me that my friend would go on outings with her chosen unbeliever, even if the activity wasn’t something my friend herself enjoyed, because the mission was the most important thing. Of course it bothered me yet more to realize that I was probably a ungraded assignment, too.

What bothered me then, and I still think is a hazard among certain strains of Christians now (but almost never among Catholics, so just put that out of your mind, sheesh), is that it seemed like the person wasn’t a person anymore. She was an object. Someone upon whom an operation must be carried out.

This was not my friend’s intent, I am sure of it. But it seemed that way.

Sometimes it seems like Christian evangelization can be summed up as *I love you so much I’m going to treat you as a mountain to be climbed, a conquest over which to be victorious, and if I have to meet you everyday at Bojangles’ and endure another one of those over-sweetened biscuits, that’s a price I’m willing to pay to meet my goal.*

But this is not the thing. Not the real thing.

If that's your attitude, you're doing the exact same thing, different format different goal, as the inveterate bureaucrat who just wants everyone to complete their mandatory sacramental prep program with no complaining and no dilly-dallying, then all stand in line and behave like little ladies and gentlemen as we approach the altar because that will make your family in the pews so, so proud!

Evangelization is not about getting other people to do the thing you want to them to do. It's not about crafting just the right technique to make that right moment fall together so neatly.

Evangelization is about looking at the person in front of your face, no matter who that person is, and gasping in wonder at the miraculously beautiful creation God has endowed with a dignity and a worth that nothing can erase, no matter how deep in the mire that person is swimming just now. You see that person, and you know for a fact: *Here is somebody worth dying for.*

And then you try for a few minutes to do something worthy of being in the presence of such a person.



Artwork by Pethrus (Own work) [[CC BY-SA 3.0](#)], [via Wikimedia Commons](#)

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## Same-Sex Marriage, has Anything Changed?



*“The truth is not always the same*

*as the majority decision” –Saint Pope John Paul II*

No subject has come under more scrutiny and been more polarizing than same-sex marriage. Both sides speak with a black and white, clear cut, angry indignation, one side alleging that the definition of marriage is too narrow and the other that the definition is too broad.

This week the Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriages in a narrow 5-4 vote. Almost instantly, these polarized battle grounds were ignited through social media. Twitter and Facebook are ablaze with diatribes from both sides of the issue.

But, has anything really changed? Is civil law really distinct from natural law? Is the government responsible to uphold our Christian definition of marriage or must it find a position that satisfies all religions or in fact those people with no religious affiliation?

To be sure, there are plenty of Supreme Court decisions that as good Catholics and Christians we would contend the court got wrong. Take *Rowe vs. Wade*, for one. But, we go on making our case for pro-life and over the years have seen the pendulum swinging in the direction of life.

What do we know for sure?

- According to the Pew Research Center 72% of Americans say that legal recognition of same-sex marriages is (was) inevitable.
- A majority of Americans, 57% favor same sex marriages and that changed in just the last 5 years.
- 65% of democrats and independents favor same sex marriage as compared to only 34% of republicans.
- Nearly three quarters (73%) of Millennials favor legal recognition.

And, majorities of both Catholics (56%) and white mainline Protestants (62%) support same-sex marriage, along with an overwhelming majority (85%) of the religiously unaffiliated.

For many it might bring to mind the quote from St. Augustine:

*“Right is right even if no one is doing it; wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it.” –Augustine of Hippo*

So, what can we Christians and Catholics do? I think there is much to learn from the pro-life movement.

1. **We must pray** not only for a change in the hearts, but spend some time in prayer before you comment on social media. Be compassionate with those who disagree with your position. Angry and bitter responses won't change minds. Thoughtful, gentle, and loving responses will.

*“Arm yourself with prayer instead of a sword; be clothed with humility instead of fine raiment.” –St. Dominic*

2. **We must not react in a way that alienates**, polarizes and puts down the opinions of others. 73% of people who have gay or lesbian family member or friends favor same-sex marriage. They want their friends to enjoy the same love for another as they do. You won't win them over by putting them down. They are emotionally invested in this issue.
3. **Live your marriage with joy!** Understand the hypocrisy that people see in divorce, infidelity and multiple marriages. If you want people to see the beauty of a “sacramental” marriage, then you must live it. Live it joyfully!
4. **We must reflect the love of Jesus** in our interactions. If Jesus were here, He would approach the situation with love.
5. **We must keep our eyes towards heaven.** Remember we are in but not of this world.

*“The Church must never conform to or be assimilated into the world. We are in the world, but not of the world and we must keep our eyes firmly on our heavenly home.” –Randy Hain*

Slowly but surely, with love, just as with the pro-life movement, we can make our case and turn the tide of opinion. Remember, nothing has changed except the law. And, even that can be reversed. Don't panic or cave in to popular opinion. Hold fast to your beliefs and humbly present your opinion by the example of marriage you live.

If you enjoyed this reflection, you can have them emailed to you every Monday morning, and not miss a single one. [Subscribe](#) by [clicking here](#). You will be sent an e-mail to verify your subscription. Just click on the link and you're all set.

Did you know that there is a Finding God's Grace podcast too? A new episode is posted every Wednesday. They are less than three minutes long and a great way to start your day. If you would like to [subscribe](#) to his podcast, delivered every Thursday morning at 7AM to your e-mail, simply [click here](#).

I love it when you share my stories with your family and friends. Below are [links](#) to share on your social media sites. Thanks for sharing!

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## Creating a Domestic Monastery [at beautiful thorns]



That time with the Franciscan sisters was one of the most powerful spiritual encounters with the Lord I have ever had. The Lord was very tangible there and it seemed like he was physically walking around the convent. When I was in their Eucharistic adoration chapel praying, it felt as though I was floating off the ground. Those ten days of monastic living wasn't easy however. There were lots of sacrifices made, especially in the area of sleep as we would start morning prayer at 5:30 am followed by mass, but those acts of mortification proved to be very fruitful and I definitely grew in my relationship with the Lord. I came close to joining but in the end I told the Lord I needed him in the flesh and he asked me, "What about marriage?" Soon after, he brought Tom into my life and the rest is history.

Even though I didn't join a convent, the seed and longing for monasticism had been planted through my time at the Franciscan University and the convents I had visited.



wiseGEEK

Don't even ask me how we detoured and left the Catholic Church for ten years because I'm not sure, except that we were impatient and wanted more doors to open for us in ministry and we were longing for community. What drew us back however was a longing for a "sense of the sacred" as well as the Eucharist and other Sacraments. The time away produced in us a deeper

appreciation for the Catholic Church.

Soon after we came back to the Church, we came in contact with a member of the [Brothers and Sisters of Charity, Domestic expression](#). We were familiar with this community, started by John Michael Talbot from our time at the Franciscan University but we did not know they also had a Domestic expression. We only knew about the [Little Portion](#) Hermitage in Arkansas. Our hearts burned within us when we found out you could belong to the community and not have to move to Arkansas! Everything they offered, we had a longing for. Their spirituality was Franciscan and Benedictine, charismatic and contemplative. They were monastic, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and practicing simplicity. Through them, we saw that monastic life was possible even in the world with a family. Right away, we knew it was right for us! We contacted the regional minister, checked out the community and soon after, started our formation with them. We have now been a part of the community for five years. This past weekend we went on our annual regional retreat. Every year that we go, it reinforces this idea of living simply, being in the world but not of it, and practicing monasticism, even with a family. The community has definitely been an instrument in helping us deepen our relationship with the Lord and grow in intimacy with him and with his people.

Practicing Monasticism in the world, especially with little children, can prove challenging but it can be done.

**Here are some ways we try to practice it in our home:**



**Create a Sacred Space**

We have a room that we try to keep clean and uncluttered. The kids are not allowed to have toys in there. We mainly use this room for prayer, individually and as a family. We have religious art on the walls, candles, and we usually burn incense when we are in the room. Sometimes when in there, we read and play sacred music.

## **Keep it Simple**

We try to limit the number of toys, especially "junk" toys that we have in our house. We try to purge our clothes often and get rid of anything we do not need or wear. We also do our best to live within our means.

## **Sacred Music**

We often have sacred music like Gregorian chants or contemporary worship music playing in the background throughout the day.

## **Pray**

We commit ourselves to morning and evening prayer, both individually and as a family. For Tom and I this usually includes the [Liturgy of the Hours](#). We have been pleasantly surprised how much our children like praying the Liturgy of the Hours with us. We usually start with a couple worship songs. When we are not able to pray it as a family, our children miss it and ask when we will be able to do it again.

## **Religious Art**

We have religious art and crucifixes in almost every room in our house. Religious art and symbols can be wonderful tools to draw our attention upward and is especially important for children.

## **Limit Electronics**

This can be one of the hardest disciplines to follow. Sometimes it is easier for us busy moms to just turn cartoons on for our little ones to keep them out of trouble. I am still working on this one but we do try to limit TV and computer time.

**Limit Activities Outside the Home** Busyness is usually a big obstacle for hearing from and drawing close to the Lord. We try to limit how many activities we and our children do outside the home.

**Make Everything an Act of Prayer** Sometimes it is hard to find Christ in the mundane and ordinary but he is there. One way I try to be mindful of him throughout my day, while doing dishes and folding laundry is to say the [Jesus prayer](#) in my mind and picture myself leaning back in him.

Of course this is not an all encompassing list but I think it is a good place to start!

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This contribution is available at <http://www.beautifulthorns.com/2015/06/creating-domestic-monastery.html>  
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## Basket Case [at With Us Still]

I read the strangest story the other day, about a fourth-century desert monk named Abba Paul.

Like many of the hermits of his day, Paul wove baskets as he prayed each day. Unlike them, however, he lived far enough away from the city to make it impractical to transport his baskets to the city and sell them for a meager income. His contemporary John Cassian [wrote](#) that Abba Paul:

could not do any other work to support himself because his dwelling was separated from towns and from habitable land by a seven days' journey through the desert...and transportation cost more than he could get for the work he did. [Nevertheless], he used to collect palm fronds and always exact a day's labor from himself just as if this were his means of support. And when his cave was filled with a whole year's work, he would burn up what he had so carefully toiled over each year [and begin again.]

So what's the point of working...for nothing?

What's the *value* in sticking to such a routine?



What might the Weaver have in mind for me?

I thought about Abba Paul's odd discipline last night when I attended the first installment of a seven-week [Life In The Spirit Seminar](#) (LISS) at my parish. Truth is, I felt a bit conflicted about signing up for the seminar, not because I didn't expect to be showered with spiritual gifts...but because the schedule for this LISS promised to interrupt one of my most cherished spiritual routines.

For about a dozen years now, I've met almost every Monday night with a handful of my brothers-in-Christ in a faith-sharing group. Looking back, I'm amazed at the many blessings that have been nurtured in my life by this particular prayer habit. And signing up for LISS meant I'd have to let it go – at least for a time; let it go for, by far, the longest stretch in the decade+ that we've been getting together.

I didn't make the decision unilaterally. We took a vote in the small group – and it was pretty much unanimous: We'd *all* try to make the LISS sessions in lieu of our regular Monday night meeting this June and July. And sure enough – many of the guys were there last evening, scattered around the crowd of 120 or so folks gathered in the [Parish Center](#).

The blessings came in bunches, too – beautiful praise music; a talk by Bishop Robert Hermann (fast becoming [one of my all-time favorite churchmen](#)); a wonderful witness given by a young woman I’ve known for years; and some time spent in small-group faith sharing. Granted, it wasn’t with my regular band of brothers...but at least a part of my Monday night routine remained intact.

So it was both *familiar*...and *brand new*. Sort of like the baskets woven by Abba Paul: Baskets...from which he had to consciously break free...in order to keep his heart open to the stirrings of the Spirit.

Imagine my surprise, then, to read the LISS prayer that we participants were all encouraged to say at the beginning of our day today:

*I want to step back from my daily routine, God. I want to see Your hand in my life. Show me how to recognize Your presence...*

We’ve all prayed, I suppose, to [be like clay](#) in the Potter’s hand. But this is a new experience for me: Praying for a break from my habits, even the healthy ones.

Praying for *perspective* — just the spiritual gift we need, perhaps, to keep from becoming a spiritual basket-case, enslaved to routine.



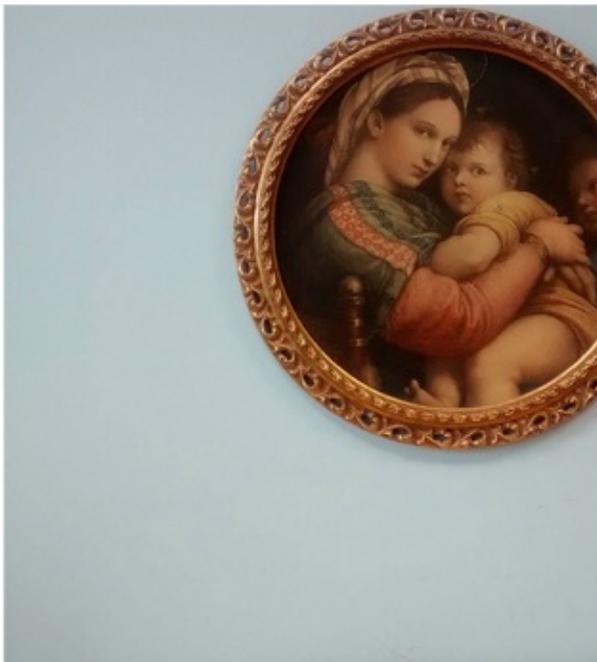
*Let us pause now...to recall that we are in the presence of the Holy One.*

*IHS*

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# Why I Love Receiving the Eucharist {on the tongue} [at Cherishing Everyday Beauty]



- 1/ sometimes prayers plant the seeds of growth and someday blossom into the radiant flower of fruition.
- 2/ [Our Lady of the Chair](#)

While I was being raised, there was never a need for attending Mass to be a 'rule' in our house, no one ever 'made' us attend, and I don't recall the lengths my parents might go to to ensure our attendance of at least Sunday Mass ever being explicitly expressed. Very simply, attending Mass was always our choice and we always chose to attend. I suppose by personal example and how seriously we each took our Faith formation through our Religious Education classes and in-home discussions, we knew the importance and the obligation and -- speaking for myself -- felt the desire to attend at least Sunday Mass. Naturally, I hope I've grown deeper in my Faith since receiving my First Communion on that glorious day in May 2000; one such way is **how I receive the Eucharist**.

I received my First Communion on my hands and every other time I received after that for the next 5 years was on the hands. But then one day during my older brother's high school years, he really wanted to attend the Latin Mass preceding his Catholic Boys' Meeting, so we all went to the Latin Mass. It was my first encounter with the Extraordinary form and -- like all new things -- I had to soak in the experience first, but I loved it. When it came time to receive I noticed that no one was receiving on their hands. I had no idea why, but I figured I should play safe and follow suit. I'm glad I did because, as I soon realized, Father was distributing Communion under both species by intinction. It was the first time I received on the tongue and the last time I received on the hands.

It wasn't like I had felt an urge to begin receiving on my tongue; I'd felt no desire or pull to previously; and I had no particular reason why I should continue to -- it simply *made sense* to me.

Of course, the reality is that now -- and for the last 10+ years -- every time I receive I'm sticking my tongue out at the clergy or laity who is distributing Communion. It was especially awkward that one time when I was in our Bishop's line to receive Communion. I could have sworn that he had already said "The Body of Christ" right before I reached him, so I said "Amen" and prepared to receive. So there I was essentially sticking my tongue out at the Bishop, waiting for him to stop wondering what I thought I was doing. There's also been the couple of times that Jesus has literally slipped right off my tongue and landed... once straight back in Father's ciborium (that was convenient. Father picked Him right back up and replaced Him on my tongue in my still-opened mouth) and once on the ground (the floor has never seemed so far away and since I lack grace and poise and, well, anything related to balance, I kinda just awkwardly stood there while the altar server bent down to retrieve our fallen Lord and hand Him over to Father who consumed that particular host and gave me another of Him). As awkward and humiliating as that is, even Jesus falling to the ground is biblical. ;-)

Theologically speaking, processing down the aisle to receive Communion truly is me as the bride and Him as the bridegroom. **Receiving Him is receiving His kiss.** This reality first occurred to me in High School, then again in college when I was studying Song of Songs. As I prayed on this, I began to realize more and more that I need the intimacy of the kiss to remind me of just what is happening. The Eucharist is *that* intimate whether or not I notice it, but I prefer to notice it.

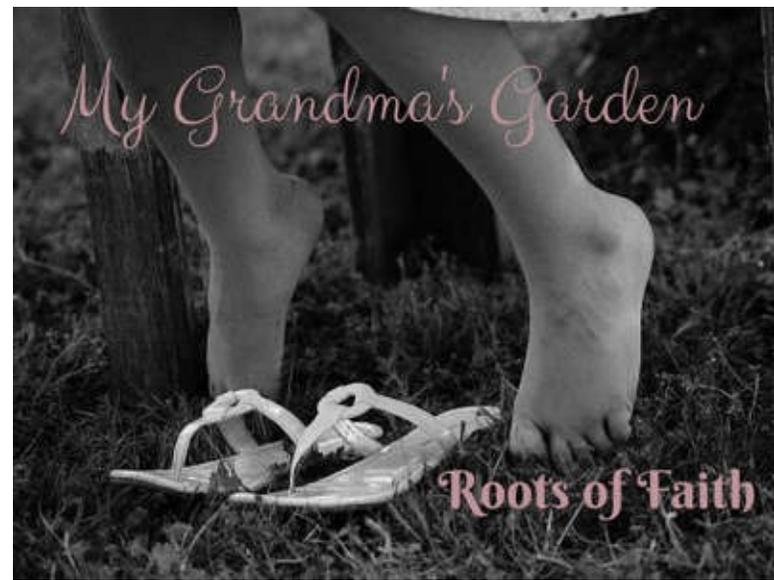
As a student, I knew I needed the graces of the Mass to perform well academically, discern my course of study, and prepare for my future profession. As a young professional now, I want to bring the graces of that intimate encounter with my Lord into the classroom with the children, back home for the evenings with my family, and on the weekends to refresh and invigorate myself for the coming week.

I have nothing whatsoever against receiving on the hands. I still do on rare occasion. At the end of the day, though, if the Church approves of receiving on the tongue or the hand, than I believe it should be left to the personal devotion of the individual (unless intinction prohibits it). I don't believe either is "holier" than the other; I don't receive on the tongue only because I have unconsecrated hands or because I'm worried about sacred crumbs. I choose to receive on the tongue because it makes sense to me in my relationship with God and I've received great graces through the awkwardness of sticking my tongue out at clerics. Who knows, maybe you wanna try it too!

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This contribution is available at <http://cherishingeverydaybeauty.blogspot.com/2015/06/why-i-love-receiving-eucharist-on-tongue.html>  
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## My Grandmother's Garden: Roots of Faith [at Theologyisaverb]



Summer is that time that so often brings me back to my childhood. With bare feet in the grass, the sun on my face, and the small quiet hum of the bees I am instantly transported to those quiet reflective moments with God. Many of my earliest memories are replete with these instances where I am drawn into conversation and contemplation, simply by being open to listen and ready to praise. Though I would beg to visit my grandma whenever I could, our time in the summer was especially unhurried and particularly memorable. Perhaps this was in part because my mother was usually either teaching summer school or taking professional development herself and it was just the two of us. Yet, more so because there were no real demands upon either of us but the invitation to simply enjoy one another's time together.



Effortlessly, my grandma witnessed her own love and commitment to making space for prayer and devotion to God in everything she did. This began early in the morning while the dew was still on the roses, and the birds could be heard softly chiming, “Get up, and greet this

new day that God has given!” There were no other alarm clocks in her house, and I remember thinking that this must be what heaven was like. While she began breakfast, I was given a long sleeved shirt, gloves and a few small baskets to carry outside to hold the treasure of blackberries for the day. As my sometimes sandaled feet brushed against the dewy blades of grass, and the sparrows called out to one another, I realized that I could go no further. With eyes closed, and a content peaceful smile on my face, I felt privileged to be among these first harbingers of the day.

“God thank you for inviting me today to share in this unbelievably beautiful beginning, and to know that your newness is always available. What you have provided for creation, you have allotted for me too!”



Berry after berry, small, large, dark and plump, my basket soon filled and I would joyfully find myself in gratitude for this great harvest. Alone these were delicious enough, but if I was truly lucky my grandma would take a few to bake in a pie. Here I glimpsed the joy of work, singing hymns and chatting as we rolled the cold buttery dough out upon the marble. Prayer for my Grandma was not regulated to any particular time or activity, but permeated every motion and second of each day.



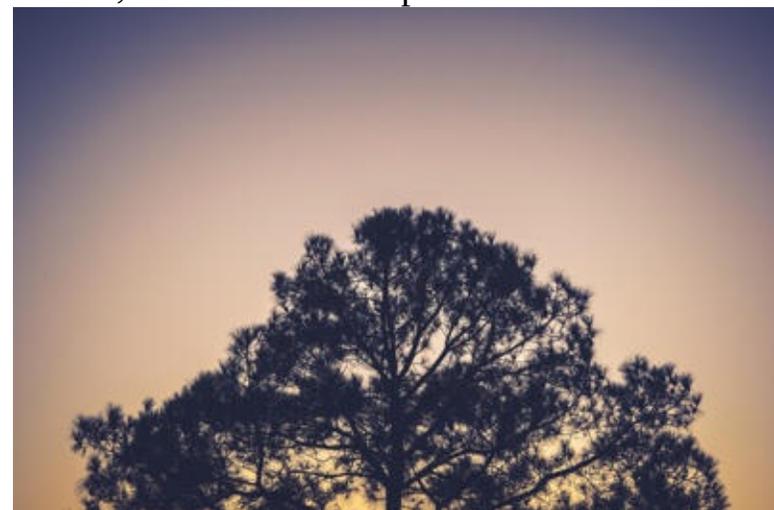
Then, while waiting for the pie to cool, my eyes would soon spy the rope swing under the giant Mimosa tree in garden. This rugged notched plank of wood was my cherished seat under an umbrella of pink airy flowers and sprawling fern like branches. The higher I swung the more exhilarating I felt till I thought my toes would indeed touch the clouds. Then just like that, I would stop to feel the air rushing past me and the stillness of my heart, breathing in the peace that

suddenly seemed to envelope me.



“God you are there in the busy excitement of life, and as we are called to slow down to feel your undeniable presence”.

Nighttime, beckoned and I gleefully climbed under the covers in the bedroom adjoining the garden, surrounded on three sides by windows. Atop this goose down mattress, with moonlight streaming in all around, I would fall asleep to the sound of the crickets and my evening prayers.



**“Father, how thankful I am that you created this incredibly infinite universe for us to enjoy. Start to finish you have reminded me throughout my day that you are with me. From the first morning rays to the stars that look down on me, I am part of your divine creation. Help me to shine your light and love in all that I do. Help me to be a good steward of your gifts that you have so graciously entrusted to me. Thank you, dear heavenly father for my Grandma who has shown me all of this in her love of you.”**

Peace,

*Elizabeth*



## Storms [at Fr. Ben's Biblical Blog]

Naturally, the Israelites also saw God's power and majesty in nature through storms.

Thus we hear that, “

*The Lord addressed Job out of the storm*

,” and in the responsorial Psalm, “

*They cried to the LORD in their distress; from their straits he rescued them, He hushed the storm to a gentle breeze, and the billows of the sea were stilled.”* Most especially we see this in the calming of the storm by Jesus Christ.

The setting of the Gospel was on the Sea of Galilee. Now when we hear the word *sea* we probably think of a vast body of water, like an ocean. The Sea of Galilee, though, is actually a lake. To compare it to our area, the Sea of Galilee is one-sixth the size of Rainy Lake—thirteen miles at its longest and eight miles at its widest. Storms could thus come up quickly on fishermen, leaving them in a dangerous position.

Imagine the terror the disciples experienced! They weren't wearing modern life jackets. Waves were pounding the small boat up and down and were coming over the bow. The wind was howling. Thunder and lightning were booming. The rain poured from heaven. The disciples were probably thinking they were going to drown.

*“Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ The wind ceased and there was great calm. Then he asked them, ‘Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?’”*

If these men saw God's majesty, power and authority in storms, who but God alone could *calm a storm*? In this small boat, the disciples *knew* that Jesus was God!

I would like to bring this to the spiritual level—metaphorically speaking we all experience *storms in life*. Whether it is an addiction, depression, anxiety, cancer, illness or other trials, storms are bound to come our way. How often do we, like the disciples, call out to Jesus “...*do you not care that we are perishing?*” while he seems to be sleeping?

Yet the account of Jesus calming the storm should give us great hope. We see how Jesus immediately answered the disciples. Jesus answers our prayers, too. Not only this, but also Jesus had the authority to calm the storm. So too does he have the power to answer our greatest needs. And just as Jesus was near in the disciples' time of fear and danger, he is *always* close to us.

Just as storms in nature come and go, we each experience storms in our lives. Have faith...Jesus is close!

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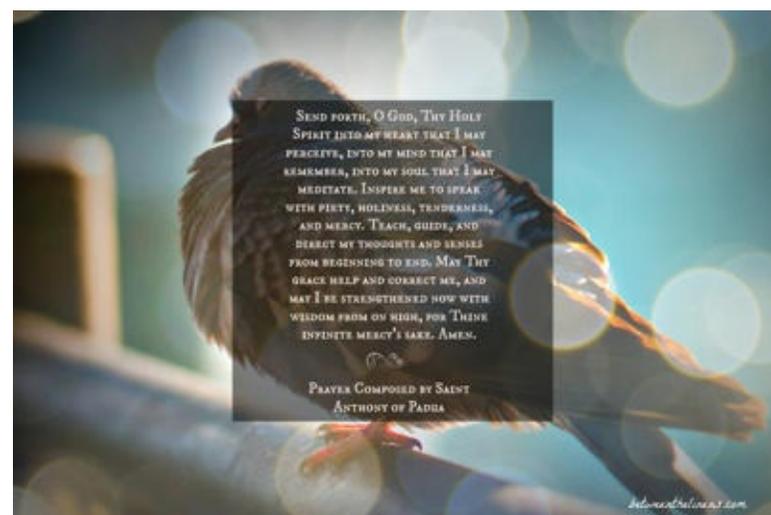
# Finding More than Car Keys with St. Anthony of Padua [at Between the Linens]

Like most small children being raised in a Catholic Family, my chickadees have learned to call on St. Anthony for help on lost trinkets and treasures. And, boy, does this guy come through! Even on our best day, we only bug St. Anthony every other hour. However, one day after reading about the life of St. Anthony, I was struck by the sheer frivolity in which this Saint has been reduced.

“Doctor of the Gospel”, “Hammer of Heretics”, and “Ark of Both Covenants” are titles given to St. Anthony. Those speak of a theological powerhouse not a man who was popular for finding the lost socks during the laundry day. He was a man who fought the desires of the flesh persevering with his chastity intact; in fact, he is often painted with a lily because he is so closely associated with the virtue of purity.

Today, we often hear about a lack of purity and a perversion of our [natural law](#). Wouldn't it be wonderful ***to call on the intercession of St. Anthony to help those struggling with porn addictions, homosexuality, transgenderism, and promiscuity find peace in their souls, to come into the Church finding a warm welcome and the support of a loving community leading them towards the virtue of purity?***

St. Anthony wrote and delivered sermons with plain speech and intellectual force. His words were not attacks but based on logic culled from his incredible knowledge and intimacy with holy scripture. I think that he limited the stinging attacks because he knew all too well the fragile nature of our souls. He was a man who kept “his personal struggles and thoughts in impenetrable solitude” (Rengers, 309). Wouldn't it be profitable ***to call on St. Anthony for those that struggle with accepting Church doctrine, for those living in mortal sin, for those without the freedom to be Catholic, for those facing unwanted martyrdom, for those who are suffering in silence to find a voice, to find a holy helpmate, to find their path back to Christ?***



On this day, St. Anthony's feast day, I want to honor him as more than a finder of lost objects. I want to remember the man who brought hundreds into the Christian life with his spiritual directions. I want to ask him to pray for our world. Searching through Amazon, I found very little in English about his life or his works. However, I plan on explaining to my chickadees that this man fought temptation, found his path,

and helped others find their way out of darkness.

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## Are We Alone? [at Declaring the Whole Counsel]

**"Two possibilities exist...either we are alone in the universe, or we are not. Both are equally terrifying" (Arthur C. Clarke).**

Clarke, who wrote the well known science fiction story "2001: A Space Odyssey" and its various sequels (including those he did not consider as sequels), was an atheist and (apparently) a sodomite. His various writings and comments make it very clear that he had no sympathy for the Christian understanding of the world. It is therefore doubtful that his comment about being "alone in the universe" was a reference to God; he was speaking about extraterrestrial aliens (which he apparently believed were likely).

What would lead Clarke to say the above quote? "Terrifying" is a strong term. He thought it was terrifying if we were alone; presumably because that would mean that there was nothing to find out there that would help us (as we can assume is why he wants aliens to exist--so that they can help us). On the other hand, it is "equally terrifying" that there

*are*

aliens out there; presumably because that would mean that they are not necessarily going to be at peace with us. Clarke was a very smart man and had some remarkable ideas about what the future of scientific discovery would reveal to us. In spite of his hatred of Christ, he was well learned.

Let us take Clarke's quote in a different direction though. If we are

*spiritually*

alone in the universe, then that would be terrifying; both for Clarke and for the rest of us. That would mean that there is no Heaven, no Hell, no angels or demons and no afterlife. We are alone, there is nothing else, and this is the only life that exists. Therefore, all the evil we see is the direct result of our own choices (no devil to blame stuff on) and nothing else. This would also leave us with the conclusion that life has no meaning. It would also mean that thousands of selfless people who died as martyrs wasted their time. If there is not a personal power who is higher than us, then there is no real justice, and we might as well "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die".

On the other hand, if we are

*not*

spiritually alone in the universe. It is only terrifying for Clarke, but not for us. That would mean that there is a higher personal power Who created the universe, Who is just and righteous, and Who, therefore, gives all existence meaning. That would mean that there are demons and angels, there is a Heaven and a Hell, and that we can see the influence of these "other beings" on our world. This would also mean that life does have meaning; it is not pointless. For those of us who put our hope in that very same Creator, this is not terrifying, but encouraging. For those who want to live their lives choosing any and every sin that they please, the concept of an authoritative being Who will be their judge is not pleasant; it is (as Clarke said) "terrifying".

The utter emptiness of life without God is clear. When the greatest thing you can hope in is that some benevolent aliens will find us and give us "salvation", then there is not much encouragement when it is equally possible that those same aliens will be malevolent. Imagine being unsure of whether Jesus was loving and good or hateful and evil (!). This is the life that Clarke chose to live and the belief system he chose to follow. It is evident in his writings (especially if you read his "3001: the Final Odyssey"). Hopelessness, chance, and a little bit of selfish pleasure along the way: this is what comes from the smartest minds that reject God. What a joy it is to know God.

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## Laudato Si with My Children [at CF Family]



(This was printed by our *Frontiersman* paper today also.)

I have read portions of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si, mi Signore* (Praise be to you, my Lord; known simply as *Laudato Si*) to the younger children and have sent the [Vatican link](#) to our older boys, telling them to read it themselves, both to learn and to be ready to converse about its contents. *Encyclical*, from the Greek word for circle, is a letter from the pope to be sent around to the bishops to encourage and educate the faithful. This day, anyone is able to access it immediately and send the links around without waiting for our bishops to translate and teach. I love that the web address includes the words, "Papa Francesco." My Papa Francis.

Currently, we are halfway through. It begins.

*"LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore"* – *"Praise be to you, my Lord"*. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs".

"This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her...The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life...We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. *Gen 2:7*); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters."



This reminded the kids of the Noah story from their picture Bibles and the older Howells of the intense visual destruction of both earth and humanity from last year's Noah movie as well. We wondered how the Creator could watch.

“Nowadays, for example, we are conscious of the disproportionate and unruly growth of many cities, which have become unhealthy to live in, not only because of pollution caused by toxic emissions but also as a result of urban chaos, poor transportation, and visual pollution and noise... Neighbourhoods, even those recently built, are congested, chaotic and lacking in sufficient green space. We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature.”

One of the children remarked, “Sounds just like Wall-E,” Pixar’s 2008 animated film where humans had completely lost touch with nature -- both their own human nature and anything green. I love that Pope Francis uses, “nature” (such an alive-sounding word) alongside, “environment” (a necessary scientific word).

And then a wincing grimace as I scrolled along.

“Furthermore, when media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously... True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution. Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new

type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature. Today's media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences.”

May I live wisely, think deeply, and love generously. May I actively reach for real relationships and challenges. May I use today's media to share and communicate but never to shield myself from direct contact with others. May I teach this well to my children.

He sheds light on the reason for the destruction of our souls and our planet.

“The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast... It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

I reminded the kids of our final blessing after Mass, which is an encounter with Jesus. “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”

The Catholic faith is a sacramental one; that is, God's supernatural graces are given by natural materials. Just as Jesus used the stuff of the earth (oil, water, dirt, bread, wine) for miracles, so do our sacraments, says Papa Francis.



“The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane. Water, oil, fire and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise. The hand that blesses is an instrument of God’s love and a reflection of the closeness of Jesus Christ, who came to accompany us on the journey of life. Water poured over the body of a child in Baptism is a sign of new life. Encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature.”

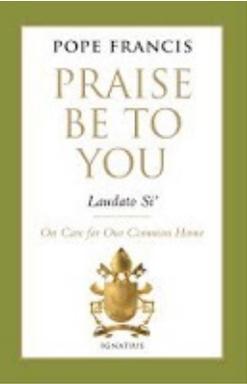
It was a good reminder for all of us, that church is not simply where we go to sing songs and hear preaching.

He gives easy, practical advice.

“I ask all believers to return to this beautiful and meaningful custom [thanking God before and after meals]. That moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labours provide us with these goods; and it reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need.”

“Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. An integral ecology is also made up of simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. In the end, a world of exacerbated consumption is at the same time a world which mistreats life in all its forms.”

I can start this immediately. So can my children. So can anyone.



I've been in the mind of a theologian, a scientist, a pastor, an environmentalist, and a lover of Jesus and people. I can't wait to learn and love more. Praise be to you, my Lord!

Love, Allison

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This contribution is available at <http://northerncffamily.blogspot.com/2015/06/laudato-si-with-my-children.html>  
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## In Him Alone [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

Need some good news? Here is the link to my Good News about our God [YouTube videos](#). Each is less than five minutes.

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*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 . . . stand firm. (Ephesians 6:12-13)*

No one old enough to read is unaware of the evil ravaging across our nation like a tsunami, leaving in its wake destruction, mayhem, and death. I do not need to itemize the things happening around us today.

Every day.

Day after day.

I also know how easy it is to start seeing life through the prism of fear, apprehension, and yes, even dread about tomorrow. I know how easy it is to do that because I found myself moving in that direction once again, this time after reading the latest reports of Satan unleashed in the South Carolina church massacre.

That evening as I prepared for sleep, I opened my Bible to John's gospel and read what Jesus said to His own: *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

Life and peace and fear and dread are deeply rooted in this equation: If we are living 'in the world', we have good reason to live with fear. But if we are living 'in Christ' we have good reason to even stare death in the face and spit in its eye.

“*And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.*” (Revelation 12:11)

Christian, stay in Christ!

In this world we have nothing but tribulation. Please! Pray for each other that we *stay in Christ*. It is in Him alone – in Him *alone* – will we receive supernatural peace . . .

Even in the midst of the tsunami.

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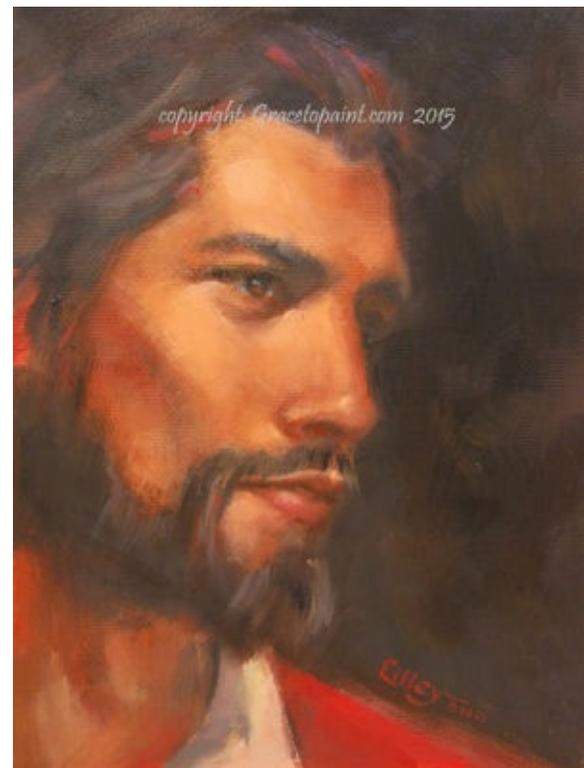
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# Jesus in Red Robe [at Grace to Paint]

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

in [Paintings](#)



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

In all faces is seen the Face of all faces, veiled...

–Nicholas of Cusa

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2015/07/03/jesus-in-red-robe/>  
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## Why I Remain a Catholic [at One Thousand Words a Week]

“Something had given him leave to live in the present.”

~ [Walker Percy](#)

A friend of mine sent me an email with this subject line: “A challenge for your blogging...” She included [Elizabeth Scalia’s invitation](#) to Catholics everywhere in the internet cosmos to write about “Why Do YOU Remain a Catholic” – an invitation itself prompted by the recent Pew Research report on the statistical collapse of the American Church.



Elizabeth Scalia, “The anchoress” (Patheos)

That report, with its grim portrayal of the Church’s retention record, already prompted me to write a [bit about Catholic parenting](#) and keeping our kids connected to the Faith. However, I’ll take Scalia’s proposition (and my friend’s email) as an excuse to add some additional, more personal thoughts.

**So, why do I remain a Catholic?** For me, the question might as well be, “Why do you keep breathing?” I can’t imagine *not* being a Catholic – there’s no alternative. Catholicism informs everything I think and say and do, and so the very concept of giving it up is unfathomable.

Curiously, this is not the case with regards to Christianity in general. I grew up in an Evangelical tradition, my beloved siblings and their families remain so, and I have great respect for my Protestant friends and colleagues. In fact, I not only admire their strong faith and piety, but I also strive to emulate their example. However, for me, Christianity *is* Catholicism – there’s no going back. [Samuel Johnson](#) (himself an Anglican) put it this way:

A man who is converted from Protestantism to Popery, may be sincere: he parts with nothing: he is only superadding to what he already had. But a convert from Popery to Protestantism, gives up so much of what he had held as sacred as anything that he retains: there is so much laceration of mind in such a conversion, that it can hardly be sincere and lasting.



G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936)

**That's one of the quirky little secrets** of Catholicism: It's not just another denomination. It really does claim to be the true Church, and hence, *the* truth. Period. "The difficulty of explaining 'why I am a Catholic,'" wrote [G.K. Chesterton](#), "is that there are ten thousand reasons all amounting to one reason: that Catholicism is true." The funny thing is that *conviction* regarding the Church's truth claims is not always the main motivating factor for *conversion*. For some converts, it might've been an attraction to liturgy; for others, it might've been marriage to a Catholic – there are myriad reasons to "pope," all of them good enough. God will use whatever means he can to get us attached to his family, and then he'll bring us along, sanctifying us one way or another, sometimes despite our objections and resistance. He's sneaky that way.

However, at some point along the sainthood trail, the outlandish truth of Catholicism becomes virtually undeniable. It sounds crazy, I know, but at some point, we start to take it for granted that Catholicism simply comports with *the way things are* (truth) and, consequently, it's the only reliable means of bringing about *the way things ought to be* (beatitude). Orthodoxy, orthopraxy; what is affirmed and what is aspired to – however it's parsed, it's a bulwark that stands between the faithful and the temptations of suicidal oblivion. It keeps us tethered to earth and directs our eyes to heaven. Above all, it gives us reason to hope: that our past may be redeemed, that our future might be glorious, and that our present...

**Ah, the present. It's so thick, so fraught with edges and endings**, uncertainties and contingencies, yet Catholicism takes it all into account. Let's see, how can I...

Well, here, let me paint a picture. Here's how I envision Catholic Faith impinging on the present.

---

"YOU DOING ALRIGHT?"

*A Comedy in Three Acts*

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

- RICK – Apprentice husband, father, Catholic
- BRENDAN – Hardware-store clerk
- DR. OFFERLE – Optometrist

- CHORUS
  - THOMAS MERTON, OCSO – Monk
  - HUBERT VAN ZELLER, OSB – Monk

## ACT 1

At RISE:

*(It's Sunday afternoon at Menard's. There is bustle and activity in the plumbing section, customers browsing for parts and tools. CHORUS is visible stage left. RICK holds a discount toilet seat, but appears stalled, adrift – no longer shopping nor moving in the direction of the check-out lanes. He seems poised to ask a question, and BRENDAN, alert and solicitous, approaches.)*

**BRENDAN**

You doing alright?

**RICK**

Uh...

*(RICK stares blankly at BRENDAN for a moment. Brendan freezes; Rick lapses into a reverie and addresses the audience, gesticulating animatedly; MERTON interjects throughout.)*

Am I doing alright? *No, I'm not doing alright.*

**MERTON**

“I have no idea where I am going.”

**RICK**

In fact, I'm doing *lousy*, wondering how I landed here, shopping for plumbing fixtures while my children are growing up at breakneck speed – another one off to college next fall! – and there's no way I can undo all the ways I've failed them, *and* failed my wife, *plus* my students, my friends, not to mention my God.



Thomas Merton, OCSO (1915-1968)

**MERTON**

“I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.”

**RICK**

My God (*hands extended, arms upraised*), I’ve been a Catholic for *decades* – over half my life now! Yet I’m barely past the starting gate – I’m just getting going! Mass and sacraments, prayers and spiritual reading, solid spiritual counsel and the best theological formation out there – for what? Scraping by, still scraping by, and there’s no second wind unless you’ve exhausted your first wind. I’m jogging here, just ambling along – not even! The race has started, and I’m just getting the shoes on.

**MERTON**

“Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.”

**RICK**

So, am I doing alright? (*pause, then addressing the frozen BRENDAN*) Are you serious?

(*Lights fade. End of ACT 1.*)

ACT 2

(*Lights fade in. Flashback several days. Eye doctor’s examination room – Snellen chart on the wall, typical equipment on counter and attached to wall. RICK reclines in the patient’s chair; OFFERLE sits on a stool directly in front of Rick, peering through an ophthalmoscope.*)

**OFFERLE**

It’s bright outside. OK if I dilate your eyes?

**RICK**

Sure (*leans back as OFFERLE instills eye drops*). I already have sunglasses with me. (*pause*) You’ll be happy to know I’ve been using them pretty regularly since last time – whenever I’m out in the sun. They *are* a bit nerdy. (*pause*) My son calls them “cataract glasses.”

**OFFERLE**

That’s good (*laughs*) – he’s right! – and it’ll help. (*Further examination via the ophthalmoscope.*) Of course, some vision change is unavoidable. (*pause*) Do you squint to read?

**RICK**

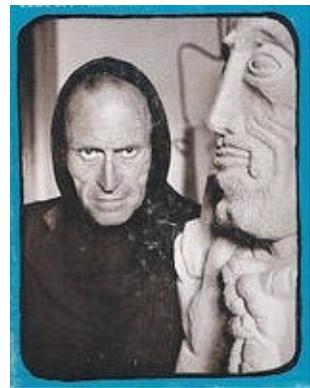
No – not usually.... (*raises eyebrows*) [presbyopia](#)?

**OFFERLE**

Right – you can expect it. You’ll have to squint to read or hold books and newspapers away from you further and further. It’s a natural part of aging, but it’s manageable. *(pause)* For now, though, *(pulling away ophthalmoscope)* I don’t see any problems.

*(OFFERLE freezes; VAN ZELLER, stage left, interjects; RICK turns to listen to him.)*

## VAN ZELLER



Dom Hubert van Zeller (1905–1984)

“As long as we are only tamed by years and not tired by them we have no cause to worry. Nor should we suffer ourselves to be unduly tamed. Looking wide-eyed at life we shall find much that will create in us that blessed sense of wonder – so much indeed that there will be no room in us for preoccupation with the crooked and the wrong.”

## **OFFERLE**

*(unfreezes)* I’m leaving your prescription the same. *(big smile)* In fact, I don’t think you need to come back for another two years. That’s good, isn’t it?

*(Lights fade. End of ACT 2.)*

## ACT 3

*(Lights fade in, revealing the previous frozen scene in the Menard’s plumbing aisle. BRENDAN is in a solicitous posture; CHORUS is visible stage left; RICK addresses the audience; MERTON interjects throughout.)*

## **RICK**

God forgive me for my failures, my weaknesses, my petty selfishness and deceit. I love you, God – at least I think I do – but I keep messing up, over and over!

## **MERTON**

“I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.”

## **RICK**

Give me your strength, your grace, your life, God. Help me keep going.

**MERTON**

“I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.”

**RICK**

Help my kids, my wife. Help me be a better husband and father, a better teacher, a better worker, a better friend. Help me, God, help me! I don't even know how to ask you to help me!

**MERTON**

“Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

*(Customers and BRENDAN unfreeze; RICK addresses Brendan.)*

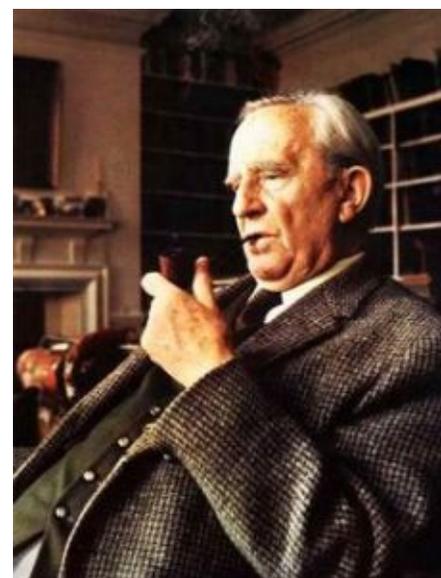
**RICK**

Yeah, *(pause)*... I'm alright.

*(Lights dim. CURTAIN.)*

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**You see, the present is “an adventure,”** Van Zeller reminds us, and “there are discoveries to be made round every corner” – tumult and opportunity, crisis and resolution, sin and salvation *around every corner!* We tend to lose that perspective as we get older, but Catholicism trumpets it perpetually *and* makes it happen. With faith, *everything* can be an adventure, *every undertaking* a quest – even shopping in the hardware store, even getting a check-up. Creation is a sacrament, people are Jesus, and everything points to God – no escape, but why would we want to escape?



J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973)

That question is at the heart of Gandalf's first encounter with Bilbo Baggins in [The Hobbit](#). Bilbo is relaxing and showing off with his pipe smoke. "Very pretty!" said Gandalf. "But I have no time to blow smoke-rings this morning. I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone." He's perplexed: Why is it so difficult? Sure, there's danger and death and no guarantees, but, c'mon, it's *an adventure!* How can we say no?

Every time we Catholics go to Mass, every time we receive the sacraments or pray, we're invited to an adventure and we take the risk of *becoming saints* – incredible. Will we agree? Will we go? *What will happen?!*

I think that's a show worth sticking around for.

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

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This contribution is available at <http://onethousandwordsaweek.wordpress.com/2015/06/07/why-i-remain-a-catholic/>  
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## The Father's Vocation [at Bethune Catholic]

Every Saturday night when we do Night Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, we read:

*Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are busy or at rest. (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)*

It occurred to me that this is surely a prescription for the vocation of father. First, there is the universal call to holiness: *Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

Then there is the call of the father on how to raise his children: *Drill them into your children.*

Then the father as spiritual head of the family: *Speak of them at home ...*

And finally, the father as the domestic church's face to the world: *and abroad ...*

Of course there is nothing here specific about a father's vocation as husband, but we can go to St. Paul for that ....

**Oremus pro invicem!**

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This contribution is available at <http://www.bethunecatholic.blogspot.com/2015/06/the-fathers-vocation.html>  
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## Depression, suicide, and the Cross as hope in reality [at Catholic Deacon]

I found it highly telling that yesterday when I posted an article from the Deseret News on my Facebook timeline (

["Utah ranks 5th for overdose deaths, 14th overall for injury deaths"](#)

) that highlighted findings from a report compiled by the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation,

["The Facts Hurt, A State by State Injury Prevention Policy Report, 2015,"](#)

nobody responded either by commenting or "liking." It seems that some facts do, indeed, hurt.

Given that Utah's suicide rate is way way higher than the nationwide average (national average is 12.5 suicides

*per*

100,000 and Utah's is 20.6

*per*

100,000), I also found it telling that this disturbing fact (I will try not to go off on a philosophical discourse about the nature of a "fact") was not noted in the lengthy headline. It's tough stuff and, I believe that here in Utah, there are some deep underlying socio-religious causes.

Needless to say, given my own struggles, these measures of events that happen in the world pre-occupied me a good portion of yesterday afternoon, especially in light of the mass murder in Charleston. For many people, including me, it's all too easy for what happened in Charleston this week to only highlight our fear and our insecurity, maybe even robbing us of our hope. Instead, let's let it provoke the question, "In who or what do I place my hope?" My hope lies in the the beautiful witness of those who were senselessly gunned down, the lone survivor, who, in the ego-manical machinations of the killer, was let go to tell the world what happened, and that of their surviving family members (see

["‘I forgive you.’ Relatives of Charleston church shooting victims address Dylann Roof"](#)

).



It was wonderful that this post by Heather Parrie showed up this morning in my Facebook feed. She deals very forthrightly with the reality of depression, the kind that leads to contemplation of ending it all:

### ["The Semicolon Project"](#)

We'll start here: a semi-colon is a place in a sentence where the author has the decision to stop with a period, but chooses not to. A semi-colon is a reminder to pause and then keep going... I got this tattoo as a promise to myself that I would never willingly end my sentence

I would never presume to speak about these matters on behalf of anyone other than myself, but I often find it very difficult, close to impossible, to face reality, to deal with the circumstances in which I find myself. As a result, I waste a lot of time and energy wishing for a change of circumstances. This week I finished re-reading Fergus Kerr's

### [Thomas Aquinas: A Very Short Introduction](#)

while sitting by the pool at the Boy Scout Camp in Millcreek Canyon, a beautiful outdoor setting in a lovely corner of God's creation, which helped me experience, again, the reality that creation itself is a sacrament. I ran across this, which I found useful, timely, and a provocation:

On Thomas's view, we pray in order to dispose ourselves so as to receive properly what God wills to give us. We pray, so to speak, to change, not God's will, but our own disposition (82)

Don't worry, Thomas accounts for that which God determines to fulfill precisely through our prayers, but that is beside the point I am trying to make.



I found Kerr's summary of the Angelic Doctor on prayer useful because it showed me, yet again, that reality, when engaged according

*all*

the factors that together constitute it, is cruciform. If I take the cruciform shape of reality as axiomatic, then, by definition, at times life is inevitably painful. So when, and, at least for me,

*only*

when, united with Christ's suffering my pain bears fruit, has a point, a purpose, an end towards which it is directed- the ultimate end for which I have been lovingly and uniquely created and redeemed. In this way, my pain becomes my sanctification. But I am aware that this pain can also be my (self-imposed) damnation. I don't mind sharing that in my sometimes realistic grappling with these things part of my inner dialogue is telling myself, "Lean into the Cross until you have splinters in your hands, on your cheek, on your forehead, and in your chest." Now, this may not be useful for everyone. It is

***useless***

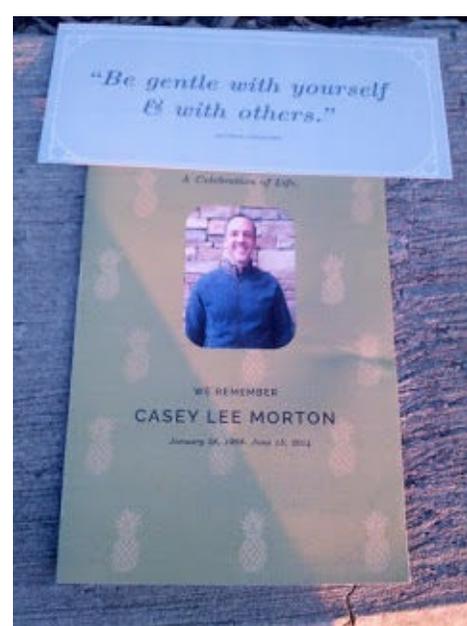
to

*anyone*

who does not have a sense of just how much s/he is loved by the Lord. It is one of the ways I experience His love most directly.

It's pretty damn difficult to stand-up with a boulder on your back and ask for help. This is true for a lot of general reasons, but even more true for specific reasons peculiar to the person who is being crushed by this weight; everyone experiences these things through the prism of her/his personality. And so, for those truly struggling, it's not easy to just say to that person, "If you're feeling the weight crushing you, reach out for help." Here's something useful: if you know someone who struggles with these things, call her, text him, email, just let that person know you're thinking about them and you care for them, remind that person s/he matters to you. If you are blessed not to be so afflicted, these simple, consistent actions mean more

than you'll ever know. We live in a society and culture that induces existential angst and produces mental disorders.



Heather went on to write this about her tattoo -

Another thing: my tattoo is just slightly crooked. At first that bothered me. And then I remembered that life's a little crooked, too. And now I love it even more

I am more than a little off-center, that is, eccentric, which, I strongly believe, makes the One who loves me with an unfathomable, unfailing love, love me all the more.

For further reflection, I invite you to pray with

[Psalm 139](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2015/06/depression-suicide-and-cross-as-hope-in.html>  
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## You Will Be Assimilated. Resistance Is Futile. [at V for Victory!]



This photo is from the White House's Twitter feed, which also now has a cartoon of a rainbowed White House as its avatar. The Executive Mansion, owned and kept up by the American taxpayer, is currently the residence of a man who, just a few short years ago, declared that he believed marriage to be between one man and one woman. Now that the U.S. Supreme Court has discovered the "right" to same-sex "marriage" in the Fourteenth Amendment -- a right hitherto undetected by any human being since the Constitution was ratified -- that same man has turned the house first lived in by Thomas Jefferson into a gigantic billboard for homosexuality.

But, lest we be too distracted by this puerile display and mockery of an historic monument of the nation's founding, let us take special note of Obama's speech celebrating the Supreme Court's travesty. You can read the whole thing [here](#); this is the money quote:

I know that Americans of good will continue to hold a wide range of views on this issue. Opposition, in some cases, has been based on sincere and deeply held beliefs. All of us who welcome today's news should be mindful of that fact and recognize different viewpoints, revere our ["]deep["] ["]commitment["] to religious freedom.

But today should also give us hope that on the many issues with which we grapple, often painfully, real change is possible. **Shift in hearts and minds is possible. And those who have come so far on their journey to equality have a responsibility to reach back and help others join them, because for all of our differences, we are one people, stronger together than we could ever be alone.**

Let us leave to one side the hypocrisy in this divide-and-conquer president of appealing to national unity. I have already been ridiculed as a paranoid because I perceive this new development as a frontal assault on my free exercise of my Catholic faith as formerly guaranteed by the First Amendment. Now along comes Obama, vindicating my point and proving that, like always with leftists, this victory is not enough. It was never going to be enough, just like all the previous victories garnered after long years of shoving gay propaganda down everyone's throats. Nothing is never enough. It's not enough that government at all levels supports the gay lifestyle. It's not enough that big business supports it. It's not enough that the entertainment industry supports it. It's not enough that the education system, from kindergartens to universities, supports it. It's not enough that the media support it. It's not enough that popular culture supports it. It's not enough that some heretical Catholic bishops and priests support it. It's not enough that

Disneyland supports it. It's not enough that now five out of nine Supreme Court justices support it. No: I must also support it. And since I must support it, if I will not do so voluntarily, the next step is to use force to make me. And if I still refuse to give way, then I guess the next step is liquidation. Because leftists think they can only have peace when there is an absence of opposition. Yet that still will not be enough. Even after all the intractables are liquidated, opposition will continue to be redefined. One day, opposition will consist in all those who are not actively participating in the gay lifestyle and gay sex, even though they condone it. Meanwhile, the misery of homosexuals increases as they struggle, pathetically, to re-invent reality in the face of nature, reason and God, their carefully-constructed edifice of imaginary "rights" having turned into a maximum-security prison from which there is no escape -- not even death.

Martin Luther said: "Reason is a whore, the greatest enemy that faith has; it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but more frequently than not struggles against the divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God." This idea of reason as a whore has borne much evil fruit over five centuries, and perhaps none more poisonous than the current assault on marriage and the free exercise of religion. We are in a mess now that can be fixed only by divine intervention; we had better pray and strive to somehow deserve it.

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This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2015/06/you-will-be-assimilated-resistance-is.html>  
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# We're bound to offend, so let's speak plainly [at Blog of a Country Priest]



This morning at Mass, I distributed the Australian bishops' recent pastoral letter on marriage. Despite its assertive title — [Don't Mess With Marriage](#) — it is a very mild document.

The document presents a case for traditional marriage which seeks to be as inoffensive as possible. By this measure, the document has failed. Here's a few headlines to prove it:

The supreme irony in this is that the document nowhere refers to the Church's "most offensive" (read, most counter-cultural) moral teachings. No mention of the grave immorality of homosexual acts. No mention of objectively disordered inclinations. These teachings constitute the elephant in the room.

I spoke to a priest last week who was quite animated in his defence of traditional marriage. "Marriage can only occur between a man and a woman. If a same-sex couple came to me, I'd be very happy to bless them. I'd pray that they find God in their love for each other, and goodness in their life together. But it's not marriage."

Right. It's not marriage. But what that priest said isn't Catholic teaching either. A gravely immoral relationship can't be blessed. This priest's position is incompatible with the Catholic moral tradition. But it's *not* incompatible with *Don't Mess With Marriage*. I don't wish to suggest that the bishops' pastoral letter condones same sex relationships. That's a logical leap too far. But certainly, the letter is ambiguous. It fails to present the full Catholic teaching on the subject.

For this reason, I also distributed to parishioners a much more comprehensive document. In 2003, Pope John Paul II approved the CDF's [Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons](#). The title is much longer than the Australian bishops' letter, but the document itself is much shorter. It's also much more "offensive" — in that it doesn't mince words and includes very direct exhortations.

For example:

Sacred Scripture condemns homosexual acts "as a serious depravity... (cf. *Rom* 1:24-27; *1 Cor* 6:10; *1 Tim* 1:10). This judgment of Scripture does not of course permit us to conclude that all those who suffer from this anomaly are personally responsible for it, but it does attest to the fact that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." This same moral judgment is found in many Christian writers of the first centuries and is unanimously accepted by Catholic Tradition.

And:

When legislation in favour of the recognition of homosexual unions is proposed for the first time in a legislative assembly, the Catholic law-maker has a moral duty to express his opposition clearly and publicly and to vote against it. To vote in favour of a law so harmful to the common good is gravely immoral.

Here we have language which is deeply provocative, and I can understand why it wasn't used in the Australian bishops' pastoral letter. The bishops want to teach and edify. They don't want to offend.

But here's the thing. Catholic teaching on homosexuality *is* offensive to a growing proportion of the population. We only have to review those headlines above to confirm it. As disciples of Jesus Christ, Catholics need to be comfortable with this. Our Lord, who of course excelled at speaking the truth with love, wasn't very *nice*. He offended people left, right and centre. Why should things be different for us?

The furore caused by *Don't Mess With Marriage* despite its mild presentation, suggests to me that we may as well be direct and avoid ambiguity. Hence my recommendation to parishioners to take and read both the bishops' letter, and the CDF's *Considerations*.

Many times in the last few years, I have heard bishops and cardinals call for a review of the language the Church uses. To cite a recent example, consider [Cardinal Diarmuid Martin's response to Ireland's gay marriage yes vote](#):

“It's very clear that if this referendum is an affirmation of the views of young people, then the Church has a huge task in front of it to find the language to be able to talk to and to get its message across to young people, not just on this issue, but in general.”

I think this is dead wrong. It's also a bit patronising. “Marriage equality” activists aren't offended by the *language* of Catholic moral teaching. They're offended by the *content*. The Church has never waged a petty war of words. The Church is engaged in the noble battle of *ideas*.

Put another way, the “messaging remedy” is not semantic. The remedy is something which was banished from the Church's seminaries and universities and schools 50 years ago, at great cost. The remedy is apologetics.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.acountrypriest.com/were-bound-to-offend-so-lets-speak-plainly/>  
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# No, I Don't Hate You, Nor Am I Afraid of You [at This That and the Other Thing]

Rainbow flags are everywhere in social media. Every state but Louisiana is issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Those favoring gay marriage are rejoicing, and those who don't; those who have the audacity to support traditional sexual morality, are reviled as being "hateful" or "intolerant" or "judgmental". We are called "homophobic", a word that means we fear same. With all due respect, I disagree. That's right, I disagree; I don't hate and I don't fear.

There have been pages and pages written by people far more authoritative and erudite than I am so I'll save you the time it would take to read my explanation of why homosexual activity is wrong. If you need a reference, check out the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Suffice to say, this is not a new position, it is not one born out of hate for those who are different and it does not condemn anyone for any inborn traits (though it may condemn behaviors those inborn traits make you more likely than average to engage in).

It seems that the greatest sin of our age is "intolerance" or "judging"; but that's only if you support traditional notions of sexual morality. I'm not called judgmental or intolerant for saying it is wrong to rob a bank, to use racial epithets even in private conversations, or to gossip or to rape someone or to (at least right now) have sex with minors. "Everyone" knows those things are wrong, so I'm not considered judgmental if I say they are wrong, teach my children they are wrong and choose not to associate with people who openly engage in those behaviors. Frankly, I'm more interested in what God believes is right and wrong than I am in what "everyone" or the US Supreme Court believes is right or wrong, and I'll trust the authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church over the majority opinion on facebook any day.

I saw a meme floating around facebook even before the Supreme Court ruling saying that the "love the sinner" approach is wrong because it requires me to see someone as a sinner and that Jesus said to take care of the plank in my eye before worrying about the splinter in yours. I daresay that everyone reading this is a sinner, as is the writer. I also would venture to say that I have readers who engage in behavior that I, if asked to judge, would say is sinful, but which they do not consider to be sinful--and that's the thing, we ARE supposed to decide, to judge if you would, whether **actions** are sinful or not, and we are to avoid those that are. Sometimes that may mean avoiding certain sinners--I would never leave my kids alone with someone I strongly suspected of child molestation. Sometimes that means counseling them about the error of their ways (but that requires a relationship that I don't have with the overwhelming majority of people in the world), and sometimes it means praying for them, while loving them letting God handle the rest.

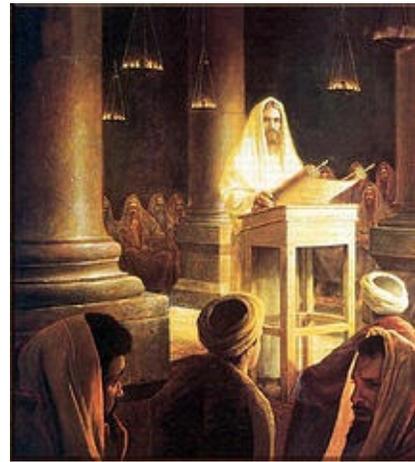
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# The Traveling Preacher [at Journey to Wisdom]

Sunday July 5, 2015

A Reflection on Mark 6:1-6 N.A.B.

By: *Larry T*



In the Gospel reading for this Sunday we read about Jesus' preaching experience in his hometown synagogue. At first the people were fascinated and spellbound as they heard Jesus interpret the law in a new and astonishing way, but when they remembered that he had been their neighbor and was a simple carpenter at that, they turned their back on him and his message. What went wrong?

*<sup>1</sup> He departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples.*

*<sup>2</sup> When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!"*

*<sup>3</sup> Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.*

*<sup>4</sup> Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house."*

*<sup>5</sup> So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them.*

*<sup>6</sup> He was amazed at their lack of faith. He went around to the villages in the vicinity teaching.*

How much time does a professional speaker have to gain an audience's trust? Is it two, five, ten, or fifteen minutes? The answer is less than five, and sometimes as little as two minutes. In view of this professional speakers are trained to use a variety of time-proven techniques aimed at earning an audience's trust in the first critical minutes of their speech.

For example, men are told to wear white shirts and women advised to wear white blouses because white implies purity. Married male speakers are instructed to wear plain gold wedding bands because an audience is more comfortable with a man who wears a simple gold wedding ring. Politicians consistently follow this recommendation; even politicians who are multimillionaires typically wear plain gold wedding rings when making speeches. Some speakers have meeting rooms set up with ninety percent of the seating required for the anticipated audience size; then they have additional seating brought in at the very last minute. This is so that seated audience members might think, Wow! Look at all the people coming in at the last minute, this speaker must really be good! These simple tricks-of-the-trade are all designed to help build credibility with the audience. Since Jesus had been invited by the synagogue officials to address the meeting he didn't have much of a credibility obstacle to overcome.

What was the audience expecting from Jesus? After all, He was just one of them, and a common tradesman at that. At best His reading of the scroll could be a little better than average. Since Jesus didn't have a formal education in Mosaic Law, his interpretations couldn't possibly equal those of the Pharisees and scribes. All things considered their expectations of Jesus' preaching might have been pretty low; some onlookers probably steeled themselves to simply suffer through it.

How good a preacher was the Lord? He astonished them! He stunned them by explaining Mosaic Law in ways that they had never heard before, in ways that they were not ready to accept. Every word that Jesus spoke and every act that he performed was a divine act in human form. This synagogue audience was simply unwilling to accept the Word of God. They rationalized that a simple carpenter could not possess the wisdom to speak as He did, so they rejected Him. Jesus was amazed at their lack to faith.

For two-thousand years all humanity has been Jesus' audience; he continues to preach to us through Holy Scripture and his Church. Like the synagogue audience we have two choices: we can receive Jesus and live out his message, or we can reject him. The greatest fear that professional speakers have is that their audience will get up and walk out on them. This Sunday we might reflect on the Lord's dismay as he sees members of his audience get up and walk out and his joy over those who stay.

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This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2015/06/the-traveling-preacher.html>  
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# Abortion - A Meditation on Scripture [at The Credo Experience!!!]

As I write these words, more than 47,669 babies have been directly killed today. Since I loaded the web page which has the abortion counter some minutes ago, more than 5,251 unborn children have been killed, and this year, more than 16,425,995 unborn children have been killed. Many countries and states continue to legalize abortions and Physician assisted suicide has continued to be on the increase as well.

The situation is worrisome and is even more so as people who are being charged with the nobility of preventing disease and in effect engendering life, have turned around to be harbingers of death. As Christians, what are we to do? What camp are we to join? I am indeed aware of the many arguments for both sides from many corners, but what I want to do is to listen to Our Lord himself, the Eternal Word, our own master, and teacher, to find out what exactly, we, the people of His way, should believe and do about these issues.

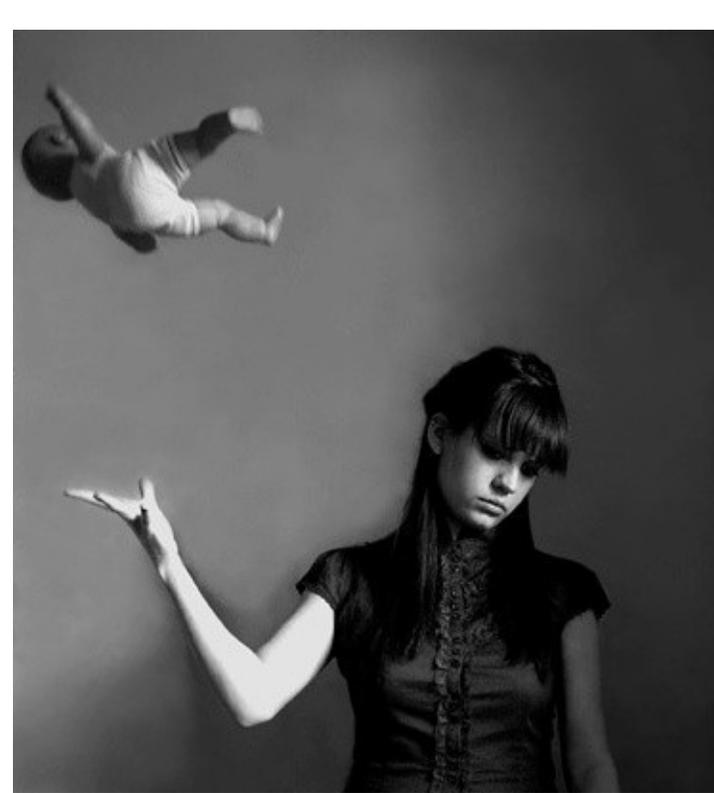
## **'In Him was Life...' (John 1:4)**

. The very character unique, for John, about the person of the God-Man is that of life, and he tells his story of his life so that believing in him, we might come to have that which is in him- Life. He himself gives testimony to this, 'But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing, you may have life in his name (John 20:31). As Christians therefore, our very lives, and the very work of our hands, in the people we meet and work for, should be one that is precisely Christ-like with regard to life. This is especially true for us Christians who are in the field of work that concerns life. Being Christ to others in the medical profession is in essence being a medical practitioner in whom Life is found because Christ lives in him. That as people crawl into the very doors of the hospital seeking life, we may not bring to them a message of death, but one of life that is abundant (cf. John10:10). Being harbingers of life also entails having a particularly unique value for human life, which God has entrusted to our care, in spite of all physical inadequacies. Every human person is created in the image and likeness of our Father God, and God loves each person in a unique way. Our Lord not only desired that we have eternal life, but was also drawn with compassion to human life, this was why he healed the sick, and raised the dead (cf. Luke 7). His work of healing and desire to give life is therefore intricately connected with our vocation and profession in the healthcare field. This should be at the very foundations of our mission to, as Jesus did, cater for human life- spirit, soul and body. It should also be noted that nowhere in the Bible was Christ reported to have sent people to their graves for any reason, no matter how disastrous their illnesses were, he instead brought people back from the dead, a sharp contrast to the so called 'physician assisted suicide' or euthanasia..

## **'Thou shall not kill' (Exodus 20:13)**

. The Ten Commandments were given to the people of Israel as precautions to ensure that they do not veer off the path of love and hence the path of God, in whom is love personified. They were laws of love. It was out of love that God gave us the law and it is in response to that love that we obey his laws. This is why Jesus says, 'If you love me, keep my commandments' (cf. John 14:15). He himself even summarized all the commandments to mean love, it is the greatest of the commandments, all God demands of us (Matthew 22:36-40). If we truly loved, we would not do anything that goes contrary to the commandments of God; the natural law of morality that is written in the hearts of all men irrespective of religion. Who

does not know that it is wrong and totally not in the place of love to kill? However, it is remarkable to note that people now, far from killing people in abortions and euthanasia in defiance to the law of God- of love, now even use love as an excuse for doing these. In essence they are saying 'Love is God' instead of 'God is Love' (1 John 4:8), and what is the danger? The danger is in reducing the concept of love to human love as we know it alone and 'deifying' it, bringing it within the realms of human decision, and thereby dominating it, such that far from what God thinks, people now consider only what they think of love. This is part of the culture which makes Man the centre of the universe. This is a disservice to love, for each man becomes the center of his world. A woman who was raped and becomes pregnant considers no more the life of the Child in her womb but her very self, she is the center, and whatever happens to her life-her fame, her dignity etc.; those are worth more than the life in her womb and so she ends his/her life. This is not the Love that Christ teaches. This radically egocentric perspective has as its consequence the fact that human beings now strive to eliminate God from every human process and leave man in charge.



The issue of pregnancy particularly comes to mind because it was through this same means that Our Savior God came to be with us, in the womb of a virgin, in quite odd a circumstance (cf. Matthew 1:18-25). Remarkably Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary though faced with the same challenges as many women face today, chose to do nothing but the will of God, (cf. Luke 1:38), for her Child-God, was a gift. She, the Mother of our savior should be proposed as a Model to the women of our day, when Children who used to be gifts from God have now become mere products from sex, when the role of God in the sexual union of a married couple is rejected, when the central reasons for marriage and sex these days are lust and sexual pleasure and not self-giving love which is fruitful. More still, when God challenges the artificial barriers we put on the natural procreative process, we refer to the life he has given as a 'mistake'. The culture of death is now so deep that we even now intend to kill in anticipation. Consequently, people are not the only ones being killed as a result of this culture, but also society, marriage and family are dying, especially with the steady rise in divorced homes. We Christians should stand for Christ and witness to him in the very place where people have chosen to eliminate him. This is an urgent call to refute a fast growing culture that is demonic and diabolical in origin.

Dearest friends in Christ, having considered what 'the Lord's side' truly is; the side of life, it is therefore

an onus on us to become servants for life, for we are servants of Jesus Christ, the only true life (cf. John 14:6) and by doing so, we would lead in our very own ministry, a lot of people to the Father through him. We should among other things fight against the current idolization of democracy as a substitute for morality, where the opinion of the majority counts more than the opinion of God, and of well-formed consciences. The saying 'Vox populos Vox Dei' (The Voice of the People is the Voice of God), only holds sway when the 'populos' are deified, in their consciences and in their ways of doing things. We Christians, we who have been indeed deified, are and should indeed be the people of God during these times in order to speak out to the world with the very voice of God, and especially in the healthcare field, we need to wage this war against the culture of death and instill the culture of life that comes from a faithful listening and acting based on the very Word of God that is Life.

From your Friend and Brother: Chibuzor F. Ogamba

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This contribution is available at <http://credoexperience.blogspot.com/2015/06/as-i-write-these-words-more-than-47669.html>

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## From "Meh" to "Amen"



I've recently started writing a monthly web column for [First Things](#) magazine. My second installment is about evangelizing the increasing numbers of "nones" who don't care about religion one way or another, those who respond with something like "meh" to such questions as: "What is our ultimate purpose?" or "Is there a God?" They aren't atheists, agnostics, or seekers; they just don't see the need to have an opinion about such things. How to evangelize the "meh" nones?

This is how the column begins:

According to the recent study from the Pew Research Center, 22.8 percent of U.S. adults and 35 percent of millennials are religiously unaffiliated. The "nones" are by all indications a diverse group. Among the nones are all the familiar categories of unbelief or quasi-belief: committed atheists, agnostics, the "spiritual but not religious," and seekers.

In addition, there seems to be another, less familiar sort: people who don't see the need to think about religious matters at all. Forty-four percent of the respondents to a 2011 Baylor University study reported spending no time whatsoever seeking "eternal wisdom," and 19 percent replied that "it's useless to search for purpose." In the same year, Lifeway, an evangelical research agency, found that 46 percent of those it surveyed never wondered whether or not they will go to heaven, and 28 percent reported that finding a deeper purpose in life wasn't a priority for them.

This variety of "none" is more confounding and dismaying. It's one thing to respond to atheists who think you have the wrong answers or seekers who think you might have part of a bigger answer, but what of those who think you are answering questions that don't even need to be asked? Higher purpose? Eternal joy? Meh. It appears that for increasing numbers of young adults, religion, and Christianity in particular, might no longer be a live option.

You can read the rest here:

# [From “Meh” to “Amen”](#)

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## Going for the Gold [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]



I

if I offered you two gold bricks, provided you went to Rome to get them, would you go? I thought so.

“Silver and gold I have none, but what I have I give you.” Not bricks but friendship with two foundation stones of the Church—Peter and Paul. Between Oct. 19 and 30, 2015, you’ll be able to walk, first in the footsteps of

*Sts. Peter and Paul*

in Rome, then of the

*saints of the Pauline Family*

in the foothills of the Alps: Alba, Susa, Turin, and Milan, with a stay in Assisi on the way. The itinerary includes the Wednesday General Audience with Pope Francis. Daily Mass, Eucharistic adoration, and group prayer with the Word of God will be led by the Daughters of St. Paul, as we commemorate our centenary year, and by Fr. Michael, Goonan, SSP.

In Rome, we’ll visit some famous sites, but also places connected with Peter and Paul that most pilgrims never see. Once in Piedmont, northern Italy, we’ll pray at the birthplaces of Fr. Alberione and Mother Thecla, Bl. Timothy Giaccardo, and Mother Scholastica Rivata, the first Sister Disciple of the Divine Master—places where the Society of St. Paul and the Daughters are active today. As a bonus, the Shroud of Turin and the rooms of Don Bosco are also on the agenda.



The price covers roundtrip airfare, 4-star accommodations, group transportation, fees, and most daily meals.

***The total:***

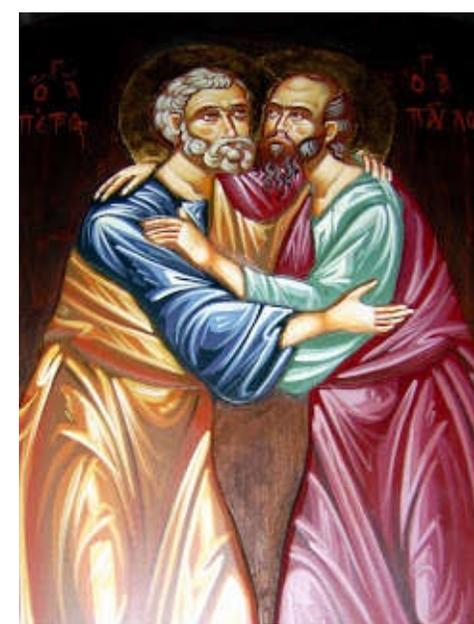
\$3,400. We need 20 pilgrims to get the trip at that price, but we don't want more than 30. It's a personal encounter, not a mass tour.

I've been talking with a lot of prospective pilgrims these days, people who think they might like to go. However, besides the usual concern about not having enough funds (do we ever?), some have had questions and a few concerns. You too?

"I've never been on a pilgrimage."

Read: "How do you pray for eleven days?"

We don't. Well, we do, but not in the way you think. A pilgrimage is a trip to a sacred place, undertaken in a holy way. Because it's sacred, we're doing it with Christ even when we're reveling in a gelato or a work of art. He makes everything, even the inconveniences, holy. When we love him in all that, we're praying. Isn't "pilgrimage" a great metaphor for our whole Christian life? As one person put it, "It'll be like a retreat, but fun!"



"I don't know if Peter and Paul, or the Pauline Family, are enough of a draw for me."

While Fr. Alberione insisted that everyone regard St. Paul as the Family's father and founder, he "interpreted" the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles for modern times, a boon for any believer. It takes only a glance at history to see that without Paul, most of us would not be Christian today. Without those revolutionary Paulines, sharing Jesus in today's world would not be what it is. That claim alone merits a lot more than a pilgrimage.

"I don't know anybody."

By the end of the first day, that'll be a moot point.

We each bring something personal to a pilgrimage. It's surprising, though, as we listen to each other, how much we're alike, how connected by the same spiritual desire, and how we value the same basic things. The group prayer on the Word of God also leads to this discovery. It opens our eyes and hearts to the good in each other. I know that from community shared meditation. It's too easy to relate to people on the basis of what we need or need to get done. Taking 15 minutes to listen to one another talk simply and

*faith*

-fully opens us to who they really are and want to be. A pilgrimage isn't just about the places we visit, but the people we meet along the way, beginning with our fellow pilgrims.

Still worried? Bring somebody!

"It'll be so beautiful, and then I'll have to come back to my hum-drum life."

Going to Palm Beach for vacation in January and then returning to five feet of snow—that's just depressing. A pilgrimage is not the same. Yes, it feels like heaven, but it doesn't just drop us again into the back alley of our lives. It sheds light on our situation, strengthens our resolve to keep God steadily present in the midst of chaos, and offers us grace to be and do what we're meant for.

"I don't like to travel; I'm a homebody."

Nothing wrong with that. But if as a result, you feel that your life, especially your relationship with God, might be on autopilot, it's a good sign that you need to dare a little and step out of your comfort zone. There's something to be said for walking away from the familiar. We're in a different space. We're paying attention, because everything is new, so we see and hear God in, literally, "extra-ordinary" ways.

"I don't want to be tied to a group, a timetable, or someone else's interests."

If independence is your thing, you may do better on your own. That said, pilgrimage organizers relieve us of the details we'd have to sift through otherwise, like accommodations, transportation, and translation. If we get sick, the trip's medical coverage pays what's needed, and the group leaders never leave us to fend for ourselves. Free time is built in too. We may want to meet up with a relative, explore on our own some afternoon, or dine out. Out of consideration for the group, people try to be on time for prayer, the bus, a meal. But in many other instances flexibility rules. It's Italy.



"I'm worried about ISIS. What if...?"

We're not going to Afghanistan. The World Synod of Bishops is meeting in Rome while we're there. Alba's International Truffle Festival will be in full swing, as well. (It runs on Saturdays and Sundays, so we'll miss the crowds.) If there were any real danger, these events would be canceled. Frankly, we run a greater risk getting into our cars every day.

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This pilgrimage is a hands-on opportunity to breathe the air that the first Christians and first Paulines did. It can shed light on how the spirits of Peter and Paul formed the spirit of the early apostles of the New Evangelization, and how they live on today, building the Body of Christ especially in the realm of media. The heroes of the past become

*real*

and present. Scripture becomes the

*real*

Word of God as we meet the two men who wrote half the New Testament. The Church is bigger than our local faith communities, while making these smaller groups even more

*beloved.*

Here we find the saints of today who, in one time and place, thrive on the universal faith that has changed the world.

*"Tell me more!"*

OK:

<http://on.fb.me/1AIZXOr>

, then contact me, Sr. Margaret J. Obrovac, at 210-393-6079 or

[pearlmjo@gmail.com](mailto:pearlmjo@gmail.com)

. The deadline for the refundable \$500 deposit is July 16.

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Photos: St. Peter's Basilica: Margaret J. Obrovac, FSP; bindery, Sts. Peter and Paul farewell, truffle market: Margaret Kerry, FSP.

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**Margaret J. Obrovac, FSP**, originally from San Francisco, has been a Pauline evangelizer since 1973 and has worked in various phases of the mission of the Daughters of St. Paul. Since attending the nine-month Charism Course in Rome in 2012-2013, she is now based in Boston, where she serves on the provincial Cooperator Team in the area of ongoing formation.

This contribution is available at <http://paulinelaity.blogspot.com/2015/06/going-for-gold.html>  
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# Gay "Marriage" [at Convert Journal]



Last week, as almost everyone now knows, the Supreme Court of the United States of America fabricated a new “right” for homosexual unions to be recognized as marriage.

## A Legal Fiction

Legal fictions can be useful, although this one most certainly is not. A useful fiction, for example, is the way law treats a corporation as a “person.” As such it has certain rights and responsibilities including paying taxes or being subject to suit as if it were a person distinct from the owner or owners. This facilitates commerce and is morally neutral.

“Gay marriage” is simply a new legal fiction. What constitutes marriage and morality in general has never been up to government and never will be. Ideally, government is enlightened and informed by God, the creator, and recognizes all rights flow from Him. Our founding documents acknowledge this but we have “evolved” to an enlightened view of our own making to our detriment.

Consider:

- Government long ago redefined the bond of marriage to be dissoluble. Legally marriage is a state one can enter into and exit as they wish as many times as they wish. That has also always been a fiction.
- Government redefined life itself as something that comes into existence only when it says so (contrary to science). This allows the “termination” of life to not only be without (legal) consequences, but also to be a cherished “right.”

## Built on Lies

Marriage as God created it and as it has been universally understood for millennia has not changed. This Supreme Court decision is just that, a deeply flawed and seriously harmful opinion of the narrowest majority. It is a legal construct, unfortunately divorced from reality.

The people of very few states approve of this. When put to a popular vote, with very few exceptions, “gay marriage” was defeated. In many cases however, the will of the people was overruled by their legislatures and most often by federal judges. The media ignores this fact, preferring to mislead by noting only 14 states at this point did not “allow” it. That the states who did “allow” it were forced to against their will is not mentioned.

Of special note are the Catholic justices who supported this decision: Anthony Kennedy and Sonia Sotomayor. Their votes were a clear rejection of God, Jesus Christ and His Church. There is no wiggle room on this. This travesty passed only because both of them supported it. In the 5-4 decision, all 4 of the dissenters (Alito, Roberts, Scalia and Thomas) are Catholic.

## **The Effect**

There are three major effects of this:

1. Religious freedom will be relentlessly attacked, long term. The heavy hand of the law will be used to bludgeon any who dare to publicly resist cooperation with this immoral fiction. Activists will seek to bully through intimidation, threats and whatever legal traps they can craft with great zeal.
2. The valid role of government in fostering procreation within stable families, structured for the benefit of children, is further muddled.
3. People who suffer with homosexual attraction are scandalized. Instead of helping them, they are increasingly told their unnatural and immoral temptations are actually completely normal, healthy and should be a source of pride. This will never result in their true happiness.

## **What to Expect**

Beyond the long-lasting effects noted above, it is almost certain that further “evolutionary progress” will be made in the legal understanding of family and marriage:

- marriage of brothers and sisters, fathers and daughters, etc.
- reducing the minimum age for marriage
- polygamy is more natural than homosexuality so why limit marriage to only 2?
- polyamory, polyandry, polygyny, polyfamilies, poly-everything-goes – why not?

Most of the arguments for “gay marriage” apply to the above. Sympathetic stories will be told, individual plights of “injustice” presented in the context of fairness and civil rights, pride parades, media support followed by corporate support and it is done.

Expect to see the process of entering into and exiting marriages, however they are defined at the moment, to be streamlined.

Many more (although not all) countries will follow in our footsteps. The UN will push harder to “recognize” this as a basic human right. Hollywood will celebrate with gay weddings appearing in most television shows beginning this fall.

## **Christian Response**

Our respect and love for people with same sex attraction must not diminish. We will be tested in this regard, count on it. Remember too that not all people with same sex attraction support this (although many who dissent are no doubt bullied into silence).

The word “marriage” has lost its common and proper meaning. We must separate what we mean by the life-long union of one man and one woman in formation of a family from the fiction presented by the law. Words have meaning and we clearly need a new one to replace being married, getting married, marriage ceremony, marriage invitation, etc. A word is needed to accurately convey the concept given to us by God. Continuing to use the word marriage will just contribute to confusion.

Finally, we must not cooperate. This must be opposed in every way possible for the benefit of society and

every person in it. This is a major setback but not a lost cause. The cause is lost only when we accept it.

“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.

Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Amen, I say to you, you will not finish the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

No disciple is above his teacher, no slave above his master.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2015/06/gay-marriage/>  
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[Ellen Kolb](#) June 14, 2015

# An abandoned human being is finally laid to rest [at Leaven For The Loaf]

Followup to [a January 2015 post](#): a human fetus found in January in a Rhode Island sewage treatment plant [has finally been laid to rest](#) by the Diocese of Providence. Bishop Thomas Tobin's offer to provide burial was accepted by authorities after a 5-month investigation was unable to determine the identity of the parents. The fetus's gestational age was estimated to be 19-20 weeks.



Photo by Rick Snizek of The Rhode Island Catholic

See [The Rhode Island Catholic's coverage](#) of the June 10 burial ceremony. From the post by editor Rick Snizek: "Bishop Tobin said he chose to name the baby Francis in honor of Pope Francis' eloquence in encouraging the faithful to change the 'throwaway culture' of abortion that pervades society today. 'This child is certainly a victim of that throwaway culture,' he said. The Bishop again prayed for the parents of the child that God 'will lift them up and help them through whatever difficult circumstances or sufferings that may have led them to this moment.'"

(My thanks to James Anderson for alerting me to this update.)

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***Leaven for the Loaf* is a participant in the Amazon Associates program. When you make your Amazon.com purchases by using [THIS LINK](#), you're not just shopping. You're also supporting this pro-life blog.**



## Why Injustice? Why Suffering? Why? [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

*[There are questions that have no ready answers. How many times have we asked God "Why" when He sends suffering or injustice our way or to our loved ones and friends? Father Raymond answers this recurrent question with one of his own sure to cause you to ponder this subject anew:]*

"Divine Providence, which is but another name for God, is bound to be more than puzzling; it is sure to be an insoluble mystery.

We simply do not, we simply cannot, see the reason for many things. Why is this young couple denied children for whom they long, and for whom they could make lavish provision, while next door the mother already burdened with a large family, for whom the father is straining to make ends meet, gives birth to another healthy child?

Why is it that this holy young woman brings forth a stillborn child, while a neighbor who has lost all faith becomes a mother to stocky twins?

Why is it that this couple has a child who is a half-wit and that one a son who is a complete imbecile? Why?

Why did that young man who was so full of character have to die while classmates who seemed so devoid of it live on?

Why does this sick and crippled old man, who has outlived all who ever loved or cared for him, eke out his days in sheer misery while the strong, loving father of a young family is killed outright in an accident that leaves Irresponsible ones unscathed?

The only answer to these questions and a thousand others like them is another question: Why was the Mother 'of God denied shelter at Bethlehem, given a sword at Jerusalem, made to fly into Egypt, and rendered childless for three endless days and three agonizing nights?"

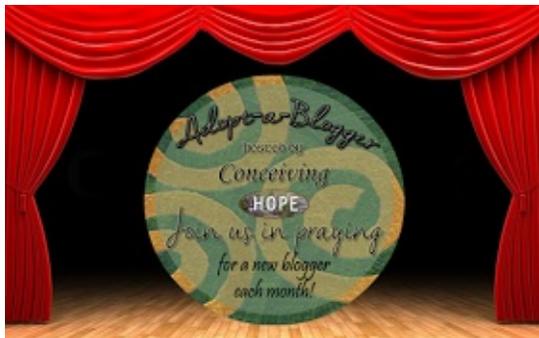
(Rev. M. Raymond, O.C.S.O. from *God, A Woman and The Way*)

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This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2015/06/why-why-injustice-why-sufering-why.html>  
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## Adopt-a-Blogger! [at Conceiving Hope]



This month, **JULY 2015**, we pray for

**How it works:** ALL bloggers, readers, commenters, lurkers, lurchers, creepers, crazies (clomid meltdown, aisle 3!), borings, snorings, dazed, confused, and willing - i.e., ALL OF US - will be uniting our prayers for the entire month for the blogger mentioned above. At the same time, across the country, across the Americas, heck, even across the world, our prayers will all be directed in the same place, at the same time. FOR A WHOLE MONTH! Get ready for some SERIOUS fruits, people! Click on the blog link above to visit the Blogger of the Month's post in which they will give you a brief history of their journey with infertility/adoption/childlessness. Then, continue to follow up and check in on that blogger throughout the month, to become more familiar with them and better align your prayers with their intentions. **Why?:** The idea is to pray a Childless Blogger, one of our own, to a Childless-No-More status. To bridge that final gap, to knock down that final wall, to make them MOMMIES against all odds!! Above all else, our prayers will be for peace and joy in their hearts as only God holds the answer to these prayers. **When?:** All month long! A new Blogger will be announced at the beginning of each new month. This post will be updated on the 1st of every month, so be sure to check back! **So,... How, again??** Pray whatever prayers you'd like. Do a Novena. Say a rosary. Meditate. Say a litany. The Memorare. Whatever your heart desires, whenever it desires it. You may also choose (and this is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED!) to offer up your suffering, any suffering at all, for the Adopted Blogger. Your offering can be as small as your patience with an overtired, sugar-high toddler, or it can be as large as offering your cycle (if you are going through infertility) in the hopes that *your* cycle will be instead the cycle in which *their* child is conceived. Singles? You, too have an excellent opportunity to offer your daily wait for a spouse. Not trying to conceive? That's okay- hey, trust me, I'm sure we ALLLLLLLL can find some form of suffering in our daily lives to offer up! So, join in, one and all, and please feel free to STEAL one of these lovely Bloggy Button Thingies for your your blog, facebook, pinterest, twitter, instagram, or **wherever:**



The button should link back to this post on your page ([steal the current URL from above](#)), so that all blog readers can learn how to join in, and WHO to pray for!

(Remember, the post will be **updated** on the 1st of each month, so the link changes each time)

Thank you for participating in the Adopt-A-Blogger Prayer Campaign in its NEW HOME here @ Conceiving Hope!!! Your prayers are powerful, and so very much appreciated!

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This contribution is available at <http://conceivinghope.blogspot.com/2015/07/adopt-a-blogger.html>  
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## Laudato Si' [at Kitchen table chats]



I have finished my first, albeit quick, reading of Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment,

[Laudato Si'](#).

My first thought is no one should draw any conclusions about this encyclical unless you read it yourself. There are enough phrases and ideas that can be cherry picked to support diametrically opposed ideologies and media news outlets are already doing so. This encyclical is not wed to any ideology. This is not an encyclical about climate change though climate change is discussed. It is a statement about the reality of Man and his place in the world. Such truth transcends politics.

The overarching theme is that as human beings we are in a relationship with God, in a relationship with each other, and in a relationship with the natural world. These relationships are intrinsically interconnected and any distortion of one of these relationships will distort the others. They cannot be addressed in isolation from each other.

The Pope reminds us we are called to be good stewards of creation. A consumerist-focused culture that does not take into account the larger impact of more production of consumer goods is disordered. We cannot expect to have wealthy segments of the world population generating large amounts of waste at the expense of the environment for the poorer, less technologically developed societies.

At numerous points in the Encyclical, Pope Francis goes to great lengths to state that genuine concern for the environment must be accompanied by a genuine respect for all human life. He pointedly states that concern for endangered species is meaningless if such concern is not also extended to the most vulnerable humans including the unborn, the elderly, the disabled, and the poor.

The Pope is not anti-technology but he states over and over again that technology must be our tool and not our master. The one paragraph that I would like to quote right now seems strange to do so on this digital platform of communication but perhaps because my work requires me to have such an extensive presence on the internet it strongly resonated with me:

*Furthermore, when media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. In this context, the great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distractions of an*

*information overload. Efforts need to be made to help these media become sources of new cultural progress for humanity and not a threat to our deepest riches. True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution. Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature. (47)*

There is a great deal of wisdom in this Encyclical but many will miss it because they insist on reading it through the lens of politics and power.

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This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2015/06/laudato-si.html>  
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# The Worst Result of the SCOTUS Marriage Decision Won't Be Persecution [at ChurchPOP]

As everyone knows, the U.S. Supreme Court [recently ruled](#) gay marriage is a constitutionally protected right.

Christians around the country have already [lost jobs](#) and [businesses](#) because they believe in traditional, one-man one-woman marriage, and many fear that this ruling will lead to more persecution.

That may be so. But even if that does happen, it won't be the worst result of our country's acceptance of gay marriage.

**The worst outcome of our country's acceptance of gay marriage will be *the loss of souls to hell*.**

Homosexual acts are gravely sinful. The approval of homosexual acts is gravely sinful. This court decision further entrenches and encourages both in our culture. And any serious sin, when left unrepented from and unwashed with the grace of Jesus, is exactly what sends a person to hell. The momentary persecutions any Christians might face is nothing in comparison to the eternal punishments people can suffer for their sins.

This is not to say that persecution can't be extremely hard. But the cultural acceptance of sin shouldn't make us turn inward, worrying about our own survival. We shouldn't become angry, bitter, or despairing. We must maintain an eternal perspective. We should have an ever greater urgency in sharing the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ with those around us. It should spur us on to love our neighbors even more, spiritually fighting for their salvation. Because eternity is hanging in the balance.

Please remember that those who support gay marriage – even those who wish to stamp out all opposition – *are not our enemies*. Satan is our enemy. Rather, those deceived by him are our neighbors, fellow travelers on this short spiritual journey of life, and are in desperate need of the grace of Jesus for conversion and salvation. The ones who oppose us the most are the ones we should be trying to save the most.

**And don't forget that the battle for souls includes your own.** We are all weak and sinful and in desperate need of Christ's grace for daily conversion. So you don't support gay marriage? The cultural acceptance of homosexual acts is just the latest development in a much larger cultural movement that includes the acceptance and practice of a wide variety of sexual perversions, including pornography, masturbation, fornication, contraception, adultery, divorce, etc. Sure you're completely clean? And that's just sins when it comes to sex, not to mention sins of all other areas of life.

A humble, serious acknowledgement of our own sinfulness – coupled with confession, penance, and prayer – and of the “[amazing grace... that saved a wretch like me](#)” should lead all of us to be that much more loving and merciful to those around us – as well as zealous to lead them to the same grace.

Persecution is hard. But it is a “light and momentary trouble” (2 Cor 4.17) in the perspective of eternity, whether that's spent in heaven or hell – and it will be one of them.

**[See also: [7 Old-Fashioned Sins that Can Still Send You to Hell](#)]**

**[See also: [Afraid to Share the Gospel? This Powerful Comic Shows the Urgency We Need](#)]**

**[See also: [The Gospel Rapped in 4 Minutes. I Got Chills at 1:18...](#)]**

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This contribution is available at <http://www.churchpop.com/2015/06/27/the-worst-result-of-the-scotus-marriage-decision-wont-be-persecution/>

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## Patient Much? The Mindset of Endurance

In my Catholic grade school, we played what was known simply as “The Religion Game.” Short explanation: it involved a person guessing a religious terms using clues provided by teammates. One of the vocabulary terms committed to memory was ejaculation.

### **Ejaculation: a short prayer meant to be memorized and repeated throughout the day**

In those pre-pubescent days, before its utterance would elicit a round of giggles and snickers, this five-syllable word had the potential to propel a team into the winner’s circle. In the ensuing years, the use of these little prayers fell by the wayside.

As our family has grown over the past dozen years and my prayer life has become fractured and disjointed, I’ve come to rely more heavily on these spontaneous aspirations. It usually involves me begging for one of the [gifts of the Holy Spirit](#).

*Give me courage.*

*Give me wisdom.*

Or most frequently, while gritting my teeth to keep from biting the head off of one of the small children in my midst, begging for one of the [fruits of the Holy Spirit](#):

*Lord, Give me patience.*

It’s seemed, at times, that motherhood was one unending lesson in patience. My struggles, however, were mainly short-term needs for patience. *Get me through until dinnertime. Help me hold my tongue for this*



*moment.*

It’s only fairly recently that I’ve discovered my need for a different kind of patience. The long-term kind that requires endurance. (“Patience” is derive from the Latin *patio* – to endure. See? Still using that Latin degree.)

I’ve acquired a whole new appreciation for patience since I’ve begun writing fiction in earnest. Patience in completing a manuscript, learning the craft of writing, finding beta readers, critiquing, editing, editing,

and editing again.

While I've waited for one of my novels to move from scribbled notes on scraps of paper to published book, I've watched dozens of authors zoom past, spitting out manuscripts and e-books at a pace that far eclipsed mine. In my weak moments, I feel a flash of envy. Yet I've observed over the past year how critical patience is and how valuable time is in perfecting, maturing, and solidifying if only I have the patience to allow things to come to fruition in God's perfect time. [Writing something worth reading takes time.](#)

We had the opportunity to tour a local winery/brewery last month, and the words of our guide stuck with me. He said that in the beginning they made every mistake in the book. But the managers worked part-time, on holidays, and on weekends for five years without pay. (Almost exactly the amount of time it will be from the time I started my first novel until I (God-willing) earn a penny for it.)

***Like the fermenting and brewing processes, many things in life simply take time if they are to be done right or accomplished well.***

***Our slap-dash efforts and our hurry-up mindsets may satisfy our Internet-age/post-sexual revolution desires for instant gratification, but they may not produce our best efforts.***

I still utter ***Lord, give me patience***, but now it's not just when a child is thrashing me with his legs or the phone is ringing, the timer is buzzing, and the clothes dryer is beeping. It's also when I confess the same sins for the hundredth time or I see couples half our age scoop up homes double the size of ours. Or while I learn all the ins and outs of what it might take to not only write a book worth reading but put it in the



hands of those who might enjoy it.

Too often, I expect God to fill the desires of my heart in a snap of my fingers or the time it takes to say a novena, yet the Israelites roamed the desert for generations, waiting for their Messiah.

In the big things or in the little things, I still find that simple ejaculation a perfect prayer, ***Give me patience.***



## Wearing My Husband's Eyes [at Out of My Catholic Mind]



I needed new disposable contact lenses so I grabbed the receipt from the last time I ordered some and headed online. I found a website selling what I wanted, entered all my prescription details very carefully, and double checked them before clicking 'pay now'. Then I waited.

A week or so later, a little package landed in our mailbox. “New lenses!” I cried. “Now I’ll see better. The world will look crisper and clearer.”

I inserted the small soft lenses and then looked around. And the world wasn’t crisp and clear at all. It was very blurry, and I couldn’t understand why.

And then it hit me: When ordering the lenses, I’d used my husband Andy’s prescription, not mine. I was wearing his contact lenses. I was looking at the world through his eyes.

Andy was very pleased with my ordering mistake. “New lenses!” he said. “What a surprise!”

I had a surprise this morning. Andy gave me a huge hug before he left for work and said, “Happy

Anniversary!”

“It’s not our anniversary,” I sleepily replied.

“Are you sure? Isn’t it on Friday?”

“We got married on my Dad’s birthday, the 24<sup>th</sup> June.”

I thought about this for a moment and then said, “You’re right!”

Andy laughed. “This is a first. It’s usually me who forgets our anniversary.” He didn’t seem at all upset by my failure to remember. In fact, he thought it was very funny.

So today is our wedding anniversary. Thirty-two years ago, Andy slipped a gold ring onto my finger, and we became husband and wife, and I thought we’d live happily ever after. But it didn't work out that way. Our life together has contained much more suffering than I ever expected. It's just as well I never knew what was ahead of us. I'd have been too frightened to marry Andy if I'd known about the difficult times we'd have to endure. No, as a young bride, I wanted happiness, not pain.

And we have been happy. There's no doubt about that. Over the years, we've shared a lot of fun and laughter and special moments. We enjoy our life together immensely. Yes, God sends us many happy days. But He hasn't prevented suffering from touching us. And unexpectedly, this has been a blessing. It has been the trials of life, and not the happy times, which have bonded us together and taught us the true meaning of love.

So Andy and I are about to begin another year together. The adventure continues. There will be more tough times ahead, I'm sure. But that's okay. There will also be a lot more love.

This morning I had my eyesight tested before ordering yet more contact lenses.

“Your eyes have improved slightly!” said the optometrist.

Improved? I smiled. My eyesight is getting better as I get older, unlike the rest of me which is slowly falling apart. I don't suppose it matters that I'm not as good looking as I used to be. When Andy looks at me, he doesn't see my flaws. He still thinks I'm as beautiful as the day he married me.

Why don't I see myself as he does? Is it because Andy can't see properly? Perhaps he needs stronger contact lenses. No. His eyesight is fine. I don't see myself as beautiful because I'm not wearing my husband's eyes.

Andy looks at me through his eyes of love.

*Happy Anniversary, Andy.*

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This contribution is available at <http://www.outofmycatholicmind.com/2015/06/wearing-my-husband-eyes.html>  
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## We Have To Behave as Emissaries of Our Lord [at Arnobius of Sicca]

It's no secret that, since Obergefell, Christians who stand for the defense of marriage as God intended it have become something of pariahs on social media, and having our faces rubbed in the ruling. People have been unfriended because they defend Christian morality, accused openly of being bigots. Between the comments and the “rainbowized” pictures, it can be very difficult to avoid lashing out at the people who seem to want to throw the #lovewins and #loveislove in our faces when we know we are being misrepresented and demonized. But it is lashing out that we must not do, and—unfortunately—some Catholics have lashed out in ways which will lead those who support “same sex marriage” to view it as just that much more “proof” that we *are* the bigots they always thought we were.

We have to remember that it is Our Lord who commanded us:

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? <sup>48</sup> So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect. [Matthew 5:43-48]

It doesn't matter how badly we are treated. In our response, even if we are forced to block them because of abusive attacks, we have to show that we love those who hate us—not as an act, but in sincerity. That means we have to be civil when we debate with them, avoiding insults, sarcasm or other rudeness. Now yes, that is hard. I confess I created a few sarcastic memes that I had to *sit on* when I *really* wanted to post them. (Through the grace of God, I was given a sense that to publish them was not in keeping with Christian witness). But we have to remember that the example we provide may be the only witness they have as to how a Christian bears witness to what they believe. If it is a bad witness, we become a stumbling block that keeps others from seeing God's call.

Now that *doesn't* mean that we have to be silent and not say that homosexual acts are wrong, as those who oppose us try to argue. As Emissaries of Our Lord, we have to carry His message telling the world to live according to God's will. Indeed, when it comes to the State legalizing “same sex marriage,” the Church has made it *very* clear that we cannot give our assent:

In those situations where homosexual unions have been legally recognized or have been given the legal status and rights belonging to marriage, clear and emphatic opposition is a duty. One must refrain from any kind of formal cooperation in the enactment or application of such gravely unjust laws and, as far as possible, from material cooperation on the level of their application. In this area, everyone can exercise the right to conscientious objection.

[#5. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003).

So, we cannot recognize the *diktat* given to us in the *Obergefell* ruling as valid or cooperate—we must oppose it. But in doing so we have to be charitable. Being insulting or verbally (textually?) abusive is not the way we are to go about it. “Rainbowizing” Hitler or the Devil is not a charitable tactic for example. Regardless of whether a person is deliberately acting abusively or is unaware of how they come across, we must show the love of Christ while teaching the truth.

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This contribution is available at <http://arnobius-of-sicca.blogspot.com/2015/06/we-have-to-behave-as-emissaries-of-our.html>

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# The Universe: a Magnificent Tent [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

Folks have looked up and been impressed for a long time:

*"<sup>1</sup> Think! The heavens, even the highest heavens, belong to the LORD, your God, as well as the earth and everything on it."*

([Deuteronomy 10:14](#))

*"The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims its builder's craft."*

([Psalms 19:2](#))



That galaxy is M31, the

[Andromeda Galaxy](#)

. Back when I was in high school, a fair number of books I read called it the "Great Andromeda Nebula." More up-to-date books occasionally called it an "island universe." (

[September 26, 2014](#)

;

[July 15, 2014](#)

)

[Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi](#)

described M31 as a "little cloud" in "

[Book of Fixed Stars](#)

," more than a thousand years after

[Deuteronomy](#)

and

[Psalms](#)

were written — which is what it looked like before astronomers had telescopes.

The first

[spyglass](#)

was probably made in the Netherlands. A spyglass was good for "seeing faraway things as though nearby:" like the flags of ships. That'd be vital for owners of the Netherlands' merchant fleets.

Then Galileo

[tweaked spyglass design](#)

, made a nice profit selling his spyglasses to merchants, published "



[Sidereus Nuncius](#)

," and was eventually placed under house arrest. I gather it was politics, Galileo's abrasive personality, and folks who mistook poetry for science, that got him in trouble.

Galileo as the shining embodiment of reason, locked in epic struggle against the dark forces of superstition and oppression, makes a good story: but is more myth

1

than history. (

[January 9, 2015](#)

;

[April 25, 2014](#)

;

[October 26, 2009](#)

)

**From the Dome of Heaven - - -**

Years ago, an enthusiastic Christian informed me that our sun goes around Earth, not the other way around — because

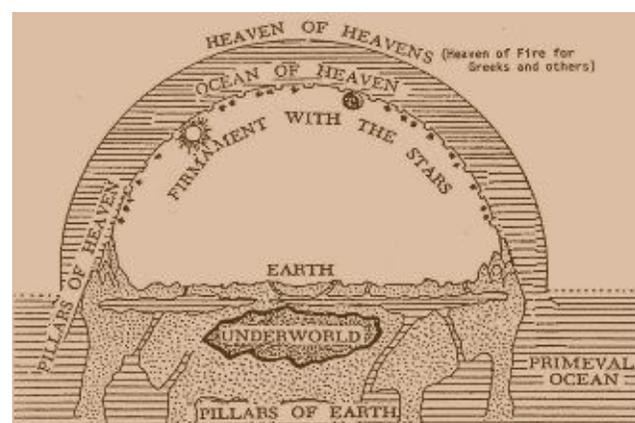
[Joshua 10:12](#)

-

[13](#)

says so. He may have been sincere, but I think he's wrong.

On the other hand, despite what



[Job 9:6](#)

-

[Z](#)

says, I've never known a Christian who said that Earth is

[flat](#)

.(

[October 3, 2014](#)

)

I could be a Christian, following our Lord, if I believed that a solid dome kept the 'ocean of heaven' from flooding the earth I walk on.

But my faith doesn't demand that I ignore what we've learned in the two dozen or so centuries since

[Mesopotamian](#)

culture provided poets with imagery we read in the Old testament.

I'm a Christian and a Catholic, so studying this wonder-filled universe and using what we learn to develop new tools is okay. Science and technology are part of being human. Ethics apply, of course. (Catechism of the Catholic Church,

[2293](#)

-

[2295](#)

)

Faith isn't reason: but it's reasonable, and certainly not against an honest search for truth. (Catechism,

[31](#)

-

[35](#)

,

[159](#)

)

Besides, as I say rather often, scientific discoveries are invitations "to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator." (Catechism,

[283](#)

)

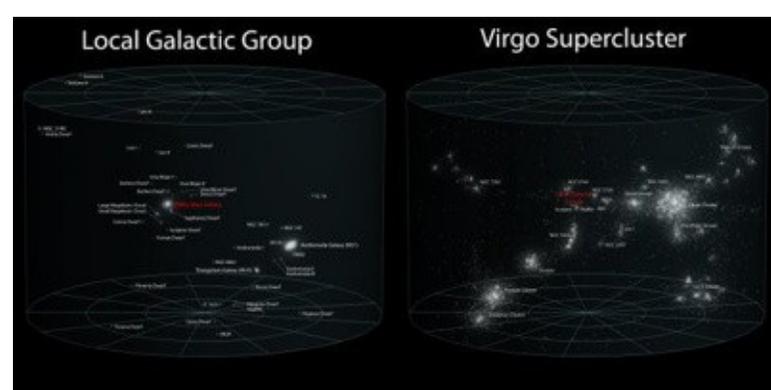
Speaking of which, although size isn't everything — in the two and a half millennia since

[Job](#)

was written, we've learned that our world is

*huge.*

**- - - to the Edge of the Observable Universe**



(From Andrew Z. Colvin, Licensed under CC BY-SA

3.0, via Wikipedia; used w/o permission.)

(Diagrams of the

[Virgo Supercluster](#)

, left; and

[Local Group](#)

, right.)

Our Milky Way galaxy, labeled — indistinctly at this scale — in red on the left-hand picture, is near the center of the Local Group, a collection of more than 54 galaxies.

Light from the Andromeda Galaxy, that largish white smudge in the Local Group, takes about 2,500,000 years to reach us.

The Local Group is one of more than 100

[groups](#)

and

## [clusters](#)

in the Virgo Supercluster. The Local Group's position in the Virgo Supercluster is labeled in red.

Light takes about 110,000,000 years to cross the Virgo Supercluster. It's one of millions in the observable universe.

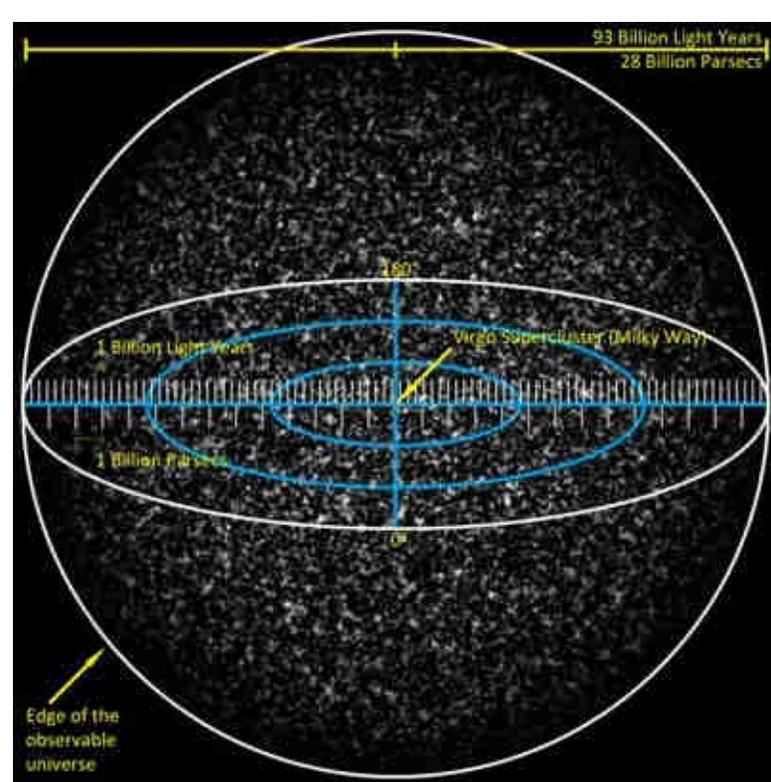
Superclusters were the largest known structures in the universe — until we started mapping

## [filaments](#)

and

## [walls](#)

of superclusters.



(From Andrew Z. Colvin, under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License and the GNU Free Documentation License agreements; via Wikipedia; used w/o permission.)

("

*A simulated view of the entire observable universe, approximately 93 billion light years (or 28 billion parsecs) in diameter. The scale is such that the fine grains represent collections of large numbers of superclusters. The Virgo Supercluster – home of Milky Way – is marked at the center, but is too small to be seen in the image.*

"

(Andrew Z. Colvin, via Wikipedia))

Scientists have been studying the cosmic microwave background (CMB) radiation: photons released when the universe

[cooled down](#)

and became transparent, some 380,000 years after the

[Big Bang](#)

. It's some 46,000,000,000 light years away "now."

The universe is only

[13,798,000,000](#)

years old, give or take 37,000,000, but photons from the CMB started traveling when the universe was a lot smaller. I've mentioned

[cosmic expansion](#)

before. (

[April 17, 2015](#)

)

**"...Whatever God Wills...."**

Do I approve of the universe being this big, or this old?

My take on that question is — it doesn't matter:

*"Our God is in heaven; whatever God wills is done."*

([Psalms 115:3](#))

God's God, I'm not, and I'm quite willing to take reality 'as is.'

**"...Though the Heavens Grow Thin like Smoke...."**

The last I checked, scientists have quite a few ideas about what will

[eventually happen](#)

to this universe. Since we've only recently started collecting data on

[dark energy](#)

,

[dark matter](#)

, and how reality

[works](#)

on

[nanoscopic scales](#)

, my guess is that today's ideas will soon be heavily revised: or discarded.

I'm not going to make the mistake of confusing poetry and science. (

[July 18, 2014](#)

)

However, I'm quite sure that this universe will change: and eventually end.

That isn't, for me, a particularly comfortable thought: but my preferences won't change reality. Not on a cosmic scale.

The idea that this universe, magnificent as it is, won't last forever is hardly new.

Thousands of years back, it was compared to useful but temporary things like tents and garments:

*"He sits enthroned above the vault of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; He stretches out the heavens like a veil, spreads them out like a tent to dwell in."*

([Isaiah 40:22](#))

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*"<sup>3</sup> Raise your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth below; Though the heavens grow thin like smoke, the earth wears out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies, My salvation shall remain forever and my justice shall never be dismayed."*

([Isaiah 51:6](#))

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*"and: 'At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands.*

*"They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment.*

*"You will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.' "*

([Hebrews 1:10-12](#))

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*"Then the sky was divided <sup>13</sup> like a torn scroll curling up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place."*

([Revelation 6:14](#))



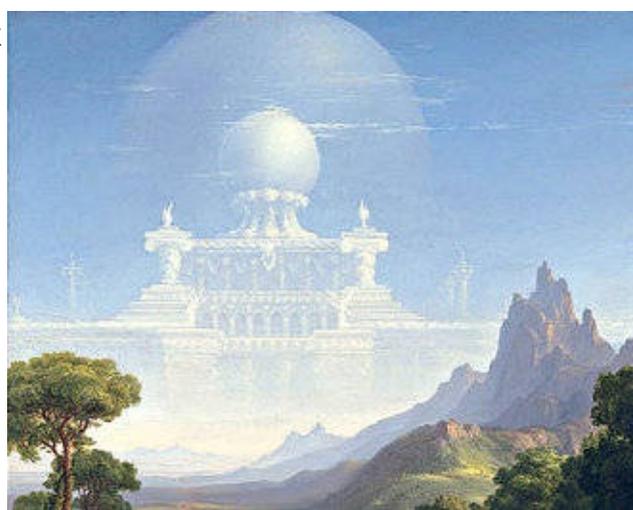
The end of this universe isn't, I think, the end of reality. And that is another topic. (

[November 2, 2014](#)

)

More opportunities for "greater admiration:"

- "[Dark Matter and Energy: New Data, and a Map](#)"  
(April 17, 2015)  
Particularly
- "[Large Hadron Collider: There's More to Learn](#)"  
(April 10, 2015)  
Particularly
- "[Humility, Science, and Accepting Reality](#)"  
(March 29, 2015)  
Particularly
- "[Scientific Discoveries: an Invitation to 'Even Greater Admiration'](#) "  
(September 21, 2014)  
Particularly
- "[Science, Faith, and Leaving the 19th Century Behind](#)"  
(July 15, 2014)  
Particularly



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1

A bit about faith and reason, religion and science, Catholic style:

*"...From the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment down to our own day, **the Galileo case has been a sort of 'myth', in which the image fabricated out of the events was quite far removed from reality. In this perspective, the Galileo case was the symbol of the Church's supposed rejection of scientific progress, or of 'dogmatic' obscurantism opposed to the free search for truth. This myth has played a considerable cultural role...."***

*("Faith can never conflict with reason," Pope St. John Paul II (1992) (via Caltech Newman Center))*

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*"Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. [Ex 33:18](#); [Ps 27:8-9](#); [63:2-3](#); [Jn 14:8](#); [1 Jn 3:2](#))...."*

*("Fides et Ratio," Pope St. John Paul II, on the relationship between faith and reason (September 14, 1998))*

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*"...Thomas observed that creation is neither a movement nor a mutation. It is instead the foundational and continuing relationship that links the creature to the Creator, for he is the cause of every being and all becoming (cf. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.45, a. 3).*

*"To 'evolve' literally means 'to unroll a scroll', that is, to read a book. The imagery of nature as a book has its roots in Christianity and has been held dear by many scientists. Galileo saw nature as a book whose author is God in the same way that Scripture has God as its author..."*  
(["To participants in the Plenary of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences,"](#) Pope Benedict XVI  
(October 31, 2008))

More:

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This contribution is available at <http://catholiccitizenamerica.blogspot.com/2015/06/the-universe-magnificent-tent.html>  
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## Pedalling with Jesus [at bukas palad]



Year B / Ordinary Time / Twelveth Sunday

Readings: Job 38.1, 8-11 / Psalm 106. 23-24,25-26, 28-29, 30-31 (R/v cf. 1b) / 2 Corinthians 5.14-17 / Mark 4.45-41

*“You can do it, Josh.” He checked the helmet on his 4 year old son; it was safely strapped on. He checked Joshua’s feet; they were on the pedals of his bright red bicycle. The supporting side wheels were removed for today’s big ride, Joshua’s first on two wheels.*

*Kneeling down, his face alongside Joshua’s, Dad then stretched out his arm, his index finger pointing to the end of the pavement: “Go, buddy, ride across to the other side; you can do it, son!”*

*And off Joshua went. Pedaling hard to pick up speed. Pedaling hard to keep his balance. Pedaling hard to get from here to there. Then he wobbled; he panicked; he was afraid he could not get across.*

“Let us cross to the other side,” Jesus says in today’s gospel passage from Mark. He is inviting his disciples to join him there as he continues proclaiming the Good News that God’s Kingdom is in their midst. Before this moment, Jesus teaches them how God’s kingdom is like seeds that God scatters onto fallow land and God grows into abundance. “Let us cross over to the other side.” There, Jesus will teach them about God’s power to cure the sick. Learning about God’s power to give life, whether in creation or through healing, is how Jesus schools his disciples to also proclaim Good News.

We are in Ordinary Time in the Church's calendar. In Ordinary Time, we do not celebrate a specific aspect of Jesus' life, like we do in Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. Instead, we are to devote ourselves to growing in intimacy with all aspects of Jesus' life in Ordinary Time.

You can say that Jesus is inviting us in Ordinary Time to journey with him, to cross from where we are now to where he desires to lead us to in the future with God. Crossing over from bad habits to a good life, from selfishness to selflessness, from mediocre Christian living to a worthier life in Christ, from sinfulness to saintliness.

I believe we all want to make this journey with Jesus to God, and we want to do this as fellow pilgrims. Our efforts to live the Christian life daily; our coming to mass and confession regularly; our honest prayer to God and our generous sharing with neighbours: all these speak of our faithful, persevering and hope-filled efforts to accomplish this journey of crossing over.

But don't we struggle on this journey? Don't we fail now and again? Two steps forward, one step back. Saints have described the difficulties of their spiritual life in terms of a rocky road, an arid desert, and the dark night of the soul. Today's gospel passage images this rough, tough struggle on our Christian journey as a raging storm.

Storms come and go; they have a life of their own. No matter how sophisticated today's weather forecasting is, we cannot control when storms will break or how strong they will be. Our life storms should remind us that all of us, including the prayerful and saintly among us, will always have challenges in following Jesus.

But the good news is that in the midst of each of our Christian journeys, there is Jesus, with us and for us. He always is, even if he was snoozing away when the storm broke and the disciples had to wake him to calm the waves. The disciples must have felt like scared children.

But it is when they are like children, vulnerable and in need, that Jesus challenges his disciples to deeper faith in God. "Do you not yet have faith?" He asks them this question from within in their midst, not apart from them. He responds to their fears and needs, delivers them from danger and urges them to greater faith by being with them. Here is Jesus making the crossing over with his disciples.

Isn't this also how Jesus is with us too? Always challenging us to deepen our faith in God in the most difficult of times when we are drenched and tossed about in those storms that besiege our life and faith.

But why does Jesus allow these storms into our lives when he can command the wind and rain? Because storms are graced-filled moments that induce faith and trust in us.

**Faith and trust are how we can open ourselves to God's love.** God does not cause pain and sorrow. But God cares enough about us to allow pain and sorrow to find us, and to draw us into deeper life-giving relationship with Godself. Instead of only happy, painless living as human beings, we can now partake in the life of God who took on human form, and once in a storm long ago taught all that God is never far away but very near if we but have faith.

This is why **finding God in all things is a faith-filled way to live the Christian life.** It guides us to keep looking out for God, like a child on a wobbling bicycle looking out for his father's assuring presence.

It also invites us to hope and not despair as Pope Francis teaches us as he ends his new encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Yes, the earth, our common home, is in bad shape. Yes, we have messed her up. But we can make the needed changes and save it, Francis encourages, because Jesus is with us still to help us do this:

In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward" (§245).

Jesus gave his disciples a new way forward through the storm. Jesus died for us to journey forward in new way: as God's new creation (2 Cor 5.17).

Today, you and I have reflected on Jesus who cares for us like a father does – paternally loving, paternally forgiving, paternally life-giving.

That Jesus fathered his disciples safety to life is how we can also remember our fathers. Our fathers who picked us up when we first scraped our knees. Our fathers who raised us up onto their shoulders to see parades when others blocked our view. Our fathers who walked us into adulthood. And yes, my father too who taught his children to welcome life eternal as we cared for him to his death.

*The bicycle wobbled. Joshua thought he would fall. Then Dad came, steadied him and helped him pedal, pedal, pedal to the end, all the time keeping him balanced on two wheels.*

Yes, isn't this too how Jesus is with us too, always steadying us into fullness of life, steadying us like only God can as our Father?

*Preached at St Ignatius Church, Singapore*

Photo: [www.babblebikes.com](http://www.babblebikes.com)

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This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.sg/2015/06/homily-pedalling-with-jesus.html>  
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## Mint, Dill, Cumin, Gnats... [at Adult Catechisis]

“Learn to do thy part and leave the rest to heaven.” [-Bl. John Henry Newman](#)

Mt 23:23-24

-from the [New St Thomas Institute](#) blog:

May 29, 2015 at 10:07 pm #12091



Caleb Payne

Member

“I need some help. 1st, I’m tired of being scandalized. 2nd, I’m not sure I completely understand why there is an apparent disconnect between Catholic belief and Catholic practice, especially in the liturgy. Maybe I’m missing something, someone help.

I’ll make the story short. Three teens from our parish driving on the highway, freak accident, two dead, one in hospital. Tragic, very tragic. Two were in my confirmation class. One was just baptized, confirmed, and received into the Church after a year of RCIA. Funeral Mass. Huge, never seen the church so packed. Many high school students. Liturgy begins. It is apparent that most there do not know what to do, so priest gives brief directions (i.e. kneel, stand, etc.). Liturgy of the Eucharist. Communion. I begin to notice that many people are going up. Many are standing in front of the Eucharistic ministers grabbing the hosts, nibbling on them, spitting them out, shrugging their shoulders...they clearly have no clue what they are doing. I also notice that some large groups do not go forward, even after the ushers pass them, so then the ushers go up to them and prompt them to please go forward to receive Communion. To make a long story short the majority of the people went up for Communion, but it was clear that the majority of people there were not Catholic. I was very saddened by this. The teen we celebrated waited one year until she was Baptized, Confirmed and received her first Communion, and yet here the message was any one can go forward. To top it off, my daughter, who was altar serving, says to my wife that she could tell many clearly did not know what they were doing and even related one incident in which someone asked the deacon, “what am I supposed to do with this?” and He just replied, “Eat it.”

So very concerned, I approached our priest this morning after Mass. I acknowledged how tragic the deaths were, and then I asked him this question, “could we possibly say during the next funeral Mass (which was this afternoon for the second teen who had died and was just as big), ‘now those who are Catholic may come forward for Holy Communion?’” He of course understood what I referring to, but said that he does not feel anything should be said. He said he has heard both extremes, priests clearly saying anyone is welcome...which he acknowledged is wrong, and other priests saying things like I suggested but which he felt was too harsh. He said he didn’t want to write off my concern and said he would think about it, maybe possibly another avenue, but he was clear he would not say anything. So, long story short

the same thing happened this afternoon. Pretty much anyone and everyone came forward for Communion (and there was maybe 800-1000 people there, half high school kids).

And the silence is killing me. The silence. And people are starving for Truth. But they are like clouds without rain.

And there have been omissions from the order of the Mass, portions which are supposed to be there are not sometimes. Maybe I don't completely understand the rubrics. Omissions. In the liturgy, in the homilies. I mean a Gospel is read, and the main point of it is completely glossed over, or completely omitted in the homily.

Please pray.

Now my question: This is an issue that cannot be solved over night and a lot of people are probably going to have different opinions on how to go about it. But in a situation where it is clearly obvious that there is a significant portion of Mass attendees who are not Catholic, whose responsibility is it make sure they are informed on what they should or should not do? The priest? The deacon? The Eucharist ministers? The ushers? What should be done?"

May 29, 2015 at 10:38 pm #12092



Foster Scott  
Member

"Ultimate responsibility in the parish falls on the parish priest. You should write to your bishop to let him know what's going on. First recount the facts and only the facts. Then let him know why it bothers you that the priest denies people the information they need to know whether they are in a state of grace to take communion.

The Church is an army. The priests are its officers, and the laity must respect the office of the priests, just as Jesus told the people to respect the office of the Pharisees in his own day. Unfortunately, only a priest can directly solve the problem, but you can help by denying the Parish your money and tithing elsewhere, and by informing the Bishop. You also might consider attending a different Parish."

May 30, 2015 at 12:16 am #12093



Matthew M

Member

“Peace, Caleb. Peace. Let God be God. Refrain, as a healthy, holy mortification from straining anything less than a camel. Mt 23:24.”

May 30, 2015 at 9:35 am #12095



John K

Member

“Mathew I appreciate what you are saying, but I believe this is a huge camel. It shows great disrespect to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I don’t think God will hold those young people accountable, because they partook in ignorance, but I think the priest is endangering his own soul by treating the Eucharist in such a shoddy fashion. I would definitely go to the bishop. It’s not something to do out of anger but out of charity both for the priest and those partaking who shouldn’t be.”

May 30, 2015 at 10:08 am #12096



Matthew M

Member

“John K, I appreciate what you are saying. I have learned the wisdom of beginning everything in life with, “YOU are God, and I am not!” It puts everything into perspective and right proportion, I have found, and informs me, I trust through the Holy Spirit, how much I should react and to what degree. I think the example presented is a time for welcome, compassion, and mercy, dear God hopefully not for a scene which leaves a bitter taste in the mouths, literally, of those so said ingnorati. I would let Jesus worry about who is worthy to receive and who receives worthily Himself. I, for my part, place my efforts at listening to Him ever more intently. “Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.” 1 Sam 3:10.

I would caution, gently, about rushing to conclusion on the priest’s intention, motivation, or thought process with regards to this event, before sentencing. Even priests, in the real world, have to choose greater and lesser priorities. I doubt it ruins Jesus’ day. He’s God. Let God be God. Peace, blessings, and prayers, always.”

May 30, 2015 at 10:57 am #12097



John K  
Member

“Mathew where are Mark and Luke?”

I am not sentencing anyone. Nor do I think that explaining Holy Communion is meant only for Catholics needs to be done in a harsh or unkind manner.

I am not attempting to play God. I am simply going by what has been taught by sacred scripture, the tradition of the Church and by the magisterium. I am also pointing out that this is no light matter. The Blessed Eucharist is the holiest thing in the world. St. Paul warns about receiving the Eucharist in an unworthy manner, going so far as to say they eat and drink damnation to themselves.

As I said above, I don't believe God is going to condemn people who partake unknowingly. However it is clearly a major responsibility of a priest to try to prevent people from receiving unworthily. For example, if there were a person who was excommunicated for teaching heresy and refusing to submit to the Church's teaching, a priest who saw him approach to receive the Eucharist, would be obligated to refuse him.

The Eucharist is holy. There's clear Church teaching on who can and cannot receive. This is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of the Son of God. It is to be treated with the utmost respect and administered properly, not just given to people who don't even realize what it is.”

May 30, 2015 at 12:46 pm #12099



Foster Scott  
Member

“Is there anything in canon law governing what the priest should say and do in this scenario?”

May 30, 2015 at 2:26 pm #12100



Mary

Member

“This happens all too often, and the priest, by saying nothing, brings condemnation on those who receive unworthily. If they truly don’t know any better, than THEY are not at fault.

But that priest....may God have mercy on him, not only for his disrespect for our Eucharistic Lord, but also for allowing others to receive unworthily, and just as badly, scandalizing the Faithful by this public act.

I hope you persist in raising this issue. It will bring you a lot of grief from the Church of Nice folks, but you are in the right here.

May God have mercy on us all for the abominations done against Him.”

May 30, 2015 at 2:49 pm #12101



John K

Member

“Here’s an article discussing canon law. It is focused on whether so-called pro-choice politicians should be admitted to communion:

<https://www.ewtn.com/library/CANONLAW/burkcompol.htm>”

May 30, 2015 at 2:59 pm #12103



Matthew M

Member

“Foster, very fair question. I think you might find this article helpful. I think it is balanced, and I have a profound respect for Catholic Answers: <http://www.catholic.com/blog/michelle-arnold/non-catholics-in-the-communion-line>

I would also recommend an examen of conscience, in a healthy, holy, and joyful way to guard against the grave sin of scrupulosity. I have written about it here on my blog: <http://soul-candy.info/2015/02/scrupulosity/>. Above all, avoid Catholics who too, too much resemble scribes and Pharisees with their mint, their dill, their cumin, and their gnats. His peace and grace.”

**FOR THE LAST TIME, CATHOLICS!!!!, and sadly yet, I so know how much it won’t be, IT IS**

**Mt 9:13**

A New Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the people I cannot change,  
which is pretty much everyone,  
since I'm clearly not you, God.  
At least not the last time I checked.

And while you're at it, God,  
please give me the courage  
to change what I need to change about myself,  
which is frankly a lot, since, once again,  
I'm not you, which means I'm not perfect.  
It's better for me to focus on changing myself  
than to worry about changing other people,  
who, as you'll no doubt remember me saying,  
I can't change anyway.

Finally, give me the wisdom to just shut up  
whenever I think that I'm clearly smarter  
than everyone else in the room,  
that no one knows what they're talking about except me,  
or that I alone have all the answers.

Basically, God,  
grant me the wisdom  
to remember that I'm  
not You.

Amen.  
*-Rev. James Martin, SJ*

I am always concerned when Catholics start sounding pharisaical. While not throwing pearls before swine is appropriate, the Eucharist is neither a prize nor a weapon, nor ever should be. It is medicine, for the sick of heart and soul.

I am trying to recall the Gospel story where the sinner approaches Jesus and He says, "Get behind Me!!! YOU ARE NOT WORTHY!!!" Oh, yeah. Now, I remember. It wasn't the prostitutes, the tax collectors, or the pagans He said this to. It was the first Pope, the first Bishops, the religious leaders. Yeah, that's right. Now, I remember. The self-righteous, those are they who are unworthy to receive Him. Yep. Perfect.

Love,  
Matthew

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## Love to Read People Smarter than ME [at Quiet Consecration]

One of the reasons I adore reading is because I love to 'see the thoughts' of people who think, truly think, about what they write. As a result my list of favorite authors is short. In my own opinion, many people simply spew (I certainly have been guilty of that) and never engage their brain. I am not so concerned as to their political or religious beliefs - I am smart enough to read and decide if the person has a good argument or not - but I like to feel challenged. Reading other people's ideas, especially those that differ from my own, challenges me.

What I find sad about so many people today is their refusal to stretch their own minds, to consider or ponder the ideas and thoughts of others. It appears to me, and I may be wrong, that we have sunk into a kind of petulant narcissism. We are easily influenced by one sentence memes on FaceBook, get intimidated by men shouting angrily about bigotry, are afraid to tell an American Teenager that they are making foolish and dangerous decisions and are overwhelmed when someone bangs their little spoon on their highchair demanding their own way about anything. In other words, we have lost our intellectual courage.

For example, I recently spent some time on a Facebook thread about Truth with a young woman (younger than me, okay? That makes her an infant...I don't care if she was 40), who used the tired old argument about 'your truth verses my truth'. She even cited her Catholic education, stating that she had been taught in her Catholic school growing up that there is 'truth' and then there is 'truth based on religion' but there is no objective truth.

I have no doubt she was taught that at her Catholic School. In fact I have no doubt there are Catholic Schools all over the world teaching gibberish like this to impressionable 8 year olds in an effort to turn out a generation of 'nice' Catholics, the kind that don't know a damn thing about history, The Faith or that they are being robbed of their birthright by their elders.

When I challenged her with the basic 'a rock is a rock and not a pizza' argument, which was a philosophical argument I was taught at Christ the King School in second grade back in 1962, she could not respond. Instead, she leaped onto the back of another horse midstream in her attempt to cross the intellectual river across which we were both fording. Abandoning her steed named "No Such Thing as Objective Truth" she climbed upon and grabbed the reins of 'You cannot impose your morality on others'. That argument, of course, is so weak that even my 14 year old niece could demolish it (and she attends public school in California, for the love of pete). I pointed at the laws on the books that make behaviors that affect the common good illegal.

She called me a bigot, cyber screamed at me that I am the reason she left The Church (I am, she said, a close minded beeyatch) and left the conversation.

Look, I do not think I would have changed her mind. What makes me sad is her reaction to a solid argument. She did not try and outthink me; rather, she attacked what she did not understand and what had backed her into a corner. An otherwise loving and caring woman turned into a cornered raccoon, spitting and slashing her way to freedom.

She is not alone. Too many of us have lost the ability to think, to stretch our minds. We cannot listen to the 'other side's' arguments because they make us mad. The arguments make us mad because, essentially, we are not getting our own way. Sometimes we even make preemptive strikes by starting a discussion with "bigotry dictates" or "those who hate people like me think", thereby destroying any possibility of using our brains for something other than holding our ears apart.

I have been guilty of this myself. My goal today is to try and really listen to people, and then to respond to what they say or propose with respect. The respect will be demonstrated not just by the tone of my voice or writing, but by showing them that I carefully considered their argument.....and here is my response.

If someone like me can do this, then I think it is possible for everyone to do it.

Even a Raider Fan.

Have a great day, people!

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2015/06/love-to-read-people-smarter-than-me.html>

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## End of the Homeschool year [at CruceSignatiBlog]

We are done. So very done.

Well, maybe its just me, but I think we've done enough organised book-work for the 2014-2015 school year. ;)

The kids all worked hard and pulled together in a couple of difficult situations throughout this year. They have all matured in their own special ways, and all of them have learned something. Here is a re-cap:

### THE FOOTBALL PLAYER

Dad taught him how to weld this year, and the two of them are rebuilding a car from a Model A frame that Dad bought before us kids were born. The football player is also working on beginning algebra and English vocabulary expansion via reading. He finished spring season football two weeks ago, and after a few weeks of camp, he is playing during the regular season starting in late August.

### THE TWEEN HIPPY-DIPLOMAT

Math, phonics, music, and science were non-issues for her this year. However, she started the school year doing grade 3 spelling, and she is twelve. (Disclaimer: if anyone is wanting to use this as a case against homeschooling, first go and test any publicly schooled twelve-year-old's spelling.) We have been focusing on that as our main point. Over the past few years, Mom and I wanted her to read more, and in turn, improve her spelling. In January, she read *White Fang* by Jack London. That did it for her! There was enough action and use of adjectives to draw her into the story and keep her excited. She went on to read the Silver Chief books and Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series. Her spelling is coming along, and she can keep working on it over the summer.

### THE TYPE-A INTROVERT

The industrious, little Cinderella of the family continues to struggle with math and reading. Last summer, she and The Debater did the **100 Days of Reading** challenge (Mom's idea). It meant that for 100 days, each kid would read aloud to Mom, Dad, The Football Player, or myself. If they completed the challenge, each of them would get twenty dollars. It went well, and their reading improved steadily! After a hiatus though, she forgot a few sight words, and has difficulty shaping her sentences at all. She works at it, but it doesn't come to her as easily as it does to The Debater. She is starting to understand more of the missing number problems in math, her piano skills are coming along, and reading—well, it will come. . .

### THE DEBATER

This kid could argue any person to the point of insanity. He is a math and music wizard, and like the tween, has discovered a love of reading (Lego idea books especially). He started the year in grade 1 spelling and phonics, and grade 2 math. He is now doing grade 2 spelling and grade 3 phonics and math. His struggle? Listening to directions! :P

## THE PRINCESS

The youngest child in the family is only preschool age, so this year she mostly played with Barbie and her Lego set. She is starting to draw figures that make some sense. Last September I looked over her shoulder once and said, “What’s this you’re drawing? Oh, of course its a kitty, how silly of me!” She is drawing pictures of her siblings and making Lego figures of everyone in the family. Over the summer I’ll be teaching her the alphabet and counting to 30 or so.

As for myself, I am still working on algebra (blech), music history, and an English course. Over the school year I took a Latin course, and it was awesome! I can hardly wait to return to it in the fall. After a few weeks of summer camp, I will be organising the kids’ school books for one final year of teaching before I leave for university in fall 2016. I am continuing to practice piano over the summer, and I have a list of over a dozen grade 9/10 pieces which I would like to tackle. For now, the garden needs weeding, the kids still need supper, laundry still needs to be folded, the kitchen needs to be cleaned, and the world still burns. Am I discouraged? Nope. Its all part of working towards sainthood and growing in love, for God and neighbor!

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## Pray for Others [at Sunflower Sojourn]

**We need to pray for each other. To truly intercede for one another, for those close to us and those we don't even know. We need to pray for each other with faith and hope.** Maybe you think praying for someone is the least you can do. *Well, let me tell you something: praying for someone is one of the most powerful things you can do for them.* We don't know the good or the blessings that can come from praying for someone. We can't possibly know the strength or the graces that will be poured out onto someone because someone cared to pray for them. We don't realize that prayers, over a period of time, can bring an atheist to belief in God or a non-Christian to salvation in Jesus Christ. **Prayer is powerful.**

(Now, I want to add a quick disclaimer. Prayer is very, very important. But just because you are praying for someone, doesn't mean you are off the hook to help them in other ways. We must assist spiritually *and* in other ways, such as economically or emotionally.)

**A lot of times, not knowing what else to say or do, Christians tell someone "I'll pray for you."** Sometimes it's a bandage on the situation—there are so many things that can't be solved or that leave us speechless. Most of the time, we are sincere and do intend to pray. However, unfortunately, a lot of times we forget. Or we might mumble a quick prayer, and then not remember again till much later—or even forget altogether.

**Let's work on this, fellow Christians.** Don't forget. Pray without ceasing. When you promise to pray for someone, do it! You can pray wherever you are. Keep a prayer list or some reminder to pray for people. If you will forget right away, right it down or put a reminder on your phone when you make the promise. **Prayer is the greatest gift we can give.**

People will see God's love through your prayers. Even in the fact that you promise to pray, they will find encouragement. **Prayer bears fruit.**

*What stories do you have of answered prayers?*

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# A Night in the Holy Sepulchre - Afterthoughts



I was sitting waiting for my train at Waterloo Station in London feeling sorry for myself. ‘What oh What’ I thought, would all that I experienced in the Holy Sepulchre mean to the vast majority of outsiders, who knew little if anything of the Christian faith? I was watching the commuters, the tourists, the retail therapists and the other miscellaneous men and women rushing past me. They were of all ages, of all colours, and of all different shapes and sizes, but they all seemed to have one thing in common; they all seemed to be busy, in a rush, all totally preoccupied. I felt as if I were caught up in a *Lowry* painting watching, all the people pass to and fro, but these people were not burdened or bent with manual labour, their souls had not been sedated into submission in the ‘*dark satanic mills*’. They were upright and busy about their own business, they all seemed to be moving with purpose and intent, but what would they make of those thoughts with which God had graced me, as I had prayed before Calvary and in the empty tomb, from which Jesus had risen, only a few months before? What on earth would it mean to them, how could it enrich their lives, even if they stopped long enough to listen. I felt like an outsider, an interloper, who had just landed on platform one from planet Zog. Then, suddenly, a young man of no more than eighteen or nineteen started to walk towards me smiling. I began to get worried when he quickened his step, and opened his arms as he approached. Before I had time to take evasive action, the girl sitting next to me jumped up to be enfolded in his arms. Like a flash of lightning I saw the light, everything made sense that had made no sense before.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that they *would* understand. They weren’t soul-less zombies after all. What did each one of them really want, what did they all have in common? Deep, deep down beneath the surface, they all wanted to love and to be loved. They all wanted to have a home, a family, or at least to be part of a loving family, where they could feel safe and secure. They all wanted to have a place that they could call home, where, if possible, all the personal selfishness, the petty jealousies, the small mindedness, and the pernicious prejudices, in themselves and in others, could be ‘*spirited away*’. Then nothing would come in the way of the perfect love, the perfect family, the perfect home for which they had always yearned. And, if all their dreams could come true, they would not only want to live in this perfect new world forever, but ideally they would want it to become ever more perfect ever more enjoyable, ever happier and for this happiness to go on forever. If this could be offered to them, wouldn’t they listen, wouldn’t this be good news, the best news they’d ever heard. Wasn’t it for this that the Holy Spirit had been sent on the first Pentecost day? It was to fill the world with the love to satisfy everyone, to fulfil their deepest desires and most heartfelt longings?

I became broody on the train home at the prospect of giving birth to another book. I wanted to try

and translate the essential meaning of the simple *spirit filled* spirituality that Jesus had bequeathed to the first Christians after his glorification. I would like to do it, in such a way, that nothing would be lost, as it was made relevant to postmodern secular men and women, so that they could understand and relish it. I began to think, and my mind took me back forty years or more.

I had spent Christmas Day with my friend Peter, his wife, their family of four Children, and a foster child, who used to spend some week-ends and part of the holidays with them. After the four children had been given their presents the foster child was given what appeared to be a boring pile of papers. But when he looked at them he dissolved into tears – they were his adoption papers. When he finally wiped away the tears he danced around the room in joy. Henceforth he would never have to go back to the orphanage, in future he could call Peter his Father, even his Dad like the other children – this was the best news he had ever received, – ever could receive.

Some of you might have looked at that moving clip on U-tube when a convert from Islam told how, that, on reading the Gospels to see what their prophet Jesus had to say about Allah, he discovered something that changed his life. He discovered that Allah was not a distant God, but a tender loving Father, his Father, even his Dad. Abba was the word Jesus had used, and told others to use when speaking to him. It was the word still used by young Arabs today to address their fathers, after all, he'd heard it often enough. The realisation moved him to tears, but it cost him dear before his new Dad could help him join the Christian family that he had dreamed about. Born Christians too often take for granted the world shaking truth, about why Jesus came, and the news he came to share with us. He is our brother, and we have the same Father, the Dad, who has given us new life, and a temporary home with him in this life 'til we're ready for the home he has prepared for us in the next. This home, that he came from, and to which he would return, will one day be our home too. It is here that we will share to eternity in the utter peace, joy, and bliss of going out of ourselves through love into endless ecstasy. We will share this experience too, not just with Jesus, but with all those we have loved on earth, but, purified of all the human weaknesses that once prevented us from loving them, as we would have wished. Now, because this loving and being loved, will draw us up into ecstatic joy that will never end, a great Christian poet made up a new word to explain this experience that had never been conceived before. He was one of the Fathers of the Church and his name was St Gregory of Nyssa. In order to make up this new word he fitted the two letters '*Ep*' to the old Greek word for '*ecstasy*' to form the new word '*Epecstasy*'. This means that the experience of loving and being loved by God, in our final home, will simply go on and on, and on and on to eternity. For the more the love we receive, the more fully our capacity to receive even more love expands, and expands, and goes on expanding to all eternity. The solace of the searcher is to go on searching, the reward of the traveler is to go on traveling, for there is no end to the journey into infinite loving. And in this journey we become more and more our true selves from the ruins that we were at the begging of the journey. Now this is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God – Father, to become worthy of all that you have done for me, in this world and in the next, and this is my sincere prayer for you, too.

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# My Pastor's Homily about "Laudato Si" [at From the Pulpit of my Life]



Encyclical on the care of our common home

In his homily today my pastor talked about “Laudato Si,” Pope Francis’ encyclical, released Thursday, June 18th. I was surprised and delighted that he talked about it so soon, just 4 days from its publication.

Father mentioned that there had been much criticism of it so far by those who think the pope, a religious leader, should not talk authoritatively about the environment, a topic that his critics deem he is unqualified to address, because he is not a scientist. Then Father made the observation that many of the critics were not scientists either, but politicians, who want power. They want to decide about environmental issues without meddling from people like the pope.

The truth, however, is that Pope Francis, a spiritual leader par excellence also has a degree in chemistry. He knows well how to read scientific documents. He understands the scientific method and how to evaluate scientific data. This does not mean that he is an expert on everything to do with the environment, but he certainly knows how to interact with those who are. He can discern which data are most likely plausible.

Aside from the criticism of the pope’s scientific background, there are those who think his encyclical has little to do with theology and spirituality. Not so. God created the planet Earth. It is His gift to us. Human beings, Pope Francis asserts, are ruining this gift. That is a moral issue worthy of theological reflection. If anyone is competent to talk about moral issues it’s the pope.

My pastor realizes that the problems that plague “our common home” are so many that as individuals we may wonder, “What can I, one person among billions, do about a these things?” His suggestion is to make an effort to be informed about environmental concerns.

Focusing on food production, Father zeroed in on how meat and other animal products are produced these days. When we go to buy milk we envision that the milk came from farms where cows grazed on fields of

green grass. But nowadays cows are rarely raised that way. Instead, they are raised inhumanely on factory farms. I took time to look up what those practices are like, and I found it disturbing. I won't get into that here. But, if you are interested, just do a search on "factory farms."

Father said it is morally imperative to change our lifestyle in the light of the issues highlighted in the encyclical. Such a change will not be easy. He advised to begin by becoming informed about the food we buy and eat. From where did it come? By what methods was it produced?

Honestly, I don't think a lot about these things, but I'm going to start doing so.

If you need an overview about Pope Francis' encyclical read this info graphic from [the Toronto Archdiocese](http://www.archtoronto.org):

The infographic is a grid of text boxes with images. The top left box is green and white, titled 'ENCYCLICAL LETTER LAUDATO SI' OF POPE FRANCIS ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME'. The top middle box is light blue and white, titled 'THE TITLE' and contains a quote from St. Francis. The top right box is grey and white, titled 'Laudato Si' is a call to conversion and action...'. To the right of this box is a small image of Earth from space. The middle left box is white with a green border, titled 'QUESTION AT THE HEART OF THE ENCYCLICAL' and contains a quote: 'What kind of world do you want to leave to those who come after us?'. Below this is an image of cracked, dry earth. The middle right box is dark grey and white, titled 'MAIN THEMES' and contains a numbered list of nine points. The bottom left box is green and white, titled 'THE MESSAGE' and contains a quote: 'Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home...'. Below this is an image of hands holding a small green plant. The bottom right box is white and contains the Archdiocese of Toronto logo, website URL, social media icons, and source information.

**ENCYCLICAL LETTER LAUDATO SI' OF POPE FRANCIS ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME**

**THE TITLE**  
Taken from St. Francis' prayer: Canticle of the Creatures. It reminds us that the earth "is like a sister with whom we share our life" - "This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her" .

Laudato Si' is a **call to conversion and action**, an invitation to **change direction** by taking on the task of caring for **our common home**.

**QUESTION AT THE HEART OF THE ENCYCLICAL:**  
"What kind of world do you want to leave to those who come after us?" (10)

**Concern for the environment is no longer optional.** A person of faith should show even more responsibility regarding creation, which is a gift from God.

**INCLUDE IN YOUR EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE:**  
How have I lived in communion with all creatures and with nature?

**THE MESSAGE**  
"Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home." "We are capable of rising above ourselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start." (10)

**MAIN THEMES**

1. the **relationship** between the poor and the fragility of the planet
2. the conviction that **everything in the world is connected**
3. the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology
4. the call to **seek other ways of understanding** the economy and progress
5. the value proper to **each creature**
6. the **human meaning** of ecology
7. the need for direct and honest **debate**
8. the serious responsibility of **international and local policy**
9. the throwaway culture and the proposal of a **new lifestyle**

Archdiocese of Toronto | www.archtoronto.org | @archtoronto

SOURCE: www.vatican.va

This contribution is available at <http://www.fromthepulpitofmylife.com/2015/06/my-pastors-homily-about-laudato-si/>  
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# I Am An Angry Mom: A Response to "No More Angry Mothers" [at The True Dignity of Women]

A few days before Mother's Day, an article was published on Huffington Post entitled, "[No More Angry Mothers; Embracing Accessible Abortion and Affordable Contraception](#)" Basically, she decries a whole generation of women who didn't have access to contraception and abortion. She characterizes them as miserable and lacking freedom. She trumpets the grand (and failed) solutions of contraception and abortion. I have two questions for her:

1. Is a little anger really a bad thing?
2. Are these really the solution?

I am an angry mother. My son was unplanned. I had to completely rewrite my career plans when he came into our lives. I never in a million years thought I would ever be a stay-at-home mom.

But isn't a little anger a good thing. As another pro-choice feminist once said:



"The truth  
will set you free  
but first  
it will piss you off."  
- Gloria Steinem

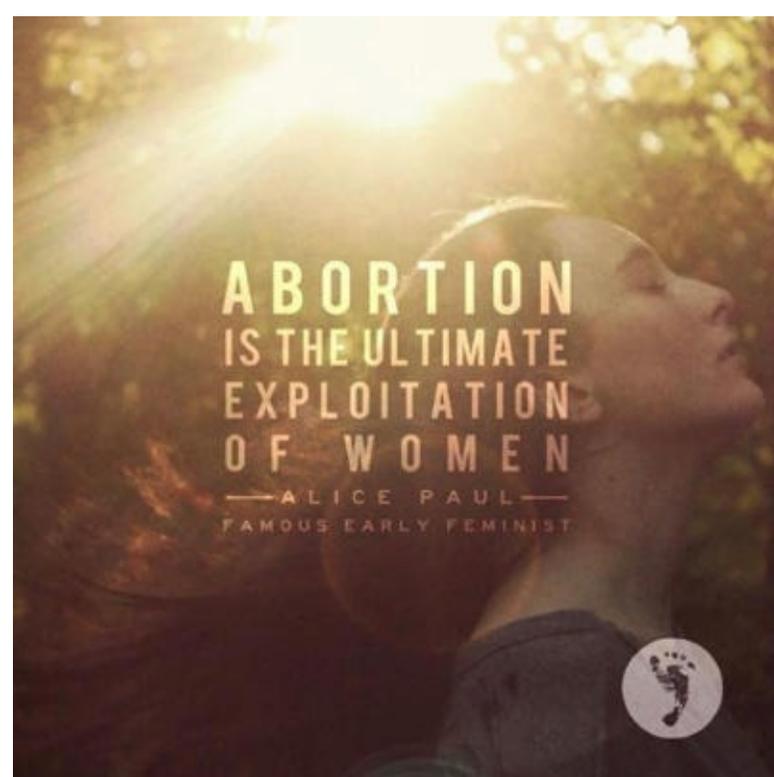
 PositivelyInclined.com  
Real Life Lessons

Change hurts, especially when that change runs counter to our plans. But it is through the hurt that we grow. The change makes us better people. My little change brought me to my position at [Feminists for Life](#). It has given me the opportunity to chase my childhood dream of writing. He has taught me patience, endurance, living for the moment and enjoying the little things. Anger allows us to grow and is usually a good indication of where we need to grow the most.

I'm sure the article comes from a place of pain from being called by her mother "her final mistake" and seeing the vocation of motherhood vilified in her childhood home. However, even now, 50% of the children who survive the womb were unplanned. I think that our silence about that is a sin. We're all worried about our kids being labeled as unwanted and ourselves being labeled as irresponsible. Instead of being worried about our own self-image, we need to be worried about our children's classmates who will never see the light of day. I would bet everything I own that for every woman entering an abortion

clinic today, there is at least one mother in the world that was in her exact shoes and chose life. We need to shout our stories from the rooftops so these women know they are not alone.

**My name is Bethanie Ryan and I had an unplanned pregnancy a month into my marriage while I was still in college. My son wasn't planned by me, but, more importantly, he was *planned* by God (fate, destiny, whatever you want to call it).**



Abortion and contraception aren't the solutions to lack of community support, poverty, abuse, and the disrepute of motherhood. A woman who has an abortion is still going back to her previous impoverished, abused, lonely existence. A woman who pops a pill doesn't [learn to understand and respect](#) the cycles of her body.

We need to learn the [art of being neighbors](#). This is all the more important in an economy that seems hell-bent on tearing families apart as people travel to find work.

We need real solutions to poverty. No woman should have to choose between a job or education and her child.

We need to be more aware of abuse in our communities and make substantial steps to protect abuse victims.

The vocation of motherhood has rightfully been taken down from its pedestal as the end-all and be-all of womankind. No woman should be held as less than for not having children. Motherhood, however, does deserve a better place. There are few fish to fry bigger than creating and nurturing the next generation. "Smart"? Many stay-at-home moms are college-educated like me.

The current solutions of contraception and abortion lead to nothing more than more pills and more abortions. We need to look for real solutions to the pains of unplanned pregnancy, not quick fixes that don't actually fix anything. And those solutions are certainly the last thing anyone needs to be celebrating

on Mother's Day.

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This contribution is available at <http://truedignityofwomen.wordpress.com/2015/06/16/i-am-an-angry-mom-a-response-to-no-more-angry-mothers/>

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## Dream BIG [at Blogging For A Better Life]

**“Follow your heart and your dreams will come true.”**

(Anonymous)

Any dreamer can tell you how amazing and fulfilling it is when a dream becomes a reality.

The best dreams are the ones you yearn so much for that they become part of who you are. They are the dreams you carry within your soul and come to be as much of yourself as your heart and hands are parts of you. They can't be easily pushed out; they are stronger than any negative energy that may be trying to chew away at your hopes. They are the dreams that outside forces can't snuff out, no matter how many times or how many people there are who tell you it will never work, to give up, that it is just a pipe dream.

If you have the desire, you will find the ambition.

And if you have the ambition, you can create great things.

I took a dream of mine and mixed it in with this Bible verse:

**“With God all things are possible.”** (Matthew 19:26)

After many months and more months of working on this project (too many hours to add up), carrying around boatloads of hope (constantly giving myself

*hope*

pep talks), spending much time in prayer (really getting down on my hands and knees and asking for guidance and insight), a dream of mine has been fulfilled.

Check out my dream...my first book...

*A Better Life (Awaits You)*

...is available for purchase.

I believe everyone can dream, and any one of those dreams can be fulfilled. You just need to let your heart be the deciding force of your dreams.

Never forget that with God all things can become possible. Dream BIG!

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This contribution is available at <http://blogforabetterlife.blogspot.com/2015/06/dream-big.html>  
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# Awakening to the Father's Love [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

## Part 1 of : Awakening to the Father's Love

***“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” (1 Jn. 3:1-3)***



***“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (1 Jn, 3:14-16)***

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and Fellow Pilgrims,

When Jesus instructed His disciples to ***“Love one another...”*** (Jn.13:34-35) He raised the level of that directive beyond that of the human love expressed by the Torah to ***“Love your Neighbor as yourselves”***. He raised it by indicating that they were to ***“Love one another as I have Loved you”***. In giving them this command He was implicitly imparting to them the power to Love with the same kind of Love as the Father Loved Him! For He also told them, ***“as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you”***(Jn. 15:9). That is why the scripture tells us that it is for this purpose that ***“the Love of God has been poured into our Hearts”*** (Rom., 5:5)

Our problem is that while we can readily comprehend loving our neighbor as ourselves at the human level, we find ourselves at an impasse as to how to operate in the same Divine Love that transpires between the Father and the Son.

This article, in two parts, is my attempt at inciting us to understand and awaken that Divine Love that is in us, so that in activating this Love through Faith, we may be the Father’s partners in manifesting His Kingdom of Love through our relationships in this world.

*Part One to my article on this theme follows...*

## Jesus’ Prayer for Impartation of the Divine Love

***“Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you***

***have loved me may be in them, and I in them.***” (John 17: 25-26 NRSV)

***Synopsis :*** *The common way we understand Jesus’ directive to “Love one another as I have Loved you” is to think we are to force or discipline the natural love with which we have been endowed to imitate Jesus’ love for his disciples. We take to this understanding because the real spiritual meaning is too hard for us to believe. For you see the Love which Jesus is asking us to place into action in our lives is the Divine Love that the Father has for the Son. This kind of love is the supernatural Divine Love that flowed from Jesus to His disciples through the Holy Spirit, who is the Divine Love. It is a Love that can only be experienced through a relationship with the Divine. It is such a Love that He is now asking to flow between each of us. This kind of Love cannot be forced through any natural discipline it can only come when we Christians enter into a personal relationship with the Father through the Son and surrender ourselves completely to the Holy Spirit so that we are totally free to be channels of this Divine Love to each other. This treatise deals with our coming to the awareness of this divine type of Love, surrendering to its embrace, and the dying to self that it entails.*

### ***What Manner of Love Is This?***

Most of us who live on this planet are blessed to have experienced “love” before we even understood that there was a word for it. A mother’s pure, unconditional and unselfish love for her child is experienced and understood by her child by the loving care and tender concern a mother manifests toward her child through her relationship with that child. If this is this is about the closest we can get, in human experience, to help us understand the pure and unconditional love that God the Father has for his human creation can you imagine the deep, tender, and intimate love that He must have for His only begotten Son, Jesus? This is a love that transcends human experience. It is a supernatural love that can only be manifested in and through the Spirit of the Loving God!

So, in His prayer, Jesus asks the Father that it is His desire that those who believe in Him come to know the Father as He knows the Father so that the Holy Spirit through a relationship with Jesus may communicate this Divine Love directly to the believers!

### ***To Truly Understand Divine Love, We must Experience it!***

For many of us, this Divine Love, is merely a theological concept, which we accept intellectually but without any expectation of the affirmation or spiritual awareness of this Divine Love that clearly Jesus and the Father desire us to have. In our case, we have an understanding of the concept but, unlike the baby in our example, we have yet to enter into a spiritual awareness of that Love. The primary reason being, that like a mother’s love for her child, that awareness must come through an active, loving relationship.

The prophets and writers of the Old Testament attempted to convey the interpersonal and relational nature of the Divine Love for humanity and for Israel through metaphors, similes and allegories, such as comparing the

Love of Yahweh for Israel being compared to that of a bridegroom for his bride<sup>[1]</sup> and a mother for her child<sup>[2]</sup>.

In spite of this, those who practiced of the Hebrew religion, instead of hearing and receiving the message of love the Lord was conveying to them through the Law and the Prophets, instead attempted to please God through dead religious legalism. That is why the prophet Hosea rebuked them in The Lord’s name

saying, “*For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*” (Hosea 6:6 NRSV). Jesus, on several occasions when challenged by the Pharisees as to why he consorted with sinners and publicans, cited this same verse from Hosea (e.g., Matt.9:13).

Amongst all the parables that Jesus used to convey the picture of the Father’s Love for humanity, perhaps none is perhaps more poignant and descriptive of this Divine Love than the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11-32).

Not only does the Father desire that we come to experience His Love, like the prodigal son, but He also desires that we also be channels of His Love. Jesus’ directive to His disciples to “*Love one another as I have loved you*” was also intended for us. And since He was the express image of the Father, it was the Father’s Love that they experienced through Him and it was the Father’s Love they, and we, are commanded to express to each other. Only the Holy Spirit working in us to form a relationship with the Father through the Son can accomplish this!

Our Loving Father, manifests His magnificent and magnanimous Love to our desperately alienated humanity by entering into human history, and offering the gift of this Eternal Love, the Love for which we were created, by reconciling us to Himself through the sacrificial death of His Son on the cross. But this Eternal Love does not stop at just reconciliation. After Jesus’ resurrection, He empowers us, the body of His Son, with the Spirit anointing that was on Jesus when He was on earth. Thus permitting us to participate in His Divinity through faith in the One He sent, who is, in fact, the image of His Love. In this participation we enter into a deeper relationship that takes us from being just friends to being His Spiritual Sons and Daughters in Christ.

How tragic, then, was humanity’s initial response to this offer of Love, that the One He sends to communicate His Love is rejected, tortured and crucified. How can this be? How can anyone reject so great a Love as this? And yet, even today, though millions upon millions have accepted His Love, there are still those in the world who, because of ignorance and misunderstanding, have not really comprehended the Good News of the Father’s Love. Much of the reason for this rejection, unfortunately, lies in the perception that they do not see God’s Love demonstrated in the lives and relations of those who live in what they consider to be “Christian” nations.

### ***Awakening to the Father’s Love In Us!***

God, in His mercy and loving kindness, is not impeded by humanity’s desperate situation. For since He does not wish that any should perish He has predestined us, in His undying love for humanity, that, we believers, the body of Christ in this world, be the communicators of His message of Love and reconciliation to the world – not only through The Word of His Love, the Gospel of the Cross, but also through the Power of His Love, the Holy Spirit, the Dove of Pentecost, who empowers all believers to be channels of this Divine Love to all the world both individually and as a community. It is the Father’s will, therefore, to release the miraculous power of His Love through our living out our loving obedience to the Gospel of His Love. A Love that is not only confirmed by the works of power that accompany the anointed proclamation of His Word but also by the power to reach into the human heart and reveal His Love directly to those who hear and believe the Messenger of His Love, Jesus, His Son!.

For this reason, it is even more urgent that we who are called by His Name be more and more resolved to not only live the life of holiness to which we are called but also to manifest and demonstrate the Father’s Love to all with whom we come in contact. For we, indeed, are His hands of Love extended to the world

and to our own communities.

But, as with all things spiritual, we cannot demonstrate or manifest that which we ourselves have not experienced. How can we convince others of the intimacy of the Father's Love when we ourselves have yet not come to know our creator in a personal way? For some of us, because of the spiritual lethargy inherent in our human nature, this personal encounter with the Lover of our souls does not always come immediately upon our intellectual assent to the faith. There is usually a gradual transition where the Holy Spirit takes us from learning about the Father's Love, through His Word and Sacraments, to spiritually experiencing this Love through a deepening personal relationship with Jesus, who is the incarnation of the Father's Love. Then, as we continue our walk with Him, we become truly aware of His personal embrace of Love, which gathers us to Himself in spite of our own unworthiness. Then, and only then, can it be said that we begin to experience the true and redeeming Love that flows through a relationship with the Father through the Son.

Such a spiritual epiphany is the necessary door to our continued spiritual growth. In fact, without a personal encounter with Christ our spiritual growth is held in abeyance<sup>[3]</sup>. Yes, we may know and give intellectual assent to all the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, but without the personal experience of "knowing" Christ intimately, our spiritual growth will be deprived of the very sustenance needed to keep from being conformed to the world instead of to Christ.

One of the impediments most of us have to entering into a personal and intimate relationship with our Father is that we have been taught to have such a reverence and awe for God that it is inconceivable to us, who are so painfully aware of our own sinfulness, to imagine how this holy all-powerful supernatural and holy being would even permit us to come before Him. While it is absolutely necessary that we not lose this sense of awe and reverence it does not mean that we cannot approach him or enter into a personal relationship with Him. For we, who abide in the Son, come before His throne garbed in Jesus' robes of righteousness and not the filthy rags of our fallen nature.

What we tend to forget is that He first loved us and took the necessary action to remove the obstacle of sin that separated us from Him, namely, through the atoning and sacrificial death of His Son on the Cross and His subsequent resurrection. Through His Word He also us provided the faith we needed to believe in His Son and thus become His Children In Him. And it is through the Son, and In Him alone, that we have access to this intimate relationship with the Father. This is the reason for which we were created. For God Is Love and Love requires an object to be Loved. He created us so He could pour out His Love on us through the Holy Spirit <sup>[4]</sup>.

Through our conversion, baptism, confirmation and the other sacraments of the church the Holy Spirit provides us the means to enter into and maintain this intimate relationship with the Lover of our souls. Only one thing is necessary, and that is, that we open the door to the One who stands at the Door of our Hearts, knocking and earnestly waiting for us to open our hearts to Him, who deeply desires that we activate that relationship for which He created us. When with all sincerity we proclaim, ***"Yes, Lord. come into my heart and abide therein"***, He enters in and sups with us and we with Him.

Maintaining this abiding relationship is a constant challenge to us for the world, the flesh and the devil are constantly attempting to distract us from the heavenly fellowship. So as we read this brief reminder of this Heritage of The Father's Love let us all reaffirm our YES and rededicate our hearts to be receptive and obedient to the Father's Love by asking Jesus to renew His life in us. And, if at all possible, do so by receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist, the Sacrament of His Love.

*Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*If this article has touched your hearts, reach out to Jesus now and ask Him to manifest Himself to you so that you may become fully aware of the Father's Love and be empowered to manifest that Love to whomever the Father brings into your life.*

*May you so be blessed in His Name! Amen!*

*Your Brother In Christ ... Bartimaeus*

(© B.R.Timeo and Bartimaeus' Quiet Place, [2008-2015])

### **Footnotes:**

[1] *“For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you..” (Is. 62:5 NRSV)*

[2] *“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” (Is. 49:15)*

[3] *“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)*

[4] *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Rom.5:5 NRSV)*

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[Cast Your Net on the Other Side!](#)

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This contribution is available at <https://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2015/06/22/%C2%A7-awakening-to-the-fathers-love/>

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## Don't Use Prepositions to Justify Solar Panels [at FranciscanMom]

One of the biggest misconceptions about St. Francis of Assisi is that he “loved the environment.”

Not exactly.

He loved God’s creation. Because God created it.

Yesterday I saw an EWTN video clip about the Franciscan Friars of Ellicott City, MD (who currently staff our parish) and how they installed 1,200 solar panels on a large piece of property at St. Anthony’s Shrine. In this clip, Father Michael Heine, OFM Conv. uses Francis’ *Canticle of the Creatures* as justification for the building of the solar farm. “We know that St. Francis was a great lover of the earth. His *Canticle of the Creatures* praises all Creation.”

With all respect to Father Michael, his statement is based on a mistranslated preposition. In the *Canticle*, the preposition *per* was used\*. It does not mean “for,” as in “Be praised, My Lord, for Sister Moon,” but instead “by” or “through,” as in “Be praised, My Lord, through Sister Moon.” In the *Canticle*, Francis called upon all Creation to praise the Creator, with each created thing: sun, moon, wind, fire, water, and the earth praising God by its very being—by doing what it was created to do.

The *Canticle* does not, in any way, praise Creation in and of itself, but only for the way in which Creation reflects the One who created it in the first place. So to use it as a justification for the construction of solar panels (the manufacture of which can have considerable environmental impact) is stretching it. A lot.

Yes, we are called to be good stewards of God’s creation and of all the natural resources that are on the earth. But let’s not justify our rush to jump on the green-energy bandwagon, with all its empty promises, with a badly-translated twelfth-century poem that was nothing more than a hymn glorifying God and calling upon all of us to do our best to glorify God with the gifts he gave us.

Below is the *Canticle of the Creatures* as presented on the [Franciscan Friars TOR site](#). This translation uses the prepositions correctly.

Most High, all powerful, good Lord,

Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.

To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him.

And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth, who sustains us and governs us and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no living man can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin. Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility. AMEN.

If you would like to read the Canticle side by side with the Italian, Father Regis Armstrong, OFM provides it [here](#).

\*Disclosure about why I know my prepositions: I majored in Spanish and English in college, and took classes in Romance Linguistics.

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This contribution is available at <http://franciscanmom.com/2015/06/05/dont-use-prepositions-to-justify-solar-panels/>  
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# Apparently being a mother of two makes me a "glutton for punishment" [at Catholic Review]

At the end of a library trip, our two sons and I carried a stack of books to the circulation desk and slid them onto the counter.

As I fumbled in my purse for my library card, the boys worked to turn the books over, jostling each other to try to help get the books ready for scanning.

“How old are they?” the woman behind the desk asked.

“5 and 7,” I said, pulling out my card as our boys wriggled with excitement about the books we were taking home.

She looked down at them and frowned.

**“Glutton for punishment,” she said.**

Her words stopped me cold. What she said went right past our sons, who were still happily waiting for her to scan their books. But her outspoken criticism of our family hit me hard.



In the heat of the moment, I didn't respond. I was so flustered that I just wanted to get to the car and go home. But, if I could go back in time, this is what I would say:

*I wish you knew how overjoyed I am to be the mother of these little boys.*

*You see them as a nuisance and a burden. I recognize them as gifts from God who will, we hope, grow up to be men who serve and lead and love.*

*Is every day as their mother a breeze? Of course not. But I remember life before motherhood, and I'd happily take the hardest days as a parent over the easiest days before I become their Mama.*

*That journey to parenthood wasn't easy. For years my husband and I hoped and prayed and worked to become parents. We were fingerprinted and fingerprinted again. We went through interviews, a home inspection, and piles and piles of paperwork. It was worth it.*

*When we first saw their pictures, we cried. We looked at those photos for months before we flew to the other side of the world to hold them for the first time.*

*Every single day since then we have stopped to thank God for bringing these children into our lives, for allowing us to be their parents.*

*They are active and excited and curious and loving.*

*They see the world through eyes of faith, and they challenge us in our beliefs, as well.*

*They greet new experiences with compassionate hearts and minds open to the possibilities each day brings.*

*They are individuals with their own concerns and questions and aspirations for the future.*

*They are best friends. They wrestle and act out imaginary scenes and stay up late swapping jokes and giggling into the covers.*

*They are our sons. They are our world. We are honored, humbled, and so very blessed to be their parents.*

*If being the mother of these two extraordinary children makes me a glutton for punishment, I'll take it —with pleasure.*

*I just hope someday you discover for yourself how much joy this kind of “punishment” can be.*



6/29/2015 11:26:34 PM

By

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This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2015/06/29/apparently-being-a-mother-of-two-makes-me-a-glutton-for-punishment>  
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# Work-Life Balance: Finding Harmony As a New Father [at A Couple of Catholics]

When I found out I was going to be a dad it hit me like a ton of bricks. It was exciting and nerve-racking all at once. My mind went a million miles a minute. How can we afford this? Are we going to have to move? Is my wife going to have to quit her job? Where will we put our child? I hope he/she turns out healthy.

Of course worrying is a natural tendency, and something every parent-to-be does.

As time progressed I became more confident. “We’re going to nail this baby thing,” I thought. Being a strategist at heart, I, of course, went into planning mode. I did a lot of research and looked at all the data. Then I figured out what “tools” we needed. With a few Google searches, I rocked our baby registry hard.

Then it came to putting together a crib...although I got it together, the tiny screws were a challenge for my bear-sized hands. After a few hours, BOOM, my child had a place to sleep.

Our daughter was due in the fall, so I felt great about getting the crib up a few months early. That’s right, I was ahead of schedule and under budget (thanks to a baby closeout sale). For soon-to-be-dads, nothing quite gives you the feeling of accomplishment like getting your son or daughter’s crib assembled. Or at least that’s what I thought at the time.

The fall is the busy season at DEG. Because of this, there are nights you bring work home, its part of the job and our industry. On this particular evening, I was putting the finishing touches on a client presentation while my wife watched the news. Then she rushed out of the room.

A moment later I heard her yell, “Pat, I think my water just broke.”

“Really, are you sure?” I asked, confused. According to our doctor, only about 10 percent of women experience their water breaking before contractions. So naturally I questioned her.

We called the doctor and got the signal to come into the hospital. I sprang out of my seat in a panic. I hadn’t even packed yet...so much for being strategic.



Text from my boss Geoff

On our way to the hospital, I called my boss and a close colleague. They told me to not worry and that they would take care of everything. My boss texted me saying, “No problem. Enjoy every second of what is about to happen, it’s the most amazing thing you’ll ever experience in your life. Work is a distant, distant thing right now. Call me if you need anything. Take lots of photos.”

He shortly followed it up by “Oh yeah, don’t forget to check in on Foursquare 😊” Classic, Geoff.

Fast forward 12 hours and our beautiful little girl, Johanna, was born. Now every day I’m greeted by her sweet smiling little face.

If you ask me work-life balance is kind of a myth. Why? Because no matter what you do, you will always spend more time at work than at home. So it’s inherently a failed idea. You’ll never attain balance, at least from an hour’s perspective.

What matters is that when you are at work, you’re at work, and when you are at home, you’re at home, fully present. The night my daughter was born was the best proof I can give anyone that DEG is a family friendly workplace. I don’t think any of my coworkers minded the extra work so that I could be present. To them, it probably seemed minimal, but to me it meant the world.

I love being a dad for so many reasons, but most of all because it challenges me to be more selfless. Since having my little girl, I have grown in a deeper, more sustaining and self-sacrificing love for both her and my wife. And this attribute has even helped me grow as a colleague in the workplace.

I also love being a dad because I am privileged with the joy of watching someone experience everything

for the first time and am blessed with the opportunity to encourage her to be the best version of herself.

Two weeks ago I was riding an airport shuttle on a business trip to New York. As any true Midwesterner does, I struck up a conversation with Joe, the bus driver. A grandfather himself, he summed up all my feelings in one sentence when he said, “Parenthood is not for the timid, but it is certainly worth the trip.”

My hope for you is that the miles you go on the journey of parenthood will be filled with all the feelings that come from deep caring... delight, sadness, joy, wisdom, and love. Happy Father’s Day!

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## Obergefell v. Hodges [at Catholic Book Report]



The Supreme Court’s decision in [Obergefell v. Hodges](#)—redefining “marriage” as a union between two people, regardless of gender—is one more step in the natural progression of our culture. We’ve been on the decline for a while now. But what was so unnerving about the *Obergefell* decision was the majority’s willingness to abandon any pretense of constitutional analysis in favor of reaching the end they desired and saw as inevitable. What is more, the majority does not even apologize for their failure to provide a single, cogent reason for their decision. Perhaps they didn’t care. Or, perhaps, they have become so blinded to the Constitution as a result of the incessant call for “equality” and “justice.” As Chief Justice Roberts so accurately stated:

If you are among the many Americans—of whatever sexual orientation—who favor expanding same-sex marriage, by all means celebrate today’s decision. Celebrate the achievement of a desired goal. Celebrate the opportunity for a new expression of commitment to a partner. Celebrate the availability of new benefits. But do not celebrate the Constitution. It had nothing to do with it.

Whatever the majority’s motivation for issuing the “opinion” they did, it is now the settled law of our land that every state must recognize a same-sex union as a “marriage.” No more debate; no more votes. Maybe. We have no choice but to accept the decision for what it is, but we do not need to accept—indeed, *cannot* accept—the flawed underlying premises. Justice Kennedy’s attempt to make “liberty” a license to do anything collapses under the weight he asks it to bear. Justice Kennedy’s liberty knows no bounds, as he made clear decades ago in the “[sweet mystery of life](#)” passage in *Casey*:

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.

*Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833 (1992). With this foundation, liberty can mean anything you want. And to the unthinking observer, arguing against such a lofty concept as liberty seems indefensible.

But as Justice Thomas noted in dissent, the original concept of “liberty” was a negative one: the freedom

from government intervention. Once “liberty” becomes the basis for positive rights (or governmental benefits and privileges), it risks becoming a concept so broad that it is rendered meaningless. Justice Scalia had criticized Justice Kennedy’s inchoate use of “liberty” in the 2003 decision, *Lawrence v. Texas*:

I have never heard of a law that attempted to restrict one’s “right to define” certain concepts; and if the passage calls into question the government’s power to regulate *actions based on* one’s self-defined “concept of existence, etc.,” it is the passage that ate the rule of law.

A mere twelve years later, Justice Kennedy is at it again, exalting liberty as one’s right “to define and express their identity.” From that unprincipled starting point, Kennedy goes on to overlook two millennia of precedent for traditional marriage and to find four new principles that, in the majority’s mind, justifies the expansion of “marriage” to same-sex unions.

I’ll spare you the details of Justice Kennedy’s explanation, which reads like a high-school sophomore’s extemporaneous essay. What I want to point you to is [Chief Justice Roberts’ dissent](#). Although all four dissents highlight different errors in the majority’s reasoning (yes, it pains me to dignify it that way), Chief Justice Roberts offers a chilling prediction for the future of believers in America (emphasis mine):

Federal courts are blunt instruments when it comes to creating rights. They have constitutional power only to resolve concrete cases or controversies; they do not have the flexibility of legislatures to address concerns of parties not before the court or to anticipate problems that may arise from the exercise of a new right. **Today’s decision, for example, creates serious questions about religious liberty. Many good and decent people oppose same-sex marriage as a tenet of faith, and their freedom to exercise religion is—unlike the right imagined by the majority—actually spelled out in the Constitution.** Amdt. 1.

Respect for sincere religious conviction has led voters and legislators in every State that has adopted same-sex marriage democratically to include accommodations for religious practice. The majority’s decision imposing same-sex marriage cannot, of course, create any such accommodations. The majority graciously suggests that religious believers may continue to “advocate” and “teach” their views of marriage. *Ante*, at 27. **The [First Amendment](#) guarantees, however, the freedom to “exercise” religion. Ominously, that is not a word the majority uses.**

Hard questions arise when people of faith exercise religion in ways that may be seen to conflict with the new right to same-sex marriage—when, for example, a religious college provides married student housing only to opposite-sex married couples, or a religious adoption agency declines to place children with same-sex married couples. Indeed, the Solicitor General candidly acknowledged that the tax exemptions of some religious institutions would be in question if they opposed same-sex marriage. See Tr. of Oral Arg. on Question 1, at 36–38. There is little doubt that these and similar questions will soon be before this Court. **Unfortunately, people of faith can take no comfort in the treatment they receive from the majority today.**

Perhaps the most discouraging aspect of today’s decision is the extent to which the majority feels compelled to sully those on the other side of the debate. The majority offers a cursory assurance that it does not intend to disparage people who, as a matter of conscience, cannot accept same-sex marriage. *Ante*, at 19. That disclaimer is hard to square with the very next sentence, in which the majority explains that “the necessary consequence” of laws codifying the traditional definition of marriage is to “demea[n] or stigmatiz[e]” same-sex couples. *Ante*, at 19. The majority reiterates

such characterizations over and over. By the majority’s account, Americans who did nothing more than follow the understanding of marriage that has existed for our entire history—in particular, the tens of millions of people who voted to reaffirm their States’ enduring definition of marriage—have acted to “lock . . . out,” “disparage,” “disrespect and subordinate,” and inflict “[d]ignitary wounds” upon their gay and lesbian neighbors. *Ante*, at 17, 19, 22, 25. These apparent assaults on the character of fairminded people will have an effect, in society and in court. See *post*, at 6–7 (Alito, J., dissenting). Moreover, they are entirely gratuitous. **It is one thing for the majority to conclude that the Constitution protects a right to same-sex marriage; it is something else to portray everyone who does not share the majority’s “better informed understanding” as bigoted.**

Time will tell just how correct Chief Justice Roberts is in his prediction. But it is only a matter of time. The persecution of those who do not kowtow to the new social order can expect to face some consequences.

But that does not mean that we are to shut our doors and hide behind some protective barrier, assuming we could even find one. It is not time to be a huddled remnant. It is, however, time to come together as a community of believers, to deepen our commitment to the faith and its moral order, and to resolve here and now [to be saints](#). This is the time we have been given and we should all be hearing the call to use the gifts God gave us to help transform the society in which we live.

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received it and know that someone is wearing your favorite outfit and looks amazing.

2

This may not actually count as a different means of living this Work of Mercy, but research where you bring your clothes and find a way to give twice. At our church, we have an

[annual clothing drive fundraiser](#)

and just recently installed a drop bin for the same purpose. Clothing is sorted and sent to third world nations in desperate need of clothing. They are willing to take items that other drives won't like clothes with small stains or mismatched socks (Now, I am not advocating giving the poor junky clothing, but let's be honest there are many items that are deemed unacceptable by our society that are still very much usable and comfortable. Why throw them into the landfill? Half of all unwanted clothing in the USA ends up in the trash.) The charity then pays the fundraising church a small amount per a pound of clothing collected. It is a win for everyone involved.

If this type of fundraiser isn't available in your area, seek out thrift shops that either give the clothing away for free or fundraise for charity work. My favorite thrift store not only sells items at amazing prices, but also uses every penny earned to fund mission trips to South America. They also provide items for free to anyone who cannot afford to pay. I know when I bring items there, they will be put to good use many times over!

3

Like the other corporal works of mercy, there is a spiritual dimension to this work. It is not just clothing the body, it is clothing the soul in dignity. Clothing the body is necessary and protective, but what if you could touch someone's soul, too? A little girl had just that idea and

[Hannah's Socks](#)

was created. The premise is to provide new socks and under garments to homeless and impoverished people to help them feel a sense of dignity and comfort. This small amount of normalcy can make a big difference in the life of someone suffering through being unwanted or marginalized.

This is a very easy way to serve the poor. Collect socks and undergarments and then find a homeless shelter or clothing charity to distribute the items to those who come in looking for some basics of life.

4

Now that you have cleaned out your closet, supported a clothing ministry or fundraiser, parted with that favorite sweater, and purchased some new underwear, what more is there to do? How about giving of your time and talent, not just your stuff? Do you know how to knit or crochet? Can you sew? You can make the world of difference for someone.

As our pastor would say, "Let's begin with a story." It was 2007, we were barely getting by and sweating every penny despite working as hard as we could. The phone rang one day and I was offered a free two night stay at a resort about 3 hours away if I would just listen to a half hour presentation on time shares while there. We so needed a little break. I calculated out the price of gas to scrimp and save up before we went. We packed up easy to prepare foods to cook lunch and dinner (breakfast was included) in the efficiency style suite. We knew that we had no money to spend on entertainment and more than once really wondered how we would even cover the gas, but getting away for a couple of days seemed to be just what we needed. The room was beautiful and big. The area looked a whole lot like home but still was a nice change of scenery. We heated up our simple supper, tucked Cowgirl into bed, and watched a little movie on the television. Life was good. In the morning, we woke up and started getting ready for breakfast. The tile in the kitchen area was shiny black and so slippery. Cowgirl only had socks on as she had hidden her shoes and I was searching for them. She suddenly took off in a run. My husband opened his mouth to say, "Stop running before you slip and hit your head," but only got as far as "St.." before we heard the slam of her head on the concrete floor. She screamed for an hour straight, her pupils were dilating then shrinking to pin holes right before my eyes. That was when we got scared. We put her in the car and tried to find the closest hospital. She vomited four times on the way there, it was a less than 10 minute drive. We were away from home, out of extra clothes for Cowgirl, and wondering how in the world we would now pay for the emergency room bill when we couldn't even afford to buy our daughter an ice cream cone. We sat there with a naked toddler and a disgusting car seat calculating how to even get her back to the hotel. Then a sweet nurse walked in and handed us a hand knit blanket from Project Linus. I can't tell you how much it meant to us. Cowgirl thought the ER was the best part of the trip, a free blanket and an ice pop! Her concussion was minor but still so scary.

Providing a blanket, sweater, or even hat through charities like

[Project Linus](#)

or

[World Vision Knits](#)

for Kids does more than clothe nakedness, it provides hope and the knowledge that someone cares.

5

The ultimate nakedness is vulnerability and dependency. The aged, infirmed, and unborn are the most naked of our society. They need us to clothe them in help, love, and protection. If you want to clothe the naked, start with restoring dignity to all life. Without dignity, even the best dressed person is left exposed and rejected. We must support pro-life efforts within our community and parish, and teach our children about the value and sacredness of every life!

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This contribution is available at <http://veilsandvocations.blogspot.com/2015/06/works-of-mercy-bouquet-part-3.html>  
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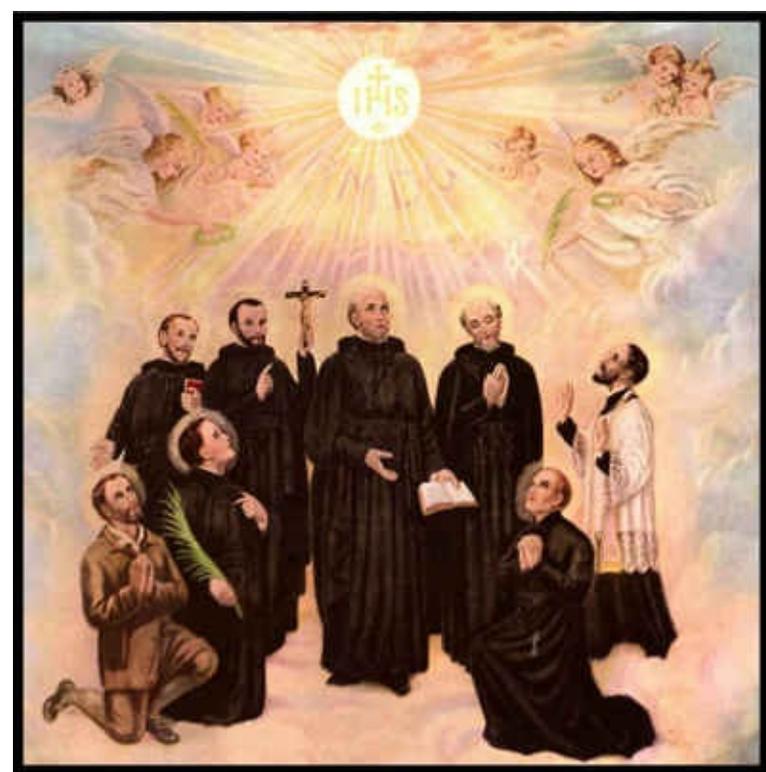
## Canadian Catholic Saints [at The Koala Mom]

**The Catholic Church recognizes fourteen Canadian saints.** These include the Canadian Martyrs as well as four women, a bishop and a religious brother. Here is a brief description of who each of these Canadian Catholic saints were.



### **The Canadian Martyrs**

These Jesuit missionaries worked with the Hurons in the colonial days of New France. They were killed during wars between the Iroquois and the Huron. All were canonized in 1930 and their feast is celebrated in Canada on September 26.



**Saint René Goupil** was a Jesuit Novice who was born in 1608 and martyred in 1642. He suffered bad health, but studied medicine and worked with the Jesuits in Canada. He was the first martyr, killed in New York with Isaac Jogues.

**Saint Isaac Jogues** was a priest who was born in 1608 in France and martyred in 1646. He came to Quebec in 1636 and was captured by the Iroquois in 1642. He was rescued and went back to France, but returned to Quebec where he was again imprisoned and this time killed.

**Saint Jean de La Lande** was martyred in 1646. He served with the Jesuits as a layperson in New France. In 1646, he accompanied Jogues on a mission to the Mohawk and was captured with him. After Jogues' death, he attempted to recover the priest's body and was killed.

**Saint Jean de Brébeuf** was a priest who was born in 1593 and martyred in 1649. He lived with the Hurons for more than 15 years and, with his assistant Gabriel Lalemant, refused to leave his people when they were attacked by Iroquois.

**Saint Gabriel Lalemant** was born in 1610 in Paris and martyred in 1649. He became a priest in 1630 and spent two years in Quebec before joining Brebeuf in the Huron missions.

**Saint Charles Garnier** was a priest who was born in 1606 in Paris and martyred in 1649. He joined the Jesuits in 1624 and taught at a Jesuit college before being ordained in 1635. The following year, he arrived in Quebec to minister to the Huron. Even when the mission was attacked and he was wounded, he continued to baptize neophytes and to assist a wounded Huron.

**Saint Antoine Daniel** was a priest who was born in 1600 in Dieppe, France, and martyred in 1648. He became a Jesuit in 1621 and arrived in Acadia (present-day Maritimes) in 1632, then went to Quebec. He founded the first boy's college in North America in Quebec in 1635. He spent twelve years with the Huron before being murdered by the Iroquois.

**Saint Noel Chabanel** was a priest who was born in 1613 in France and martyred in 1649. He was the youngest of the Canadian martyrs.

## Holy Canadian Women

[Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys](#) was born in 1620 in France and died in 1700. She started the first school in present-day Montreal and founded an order of religious women, the Congregation of Notre-Dame. She was able to convince the bishop that her Congregation should remain an active teaching order—a unique idea then—rather than being joined to a cloistered order of Ursulines. She was canonized in 1982 and her feast is January 12.

**Saint Marguerite d'Youville** was born in 1701 at Varennes, Quebec, and died in 1771. She was married for eight years before becoming a widow in 1730 and had three children. She founded an order of religious women, the Sisters of Charity, commonly known as the Grey Nuns. With the Grey Nuns, she established hospitals in Montreal and across Canada. She was canonized in 1990 and her feast is October 16.

[Saint Kateri Tekakwitha](#) is also known as the Lily of the Mohawks and is the first Native American to be canonized a saint. She was born in 1656 in New York State, but her parents both died in a smallpox epidemic when she was four. She was raised by her aunt and uncle but always remembered her mother's faith and joined the Catholic Church as a teenager. She was persecuted by her tribe and eventually left her village to join a Catholic community in Canada. She died there at age 24 and was canonized in 2012. Her feast day is July 14.

**Saint Marie de l'Incarnation** was born in France in 1599. She married when she was 17, but her husband died two years later, leaving her with an infant son. Marie retreated to a secluded life and joined the Ursulines in 1633. Six years later, she joined several other nuns in a journey to Quebec, where she was both businesswoman, mystic, and teacher. She died in 1672 and her feast day is April 30.

## Other Canadian Saints

**Saint André (Alfred Bessette)** was born in 1845 in St-Gregoire-d'Iberville, Quebec, and died in 1937. He was orphaned when he was twelve years old and worked for a while in textile mills in the United States. He joined the Congregation of Holy Cross in 1870 and founded St. Joseph's Oratory in Montreal. He was canonized in 2010 and his feast is January 6.'

**St. Francois de Laval** was the first bishop of New France. He was born in 1623 in France and entered the local Jesuit college at the age of eight. He spent the next decade studying theology and became a priest in 1647. He was appointed bishop of New France when he was 36 and "is admired for his pastoral work among the Aboriginal Peoples and the settlers of New France, and for trying to defend Native People from being exploited by merchants and governors through the sale of alcohol" ([CCCCB](#)). He was canonized in 2014 and his feast day is May 6.

[The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) notes that these "men and women have, in some particular way, shaped the life of the Church in Canada. Some gave their lives to ensure that the Good News be heard throughout North America. Others, out of steadfast faith and profound love, dedicated their lives to the service of their brothers and sisters, whom very often were among the most underprivileged."



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This contribution is available at <http://thekoalamom.com/2015/07/canadian-catholic-saints/>  
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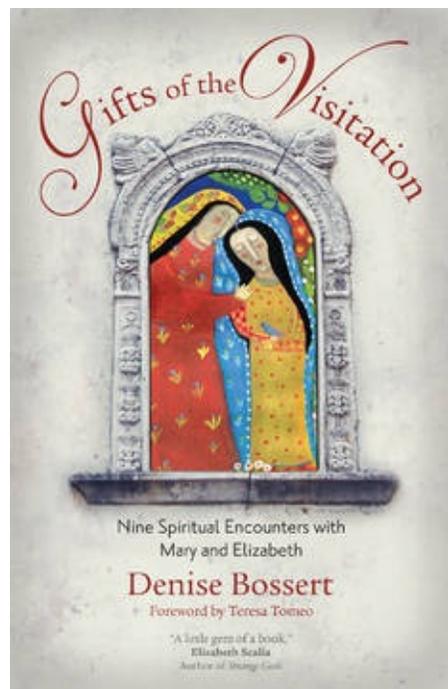
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# What to do When you Disagree with a Catholic Teaching [at A Catholic Newbie]

As a newbie to Catholicism or as someone exploring the faith, you will likely find one or more teachings that you just can't get your head around — or flat out disagree with. Oftentimes, these are teachings like the saints, Mary, purgatory or contraception. Don't worry about this; you are not alone! Most of us struggle with multiple teachings as we learn more about the faith.

Here are some suggestions to help you if you find yourself stuck in this situation:

1) **Keep searching** – Read, read and read some more. Listen to Catholic radio and watch EWTN. Look it up in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Find Bible verses about the issue. Ask your RCIA leader or another Catholic well educated in the faith. Keep reading different explanations and really delve deeply into the whys of the teaching, and I promise, you will find one an explanation eventually that makes sense to you. I found that every issue I did not understand I eventually came to terms with. Several issues for me included contraception and [purgatory](#).



2) **Write a petition** – I just finished reading “[Gifts of the Visitation](#)” by Denise Bossert (Ave Maria Press, 2015), a convert to Catholicism, who explores the Visitation (when Mary and Elizabeth meet and John the Baptist leaps in his mother's womb) in detail and shares along the way her conversion to the faith. The daughter of a Protestant minister, she felt called to Catholicism after her father's death, but especially struggled with the Church's teaching on Mary's Immaculate Conception. This teaching is that Mary was conceived in her mother's womb free from original sin.

After many attempts to understand this teaching, her RCIA leader advised her to write a petition to Mary, asking her to show Denise the truth. What a wonderful idea! Here's what she wrote:

*Mary, if you are as the Catholic Church says, and if you love me, please answer this petition. I want someone to communicate with me by your inspiration. Mary, I want the message to come from you to the ears of one who could know no other way. Please choose someone who, for me, would represent the*

*universal Catholic Church. Then I will know I am right where I am supposed to be and that the Church's teachings are all correct, terra firma, especially the teachings about you. Please answer my petition before the end of the year—I know, that's just two weeks.*

Thinking it unlikely she would receive a response, she was surprised that the day after she wrote the petition, she received a letter from a woman she had written to after seeing her on EWTN's The Journey Home. The letter, dated Dec. 8 had hand written beside it "The Feast of the Immaculate Conception." That was her answer.

While God sends me these types of messages and reassurances quite often — now that I'm looking for them! — I too had a [WOW moment](#) after praying to my confirmation saint, St. Therese of Lisieux, for a specific intention. Known for sending roses as signs, as soon as I woke up the next morning and stumbled outside to pick up my paper, I opened it to find giant picture of a rose across the whole paper and a story about decorating your home with roses. Thanks St. Therese!

How did you come to terms with a Catholic teaching you were struggling with?

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## What we do with our bodies we do with our spirits [at On the Road to Damascus]

One thing that always upsets me is when I see the disrespect of our Lord by those who claim to love him the most. This is especially apparent twice a year – between May and June as the weather turns warmer and again in the fall as football season ramps up. Yes, I am going to rant about clothing.

If I had any ability to draw I would have made a cartoon picture of Jesus on the cross. Standing in front of him would be a guy in shorts, T-shirt, and flip-flops looking up at him. The caption would read, “I did this for you and that is the best you can do when you come to see me?”

I can hear the sighs and see the eye rolls already. I have it heard it before, “God doesn’t care what I wear to Church. He is just happy that I came.” The arrogance in that statement never fails to astound me. The Creator of everything that is, was, and ever will be is happy just because I could carve out forty-five minutes of my time to come see Him in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Of course, I sat there bored out of my gourd and annoyed because the homily went over five minutes. Why can’t the priest have some respect for my time? Doesn’t he know I have more important things to do today? I know I was ten minutes late and left right after communion but I put forth the effort. That’s all that matters, right?

C.S. Lewis said it best in the *Screwtape Letters* when he said what we do with our bodies we do with our souls. We do Catholic aerobics (sit, stand, kneel, bow, genuflect, cross ourselves) precisely for this reason. We show respect with our bodies so we can show respect with our spirits. Why do we come to Mass? Simply because God is deserves our worship. He is king of all creation and our salvation and redemption. Nothing or no one is more worthy or more deserving of our worship, love, and respect. If nothing or no one is more worthy then nothing or no one is more worthy of our best. God surely deserves better than a T-shirt, swim trunks, and flip-flops. We are going to be in the presence of the greatest King ever to rule the earth, not to a barbeque on the beach.

Likewise, when fall rolls around we will start to see our favorite football jerseys be worn in pride to Mass. Whom do we venerate when we wear our jerseys to church, Jesus or good ol’ #4 (Brett Favre of the Green Bay Packers, who is a god to many north of the cheddar curtain). Having pride in the home team has its place. That place is not the Mass. The Mass is time to love, adore, and worship the Lord alone.

And that is where I think the problem firmly falls. I think there is a general misunderstanding of what the Mass actually is. Many of our Catholic brethren have gone the Martin Luther route and see Mass as nothing more than a prayer service, an instruction of the faithful. Mass is no longer a sacrifice.

In reality, Mass is a time machine where heaven and earth come together as one and we are mystically transported back to the foot of the cross at Calvary to be with all the angels and every soul who has or will ever live to participate in the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ. The priest acts as the conduit merging all of these plains of existence and times into a single act. The Mass is not the same sacrifice repeated. It is the one sacrifice that we are joined to each and every time we participate in it.

If you could stand before Jesus on the cross on the day he was sacrificed would you show up in a T-Shirts and shorts or a football jersey or would you choose to dress a bit better? Well, each and every time you

participate in the Mass you are doing just that – you are standing before Jesus on the cross on the day he was crucified. Just because you cannot see the angels and saints surrounding you does not mean they are not there. Just like with faith you have to believe what eyes cannot see.

*“Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, “I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up.” When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.” - Exodus 3, 1-6.*

When Moses came before the Lord the Lord made Moses remove his sandals because he was on Holy Ground. Likewise, when you come before the Lord in the Mass you are also on Holy Ground. It has been consecrated and set aside for the Lord. To come before the Lord without regard to the way you dress is disrespectful at the very least, most likely sinful at best, and probably idolatrous in the extreme. You shall have no other gods before me, even Brett Favre.

Ask yourself this question; if the clothing worn to Mass doesn't matter how would you feel if the priest ditched his itchy Roman robes for shorts and sandals? How would you feel if he walked out to do a wedding in a Green Bay Packers football jersey? What if he showed up to baptize your baby in flannel and cowboy boots? Most would be downright furious if this happened to them. Sadly, some would only be upset because their pictures would be ruined but most would view this as a gross disrespect to their special day. Every day is a special day to the Lord.

Clothing is an extension of the soul. It is the visible representation of how important an event is to you. If the Bishop was going to be at Mass you wouldn't wear your shorts and T-shirt. If the Pope was coming by you wouldn't wear your Michael Jordan jersey. If you were going to meet the President of the United States you wouldn't do so looking like a hobo. You would have respect for the office these men hold even if you had no respect for these men as men.

Yet all of these men fail to compare to He whom we come to worship during Mass. I get to hold the creator of everything in my hands during Mass. I get to enthrone my King, my Salvation and Redemption and my life with my body. I get the greatest honor a lowly creature like me could ever have.

The devil wants us to be disrespectful. He wants us to be callous and unaware of the Lord. Once he is successful in separating us in the small the important is easier to get us to turn from. Once the devil gets us to think that the Lord doesn't care for things like how we dress for Mass it becomes easier for him to convince us that God doesn't care about the important things like abortion or same sex marriage.

It is time we revive “Sunday Best” and start showing our respect for our Lord when we gather to celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass.



## What is a 'contraceptive mentality'? [at LMS Chairman]

A recent

[article](#)

in The Telegraph shines a new light on Natural Family Planning ('NFP'): a smart-phone application means couples can replace periodic abstinence with periodic use of a condom, which will have no effect on the accuracy of the method, since this is based entirely on temperature. (This is not the case for the currently standard 'Billings' version of NFP.)

Couples adopting this approach will avoid the many hideous, and occasionally life-threatening (yes, thrombosis can kill you) side-effects of other methods of contraception. Since many methods can (and some invariably do) cause early abortions, it may be morally preferable as well, though this consideration won't be a motivating one for many secular couples.

I think that proponents of NFP would agree, however, that, if you take away the element of self-restraint and abstinence, a lot of what they say about the spiritual and relationship benefits of NFP would no longer apply. The stuff about being in tune with your body is still there, but while this is an appealing idea, it doesn't have any very obvious connection with Catholic spirituality. You're not a better person because you are 'in touch with your body'.

I don't know if this NFP app will take off, but it raises the question of the 'contraceptive mentality', to which, as a Catholic ethicist, I'd dearly love to give a proper definition. If this phrase means anything, it must apply to the couples supplementing fertility awareness with condoms.

An article

[here](#)

argues that the 'contraceptive mentality' idea is a 'myth'. It points out correctly (more or less) that the intrinsically wrong contraceptive act identified by Catholic ethics has two components: an intention to perform a complete sexual act, and an intention to frustrate that act's potential for procreation. Used in the normal way, without condoms, NFP doesn't make room for this: there are no sexual acts whose fertility is impeded, only ones which weren't fertile in the first place. But that is exactly why we need a vaguer phrase like 'contraceptive mentality' to cover the clearly wrongful use of NFP to implement an intention, for example, not to have any children at all within marriage. This intention, if present at the time of the marriage ceremony, invalidates the marriage itself. It is rather different if the couple choose not to consummate the marriage; but if there are sexual acts, there is a need for them to be 'open to life' in a sense which goes beyond the requirement not to engage in contraceptive acts. The question is, what does this mean?

What is wrong with a married couple's intention, however implemented, not to have any children (while still having sex) is that it is contrary to the vocation of marriage. It would be like a priest who decides never to celebrate Mass. Married couples are called to have children. It may be that they can't have any, physically; it may be that they discover that pregnancy would be dangerous to the wife's health after

marriage. But it remains the nature of the marital state that it is ordered to procreation.

The same would go for couples who use NFP to limit their family size in an unreasonable way. I'm not going to define what would be unreasonable, but just to take it for granted that there is such a thing, since everyone agrees (or should) that the just use of NFP requires 'reasons'. If couples limit the number of children unreasonably, then they are offending against the nature of their vocation.

This, I would suggest, is what it is to have a 'contraceptive mentality'. It is a mentality which is typically accompanied by contraceptive acts, but can also be put into practice using NFP. It is an attitude not open to life in accordance with the marital vocation, excluding children altogether or to an unreasonable degree.

It would follow from what I have said that it would not apply to non-married couples. Although contracepted fornication or adultery is worse than non-contracepted fornication or adultery, since the act has been deformed in an additional way, a blanket use of NFP would not be wrong, since the couple are not under an obligation to partake of the marital vocation in this way. On the other hand, they are attacking marriage in another way: from the outside, at it were.

Something I've skirted round here is continence in marriage: a decision not to engage in sex at all, either from the start, or at some time later, or temporarily, for a longer or shorter period of time. This finds a place in the history of Catholic spirituality. The logical conclusion of the practice is when a married couple agree to give up their marital rights in order to join monasteries. I think this case makes sense of the whole practice: it is the exchange of one vocation for another. Since the vocation to the religious life is the higher vocation, the exchange is a reasonable one, even if not formalised by public vows, and even if just a temporary arrangement to 'make time for prayer'.

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# The Supreme Court's Decision - Now What? [at Servant of Charity]

## The Supreme Court's Decision – Now What?



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Last week's Supreme Court ruling would seem to have been an answer to a major cultural question. But rather than an answer, it was really the opening to many more questions: What does it mean? What will happen next? What are we, as Christians, to do? Are we living in the End Times? Or does it at least spell the end for our country?

I have heard all of these asked over the past few days; I have asked some of them myself. Over the next week or so, I will be reflecting on them and sharing some of my (very unauthoritative) thoughts.

The first question I need to answer (which all of us do) is a very personal one. We are probably all close to people (friends, family, coworkers) who see last Friday's decision as a cause for great celebration. We have probably all had to endure some of that celebration the past few days. How do we respond to that?

There is no question that much of it has been, and will continue to be, crass and revolting. We will be taunted, called bigots who have finally been placed firmly on the wrong side of history, and scorned. It seems to me that such responses should be met with patience, but essentially ignored. They are without depth and dignity, and do not deserve a response.

However, I do not begrudge the marriage redefiners their celebration. The day that all human life is protected from conception to natural death, I will certainly celebrate, rightly so. I will try to be classy and gracious, but such an event would deserve to be celebrated. Those on the other side of this issue must be feeling the same way right now. I understand. Even those who, in their zeal, have crossed the line, I can easily forgive. It's easy to go overboard at such an emotional moment.

But how do we personally respond to those people we have, or certainly will, encounter, who celebrate last week's decision of those five black-robed politicians? There is no question that they are wrong; we need not back down on that point. Last week's decision no more puts us on the wrong side of history than did the Dred Scott decision put abolitionists on the wrong side of history. Right is right and wrong is wrong, regardless of historical events. (Besides, I'd much rather be on the right side of eternity than history.)

It seems to me that the answer to the question of how we ought to respond is simple: with charity. As much as I disagree with those who have sought to redefine marriage, I understand their position, and in most cases, I respect them. I believe that most of the people I know personally have arrived at their position, by and large, compassionately.

This is what I mean. They and we hold totally different visions of what it is to be a human person – who we are, what our destiny is, and the genius of our creation. We hold to a vision of the human person that is much larger and more beautiful than secular society offers. We believe in a destiny in which our culture not only no longer believes; it no longer finds desirable. We encourage men to be ruled by their higher nature, given by God, and in which they will find the fullest happiness. But the world says that we have no higher nature; we have simply a highly evolved bestial nature.

To be sure, not all those on the other side of the marriage issue have fallen for the entire secular bundle of lies. But it is certain that their view of human beings, human sexuality, and marriage and family, differs greatly from ours.

Here's the point: if they are correct on those fundamental issues, then we are wrong about same-sex "marriage." Their view of "marriage equality" flows naturally, and *compassionately*, from their basic assumptions.

On the other hand, if we are right about the fundamentals, then they are wrong about marriage. Our view is the truly compassionate and loving one, *loving towards everyone*, because what we aspire to for all people, is higher and more beautiful, however difficult it may be.

Therefore, although I soundly disagree with those who celebrate the Supreme Court's decision, I can respect them – because both their position and mine are based on charity. Genuine charity has led them from a faulty starting point to a faulty conclusion, but charity is something I can admire regardless.

I do not scorn anyone for not knowing calculus. I have never cut off a friend or family member because they could not properly conjugate irregular verbs. Why, then, would I act in such a manner to one whose knowledge about man, sexuality and marriage is lacking?

I honor the charity in their hearts, and perhaps they can honor the charity in mine. Now this does not answer all the questions that I began this article with, and there still remain large cultural questions and battles (probably for survival) to be fought.

But at least with this approach, I can love others as I hope to be loved by them. In times like these, that's at least a start. May we all pray for the grace.



## How the Church changes



Change is in the air these days. Flags are coming down and new laws are being solidified and marriage rights are being extended and American society is simply shaking with change.

But what of our Catholic Church? We don't change, right? And so all of us are in a tizzy, from those of us who want it to change right now to those of us who plant our feet firmly and insist such change would be sacrilege or sin. Who among us can be happy?

I don't presume to predict how these social changes will affect the Church, or to which of the many shifting social fronts the Church will react. What I know is that the Church has changed and can change and will change, and will do so very slowly.

Practice stems from doctrine, and doctrine from theology, and **no shift ever happens until we have the theology to back it up**. At times this consoles me deeply: every bit of what we do and believe can be traced back to some fundamental theological truth.

Take limbo, for an example. [Remember when that disappeared?](#) It was 2007, decades after the Church moved from a mechanistic understanding of Baptism to what Rahner referred to as Vatican II's "optimism about salvation". A thorough examination of the big ideas of salvation, mercy, and sacraments led to letting go of that doctrine.

So it will be with our contemporary trends. People will keep working in feminist theology and liberation theology and queer theology, all fields new to our changing world. Church doctrine and practice will evolve along with their discoveries, though I know not how. I doubt those brave souls know either, but they continue probing questions and ideas deeply, applying our ongoing experience to our most ancient wisdom.

**Lived experience is key**, especially when we examine a lived experience informed by love. [Would Cardinal Cushing have pushed back so hard against Father Feeney's "no salvation outside the Church" line if his brother-in-law had not been Jewish?](#) Feeney wasn't saying anything unorthodox, but the lived experience of Cushing, Boston's towering, iconic Archbishop, had taught the prelate something different. So Feeney was excommunicated, and the Vatican backed up Cushing. Another shift.

Most of these changes do not happen quickly. We take our time examining an issue. We examine changes

in theology. We take care to get it right. This can be quite painful. All of our hot-button issues – divorced Catholics, limits on ordination, gay unions – prompt fiery responses because they cause people real pain. As someone called to (and finding ways to engage in) leadership in the Church, I can understand the pain of loving a Church that at times has been wishy-washy on female leadership. All I can say in response to that pain is that I want the entire worldwide Church to be ready for a change before it occurs. It's not my place to drag the universal Church along with my first-world, New England tendencies.

There are times when the Church has been on, as we call it, the wrong side of history. Gregory XVI opposed democracy, trains, and gas streetlamps as unacceptable signs of devilish modernity. The Church didn't buy into the American abolitionist movement.

But what we do isn't calcified. We don't settle upon a firm set of rules and assume that settles all questions for all eternity. What makes Catholicism extraordinary is our capacity to respond to the world, to listen to the Holy Spirit and use our most basic truths to inform our belief and practice.

**To be a disciple is not to be stuck in one place, but to be always moving.**

There has been much talk lately of [the arc of the moral universe](#), and which way it bends. There is no doubt that it has been bending toward justice for a long time, since our modern ideas of equality, opportunity, and care for the vulnerable, are quite remarkable when one considers the totality of human history. That we even bother to fight for such things is a marvel. Who would have thought we would?

But I wonder if that moral universe is bending toward something even greater. I wonder if we lean toward that which God came to earth to teach us. Perhaps we lean toward a truth that undergirds our desire for justice and fairness and equality. Perhaps that long arc of the moral universe bends not only toward justice but toward love.

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# Out of Love for Us, God Gave Us a Job to Do [at In Caritas Christiana]

## 12th Sunday of Ordinary Time

This Sunday, the second reading will be from

[2 Corinthians 5:14-17](#)

. I would recommend reading

[verses 11-21](#)

, and also the

[other readings](#)

for this week. It's Lectionary # 95, if you're reading from a hard copy.

The first reading and Gospel speak of God's mastery over the sea. He set their boundaries when he made them, and he can speak a word to calm a mighty storm at sea. Clearly, his power is great, and greater still is

[his love for us](#)

.

We know this because out of his great love for us, when Adam and Eve disobeyed him, he began to reveal

[his plan](#)

to reconcile them (and us) to himself almost immediately.

In the fullness of time he sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to die, that through Christ, the world might be reconciled to him.

Since we are among those who are already being reconciled, and because we know Christ's great love for us, it is natural that we desire to serve - to act on the great mission that he gave to the Church.

This great mission is to bring all to be reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ, so that God might make his appeal to them, through us.

It is a great and humbling mission - so great that twenty

*centuries*

later, there are still people who have not heard of Jesus.

If God is so mighty that he can set the boundary of the sea, and can calm mighty storms with a word, wouldn't it have been more efficient to do it himself?

Sure. Anything we can do, he can do better. So why use us clowns?

In short: this is the way he

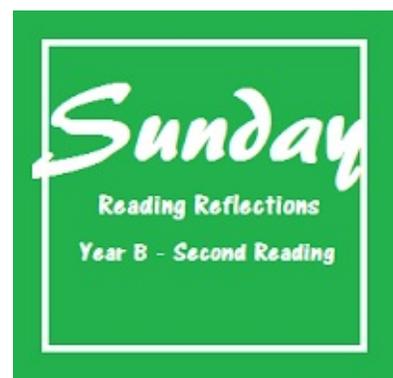
*chooses*

to do it.

He surely was not obliged to use us for this great mission, but he chose to, and it is good for us that he did. It gives us an important role to play in salvation.

Of course, we could not do it apart from his grace, but our cooperation in this great mission gives our actions meaning in the history of the universe. If our actions (our "works" as it were) mean nothing, it is easy to fall into either laziness or despair, neither of which are spiritually good places to be.

It is much better, for our sake that we be industrious and hopeful - because our lives, and the actions we take in them are important, and they do have meaning.



Let's pray:

God, Our Father, like a good father looks after the growth of his children by giving them responsibilities as they mature, so, too, you have given us responsibilities as we have matured enough to take them on. Help us not to be daunted by the magnitude of the mission you give your church; help us to take courage, because you are with us.

Amen.

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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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## Walking and Pondering the Meaning of Life [at String of Pearls]

Yesterday morning, I took my usual walk--the daily four-mile walk that is part of my grand plan for making my osteoporotic bones become more healthy--along the shore of Lake Champlain.



It was a glorious morning here in Chazy, NY--sunny, breezy, not the least bit humid. Not long after I set off, I saw the happiest sight: two young boys in swim trunks and life vests, newly released from school for summer vacation, playing on the rocks on the shore of the lake, watching their father install a dock. I smiled, thinking how wonderful it is to be a kid in the summer, with nothing but freedom and fun ahead for the next couple of months.

But then I realized that the boys' father was submerged up to his shoulders in the lake as he worked, and he'd left a small four-wheel all-terrain vehicle idling up on the side of the road, right near the rocky spot where his boys were playing. And right away, my imagination began to run away with me, creating all sorts of terrifying scenarios. What if the four-wheeler's gear shift suddenly switched into "drive" on its own, and mowed down those boys? What if they ran away in fear and tripped on the rocks, falling head-first into the lake, unconscious? What if I needed to try to save one of them, because their father became incapacitated himself?

As these thoughts rushed through my brain at break-neck speed, I decided that yes, I would gladly risk my life to save those young boys--complete strangers to me, but my brothers in Christ. Even if I died doing so, I thought, that would be okay. More than okay, in fact, for that might be just the selfless action that could help this sinful soul of mine find its way to Heaven.

Wow, right? Sunny day, happy kids squealing in delight at the water's edge, with their dad right nearby...where did these dark imaginings come from?! And these grandiose thoughts of heroic rescues?

Anyway, I moved on, trying to clear my head of scary images. And I started ruminating on an aspect of myself that I'm not particularly proud of. While moments ago I had contemplated dying to save young lives, I was struck by the thought that I have had a lot of trouble lately dying to self when it comes to dealing with someone who is actually very close to me, someone I love. I was reminded of a passage from one of my all-time favorite novels, Graham Greene's

## *The End of the Affair*

. The heroine of that story, who has a conversion experience after a near-tragedy and promises God that in return for His mercy she will give up the man with whom she is having an affair, is writing in her journal about the inconsistency of her feelings: how can she tell the Lord that she wants to suffer as He suffered on one hand, and yet not even be able to stand spending a couple of hours in the grating company of her husband (whom she has never loved the way she loves the man she gave up) on the other? Yikes. "That's me," I thought. "I SAY I want to carry big, heavy Crosses; but then I don't like the small, light ones God sends me--and I can barely lift them, much less carry them."

I was also reminded of the admonition in C.S. Lewis's

### *Screwtape Letters*

: "Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts." So true. And just as Hell can be reached by small sins, repeated over and over until they separate us from God, so too can Heaven be reached by small acts of mortification and self-sacrifice--by practicing St. Therese's "Little Way of Spiritual Childhood." Anyone, no matter how small, can practice this "Little Way," I remind myself of this all the time. And then I pass up perfect opportunities to do so.

With my head in the clouds, I walked a tad farther than my usual two-mile mark, so I checked the GPS on my phone to see how far I was from my mom and dad's house. I saw that I was 2.1 miles from "home," so I turned around to head back. And that's when I saw it:

### *a signpost*

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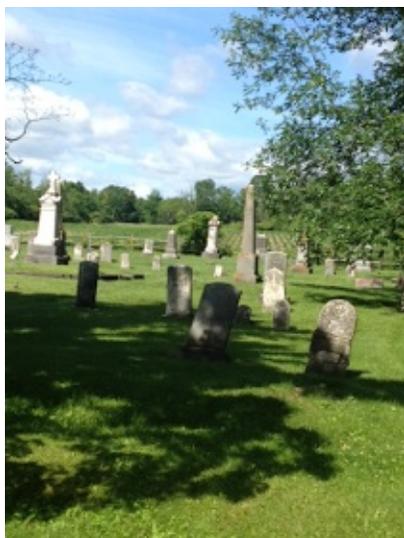
I've seen a lot of interesting historical marker signs in my walks around Chazy (some of which I shared with you in

[this recent post](#)

), but I'd never seen this one--and I would have missed it entirely, hidden there in the trees by the side of the road, if I hadn't walked too far, too busy pondering the meaning of life to turn around when I usually do. Right as I changed directions, there it was.



It was like a sign. Literally. And it overlooked a small Catholic graveyard--just what I needed to see as I was contemplating life and death, sin and redemption.



Talk about a reminder of the true meaning of life: that the purpose of this very short one we get to have here on earth is to live in such a way that we can be with God in the next one, the one that lasts forever. That's the goal, and if I want to reach it...I better learn how to carry my little daily crosses with greater faith, hope, and most of all LOVE.

*[On a side note: I loved seeing that this area was the site of the first Catholic church in Northeastern NY, built in 1790. If you read Erin's Ring, you know that it is in part the story about Dover, NH's first Catholic church (home of the second-oldest parish in the state), built in 1830 by Irish immigrants.]*

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This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2015/06/walking-and-pondering-meaning-of-life.html>  
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# America's Mental Illness [at Justin's Corner]

by Justin Soutar

*(This article originally appeared on the website*

Intellectual Conservative

*June 2, 2015 at <http://intellectualconservative.com/americas-mental-illness/> )*

As we the people of the United States anxiously await yet another historic, momentous, far-reaching, and quite possibly unprecedented Supreme Court decision--this time regarding whether or not homosexual couples possess an inherent constitutional “right” to see their sinful relationships legally recognized as “marriages” throughout the country--it’s a good time to pause and reflect on what is really happening to our nation as it continues to drift away from its traditional Judeo-Christian cultural and social moorings, and, ultimately, away from God and reality.

Under the poisonous influence of a radically secularist ideology, vocal homosexual activists are insistently pressuring the High Court to redefine marriage as the union of any two (or more) consenting adults regardless of sex or biological compatibility. Not content to offend their Creator by engaging in gravely immoral behavior in the privacy of their own homes, these shrill extremists are now demanding that their deviant lifestyles be publicly recognized by the federal government of the United States—whose official national motto is still “In God We Trust”—as the equivalent of the Creator’s own sacred institution of marriage that has formed the connective tissue of every flourishing human society from the dawn of civilization throughout history and right up to this moment. In other words, these outspoken sodomites want the High Court to manufacture for them out of whole cloth a brand-new “right” to enjoy all the privileges of marriage in their own irregular relationships. Such legal recognition of morally disordered homosexual unions on a par with normal marital unions would be a slap in the Creator’s face, would contravene His natural law, and would constitute a blanket rejection of the collective wisdom of the ages, also known as tradition and precedent. Furthermore, it would evince a pathetically naïve misunderstanding of the nature of marriage as well as a foolish disregard for the negative social consequences of legitimizing homosexual activity on a national scale. Finally, such a radical High Court decision would insult common sense and flaunt the will of the American people, who in the last twelve years have approved laws in more than thirty states upholding the traditional definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

Should the Supreme Court cave in to these radical homosexual lobbyists and venture to issue such a stupid and misguided decision, it won’t be the first time that several unelected activist justices have waved their magic wand to create a previously nonexistent human “right” out of thin air. Forty-two years ago in

*Roe v. Wade,*

seven such justices arbitrarily reinterpreted the Constitution’s due process clause to include the supposed “right” of a woman to kill her unborn child for any reason whatsoever. But no human being ever has any

right to violate God's natural moral law, whether by killing an unborn child in a so-called "health clinic" or by engaging in homosexual activity behind closed doors. Regardless of the circumstances involved, no violation of the natural law can ever properly be called a human "right." Authentic human rights are not invented and declared by two consenting adults or an immoral lobby group or a court decision or a majority vote; on the contrary, they are given to us by our Creator and must be exercised responsibly in accordance with His laws.

Unfortunately, thanks to the increasingly pervasive influence of America's radically secularist internal enemies, who are hell-bent on constructing a new America without God and without moral absolutes, the fundamental concepts of inalienable rights, natural law, and ordered liberty that originally formed the basis of American society and the Judeo-Christian cultural tradition within which they developed are rapidly becoming obsolete. America's Founders believed that human beings are endowed by their Creator with certain inherent rights such as life and liberty that cannot be taken away—basic rights that government must protect. They acknowledged the existence of the Creator's absolute and unchanging natural law, consisting of basic principles of right and wrong implicitly engraved in the human heart and explicitly encoded in the Ten Commandments. And they understood freedom as the fundamental right to act in accordance with the natural law—i.e., the right to do the right thing. As wise, brilliant, and courageous men of deep Christian faith, unshakable trust in Divine Providence, and sound reason, the Founders grasped the reality and inner logic of these three interrelated fundamental concepts and dared to build a new nation upon their firm foundation. Thus constructed on solid rock, America rose to become the greatest nation in the history of the world.

Now, almost two and a half centuries after her founding, America is in deep trouble because these fundamental philosophical concepts and the Judeo-Christian tradition that gave birth to them no longer form the basis of her society and culture, and thus of her political and legal systems. In place of inalienable rights, we have a relativized, ever-changing list of so-called "rights" based exclusively on whim and convenience, invented and declared on the spur of the moment. In place of natural law, we have moral relativism, the idea that right and wrong are determined solely by individual preference. In place of ordered liberty, we have the strange idea that freedom is the absolute right of each and every individual to do whatever he or she wants to do. And in place of the Judeo-Christian tradition, we now have the novelty of an aggressive and intolerant radically secularist ideology that is determined to completely rob modern America of her traditional Christian identity.

The fundamental concepts on which America was built are being lost today because we the people are losing faith and trust in God the Creator, Who is Ultimate Reality and the source of all other realities (except evil). As we become increasingly estranged from our infinitely good, wise and loving Creator, we naturally become suspicious of His moral order that governs the universe He created. Falling into the original sin of pride, we dare to exalt ourselves above the Creator and His eternal law, rejecting transcendent truth and taking it upon ourselves to arbitrarily decide what is right and wrong. Instead of humbly accepting the divinely revealed objective realities of inalienable rights and natural law and ordering our lives accordingly, we prefer to construct our own subjective virtual reality and live according to our own wishes, either denying that God exists or simply ignoring His existence as irrelevant to our own.

This is the dangerous building project in which the radically secularist elites are currently engaged: they are hacking vigorously at America's Judeo-Christian bedrock and demolishing her philosophical foundations laid upon that bedrock in order to construct a new nation on the shifting sands of moral

relativism and atheism. Experience offers abundant warning of the end results of such a project: consider the French Revolution, Italian Fascism, German Nazism, Russian Communism and all the bloodshed and human misery spawned by these infamous totalitarian regimes before they were washed into the ocean of history. Attempting to build a nation without God always leads to social chaos and totalitarianism, resulting in the loss of human rights and freedom. It should also be pointed out that a nation's loss of faith is inevitably followed by a loss of reason, because without faith in the realities of God and His natural law, the world no longer makes sense.

Under the destructive influence of radical secularism, America is losing touch with God and thus also losing touch with reality. Polls now indicate that a majority of Americans favor legally equating the moral abomination of a homosexual union with the sacred institution of marriage. This demonstrates just how far our society and culture have drifted from the religious and moral values of America's founding generation. We don't even understand what marriage is anymore. Marriage is the Creator's own institution, the perfectly designed union of a man and a woman for the good of the spouses, the procreation of children, the good of the children and society, and the growth and continuation of the human race. If we had sufficient common sense, we would simply recognize this fact as self-evident as our ancestors did, respecting and protecting and promoting heterosexual marriage as the lifeblood of a healthy and flourishing society. Our laws and policies would naturally favor and strengthen marriage and nuclear family life. The facts that some people now seriously claim a "right" to have an immoral relationship endowed with the title and privileges of marriage, that we are actually discussing and debating and defining and redefining what marriage is, and that those of us who still cling tenaciously to the age-old definition of marriage must now battle strenuously to preserve and hand it on, all indicate that we as a nation are going insane because we no longer recognize and accept the objective truths of the natural law, natural rights, and ordered liberty. And we no longer recognize and accept these truths because we no longer believe in God Who is Truth itself.

The influence of radical secularism in our culture has become so pervasive that it is now affecting the thinking even of some good and well-respected Catholics. Last year, for example, based on a misguided tolerance and an inordinate desire not to offend homosexual lobbyists, Bill Donohue, President of the Catholic League and Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York both wrongly approved of admitting them into the 2015 Saint Patrick's Day parade, a Catholic religious and cultural event. Given that their radical agenda is to celebrate their sinful relationships and have them legally recognized as "marriages," such approval was entirely inappropriate. Apparently Donohue felt that agreeing to homosexual activists' participation in the event was a useful bargaining chip for getting pro-life activists into the march. And apparently Cardinal Dolan felt that allowing such immoral extremists into this event was an act of Christian charity that could draw them closer to the Church. But the end does not automatically justify the means. It is forbidden to compromise with evil in order to obtain a good. And there can be no moral comparison or equivalence between those who promote a grave moral evil that violates God's law and wreaks social havoc, and those who defend the inalienable right to life of the innocent unborn, which currently is not protected by law in the United States.

In another example of how radically secularist thought can affect Catholic reasoning, attorney Kyle Duncan of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty recently remarked in an interview on

*The World Over*

with Raymond Arroyo that a certain state has the right to broaden the definition of marriage to include

same-sex relationships if it so chooses. Such a remark betrays the often subtle and subconscious influence of the radically secularist ideology and the insidious moral relativism and atheism on which it is based. The truth is that the states, the courts, the federal government, and the people have no right to decide to legally alter the Creator's timeless definition of marriage. On the contrary, it's the business of the states, the courts, the federal government, and the people to properly understand and accept marriage for what it is and to have their laws reflect that proper understanding and acceptance. As a firm believer in democracy, I do acknowledge and treasure the ancient democratic principle

*vox populi vox Dei,*

“the voice of the people is the voice of God.” However, the will of the people is to be respected and carried out only insofar as it accords with the objective truths of the natural law and promotes the true good of society. Thus, laws that acknowledge and reflect the Creator's definition of marriage and protect the sanctity of the nuclear family should be consistently upheld, while those that attempt to change that definition and assault the sanctity of the nuclear family should be struck down and overturned.

Faced with growing attacks on marriage and religious liberty, taxpayer-funded abortions, the HHS anti-life mandate, ballooning national debt, and increasingly corrupt career politicians, many well-intentioned religious and patriotic Americans of good will are now scrambling to bolster the political and legal defenses against our radically secularist internal enemies, with efforts ranging from the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act to state versions of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act to court injunctions to a Balanced Budget Amendment to term limits for senators and representatives. Catholic and Christian lawyers are claiming that individual states have the right to decide for themselves what marriage is without interference from the courts. Although many of these efforts are laudable and deserving of support, the main problem with this whole approach is that it merely treats the political and legal symptoms of a much deeper cultural and social disease infecting our nation. Our current political and legal systems are simply the products of our contemporary culture and society, which has turned virulently anti-Christian in recent years. If our American culture and society are indeed so profoundly afflicted by the mental illness of radical secularism, then we cannot logically expect our federal government and courts to hold out long as bastions of sanity and justice. Not even the Constitution can guarantee protection of our inalienable rights when it is reinterpreted to mean whatever this or that radical lobby group or alliance of activist justices arbitrarily decides it should mean. Any government or court system is only as good as the people who run it. When our politicians and judges are godless, immoral, unjust, and biased, how can we expect them to issue godly, moral, just, and unbiased laws and rulings? Since they are living in a self-constructed fantasy world, how can we expect them to govern and interpret the real world in a sensible and rational manner? As the Supreme Court prepares to issue a landmark decision on whether homosexual relationships should be legally recognized as “marriages,” can we reasonably expect a simple majority of the justices, let alone all nine of them, to make the right decision based on common sense and the Creator's natural law?

If America is to be rescued from the brink of final and ultimate disaster toward which she is now obviously hurtling, a profound change of mentality must take place in our culture. We the people need to break out of our beloved self-constructed virtual-reality bubbles and get back in touch with reality. We need to rediscover the fundamental concepts of inalienable rights, natural law, and ordered liberty as the irreplaceable foundations of a great nation. We need to rediscover marriage and the nuclear family as indispensable elements of a healthy society. We need to rediscover and reconnect with our priceless Judeo-Christian cultural heritage. And, most importantly, we need to reaffirm our faith and trust in

Almighty God, our infinitely wise and loving Creator, humbly begging His forgiveness on our waywardness and imploring His providential assistance in rebuilding our crumbling nation. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Ps. 33:12).

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# The real reason I'm still Catholic (A tribute to Dad) [at Peace Garden Passage]

As usual, I'm late to the party. It's been a few weeks now since [Elizabeth Scalia over at Patheos posed a challenge](#) to the Catholic blog world, basically asking the question, Why will you remain with the church "even as the world increasingly bares its teeth against it?"

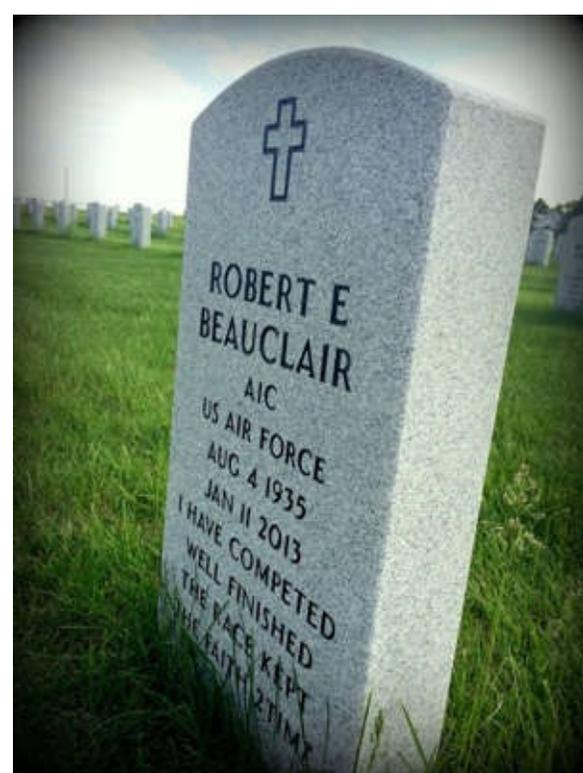
It's a fitting image, the world baring its teeth at us, hoping we'll just go away once and for all, or at least stay silent. The Church poses a threat to modern culture like never before. And given all the controversy and examples of broken humanity within it, what sane person would stay?

I have watched my own friends and family members dropping away left and right. Meantime, here I am, sticking tenaciously by the Church, even as the arrows fly at her daily.

As a Catholic communicator, I've answered the question Elizabeth poses many times and in so many ways already, which is one of the reasons I've been slow to respond. Does anyone really care to read another blog post by Roxane Beauclair Salonen defending the Church?

It might seem a bit tired to keep this defense going, but if someone dear to me were under attack, I wouldn't relent. I wouldn't back down. If it were my own child, I'd be the mother tiger of all mother tigers, to the bitter end.

As I began reflecting on Father's Day coming up, and on the fact that I have been dragging my feet about this post, it hit me. Father's Day and the answering of this question were meant to coincide all along. Because, truth of the matter is, there are many reasons why I am still Catholic, despite all the gripes against it, but among them all, one stands out most.



This. This is the reason I am still Catholic.



My father, Robert Beauclair; he's there, and he's in my heart, and I have a great hope that he's also in heaven. Last week, I had a chance to hang out with him a while with my younger three kids, and it was the most peaceful visit imaginable; truly.





Please don't misunderstand. My mother played a tremendous role in the whole thing, too. I will not forsake the fact that she was the one to drag us to Mass kicking and screaming as children (yes, we rebelled at times; who wants to go sit in church for an hour when you're young?), the one who steadfastly prodded us to keep at it all those years, even as my father stayed home on Sundays, worn from another late night and too much beer.

But something was happening even in those 35+ years my father stayed away that I couldn't ignore. Because even as we three — my sister, mother and I — got ready to leave for Mass each week at Our Lady of Lourdes in Poplar, Montana, knowing well what was missing, Dad still wanted us to go and asked us to pray for him on our way out.

It would be easy to interpret all this as the very reason we should turn away from the Church. Our own father couldn't summon the courage to get up and join us. Some spiritual leader he was. And yet...he wanted us to go. I remember him saying as much.

*What was that all about?*

It tugged at me, and over the years, I began reflecting on it more, seeing it as important to my own faith journey. I thought about how my father had gone to seminary to become a priest, and then left, feeling that God had different plans for him, and how my sister and I emerged as a result of that difficult decision, and how grateful I was to have been given life.

And yet...*dad had gone to seminary*. He was close enough to the Lord that, at one time, he wanted to give his whole life to Him through the Catholic priesthood.

It's been said his mother, Mary, influenced him most of all in this direction, and I don't doubt it, for they were very close. But after her tragic death, which he learned about by telegraph at age 19 while at seminary, it wasn't long before he would leave.

This all got me thinking about Grandma Mary and her strong faith; the kind that had her on her knees every night, praying for her nine kids and husband, throwing in a petition that maybe, her youngest son might go into the seminary someday, if it be God's will, of course.

*What was that all about?*

Then I thought about my mom's father, and how, despite his own struggle with alcoholism, he'd made hanging out with God a daily thing. Despite his shortcomings, he kept going back to Mass, day after day, looking for the strength to get through, to set his mind on the one thing that seemed stronger than his desire to head to the liquor cabinet — Jesus the Christ in the Eucharist, found present, body, blood, soul and divinity, in the Catholic Church.



*What was that all about?*

It was all over the place, this Catholicism thing. And in many cases, the men pushed forward with it most tenaciously, even when they felt too weak to manage their own wills and lives.

It was something big, I came to realize, and I didn't want to just shirk it, despite not understanding it all, just because I was being challenged by well-meaning friends who had been led to believe the Catholic Church was the last place anyone should be. This choice of so many in my family to cling to Mother Church come what may was no small thing, I was seeing. And on some level, it seemed, I bore the responsibility of carrying this big thing forward in some way.

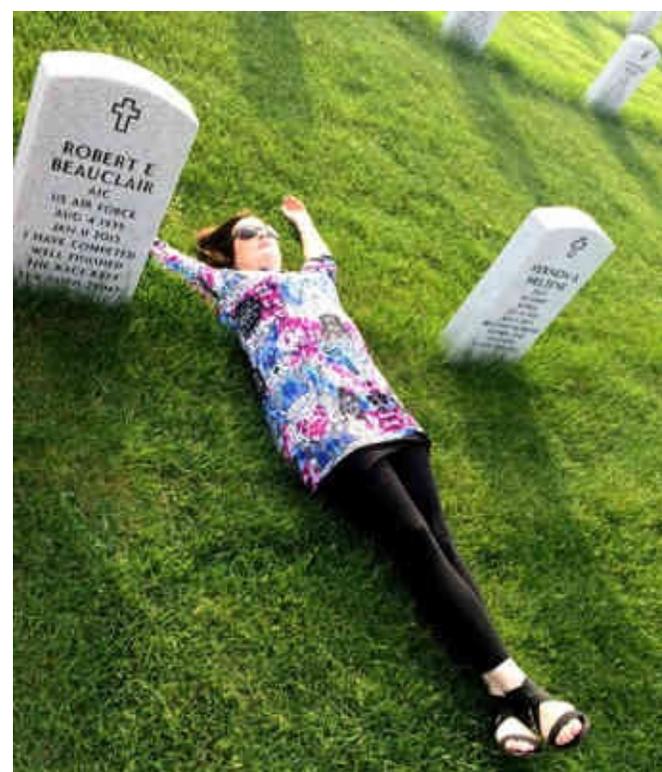
Not long ago, a friend of mine who isn't Catholic told me she's interested in Catholicism but can't imagine leaving her Protestant roots. Practically everyone she knows, except me, is Lutheran. And I get that. It makes sense because of what I've lived, and how my family and friends influenced my decisions toward faith. Since hearing her say this, I have an even greater respect for those who are not born Catholic and yet find themselves at Rome's doors. It can't be easy to leave everything you've known and set out on a new course, and one constantly mocked and ridiculed. What strength it would take!

I guess in the end, then, you might say that I'm not very strong at all. I'm certainly not very original. This Catholic thing has been a part of me both for as long as I can remember and longer than I can remember. I just picked up where others left off, really.

And yet, I did discover it for myself. As an adult, I was faced with a choice, and tough questions, and while, yes, those roots went long and deep, in the end I still chose the Catholic Church on my own accord and have never looked back. There's something so beautiful, warm, and amazing about it that I am finding myself compelled deeper into Her bosom every passing year. Whenever I've balked, it's only been in selfish phases. Now, I can't imagine caving, ever. I am wont to defend Her because She and the Christ in Her have loved me so.

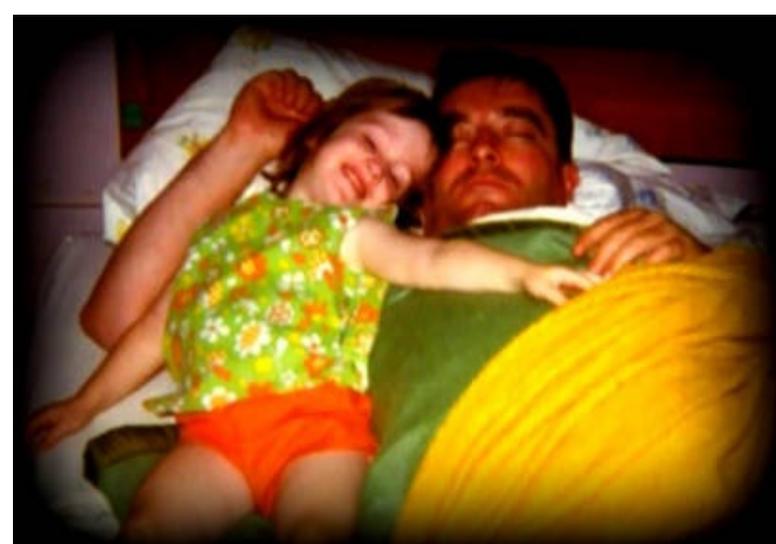
The bloodline of my own family first brought me to the Church's doors, but the Body and Blood of Christ that I find within have kept me drawing near. And this blood, this body, has the potential to transform not just one soul, not just one family, but the whole world.

Dad's no longer here, but the essence of him is always with me, and I am eternally grateful for both Dad and the faith he wanted so much for me to have, even in times when he did not feel worthy of Her, and Christ, himself. What an act of pure love.



Thank you, Dad. I finally figured out what it was all about, in part because of your love for the Church and the God who put Her in place; the love I saw peeking behind the brokenness in your eyes all those years ago. I know that you often felt you had failed me as a daughter, and yet in my eyes now, it's not even close. For you gave me the greatest gifts of all: my very life, and life in the Church.

You're the best.



Q4U: What makes you hold fast to your faith?

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2015/06/the-real-reason-im-still-catholic-a-tribute-to-dad/>  
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## Crucial Distinctions [at Brutally Honest]

Anticipating being asked to become involved in something I oppose, an opposition sourced in sound and firmly entrenched Catholic teaching. I recently sought the advice and wisdom of my Deacon, and indirectly, my priest on the matter. After some research, my own and that of those whose wisdom I was seeking, it became more than obvious, and painfully so, that I should not become involved. Though in the end, no one in the Church would forbid my involvement, it became clear in my mind that my conscience was going to be a serious roadblock.

A couple of days ago, as expected, I was formally asked about my anticipated involvement and had to tell the person, whom I love and respect dearly, that I could not participate. They were respectful and cordial about it but the pain seemed evident and that of course, caused pain in me as well.

In all honesty, it sucks at times to be faithful.

I give this as background because this morning, I came across [Father Robert Barron's most recent piece where he touches on aspects of this with, as is his style, effective clarity](#):

*For the mainstream of the Catholic intellectual tradition, love is not primarily an emotion, but an act of the will. To love, Thomas Aquinas says, is to want the good of the other. Consequently, hatred is not primarily a feeling, but desiring evil for another, positively wanting what is bad for someone else.*

*Given this, when is hatred called for? When is hatred morally permissible? The simple answer: never.*

*God is nothing but love, and Jesus said that we are to be perfect, as our heavenly father is*



*perfect. This is precisely why he told us to love even our enemies, to bless even those who curse us, to pray even for those who maltreat us.*

*Does this mean that our forebears were obliged to love Hitler and that we are obliged to love ISIS murderers? Yes. Period.*

*Does it mean that we are to will the good of those who, we are convinced, are walking a dangerous moral path? Yes. Period.*

*Should everyone love Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner? Absolutely, completely, unconditionally.*

*But here is where a crucial distinction has to be made: to criticize someone for engaging in*

*immoral activity is not to “hate” that person. In point of fact, it is an act of love, for it is tantamount to willing good for him or her. Once the sense that there is objective good and evil has been attenuated, as it largely has been in our society, the only categories we have left are psychological ones. And this is why, in the minds of many, to question the moral legitimacy of transgenderism is, perforce, to “attack” or “hate” transgendered people.*

*A very real danger that flows from the failure to make the right distinction in this regard is that moral argument evanesces. If someone who disagrees with you on an ethical matter is simply a “hater,” then you don’t have to listen to his argument or engage it critically. You are permitted, in fact, to censor him, to shut him down.*

*Sadly, this is what obtains in much of the public arena today: the impugning of motives, the questioning of character, and the imposition of censorship. Just a few weeks ago, two Princeton faculty members, Cornel West and Robert George, had a public debate regarding same-sex marriage, West arguing for and George against. What was so refreshing was that both men, who are good friends, actually argued, that is to say, marshalled evidence, drew reasoned conclusions from premises, answered objections, etc., and neither one accused the other of “hating” advocates of the rival position. May their tribe increase.*

*Distinctions are called for, furthermore, regarding the word “tolerance,” which is bandied about constantly today. Typically, it has come to mean acceptance and even celebration. Thus, if one is anything shy of ecstatic about gay marriage or transgenderism, one is insufficiently “tolerant.”*

*In point of fact, the term implies the willingness to countenance a view or activity that one does not agree with. Hence, in the context of our wise political system, each citizen is required to tolerate a range of opinions that he finds puzzling, erroneous, repugnant or even bizarre.*

*There are lots of good reasons for this toleration, the most important of which are respect for the integrity of the individual and the avoidance of unnecessary civil strife, but it by no means implies that one is obliged to accept or celebrate those perspectives.*

Read [the whole thing](#), it's most worthy, particularly Fr. Barron's description of that which led him to write the piece.

I hope and pray, and I mean this sincerely, that love and respect for a person can be genuinely expressed, and accepted as such, despite painful decisions made to not engage in something that might communicate the acceptance and/or celebration of, that said something.

I hope and pray, with love and respect.

Crossposted at [Wizbang](#).

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This contribution is available at [http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally\\_honest/2015/06/crucial-distinctions.html](http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally_honest/2015/06/crucial-distinctions.html)  
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# The Birth Story of Eliana Grace & God's Gift of Grace [at Sacred Sharings For The Soul]

*" For this child I have prayed and the Lord has granted the desires of my heart " (1 Samuel 1:27)*



*Eliana's Baptism*

*Day: Divine Mercy Sunday*

I hesitated to share the intimacies of our daughter's birth story out of the initial desire to enjoy the sacredness of each moment with her and to allow for everything to 'sink in'. After some prayerful reflection I felt it was important to share her birth story to bring glory to God.

Every birth, every beautiful gift of life within the womb of a woman is a testimony of our Lord's majesty and goodness. The experience is full of awe. It is difficult for me to imagine any woman carrying life within her and not contemplating the One who gave us all this precious gift of life-- "*You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb*" (Psalm 139:13).

The experience of my pregnancy allowed me to enter more fully into the mystery of our Lord. Not only was I stretched in the literal sense, but also spiritually. My awareness of the unknown was expanded and the reliance on hope and trust in the Lord was renewed and prayed for every day (often many times in the same day).

My husband and I decided to keep the gender of our baby a surprise. Leading up to the due date of March 18th we often tried to guess what we were having. This too was a test of my patience! Given that I was due to deliver during the Lenten season I thought that my Lenten sacrifice could be to offer up my labour pains for our Lord's sufferings and mercy. Yes, I was naive at this time to the pains to come, but I was determined. I shared this desire with my spiritual director, who replied without hesitation "You know Catherine, I read somewhere that the pains of child birth are the equivalent of sixty bones crushing simultaneously, or something like that" ...well Father, thanks for the encouraging words! I left

there recognizing the need to enter more fully into the preparation with prayer, while also aware of my own physical limitations.

[St. Gerard \(patron of expectant mothers\)](#) and I became great friends, but I also decided that I would need to think of more concrete offerings to meditate upon throughout the labour experience. As the due date approached I entered into the Psalms and following the advice of a priest in Confession read and re-read the scripture of Jesus in Gethsemane. I thought of three intentions (*in no specific order*) and kept them in my heart.

My intentions were The Passion of Our Lord and the excruciating pain He endured. I also committed to offering up my labour for the women who have had abortions, for their emotional pains and for our Lord's mercy on them. And lastly, but not least, I chose to offer up any sufferings to come for the 21 Egyptian Coptic Martyrs, as that story truly touched my heart and the images of them kneeling on the beach in surrender left a painful imprint within me. I knew it would take discipline and focus to think of these intentions when my "*hour came*" (John 16:21).

And the hour(s) did arrive on Sunday, March 15th, 2015. My water broke at home (*thankfully*) and the journey to delivery began. I will spare the specifics. Things progressed well and I endured much of the early stages of labour at home before my midwife asked me to come to the hospital to monitor baby and me at 2pm. Baby and I were doing healthily and she was confident to send me back home as she thought I had much time to endure before it was "Go" time.

My husband was truly the hero this day with support, patience, and incredible focus operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of a wife in labour! The agony became more intense as soon as we left the hospital to return home. Once home, I entered deeply into my intentions, plugged into my ipod, which my husband had loaded with audio from my favourite [Gregorian Chant](#) and waited in expectation of more to come.

By 8:00pm we were on our way back to the hospital, and at this point I was quite sure that if labour had not yet fully arrived then I would not be able to keep going! When we arrived to the hospital my husband dropped me off at the Emergency entrance said to wait there for him and a wheel chair as he parked. I told him I'd be walking right in to labour and delivery and that I had to keep moving ...off I went. This walk up to labour and delivery was truly a grace. It was during this time of painful walking and stumbling that I was again able to refocus on my intentions.

My wonderful midwife (*a seriously devout Polish Catholic*) was there to greet me with open arms. She gave me a very soothing and maternal hug. Eventually my husband arrived not too long after, carrying multiple bags and on a mission! By roughly 9pm I was checked for the first time and I was 9cm dilated!!! It was indeed "GO" time shortly. My husband placed a crucifix that we had brought from home above my head. By 11:24pm our baby girl had arrived!



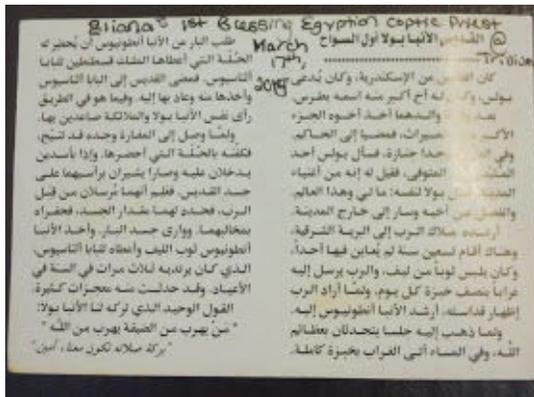
There is much that remains in the sanctity of silence and experience alone. However departure day on March 17th, 2015 was truly where the most affirming sign from our Lord was made visible.

My husband and I were leaving the hospital and he had gone to get the car telling me to wait with Eliana inside as he felt it was too cold to wait outside. I am much more stubborn. I began to leave through the main doors and was stopped for a moment by two men attempting to enter at the same time. These men were robed in black cassocks, one gentleman had a rather long beard and was carrying a small wooden ornate Crucifix. I motioned for them to enter, but they insisted that I depart first. I was intrigued by them. It was rather cool so I walked back inside of the lobby. The man with the beard and Crucifix was seated across from the information desk and I approached him, gazing at the Crucifix in his hand. He held Jesus out to me and I reverently did the sign of our faith and kissed the Crucifix with my hand. I was greatly moved and began to ask him some questions. Embarrassingly the first question was "Are you a Christian?" (yes, *it was glaringly obvious, but I'm not sure what overcame me*). My next question to him was "Are you Orthodox?" to which he said yes. I then asked him if he was a priest and he replied yes. I told him that I was Roman Catholic and without hesitation he brought his hand to his heart and said " My brothers".

The exchange was very emotional. I introduced him to Eliana and he blessed her. I began to weep, and being 2 days postpartum these were quite intense tears! He sat back down and I asked him what type of Orthodox Christian he was, and when he replied that he was Egyptian Coptic my tears and awareness of God's providence and majesty increased.

I shared my labour intentions with him....telling him that I had included his martyred brothers in my intentions as I continued to weep. He stood up and gave me two prayer cards and said "Remember St. Paul always".

Here below are photographs of the cards. I obviously have no idea what they say, but that is unimportant.



My husband then called me and I walked out of the hospital crying. My first words to him in response to his perplexed look were "I'm okay, God is so amazing."! He assumed it was hormonal, but on the ride home I shared the story with him and showed him the prayer cards. He was just as moved. I am so grateful that our Lord gave me the gift of this tangible keepsake to remember the blessing of this day and to share it with others. Should Eliana ever doubt God's presence in her life I will be undoubtedly sharing the story of her birth and leaving the hospital with her!!

The name Eliana means "My God has answered" and our Lord truly answered me with her life and affirmed my Lenten offering. May the glory and praise be to God. (CC)



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This contribution is available at <http://sacredsharingsforthesoul.blogspot.ca/2015/05/the-birth-story-of-eliana-grace-gods.html>  
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# The Wise Guy: Words of Wisdom, Lord, Words-of-Wisdom [at PURE HOMILETICS]



THIRTEENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Wis 1:13-15, 2:23-24 *By the envy of the devil, death entered the world*

Francis of Assisi (AD 1182-1226), a highly popular saint, wrote a poem entitled “The Canticle of the Creatures.” The work extols the wonders of creation, the moon, the stars, and the skies. Not bad for a thirteenth century beggar who never learned to read or to write.

In the poem *Il Poverello* (“the little poor one”) described the escape from earthly life as an unexpected visit from ‘Sister Death,’ “from whose embrace no mortal can escape. Happy are those who are found to be in a state of grace, for the second death will not harm them.”

The Bible says that God “did not make death” (Wis 1:13) yet scripture also teaches that there are not one but two forms of death. If God did not make death then who did? And what’s up with the ying and the yang?

The Book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, describes the death of the body. The Book of Revelation, the final book in the Bible, refers to the destruction of the immortal soul if found to be ill-prepared on Judgment Day.

The Book of Wisdom sheds much light on the subject of life, death, and life after death. Wisdom appears to be squarely in the middle of the dichotomy between heaven and hell, everlasting life and eternal damnation. Its author studied hard and, like a scientist, spent years marking down his observations. He stood in good company. Wisdom is the fifth of six books contained in the collection of the Hebrew Scriptures known as *Wisdom Literature*, which includes Job, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Sirach. These are very important books and should be studied carefully, for they possess the key to the meaning of eternal life.

The author of Wisdom possessed a profound knowledge of the Hebrew Bible, reflected in every line of this most excellent book. To enhance his credibility the author used the pseudonym of the great King Solomon, who was very wise, for he was the son of the greater King David, who was a pound wiser but a penny more foolish.

“Pseudo-Solomon” was highly intellectual, a member of the prestigious Alexandrian college of Jewish theology and Greek philosophy. To him faith and philosophy are *simpatico*. Pope Saint John the Great, another herculean thinker, affirmed that often in his many learned writings, including and especially *Fides et ratio*, "Faith and Reason" (1998).

Pseudo-Solomon wrote this masterpiece about one hundred years before the birth of Christ. Our Lord was familiar with the witticisms and musings of Solomon, and they undergirded much of his teaching. The Lord understood this mystery writer to be fiercely nationalistic in his claim that the Jewish monotheism to which he adhered was superior to the polytheism of the Romans, the Egyptians, and the Greeks. In the ancient world Judaism and philosophy were not mutually exclusive. Wisdom asserts that the latter edified the former. That bodes well for us in the Church today, to refute the contemporary era which says that the Church denigrates reason and science.

This is not a new concept. Saint Albert the Great and his brilliant student Thomas Aquinas held similar beliefs in the high middle ages when they infused the writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle into their theological experiments that continue to support the spiritual and intellectual heritage of the Church.

Ancient Jews believed that God created the universe by an powerful act of wisdom: he spoke and

everything came into to being because he was very smart. And he was a benevolent creator: he freed the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt; he crushed idolatrous nations that attempted to destroy Israel. A just judge, the Lord bestowed favors upon those who did his will. To those who disobeyed him he punished. Heaven was for saints; hell was for sinners. Salvation History from the perspective of the ancients was that black and white.

Take heart. There is some gray area. The Catholic understanding of purgatory developed gradually over many centuries, partly based on the First and Second Books of Maccabees, two biblical novels about a band of brothers who fought valiantly against the Greeks to preserve the integrity of their Jewish religious heritage. Mostly the Catholic concept of purgatory resulted from the theology of Saint Augustine (d. 437), and on *The Divine Comedy*, an epic poem written by Dante Alighieri, an Italian poet in the fourteenth century. Augustine and Dante both were master dreamers. Augustine earned his place among the premier Catholic psychologists and theologians, while Dante's work is akin to apocryphal literature.

Scripture tells us that we are created in the image of God, *Imago Dei*. He is pure spirit yet he is one of us, and to prove this he incarnated himself in the form of the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, thereby giving us an advocate, “Jesus Christ, the righteous one” (1 Jn 2:1). God sent Jesus to restore the immortality that we lost when Adam and Eve, our ‘first parents,’ disobeyed God and rejected his friendship. Death and sickness, the corruptibility of the body, entered the world because Adam and Eve chose to listen to the wiles and trappings of a talking snake who tempted them with the forbidden fruit. Truth be told, we suffer from their sin but Jesus Christ paid the ultimate price.

Sanctifying grace, that which saves us, was issued to the world from the supernatural realm in which God dwells. Immortality is not a natural attribute of the soul; it is a supernatural gift from God obtained through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle wrote copiously about the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul and he traced its line between Adam and Eve and the Son of God. “For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ all shall be raised to eternal life” (1 Cor 15:21-22). Happy days are here again!

Wisdom exists in several planes of human reality: body, soul, and spirit, past, present, and future. From the depths of his understanding he wrote: “God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they may have being; and the creatures of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison among them, nor any domain of the netherworld on earth” (1:13-15). If that's the case, then we can stop blaming God for our troubles. Why do we then?

## ***YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION***

Behind the rebellion of Adam and Eve lurked the seductive voice of the serpent “the most cunning of all animals” (Gn 3:1; Wis 2:24). The entire fiasco was a setup. Scripture and Tradition, upon which our Church has been founded, teaches that the devil at first was the virtuous angel Lucifer, whose name means “bearer of light.” Lucifer led the legion of angels that rebelled against God out of jealousy, and so deprived themselves of the glory of the Creator. The bearer of light became the purveyor of darkness.

God did not spare these fallen angels when they sinned but condemned them to “eternal chains of gloom” (Jude 6) until Judgment Day. In a further act of vengeance against God “the father of lies” spoke surreptitiously to Adam and Eve, telling them “You surely will not die! You shall be like God!” (Gn 3:5). Well, we *WERE* like God. God had plan. Everything was arranged. It was just another day in Paradise until he took away one of Adam's ribs.

By his envy the devil introduced sin and death to the world. Jesus said, “When he tells a lie he speaks in character because he is the father of lies” (Jn 8:44). The rest is Salvation History. Yet “justice is undying,” the Wise Guy from Alexandria counters. To the Greeks incorruptibility was the divine quality that rendered their gods invulnerable from the advances of mortals at the base of Mount Olympus. Blame the evils of this world on the devil, but we bear our own responsibility. It’s a matter of perspective. Either we are living as we are dying or we are dying as we living. It’s up to us to choose on where we place the emphasis.

Some day Sister Death will come calling. How shall we choose to meet and greet her?

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This contribution is available at <http://purehomiletics.blogspot.com/2015/06/the-wise-guy-words-of-wisdom-lord-words.html>

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# Happy Catholic - An Interview With Julie Davis [at BIG C CATHOLICS]



June's blog of note emanates from the mind of noted Catholic blogger Julie Davis. Julie has contemplated Art, Literature, popular culture and all things Catholic on her blog

## [Happy Catholic](#)

since 2004. Her other noble ventures (listed at the end of this post), are well worth your time. Her book,

## [Happy Catholic – Glimpses of God in Everyday Life](#)

, is a consideration of quotes from The Simpsons to Saint John Paul II, wherein she discerns how everyday people and events reveal God.

I interviewed Ms. Davis about her blog, her latest pursuits, her faith journey and the role of Providence in her life.

**In your [conversion story](#) you mention how the Lord changed your heart without any reading or influence from outsiders; it was just between God and you. What do you tell others who are considering or curious about Catholicism?**

I tell them to honestly ask God for a sign. And then to wait with an open mind. I didn't dwell much on my "bet" with God since I really put no constraints on it (like time or neighborhood, etc.). That's probably the best way because then you're not reading into things or throwing up roadblocks. He knows you best. He'll speak in a way you will uniquely understand. When it happens you'll know.

**Growing up as an agnostic, what were your feelings toward religion? How did that change after you became Catholic?**

I don't recall thinking about it much. The general way my parents spoke about it, if it came up (and it rarely did) was that it was a weak reed to lean on for people who couldn't handle the real world. Probably the main times it would come up were when we'd come across television evangelists. Unfortunately, that planted the seed that believers were credulous and a bit simple to believe their claims and fundraising.

Of course, now that I'm Catholic I know that is anything but true. Living my faith fully and honestly takes much more perseverance than not believing in anything. I love my Catholic religion so much for showing me the Truth that underlies what we see on the surface. It is the lens that focuses me on reality.

Having been on the "other side" is helpful though because I know what atheists and agnostics tend to believe when they learn I'm Christian. I can talk their language.

**Many of the Church's detractors criticize her in light of adherents who don't "walk the walk." How do you answer such critics?**

There are two quotes that sum up my general attitude and form the essence of my response:

*You judge a medicine by those who take it, not by those who pour it down the sink. — Frank Sheed*

*I know it has been full of sinners. What did you think the Church was, a club for shining saints? But if it has been a hospital for sinners, it has also been a training school for saints... — George Stewart, 1931*

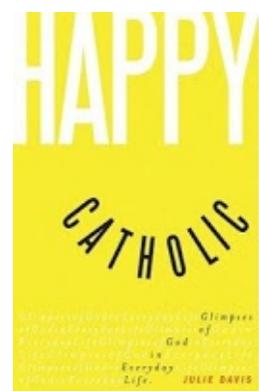
Then I try to see if there is a specific problem the person is thinking of and address that specifically.

**Saint John Paul II once said, "In the designs of Providence, there are no mere coincidences." Can you explain how this has been true in your own faith journey and the work you do now?**

Oh my goodness, my whole faith life began with a gigantic string of "coincidences." Hah. We know that St. JPII was spot on that there aren't any coincidences. My

[conversion story](#)

shows that quite well.



Honestly, I see "coincidence" showing up a lot and I actually have to fight my tendency to discount a lot of it, just as I would have before my conversion.

*Most people desperately desire to believe that they are part of a great mystery, that Creation is a work of grace and glory, not merely the result of random forces colliding. Yet each time that they are given but one reason to doubt, a worm in the apple of the heart makes them turn away from a*

*thousand proofs of the miraculous, whereupon they have a drunkard's thirst for cynicism, and they feed upon despair as a starving man upon a loaf of bread.* — [Dean Koontz, Odd Thomas](#)

I tend to see it in my work in the way that Elizabeth Scalia mentioned in her keynote talk for the Catholic New Media Conference a few years ago. She said that when talking to bloggers she'd always ask why they don't quit. And invariably they would say that just when they were going to throw in the towel (for whatever reason) they would get that email, phone call, note, out of the blue that showed them the difference they made in someone's life. That little love letter from God in essence.

I was listening and my eyes were filling with tears because I get them too. Not often, but I don't need them often. It's according to the need.

I think those coincidences happen all the time in all levels of our lives. And maybe that's why I have to fight the doubt. It happens all the time. How could that be true? But it really is.

**What movies, books, projects, etc., are you reading/watching, involved with at present?**

In terms of books, I'm working on a book about prayer, with the working title Who Do You Say I Am? I haven't yet begun to show it to publishers, but luckily these days there is always the self-publish option.

Reading books is so much easier than writing books and it seems as if I've always got at least one book or movie that I can't shut up about. Lately it is

[Mockingbird](#)

by Walter Tevis, a 1980s science fiction book that I can't believe isn't a classic. It has some fascinating symbolism and a subtext that speaks straight to the Catholic life today.

Also, I've always got a variety of "assignments" because of the podcasts I do.

[A Good Story is Hard to Find](#)

podcast alternates books and movies for discussion. I'm really looking forward to October because it's my turn to choose the spooky movie and book this year. I know it's early but I'm already having fun trying to pick out what we'll discuss.

I'm also an occasional guest at the

[SFFaudio](#)

podcast (science fiction and fantasy). We've been working our way very slowly through The Lord of the Rings in six parts. It has been incredibly rewarding reading that book so slowly and discussing it in such depth. This is not a religious group at all, in fact they tend to be precisely the opposite, but that is the beauty of a group of friends centered around reading. You can all appreciate the books from such different points of view that you might not have found otherwise.

Specifically in terms of movies I head a discussion group at a local assisted living facility. You have to choose the movies for a completely different audience than you'd otherwise have and that too broadens my horizons in ways I wouldn't have expected. One of the most interesting conversations came after we

watched *Philomena* as a companion piece to *I Confess*. Both showed such different sides of the priesthood, Catholicism, and the lives of Catholics that we still reference the conversation months later. I'd never have chosen either of those movies, so we're all growing together.

**What was your *raison d'être* for starting your Happy Catholic blog. Has it changed as your audience has grown?**

I began Happy Catholic in order to keep in touch with people I met on a Christ Renews His Parish retreat. I'd been sending emails about books, movies, quotes, and so forth. It occurred to me it would be a lot more efficient to put it all in one place and so I began the blog.

The funny thing is that almost no one from that retreat has ever read it. However, other people did and I had fun no matter who was dropping by. It is funny that as social media came along, they said that blogs were dead. I haven't seen it, frankly. There are a lot less comments because I think a lot of that has gone to social media, but blogging seems alive and well. It's just where you find the content instead of the chatter. (Or maybe that's just my place!)

I think the only thing that has really changed is that I'm calmer than I used to be. People change, blogs change to reflect them. I began in 2004 and it is 11 years later. I still love the faith as much as ever and I hope Happy Catholic shows that to the world.

**Having authored a successful Catholic website for over a decade, what advice would you give someone looking to begin a Catholic blog?**

I have two pieces of advice I always give.

1. Be yourself and blog about what you care about. Be authentic.
2. Don't worry about how many people are reading.

When I first began I came across a blogger who was saying that she'd had six steady readers and that was fine, whoever God sent her was enough. I've always tried to remember that.

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**Julie Davis' Links:**

Julie's blog

[Happy Catholic](#)

Her food blog, [Meanwhile, Back in the Kitchen](#)

[Forgotten Classics](#), her podcast dedicated to “great authors and stories that should be better known”

She reviews science fiction and fantasy audiobooks at [SFFaudio](#)



## World [at Loved As If]

I've lived on three continents and seen more of the world than most. Living in other parts of the world provides an education one doesn't get when everything is familiar. I've often shaken my head at wonder that many don't know that that black and white are only two of many ethnic possibilities, that in some places, class (a/k/a money and deportment) trumps skin colour every time, that in many parts of the world, those with darker skin are considered less desirable but in some, those of lighter skin are less beautiful.



Christians dining (catacomb painting)

Still, there is that which can never be learned traveling the world. The family is the ideal place to lean that when life is just too much, when everything ought to work but fails, when I feel I'm a total disappointment and a burden, those who love me will pick me up, dry my tears and say, 'I'm here for you. I'm happy to have you in my life. Believe me, it will work out.' Family is where having a meltdown and being weak are opportunities for more love, not less.

But sometimes family isn't available. Real Christian community can provide the same love. Christian community is not being nice on Sunday and at church events before we go off to our own separate existences. It's not just asking, 'How are you?' and saying, 'I'll pray for you,' when we hear that things are tough. Sometimes tough consists of the endless days of isolation and loneliness punctuated by Church attendance. Sometimes tough consists of never having the opportunity to give to others. Sometimes tough is not what I need you to give me but what I hunger to give you.

In a moment, I'll go and transplant my house mate's herbs — we're trying to protect the basil by planting it next to some spicy hot oregano. The joy of doing something for a friend is excruciatingly painful — warm water on frozen fingers. It's not something the world can give me. It's a people thing. It's an *Acts of the Apostles* thing. It's the place where I can trust enough to reveal myself, including the parts I've always hidden because being brave and tough and strong were necessary. It's the place where I can just relax and be human.

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This contribution is available at <http://lovedasif.com/2015/06/12/world-five-minute-friday/>  
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# Recognizing the Body [at Serviam Ministries]

Written By: Gregory Watson

The blessing-cup, which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ; and the loaf of bread which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

(1 Corinthians 10:16)

Have you ever stopped to ponder the immense love that Jesus has for us—for you? It wasn't enough for Him to become a Man, or to die a horrible, painful death. No, for love of you and me, He went that extra step. His desire to be with us, and for us to be with Him, didn't end with the Ascension. This Sunday, we celebrate the realization of His infinite love for us, by honouring the mystery of the Eucharist—that Jesus hides Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, transforming the bread and wine into His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, in order to nourish our souls with His very presence with us!

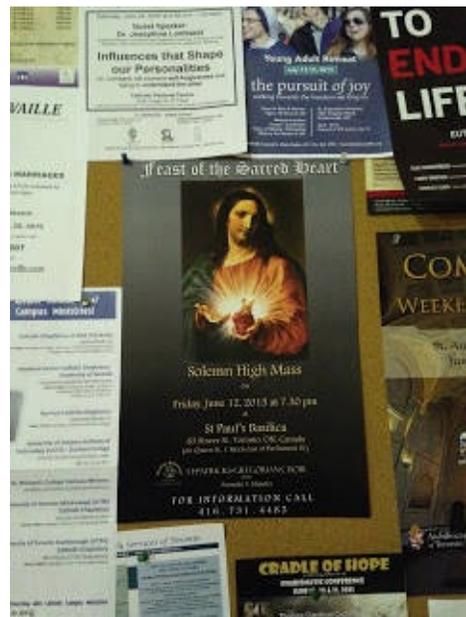
And as that reminder of this core Catholic belief sinks in once more, add to that the patience of Jesus' love and humility: He is not simply present in the Eucharistic elements during Mass, but He remains as long as the elements are intact. He waits for us in the tabernacles and monstrances of every Catholic Church throughout the world, hoping that we would take the time out of our busy lives to spend some time with the One who so ardently longs to be with us, that He would dwell with us in this way!

Frequently, I drive a co-worker home from work. As we pass Hamilton's Cathedral of Christ the King, I make the Sign of the Cross in order to recognize that Jesus is truly present within the large Gothic building, and to say hello as I pass by. The first time I did this, my friend asked me why, which led into an excellent discussion of Jesus' true presence in the Blessed Sacrament. These simple gestures and rituals and traditions that permeate our faith serve not only to honour Our Lord, and to strengthen our own faith, but are effective ways of sharing the Gospel with others! If you don't already, start by simply making the Sign of the Cross when passing a Catholic Church. Better yet, find out if your parish, or a parish near you, is holding a Eucharistic Procession this Sunday for Corpus Christi, and participate! What better way is there to thank Jesus for His infinite love for you?

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## Solemn Latin Mass for Feast of the Sacred Heart @ St. Paul's Basilica, Toronto [at Servimus unum Deum]



Hello Everyone,

After a good length of time

[since Immaculate Conception 2014, for St. Francis of Assisi's centenary celebrations](#)

, the esteemed St. Patrick's Gregorian Choir, (SPGC) operating within the Archdiocese Toronto, began it's 2015 season of organizing higher level Latin Masses for the lay faithful of the Archdiocese. Of course, yours truly once again served alongside this awesome choir in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

For SPGC's first Mass in 2015, to commemorate the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the choir was welcomed back to St. Paul's Basilica in Toronto, a real treasure of a parish/worship site. The last Solemn Mass that the choir held at this site was for the Feast of Divine Mercy/Low Sunday, back in 2012.

Having had artistic renovations in the last decade, the basilica is what I like to describe as, a "mini Sistine Chapel." Let the pictures below tell the tale, even though this is only a sampling of this gorgeous site:



The exterior, in classic church design with a functional bell tower.



A snapshot from the back of the Body of the Church. Look at all the painted frescoes on the ceiling!



Close-up of some of those frescoes. I am not sure of the top and bottom, but the middle is a depiction of either Peter's thrice-fold denial, or the wagering of Christ's clothes by lots (dice).



This must be the Holy Family, with the Holy Spirit in classic dove symbolism, atop a standard, classic style confessional.

In addition to the lovely space for the Holy Mass, we were blessed to be in the presence once again, of the Archdiocese of Toronto's most experienced Latin Mass priests: Fr. Russell Asch, associate pastor of St. Joseph's ("Streetsville") Catholic Church in Mississauga, and Fr. Steven Szakaczki, who is responsible for St. Lawrence the Martyr Scarborough's Latin Mass program, and other Latin Mass inquiries in the archdiocese. Fr. Steven took over after Fr. Howard Venette of the FSSP left Toronto in 2010. Both priests have been veterans in the Latin Mass circuit for High/Solemn Latin Masses in our Archdiocese, and have been a blessing in assisting the needs of those seeking the Extraordinary Form without prejudice or bias.

### ***Preparation for the Mass***

After making arrangements to secure the necessary serving and clerical roles, a practice was arranged for servers and those needing additional practice work for their roles, on Tuesday, June 9. The practice was held at St. Lawrence the martyr, with Fr. Szakaczki generously allowing for the practice space. Unfortunately, the basilica was not able to be booked for a practice.

During the practice at St. Lawrence, our Master of Ceremonies (MC)/Instructor went over the necessary parts for all servers, and assigned roles accordingly, with your author being assigned Acolyte 1. In an additional blessing and bonus, a full contingent of 6 servers were acquired for this Mass, with the optional roles of crucifer and boat bearer being fulfilled too! In addition one new server joined us, who had not assisted with the choir's Masses previously.

With this new server, and new attendees partaking in the choir's offerings, I've come to discover, that positive word is being spread about efforts in the Latin Mass via St. Patrick's Gregorian choir! I am sure my blog has played a portion in this on social media, and I am glad to serve the Lord in this way, by promoting those efforts whose modus operandi aligns with the Mind of the Church, and true obedience to its Magisterium and its Holy Fathers, past and present.

Our practice was successful, and smaller arrangements for Friday were taken care of.

### *Setup for St. Paul's Basilica*

Arriving in considerable time, the choir and servers set about in preparing the altar for the Solemn Latin Mass. Latin to English translation booklets, with the order of the Mass and appropriate cues for the laity, were provided, though we will need to increase the quantity that we produce in future!

Anything last minute to go over was re-freshed and dealt with, and the altar was promptly set up for Holy Mass. Pictures below, as usual, display how the altar and credence table were set up for this Mass:



Alb, supplementary notes, and the Evangelarium opened, last minute things for our Sub-deacon to chant his reading properly.



Credence table, rear view, setup for Mass. The cruet set pictured here is NOT property of the basilica. This is actually an addition to my serving hauls that I splurged some of my earnings on, as a gift for whomever I have the pleasure to serve with. Let's just say they don't make cruets like these anymore, with a serving dish to house them.



Frontal view of the credence table..



The Altar set up prior to the start of the entrance procession. Beautiful.

The censer was primed with burning charcoal, acolyte candles were lit, and after some preparatory prayer from our Celebrant, Fr. Steven, our party went out in procession to go unto the altar of the Lord.

### ***The Mass, Including Homiletic Notes From my Memory.***

Save some minor difficulties of navigation of the sanctuary space, due to not having the basilica for practice earlier in the week, the Mass was done in a beautiful and solemn manner. The servers carried out all their roles in holy reverence to our Lord, from our newest servers as crucifer, to our stalwart MC, who ensured the liturgy was carried out with dignity and order. This was accomplished from the very start of the procession and prayers at the Foot of the Altar .....



Thurifer and boat bearer in sync, followed by crucifer, flanked by acolytes 1 (me) and 2.



Our clergy, sub-deacon, deacon, and celebrant.



``Introibo ad altare Dei. Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam ....``

..... to the end of the Holy Mass. Our choir, sang quite beautifully, pulsating their sacred music throughout

the echoes of the basilica.



Surinder S. Mundra, leading the St. Patrick's Gregorian choir in chanting the music for the Sacred Liturgy.

Their effect was so powerful, that as one attending lay member described to me, that the moment the choir began to sing its beautiful Gregorian chant, his whole self became filled with calm, and a euphoria at being elevated to the Holy Mass through our choir's prayerful music. I have no doubt that this happened to the majority of those in attendance as well. The effect a well-carried out Latin Mass can have on a person's soul is magnanimous.

As always, the preaching contained in the Latin Mass never ceases to disappoint, nor fail to teach those in attendance something new and true of our Faith, while addressing the needs of the faithful.

Fr. Steven Szakaczki, delivered quite a homily that spoke to our "hearts: as it were, about Christ's Sacred Heart. That is, the Love of His heart, and even, our love, or reason for lack thereof, for Him.



Of the points (that I could remember,) Fr. Steven spoke about these topics as such:

- When we speak about the Heart, we often speak about love. What were Christ's two greatest commandments? To love the Lord your God above one another, and to love your neighbour as God loves you.

- Often when I give homilies, I ask those in the congregation, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you love God, though our Lord?"

- God is loved above all other things, because what God provides is necessary to our salvation, to our being, to our locution ....

- Now, on a scale of one to 10, how much do you love others, including our Lord?

- One reason that we find it so hard and challenging to love the Lord, is due to justice.

- We must emphasize that both Justice and Mercy go hand and hand. You cannot be merciful if you are not also just.
- When we see depictions of Christ's Sacred Heart, such as the Divine Mercy, there are two rays radiating from His heart. These rays represent Christ as being both infinitely Merciful, but also infinitely Just.
- When it comes to justice, we want to punish one who transgresses or causes an injustice. For humanity, when we want to resolve the injustice, we have ourselves or the person commit some form of action in reparation, either equivalent to the harm caused by the injustice, or beyond.
- With us, we feel that when we sin, we feel that God loves us less, that we are insufficient, and not worthy of God's love because of guilt and our sense of justice [editor: that is, that we have committed an injustice against Him.]
- Now, Christ, the Word of God Made Flesh, came down from Heaven, for us in the human state, and in our injustice, he suffered through such depravity and torture in His Passion. They beat Him, bruised Him, slashed Him already though He was badly bruised, mocked Him, crowned Him with thorns, all ending up with Him being crucified in agony on the Cross at Calvary.
- The Roman soldiers, being experts at what they do .... their "job," as the Roman Empire's military force, ensured that those men who were on the Cross, including Christ, were truly dead. They purposely aimed with their spears at the crucified men, piercing their lungs and heart to ensure that they would be truly dead in their entirety.
- Christ, suffering all He did, gave himself in the ultimate sacrifice of Love from God, for all men, for all time, regardless of one's sins they have and would commit. Christ's redeeming act, truly shows that God loves us that much to have done so. [Editorial note: again I'm paraphrasing. Yes, you need confession for mortal sin. Fr. Steven OBVIOUSLY knows that, but his point is that he is countering this reason that people, including numerous Catholics, hold erroneously, via what lies within Christ's Passion and Death on Calvary.]
- **When we attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we participate in his ultimate act of Love for us, represented by the Sacred Heart of Jesus.**
- .... We also see example in St. Margaret Mary, when she was presented with the vision of Christ for the Sacred Heart, He was present holding his most Sacred Heart in His hand, extending his heart in hand out to St. Mary....

- Another reason that we find it difficult to love the Lord is because of a lack of that which allows us to Love.

- For some people, this could be exemplified in actions or circumstances which happen to them in one's life. This can range in anything from one's environment, being burdened more than other people, or some form of trauma or bad actions happening in the world, perhaps even bad actions that other people have inflicted onto you. Such actions are not inflicted because you are loved less than others by the Lord.

- Also part of this reason is comparison to other people, such as the Saints. We often feel that God `made them special` or bestowed special graces onto them, making them more favored in God`s eyes, yet we are not.
- This is actually not true in the sense that they were favored. In fact, the saints often times suffered quite harshly and were not ``favored`` this way, yet were highly capable of expressing such Love of Christ.
  - E.g. 1: St. Paul: Prolific in spreading the Church, Paul was jailed a number of times, not well received in every town he preached in, got abandoned or shipwrecked twice [Êditorial note: One of those times being shipwrecked on the isle of Malta], and he eventually was brought to final imprisonment, and then even martyred by [necessary edit 19/6/2015] beheading as Christian tradition holds.
  - E.g. 2: Highly important to Canada's patron sainthood, the primary saint is St. Joseph. Second most important, would be the North American Martyrs. St. Jean de Brebeuf is a prime example of Christ's Love, and being able to Love Christ, despite the most awful of circumstances and inflicted abuse and pain and suffering.
    - The Jesuits in doing mission work in North America, attempted to spread the Gospel to the Native Canadians. One group they were not received by was the Iriquois nation.
    - The Iriquois was a war-nation. They detested the white man, and any associated allies. This included the Huron tribe of Native Canadians, who did assist and accept the company of the Jesuit missionaries.
    - The Iriquois attacked the Jesuits and Hurons, and took many of them captive.
    - With Jean de Brebeuf, they saw him as a "leader" of the group, and wanted to make an example out of him to instill fear in the Hurons and other white man followers.
    - With St. Jean, they of course physically assaulted him. Of other tortures they inflicted upon him [warning .... extreme depravity and grotesque acts, but they were true and documented!!!!!! .....], they ripped out his finger nails and toe nails, forced him to walk back in the frigid cold with his fellow Hurons back to their village, made him run the gauntlet which is two rows of Iriquois at each side and you get beaten with clubs while running through the center, etc.
    - After that they attached him to a post, and while he was there, they scalped him alive. They boiled water and poured this scalding water over the scalp-less part of his head. They even performed acts of cannibalism, eating parts of his flesh while he was alive.
    - Finally, to kill him, one or more of them, took an awl, and stabbed him repeatedly to finish the job.
    - **Yet, even while experiencing these extreme torments, he pleaded and encouraged his tormentors to repent and believe in the Gospel and to believe in the Lord. Most of all, he forgave them and loved every single one of them, despite what they were doing to him and his Huron companions.**

- Therefore, on a scale of one to ten, now, how much does God truly love us?

### He loves us infinitely

. It is this love, expressed in the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, that we focus on today for this Feast, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

After the homily, the Mass proceeded accordingly in the second part, the Mass of the Canons. Provided

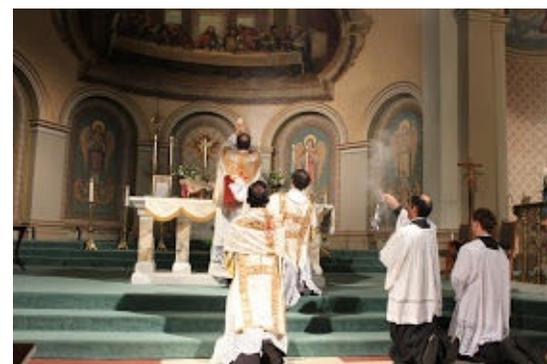
below are digital photographs from that portion:



Preparations of the Altar, at the Offertory. Boat bearer and thurifer assist in the preparations for the incensation of clergy and laity, while Acolyte 2 awaits to remove the missal, next to our Master of Ceremonies.



Incensation of the celebrant by the deacon, with thurifer next to the deacon.



**``HOC EST ENIM CORPUS MEUM``** - The consecration of the Sacred Host to His Body.



**``HIC EST ENIM CALIX SANGUIS MEI ...``** - The Consecration of the Sacred Wine into His

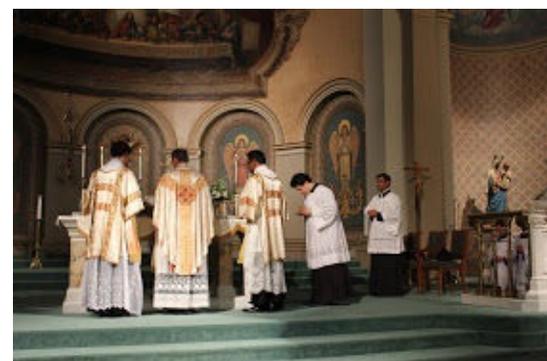
## Blood.



“Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi.” - Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world.



Myself as Acolyte 1, waiting for the return of the cruets, while the post-communion ablution takes place.



With the cruets in my hands after the ablutions, I bow to the clergy.



## The Last Gospel.



``Ita Missa Est. Deo Gratias.``

### *Concluding Notes*

Once again, it was an honour and divine pleasure, to serve at the Lord's altar through the most holy and charitable works of the St. Patrick's Gregorian Choir. Each Mass involves much preparation and arrangements, not to mention dealing with other behind the scenes issues that pop up. Satan tries his best to throw curve blocks in our path of various forms, but every time, SPGC has over come these barriers, and the result is epic Masses that inspire the lay faithful, and the choir, clergy, and servers that partake in them.

Clearly, there was a good response from the Laity to our Mass. One prosperous sign, is that we only made 70 Latin-to-English booklets for the Mass. All were taken by those in attendance! We surpassed that number at least 2x fold! By my visual estimate, we had about 130-160 in attendance. This was quite a marvel considering the urban location for the basilica, cloudy/rainy weather, and a Friday evening after a long work-week!

In the crowd, I say a number of people of varying ages and cultural demographics. Aside from the usual baby boomers and seniors who would have been familiar with the EF Mass, there were other types of people of note. I saw a few young people in attendance on their own at the Mass. I saw a young couple or two as well. I am quite positive I even saw a home-schooled, traditionally Catholic family of 4 or 5 children from youth to teen to young adult in the pews! (I might be wrong on the homeschooling part, but usually their presence is quite obvious in dress, disposition, and family size. By the way, homeschooling or not, if you read this, thank you graciously for coming! Sorry I could not speak to you and introduce myself to you!). I think I might have even spotted a familiar face from when I used to attend and assist another Latin Mass group`s offerings. Overall, the mix of ages and attendees was a great sign! The Latin Mass is for all peoples, of all ages and backgrounds!

Every time these Masses are held, they contribute to the New Evangelization, and the liturgy is one of the most powerful means of the Church to (re-)educate its Body of members, renew their hearts and souls, and truly FEED them spiritually in its direct, visual, and powerful ethos and operation.

In addition, allow me to share a personal sentiment about St. Patrick`s. I have remained with the choir for the longest time, of 3.5 years, since October 2011. My first ever Latin Mass I served was a Missa Solemnis/Solemn Mass at St. Patrick`s Catholic Church Toronto, as a torch-bearer. I have remained with

this choir, because all its members exude a true, fraternal love and charity, with boundless joy for Christ and His Church.

Intra-Church or Intra-liturgical politics, critical harshness thinly veiled as `fraternal correction`, or liturgical self-policing by chastising other priests and organizations publicly, are not present here with this fine group of men, women, and young adults. Rather, they express the very joy and love of Christ, qualities that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, is encouraging the Church to express, in order to show the world the Church`s beauty and life. Because SPGC does so, I remain with this group of loyal sons and daughters of the Lord, and will continue to do so until the Will of the Lord absolutely prevents me from doing so. What SPGC does, brings justice and truth to what the Latin Mass truly is all about ..... the Love of Christ that emanates from His Sacred Heart.

To all of you reading this report, if you attended the Solemn Latin Mass at the basilica, thank you dearly and honestly for supporting St. Patrick`s Gregorian Choir, but more importantly, for loving your Lord, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite.

For those of you who live in the Toronto area or close by, and did not attend, I hope that after reading this report, you will be intrigued about the Latin Mass, and will seek to attend a future offering of the High/Solemn level Latin Mass, offered by parishes and/or the St. Patrick's Gregorian Choir.

Should anyone wish to attend the next offering, SPGC annually organizes a Mass in October, for the Feast of Christ the King, which takes place in the EF calendar, during the last Sunday of October. Traditionally, this has been an afternoon Mass, which when at the higher levels, will include the Asperges (holy water) rite prior to the beginning of the actual Mass. This year's anticipated date is

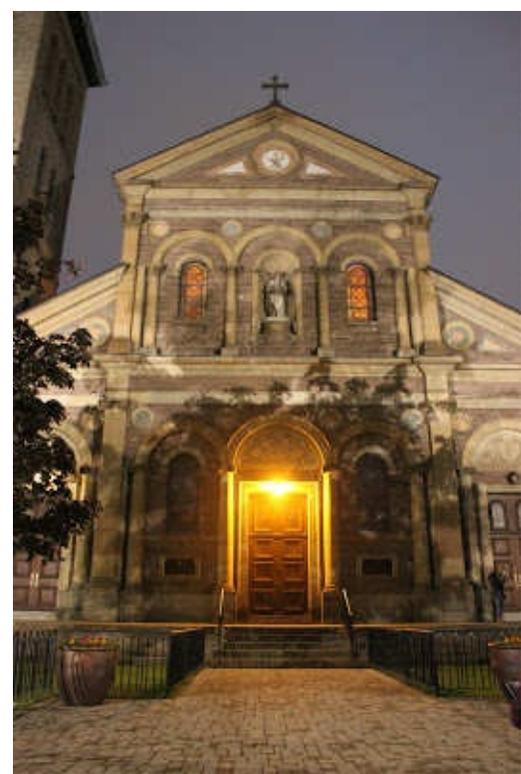
### **Sunday, October 25, 2015**

. The choir also holds this Mass annually in commemoration of their formation in 2006 on that feast day in the EF calendar. Please keep this specific Sunday in mind, by looking for the next offering on social media such as my blog (but also Facebook, and occasionally, other websites.)

Whether you are looking for more information for future offerings such as Christ the King, or be a young man, aspiring (as in seminarian), or ordained cleric (Deacon, priest, or higher) interested in assisting in the EF, via SPGC, please feel free to contact Surinder, choirmaster and head of the Choir. Contact information is in my Latin Mass offerings tab, or you can look at the opening picture above in this post for his phone number.

Finally, I would like to extend due credit and thanks to Emad Alfred, one of the attendees at our Mass, who offered out of kindness to share with the choir and I, the pictures he took at the Solemn Mass, which are posted here in this report. While the pictures prior to the start of the Mass are my personal property, all other pictures are those of Emad. Thank you!!!

We hope you have enjoyed this report of the St. Patrick's Gregorian choir's Sacred Heart 2015 Mass.



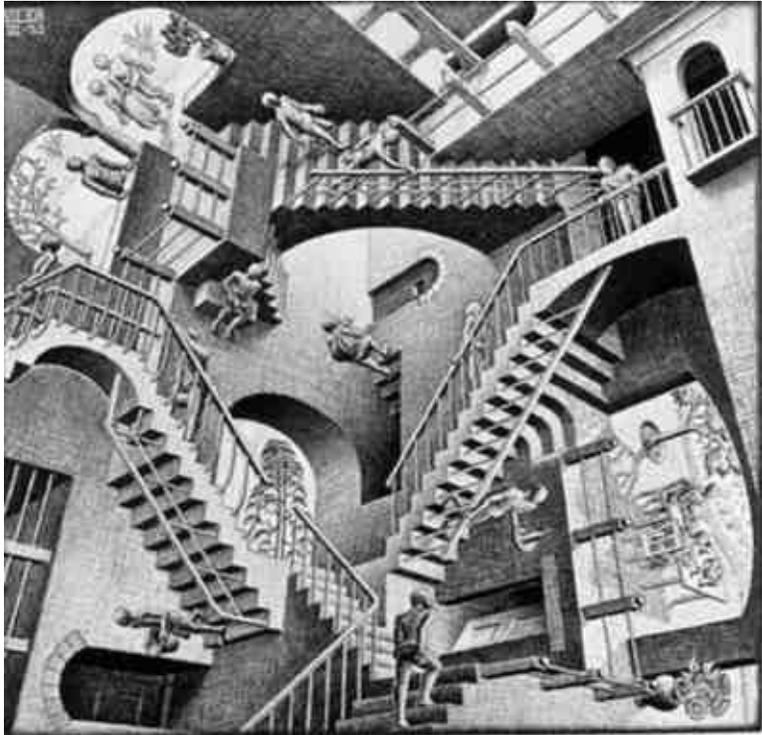
PAX TIBI CHRISTI! Julian Barkin.

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This contribution is available at <http://torontotlmserving.blogspot.ca/2015/06/report-solemn-latin-mass-for-feast-of.html>  
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## The Rights of Evil [at Travels of a New Christian]



One of the things I have learned so much about in the last few years, and have been presented with its depth as of late, and yet I am still lacking in good comprehension of such a difficult subject, is the nature of evil and man's role in it. So, with a recent event that took place shortly after my return from my pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela via the Way of St. James, I have decided to take this subject matter on and leave it to God as to what I contemplate and write down here.

As it has turned out, this essay is becoming exceedingly long, as evil is not a simple matter of right and wrong, but rather a matter of intent, and intent can be a mystery to even the most learned of us. As such, I am posting this essay in segments with the hope that before my posts catch up with where I am in completing this essay, I will have come to some fair balance of understanding of evil. Should I not, well, who does understand evil in all of its complexities and forms? At the least I shall have carried my mind to the root of evil, and even the knowledge that the root of evil manifests itself in all of the forms of roots – the tuberous, the aerial, the fine mass of hair-like roots, the propagative, and the stilt-type – I can say I've given it all due consideration.

### What Is Evil?

I have had few occurrences in my life that have affected me as much as the train derailment, and subsequent deaths of 79 people, in Spain of July 2013. On the initial level it was Spain; a country I had just returned from and sacrificed so much of my very soul within its boundaries along the Camino Frances. I spent so much of myself on The Way, finding myself totally insufficient, that I realized it was God who was carrying me through to my goal of reaching Santiago de Compostela. And on another level, I felt a true kinship to the people of Spain for their generosity, kindness, and forbearance of my awkward presence, insufficiencies, and naivete to the realities and cultural traditions of their country. I was simply a pilgrim, like so many from around the world, claiming the land that my feet walked upon; their land, not ours or mine. My mindful and spiritual contemplation of this horrible accident, through the lens of my

pilgrimage, confounds me and leads me invariably to one of the questions that man has wrestled with for as long as he has been able to think rationally. "Why?"

On the primary level of human presence into those things of a spiritual nature, I cannot fathom the process of trying to rationalize this train derailment and deaths of so many. Here is a city that is an epicenter of the Christian faith – a city that defines and hosts the truest of Christian devout obedience, sacrifice and suffering through the millions of pilgrims that has walked out their faith – and now, on the eve of the celebration of the Festival of St. James, the city must instead of joy, face grief, misunderstanding, anger, and denial by so many of God's children, because of what might prove to be the simple weakness and inclination of a train engineer and his lust for the thrill of speed. Actually, it makes no difference what the cause of the accident is, my gasps for any clean air of comprehension as to why God would let such a thing happen leaves me breathless. I cannot make sense of any of this, and so I write to let Him reveal the true nature of His creation.

Thomas Aquinas asserts that evil is the deprivation of the full measure of good within a person. It appears that a person who has experienced what we call an evil is affected by such an event in their lives in a measurable manner; that being a loss of happiness, contentment, joy, peace, comfort, etc. And it can be stated that such damage to the human soul appears to be inescapable on some level or to some degree. In this truth, one could say that it is a deprivation of the potential of a human being in their ability to express good, but not necessarily their intent to express good; intent being that critical factor by which one judges an action as good or evil. I pass on from a university professor what I believe to be an excellent example of such thinking:

A woman is hiking along a mountain ridge and comes across a man who is clinging to the side of a precipice. She has no means to alert others to assist and realizes that he may fall at any time due to his circumstances. She decides to try to save his life. In setting herself in position in order to reach down to him, she dislodges the rock that the man is clinging to; causing him to fall to his death.

Two views of this incident and her actions can be assumed. One, her actions caused the death of this man, and she should be held responsible. Two, that her actions were based upon her intent to do good, and as such, she cannot be held responsible. While one might think that intent overrides results, there would be great discourse generated on the quality of her decision-making that led her through a series of actions that ultimately led to the man's death. If it were majorly concluded that her actions were flawed, would that make her responsible to some degree? Can intent override all actions, and what actions may be judged as not sufficient to permit intent its full strength of defining good and evil.

Looking at the same scenario of the man clinging to the precipice of a mountain, we have another woman who is hunting with a bow in the valley below the precipice. She looks up and sees the man, and judges that he will fall soon if she does nothing to assist him. Now the woman is a sociopath, and her mind conjures up the thought that since this man is about to fall, his life is forfeit; so why not just shoot him with an arrow? So she makes the attempt, but her arrow lodges in the face of the rock just above his handhold, permitting the man to grab onto the arrow and secure a footing in order to lift himself out of danger. The man alerts the authorities of what took place, and the sociopathic woman is lauded as a hero, as the man believes her shot was accurate and intended to save his life.

Few would suggest that the woman's action was anything other than evil, but without the knowledge of intent, society can only be utilitarian about the outcome and define the action as good. As you can see in these two examples, good and evil is more complex than we might believe, and appear to more subjective

than objective in nature.

## **Evil and the Innocent**

Death of the innocent is always a struggle to understand. It appears that only time can mitigate that struggle and move such events, and the damage they do to man's hope for meaning, into the haze of a history where peace is nothing more than voices gone silent through death. An event like this train derailment will take more than a generation of humanity to shelve it into such annals. What is fresh at this moment, in so many minds, are questions of "why" more so than any other interrogative word. And from these "why" questions come the questions of accusation that are heaped at the feet of God.

Mankind is repulsed by tragedies such as this one and he struggles intensely in constituting some greater purpose that tragedies and evil might bring and thus be of some good in nature. Man wishes to not align with such a concept and so man tends to reject the concept that God would permit such a tragedy for that greater plan. It seems to run contrary to man's sense of compassion and love.

"How could He have let something like this happen?" "Why would God permit this?" "How could a god who professes to be love allow such evil to happen to the innocent?"

Confusion overwhelms any attempt at a rational answer, and thus one's mind tends to adjudicate and execute the nearest suspect; blinded by the senseless nature of tragedy. In this case, it's the engineer. It is done. These people are dead. Time will not reverse itself for man, and God will not do it for us. We simply go on, but in what form? Are we to know that hope and faith are those confident and eternal expectations of God's presence, love, and protection in our lives? Or will the impact of such events break our porcelain souls in a manner that no rational glue could ever mend?

On my part, I am most affected by the story of the American woman, wife and mother, who died in this accident. Every life is equal in value and so I apologize for my focus on one. I cannot bear to read about too many lost lives as it only solidifies my disheartenment, and so I focus to preserve my sanity. I am American, she is American.

Ana-Maria Cordoba was traveling with her husband and daughter to Santiago de Compostela. The purpose was to greet their son and brother who had recently completed the pilgrimage of The Way of St. James. As my post is centered so much these days upon this pilgrimage, and the fact that I had just completed this walk, my readers understand my connection to this tragic story. In all likelihood, this young man was on the Camino when I was; perhaps two weeks back, and facing the same struggles and obstacles that I had faced. Since the news reports state that the Cordoba family is Catholic, I can well imagine why this young man was on the Camino, and I can understand the thoughts that may reside in this young man's mind and that of the family's mind; those thoughts that focus so squarely upon faith and God's purpose for our lives. Those questions of "If I had just not walked the Camino, my mother would be alive." or "If we had just not decided to meet our son in Santiago de Compostela, my wife would be alive." are swords that separate flesh and leave scars that disfigures families forever; potentially.

For those like me who deeply wonder the meaning of such events, we innately demand the judicial trial of what we call "Faith in God". I posed those questions earlier because, as a Christian, I believe that God crosses the path of all people for all things at all times. His hand is within us, and never separate from us; ever. But one who is agnostic, atheist or simply a secular person unencumbered with the need for spiritual reasoning, views such a tragedy in a different manner. They want empirical answers and judicial

actions. And so evil becomes even more complex as we have competing beliefs on the nature of evil and how to deal with it.

While we all seek to learn truths that may enlarge mankind's understanding of humanity, and we all work to implement our beliefs of those truths into the dough of human knowledge so that mankind may rise to a better disposition of one another, Christians differ from secular humanity in the foundational aspect of that search and implementation; their foundation being an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good God who calls us, through His grace, to love; that state of perfect form without limiting structure. For the secular man, that foundation is himself and his law, and it is here that I realize that my discourse is assuming a direction I had not anticipated; from the hope for a means to find good in what we call evil, and thus restrain the psychological and moral damage caused to those close to a tragic event, to a discussion on societal thinking that leads a society to or away from such damage to the human soul. Hopefully, I will find the former through the discourse of the latter in this series of posts.

**PART 2** – To come.

God Bless and Buen Camino – Reese

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This contribution is available at <http://travelsOfANewChristian.com/2013/09/12/the-rights-of-evil-part-1/>  
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