

NewEvangelists.org

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Forward

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

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

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

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Thank You! Two Words: Never Overused!



photo by Dominik Gwarek

“Thank you” can never be said too much. Gratitude is a sense of thankfulness to God and to your fellow man for kindnesses extended to you, expressed in word or in deed.

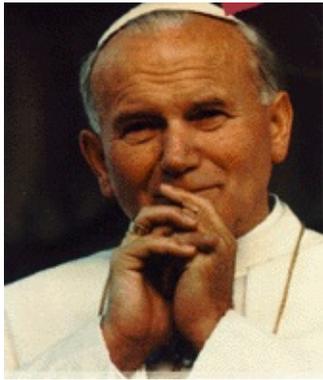
Everything good that comes our way is a gift from God. We came into this world with nothing. We leave with nothing. All that we obtain in between comes from God. Therefore, we say thank you to God for meeting our needs and blessing us in abundance; for providing us with possibilities and opportunities. We even say thank you to God for times of suffering. For it is in suffering that we are united to Christ’s suffering; when we are gifted with the opportunity to carry our crosses for Christ.

When we say thank you to others for kindnesses expressed to us, we are offering an expression of thanks to the Divine; for such a kindness expressed is also a means for God to bless us with what/who we need when needed. Take a moment now and thank God for everything.

I have much to be thankful for in my life; a good marriage to a wonderful man, my good health, and the fact that God always knows what I’ll need before I know it, and He always provides.

Is gratitude a two-way street? We’ll answer that question in our next reflection on Wednesday. Don’t miss it!

Saint John Paul II's Threefold Vision of the Human Person [at BIG C CATHOLICS]



St. John Paul II's

[Theology of the Body](#)

discusses three states of man. Man before the first sin (Original Man), man after the Fall (Historical Man), our current state, and our life with God in heaven following Christ's Second Coming (Eschatological Man).

Original Man

The state of original man concerns two human beings – Adam and Eve. They viewed each other with, "all the peace of the interior gaze." God walked in their midst, suggesting an intimacy with the creator we can only imagine. Adam and Eve's lives were untouched by sin. Vice, depravity, and despair were foreign to their experience.

The boundary between the state of original man and historical man is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man was the only person in the garden. The animals were not persons. They could not till the ground or tend to the garden much less choose, contemplate, and love as human beings were called to do.

Before the first sin, the entire world was a temple in which human beings worshiped the one true God. Man fully possessed original goodness and original justice. With Adam's sin, the world at large stopped being a temple. Paradise was lost.

St. John Paul II begins his reflections on "Original Man" by examining Mathew 19:3-8, where the Pharisees question Jesus about the permissibility of divorce. Christ responds that divorce was not in God's original plan for human beings. Jesus starts and ends his answer by referring to "the beginning". This exchange shows that there was a time ("the beginning") in which humans did not need divorce, just as God intended.

Historical Man

After the Fall, sin entered human existence and with it concupiscence and death. The world at large ceased being a temple. It became necessary to build a temple where God could be worshiped.

Furthermore, man had to sanctify or purify himself before entering this sacred space. Everything in the created world was profaned including human nature, our relationship to beauty, truth, and goodness, our relationship with the natural world, our relationships with each other, and our relationship with God.

In his reflection on "Historical Man" St. John Paul II considers Christ's words: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you: Whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Mt. 5:27-28).

Jesus' admonition remind us that adultery violates the personal covenant between husband and wife and is the opposite of conjugal faithfulness. The conjugal act between spouses is a "truthful sign" of covenantal love — promising the unity of body, mind, and soul exclusively to the other. The sin of adultery (or any act of extra-marital sex) ruptures the unity that accompanies the sacred, deeply personal, human expression of love that is the conjugal embrace. Having sex outside of matrimony, the adulterous couple commits a lie with their bodies.

Throughout history, some have seen Christ's teaching about adultery as a condemnation of the flesh. St. John Paul II clarifies our Savior's meaning. Properly understood, Christ's words are a call to the heart enjoining us to love selflessly, not a condemnation of man and the material order.

Eschatological Man

In the time of Christ, Levirate marriage was mandated. If a Jewish woman was widowed and childless, then a brother of her deceased husband was obligated to take her as his wife in order to provide an heir. The Sadducees attempted to trap Jesus with a question concerning such marriages (Mark 12:20-27). If a repeatedly widowed woman enters into Levirate marriage six times, leaving her with seven husbands, to whom will she be married in the afterlife? Jesus responds that those who rise from the dead "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25). Our resurrected bodies will retain their maleness or femaleness, but there will be "a spiritualization that is different from that of earthly life." With this spiritualization will come freedom from the "opposition" of mind and body, and a return to a perfecting harmony between the two. It will be a realization of God's self-communication in his very divinity, not only to the soul, but to the whole of man's psychosomatic unity – body, mind, and soul. St. John Paul II notes that in the resurrection Marriage and procreation lose their

raison d'être

Following the Last Judgment, "Historical Man" will give way to "Eschatological Man" ; the good will enjoy the Beatific Vision, see God face to face, and experience perfect happiness. Salvation history will cease, having achieved its ultimate purpose, love will triumph over evil, and darkness will be no more.

This contribution is available at <http://www.bigccatholics.com/2015/09/saint-john-paul-ii-threefold-vision-of.html>
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Me? Wear A Chapel Veil? [at TASTE and SEE]

A little over a year ago, I purchased my first mantilla, or chapel veil. No one would have guessed that I would do such a thing, including me. Before

[I reverted to the Catholic Church in 1997](#)

, I was what I call a rugged feminist, along the lines of "No one, especially a man, was going to tell me what to do, women should be allowed to be priests, and the likes." I would have never guessed that I would return to the Catholic Church, never mind start wearing a chapel veil later on.

Of course, there were several years between the two, but it was all good and all in God's timing. Today, I love my mantilla. Years ago when I first came back to the Catholic Church, I could never have imagined wearing one. Chapel veils were for those really "far out Traditionalists," of which I was not one.

Years later, I found myself attracted to mantillas worn by other girls and women attending the Latin Novus Ordo Mass and Divine Office I frequented. I paid attention to the yearning because it happened several times. Eventually, I took it as a calling from God and I decided I was going to purchase one. I foresaw it as an expression of humility before Jesus in the Tabernacle. I saw it as an expression of my femininity, something I rejected while I strayed from the Church. It was a deepening of my love for Christ and I was so ready for these things.

But what color? What shape? What vendor? Some women/girls wore black, some dark purple, a few white, some green. I asked around. What was the meaning of the different colors? The most concrete answer I got was that they used to mean something way back when, but now, they don't really have a meaning.

I wanted to get a white one. Despite the general consensus that colors have no meaning, I imagined that white would have one. Purity, virginity. Since I had made an attempt at marriage earlier in my life (I have a Decree of Nullity), I wondered if white was appropriate for me, but I eventually found my way to the concept similar to that expressed here, "

[Renewed Purity for the Non-Virgin](#)

."

I decided it fit and I bought a white lace mantilla like the one in this picture.



Here are others. It is a beautiful thing to develop femininity in young girls. I am not talking about being doormats. I am talking about developing true personal and Christian power from within. It is endearing and empowering at the same time.

This is tan and black.

And white.....



This is lilac.

And blue....



Some women try to match the color of their chapel veils with the color associated with the current liturgical season.

A Biblical reference for the veil in general, is 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. I like to include all of it. The excerpt from the NABRE is below... More about this in a future blog entry.

1Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

2I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions, just as I handed them on to you.

3But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and a husband the head of his wife, and God the head of Christ. 4Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered brings shame upon his head. 5But any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled brings shame upon her head, for it is one and the same thing as if she had had her head shaved. 6For if a woman does not have her head veiled, she may as well have her hair cut off. But if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should wear a veil.

7A man, on the other hand, should not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. 8For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9nor was man created for woman, but woman for man; 10for this reason a woman should have a sign of authority on her head because of the angels. 11Woman is not independent of man or man of woman in the Lord. 12For just as woman came from man, so man is born of woman; but all things are from God.

13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? 14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears his hair long it is a disgrace to him, 15 whereas if a woman has long hair it is her glory, because long hair has been given [her] for a covering? 16 But if anyone is inclined to be argumentative, we do not have such a custom, nor do the churches of God.

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What to do When They're Not Sorry [at In Caritas Christiana]

So, you've had people hurt you accidentally, right?

They say they're sorry and really mean it, make amends, and everybody goes their way. I've done that recently. It's not too hard, even when the damage done is pretty serious.

Have you ever had somebody hurt you on purpose?

Harder, right? Harder, even, to think of a personal example, for most people.

You might also be aware that I spent... almost eight months on hiatus from Facebook because of what - in part - amounted to "somebody really hurt me, it was no accident, and I can't do anything about it."

In the fallout, it was many, long months after

everything

was said and done, after all facts were revealed, - and

long

after the "fight" part was over that I've managed to forgive enough to go back on Facebook. And a lot of therapy both before and after.

What makes forgiving this fight and what came before it so difficult?

More than anything, I think that the fact that the wrong was deliberate was the thing that has made it the hardest. That fact being closely followed by the clear demonstration of "no remorse" - for what this person did to me, or what was asked of my friends.

I've heard forgiveness defined in a few different ways.

The first definition that really struck me was one from a Lenten Mission given by [Fr. Scott Seethaler](#) when I was... twelve? Fourteen, maybe? He said, "Forgiveness is not forgetting that you were hurt; forgiveness is letting go of the pain."

The best one I've heard recently was from Dr. Greg Popcak (pronounced "pop-check"). He's said on his radio show ("More to Life") that, "Forgiveness does not mean pretending everything is "OK." It doesn't mean forgetting the hurt either. According to St. Augustine, forgiveness is simply the act of surrendering our desire for revenge; that is, our desire to hurt someone for having hurt us.

Forgiveness is the gift we give ourselves that enables us to stop picking at the scab and start making a plan for healing." (Incidentally, I wish I'd found the [blog post](#) in which he wrote it down when it was originally written - would have made my life a lot easier.)

These two definitions come back to the same thing. This person owes you at very least an apology; they're

refusing to give it; so you let go of the debt you know you're never going to recover.

It's a hard fact that really forgiving someone who has really hurt you, and really meant to do it... is really hard.

Here are some of the things that I've done that have helped me on the pathway to forgiving this person:

(1) Consider the ways in which you might not have been the ideal Christian to the person you're trying to forgive. (This question was put to me by my own counselor, out of a Christian Counseling Center.)

This is not admitting that you were responsible for your own hurt, only that there are rarely fights that do not have two sides to them. Think about the times that you did lash out at a slight (whether real or imagined), think about the things you said that perhaps were not expressed in the most tactful way, think of the unkind thoughts you had about them, think of the things you muttered under your breath when you thought nobody could hear you, or what you said out loud when you knew people could. Not that these things weren't understandable, or even easily justified, but they were not Christianity in its ideal case.

(2) Reflect on the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. I wrote one of my

[reflections](#)

during Lent on this one.

One thing it's important to know about this parable that the unforgiving servant was within his legal rights when he had his fellow servant thrown in prison for the debt owed. He was standing on his legal rights. You have a right to feel hurt, and it's natural to desire your eye for an eye. It doesn't make you crazy; it makes you human.

The problem with what that servant did is that he stood on his rights when he really had no business doing so. The master could have stood on his rights before, but didn't until he found that the servant was unwilling to do likewise for someone else.

Consider the mountain of debt that God has forgiven you - start trying to go to confession regularly - and in time the hurt done to you, however real and painful, doesn't seem as impossible to forgive as before.

(3) Pray.

Don't just sanctimoniously pray for them, and pretend you're doing everything you need to. Pray for yourself - you do need it. Ask God to help you really forgive the person that hurt you from your heart.

One of the particular prayers that was helpful to me was the Lord's Prayer. It's easy to breeze through it without thinking, but very useful if you go slow.

I heard the story of a woman who, for many years, didn't say the part of the Lord's Prayer where we ask God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us", because she realized what she was saying, that there was someone she couldn't fully forgive,

and she did not want God to hold it against her - so she didn't ask for it.

I really took this story to heart, and - when I came to that part - I always asked God, instead, to help me forgive freely, in the way that I know that I have been freely forgiven.

Keep in mind that these are just my experiences, and that forgiveness can be a long process. Mine is still ongoing, in some ways. The bitterness still rears its ugly head sometimes, and sometimes I spend a little too much time indulging myself in rehashing the story for everyone who expresses the slightest interest.

Have you ever had somebody hurt you on purpose? Was there anything that helped you to work through the pain to be able to let it go?

This contribution is available at <http://incaritaschristiana.blogspot.com/2015/08/what-to-do-when-theyre-not-sorry.html>
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Three Picks from the Video Archives [at One Thousand Words a Week]

The most beautiful journeys are taken through the window.

~ Last line in [King of Hearts](#)

My neighbor across the street had a garage sale recently, and she was closing up shop late Sunday afternoon. She spied Katharine, my fourth-grader, rummaging through the trinket table, and she told her to save her pennies. “I’m packing up what’s left as a donation,” my neighbor told Kath. “Take whatever you’d like.”

“Papa! Papa! She’s giving stuff away now,” Katharine breathlessly announced running into our home. “Pictures and toys and everything – can I get some?”

That’s a magical moment for a grade-schooler, and I was impressed that Kath had even thought to ask permission first. “Sure, sure,” I reassured her, “but not too much.”

“Don’t worry – there’s only a couple of bird pictures I want, and a nice basket,” Kathy explained. “Maybe you should come, too. There’s lots of books and movies.”



I crossed the street with her to check it out. No books that interested me, and no DVDs – only a bunch of VHS kid videos. “We’ve got lots of Disney left,” my neighbor said. “Are you sure you don’t want any?”

“No, we’ve got all the Disney videos we can ever use,” I replied, and that was the truth. When our old VCR was still operative, we were still buying movies from thrift shops for a dollar or less. In fact, at one point, the local [Goodwill](#) was so overloaded with tapes that they’d only sell them in lots of thirty. If you found a single title you wanted, you could purchase it for a buck, but only if you took another 29 tapes along with it. Consequently, we were swamped with movies, and we had duplicates (even triplicates) of just about every Disney film ever made.

All the same, it was a small price to pay, because we amassed some beauts that way. With the advent of disc technologies, and now streaming video and [Netflix](#), most everyone has pretty much dumped their VHS collections, and my semi-Luddite household has reaped the bounty. As long as the old VCR was still working, we had access to virtually limitless and extremely cut-rate cinematic entertainment – *score!*

Then the inevitable happened: The VCR conked out. Our vast hoard of VHS tapes was relegated to the basement, and used DVDs began to proliferate instead – although at a much slower and costlier rate. And so, as I poked about my neighbor’s movie table, I paid little heed to the VH



S offerings, aside from the slight melancholy they induced insofar as they reminded me of our defunct player....

But what’s this? I thought to myself. *A silver, oblong case with dual drawers in front – one larger, one smaller. Could it be...yes! It was! A combo VHS/DVD player!* “Does this really work?” I asked.

“Well, yes, it does...,” came the tentative reply.

“Oh, I wouldn’t expect you to give it to me for free,” I hastily clarified. “How much are you asking?”

“How about five dollars?”

“Sold!” – how could I pass it up? I rushed home with Kath – she with her treasures, me with mine – and I hooked it up. I think the first tape we inserted was a Hanna Barbara cartoon that my neighbor threw in at the last minute...and it played! A new lease on life for our humble home theatre – and at such a miniscule expense!

Down into the basement I flew. I pounced on the VHS stash and filled my arms with classics to release



from exile. [Star Wars](#) was an obvious pick – the original three episodes, of course, along with *The Phantom Menace* and *Attack of the Clones*. (I don’t think we’ve ever even owned a copy of *Revenge of the Sith* – who’d want to watch *that* again?) I also grabbed a few Disney’s and Veggie Tales, and then, in my enthusiasm for having recovered the anachronistic mechanical link to our collection, I snagged three more videos for my older kids to watch.

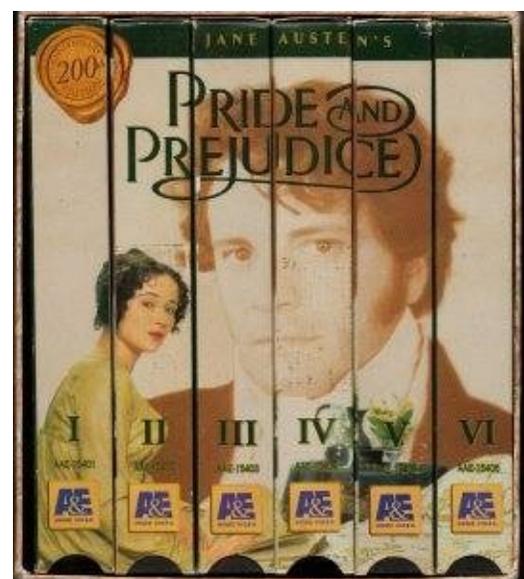
At the moment, it was like blind emotion – “Quick! I’ve got to get them to watch *these particular movies* before we again lose our tenuous technological capacity to do so!” – and I didn’t give much conscious thought to my selections. Since then, however, I’ve pondered that pile – they’re still sitting there on the mantle, waiting to be electronically revived (teenagers are exceedingly busy people these days) – and I’ve wondered: why those three? Did they just happen to be on the top? Or were there other, more subtle factors at work?

For what it’s worth, here’s the list along with some observations. I’m no movie critic, and I have no

pretensions in that direction. Instead, these are the comments of a cinephile father who wants his kids to benefit from older flicks they might otherwise pass over. See if my selections resonate with your own film-watching recommendations.

1. [*Ulee's Gold*](#) (1997). Peter Fonda plays Ulysses (Ulee), a Florida beekeeper with family troubles, and his performance is arrestingly understated. A single father doing his best to provide what stability he can to an unraveling family, he is battling plenty of demons – both inside and out. The bees are his prime solace, providing routine and even a kind of liturgy, amid his chaotic, dangerous circumstances. Like every film, every story, it's about sin and salvation, and it mixes in a healthy dose of enlightenment for stoic go-it-alone fathers everywhere. As a bonus, Ulee's bees produce that rare ambrosia known as [tupelo honey](#), which provides an excuse to include Van Morrison's of that title in the soundtrack. This movie is worth watching just to connect its images of hope with that incomparable love song.
2. [*The Trip to Bountiful*](#) (1985). Based on [Horton Foote's](#) 1950s play, this is a story about an aging widow, Carrie Watts, who feels increasingly alienated from the son and daughter-in-law she lives with in Houston. Mrs. Watts (played by Geraldine Page in this version; Cicely Tyson stars in a [more recent TV production](#)) longs to return to Bountiful, Texas, her childhood home that has taken on an Eden-like connotation in her imagination. It's no surprise that when Carrie does eventually get there, she's disappointed – a classic tale of “you can't go home again,” as many have noted. Even so, it's a rich journey, filled with illuminating encounters that foster the notion that we do well to gently carry our homes and histories with us – a notion that “wherever we go,” in the words of critic [Desmond Ryan](#), “will always be true.”
3. [*King of Hearts*](#) (1967). Alan Bates plays Scottish soldier Charles Plumpick, a World War I carrier-pigeon wrangler who is mistaken for an explosives expert. After German forces abandon a French village, Plumpick is sent in alone to defuse whatever booby traps lie in wait. Between the Germans flight and Plumpick's arrival, the inhabitants of a local asylum take over the village, and their histrionic portrayal of various townsfolk leads to much revelatory mayhem. The blurb on the VHS box claims it “became the longest running film in U.S. history,” which is apparently true: “King of Hearts” ran continuously [for five years](#) at a theater in Massachusetts, although it tanked when first released in France. In any case, it has risen to the “cult film” stratosphere, and so, by definition, it's not exactly popular fare – in this case, a tri-lingual (sub-titled) quasi-farce about war and peace, sanity and madness, and the mystery of love and communion.

And speaking of communion, that brings me to my rather obscure reason for holding onto old video tapes at all – to wit: They preserve human connections in a concrete way. Take our VHS boxed set of the BBC's [*Pride and Prejudice*](#) (1995) for example. Sure, we have the DVD version now, but it was those six individual video cassettes that first introduced us to Simon Langton's maste



...ful achievement. What's more, it was those actual six tapes that we played at the end of several pregnancies – one episode at a time, one a night – as well as being the medium through which our youngest children themselves came to know Darcy and Elizabeth.

In other words, those six tapes have acquired a *sacramental* character – almost like relics that keep us in touch with former times and circumstances. “Perhaps in our technological age, the whole idea of relics may seem strange,” writes [Fr. William Saunders](#), but “all of us treasure things that have belonged to someone we love.” In this case, it's not only the *content* of those ancient tapes that we treasure – especially given their ready availability in updated formats. Instead, we treasure them because it was *those particular cassettes* we recall handling and watching and sharing with each other.

As such, they can mediate real encounters, bringing them forward from past to present, and that's a good thing in this disembodied media age. It's like [Ann Packer](#)'s description of “[The Moth](#),” a popular podcast. “There are moments when, clearly, the storyteller has done something that a listener can't see,” writes Packer. “It emphasizes the fact that this was something that happened in space and time somewhere.”

Exactly – like watching a particular video tape in an actual time and place, along with actual friends and family.

Pass the remote.

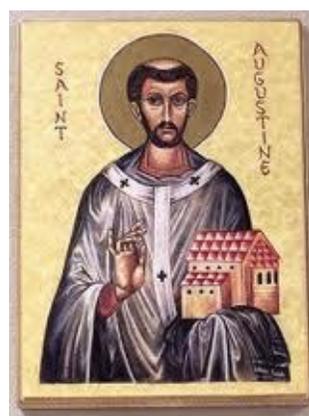
This contribution is available at <http://onethousandwordsaweek.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/a-garage-sale-vcr-three-picks-from-the-video-archives/>
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3 Year Blogiversary! [at The Veil of Chastity]

6



Today is the 3 year 'blogiversary' of The Veil of Chastity! It is also the feast day of one of my favorite saints, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, followed quickly by St. Monica (Aug 27th) and her son, St. Augustine (Aug 28th). I like to call it a Saint 'Hat Trick' for those sports girls among us.



This week the blog also registered ***over 200,000 hits*** and the most popular post, [Stop Chasing Him](#) is responsible for 39,000 of those hits. The best part has been hearing from you and the fact that your emails and comments come in from all over the world. 187 different Countries! What a privilege it has been for me to read each email and comment and then pray for you. I would have never imagined this 3 years ago.

Thank you so much!

Be assured of my love and prayers for you!

p.s.s.s You can do a search of the blog by using the Search function on the right side of the page all the way down at the bottom.

p.s.s.s.s.s.s Write to me anytime at the veilofchastity@gmail.com

This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2015/08/20/3-year-blogiversary/>
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Power of God [at A Spiritual Journey]

As I was praying the first decade of the Rosary on the Glorious Mystery Resurrection this morning, the Lord made me see his power. Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven ~ all this happened supernaturally without any effort on God's part. By contrast, for example, human scientists have worked hard for decades to find a cure for cancer and are still unfruitful. When God wills something, it's done. Let there be light and there was light. I know that he can heal my sprained wrist instantly now if he so wishes. When we repent and ask him to take away our sins, it's done. When we surrender and desire union with him, it's done. When we believe and beg him to grant us eternal life, it's done. Follow the will of the Lord to let him accomplish what he wills.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2015/08/power-of-god.html>
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Planned Parenthood Videos Spark Protest of Biblical Proportions [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

The devil is a liar and a murderer from the beginning. (John 8:44)



In what is often termed “The Voyage of the Damned,” 937 Jewish refugees – whole families – joyously and hopefully set sail for the United States from Hamburg, Germany, on May 13, 1939, seeking asylum from the increasing horrors of Nazi Germany. They were refused entry. After the return voyage to Europe, some were accepted in other countries, but it is estimated that fully one-third of the 937 Jewish refugees lost their lives in a Nazi death camp.

Today in the United States, the Voyage of the Damned begins at conception.

Despite the fact that there has been a steady decline in abortions since 1980, it is estimated that 21 percent of all U.S. pregnancies end in abortion, according to [Operation Rescue](#).

Hardest hit by the abortion debacle is the U.S. Black Population. Blacks comprise only 13 percent of the U.S. population, but they account for 37 percent of all abortions. In New York City in 2012, the number of abortions in the black population exceeded the number of live births. #BlackLivesMatter, but many in the black community are trying to convince their own people of that reality.

However, since the radically pro-death Barack Obama was elected president in 2008, there has been a strong shift in American opinion on the issue of abortion. A recent Gallup poll found that a majority of Americans identify themselves as pro-life, fully 51 percent, while those self-identifying as “pro-choice” were 42 percent. This is the first time since 1995 that a majority of U.S. adults have called themselves pro-life.

The ordinarily Silent Majority showed up in force at abortion clinics nationwide on Aug. 22 in the largest coordinated protest against abortion in history -- with signs saying "Planned Parenthood Sells Baby Parts." At least 73,813 Americans demonstrated at 356 Planned Parenthood facilities in 49 states and Washington, D.C. on Saturday, according to protest organizers ProtestPP.com, (Only 306 sites have reported their numbers so far.)

Pro-lifers also enjoyed a successful Twiterstorm on Sunday Aug 23 blasting the hashtag #UnbornLivesMatter 60,000 times. These movements came in response to eight undercover videos showing Planned Parenthood illegally harvesting and selling baby parts. A ninth video has been released since the protest.



I called her the most cold-hearted woman in the universe when I watched the first undercover Planned Parenthood video filmed by the non-profit Center for Medical Progress. Planned Parenthood chief medical officer Dr. Deborah Nucatola was casually drinking wine and eating her salad at a restaurant while she discussed manipulating abortion procedures to procure better quality human brains from the tiny persons being removed from the womb.

But on the 7th video, I found out some of the children pulled from the womb were still alive. Technician Holly O'Donnell, who unsuspectingly took a job at the fetal tissue company Stem Express in late 2012, reported she was required to cut open the face and extract the brain of a boy while he was still alive.

The video showed a tiny man no bigger than forceps -- perfect in every detail -- clearly just a miniature version of my husband and son. As I watched the video, the tiny man moved his legs. He was still alive. I held my breath.



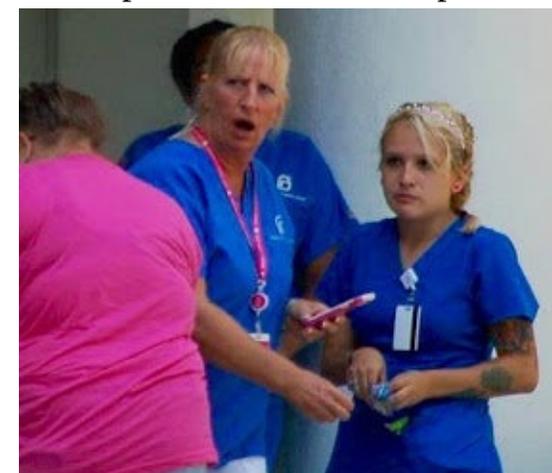
Clearly, all he wanted out of life was to be loved. It's what we all want. His little figure cried out to me, "Hug me! I'm scared. I'm cold in this bowl." But he was met with rejection and then carved open and sold for his parts. So was Christ sold for 30 pieces of silver – not a lot of money really, it was the price of a slave. (Matt. 26:15)

World Renowned Stem cell Researcher Dr. Theresa Deisher said the investigative videos confirmed what she had suspected for a long time -- Planned Parenthood is keeping some babies alive after the abortion to collect better quality organs for harvesting. "I have always suspected that the babies in some of these cases were alive until their hearts were cut out," [Dr. Deisher](#) said.

Such horror recalls the barbaric practices of the [Aztecs](#), who were involved in assembly-line ritual murder on a massive scale, sometimes 20,000 people at a time. When Spanish Conquistador Hernan Cortez arrived in Mexico in the 1500s, he and his men were forced to watch the living hearts ripped out of their own men – Aztec captives -- in just seconds, sacrificed to the bloodthirsty sun god Huitzilopochtli. Aztecs apparently could perform the murderous act just as casually and efficiently as Dr. Nucatola could speak about doing eight abortions in a day to maximize the type and quality of organs demanded by Planned Parenthood's clients. "A lot of people want intact hearts these days," Nucatola said, "because they are looking for specific nodes"

A fetus extracted intact and alive during an abortion is a born alive infant under federal law and any further actions taken to kill him or her is homicide. Yet Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper has refused to investigate Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains, which appeared in the 4th undercover video with an excited doctor exclaiming, "Another Boy!" during dissection of the child's parts.

In the first video, abortionist Dr. Nucatola described how she was able to recover intact human brains during an abortion by changing the way the child comes out of the birth canal -- feet first instead of head. Such a procedure is used in partial birth abortion, which is illegal. "The federal (partial birth)



Abortion Ban is a law," said abortionist Dr. Nucatola on the undercover video, stabbing her salad and explaining how she diabolically justifies what she is doing, "and laws are up to interpretation. So if I say

on day one, I do not intend to do this, what ultimately happens doesn't matter." Then she goes on cold-heartedly to describe how she plans her abortion procedures based on the needs of Planned Parenthood's clients for certain parts – hearts, livers, lungs, brains even legs, muscle.

What is surprising is how many Americans aren't aware of the undercover videos, or don't believe they are real. Surveys showed early on that 70 percent of Americans were unaware of the undercover videos. Many refused to believe them because Planned Parenthood has claimed the videos are heavily edited. But no, you can see the full-unedited videos online. The story doesn't change. Ironically, I went to the Planned Parenthood site where they had initially laid out their defense, but Planned Parenthood had removed it. The site was blank. Now they have nothing to say.

Pro-lifer Linda Maria Carrillo – who couldn't find the list of Planned Parenthood locations for the Saturday protest from 9 to 11 a.m., went to the closest Planned Parenthood near her home – the one in Santa Monica, California. She took the bus. She didn't have a sign because she thought other people would be there. She began witnessing to everyone, starting on the bus and then four hours at the abortion clinic. She was the only witness in Santa Monica. But what she discovered is that most people she talked to didn't know about the undercover videos. "Their jaw was dropping," she said, adding they were shocked, and one said: "That's Frankenstein behavior!"



Phoebe Wise demonstrated at the abortion clinic in Mountain View, California. "Bob (my co-organizer) and I were staggered at how many people came. I thought we might have 5, at most 15. That's why I made 15 signs. I felt like a disciple at the multiplication of the loaves. Bob counted 60 adults at the peak, and there were about 10 children, who certainly count, so that's 70 people -- with almost no publicity. People kept asking me when the next rally would be. I was flabbergasted. I am not a protest organizer! I am just someone who prays once a week at the abortatorium. Good grief!"



Lawrence and I attended the protest at the Denver Stapleton Planned Parenthood, and the official tally for the number of people present was 570, according to ProtestPP.com. We did have a camera crew from one of the local television stations show up, and when he was shown the signs of mutilated baby parts, he responded, “We can’t put that cr_p on television!” A courageous soul, pointing at the abortion clinic, responded, “This is not cr_p. This is reality. That’s what they are doing in there!”

In Denver, the security guard was nervous about anyone crossing the yellow line. There was a drive-in entrance to the facility. A huge fence blocked out with black sheeting covered the rest. It was impossible to talk to anyone going into the facility unless they stopped their car. Most went in the back way. One lady drove very fast to the entrance, almost hitting protestors.

“Don’t go past the yellow line,” the guard shouted at some of the protestors, who responded, “Your job is to make sure they can do the abortions safely!” The guard denied it. “No my job is to make sure no one crosses the yellow line.”

Linda Carrillo, of course, had a long cozy chat with the Planned Parenthood guard in Santa Monica. Carrillo said the guard was also unaware of the eight undercover videos. “So many people are unaware of what Planned Parenthood is doing.”

The black sheeting did not deter the Denver-based [American Right to Life](#). They had brought an extremely tall ladder. That’s where I met Leslie Hanks, the group's president. She was shouting over the fence at some potential



mothers-to-be and the person she called their “deathscort.” “Please Mom, don’t hurt your baby. It’s a terrible place to be where they murder innocent babies and call it health care!” Squinting through the trees surrounding the plant, she added in a loud voice, “They sell the children’s organs. God hates the shedding of innocent blood.”

While standing vigilant and very matter-of-factly on her ladder, Leslie told me they started American Right to Life because the National Right to Life never “says anything like ‘Stop killing kids!’” Instead they support 24-hour waiting periods and other measures to restrict abortion, but not stop it. “We at American Right to Life are pro-life from conception to natural death,” she said, pausing to shout over the fence, “Folks, don’t do business here. They kill babies.”



She and Jo Scott were up and down the ladder while I was there, loudly sharing their pro-life message. Both of them had spent decades witnessing outside abortion clinics. Jo had been in jail at least 20 times, and helped countless women avoid abortion. I asked her how she knew that, and she said, “We talk them out of it, and then take them to the crisis pregnancy center (which was across the street).” The ladies said the mothers are helped to find a job, medical care and housing. One time a heavily pregnant woman threw herself at Jo and started weeping. Jo didn’t recognize her, but she had apparently talked her out of an abortion, and she was grateful. “You saved my baby!” she wailed. More than one girl comes out of the abortion clinic angry because they feel the Planned Parenthood staff tired to force them to get an abortion,

according to Jo and Leslie.

The man behind the ladies on the ladder was Pastor Bob



Enyart of the Denver Bible Church. “You have to be pro-life to be a member of my church,” he boasted, looking at Catholic me. “Yeah we want them out of the Catholic Church too, Bob,” I responded thinking of outspoken pro-abortionist Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco), who still calls herself Catholic.

In 1988, Enyart and his congregation decided to keep vigil every day abortions are performed at Denver’s main Planned Parenthood clinic, basically Tuesday through Saturday. And they have faithfully kept watch for 27 years, saving thousands of lives. “We are the last voice their baby will ever hear,” Leslie said, pausing to shout over the fence, “Choose life and you won’t regret it.” Enyart also has a [radio show](#) with 4,000 listeners. On Aug. 9, his church sent 50 people to a [residential protest](#) of abortionist Dr. Savita Ginde, who appears in the 4th undercover video saying, “I’ve seen livers, I’ve seen stomachs, I’ve seen plenty of neural tissue. Usually you can see the whole brain come out.” She is the one who excitedly tells the investigators, “We’ve got another boy!” during his dissection.



All I can say is that Colorado seems to have very tolerant abortionists as it appears she did not call the police about the protest despite the fact that they held up a huge sign outside her house, saying, “Savita, turn state’s evidence!” The Denver Bible Church leafleted her neighbors informing them that their neighbor, Savita Ginde “murders children.”



On Saturday during our Denver protest there were no police visible at all. The only response from Planned Parenthood – besides fussing over a yellow line -- was the word, "PROUD," pasted in their window.

Catholics, of course, were very present in Denver. They had a huge rally with speakers sponsored by the Archdiocese of Denver. I was struck deeply, watching two young men passionately praying the Rosary, and then we saw a large



group of Catholics marching around the clinic praying the Rosary, circling it seven times just as the Israelites did to the city of Jericho before its walls came tumbling down.

The author of the pro-death movement – the one identified by Christ as a liar and murderer from the beginning -- surprisingly revealed himself publicly at Detroit’s downtown Planned Parenthood on Saturday morning about 10 a.m. On July 25, a devil- worshipping cult calling itself the Satanic Temple unveiled a one-ton bronze statue of a goat-headed Baphomet in Detroit, charging \$25 a ticket as part of its fund raising effort to support abortion. On Aug. 22, the same group dressed as Catholic priests dumped gallon after gallon of milk over two struggling women, who had their hands tied, while shouting, “Hail, satan!”



This event had meaning on three levels. It is a form of pagan worship to the Earth Mother, a sort of satanic baptism. It is also considered lower level occult magic.

On a practical level, the message was clear to pro-lifers, who are often called “forced birthers” by the opposition. The satanists were saying if you take away the right to abortion, you are forcing women to give birth against their will – you are drowning them in breast milk. That is a very satanic message, and a very ugly view of women. We are not helpless rag dolls with no self-mastery. We can practice self-control and wait to consummate a relationship when we are married and want children.

The third meaning of the event would not even occur to most people. In two places in Exodus (23:19b, 34:26b) and once in Deuteronomy 14:21b, God warns the Israelites against boiling a young kid in its mother’s milk. There is some evidence, the Israelites sprinkled milk cooked this way on their fields to make them fruitful, which is idolatry. But it is also a form of lust and greed.

“For a mother goat or sheep to give birth, and then have its kid cooked in the same milk used to nourish it and give it life shows no reverence for life!” said Lawrence Fox, describing how cruel it is to milk the mother when she is missing her baby in order to make the meal taste better (lust and greed.) “People kill their children out of fear and greed,” he added, “They say, ‘I won’t graduate. My life is ruined.’ Yet none of that mattered before they got pregnant.”

Church Militant videotaped the satanic protest, and it is quite hair-raising. A young Christian man responds by saying, he loves the satanists: “I pray you come to saving faith.” At that point a dark-haired man on the left began to laugh demonically. I kid you not. But as the Christian continued to urge them to “run to King Jesus,” warning them that on the day of judgment they would beg for mercy and no mercy would be given to them, the satanists got a little quieter. He got into an intense discussion face to face with one of the satanists, who was obviously distraught by his message, and he calmed him down by saying repeatedly, “I care about you.” I think the score at the end was God 1, satan 0, except that satan’s previous score is 57 million unborn Americans murdered at the altar of lust, greed and convenience, that is abortion.

Of course, who better to defeat the father of lies than St. Michael himself? Lucifer said, “I will not serve!

I will be God.”



But St. Michael’s name means, “Who is Like God?” It was this humble question that allowed a mere archangel to defeat the powerful seraphim Lucifer, and send him and his followers to hell.

So a new group formed called [#StMichaelFastforLife](#). Beginning Aug. 21, you are invited to join them fasting for life in honor of St. Michael for 40 days. For the apostles also found some demons difficult to expel on their missionary journeys, and they asked Jesus, “*Why could we not drive it out?*” (Mark 9:28)

Jesus answered them, “*This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.*”

Now comes the Egyptian Pharaoh in fury, repenting of the fact that he let the Israelites leave, “*What have we done?*” (Exodus 14:5) Pharaoh had plotted to wipe out the Israelites by having all their male infants killed by the mid-wives: “*Pharaoh therefore charged all his people, saying: Whatsoever shall be born of the male sex, ye shall cast into the river: whatsoever of the female, ye shall save alive.*” (Exodus 1:22) Ironically, in the undercover videos, what we remember is they are constantly finding and dissecting human boys. The words, “Another boy!” plays like a funeral dirge in our memories.

God brought down 10 plagues on Egypt to win the freedom of the Israelites, but the Egyptian Pharaoh still chased them down to the Red Sea where they seemed to be trapped.



Saying nothing about looking into whether Planned Parenthood is engaging in illicit sale of baby body parts, the [U.S. Department of Justice](#) has announced it is looking into whether Center for Medical Progress obtained its videos legally, a move that should freeze the blood of every self-respecting journalist in this country. Barack Obama's pet organization Planned Parenthood was disturbed, so he is riding to the rescue, ignoring the plight of the innocent victims of abortion.

Both the National Abortion Federation in San Francisco and Stem Express in Los Angeles are suing the non-profit Center for Medical Progress and Roman Catholic David Daleiden, the lead on the project, bringing racketeering charges against them, according to Tom Brejcha, founder of the St. Thomas More Society, a not for profit, national public interest law firm. Such charges normally are a means of catching mobsters, but David is an investigative journalist performing a public service. Brejcha is asking his donors for contributions to help them defend David Daleiden and the Center for Medical Progress against these charges. You can donate [here](#).

Now when Moses and the Israelites looked up and saw the horses and chariots of the Egyptian army riding down towards their encampment on the Red Sea, they cried out to God in fear. *"Were there no burial places in Egypt that you had to bring us out here to die in the desert? Why did you bring us out of Egypt?"* (Exodus 14:11)

Moses turned to God, Who said, *"Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward!"* And they did. They walked right into the Red Sea. And God parted the waters, safely leading the people to the other side. But when Egypt's army followed, the sea closed, and they all drowned.

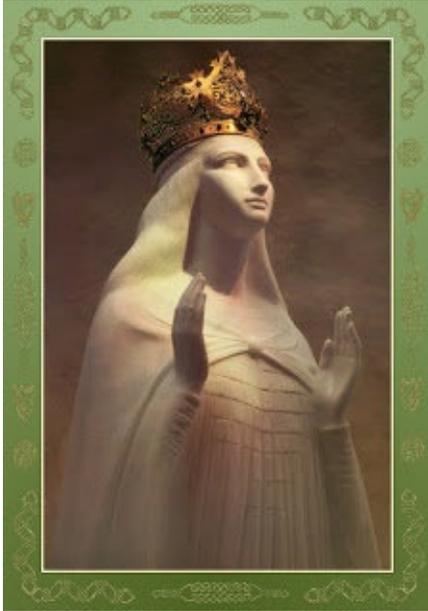
"As the water flowed back, it covered the chariots and the charioteers of Pharaoh's whole army, which had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not a single one of them escaped." (Exodus 14:28)



There is more to read on this issue:

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2015/08/planned-parenthood-videos-spark-protest.html>
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Editor's note: Friday, Aug 21, is the feast day of Our Lady of Knock, and the anniversary of her silent apparition in County Mayo, Ireland in 1879. Fifteen people standing in the pouring rain saw Our Lady -- with St. Joseph and St. John the Evangelist. A Lamb stood nearby on the altar surrounded by angels. The apparition occurred during a time when the Irish suffered under famine and forced evictions that led to a new wave of Irish emigration.

Everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day, goes the old saying. Certainly every Catholic should celebrate the day with heartfelt thanks for all the gifts that the Irish have given the Church down through the centuries.

Likewise, every person should mourn the Irish legalization of same-sex "marriage" on May 22, 2015.

There is more to lament. Last year, in 2014, the first legal abortions were carried out in Ireland: twenty-six innocent babies were murdered in the womb. The country's bishops must have felt this storm brewing for some time. The year before in 2013, on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, they gathered at the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock to consecrate Ireland to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

People may want to ask what was the effect of this consecration. As far the country as a whole is concerned—there is no visible effect. Abortion and gay marriage are in place in the land of saints and scholars, the consecration notwithstanding. What the English tried and failed to bring about with over 300 years of persecution has now been accomplished: Ireland is no longer a Catholic country. This calamity has caused some to call for a "[great exorcism](#)" of Ireland along the lines of the one recently carried out in Mexico.

One of the places the bishops could choose to perform such an exorcism might be the site of the previous consecration: the Shrine of Knock.



Why Knock? Ireland is a land of legends, and one of them, dating back to time of Patrick himself, says that the Saint predicted that someday the tiny hamlet of Knock would be a holy place. That is one legend that has come true to the letter. Ever since the appearance there of the Mother of God in 1879, Knock has been a place of pilgrimage, and its reputation as a holy shrine has steadily increased.

Some people have criticized or dismissed the Knock apparition because no words were spoken to the visionaries, but most Catholics have recognized that the message was eloquently conveyed by means of symbols. A lamb standing on a stone altar clearly represents Jesus and the Mass. St. John the Evangelist reading from a book represents the Church and its authority to teach. Mary and St. Joseph, together with Jesus, show us the Holy Family, whose dignity reflects that of the Most Holy Trinity, the Creator of the Family. Finally, Our Lady's hands and eyes raised to heaven in prayer represents to us the gracious gift of her intercession.

Also, several writers have noted that the symbolism of the Knock apparition appears in the Book of Revelation, with its vision of the [heavenly liturgy](#). Catholics believe that every Mass celebrated on earth participates in the worship of the saints and angels in Heaven.¹ The Apocalypse of Knock shows us that the suffering of God's people, whether in the Ireland of 1879 or in the present era, finds its meaning and consolation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. And as a further consolation, we have the Communion of the Saints. Just as she kept her silent vigil at the foot of the cross, Our Lady, the Queen of Ireland, crowned with a "brilliant crown of glittering crosses," gave silent witness at Knock that she is always praying for the forgotten victims of the world.² And with her is St. Joseph, the patron of the universal Church.

Knock is Silent but not Wordless

While the symbolism of Knock conveys a powerful message, it is not the imagery alone that speaks to us.

Silent though it was, the vision of Knock was not wordless.

To understand the verbal message, we need to go back to 1829, *exactly fifty years before the apparition*. England had repealed some of its harsh penal laws against Catholics, and a devastated Ireland emerged from over 300 years of persecution. Churches had to be built by the hundreds all over the country, to replace the ones destroyed by the foreign masters. In the tiny hamlet of Knock, Father Patrick O'Grady built a small stone church with a flagged floor and room for about 30 people. And he ordered an inscription for the outer western wall:

My house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations.

This is the gate of the Lord: the just shall enter into it.

Such an inscription could not have been cheap or easy to come by in that place, at that time. Why did Fr. O'Grady go to the trouble, and why did he choose those particular verses of Scripture? Though we can't know for certain what he intended, we are free to try to discern the message. Many people, myself included, are convinced that Fr. O'Grady's inscription is an important part of the prophetic meaning of Knock.

Let us take a careful look at these words and their context. Both lines of scripture are from the Old Testament: Isaiah 56:7 and Psalm 117[118]:20. However, I believe that Fr. O'Grady must have put the two lines together in order to call to mind their reference by Jesus in the New Testament. The context is Holy Week, and Jesus' fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

We know that the Jews of Jesus' day would recite just one passage of Scripture and then rely on their hearers to recall to mind the entire passage. Jesus did this himself many times. For example, in Luke 4:21 he read aloud a few verses from Isaiah in the synagogue, and then proclaimed, "*This day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears.*" He knew that the Jews would be familiar with the book of Isaiah as a whole, and would understand that he was claiming to fulfill its Messianic prophecies.

Fr. O'Grady's Inscription and its Intended Meaning

Keeping in mind this principle of using a single verse of scripture to invoke entire passages or even entire books in the Bible, we may be able to understand something of Fr. O'Grady's intentions in placing the

inscription on his church. With just two lines of scripture, he could summon both the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament and Our Lord's fulfillment of that prophecy. Why would he want to do this? I can guess that he wanted to call on the Word of God to bear witness to the martyrdom of the Irish Church in the previous centuries, and to celebrate his small but significant effort to rebuild that Church. He must have seen the raising of the small stone church in Knock as a fulfillment of God's promise that the Church Jesus founded would always triumph over persecution. The Temple of the New Covenant, namely, the Catholic Church and the Mass, would never pass away, but would always be the "*house of prayer to all nations,*" and the Gate of Heaven for those seeking salvation.

That summarizes what I think his intention may have been. But how could just two Bible verses serve to convey such a weighty message?

When we read "*My house shall be called a house of prayer to all nations,*" we think not only of Is. 56:7, but also of the Cleansing of the Temple, when Jesus drove out the money changers. Matthew 21:13 tells us the Cleansing took place after Palm Sunday during Holy Week: "*And he saith to them: It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves.*" Here Jesus puts two quotations together. To Isaiah 56:7 he adds the words, "*you have made it a den of thieves,*" from Jeremiah 7:11. This gives us two Old Testament prophets and their fulfillment in the Gospel to explore.

The books of Isaiah and Jeremiah both predict the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple because of the unfaithfulness of Israel, meaning their worship of pagan gods and their failure to live by the commandments of God's covenant with them. (This prophecy was fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C.) The prophets promise that after the destruction, God will make a new covenant with Israel, and all nations will be invited to be part of it. (Is 55 and 56) There will be a new Temple, a new kind of sacrifice, and a new priesthood. We see this prophecy fulfilled in the Book of Revelation. In Heaven, Jesus Himself is both the Victim and the new High Priest. The Lamb of God is the Temple, and gives light to the New Jerusalem.

With the first line of the inscription, Fr. O'Grady summoned the prophecies in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and also Jesus' reference to them during the week before his Passion. Now let us look at the second line of the inscription. It is taken from Psalm 117[118], and Jesus also cites verses from this psalm during Holy Week.

Psalm 117[118] is the oldest Easter hymn of the Church, making it the perfect text for Fr. O'Grady to employ when celebrating the resurrection of the Catholic Church in Ireland. It was used in the Easter Mass from earliest times. In the modern version of the Easter Vigil liturgy, Psalm 117[118] is placed in the most dramatic position possible, between the Alleluia and the proclamation of the Gospel of the

Resurrection. This unique placement makes Psalm 117[118] *the* Easter hymn. It continues to appear throughout Easter week in the readings for Mass and the Divine Office, and finally at mass on the Second Sunday of Easter. Thanks to St. Pope John Paul II, this day has become Divine Mercy Sunday, and the responsorial gives special emphasis to the verses *“Praise the Lord for He is good, His mercy endures forever.”*

Gate of the Lord

But what about verse 20 of Psalm 117[118]? That’s the one inscribed on the wall at Knock: *“This is the gate of the Lord: the just shall enter into it.”* This verse requires a bit more explanation. When Jesus left the temple for the last time, he told Jerusalem that the city would not see Him again until it said: *“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”*

Here is another prophecy of Jesus that has been fulfilled to the letter. At every Mass we recite those exact words in the great biblical hymn known as the Sanctus. It is short enough to quote in full here:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory,

Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.

The Sanctus is part of the Preface of the Mass. The Preface comes just before the Eucharistic prayer, and can be understood as a kind of gateway to the Canon, the most important part of the Mass. When the priest says the words of consecration during the Canon, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus. Only after we pray the Sanctus do we kneel for the Eucharistic prayer, and then Jesus shows himself to us under the forms of bread and wine. We have entered the Temple through the Gate of the Lord. [Hosanna in the Highest](#)

With a single excerpted verse, Fr. O’Grady was able to invoke the entire text of the Psalm 117[118], and its place in the liturgy of the Mass. And he could rejoice in the fulfillment of God’s promise that his Church would be the house of prayer to all nations. We can see that he chose a most worthy inscription to commemorate the restoration of the Church in Ireland. Whether it is celebrated in the small stone church at Knock, or in a great basilica like St. Peter’s, or on a bare rock under the open sky, the Mass unites us with the Lamb of God and the worship of the saints and angels in Heaven. Because Jesus transforms the bread and wine into Himself at every mass, we truly pass through the Gate of Heaven when we receive Him. The stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone, and we become the living stones of the Temple—the Temple that is made of his Body and Blood.

House of God, Gate of Heaven

There is another question to ask: why join Isaiah 56 and Psalm 117[118] in one inscription? By doing so, Fr. O’Grady referenced another Old Testament messianic prophecy that was fulfilled by Jesus. Both gate and house are very potent images recurring throughout Scripture. We find these two images linked together

in the very first book of the Bible, in Genesis Chapter 28.

For some mysterious reason, at this point in sacred history, God chose to reveal his plan of salvation for the whole human race to a very unlikely character called Jacob, whose name means “supplanter.” He had just swindled his brother Essau out of his birthright, and was fleeing for his life, when he discovered that his randomly chosen camping place was actually the House of God and the Gate of Heaven. After granting him a beautiful dream of angels ascending and descending in that place, God made him the astonishing promise that in his seed “*all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed.*”

As St. Augustine points out, Jesus also brings to mind the prophecy of Genesis 28 and claims to be its fulfillment when he quotes it in John 1:51: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.*” The Knock inscription, with its two succinct lines, evokes yet another of Jesus’ claims to be the fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy. This evocation becomes easier to grasp when the two are placed side by side:

Genesis 28

“in thy seed all the tribes of the

“the house of God”

“the gate of heaven”

Knock inscription

“to all nations”

“the house of prayer”

“the gate of the Lord”

The images of the Gate of Heaven and the House of God were in earlier times better known and easily identified with Jesus. For example, Catholics frequently sang “*O Salutaris hostia,*” a hymn by St. Thomas Aquinas used at Benediction. This first line is: “*O Salutaris hostia, Qui caeli pandis ostium,*” which means: “*O saving Victim, open wide, the gate of heaven to us below.*”

Not only Catholics, but also Protestants also once had more familiarity with these images and their meaning. Charles Wesley (1707-1788) wrote a hymn called, “*O Thou, Whom All Thy Saints Adore*”

We come, great God, to seek Thy Face,

And for Thy loving-kindness wait;

And O how dreadful is this Place!

‘Tis God’s own house, ‘tis Heaven’s gate.

For the Catholic who uses traditional prayers that distill the devotional wisdom of the Church, the identification of the images of house and gate with Christ is immediate and effortless. The Litany of the Sacred Heart lovingly addresses Jesus in just this manner:

Heart of Jesus, Sacred Temple of God,

Heart of Jesus, Tabernacle of the Most High,

Heart of Jesus, House of God and Gate of Heaven.

All of these scriptural references and imagery were available to Father O'Grady when he chose the texts for the inscription at Knock. He certainly must have rejoiced that he could at long last build a church that would fittingly house the externals of religion. No doubt he meant the words "house of prayer" to refer to the humble stone structure. But the recent experience of persecution had driven home a profound lesson to the Irish—a lesson that could have inspired Fr. Grady's inscription. And the lesson was this: any place on earth, indoors or out, where Mass is offered, is the Gate of the Lord and the House of Prayer, because in the Mass we encounter Jesus, who is God Himself.

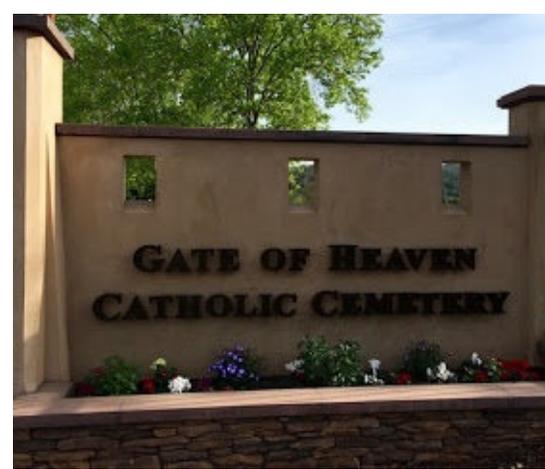
Marian Imagery—Mary as the Gate The Temple of the New Jerusalem, the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven—these are not physical places where we encounter God; they are God, since they are types of Jesus. But Knock is a Marian apparition. What does the Knock inscription have to do with Mary?



Just this -- the Gate and the House are also types for the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Litany of Loreto, a popular prayer recited by both religious and lay people, addresses Mary as Gate of Heaven and House of Gold. *Ave Maris Stella*, an ancient hymn which is still part of the Divine Office, also uses the title:

Fortunate Gate of Heaven.

We address both Jesus and Mary with the beautiful title of Gate of Heaven. If we meditate on the history of our redemption, this will make sense.



When I was looking for a house to buy a few years ago, I had to drive past the Gate of Heaven Catholic Cemetery to find the home I eventually purchased. As someone who prayed the Litany of the Sacred Heart, and the Litany of Loreto, my immediate thought was, “Oh, this is Jesus’ and Mary’s neighborhood —Great!” And when I drove into the cemetery to explore, I found at the very center of it a beautiful pieta —a statue of Mary holding her dead Son in her arms. That statue summarizes the history of our salvation; it took both of them to accomplish it. Both of them deserve the title of Gate of Heaven: Jesus, on the divine level, because, by his life,



death, and resurrection, he was the author of our redemption, and Mary, on the human level, because, without her *fiat*, God would not have chosen to enter history and become human.

She could have said no. She was completely free. It was Mary’s Choice. But, fortunately for us, she gave her consent, and it was no doubt the most informed consent in human history. When we read the *Magnificat* -- the song that flowed from Mary’s lips when she met her cousin Elizabeth -- we get a glimpse of the depth of her knowledge and understanding. Only someone steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures, in all their promises and prophecies, could have composed such a canticle. Mary was no simple, ignorant girl that God used as an unwitting tool, like a surrogate mother; she was fully aware of

the hopes of her people. She recognized her own littleness and God's terrible majesty, and yet she gave Him welcome in her womb.

Some world religions are scandalized by the Incarnation. They abhor the very thought that the most high God would enter the messy precincts of a woman's womb. But Christianity has always celebrated Mary's physicality, especially her most pure and virginal womb, praising it in hymns and devotions that date to the early days of the Church. The *Te Deum*, which dates at least to the fourth century, is one of the earliest:

Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem,

Non horruisti Virginis uterum.

When You were to become man so as to save mankind,

You did not shrink back from the Virgin's womb.

The hymns of the Divine Office for Christmas also celebrate the womb of the Virgin.

Here are some verses from *Iesu, Redemptor omnium*, (6th century):

Nostri quod olim corporis

Nascendo, formam sumpseris.

Remember, Creator of the world,

That long ago, at Your birth,

From the Virgin's holy womb.

And here is another, *A Solis ortus cardine*, by Coelius Sedulius (died circa 450):

In that chaste parent's holy womb,

Celestial grace hath found its home:

And she, as earthly bride unknown,

Yet calls that Offspring blest her own.

Many people know the Christmas carol *O Come All Ye Faithful*. It is an English translation of the Latin hymn *Adeste Fidelis*. An English Catholic priest named Frederick Oakley penned it in 1841. But the second verse, which echoes the *Te Deum*, is most often scrubbed from modern versions:

God of God, Light of light,

Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;

Very God, begotten, not created:

O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him,

Modern sensibilities may reject poetry that celebrates the womb as too strange. If we think of the womb at all, it is probably in medical terms, or a woman might think of the monthly “curse.” We have lost our sense of wonder and awe at what the womb can bring forth—the “ordinary” miracle of life. Few people, even Christians, give much thought to Mary’s womb, and the extraordinary one-time event that was the Incarnation.

Not so with the generations of Christians who went before us. They meditated again and again on the Annunciation, that moment when the Creator waited humbly for his creature to make her choice. They could never begin to exhaust the mystery, and the artists never tired of depicting that moment.

With his infancy narrative, St. Luke made certain we would know that Mary made her choice in freedom and in joy. God could have redeemed humanity in an instant, with just one word, but instead He allowed Mary (and each of us in turn) to be a cooperator with His plan.

Mary had to consent to become the Gateway to earth before Christ could become the Gateway to heaven. She was the perfect Gate of God, both in body and soul. In soul, because her memory, intellect, and will were all perfectly ordered towards God. Like her Son, she had stored the Scriptures in her memory. She

knew the stories of Sarah and Hannah, of Moses in the bulrushes, Jephthah's daughter, and the Sacrifice of Isaac; she knew how God values the life of a child. She knew the Psalms, and with the Psalmist could pray,

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

Her fiat was given with the enlightened consent of her will.

Yet Our Blessed Mother would not have thought of her soul as more important than her body—human persons are a union of body and soul. When Mary said yes, she allowed her womb to become the Gate of God.

The Hebrew people always understood that the womb was holy; it was the place where God was at work, the place where He cooperated with a mother and a father to create new human life. For Christians, the Incarnation of Jesus should reaffirm and heighten, inexpressibly, the sanctity of womb. We should delight in praising her who

Welcome in womb and breast

Birth, milk, and all the rest³

(G.M. Hopkins, The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe)

And this love of Mary must give us a greater love and reverence for all women. We believe that every woman's womb is the Gate of Heaven for the child that she shelters there. Every woman who says yes to life is the gateway to eternal life for her child, for only by treading the paths of this world can the child reach the Gate of Heaven.

And how do we enter the Gate of Heaven? Through Jesus and his Church. Our Blessed Lord did not become man just to instruct his disciples and work miracles. He became man so that he could suffer, die, and rise from the dead. It was through this Pascal Mystery, which we can contemplate but never comprehend, that He established the New Covenant in his Blood. Whereas the Old Covenant sanctified one tribe, one nation, as the chosen people of God, the New Covenant invites ***all the nations of the earth***

to become the adopted sons and daughters of God. And God's effective means of consummating this covenant with us is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: just as God entered Mary's womb at the Incarnation, God enters our bodies at Communion, and we become His children--*and* Mary's children, because when she received John as her adoptive son at the foot of the cross, she also received all of us as her spiritual children.

What is the meaning of Knock for our times? Many people besides myself have taken note of the inscription on the old Knock church, especially the passage from Isaiah 56:7: "***My house shall be called the house of prayer to all nations.***" They see it as a prophecy that has been fulfilled by the approximately one and a quarter million



pilgrims that come to Knock each year from all over the world. In the shrine grounds, trees have been planted to represent all the nations on earth. And not all the pilgrims are Catholics. An Anglican priest made a recent [blog post](#) on his visit to the shrine: "When that parish church was built in 1828, a plaque on the west wall read 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.'"

He goes on to describe the apparition and makes some mild comments about it. For example: "... although there was no message from Mary, it was almost as if she had appeared with the saints and angels to say, 'Yes, all is well and all shall be well.'" He never mentions the persecution that caused the people of Knock to live "simple lives that were always threatened by poverty and famine."

We can feel grateful that the clergy of the Church of England no longer wish to destroy the Catholic Church in Ireland, and instead make respectful and appreciative blog posts about their holiday there. Such good-natured comments are a huge improvement over the hatred that existed on both sides at one time. And they may represent the sentiments of many pilgrims that visit Knock, both Catholic and Protestant. But if people take away only this kumbaya message from Knock, I think that they may be missing the deeper meaning of the apparition. Although its meaning is inexhaustible (since it is clearly an Apocalypse made visible), I believe that Knock holds one particular message for our times that is very important, but also very disturbing. It is hiding in plain sight in that feel-good line from Isaiah quoted by the Anglican priest.

allowed them to be conquered by the Babylonians and sent into exile.

Human nature does not change. Down through the ages people have continued to sacrifice their children. I have found some dark hints that the 19th century people of Knock had their own encounter with infanticide.

We moderns sacrifice our babies to the gods of convenience, selfishness, and lust. But we do it on a scale unimaginable to the Old Testament prophets. About one and a quarter million children die from surgical abortion every year in America—that's over 3,000 a day. (And that's not counting those who die from abortion pills like RU486.) Since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973, over 57 million children have been surgically aborted in the United States.

For those who are able to face these facts honestly, this is a tragedy too great to comprehend. The efforts of pro-life advocates, valiant as they may be, seem pitifully inadequate to challenge this culture of death.

*“The defenseless crowds race to offer the sacrifice
Of their own children to the bloody screams of Moloch.*

In the air, fear, a lament without words...”⁴

Recently, we have learned that hospitals in England and the U.S. have been [incinerating aborted babies](#) along with medical waste to generate electricity—we have come the full circle back to the worship of Moloch.

We have also learned that during an abortion, Planned Parenthood manipulates the bodies of babies in utero so their body parts can be “harvested” in the most efficient manner. They don't want to crush valuable heads, livers, hearts, etc., because they have orders for those parts from medical “research” companies. Despite the claims by the organization that it does not sell [baby body parts](#), the “processing fees” that it charges its customers allow it to realize a hefty profit from each organ it “donates.”



We did not reach this pinnacle of anti-civilization all in one step; we began by worshipping a host of lesser

gods that serve this great god Moloch. Though it seems hard to believe now, all Christians -- Catholic and Protestant -- were united against artificial birth control until 1930, when the Lambeth Conference, an advisory assembly of Anglican bishops, decided to approve it for married couples. Since that year, one main line Protestant church after another has followed suit. But by far the greatest catalyst for sexual revolution was the advent of abortifacient hormonal contraception aka the Pill. In the years since the turbulent 60's, most Protestant churches have also approved or tacitly accepted surgical abortion, sterilization, divorce, sex outside of marriage, and same-sex unions.

Added to these evils is the tragedy of infertility. Same sex unions are always infertile, of course. Heterosexual couples also face increasing rates of infertility. Some contributing causes are these: damage from IUD's, diseases contracted from promiscuous sex, delayed child bearing, the use of hormonal birth control, and abortion. (Yes, the Pill and abortion are prime risk factors for infertility.) Couples desperate for children have turned to a burgeoning fertility industry, and babies have become a commodity. Businesses traffic in sperm and eggs, while "spare" embryos may be sold, reduced, or poured down the sink. Third World surrogates are used like a new form of breeding livestock. Britain has approved human GMO's, giving a child three or possibly even more genetic parents, and human cloning is on the horizon. Lost in all this is the child's right to know and be raised by the two people who created him in an act of love, and who have made the sacred promise to preserve the union of the family till heaven calls them home.

These "achievements" in birth control and infertility "management" are no longer counted as immoral, and many call them virtuous. The degradation of sex by pornography, the celebration of deviant behavior, the pressure on children to become sexually active at younger and younger ages—all these have continued to escalate in our society. Blessed Pope Paul VI predicted all these evils in *Humanae Vitae*, his encyclical against artificial contraception. His successor, St. Pope John Paul II, gave these evils a name: the culture of death.

Cynics would say that a majority of the world's nominal Catholics believe and behave no differently than the general population in these matters, and sadly that is true—witness the legalization of abortion and same-sex marriage in Ireland. Undoubtedly, the sins of a small percentage of clergy who molested children have given great scandal and weakened the Church's message on the life issues. All this is enough to cause us to lose faith and fall into despair, and that is precisely what the enemy wants us to do. But rather than despair, we must think of the light that shone at Knock on a dark night of rain. Light overcomes darkness. Love overcomes hate. Life overcomes death. Despite the sins of its members, there is still one Church that proclaims the Gospel of Life, and it remains, forever, the house of prayer for all nations.

We must not give in to the temptation to despair. We remember Isaiah and Jeremiah as the prophets of doom, but they spoke of mercy as well, and the forgiveness of sins. They promised that God would make a new covenant with Israel, and all nations would be invited to be part of it. (Is 55 and 56.) There would

be a new Temple, a new kind of sacrifice, and a new priesthood. All of these promises are fulfilled by Jesus in the Mass.⁵

“Incline your ear and come to me. Hear and your soul shall live. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the faithful mercies of David.” Is 55:3

“Let the wicked forsake his way and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord: and he will have mercy on him: and to our God; for he is bountiful to forgive.” Is 55:7

“For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” Jer 31:34

God does not change. If He could forgive the Jews who threw their living children into the fire of Moloch, He can forgive us moderns for tearing our children limb from limb in the womb. This is difficult to believe; such forgiveness is unfathomable to us. Jesus had to come to earth to show us what such forgiveness looks like—He forgave the people who tortured him to death on the cross. But first we must believe that we have need of forgiveness.

“There is none that doth penance for his sin, saying: What have I done? They are all turned to their own course, as a horse rushing to the battle.” Jer 8:6

“This is a nation which hath not hearkened to the voice of the Lord their God nor received instruction. Faith is lost and is taken away out of their mouth.” Jer 7:28

We must remember the second line of the Knock inscription: *“This is the gate of the Lord; the just shall enter into it.”* Ps 118:20. It does not say that “all” will enter the gate of the Lord, but the “just.” Those who deny their sins will not be able to enter God’s presence, but only those who seek His mercy.

We who are living in the time of God’s mercy, after the coming of His Son, are under a greater obligation than the people of the Old Testament. We cannot enter heaven just by being what passes today for “good people.” We who have heard the message of the Church are the ones who should tremble at the thought of the coming of the Lord. We cannot cry *“The Temple of the Lord! The Temple of the Lord!”* (Jeremiah 7:4), and count on that to save us. We must strive to *“Repent and believe the Gospel,”* (Mark 1:15), which is the message of the Church to all people in all times.

But to give us heart, and save us from despair, there is also the promise of His unfathomable Mercy: *“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good: his mercy endures forever!”* This is the first, and the last, line of Psalm 117[118]. (Verse 20 is the second line of the Knock inscription.) It is the great Psalm of the Easter Alleluia, and also the responsorial psalm for the Easter Octave, Divine Mercy Sunday.

St. Pope John Paul II promulgated the devotion to the Divine Mercy in his encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*. He considered it one of the most important works of his papacy. The



painting of Jesus as Divine Mercy shows us white and red streams of light flowing from his heart. These represent the water and blood that flowed from his side when the lance pierced his heart after his death on the cross. The water represents Baptism and Confession—the two sacraments that cleanse us of sin, and the blood represents the Eucharist.

Confession has been called the tribunal of mercy; it cleanses us so that we can be worthy to receive the Eucharist. The Apocalypse of Knock presents a vision of the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for our contemplation, and the Knock inscription encourages us to pray, so that we can be numbered among the “just” who will enter into the Gate of the Lord. Only those who pray with a sincere heart will examine their consciences and be moved to repentance. And only those who repent and confess their sins may worthily receive the Eucharist.



Is that all there is to Knock then? Confession and the Mass? Yes, that is all. Mass is an everyday miracle, not because it is mundane, but because it occurs every day: the living God comes to be with us. Confession is also a great miracle. People who are spiritually dead from sin, walking corpses, can enter the box, make a good confession, and exit as human beings again, healed in soul, ready to receive God.

As I write this on the Feast of the Assumption, 2015, Cardinal Timothy Dolan has just finished leading an historic pilgrimage to Knock at the head of many New York Catholics. A promotional website for the tour said, “the special message of Knock is the need for penance.” Let us humbly pray that the shepherds of our Church will grow bolder in proclaiming the *reasons* that we all need to do penance. It has been 136 years since Our Lady appeared at Knock. Not all of us can travel to Knock, but we can all make a pilgrimage there in our hearts. And when we kneel at Our Lady’s Shrine in prayer, we must strike our breast and confess that we are all Irish now. We have all suffered from immersion in this culture of death, and we need to do penance, for ourselves, and for our brothers and sisters. We may be guilty of active participation



in the evils of the day, or we may have failed to do everything we can to combat them. Whatever the case, let us bow our heads in prayer, confess our sins, and then receive the Lamb of God. Our Lady of Knock, Queen of Ireland, pray for us.

Footnotes

1. Scott Hahn

The Wedding Supper of the Lamb, key to understanding the Apocalypse.

2. A Woman Clothed with the Sun, Hanover House, 1960

3.

(G.M. Hopkins, *The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe*)

4.

“Ode for the Eightieth Birthday of Pope John Paul II” Czeslaw Milosz,

in *The End and the Beginning* by George Weigel, Doubleday, 2012, p. 241.

5.

Michael Patrick Barber “The New Temple, the New Priesthood, and the New Cult in Luke-Acts” in

Letter & Spirit

8 (2013):101-124.

This contribution is available at <http://christsfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2015/08/enter-the-lords-gate-our-lady-of-knock.html>

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U.S. President Creates Bureau of Vital Fetal Organs [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

by Lawrence Fox



Months before President Barack Obama's sodomy promotion tour in Kenya, the White House established the United States Bureau of Vital Fetal Organs.

Congress did not approve the new bureau. In fact, the majority of Congress was not informed about the matter, and still remains ignorant of its existence.

"We will not punish our daughters with unwanted children and we won't hurt medical research by restricting their access to intact body parts," the president was overhead saying at a meeting with Planned Parenthood and Democrat members of Congress. He did not use the word human or little person during this exchange since he was already on record stating, "The question of when human life begins is above my pay grade."

By working to establish the Bureau of Vital Fetal Organs, the president demonstrated his ethical consistency on the science of abortion. Early in his first term, he issued an executive order, releasing a large unused line of "frozen embryos" for medical research. Embryos released from frozen captivity have been carefully injected into mice, rats, and hamsters for the purpose of seeking a cure for AIDS, which unfortunately is still contracted by drug use and sodomy -- activities which the President promotes around the world. Medical science should not be hampered by religious and cultural biases, the president said while signing the executive order creating the Bureau.

U.S. Democrat Senators and Representatives worked feverishly with the president while he was negotiating with Dr. Bladder – a Planned Parenthood advisor - on the exchange of fetal body parts for

profit, it was reported anonymously.

President Obama was mostly concerned with adding to his presidential legacy the creation of one arching mechanism that would stimulate the U.S. economy, decrease unemployment, decrease the human carbon footprint (the snap removal of little feet from fetuses is quick and simple), and address Climate Change.

The President reminded those present in the White House during the negotiations that he promised to lower ocean levels as a result of his presidency. It seemed the expeditious merging and promotion of capitalism, medical science, and de-population under one umbrella would secure a Democrat victory in the next general election.

Dr. Bladder advised the President that in the past federal laws protected millions of women in America with access to safe, clean, sanitized, painless, and private abortions. But now by allowing cadaverous witchdoctors at Planned



Parenthood to alter and prolong the abortion procedure (i.e. making them less safe), more intact fetal body mass would be available for a profit with each abortion.

To do this successfully, the amount of Saline, D&C and Vacuum procedures would have to be reduced. Highly cruel methods of infant execution -- as used during a partial birth abortion -- would need to be used more often. It was anonymously reported that the option was proposed of not aborting the fetus, but delivering it whole and alive and then immediately putting it in deep freeze like a salmon netted and yanked out of the earth's liquid uterus.

Dr. Bladder advised the President that the plan had one drawback. There existed a shortage of specialized and intoxicated abortionists capable of performing the task without reservation. The President was reminded that the Lutheran Deacon and partial birth abortionist George Tiller was recently terminated at

the OK Corral and Kermit the Frog Gosnell was imprisoned because Attorney General Eric Holder could not protect him. Kermit ran his little house of horrors for years within property owned by Eric Holder's wife.

It was anonymously reported that the President retorted, "We can certainly recruit from among ISIS adherents since they have no difficulty with slicing heads, arms and legs off of non-Muslim children. We have done our best to keep ISIS in business only pretending to give a damn. Because of our open borders policy, we have ready access to members of ISIS, who have snuck into the country."



Dr. Bladder told the President that there was a very small risk of the un-educated American population finally learning that abortions are not performed on blobs of tissue or

undifferentiated cells, but instead on tiny human fetuses with developing and intact body parts including: heads, legs, arms, fingers, eyes, hearts, kidneys and livers. If that information got out, there would be some indignation among Republicans who would wage another war on women and seek to stop the flow of millions of taxpayer dollars from the federal government to Planned Parenthood.

It was reported anonymously that President Barack Hussein Obama considered the matter for about ten seconds and reasoned, "If the altered abortion procedures advance medical science and promote my legacy, then this Administration will continue to shield the cadaverous witchdoctors of Planned Parenthood."

The president then ended the meeting with Democrat members of Congress including: Representatives Lipton Soup and Pepsi, Senators Bentover, Rheem, and Rover. The meeting had netted all the talking points necessary in case things went sour.

Dr. Bladder, the President and the members of Congress retired for lunch together. Munching on their salads, sipping wine, they discussed casually the value of vital fetal organs and the color of the Lamborghinis they would soon receive from Planned Parenthood.



P.S. They didn't know there was a video recording.

Did you enjoy this spoof? Lawrence has written others. [FOR THE OBAMA LADY: New Product from Smoke & Mirrors!](#)

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2015/08/us-president-creates-bureau-of-vital.html>
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I Stand With Luther [at A Faith-Full Life]

Martin Luther, the Father of the Reformation, or perhaps more aptly, the father of the Protestant Revolt



As someone who has quit my own personal protest and has indeed come into full communion with the Catholic Church; it may be surprising to hear that there are actually areas of commonality where I would wholeheartedly agree with Martin Luther.

Those who know me well can attest to the fact that even prior to becoming Catholic I wasn't overly fond of many of Luther's teachings and even less impressed with his tendencies to swing from one radical extreme to another. However, just because I would disagree with Luther on many topics; in the interest of ecumenism there are also areas where I can say wholeheartedly that, "I stand with Luther."

Below are several examples of areas where we would agree, with quotations directly from Martin Luther, and then brief follow up comments from me.

— 1 —

*"That the Roman Church is more honored by God than all others is not to be doubted. St. Peter and St. Paul, forty-six Popes, some hundreds of thousands of martyrs, have laid down their lives in its communion, having overcome Hell and the world; so that the eyes of God rest on the Roman church with special favor. Though nowadays everything is in a wretched state, it is no ground for separating from the Church. On the contrary, the worse things are going, the more should we hold close to her, for it is not by separating from the Church that we can make her better. We must not separate from God on account of any work of the devil, nor cease to have fellowship with the children of God who are still abiding in the pale of Rome on account of the multitude of the ungodly. There is no sin, no amount of evil, which should be permitted to dissolve the bond of charity or break the bond of unity of the body. For love can do all things, and nothing is difficult to those who are united."*¹

Ecclesia semper reformanda is a Catholic insight that states, "The Church is always in need of reform." This motto recognizes that the Church is always, and in every age, in need of reform. It was first formulated a century prior to Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, and was tied to the ancient understanding of the Church as people on a pilgrimage – an institution existing *in* but not necessarily *of* this world. As John Henry Newman once observed, "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change; and to be perfect is to have changed often."

Had Luther remained true to his own reflection that, "It is not by separating from the Church that we can make her better." and remained a reformer *within* the Church, rather than breaking *from* her in order to promulgate his own doctrines and found his own church – well, we might find ourselves in a very different world indeed!

Perhaps a world where, as Luther speculated, love could accomplish all things through the bonds of Christian unity.

— 2 —

“We on our part confess that there is much that is Christian and good under the papacy; indeed everything that is Christian and good is to be found there and has come to us from this source. For instance we confess that in the papal church there are the true holy Scriptures, true baptism, the true sacrament of the altar, the true keys to the forgiveness of sins, the true office of the ministry, the true catechism in the form of the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the articles of the creed . . . I speak of what the pope and we have in common . . . I contend that in the papacy there is true Christianity, even the right kind of Christianity and many great and devoted saints. . . . The Christendom that now is under the papacy is truly the body of Christ and a member of it. If it is his body, then it has the true spirit, gospel, faith, baptism, sacrament, keys, the office of the ministry, prayer, holy Scripture, and everything that pertains to Christendom. So we are all still under the papacy and therefrom have received our Christian treasures. . . . We do not rave as do the rebellious spirits, so as to reject everything that is found in the papal church. For then we would cast out even Christendom from the temple of God, and all that it contained of Christ.”²

Although Luther often railed against the pope (he frequently referred to the pope as the anti-christ), in this letter written over ten years *after* the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, he rightly recognizes all the good that has come from the, “papal church.” Indeed in his words, “**Everything** that is Christian and good is to be found there and has come to us from this source.”

Who am I to disagree?

Notice as well that Luther affirms both the sacraments and the Church’s authority to forgive sins – doctrines that most modern-day Protestants roundly reject. Speaking of sacraments, let’s take a look at a few quotes from Luther dealing with the Eucharist, Baptism, and Confession.

— 3 —

“Who, but the devil, has granted such license of wresting the words of the holy Scripture? Who ever read in the Scriptures, that my body is the same as the sign of my body? or, that is is the same as it signifies? What language in the world ever spoke so? It is only then the devil, that imposes upon us by these fanatical men. Not one of the Fathers of the Church, though so numerous, ever spoke as the Sacramentarians: not one of them ever said, It is only bread and wine; or, the body and blood of Christ is not there present. Surely, it is not credible, nor possible, since they often speak, and repeat their sentiments, that they should never (if they thought so) not so much as once, say, or let slip these words: It is bread only; or the body of Christ is not there, especially it being of great importance, that men should not be deceived. Certainly, in so many Fathers, and in so many writings, the negative might at least be found in one of them, had they thought the body and blood of Christ were not really present: but they are all of them unanimous.”³

Martin Luther was utterly unwavering in his belief that the real presence of Christ was to be found in the Eucharist. Indeed, this issue became the cause of the first split amongst the churches of the Protestant movement. The infamous Colloquy of Marburg, a meeting called by the German Prince Phillip of Hesse to

try and unite Luther and Zwingli into a united Protestant front, failed rather famously with Luther angrily carving *Hoc Est Corpus Meum* (This is My Body!) into the meeting table in chalk and making frequent uncharitable remarks about Zwingli throughout the proceedings.

Notice as well though, Luther's appeal to the Apostolic Fathers and the traditions of the Church. Certainly the arguments he makes here could be applied to a great many issues of our day if we were only willing to ask ourselves, "What has been the historic and unanimous position of the Church throughout the ages on this particular issue?" Recent novelties such as the rapture would fade away, while the enduring teachings of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the necessity and efficacy of baptism, and the moral teachings of the church against contraception, homosexuality, divorce and remarriage, etc. would remain.

As a side note, if you haven't had the opportunity yet to read Jimmy Akin's excellent book [The Fathers Know Best](#) – I highly recommend that you click on the link and get it now!

— 4 —

*"Therefore, expressed in the simplest form, the power, the effect, the benefit, the fruit and the purpose of baptism is to save. No one is baptized that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare [of Mark 16:16], that he may be saved. But to be saved, we know very well, is to be delivered from sin, death, and Satan, and to enter Christ's kingdom and live forever with him . . . Through the Word, baptism receives the power to become the washing of regeneration, as St. Paul calls it in Titus 3:5 . . . Faith clings to the water and believes it to be baptism which effects pure salvation and life . . . When sin and conscience oppress us . . . you may say: It is a fact that I am baptized, but, being baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and obtain eternal life for both soul and body . . . Hence, no greater jewel can adorn our body or soul than baptism; for through it perfect holiness and salvation become accessible to us . . ."*⁴

*"Little children . . . are free in every way, secure and saved solely through the glory of their baptism . . . Through the prayer of the believing church which presents it, . . . the infant is changed, cleansed, and renewed by inpoured faith. Nor should I doubt that even a godless adult could be changed, in any of the sacraments, if the same church prayed for and presented him, as we read of the paralytic in the Gospel, who was healed through the faith of others (Mark 2:3-12). I should be ready to admit that in this sense the sacraments of the New Law are efficacious in conferring grace, not only to those who do not, but even to those who do most obstinately present an obstacle."*⁵

Not much to add here. Luther believed that baptism was necessary for salvation and efficacious in cleansing, renewing, and changing the one baptized. He also firmly believed in paedobaptism – the baptism of infants and children.

— 5 —

"What is the Office of the Keys? It is the peculiar power which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent. What do you believe according to these words? When they absolve those who repent

of their sins and are willing to amend, this is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself. What is Confession? Confession embraces two parts. One is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, and in no wise doubt, but firmly believe, that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.”⁶

Granted, Luther appropriated to himself the right to the office of the keys – notwithstanding that it was never an office which was given to him! Christ extends to St. Peter alone⁷ (and through St. Peter to his successors) the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Luther seemed to think that any Christian could act as confessor to other Christians and said in a sermon preached in March of 1522,

“I wish him [the pope] to keep his hands off the confession and not make of it a compulsion or command, which he has not the power to do. Nevertheless I will allow no man to take private confession away from me, and I would not give it up for all the treasures in the world, since I know what comfort and strength it has given me. No one knows what it can do for him except one who has struggled often and long with the devil. Yea, the devil would have slain me long ago, if the confession had not sustained me... Therefore, no man shall forbid the confession nor keep or draw any one away from it. And if any one is wrestling with his sins and wants to be rid of them and desires a sure word on the matter, let him go and confess to another in secret, and accept what he says to him as if God himself had spoken it through the mouth of this person. However, one who has a strong, firm faith that his sins are forgiven may let this confession go and confess to God alone. But how many have such a strong faith? Therefore, as I have said, I will not let this private confession be taken from me. But I will not have anybody forced to it, but left to each one’s free will.”⁸

Nonetheless, Luther affirms both the efficacy of the sacrament of confession and the very real strength and sustenance received through it.

— 6 —

Let’s wrap up with a few more quotes from Luther on a variety of different topics.

“It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary’s soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God’s gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin... Therefore the Virgin Mary is in the middle between Christ and all other men.”⁹

“Christ...was the only Son of Mary, and the Virgin Mary bore no children besides Him...I am inclined to agree with those who declare that ‘brothers’ really mean ‘cousins’ here, for Holy Writ and the Jews always call cousins brothers.”¹⁰

“In the morning, when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”¹¹

“As for the dead, since Scripture gives us no information on the subject, I regard it as no sin to pray with free devotion in this or some similar fashion: ‘Dear God, if this soul is in a condition accessible to mercy, be thou gracious to it.’ And when this has been done once or twice, let it suffice.”¹²

— 7 —

“In the first years of his separation from the Church, Luther declared that the Bible could be interpreted by everyone, *‘even by the humble miller’s maid, nay a child of nine.’* Later on however, when the Anabaptists, the Zwinglians and others contradicted his views, the Bible became, *‘a heresy book,’* most obscure and difficult to understand. He lived to see numerous heretical sects rise up and spread through Christendom, all claiming to be based on the Bible.

Thus, in 1525 he sadly deplored the religious anarchy to which his own principle of the private interpretation of Scripture had given rise¹³ :

“There are as many sects and beliefs as there are heads. This fellow will have nothing to do with baptism; another denies the sacraments; a third believes that there is another world between this and the Last Day. Some teach that Christ is not God; some say this, some say that. There is no rustic so rude but that, if he dreams or fancies anything it must be the whisper of the Holy Spirit and he himself is a prophet.”¹⁴

This last quote from Luther can most properly be taken as a warning against the private interpretation of Scripture, but how bitterly ironic are the words above from the very man who invented the doctrine of sola Scriptura!

Luther’s comments could almost be a paraphrase of St. Peter who writes, *“First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”¹⁵* and again, *“So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability.”¹⁶*

It would seem that Luther observed firsthand the effects of the private interpretation which St. Peter warns against in his epistle.

I hope you’ve enjoyed this insight into some of the common beliefs that I share with the father of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther.



Next up? Maybe John Calvin

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1. Martin Luther An Instruction on Certain Articles: Late February 1519 [↵](#)
 2. Martin Luther Concerning Rebaptism: A Letter to Two Pastors, 1528, Luther's Works ["LW"], Vol. 40, 225-262; translated by Conrad Bergendoff, pp. 231-232, 251, 256-257 [↵](#)
 3. Martin Luther, Luther's Collected Works, Wittenburg Edition, no. 7 p, 391 [↵](#)
 4. Martin Luther, Large Catechism 1529 From edition by Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1935, sections 223-224, 230, pages 162, 165 [↵](#)
 5. Martin Luther, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520, from the translation of A.T.W. Steinhauser, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, rev. ed., 1970, 197 [↵](#)
 6. Martin Luther, Small Catechism, 1529, 18-19 [↵](#)
 7. "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:16b-19 [↵](#)
 8. Martin Luther, Sermon of 16 March 1522; LW, Vol. 51, 97-98 [↵](#)
 9. Martin Luther, Sermon: "On the Day of the Conception of the Mother of God," 1527 [↵](#)
 10. Martin Luther, Luther's Works, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan v.22:214-15, 1955, v.22:23 / Sermons on John, chaps. 1-4, 1539 [↵](#)
 11. Martin Luther, 1529 [↵](#)
 12. Martin Luther, 1528 [↵](#)
 13. John Anthony O'Brien, The Faith of Millions: The Credentials of the Catholic Religion pg.136, Published by OSV 1974 [↵](#)
 14. Martin Luther, 1525 [↵](#)
 15. 2 Peter 1:20-21 [↵](#)
 16. 2 Peter 3:15b-17 [↵](#)

Obsessed with Comfort

I woke up this morning to the [story of a man who shot and killed two people on live TV and then uploaded the killing to YouTube](#). I think that the saddest part about hearing that story first thing this morning is that it didn't shock me. I am no longer shocked at the things happening in this world or this country or my town or even my house. The moment that I saw satanists say they don't believe in satan as a deity but rather as the spirit of human nature and freedom, I just stopped being shocked about anything. True story.

While we can see evil out in the open when it comes to giant demon statues and abortion, we shouldn't get so cocky and think that evil isn't in our own circles. Some people seem to think that my favorite thing to do is condemn other Catholics because I'm bored or somehow think that I'm the taxpayer who is bragging about how I'm not a pharisee. Ok, everyone is entitled to their opinion but the truth is that I see a lot of people being fooled by evil in my own circles and I think that people who know Christ and fall are going to pay a much bigger price than people, who by no fault of their own, don't know any better.

What made Judas' betrayal the worst betrayal? Jesus was taunted by the Pharisees and by plenty of people, the soldiers mocked Him and yet the only person who He said it would have been better if he had not been born was Judas. Why? Because of all those other people, Judas was one of His followers. Judas had a relationship with Jesus and stole money from Him and betrayed Him anyway. I think of the words of Jesus "it would have been better if he had never been born" as a warning that if you are close to Jesus and you turn your back on Him, you will pay much more than those who don't know any better.

Why did Judas betray Jesus? I asked myself this every year during Lent because I feel if I know Judas, then I will recognize him in myself. I know that I am a sinner, that I have pet sins and that I am not better than anyone else even when I'm tempted to think that I am. I'm not even better than Judas. I know this about myself because I sit in a confession line on a regular basis and a perfect sinless person would not need to do that.

Judas betrayed Jesus to be comfortable. He began resenting the idea of having to suffer as a follower of Christ. He resented being poor and not having money. He resented how Jesus ministered to sinners and he resented not being one of Jesus' favorites. He felt that he was entitled to a certain level of the good life by following the Son of Man. He didn't have the faith that Peter had or the love for Jesus that James had or the ability to care of the poor that other Apostles had. Or the humility to be one of the Apostles who just stayed in the background. No, Judas wanted money, popularity and an easy road in life. He didn't want his discipleship to cost him anything.

When I look at American Christians I see this obsession with comfort as well. We want religious freedom so that we can be guaranteed that we will not lose anything if we follow Jesus. We want people to be forced by law to deal with us and our choice to be a Christian and live our lives of conviction without having to face persecution or hardship for it. We want to refuse to bake cakes for gay weddings but we don't want people to sue us or to put our bakeries out of business with boycotts. BUT we sure do want to boycott the crap out of Starbucks! I am not pointing fingers at anyone because as I type this, I'm complaining to God about how me following what He asks of me is costing me my house because none of what I am doing is paying. It's a lot of work for no pay. As I was vacuuming and complaining about how little money we have and how God doesn't seem to be too concerned about where me and my kids are

going to live because we are pretty close to being homeless while God seems to be MIA. It's a real possibility at the moment and He has not opened the sky to let money rain down on us. My natural conclusion is that He must not care.

In the middle of my complaint against God and my argument of how much I deserve for all the sacrifices I make to follow God it occurred to me that Jesus didn't save me from my sins in comfort. In fact, He was spit on, whipped, had his skin ripped off his body, had a crown of thorns on His head, was forced to carry His cross when He could barely walk and had nails put into His hands and feet and then hung on the Cross in the middle of the day and died in Agony. So why exactly do *I* feel entitled to follow Him in comfort? Why do I feel like I am above being persecuted for my faith? Jesus said that persecution would happen. He said "if you follow me, the world will hate you", so exactly why do I think that any law will stop that from happening? Or that I even have a right to live as a Christian without suffering? Because I am obsessed with comfort. And there's the Judas in me.

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Children: A Living Reflection [at Plot Line and Sinkers]



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My latest post from Catholic Mom is entitled

[Children: A Living Reflection](#)

Thus the couple, while giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother.” [St. John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio \(On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World\)](#)

Children are indeed a “living reflection...a living and inseparable synthesis” of a married couple’s love. This can be evident physically (as children often look like a combination of both parents), but is evident spiritually and emotionally as well.

It is also been said that the greatest gift you can give to your children is to love your spouse.

James and I have been blessed with five sons (now ages 16-28) but we have also faced the heartbreak of losing seven babies through miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy. Born or unborn, each of our 12 children is an unrepeatable and eternal sign, an outward expression, that we love one another.

This truth that children are a “living reflection” of a couple’s love was not something I fully appreciated until a trip to the beach many years ago.

It was a beautiful July evening and our sons (then ages 4-16) were running and playing in the sand, their laughter like sweet music to our ears. The sun was setting and the sky a brilliant pink and orange, reflecting off their bodies as they ran in the sand. Watching them, I had a ‘light bulb’ moment. “Those children exist because we love each other,” I whispered to my husband. James, ever wise, said, “And because God loves us. Pretty awesome, eh?”

Precisely because of the truth that “children are a living reflection of their love...a living and inseparable synthesis...” divorce can have a negative impact on the children (even adult children). While separation is sometimes a necessity if there is abuse, divorce is too often used because a couple “stops loving one

another.” We all have a choice to love.

As a “permanent sign of conjugal unity,” a divorce can sometimes make a child feel like he is being torn in two directions. My husband, whose parents separated when he was 16, said that is exactly how it feels. So when we became engaged, James (only 18 at the time) said, “Ellie, are you sure you want to be married for the rest of your life? Because we will be together for life. We will never get a divorce. I do not want to put my kids through that.” Although we have experienced ups and downs, challenges and loss, we both know that divorce would never be an option.

A Catholic couple we know was facing divorce court. They had lived together before marriage and had used birth control for many years, eventually drifting apart. They had tried secular counseling, but it didn’t seem to work. Even before physical separation, some of their children had begun to show signs of depression and irritability. They agreed to sit down and speak with a priest. This priest urged them to try one more time, and he gave them books on Pope John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. While this is a simplification of their story, they eventually rediscovered their love for one another and are now happily married. They still face challenges, but their love for one another is evident in their relationship with each other and their children.

It is awesome to experience the gift and wonder of new life, as children are indeed the illustration and reflection of a married couple’s love. This love for one another is the greatest gift you can give to your children.

My story of love, loss and conversion is the basis of my novel, [Emily’s Hope](#), which is available on Kindle and in print.

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Pope Francis' visit to North America "one of the more sensitive of the pontificate" [at Catholic World Report]



Pope Francis greets veteran Vatican journalist Andrea Torielli aboard the papal flight to Brazil in this July 22, 2013 file photo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Andrea Torielli is a senior member of the Vatican press corps, the author of scores of books about the Pope, the Vatican, and the Catholic Church, including [Francis: Pope of a New World](#) (Ignatius Press, 2013) and [Fioretti: The Little Flowers of Pope Francis Heartwarming Stories of the Gospel in Action](#) (Ignatius Press, 2014), and he is the editor of [La Stampa's Vatican Insider](#), which is published daily in three languages. Recently, the Liturgical Press released his newest book, [This Economy Kills: Pope Francis on Capitalism and Social Justice](#), which he co-authored with Giacomo Galeazzi.

As an accredited member of an elite group of journalists who cover the Vatican and the pope daily, Torielli has accompanied Popes St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis on numerous apostolic voyages outside Italy. This month, he will travel with Pope Francis during [his nine-day apostolic journey](#) to Cuba (Sept 19-22) and the United States (Sept 22-28), his first trip to North America as pope. Torielli recently spoke with CWR about the pope's upcoming trip.

CWR: in September, Pope Francis will visit three American cities as part of a six-day visit to the US. He will address a joint session of Congress and the United Nations' General Assembly. Is this something unique for the Francis pontificate? Has the Pope addressed other bodies of government during his travels?

Tornielli: No. Usually the Pope meets representatives of political institutions, which happened in previous trips, but this will be the first time with the official Parliament of a single nation. We need to remember the speech at the European Parliament the last November too.

CWR: You are a veteran Vatican observer and the editor of a leading record of papal activity. How do you think Pope Francis' visit to the US factors into his pontificate? Is it just "another trip on the list", so to speak?

Tornielli: First of all, I really think that every trip, every pilgrimage, and every visit of the Pope never is "just another trip on the list." There are trips with more geo-political appeal, and more journalistic comments, but I think that in the heart of Pope Francis, as in that of his traveling predecessors, every trip

is important: the successor of St. Peter is going to meet his sheep, and is going to present in a very positive manner the message of the Gospel both to Catholic and Christian believers, and to non-believers.

But, it is also clear that the coming trip to Cuba and the United States is, in my opinion, one of the more sensitive ones of the pontificate. Not only because it is the first time for Pope Francis in the USA, but also because the part of his message focusing on social doctrine was misunderstood and badly presented by columnists and think-tanks in North America. Pope Francis and his message about poverty, his courageous denunciation of the economy that kills, are usually well understood by normal people, but rejected by some intellectuals who want to teach the Pontiff how to do his job and what the correct interpretation of the social teachings of the Catholic Church is.

CWR: As you well know, Francis is a pope who has a special concern for those on the margins of society. Since before his election, he has had the custom of celebrating the liturgy for Holy Thursday with those at the margins. In March 2013, shortly after his election, he celebrated that liturgy at a youth detention center. During his visit here, he'll stop at an American prison. What might we expect from the pope's visit there?

Tornielli: In my opinion, and from the experiences of previous visits, such as the visit at Palmasola prison in Bolivia, in which I participated, I think that it will be one of the most important moments of the trip in the USA. I was so impressed because Francis loves to be in the middle of people on the margins of society, and especially prisoners. He tried to share a message of hope, because there is no sin which could not be forgiven. And it is so important, in the Pope's vision, to be close to people on the margins of society, not only for sociological reasons, giving a better chance to prisoners could mean restoring rehabilitated men and women to our society, but first of all because it is clearly indicated as the necessary attitude for Christians, as we can read in chapter 25 of St. Matthew's Gospel.

CWR: Speaking of Pope Francis' social message and appeal to society, do you think he will address global warming and immigration? What has his messaging on those themes been so far?

Tornielli: I don't have any kind of anticipation about the Pope's speeches. But I think that immigration will be one of the themes he covers, as of course it is an issue for the USA Bishops' Conference. Concerning immigration, I want to recall that Francis chose to make his first trip in Italy to the island of Lampedusa in July 2013, commemorating dead immigrants. In that occasion, the Pope asked the people to break the bubbles of indifference, in which we are living. After the publication of the new encyclical "*Laudato si'*", I also think that the environment and the salvation of Mother Earth could be quoted, but not only global warming.

CWR: How will he balance his concern for these topics with American Catholics' concern for topics like the Gospel of Life, the sanctity of marriage, and religious liberty? Is the pope concerned about these things too?

Tornielli: He obviously is. He is concerned not only because he is a "son of the Church", as he explained when he was answering a question during the flight from Rio de Janeiro to Rome in July 2013, but also because he often speaks about family, the Gospel of Life, remembering that life does not only mean the life of unborn children threatened by abortion or old men and women threatened by euthanasia, but it is also the life of the immigrants, the poor, the unemployed and so on.

CWR: At the Vatican, the pope has been overseeing the reform of the Roman Curia. Has real progress

been made on that front?

Tornielli: Yes, even if the job is taking time and it is going slowly. It is necessary to evaluate and to take very pondered decisions, because it is neither simple nor easy to reform the Roman Curia. I'd like to highlight the reform of the economical structures of the Vatican State and the Holy See, and the new process for the work of the Synod. In the next year, I think that the reform of the Pontifical councils will be concluded.

CWR: You mention the Synod of Bishops. Pope St. John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* speaks of one America, as opposed to the Americas. And, certainly, this pope is concerned with peace and unity. What can you tell us about the role he played in seeking to re-establish diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba?

Tornielli: The most significant result achieved thus far is undoubtedly the “thaw” in relations between the United States and Cuba, with the leaders of both countries President Barack Obama and Raúl Castro publicly thanking Francis and the Vatican for his mediatory role. As Francis himself had stated, however, it was not so much the Vatican's mediation that was the determining factor, but the willingness showed by the two presidents, both of whom were in need of truly neutral ground on which to negotiate. “The process between Cuba and the United States,” said the Pope last July “was not mediation. It did not have the character of mediation. It arose from a desire ... and then three months went by during which I prayed hard about this ... Then the Lord made me think of a cardinal, and he went there and spoke. Then I didn't hear anything; months went by. One day the Secretary of State, who is here, told me, ‘Tomorrow we will have a second meeting with the two teams.’ ‘What?’ ‘Yes, they are talking to each other, the two groups are both talking, they are making progress ...’ It progressed by itself ... It was the goodwill of two countries. The merit is theirs, the merit is theirs for doing this.”

Some are inclined to compare Francis' role in Latin America to the role John Paul II played in the countries of Eastern Europe when communism fell. But this comparison does not hold water. First and foremost, geopolitics has changed and the world is no longer split in two. Secondly, because neither the Argentinian Pope's Latin American cultural identity nor any structured political thinking are the main motivations for his actions. Rather, it is an evangelical and realistic approach to the world's problems today that is the driver. The same approach Pope Wojtyla took when he refused to be pigeonholed as the chaplain of the West after the fall of communism, imploring in vain his old friends and allies in the anti-communist struggle not to go ahead with the two Iraq wars, which proved to be full of negative consequences for the region.

With his geopolitics inspired by the Gospel, Francis is giving a voice to those who did not have one or no longer has one. He is trying to involve everyone in dialogue and negotiation processes, regardless of the politically correct vetoes of Western gurus.

CWR: You speak of the thawing relations between Cuba and the US and the historic tensions that existed between the Communists and the US. But, even inside the Church there are tensions. When the pope returns to the Vatican after his visit to the US, he will have one week to finalize preparations for the Synod. Do you think we can expect any talk of the Synod or signals about it from him during his visit here to the US, especially since he'll be taking part in the World Meeting of Families?

Tornielli: Yes, I definitely think so. The World Meeting is the meeting of families, and the Synod is

dedicated to the family. But I do not know what the Pope is going to say about this. I could only argue that he wants to present the Gospel of Family in a positive manner, without forgetting the big challenges for the families in our times and the necessity to announce the message of the Gospel to people that are having difficulties and problems in their family life.

CWR: When he returned from South Korea to Rome in 2014, Pope Francis said he could maybe see himself renouncing the papacy, like his predecessor, in two or three years' time. That would put his resignation around 2016 or 2017. Do you think that could happen?

Tornielli: I do not think that it could be possible to predict a scheduled date, because the Pope's speech was so clear about this. After the historical decision of his predecessor Benedict XVI, now the door "is open", there is this possibility. But I think that Francis could imitate Pope Ratzinger only if his health deteriorated and it would not be possible for him to continue in his pastoral ministry.

CWR: One final question. In the US, some people are talking about their desire to see Pope Francis declare Pope St. John Paul II a Doctor of the Church. Might that happen?

Tornielli: Pope John Paul II was proclaimed blessed in 2011, only six years after his death, and was proclaimed a saint in 2014, only three years afterwards. I do not have any information about this, but I think that the timing of the Church is usually slower.

This contribution is available at http://www.catholicworldreport.com/item/4130/pope_francis_visit_to_north_america_one_of_the_more_sensitive_of_the_pontif
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Following Jesus is a matter of the heart [at Catholic Deacon]

[Readings: Deut 4:1-2.6-8; Ps 15:2-5; Jas 1:17-18. 2:21b-22.27; Mark 7:1-8.14-15.21-23](#)

In making an attempt to comeback from a bit of a blogging vacation the last half of August I am faced with the readings for this Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time. Why do I find them daunting? I find them daunting because these are just the kinds of readings that can easily and often are dealt with in a Pelagian manner, that is, in a way that makes it sound like God helps those who help themselves and that it is by our own strenuous efforts that we are saved. (It's important to note that salvation really equates to being made whole and complete- we were made for life eternal). Orthodoxy, right belief, which informs right action, most often consists in maintaining tension between two seeming disparate ideas/concepts/beliefs. And so, as Newton's Third Law holds, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. In other words, while we do not and cannot attain holiness (wholeness) by ourselves, sanctification (holiness) is not a passive endeavor.

In our readings for this Sunday we see a stark contrast between the Old and New Testaments. In our first reading from Deuteronomy Moses enjoins the Israelites to faithfully keep all of the commandments that God has enjoined on them through him. Moses tells them that the commandments of God, far from being an arbitrary set of rules that make little sense, are the paragon of wisdom and virtue. Of course, we know the subsequent history of Israel is a long story that veers from fidelity to infidelity to their covenant with God. Through it all, God remained (and remains) faithful to Israel. But it took Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to fulfill in His own person what Israel was unable to do over the long course of its history.

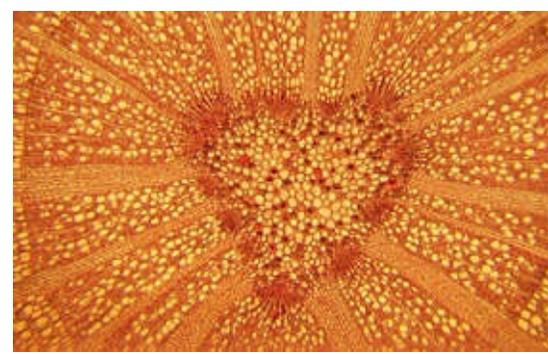
Ultimately, keeping the commandments of God is a matter of the heart. This is the point made in our second reading from the Letter of James as well as what Jesus focuses on in our Gospel. This is not to say that obeying the commandments, which can be summarized as loving God with your whole being and loving your neighbor as yourself, is unimportant. Rather, it's why, as a disciple, as a follower, of Jesus you strive to live your life in a certain manner. St Paul wrote about just this in his Letter to the Colossians:

Therefore, from the day we heard this, we do not cease praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding to live in a manner worthy of the Lord, so as to be fully pleasing, in every good work bearing fruit and growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with every power, in accord with his glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to the Father, who has made you fit to share in the inheritance of the holy ones in light. He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins ([1:9-14](#))

We may well ask, "Is it possible to live this way?" Our answer comes from the lives of so many saints, people like Mother Teresa, Gianna Molla, Utah's own

[Cora Evans](#)

, St Francis of Assisi, St Faustina, et al.



While we practice, or ought to practice, spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting and abstinence, solitude, and confession on a regular basis, as Christians we do not have elaborate prescriptions and proscriptions of the kind found in the 613

mitzvot

followed by observant Jews, or even the fewer laws of Islam. We don't believe that practicing these disciplines are ends in themselves, but means to an end, namely closer union with God and living in a more self-sacrificial manner. It is because, as Jesus taught, "Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile" (Mark 7:15) that we can fairly say being a Christian is more difficult, more demanding, than being anything else.

In his book

[Unapologetic](#)

, Francis Spufford captured this well when he observed that, in contrast to Judaism and Islam, Christianity does not consist of "a set of sustainable rules for living by" (43). To wit:

Jewish laws of behavior and Muslim laws of behavior may be demanding to keep at times, but they can be kept. That's the point of them, that's what they're for. Eating kosher or halal can involve juggling with saucepans and reading the sides of packets carefully, but it isn't privation. Getting up at dawn for prayer can be a pain, but it won't leave you short of sleep, if you go to bed at a sensible hour. Refraining from work on Shabbat is tricky, if you define "work" to include all household chores, and it takes some organization, but not an impossible organization. Wiggle-room is kindly built in to the rules, so that you can cope if your water bursts on Shabbat, or if you're traveling and there really is no way of telling the direction to pray in. Nothing crazy or superhuman is required of you... In Judaism and Islam, you don't have to be a saint to know that you are managing to be a good man (44)

"Christianity," Spufford notes, "does something different. It makes frankly impossible demands. Instead of asking for specific actions, it offers general but lunatic principles" (45). Unsurprisingly, unlike its older (Judaism) and younger (Islam) siblings, "These principles do not amount to a sustainable program" (45). In fact, according to Spufford, the whole question of how someone could possibly maintain this way of life is completely ignored. The saints make this concrete for us. We neglect them to our own detriment.

More to the point of today's readings, as Christians, what we

mean

by our behavior is as important as the behavior itself. I shrink back from saying it's

more

important in a categorical way because I do not believe, nor does the Church teach, that the morality of an act can be determined by intention alone. However, I do believe that what we mean by a particular behavior is more important than the behavior when it comes to doing what is right. As T.S Eliot wrote in

Murder in the Cathedral

, "The last temptation is the greatest treason: to do the right deed for the wrong reason." As Spufford observes, with what I surmise is a nod to St Paul (

[1 Cor 13:1-3](#)

), "You could pauperize yourself, get slapped silly without fighting back, care for lepers and laugh all day long in the face of the futures market, and it still wouldn't count, if you did it for the wrong reasons" (45). All of this should both ease us over any Pelagian tendencies and show us in what genuine love consists.

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2015/08/following-jesus-is-matter-of-heart.html>
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3 Beautiful Celebrities Who Gave It All Up to Become Nuns [at ChurchPOP]

What makes a person happy? What makes a life worth living?

Is it money? Fame? Popularity? Career success?

We all know the answer, even if we don't always live like we know it: not at all. All of these things come up short. There is only one thing – or one person, to be more exact – that can make us happy, and that's Our Lord Jesus Christ.

[See also: [10 Reasons Some Women Are Wearing Veils in Church Again](#)]

[See also: [How the Famous Sell Their Soul to Satan](#)]

This is the only way to understand what the three women described below decided to do. Even in the midst of worldly success, they gave it all up to pursue Christ in a more focused way in the religious life.

Of course, one can follow after Jesus without joining a religious order. Some of us are called to go into business, to work in the entertainment industry, and have families, etc. But some are called to the radical religious life – and they remind us of what's really the most important.

1) Dolores Hart – “If you heard what I hear...”

CBS Television, Public Domain, Wikipedia

Born with the name Dolores Hicks in 1938, [Dolores](#) took the stage name Dolores Hart when she started her acting career as a young woman. And that career took off pretty fast! At the age of 18 she landed a part playing Elvis Presley's love interest in the 1957 movie *Loving You*. Famously, she gave Elvis his first on-screen kiss in that role. She had important parts in 9 more films over the next 5 years, playing opposite Stephen Boyd, Montgomery Clift, George Hamilton and Robert Wagner. She got engaged to be married, and had her pick of roles.

Then, suddenly, at the age of 24, engaged to be married and a rising Hollywood star, she announced she was leaving it all to become a nun. She later explained that she had a turning point while filming *Francis of Assisi*, in which she played St. Clare of Assisi. She met Pope St. John XXIII in Italy during the filming, and when she introduced herself, “I am Dolores Hart, the actress playing Clare,” he responded, “No, you *are* St. Clare of Assisi!”

Her fans and friends were in shock, angry even, when they heard the news. “Even my best friend,” Hart [recalled](#) years later, “who was a priest, Fr. Doody, said, ‘You're crazy. This is absolutely insane to do this.’” One friend wrote her angry letters for years after she joined the convent, trying to talk her out of “throwing her life away.”

Hart's response?

“If you heard what I hear,” she told her friend, “you would come, too.”

via communio.stblogs.org

2) Olalla Oliveros – “The Lord is never wrong...”

via olallaoliveros.blogspot.com

Olalla Oliveros was a successful Spanish model, starring in [movies](#) and advertisements throughout the country and the world.

Then she visited Fatima, Portugal, site of the [famous Marian apparition](#) to three children there in 1917, and had what she [later described](#) as an “earthquake experience.” She says she received in her mind the image of herself dressed as nun, something she said she initially found absurd.

But she couldn’t shake the image. She eventually concluded that Jesus was calling her to give up her glamorous life and become a nun.

“The Lord is never wrong,” she said. “He asked if I will follow him, and I could not refuse.”

She is now a member of the semi-cloistered Order of Saint Michael.

via ncregister.com

3) Amada Rosa Pérez – “Now I live in peace...”

via catholicnewsagency.com

Amada Rosa Pérez was one of Colombia’s most successful models before she [disappeared from the public eye](#) ten years ago. Then, five years ago, she re-emerged to explain her absence: she had had a religious conversion and was working with a Marian religious community (though she had not become a nun).

At the height of her career, she was diagnosed with a disease that made her lose part of her hearing. The diagnosis led her to question her lifestyle, saying, “I felt disappointed, unsatisfied, directionless, submerged in fleeting pleasures... I always sought answers and the world never gave them to me.”

Now, she regularly goes to Mass, goes to Confession, prays the Rosary, and prays the Divine Mercy Chaplet. “Before I was always in a hurry, stressed out, and got upset easily,” she explained. “Now I live in peace, the world doesn’t appeal to me, I enjoy every moment the Lord gives me.”

She also has re-evaluated what it really means to be a “model”: “Being a model means being a benchmark, someone whose beliefs are worthy of being imitated, and I grew tired of being a model of superficiality. I grew tired of a world of lies, appearances, falsity, hypocrisy and deception, a society full of anti-values that exalts violence, adultery, drugs, alcohol, fighting, and a world that exalts riches, pleasure, sexual immorality and fraud.

“I want to be a model that promotes the true dignity of women and not their being used for commercial

purposes.”

**Do you know other stories of famous people giving it all up to pursue Jesus in the religious life?
Share in the comments!**

[See also: [31 Beautiful Paintings of Mary Nursing the Baby Jesus](#)]

[See also: [6 Lesser-Known Depictions of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)]

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This contribution is available at <http://www.churchpop.com/2015/08/09/3-beautiful-celebrities-who-gave-it-all-up-to-become-nuns/>
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Why we ruined our wedding pictures

“Honey,” I said a few months before the wedding, “everyone says that we should make lists of our priorities for the wedding so that we know what the each other’s non-negotiable are.” There had been no disagreements thusfar, and we were committed to a simple celebration without most of the bells and whistles that have somehow become “essential”, but I still wanted to make sure we were on the same page with what little planning we had to do. I suggested he name three priorities.

“I don’t know,” he replied from the driver’s seat. “I guess, church? Having a meaningful ceremony. That’s really it. And shrimp cocktail at the reception.” I smiled to myself and exhaled.

We had no bridal party, asking our siblings to serve as our witnesses. We had no trolleys or limos or party buses, just an SUV we rented because the winter had banged up both of our cars. We rode to the church together and processed in together. We had no cake, no signature drink, no band or DJ, but boy, did we have some church.

I invited the students from the collegiate choir I work with to sing and play for the ceremony. I expected maybe 12 or 15 to sign up, but instead we had about 35 singers. Three violins, brass quartet, handbell choir, timpani, piano and organ, all directed by my supervisor and mentor from the college. There were only two priests – I had to narrow it down. The altar was crowded, to say the least.



When I’m helping people plan liturgical celebrations as part of conferences or workshops I often tell them to imagine a photo of the event. This will be the lasting visual that people have of the entire conference, so what is the image you want to leave them with?

Commercial American romanticism suggests that my husband and I should have been alone up there on that altar, sealing our devotion with individual promises and shutting the world away. What a lie

that would have been. For as intense as our particular love for each other is, it is undoubtedly tied to the hundreds of loving relationships that we have with other people in our lives. **It's not that our love does not exist without our community, but that we do not exist.**

While assembling our cast of thousands for our music ministry, I quipped a few times that I wanted to have the type of wedding that would make people want to go to church. We were bearing witness that day not only to companionship and commitment, but to living our lives with God in mind and in communion with the Church. For as much as our guests were witnessing to their love for us, we were witnessing to our love for God, our families and friends, and each other.

I didn't realize until after the wedding that our celebration showed all of our college-aged guest musicians what a nuptial mass could be, that it didn't have to be cookie-cutter but could demonstrate the reality of our relationship. When I see the pictures of us on the altar with dozens of people crammed up there behind and beside us, I am so grateful to have had them all with us not just because they made beautiful music, but because they reflect the truth of who we are, and who we want to be: welcoming, generous, friendly, and loving.



After our guests gathered for a group picture on the church steps we zipped off in the same SUV we had arrived in together so that we could be at the reception venue to greet our guests. I suppose we should have done more photos then, but we had done many before the ceremony with our families and knew that our magnificent photographer could capture the moments without needing an exhaustive multi-hour session.

So instead of retreating for more portraits we grabbed glasses of prosecco (and my husband claimed more than his fair share of shrimp) and worked the room, hugging people and showing them to the bathroom at the historic estate, directing them to the bar and appetizers, and delightedly being among the people we love.

[Our photographer did indeed document our day in marvelous fashion](#), and we have plenty of pictures of just the two of us. But when it counted, up on the altar before God, breaking bread, the image is crowded, and I wouldn't have it any other way.



All photos by the incomparable [Kendra Stanley-Mills](#)

Like what you read, or want to stay in touch? [Subscribe](#), or catch me on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

This contribution is available at <http://margaretfelice.com/2015/08/03/why-we-ruined-our-wedding-pictures/>
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SHOCKING! Virgin Mary Is Indeed Your Mother [at I am Proud to be Catholic!]



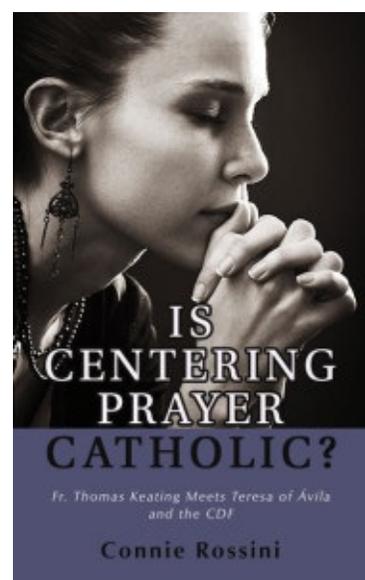
St. Paul says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16) This is true for all the gospel message of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. At the crucifixion, Jesus gave Mary as Mother to the disciple whom he loved. We read, “When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.” (John 19:26-27)

This above act of love of a dying Son entrusting a sorrowful Mother to a beloved disciple is one worthy of our imitation as beloved disciples of Jesus whom we claim to be our Master. The Master in his wisdom thought it wise to give his Mother to us for a good reason. Who are we to refuse such an offer from our Lord Jesus Christ? After all, we all know that Jesus honoured his heavenly Father and his earthly Mother perfectly than any child ever did. “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12, Leviticus 19:3, Deuteronomy 5:16, Matthew 15:4, Mark 7:10, Ephesians 6:2)

Mary our Mother herself under the influence of the Holy Spirit proclaimed, “For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.” (Luke 1:48 RSV) Would you obey Jesus? Would you accept his Mother as your Mother also? What are you waiting for?

By Godwin Delali Adadzie (AboutTheRosary.com)

Is Centering Prayer Catholic? [at Contemplative Homeschool]



“What is Centering Prayer? What are its origins? Is it a form of New Age meditation, or a thoroughly Catholic prayer method that can lead to contemplation? Connie Rossini digs into the writings and public statements of Fr. Thomas Keating, one of Centering Prayer’s foremost proponents. She compares his words with the writings of St. Teresa of Avila on prayer, and the [Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) on New Age spirituality. Find out if Centering Prayer is a reliable method for union with God, or a counterfeit that Catholics should avoid.”

Announcing...

[Is Centering Prayer Catholic? Fr. Thomas Keating Meets Teresa of Avila and the CDF](#). A new book by Connie Rossini.

I changed the title and the cover, but it’s the same book I excerpted here a few weeks ago, except even better, based on feedback from readers and my editor.

[Just \\$2.99 as an ebook on Amazon](#), soon (God willing) a \$9.95 paperback as well.

Do you know anyone who is confused about how to pray? Need a gift for a priest? How about stocking your parish library or Adoration chapel?

As always, if you order 5 paperbacks directly from me, I’ll sign them all and send you a sixth free—with free shipping as well. This deal still stands for [Trusting God with St. Therese](#) and [A Spiritual Growth Plan for Your Choleric Child](#) as well. In fact, you can even mix and match among the paperbacks, as long as your free sixth copy is equal to or greater in value than the average of the five you pay for. And if that confuses you (as I admit it does me), just email me at [crossini4774](mailto:crossini4774@comcast.net) at comcast dot net with your questions.

Also, I wanted to let you know that the ebook version of *A Spiritual Growth Plan for Your Choleric Child* is now available at several online retailers. Visit my [Book Table for all the links](#).

Please pray for the success of this important work, and spread the word among your family, friends, and fellow Catholics. God reward you!

Connie Rossini

This contribution is available at <http://contemplativehomeschool.com/2015/08/25/is-centering-prayer-catholic/>
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10 Amazing Facts About the Unborn [at Designs by Birgit]

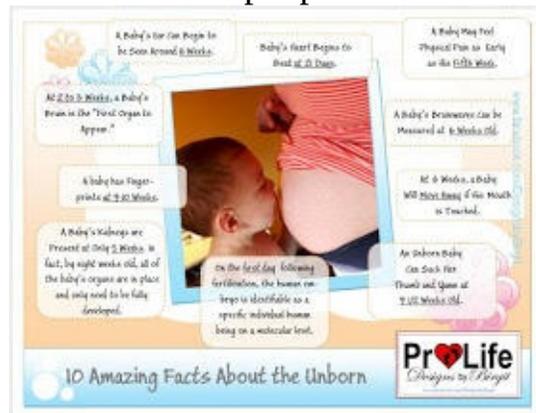
In light of the horrific videos exposing the nefarious deeds of Planned Parenthood and their subsequent denials, I wanted to take you on a brief journey into the amazing world of the unborn.

The meme below, showing the developmental milestones of the unborn, was created earlier this year. But the wonder at God's creation can never be shared too often - especially in relation to His human works of creation.

Genesis 1:26-27 tells us,

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

As creations in His image, endowed with an immortal soul, we are indeed 'wonderfully made'. So what would we see if we had a window into the womb and understood the magnificence of God's creation of His people?



Feel free to share this infographic on Facebook by following the link to the Designs by Birgit [fan page](#).

Developmental Milestones by the Numbers

1.)

Unique Individual: [On the first day](#)

after fertilization, the human embryo is identifiable as a specific individual human being on a molecular level. This flies directly in the face of the 'my body, my choice' argument. There are two separate bodies with unique DNA - even at this early stage!

2.)

Brain:

At

[2 to 3 weeks](#)

, a baby's brain is the first organ to appear. Brain waves don't usually happen in something that isn't alive, do they?

3.)

Heart: [At 18 - 21 days](#)

a baby's heart begins to beat. So if death is signalled by a heart that stops beating, how does that square with claiming a beating heart isn't life?

4.)

Kidneys and Other Organs

: At only 5 weeks a baby's

[kidneys are present](#)

and

[by 8 weeks](#)

, all of her organs are in place. From that time on they only need time to become fully developed.

5.)

Pain:

As

[early as her 5th week,](#)

baby may be able to feel physical pain. Numerous studies have been done and cited about this. See number 6 and then wonder how it could not be so.

6.)

Sense of Touch

: At 6 weeks old, baby will

[move away](#)

if her mouth is touched. If baby moves away, she must be able to feel, right?

7.)

Brain waves:

At

[6 weeks old](#)

a baby's brain waves can be measured. Another sure fire sign of life, wouldn't you agree?

8.)

Ears:

At around 6 weeks

[a Baby's Ear](#)

can begin to be seen. So a face is beginning to form and Mom may not even know that baby is in there yet!

9.)

Fingerprints:

At 9-10 weeks a baby has

[fingerprints](#)

. Hmmm, would someone who isn't someone have unique fingerprints?

10.)

Sucking and Yawning

: At 9 1/2 weeks old an unborn baby can

[suck her thumb](#)

and yawn. Sounds like a human baby to me!

As much as the Culture of Death has tried to hide the humanity of the unborn, modern medicine has trumped their denials with the scientific facts. These developmental milestones of the unborn speak for themselves.

As the ugly beast that is Planned Parenthood continues to prey on these little ones, may we become their champions and shine the light of truth for all to see. Please be mindful of the fact that it's up to us to share

these facts with others. Don't hide the light under a bushel!

*Cursed be he that taketh gifts, to slay an innocent person: and all the people shall say:
Amen. ~Deut 27:25*

God will rain down judgement in His own time and in His own way. While we aren't privy to His greater plan, we can surely be workers in His vineyard. Let's concentrate of being witnesses of His Word. Let's become one with the children we strive to defend, coming to the Lord for His embrace.

Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such. ~Matthew 19:4

This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2015/08/developmental-milestones-10-amazing.html>
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The Assumption of Saint Joseph

August 15 is the date the Catholic Church in the United States celebrates the Assumption of Mary into Heaven Body and Soul. It was Pope Pius XII who on November 1, 1950 declared this to be a dogmatic teaching of the Church.

This teaching makes sense on so many levels that as early as the fourth century it was a popular belief among the faithful that Mary was brought body and soul into heaven upon her death.

- 1) She said, “Yes, let it be done to me according to thy will.”
- 2) She was the true Mother of God, Jesus Christ, the perfect son who loved her more than any son ever loved his Mother. Would He allow His Mother to remain in the tomb when He could do something about it?
- 3) She was Full of Grace, not subject to the stain of original sin, which results in death.
- 4) She was faithful to Him even as He hung on the cross. Then she continued His work by teaching the Apostles.

The Assumption of Mary makes sense. What about Joseph?

First – there is **NO** dogmatic proclamation about Joseph being assumed into heaven body and soul after his death. Beyond that, we have much to consider.

- I) Joseph was the true husband of Mary. Mary and Joseph loved each other with a perfect love.
- II) Joseph was selected by God the Father to be the guardian of Jesus and Mary. He fulfilled this duty completely.
- III) Jesus, Mary and Joseph, all three comprise the Holy Family. They are a unit.
- IV) We read in Matthew 27; vs 51 -53, “The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the city and appeared to many.

So we know from the Bible that some have already experienced the reuniting of their souls with their bodies. The Bible does not give us names but we can piously speculate and some of the Church Fathers and saints have done so.

- Saint Bernadine of Siena proclaimed that just as Jesus, Mary and Joseph labored on earth together



they now reign in splendor in Heaven Body and Soul.

- Saint Francis de Sales declared in a sermon, “St. Joseph is, therefore, in Heaven in body and in soul; of that there is no doubt.”

- Saint Leonard of Port Maurice whose preaching on the Immaculate Conception was instrumental in its eventual declaration stated that Saint Joseph was granted a special privilege when his body and soul were brought to heaven. For proof he references the book of Proverbs that states all her (Mary’s) household are “clothed with double garments.” Interpreters say that double garments signify the body and the soul.

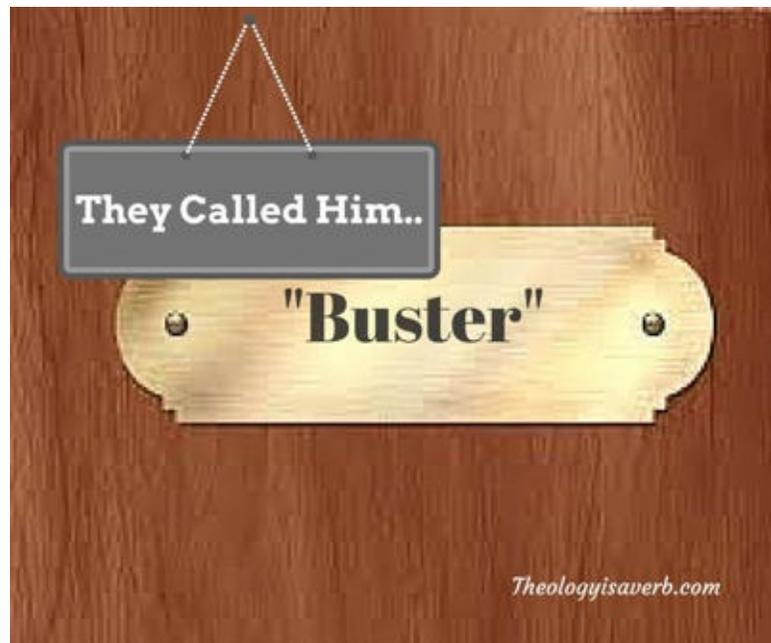
Consider the fact that Jesus cannot refuse his mother any reasonable request. When she was assumed body and soul into Heaven was she to be greeted by her husband’s disembodied soul? If this had occurred would she not ask her son to reunite Joseph with the body that had served both of them for so many years? Saint Augustine and other Church Fathers state it would be improper for Saint Joseph’s body to lie in the ground until the Second Coming given that no other person was as close to Jesus as Joseph was with the exception of his spouse Mary. If the bodies of unnamed saints were raised at the resurrection does it not make sense that the body of the man chosen by God the Father to be the guardian of His Son and his Mother would be among them?

If the body of Saint Joseph remained in the ground would it not long ago have become the object of veneration like so many other saints? Would not his bones be displayed for the edification of our souls? But no remains are available despite claims of where his tomb is located. The body of Moses, who appeared with Jesus on Mount Tabor in glorified form with Elijah, who was taken directly to Heaven, is missing. Is it missing or is it no longer on earth?

So we are left to use our capabilities and decide for ourselves. We cannot make a firm dogmatic proclamation as that is left to the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But just as the Assumption of Mary was piously believed by many for centuries before it was made firm, so too may the faithful pray that Joseph is soon honored with the same dignity.

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They Called Him [at Theologyisaverb]



Some years ago I met one of the few living witnesses, other than family, to the life and memory of my Grandpa Ferrell. Standing at an impressive 6’6” he easily towered over everything and yet the warmth of his smile and joyous presence elevated all surrounding. Donning a nicely pressed dress shirt under a pair of overalls, his attire was to be truly befitting of his personality. Brought up in a seemingly bygone age where there was both respect and appreciation for women, I had become his honored guest. And still, rather than displaced gestures of formality I was most graciously welcomed into his small room within the nursing care facility in which he lived.

I had not expected to be there that day, truly a tag along on vacation, I had no idea what God had lay in store. Since my Aunt’s passing, my Uncle Bob had found comfort in the ministry of visitation to the sick, home bound and elderly. Having reached his own rock bottom of loneliness and grief without the love of his life he had sought better meaning and purpose for this idle time. These visits had become the bright spots in his week and one could not help but notice the great care he would take to be presentable and on time.

Having served in this ministry with my husband, I too knew the immeasurable joy that comes from the very small gift of time spent. So, when he announced that he was departing our Sunday family meal to go out on ministry, I could not remain either. The Holy Spirit was tugging on me, telling me that there was somewhere else I was meant to be. **“Wait up, can I join you?”**, I called out. **“Yes... you want to come? Well, we need to hurry; I hate to keep them waiting”**.

Part of me felt like a kid again riding someplace fun with my Uncle Bob, a man who always made me laugh and had cared for me like a father. However, this was uniquely different. For, I wasn’t a child but an adult and I was choosing to spend this time together in service for others not for myself. Something inside too was reminding me of the sacredness of this moment, and the fact that I might ever be given this shared opportunity again. How true this was.



Within minutes of arriving, nurses and guests alike had made their way to saying hello to us, who all were very familiar with his visits. Clearly there was an extra spring in both our steps as we walked those halls, and stepped inside the home of each resident. Here, in the exchange of banter, stories and prayers, we were no longer considered as visitors but brothers and sisters in Christ. When one remarked how good it was to see someone of my age want to come, I felt sadness for this missed blessing that others have not known.



Buster Keaton

So it is that we made our way to “Buster” Kennedy’s room. To this day I am still not sure why he was called Buster. Perhaps I have thought it was in reference to Buster Keaton, a vaudeville film actor and comedian from the early 20’s known for not shying away from dangerous stunts or the quick punch line. Whatever the reason, that was the only name on the door, and I was intrigued immediately.

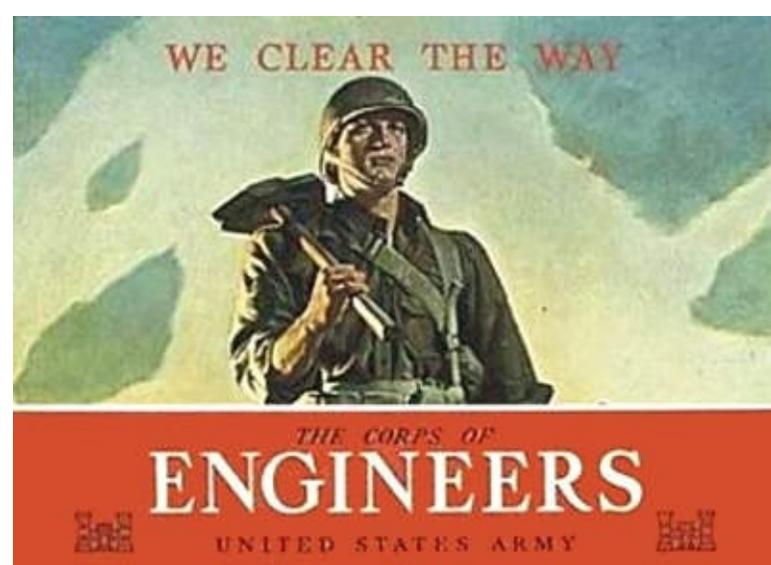


My Grandpa & me

As we stood there for a few seconds, with my Uncle Bob making introductions, I realized just how little I was in Buster's shadow. And still, that soon all disappeared as he leaned in looking me in the eyes, adding what a pleasure it was to meet Carl Ferrell's granddaughter. He knew me, I thought. Yes, I know I had never met him before, but in knowing my grandpa, in some sense he knew me. My grandpa, whose love of learning and knack for poetry and languages I inherited, had passed away when I was quite small. Oh, how I yearned to know more of my grandpa, who others saw him to be.



The Ferrells' 1950's (My mom far left)



Buster Kennedy, a combat engineer in the Army during World War II, had served in the Philippines as a young man. When he returned to the states, Buster found work as a driver for the cotton gin my grandpa managed in his summers apart from teaching. As he described my grandpa, Buster spoke of the kindness and compassion shown by my grandpa, and the honor and respect he had earned by all those who worked for him. "He was so smart, but always took the time



to explain things, the reasons why." As we talked, my heart soared and inwardly I hoped that I could be that friend to others that my grandpa was. That's when Buster stopped, and said what I had longed to hear, "Do you know how proud of you he must be?" Filled with emotion, and holding back the tears, I managed a feeble "Thank you so much, I have always prayed he would be".

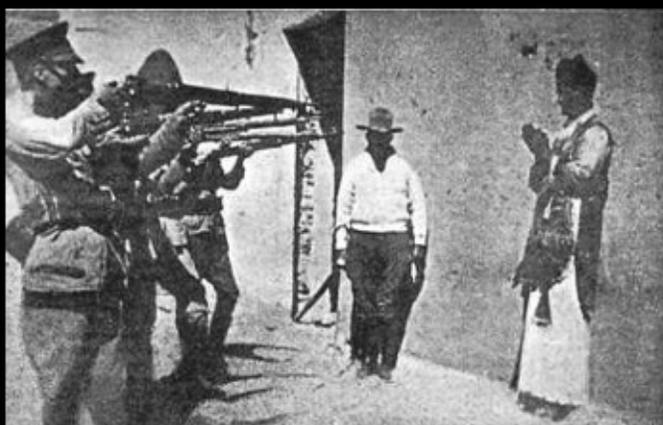
Thank you Father, for those you place in our path that remind us **who we are** and **whose we are**.
May we always seek to honor you with lives of love and compassion. **Thank you God, for
“Buster”**.

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Whence Comes Government Authority? [at Practical Distributism]

Whence Comes Government Authority?



David W. Cooney

The answer to this question is important for determining if there are any limits to the authority of government and, if so, what those limits are. It will help us to understand when those who wield the power of government have gone too far in the exercise of that power. It will help us to identify when groups of people actively seek to manipulate government to do things that are an abuse of its power.

One position is that, by establishing a government over themselves, the people automatically yield or even negate what authority they possessed for themselves. The government now rules supreme by virtue of its existence and essentially gets to decide what powers it has. This view also empowers the government to determine what rights belong to the people. It can grant (or revoke) rights with impunity without regard to what the people believe or want.

Another position is that all government authority originates from the people. Because government only truly exists by the consent of the governed, they are the source of its authority and actually determine what powers of authority the government possesses. This means that the people can grant or revoke any power of government. They could conceivably revoke authority to the point where government cannot effectively do anything it actually should do. Another implication of this is that the people could actually grant the government so much authority that it effectively becomes the type I described above.

A third position is a kind of variation of both of these. A government only truly exists if it is accepted by the people. This acceptance doesn't have to be universal. If the people, through active participation, complacent acceptance, or some degree of fear abide by a government's decrees, then they have accepted the government. Once a government exists, it continues to rule until it either collapses or is successfully overthrown. This is important to realize in the case of revolutions. Revolutionaries are called “unruly” because they refuse to be ruled by the established government. Does this lack of consent mean that the government ceases to exist? No. If there is no established government, there can be no revolt against it.

Therefore, even the revolutionaries give some form of acknowledgement to its existence. This, however, doesn't address what powers the government has.

This third position holds that government has certain powers by its existence, but those powers are defined by human nature and the needs of the common good of people living in community. The distinction between this and the first position is that this authority is not actually yielded by the people and the government has no true authority to determine what rights belong to the people. The distinction between this and the second position is that the people cannot legitimately grant powers to the government that interfere with the rights of the people, nor can they legitimately revoke powers that properly belong to the government. This is the case regardless of the form of government and the method of establishing particular laws. This even applies to multiple levels of government, where the different levels cannot legitimately interfere with the proper functions of the other levels. In determining exactly what those powers are, this position relies on the common good of people living in community, which can only be properly understood if we have an adequate understanding of human nature.

This contribution is available at <http://practicaldistributism.blogspot.com/2015/08/whence-comes-government-authority.html>

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A Mystical Maelstrom



Summary of the 4th Lenten Talk. SS Anselm and Cecilia, Holborn, London

When Christ came, it was to announce something that no other religion had ever taught, nor any other religion taught since. Namely that the ultimate power, the ultimate energy the infinite source of all creation, is not some impersonal super-power, but infinite *love*, no, infinite *loving*. Love cannot exist without a lover. Before time began, Christ was the recipient of his Father's love. He was inextricably caught up in a mystical maelstrom of loving that flowed to and fro between him and his Father from all eternity. When human beings love their love is both physical and spiritual, but God has no body, so he loves with his spirit alone. As a mark of respect therefore, tradition has taught us to call his loving, *The Holy Spirit*. Jesus not only came to tell us this, but to enable us to receive this loving for ourselves. So when, after the Ascension he returned to where he had enjoyed his Father's love before, he returned not just as a divine being, but as a human being too. Now his human being could, and did, become a transformer capable of converting the powerful voltage of infinite *loving* into human loving, in such a way that it could be transmitted to other human beings. When this love became embodied in human loving it manifested itself in a remarkable quality of loving that the world had never seen before. The loving was there for all to see in the way that they lived out what they believed and in the way that they were prepared to die for it. Pure unadulterated goodness attracts human beings as honey attracts bee's. In no time at all a pagan Roman Empire was transformed into a Christian Empire.

The Way the Truth and the Life

These first Christians knew that the love that poured out of the Risen Christ drew them all back into him, into a mystical family, to embark on a journey, back to the loving God, whom they had been taught to call Father, to whom all their prayer was ultimately directed. Their prayer was, like the prayer of Jesus himself perfectly embodied in the first of the New Commandments that Jesus had taught. In short every moment of every day of their lives was centred upon learning how to love God their Father, with their whole heart and mind, with their whole soul and with their whole being. When at the Last Supper Philip said to Jesus, "But Lord, show us the Father." Jesus answered, "Do you not know that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. To have seen me is to have seen the Father." The starting point for their journey

back home then, was to come to know and then to love Jesus, the Way the Truth and the Life.

From Meditation to Mystical Contemplation

In order to do this, they had learned the scriptures, or at least the new testament off by heart. Before the printing press people had prodigious memories. Greek bards, poets and professional story tellers knew the Iliad and the Odyssey off by heart, just as their Jewish counterparts knew the Old Testament off by heart too, for hundreds of years before they were written down. Their continual meditations on the life of Jesus were indelibly imprinted on their minds and imaginations, and in technicolor too, thanks to the vivid stories of those who had known Jesus personally both before and after the Resurrection. You could hear a pin drop as speakers would set the community alight with their reminiscence of the man born to be king. These readings and these stories would have filled them with a living and vibrant love of Jesus, and of all that he had said and done. Now love always wants to go further than mere knowledge, it wants to have communion, union, with the one who is loved. But as you cannot have union with a person who is dead and has been buried – the love for Jesus that was generated lifted them up and into Jesus, as he is now, after the Resurrection. Now it was in with and through him that they came to gaze up at the Father in a simple uncluttered prayer that was later called contemplation. Because this simple gaze upon God is unseen by onlookers it came to be called hidden, secret, or mystical contemplation.

The Making of a Mystic

The spiritual journey that leads a believer onward through meditating on Jesus, as he once was, to contemplating the God in with and through him, passed far more smoothly for the early Christians than for many of their descendents. The reason why, is because there was an abundance of wise fellow travellers, who had gone before them, who were able to guide them through the inevitable purification that all must undergo. For, sullied and selfish human beings can not be united with a perfect selfless human being. However, with the demise of mystical contemplation that followed in the wake of the ant-mystical witch-hunts after the condemnation of Quietism (1687), the supply of wise directors dried up. Suddenly there were very few who could guide beginners through the purification that must take place before obscure contemplation blossoms into pure contemplation and so the vast majority tended to give up, unable to go back to how they prayed before, and unable to go further. It was for this reason that I wrote the Peter Calvay Trilogy in three separate books before publishing them together in one volume called – ‘*Wisdom from the Western Isles – The making of a Mystic*’.

Now Here’s the Good News

Although the journey into God in prayer passes through many different phases it is essentially the same action. It involves trying to observe the first commandment, as Jesus himself did throughout his life on earth and after his Resurrection. I say *trying* because what ever means are employed to this end, we continually fail, as distractions repeatedly thwart the traveller. However, the good news is that St Teresa of Avila said you can’t actually pray without distractions! If you have no distractions, then you have either fallen asleep or are in an ecstasy! If you have fallen asleep you are doing nothing, and if you are in an ecstasy, God is doing everything. Prayer is in the middle, between the two where we daily try to keep turning back to God despite the distractions that would prevent us. Learning to pray then, learning to open ourselves to God, is like anything else, it needs practice and it takes time. There is no accomplishment of any worth that I know of, that you can attain merely by desiring to have it. We think nothing of spending hours a day, and working for years to get a degree, pass an examination or attain certain qualifications. And we quite rightly accept as a matter of course that the time we give and the energy we expend is

necessary. Somehow we seem to think that prayer is an exception, but believe me, it is not. Like any form of learning, responding to God's love is initially difficult and burdensome until, with continual practice, it becomes easier and easier until '*practice makes perfect*'. Practice eventually 'makes perfect' because as we turn to God we enable his love to enter into us, permeating our being with his being and fusing our acting with his.

Try, Try and Try again, but Try Gently!

However the way a person tries must demonstrate the deeply held conviction that success ultimately depends, not on their action, but on the action of God. If we find that we are getting angry, because we don't seem to be getting anywhere, it's because we think everything depends on us but it doesn't, it depends on God. When we have learnt this, and the patience that humbly awaits his action, then God's love will eventually begin to act within us like never before. That's why I like to qualify the word 'trying' with the word 'gently. The word 'gently' describes the way we ought to try, in other words, in such a way that we know that without God's action entering into ours, failure will be inevitable. Harness these two words together and you have what I think is an ideal definition of prayer as – '*gently trying to love God with our whole hearts and minds and with our whole strength and with our whole being*'.

Pray as You Can, not As You Can't

Now in order help a person to keep turning away from distractions and back to God, Christian tradition has devised many different forms of prayer. Now there are no perfect means of prayer. There are just different means to help a person to keep turning and gently opening their hearts to God. The important point to remember is that there is no magic formula, no infallible method or technique. There are just many of different ways of prayer to do one and the same thing. A means of prayer is good for you, if it helps you, here and now to keep turning your heart back to God. What might help you at the beginning of your spiritual journey may be of no use later on. What helps you in the morning might not help you in the evening. What helps you one minute might not help you the next. So please move from one method to another with complete freedom. Beware of the here today and gone tomorrow gurus, who have a fixation about a particular means of prayer, which they enjoin upon everybody without question as a 'panacea'. They know nothing about the spiritual life. If they did they'd know that methods of prayer change as people change and as prayer develops with the years. Remember the words of Dom John Chapman, 'Pray as you can, not as you can't'. However the first Christians found that meditating on the sacred scriptures was the preferred means of launching them into prayer as I have tried to show, and this should always hold pride of place. But through the years when reading the scriptures was impossible or frowned upon, devotional exercises or set meditations often took their place. People like my parents were able to reach the heights of mystical contemplation, without ever realizing it, through using the rosary.

Nevertheless, whatever forms of prayer a person chooses there will still always be distractions, so don't be discouraged. The journey into God can be described as a journey from selfishness to selflessness. When we become selfless then there's nothing to prevent God's love from totally possessing us. Because there was no selfishness in Jesus, he experienced mystical contemplation at every moment of his life on earth. In him there was never any barrier to the love that continually poured into him and which gave him such joy (Jn 15 :11-12). If we turn away from fifty distractions in fifteen minutes we are in fact performing fifty acts of selflessness. This is how a person can learn to become a more selfless human being and therefore more open to the love of God that found no barrier in Mary or Jesus. That is why *St Angela of Foligno* said that '*prayer is the school where we learn to love God*', and that's why *St Teresa*

of Avila said :- “There is only one way to perfection and that is to pray, if anyone points in another direction then they are deceiving you!” And they are aren’t they?

This contribution is available at <http://blog.davidtorkington.com/a-mystical-maelstrom/>
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A God Appointment



“Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” –Matthew 19:24

Today I had a God appointment. This morning as I was reading the morning office, I had a strong feeling that I should forego morning mass and go at noon time at St. Bernard’s, an inner city church where I work.

Why would I do that? I’m awake and have plenty of time to make it to morning mass. It must be that God wants me at noon mass for a reason. It must be a God appointment.

As I entered the church, I immediately spotted [Keith](#) sitting where I usually sit whenever I attend mass there. I met Keith a few years ago. At the time, he was homeless. We have kept in touch seeing each other from time to time.

As we made eye [contact](#) he smiled a huge smile. Keith is a slight black man with a deep love of God. As I made my way to the row and took a seat next to him, I noticed that he was praying the rosary, so I didn’t disturb him.

Is this the God appointment I thought? Am I here to help Keith? Perhaps he is homeless again or maybe he needs some money for food? Maybe God is calling me to minister to Keith?

After mass, we talked for nearly half an hour. Keith had quit his job after being continuously screamed at and made to feel worthless by two other employees. He wondered if he could find another. God has given Keith a hard life.

Why would our Lord put so many obstacles in his way? Why can’t Keith get a break?

And, I wondered why my life has been so blessed and easy.

I thought back to the gospel reading we had heard just a few minutes earlier. It’s the one about rich people having a harder time getting into heaven.

Keith had the answer as he offered, “God has given me a hard life so I will appreciate things. My room has no running water, so I appreciate water, soap, and shampoo. I appreciate a shower and a roll of toilet paper. I realize that everything I have is a gift from God. I am so grateful!”

“If you are not grateful for the things you have, what makes you think you will be grateful for the things you want.” –Tony Agnesi

Wow, I will never look at a bar of soap or a roll of toilet paper the same!

It begs the question, “What do I appreciate? What am I grateful for?” We spend so much time worrying about the things we want that we fail to appreciate the things we already have.

Debbie is upset with her 5 series BMW. She really wanted the 7 series. Keith appreciates soap.

Tom wanted the 60 inch flat panel television but could only afford the 47 inch. He finds it hard to appreciate the one he has. Keith is grateful for a roll of toilet paper.

Ryan finds it hard to love his 40 foot Sea Ray boat in a harbor of 50 foot plus yachts. Keith appreciates taking a shower.

No wonder Jesus warned about the difficulty of the rich entering heaven. It’s about gratitude, understanding that everything we have is from God. It’s about appreciating little things.

I am certainly not rich, but I have a job, a home with running water, and soap and toilet paper. I need to take a minute to be grateful for these things.

How about you? Are you grateful for little things? If you are it will certainly make getting into heaven easier.

I came to mass today expecting that God would use me to minister to someone and here Keith was ministering to me.

As we parted, I gave him some money for gasoline for his truck and food to get by and the promise that I would keep him in my prayers. He promised to pray for me as well.

As it turned out God had a better plan. He always does, if we just open ourselves to listening to Him. He might just have a God appointment waiting for you.

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Beth Moore, altar calls and 'war rooms' for Catholics [at Peace Garden Passage]

For years, I've been hearing, mostly from my Protestant friends, about the fabulous Beth Moore. "You must come see her," they said. And so, seeing how big their hearts were for Jesus and how much they'd been moved by Beth, and since Beth would be paying a visit to our town, and I'd written a preview about her visit and secured a complimentary ticket in the process, it was a done deal.

Happily, I set aside much of my weekend to sit in a huge auditorium we know here as the Fargodome to see what God had in store for me.



Beth calls her events Living Proof Live. She's been doing them now for 18 years, and each time she visits a city, she creates a unique presentation for that particular region. So even if you've heard Beth talk before, you've never heard THIS talk and never will again.

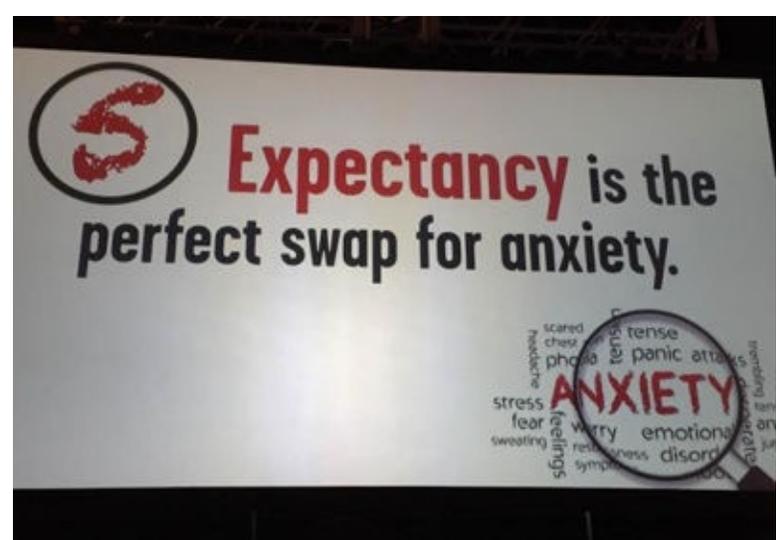
I arrived at the Fargodome alone, not sure if I'd have the chance to connect with friends who also had tickets but had gone separately. With nearly 5,000 women in attendance, I figured it would be impossible to find them.



But somehow, we managed to connect. And not only that, but God led me to the perfect seats three rows back from the front!

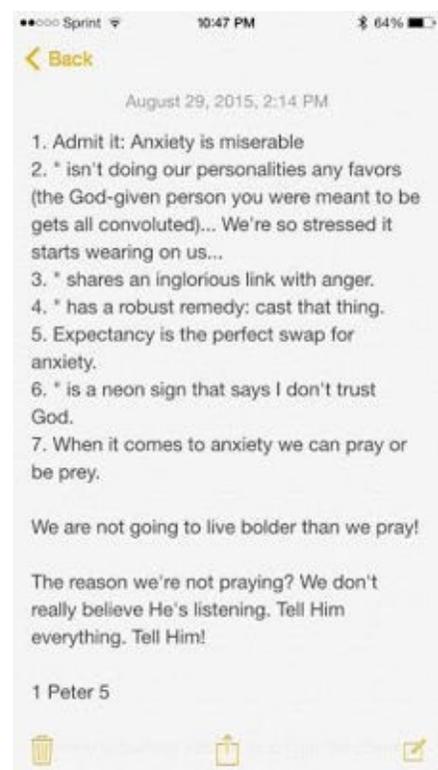


She always chooses a word to focus on, and her word for this weekend turned out to be: anxiety.



Beth admitted she'd lived with this word and its effects all her life, and she did not hold back. Before all of us, she laid bare her weaknesses and crosses, so we might know she was not so far removed from our lives.

Her sincerity and passion were palpable, and I was taking notes like a mad woman on my Iphone!



As a Catholic I'm always a little hesitant at such events, knowing the worship style likely will be a little more emotionally charged than what I'm accustomed to at daily or Sunday Mass.

Now I don't think there's anything wrong at all with getting excited for Jesus. I'm right there! It's just that Mass tends to be more on the reverent side – with good reason. What we do at Mass, we take very seriously. It is the Lord, after all, that we are preparing to bring into our very bodies. And if we are truly living in the light, we Catholics are feeling the joy deep down in our bones. It is a celebration, but also, a meal. We are getting fed so that we can go out and witness the truth of God to others. The emphasis may be different, but no less effective or worthy.

And while I did not raise my hands in the air, sway back and forth or utter any spontaneous “Amens!”...I was completely with everyone else, opening my soul to whatever God had called me there to learn. Just because I'm Catholic does not mean I'm above being ready for God to reach me wherever and however He wants.

After a rousing Friday night, we were back Saturday morning for more — this time in seats further back, which was fine with us. Time to let others experience the front. Beth went full steam ahead, going even deeper into her message this time. It was tremendous; I'm so glad I had a chance to experience it. I get now why Beth is so beloved. It would be hard not to love her.



In the middle of Saturday's event, Beth asked women stirred by the Holy Spirit who wanted to ask Jesus into their hearts to come up to the stage and be prayed over and guided into a new level of spiritual commitment — an altar call if you will.



I'm glad souls who have not been able to know Jesus had that chance. For the broken, it is a precious thing to be welcomed in this way. God will do whatever it takes to call His children to Him, and I will always celebrate hope and a changed heart. As I watched the women go up, I felt a contentment in my soul that Jesus is already within me. What a gift.

It wasn't but a couple hours later that I was at Mass in my own house of worship, and the parallel hit me as people began to walk up for the Eucharist. This was the Catholic altar call in action, and we experience this every Sunday, or even every day for those who attend daily Mass. Incredible!

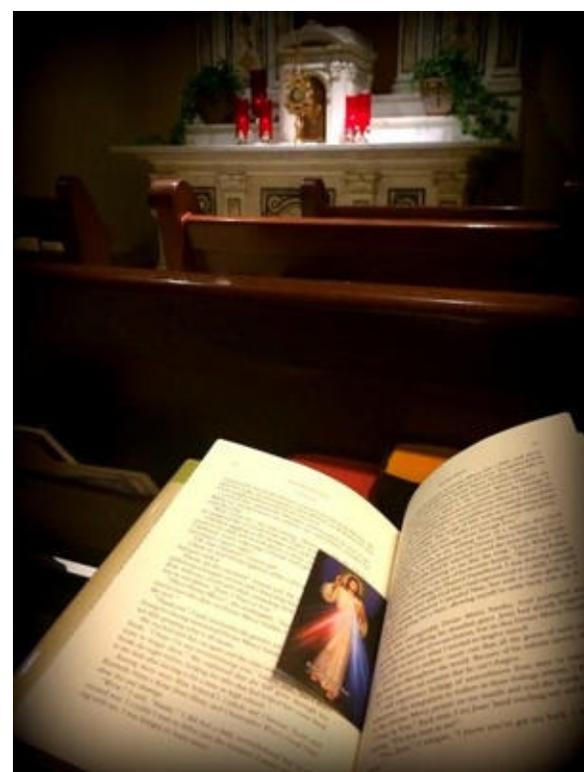


This time, I went up. This time, I said, “Yes,” and “Amen.” This time, I consumed the very body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ in an act of love and communion so intimate that it’s hard to fathom, truly. I think, because this is such a usual thing for us Catholics, we can easily take it for granted. But as a friend who is in the process of converting to the Catholic faith has reminded me, the Eucharist is an honor and privilege. We are so blessed to receive the Lord in this way; it is the closest we’ll get to Jesus here on earth!

As I experienced the weekend of Beth Moore and then Mass later, I felt gratitude, both for Beth’s inspiring words and spirit, and the richness of the Catholic faith as well. Though the Mass might not compare in terms of acoustics and the intensity of 5,000 women in an auditorium praising God together, the depth we experience at the Eucharistic table seems unparalleled.

To me it’s a win-win. For Catholics wary of attending such an event, I would say, “Go!” You will not lose a thing. On the contrary, you will probably find that the experience simply enlivens what you have already known and receive every Sunday at Mass. It does not replace, does not detract from, does not jeopardize the gifts that already exist. It is simply a refresher, a reminder of the awesomeness of God we experience in our own mighty corners.

As sort of a side note, I found it a neat confluence that the faith-based movie “War Room” opened this weekend, the same week one of its actresses, Beth Moore, visited Fargo. (Find [my review from a few weeks ago here](#).) And just like the altar call comparison, I discovered another Catholic likeness relating to the prayer room presented in this moving story about the power of prayer. Years ago, I discovered my own “war room” when I was introduced to the Adoration chapel of our church. This little chapel, where I regularly go to converse with the living God, sitting at his feet as a child in need of reprieve, serves as my “war room;” a place to bring my bring cares of the world and lay them directly in the hands of God.



The weekend filled me with gratitude, for my faith and the fact that I can share it vibrantly with my soul sisters of all stripes; for God's incredible love for me, which He began revealing to me at the beginning of my life; and also, for the Catholic version of altar calls and prayer rooms, where I first met the living God, who pulled me in closely and tightly and eternally.

Beth warned us it might not be easy to go back home and bring what we'd learned into our realities. But even before I'd arrived there, my sweet oldest daughter had texted that an early birthday present would be on my nightstand when I returned.



She didn't know it, but this is exactly what I needed to wrap a bow on this beautiful weekend and have confirmation that God wasn't about to stay behind at the Fargodome. No, he'd be right alongside of me, as

always, forever. What a blessing.

Q4U: Where is your war room? Where was your altar call? What signs has God given you that He's sticking around?

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2015/08/beth-moore-altar-calls-and-war-rooms-for-catholics/>
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Boldness for Christ [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

It happened during the noon hour. I was visiting a friend on board a navy destroyer and as we looked down at the hundreds of men and women milling about on the pier, I spotted Roger.

I called out to him. That was my first mistake.

When he didn't hear me, I shouted a little louder,

"Hey, Roger!" That was my second mistake. This time he heard me.

"Howdy, Rich!" he waved.

And then he did it. In front of all those people who didn't even know I existed . . . he did it. "Hey, Rich," he shouted. "Do you love Jesus?"

I cringed. Is he crazy! There had to be a hundred thousand sailors gathered along the pier side. And now, thanks to Roger's recklessness, every one of them stopped in their tracks and stared at me. Time stood still as they waited for my answer.

More than four decade have passed since that moment when the Lord taught me my first lesson in Christian boldness. I needed it back then, and I still need to be reminded of it now. As the world becomes increasingly resistant to the gospel, there is an ever urgent need for those who follow Christ to boldly and without embarrassment share their faith with others.

Over the years I've learned a person can be a bold and effective witness for Christ in many different and much less flamboyant way than shouting from the rooftops. Here are only a few suggestions:

1. Fall deeply in love with Jesus. We're never ashamed of the one we love. We're never embarrassed to

talk about our beloved. Sometimes it's all we can do to control ourselves so we do not bore others with talk about our love one. So fall in love with Jesus. Stay in love with Jesus. It will change your perspective about everything and everyone.

How does anyone fall deeply in love with Jesus? We could just as easily ask how does anyone fall in love with someone. The answer to both questions is the same: By spending time with the beloved – time in communication (or, prayer); Time meditating on His love letters to us (e.g. the books of the Bible); Time to be quiet with Him (like turning off the phone, the computer, and the television). The more time we spend with our beloved, the deeper our love grows – whether with another person, or with our God.

2. Know what you believe and why you believe it. This is perhaps most important for Catholics who grew up on the front pew, attended early catechism classes, received Confirmation as a teenager . . . and then set the spiritual cruise control for the next few decades.

I've heard it said Catholics read the entire Bible in a three year period as the Church wends its way through the Missal Years A, B and C. But the objective thinker soon realizes what we really get are snippets here and there of texts usually out of context. As St. Jerome counseled many centuries ago: "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ".

It's much easier to *know* your faith and to *share* your faith if you *know* the root of your faith -- which is God's word. See my 2+2=1+3 Bible reading suggestion at the end of this essay for some helpful suggestions.

3. Walk the talk. No amount of telling others about Christ can take the place of genuine humility, love, kindness, patience, self-control, and a holy lifestyle. If the walk doesn't fit the talk, there's little likelihood others will listen to what we have to say about our faith in Christ in the first place.

4. Invite someone to Mass with you. A casual conversation over a cup of coffee can develop into an invitation to attend Mass on the following Sunday. They may say, "No, thank you." Then again, they may say, "Sure, why not?"

5. Pray over food in restaurants. If we thank Him for our food in the privacy of our homes, why should we not thank Him in public places? If nothing else, it is a silent testimony to others that we are not ashamed of our faith.

I made a third mistake that day. Instead of shouting, "Hallelujah! Yes I do!" I answered Roger's question with a weak, "yes." Part of me wanted to take a bold stand for Christ, but a greater part was too embarrassed to do so before all those people.

I wish I could tell you that I've never missed an opportunity since then to be bold for Christ. But I've missed numerous such opportunities. Nevertheless, looking back with guilt is not the way to move forward. If you struggle with boldness as I sometimes still do, perhaps my few suggestions may help. We *can* move forward and fruitfully share the good news of Christ's love with others.

The 2+2=1+3 Bible Reading Plan:

If you read two chapters of the Old Testament each day (it takes about 10 minutes on average) and two chapters of the New Testament each day (another ten minutes on average) you will read the entire Old Testament once a year and the New Testament three times each year.

This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2015/08/boldness-for-christ.html>
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1P5 on female lectors: a response [at LMS Chairman]

I'm delighted that the issue of the roles of the sexes in the liturgy is getting more discussion. Just now the blog 1Peter5 has addressed the issue of

). While agreeing with the conclusion - female lectors are liturgically inappropriate - I want to disagree with the argument for that conclusion, made by the contributor 'Benedict Constable' (a

).

On female lectors specifically, I think a lot of traditional Catholics will say simply that we should not have lay lectors at all. The order of Lector, after all, is (historically) a clerical role. Here's a little trap: Pope Paul VI changed 'minor orders' (porter, lector, exorcist, acolyte) so the seminarians who receive them are no longer regarded as clerics, and they can also be given to ordinary lay men - but not women. Lay readers are almost never 'instituted Lectors', they are substituting for 'real' lectors, just as in principle Altar servers are substituting for 'real' acolytes. The argument has been made that because women substituting for non-clerical minor orders (which can only be held by men) is less obviously wrong than women substituting for clerical minor orders (which can only be held by men), then we should conclude that it is ok for women to be readers and servers alike. This argument comes down to hair-splitting legalism, something surprising common with liberals when it suits them. Anyway, (male) lay servers are clearly practically necessary, but lay lectors are not, never have been, and never will be. The endless practical, pastoral, and theological problems lay readers raise are for nothing. Just stop it. Let the priest read the Epistle: isn't that a simple solution?

'Benedict Constable' (BC) seems too caught up in the Novus Ordo way of doing things to consider this response, but the real objection I have to his treatment is something else. His argument is that the role of proclaiming the Scripture is a masculine role; the receptivity of the congregation to the Word is a feminine role. Ergo, it is symbolically appropriate that readers be exclusively male.

To the obvious rejoinder that it would be seem therefore to be symbolically appropriate for members of the congregation to be exclusively female (an ideal many

Novus Ordo

congregations do indeed approach), he writes this, in a follow-up post, as follows:

as many saints and theologians have maintained, all Christians are, before God, symbolically in the role of bride and mother. Creatures are fundamentally receptive; and the Church is a bride, of which all of us are members (cf. Ephesians 5). Now, naturally, this symbolism is not going to be pressed into the faces of men in such a way that they are made to feel uncomfortable. For men, we need the language of fighting like soldiers, being carpenters and guardians, etc. But still, our fundamental identity as a Christian is one who receives grace and is made fruitful by it. This is why the Blessed Virgin Mary is not just a model for women but for all Christians as such.

It appears that BC's feet are getting a bit cold even as he types out this paragraph. We don't want to press this idea into men's faces, eh? I should think not. Something is going awry here.

The idea that that 'our fundamental identity as Christians' should be seen through the bridal metaphor is an idea with a certain currency in the tradition, but it is a problematic one and needs to be treated with caution. An author I've discussed at some length who addresses this historically is Leon Podles in his book

The Church Impotent

; I summarise his argument pertinent to this issue in this way, in this

[old post of mine](#)

. I quote:

1. Bridal mysticism. In the Song of Songs and in St Paul (and elsewhere in both Testaments), we hear of Israel/ the Church being described as the Bride, and God or Christ as the Bridegroom. St Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) applied the idea differently: that one could think of the soul as the beloved/ bride and Christ the lover/ bridegroom; the feminine Church community, represented by Our Lady, became a model for the individual Christian. The immense influence of this idea meant that popular devotion began to suggest that a feminine role vis-a-vis God is appropriate to every Christian. This idea is a complete reversal of the attitude of Scripture, which describes the individual Christian as taking on the role of a son (and heir) of the heavenly Father, the Christian as a soldier, and as imitating Christ. The central metaphors of the spiritual life flipped, in this way, from male to female.

2. Aristotelianism. Aristotle's metaphysical system of form and matter identifies the female with the material, and the male with the formal. The feminine tends, then, to be associated with the passive and receptive; the male with active and the giving of form or structure. In the spiritual realm, it is easy to see how this combines with bridal mysticism to suggest that because Christians should be receptive to God's grace and to God's re-forming of them, that means they need to be passive and in that sense feminine. Podles points out that this causes problems for both sexes. Passivity, he points out, is not the central feminine trait: rather, that is connected with the bonds of community. Our Lady's response to the Annunciation was not to lapse into passivity, but to get onto a donkey and make a long and potentially dangerous journey to reinforce the bonds linking her and her unborn Child with St Elizabeth and the unborn St John the Baptist.

I have a number of corrections and reservations to make about Podles' argument, which can be seen in the

[subsequent post in the series](#)

, but on these two points I think he is clearly onto something.

BC's expression of his argument illustrates the problem. Notice, first, how he adopts the idea of female receptivity as if it is to be found in the scriptural passages he cites. But it isn't, for the simple reason that St Paul was writing 11 centuries before Aristotle's unfortunate analogy between sexual reproduction and hylomorphic metaphysics started to have an influence on Catholic theology.

And notice, second, how he slides, apparently without even noticing, between talking about the community as female ('the Church is a bride, of which all of us are members'), to talking about the individual Christian as female ('all Christians are, before God, symbolically in the role of bride and

mother'), as if the scriptural use of the first idea somehow gave support to the second.

This is not to say that bridal mysticism, supercharged with Aristotelian metaphysics, is incompatible with the Faith. It is just to say, what should be obvious, that is not part of the Faith. It is not fundamental, and should not be used as an interpretive lens for understanding the theological sources of Scripture and the Liturgy. The fundamental metaphor between the sexes and the spiritual life, which is rooted in Scripture and reflected in the Liturgy, is of God as Father, Christ as Son, the Church as Bride and Mother, and Christians as Sons, Heirs, and Brothers of Christ. (The Old Testament writers are equally comfortable talking about Israel as a son, as a matter of fact.) Christ taught us to pray Our Father, not 'Our Husband'. If the latter idea, in fact, does not put your teeth on edge, you need a new set.

This plays out in terms of liturgical roles in the way described in the

[FIUV Position Paper on the Service of the Altar](#)

, paragraph 8:

The analogy of Bridegroom and Bride has its corollary in the relationship between the clergy and the Christifideles, and between the Sanctuary and the Nave of a church building. On the first, Bl. Pope John Paul II cited *Mulieris Dignitatem* in his ruling on the impossibility of the ordination of women. If women are able to represent most perfectly the Church as Bride, it is men who are called to represent Christ, particularly in his priestly role. In recognition of the priest's role in *persona Christi*, the priest's collaborators and assistants, his living tools, so to speak, are to be understood as being on the same side of the analogy vis-à-vis the Christian faithful, and this is underscored by the long tradition of seeing the sanctuary of a church as representing the heavenly realm, and the nave the earthly one. As the scholar Fr Michel Sinoir writes:

"The [Eastern] iconostasis symbolically is Heaven, and its liturgy, which anticipates Heaven, is celebrated only by members of the clergy. The nave is symbolically the earth, the abode of men and women who are preparing themselves to enter into Glory. This is by analogy the same mystery as that of Christ-the-Bridegroom, renewing in the sanctuary His sacrifice, which is gratefully received by the Church-His-Bride who is still in pilgrimage here below."

The importance of the Sanctuary as a space reserved for men is a theme developed by

[Fr Brian Harrison](#)

in his treatment of Altar Servers; he points out that even as late as the 1975 General Instruction women were forbidden from entering the sanctuary, and as a result it is envisaged that female readers would have to read from outside it.

To summarise, just as I reject the argument for head-coverings based on 'feminine holiness' used by

[Alice von Hildebrand](#)

, I don't want to help myself to arguments based on 'feminine receptivity' and 'we're all women in the eyes of God' against female lectors. The correct approach, in my view, and the Scriptural approach, is to say that the female represents the community, the Church, and the male represents Christ. Christ and the

Church are joined spousally, and this connection is one of authority on his part and obedience on hers. Individual Christians are members of the community, the Church's children. Individual women represent the Church as a community more perfectly than men; men represent Christ more perfectly than women. That doesn't mean that men are women or blushing brides anything else which might make your skin crawl. Rather:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law: That he might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father. Therefore, now he is not a servant, but a son. And if a son, an heir also through God.

Galatians 4:4-7

This contribution is available at <http://www.lmschairman.org/2015/08/1p5-on-female-lectors-response.html>
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There Are No Coincidences, Even On Vacation [at FranciscanMom]

Last week my family and I went on vacation to Myrtle Beach, SC, where this was the view from my office, located on the 19th-floor balcony of a high-rise hotel:



I could sit and look at that all day. And a lot of the time, I did exactly that.

We arrived late Saturday evening and after unpacking, got set to find a church for Mass the next morning. It made sense to go to the closest one after spending many more hours in the car than we'd planned (traffic on I-95 in Virginia was terribly slow. For hundreds of miles.)

After Mass, we were handed a bulletin on the way out, and I idly scanned it on our way back from church. That's when I saw a familiar name in the list of announced Masses for Monday morning.

The Mass was for one of my great-aunts. She had moved to Myrtle Beach a few years ago to be near her only daughter.

She'd passed away the year before at the age of ninety-something, predeceased by her husband and daughter. Another aunt (my mom's sister) had made a few trips to SC during Aunt Marge's final illness to help arrange things, so I texted my cousin to tell her about finding Aunt Marge's name in the bulletin. My cousin said that one of the parish priests was faithful in visiting Aunt Marge in the nursing home, praying with her and giving her the Sacrament of the Sick. After Aunt Marge's death, my mom's sister sent a donation to the parish in gratitude. She received a note of thanks that stated that the priest had dedicated that donation to several Masses for the repose of Aunt Marge's soul.

Hubs and I made sure to get up early the next day so we could attend that Mass for Aunt Marge.

What are the odds that we'd have chosen that vacation destination, putting us closest to that church, during that very week? We couldn't have planned it better if we'd tried.

Good thing we weren't the ones with the plan.

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Contemporary Catholic Fiction-Writers

Here are five of my favorite contemporary Catholic authors, listed in the order in which I “discovered” them. (I’ve left off big-name authors such as Dean Koontz since it’s doubtful he needs a promotional boost from my humble blog.)

–1–

Regina Doman



Regina Doman

Regina Doman is known for her series of fairy tale novels, which I found at my local library when I was thirsting for contemporary fiction by Catholic authors. My favorite in the series is [Waking Rose](#), a retelling of Sleeping Beauty. You can check out her other books and those she publishes at [Chesterton Press](#).

–2–

Ellen Gable



Ellen Gable

I read most of [Ellen Gable's](#) novels before I'd begun writing in earnest, long before she became my publisher. My favorite is her most recent book, the historical novel [A Subtle Grace](#). Find Ellen's other books and those she publishes at [Full Quiver Publishing](#).

-3-

Erin McCole Cupp



Erin McCole Cupp

[Erin McCole Cupp's *Don't You Forget About Me*](#) is a unique, fun read. (I'm growing a little impatient for the sequel but know she's hard at work on it). Erin's smart and self-deprecating sense of humor shines both in the book and at [her blog](#).

Leslie Lynch



Leslie Lynch

[Leslie Lynch's](#) independently-published novels are gems. Her stories of healing and redemption are gritty and moving. I enjoyed reading her Appalachian Foothill Series in its entirety. My favorite book is [Opal's Jubilee](#).

Theresa Linden



Theresa Linden

I “met” [Theresa Linden](#) through the [Catholic Writers Guild](#) fiction critique group. While only one of her novels is presently available ([Chasing Liberty](#)), I’ve read some of her other manuscripts, and she is a creative, talented writer. My favorite may be the yet-to-be-released second book in the Liberty Trilogy, *Testing Liberty*.

I want to make special mention of three other authors whose work I’ve enjoyed: **Michelle Buckmann**, **Corinna Turner**, and **Stephanie Landsem**. (Stephanie writes biblical fiction, but it’s too good to leave out.) I’ve (so far) read single books by each of them, respectively: [Rachel’s Contrition](#), [I Am Margaret](#), and [The Well](#) – and look forward to more!

###

This contribution is available at <http://carolynastfalk.com/2015/08/26/5faves-contemporary-catholic-fiction-writers-edition/>
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Is It OK to Be a Devout Catholic and Have Nice Things? [at A Catholic Newbie]



**Is it OK to be a
Devout Catholic
and Have
Nice Things?**

*Catholic Newbie
explores...*

www.CatholicNewbie.com

As I enter into my third year as a Catholic, one of the issues I've yet to find peace with is my "stuff" and whether I'm truly living the Catholic life as Jesus wanted while sitting in a nice house in a suburban neighborhood with plenty of food to eat, enough money to clothe my family and indulging in Starbucks Frappuccinos more than I should. I think of Mother Teresa and how far away I am...

Today's Gospel reading (Matthew 19: 16-22) about the young man who asked Jesus how he could gain eternal life drives the point home even further. Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and give them to the poor and the young man went away sad because he had so many "things." This also turned out to be the discussion last night at my women's Christ Renews His Parish meeting. Clearly, God has something to say to me — and possibly you since you are reading this post — on this topic ;-).

Over the weekend, while reading our local diocesan newspaper, [The Catholic Moment](#), I had a "light bulb" Catholic moment about "stuff." They write that Pope Francis said that the problem isn't the having of money, but rather when money "owns" us and when we place our own desire for money and wealth over the welfare of others.

They went on to give a great metaphor, saying: *"We have to surrender the title to all that we have and all that we are. God holds the title, but still allows us to live in the house."* Lightbulb on!

This is precisely what I agreed to do when going through [Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary](#) two years ago. I agreed, and still verbalize this daily, to give Mary the right to "all my goods — both spiritual and physical." I am giving her charge of all my "stuff" and agreeing that I will accept whatever goods she agrees for me and my family to have — whether much, enough or little. And I'm here to tell you that Mary

has been very generous, though she has asked us to do without at times, as well.

This also speaks to a past article I wrote asking the question: [Are Catholic bishops living too lavishly?](#)

It seems to me there are several “tests” you could give or questions you could ask yourself to see if indeed money “owns” you, as Pope Francis said, and if it is more of an “idol” to you:

- **Are you able to easily let go of things, even sentimental things, realizing you cannot take these items with you to heaven?** A friend from my CRHP group told us last night how when her father was at the end of his life, she and her siblings were shocked at how his “stuff” fit in 1 shoebox. We truly can’t take it with us!
- **Do you help people financially when they come to you in need or you see them in need?**
- **Do you contribute something financially to the causes you believe in?** Are these line items at the top of your budget to come out first?
- **Do you have just one or two of each thing you truly need or do you have a stockpile of sheets, shoes or purses, for example?**
- **Do you mostly buy things out of need or mostly for pleasure?**
- **If you had to, could you live the simple life of a monk or nun in one room with only the basics — without being an ogre ;-)?**

The young man in the Gospel did not have the right attitude toward money because he went away sad to lose his “stuff,” rather than being open to what Jesus asked him to do with it.

I think the bottom line here, which was a revelation to me, is that it’s OK to have nice things and to have money. Instead, it’s more about your attitude toward it and **truly** relinquishing your right to these things and giving them to God for his distribution. If money controls you, you are a slave to it. If God controls it, you are simply doing God’s will.

Thoughts?

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicnewbie.com/is-it-ok-to-be-a-devout-catholic-and-have-nice-things/>
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Redemptive Suffering [at On the Road to Damascus]

My mother is at the end of her life. She smoked menthols for fifty-two years and that has decimated her lungs. She has emphysema and chronic obstructed pulmonary disease (COPD). Her lungs are only functioning at around 10%. She is slowly suffocating to death. Death by suffocation is what effectively happens to a person when they are crucified. It is a slow, painful, and an extremely scary way to die.

This is wrapping up a life of suffering for my mother. Included on her resume is being impaled on a picket fence, being thrown from a car at seventy miles an hour, surviving both uterine cancer and leukemia, losing two fingers in a punch press, suffering a major head injury in a fall that required brain surgery that had her in a coma for twenty-eight days, and a variety of other things. My mother is a survivor, but a survivor who is running out of time.

Why was my mother made to suffer? If God is all powerful and all loving why would he permit those he claims to love suffer? Why doesn't he just put an end to it? This is one of the most asked questions by Christians and one of the numerous excuses an atheist uses to support his disbelief.

One of the most common answers to this question is that God allows suffering to bring about the greater good, whether or not we can see or even understand what that good may be. That answer is of little comfort to those who are suffering or to those who have lost someone close to them.

Suffering was not God's plan for mankind. God made man perfect, in a perfect home, without pain, hunger, or suffering. When man voluntarily turned from God and sinned suffering and death were the consequences. It wasn't God's doing but our own. Still, if God is all powerful he could end suffering anytime he chooses. Why doesn't he do so? The answer is love.

If you want to know what real, true love - Agápe, looks like just look at a crucifix.



“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” – John 3:16

Jesus suffered immensely and died an agonizing death on the cross for the love of us. If God suffered so greatly for us how can we complain when we are made to suffer for him? Why is there suffering in this world? It is so that love can exist. Things given for free have little value to the recipient. For love to freely exist and have meaning there has to be other choices.

Think of the nineteen year old starlet who marries the ninety year old billionaire. She tells the world that she married him because she loves him and would have done so even if he were the poorest man in the world. In reality the starlet couldn't have possibly loved the man because he gave her everything her heart desired at no cost to herself. God allows suffering so that we can love him. If he gave us everything with no cost we couldn't possibly love him. We demonstrate our love for him when we accept our suffering and do not turn away from him. When someone who is suffering turns their back on the Lord they don't love him.

God - If there was nothing in it for you would you still love me?

Man – Nothing?

God – Nothing.

Man – Not even eternal life?

God – Nothing. Not eternal life. Not pleasure. Nothing.

Man – Yes, you are my God. I love you.

At least that is what God desperately wants to hear from us. But like so many who gathered for a free meal during Jesus ministry when he offers himself as true food and true drink we leave disappointed. Many abandon God at the first twinges of suffering. If there really was a God he wouldn't let me suffer like this.

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” – Matthew 16, 24 & 25

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.” – St. Paul, Colossians 1:24

What could possibly be lacking in the suffering of Christ? Quite simply – our participation.

The Catholic Church believes in redemptive suffering. The suffering of Jesus redeems not only us but suffering itself and opens up the possibility that we can share in his redemptive work when we bear our suffering with the dignity he bore his for us. When we offer up our suffering to him, no matter how insignificant our suffering may be, we share in his redemption of all mankind. The root of suffering is divine love and love is never wasted with God.

My father bore suffering better than anyone I have ever met. By the time he was forty-two he was completely disabled with debilitating rheumatoid arthritis and crippling heart disease. As the arthritis ate away at his joints day to day tasks went from difficult, to painful, to impossible to perform. Eventually things progressed to a point that he could do little more than sit in his favorite chair and watch his

beloved Cubbies play baseball.

And yet, through it all, it was hard to tell how much this man suffered. He always seemed in a good mood, ready to put a smile on someone's face, give them a good laugh, and he made sure they knew just how special they were, especially to him. He talked to everyone, children and old folks alike, always with genuine love in his voice. He was missed by every doctor, nurse or care taker who got the privilege to care for him.

He bore his suffering with love and love is never wasted with God. This is how we are called to bear our suffering - with dignity. We are not called to do this alone. Even Christ could not bear his cross alone. Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus carry his cross when he was too weak to do so himself. Jesus now stands by our side to help us when we are too weak to bear our crosses. All we have to do is be humble enough to ask for help.

Jesus come to my assistance. Lord make haste to help me. In you I put my trust, my life, and my love.

Please pray for peace and comfort for my mother and our family as we face the difficult time ahead.

This contribution is available at <http://damascusroadsojourner.blogspot.com/2015/08/redemptive-suffering.html>
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Standing with the Crucified [at walk the way]

Do you want to be totally united to the Crucified?
If you are serious about this,
you will be present, by the power of His Cross,
at every front, at every place of sorrow,
bringing to those who suffer, healing and salvation.
St. Teresa Benedicta a Cruce

Today is a day filled with challenges for me.



Nagasaki crucifix

On August 9, 1945, the US dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki and used the Catholic Cathedral as a point to help them determine the spot to drop the bomb.

Nagasaki was one of the great center of Catholicism in Japan, even preserving the faith after all the priests had left. On the day of the bombing, Catholics were gathered in the cathedral at Mass. There and throughout the city many innocent people were killed.

On August 9, 1943, Franz Jägerstätter, a Austrian peasant, was beheaded in Germany as “an enemy of the state.” Blessed Franz refused to serve in Hitler’s army because of his faith – despite the advice of priests, and bishop, and many others. He saw Nazism as a “train headed for hell” and refused to have part in it. For that decision of conscience he was executed by the state.

On August 9, 1942, Sister Teresa Benedicta a Cruce, Teresa blessed by the Cross, was killed in the gas chamber at Auschwitz. Born Edith Stein, a German Jew and philosopher, she became a Catholic after reading St. Teresa of Avila and later joined the Carmelites. She was sent from her Cologne to a Dutch convent for her safety. But after the Dutch bishops and other religious leaders spoke up against Nazi racial policies, she and her sister were deported to Auschwitz. Though she had a chance to escape to Switzerland, she refused to flee but sought to be with her people.

On August 9, 1991, two Polish Conventual Franciscan Friars Michał Tomaszek and Zbigniew Strzałkowski were killed by the Sendero Luminoso in the Andean parish where they ministered to and with the poor. As Father Michal (Miguel), wrote to a friend a few months before his killing: “You are not where you are now to understand the world, but to understand what the will of God is for you. It is a matter of being where you are supposed to be.”

Recalling these persons and these events, I feel a renewed calling to be a witness to the Crucified Christ and the crucified peoples of the world – by being here in their midst. May God give me the courage and gentleness to persevere.

The quotation from St. Edith Stein comes from Robert Ellsberg’s *All Saints*.

This contribution is available at <http://walktheway.wordpress.com/2015/08/09/standing-with-the-crucified/>
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CHRN Evangelizes Without Talking "Religion" [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]



W

hat does Christian faith have to say

about meteorology? Does *Ghostbusters* echo a comedy of humors? How can Old English poetry lead us to a new perspective on Jesus' Passion?

The

[Christian Humanist Radio Network](#)

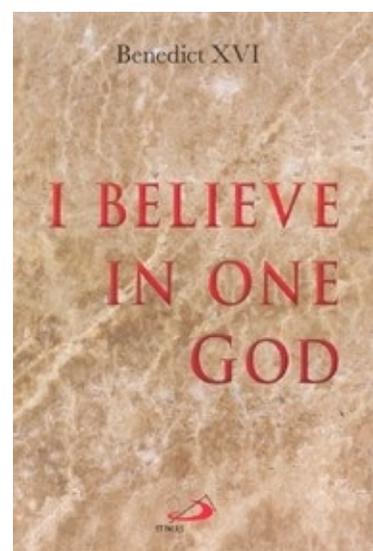
hosts a series of podcasts with a variety of scholars exploring their fields from a Christian perspective.

In 2009, three friends from the English literature graduate school at the University of Georgia launched the "Christian Humanist Podcast," "a weekly conversation on philosophy, theology, literature, art, and other things that human beings do well." With topics ranging from Christmas television specials to Old English poetry to the best elements of Contemporary Christian Music they analyze and enjoy biblical theology, classical literature, and popular culture as both Christians and scholars.

In 2013, two new shows launched. Victoria Reynolds Farmer and a rotating set of panelists began "The Christian Feminist Podcast" to examine feminist history and gender relations in contemporary culture and the church. The entire team collaborates on long-form interviews with authors discussing their recent books on "Christian Humanist Profiles."

A meteorologist, psychologist, and physicist collaborate to explore faith and the natural sciences on “The Book of Nature” podcast which launched in the fall of 2014. Historian Chris Gehrz of Bethel College recently finished the first season of “The Pietist Schoolman” which explores the character and purposes of Christian higher education, with particular emphasis on colleges rooted in the Pietist theological tradition. Danny Anderson of Mount Aloysius College has guest hosted on “The Christian Humanist Podcast” and plans to launch a cultural criticism program called “The Sectarian Review” in September 2015.

As I was finishing Pauline Cooperator formation in 2014, I was thinking about how to participate in some media-related ministry. I had enjoyed listening to the “Christian Humanist Podcast” for some time, and fired off an email asking the hosts if I could somehow participate in their project. I didn’t think there would be a way for me to contribute, but it didn’t hurt to ask. They invited me to coordinate their interview program, “Christian Humanist Profiles.” I serve as the main point of contact with publishers and authors in order to request interviews and publicize the interview when they are released. We have now released forty-eight episodes on the interview show, ranging from the vocation of Christian intellectuals, the core of the Gospel message and the profoundly Catholic vision of JRR Tolkien.



We also publish written book reviews on our blog when authors are unavailable for recorded interviews.

For example, earlier this year Nathan P. Gilmour, Protestant professor, podcaster, and blogger, enthusiastically reviewed the Society of St. Paul’s book by Benedict XVI,

[*I Believe in One God.*](#)

His

[opening sentence:](#)

“Believe it or not (and if you know me at all, you’ll believe it), I did ask Kristen, our press liaison, to request a podcast interview with the Pope Emeritus. The response from the publisher, in Kristen’s words, was, ‘You’re kidding, right?’”

At the beginning of the 20th century, Father Alberione received a vision for a new congregation to spread the Gospel through the most effective means of mass media. In the first century, St. Paul took advantage of the newly created Roman road system which made travel easier than ever before and sent letters to nurture new Christian communities around the world. In the twentieth century, Father Alberione sought to use technological developments to spread the Gospel through publishing, films, and radio. The dawning of the Internet age provides possibilities that Father Alberione could never have imagined. With bargain Internet hosting and \$25 microphones, the Christian Humanist Radio Network reaches thousands of listeners spanning the globe.

Dutch statesman and neo-Calvinist

theologian Abraham Kuyper

famously said, “There is not one square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, ‘This is mine!

This belongs to me!’” In his charismatic history of the Pauline Family,

Abundantes divitiae gratiae suae,

Fr. Alberione puts it like this: “Imbue all thought and human knowledge with the Gospel. Don’t talk only about religion but talk about everything in a Christian way...in accordance with reason subordinate to faith: [this is what] the Pauline Family must give” (n. 87). As the School of Jesus the Divine Master includes all of creation, the Christian Humanist Radio Network hopes to study every square inch of creation, and by doing so ultimately draw closer to the God who created it all.



Kristen Filipic has been involved with the Pauline family since 2010 and completed the Cooperator Formation program in 2014. She is a native Midwesterner but has lived in Boston for the last twelve years, where she works as a civil rights attorney. She serves as a lector and a Bible study leader in her home church.

The Little Heart Kept Beating - Beating, Beating, Beating: Then it Stopped [at It Makes Sense to Me]



IT MAKES SENSE TO ME

By Larry Peterson

(As the parent of a daughter who was stillborn on September 6, 1978, I am fully cognizant of the LIFE that was lost to us and her siblings. My wife (who passed away from cancer in 2003) almost died that day in a valiant attempt to get to a Catholic hospital so the baby might be baptized. That is a story for another time but, as a man, I understand the insanity of treating tiny people in-utero as nothing more than "products of conception". Trust me--they are not. They are people, just like us--only a lot smaller.

~~~~~

The reports about Planned Parenthood's calculating, impersonal and clinically callous disposal and sale of aborted baby parts is so hard for me to fathom. Many folks feel as I do, that these actions are simply heinous. Now, with the latest revelations of Planned Parenthood's actually selling the complete cadavers of aborted babies for profit, we may have equaled the Nazis in an unparalleled cold-hardheartedness. In fact, since these tiny people have no-one to save them once they enter the sanitized and legalized death camps spread all across America, maybe we have become the most heartless and ruthless generation of all time.

What is so astonishing is that so many folks do not see anything wrong with participating in a holocaust that has claimed more than fifty million lives. Many of these people seem to be no different than me. They work, pay their bills, mow their lawns, and celebrate Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July. Yes, and they go to church and pray too.

There are many notables among them including a sitting president, the leading Democratic presidential contender and many more "upstanding" people such as the former Speaker of the House, and the former Senate Majority leader. There are academicians, professional people, doctors, lawyers, even clergy and many others. The proof and fact of LIFE in-utero is all around them yet they deny it. I do not understand.

They may look like me and walk like me and laugh like me and like pizza like me but none of them are like me. For I am sickened by the actions that they condone. Yet they consider these same actions as a "constitutional right". Maybe they need to listen to a non-American, Stojan Adasevic, a Serbian abortionist responsible for over 48,000 abortions and the 'regular' work day that changed his life

forever. These are a few of his words (the rest are in the video trailer, The First Hour, and the following [link](#)

.)

*"As I pull out the mess, thinking it will be bone fragments I lay it on the cloth, I look, and I see a human heart, contracting and expanding and beating, beating, beating. I thought I would go mad. I can see the heartbeat is slowing, ever more slowly, and more slowly still, until it finally stops completely. Nobody could have seen what I had seen with my very own eyes, and be more convinced than I was--- I had killed a human being.*

### [Stojan Adasevic](#)

became the first abortionist in communist Yugoslavia to refuse to do abortions. His salary was cut, his daughter fired from her job and his son refused admission to the university. Most of us never had to destroy a child, no less 48,000 or more, before realizing we were murdering children. But in the war being waged by Satan, the master of lies and deception, sometimes his influence is so great and the deception so pronounced it takes many years of flowing graces from God before that door is cracked open and the light begins to enter. In Stojan's case the light was brought to him personally by

### [St. Thomas Aquinas](#)

. Click on Stojan's name and read his story.

Some information for this story was from LifeSiteNews (Abortion; August 5,2015 by Sarah Terzo)and I thank them for giving me permission to reference it.

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This contribution is available at [http://www.slipperywillie.blogspot.com/2015/08/the-little-heart-kept-beating-beating\\_8.html](http://www.slipperywillie.blogspot.com/2015/08/the-little-heart-kept-beating-beating_8.html)  
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## Dew Drop In [at Smaller Manhattans]



Here's a favorite bit from Isaiah 45:

“I am the LORD, there is no other.

I form the light, and create the darkness,  
I make weal and create woe;  
I, the LORD, do all these things.

Let justice descend, you heavens, like dew from above,  
like gentle rain let the clouds drop it down.  
Let the earth open and salvation bud forth;  
let righteousness spring up with them!  
I, the LORD, have created this.”

I like occasions when Scripture refers to rain or dew: I imagine both precipitations would figure prominently in the imagination of anyone living in an arid land. And I'm guessing, but I bet anytime a prophet figuratively referred to rain or dew, his hearers would reflect on this bit of Exodus:

“Then the LORD said to Moses: I am going to rain down bread from heaven for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion...”

And I love the way the bread came down: not in a torrent, but lightly, softly-

“In the morning a layer of dew lay all about the camp,

and when the layer of dew had gone up, fine flakes were on the surface of the wilderness, fine flakes like hoarfrost on the ground.

On seeing it, the Israelites asked one another, “What is this?” for they did not know what it was. But Moses told them, “It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.”

It’s especially relevant for Catholics, because Eucharistic Prayer #2 riffs elegantly on that bit of Exodus:

“You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness.

Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In Exodus, first came the dew. When the dew went up, the miracle bread was present. And at Mass we pray for a similar miracle: that the Holy Spirit will, dew-like, cover our offerings; and shortly after, there will be miracle bread to eat.

Stay fired-up about Jesus and his Church.

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This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2015/08/dew-drop-in.html>  
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| [Contents](#) |

## Getting to Know Your Baby Before Birth [at joy of nine9]



**An unborn child hears and reacts emotionally, not only to his mother but also to the people and activity around him.**

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.

Prenatal babies have personalities before they are born.

As any mother can tell you some babies move around energetically both in and out of the womb, while other infants are physically passive. Some infants are night owls both in and out of the womb and others actually sleep well at night.

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As nurses will point out to new parents, newborns quickly turn towards the voices of their mother, father, siblings and even grandparents. So that means that an unborn child hears what is happening and remembers what he has heard while he was still in the womb. These memories are conscious for the first couple of years of a young child's life but later they lay deep within their subconscious.

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For example, some musicians, when first introduced to a piece of music, already know how to play it without even rehearsing. Later they discover their mother had practiced the very same piece of music while she was pregnant with him.

.

Understanding the implications of these tidbits of trivia, I convinced my son to try this experiment with his pregnant wife a couple of months before the birth of their first child. Actually, this is something I did during all my pregnancies. Often my kids laugh and dismiss some of my beliefs but this time David took my suggestion and put it into action.

David gently placed his hand on one side of his wife, Erica's, stomach and then talked loud to his unborn child, welcoming her into their family. He told unborn Eva both of her parents loved her already and they would protect her and supply all her needs, physically, emotionally and spiritually. He concentrated on pouring love into his unborn baby's spirit.

As David loved his baby by talking and placing his hand on Erica's right side, unborn Eva kicked and pushed on that side of the womb! When David placed his hand on the other side of Erica's stomach and repeated the 'prayers', their unborn daughter placed a few good kicks on that side instead.

Obviously, pre-natal Eva heard everything and she was happy and excited by what she heard. As a result of Eva's parents consciously soaking her with nurturing love while she was still in the womb, she is a peaceful, content baby who is a joy and a delight to everyone she meets. None of their friends can quite understand how Eva can be such a good baby.

Basically the answer to their question is my son and his wife connected with Eva's heart, mind and spirit before she was born. After birth, they knew how to respond to Eva's none verbal communication. David and Erica were in fact Baby Whisperers.

In the hospital, while holding his newborn daughter, David turned to his dad and said, "I think this is the best thing that I have ever done!"

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This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanuneau.wordpress.com/2015/08/11/worth-revisiting-getting-to-know-your-baby-before-birth/>  
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## But it's only temporary! [at A Moment From De Sales]



Pope Francis loves creation. In his new encyclical *Laudato Si*, he calls creation “***Our Common Home***,” *i.e.*, creation is a home belonging to all God’s people. Pope Francis wants everyone to remember that this earth is not the personal possession of any one race, person, class or culture. It belongs to God.

Certainly God created the world for us to enjoy, but as my Mother used to say: “**to help us get from here to there.**” What she meant is the most profound theology we can ever learn.

What my Mother meant is this. God put us on earth to get “*to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world, and to be with Him in the next.*” We learned this convincingly in our beginning years as fledgling Catholics! Today, as we read, it is the basic inspiration in Pope Francis’ teaching in the encyclical and the one that my Mother and Pope Francis would certainly be in agreement.

Like Pope Francis, my Mother knew how deep God’s desire is that we get to Him when our life is over. What Pope Francis wants us to keep in mind—is that for God it is equally important that those traveling beside us-get there too! Our bountiful earth supplied with essentials like water, air, food, and other needed resources are God’s common provisions.

They are still God’s, but we take what we need now for our journey to heaven. Pope Francis asks in *Laudato Si*: “*Don’t be greedy. Only take what we need, and offer the rest to those who can’t enjoy what we enjoy.*” The Pope asks us to remember to live mindfully of those others who need and want some of what we enjoy so readily.

Indeed this common home shows how passionate Our God is that we live “loving and serving Him now and later live with Him in heaven.” But He wants everyone else too, as well.

Pope Francis is simply reminding us to help God fulfill this dream, so that one-day when we all arrive safely we can say “***Laudato Si***”—“***Praise be to You, My Lord!***”

## My, Oh, My [at Blogging For A Better Life]

### My Medjugorje Trip:

Never have I yearned for something so much as to travel as a pilgrim to Medjugorje. So to say that I had very high expectations for this place is an understatement.

For the last twelve years I have been praying, pondering, reading every bit of information available, dreaming of someday traveling to the holy grounds, longing to encounter a life changing trip with all my heart and all my soul.

With my high expectations I thought I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. I had anticipated that in taking my first steps onto the soil of Medjugorje that total peace would swallow me up. I envisioned my rosary turning gold. And, I was for certain that I would smell roses where no roses were present. I had imagined myself climbing up Cross Mountain and then climbing down as a totally transformed person.

I kept looking at the sun wondering why it wasn't spinning for me, and I searched the sky day and night seeking any glimpse whatsoever of Our Lady up in the clouds. I wished for all this in which so many pilgrims had claimed to experience.



My expectations were very high and throughout the week I came to realize very self-centered. How I ached to see some unexplainable miracle, some far-fetched phenomenon that no man can explain. We were told many times during our stay that none of us pilgrims who come to Medjugorje come by accident. We arrive because Our Lady has called us. She personally has invited each of us.

I was a little skeptical. I came to see the unbelievable. I wanted to see things, witness some miracles with my own two eyes. Would Our Lady really invite someone with those intentions?

About mid-way through our pilgrimage it happened. I experienced my first miracle! I'm sure some will feel this phenomenon I am about to describe is far-fetched, but I will always know, and I will always believe, and I will always be grateful for our Lady inviting me to come see.

I was sitting in a pew during one of many Masses we attended and it was a Priest giving a sermon, but for me it was Our Lady telling me internally, loud and clear that Our Lord needs me. He needs me to help Him.

As I stared at the crucifix of Our Lord, I became fully aware of what He suffered in order for us to one-day have eternal life. I listened to the words of the Priest, asking us if for the rest of our life here on earth could we not let Jesus borrow our smiles, borrow our hands, borrow our legs? Borrow our hearts?

I thought of my life and how I live most days and I knew somewhere, somehow along my daily journey that I had forgotten this important message. I looked back up at the crucifix and amazingly a warm inner peace that I have never experienced before began to flow through my veins and I could feel my heart begin to soften.

This softening feeling inside opened my eyes in new ways. It is as if I was beginning to look at life and all its beauty for the first time, the way that God had intended for us all to see.

A new me is emerging. (Exactly what I have been aching for.)

I know Our Lady brought me to Medjugorje to hear a specific message. Now is the hard part, to live that message.

She is our Mother and will always give us help. From twelve years of reading Her messages I know all

about Her five stones, which she encourages all to partake in,

### **Prayer, Fasting, Mass, Bible, and Monthly Confession**

. It is with these simple weapons that we can overcome the world—that we can become true Christians—Christians that help and love one another—as Christ loves us.

Do you let Our Lord borrow whatever it is that He needs from you?



My long awaited pilgrimage to Medjugorje has turned out to be much more than I expected.

My, oh my!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*Thank you so much for reading my blog post. Godspeed, Rose*

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This contribution is available at <http://blogforabetterlife.blogspot.com/2015/08/my-oh-my.html>  
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## God our Strength: Hiding Place [at CatholicSoup]

There's so much going on in the world today, so much death, so much uprising, it's almost like the physical world is headed in the wrong direction and there isn't many options. With Donald Trump all over the news, Planned Parenthood, riots between races, court case news because of shootings in the world it's too much. There's no wonder why during commercial breaks there is always somebody who says, "What is this world coming too?" Not to mention sports and torn ACL's!

But in my reflection there is a parallel between the physical reality of everything going on and the spiritual reality. It's sort of like the world, full of disorder is depicting our own spiritual life, full of chaos. Chaos and confusion that leads us to doubt our own vocations, doubt God's plan for us and even doubt who we are. So much of our lives are full of stress and worry, or fear and anxiety. We're lukewarm in our spiritual lives! So much, that there's no room for strength, or courage. The channels of peace and joy have been backwashed and taken over by doubt, mediocrity, fear, and ultimately death.



A few months ago I felt that about myself, I was struggling spiritually, there was chaos, and with that doubt and fear. I remember living those few weeks just going through the motions, not really striving for anything. All I did was enough to get by. I was in a grave, I was just bored of things that were going on. In my prayer I turned to God and what helped was his presence and I was able to recognize that God allows all of this to show us, in a real intimate way, what it is that we really desire. The reminder is that there is a heaven that we can work for! There is a greater place and a relationship with Christ that is waiting to unfold. All we have to do is seek the help Christ gives us. Seek him, turn to him in his hiding place and the effects of that is endless grace and joy. With it we can never be bored, lukewarm, stressed, scared or bland. We can do great things with the Spirit, all we have to do is seek Christ and his loving shelter that he provides. So for any of my friends battling with fear, stress, worry, or sort of a "gray" spiritual life. Just remember that God has never left you, that he is our hiding place and by that we are strengthened by Him.

The prayer is now a song on my soundcloud titled,

*My Hiding Place.*

You can listen to here at the link below.

[My Hiding Place](#)

This contribution is available at <http://catholicsoup.blogspot.com/2015/08/god-our-strength-hiding-place.html>  
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## Change Happens [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

I took an unexpected trip to North Dakota Friday, delivering parts my son had been working on: and enjoying a few hours with family there, including our granddaughter.

On the way out, I stopped off at Fergus Falls for gas: and discovered that

### [Debbie's Home Style Kitchen](#)

isn't there any more. That's what it looked like, back in 2010.

I found a partial explanation on a Fargo, North Dakota, station's website:

["Longtime family restaurant Debbie's Home Style Kitchen in Fergus Falls closing after 23 years"](#)  
WDAY (June 10, 2014)

*"...Owners Debbie and Bob Proudfoot fired up the kitchen after moving here with their two children.*

*"Debbie says they've enjoyed many years of serving the community traditional home-cooked meals...."*

*"...But she says, it's time to move on.*

*"Their kids are grown - they now have kids of their own...."*

*"...Debbie's Kitchen's last day will be Sunday, June 15th."*

I'll miss the place, although my family weren't 'regulars.' Not long after Debbie's Kitchen opened in 1991, we began stopping in when returning from North Dakota, and passing Fergus Falls near a meal time. We hadn't been there in more than a year, and now never will.

Some online reviews indicate that some folks didn't like the food: which I can believe. Debbie's Home Style Kitchen served food that folks here in the Upper Midwest are more likely to enjoy.

However, it sounds like the Proudfoots (Proudfeet??) made a good choice. My wife and I are at around that age: and change happens.

### What Socrates Said

Although I talked about Socrates yesterday and Friday, A Catholic Citizen in America hasn't become a 'Socrates every day' blog. (



[August 22, 2015](#)

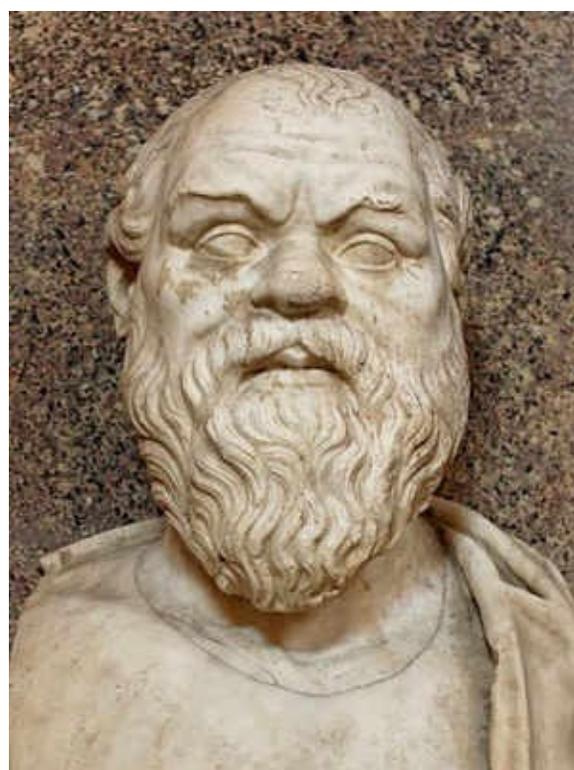
;

[August 21, 2015](#)

)

One more quote shouldn't hurt, though:

***"I would rather die having spoken in my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet in law ought any man use every way of escaping death. For often in battle there is no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death, if a man is willing to say or do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness; for that runs deeper than death."*** (Socrates, from "[Apology](#)," Plato's account of the trial of Socrates (Translated by Benjamin Jowett))



Small wonder the Athenian establishment sentenced him to death.

'Kids These Days!'

Now, something Socrates

***didn't***

say. It's actually a

[bowdlerized](#)

version of lines

[961–985](#)

of "

[The Clouds](#)

,"

[Aristophanes](#)

' comedy: spoken by a satiric version of Socrates. (

[August 22, 2015](#)



)  
Amsterdam's mayor, Gijsbert van Hall, apparently quoted the lines from "The Clouds" following a street demonstration in 1966.

The New York Times ran a story quoting the mayor's quote of "Socrates" April 3, 1966, on page 16: and the quote-of-a-paraphrased-satire entered American culture. (

[Wikipedia](#)

,  
[Bartleby.com](#)

)

*"The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers."*

(Socrates [didn't say this](#))

I'm getting to the age when I could complain about 'kids these days,' and how wonderful the 'good old days' were. But I won't. My memory's too good.

Back in 'the good old days,' some American families were a bit like the Cleavers in "

[Leave It to Beaver](#)

:" sane, sensible, and not obsessively climbing the economic ladder. But others — too many, I think — gave their kids everything money could buy, and little else.

My parents were comparatively sane and sensible, which may be why I thought buying stuff you don't need with money you don't have to impress folks you don't like made no sense at all. Come to think of it, I probably heard that from my father.

## **Nostalgia and Diaper Changing Tables**

I was in my teens during the 1960s, one of 'those crazy kids' who thought America and the world could do better. I still do.

A half-century later, I occasionally indulge in nostalgia: like a detour through Fargo yesterday, on my way back from North Dakota. It was mostly to avoid road construction, partly to see what University Avenue looks like now.

It's not the same as I remember: particularly near major Interstate interchanges, where almost nothing is as it was when I was a teen and young adult.

That's okay. Change happens.

Some of the changes are invisible from the road, of course. Diaper changing tables, for example, aren't exactly new: but having them in the

*men's*

restroom?! That would be unthinkable in my 'good old days.'

Men simply did not associate with babies in public. That was 'woman's work,' not something a 'regular guy' would do.

Some of the changes my generation worked for didn't go as well as I'd hoped: but I do not miss the days when 'she's smart as a man' was supposed to be a compliment. (

[April 12, 2015](#)

;

[August 29, 2014](#)

)

### Some Things Don't Change

Some folks, Christian and otherwise, seem convinced that Christianity is all about clinging to a bygone way of life. Details vary, but I suspect that for many, the 'good old days' were a particular middle-class American subculture's lifestyle, from about

[1945](#)

to

[1956](#)

.

If I thought we had a perfect society in 1950s or 1860s America, or 11th century Europe, I'd want

[comics](#)

suppressed,

[bustles](#)

back in fashion, or the



[re-union](#)

of England, Demark, Norway, and part of today's Sweden. (

[July 5, 2015](#)

)

Like I said, I indulge in nostalgia occasionally. But the 'good old days' aren't coming back. Change happens, and this isn't the 20th, 19th, or 11th century any more.

Some things don't change, though. These were good ideas two millennia back, still are, and will be when

[Emperor Guangwu](#)

,

[Bhoja](#)

, and

[Trygve Lie](#)

seem roughly contemporary:

How we apply those principles changes, depending on where and how we live. (

[September 7, 2014](#)

)

The Church doesn't try cramming everyone into one cultural or political mold.

We are, however, expected to work toward having political systems and cultural norms which respect the "legitimate good of the communities" and "fundamental rights of persons." (Catechism,

[24](#)

,

[814](#)

,

[1901](#)

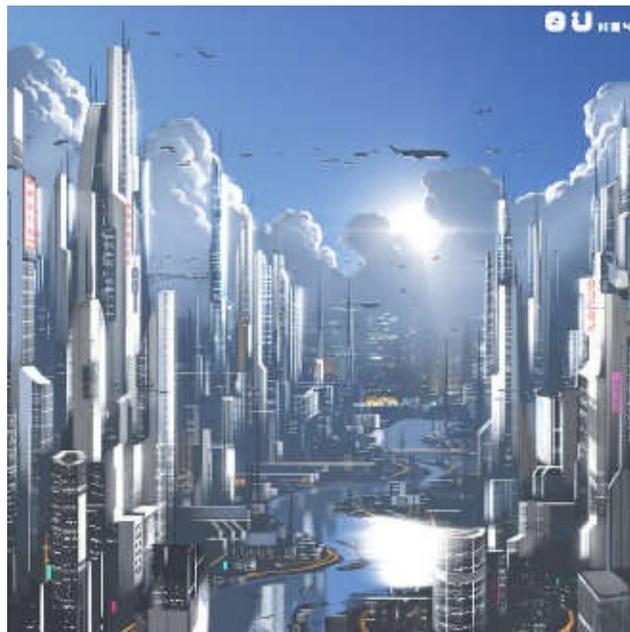
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[1957](#)

)  
By keeping what is good, changing what is not, and passing along what we've learned: we will continue to make mistakes, but I think we can also build a better world.

More of my take on:

- "[The Trinity: Accepting When I Cannot Comprehend](#)"  
(May 31, 2015)  
Particularly
- "[DNA, Babies, Life, and Death](#)"  
(February 13, 2015)  
Particularly
- "[Holy Family, Not '50s Family](#)"  
(December 28, 2014)  
Particularly
- "[Caesar, Civilization, Dealing With Change — and Building a Better World](#)"  
(August 31, 2014)  
Particularly
- "[Regeneration: Getting Closer to Growing Lost Organs](#)"  
(August 29, 2014)  
Particularly



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This contribution is available at <http://catholiccitizenamerica.blogspot.com/2015/08/change-happens.html>  
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## Clean and unclean meat [at Catholicism and Adventism]

[In the previous post](#), we saw that the distinction between clean and unclean animals was put in place by God for the purpose of separating Israel, God's chosen people then, from the Gentiles, and this played out in the types of animals used for sacrifices.



Bacon

[We also saw](#) that animal sacrifices have come to an end with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, and that there is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile. We saw the God showed this truth to Peter using as an example ... what? ... clean and unclean animals!

So, what did Jesus say?

Mark 7:18-19 (KJV) – And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, **purging all meats?**

The KJV was written several centuries back, using English we don't always find to be clear today. Other translations phrase it like this:

[RSV](#): And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him, since it enters, not his heart but his stomach, and so passes on?” **(Thus he declared all foods clean.)**

[NIV](#): “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” **(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)**

[ASV](#): And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Perceive ye not, that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him; because it goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the draught? **This he said, making all meats clean.**

[ESV](#): And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” **(Thus he declared all foods clean.)**

Most translations into modern English make it very clear. But some claim they are all wrong. Some will argue that the purging refers to evacuation from the intestines. Does that hold up under scrutiny?

The word “*purging*” is the Greek word καθαρίζω ([katharizō](#)).

It means to make clean. Nowhere in the Bible is it used to refer to the removal of food from one’s intestines. The object of the verb is what is made clean, every time. When the verb is performed by someone on something, that thing is made clean.

The three other times it is used in Mark are found in Mark 1:40-42:

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me **clean**. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou **clean**. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was **cleansed**.

This is what the word καθαρίζω means in Mark:

- 1 – Jesus made him clean (Mark 1:40)
- 2 – Jesus made him clean (Mark 1:41)
- 3 – He was made clean by Jesus (Mark 1:42)
- 4 – All food was made clean by Jesus (Mark 7:19)

Do we believe the way Mark used the word *katharizō* in his writing, or do we make up our own dictionary and our own grammar to suit our own desires?

If we look at the various translations, we can compare the four clauses in Mark 7:19 –



An Ulster fry

KJV:

Because it entereth not into his heart  
but into the belly  
and goeth out into the draught  
purging all meats

NIV:

For it doesn't go into their heart

but into their stomach  
and then out of the body.  
(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

ASV:  
because it goeth not into his heart  
but into his belly  
and goeth out into the draught  
This he said, making all meats clean.

ESV:  
since it enters not his heart  
but his stomach  
and is expelled  
(Thus he declared all foods clean.)

The Clear Word Bible (aka [What Adventists want the Bible to say](#)):



Sow with piglet

It doesn't affect his relationship with God  
because it passes into his stomach  
passes through his intestines  
then out of his body

Do you see the parallels? And the mismatch?

First – not into the heart  
Second – into the stomach  
Third – out of the body  
Fourth – he cleansed (purged, made clean) all meat

Do you see what Adventists need to do in order to avoid that truth? In order for their doctrine to not be destroyed by this verse, they **must** translate the last clause as referring to removal from the intestines. But that is what the **third** clause says, so they need to alter the third clause as well, to something it doesn't say – passing through the intestines.

And how did Jesus start off? He started off by saying:

“whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him” (Mark 7:18)

Adventists (and others) believe that pork **can** defile one. They quote 1 Cor 3:17 to me:

1 Cor 3:17 (KJV) – If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.



Hickory smoked barbecue bacon

But Jesus said that what goes into someone **doesn't** defile them.

Jesus also said the following in Mark 7:18:

“Are ye so without understanding also?”

It would seem that those who change the Word of God to prevent the Bible from showing that Jesus cleansed all food are really and truly without understanding.

I'll close with some advice from Paul:

Romans 14:14 (KJV) – I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that **there is nothing unclean of itself**: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Romans 14:2 (KJV) – For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is **weak, eateth herbs**.

Col 2:16 (KJV) – **Let no man** therefore judge you in meat ...

Col 2:20-21 (KJV) – Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (**Touch not; taste not; handle not**)

1 Tim 4:1-4 (KJV) – Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to **seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils**; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and **commanding to abstain from meats**, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. **For every creature of God is good**, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving

Now take this quiz – [Bible Quiz: Are unclean meats still unclean for Christians?](#)

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## Walking the path of St. Monica [at Kitchen table chats]



St. Monica has always been a favorite of mine. You will notice I have her as a patron of this blog. I dearly love Mother Mary, but let's face it, she was "full of grace" and was the Mother of God. I can often relate much more to St. Monica who had her own set of failings and was the mother of a real hellion,( Not that I am saying any of my children have come close to the exploits of the young St. Augustine).

My prayer list used to include young moms with intentions for safe pregnancies, babies that sleep through the night, toddlers with fevers, and grade school struggles. Now that my circles have aged I am praying for elderly parents, sick spouses, college admissions, job applications, and holy spouses for grown children. And I am praying for a plethora of good and holy mothers and fathers who are having their own St. Monica experiences. Today on the Feast of St. Monica I knelt in Mass with a heart full for prayers for so many mothers and fathers whose hearts are breaking from wayward children.

In today's society it is counter-cultural to be a faithful Catholic. We do our best to teach our children and give them the tools they need to stand firm in their faith. But faith is a gift that must be accepted. The Sacraments are not magic. Individuals have free will to cooperate with the grace of the Sacraments or not. Unfortunately, too many of our children forge their own way, ignoring the gift of faith they have been so lovingly offered and choosing instead the lures of shallow pleasures in a secular world.

This is not a new problem. St. Monica walked this path as a mother in the fourth century. She is the model for mothers grieving from the sinful choices of their children. She never compromised her own faith in order to entice her son to return to the fold. She never enabled his sinfulness. But she also never stopped loving him. She never stopped praying for him. She never gave up hope.

*Dear St. Monica, please pray for all mothers and fathers whose children have rejected the faith. May these parents persevere in faith, hope, and love as you did and may they see their own children find their way back to a life of virtue in Christ. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

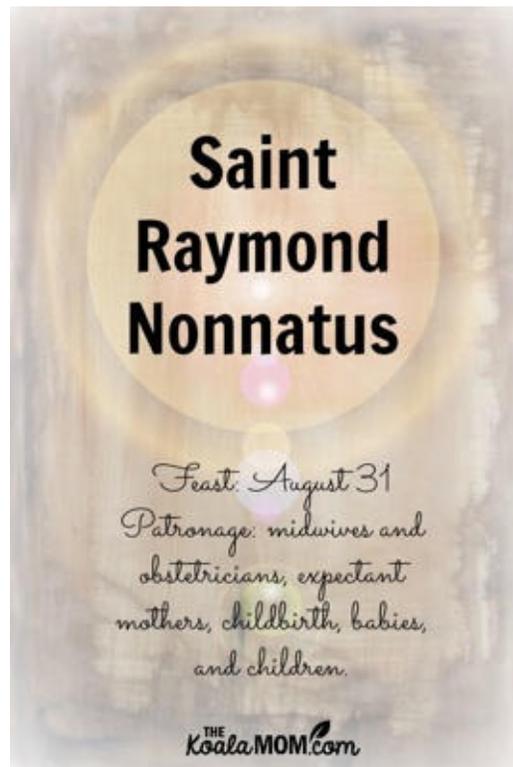
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# St. Raymond Nonnatus [at The Koala Mom]

**St. Raymond Nonnatus is perhaps best-known not for something he did,** but for the manner of his birth. He was born in Spain in 1204 via C-section after his mother died trying to deliver him. His name “nonnatus” means “not born,” and as a result he is the patron saint of midwives and obstetricians, expectant mothers, childbirth, babies, and children.



**Raymond grew up in a family that was noble yet poor.** From a young age, he was drawn to spiritual matters, yet also did well at school. His father, however, hoped that Raymond would have a career in the royal court, where they had family connections. Raymond obediently went to work on one of the family farms, though he used the solitude he found there to spend time in prayer and meditation.

Eventually, Raymond’s father acknowledged his desire for religious life and granted him permission to join the new Order of Our Lady of Mercy. Raymond advanced quickly in his studies there and was soon made the Ransomer—the man in charge of going to North Africa with large sums of money to ransom Christian slaves. When he ran out of money, he gave himself up as ransom for more slaves. Then he began sharing the Gospel with slaves and captors alike, converting many and earning the wrath of the Muslim leaders.

Raymond was tortured and thrown in prison, but he kept praying and preaching. Finally, he was ransomed by his own Order and returned to Spain. There, he was nominated a cardinal by Pope Gregory IX, but he continued to live in a tiny cell on very little. When the pope called him to Rome, he traveled there as a poor religious man but was taken sick on the way. He died of a fever on August 31, 1240.

**Raymond’s life speaks to me as a mom in several ways.** First, he faced pressure from his family and friends to do “more” with his life, studies and connections. I’ve also felt that pressure to do “more” than

“just” be a mom. Yet as I embrace my calling to be a mom, I’ve found happiness, just as Raymond found happiness in his calling to be the religious life.

Second, Raymond loved those around him and gave everything he had. As a mom, it can be hard to keep giving and giving and giving to the little people in our lives. We love them and we chose to give our lives to them, but sometimes, they demand a lot. Raymond kept giving, even to the point of being willing to die in a strange land for people he didn’t know.

Third, Raymond was content with very little. Even at the end of his life, when he was offered a palace and carriages and other luxuries in keeping with his position as cardinal, he continued to live simply. I’ve often wished for a new car or a nice house or a faraway vacation. Instead, like Raymond, I should be happy with what I have and see that God has provided everything I need.

*Catholic Tradition has a [beautiful, printable prayer card](#) and novena to St. Raymond. For more patron saints of childbirth and pregnancy, check out [my list and my free printable prayer cards](#).*



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## Lessons from the Mud Run [at CF Family]

We did the

### [ACMHS Mud Run](#)

a few weeks ago according to our new family status ~ without Rees and John (Still having a hard time with that.). Ken ran the kids' 2K with Ian, Luke, and Joseph, then the adult 5K with Clare.



I just walked around with Addie and plied her with hot dogs and water cups, which were probably for the runners but she's cute so the grilling guys gave her whatever she asked for.



I witnessed an incident that had a profound effect on me. I've written before that homeless people scare me: I'm wary of their looks, their smell, their stories, their choices, their mental health. I'm certain one will grab me or ask me for something or breathe on me. I avert my eyes and hope they will just get a job, take a shower, or buy an apple for goodness' sake. Well, I got Addie a drink, popped her up on some sort of cement table, and noticed two homeless men lounging at the other end with hot dogs. Indignation welled up.

*They are not part of this*

;

*they just drifted over because they smelled the grill*

. I busied myself getting out her enzymes when one of them spoke to me (

*Oh no*

). "Pretty soon, you won't be able to lift her so easily," he grinned, proudly exposing his blackened teeth. I tried very hard to focus on his eyes through the grime and didn't notice any leering creepiness, so I took a breath and answered, "Yeah, I hate to think of that." He bobbed his head and poked his friend in the arm while the two of them cackled cheerfully. I moved the two of us away, pretending that I wanted my own cup of water.

Then, one of ACMHS staff, a lady I recognized from the company picnic but couldn't remember her name, approached the men and I heard her say, "You guys enjoying the day? How're you doing? We're raising money for supplies for our community mental health." They chatted some more (which I couldn't completely hear because remember, I'd moved away) and she meandered off to mingle with others. She did not shoo the men away or confiscate their hot dogs. The exchange was pleasant. I sniffed.

Then of course it hit me that I was being a jerk. Again. There was no need for rudeness. Look what I have. Mercy. Kindness. Food. Drink. Family. Love. Humanity. They deserve it, too.



I wish I could have gone back and asked that man if he had children, if he was enjoying the nice weather and tasty lunch. I wish I was as cool and friendly as Ken's coworker. Next time.

Love, Allison

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This contribution is available at <http://northerncffamily.blogspot.com/2015/08/lessons-from-mud-run.html>  
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## It's OK to Struggle [at Miss Em]

The other day I was talking to a dear friend. She is one of those people who call you out on things that you do not even realize. The friend who calls you on to be greater. The kind of friend you can say anything to without feeling self-conscious.

We were talking about our spiritual lives. Well at least I was sharing about just how much of a failure I am.

I have not prayed the rosary in months. I have no idea when I last had a consistent prayer time, I think it was sometime last year....My Mass attendance has been Sundays only and distracted even then.

I have had a lot going on, a lot of struggles. I have been really struggling with my faith.

Some times in life are full of trials in struggles and I feel like this is one of those times in my life.

A time when my faith is stale at best and my mind is more preoccupied with lesser things.

I am not proud of it. In fact, I hate to admit it. Really hate it.

But I should not. Everyone has times of struggles. Everyone has times that are rough. The life of faith is never easy and oftentimes it is fraught with struggle.

I am sick of it. Sick of pretending like living a life of faith is easy. It's not.

We all struggle and that is ok. We can admit it.

I can admit it. I am struggling in my faith journey and that is ok.

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## Life in a Valley Town [at Quiet Consecration]

I am the mother of dead children who never made it past birth, which is a different status from those who have children still running around on the earth or who lost children at young ages. Parents like me are not given the same respect, which is not said as a means to gather sympathy; rather, I am simply sharing my experience. Women and men who have live children are usually allowed opinions that mothers and fathers of dead children are not. Because our children are waiting for us in heaven, no one wants to know what we think should be done when a child has an earache, or is afraid of the dark, or hates their sibling or gets arrested for shoplifting at the age of 15 or ends up with a pregnant girlfriend when they are 22. Neither is anyone interested in our ideas regarding child rearing. The argument is this: since we did not raise our children into adulthood then any ideas we may have are theoretical at best and so should be disregarded.

I have a certain amount of sympathy with this argument. It can be maddening for a young mother or the father of a teenager to hear from seemingly uniformed friends or relatives about what the latest fad or school of thought or theory regarding child rearing can mean when they are the ones in the trenches.

Stand this resentment, however, alongside the willingness to turn our children over to young teachers straight out of college with no experience in the classroom, or drop them off at a neighborhood house with a homemade sign in front of this advertising Auntie Blossom's Unicorn Daycare and you have a tougher sell to make to me.

My thinking is, and I may be wrong, is we are not willing to listen to the well meaning grandmother or great aunt or loving cousin when we are willing to follow the advice found in a newspaper column (written by an unknown entity) because it smarts to take advice from people we both love and hate, need while squirming under their gaze convinced they are judging us the entire time we are judging them.

Being the mother of dead children, I have not had the privilege of driving my own child to a music lesson or picking out their Baptismal gown. I have been involved in the lives of my two nephews and my niece and I have been involved with the lives of the children of my friends but that is very different. Again, while I may have some really definite ideas of how a child should be raised all my peers can quite rightly look me in the eye, puff out their chests and say, "Oh yeah? What the hell do YOU know?".

So, tonight, as I prayed for a dearly loved young person in my life I thought about what I do know and how, if I was allowed, I would share that knowledge.

And I haven't got a clue.

Sure, it would be lovely to sit and have a long conversation over hot coffee about how to handle life and its disappointments. It would be wonderful to share where I was at their age, what my life had ended up being and how the only thing I had ever wanted to be had been snatched from me for no other reason than my own bad behavior. I would love to wax philosophical about the choices I made - both good and bad - and share with them the wisdom I learned from that great teacher (hindsight and experience).

The problem is I would not be able to do that without including my Faith journey, my Sobriety life and the

incredible healing I have found from my Catholic Faith.

When I look back on that crossroad I stood at when I was 26 years old, frightened, disappointed, mourning the loss of my children and the shock of being dumped by someone who had sworn to me they loved me no matter what, I can see the mistake I made. The mistake I made was walking away more firmly from God because I did not think I could ever be forgiven for the life I had lived between 18 and 26. It would be another five years before I found myself at another crossroads - and then I chose poorly again, once more convinced that if I could only find the perfect husband my world would be fine.

If I could share my life with someone wondering what to do next today, I would share with them the mistake I made that caused me so much pain. I would share with them my error in thinking that somehow I was so bad, so unworthy, and so lost that my only chance was finding redemption in human beings and substances....drugs and alcohol.

Because I do not have standing as a parent, I cannot share that with any real authority and I am sorry. What I can do, however, is I can pray - I can pray that the journey the young person I love will not be as full of pain and wandering as my journey was and I can pray that it does not take them as long as it took me to find my way Home to Truth.

And I can pray that all those people - young and old - who are so lost, so sad and so convinced that they are not worthy of a spectacular life will find what I have found; a loving and merciful God and His Church.

He wants what is best for me....and for you too.

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2015/08/life-in-valley-town.html>  
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# Daughter of God

On my way home last week, I felt the need to stop by Adoration. I know that an hour of my day devoted to Eucharistic Adoration would be even better, but sometimes, like a power nap, ten minutes of Adoration can do wonders for my day.

So in entering into my “power prayer,” I soaked in the silence, solace and peace. My head was still spinning with everything I was thinking about in the parking lot so I tried to turn my thoughts to my vocation. My duties as a mother – how I desperately want to be there for everything my kids truly need, from meals and help with homework to reading their favorite books and listening to stories of their day. As a wife – how I want and need to be loving and passionate toward my husband from every phone call and email to him walking in the door and the last kiss before we fall asleep. As a daughter, sister, and friend – I want to be able to do things for those dear ones that I love, spending time with them and conveying to them through time and effort, that I love them. My head kept swimming. As a professor, I want to.... As a catechist... As a school volunteer... As a soccer mom....



What should I focus on was the question that came to my mind and so obvious came the answer that I actually felt surprised. “You are my daughter. Your most important vocation is as my daughter. You are a daughter of God.”

This gave my heart great peace – knowing that everything else would fall into place if I was concentrating on just being a daughter of God. But what does that mean for my life? What does that mean I should do?

Then I started thinking about my own children. We have received comments like, “Your girls look just like you,” or “Your son is your husband’s mini-me.” People know that our children belong to us because they look like us.

How do I look like my Father? Would people know that I am a daughter of God? Do I act or speak in a Godly way? Do my actions emulate that of my Father? Do I love like my Father?

My vocation is simply to be a daughter of God, acting in such a manner that people would know I am His daughter, just by looking at me.

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This contribution is available at <http://busycatholicmoms.com/sample-page/daughter-of-god/>  
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# The Life of Saint Augustine Through the Words of Pope Benedict XVI

Today, in the Western lung of the Catholic Church, we celebrate the great African Doctor – Saint Augustine of Hippo. Eloquent in his life and his words, the Church dons him the name – The Doctor of Grace. Even after 1600 years, the Catholic Church views him as one of the greatest theologians in her arsenal; an arsenal filled with many great fighters and defenders of Jesus Christ. The Church also sees him as one the greatest conversion stories of any saint.

Today, I am not going to focus on his biographical life, since I have done this [in years past](#). For today's memorial, I want to share with you Saint Augustine through the words of Pope Benedict XVI. In his general audiences from March 7, 2007 to February 27, 2008, Benedict taught on the [Church Fathers from Clement of Rome to Augustine](#). So important is Saint Augustine to the Catholic Church that the Holy Father dedicated *five* general audiences to him from January 9 – February 27, 2008.

Here are 10 excerpts from the five audiences –

1. “It could be said, on the one hand, that all the roads of Latin Christian literature led to Hippo (today, Annaba, on the coast of Algeria), the place where he was Bishop from 395 to his death in 430, and, on the other, that from this city of Roman Africa, many other roads of later Christianity and of Western culture itself branched out.”
2. “Augustine realized that the whole of the Old Testament was a journey toward Jesus Christ. Thus, he found the key to understanding the beauty and even the philosophical depth of the Old Testament and grasped the whole unity of the mystery of Christ in history...”
3. “Yet, if the world grows old, Christ is perpetually young; hence the invitation: “Do not refuse to be rejuvenated united to Christ, even in the old world. He tells you: Do not fear, *your youth will be renewed like that of the eagle*” (cf. *Serm.* 81,8). Thus, the Christian must not lose heart, even in difficult situations, but rather he must spare no effort to help those in need.”
4. “When I read St. Augustine’s writings, I do not get the impression that he is a man who died more or less 1,600 years ago; I feel like he is a man of today: a friend, a contemporary who speaks to me, who speaks to us with his fresh and timely faith. In Saint Augustine, who talks to us...for Christ is truly yesterday, today, and for ever.”
5. “Thus, Augustine’s entire intellectual and spiritual development is also a valid model today in the relationship between faith and reason, a subject not only for believers but for every person who seeks the truth, a central theme for the balance and destiny of all men.”
6. “Here, then, Augustine encountered God and throughout his life experienced him to the point that this reality – which is primarily his meeting with a Person, Jesus – changed his life, as it changes the lives of everyone, men and women, who in every age have the grace to encounter him. Let us pray that the Lord will grant us this grace and thereby enable us to find his peace.”



7. “In the first place, *confessiones* means the confession of our own faults, of the wretchedness of sin; but at the same time, *confessiones* also means praise of God, thanksgiving to God. Seeing our own wretchedness in the light of God becomes praise to God and thanksgiving, for God loves and accepts us, transforms us and raises us to himself.”
8. “Only by reading Saint Paul’s Epistles within the faith of the Catholic Church was the truth fully revealed to him. This experience as summarized by Augustine in one of the most famous passages of the *Confessions*: he recounts that, in the torment of his reflections, withdrawing to a garden, he suddenly heard a child’s voice chanting a rhyme never heard before: *tolle, lege, tolle, lege*, “pick up and read, pick up and read” (VIII, 12, 29).”
9. “We always need to be washed by Christ, who washes our feet, and be renewed by him. We need permanent conversion...Augustine converted to Christ, who is truth and love, followed him throughout his life, and became a model for every human being, for all of us in search of God.”
10. “Even today, as in his time, mankind needs to know and above all to live this fundamental reality: God is love, and the encounter with him is the only response to the restlessness of the human heart; a heart inhabited by hope...so much so that Saint Paul wrote that “in this hope we were saved” (Rom 8:24).”

It is my hope, as it is with many of my blog posts where I quote the Doctors, the Saints, and the Popes, that you will come to take their words to heart in order that you know Jesus Christ in a complete way as well as come to know the beauty of the Catholic Church.

For further magisterial reading on Saint Augustine of Hippo, I suggest the Apostolic Exhortation, [\*Augustinum Hipponensem\*](#), promulgated on August 26, 1986, by Pope St. John Paul II.

Saint Augustine of Hippo...Pray for Us.

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This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2015/08/28/the-life-of-saint-augustine-through-the-words-of-pope-benedict-xvi/>  
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# Ang Resibo [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on September 2, 2015 · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)



9×12” oil paint on canvas panel; use “comment” below to inquire.

Those at work in the food business always have my interest; they are on their feet long days to serve. This young lady seemed to celebrate it.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2015/09/02/ang-resibo-the-receipt-finished/>  
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## Dig Deep [at bukas palad]



Year B / Ordinary Time / Twenty-first Sunday

Readings: Joshua 24.1-2a, 15-17, 18b / Psalm 33.2-3, 16-17, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23 (R/v 9a) / Ephesians 5.21-32 / John 6.60-69

*When the going gets tough, the tough get going.*

We're all familiar with this phrase. It can however mean different things. For some, it means studying hard to ace our examinations. For others, it's about persevering through our army training to survive its rigors. It could also be about giving that little bit more to get the umpteenth work email or boss's instruction done. And it might even be taking up grandma's advice to start over after one's divorce.

Digging deep into one's beliefs to get on with life is another interpretation of the phrase, "when the going gets tough, the tough get going."

It's an interpretation that came alive for me when our B Division soccer team from St Joseph's Institution (SJI) entered the National Finals this year. Our opponents were Hong Kah Secondary, 5-time National Champions in the last six years. SJI was the underdog; we only began to rebuild our soccer programme four years ago. This was our first finals since the 1980s. We worked hard to get here. But we weren't strong enough. Our boys played well but Hong Kah played better. Each time they scored a goal, our boys regrouped and played on. As the margin increased from 2 to 4 to 6 goals, and we still had not scored, our team played with even greater determination, never giving up, and our supporters, cheered on, never

letting up. Sadly, we lost the Nationals. But our spirit won. And life goes on. Yes, when the going gets tough it is good that the tough get going.

What enabled our SJI team and supporters to do this? I believe it's because they made a choice to believe. They made that choice not to say “alamak, let's give up” but to say “yes, we can, and we can because we're Josephians.”

Making a choice is what Jesus' disciples face in today's Gospel reading.

Listening to Jesus teach that he is the Bread of Life, we hear them murmur: “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” What is this saying? It is the choice Jesus offers them in this line that comes just before today's passage: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven,” Jesus says: “whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (John 6.51).

Jesus is offering them a choice: to believe that he is God's bread for their life. He is so because his words are God's Spirit and Life for their salvation. Many of the disciples struggle with Jesus' teaching. It is a tough teaching: to them, it sounds like cannibalism, and this disturbs them. But Jesus clarifies that it is not cannibalism; he is inviting them to choose him as the one God sends to save them.

But they still find it tough to accept Jesus. Why? Because Jesus does not back off from demanding their total commitment of faith. He is being tough on them because he is forcing them to make that fundamental choice for life. The evangelist John tells us that many of his disciples could not do this; they found it hard to make this necessary life-giving choice. And so, they “returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him.”

What about you and me? Do we want to make Jesus our fundamental choice as our Bread of Life? Today, Jesus is demanding the same total commitment of faith from us.

Will we say, “Yes,” completely, unreservedly, totally? Or, we will choose Jesus on our own terms and conditions? Will our choice be resolute or lukewarm? Or, it will be, “Why should I even bother?”

**For a Christian, not bothering about choosing Jesus is unacceptable.** Jesus, must be our fundamental choice for life. Why? Because Jesus' teachings and way of life show us how to live, how to be happy,

how to be saved, especially when the going gets tough.

Our daily life is graced with moments of light, acceptance and peace. But it is also riddled with shadows, challenges and struggles. The difficulties and hardships in these moments make living tough. We can feel defeated. We can resign ourselves to despair. We can give up. Or, we can choose Jesus who will give us what we need to be tough in such times and to get on with life.

What will Jesus give us? God's love as fuel to get on with life. How do we get this? By choosing to dig deep.

If you love wine, you'd know how too much heat and too little water is not good for grapes. The grapes will dry out and become overripe. Instead of a Zinfandel smelling like fresh raspberry or cherry, it may have a not-so-lovely raisin bouquet. This is why I lamented about the drought's impact on the grapevines when I visited a friend's family vineyard in Napa Valley this summer.

"It's a pity," I said. "Oh, no," he replied; "thank heavens for the drought. It forces the roots of the vines to go deeper, deeper till they hit the water table underneath. Then, they can draw all the water they need. It will irrigate the vines, and they will grow. Then, the grapes will thrive."

Digging deep. Finding water. Being nourished. Having life. Flourishing.

These are words we should keep in mind when our going gets tough as Christians. They are words that chart Jesus' way for us to get tough and to live our Christian faith better: "I am the vine you are the branches."

Yes, **we need to dig deep into our belief in Jesus if we want to live and grow as Christians because he offers us God's loving salvation.** But to do this, you and I must make that fundamental choice to stay true to Jesus so that we get on with life in God. If we seriously want to make the choice, Simon Peter's answer in today's Gospel passage models for us the right response: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

There's really no need to end this homily with a question that some of you expect me, like some of my Jesuit confreres, to ask as we close our homilies. It's a no brainer to ask you to reflect even more about

whether or not you want to choose Jesus. I believe you all, like me, want to make this choice; our presence here this evening proclaims this.

The SJI team and its supporters chose to get tough and to keep on playing when the going got tough by digging deep into their Josephian spirit. If you and I want to get tough when our going in life is tough, we need to admit to ourselves, to one another and to Jesus that we too can dig deep: dig deep into our belief in Jesus because his words are life.

I believe we want to. So, let's not wait anymore; let's dig deep: Jesus wants to give us life.

*Preached at St Ignatius Church, Singapore*

Photo: [www.securityintelligence.com](http://www.securityintelligence.com)

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# The Rights of Evil



## Dependency

Who could possibly be more compassionate for a sick child than the mother of that child? Who could be of better service to the land than the farmer who owns it? And would you really go to an electrician for a heart transplant? What I'm getting at here is the power of, and truth found in intimate association; whether it be the interaction between individuals, or those associations of man with the world and its wealth of knowledge. It is no mere coincidence that Christ proclaimed "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But as with all associations, the quality of such relies upon the dependency between those associations. The woman, as mother, is biologically and psychologically linked to the child. The farmer is fully dependent for his family's stability and health upon the land he stewards daily. The doctor, through his intensive and exhaustive training of the knowledge of medicine, is best suited to perform such a difficult operation as a heart transplant. They all realize and live out dependencies, and in so doing are transformed by them.

We embrace such attributes as virtues, yet as a society we propel ourselves – through increasingly larger communities and complexities of social structure – into a world where personal, second-person interactions are relegated to second-class status. While we proclaim our structures as aids to understanding and improved personal relationships, the truth of the matter is that we understand less of each other now than at any time in history. What we have gained is empirical. What we have lost is communicative, spiritual, and transformative. Without a lengthy, intimate experience, a source of knowledge between one person and another is not much more than a sympathy, or a "There but for the grace of God go I." rationalization. Modern society claims intimacy through its social structure and embraces the concept of mankind as of one body, but sets goals that move mankind away from constant, personal interaction and into impersonal limitations and suspicious inclinations.

As a result, man pursues and endorses relationships that encourage his own self-centered thinking. In other words, love your lover, love your family, love a few friends, like a few others, like your neighbors, respect your acquaintances, respect those you interact with at the supermarket and shopping mall, care little for those you know not, dislike the competitive, condemn the guilty – as long as you only like, respect, dislike, or don't know them – and judge them all. I recognize the dogmatic assertion I've just made, but look around you, and look in the mirror. Are you really going to tell me that this isn't you to some degree, and are you really going to tell me that this discrimination is nothing more than the discernment of absolute good and evil?

## Moral Relativism

And what of man's judgment of evil? While our formula for authority is based in knowledge and

experience that has proven beneficial to mankind for centuries and thus called truths, modern man, more than any preceding version of man, subjects those truths to scrutiny through his personal emotions; using them to litigate and execute a wide range of societal laws and preferences. Man loves his feelings as he is beginning to believe them to be a superior authority in a deceptively secure world, where there appears to be no more lions, only skittish gazelles. Problems arise when those same feelings prevent his objective analysis of the relationships between individuals of fixed biology, as well as between man and nature, and man and God. Feelings have little sense of, or patience for biology. Feelings are the panic of human understanding, and if there is an evil entity, those feelings are his primary fodder for deception. Feelings, in the position of authority, are the “behavioral shortcut” I pointed out earlier that requires no engagement or knowledge to be gathered. Simply react to perceived evil as feelings dictate and enact law; indignant that second-person experience and knowledge play any part at all in equality.

In this environment of feelings, our inclination to point out evil and intensify suffering is a badge of courage that conflicts with truth. Human perversion has found solace and purpose in redefining itself into a newly-revealed truth and right. It’s the Pharisee in the temple courtyard. And as such, it must present itself in criticism of those who understand evil and suffering; those who can best manage such events. Christ comes to mind. Christ experienced the full depth of suffering, yet managed it for the salvation of mankind. Saints of the Catholic faith likewise manage suffering and evil for the betterment of man. But the secularist argues that God is insensitive to the human suffering in the world, because He does little about it, and is suspicious of “Saints” as being in the pursuit of their own purposes and simply encouraging their weaknesses in the guise of strengths.

Christ was insensitive to man’s law. Evil wants suffering out-of-control through law.

Our modern societal issues are heavily invested in this philosophy of desire. In man’s earliest centuries, he was part of nature; competing for his daily existence as an individual and small group. The only thing relative was his ability to stay alive. As he organized, mechanized, and overcame the competition, he saw himself as separate from the world, preferring to see himself as somehow relative to the divine. God became evident in his imagination; a condition that to this day man cannot clearly resolve, for his pride prefers God as only in his mind and not in dominion over him. Today’s modern man has come full circle; placing himself back into nature, but reserves natural law as subject to his persona, and holds God as a choice like going to the movies or going to church; it is no better, and perhaps worse.

## **Tolerance vs. Self-Sacrifice**

It is here where we see the argument of some, like Eleonore Stump, Professor of Philosophy at Saint Louis University, who reinforce Christ’s second commandment on the value of personal relationships over the alternatives of third-person knowledge and the ever increasingly popular first-person infatuation. I believe the results of such alternative first and third-person thinking is evident; evil on an expanding campus that teaches tolerance over self-sacrifice.

In today’s world these two words, tolerance and self-sacrifice, seem to have achieved similar meaning, but they are quite different. To show **tolerance** today means to recognize the equality of another person’s values with your own, and to include within one’s own values, the values of others; to change for the betterment of society. “Values” would be defined as those feelings and emotions that promotes the cause of sociopolitical stability with the goal of equality between all members within the society. ‘Equality’ refers to the successful achievement of happiness by all. So, what we have here is the understanding that what brings a person to a state of happiness through their feelings should be considered a value. Those

who resist the concept of tolerance are outside of acceptable norms and therefore must be subject to assertive, public conditioning and punitive efforts until a society is formed without discrimination of values.

“They are, if you like, men who have sacrificed their own share in traditional humanity in order to devote themselves to the task of deciding what ‘Humanity’ shall henceforth mean. ‘Good’ and ‘bad’, applied to them, are words without content: for it is from them that the content of these words is henceforward to be derived.” C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*

Unfortunately, tolerance demands a constant rise in discrimination, prejudice, dogmatism, and violence, for as mankind pursues ever deeper the identification of groups of human inclinations based upon feelings and emotions, he creates separations between individuals and groups through the identification of their differences and not their similarities, and these differences are based largely upon first-person and third-person analysis, in that it is one’s personal feelings and emotions that are driving the analysis, not the reparative, second-person relationship that gives a greater measure of understanding to the other person than to the self. It is by nature selfish, though it claims inclusion. Thus, each newly identified group will become another cause by which to condemn those who disagree and reject their assertion of the good of second-person experience. The hope of the secularist is that he can reach the bottom of the barrel of the infinite diversity of human expression before the world implodes from its own bigotry. The secularist believes he can juggle an infinite number of juggling balls.

The word **self-sacrifice** refers to the surrender, forfeiture, or giving up of something of worth, merit or importance for the greater good of another, or others, and thus prevent or mitigate what would otherwise be the other’s loss. In simplest of terms, it requires one to lose in order for another to gain. Self-sacrifice means to give up one’s authority or parity in return for equality, and does not require an acceptance and inclusion of the other’s condition. It is a singular act of second-person experience that produces mutual transformation. Values are not for introspection or redefinition for values are absolute and naturally defined. Unlike tolerance, self-sacrifice recognizes no group by which to separate one human from another.

While one can speak and act against those who perform sacrificial acts for others, society has consistently lacked any perseverance to any ideology that condemns self-sacrifice in favor of self-serving feelings and emotions, but times are changing. One cannot be tolerant and self-sacrificial at the same time. There is a huge difference in meaning between the two words, and yet they both claim centrality to today’s sociopolitical path for Western civilization.

Now, why am I even discussing this when the intent of my discourse is to provide some hopeful illumination of evil’s darkness? Ultimately, we hope to illuminate a path of understanding on which we can experience inevitable suffering in a manner that strengthens us rather than weakens us. I task myself to this because I believe the answer lies within our choice between secular tolerance and Christian self-sacrifice.

## **Of What Good is Man’s Philosophy?**

The day-to-day discourse of life appears purely physical with success based upon the ability to relate in a manner that is consistent with the relationships perceived. But while man diddles about with his smartphone – in control of his universe – philosophy measures the consequences of man’s collective thinking and lays out a map for his destiny.

Philosophy has recorded the human perceptions of life since man's ability to engage in language, to write and to read. It is in man's nature to communicate with one another on the deepest perceptions of their own condition, and the narrative recorded over the past five-hundred years demonstrates a consistent, declining respect for mankind as a unique species. Modern philosophers, for the most part, paint a very grim picture of the nature of man. From Schopenhauer to Nietzsche to Freud and onwards, philosophers have found it increasingly difficult to find merit in man's nature as he continues to insist upon his independence from everything that binds him or limits him. I recently came to learn that dystopian fiction writing is an invention that came into being with the Reformation and crystallized itself with the Enlightenment of mankind in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It's a telling thought that man's first visions of a world gone wrong emerged as he began his quest for independence from the absolute.

And what are those thoughts of contemporary man that leads him down that path of independence? Let me run through a few of our current philosophical trends in modern society. These are not extremist platforms I have selected, but rather main stream philosophies that are routinely taught at most colleges and universities. You'll hear much that resonates in our current sociopolitical reasoning and practice. These philosophies permeate the thinking of our educational system and is dispensed as medicine for our children and teenagers.

**Secular Humanism** attempts to underscore the responsibility mankind has to one another and the environment in which he lives. The means to such an attempt is a course of re-examination of all past traditions and truths in light of man's present and future knowledge; not upon the experiences of those men and women who defined the society of man in the past. In such a means, there is an automatic rejection of any tradition or truth that appears as dogmatic or conflicting with the right of present and future mankind to assert his ability of self-determination of his own qualities and temporal truths. The secular humanist sincerely believes that the path of knowledge and its technology, in itself, will yield equality, and equality will yield happiness and peace.

**Preference Utilitarianism** is a form of utilitarianism – the practice of choice being justly based upon the minimum of pain and the maximum of pleasure – that focuses upon the preference or interests of a person as being rational, and therefore the resultant actions of such preferences are morally justifiable. In this philosophy good and evil are purely preferences and therefore non-existent.

**Personism** is a philosophy that considers the “rights” of a creature to its existence and its ability to express its own will to be in accordance to its ability to be defined as a person. The word “person” may be defined, in this philosophy, to be a creature with the ability to prefer to continue to exist for the purpose of experience. Those creatures unable to have preferences are not persons, and thus have no “right” to life (that being the state of person-hood); leaving their quality of existence to the preference of persons.

**Speciesism** is a term used to describe the prejudice of classifying animals into stratum of importance based upon human use. It is meant as similar to racism or sexism; where it is assumed that it is illogical and hateful to believe that one creature is of less value than another and therefore its life is not of the same value as mans. It uses the same criteria as I mentioned much earlier:

“Secular man views society as the common discipline of respect for one another's existence, and the right to be within the society through the birth of their physical form into the physical world.” (If you're not born you're not equal.)

The difference lies in the claim of the extension of such respect unto non-human creatures. There can be no moral distinction here, and thus one who must choose in saving the dog or its master in a house fire is presented with a truthful dilemma.

## **Is Secularism Dangerous?**

Now, all of these philosophies are considered imperative to the secular vision of happiness, and they provide the structural outline for the conditioning of our societal mindset. Perhaps you see in their doctrines an opportunity for the abuse of such reasonable assertions to the benefit of some over others. The issue would then come down to whether these types of philosophies and practices of the secular future are superior to, and more reliable than, those philosophies and practices of the past. Is humanity at a crossroads in its progress towards universal happiness – one direction achieving the goal while the other direction channeling our nature into a dead end and extinction? Are we indeed unique as an earthly creature and can claim a separation from the natural world that leads us to a responsibility for the stewardship of the world, or are we but in symbiosis with all things about us and cannot be judged as better than or worse than anything else? The Christian world believes the former. The secular world believes the latter.

If these models of secular, human thinking are superior to the models of the past, then let's construct a model human from these philosophies and examine him. Let's call him "Pete".

### **Pete**

Pete believes that the value of a life is based upon the corollary "the greatest good for the greatest number." Pete believes he must examine all knowledge for its relevance to his preferred actions (disregarding any dogma or knowledge that claims any absolute condition by which man exists). Pete believes that science is the sole arbitrator of valid knowledge for society. Pete believes that mankind must be pooled with all living creatures and their "personhood" or level of ability for preferential thinking be assessed so "rights" may be assigned. Pete believes that any moral interpretation of actions be seen through the eyes of a non-discriminating observer who sees neither good nor evil in the world.

In his practice of life, Pete believes that athletes should be permitted to take any "safe" drug they choose in order to counter-balance the inequity of genetics and provide for a level playing field. Pete believes that surrogate motherhood should be a profitable venture, run by a non-profit "State Surrogacy Board" in order to ensure the ability of any sentient individual to have a child. Pete believes that sexual relations between humans and all other living creatures to be acceptable where there is no harm to either participant and there is the appearance of happiness; "harm" being defined by the preferences of some authoritative body. Pete believes that the fact that a human is alive has no bearing upon whether or not that human has a right to life should there be a preference for the life of another deemed as more important; "more important" being defined by the competitive other. Pete believes that a living human being only has a right to life in relationship to their ability to meaningfully calculate their existence and have desire for experience; "meaningfully" defined by some authoritative body and not by the individual.

How am I doing here? Is Pete someone you'd like to be friends with, or even his lover? Do you believe Pete's philosophy is for the good of society? Do you believe Pete's philosophy clearly delineates the difference between man and all other things of the world, or do you believe that he holds man as but another thing? Do you believe that you could trust Pete with your life?

I should probably note that Pete so passionately believes what he believes that he has taken his philosophy deeply into the academic world; supporting others who believe as he does, forging new ground for his philosophy, indoctrinating thousands of university students to his way of thinking, and calling for what he defines as practical ethics – the subjugation of past, dogmatic morality to the equal consideration of interests between conflicting parties – to be the practice of the world.

And for Pete's efforts he has received the accolades of the world. Pete is the Ira W. DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University. He's a Laureate Professor at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne. Pete serves on the Advisory Board of Incentives for Global Health. Pete recently received the title Companion of the Order of Australia. Pete is considered by his contemporaries as one of the most read and influential philosophers in today's society.

As you might guess by now, Pete is not my imaginary construct of a human of the secular world, Pete is a real person in this secular world; one of its philosophical and academic architects. Pete is the future essence of our secular-driven society. Pete wants our secular society to embrace his principles, for in his mind, he sees that man is but one of many things that must receive equal consideration of their interests based upon their sentient nature. He is the logical extension of our current demand that one cannot form distinction based upon past moral ethics, simply because those moral ethics may impede one's ability to redefine their preferred actions as good for the society.

And if one might be scratching their head over this one, take into consideration that Pete's paternal grandparents disappeared into the Nazi ghetto of Łódź, and his maternal grandfather was murdered in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Such irony; that Pete's philosophy is so in step with one of the most brutal, genocidal regimes of man's perverted thinking.

## **Man's Nature**

For secular philosophy to succeed in raising man up into universal equality it must do so on the back of man, and only man. Is he up for the task? Does his record as a species merit him the prize of successful entrepreneurship and absolute authority over his actions?

I do not think I have to make any argument for this merit. Our documented history and our daily newspapers records and identifies humanity as a volatile, insecure, dogmatic, corrupt, and murderous species that prefers existence through the extinction of its perceived enemies over that of mutual obligation to co-existence for the benefit of all. I could stop here and just say that man is evil, but I do not believe that easy assumption. To the secularist – to Pete – the way out of this condition lies in the general lowering of the standards of equality to a level by which all will concede to, versus the personal risk of further aggression and alienation from those in secular power. As secular man ventured out with good intent he consistently found that “power” addicts and corrupts, and so he tries this new course that he believes will negate the urge for power through a unified distribution of a limited source of equality. In other words, some eat steak while others eat hamburger, becomes we all eat hamburger. No one gets steak; unless, of course, you are a politician, a celebrity, or an athlete. Everyone else gets to live in a virtual steak world of twitter and YouTube; pretending to be more equal than that which has been dispensed to them. Despite the constant dramas played out in our public society of this very truth, we plow ahead anyways with this global plan; trying to keep a straight line with a bent blade and ignoring the rocky and infertile soil.

Sorry, but it appears I will be going further down the rabbit hole in my next post, but I do hope to provide

some illumination to this otherwise dismal and dark landscape as I let God's light enter into my argument in the future. I'd just like to know the bottom first.

**PART 4** – To come.

God Bless and Buen Camino – Reese

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This contribution is available at <http://travelsOfANewChristian.com/2013/09/17/the-rights-of-evil-part-3/>  
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When I was pregnant with Matt, our oldest, we decided not to find out if he was a boy or a girl until his birth. We kind of suspected that he was a boy because at one of our ultrasound appointments, the technician remarked to the doctor, “They don’t want to find out the sex. But WE know, don’t we??” Ha ha. Needless to say, we weren’t all that surprised when after a difficult labor (I. Don’t. Even.) the doctor said, “You have a boy!” The next thing she asked me was, “What’s the baby’s name?” We already had a boy’s name picked out: “Matthew.”



With Chris and Nick, we found out they were boys at their 20-week ultrasounds, and had even named them by the time they were born. “It’s a boy!” were joyful words we were blessed to hear, before *and* after their births.



On Friday I heard about the latest video from [The Center for Medical Progress](#) that reveals more barbarism from that despicable organization called Planned Parenthood. Listening to clips on the radio, my blood ran cold when I heard the voice of a medical assistant who was dissecting little babies gleefully announce, “Another boy!” I heard that voice echoing in my head as I tried to go to sleep and I could still hear it when I woke up. Yesterday I finally was able to bring myself to watch, and it made my stomach turn. She’s poking at the mangled remains of a baby in a petri dish, for God’s sake. (This takes place after a discussion with the medical director of a large Planned Parenthood clinic about how they can sell baby body parts for profit and make it look like they’re not. Tell me that isn’t human trafficking.)

Watch and then tell me that Planned Parenthood is doing good work, that they’re helping women. Tell me

that those of us who are sickened by people casually discussing the prices of baby body parts over wine and salad—and those who were brave enough to go undercover to expose Planned Parenthood’s sick agenda—are anti-choice extremists. Tell me *you* aren’t sickened by what you see and hear. Watch and If you still stand by Planned Parenthood, if you believe Cecile Richards when she says they don’t profit from the sale of body parts, if you believe those who say Planned Parenthood is a good and necessary entity for the health and well-being of women, then God help you.

Enough is enough. On Monday there will be a vote in the Senate to de-fund Planned Parenthood and support legitimate health providers. [Contact your senators](#) and urge them to support S.1881. And most important of all, pray.

*Holy Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Hosts, thrust into Hell Satan and all the evil spirits who roam about the world seeking the ruin of souls.*



**LIFE Runners Creed:** *We believe in the dignity of all human life from conception to natural death. We run as a **Prayer**, to defend children in the womb, so that they may be born and united with our Christian community. We run to build **Endurance**, for the race is long and we must keep our eyes fixed on You Lord. We run for **Awareness**, so our culture will view all human life as a reflection of Your glory Lord. We run for **Charity**, to provide support for mothers and fathers tempted to abort their child, and healing support for post-abortion women, men and families. We run to **End** abortion, for Christ died so that all may live. Guard us all, born and unborn, with Your **PEACE**, Lord. For in You, life is victorious. We pray and run in Your name, Jesus Christ. Amen.*



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This contribution is available at <http://eatingslowly.wordpress.com/2015/08/01/another-boy/>  
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# Chris West Will Write the Foreword to Our Marriage Advice Book! [at Can We Cana?]



Many of you have patiently followed the saga of our Catholic marriage advice book through the stages of [proposal](#)

,  
[publishing contract](#)

, and

[editing](#)

. Over the summer, we found out our title:

The Four Keys to Everlasting Love:

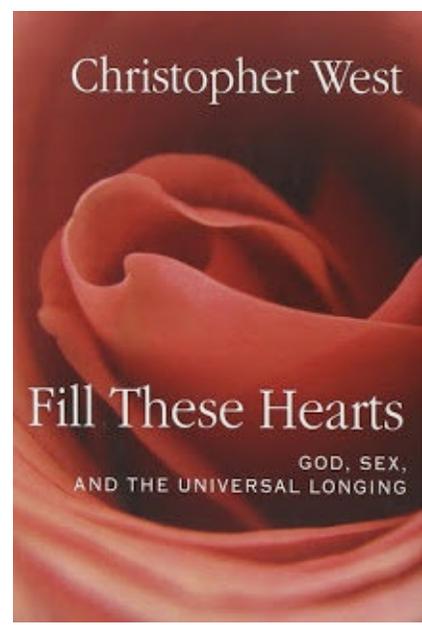
How Your Catholic Marriage Can

Bring You Joy for a Lifetime

And.... we found out that

[Christopher West](#)

had agreed to write the foreword!!!! In every informal poll we conducted on social media, when we asked who would be the BEST person to write a foreword to a Catholic marriage advice book, you overwhelmingly responded, "Chris West."



Christopher West

Fill These Hearts

GOD, SEX,  
AND THE UNIVERSAL LONGING

As many of you know, Chris is a best selling author, speaker, teacher and world-renowned expert in John Paul II's Theology of the Body. Chris' book

[Good News about Sex and Marriage](#)

, published for the first time in 2000, is still one of the most popular Catholic marriage advice books on the market. His pre-Cana program

[God's Plan for a Joy-filled Marriage](#)

is used for marriage preparation in dioceses across the country.

Chris' latest book,

[Fill These Hearts](#)

, was released in 2013. From my review:

A recurring theme of Fill These Hearts is that we must learn to aim our desire according to God's design so that we can arrive at our destiny. Our destiny is to be totally united in bliss with Our Lord and Savior forever in heaven. "These heavenly nuptials are what we long for (desire); they're what we're created for (design); and they're what we're headed for (destiny)," states West.

We are beyond thrilled that he is writing the foreword to our book!

**And here's more about our book from the publisher Ave Maria Press:**

*The Four Keys to Everlasting Love* offers a warm catechesis that illustrates how God's plan for marriage can turn self-centered individuals into a united couple capable of experiencing deep, lasting, and soul-satisfying love in their everyday lives. *The Four Keys to Everlasting Love* shows how the intentional practice of Biblical principles in key areas of life can inspire couples to stay in love with each other, in love with Christ, and in love with the wisdom of the Catholic Church.

In addressing universal issues like sex, money, health, child-rearing, in-laws, and work-life balance, this book incorporates examples drawn from Dr. Manuel Santos' psychiatric practice, as well as shared stories from the authors' family life. The philosophy of Pope St. John Paul II played a powerful role in shaping the contours of the book, which explores the sacramentality of marriage contained in the late pope's Theology of the Body and his encyclicals on family life (*Familiaris Consortio*; *Gratissimam Sane*), sexuality (*Evangelium Vitae*), and work (*Laborem Exercens*).

Direct, informative, helpful, and encouraging, this book celebrates the gift of our Catholic faith without downplaying the difficulties we face in living in a world that no longer seems to believe in the permanence of marriage or the value of trusting in God's will for us. This book does not adopt a one-size-fits-all spirituality. It is distinctively and joyfully Catholic.

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This contribution is available at <http://canwecana.blogspot.com/2015/08/huge-news-chris-west-will-write.html>  
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## Two Sides of the Same Coin [at beautiful thorns]



I have often been bewildered by different extremes you find in society. You see it in religious circles and in the world. You see it among Catholics and Protestants.

In Catholic circles, one extreme group of people is called the "rad trads". The "rad trads" are ultra-traditionalists who are more Catholic than the Pope. They believe in following rules and regulations, the letter of the law but often miss the mark and forget about love. Oftentimes they do not have a correct understanding of the true nature of God and what He is really like.

The other extreme Catholic group are the liberals who reject church doctrine. This group throws themselves into social justice and the plight of the poor but they often fail to believe in moral absolutes. They also miss the mark when it comes to giving people Jesus because they haven't learned the art of being still and receiving his love for themselves before going out and serving others.

In Protestant circles, you have the Fundamentalists who are like the Catholic "rad trads". They are very legalistic and take everything in scripture literally even if it is not meant to be taken literally. They tend to take a stand on insignificant details that don't matter to faith but forget about love.

The other extreme group Protestants fall into is the "cheap grace" group. This term was coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This group of Protestants focus on a form of grace, but a grace that is separate from the Cross of Christ. A grace without repentance. A grace where everything is accepted in the name of "love". They often view people striving to be obedient to God as foolish and legalistic. The type of "grace" they have bought into however isn't true grace and it isn't true love.

In the world you often see these extremes in politics. There are the "progressives" and the "conservatives".

These extremes try to separate justice from mercy and mercy from justice. However, you can not have one without the other. Both extremes are missing it. They are two sides of the same coin and they are not founded on the Cross of Jesus or rooted in true love! The different extremes try to separate sacrifice from love but true love requires sacrifice and true sacrifice is founded in love.

This tendency to go from one extreme to another is human nature. It all started with the Fall of Adam. Through the Fall, we lost our center and our souls became fragmented. We lost our focus on God and became distracted. This is when people started to choose the good over the best. They started to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil instead of eating from the tree of life in the middle of the garden. We started to do things our way, apart from God. We also lost control over our passions. Paul says we do what we don't want to do and we don't do what we want to do (Romans 7:15-20). In order to justify our passions, we now try to separate truth from love and love from truth and we find ourselves opposing God.

So, the question is, how do we get back to our original state, the way we were originally intended to be? How do we keep from extremes and become fully integrated, fully human, and once again focused on God? Our only hope is Jesus!

Jesus set the example. He is the way and he showed us the way. He was always centered on God the Father. He carried his cross and laid down his life. Through him, truth and love kissed.

We are also called to center our lives on God through the cross of Christ and be willing to lay our lives down out of love for Him.

The way we can center our lives on Christ is by growing in intimacy with him. The ways we grow in intimacy with him is to learn to rest and abide in him (John 15:4); seek his face (Psalm 105); and eat from the tree of life which is Jesus himself (John 6:51). When we do these things and allow him to consume us, we realize we can do nothing apart from him. We recognize more fully that we need him! He is the true bread that came down from heaven. We discover that Jesus alone can satisfy the longing in our hearts, integrate us and transform us into his image. Once we realize this, it is easier to keep Him at the center of our being.

Only Jesus can keep us from seeking extremes which are not rooted in anything real.

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# Putting on God's Armor [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

## *Putting on God's Armor*



### You Need Armor to Fight the Battle

***“... be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”*** (Eph. 6:10)

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There are times in our walk with Christ when the enemy throws everything at us in his attempt to cause us to deviate from the purposes of the Father for our lives by weakening our faith. These attacks often come in multiple fronts. For instance, illnesses, that out of fear and anxiety, cause inordinate tensions between family members combined with problems with our employment or lack thereof that cause us to doubt the Father's provision for our families and our faith in His Promises and His Love.

These attacks sometimes appear suddenly, especially when we are spiritually unprepared and leave us even more vulnerable to these incursions. And, because of our unpreparedness we are more likely than not to succumb to these attacks. If we have good faith foundations in the Word and an active prayer relationship with Jesus we are better able to recover from these situations because we can turn to Him immediately for help. But if we have wandered from our relationship with our Lord and Savior we will need the help of spiritually active Christians to assist us in such situations to assist us in returning to Christ who is our refuge and our fortress in such situations.

Of course, St. Paul, who himself was exposed to every type of attack of the enemy, exhorts us to always be prepared by putting on the spiritual armor which the Lord has made available to all of us through His Grace and the power of the Blood of His Son.

***“... be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.} Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.***



***“Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the SHIELD OF FAITH with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil {one.} And [having taken on] THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God ... With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints ...” (Eph. 6:10-18)***

Before entering the discussion about the armor one thing must be made clear, in order to put on the King’s Armor you must be a soldier under the command of the King and in good relationship with Him! In today’s terms, this means we must be in an active relationship with Jesus and not holding to any sin in our lives.

If are holding back some sin or failing before your conscience, the enemy can rightly use this as weakness that can use as a claim against you and your right to put on the King’s Armor.

So the first thing we must do before putting on God’s armor is to repent of our sins and through confession and the Eucharist, thus restore ourselves as loyal and obedient Soldiers of our King and Savior Jesus, the Son of the Living God.

Once this is accomplished we must then understand exactly what is meant by “God’s Armor” so that we can begin the task of putting it on as we prepare to engage the enemy.

Accordingly, St. Paul, the author of the letter to the Ephesians provides us further information in other of his epistles that brings us to a fuller understanding of the elements of the armor and its use in our defense and our offense against the enemy.

***Regarding Truth and Righteousness, St. Paul informs us, as follows:***

***“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it– the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.” (Rom. 3:21-28)***

...

***”There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.***

***So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*** (Rom. 8:1-9)

### ***Regarding the Shield of Faith***



Clearly, a shield is vitally important to a soldier. It provides a blanket of protection. It is meant to be taken up in all circumstances. It is the first barrier against the enemy’s attack. Often, shields were painted with identifying marks; a Christian who takes up the shield of faith identifies himself as a foot soldier who serves the Commander of the Lord’s army (see Joshua 5:14).

Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” Verse 6 stresses the importance of faith: “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Satan’s attacks can sometimes cause us to doubt God. Faith prompts us to believe God. We give in to temptation when we believe what it has to offer is better than what God has promised. Faith reminds us that, though fulfillment of God’s promise may not be readily visible to us, God is true to His Word. When Satan attempts to plague us with doubt or entice us with instant gratification, faith recognizes the deceptiveness of his tactics and quickly extinguishes the arrows. When Satan accuses us, faith chooses to believe that Jesus has redeemed us and that there is no more condemnation (Romans 8:1, 34; Revelation 12:10–12).

Faith is one of the greatest gifts (1 Corinthians 13:13), and it is the means by which we receive grace and come into right relationship with God (Ephesians 2:8–9). It is because we have been justified through faith that we belong to God and have peace with Him (Romans 5:1). Faith is the doorway to hope in God (Romans 5:2). Because we have faith in God, our suffering need not faze us; in fact, we can persevere under it (Romans 5:3–5). The things Satan attempts to use to discourage us can actually become tools in the hands of God.

All believers have this promise: “Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). Faith is a protective barrier between us and the schemes of Satan. When we believe God and take Him at His word, we remain grounded in truth, the lies of the enemy lose their power, and we become overcomers. In that way, faith is our shield. (excerpted

### ***Regarding Having our feet “fitted with the Gospel of Peace”***

Verse 15 says, “And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.” The New Living Translation words it this way: “For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.” The gospel of peace is the message that Jesus gave to those who trust in Him (John 14:27; Romans 10:15). It comes with the assurance from God that we are His children and nothing can snatch us out of His hands (John 10:29; 1 John 5:13). It outlines clearly what is required to become a child of God (1 Corinthians 15:1–6; John 1:12; Romans 10:8–10). Any other message is a false gospel.

The word readiness implies constant vigilance. A victorious soldier had to be prepared for battle. He had to have studied his enemy’s strategy, be confident in his own strategy, and have his feet firmly planted so that he could hold his ground when the attacks came. A soldier’s battle shoes were studded with nails or spikes, like cleats, to help him keep his balance in combat. He knew that, if he lost his footing and went down, it wouldn’t matter how great the rest of his armor was; the enemy had him. When we are ready with the gospel of peace, we live with the understanding that we are continually under attack from Satan. Second Timothy 4:2 says to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.”

The “peace shoes” that God supplies His soldiers have two purposes: defensive and offensive. In order to defend ourselves against the “flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16), we must have confidence of our position in Christ. We must stand firm in the truth of God’s Word, regardless of how terrifying the circumstances may be (1 John 5:14). We must understand grace without abusing it (Romans 6:1–6), remember that our position in Christ is not based on our own abilities or worthiness (Titus 3:5), and keep our belt of truth and breastplate of righteousness securely fastened (2 Timothy 1:12).

When Satan attacks with a flaming missile of doubt, such as “If God really loved you, He wouldn’t have let this happen,” we dig our peace shoes into the turf of God’s Word and reply, “It is written: All things work together for the good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). When Satan stabs from behind with “Remember what you did?” we dig in more deeply and reply, “It is written: If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

In addition to standing our ground, shoes are also for moving. God expects us to go on the offensive and take the gospel of peace to others. First Peter 3:14 says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” Sharing our faith is one of the best ways to maintain our own sure footing. God knows that, when we are active in speaking of Him to others, we not only charge into Satan’s territory, but we dig our shoes more deeply into truth and will be much harder to dislodge. When we have “studied to show ourselves approved unto God” (2 Timothy 2:15), we are ready to stand firm in the gospel of peace no matter what the enemy brings against us (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

### ***Regarding the Helmet of Salvation:***

Ephesians 6:17 instructs us to put on the whole armor of God and to “take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” When a soldier suited up for battle, the helmet was the last piece of armor to go on. It was the final act of readiness in preparation for combat. A helmet was

vital for survival, protecting the brain, the command station for the rest of the body. If the head was badly damaged, the rest of the armor would be of little use.

The assurance of salvation is our impenetrable defense against anything the enemy throws at us. Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). The idea in this verse is that, as we prepare for Satan’s attacks, we must grab that helmet and buckle it on tightly. Salvation is not limited to a one-time act of the past or even a future hope. God’s salvation is an ongoing, eternal state that His children enjoy in the present. It is daily protection and deliverance from our sin nature and Satan’s schemes.

Because of the power of the cross, our enemy no longer has any hold on us (Romans 6:10; 8:2; 1 Corinthians 1:18). He knows that, but he also knows that most of God’s children do not know that—or, at least, they do not live as if they know. We must learn to keep our helmets buckled so that his fiery missiles do not lodge in our thoughts and set us on fire. Through this helmet of salvation, we can “destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

There are several actions a believer can take to keep this helmet fastened and functioning:

1. Renew our minds. Our minds are battlefields. The outcomes of those battles determine the course of our lives. Romans 12:1–2 instructs us to renew our minds by allowing the truth of God’s Word to wipe out anything contrary to it. Old ideas, opinions, and world-views must be replaced. We must allow God’s truth to continually wash away the world’s filth, lies, and confusion from our minds and adopt God’s perspective.
2. Reject doubts that arise from circumstances. Human beings are sensory creatures. What we cannot fathom with our five senses, we tend to disregard. If we allow them to, circumstances may convince us that God does not really love us or that His Word is not true. It is impossible to have faith and doubt at the same time. God rewards our faith. With the helmet of salvation firmly in place, we can choose to believe what appears impossible (Hebrews 11:6; 1 Peter 1:8–9).
3. Keep an eternal perspective. When life crashes in around us, we must remember to look up. Our salvation is the most precious gift we have received. Keeping our eyes on that can help us weather life’s storms. We can choose to live our lives by the motto “If it doesn’t have eternal significance, it’s not important” (see Matthew 6:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11–13).
4. Remember that victory is already accomplished. When we consider ourselves “dead to sin but alive to God” (Romans 6:11), we eliminate many of the opportunities Satan uses to entrap us. When choosing sin is no longer an option for us because we recognize ourselves to be “new creatures” (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 3:9), we effectively cut off many avenues of failure.
5. Find all our hope in Him. Psalm 73:25 says, “Whom have I in heaven but You? Besides you, I desire nothing on earth.” Our helmet is most effective when we treasure what it represents. The salvation Jesus purchased for us cannot share the place of importance in our hearts with earthly things. When pleasing the Lord is our supreme delight, we eliminate many of Satan’s lures and render his evil suggestions powerless.

As we wear the helmet of salvation every day, our minds become more insulated against the suggestions, desires, and traps the enemy lays for us. We choose to guard our minds from excessive worldly influence and instead think on things that honor Christ (Philippians 4:8). In doing so, we wear our salvation as a protective helmet that will “guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7; cf. Isaiah 26:3; 1 Peter 1:5). (excepted from got questions.org)

## **Final Word**

Regarding the imminent return of Christ, the apostle Paul said, **“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light”** (Romans 13:11–12).

## **The Prayer of Engagement**

**Jesus, You are Lord over the entire universe and I give you the Glory for Your creation and Your Power over all that exists – both physical and spiritual.**

**Thus, It is In Your Name and Power that I bind all demonic forces that have come against us and our families and I cover all of us in the protection of Your Precious Blood that was shed for us upon the Cross.**

**In the Name of Jesus, I also take authority and I bind all powers and forces in the air in the ground, in the water, in the underground, in the netherworld, in nature and in fire.**

**In the Name of Jesus, and in the power of His Precious Blood, I hereby bind and command all the powers and forces evil to depart right now, away from us, our bodies, our souls, our spirits, our homes, and our lands, leave us and never return.**

**Holy Spirit come and restore all that the enemy has taken and fill us with your presence so that we may thank and glorify Jesus, our Lord, and Our God in the spirit as He, and He alone, deserves.**

**We thank You Lord Jesus for you are faithful to your Word and compassionate and loving to all those who believe and worship you. To you be the Glory forever and ever, Amen.**

~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~+~

May the Holy Spirit guide you and may the Blood Of Christ be your covering as you take action against the enemy of our souls.

Your Brother in Christ ... Bartimaeus

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This contribution is available at [http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2015/08/27/\\$-putting-on-gods-armor/](http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2015/08/27/$-putting-on-gods-armor/)  
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## Psalm 1 [at Bible Meditations]



*Happy are those who reject the advice of evil people, who do not follow the example of sinners or join those who have no use for God.*

*Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the Lord, and they study it day and night.*

*They are like trees that grow beside a stream, that bear fruit at the right time, and whose leaves do not dry up. They succeed in everything they do. Psalm 1: 1-3 (GNT)*

I joined “those who have no use for God” during my college years. Listening to God didn’t sound like much fun at the time. I did things my way. I thought that would guarantee happiness. Instead it let me down. When pain brought me to my knees, I turned back to God. He was waiting for me with open arms. Instead of fun, God offered me joy.

As far as studying God’s law day and night, Jesus said the most important laws were loving God with all our being, loving our neighbor, and loving ourselves. That gives me plenty to reflect on. I can’t think of a single conflict with others or internal struggle I’ve ever had that can’t be traced back to my neglecting one or more of those.

Like a tree growing beside a stream? I can tell you that since I’ve recognized my need for God and have started spending even a little time each morning in prayer, I have increasing peace in my life. The fruit I have to share is the story of my mistakes and limitations and God’s unconditional and limitless love.

Succeeding in everything I do? That depends on what you call success. I’m gaining a sense of who I really am instead of who I thought I was supposed to be. Jesus warned against gaining the whole world and losing our own selves. If a more honest sense of self counts as success, I guess I’m succeeding.

What about you?

- When have you followed the example of those who have no use for God? When have you rejected their advice? How did things turn out in each case?
- Think of a time you found joy in doing what you felt was right, even though it seemed beyond you at the time. Looking back, can you see that God gave you all you needed to do what you felt called to do?
- Are you feeling “dried up” today or refreshed and replenished? What can you do in either case?
- What will success look like for you today?

I invite you to read this psalm through on your own and reflect on whatever phrase or idea might speak to you at this moment in time. I welcome comments if you'd care to share your reflections. Peace and good.

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# Stop the Bishop Bashing: An Open Letter to my Fellow Catholic Bloggers [at Arnobius of Sicca]

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ who blog about the Catholic faith.

During Lent of this year, I [wrote a post](#) about the problems with attitudes in Catholic blogging. It was one I was afraid to post because I did not like the idea of being confrontational. It turned out to be one of the farthest reaching posts I made. However, since I am seeing certain blogs that I once admired slip into a nasty mindset, perhaps it is time to write again on the topic. I do not write this article with the intent of singling out a particular article or blogger. Rather, I write this to alert my fellow Catholic bloggers to an attitude we should watch out for and, if necessary, correct.

I've seen the posts shared on Facebook. Some have impressed me enough that I follow the Facebook page, Twitter, or RSS feed. So long as one defends the Catholic faith and show love for the Church established by Our Lord, all is well. Sometimes that defense of the faith involves speaking about misrepresentations of the faith from members of the Church. That is understandable. That is permissible—provided the correction is done in love and with the due respect for the office the person holds and gives obedience to those in persons of authority.

But some of these blogs have gone from showing love and charity for our fellow Catholics to the old and wearisome sport of “Bishop bashing.” Such blogs have gone from showing love for the Church as the Bride of Christ to showing bitterness towards the Church and treating bishops with contempt and scorn if they do not speak effectively about an issue we are concerned with or fail to openly champion a political platform which we prefer.

My brothers and sisters, when one reads the lives of the saints and the histories of the Church, we see that weak bishops and even bad bishops are not something that is present only in this present age. They have existed in all ages of the Church. Moreover, some bishops which are derided in this age actually are speaking the Catholic moral teaching but the critics seem to be unaware of it.

Now I do not speak to you as a moral authority who says “Be like me, for I am without flaw!” I'm *quite* aware of the log in my eye. The fact is, my blog (in the early Xanga days of 2007 through mid 2008) did take part in the sport of “bishop bashing.” Back then, I saw the crisis of the faith in America with the dissenters openly scorning the teaching of the Church, I saw the bishops speaking ineffectually on a topic or even focussing on a different topic. I bought into the belief that we had bad Catholics because we had bad bishops.

I was wrong. I used bad reasoning (the affirming the consequent fallacy) which failed to consider other possibilities. *Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.*

They say that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and I can attest to that. I believed (committing an argument from ignorance fallacy) that because I did not hear of the bishops defending the faith, it meant that they did not defend the faith. Yes, there were some bad decisions made and some members of the clergy expressed themselves poorly, or even had a wrong conception of the faith. But what it took me time to learn was that these things did not prove the existence of a willfully heretical bishops' conference.

Bishops are human. They can make bad administrative decisions. They can speak poorly on a subject. They can do these things because, like us, they are sinful human beings in name of salvation. They need our prayers that they can successfully carry out their task of shepherding us. Again, that's not solely a modern problem. We've had this in every age of the Church.

Now, some may ask about the actual faithless bishops in Church history. Does this mean that we are to accept whatever someone says because he is a bishop of the Church, even though this goes against what the Church has taught? No, I do not say that. After all, Pope Francis has said, "*Inconsistency on the part of pastors and the faithful between what they say and what they do, between word and manner of life, is undermining the Church's credibility.*" So sometimes we are right to be concerned. However, we do have to keep perspective and recognize where the authority to judge exists and what we must do when a member of the Church teaches wrongly.

Yes, Canon Law does recognize that the faithful have the right to manifest their opinion on the good of the Church, but that canon needs to be read in full:

CAN. 212 §1.† Conscious of their own responsibility, the Christian faithful are bound to follow with Christian obedience those things which the sacred pastors, inasmuch as they represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or establish as rulers of the Church.

§2.† The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires.

§3.† According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.

So, yes, when the faithful have concerns about the direction the Church is going in, when they have concerns that the statement of a bishop sounds strange, they can certainly express that concern—but only in the context of obedience to those entrusted with the mission of shepherding us. If such a shepherd creates a confused message, we can ask for clarification and we can appeal to a higher source. But we cannot do so in a disrespectful manner. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote well in his *Summa Theologica* on the subject.

*I answer that,* A subject is not competent to administer to his prelate the correction which is an act of justice through the coercive nature of punishment: but the fraternal correction which is an act of charity is within the competency of everyone in respect of any person towards whom he is bound by charity, provided there be something in that person which requires correction.

Now an act which proceeds from a habit or power extends to whatever is contained under the object of that power or habit: thus vision extends to all things comprised in the object of sight. Since, however, a virtuous act needs to be moderated by due circumstances, it follows that when a subject corrects his prelate, he ought to do so in a becoming manner, not with impudence and harshness, but with gentleness and respect. Hence the Apostle says (1 Tim. 5:1): *An ancient man rebuke not, but entreat him as a father.* Wherefore Dionysius finds fault with the monk Demophilus (*Ep. viii.*), for rebuking a priest with insolence, by striking and turning him out of the church. (II-II q.33 a.4 resp.)

I would ask any person, who criticizes a bishop openly, whether they take this approach. If they do not, they are not behaving according to our moral obligation.

Now, some have asked whether I think this should apply to a heretical bishop like the Arians. My answer is twofold. First, if they have formally broken away from the Church, they are not in communion with the Pope and bishops in communion with them and by that fact have no authority over us. Second, the modern bishops today are certainly *not* in the same class as those bishops who fell into heresy.

For example (to cite the most recent example of bishop bashing), when [Archbishop Cupich](#) brought up several topics of moral concern after the Planned Parenthood videos went public, he spoke no heresy or material error. The Catholic Church *does* require us to be concerned about the issues he brought up. One may (respectfully) believe that this was not the time to speak about those issues. One may respectfully believe that in doing this, he gave the wrong impression that these issues are the moral equivalent of abortion and disagree with him. But, he is *not* a heretic nor betraying the Church in mentioning these things.

But, by insinuating that bishops like this *are* heretical, when they say these things, we are causing scandal by undermining the faith of our readers in the Church. We cause people to stop trusting the leaders of the Church and use one's personal views to stand in judgment over whether the Church can be trusted. But in doing so, we are playing into the hands of the enemy who wants to attack and destroy the Church—and sees destroying the faith in the leaders as a good tactic. It's remarkably similar to the 1943 Walt Disney Cartoon, *Chicken Little*:

We need to ask ourselves who benefits from our bishop bashing. It's not the Church and it's not the faithful. It's not even ourselves. So, let us always remember to act in love and charity, even when we find ourselves needing to voice our concerns. Otherwise, we are the ones causing harm to the Church and we will have to answer for it.

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This contribution is available at <http://arnobius-of-sicca.blogspot.com/2015/08/stop-bishop-bashing-open-letter-to-my.html>  
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## Probed [at With Us Still]

It tends to make me squirm just a bit whenever I encounter this line from Psalm 139:

‘O LORD, you have probed me and you know me.’

I’m not big on the idea of being probed, I guess.

And for two days in a row now, we’ve been reflecting on that notion [in the responsorial psalm](#) at Mass – along with some other potentially unsettling insights from David’s prayer:

O LORD, you have probed me and you know me;  
you know when I sit and when I stand;  
you understand my thoughts from afar.

My journeys and my rest you scrutinize,  
with all my ways you are familiar.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O LORD, you know the whole of it.  
Behind me and before, you hem me in  
and rest your hand upon me...

Where can I go from your spirit?  
From your presence where can I flee?  
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I sink to the nether world, you are present there...

If I say, “Surely the darkness shall hide me,  
and night shall be my light”–  
For you darkness itself is not dark,  
and night shines as the day.

I say ‘unsettling’ because many of the lines in the Psalm ring true for me. I do feel ‘*known*’ by God... ‘*loved*’ by God. And yet there’s a part of me that’s inclined to run away from that relationship.

Why is that, I wonder?

Why do I flee?

A recent visit from our granddaughter Hannah helped me see a little bit more deeply into those questions. What I concluded is this: I’m a lot like a toddler in my relationship with the Lord.



Fully protected...and free to move...

It's really a kick to watch Hannah do her thing out on the patio on a sunny day. She takes delight her ability to walk, to move confidently about her world. And she can be confident, because we've already taken some important steps to minimize the potential for danger. We've slathered her up in sunscreen – and put on her sun-hat and shades – because she's much too young to understand the hazards of UV rays, but not too young to get burned.

We give her a measure of freedom to move about, too – and typically, she takes it to the limit. She literally runs from our love: You get the sense she'd fly to the heavens if she could, or sail beyond the seas.

And it occurred to me as I was watching her that our presence is what makes it possible for her to run. She's confident we'll still be there.

Which is a lot like the God we encounter in Psalm 139, is it not?

*You do your best, Lord, to protect me...without smothering me.*

*You know I need freedom to grow into a fully functioning, fully alive human being.*

*You know, too, that I'm apt to fall and skin my knee.*

*It's gonna happen, no matter how close an eye You keep an eye on me.*

—

*You allow this pain to enter into my life – not so much because You want me to learn from the experience...but because You know there's no other way to teach me*

*that I truly am free to spread my wings. That my freedom is not an illusion.*

*And You are there, too, to pick me up when I fall...and dry my tears.*

—

*Amazingly, You are willing to let me make my own way, even if it injects a measure of pain (and perhaps helplessness) into Your own role as my guardian.*

*It's an extraordinary thing to be known by You.*

*To be trusted by You.*

*Thank you, Lord, for always being there – wherever I end up.*

*Amen.*



*Even in the shadows...I find You there.*

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

*IHS*

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# Synod on the Family: Perception v. Reality [at Justin's Corner]

by Justin Soutar

*(Note: This article previously appeared on the website*

Catholic Online

June 16, 2015 at [http://www.catholic.org/news/blog/story.php?](http://www.catholic.org/news/blog/story.php?id=61153)

[id=61153](http://www.catholic.org/news/blog/story.php?id=61153)

*and on the website*

Catholic365

July 1, 2015 at <http://www.catholic365.com/article/1783/synod-on-the-family-perception-v-reality.html> )

In recent months, some devout and well-meaning Catholics have been organizing and sending petitions to Pope Francis urging him not to change the Church's teachings on marriage and the family during the Ordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family scheduled for this coming October. Most, if not all, of these petitioners are basically good, faithful Catholics who sincerely try to believe everything the Church teaches and strive to practice their faith with admirable consistency. At a time when the Church is under enormous and constantly growing pressure from an increasingly secularist world society to change her teachings on morality, human life and sexuality, marriage and the nuclear family, these loyal sons and daughters of the Church are full of concern that their Holy Mother will cave in to the wishes of her enemies—or, that she is in fact already beginning to do so, as evidenced by the controversial midterm report issued by the Extraordinary Synod last fall. These apparently rock-solid Catholics see themselves as faithful defenders of the one true Church of Christ against the malignant forces of heresy and radical secularism. Their goal is to ensure that the Church of our time will continue to faithfully adhere to and proclaim her 2,000-year-old doctrines on marriage and family life in all their splendor and integrity.

## **False Assumptions**

But these otherwise praiseworthy and well-intentioned Catholics appear to have overlooked the fact that they have grounded their seemingly noble campaign on a few blatantly false assumptions. One of these assumptions is that the Bishop of Rome has the ability to make changes to the Church's teachings as he sees fit. If that were true, the teachings would have been changed many times by 265 Popes throughout the last 2,000 years, and the deposit of faith would never have survived intact to our own day. As Catholics, we believe that the office of the Successor of Peter is protected in a special way by the charism of infallibility, which means that the Pope is incapable of erring when teaching the whole Church on a matter of faith or morality. Pope Francis can no more change any part of the Church's doctrine than could Pope Benedict XVI, or Saint John Paul II, or any of the other Popes preceding them.

Another false assumption undergirding this petition campaign is that Pope Francis himself, in his heart of hearts, is intending to change Church teachings on marriage and family life to accommodate modern viewpoints, or is at least considering doing so under pressure from a handful of heterodox bishops, clergy, and laity. Nonsense. Anyone who really knows this man knows better than to even think such a

thought. From his earliest days as a Jesuit priest right up to the present, and often amid difficult and hostile circumstances, Bergoglio's spoken and written words demonstrate an unswerving commitment to Catholic orthodoxy. Anyone who reads his homilies, letters, addresses, interviews, and other public statements as priest, bishop, Archbishop and Pope can verify his record as a faithful son of the Church in that regard. There is no talk whatsoever of changing any part of Catholic doctrine to better suit modern tastes. On the contrary, Bergoglio's clear affirmations of traditional Church teaching on all manner of topics is both refreshing and reassuring.

But the worst assumptions of all by these Catholic petitioners are 1) that the Church herself has the ability to change some of her teachings, and 2) that she is actually going to do this at the upcoming Ordinary Synod on the Family, that it will be a “heretical” Synod. Both these fears are groundless. To begin with, the Church cannot change any of her teachings any more than the Pope can do so. As Catholics, we believe that the charism of infallibility is bestowed not only on the visible Head of the Church on earth, i.e. the Pope, but on the Church herself as a whole as well. We believe that the Holy Spirit protects the Church from teaching error. Specifically, the Church is infallible when the Pope, and the bishops united with him, declare that such and such a doctrine of faith or morality is to be definitively held by all the faithful.

### **An Advisory Body**

Secondly, it should be pointed out that the primary task of the Synod of Bishops—a relatively new institution in the Church which was created by Blessed Paul VI following the Second Vatican Council—is to advise the Pope on matters of Church governance and discipline, and thereby to assist His Holiness in applying Church doctrine to current pastoral situations throughout the universal Church. The purpose of the Synod is to foster greater collegiality within the Church by facilitating more effective collaboration between the Pope and the bishops in the governance of the Church. By means of the Synod, bishops from every part of the Catholic world in union with Rome freely and frankly communicate to the pontiff the problems and concerns of their particular Churches, along with their discussions and opinions on such problems and concerns, related to a certain theme chosen by the Holy Father (i.e., “The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization”). The Pope listens to all of this feedback and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, uses it to make wise and sound decisions for the future of the Church.

The Holy Father then communicates his decisions to the bishops and the whole Church by means of a written document called a post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, in which he “confirms his brothers” (cf. Luke 22:32) in their faith and issues binding pastoral guidelines. Such an infallible papal document is the only text having anything to do with a Synod that carries official magisterial teaching and decision-making authority for the whole Church. As a representative institution, the Synod of Bishops is first and foremost an

*advisory*

body to the Holy See; it has no decision-making authority or magisterial teaching authority apart from the Successor of Peter. Thus, the idea that a Synod can alter Church doctrine is contrary to the fundamental nature of the Synod itself as an advisory organ. Every few years, the Pope calls his brother bishops to meet with him in the Vatican for a few weeks to hear what they have to say. The bishops do not go to Rome to help the Pope change Church teaching, which he can't do anyway—and even if they were to try to abuse the Synod to that end, their efforts would come to nothing thanks to the charism of infallibility.

## Unofficial Documents

Upsetting and misleading as some of its statements were, the highly controversial 2014 Synod midterm report issued last October was not an official teaching document of the Magisterium and was never intended to be treated as such. It was nothing more than an inaccurate and heavily biased summary of the bishops' discussions up to that point that reflected a heretical agenda by certain groups of people who are attempting to manipulate the Church's internal affairs in order to advance their own agenda. Such attempts to influence the Church to change certain of her teachings have been made by rebellious bishops, priests, and laypeople on numerous occasions over the course of 2,000 years—most recently in the decades following the Second Vatican Council—but none have ever proven successful. In each case, what actually happened was that those bishops, priests, and laity who pridefully rejected certain Church doctrines found themselves

*ipso facto*

estranged from their Holy Mother—i.e., instead of changing Church teaching to suit their own ideas, they found that they had voluntarily renounced their membership in the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church and were now marked for all time as heretics and schismatics.

Although not an official teaching document itself, the final report of the 2014 Extraordinary Synod clearly reaffirmed traditional Church doctrines on marriage and family life and the incompatibility of certain lifestyles with Catholic moral teaching, thus offering considerable reassurance to the troubled and confused faithful that the Synod on the Family is indeed on track to fulfill its mission. Even the three most controversial paragraphs in the document, nos. 52, 53, and 55, did not attack Catholic doctrine or indicate that the norms regarding reception of Holy Communion are about to be changed in any significant way; nos. 52 and 53 merely called for close theological examination of sacramental and spiritual Communion in regard to those who are divorced and remarried. It does not necessarily follow that there will be any change in the current discipline. Pope Francis will certainly listen to and consider the recommendations he is given by theologians who are commissioned to study the subject, but it is he who will make the final decision for the whole Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Following the Second Vatican Council, many Catholic theological experts urged Paul VI to approve the use of artificial contraception by Catholic married couples. The pontiff proceeded to write and publish his magnificent encyclical

*Humanae Vitae*,

which explicitly reaffirmed unchangeable Church teaching on the matter, and the rest is history.

## Myth v. Reality

Catholic doctrine cannot change; that much is clear. Church discipline and pastoral practice, on the other hand, is subject to a certain degree of flexibility in order to suit the needs of different times; therefore, it has gone through various, necessary, and occasionally even significant revisions over the past two millennia, usually as a result of Church councils and for purposes of reform. This legitimate mutability of discipline has some people very worried at present. One of the chief fears of the good Catholics referred to above is that, as a result of the upcoming Synod, traditional Church teachings on marriage, family life, and mortal sin will be severely undermined by the official approval of new pastoral practices that directly contradict the teaching. But, as with the other false assumptions discussed above, it is simply not possible for this to occur. Official Church discipline must always reflect official Church doctrine; it

cannot be altered to the point where it flies in the face of Church teaching. The discipline can only change within the narrow limits set by canon law. For example, a Catholic who is conscious of being in the state of mortal sin has always been forbidden to partake of Holy Communion until he or she receives the Sacrament of Penance. That norm cannot and will not be changed by Pope Francis or the upcoming Synod.

On the other hand, however, as a result of fallen human nature, the implementation of ecclesiastical discipline is not always a straightforward affair. As with Church doctrine, so also with Church discipline throughout history certain bishops, priests, and laypeople have attempted to substitute their own preferences for what the Church says, based on some excuse or other. This is exactly what happened with the Second Vatican Council, when all manner of heretical notions and illicit practices were justified under the vague mantle of "the spirit of Vatican II." Although the teachings of the Council itself were entirely orthodox and the liturgical, pastoral and disciplinary changes it introduced were fully in accord with those teachings, the general public perception of the Council was a far cry from the reality of what the Council Fathers officially said and did. As a result of this unfortunate discrepancy between the myth and the facts of Vatican II, the post-Conciliar period was marked by a great deal of confusion and difficulty for the Catholic Church. Heretical ideas proliferated among the hierarchy, clergy and laity; liturgical experimentation knew no bounds; millions left the Church, no longer recognizing their beloved Mother; small groups of schismatic traditionalists claimed to be the remnant of the "true faithful." Blessed Paul VI, who had brought the Council to a successful conclusion, famously lamented that "the smoke of Satan has entered the Church." At least for a time, the Bride of Christ appeared to have lost her way.

Here we must acknowledge that there is in fact a certain real danger for the Church at the present moment in her history. This danger is that—just as happened with the Second Vatican Council--certain bishops, priests, and laypeople will view the Synod on the Family through the colored lenses of their personal whims and wishes, and as a result will end up saying and doing anything they please using "the spirit of the Synod" as a cover. Unfortunately, those in the secular news media, which is increasingly hostile to the Church, have already embedded in the public mind their own grossly inaccurate portrayal of the 2014 Extraordinary Synod as the first clear step by the Church hierarchy toward a radical transformation of Catholic doctrine and discipline on the subjects of marriage and family life. By projecting this false and misleading image of the Synod on the Family—which is the brainchild of Pope Francis and has nothing whatsoever to do with changing Church teachings—unscrupulous journalists are raising vain expectations among the Church's enemies, including heretical dissenters, of official doctrinal and disciplinary changes that cannot and will not take place, while providing fresh fodder for schismatic traditionalist conspiracy theorists who claim that the Church is "going heretical" and that they are the sole remaining guardians of orthodox doctrine.

## **Reasons for the Synod**

Given the considerable risks involved, one may ask why Pope Francis has called this Synod on the Family—an unusual double Synod at that—and what he hopes to accomplish by it. As someone who grew up in a closely-knit Italian family in Argentina, Francis understands the critical importance of the traditional nuclear family in God's plan for human society in general and for the Church in particular. He is painfully aware that this traditional family unit, the basic cell of society, is under tremendous attack and facing many difficult challenges in our increasingly secularized contemporary world. He realizes that the Church has a duty to reaffirm the truth of her beautiful teachings on marriage and family life and to

examine how these timeless teachings should be applied to Catholic families and family members within the context of the present situation. Thus, Pope Francis has called this Synod primarily for pastoral reasons, in order to reassure modern Catholic families that the Church is there to offer them meaningful help and sound guidance in addressing the challenges they currently face.

As to what he hopes to accomplish through this Synod, clearly Pope Francis wants to strengthen intact Catholic families in order to help them more fully live out their beautiful witness of God's plan for marriage and family life in an increasingly individualist and radically secularist environment. At the same time, Francis wants the Church to more effectively reach out to the hundreds of millions of Catholics who are in mortally sinful "irregular situations"—e.g., drug addicts, those who are cohabitating, married couples who use artificial contraception, the divorced and remarried, those in homosexual relationships, those who no longer practice their faith, and so forth—in order to invite them to experience the Lord's mercy by repenting of their sins and returning to full communion with the Catholic Church. In this regard, Pope Francis simply wants the Church to do what Christ would do, which is to seek out sinners and call them to repentance and conversion—to go in search of the lost sheep that have strayed from the fold. Francis correctly perceives that the modern Church has grown a bit lax in this area, with many of her shepherds preferring to stay comfortably inside the fold with the "good sheep" while ignoring and forgetting about those wayward sheep in the wilderness who are in danger of being lost forever. Thus Francis, an experienced and genuine pastor, wants Church leaders to step outside of their comfortable offices and their comfort zones, to reach out to the peripheries of their parishes and dioceses and invite the lost sheep to return home.

In this context, the Synod on the Family is meant to help rebuild a worldly and weak Church, first by strengthening good Catholic families that are “inside the fold,” and secondly by healing and repairing many of those wounded and damaged Catholic families that are “lost in the wilderness”—the latter to be accomplished primarily by inviting many individual grave sinners to repentance and conversion. Altering Church doctrines on marriage, family life, and sin will not be part of this equation; nor will the basic norms currently in force regarding the proper reception of Holy Communion see any significant change. So regardless of unfortunate misunderstandings and misperceptions that swirl around the Synod on the Family generated by media pundits, heretics, and schismatics, and regardless of serious problems that may arise with its implementation, it is the opinion of this author that the Synod itself—like the Second Vatican Council—is the fruit of a genuine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who “leads us into all truth” (cf. John 16:13), who protects the Church from teaching error, and who in every age is the real Protagonist of needed reform and renewal within the Mystical Body of Christ.

## **Opposing Viewpoints**

As a result of last year's Extraordinary Synod on the Family, Pope Francis is keenly aware of two opposing viewpoints within the Church today: there are some who correctly understand and heartily support his Christ-like mission to have the Church reach out more effectively to sinners, and there are others—misled by the mainstream media and their own irrational fears of doctrinal changes—who reject this courageous initiative for seemingly laudable reasons, preferring to take shelter within the secure confines of the Church they have always known and which they are afraid to lose. Francis himself neatly summed up this dichotomy and the merciful mission of the Church in his homily to newly created Cardinals on February 15, 2015:

There are two ways of thinking and of having faith: we can fear to lose the saved and we can want to save

the lost. Even today it can happen that we stand at the crossroads of these two ways of thinking. The thinking of the doctors of the law, which would remove the danger by casting out the diseased person, and the thinking of God, who in his mercy embraces and accepts by reinstating him and turning evil into good, condemnation into salvation and exclusion into proclamation....

The Church's way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement. This does not mean underestimating the dangers of letting wolves into the fold, but welcoming the repentant prodigal son; healing the wounds of sin with courage and determination; rolling up our sleeves and not standing by and watching passively the suffering of the world. The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone for eternity; to pour out the balm of God's mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart. The way of the Church is precisely to leave her four walls behind and to go out in search of those who are distant, those essentially on the 'outskirts' of life. It is to adopt fully God's own approach, to follow the Master who said: 'Those who are well have no need of the physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call, not the righteous but sinners' (Lk 5:31-32).

### **A Divine Institution**

So while the petition drive currently underway to Pope Francis may in one respect be considered a hopeful sign of certain lay Catholics' fidelity to Church doctrine, it is a wholly unnecessary, quite useless, and ultimately misguided endeavor. If the Church were exclusively a human institution, built on the sand of fallible human ideas and protected and defended by human effort alone, their grave concerns about her future would indeed be fully justified. The Church, however, although comprised of weak and sinful human members, is fundamentally a divine institution, built by Christ Himself on the Rock of Peter, and we have His word that the gates of Hell will not prevail against it (cf. Matt. 16:18). The fundamental problem with these otherwise good Catholics who are pleading with Pope Francis not to change Church doctrine on marriage and family life is that they do not really fully believe that the Holy Spirit protects the Church from teaching error, nor do they really fully trust that God is in command of His own institution. Because of this reprehensible lack of faith and trust, at the root of which is the original sin of pride, these Catholic fundamentalists run the risk of refusing to obediently submit to the magisterial teaching authority that God Himself has established and guaranteed, and instead taking it upon themselves to decide what the Church should do and teach. They share this lack of faith and trust in common with schismatic traditionalists, and in fact are just one step away from joining their ranks.

These worried and fearful Catholics would do well to reread certain parts of the

### *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

and rediscover the basic truth that the Church ultimately belongs not to us, but to the Lord. As Pope Benedict XVI candidly declared not so long ago in his final General Audience address of February 27, 2013, at a time when many Catholics were filled with grave concern for the Church's future: "I have felt like Saint Peter with the Apostles in the boat on the Sea of Galilee:...there were also moments when the waters were rough and the winds against us, as throughout the Church's history, and the Lord seemed to be sleeping. But I have always known that the Lord is in that boat, and I have always known that the barque of the Church is not mine but his. Nor does the Lord let it sink; it is He who guides it." We should also recall the oft-repeated words of Saint John Paul II, the simple words of Christ Himself: "Do not be afraid!" This is not a time for illogical fears and useless anxiety, but rather a time for renewed faith and lively hope. Instead of wringing our hands anxiously about what may happen to our Holy Mother the

Church in the near future, let us take this wonderful opportunity of the Synod on the Family to renew our faith and trust in God, who will continue to protect His Church and guide her safely through the storms of temporary difficulties to the glory of eternal life.

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This contribution is available at <http://justins-corner.blogspot.com/2015/08/synod-on-family-perception-v-reality.html>  
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# Why I'm crying as our child starts kindergarten [at Catholic Review]

As our little boy walks into school to start kindergarten today, I'll have tears in my eyes.

It's not just that I want to hold onto our baby a little longer.

I'm crying because I worry that I should have prepared him better for the challenges and questions that come with starting this new chapter of his life.

I'm crying because even though his big brother will be nearby, our little boy has to stand on his own.



I'm crying because I know he has to make his own friends, which he'll do so easily, but he'll also have to

figure out that children aren't always kind.

I'm crying because I'm so very proud of who our little boy is—and how far he has come since we met him four years ago.

I'm crying because there were years when I wasn't sure I'd ever be a mother—and because I know so many people who still yearn for motherhood or miss a child who's in heaven.

I'm crying because I'm overjoyed and honored to be the mother of a child who is so packed with personality, compassion, and joy he brings to every single day.

I'm crying because I know there are people on the other side of the world who would love to watch our little boy beginning his first year of elementary school. They would be so proud of him.

And, all right, all right, I might as well admit that I'm crying because just a minute ago he was a toddler racing his big brother through our house, and I can't believe he's already in kindergarten.

We went through this two years ago, and I thought it would be easier the second time. In some ways, though, it's more difficult. You see, I know how fast it's going to go. And one day I'll be packing lunches and realize the year is ending, and we're on to the next.

I feel so blessed to be here with him right now, to be celebrating this moment in our family. And I know that as nervous as he might be to start kindergarten, tomorrow he will jump out of the car and run to the door without even looking back.

And that's good because then he won't notice that I might have tears in my eyes again.

Have fun in kindergarten, little one. Let your little light shine.

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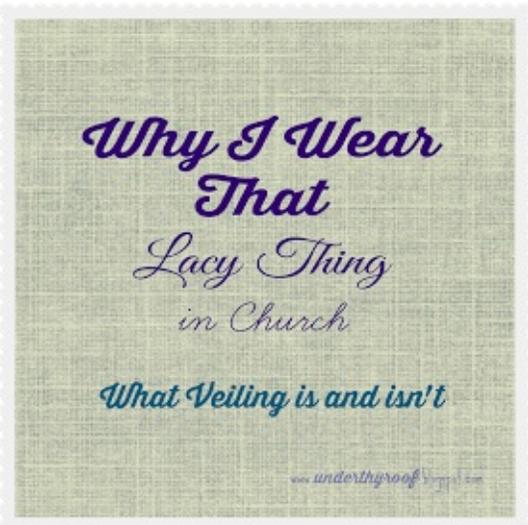
By

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This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2015/08/23/why-i-m-crying-as-our-child-starts-kindergarten>  
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So last week's What I Wore Sunday post accidentally included my little chapel cap in the picture. I meant to do some without it because the internets can be a scary place. With the likely chance you've never met a younger woman who chooses to wear a veil, or other covering, at mass, I figure I should maybe explain this a bit.



*Why I Wear  
That  
Lacy Thing  
in Church*

*What Veiling is and isn't*

www.undertheroof.org

## Reasons I Veil

### 1. It differentiates between the everyday and when I'm in a sacred place.

My everyday clothes are, most of the time, the type of things I would wear to mass.

I veil when in the presence of the Eucharist. So that means whenever I'm in a church something will be on my head. That changes the dress that I have worn/will wear the rest of the day while cooking, cleaning, and taking care of babies into something that also brings me into a place of reverence.

### 2. It forces me to pause and remember what I am doing here

I stop in the vestibule, or outside the church, and put my veil on. It's how I make sure I take a pause and remember what I am doing by walking into the church is different from rushing into a grocery store. I'm not here just to get what I need and leave as soon as possible. I'm here to worship and be present with my brothers and sisters.

### 3. I feel a calling to it

Veiling is something that I started as a Lenten practice because it was the most uncomfortable thing I could think of to do. I thought it would be a good growing experience for me. By the end of it I was uncomfortable if I didn't veil.

## What Veiling Isn't

### 1. It's not about saying all women must veil or else

This is another of the many possible devotional practices that we have to choose from as Catholics. I like it, and find it helpful, but not everyone does. It's not bad if you don't veil, and it's not better if you do.

It does not bother me in the slightest that most other women at mass don't veil. I'm not out to convert them to it, but I'm happy to support someone who wants to try but might be a little insecure.

## **2. It's not about forcing more and more rules on women**

To me, the free choice to veil is an important part of the practice. It is entirely possible to be reverent without a veil, just as it is to be reverent with it. It's all about your intention.

## **3. It's not about making a "holier than thou" statement**

Whether or not there is a veil on your head does not change your prayer before God. I do not look down on women who don't veil, nor do I assume all women who do are super duper devout and perfect. Neither of those are realistic, or loving, assumptions.

## **4. It's not about showing off**

If you are veiling just to be different, then you shouldn't be veiling. You need to do a little more prayer and discernment if that is your main purpose.

*I really did write my college thesis on this topic, so if you are just dying to read a scholarly lit review on it, just shoot me an email! Feel free to send any other questions you have! I've probably heard it before, and really won't be offended by a question asked in sincerity.*

Now for another edition of

[What I Wore Sunday with Fine Linen and Purple!](#)





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This contribution is available at <http://underthyroof.blogspot.com/2015/08/why-i-wear-that-lacy-thing-at-church.html>  
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# Preparation for Death: You Should Have Cared While You Could OR You Can't Take it With You [at Servimus unum Deum]

Hello Everyone,

My first postings, 1A to 1D, in the "Servimus Liguorian Series" will focus on the content and teachings of St. Alphonsus, via the first volume of his Ascetical Works. Volume I is called "Preparation for Death" and is self evident as to what that volume is about.

This is the copy of the Ascetic Works that I am using:

de Liguori, A. Ed. Rev. Eugene Grimm. Preparation for Death. Volume I of The Ascetical Works. Comissioned by the Redemptorist Fathers. Reprinted in the 1970's or the 1980's by Our Blessed Lady of Victory Mission in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.A.

Should you use or read free copies on the Internet of his works, realize that the translations of the work into English can be different, or even abridged in some format, and that the numbers might not align to the page references I am using.

In this book, one could divide the areas that St. Alphonsus focuses on into three central themes/teachings with regard to this book:

- 1) What happens to those who do NOT live a holy life, when death comes to take their soul away, as well as on Sin, and what surrounds it in the life they commit to,
- 2) What happens to those who have lived a holy life, and in essence, WHY one should NOT like be the person in the first topic, and
- 3) What must we do to prepare for our death so that we do not fear it in the end of our lives.

A fourth posting might also include some prayers that are deep and spiritual, from the volume, but will include a couple of other interesting facets that don't quite fit neatly into the three themes, but support them and deserve their own merit to highlight.

One of the great things I've come to discover in his writings, as I've delved into this book, is that each chapter is moving, deeply probing, and pretty much makes sense to any regular person reading his material. While he doesn't overflow you with lots of theological terms and ambiguous terms, he does use descriptive language in a way to drive a point across. He does so with some variance, but many of the writings tend to tie into a main theme. True to the very style of his preaching, it is simplistic enough, for the common layperson in the pews to get a point across. Liguori also uses many other small quotes and passages from the writings of Saints in Church history, even some famous ones, as well as much scripture, again even some well known passages.

In the first of four parts to my posting series, I will focus on topic 1: What happens to those who aren't prepared for death, including SIN, and what surrounds that sin in the life those lost souls commit to.

### *LIGUORI AND SIN*

To begin with, one should examine Sin itself, before we move into what the unfortunate soul who chooses a habitual, sinful life, experiences at death.

Should you need a reminder from the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

1849 Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as "an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law."<sup>121</sup>

1850 Sin is an offense against God: "Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight."<sup>122</sup> Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it. Like the first sin, it is disobedience, a revolt against God through the will to become "like gods,"<sup>123</sup> knowing and determining good and evil. Sin is thus "love of oneself even to contempt of God."<sup>124</sup> In this proud self-exaltation, sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus, which achieves our salvation.<sup>125</sup>

Liguori, of course, strays not from the doctrine of sin presented in the Catechism. He says the following of sin:

".... In committing sin, man dares to declare himself the enemy of God, and to content dingle-handed with the Lord .... In consenting to sin, the sinner stretches out his arms against the Lord .... He raises his neck, that is, he swells with pride, and runs to insult God; he arms himself with a fat neck, that is, with ignorance; for a fat neck is the symbol of ignorance .... What an Insult! What temerity! What blindness! .... When the sinner deliberates whether he will give or refuse his consent to sin ... when he consents to sin, he declares that his passion, vanity, or pleasure is of greater value than the friendship of God. Behold the Lord covered with shame by the sinner!" (Preparation for Death, 154-156)

There are two kinds of sin that one commits, the venial, and the mortal. While Liguori does not focus heavily on the venial sin in of itself (thought it will be tied to obstinate sinners later on,) he does expand much on Mortal Sin. Liguori does not mince words and clearly follows the line of Catholic doctrine and the CCC. When a man sins in such a profound manner (or one could say, habitually without care ...):

"... He insults God, he dishonours him, he afflicts him .... God punishes sin with the pains of hell ; ... [Man] says to God, Lord, I will not serve Thee. "Thou hast broken My yoke, thou has burst My bonds." (Jeremiah II:20.) .... The sinner says the same -- "Lord, I know Thee not, I will do what I please; in a word, he insults the Lord to his face, and turns his back upon Him. Mortal sin is precisely a turning away from God. (152-154)

## LIGUORI AND MERCY

I must say, those prior words cut deep with fear into your heart, the fear of the Lord. But always, with justice, its companion is mercy. What do we say, on the mercy of God (Christ) to forgive sin? On that note, St. Alphonsus comments as such:

" Dearly beloved Christian, how often have you been deaf to the calls of God? You deserved that He should call you no more; but your God has not ceased to call you, because He wishes to make peace with you, and to save you .... Oh! with what love and tenderness does God embrace the sinner that returns to Him! This love and tenderness Jesus Christ wished to give us to understand by the parable of the sheep ... "Rejoice with me; because I have found my sheep that was lost." (St. Luke XV: 5) .... This tenderness the Saviour declared more fully in the parable of the prodigal son; in which he tells us that He is the Father who, when he saw His lost son returning, runs to meet him, and before he his son utters a word, embraces and kisses him ..." (165, 168-169)

Does Liguori score once again with the Teachings of the Catholic Church? Yes he does, in the Catechism's 1864:

**1864** "Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven."<sup>136</sup> **There are no limits to the mercy of God**, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit.<sup>137</sup> Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss.

Clearly, our God is merciful ... to a point. Right after the chapter on God's Mercy (Consideration XVI,) Liguori brings us back to serious thought on our souls, by explaining how we can all too easily abuse Our Lord's Divine Mercy, as well as speaking "Of the Number of Sins" in Consideration XVIII. St. Alphonsus comments on the "time limit" for forgiveness of sin AND the number of sins that God can forgive as follows:

*" ... O Sinner! you must tremble even on account of the sins which I have forgiven you; for if you add another, it may happen that this new sin, along with those which have been pardoned, may complete the number, and then there will be no more mercy for you; .... God waits till the measure of iniquities is filled up, and then he chastises the sinner. (183)*

What you say? There is a fixed number of sins that God can forgive???? So I only get X tries and then I am predestined for Hell???? Now stop right there!!! Before you accuse St. Alphonsus of being a heretic, there are a number of things to consider.

1. Remember, that predestination, and the LITERAL forgiveness of only X sins, betrays the Divine Mercy of Christ, and is heresy in the Church. This would be a subset of heresy under Calvinism. Were St. Alphonsus to be a practitioner of heresy, he would NOT be a saint, never mind a doctor of the Church.
2. When a priest, up to the Pope, speaks of matters that are not 100% dogma and doctrine of the Church, it is in our spiritually best interest to interpret the action/speech in the MOST orthodox light, with exception to outright, formal heresy, and moral evil. Otherwise, what respect or trust can we give to our clergy on any matter at all? It would be utter disobedience, as some questionable groups, societies, and internet trolls or Radicals Misrepresenting Traditionalists, express, even today.
3. Further, St. Alphonsus, and the establishment of the Redemptorists, were not to uphold predestination and heresy, but to COUNTER them, particularly those who expressed elements of, or were absolutely practicing the heresy of, [Jansenism](#).
4. Finally, St. Alphonsus, when speaking about the Mercy of Christ to forgive sins, clarifies his stance on this "number" of sins himself: "... " (189).

Now, how can this be understood, in the best possible way a Catholic should? Remember that the preaching of the past could be easily claimed to be "fire and brimstone." Generally speaking, priests spoke in such a matter and were not afraid to instill, (rightly so,) the fear of hell and committing sin to

place you in Hell. St. Alphonsus rightly did so, because he genuinely cared about the salvation of souls in his duty to the Church, not because he was a profound heretic.

As for what to make of said passages, it could be said in this manner:

- We all have a finite existence on this Earth. We have a limited lifespan only titling X days. That number is different for everyone.
- Death knows no boundary of age, and even children could meet their demise at an early age. Yes, a child could commit such a mortal sin to separate their souls from Christ, around and before their age of reason, particularly if their parents fail to raise their child in the teachings of the Church, willingly, or lacking resolve to deepen their faith (sloth, laziness).
- Children might know simply, but they DO know of such sins in their innocence. Everyone, YOU are responsible for the lifelong formation of you and your children, ensuring that all of you live a Holy Life in Christ, so as not to make that fatal error of sin, or to become habitually chronic in a lifetime of sin.
- Do so, for death comes whenever he pleases to claim one's life. Be it 5 from cancer, 12 from an accident or teen suicide, or 102 from old age.

#### *LIGUORI AND RELUCTANT SINNERS*

Next, what does sin do to the reluctant sinner who refuses the Mercy of the Lord, pleasing themselves in wanton ways of the carnal pleasures of life? Obstinate sin, or reluctance to curb sin:

*"... blinds the understanding, hardens the heart, and thus makes the sinner obstinate till death. (Chapter XXII: pp. 221 - 228).*

*" ... A bad habit hardens the heart. And this hardness of heart God justly permits in punishment of resisting his calls ... According to St. Augustine, ... he subtracts his graces in punishment of their ingratitude for past favours, and thus their hart becomes hard like a stone. ...." (225)*

*" .... instead of regretting his sins, he rejoices at them, he laughs at them, and boasts of them. ``They are glad when they have done evil.`` .... Proverbs II: 14) .... They are ... all signs of damnation." (226)*

*"... would it not be the extreme of folly to play for ... to lose, all your property, with the hope of winning it back at the last game? Such is the folly of the man who continues to live in the midst of sins, and hopes at the last moment of life to repair all the evil he has done ... the habitual sinner, in the end, abandons himself to despair. such is the manner in which his life terminates." (228)*

Looks like once again Liguori and the Catechism agree, or perhaps ... the Catechism is leaning on

Liguori's writings?

**1863** Venial sin weakens charity; it manifests a disordered affection for created goods; it impedes the soul's progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good; it merits temporal punishment. **Deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin ...**

**1865 Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts.** This results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Thus **sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself**, but it cannot destroy the moral sense at its root.

Allow me to add my own personal reflection to St. Liguori's, perhaps, trying as best to imitate his style, especially on that last passage.

Our age is awash in sin and men, weaker than before, attracted to our ever aggressive world, their flesh, and the Evil one. In its wake, those holy and virtuous men are missing, with fewer alter Christi abound, and even fewer men listening to the Call of the Lord to His Holy Priesthood. Many of us in our age of social excess, expect life's amenities to be there, material and spiritual, including a confessor for Last Rites/Anointing of the Sick with viaticum.

But I awaken thee to the truth ... there will not always be that *Alter Christus* available. It is ever more possible in this age of the busy, the tired, the sinful, the weak ... that even Christ's workers do not tend his vineyard. Perhaps they care not or limit their "work," or they are spread as the sole priest for multiple parishes, with too few opportunity for calls, or are too busy to attend the banquet of the King on invitation for they have "other duties." Lest you are a noble and good practicing Catholic with but one mortal sin ... the circumstances of the world are such your priest may not arrive, and your death is unpredictable or unpresident! Then you are judged, guilty of the first degree of that one mortal sin!

And what if a priest is available, but your physical disease is one that strips you of conscience and voluntary function, such as Alzheimer's or dementia, or you experience a traumatic incident that turns you into the mentally disabled? How will you be able to remember, and/or communicate your sins to the merciful doctor, when you cannot even tell him? Alas, confession is not laboratory science, whereby despite unconsciousness, one can analyze and spiritually test the soul for abnormality, and the doctor can treat you in absentia with intravenous liquid medicine.

The Church may be referred to as a "hospital" by modern clerics, but it is of no use if one cannot tell the

doctor your symptoms, or you never visit the clinic or emergency room to begin with! And in more cases today, there are closures of said hospitals, due to the staff shortages, with the next available hospital possibly being miles away! One's spiritual "health" then, should not be taken lightly, but with the same observance and value we place on our physical health to remain alive!

### *LIGUORI AND CHRONIC SINNERS AT THEIR DEATH BEDS*

Now, what becomes one whose life is of chronic sin, or has not TRUTHFULLY repented of their ways by their deathbed? We can start with St. Alphonsus' writings on the dying person's thoughts and seeking of medical remedy to buy them time:

*"Ah! at that hour all earthly goods are viewed only with pain by those who have had an attachment for them. And this pain will serve only to increase the danger of their eternal salvation; for we see by experience, that persons attached to the world wish at death to speak only of their sickness, of the physicians to be called to attend them, and of the remedies which may restore their health. When any one speaks of their soul, they soon grow weary, and beg to be allowed repose." (44)*

Perhaps in modern time, have you heard of people having regrets on their death bed? Yes, that regret, if not materially based/success based, is truthfully them saying, "I've sinned so much. I can't make it up to myself, X, Y, ..... etc." The person laments that they cannot at least remedy their past situations to the ones they have offended in their selfish sin. Another way of saying these regrets, are as St. Alphonsus tells us, is the is the torment of their inner souls:

*"Poor sinners! They seek for happiness in their sins, but they find nothing but bitterness and self remorse .... The torture of the remorse of conscience is so great even in this life, that to free themselves from it, some have committed suicide. (pp. 214-216)*

*"He will then say, O unhappy me! I have had so many lights from God, so much time to tranquilize my conscience and have not done so .... What would it have cost me to have avoided such an occasion of sin, to have broken off such a friendship, to have frequented the tribunal of penance ... Oh! if I had put into execution the good resolutions which I made on such an occasion; if I had continued the good works which I began at such a time, how happy should I now feel! But these things I have not done, and now there is no more time to do them ...." (80)*

### *LIGUORI AND JUDGEMENT AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH*

As for the soul at Death, St. Alphonsus describes the fate that we meet at our death's instance. Yes people

... it's one of the four final things ... JUDGEMENT:

*"... the particular judgement takes place at the very moment of death; and that on the very spot where the soul is separated from the body, it is judged by Jesus Christ, who will not send, but will come himself to judge it according to its works .... Oh! how great will be the terror of the soul the first time it sees the Redeemer, and sees his countenance full of wrath! .... The wounds of the Redeemer will console the just and terrify the wicked .... Now what answer will the sinner make to Jesus Christ? .... He will behold an angry judge above; hell open below; on one side his own sins accusing him; on the other, the devils ready to inflict chastisement; and within, the remorse of his conscience...." (241-243)*

And of course, our CCC does not ignore what the Church always teaches on that here: meaning that St. Alphonsus is in congruence with the Church's teaching!

**1022** Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul **at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ:** either entrance into the blessedness of heaven--through a purification<sup>594</sup> or immediately,<sup>595</sup> -- or immediate and everlasting damnation.<sup>596</sup>

**1023** Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ. They are like God for ever, for they "see him as he is," face to face:<sup>598</sup>

**1033** We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: "He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."<sup>612</sup> Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren.<sup>613</sup> **To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell."**

**1035** The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, "eternal fire."<sup>617</sup> The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.

**1039** In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be

laid bare.<sup>626</sup> The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life:

Sorry fellas, not everyone goes to heaven, and as there are good judgments, there must be bad judgments. In addition, this judgement process is perfectly in line with scripture in the Old Testament, for There will be no arguing with God (Job 40:1-2; cf. 42:3) when one is being judged about their salvation.

### *LIGUORI WAS JUST LIKE TODAY ON DESCRIBING WHAT IS HELL?*

So when a soul goes to hell, what is it like? Perhaps you have heard an analogy used by your parish priest of an "eternal darkness." Guess what? They aren't the first people to use it, though they might do so, in order to stray away from making it "bad" or sounding like a fire and brimstone preacher.

Liguori actually described Hell with this analogy, of eternal darkness, but he is darn serious about it and doesn't water it down the way modern preaching does. It is actually moving to make a person quite frightful of Hell and despairing of all hope should that be their final destination:

*"What is this Hell? .... A place of torments, where all the senses and powers of the damned will have their proper torment, and where the more a person has offended God by any sense, the more he will be tortured in that sense .... The sight will be tormented with darkness ... Hell is a dungeon closed up on every side, into which a ray of the sun, or of any other light, shall never enter ..." (263)*

Or perhaps an illusion of light is more your fancy? This is also another analogy that has been used in modern preaching about Hell, should you be lucky to have encountered such preaching. But this light, or this "fire" of Hell, is not radiantly happy ... no ... rather ...

*" ... St. Basil says, that the Lord will separate the light from the fire, so that this fire will burn, but will not illuminate ... In that glimmering light they will see the deformity of their associates, and of the devils, who will assume horrible forms in order to increase the terrors of the damned. (263)*

The way modern preaching has described it, is that the light of the Lord will be radiant to the joyful, hopeful and joyful, and purifying. To the sinner who damned themselves, it will burn even hotter than scalding water or a five-alarm fire, and be like poison to them.

## FINALE: NO ONE IS SAFE FROM DEATH

When we are at death, we all are death's property. When death come for us, our status, wealth, money, and such, DO NOT MATTER! We are all going to die. What kind of legacy, myself included, of our lives, will you leave at the moment of lifelessness?

Will you leave yourself a legacy of "wealth," built on material and spiritual corruption in your treasury of sin?

Should that be what is stored in the vault of your soul, it doesn't matter whether you are a corrupt politician or businessman, a cleric, a layperson affiliated with the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, or a Novus Ordo Catholic who is part of the Knights of Columbus/CWL and serves soup kitchens every winter. Christ looks past all your good deeds. His only currency: That upon your soul.

When He finds your "treasury" do you think He will be pleased? He will discover a foul stench and horrid sight, and ye will be judged for the dark and plunging depths of Hell.

I shall leave you with some of Liguori's words,

*"Death, in time, strips man of all the goods of the world .... The servants leave him in a grave ,, There is no longer anyone to esteem or flatter him, no longer anyone to attend to his commands ... his flesh drops off; and behold his skeleton can no longer be distinguished from others .... In a word, when death comes, the end comes; all ends, we leave all things; and of all that we possess in this world, we bring nothing to the grave." (36)*

Pax Tibi Christi, Julian Barkin.

**NEXT POST: Liguorian Series Post 1B: Souls who are in Sanctifying Grace and are "Saintly" with God**



## Walk on Water [at Convert Journal]



Sometimes I walk on water and I hope that you do too! It is real, supernatural and can be trusted 100%. Yes, yes, I am speaking figuratively but it is very real none-the-less.

We walk on water when we trust in the Lord *completely*. The more saintly among us do this routinely. For the rest of us, it is still a more conscious choice. We particularly experience this when we are unable to be in control, turning ourselves and our problems over to Him. We do not abandon the problem and step back into the boat. Rather we trust Jesus, work as His instruments and accept the direction He takes us.

This is easier said than done. We try to be self-reliant and solve problems ourselves. As complications increase we can start to sink before we realize it. Knowing when we are in too deep and asking God to take this increasing burden from us might not occur to us. So we too often keep control as we sink toward the bottom. It takes humility to see when this is happening. Peter trusted the Lord and didn't hesitate to give up control (his will to keep a solid, if wobbly, platform beneath himself). Nothing he could do would change his buoyancy, yet he did not sink. Miracles work when faith is present.

Even when we do place our trust in the Lord we can be tempted to interfere. That is, attempting to reassert some control. Our trust then becomes conditional, subject to our will — effectively we revoke trust. You know how that works out. Peter discovered those consequences as he doubted the miracle he was in. The more he doubted, the more he sank. His faith – his trust – was waning, he was taking back control and sinking.

Jesus does not give-up on us when put our faith on ourselves. He is still there by our side waiting to extend His saving hand when our sometimes prideful free will gets us into trouble. As Peter sank, he turned back to Christ and embraced His outstretched hand. He didn't drown, but I bet he got soaking wet.

Think about that big problem you are currently dealing with. It might be publicly known like an issue at work or perhaps a very private matter known only to you. Do you really want to “go it alone”? For that matter, is there ever a time that you should? Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. “It is a ghost,” they said, and they cried out in fear.

At once [Jesus] spoke to them, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Peter said to him in reply, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”

He said, “Come.” Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.

But when he saw how [strong] the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why

did you doubt?”

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## Prepping for battle [at Mere Observations]

*Yes, organized religion is a crutch. You mean you didn't know that you are a cripple? If you don't know that, then you are a very serious cripple indeed, mentally and spiritually. Go back to Socrates: "Know thyself." For Socrates, there are only two kinds of people: the wise, who know they are fools; and fools, who think they are wise. Similarly, for Christ and all the prophets, there are only two kinds of people: saints, who know they are sinners; and sinners, who think they are saints. Which are you? You can tell which class you fit into by whether or not you accept the "crutch", the road map. Maybe the Jews were lost forty years in the wilderness because Moses was too proud to stop and ask for directions. (It's a guy thing.) – [Manual for Spiritual Warfare](#), by Paul Thigpen*

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Today, even secularists sense a disintegration taking place. Random violence, natural disasters, a collapse of traditional morality, the rise of vicious political movements and international "gangs"; these have left most people uneasy and wondering "What will happen next?"



My reaction to the current malaise, which is not going away any time soon, is to learn far more about the tradition of the interior life and spiritual warfare. Because I believe 100% that we are engaged in an age old battle whether we choose to participate or not. I've been reading book after book, as a sort of intellectual preparation for whatever is going to go down in the future. I want to not only be prepared myself, but to prepare my family and friends as well. Another reaction I have is a morbid fascination: history is unfolding before our eyes and we are witness to the unraveling of a great constitutional experiment that appears to have run its course. It is therefore necessary to fight the good fight and play a bit role, however ineffective, in countering the madness. [Father Richard Heilman writes](#):

Early in the morning of January 21, 1610, the Archangels St. Michael, St. Gabriel and St. Raphael appeared to Mother Mariana. Then Our Lady appeared to her and predicted many things about our own times: this is part of what Mother Mariana afterwards related that she told her:

“Thus, I make it known to you that from the end of the 19th century and **shortly** after the middle of the 20th century... the passions will erupt and there will be a total corruption of customs (morals)...

“As for the Sacrament of Matrimony... it will be attacked and deeply profaned... The Catholic spirit will rapidly decay; the precious light of the Faith will gradually be extinguished... Added to this will be the effects of secular education, which will be one reason for the dearth of priestly and religious vocations.

“The Sacrament of Holy Orders will be ridiculed, oppressed, and despised... The Devil will try to persecute the ministers of the Lord in every possible way; he will labor with cruel and subtle astuteness to deviate them from the spirit of their vocation and will corrupt many of them. These depraved priests, who will scandalize the Christian people, will make the hatred of bad Catholics and the enemies of the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church fall upon all priests...

“Further, in these unhappy times, there will be unbridled luxury, which will ensnare the rest into sin and conquer innumerable frivolous souls, who will be lost. Innocence will almost no longer be found in children, nor modesty in women. In this supreme moment of need of the Church, the one who should speak will fall silent.”

Sound familiar? What’s the solution?

The solution is to prepare. I know many who prepare by buying gold, stockpiling guns and ammunition, food and water, or with ham radios. All of these are valid and I’d be lying if I didn’t say I was doing some of this myself. But where I’ve felt the most compelled to prepare myself is in the spiritual realm, because this is where my senses are most acutely aware of the battle waged around us. It’s so obvious to me that I can’t understand how more do not see it.

I’ve been preparing by developing and strengthening my interior life. Many want to rush off to battle but after reading a few books or various well-meaning programs available it became clear to me that we already have the training laid out before us. It was revealed by Jesus Christ, the Scriptures and used by many of the holy men and women we call saints. St. Teresa of Avila. St. Frances de Sales. St. John Vianney. St. Maximillian Kolbe. St. Therese of Liseaux. St. Dominic. St. Benedict. St. John of the Cross. The list goes on and on.

All of them fought this spiritual warfare. All of them prepared themselves first by developing an interior life. That is what so many neglect today.

St. Paul implores us to set aside our misguided mundane and temporal lives, and enter into the full life of holiness and truth:

*“Brothers and sisters: I declare and testify in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their mind; darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance, because of their hardness of heart, they have become callous and have handed themselves over to licentiousness for the practice of every kind of impurity to excess ... you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.”* (Eph. 4:17-19, 22-24)

Last night I read the following in the Introduction of Volume One of my 1989 TAN Publishing edition of *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, by Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (also available online [here](#)):

As everyone can easily understand, the interior life is an elevated form of intimate conversation which everyone has with himself as soon as he is alone, even in the tumult of a great city. From the moment he ceases to converse with his fellow men, man converses interiorly with himself about what preoccupies him most. This conversation varies greatly according to the different ages of life; that of an old man is not that of a youth. It also varies greatly according as a man is good or bad.

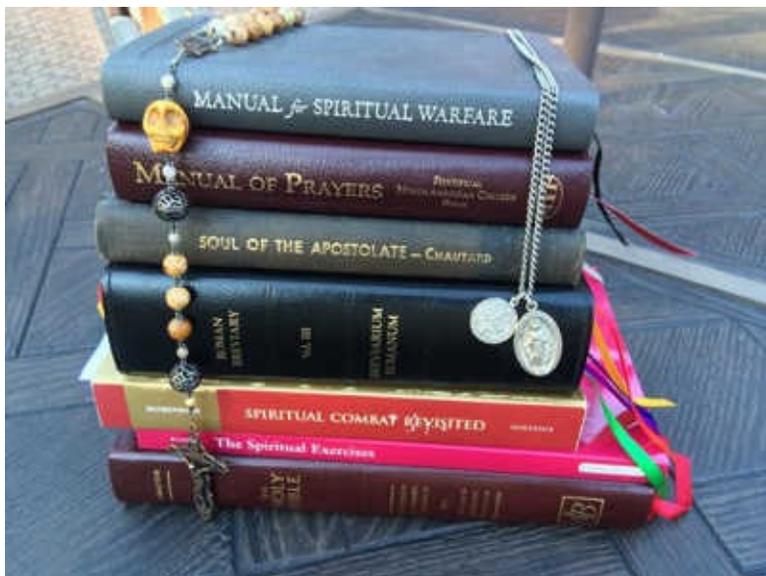
As soon as man seriously seeks truth and goodness, this intimate conversation with himself tends to become conversation with God. Little by little, instead of seeking himself in everything, instead of tending more or less consciously to make himself a center, man tends to seek God in everything, and to substitute for egoism love of God and of souls in Him. This constitutes the interior life. No sincere man will have any difficulty in recognizing it. The one thing necessary which Jesus spoke of to Martha and Mary (Luke 10:41-42) consists in hearing the word of God and living by it.

[snip]

We conclude logically that religion can give an efficacious and truly realistic answer to the great modern problems only if it is a religion that is profoundly lived, not simply a superficial and cheap religion made up of some vocal prayers and some ceremonies in which religious art has more place than true piety. As a matter of fact, no religion that is profoundly lived is without an interior life, without that intimate and frequent conversation which we have not only with ourselves but with God.

All of us are having a conversation, but it's difficult to converse when our focus is elsewhere or there is too much noise. Our focus needs to be off of ourselves and we must be detached from the things of this world. It's true that for too many their religion is cheapened when they skim the surface by muttering prayers with a lot of repetition. They love their religion, but that is not the same as loving God. They do not go deep enough. For some great insights on detachment you'll want to read Jessica Archuleta's article [Lessons From A Monastery: Detachment](#). She does a great job of describing this part of the interior life by using a favorite book of mine: *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis.

Pictured below are a few of the "manuals" I've immersed myself in to prepare myself. I'm not a total neophyte and have myself fought a few skirmishes and battles along the way in this life. I've survived, but a quick look around at the world today tells me that I can't rest on my laurels. It's time to go deeper.



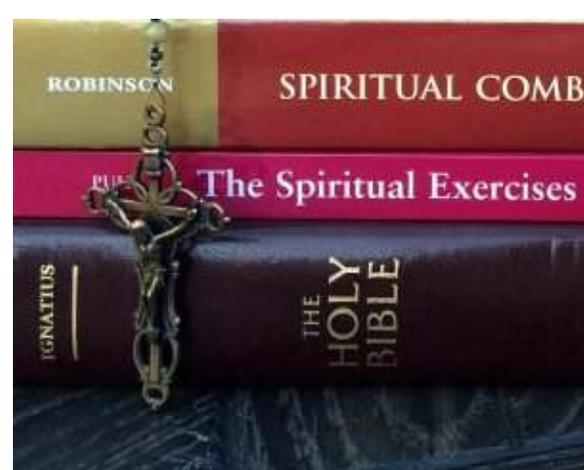
In addition to this stack of books I'm reading *The Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales

(thank you [Julie!](#)). I've worn my Miraculous Medal for fifteen years and four years ago added the St. Benedict medal. I pray the Divine Office regularly (converse with God) and it goes without saying that I attend Mass (worship God) and partake of the Sacraments as well. The interior life is an examined life, and what better method is there than regular Confession?

Of course, there is the Rosary. Perhaps the most easily overlooked yet most powerful weapon I possess.

- “Continue to pray the Rosary every day.” -Our Lady of Fatima to Sister Lucia
- “Never will anyone who says his Rosary every day be led astray. This is a statement that I would gladly sign with my blood.” -Saint Louis de Montfort
- “You shall obtain all you ask of me by the recitation of the Rosary.” -Our Lady to Blessed Alan de la Roche
- “Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world.” -Pope Blessed Pius IX
- “If you persevere in reciting the Rosary, this will be a most probable sign of your eternal salvation.” -Blessed Alan de la Roche
- “The greatest method of praying is to pray the Rosary.” -Saint Francis de Sales
- “When the Holy Rosary is said well, it gives Jesus and Mary more glory and is more meritorious than any other prayer.” -Saint Louis de Montfort
- “The Holy Rosary is the storehouse of countless blessing.” -Blessed Alan de la Roche
- “One day, through the Rosary and the Scapular, Our Lady will save the world.” -Saint Dominic
- “If you say the Rosary faithfully unto death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins, ‘you will receive a never-fading crown of glory’ (1 Peter 5:4).” -Saint Louis de Montfort
- “The Rosary is THE weapon.” -Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

The Feast of the Assumption is this Saturday, August 15. I've signed up to participate in the National 54 Day Rosary Novena that will continue through the Feast of the Holy Rosary on October 7. You can do the same or learn more information about this campaign at [www.54days.org](http://www.54days.org). I've signed up to receive the daily reflections and plan on using the rosary meditations found in *The Manual of Spiritual Warfare*.



Our society is at war with itself. Take a look around. Venture online into a comment box or two. Watch the news or your Twitter feed. Look at the dreck being sent over the airwaves by television producers/Hollywood. Listen to the politicians, not just as they vie for your primary election vote, but also look at how they talk and vote while already in office. Maybe you're numb to it all because it continues to hit you nonstop. Take a step back for a day or two and then really look and listen with a discerning heart and mind. You may find yourself reaching for your rosary as I do.

Before any athlete steps onto the playing field he or she has undergone hours and hours of training for months leading up to their competition. The best train a lifetime. Soldiers, too, spend hour upon hour in

monotonous drills, punishing mind and body to prepare themselves for combat.

Why would spiritual warfare be any different? There is too much history and I have too much personal experience to ignore it. Leadership is accepting this responsibility to not only myself but to my family and friends for the future. Living the virtues may be frowned upon as old fashioned, but it never goes out of style.

Ultimately it is a source of joy for me, and if there is one thing that will be sorely needed as we march forward it is joy.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. (Habakkuk 3:17-18)*

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# Be All That You Are Intended to Be! [at Journey to Wisdom]

Sunday Sep 6, 2015

A Reflection on Mark 7:31-37 N.A.B.

By: *Larry T*

Follow me so that you  
can be all that you are  
intended to be!



How can expert knowledge develop into ignorance? Give a master electrician a book promoting a new theory on what causes circuit breakers to trip, then wait a month, and ask him if he has read it. The answer will typically be, *no*. Why wouldn't he read it? Sometimes it's because, after all, he is a master electrician, and he considers himself an expert on all things electrical, so he refuses to read and learn new ideas. What's worse, he might even scoff at the new concept. When expert knowledge is self-sufficient, or arrogant and haughty, it can lead to ignorance. In a sense the electrician is deaf because his mind is closed, and since he refuses to learn new concepts, he cannot teach them, so he also has a speech impediment. But he isn't alone; this is one of the fundamental flaws of our human nature. In Scripture the best example we have of this is Saint Paul.

Paul (his Roman name) or Saul (his Hebrew name) had been taught by the greatest teachers in Judaism. He was a devout Pharisee, an expert on Mosaic Law. He was so arrogant and haughty in his superior knowledge of the Law, and all things Jewish, that he not only refused to listen to anything Jesus said, but considered him a blasphemer. Saul, the single-minded persecutor of Christians; went so far as to endorse the stoning of Stephen for blasphemy (Acts 8:58). He was deaf to Jesus and the truth, and since he didn't hear the truth, he couldn't speak it, so it follows that he had a speech impediment as well. These are the same ailments that plagued all humanity before the coming of Jesus. It was only when the Lord whacked Saul on the head with a spiritual club that his hearing and speech disorders were healed, and he went on to become a great evangelist, theologian, and saint.

This Sunday we read about the healing of a deaf man who had a speech impediment. It is one of two miracle healing stories that are exclusive to the Gospel of Mark. It's so easy to get caught up in the details of the healing act itself that we forget the purpose of the miracle healings performed by Jesus. These acts proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God through Jesus to a world that had become unable to hear the true word of God.

*<sup>31</sup> Again he left the district of Tyre and went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, into the district of the Decapolis.*

*<sup>32</sup> And people brought to him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him.*

*<sup>33</sup> He took him off by himself away from the crowd. He put his finger into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue;*

*<sup>34</sup> then he looked up to heaven and groaned, and said to him, "Ephphatha!" (that is, "Be opened!")*

*<sup>35</sup> And [immediately] the man's ears were opened, his speech impediment was removed, and he spoke plainly.*

*<sup>36</sup> He ordered them not to tell anyone. But the more he ordered them not to, the more they proclaimed it.*

*<sup>37</sup> They were exceedingly astonished and they said, "He has done all things well. He makes the deaf hear and [the] mute speak." - Mark 7:31-37 N.A.B.*

In this reading, verse 37 echoes Isaiah 35:4-6 which was written some eight-hundred years earlier; it identifies the signs of the arrival of God's Kingdom:

*<sup>4</sup> Say to those whose hearts are frightened:*

*he comes with vindication;*

*<sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,*

*the ears of the deaf be cleared;*

*<sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a stag,*

*then the tongue of the dumb will sing.*

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other Old Testament prophets constantly preached to obstinate and rebellious people who refused to hear and pay attention to God's commands (e.g., Jeremiah 5:21, 9:19, and Ezekiel 12:2). And whenever Jesus said, "Whoever has ears ought to hear", he was imploring his audience to listen to him so that they could receive the truth, which is God (Mt 11:15, 13:9, 13:43, Mk 4:9, 4:23, Lk 8:8, and 14:35).

Why does mankind remain obstinate and rebellious, content in arrogant and haughty knowledge when it comes to God and his commands? Pope Benedict wrote, "*God himself is constantly regarded as a limitation placed on our freedom that must be set aside if man is ever to be completely himself. God, with his truth, stands in opposition to man's manifold lies, his self-seeking and his pride.*" - (Jesus of Nazareth, The Infancy Narratives, Pope Benedict XVI, 2012)

Ironically, setting God aside so that we can *be all that we can be* is one of the great illusions of our modern time because it is a hollow promise that leads to frustration and emptiness. It is only when we hear and obey God that we experience the joy of becoming what we are truly intended to be.

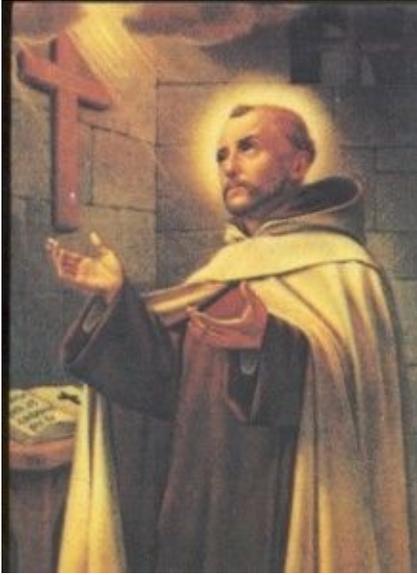
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## When Joy Is Wrong According to St. John of the Cross

It sounds a bit crazy when you first hear it. According to St. John of the Cross, there is actually a time when we shouldn't be rejoicing in beautiful things like marriage and children. What in the world does he



mean?

We're all aware we shouldn't take inordinate pleasure in earthly/temporal goods (which remains a problem for most of us).

Affected by the Original Sin of Adam and Eve, we tend to focus too much on the things of this world. The cliché's of women craving shoes and men drooling over cars is rooted in reality. We like stuff.

Again, it's not that any of these things are intrinsically evil. When God created the world he called it "good". The problem is that these earthly things can easily distract us from heavenly matters. We know that.

But what is John talking about with regard to other, less "worldly" goods? Isn't marriage *always* good? Aren't we *always* to be proud of our children (except, of course, when they start screaming at the top of their lungs after you've settled into the front row of a packed Mass).

In one sense, the answer is yes. Marriage is good. Children are good. They're amazing gifts from God.

But John makes a very important distinction in his masterpiece *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel*: "One should rejoice in them if they are serving God...It would be vanity," for example, "for a husband and wife to rejoice in their marriage when they are uncertain whether God is being better served by it."

Earlier in this passage he says there is no reason to rejoice in children "because they are rich, or endowed with natural talents and gifts, or because they are wealthy." True joy in them comes only when they are serving God.

In other words, whatever isn't giving glory to God needs to be worked on or helped along until it does, because that's what life is all about. How do we do that? The basics. Prayer, fasting, instruction, etc... St. John is basically encouraging us to take a hard look at ourselves, our family, and our relationships, so that

all areas of our lives bring more joy to ourselves and Christ.

Like all the saints, he desires nothing less than the best for all of us.

God bless!

Matt

P.S. Don't forget to grab your FREE talk in top right hand of this page!

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# Be Catholic to Save the World by Grace! Some Words of Encouragement from the Early Church [at Community in Mission]



There are some who would have the Church step back to avoid persecution or giving offense. Perhaps there are assets like buildings and land to protect. And maybe some rapprochement with the world will attract more members. Or so the thinking goes.

**But a study of earlier periods of persecution reveals a different plan** for the way forward: confidence, courage, boldness, and love—even for our enemies. Let’s look at some texts.

**Earlier this week we read from St. John Chrysostom**, who knew all about exile and persecution. At a difficult time for him and his flock, he preached from the following text of St. Paul’s:

*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men ([1 Cor 1:18-25](#)).*

**Of this passage, St. John Chrysostom said,**

*How the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and his weakness stronger than men! In what way is it stronger? It made its way throughout the world and overcame all men; countless men sought to eradicate the very name of the Crucified, but that name flourished and grew ever mightier. Its enemies lost out and perished; the living who waged a war on a dead man proved helpless.*

*Therefore, when a Greek tells me I am dead, he shows only that he is foolish indeed, for I, whom he*

*thinks a fool, turn out to be wiser than those reputed wise. So too, in calling me weak, he but shows that he is weaker still. For the good deeds which tax-collectors and fishermen were able to accomplish by God's grace, the philosophers, the rulers, the countless multitudes cannot even imagine (from a homily by St. John Chrysostom, bishop, on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Hom. 4, 3. 4: PG 61, 34-36)).*

**Such words ought to encourage us as well, for** many today gleefully report the decline of faith and of the influence of the Church. 2000 years of history bears witness to the fact that those forecasting the doom of the Church will be long gone, and the Church will *still* be preaching the gospel.

**Indeed, to paraphrase G.K. Chesterton,** the Church has read the funeral rights over everyone who has predicated her demise. Where is Nero? Where is Domitian? Where is Napoleon? Where is Mao? Where is the Soviet Socialist Republic? Indeed, the largest statue of Christ in the world is reportedly being built in Russia right now. Where are so many heresiarchs? What happened to the erroneous philosophies and destructive trends that have been proposed? These things have come and gone; empires and nations have risen and fallen. But the Church is still here. Often persecuted, sometimes growing and sometimes struggling, but here, still here, always here. Twelve fishermen and other commoners with Jesus have established a stronghold in the world.

**Scripture says,**

*Some trust in Chariots or Horses,  
But we in the name of the Lord.  
They will collapse and fall,  
But we shall hold and stand firm ([Psalm 20:8](#)).*

**But of course this will happen only to the extent that, by God's grace, we DO hold and stand firm.** It will not happen by adopting the world's ways or fearfully caving in to its demands.

**There is a powerful description in Scripture of the time when Peter and John were arrested for causing a commotion in the Temple area** (by healing the lame beggar and proclaiming Jesus at the Beautiful Gate).

*Now when [the Jewish leaders] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus ([Acts 4:13](#)).*

**Note that the Jewish leaders recognized that "they had been with Jesus."** Would anyone recognize this about you, or your parish, or your fellow parishioners, or even us clergy? This is our main goal in times like these: that others recognize that we have been with Jesus! In times like these, the Church must be the Church.

**And notice this prayer in the Acts of the Apostles, of the early Church under persecution.** It takes place just after the arrest of Peter and John, after they had been warned not to mention Jesus again.

*"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place in which they were*

*gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness ([Acts 4:29-31](#)).*

**In her work on Acts, Dr. Mary Healy notes that they do not pray for safety** or for their enemies to be vanquished; they pray to be able to continue to speak with boldness, to bring healing, and to announce Jesus and draw others to Him.

**And this should be our prayer:** Lord, keep us strong. Keep us bold and filled with love for our enemies and for all those who are troubled and in need of healing. Never allow us to hide or to be concerned for our own safety, but rather concerned only that your glorious and Holy Name bring healing and grace, conviction for our sins, repentance, and therefore mercy. Help us, Lord, to stay faithful, courageous, and bold no matter the threats, the hardships, the persecution, and even the ruthless attempts at suppression. May no one who looks at us conclude anything less than that we “have been with Jesus.”

Courage and holy boldness, fellow Catholics! The only way we will change the world (by grace) is to be Catholic through and through. The world does not know it, but Christ and His Body, the Church, are the only hope. Be authentically Catholic, and by that grace, save the world!

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This contribution is available at <http://blog.adw.org/2015/08/be-catholic-to-save-the-world-by-grace-some-words-of-encouragement-from-the-early-church/>  
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## The Analogy of Progress - The Plans of the Enemy Exposed!!! [at My Classic Creedz]

‘At the beginning of the world, God commanded the earth to bring forth “the green herb, bearing its seed, and every fruit tree yielding fruit, each after its kind, which also has its seed in itself.”’ (Gen.1:11) This was the passage of scripture the wise and blessed Francis de Sales made use of in his book, ‘Finding God’s Will for You’ which I have started reading and which from the beginning has captivated me. What was he trying to say with regard to this text? He was trying to draw what I would like to call an ‘**analogy of progress**’, By this I mean that from that verse we see that in the way God created the green herb ‘**bearing its seed**’ and every fruit tree yielding fruit, each after its kind, ‘**which also has its seed in itself**’ an analogy of progress or continuity is drawn by God himself. He did not create the trees and the herbs to just live on their own and in a way remain stable or lasting in a fixed manner of existence, he created them with a view to increase, to grow. The essence of the ‘**seed**’ is to, in a way, create a pattern for a growth potential, an increase potential.

He does this as well with Man, creating him and the Woman and blessing them to ‘**increase and multiply**’ (Gen. 1:27-28). For me this was a spectacular observation from the scriptures. Sometimes we tend to ignore the great treasury of knowledge and example that are stored up with the saints. The truth is, this is part of the codes with which God built the whole of creation, and for blessed Francis this is also part of the codes for our supernatural lives in Christ. For him, our hearts are like the earth nourished by God’s very life and Word to bring forth spiritual plants which bear fruits of holy works that are impregnated with seeds of desire to further advance in the journey to perfection. This means that our lives in Christ are not meant to be static, or set in a particular field of existence rather they are meant to be in a continual state of advancement towards perfection. Our Lord himself speaks of this when he says to us in the Gospels, ‘Be ye Perfect’ (Matthew 5:48). It then seems to me that ‘perfection’ is not that stable, unchanging state of existence, or that peak or set point, but consists in that dynamic flux that is charged towards the infinite mystery that is God with a zeal for continuous advancement in justice and righteousness. And so it is not possible to have such a state in our spiritual lives where it doesn’t get better and it doesn’t get worse.

But in reality we find that many of us find ourselves set in such an illusion of a state. The enemy of our salvation delights that we are set there because it’s so bad a position, it’s such a position where we have no idea of what is going on in our spiritual lives, we become directionless and even worse, careless about directions. We become complacent in that illusion of deceit that we do not see ourselves drifting far away from God and yet not realize it. What a terrible way the subtle serpent uses to catch us off guard. I believe dearest friends that it is in this illusory state that most Christians of our day, in my country are caught up in. It is even worse that it is sometimes implied in certain sermons by some certain churches when they preach a theology of complacency and lack of involvement of the Christian himself in working out his salvation. (cf. Phil. 2:12). I do not need to give examples of the various ways we are set in this state of illusory spiritual inertia because some of us, if not most, need but only examine our journeys with God and ask where we are actually headed, perfection or just on the average ‘a good Christian’ or ‘a good Catholic’. What motivates us to the relationship it seems we have with God- Law, Society or Love?

Many of us have been drenched in minimalism and a drought of love in our hearts that we only ask what is the least we could do and still be called Christian and also not be doomed for hell. We go to Mass on Sundays, we say morning and sometimes evening prayers, and we belong to one group or another in Church and we think, 'Oh that should be good enough, even my friends don't do as much'. We frown at people who are actively trying to find God in their daily lives and accuse them of wanting to be too Catholic than the Pope. We are satisfied by being caught up in the observances without having a spiritual foundations for the fruits of those observances to take root within us for active progress towards perfection etc.

This illusory state is what the Bible calls 'Lukewarm' in Rev.3:15-16. In this message to the Church of Laodicea, the Lord says, 'I know thy works, that thou art **neither cold nor hot. I would that thou were cold or hot, but because thou art Lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth**'. One thing I observed in particular was that this Church of Laodicea was called in verse 14, '**the beginning of the creation of God**', in many ways this represents us Christians in who God started his work of the new creation in Christ, especially Catholics, the first Christians and beginners of Christendom. Some of us have abandoned the journey towards perfection through the grace Christ gives us in the Sacraments and have begun to embrace the illusory wiles of Lukewarmness that that Ancient dragon who has sworn not to leave us at peace I setting before us. (cf. Rev. 12:17).

This particular evil, blessed Francis reveals to us. has even taking another dimension, in what I would like to call '**the trap of starting and never continuing**', many of us who try so hard to be zealous in the spiritual life, we begin a particular spiritual exercise only to stop half-way as we are attracted by another and then we also stop along the way as another comes along. The enemy presents to us multiple and increasing ways of achieving holiness, capitalizing on our poor desires for God and our weak human wills and virtues in a way that after dragging us through a series of virtuous beginnings, we are no more than how we started, we find that nothing has changed; something I would like to also call an '**ideology of false continuity**'.

We all are summoned back to that Spiritual Warfare my brothers and sisters. We thank God for the gift of his holy ones and special ones among us whom he continues to use by his inspiration to point us to the path of righteousness and holiness. It would pay us to take full advantage of this message, come to our Lord in holy reparation and make firm resolutions to be afire with his Spirit working in and through us for his good pleasure. We need to once again rekindle the fire of Divine Love in us that we may once more and forever be the burning ones who would shine God's light to a world so confused and in need of Christ's Light. May Our Lady, the Woman of Revelations 12, who continues to protect us from the various machinations of the evil one through her many visits to us continue also to intercede for us that in the end, Victory shall be ours in Christ.

St. Francis de Sales, Pray for us!!!

From your Friend and Brother: Chibuzor F. Ogamba

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This contribution is available at <http://myclassiccreedz.wordpress.com/2015/07/02/the-analogy-of-progress-the-plans-of-the-enemy-exposed/>

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# Altaration, the Mystery of the Mass Revealed [at String of Pearls]

Some months ago, the people over at Ascension Press asked me if I'd be willing to watch and then review their new DVD series called "

." I eagerly agreed, and was gratified to receive the entire program, complete with a teacher's guide and student workbook.

In a nutshell, as described on the Ascension Press website, here is a description of this extremely well-done and thought-provoking series created by Mark Hart:

**The 3-DVD Set provides five lessons (approximately 20 minutes each<sup>†</sup>) and features some of the top Catholic youth presenters in the church today, including Mark Hart, Jackie Francois Angel, Fr. Mike Schmitz, Chris Stefanick and Fr. Josh Johnson. The program also features music from acclaimed Catholic musicians Ike Ndolo and Emily Wilson. Through a combination of stunning cinematography and powerful testimonies and teaching, teens will come to see the Mass in a dramatically new way. <sup>†</sup>*With the exception of Lesson 5, which is a dynamic, 60-minute specially formatted walk through the Mass.***

I could leave you with that blurb and then just say, "Two enthusiastic thumbs up!" Or, "'Altaration' is a wonderful series--every parish should have this DVD set for its CCD programs and youth ministries!" Or "Every teen should watch these attention-grabbing and informative videos--and so should his or her parents!"

But I feel I need to give you more. Much, much more.

Because even a 50-something cradle Catholic like myself needed to see this series: to be reminded, again, of the enormous importance of participating regularly and reverently in the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is not a mere obligation to be fulfilled, but a true privilege. To be reminded, again, of the enormous gift of

*Himself--*

Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity--that Christ gave us in the Eucharist. To be reminded, again, that I must never allow myself to take the Mass experience--and especially the Eucharist-- for granted. Ghandi is famous for saying that if he believed what Catholics believe about the Eucharist, he would crawl on his hands and knees to receive it. Yet sometimes, it seems that even we Catholics, who ought to know better than anyone what--make that

*Who*

--is contained in that Sacred Host and the many graces this Sacrament offers us, have lost our sense of awe and reverence when it comes to receiving it.

There are five lessons, or sessions, in the "Altaration" series. Each of these sessions is broken up into three segments, presented by the very energetic and appealing young individuals mentioned above (Mark Hart, Chris Stefanick, Jackie Francois Angel, and two wonderful young priests, Frs. Schmitz and

Johnson).

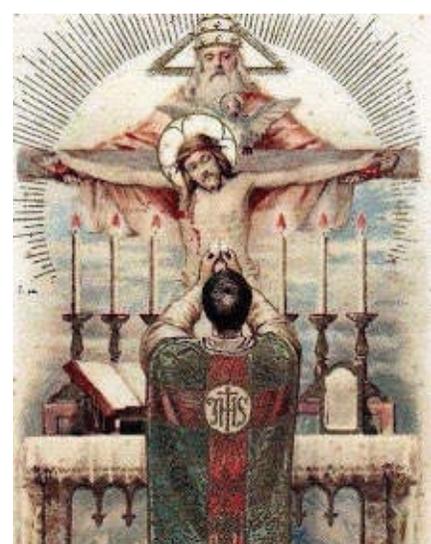
My husband and I watched Sessions 1 and 2 with a group of our teenaged nieces and nephews in early July (I blogged about it

[here](#)

), and it kept them very engaged. One nephew (now a freshman at Catholic U) called the material, and the way it was presented, "relatable." I can see why he thought that, because in this series, the presenters are youthful, good-looking, and enthusiastic--utterly real and

*normal*

people--and they don't come across as preachy or judgmental. Instead, they come across as regular folks who are flawed and human, just as we are; they are people who have struggled through periods of doubt or ennui themselves, but who have fallen totally in love with their Catholic Faith. Their enthusiasm for the Mass is contagious.



Another nephew (now a freshman at the Univ. of Notre Dame) said that at first, it seemed like "Altaration" was going to be the same sort of thing he'd seen many times before in his different religion classes over the years--good enough, to be sure, but just nothing all that new, nothing to write home about; but then after watching the second segment of Session 1, he said that it was obvious this series was something altogether different. That segment includes scenes of both Fr. Schmitz and Fr. Johnson at Mass, raising the consecrated host, their faces radiating reverence and love, until it is aligned with the large crucifix in the background that's hanging high over the altar. These scenes are so beautiful, they will bring tears to your eyes. Parts of them are included in the "Altaration" trailer, which my husband and I watched together back in April (and which I reviewed in

[this post](#)

); when my husband first saw them, he was blown away. Watching the full-length video and seeing those scenes more fully fleshed out only strengthened his reaction. We both agree that this segment is easily the most deeply affecting in the entire series. In this session, Fr. Schmitz hammers home the fact that the priesthood is an essential part of the Mass, that the priest acts

*"in persona Christi."*

When, as if speaking to Christ, he says the words, "I will be your priest"...wow, that part made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.

Our oldest son and his wife (the parents of four little girls, 4-years-old and under) watched Sessions 3 and 4 with us. They thought the series was wonderful, too, and that the format--each lesson broken up into three short segments, with a different presenter for each segment--was perfect for teens. My son commented that because kids can sometimes have short attention spans, he thought this was an ideal way to present the material. Each segment can be easily digested before going on to the next one.

The presenters in this series are all quite dynamic. Chris Stefanick, a young father of six, beautifully explains that going to Mass is not an invitation; it's a command. But he reminds viewers that commandments come from a place of LOVE, that parents set boundaries because they know their children need them. Just as Stefanick, a loving dad, wants to feed his own children with food that's good for their bodies, God the Father wants to feed us with what's best for our souls. Jackie Francois Angel, a young wife and mother, is as stunning and glamorous-looking as any supermodel; but this sweet-voiced and faith-filled beauty has so much more to offer than the Hollywood celebrities to whom teens are typically drawn. "How long would you wait for VIP passes to see your favorite artist or band?" Angel asks. Most young people answer that they'd camp out overnight for such a privilege; and yet, she asks, how much value do we place on God's gift of Himself? How far would we go for Him? Can we give that hour a week at Sunday Mass, and in return receive his grace and peace?

Wow. That's the word that kept popping into my head at the conclusion of each segment: "Wow." In our increasingly God-less modern age--where reality TV stars become role models, where there is an almost epidemic (and unhealthy) longing for worldly riches and pleasures--these vibrant Catholic speakers show young people how you can live in the world, but still be holy.

My husband and I watched the final installment, Session 5, by ourselves. (By that point, we were back home in our empty nest, after summer travels to visit with our grown kids, grandkids, and extended families on both sides.) I must say that by the time we got to this portion of the series, which is an hour-long lesson explaining each part of the Mass and showing the symbolism and meaning behind every gesture and every prayer, I was more than ready for it. In Sessions 1 through 4, the presenters reawakened in my heart a stronger love for the Mass and a desire to understand it better. Although the last session is much longer than the previous ones, it is unbelievably interesting. Riveting, really. I can't think of a better ambassador for the Mass than Fr. Mike Schmitz; he's a good-looking, likeable, athletic, down-to-earth, engaging, and holy young priest whom viewers will feel they know very well by the time they get to this all-important lesson that teaches what the Mass is really all about. I believe young people will find Fr. Schmitz incredibly "relatable," and he will inspire them to know and love their Faith better. I wish he'd been in our parish when our boys were growing up!



In closing, I have to say that it seems like young Catholics of today--and even of my generation--were shortchanged a bit in our catechesis. What a great tool "Altaration, the Mystery of the Mass Revealed" provides for strengthening our understanding of our beautiful Faith and inspiring a deeper devotion to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. May it find its way into the religious education programs of Catholic parishes across the world!

Many thanks to Ascension Press for allowing me the opportunity to view and review this series. I hope--and believe--that it will touch many hearts and minds, and bring many souls closer to Heaven.

*(If my husband writes a review of the "Altaration" series--and I dearly hope he will--I am going to have him on to do a guest post. So stay tuned...)*

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This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2015/08/review-altaration-mystery-of-mass.html>  
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## Just a Moment [at Raising Angels]

Last night, as I sat through game seven of Mackenzie's two volleyball matches, I had a horrible thought. I stood between one of the matches to stretch, chase Felicity, and relieve myself of the ever-hardening bleacher seats. I chatted with some of the other moms. It was in that moment, as I was trying to hold a conversation, while watching to see that Felicity didn't fall to her doom off the bleachers, while doling out the last of the snacks to the boys that the thought blasted its way into my mind.



I...will....be...doing...this...for...THE NEXT EIGHTEEN YEARS!

It was deafening. It was as if someone had blown an air horn next to me with a sound so loud I could feel it in my bones. There will be no break, no hiatus, no let down of any of this craziness for a very, very, VERY long time.

Suddenly, there I was sitting (probably on one of those padded, backed, portable bleacher seats) at my umpteenth sporting event, eating my thousandth late night meal, giving a ride to the hundredth passenger. It was overwhelming.

After finding a brown bag to breath into, and bringing my heart rate down close to just below busting, I realized that the marathon of games that started three and a half hours ago had finally ended. I gathered the troops and headed home with a baby that was starving, exhausted, and filthy from her adventures under, around, and behind the bleachers as well as from the fact that she had indeed picked up some form of someone's left behind or, GASP, already consumed food and...yes...put it IN her mouth. Seriously! The kid is oh so cute, but also a total terror.

Fast-forward to this morning when I had to peel cleaned, scoured mouthed Felicity out of bed and get her off to her first day of school. Last night, as I was packing her lunch, I realized that I hadn't prepared for it like I did in the beginning. There was no cute lunch box or miniature backpack for her to carry; she got what was in the closet. There was no new outfit to commemorate her first day.



She got one foot in the door, ran off to the playroom and never looked back. There were no tears. I snuck out and didn't look back either. Okay, I looked back once. I am still a mama after all. That was it. I just walked out and got in the car and went back home. It was her first time in any place remotely like this. They've gotten rid of the nursery at our church (I know Jesus said, "Let the children come unto me," but I think He meant like when they are old enough to understand to sit still and be quiet.) and I no longer work out at the Y so she's not been to a nursery at all. I know her well enough not to worry about how she'll handle it. I worry more about how the other kids will survive her. She can be quite the brute these days. She's in that what's mine is mine and what's yours is mine and I'm going to scream until you submit stage. Remember, she's cute but a holy terror. No kidding.



When I got back home, I quickly scrolled through the photos. Aiden had snapped a few as I walked her into the building. I saw her, but what I focused on was how I looked. I saw a cute little redhead being led into the school by a mom old enough to have taught all of the other mothers when they were in high school. I saw legs with veins bulging from the stress of carrying five babies. I saw flabby arms out of shape from lack of time and energy to focus on them in the never-ending summer.



I forced the big kids into the car so we could go to the pool. “Aww mama, why don’t you take a nap? We can just stay home and watch TV,” was their play. I wasn’t going for it. They needed to get out of the house and I needed to too.

I swam a mile in almost complete silence. I was counting laps in my head so there was no room for self-defeating thoughts. There were only the muffled sounds of the kids playing in the pool and the bubbles blowing past my ears. When I finished, I sat on the side of the pool and carried on the longest conversation I’ve had there all summer. And after two short hours, it was time to head back to pick up Felicity.



This time my head was clear, and I was relaxed and accomplished. I met that darling girl at the door walking towards me with her belly peeking out of the too small shirt I chose, a lollipop dangling from her sweetheart lips. She acted like she owned the place and trotted out as if she had been doing it her whole life.

In the car, we quizzed her about her day. “Did you have fun?” She nodded yes. “Did you eat your lunch?” She shook her head no. “Did you play outside?” Again no. “Did you color?” No. “Did you miss us?” No. “Do you want to go back to school again?” Yes!

She was so worn out that by the time I got her home, she wasn’t even interested in a story before her nap. She pointed to her bed, I laid her down, and she grabbed her elephant, rolled over and went to sleep.

I walked out of the room and looked at those pictures again. That’s when I had a better thought - a thought that blossomed from a cleared mind. I looked at those pictures and didn’t see myself. I saw that sweet girl grasping the lunchbox that was almost half her size. I gazed at the flouncy pink skirt mid swish, the tiny white shirt, that red pony tail, and those oh so squeezable, chubby arms. I stared at that puffy, dimpled hand holding mine. Then I thought it.

I...GET...to...do this for the next eighteen years!

My heart skipped and beat as it jumped into my throat. I saw Felicity in that picture, but was immediately taken back to Mackenzie at that same age, looking almost identical. I remembered watching her walk down the sidewalk towards Kindergarten while realizing that in a few short weeks, she will be able to get

her learner's permit.

There I was in that juxtaposition of the sweetness of what was and what's yet to come. The realization of the gift it is to have the opportunity to do this so many times, each with a little more experience and wisdom to accompany it. The realization that as badly as I want to move through this season at times, I also want to savor each moment.

That's the lesson here. It's survival lesson 101. To make it through life, you have to stay in the moment. Sure we have to plan for the future – everything from who needs a ride where tomorrow, to how are we going to celebrate our soon to be fifteen year old, to how are we going to put five kids through college.

We can plan for the future, but we can't live there.

We don't have the grace. Grace only comes in the moment it's needed. And the moment? That's the place we need to dwell. What do I need to do now? How do I need to respond in this moment? If we can focus on that, there's not much room for worry, only action. I may not live to see eighteen years from now. I hope and pray I do. I'd love to live long enough to enjoy a few fruits of all this labor, but none of us know how long we'll be here.

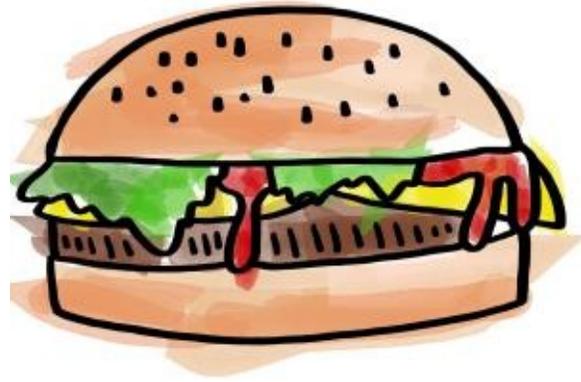
What is certain is the here and now and that's where we...I...should live.

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## Your Terms Will Not Get You There [at Tactical Catholic]



I was thinking about this last night in Adoration. Jesus never promised ease or comfort, and He certainly did not offer the “have it your way” option for faith. Well, He did sort of, but I’ll get to that in a minute.

Reading about the rich young ruler who came to Jesus offers a good glimpse into what I’m talking about. What did this guy say?

<sup>17</sup> And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>18</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” <sup>20</sup> And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth.” <sup>21</sup> And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” <sup>22</sup> At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.

Mark 10:17-22

By this point in His ministry, Jesus was known to be Messiah. Some are catching on that Messiah is the Incarnate Word of God. Yet this guy calls Jesus “good teacher” or “good rabbi”. Naturally, Jesus gives him some hints. “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” I don’t think I’m reaching here when I say Jesus was saying “Do you only see me as a teacher?” Note also that the man doesn’t answer Jesus’s question. So Jesus gives him the law, which he claims to have known from his youth (which also means he has kept them). Jesus cuts to the heart of the matter (his financial security) and asks him to let it go for the sake of the Kingdom. This is too much for the young man so he went away.

Perhaps some in the “pastoral council” of followers were asking...

Wouldn’t this be a good guy to have as a supporter? I mean, think of what we could do with access to a portion of those resources. Jesus, don’t run this guy off by being a hard-liner. Don’t tell him “sell everything”. Isn’t that being extreme?

Sometimes we feel pressure, rarely vocalized and often assumed, to cave on the clear teachings and demands of discipleship to Jesus Christ. We are afraid of offending them with the truth. We do them a great disservice when we veil or exclude portions of the truth. In fact, this “have it your way”

Christianity doesn't exist. It isn't Christianity. It only plays at Christianity.

Jesus did not selectively present data here. He got to the heart of the faith. We are called total abandonment to God. That may mean leaving homes, friends, finances, comfort, etc. What it always means is leaving the attachment to homes, friends, finance, comfort, etc. Utter dependence upon God, whether in poverty or in wealth, is the name of the game. For this reason Jesus went on to discuss the difficulty with which the well-off come to God.

But this isn't about money. This is about wanting God on our terms. We want a religion/relationship/faith that does not ask anything of us, does not make demands on our time or resources. We want to keep those things and on our terms. Jesus will say to us then, "Have it your way" but what He is doing there is simply leaving us like that wealthy young man to go on our way but not with Him. It's our call.

I stand before you as one of the last guys you'd want to look at as an example of selfless abandon to God's providence. Consistency is a problem, but here's the thing: I know better. When I fail to detach from my possessions or habits, I am detaching myself from Christ. It's all His. I don't control anything, so why do I scratch about and fret about things that are so small in the grand scheme of things. Didn't Jesus tell us about the flowers and the birds and all that? He will take care of us. That doesn't mean piles of money. In fact, some of us might live in poverty, persecution, or worse. However, this isn't our home, is it? God has prepared for us something greater. It's scary to abandon. It's hard to give up pet sins. But we don't get to pick and choose. We are not the Lord. Jesus is.

Parenting is like this. We lay out the rules and the kids don't get them. We do so because we know better than they. For example, I don't let my kid eat junk food all day. My rule goes against his want and even a natural desire. Why? Because I don't want him to get sick or fat. But look how happy his choice makes him? Why not let him make his own decisions? Leave him alone, right? He will grow into responsible choices. Really? No. He will get fat and lazy and sick. I set the rule as the parent out of love for my child. God who is perfect in every way sets the rules and the demands for us each day. It must be his terms. Our way gets us dead.

Guys, I'm not trying to beat anyone up. Fingers at me and all that. These are my thoughts from adoration. The truth is that faith is costly. Faith in Christ costs everything, and that's what we shoot for. Let's pray for each other that we can abandon ourselves to God and let go of fear of losing something, the ease of sin, and the fear of what other people will do or think as a result of living the fullness of the Gospel. I need your prayers for this. Pray for me and I'll pray for you, okay?

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## Reflection on *Laudato Si* by Pope Francis [at *Quidquid Est, Est!*]



If you missed parts I through IV, [check them out here](#).

### **PART V**

Chapter Four of *Laudato Si* is entitled “Integral Ecology.” Here, Pope Francis again focuses on the interrelatedness of all of creation. Everything in creation, every animal and rock, person and plant, is essentially good, since it has being, which comes from God (even mosquitoes!). We are part of nature, not just living in it. What we do to nature affects us, and what we do to ourselves affects nature. The problems in today’s society are not divorced from the problems in the natural world. As Pope Francis says, “We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (139). As such, we need to study and develop ways to live with nature and with each other, respecting others and the creation God gave us. We depend on nature for our physical existence, for food, water and shelter. “We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about” (140). This, the Holy Father notes, is why “sustainable use” natural resources are so important, so that we can utilize our world while allowing it the chance to grow back. One of the best examples of this is planting trees where forests were harvested, or having fish farms to protect wild fish populations.

Two social issues expand on the pope’s discussion of sustainable use. The economic systems of our nations should reflect our effort to protect the world, and our society should enforce laws which deal with environmental and human factors. Economies are only helpful in so far as they help the people of a nation, and they should take into account environmental factors as well as human ones. A nation which has laws protecting the environment or defending the innocent, but does not enforce such law, does more harm than good. What good are laws if they are not enforced? This leads to a culture of disrespect.

Speaking of culture, Francis next turns his attention to a “cultural ecology,” which is not as much a culture of ecologists, but rather approaching human culture with the same care as one approaches the environment. This is an important discussion because we face not just the extinction of plants and animals in our world, but also the extinction of entire ways of life. Too often man-made environmental changes, either exploiting or protecting the ecosystem in question, ignore the needs of indigenous groups, who have coexisted with their natural neighbors for centuries, in some cases for millennia.

Many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provide local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a long time, shaped cultural identity and their sense of the meaning of life and community. The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal. The imposition of a dominant lifestyle linked to a single form of production can be just as harmful as the altering of ecosystems. (145)

Because of their important role in understanding an ecosystem, indigenous cultures should be brought into environmental discussions. “When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best” (146). Working with these people, rather than against them, shows respect for the whole ecology of a region.

Pope Francis next examines how we can incorporate this ecology into our daily lives. It is, in a sense, about taking care of our own environment, specifically where we live and work. The pope’s reflection calls to mind Christ’s teaching “Love your neighbor as yourself” (see Matthew 22:39 and Mark 12:31), for if we do not properly love ourselves, we cannot properly love our neighbors. We cannot care for the world-wide environment if we cannot care for our local, personal environments. In this context, Pope Francis addresses again the issue of extreme poverty, which plagues so much of the world. In these situations of disease, filth, and violence, it may seem that all is hopeless.

However, as human history shows, “love always proves more powerful” than the evils of a corrupt city (149). We need to remember that charity isn’t just giving money; it is acting in love, namely the highest form of love. Charity is that sacrificial love of another, *caritas* in Latin, *agape* in Greek. It is the love which St. John the Evangelists, the “beloved disciple,” uses to describe God (1 John 4:8). So in charity, we help out neighbors, whether it be giving money to help them, or helping build them proper homes (in paragraph 152, Pope Francis notes that “lack of housing is a grave problem in many parts of the world”).

This section on ecology in our lives has a lengthy paragraph on “human life and the moral law” (155). In this paragraph, Pope Francis looks at how we view our bodies, for how we view our body correlates to how we view our environment. This is one of those paragraphs that I’m pretty sure socially liberal fans of the encyclical did not read (along with the ones discussed earlier about abortion and overpopulation). I say this because here Pope Francis speaks out about gender identity. The discussion in the encyclical is brief (it is only part, after all, of a larger tapestry about our common home), and there is a lot more that could be said about the issue in light of the Church’s teaching. However, Francis felt addressing the issue of gender identity was important, particularly in light of charity. Here are the Holy Father’s words:

Human ecology also implies another profound reality: the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment. Pope Benedict XVI spoke of an “ecology of man,” based on the fact that “man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will” [here he is quoting Pope Benedict’s address to the German Parliament, the Bundersrat, in 2011]. It is enough to recognize that our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way

we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. It is not a healthy attitude which would seek “to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it” [here he is quoting one of his own Wednesday Audience addresses from April 15, 2015].

Pope Francis is clearly rejecting the popular manipulation of the body. He isn't talking about staying healthy or trying to loose weight. He is talking about gender identity. He is talking about masculinity and femininity and the role those two aspects of human nature play in our lives. There are certain traits, gifts from God, associated with being a man and being a woman. We must embrace who we are and not seek to change our gender to fit our wants. If I am a man, then that is part of who I am. The same goes for women. Otherwise I cannot “recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different,” which is literally every other human being in existence besides me. If people in society cannot recognize themselves for who they are, then we have a society which cannot communicate, which cannot relate to its own members. There is an important difference between men and women (and it is more than their reproductive organs). Differences aren't bad, of course; they are essential. A woman isn't less than a man because she is not a man, nor is a man less than a woman because he is not a woman.

It is an important discussion, one which I should discuss in a later post. For now, I would like to move to the end of the encyclical.

Pope Francis concludes the chapter with a brief discussion of two points: the common good of society and justice between human generations. Remember a point made during our last reflection: the Church's teaching concerning care for the environment falls under God's prohibition against stealing. We cannot steal the gifts of God from later generations, in particular the gifts of our world. We cannot rob our children of their planet, nor should we simply solve the immediate problems and leave the larger ones for someone else. That is not the way a family solves its problems; our human family should not turn to that solution either. In other words, when we plan how to protect our common home, we must think of long standing solutions, cures rather than bandages. Take a polluted river, for example. A short term solution to the pollution would be to remove the garbage that collects along the river's banks. A lasting solution, in light of what Pope Francis teaches, would be to educate future generations to respect the not pollute, to conserve water, etc.

Nor should we sit back and say there is nothing wrong with our world from where we sit, so there is nothing we should do. The pope's major issue here is individualism, which is when we make ourselves the measure of the rest of the world. It stems from one of the great moral evils of our modern world: utilitarianism. The Holy Father is writing against such selfish evil, the “what's in it for me” mentality that infects pseudo-philanthropy. But we are not the center of the world. Our world is more than an extension of our personal yard. It is a home shared with all of humanity, our extended human family. We must first recognize the other man, the stranger whom we dread to meet. Again, the refrain of the encyclical appears: the environmental problems in today's world stem from an even greater problem in our society.

We need a proper human ecology.

## Happy Again - Five Photos, Five Stories [at Loved As If]



“Three pirouettes!” I cried out. “Three pirouettes! For the first time, God!” I took a series of quick steps and executed a grande jeté. My hand reached for the barre. A huge smile lit my face; my eyes sparkled. I took a deep breath, “That’s what it needed, three pirouettes!”

“Can you be happy without knowing everything?”

Time stopped. A rich, white noise masked the strong, driving beat of 38 Special’s “. ” The question hung in the air. I blinked away the tears that suddenly pricked my eyes.

“Can you be happy without knowing everything?” The Voice spoke again.

“Y-yes,” I found myself responding. Tears surged past my attempts to blink them away. The mirrors reflected my crinkled forehead, of eyes sparkling with tears. I did not ask, *Why are You asking me? What does it mean?*

For much of my life, I have kept in check a very young part of myself who longs to squat keening in the marketplace, “Look at what they did to me! Look! Look!” as I toss dirt and ashes on my head. Her deepest desire is that my losses, my wounds, my pain be acknowledged. Beyond that, she doesn’t know what she wants. Some losses are so great, it’s impossible to imagine any recovery.

So when my dearest Friend asked if I could be happy without knowing everything, I could say, ‘Yes.’ Hadn’t I just turned three pirouettes when I’d never imagined myself turning more than two? Didn’t that make me happy? Didn’t singing, swimming make me happy? Hadn’t designing a pencil skirt that fit a narrow waist and wider hips made me happy? I didn’t know that I didn’t know what happiness was. I was willing to go along for the adventure.

But the keening child in me knows happiness. She remembers everything. She holds within her the absolutely delicious experience of belonging to specific people, of being loved by specific people, of being at home with them because they are hers and she is theirs. And through the adventure, she has often noted that this is all very nice but...

It's grand that these people are accepting my invitation to dinner but they're not my family. What a lovely time I had with my girlfriends but I don't really belong to them. How grand that they threw me a surprise birthday party but they don't really know me and so can't really love about me. Then I unexpectedly found myself waiting five months for my insurance company to begin paying on my disability claim, wasn't allowed access to my profit sharing account, and had already spent all my savings on being ill. Friends (and even strangers) swooped in and provided the funds I needed to pay my bills. At the same time, they continued to be my friends. The young, keening child in me was flabbergasted and dazzled. But she insisted there was at least one person my friends could never replace. She knows the place in my heart I never go, the place to which I never invite anyone.

I have no auditory memory of Marmar's voice, no auditory memory of Portuguese. I do recall the sound of German, French, Italian, Spanish, and several other languages. Though I read Portuguese quite well, each time I hear it as it's the first time. Each time I want to wail. Perhaps it is mercy that hinders my memory. Her loss is beyond telling, a pain I will carry to the grave. Perhaps my Friend has granted me the grace to forget because memory would bring more pain than joy.

“‘Helen was happy here,’ said Phronsie decidedly. ‘And she never–never would want to leave her mother alone, to go off to a nicer place. Never, Polly.’

“Polly drew a long breath, and shut her lips. ‘But, Phronsie, don't you see,’ she cried presently, ‘it may be that Mrs. Fargo wouldn't ever want to go to Heaven unless Helen was there to meet her? It may be, Phronsie; and that would be very dreadful, you know. And God loved Mrs. Fargo so that he took Helen, and he is going to keep her happy every single minute while she is waiting and getting ready for her mother.’”\*

[Fallen Sparrow](#) learned to drive recently and set off on an adventurous motoring trip from Maryland to his home state of Minnesota. Some planned meet ups didn't work out. I was concerned that he might be disappointed. When I gingerly inquired, he told me he wanted to let one of those he missed know, “I will always fail you and disappoint you, but Jesus never does.”\* We cannot escape entropy. Life fails and disappoints but Jesus never does. Christ holds us together, holds all that we are. And just as He held my innocence until I could receive it again, He holds Marmar. And perhaps I long for heaven more than I would have had I never lost her. Though her voice remains just beyond my memory, the sight of her fills my heart. I see us in heaven some day. We will dance before God, her extremely long, dark hair flowing freely and my (not quite so) long, dark hair bouncing in the breeze.

In the meantime, I am happy again. The young child within me longs to keen on occasion but I know, friends love me; I belong to people who belong to me. There are feasts on earth even though there is also famine. While earth was never meant to be heaven neither is it hell. I can be happy and long at the same time. We're not an either/or people; life is not a zero sum game. Christians are both/and people. Even as we wait, we know we are [“heirs in hope of eternal life.”](#) And [“hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.”](#)

\*Margaret Sydney, *Five Little Peppers Grown Up*: <http://www.readprint.com/work-5664/Five-Little->

Image: An earthly feast – Grilled chicken breasts with a balsamic and garlic glaze; Baconated kumatoes with fresh basil, garlic, and spicy pepper oregano; Old Bay Shrimp (with butter for dipping).

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This contribution is available at <http://lovedasif.com/2015/08/10/happy-again-five-photos-five-stories-5/>  
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# Our Lady of 9/11 [at Serviam Ministries]

Written By: Gregory Watson

*“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, robed with the sun, standing on the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”* (Revelation 12:1)

As I drove to work this morning, I saw the moon in the clear, pre-dawn sky- a crescent, and off to its right, a single bright star. Immediately, I was reminded of Islam, and their crescent moon and star symbol (as depicted on the flags of Pakistan and Turkey, for example). Considering what day this is, my mind started whirring around as I drove to work. I remembered where I was when I heard the news that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center 14 years ago today (sleeping in at Bible College, thinking my dorm mates were watching a movie way too loudly). I then thought about the feeling of almost conspiratorial intrigue I felt when I later learned that September 11 wasn't a random date to the terrorists, but harkened back to the defeat of the Ottoman Turks in the battle of Vienna in AD 1683, which put an end to their incursions into Europe and led to the re-Christianisation of southeastern Europe.

It was in honour of the Christian victory at Vienna, and in gratitude for Our Lady's help, that the pope instituted the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary to be celebrated on the Sunday in the octave of the Nativity of Mary. For some reason, when the new liturgical calendar was promulgated in 1969, this feast was removed. I hesitate to speculate as to the motives behind that decision, but in 2002, on the first anniversary of 9/11, Pope St. John Paul II reinstated the feast, setting it fixedly on the 12th (the date that the aforementioned battle of Vienna was won) in an act of spiritual defiance to the enemies of Christ and as an expression of audacious hope in the midst of a spiritually dark world.

Which, in the end, brought me to remember our persecuted brothers and sisters in Syria and elsewhere, suffering under the brutal regime of the Islamic State. Their plight can seem so hopeless, and it feels like there just isn't anything, or not enough, that we can do. Yet we can hold on to hope by recalling the same heavenly sign—that on that crescent moon stands the Woman, who crushes the head of the serpent, giving birth to the Messiah who rules all nations with a rod of iron. As she has in the past when her name has been invoked, such as at the battle of Lepanto (1573) and at the aforementioned battle of Vienna, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Our Lady of Victory, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and her Divine Son will overcome in the end.

I exhort everyone who reads this blog to join me in praying the Rosary daily from the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary (Sept 12) until the Feast of the Holy Rosary (Oct 7) for an end to ISIS's persecution of Christians in Syria and elsewhere.

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