

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.

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Jesus, What Were You Thinking?



It was just another day of the week, or was it? Jesus knew, as God, that before the week would end, He will have given His life, for many, to conquer death.

What must Jesus have been thinking?

He arrived in Jerusalem the day before; greeted with fanfare; literally, with palms waving in the springtime breeze. Jesus knew, only too well, how fickle man can be; how in the blink of an eye, they would turn on Him. He would be turned over to the authorities and would be put to death. Jesus only had a few more days to impart His wisdom upon His chosen Apostles, before everything would change. In the calm before the storm, what was going through Jesus' mind?

I have often contemplated this scene. I have tried to imagine what He must have been feeling and thinking. I do know this: After tossing the money changers tables on the day of His arrival in Jerusalem, He continued to teach in parables. Every thought of Jesus, every action, had purpose in conjunction with the Father's plan for salvation. He imparted the parable of the tenant farmer (foretelling His own demise). He spoke about paying taxes to the emperor, and He answered questions about the Resurrection for the Sadducees (who deny the concept of resurrection). He seemed to be "poking the bear." Everything Jesus said and did was born out of love for His Father and for us, as well as obedience to the Father.

Today is Holy Monday, the calm before we enter into the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Take these days of calm before the storm and contemplate what might have been going through Jesus' mind as He prepared for the greatest moment in the history of mankind.

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Built Upon The Rock [at A Faith-Full Life]

— 1 —

I remember being quite taken aback when I first encountered the claim made by the Catholic Church stating that,

*“The Church is catholic: she proclaims **the fullness of the faith**. She bears in herself and administers **the totality of the means of salvation**.”¹*

What arrogance! How condescending to other Christians! The fullness of the faith?! The totality of the means of salvation?! I was aghast.

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Biblical Foundations

Having been raised in an evangelical Christian home, I had never encountered a church that would have even dreamt of saying that they possessed the, “fullness of the faith.” I had never heard of a church claiming to be “infallible” in her official teachings, or one who claimed to administer the, “totality of the means of salvation.” I was used to attending churches that were very forthright and honest about just how fallible they were! I was used to listening to sermons by preachers who would often end their sermon by warning us to double-check what they had just taught us against our own personal understanding of the bible!

Growing up, it seemed like every church I attended had one thing in common – the bible was the sole rule and guide for all matters of faith and morals. The bible was the ultimate authority when it came to truth – not the church! Unfortunately, that was almost all that these churches agreed on. Each church had a different way of interpreting the bible, a different way of understanding the truth.

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These differences ran the full gamut, ranging from what was necessary for salvation and whether or not salvation could be lost, to whether baptism was necessary and efficacious or merely optional and symbolic. We disagreed on moral issues like homosexuality, whether or not divorce was permissible, and whether or not abortion was okay in certain circumstances. We disagreed on what day of the week to worship, free will versus predestination, the necessity (or lack thereof) of good works in the life of the believer, end time chronologies, the gifts of the Holy Spirit – the list went literally on and on.

We disagreed with one another on virtually everything, often completely convinced that *we* were right and *they* were wrong...but no one was ever audacious enough to claim that they were *infallibly* correct. A church that taught infallibly? A church that contained the fullness of the faith? A church that administered the totality of the means of salvation? Ludicrous.

So, when I learned that the Catholic Church claimed to be infallible in her official teachings on matters of

faith and morals, when I discovered that she claimed to possess the fullness of the Christian faith, when I heard her proclaim that she bore and administered the totality of the means of salvation,

I found myself simultaneously offended and intrigued. Who was this church that had the audacity to make such radical claims?!!

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Audacious Claims

Not only did the Catholic Church make radical claims as to her ability to dispense truth and salvation, but she also claimed to be the church which Jesus Christ founded on and through His apostles. Which kind of made sense when I reflected on the fact that Christ Himself was no stranger to audacious claims. Not only did he claim to be God in the flesh, but he also declared, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.*”² As a Christian, this was a claim that didn’t strike me as being particularly arrogant or condescending, but I had to admit, if I had encountered Christ’s words as a Muslim, Hindu, or Jew, I might have felt very differently about the nature of His claims!

Ultimately, I realized that all declarations of truth are exclusive. In saying that one thing is true, we are by *default* eliminating other options. Fundamentally truth claims aren’t personal although we often tend to take them that way. Rather, they are an invitation to either prove or disprove the veracity of the claim that is being made. They are entirely non-subjective. They aren’t about personal feelings, desires, or how we want the world to be. They are either true or they are not. With that in mind, we should be free to evaluate truth claims without getting our panties in a bunch. I know, I know, it’s easier said than done sometimes, but nevertheless, there you have it.

I was also forced to admit that the Catholic Church’s claims to absolute truth weren’t in opposition to other Christian churches who made similar claims, rather she was the *only* Christian church which even claimed infallible truth. She *alone* claimed to possess the fullness of the Christian faith and the totality of the means of salvation. And that began to bother me. As a Protestant, why would I want to be a part of a church that admitted that they taught some error mixed with truth? Why would I want to be part of a congregation that flat out said, “*Listen, we don’t have all the answers. Sometimes we get it wrong. Sometimes we think we’re right. We can’t know for sure, and ultimately you’ll have to follow your own best judgement, but you’re more than welcome to be a part of our group.*”

The Catholic Church claimed to possess infallible truth and the fullness of the faith. Every other Christian church responds, “No you don’t – and we don’t either!” [\[Tweet This\]](#)

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Once upon a time, Protestants and Catholics fought over which side was correctly proclaiming the truth. When they squared off in the ring it was to see who could best defend the tenants of their faith. But in recent times, non-Catholic Christians have seemed less and less willing to engage in a fight to determine truth.

Modern Protestantism doesn’t claim infallible and absolute truth, rather it defaults to a fundamentally agnostic position asserting that *no denomination* can have complete certainty on all doctrinal and moral issues. The claim is essentially that *no one* possesses the fullness of the faith – that no one can say with

absolute certainty, “*We can teach you to observe all that Christ commanded.*”

Protestant Christianity is kind of like a challenger who steps into the ring with the champ, but oddly enough isn't interested in beating the champ or taking his title. Instead the challenger just wants to discredit him. He just wants the world to acknowledge that there's no such thing as a title and no such thing as a champion. That the claim to greatness (or the claim to truth) is itself a lie. That there's really no such thing. Their knockout punch is the claim that the fullness of truth can *never* be taught without an admixture of error.

In some ways these claims are as audacious as that of the Catholic Church, they are simply claims which find themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum.

Perhaps it will come as no surprise when I tell you that I found this approach unappealing. I decided that it was time to honestly and fairly consider the truth claims made by Catholicism.

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A Rock in Shifting Sands

In the Sermon on the Mount, after Christ finishes His preaching, He gives an apt description of what will befall those who heed His words, and what will befall those who don't.

“Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”³

Interestingly enough, when Christ builds His house, *His Church*, it is also built upon a rock. “*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.*”⁴ Christ's Church is built upon a rock – not on shifting sands. And it is His Church, “*the church of the living God,*” which becomes the very, “*pillar and foundation of the truth.*”⁵ The Church is the pillar of the truth – it upholds it and elevates it. The Church is the foundation of the truth – it supports it and strengthens it.

The foundation of the truth is the Church, which is built upon the rock. There are no shifting sands, everything is firm and stable and secure. Christ gives to Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven. To Peter and the apostles He gives the almost unbelievable authority to bind and loose in heaven and on earth⁶. In sending them out he tells them, “*He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.*”⁷ In the Great Commission, Christ also commissions and sends out the disciples saying, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.*”⁸

Perhaps then, it is not so odd that the Catholic Church speaks with the same authority and audaciousness as her founder. Having been given the very teaching authority of Christ (he who hears you hears me), the authority to bind and loose, the commission to teach *all* that Christ commands, the promise that Christ will be with her to the end of the age and that He Himself will ensure that His Church prevails over death and Hell...well perhaps the Catholic Church *is* the pillar and foundation of the truth as the Scriptures claim. Perhaps she does proclaim the fullness of the faith and administer the totality of the means of salvation. Perhaps she is infallible in her official teaching. Perhaps no other church can claim this precisely because no other church was founded on the rock by Christ Himself.

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A Walk Along the Beach...

Have you ever walked along the beach in deep sand? It can be pleasant enough for a while, especially on a beautiful day. But after awhile you may start to notice how much harder it is to walk in deep sand rather than on solid ground. Sometimes people will train by running on the beach because it's a much more difficult workout versus running on a solid track.

Whether walking or running, you will notice that with every step, you have to rebalance and correct for the next step as the sand shifts under your feet. Soon your arches ache and you find yourself using muscles that you typically don't pay any attention to as your body tries to compensate. Even though you are on relatively flat ground, the deep sand is making you breath harder than usual and you're definitely not able to go in a straight line. It's hard to find any sort of cadence because each step brings a uniquely shifting terrain that you have to adjust to on the fly. By the time you leave the beach and head to the parking lot your body is crying out for stable ground. As you step onto the pavement it's wonderful. Firm and supportive, your body finds it's natural walking rhythm, and your muscles are able to relax. Your breathing slows and your calves and arches unknot.

When I left the shifting sands of Protestantism for the firm ground of Catholicism it was a relief. I finally had firm teaching under my feet – fixed and unmoving. Spiritually I had been crying out for solid ground without even realizing it. I had been worn out by the shifting sands of doctrine and a lack of fixed truth. I needed solid ground. My soul echoed the cry of the Psalmist

Hear my cry, O God; Attend unto my prayer.

From the end of the earth will I call unto thee,

When my heart is overwhelmed:

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.⁹

And in His mercy, Christ led me to His Church. The rock that is higher than I.

!

1. CCC 868 [↵](#)

2. John 14:6 [↵](#)

3. Matthew 7:24-27 [↵](#)

4. Matthew 16:18-19 [↵](#)

5. 1 Timothy 3:15 [↵](#)

6. Matthew 16:19, Matthew 18:18 [↵](#)

7. Luke 10:16 [↵](#)

8. Matthew 28:18b-20 [↵](#)

9. Psalm 61:1-2 [↵](#)

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Communication, Mother Angelica style [at Leaven for the Loaf]

[An Alabama nun died on Easter Sunday](#), and honoring her life and work in the service of God is a much more edifying way to spend time than parsing the latest outrageous remark by a presidential wannabe. So here we go: May [Mother Angelica](#) rest in peace – and I hope I can learn as she did how to use media to communicate the truth in love and charity.

The television network she founded, EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network), is well-known. I wonder how many people who watch it remember what preceded it.

I was a college freshman in Florida in 1977. One day in the back of the church I attended, I found a little free booklet by someone named Mother Angelica. I can't remember the title, but it was about prayer. The brochure was a low-budget production, which didn't surprise me when I saw that it came from an Alabama monastery. When I started reading, though, the quality of the printing didn't matter. Here was sane and sound and sensible counsel.

As time went on, more Mother Angelica brochures appeared in the literature rack. The topics varied, but there were repeating themes: love of God, His infinite mercy, the value of human life at all stages, the need to keep growing in faith. The writing was always clear, good-humored, and down-to-earth.

That was a time in my life when by imperceptible steps I was moving from a personally-opposed-but view of abortion towards a pro-life commitment. The Alabama nun's brochures that looked as though they'd been cranked out on a high school's mimeograph machine were to play a subtle, indispensable role in changing my life.

I couldn't anticipate in 1977 what kind of reach EWTN would eventually achieve. All I had were those simple little booklets. They were tiny masterpieces of communication and evangelization and pro-life coaching. They were like the snack food whose tagline was "betcha can't eat just one" – I couldn't read just one. I kept looking for more. And thus that Alabama nun with a gift for communication became one of the many influences that set me on the path I've been trying to follow for many years now.

Mother Angelica didn't need fancy equipment to communicate. She used the tools at hand, however sophisticated or humble.

In her own words, "You see, God expects His people to do the ridiculous so He can do the miraculous."

By the way, it turned out that the man responsible for the supply of brochures back in my college days was Father Bob, pastor of the church I attended. Father Bob is now Bishop Robert Baker of Birmingham, Alabama – the diocese where Mother Angelica lived and prayed and worked with her sisters in faith at Our Lady of the Angels Monastery.

Catholics and the Ideology Trap [at If I Might Interject...]

It's no secret that factions try to hijack Church teaching to either try to give their political platform credibility (if they are similar) or to discredit the Church (if they are opposed). For example, the Church teaching on caring for the poor is hijacked into either equating this teaching as a mandate to vote for a party platform or to indicate that the Church is being biased and therefore should not be heeded.

In America, both parties use both tactics, and some members of the faithful who want to promote a political cause will misquote Church teaching a way that makes it appear as if the Church is changing...either to praise the party or discredit the Church by accusing them of "becoming political."

For people who get caught in it, this is nearly an airtight trap. It leads one to either think that fidelity to one political faction is fidelity to the Church, or to claim that they are being faithful to Our Lord or the earlier Church over the Church today.

This happens in two different ways. In one case, we have obvious schizophrenia where the US bishops are simultaneously called left-wing and right-wing by foes of different positions. But a new tactic is emerging. One where both factions react to accounts from the secular (and religiously illiterate) media and ignores what they ignore. As a result, people are ignorant of the fact that Pope Francis is just as firm in defending Catholic moral teaching as his predecessors, and his predecessors were just as firm as Pope Francis on social justice.

For example, I recall a debate on Facebook with a woman who angrily wanted to know why Pope Francis never mentioned the plight of Christians in the Middle East when he spoke about injustice. She was shocked when I produced an address by the Pope pleading for the world to help these Christians and retracted her objection. She literally didn't know the Pope had spoken about this.

People forget that ALL news media is partisan. It's easy to deride "Faux News" or MSNBC, but the entire media is biased. If a person is unaware of this, they will not realize that a distortion IS a distortion.

The remedy for partisanship is to recognize that a political position must be judged by the Church, NOT the other way around. We must remember that deploring abortion is not "right wing" and deploring the treatment of migrants (legal or not) is not "left wing."

I believe that we must change our method of thinking. We must stop assuming that secular reports about Church teaching are accurate. We must first seek to understand what the Church intends to teach. We must reject an arrogant overconfidence in our ability to interpret what we think is the "plain sense" of a document (if I had a dollar for every time someone with a wrong interpretation appealed to the "plain sense" of the document, my student loans would have been paid off years ago). We must realize that our perspective as 21st century Americans (or Europeans etc.) may lead us to interpret words in ways that the Church NEVER intended.

In such a case, the Church is not at fault for "speaking unclearly" (a common charge). Rather WE are at fault for assuming that the Pope is thinking like a 21st century American. It's pretty arrogant to assume our cultural experience is normal.

I believe that, for us Catholics, we must step back from our dualistic political views where Left and Right become Right and Wrong. We must start thinking of the Church as Mother and Teacher again and apply her teachings to the issues of the World. That means rejecting the tendency to view Church teaching as a political platform and accepting the view that all politics need to be re-formed (and thus reformed) by Christian belief that doing good in relation to God, neighbors and self is to be sought and evil rejected. When it comes to the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, we need to stop thinking like the Pharisee.

It means we must stop thinking of politicians as evil incarnate when they have the "wrong" letter (D or R) after their name and stop making excuses if they have the "right" one. Regardless of your opinions on Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump, we have to think of them as fellow sinners who God wishes to save as much as He wants to save us.

That means when the Pope shows compassion to a person on the "wrong side" of the political divide, we don't assume he is blessing the party platform of our opponents. It also means we don't assume he gives carte blanche endorsement to our political platform when he says something our party agrees with.

What it boils down to is that the Christian must constantly assess themselves, turning away from evil and back to God. It means we must pray that our hidden faults are revealed to us and for the grace to change our ways.

This, I believe, is the remedy to the trap of ideology.

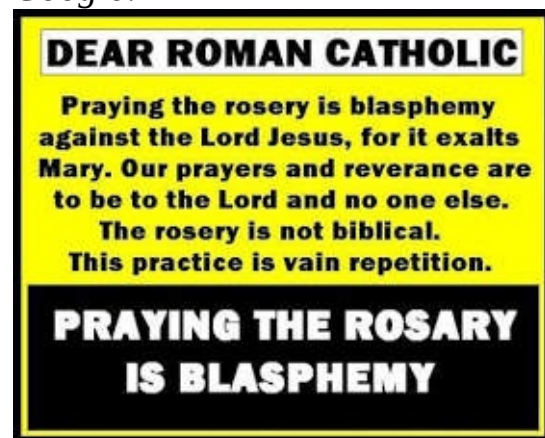
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En Garde! In Defense of the Holy Rosary and Other Catholic Practice [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

by Susan Fox

Christian Pastor James J. Brown is pro-life, favors Traditional Marriage and understands the dangers of Islam. But he doesn't understand why Catholics pray the Rosary. This is his [notice](#) to Catholics on Google:



Pastor James J. Brown, such is vain ignorance.

The Rosary is a meditation on Scripture itself. It is the vast training ground of prayer and therefore the door that opens when Christ knocks.

It leashes the three dogs of useless talking, vain imagination and a cold heart towards God. These three dogs are trying to pull us in three different directions. The Rosary --



properly prayed -- ties up these fractious dogs and allows us to love God with our whole heart!

The first dog resides in our wagging lips. This dog will waste our time rattling endlessly so much flotsam and jetsam. "Did you hear what that no good bloke said to me yesterday?" "Why is she dressed like that?"

"Silence. Pray," the angel says. "Listen to me:" *"Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus."* (Luke 1:28,31) When the

disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, His answer was: "*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy*



Name." How can we go wrong praying what Our Lord Himself told us to pray, and doing it five times during the entire Rosary?

The second wild dog is our own imagination. While you are trying to pray, are you not endlessly distracted with thoughts about what someone said to you yesterday, or what you will eat at dinner? This dog is pulling you away from God. When we pray the Rosary,



we must THINK about the very Life of Jesus as we have read about it in Scripture! These are called the mysteries of the Rosary. We think of His Birth, how the angels came to the little people of the world -- the shepherds, inviting them to the Birth in the manger. Pray about the excited response of the shepherds! They got up and ran to where the Child lay in the manger! Lord, give me that excitement in Your Presence!

During the Rosary, we think about the Wise Men who traveled far to give Him gifts fit for a King, God and Sacrifice. Do you realize the implications of that? Here is God come in the flesh willing to die for our sins. Already, at His Birth, foreign kings understood this. And the usurper King Herod, who was not born of the line of David, also understood the significance of Christ's Birth. When he realized that the foreign kings had double-crossed him by not returning to give him the location of the Messiah, he sent his guards into Bethlehem (meaning "House of Bread") to kill the true King along with all the male children age two and under.

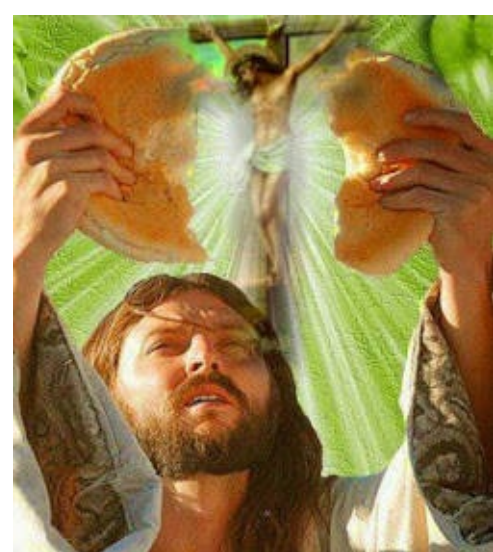


"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." (Matt 2:18)

In the Holy Rosary, we think of Christ's Life -- His presence at the Wedding Feast of Cana. Here He worked His first public miracle at the request of His Mother. We ponder Jesus' Baptism in the River Jordan, how this holy guy named John the Baptist didn't think he was fit to tie Jesus' sandals! Why not? What is different about Jesus? Isn't He just a man?

While praying the Rosary, we think of the parables of the Kingdom of God. What do they tell us about Christ? Is not the Kingdom of God the very Life of Christ within us? We pray about His Transfiguration, the manifestation of His Glory, which so confused the apostles that they wanted to build three altars!

We meditate on the Last Supper. "This is my Body. This is My Blood." Lo, He didn't say, "This is the symbol of my Body. This is the symbol of my Blood." He literally said, "This is my Body." And since it is Christ saying it, we know He made it true.



*"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." **Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"** (John 6: 51-52)*

How is it that those Jews knew Christ was telling them to eat His flesh, and you Bible beginners don't know that Christ told us to eat His flesh -- even though you use your lips to say Scripture is infallible?

You don't think Scripture is infallible! You think you are infallible, and your out-of-context interpretation is infallible.

Many Catholics go to daily Mass where Christ's one Mediation in time is re-presented. This is what Christ was talking about! "This is my Body! This is my Blood!" We Catholics are time travelers because at every Mass we participate in His original Last Supper and His original Passion, Death and Resurrection. We eat the Real Body and Blood of Christ every day as He commanded literally. We hear His Gospel daily, the Word of God!

It's not because He needs to die over and over again. No, He does it once. But we are human beings. We are weak. We need the nourishment of His Passion, Death and Resurrection every single day.



Christ willed to accompany us daily during our entire lives! Yes, He is present in the Word of God, in which we rejoice during the Mass, during the Liturgy of the Hours, and during our private Bible reading. The Word of God is the complete focus of our meditation in the Rosary! Daily we can receive the Word of God, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist! Daily we can focus on His Word praying the Rosary.

In praying the Rosary, we think about His Passion. We comfort Him in the Garden while the apostles sleep. We watch in horror His scourging at the pillar, which He so mercifully suffered, for our sakes. We stand with Him as He is mocked, humiliated and scorned during the crowning of thorns.

We walk with Him and Simeon, carrying the cross. We see the kindness and generosity of Jesus as He meets the people along the way, telling them not to weep for Him, but for their own children. While He suffered on the way to Calvary, He felt pity for Jerusalem, which he knew would be destroyed in 35 short years by the Romans.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! "For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'"
(Matthew 23: 37-39)



In the Rosary, we kneel at the foot of the cross as He says, *"Behold Your Mother!"* We rejoice in the honor shown to Mary by Her Son along with St. Paul, who said *"And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."* (1 Cor 12:26) Mary is honored by the angel at the Annunciation, honored by the Son at His death, honored by the Church at its Birth on Pentecost, and honored by Elizabeth in the Bible when she says, *"Who am I that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"* (Luke 1:43) If all these in the Bible honored Mary, why should we not do so?

On the cross, He owned nothing! Not even His clothes. And He gave His last remaining and most precious possession away! His Mother. *"Behold Your Mother!"* We are to take her into our home.

During the Rosary we meditate on the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This leashes the dog of the imagination that wants to run wild and think about something vain and worthless like chastising Catholics who honestly worship in Spirit and Truth when they pray the Rosary.



The third dog to be leashed is the heart. Oh the heart wants to run after riches, getting things done (prayer

is useless), wasting time thinking about a shiny bobble or a new car. The heart wants to stick its nose in other people's business. The heart slyly wants to admire itself. It does this so the human being isn't aware of it. "Aren't I good? Don't I do good things for God?" says the heart.

But the Rosary restrains the dog of the heart, and encourages it to wholeheartedly turn to God, its Creator. The Rosary softens the heart, makes it grateful for the job God did to save its worthless hide. "*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son!*" (John 3:16)

Jesus was upset when he realized the Jews were thinking that Moses gave them the manna in the desert. You can almost hear the frustration in His voice: "*It is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.*"

Hush, now, I am praying the First Joyful Mystery of the Rosary and therefore I am in the room where the angel comes to announce to Mary that she will be the Mother of God. I notice how sweetly she accepts the will of God. She clearly recognizes that the angel invites her to be the Mother of the Messiah. She fully knows what he means because she uses the words of the Messianic Psalm 116 to accept the will of God:

"O LORD, surely I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid, You have loosed my bonds. To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And call upon the name of the LORD. I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people" (Psalm 116:16-18)

And Mary response shows she read that psalm. She understood it. She knew God was asking her to be the Mother of God. "*Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, Be it done to me according to Your Word.*" (Luke 1:38) She would be the mother of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, the prophesized Messiah.

But her statement: "*How shall this be done, because I know not man*" is also prophetic. (Luke 1:34) She is not just talking about her virginity though she is a virgin. She is talking directly to God with a very important question that any good Jew would ask. The angel's response gives us a clue to what she is asking.

"The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1: 35)



How did God enter the Temple the first time? God entered the Temple through a cloud that overshadowed the Ark of the Covenant. And the Glory of the Lord traveled with the Israelites in the form of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. *“And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”* (I Kings 8:10-11)

Tragically, Ezekiel sees the Glory of the Lord leave the temple about 600 years before the Birth of Christ. And Mary is aware of this. She knew God’s presence left the temple before she was born because of Israel’s secret worship of abominations in the Temple. God asks Ezekiel, *“Have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness”* (Ezekiel 8:12).

The horror that Ezekiel saw and reported in chapters 8-11 is fulfilled when the armies of Babylon destroy the city and slay its inhabitants in 586 B.C.

“How can this be? I know not man.” The young Jewish virgin asks God, knowing that God’s Hand left the Temple because of her people’s transgressions. *“Are you coming back?”* she asked.



The angel tells her, *“Yes. He’s coming back. You are the new Temple. The Cloud will now overshadow you, most highly favored daughter of Israel. You are the New Ark of the Covenant.” “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”* (Luke 1: 35)

So my heart is totally engaged in this scene, not only out of love of Mary, whom I do honor, but out of love of God, Whom I adore. I marvel at His plan for our salvation. I see He has taken care of every detail. My heart is enkindled with love for Him. Never once did I blasphemy because all true devotion to Mary is Christ centered.

Mary is transparent – almost invisible. She is a magnifying glass for God. It's in the Bible: "*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior!*" (Luke 1:46) She is the little key that opens the door of our hearts to God, the King of Glory. "*Behold your Mother.*"

We say the words of the angel, "Hail Mary," and she turns to Christ and gives Him our Greetings.

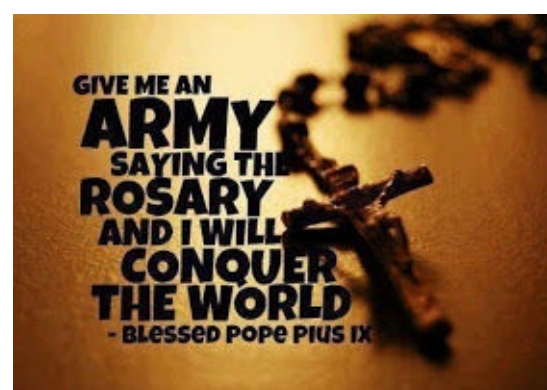
We put our imagination to work and think of the moment of the Annunciation. We bury ourselves in the Great Cloud that descended on her during the Conception of Christ in her womb and she turns to Christ and gives Him our imagination.

We turn our hearts to what is taking place in the Scriptures, and Mary takes our hearts, softens them, and gives them to God Himself. She is an Intercessor *par excellence*. We are all called to be such.



And when the Rosary is finished. I take a little flower from the bouquet of what I have given to God, and I press it to my nose all day long. And so I have Peace. Not the peace that the world gives, but the Peace that Christ gives.

And that is the power of the Holy Rosary.



This contribution is available at <http://christsfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2016/03/en-garde-in-defense-of-rosary-and-other.html>
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Easter: The Greatest Miracle in Human History! [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

Sermon by Rev. John Paul Shea

Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Tucson, AZ



Happy Easter! Alleluia! Christ is risen!

My brothers and sisters, today we celebrate the greatest miracle in human history, the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead!

It is in fact the resurrection of Our Lord that is the foundation of Christianity! Everything we believe and all that is sacred stands on the fact that Christ was raised from the dead.

Today's celebration reminds us that the resurrection is not something to be seen with normal eyes. It is something to be seen with the eyes of faith through the words of the witnesses we hear in the scriptures. We hear of these witnesses in today's first reading (Acts 10:34-43) as Saint Peter proclaims "*how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power.*"

And that he was put to death. But God raised Him on the third day and granted that he be



visible, to those "*witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from*

the dead.”

Yet, our faith in the resurrection of Our Lord does not come simply from the words of the witnesses we hear in the scriptures. Our faith is also greatly inspired by the ways in which these witnesses lived their lives.

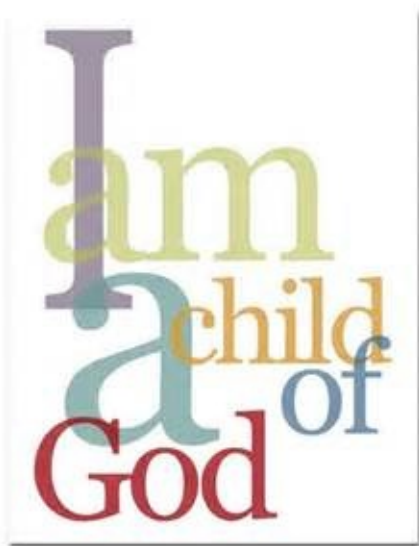
In fact, the impact of the resurrection of our Lord in the lives of the early church was radical indeed! Several early members of the Church gave up literally everything, even their very lives in order to live as Christians!

These individuals suffered the most horrendous deaths as a result of their faith in the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus! They suffered crucifixions, stonings, beatings, burning at the stake, and even being thrown to lions!

Today’s celebration of the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus from the dead calls us to a new and radical way of living!

In today’s second reading (Colossians 3:14), Saint Paul says, *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.”*

As Christians, we are to listen to these words of Saint Paul! We are to live our lives not for the world, but for God! For the resurrection teaches us who we are to become.



We are to become children of God. We are to be resurrected with Our Lord at the final resurrection. Yet, if we want to live in the resurrection with Our Lord, than we must strive to make changes in our lives today. We must strive to remove from our lives all impurity because nothing impure can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The resurrection reminds us that even in this life, when we live for God, our body becomes a temple of light. But, when we live in sin, our body becomes a vehicle of darkness. We can see this darkness in the lives of many in our society today as more and more persons conform their lives to the spirit of the world. When we live for the world we are not happy, and when the spirit of the world takes over our lives, then we bring degradation upon our souls. This is why Our Lord has come. He has come to call us out of the world because the world in its present form is passing away, and it is taking many souls with it. In fact, our Lord has told us that only a few will enter into the narrow gate of heaven. For the gate that leads to damnation is wide, and those who enter through it are many.



My brothers and sisters, Our Lord is coming again soon, and He will judge the living and the dead! Therefore, our Lord calls us to live for Him. He calls us to seek what is above. Our Lord wants us to pray. He wants us to live chastely and devoutly.

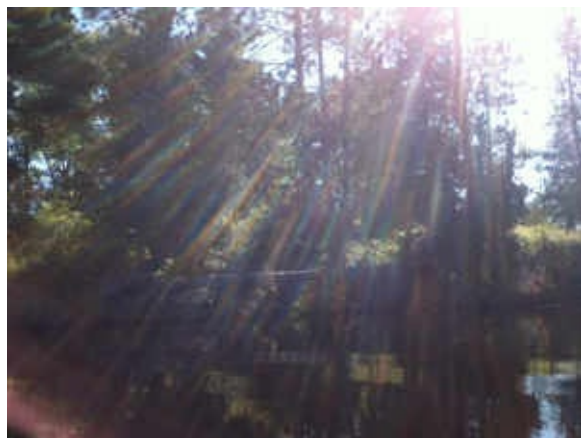
So, let us seek conversion of heart and purity of mind and body so that we can become the resurrected persons our Lord has died for. Let us be on fire for our faith as was the early disciples of our Church! For Christ has risen indeed! Alleluia!



Did you enjoy this homily. Fr. Shea has another one on Palm Sunday called

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Fasting and Peace [at Plot Line and Sinkers]



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“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.” The opening words to the song “Let There Be Peace on Earth” are simple but profound.

Of course, everyone wants peace: no wars, no bickering, no slavery, no oppression etc. However, when we start arguing with someone about an insignificant topic, or when we don’t want to admit we’re wrong, or when we have a hard time forgiving someone, it’s hard to find that peace within ourselves.

The truth is that peace *does* begin “with me.”

How can we cultivate this peace in our hearts?

It might seem like a simple answer, but regular fasting (together with prayer) cultivates peace in our hearts. Fasting invites the Holy Spirit in to heal our hearts, our relationship with God and our relationship with others.

Let’s take for example, forgiving someone. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, we are all called to be merciful and forgive those who have hurt or offended us.

But what if the offense is grievous? Say, like torture, abuse, rape or murder? And what if the person we must forgive is not repentant?

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Jesus didn’t give any exceptions to this rule. We will be forgiven as we forgive those who trespass against us. We are still called to be merciful and to forgive *regardless of the offense*. We are all called to have peace in our hearts. Forgiveness and showing mercy to others helps heal our hearts and souls. However, forgiving someone, especially those who have grievously harmed us, is not easy and it is impossible without God’s grace. Fasting opens our hearts to this beautiful grace and peace.

The testimony below from one of the *Live the Fast* community members might help to illustrate this:

“Throughout my life, a relative of mine was verbally abusive to me and to others in our family.

Eventually, she was diagnosed with a mental illness and, with medication, she was able to stop being verbally abusive. When she got older and began exhibiting signs of dementia, however, it seemed like she was falling back into her former caustic verbal abuse. I had thought that I had forgiven her, but realized that I never did forgive her for all the cruel things she had said and done to me. At that point, I had already been fasting for several months and someone had suggested that I fast and pray for this relative in order to help me to forgive her. So I fasted and prayed for her and eventually, I realized that I had been able to forgive her and to speak about and treat her with the utmost love and kindness. I don't think I could have done that without praying and fasting for her.”

Lent is a time of change and sacrifice. Fasting and prayer together will help cultivate peace and forgiveness in our hearts. Fasting will invite the Holy Spirit in to heal our hearts, our relationship with God and our relationship with others.

Fasting is not an easy practice with our society's current tendency to overindulge. However, if you can do penitential acts during Lent, if you can fast during Lent, then you can fast all year round!

For more information on how to get started with fasting, check out our website (<http://livethefast.org>) **Always check with your physician** before beginning any fasting routine.

To sign up for LTF's free biweekly fasting newsletter, [click here](#).

[Live the Fast](#) is a Roman Catholic Apostolate that is focused on bringing more awareness to the discipline of fasting by offering educational resources on prayer and fasting, a prayer community that will inspire one to live the fast and providing nutritious fasting breads. (Priests and religious receive fasting breads and resources free of charge.)

This contribution is available at <http://ellengable.wordpress.com/2016/03/18/fasting-and-peace/>
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Easter Letdown or Easter Joy? [at Catholic Stand]

In our flawed human existence, we often experience a letdown after major holidays (holy days). The buildup leading to the event, in this case, Easter, has been fruit-filled and intense. We may have ramped up one, or all, of the three expressions of faith during the Lenten season – sacrifice, prayer, and almsgiving.

Perhaps, this year, we were even moderately successful in creating ourselves anew in anticipation of His rising. Even if we were less than successful, the awareness and anticipation insinuated their way into our lives.

Triduum

With the Triduum, our efforts intensified. Our God is a forgiving God, given to second and endless chances – right up until the moment of our death. Holy Thursday brought the delight of sharing, in our small way, in the elation and wonder of that first Holy Mass. Of the institution of priesthood and Eucharist. And the command to go out, mercifully, and serve others.

Then came the somber, exquisite pain of Good Friday. The empty tabernacle left us feeling desolate and mournful. An entrance and recessional of silence only emphasized that this day was like no other.

No Mass – how could that be? The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, readily available 364 days of the year, was taken from us. Yet, the nourishment of His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity sustained us still, having been reserved the night before.

Saturday, the anticipation became palatable. The Vigil Mass, the candle light (His Light) leading us toward hope as it brightened with each succeeding participant. Readings, telling and thorough, guided us toward the tomorrow of Easter joy. Yet still, we waited.

Easter Joy

The bells ringing, Gloria triumphantly singing, and Alleluias resounding on Easter morning all called us Home. The parish church, whether a cathedral or modest country chapel, was resplendent in festive flowers, white vestments, love-filled faces, and joyful hearts. The springing of hope was resounding and rose to the rafters. The long anticipated Resurrection had come. He has risen! He is alive!

As our Easter Joy spilled into the afternoon, family and friends gathered. An atmosphere of celebration was in the air. Souls, cleansed from confession and nourished by the Eucharist, exulted in an atmosphere of joy. Prayers and meals shared, we were reunited with coveted pleasures formerly sacrificed.

The Letdown

So why is there now a letdown? Our human experience leads us down this path because we are weak. Lent holds us accountable. It reminds us, day after penitent day, that there is something magnificent coming. Because we know it has an end, we feel a false sense of finality. This, too, shall end and we will once again take up our earthly pleasures.

Is this the righteous mindset? The tomb is empty but our resolve shouldn't be. The true test comes from maintaining what Lent has taught us. The cross is still a reality. Eucharist still brings us to the foot of that bloody sacrifice – at each and every celebration of Mass. Sin is still real, relevant.

Lent As a Stepping Stone

Flying without the net, the accountability of the Lenten season of penitence, almsgiving, and prayer leads us to temptation. Our earthly vessels need the reminder. Easter isn't over; it's a season, which gives us the opportunity to mold Lenten habits more firmly into lives. Our spiritual duty is to avoid falling back into old habits – to move forward and seek more.

Living Easter Joy

That extra reading, that prayer life more fully developed, and those small mortifications performed in the name of love need to be nurtured. Each year's Lent can be a stepping stone toward sainthood as we train for more spiritual endurance.

The Easter Octave is the perfect time to hone our spiritual skills. Taking advantage of the opportunity of turning Lenten sacrifice into holy habit will reap much fruit. In turn, our lives will joyfully march toward the holiness so vaunted by God Our Father and Jesus Our Brother. The Holy Spirit whispers encouragement if only we will heed it.

Living Easter Joy, while maintaining our Lenten growth is well worth the effort. Growing in faith is the only way to prevent the stagnation on the other side of the spiritual coin.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicstand.com/easter-letdown/>
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The Angry Mob [at Third Place Project]



Photo Credit: [Robert Couse-Baker – Flickr: angry mob, CC BY 2.0](#)

A number of years ago, I had the privilege of acting in an Easter production of the life of Christ entitled *Love According to John*. This musical featured a cast of hundreds of varying ages, experience, and acting, musical, and dancing skill. During the year I was a cast member, I played the lame man (which is probably appropriate, considering my sense of humor.)

One of my most vivid memories of being in this production was the sequence during which we portrayed the trial of Jesus. My character was a part of the mob – and it was (by design) absolute chaos.

We were disorganized and unruly. unsure of exactly why we were there. At the head of the mob were the Pharisees, religious leaders whose motives were questionable at best, but whose hatred of Christ was clear. They procured false witnesses to back up their case, and encouraged us to demand the release of Barrabas, who was more like the sort of Messiah that Israel had been hoping for. *[Most Israelites in the first century were expecting the Messiah to be a military leader in the spirit of King David. John 18:40 identifies Barrabas as a revolutionary – possibly a member of the [Zealots](#), a group of rebels who sought to bring about Israel’s liberation by force.]* The crowd seemed to revel in the chaos – and our chilling cries of “CRUCIFY HIM” had a *lot* more oomph than the congregational parts from Holy Week. I know some of the actors (particularly the Pharisees and Roman soldiers) had to pray before and after these scenes to shake off the venom they kept directing in Christ’s direction.

Pontius Pilate was left to sort it all out. Based on what is said and written of him in the Gospels, it’s no wonder we often have great sympathy for Pilate, even as [other historical records](#) refer to him as a harsh (and at times brutal) leader. Whether he was as sympathetic as the Gospels imply or as brutal as others have recorded isn’t the point: in either case, he is more concerned with maintaining power than he is with serving justice and the truth

In the center of it all was Christ – attacked, vilified, rejected, and eventually [condemned to die](#).

This year as we read through the passion on [Palm Sunday](#) and [Good Friday](#), I was left thinking to myself that things haven’t changed all that much. What was true for Christ was true for the early Church and is also true for us today. St. Paul wrote in the first century that **“We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed;**

as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything” (2 Corinthians 6:8-10).

We live in a world where our political leaders, like Pilate, seem to be more concerned with maintaining power than with doing what’s right. We live in a world where many of us, like the Pharisees, understand and present God according to our own ambitions, rather than letting Him change us. G.K. Chesterton once wrote that ***“Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried.”*** While this is still true in part – there are no shortage of Christians who abandon the faith, never having truly embraced it or given it a chance. There are also significant movements within Christianity which seek to neuter the truth, by presenting a Gospel of prosperity (follow Christ and everything is awesome) or simply as one path among many. We live in a world where social media has provided a new vehicle for the “mob” – where any individual with the right combination of wit and influence can use half truths to influence the views of others.

Once again, in the center of it all is Christ – often in the form of His mystical body (the Church) – still attacked, vilified, rejected, and [condemned to die](#). It would be easy to say that nothing’s changed, to embrace despair, and lament our place in the world... seated plainly in the cross-hairs of today’s “mob.” In doing so, we forget that Jesus told us to expect it to be this way: ***“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you”*** (John 18:18). But His warning was not simply words of gloom, they came with a promise:

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.” -Matthew 5:11-12

The events of Holy Week save us from the power of sin and death – and one cannot overstate how important that is. There is no thing -nothing at all- that the mob can threaten us with that has the power to deny us our promised heavenly reward. And Jesus’ willingness to accept all that the mob, its leaders, and Pontius Pilate had to throw at Him shows us that God will spare nothing – not even the life of His Son – to get us to that promise.

When Joshua inherited the leadership of Israel from Moses he was (understandably) a little nervous. He had seen the Israelites show great faith in God and in Moses after witnessing the incredible way in which they were liberated from Egypt. But he’d also seen just how quickly the people could turn on God and Moses, and become mob-like when things weren’t going their way. God’s words to Joshua at this moment are a good reminder to us as we might feel similarly overwhelmed by the mob: ***“Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go”*** (Joshua 1:9). Jesus has shown us that these words, like all of God’s promises, can absolutely be trusted.

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Joyful, Messy Meals [at joy of nine9]

Ever noticed how many times in the gospels Jesus is pictured eating? Of course, there is the Last Supper and the wedding at Cana and the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus not only ate with Levi the tax collector and his sinner friends but also meals at the homes of Pharisees (11:37-54 and 14:1-24), Zacchaeus (19:1-10) and Martha and Mary. Christ even ate after His resurrection appearance on the Emmaus Road (24:30) and dined on freshly caught fish with His disciples on the seashore.



I bet most of those celebrations were joyful but noisy and messy as people crowded in small rooms, often on the floor, eating food prepared without modern appliances, cookware, utensils, refrigeration or even concerns about hygiene. While Jesus was enjoying these meals with the poor, sinners and tax collectors, the uptight religious of His day were appalled.



Mealtime at our house was rather chaotic as well.

Listen as I struggled to gather my crew every night for a family meal.

“Oh good, you’re done barn chores. Perfect timing; dinner is almost ready.”

“Two more minutes, everybody!”

“Joseph I’ll help after we eat, okay?”

“Mary, please run up and open Jean’s door and shut off the music.”

‘Dinner is ready!’

“Grace, I know you love that book sweetheart but, remember, no reading at the dinner table.”

“Where’s Mark?”

“Honey, would you lift up Daniel into the high chair?”

“Are we all here? Anyone missing?”



Ah, dinner time in a large family.

Dinner was the highlight of the day with everyone clamoring to share their news or simply squeeze in comments into the cacophony of voices. It was a humorous symphony which sounded perfectly in tune to my ears. High pitched baby squeals combined with loud, boisterous little boys and the quavering of a male teen voice balanced teenage girl’s chatter. Dad’s reassuring bass tones soothed my shrill calls for everyone to listen to the toddler’s newest word. The highlight of this often unruly symphony was the spontaneous laughter punctuating the entire meal.

Life around the dinner table was relaxed and happy because I allowed my children to behave in age appropriate ways. I did not demand adult perfection. The consequences of this decision were messy but well worth the time it took to mop up after meal time. It meant I did not shovel neat, tidy mouthfuls of food into a toddler because we let little people feed themselves as soon as they reached for the spoon. It meant including three-year-olds in meal prep, sending five and six-year-olds running out to the garden for vegetables and allowing a ten-year-old to make the dessert. In other words, we valued participation over a neat and tidy kitchen and orderly meal times.

Now I am reaping the rewards of decisions which sent some visitors into sputtering, spirals of incredulity

as they eyed my kitchen and the messy faces of my little people after a meal. I feel vindicated when I look at my grown-up kids; they all love to cook and entertain, especially for each other. Just drop by for a quick hello and inevitably they will cajole you to stay for a delicious meal.

It is a simple fact- there is no better way to form deep relationships than conversation over a home-cooked meal. In fact, there is no better way to encourage the development of a warm supportive family than with great food and relaxed conversation around the dinner table.

God delights more in joyful chaos than in miserable, tight perfection.

connecting with [theology is a verb](#)



This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanuneau.wordpress.com/2016/03/23/worth-revisiting-joyful-messy-meals/>

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The poor, ointment, and diamond rings [at walk the way]

There should be no poor among you.

Deuteronomy 15:4

Today's reading about the anointing of Jesus by Mary in Bethany (John 12: 1-6) has been twisted so much that we may find it hard to see Jesus in it.

Mary shows her great love by an extravagant gesture – anointing the feet of Jesus with aromatic nard. It is a gesture of love a gesture of giving to the Beloved.

Judas objects that the oil could have been sold and the returns given to the poor.

Jesus responds that “the poor you have always with you...”

A good Jew would know that this quote from Deuteronomy 15:11 is part of a longer passage which entails obligations to the poor. In fact, the full quote of verse 11 (from the *New American Bible* translation) reads:

The needy will never be lacking in the land, that is why I command you to open your hand to your poor and needy kinsman in your country.

The verse could be considered a condemnation of the failure of a nation to care for the poor. It is not a call to resignation in the face of the needy.

As I reflect this morning on poverty and extravagance, I recall the story of Dorothy Day that is related by Jim Forest, in an [article](#).

A donor visited the Catholic Worker and gave Dorothy a diamond ring. Later a woman who was a regular visitor to the Worker came in and Dorothy gave her the ring.

As Forest notes:

Someone on the staff said to Dorothy, “Wouldn't it have been better if we took the ring to the diamond exchange, sold it, and paid that woman's rent for a year?”

Dorothy replied that the woman had her dignity and could do what she liked with the ring. She could sell it for rent money or take a trip to the Bahamas. Or she could enjoy wearing a diamond ring on her hand like the woman who gave it away. “Do you suppose,” Dorothy asked, “that God created diamonds only for the rich?”

I wonder if what Jesus wants us to do is to anoint the feet of the poor with anointment. Their feet are worn and cracked as are the feet of this man who carried a cross in our parish Stations of the Cross last Friday.



How can we be extravagant in our love for each poor person – not for a nameless mass of poor people, but for a real poor person we can meet, embrace, and share love with each other?

This contribution is available at <http://walktheway.wordpress.com/2016/03/21/the-poor-ointment-and-diamond-rings/>
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Still Seeing Mary Everywhere I Look [at String of Pearls]

One of the things I love about being in Germany is that religious imagery--specifically *Catholic*

imagery--is everywhere you look. Just walking down a random city street filled with shops and restaurants and bakeries, you're bound to see more lovely Catholic statues and paintings than you'd find in most parish churches back home.

Nowadays in our country, it seems like a loud minority of anti-religious protestors has succeeded in having religious imagery removed from the public square altogether, because it so "offends" them. (Apparently, seeing a Nativity Scene set up at Christmastime is the most vile offense some non-Christians can imagine!) I don't know if the German population is more religious in general, or just more tolerant; but it definitely looks like no one is clamoring to have these beautiful Catholic images torn down, painted over, or removed.

Earlier in the month, I blogged about how I was seeing images of Mary everywhere I looked ([here's that post](#)

if you missed it); but I'd only been here a little over a week by that point, and let me tell you, I didn't know the half of it! Since then, I have spied many more images of Her, usually holding Her Infant Son, both here in my son's city and on a recent day trip to Bamberg.

One of my favorite images of those I'm about to show you is the last one of the Holy Family, painted on an archway over a little alley that leads to some bistros and shops. I added a close-up, because I think the detail is exquisite.

Okay then, I think it's time to let the pictures do the talking for me. (And keep in mind that none of these buildings adorned with beautiful images of Our Lady are churches or chapels--they're just businesses and private homes!)











Constantly seeing all of these images of the Blessed Mother, and feeling like She is so close to me, wrapping me safely in Her mantle and protecting me from all harm, is one of the best things about being in Germany--and one of the things I'll miss the most when I get back home.

This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2016/03/still-seeing-mary-everywhere-i-look.html>
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I Am I Am [at Smaller Manhattans]



Like my car, it's old; but nowhere near needing replacing.

In 6th grade Catechism class, we go through the Bible chronologically, Genesis to Revelation. In the first four months, the kids learn all sorts of Old Testament stuff that will connect to what's covered in the last four months. What sort of stuff? Stuff such as this bit of Exodus 3:

“I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses said unto God, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?” And God said unto Moses, “I AM That I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

We talk about how God's title, YHWH, is related to the Hebrew word for 'I AM,' and says something important about God's existence in the Eternal Present. As the Glory Be puts it, “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.”

Then a few months go by. We leave the O.T., and eventually Jesus becomes an adult, and drives the Pharisees and scribes so crazy they want to kill him. Here's a good example from John 8. Jesus' critics ask:

“Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?...Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” Jesus said unto them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.” Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

I ask the kids why people would want to stone Jesus to death. They make a few guesses. I write “I AM” on the board. “Where have y'all seen that before?” Little brains percolate; then, “That's what God told Moses his name was! Yes, genius! Somebody tell me about it! It was when Moses saw the Burning Bush! Yes! So why do folks want to kill Jesus when he says “Before Abraham was, I AM?” More percolation, and boom, “Because he's saying he's God? Yes, that's it! Nobody thinks a human being can be God, and to suggest that you are God will offend many people. It's a serious sin aimed right at God Himself, what we call blasphemy. Jews would stone such a person to death.”

In that first case I have to help them a bit with the I AM business. Then last Wednesday, Jesus was arrested:

The high priest asked him, and said unto him, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I AM: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, "What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?" And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

This time all I said was: Tell me about it. And within two seconds, a child responds, *"He said I AM again like he's God. And is Jesus God? Yes, but they didn't believe him. Yes- what doesn't the high priest have? Faith. Yes, good. Of course faith is a great gift; but nobody has to accept it."*

In Catechism class, if I let the Bible be the Bible, it can teach the kids about Jesus almost by itself.

This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2016/03/i-am-i-am.html>
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We are Easter People [at Making It In Vermont]

We have just arrived home from our Easter celebration in Massachusetts with my family. The boys are all neatly tucked into bed and Kevin is out harvesting sap from our maple trees as our buckets are overflowing from two days of sap runs in our absence.

Lent ended last week. It is that time of preparation for our hearts where we either give up the things that are keeping us from getting closer to God or we take on things that will help us grow closer to him. I chose to get out for a walk each day and be kinder to my husband. The first gave me precious time for my soul so I could be more successful with the 2nd. I hope to continue with both far beyond Lent.

You could feel the tensions build in the readings this Holy Week. There was Palm Sunday when Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as a king (shortly after raising Lazarus a good friend of his from the dead), to the lead up to Holy Thursday where Jesus celebrates the Last Supper with his apostles which ends with one of them turning him over to the authorities. Then his apostles all flee in fear as Jesus is tortured and humiliated, and on Good Friday Jesus is horrifically crucified on a cross.

Holy Saturday is spent in stunned silence as his followers hide in fear and mourn the death of their hope, and then today... some of his followers go to his tomb to pray and find it empty. What has happened? Where did he go? Was he stolen? Those questions are not immediately answered, not until later in the day and then over the next 40 days as Jesus appears to his followers over and over again and the truth is unmistakable. He Is Risen.



Paper mache' and grass recreation of Jesus' tomb the boys and I put together this past week. We tried to improve upon our [previous tomb](#) and make it more travelable.

How often are we in stunned silence in the moment? Disoriented, fearful? Just like the apostles on Good Friday and Holy Saturday. They couldn't make sense of what was going on. He was supposed to be their king, to lead them to freedom.

I see a lot of myself in the apostles. I often say in my heart “Jesus I give you all of me, do with me what you want.” and I mean it when I say it, but then things get tough and I am disoriented in my heart and end up saying to him “Oh, no you didn’t mean THAT though did you? That is too hard!”.

How could Jesus’ brutal humiliation on the cross or my –fill in the blank with any thing I don’t want to do– be part of the PLAN???

It’s not supposed to be easy, this life. If it doesn’t make us cringe a little, if we aren’t giving up something, then we cannot be transformed. Jesus knew this so well. He gave us his all to free us from the parts of ourselves that we tend to cling to, the parts he sees keeping us back.

Jesus sees how very beautiful we are. He can look beyond all our little and big sins to our potential. The potential each and every one of us has. He’s got a plan that he revises each moment of our lives. We can help him complete it if we decide to look to him and listen. To listen even when it means carrying his cross for a mile or two or three...



Pouring sap into holding containers.

...We thought this sugaring season was a bust a few weeks ago. With no snow on the ground to keep our perishable sap from spoiling we have to boil each run of sap as it comes in. That was ok when we were thinking it was a short season and the warm weather would make the buds on the trees open and it would be over soon as the sap wouldn’t be good for sugaring anymore. Then you just pull the taps out of the trees, wash out and put away the containers, lines, and pans.

Well that hasn’t been the story. So far we’ve made 7 gallons of syrup from about 280 gallons of sap. It has been our biggest yield since we’ve been sugaring. That has meant some long nights in the sugar shack, a whole lot of persistence, and even a little faith.

Sugaring seasons on average are about 4 weeks long and by the end we are often tired and yes we have been known to waste some sap instead of boil it at the end because we just felt spent.

So far we are keeping on keeping on. We’ll see how the season turns out and if we boil every last drop of

sap (you know we'll kick ourselves in the summer if we don't do it now when the getting is good).

I know making maple syrup for 4 weeks is hardly a great cross to carry, but it is where our family is at right in this very moment, THIS Easter.



Steam rising out of our sugar shack.

Leaning into the collecting, the boiling, the feeding the fire, the waiting, all while carrying on with all the other aspects of our busy lives... Four weeks of persistence rewarded with gallons and gallons of sweetness.

Who doesn't want gallons and gallons of sweetness?

We are ALL Easter people, we are made truly alive by the challenges we face. I don't know about you, but I want to see what plan Jesus has for me and the goodness that I can't even comprehend. Oh God give me faith and persistence and yes, gallons and gallons of sweetness!!

Happy Easter Everyone!!

HE IS RISEN, Alleluia, Alleluia!!

Love,

~Lisa

This contribution is available at <http://www.makingitinvermont.com/2016/03/we-are-easter-people/>
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Our Living Stations of the Cross [at Campfires and Cleats]

*“The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,
and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name.”*

(Luke 24:46-47)

Our parish's Good Friday Stations of the Cross.....:
Wow.

The youth of the parish present the living stations and every year it is
truly remarkable.

SO so powerful to bear witness to kids ringing to life the Lord's passion.

So moving. So real.

This year, my son was given the honor of portraying Jesus ...

and.....was he ever thrilled and humbled.

I honestly was moved to tears thinking about how truly

deserving this boy is to be granted such a privilege.

And while I sat with the rest of the family and our friends and parish

community, I was again moved to tears a few times

during the fourteen stations.

Between the 12th and 13th station,

our church bells tolled, the actors were still.....

I was moved and it was clear so, too, every person

in the congregation was touched.

How could we not be?

Here's a glimpse of each station

(With whatever picture or video is was able to obtain!)

The kids presented a tableau of each along with narration and a reflection.

I'm so happy to share with you the memory, the appreciation and the honor.....



1. Jesus Is Condemned to Death

Pontius Pilate condemns Jesus to death.



2. Jesus Takes Up His Cross.

Jesus willingly accepts and patiently bears his cross.



3. Jesus Falls the First Time.

Weakened by torments and by loss of blood, Jesus falls beneath his cross.



4. Jesus Meets His Sorrowful Mother.

Jesus meets his mother, Mary, who is filled with grief.



5. Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross.

Soldiers force Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross.



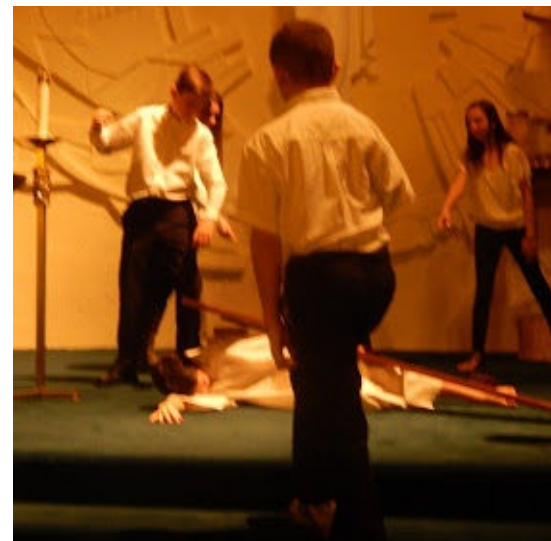
6. Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.

Veronica steps through the crowd to wipe the face of Jesus.



7. Jesus Falls a Second Time.

Jesus falls beneath the weight of the cross a second time.



8. Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.

Jesus tells the women to weep not for him but for themselves and for their children.



9. Jesus Falls the Third Time.

Weakened almost to the point of death, Jesus falls a third time.





10. Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments.

The soldiers strip Jesus of his garments, treating him as a common criminal.



11. Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross.

Jesus' hands and feet are nailed to the cross.

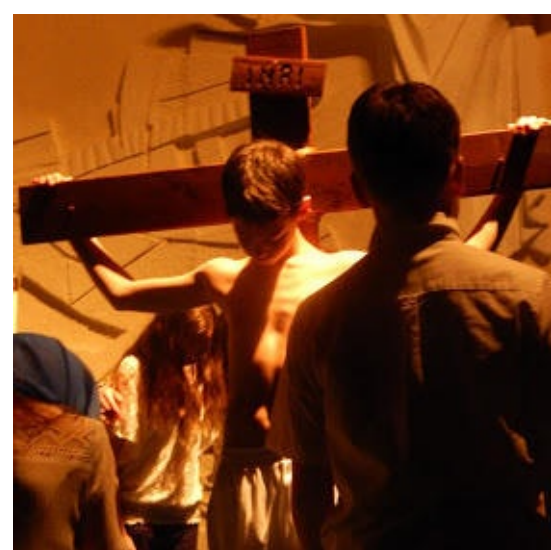




12. **Jesus Dies on the Cross.**

After suffering greatly on the cross, Jesus bows his head and dies.





13. Jesus Is Taken Down From the Cross.

The lifeless body of Jesus is tenderly placed in the arms of Mary, his mother.



14. Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb.



Do not abandon yourselves to despair.

We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song.

Pope John Paul II

thank you for stopping over and
spending some of your precious time
here at my home on the web!

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

If not, just enter your email address here

so we can be in touch regularly!

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2016/03/our-living-stations-of-cross-good.html>
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Catholic Social Teaching and Conventional Economics [at Practical Distributism]



by

[Thomas Storck](#)

Anyone who has spent much time trying to promote Catholic social teaching has probably met with a response something like this. "What you say is very fine and certainly evidence of good will. But, you see, most of what you are asking for is simply impossible. Society would break down. For there are economic laws which it is as foolish to try to circumvent as those of gravity. We certainly ought to try to eliminate poverty and all that. But this can only be done if we obey the laws of economics. If you study economics a bit, you'll soon see why you're barking up the wrong tree."

And it is easy to understand why economists or those who have studied economics say this. For mainstream economics does teach a simple yet powerful approach to all of the multifarious questions arising from man's relations of producing, buying and selling, lending and borrowing, and so on. Everyone wants to maximize his welfare, the desire to produce and sell can be matched against the desire to buy and consume since there are market forces which balance these two exactly, and even if they do not always result in what Christians would call justice, to interfere in their workings is to bring about (ultimately) inefficiency, waste and poverty.

According to this conception, then, economic activity works more or less according to a few simple principles, which can be applied over and over again with great sophistication to analyze a wide variety of behavior. And to try to escape from the inexorable working of these economic principles is to court disaster. For example, one might think that some workers are underpaid, and that this problem could be easily solved by passing a law requiring that all workers be paid a minimum wage. But, no, that would result only in more unemployment. It may be a shame that some get paid so little, but there is nothing that can be directly done about it. Certainly passing minimum wage laws is the last thing we would want to do.

Economics, therefore, describes what will happen if you do a certain thing. It is a predictive science, able to tell you that if you do A, B will result. It is thus reduced to something like mechanics, a sort of mechanics of human behavior. This approach is well illustrated by Milton Friedman in his famous 1953

essay, "The Methodology of Positive Economics."

I venture the judgment, however, that currently in the Western world, and especially in the United States, differences about economic policy among disinterested citizens derive predominantly from different predictions about the economic consequences of taking action - differences that in principle can be eliminated by the progress of positive economics - rather than from fundamental differences in basic values.... An obvious and not unimportant example is minimum-wage legislation. Underneath the welter of arguments offered for and against such legislation there is an underlying consensus on the objective of achieving a "living wage" for all, to use the ambiguous phrase so common in such discussions. The difference of opinion is largely grounded on an implicit or explicit difference in predictions about the efficacy of this particular means in furthering the agreed-on end. Proponents believe (predict) that legal minimum wages diminish poverty by raising the wages of those receiving less than the minimum wage as well as of some receiving more than the minimum wage without any counterbalancing increase in the number of people entirely unemployed or employed less advantageously than they otherwise would be. Opponents believe (predict) that legal minimum wages increase poverty by increasing the number of people who are unemployed or employed less advantageously and that this more than offsets any favorable effect on the wages of those who remain employed.

According to this conception of economics, economists must chiefly engage in manipulating graphs, mathematical formulas and the like to predict the results of actions. Things either happen or they do not. Though it may be more difficult to discover what will happen because of the multiplicity of variables, in principle there is no more room for discussion than if it were a matter of asking what happens when we drop a ball of a certain height and weight or project something with a certain force against some obstacle.

Friedman's discussion of the minimum wage that I just cited is a good entry point to begin to unravel such economic dogmas. It is easy to understand the logic behind Friedman's argument. Like most arguments in the economic tradition descending from Adam Smith, the notion that "minimum wages increase poverty by increasing the number of people who are unemployed or employed less advantageously" by increasing employers' costs has an obvious plausibility. But yet one may question it on several grounds. Aside from the fact that there is little recognition here that in something as complicated as human affairs it is unlikely that one can pronounce once and for all about something such as the minimum wage, more importantly there is an assumption of a certain legal structure which is simply accepted as given. For whatever side of this question mainstream "positive economics" may eventually take, such a judgment presupposes a specific legal and social framework. The distribution of income and economic power that mainstream economics apparently accepts as a given depends more on human law and custom than on any immutable laws of economics. What I mean can be illustrated by the well-known story of the Antigonish cooperatives in Nova Scotia in the 1930s, as recounted in B. B. Fowler's 1947 book, *The Co-operative Challenge*.

But the most forlorn picture lay in northeastern Nova Scotia and the island of Cape Breton. Along the coast lived the fishermen. Their catch of fish and lobsters was handled by local dealers who in many cases kept the fishermen in a state of peonage. While Maine fishermen were getting about fifteen cents a pound for lobsters, the Nova Scotian fishermen were receiving as little as two cents a pound. All other prices were scaled down in the same ratio. For everything they bought, however, from their scanty food purchases to nets and lines, they paid top prices, with the result that they were invariably bowed down with a load of debts. Appalling poverty, illiteracy, poor health and the

worst possible housing conditions existed throughout this section.

After priests from St. Francis Xavier College had begun to educate the fishermen and others in the philosophy of cooperatives, a

few lobster fishermen got together and made up a crate of lobsters which they shipped express to a commission agent in Boston. When the mail brought a check the group sat around, afraid to open it. So much depended upon that check; upon its size rested their hopes for better prices and better living. Probably there had never been a more momentous moment in all their lives than that moment when one of the boys finally opened the envelope and took out the check. After all shipping charges and commissions had been paid, there remained fifteen cents a pound for their shipment.

The point of this story is that the distribution of income follows the distribution of economic power, which in turn depends in large part upon the legal and social structure. Doubtless one could have found economists who would have said that the penury of the fishermen while they were at the mercy of the middlemen of their province simply reflected the inevitable laws of economics and that the price they received for their lobsters faithfully reflected the economic contribution they made and therefore the two cents per pound was simply the equilibrium toward which they were forced as if "by an invisible hand." But this obviously was not the case. Rather, it faithfully reflected certain economic and legal arrangements and structures, which, as it turns out, could be changed.

This same argument can be made about the question of minimum wages. As long as the employer/employee relationship, the essential note of capitalism,

[1]

is the common method by which labor is engaged, then the desire of employers to reduce costs can and probably sometimes will conflict with their ability to hire more workers at a statutory minimum wage. But this reflects not unchanging laws of economics drawn from the nature of reality or human society, but rather certain legal, social and cultural arrangements which are by no means immutable.

The unequal power of employer and employees, especially of unorganized employees, our societal ideals which deny that there is any just or reasonable amount of profits with which an employer or firm should be satisfied, our general incorporation and limited liability laws - all these create a situation where Friedman's dilemma, or rather the dilemma he sets up for society, has some plausibility. But how if some or all of these legal and cultural norms were changed? How if, as in the case of the Antigonish fishermen, the framework in which these economic transactions occur were changed? For example, how if employees themselves became owners, as so often recommended by the Popes?

[2]

These types of considerations should lead us to see that perhaps the framework that conventional economics presupposes is not the only possible framework. That is, with a different legal system, different cultural and societal norms, different personal goals and expectations, many of the so-called laws of economics would appear not as universal laws of human behavior, but as limited by place and time, as taking for granted certain institutions, incentives and motives which are far from being universal

principles of human society or action.

My thesis is that Catholic social principles will often seem at odds with economic facts as long as we accept mainstream neoclassical economics as descriptive of how the world actually operates. But as soon as we begin to question orthodox economics, then all this can be looked at in a new light. And there are in fact many reasons to suppose that orthodox economics is not descriptive of how the real world operates. Let us look at a few more examples.

The notion that economics can be based on market forces, such as a more or less constant tendency toward equilibrium, etc. seems to depend on the prior notion that people are motivated primarily by economic motives, that is, by the desire to buy cheap and sell dear, to increase their material wealth as much as possible. But it seems to me that history, as well as our own experience, tells us that reality is much more complex. Often people or firms do not strive to maximize their profits or income, as even such conventional economists as Laurence Miners and Kathryn Nantz, associates of the late Paul Samuelson in preparing introductory economics texts, admitted in their 2001 Study Guide to accompany Samuelson's textbook. Sometimes this is because it is too irksome to do so, other times because people prefer leisure to increased wealth and are content with simply a sufficiency. Sometimes habit and custom dictate a standard with which people are satisfied. They may shop in the same store even though it is more expensive because they are accustomed to do so. To say, as Samuelson might, that this is an example of imperfect competition because the two stores differ in some way, is to try to prove too much, because then everything becomes a matter of economics. Certainly people are always motivated by a desire for their happiness, but to say that this human striving for happiness is always an example of economic behavior and ought to be analyzed according to economic criteria, would be to make economics, rather than ethics, the architectonic science of human behavior.

One example of the way that habit often makes us satisfied with customary gain is mentioned by Max Weber in his classic work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Until about the middle of the past [i.e. nineteenth] century, the life of a putter-out was, at least in many of the branches of the Continental textile industry, what we should to-day consider very comfortable. We may imagine its routine somewhat as follows: The peasants came with their cloth, often...principally or entirely made from raw material which the peasant himself had produced, to the town in which the putter-out lived, and after a careful, often official, appraisal of the quality, received the customary price for it. The putter-out's customers, for markets any appreciable distance away, were middlemen, who also came to him, generally not yet following samples, but seeking traditional qualities, and bought from his warehouse, or, long before delivery, placed orders which were probably in turn passed on to the peasants. Personal canvassing of customers took place, if at all, only at long intervals. Otherwise correspondence sufficed, though the sending of samples slowly gained ground. The number of business hours was very moderate, perhaps five to six a day, sometimes considerably less; in the rush season, where there was one, more. Earnings were moderate; enough to lead a respectable life and in good times to put away a little. On the whole, relations among competitors were relatively good, with a large degree of agreement on the fundamentals of business. A long daily visit to the tavern, with often plenty to drink, and a congenial circle of friends, made life comfortable and leisurely.

It would seem that the constant desire to maximize income or output simply does not exist without a

cultural imperative to that effect.

Another area in which we may question the descriptive nature of conventional economics concerns the role of market forces in allocating income. The allocation of economic rewards does not always come about because of market forces, rather, whoever holds economic power generally receives more economic rewards, as in the conspicuous example of CEO compensation. The remarkable fact about CEO compensation in the United States in recent years is that certain CEOs have received large compensation packages even though the companies they headed were losing money or going into bankruptcy. Why then did they receive these salaries and benefits? Because of market forces? Hardly. It was because they were able to appoint their cronies to the compensation committees of their boards of directors. Their salaries and other compensation were almost entirely insulated from the market forces of supply and demand for executives. Let us look at a few specifics.

As described in The Washington Post, April 22, 2003, while Apple Computer's "shareholders' return declined by 34 percent" CEO Steve Jobs received \$78 million, and while Lucent's "shareholder return declined by more than 75 percent" Pat Russo received \$38 million (Carlson 2003:C1). Even more striking is the case of Disney's Michael Eisner. Eisner, "after he failed to clear his bonus hurdle two years running, his board lowered the performance bar, and then...he finally cleared it. An Olympian effort worth \$5 million"

An April 2003 article in Fortune magazine explained another method by which much CEO compensation is hidden from shareholders, the legal owners of the corporation. Delta Air Line's CEO, Lee Mullin, after the company lost \$1.3 billion and laid off thousands of workers, in response to criticism, grandly announced that he was going to give up 25% of his salary and other compensation. But what he did not mention was his pension plan.

You see, Mullin has been employed by the airline for only five years and eight months. But a special pension plan that Delta's board created for top executives has credited him...with another 22 years of service. Thanks to those phantom years, the 60-year-old CEO could walk away from the airline today and be entitled to receive a payout of about \$ 1 million a year, starting at age 65, for the rest of his life. And if the airline goes bankrupt, no problem: Special Delta-funded trusts protect the pensions of Mullin and 32 fellow executives from creditors.

(This by the way while Delta's workers' pensions were being cut.) This same article details many more examples of CEO's receiving exorbitant pensions while their companies went bankrupt, lost stockholder value or cut workers' pensions. And the article goes on to ask the reasonable question:

Both the example of Disney's Michael Eisner, whose board kindly made it easier for him to get (I will not say "earn") an extra \$5 million, and the fact that boards hide the details of CEO retirement so that shareholders will have trouble finding out about them, illustrate my point: Market forces are not the only or even the most powerful forces operating in the economy, and moreover market forces always work within a legal, socio-cultural and technological framework. It is a CEO's cronies on the compensation committee of the board of directors that determine his compensation, not impersonal market forces. If we changed the law so that CEO salaries were decided by a free vote of the stockholders, not many of them would get these huge salaries and retirement packages, especially when their companies were failing and stockholders were losing the value of their investments.

This principle of the importance of non-market factors is true throughout the economy. Without labor

unions workers received low pay and had poor working conditions and benefits. Unions helped them to achieve gains in all these areas. This was because it helped to give the workers power to offset that of their bosses, not because the law of supply and demand had been changed.

All of these instances of economic behavior presuppose certain norms, generally both cultural and legal. Without limited liability laws, for example, corporations could not exist, at least in their present form. Without patent, trademark and copyright laws, the provision of inventions and other kinds of intellectual property would doubtless be very different. Moreover, the kind and degree of taxation, technology, the physical infrastructure - all these affect to a great degree the workings of the economy.

Markets and market forces, then, are always embedded in social, legal and cultural systems. Economic forces, such as the equilibrium of supply and demand, are certainly real, but seldom if ever the most important forces operating in an economy. Thus the objection to Catholic social teaching based on the notion that it violates the assured findings of economic science is not valid. Rather, economic outcomes depend on power, cultural and legal institutions, and other factors. Since laws and institutions can be changed, there is in fact ample room in economics for a consideration of ethics. Thus those who seek to promote Catholic social doctrine should acquaint themselves with those economic schools, chiefly the German historical school and the institutionalists, whose conception of the economy recognizes that it does not operate like clockwork, but is chiefly determined by who holds economic power, which in turn is chiefly determined by law and custom. Clarence Ayres wrote with regard to institutionalism in a discussion in 1957 in *The American Economic Review*:

...the object of dissent is the conception of the market as the guiding mechanism of the economy or, more broadly, the conception of the economy as organized and guided by the market. It simply is not true that scarce resources are allocated among alternative uses by the market. The real determinant of whatever allocation occurs in any society is the organizational structure of that society - in short, its institutions. At most, the market only gives effect to prevailing institutions. By focusing attention on the market mechanism, economists have ignored the real allocational mechanism.

As soon as one considers this, its truth should be obvious: the human desire for happiness certainly very often includes the desire to maximize material gain and minimize loss, but this desire is channeled through existing customs and institutions, and to a great extent even shaped by them. So that a conception of "economic man" which isolates him and posits certain things about him which are then universalized, is erroneous.

Similar criticisms were made by the German historical school. As described in the well-known reference source, *The New Palgrave: a Dictionary of Economics*, this school of thought faulted the

classical school's deductive method...as being too abstract [and] puts the emphasis on the inductive method. Historians point out that economic development is unique, so there can be no 'natural laws' in economics.... Instead of searching for generally applicable laws, the historical school therefore tried to describe the particulars of each era, society and economy.

Since the human institutions within which economic activity occur undoubtedly vary widely over time and place, and to some extent, even the human desire for gain takes on different forms according to custom, it would seem rational to include such historical factors in economic analysis, and further, that any economic analysis that omits or downplays them is not dealing with the real world. Conventional neo-classical economics, however, largely does just that. If its defenders regard it as the only acceptable

scientific form of economics, we must point out to them that any economic science that strives more for mathematical precision and consistency than conformity with the real world has deeply misunderstood its task. Thus there is a simple way out of the intellectual trap that is set for Catholic social teaching. We do not have to abandon our intellectual rigor or scientific orientation. Rather we can retort that it is our critics who are unscientific. But above all we should begin to bring the insights of heterodox economics into the debates over social doctrine. Without them, the critics of Catholic social teaching will always claim that they alone understand economics. For to attempt to defend Catholic social teaching while explicitly or implicitly accepting conventional neo-classical economics is not only to allow one's adversaries to set the terms of the debate, but it is to adhere to an economic methodology which distorts facts and attempts to compress reality into a straitjacket.

Notes: [1]

This way of characterizing capitalism comes from the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). Pius speaks of "that economic system in which were provided by different people the capital and labor jointly needed for production" (no. 100, Paulist translation).

[2]

Those papal documents which recommend widespread property ownership include *Rerum Novarum*, nos. 4, 10, 26, 35; *Quadragesimo Anno*, nos. 59-62, 65; *Mater et Magistra*, nos. 85-89, 91-93, 111-115; *Laborem Exercens*, no. 14.

This contribution is available at <http://practicaldistributism.blogspot.com/2016/02/cst-and-conventional-economics.html>
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The Value of a Lost Soul



I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. Luke 15:7

“In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10

“But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.” Luke 15:32

As the female inmates entered the classroom, I couldn't help but notice that one of the inmates was pregnant, and from the looks of things, was close to her delivery date. As the service began, I had a feeling that we should offer prayer for her and her unborn baby.

When I asked if we could pray for her and her baby, her eyes began to tear up.

She said, “No one has ever asked me that before, no one has ever prayed for me.”

As we spoke softly, she told of how she was always told that she was worthless, that she was useless, and no one even cared if she were dead or alive. I could see that she wasn't suffering from LOW self-esteem, but NO self-esteem!

It reminded me of something a good friend once shared;

The value of a lost object doesn't lessen just because it is lost. A lost \$20 dollar bill is still worth \$20 dollars. Its maker determines its value, not its situation.

The same is true for a lost soul, it still has great value, because its Maker, God, establishes its value, and God doesn't make worthless or useless souls!

In Luke Chapter 15, Jesus shares three parables about lost things and their value. In all three, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, he ends each story with his concern for the lost and God's love for a

repentant sinner. Jesus values lost souls.

This poor girl has been beaten down for so long she doesn't realize that she has great value in God's eyes. Like the shepherd who left the ninety-nine to go after the lost one, we should all join in rejoicing that this lost sheep has been found.

I asked the other inmates and ministry team to lay hands on this inmate and pray for her and her baby. As we began to pray, several of the other inmates prayed aloud for her and for a healthy baby. They prayed that she would get her life together and become the person and mother she was meant to be.

She was in tears, but the good kind. She realized that she was loved and the concern for her and her baby was genuine. For the first time, someone said she was special, a loving person, and would be a great mother. She wasn't worthless or useless. People cared for her.

Most people have never witnessed inmates praying for another inmate, but I can tell you that these prayers are very powerful, offered through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth" 1 Timothy 2:1-4

These may be lost souls NOW, but they still have great value. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4, we learn that Jesus wills everyone to be saved, even those in prison.

Before we begin to judge others, please remember the story of the \$20 dollar bill. Its value is not diminished because it is lost. And when a lost soul is found, there will be much rejoicing in heaven.

If we judge less and love more, we can all be an instrument to make this happen. Jesus, make me an instrument of your peace!

*******Note: I am currently on hiatus until the first week of April. During this time, I am finishing a final edit on my new book and have redone TonyAgnesi.com in a new responsive design to make it easier to read on all devices.**

This is an updated post from August of 2013. While away from writing, I will be featuring some posts from the [archive](#) that you made not have ever had a chance to read. I'll have all new stories beginning in April. We will continue to have brand new Thursday Podcasts throughout the month of March.

Additionally, we switched mailing providers from Feedburner to Mailchimp, which present a much more robust look to our subscribers each week. See you in April!*****

To get Tony's latest posts delivered to your email every week, simply [Subscribe](#) by [clicking here](#).

Thank you for sharing my stories with your family and friends. Below are

[links](#)

to share on your social media sites. Your sharing my stories helps to get the word out.

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This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2016/03/the-value-of-a-lost-soul-2/>
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Cross or Crucifix? [at On the Road to Damascus]

Catholics are often criticized for our use of the crucifix (a cross with a corpus on it). Many non-Catholic Christians believe that a simple cross is a better representation of the Christian faith. Jesus has risen and is no longer on the cross so we shouldn't depict him still there by using a crucifix. But many of the same people who say this have no problem depicting baby Jesus in a manger in their nativity scenes. Why still show baby Jesus in the manger? He grew up you know.

Another argument against the bare cross is the fact that the cross came down at the same time Jesus did. The cross did not stand after his death. It was not up when he rose from the dead. A bare cross cannot possibly represent the risen Lord because it did not exist when he rose. It only existed before he was nailed to it. If you want to better represent a risen Christ wouldn't an empty tomb be a better visual?

Cross or crucifix? That question is very similar to Protestant or Catholic. It is a decision only you can make for yourself. All I will try to do here is to give witness as to what they mean to me.



When I look at a cross with modern day eyes I see the symbol most commonly used to represent Christianity in the world today. When I look at a cross through historical eyes I see one of the most horrendous torture devices ever created. The cross was designed to kill a person with great pain and suffering over the longest period of time possible in the most humiliating way possible. Every last bit of dignity was stripped from those crucified. Regardless of what the crucifix looks like, every person crucified was hung on the cross naked, including our Lord.

The cross was thought to do more than that. It was believed that anyone who died on a cross was cursed. They could not go to the god in the heavens as they did if they were burned. Likewise, they could not go to the god of the earth as they would have if they had been buried.

“If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.” - Deuteronomy 21, 22-23

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” – Galatians 3, 13

The cross cannot provide salvation. The cross is no more the sacrifice than the chalice used to hold the Sacred Blood is the sacrifice. An empty cross is nothing more than just that – empty. By itself it holds no value.

Now when I look at a crucifix I see something very, very different. When I look at a crucifix I see what true, sacrificial, agápe love looks like.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” – John 3, 16 – 17

If you want proof to this passage just look at a crucifix. There is nothing that happens in my life that a crucifix cannot help me with.

When I am suffering the physical pains my aging body provides I can look at a crucifix and be reminded as to what true suffering really is. My pains aren't so bad.

When I am feeling lonely I can look at a crucifix and be reminded what real loneliness looks like. I am not so alone.

When I am feeling like all of life is against me I can look at a crucifix and see what it truly means to be hated.

When I am not feeling loved I can look at a crucifix and be instantly reminded of how much I am loved.

This is something a bare cross simply cannot do. A bare cross states for the person who wears it, “I am Christian.” Add the corpus and a crucifix states for Jesus, “I am love.” The first is a statement about who I am, the second is a statement about who God is. There is no comparison.

One of the criticisms of the movie *The Passion of the Christ* was that the torture of Jesus in the movie was too brutally depicted. It is heart wrenching to watch. For many, including myself, it was the first time we connected the reality of Christ's sacrifice to our understanding of that reality. I can never look at a crucifix the same way ever again. It is also the reason why a bare cross doesn't move me as it once did. A bare cross is to Christianity what a porterhouse steak is to the modern consumer. Both are great as long as we don't have to see the reality of where they came. As a hunter I have a deeper appreciation of meat because I know firsthand where it comes from. As a Catholic I have a deeper love for the crucifix because I know the reality it represents.

Jesus is agape. A crucifix is the visible representation of that agape. A cross represents the Christian, the crucifix represents Christ.



My heart is full because the tomb was empty.

This contribution is available at <http://damascusroadsojourner.blogspot.com/2016/03/cross-or-crucifix.html>
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Today, Holy Thursday, is the day that the New Covenant came into being.

Luke 22:19-20 (KJV) – And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

The Old Covenant came to an end. The [sabbath, the sign of the Old Covenant](#), likewise came to an end. [Christians don't observe the sabbath any more.](#)

The [Eucharist](#), the sign of the New Covenant, was instituted today.



The Sacrificial Lamb – Josefa de Ayala, ca 1670

Tomorrow, Good Friday, Jesus, the sacrifice ratifying the New Covenant, was slain with the Passover Lambs.



Crucifixion, from Polittico di Valle Romita

On Holy Saturday, the last sabbath, Jesus is in the tomb.

On Easter Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead, bringing with him the promises of the New Covenant. Jesus was the first-fruits, rising with the Old Covenant type.



Icon of the Resurrection

The old creation was made new – the new creation. 2 Cor 5:17, Eph 4:24, Col 3:9

The freedom from slavery in Egypt became our freedom from slavery to sin. Rom 6:18, Gal 5:1

The weekly sabbath rest became a permanent rest from our labours in Christ. Matt 11:28, Heb 4



Catholics: We celebrate
Jesus' resurrection
from the dead!

Adventists: No, don't do that!



Satan: No, don't do that!



Discussion with Adventists



Catholics: We celebrate that we are part of the New Creation in Christ, brought to life by his resurrection!

Adventists: Don't do that! Remember instead the old creation that turned to sin!



Satan: Hahahahaha!



Discussion with Adventists

Catholics: We celebrate Jesus rising from the dead and freeing us from slavery to sin!



Adventists: Don't do that! Celebrate the exodus from slavery in Egypt!



Satan: Hahahahaha!

Discussion with Adventists

Further reading:

[On Holy Thursday, We Remember Jesus' Gift of Himself in the Eucharist](#) – by Kathy Schiffer, National Catholic Register

This contribution is available at <http://blog.theotokos.co.za/>
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RIP, Mother Angelica [at Convert Journal]



Easter Sunday, late afternoon, God called Mother Mary Angelica of the Annunciation home. We lost a truly amazing woman on this side of eternity, but her work will live on for a very long time.

Mother Angelica was, of course, the foundress of EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network) and a whole lot more. Her calling was evangelization of the beauty and truth of the Catholic faith... simply the truth of Christ. When modernism reared its ugly head to reinterpret that truth, she refused to remain silent. This got her in serious trouble with powerful bishops. Suffice to say, she was right and they were wrong. The Body of Christ has been strengthened through Mother's steadfast faith and determination.

Mother Angelica was unique, but her life and work bring to mind several other people.

First, for the impact of God's work through her in modern times, I would not hesitate to compare Mother Angelica to Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Their charisms were very different, but their holiness, struggles, faith and impact are immeasurable.

Second, her work in television and her own *Mother Angelica Live* show draw obvious comparisons to the extraordinary work of Venerable Fulton Sheen. Both were incredible evangelists, creating powerful ministries from nothing, true servants of the Lord. Bishop Sheen too suffered through famous conflicts with powerful hierarchy, particularly Cardinal Francis Spellman. Similarly, (now disgraced and removed from all public duties) Cardinal Roger Mahoney viciously fought Mother Angelica.

Third, moving back in history a little (14th century) there is St. Catherine of Siena who effectively chided 2 popes (Pope Gregory XI and Pope Urban VI) when necessary. It takes bravery to step outside your comfort zone, challenge rightful authority when they err, at the risk of serious consequences. The Holy Spirit worked abundantly through St. Catherine and worked similarly through Mother Angelica.

Much has been written about Mother and her life. I recommend Raymond Arroyo's [Mother Angelica: The Remarkable Story of a Nun, Her Nerve, and a Network of Miracles](#). For some quick, online pieces see:

In your charity, please remember to pray for her soul.

Finally, my wife and I were fortunate to visit both EWTN and the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception last month. Below are some of my pictures.

This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2016/03/rip-mother-angelica/>
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Thank you, Indiana!



Today, Indiana Governor Mike Pence signed into law a provision making it illegal to abort a child due to fetal anomalies (as well as race or sex), such as Down's Syndrome. Indiana is only the 2nd state to do so, North Dakota being the other one. I am so excited to see this! And yet I am saddened. I looked at the AP Twitter page, and saw a long stream of complaints about these "helpless children" and the ones who will "freaking die" and have "excruciating lives."

Hello, people! It's 2016. People with disabilities are your neighbors, your friends, your teachers, your authors. Disabilities are as varied as the people who live with them. Some are more severe. Some, like mine, are progressive. Many people do need assistance daily, but why does that make them less worthy of birth?

It doesn't.

The all-too-common narrative has been that evidence of a fetal anomaly is an acceptable reason for abortion. It is pushed on many women after prenatal testing and, some argue, is the reason behind many of those tests in the first place. As a person with a disability I find it repugnant and insulting beyond words to suggest that the "compassionate" answer is to tear a child apart with forceps and the intense force of suctioning. I refuse to cater to the "better before she is born" nonsense that denies the beauty of every life in spite of whatever suffering might happen. Yes, suffering will happen. But you don't have to have a disability to experience suffering. My own life has been filled with emotional struggles, physical pain and bullying. My life has also been filled with love, laughter, joy, fulfillment, and a peace that passes all understanding. I am not a mistake. My Dejerine-Sottas is not a mistake.

The children this new law is designed to save are not mistakes, either. We must stop the rhetoric that children must be healthy in order to be happy. We must stop the selfishness that promotes killing off the needy so we as a society don't have to be "burdened" with caring for them. We must stop the foolishness that denies the redemptive meaning of suffering, and the graces from serving those who suffer daily.

Of course, there are also the science deniers tweeting away that these fetuses "aren't children." Well, they aren't kumquats or bunny rabbits. Human egg + Human sperm = Human Being. A fetus is just a young human being, created in the image of God. Time to protect them all. Black or white. Rich or poor. Disabled or healthy. Planned or unplanned.

So, thank you Governor Mike Pence and the Indiana legislators who recognize the dignity of all these children.

This contribution is available at <http://gabrielsmom.com/2016/03/thank-you-indiana/>
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Ruach [at With Us Still]

He's called an "offender" in the common parlance of the prison administration, but I encountered Ted as more of a "teacher" yesterday.

That's not at all unusual, I've discovered. Just about every time I go inside the walls at Menard – whether for a [Kairos Weekend](#) or for a [monthly reunion](#) – I pick up a wealth of spiritual insights. Saturday was no different, although Ted's story didn't seem all that promising at the start.

When he stood up to talk during our "open mic" time, he said he felt compelled to tell us about the odd dream he'd had lately. That's almost always a conversation stopper, isn't it? And when you hear those words coming from the lips of an inmate—well, frankly, your first thought runs pretty much along the lines of: "Uh-oh."



Ted surprised me, though, as he recounted the dream-scene he recalled—of traveling, rapidly, along a path in an unfamiliar place...until he got to a spot where the path simply was no more. He felt a sense of panic set in, he said. *'Where do I go? How do I go? I did not know what to do...until the Lord put it on my heart to turn back into the wind – the ruach.'*

He actually used [that Hebrew word](#) – *ruach* – which refers to the powerful, creative spirit of God. And let me tell you, when I heard the holy word escape his lips, I was riveted.

'Turn into the wind – the ruach – and the Spirit will take you,' he said. *'The Spirit desires to take us to impossible destinations...to places where there is no path...to places we could never get to on our own.'*

Is your mind bent yet? Mine certainly was, particularly as I recalled the story I knew we'd [hear in today's Gospel](#):

Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle.

Nowhere to run to, nowhere to hide – if ever a person in the gospels must have felt exactly what Ted felt in his dream, it's *this* gal. She's about to be stoned...put to death...for her sins. Until Jesus breathes his Spirit – *ruach* – over the scene.

Then, the masterstroke. Jesus utters less than 20 words, and suddenly everything is changed:

[Jesus] straightened up and said to them, ‘Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’

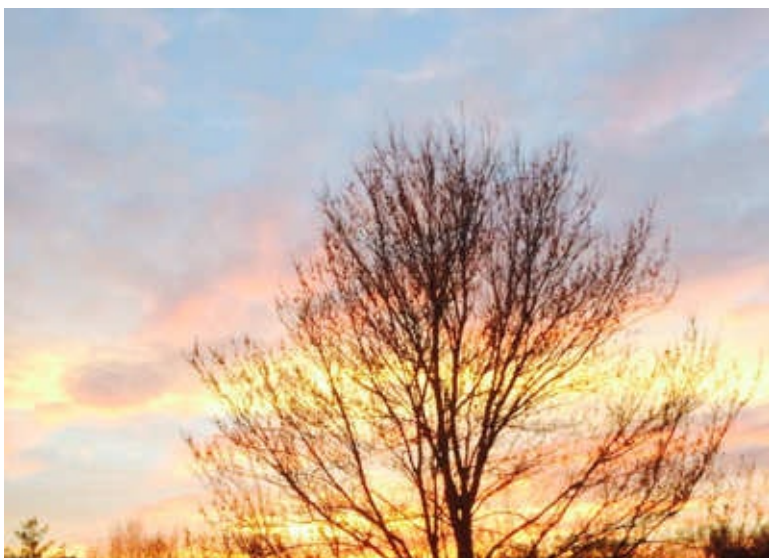
Improbably, a path opens up for the condemned woman...as one by one, her accusers drift away. It seems almost too good to be true, this Good News that Jesus offers us. It seems like a dream – and yet, it’s real.



Sometimes, the best lessons about freedom come from within these walls...

I heard that wisdom confirmed again yesterday, in the strangest of places – inside a maximum security prison. Ted’s insight worth meditating upon, it seems to me, as we head into the home stretch of our journey of renewal this Lent:

‘Look not for your own path,’ Ted said. ‘Turn instead into the wind.’ *Ruach*.



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

IHS

Certain matters of sex and the believing deacon [at Catholic Deacon]

Over the past few weeks I have been having what I think is a very fruitful dialogue with an old friend, a Christian brother who I love very much. We have been discussing Church teaching on the matter of homosexuality. While I believe and seek to personally adhere to what the Church teaches on matters of sexuality, I don't presume for one moment to have it all figured out.

The immediate cause of our exchange was a homily he heard at Mass in which the preacher, in an apparently very forceful manner, was heard not only to condemn homosexuality, but homosexuals. For a variety of reasons, not least among which his son, a baptized Catholic, identifies as homosexual, this gave my friend pause. I have no intention of re-hashing our whole correspondence, but our discussion took an interesting turn as the result of my post earlier this week on Camus. Reading that prompted him to read Camus' "The Unbeliever and Christians." He was struck by Camus' insistence in this talk, given to a group of Dominican friars, that "the world of today needs Christians who remain Christians." I think this admission goes some distance to support the point that Camus knew there was more to Christian faith than he was often willing to admit, for whatever reasons.

In his lengthy newspaper correspondence with the recently deceased Umberto Eco, the late Cardinal Martini (their correspondence was published in book form, entitled in English

[*Belief or Non-Belief: A Confrontation*](#)

), specifically writing about why the Church does not ordain women, said- "The Church does not fulfill expectations, it celebrates mysteries."

When it comes to sexuality, it seems to me the mystery involved is well-summarized in verses

[31-32](#)

of the fifth chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians, concerning the meaning of marriage. It begins by citing what I usually call the Bible's

ur

verse on marriage,

[Genesis 2:24](#)

: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." The next verse notes, "This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church" (

[Eph 5:32](#)

).



In the wake of finishing the second book of C.S. Lewis' Space Trilogy,

[Perelandra](#)

, last fall, I took a stab at addressing this matter:

["Metaphysical dialectics vs Sophiology."](#)

After finishing

[Perelandra](#)

, I went on to read Lewis' memoir

[Surprised by Joy](#)

. I was very much struck by what he wrote at the very beginning of the book's seventh chapter about the schoolboy homosexuality at the boarding school, Wyvern, he attended in his teens:

Here's a fellow, you say, who used to come before us as a moral and religious writer, and now, if you please, he's written a whole chapter describing his old school as a very furnace of impure loves without one word on the heinousness of the sin [homosexuality]. But there are two reasons. One you shall hear before this chapter ends. The other is that, as I have said, the sin in question is one of the two (gambling is the other) which I have never been tempted to commit. I will not indulge in futile philippics against enemies I never met in battle.

("This means, then, that all the other vices you have so largely written about..." Well, yes, it does, and more's the pity; but it's nothing to our purpose at the moment.)"

I found much for personal application in this passage. In the same chapter, Lewis went to observe: "There is much hypocrisy on this theme [of homosexual relations]. People commonly talk as if every other evil were more tolerable than this. But why? Because those of us who do not share the vice feel for it a certain nausea, as we do, say, for necrophily? I think that of very little relevance to moral judgment."

At least for me, it's not necessary either to figure everything out all at once or figure anything out once and

for all. By "figure out" I am referring to the

why

of things, not the

what

, which is pretty straightforward and easy to grasp. I've found it's good for me to re-visit matters and be open to the Lord's leading. Being open does not include expecting God to contradict himself, especially given how central marriage is to the divine plan; the Bible, after all, practically begins with a marriage and certainly ends with the wedding feast of the Lamb.

I suppose the question that I find relevant is a variation on Msgr. Giussani's all-encompassing "Is it possible to live this way?" - "How do I live the truth in love?" I've found a compelling and provocative answer in

[Micah 6:8](#)

, which tells me what the L

ORD

requires of me: "Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God." Especially as a deacon, it's not my place to judge others, but it is my God-given duty to lovingly serve them

in persona Christi servi

. The only person I am in a position to judge is myself and I do so each and every time I go to confession. This reminds me how much I persistently have to be humble about.

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2016/03/certain-matters-of-sex-and-believing.html>
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When a loved one leaves the Church [at Catholic Review]

The other day a friend mentioned that her mother has decided to leave the Catholic Church to become an Episcopalian. We talked about how hard it is (not theologically, but personally) when someone you love decides to leave the Church for another faith—or none at all.

As we were talking, I realized a friend who is a Jesuit priest was standing with us, listening. I wondered what he would say.

When he spoke, he shared his own story of a friend, a former student, who had surprised him when he decided to leave the Catholic Church to become Greek Orthodox.

You have to respect where people are in their individual faith journeys, our Jesuit friend said. But we can also acknowledge that especially when the person leaving the Church is a family member, it can leave us with a sense of loss. After all, he said, you lose that shared experience, that connection, that part of your past that you shared with that person. And that is a significant change—and a difficult one.

I hadn't really considered it in that way. It struck me that when people I love have decided to leave the Catholic Church, I have felt confused and a bit shaken. Initially I even argued with them about theology. But faith is not a matter of human persuasion. And I truly can't see into people's hearts and know what they believe or what they are seeking.

As it turns out, even as members of different churches, it isn't as if we can't still talk about our different faith journeys because we can and we do. We love and support one another, of course. We celebrate our children's milestones on their faith journeys, even though we are in different churches.

But although we may have begun at the same starting point, we are on different paths today. And especially because our faith was so much a part of our connection, that change can be difficult to accept.

Maybe this would be obvious to most people, but it wasn't to me—and I liked that my Jesuit friend acknowledged that that was normal, and even expected.

So I pray for my friends and family who are on their own faith journeys and hope they pray for me on mine.

Have you had a loved one leave the Catholic Church? How did you deal with it?

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2016/03/08/when-a-loved-one-leaves-the-church>

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Mother Angelica [at Quiet Consecration]

Mother Angelica passed away on Easter Sunday passed, at the age of 92. A lifetime of pain, sorrow, suffering and great accomplishment is finished here on earth. A lifetime of immense power, strength and great deeds now begins.

Catholic Answers Live has devoted time to mourning her in what I think is a really appropriate and cool way. The show has solicited "Mother Stories" from their Listeners and everyone who has called in has done so with such joy and appreciation for all this little nun did in their lives.

I did not call in - I was driving and the host is always very good about telling people that calling on a Bluetooth does not make for a good connection. However, I have a Mother Story myself and I want to share it.

In the year 2000 I was 8 years sober and had just embarked on my last attempt at having my life be MY way. I had gotten myself into a horrible relationship with a man who turned out to be a con artist and a fake Vietnam vet. It broke my heart and I came close to drinking. I didn't - pure anger kept me sober - but one of the things I realized was that I needed to be real about my commitment to The Church. I had not been up to that time; rather, I had been willing to throw away my soul in order to have a boyfriend and assuage my loneliness.

That same year I bought a little Scottish Terrier puppy. He was my second Scottie and I named him Shaw's Roddy MacDuff. Roddy was a special dog. He bonded with me immediately in a way no other dog had before and our relationship really helped me heal from the heartache my own stupidity had caused me. We attended obedience classes together, just so he would learn the basics, and it turned out he had 'the chip' - the talent for performing. We began to compete and for a brief few years I participated in the fabulous world of Canine Obedience Competition.

People would make fun of us when we showed up at meets. See, Scotties are not known for Obedience Competition and they would say funny things like, "Nice to meet you. Where's the dog you are going to compete?". I would point at Roddy and shrug. "We are just here to have some fun", I would say, and then we would go into the ring and kick Golden Retriever BUTT.

Roddy won the San Joaquin Kennel Show and we met Julia Priest, dog trainer extraordinaire, who invited me to learn with her how to prepare him for Utility Dog competition. For those who are unaware, that is like a dog getting a PhD in Obedience Training. We went up for a few lessons, I bought the gear and we started training. Roddy was 5 years old.

I had healed. I was back in the arms of Holy Mother Church. I was a Catechist. I was sober. I was

starting to discern my vocation as a Dominican. Life was solid and good.

One day I went to say good bye to Roddy and noticed his throat felt swollen. I ask my Mom to take him to the Vet for a check up. She called me later that day, sobbing.

Roddy had Lymphoma.

Roddy lived for another 10 weeks. He died at home. I was bereft. I also felt so grateful to have had that dog. I don't know how to explain it - to be so sad and so grateful at the same time! I went to St Joe's RCIA that night and shared with someone that my beloved pet had died. The woman, a very good Catholic, said something rather dismissive and I know she did not intend to be mean to me but it stung like crazy. The fact that I did not lash out at her is a testament to my Guardian Angel, not me. I wanted to rip her head off but I didn't. Instead, I went home and for the first time in 11 years I smoked a cigarette. It was better than drinking, right? RIGHT.

That night for some reason I turned on EWTN. I am not a regular watcher - I watch for special things but I have my own shows that I like and so am not one of those Faithful Catholics that have EWTN on 24/7. But that night I turned it on and there she was - Mother Angelica. It was a rerun, of course, but I listened to her and at the end of the show I did something really out of character for me:

I wrote her a letter.

I poured out my sorrow over losing my dog, how he had kept me sane after that stupid relationship and that sanity had brought me more fully into the Church. I told her how I missed him so much and how alone I felt, how unloved and unlovable. I wrote that I wish I could have saved him and how my giving him medicine to try and save him had made him so sick his last week on earth and how sorry I was for doing that but that I had just wanted to save him. I poured out my heart to that nun, crying as I wrote, and thinking the entire time "you are an idiot. Every good Catholic knows animals have material souls and are not humans". I enclosed a donation - some little sum, nothing much - and the next day I mailed the letter. I never expected to hear back.

Well, I did.

I received the usual "Thank you for your donation" letter from EWTN...but at the bottom, in her own handwriting, she had written, "Dear Heart, don't you ever think dogs are not important. I know your Roddy was your Guardian Angel, just like St John Bosco's Grecio was his, and I bet that Angel will be there to meet you in heaven, tail wagging. Your job will be to get there to be with him. Now get cracking!".

I have that letter in the box with Roddy's stuff. His medals and ribbons, a picture from his last show when

he beat all the other dogs there and so impressed Julia with his talent.

I have had two other Scotties since then - William Wallace MacDuff (Duffy) and my present Scottie, Shaw's Rob Roy MacDuff (Robbie). I am a Scottie girl, that is just how it is, but there will never be another Shaw's Roddy MacDuff.

And there will never EVER be another Mother Angelica.

Eternal Rest grant unto her, O Lord, and may Perpetual Light shine upon her.

Mother Angelica, pray for us!

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2016/03/mother-angelica.html>
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This Year Holy Week Sends a Perfect Storm: Embrace Its Power [at It Makes Sense to Me]

IT MAKES SENSE TO ME

By Larry Peterson



If you are Catholic and have not been to Mass or confession in thirty years or more you might think that forgiveness is beyond your grasp and that there is "no hope" for you. You might even think that if you walked into a church you would turn into a pillar of salt. Well, here is the deal. All of that negative, "I'm too bad to be forgiven" or "It's too late for me" stuff is bunk. It is what is known as a "cop-out". But there is great news for all of us, wicked sinners included.

You see, a Perfect Storm is approaching. This might even be a once in a lifetime occurrence. During the upcoming days, Holy Week, Easter Sunday and the Holy Year of Mercy will converge into a spiritual tsunami ready to wash us all with its unrivaled, avalanche of Love., Forgiveness and Mercy.

Even if you have been the most self-centered, egotistical, s.o.b. since Caligula busied himself ravaging Rome, it does not matter. We all have an opportunity to run into this storm, open our arms wide, and embrace the deluge of unconditional love and mercy that God will be pouring down upon us. There is a catch. We have to want it and ask for it. That's all there is to it. That seems simple enough but for so many it is so hard to do. That is because something called Pride stops us over and over.

Recently I wrote about

[Dutch Schultz](#)

. Dutch was one of the most feared and brutal murderers in the bootlegging business in the 1930s. He ruled the Bronx and, as he lay dying after being gunned down in Newark, N.J., asked for a priest. He had his confession heard, asked for and received Anointing of the Sick and received Holy Viaticum (last Communion). Was Dutch Schultz turned away and told he did not qualify for mercy? Answer, NO.

Let us look at another fellow who makes Dutch Schultz look like a "goody-two-shoes". His name was

[Rudolf Hoess](#)

*. This man was the Kommandant at Auschwitz, the deadliest and most efficient of the German death camps. Hoess designed the extermination processes that were implemented there and was responsible for

the murders of over two and a half million people.

Every day, Rudolf Hoess kissed his wife and kids good-bye and went to work. While at work he supervised the killings and torturing of countless men, women and children. After work he went home, kissed his wife hello, ate dinner with his family, read a book to his children and then tucked them into bed. What a guy. What a dad. What a husband. He also can lay claim to the title,

Greatest Mass Murderer in History.

Here is something not too many people are aware of. Hoess had ordered the execution of a group of Jesuits, including their Superior, Father Wladyslaw Lohn. The priests were all herded out together to be killed but, ironically, Father Lohn was not with the others. The priest was somehow "absent" for his execution and the executioners did not know it. Was it Providence?

Rudolf Hoess was raised in a strict Catholic household but rebelled against his faith as a teenager. Right before his execution he asked for a priest. It was Father Lohn who was sent to him. It was Father Lohn who heard his confession, anointed him and gave him his final Holy Communion. Then Hoess was sent to the gallows.

Isn't it amazing but, no matter how evil any of us has been, as long as we have a breath left in us God will hear our cries for mercy. All we have to do is ask. Even a monster such as Rudolf Hoess was given a chance at forgiveness. He responded to grace, seized the moment and asked for God's mercy. Was he redeemed? What do you think? (See

[temporal punishment](#)

)

The point is this. Love, Forgiveness and Mercy are ours for the asking. And now, as Holy Week and Easter Sunday join The Holy Year of Mercy, a Perfect Storm is about to blow across our world, a storm that you will want to be sucked up in and transported to another spiritual dimension. No matter what you have done, it is never too late. God waits with open arms for all of his children. Some will seize the opportunity, swallow their pride and ASK for forgiveness and mercy. Others will never do it. We all have a choice. We can embrace the storm or hide from it.

Rudolf Hoess* should not be confused with

[Rudolf Hess](#)

, who was Deputy Fuhrer under Hitler

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We should not stay away from our assembly as is the custom of some, but encourage one another [at In the Breaking of the Bread]

That verse from the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter ten verse 25, applies more and more often to us in our own day and, probably, to Christians in every generation. Due to our human condition after the "original sin" or "trouble at the origins of humanity", our natural inclination is no longer to worship God and offer Him thanks and praise, but rather to "go it alone" or "do our own thing" or just simply dispense ourselves from being dependent on anyone else, not even God.

Those who know me remember that I've never been one to "push religion" with anyone. I don't want to change in this outlook but to continue respecting another's own freedom and responsibility to engage in their own life journey and their own personal faith relationship with God and to travel on the road of life with other fellow Christians within the Church Jesus founded and died that we might all have life together in Him...

What often keeps me awake late at night and so is prompting me to write this love note is simply the kind of thing that comes up in conversation and then presses on my mind and in my heart.... It might be prompted when others share with me their experience of Sunday worship or simply their inclination no longer to go or not go so often. They may have had their own experience of participating - for a number of years - and how at times our Sunday worship can be an occasion of pain because of others....

One may say something that gives an impression of perhaps not joining in so often anymore in the Sunday worship.... I remember from what place in me friendly, fraternal words come... that place deep within me where pain and exhilaration meet... from the history of my life, of our lives, in all of those moments of human experience when life seems to be overwhelming... and if it weren't for God's love for me and personal experiences of that love, especially in the regular rhythm of Sunday worship, and also of Penance and Reconciliation, I know that I just wouldn't have made it this far in my life...

It would literally tear my heart out for me to hear or discover than anyone of my family or friends, or other Catholics or Christians, would suffer through life's many challenges and difficulties and feel isolated, or alone, or overwhelmed by it all and not taste the goodness of the Lord, especially when we allow Him to surround us with others just like us, fallible and imperfect and equally in need of God's love and mercy and understanding and consolation and wisdom and strength and peace.... I've been witness to far too many lives of those who, young and old, deprived themselves of frequenting the Lord in his Sunday Assembly and became so isolated and caught, strangled in the narrowness of their own troubled thoughts and agonizing heart, that their poor life didn't go so well, or even tragically.... Please don't let it happen to any of you....

The Father... and Jesus... and the Holy Spirit are EVERYWHERE and ALWAYS present... and we weak human beings, being in large part social, stand forever in need of being touched by the Lord in the midst of his great Sunday Assemblies.... When we stay away too long, ever so slowly the boundaries of our own thoughts and movements of our heart can shrink and we can find ourselves caught in an interior landscape that has become too narrow, tight, restricting, and even suffocating... and life can become unbearable... I know, I remember, from my own personal experience in adolescence, and then later again in my youth, and then yet again in my young adulthood... and at times even now through the many seasons of life....

Why did I forget to invite the Lord in when He knocked at the door of my heart? Why do I ever forget? I don't know... yes, I do... it's our human condition... but I remember with gratitude that He sent and still sends someone to remind me to listen for Jesus' gentle knock at the door of my heart and encouraged me to open up to Him without fear... and yet again, after having forgotten several times, I got to experience anew why we call Jesus our Savior... because I needed Him to shine his divine light into my confused mind... and inflame my smoldering heart with the burning fire of his divine love... and heal my wounded and damaged sense of my failing or impoverished life by the kind and merciful look of his eyes when I found myself seeking his forgiveness or just pouring out my troubles through one of the priests He went to a lot of trouble to send my way....

I know that I am more of a sinner than all of you, and you probably remain close to the Holy Trinity in the course of your daily life and continue to experience the conviction that God loves you and cares for you, but if you find yourself having neglected to accept Jesus' invitations to worship Him and his / our Father and the Holy Spirit in his Sunday Assembly, if you won't go back for your own sake, perhaps you might be willing to do it for me... and for Jesus Himself... just because He would like you to go because of what it is that He wants to do for you that He can only do for you when you are there among the others like us, to worship God and thank Him, regardless of how beautiful or how painful the music may be or the preaching may be....

There are some inner turmoils for which we can find no solutions because only God can give them, and He can only activate them within us through the instruments He has chosen and prepared for us.... I know, being a priest myself but at the same time a poor sinful human being like you, how much trouble Jesus has gone to over the years to make of me the instrument that I am or can be when I am attentive to Him.... It is out of love for you and me that Jesus gives us the priests we have, and their imperfection is simply an echo of our own human imperfection and a reminder that it is God alone who is perfect and who is qualified and empowered to bring about in us the impossible beautiful things we long for....

I have also learned from my own experience as well as that of so many other lives that we cannot expect fairly from God a "command performance", that He do for us, for me, exactly what I want and precisely when I want it.... Much of what I need from God and what He wants to give can only come gradually, a little at a time, through regular organically developing installments, one Sunday at a time, which is why He gave the third commandment, to "keep holy the Lord's day"... not only with Sunday Worship but also with praying and playing together as a family and taking time to rest....

May you all taste deeply and regularly of the "goodness" of the Lord....

Please don't take any of this as "preaching" because it isn't that at all... but only the pangs of my love for each of you and for all of you together as the beautiful family that you are, and my friends....

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This contribution is available at <http://fathergilles.blogspot.ca/2016/03/we-should-not-stay-away-from-our.html>
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A Presidential Election Like No Other [at Renew The Church Blog]

Not in my lifetime, anyway, has a presidential election been like this one – and not in my lifetime has the need been greater for a true statesman to hold the office, to lead this country. How America needs a statesman seeking the true good of the nation, with members of Congress to work with him – and not mere self-advancing careerists, politicians serving their own ambitions, seeking their own glory.

Augustine saw the difference among men so clearly! In his penetrating book *The City of God* he wrote of those whom we would call true statesmen, who seek to “serve one another in love,” who seek to “take thought for all,” who seek, in other words, the true good of their fellow men and women. Such is true servant-leadership: leading by serving, leading in order to serve others, serving according to the true good intended by God in His holy truth and love.

But then there are the lesser men of whom Augustine writes, who seek to rule for “the love of ruling.” They are dominated – they are driven – not by the love of others for the sake of God, but by “the love of self, even to the contempt of God.” They seek glory for themselves, glory that they draw from the men they dominate. They are not servants of others though they speak often of “serving their country”, but they are users – abusers, really – and manipulators of others in order to gain power over them.

I see and hear such a hard spirit of meanness, bitter hearts dripping with disdain for their enemies and rivals for the power they seek! So many politicians seeking to divide and thus conquer, seeking to set one voting block against another, seeking to guard their own power base, willing to insinuate what is false and to suggest so as to deceive. They are willing – so much do they lust for power – even to lie outright and to repeat the lie again and again until the undiscerning fall into believing the lie.

Thus the weakness of democracy: it depends upon the people! Thus the vulnerability of democracy to evil men, and their dark work of “dumbing-down” the electorate, keeping the poor poor and dependent upon their elected masters, keeping all ignorant of what is happening around them. These rulers, who rule for the love of ruling, hide the truth of the true God from public consciousness so as to bring ultimate impoverishment to the people, so as to bring ultimate hollow and false dependency on these evil masters who in fact care nothing for the people ruled by them.

But how they lie and manipulate, twist and dodge, evade and invent, and repeat the lies until they sound normal and right! And the people – have they come to love it that way? Has the lie become lovely to them? Have they come to disdain the truth – does truth demand too much of them – does the truth condemn their own wickedness, does the lie help them justify themselves, and help them hide from God in the roar of the crowds and the glory of the masses?

The Reading of today, for this morning’s Liturgy of the Hours, this day called “Super Tuesday” in the secular world, is a telling exhortation from the prophet Joel. He wrote, on behalf of God to His people,

Return to me with your whole heart,
with fasting, weeping, and mourning;
Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the LORD, your God.

For gracious and merciful is he,
slow to anger, rich in kindness,
and relenting in punishment. (Joel 2:12-13)

The following is a quote attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville (1805 -1859), a French political thinker, historian and writer. If he was not the first to express it this way, someone did. It is true.

“America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

Indeed, America has for some time now taken a path of intentional redefinition – distortion – of the good in preference for ideas of “goodness” of anything that seems pleasurable. Sexual excess and deviancy is not only common, but is declared “normal” and thus “good. Material things are sources for our human happiness. “Political correctness” – not the truth of God, not even the truth attested in human conscience – is becoming the standard, the foundation for morality, and even for federal law as interpreted by a so-called “Supreme Court”. The American Constitution, which once enabled America to be a nation of laws and not of the wishes of the powerful, is becoming a document of suggestions open to the whims of fickle men. “Might makes right” – the code of tyranny used by evil throughout human history – is becoming the operative code in our new “progressive” philosophy. Its fruit is death, in a culture of death; its future is darkness and great suffering for all.

Can America be made great again? Can she be made good again? If so, it will not be by making more clever deals and treaties, by making the middle class more affluent so as to spend more money in shallow self-gratification, so as to make “the economy” stronger. America, we need a renewed sense of value – we need to understand the economy of the spirit – we need to learn where happiness truly is found! We need to learn again what “truth” is! And “goodness”! And righteousness. We need to know that we do not have the power to define good and evil – God has that power – we need to recognize, to acknowledge, and to honor the true good, and to reject the evil no matter how tempting, “glamorous” and politically correct it is declared to be by a political elite, in the dark culture of death.

America, will you wake up before it is too late? Will you listen to your heart, to your conscience, to the better voices in and around you? Or will you grasp the lusts and the lies dangling before your eyes, in the shouting crowds, in the roaring din of noise that seeks to overwhelm the whispers of reason and truth, of goodness and beauty, of salvation and holy life? Your God is calling you:

Return to me with your whole heart,
with fasting, weeping, and mourning;
Rend your hearts, not your garments,
and return to the LORD, your God.

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note: Augustine, *City of God*, Book XIV, Chapter 28: “Of the Nature of the Two Cities, the Earthly and the Heavenly”

Through the Shining Light [at WordPress.com]

This is a continuation of my writings on the spirit within us all. It has been some time since I posted last. No, I have not run away, nor ventured far. Rather I have come to some understanding of God's work upon me these last few years, and have thus put myself in His hands with each morning sun. Most important, I've come to understand finally what God has done to me and for me, and I offer it in a marriage between prose and poetry:

A paradigm perched upon my shoulders, inquires the eternal question:

“How does one find God?”.

Or perhaps more so, “How does one live with God?”.

For myself, I am of His Spirit;

no matter my desires, nor reflections, I suspend midst His being,

and for myself, there is no seeking for, nor refuge from;

no need to breathe.

My paradigm asks of the others.

Borne from the practical world and carried forth

as naturally as the weed that eternally rises midst the flower,

this paradigm slithers from a place sodden with fertile anticipation.

Hubris or humus? Where is the power?

Weighed are we that expectation is unconscious assumption,

while love could never be so secure.

“For whom has loved without condition except God himself?” we might demure.

So we hold our own judgement, in abeyance to the hope

that what we see in the mirror is something

more than what we see in the light.

For though we see *in the light*,

we choose not to look *through the light*,

but choose rather to see the mirror.

We mistake light as mirror – living as life –

and thus find but a reflection of ourselves,

and not what life truly is: being in God.

Think, for the moment, of the rose.

In the rapture of God's perfection,

the turned words of Rilke speak of the rose:

Wildness surrounding wildness,

Tenderness touching tenderness,

It is your own core that you ceaselessly caress,

As they say.

*It is your own center that you caress,
Your own reflection gives you light,
And in this way, you show us how
Narcissus is redeemed.*

Might I ask the question, "How does Man see Narcissus?"
What space shall there be between wildness and tenderness?
Does love burn light only to reveal light ever more?

Known now, seven years on of wandering
with even step and faithful direction;
God's will and not my own,
to a knowledge, perhaps a wisdom
that what God can bless one with
is a thing that few consider;
no matter their diligence or endeavor.

Industry like that of the cardinal
whose eyes and beak so charged with black,
alights upon a tree;
chirps and flits about from branch to branch,
sudden one way and then another.
One moment its breast of red resplendent,
another it wings of faded, carnelian gray.
Who is this bird; gay or subdued,
fierce or fallow, worthy or unworthy?

Surely not that one should find sorrow here,
for what is, simply is.
For Man is a metronome, a tin cardinal shedding feather;
clock-work by his own reflection.

Shun we Narcissus as that most rotted of our nature,
and yet, like all God's creatures, we adore the light.
Narcissus is the light, and yet fearfully we see
Narcissus as Medusa hissing.
We shall not look, not a glance, taste not the fruit
lest we lose flesh for stone.

Think upon the plant that leans to the light.
Muscles green, it has not, to move,
nor reason to know light of better ration
than the dark.
It has no eyes by which to mimic
that what the whole forest knows
and pains to do each moment of each day.

The forest leans to the light.

There is a truth that Man cares little to see *through the light*,
and when he does hope for something more
than what light brings to him,
he is more bound by his image
in the dark, dour water of a mirror,
than in what he can bring to the light.

Much ado does Man find flight from such speeches,
for determined is he that free will excels above all,
and independence: the highest of virtues.
With these two heroes in hand, what needs has Man?

Of course, Man possesses the former by right
and so why would he look *through the light*?
“Do we not have God secured to our bosom?” we proclaim.
“Free Will is God’s mark of love for us.” we cry out
in our own self-domain.

And what of honorable independence?
Does Man not struggle his full life to secure
that which he can never take to the next;
just so solitude might be with his own reflection,
as Narcissus at the pool?

Folly lies deep within these mirages
that beguiles the many mind;
as if heaven should care an addled bit
for the spittle of sovereignty maligned.

Man does mistake humus for hubris; this is most certain.

There lies an odd peace in this truth.
Instinct for me, as God swept away the dark for the light,
and taking my hand, pressed it past mirror and through His light.
I am now set about by guardian Seraphim – safe in His being,
and wrapped gently within the unfolding, rising petals
of God’s own Spirit –
so that I might, in celestial wonder,
see life revealed once again from the beginning;
to know the unfallen condition of Man,
and to know once again that all things made by God
are good truly, beautiful truly, pure truly
as the day God created them.

This love, made for all, is there for all;

still within us all, still awaiting a salvation
that only God can offer.

Can you not touch it?
So relinquished it is; bringing tears to love,
wild abandon and tender adoration.

Through this shining light, waxen flesh,
translucent with color and light,
glowing effervescent and bright,
radiating its inner outward flight;
gives and receives an eternity ever fresh.

Yes, thus love is, and Narcissus gazing
sees not but God's love in return.
For when you see through the light,
does Living Water imbue you;
And your luminary spirit renews with you.

Flesh glows.
Breath now knows that there are no secret paths,
no hidden doors for which you have no key.
One being. One humus.
One lucid field with wild abandon true
to see that celestial view that no eye can ever see.

His Word becomes of you and you of His Word
Purist beauty within ourselves is the being in God.
Spirit, Oh purist beauty.

This contribution is available at <http://travelsOfANewChristian.com/2016/03/25/through-the-shining-light/>
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The Pope: Missing Another Opportunity [at Heresy and Apostasy]

Once again the Pope has indiscriminately set about washing the feet at a Maundy Thursday service.



The archbishop of Buenos Aires, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, is seen in this file washing the feet of a unidentified woman on Holy Thursday at the Buenos Aires' Sarda maternity hospital, March 24, 2005.

In his zeal to communicate erroneous and heretical concepts of parity of gender, equality of religions, and servanthood the Pope has missed on many opportunities to clear the air on many misunderstandings concerning Christian Dogma, morality and faith. He is known for such blunders and has been one of the worst teachers of the faith; an abuse by the highest authority which is unprecedented since the beginning of Christianity.

No Pope in the history of Christianity has spoken so freely and in such confusing language and communicates a very high degree of a false sense of humility through his actions in order to deceive the masses.

The credulous and the gullible, which always makes the majority are easily deceived and fall prey to erroneous teachings; "as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." Matt 24:24. They are truly the deceived that think that they are not vulnerable to such deceptions and accept blindly all that the men in authority teach.

Indeed the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church (Mt. 16:18) but not before the countless humanity is lost by the deception unleashed on it by the present Pope and his coterie.

The Primary duty of the Pope or the Bishop in their commitment to God's service (i.e. Washing of the feet) is that of teaching and preaching the truth of the faith, more so in our dark times. But by deviating from the sound doctrine as taught in **Scripture** and **tradition** they have failed to be the servants of God and of these pillars of the church, viz. **Scripture and Tradition**. Thus the magisterium has gone bankrupt in our times.

Sacred Tradition: The great scripture Scholar and a doctor of the church Saint Jerome (347-420 AD) in his Epistle to Pope Damasus I states that Christ washed His Apostles' feet to prepare them for the preaching of the gospel, in fulfilment to the prophecy of Isaiah:

“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, of them that bring good tidings.” (Isa. 52:7)

The Apostles were ordained as sacerdotal priests at the Last Supper and so the foot washing is to prepare them to carry the Gospel to foreign lands. It's a commissioning rite to “preach the Gospel of peace.”

They prove the truth of this statement by living up to it, even with their lives.

Canon Law: In the same vein, **Canon Law** too prescribes that the Bishops are supposed to preach and teach at every opportunity.

Can. 756 §1. With respect to the universal Church, the function of proclaiming the gospel has been entrusted principally to the Roman Pontiff and the college of bishops.

Can. 760 The mystery of Christ is to be set forth completely and faithfully in the ministry of the word, which must be based upon sacred scripture, tradition, liturgy, the magisterium, and the life of the Church.

Sacred Scripture: He is no humble servant serving God if he doesn't faithfully speak the voice of God as revealed in Scripture and tradition. It is first presumed that these men in high office have allowed their feet to be first washed by the Lord and Teacher of John Chapter 13. One of the fruit of our feet being washed through the word of God and Baptism is participation in the Eucharist:

“If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.” John 13:8

Profane Witness in deed and words: Indeed in Pope Francis we have an apparently humble servant serving his own agenda, supported by crafty Cardinals and Bishops in high places, where everyone has a part in Christ apart from Christ; like the marauders and plunderers.

For example he even made us believe through his crafty media management that he answers every letter personally or at least delves into it but the opposite is true; the selective media glare he laps up betrays the lack of response to the many letters written to him and to the dicasteries working under him by me. Indeed, with the help of the media he makes us believe in his goodness; alas for the manifest deceptive false humility!

He has thus brought about a divide in the church of Christ by dishing out wares that are contrary to sound Catholic Faith. The Pope is no longer a symbol of unity but of division, even through the many compromised unity he is speedily working on.

Missed Opportunities:

These are some of the many opportunities the church has missed in the recent move of just the indiscriminate washing of the feet:

1.) Failed to be the **servant of the servants** of Christ and increased the chasm in the church: He may wash the feet of everyone whom he thinks is fit at a Maundy Thursday ceremony. If the man has been

tweaking the rubrics of the church like a **true rebel** even before being elected the Pope then it shows on the maturity of the Cardinals who have elected him and still more, it shows on the maturity of those who are working in close proximity with him. Does such a rebel have a right to demand obedience from any of his subordinates, especially in matters that concern the falsity of doctrine?

In fact the Pope has opted to wash his own feet with media glare, unlike Peter who first protested and then submitted, by seeking to proclaim a gospel other than what we have been commanded to believe and preach; the gospel of gender equality, humanism and brotherhood, false peace and of emancipation of the poor and refugees.

Can. 771 §1. Pastors of souls, especially bishops and pastors, are to be concerned that the word of God is also proclaimed to those of the faithful who because of the condition of their life do not have sufficient common and ordinary pastoral care or lack it completely.

§2. They are also to make provision that the message of the gospel reaches **non-believers living in the territory** since the care of souls must also extend to them no less than to the faithful.

Even the Canon Laws of the church are abused by the Pope and his coterie by failing to proclaim the gospel of Salvation to non-believers and thus washing feet.

Instead of proclaiming the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:8) the Pope has been preaching the gospel of Humanism.

2.) By arguing in favour of **gender equality**, in the washing of the feet ritual on Maundy Thursday, the Church in the process is losing out again on an opportunity to clarify the **Christian concept of equality**. The Church, which through the revelation of Christ is supposed to be long sighted and even prophetic in action, is now choosing to be praxis oriented and becoming myopic in its teachings and doctrine by rejecting sound tradition, scripture and the objective teaching of Christ. What is more, it also substituting **man** in place of Christ and his gospel and creating a new religion of humanism; long forewarned by the holy saints and prophet, besides what we have through the scripture and the many approved Apparitions of our Lady.

Christ ordered towards man rather than man ordered towards Christ.

The Marxist idea of equality has now gained an increasing following in the church as seen in the easy acceptance and blind assertion of the same doctrine, even by the Pope and his many Cardinals and Bishops. No wonder our Lady has warned in one of her apparition at Fatima; “Russia will spread its error throughout the world”

The Catholic Church has always asserted the equality of men and women in the eyes of God and this doctrine of equality gave them an opportunity to explain the difference in roles and responsibilities of each of them. It also was gave one an opportunity to explain the significance of privileges that normally accompany responsibilities, even responsibilities that involve a dedication unto being dedicated and sacrificing. But the new concept of **equality** is honour privilege centred.

It is now clear that the majority have rejected the doctrine of Christ and even subjected this Christ to modernistic myopic thinking, thus even crucifying him again in the very Church he established. It has thus written its own code for self-destruction. “Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on

3.) Distorting the meaning of Scripture by not even referring to what has been revealed through scripture, especially the gospel of John: The Second Commandment prohibits using the Lord’s Name in vain (blasphemy). If we refer the Catechism of the Council of Trent’s on the same commandment, it teaches that those who support heresy, and “distort the Sacred Scriptures from their genuine and true meaning,” are guilty of sins against the Second Commandment. (refer my earlier article on this blog on the washing of the feet and how the Pope himself has distorted sacred Scriptures; and what I have written is not an isolated instance). “..... and killed thy prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to thee, and they committed great blasphemies.” Neh 9:26

By washing the feet of pagans and unbelievers the Pope is communicating a distorted message both in deed and in words too. “ ... all of us together: Muslims, Hindus, Catholics, Copts, Evangelicals but all brothers and children of the same God: we want to live together in peace” he said in the homily of the day.

By this statement the Pope, who is supposed to be the Vicar (representing or acting in the person of Christ on earth) has rebelled against the Lord of heaven and earth. The Scripture clearly reveals to us that not all are brothers and children of the same God but only those who believed and received Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:12; also refer: Rom. 9:8; Phil. 2:14 -15, 1John 3:1; 5: 1-2). In fact we become children of the one God through faith in Christ Jesus and thus accept his Father as our Father (Jn. 1:12). The scripture is replete with teachings which clearly distinguishes the children of God from the rest.

Contrast what the Pope asserts above with John 8: 44 and you will realise why there is so much of lies in what he propounds by proposing God as father of all: “You are of **your father** the devil, and your will is to do **your father’s** desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the **father** of lies.”

God indeed loves all people but not the way these in high offices propose. Because he loves all he sent a saviour to save that which is lost. But to seek to save the lost by encouraging them to remain in their lost condition is a deviation from the truth of the Gospel. It is the same as allowing the prodigal son to remain in the squalor in which he has chosen and to remind him what he already partially knows, that his father loves. Yes! His father loves him but doesn’t want him to remain in the lost state.

Has the Pope incurred an Anathema (Curse on himself and all who believe his erroneous gospel on 2 counts, thus preparing the Church for the wrath of God until Christ comes again to renew it? It is for you to prayerfully discern:

1. Has he not proved his love for humanity more than his love for the Lord who died for us? (I Cor. 16:22). Thus abusing and blaspheming the name of the most high God (cfr. Rev. 13:6).
2. Preaching a gospel of humanism; a gospel other than what the Church has held on to right down the century in keeping with St. Paul’s injunction. (Gal. 1:8).

How an ornery 'pirate nun' saved a soul [at Peace Garden Passage]



Roxane and Paul Darrow, Philadelphia Convention Center, September 2015

I was making my way through the exhibition hall at the Philadelphia Convention Center in September, during the World Meeting of Families conference, when I saw him.

His face was unmistakable. It was only a few months before that I'd become mesmerized, late in the night, with his story.

I'd come to know Paul Darrow not through his work as an international model who had dazzled hundreds of famous people in the height of his young-adult heyday, but through a documentary that had gripped me, leaving me in tears, with a new understanding of humanity and our deep longing for connection with others.

It was a story of redemption of the most powerful kind. A soul on a quest for fulfillment finds it at every turn and yet comes up still achingly empty. And then, one night after partying, he turns the dial on his television and sees an image he can't believe — a nun who has a distorted face and a patch over her eye. He is struck to his marrow by the sight of her, so at odds with everything he believes to be worthy of his attention, that he is moved to mock her, even inviting his lover to come into the room from another to join in the jeering.

And yet...when his lover leaves and he goes to turn off the channel, that nun, from the other side of the tube, says something that rings of unexpected truth, and the words reach his soul in a place that has not been touched for years, maybe never, and deep down in that deadened place, something new and green begins to grow.

He continues sneaking glimpses of the distorted “pirate nun,” the one he had laughed at, and each time, he hears something that begins to peel away the layers of hatred, lust and greed that had been forming around his heart, keeping it bound. Day by day, the nun’s penetrating words begin to change and free him ([read more in this LifeSiteNews piece here](#)).



On Easter 2016, this same nun, suffering for years now following a stroke — a woman who was tested by fire and fought her way out of hell on earth to become the founder of a religious order and an international communications network — dies. And one of my first thoughts is of this man who was so transformed; the one I met in Philly.

“Mother Angelica really changed my life, you know,” he reminded me in that exhibition hall in September. “I had the pleasure of meeting her a while back, and to thank her in person. It was incredible.”

How can I not rejoice with him and all the heavens? And it was all because of this little old lady, who many still discount, refusing her the chance to teach them something new, or remind them of something old needing renewal. To Paul Darrow, her crotchety pronouncements meant life, and he is not alone.

I think again of the eye patch and her sometimes off-putting statements that even made me cringe at times when I’d listen to her on the radio. And yet if one listened long enough, the love that oozed out of her could not be denied. She was not one to cave to political correctness, and some found that offensive. Others say if not for her, everlasting separation from God might be their fate.

In [Desire of the Everlasting Hills](#), Paul Darrow’s story was the one, of three featured, that most reached me. So it was quite a gift to me to bump into him unexpectedly just months later on that fine Philly day, to encounter the one who was saved by words uttered by an old nun in a habit, and realize that somehow, in hearing his story, she’d changed me, too.

Catholic radio and television have been a treasure trove in my life. I’ve had the pleasure of hosting Catholic radio, as well as being a guest, and for many years now, an avid consumer. If I didn’t have it to

turn to each day, my life would be lacking something very edifying and life-giving.

Thank you, Mother Angelica, for all you gave, and the suffering you endured on our behalf. Not everyone got you, Mother, but those who could look past the sometimes ornery, frumpy exterior were privileged to glimpse the shining jewel, and our gratitude is eternal.

Rest in peace, dear one. You have finished the race well; it is time for reprieve. Sing with the angels!

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2016/03/how-an-ornery-pirate-nun-saved-a-soul/>
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Into Thy Hands... [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

The Seventh and Last Word of Jesus on the Cross

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”

(Luke 23:46)

It is 9AM on Friday and Roman soldiers hammer spikes into His limbs. Then they lifted His cross and He hung between heaven and earth until 3PM. Six hours. Crucified prisoners often lasted much longer than the six hours Jesus hung between heaven and earth. That’s why when Joseph asked Pilate if he could take Jesus’ body and bury it, Pilate was surprised to learn Jesus was already dead.

It is critical that we remember Jesus was in complete control of the timing of His capture, of His scourging, and of the time of His death. *“No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.” (John 10:18)*

The Lord of heaven and earth could have at any time called for those 12 legions of angels to rescue Him (Matthew 26:53). But He did not call for them. He determined to complete the course set out for Him from the foundation of the earth. And just a moment earlier, what did He shout? It is FINISHED!

Before we move on with His last words, let’s reflect on what else we know was happening that hill. Here is what the prophet David tells us in Psalm 22: *All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads; “He committed his cause to the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”*

In the third psalm, the David prophesied: *O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of me, there is no help for him in God. (Psalm 3:1-2)*

The gospels give us additional information. They tell us of Jesus’ agony from the whip that tore slices of flesh from his body. We know of His desperate loneliness as He sensed the Father had forsaken Him. We know of His overwhelming thirst. And we know of the crowd’s jeers:

“Jesus,” they said, “There is no help for you in God! . . . “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself . . . “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us” . . . (Luke 23:37, 39) “Ha! You who were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself . . . and come down from the cross.” (Matthew 27:40)

It is against this backdrop that Jesus lifted His face toward heaven and said what holds for us at least two critically important lessons when He uttered: “Into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

The first lesson is this:

Have people ever mocked your faith – especially in times of your greatest need? Have they ever said – not in these words, but in meaning – There is no help for you in God? It is here that we can look to Jesus, who suffered far more than you or I will ever suffer. Jesus the man could have given in to the mockery. But there was something about His relationship with His father that enabled Him – and will enable us – to say just as He said -- even when faced with the pits of hell: “Father, I trust you. To the very gates of hell, I trust you. And into thy hands I commit my spirit.”

How did He establish that relationship? It is not at all enough to simply say, “Well, that’s Jesus. Of course He had a relationship with the Father.”

No, that is not sufficient, for if that was all there is to it, then you and I can never hope to imitate Him. We could never hope to follow in His steps, as St Peter tells us:

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, . . . and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously”

(1 Peter 2:21)

No, Jesus the Man had developed a relationship with the Father in exactly the same way you and I and all of the prophets and saints of Judeo-Christian faith develop a relationship with the Father: By spending time with Him. There is simply no substitute for spending time with God if we hope to ever have a deepening relationship with Him.

Spending time.

Not once a week in a church pew, but daily – in your prayer closet. Just you and Jesus. It requires reading and meditating on His scriptures. And if you are a Catholic reading this, it requires frequent reception of the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation. There is simply no substitute. Our problem is – we most often choose not to sacrifice the time required.

As Mother Theresa once said: *“We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass- grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls.”*

And the second lesson is this:

Remember into whose hands we are committing our lives, our health, our families, our destinies. It is into the hands that created all things we see and can't see – “all things visible and invisible”. There is no power in heaven, on earth, or under the earth that can open what He has shut, or shut what He has opened.

This passage from Isaiah barely touches the surface of God's power: Isaiah 40:15-17: *Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust... All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.*

No wonder we can commit ourselves into His hands. There are no hands stronger, or more comforting, than our heavenly Father's hands.

Believing in God, and loving him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, has enormous consequences for our life. I like what St. Theresa of Jesus wrote: *Let nothing trouble you. Let nothing frighten you. Everything passes; God never changes. Patience obtains all; Whoever has God wants for nothing. God alone is enough.*

Yes, believing in God and loving Him has ENORMOUS consequences for our whole life. Here is what

Jesuit Fr. Perdro Arrupe once wrote:

Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love [with God], stay in love, and it will decide everything.

What darkness envelopes you today? What sadness, or emptiness, or loneliness, or pain overshadows your soul? Jesus had fallen in love with His Father. That is why He could trust Him, despite His pain, His loneliness, the mocking and the jeering of others who told Him, “There is no help for you in God.”

What can separate us from God’s love? St. Paul asked that question, and then he definitively answered it. You can find his answer in the eighth chapter of Romans, beginning with verse 35: *“Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

And as our relationship with God deepens, Paul’s words make greater sense with each passing trial and each passing year.

Into Thy hands I commit my spirit.

Oh, thanks be to God for Jesus’ example – deep and abiding love for God, a love birthed in a lifetime of prayer and meditation of the Scriptures and seeking His face above all other faces – Jesus is our example of what we too can say when faced with depression, heartache, terror, loss . . . we can learn to say it from the depths of our being: Father, “Into Thy hands I commit my spirit.”

Amen.

I Remember, I Remember!



photograph by Trish Steel

‘I remember, I remember the house where I was born, the little window where the sun came peeping in at dawn’. (Thomas Hood – 1826)

I remember the bomb that smashed that window into pieces and spread them over my bed and all over the bedroom floor. I remember cutting my feet, as I ran for the open door. I remember seeing Our Lady’s statue, as I ran down the stairs, and the Sacred Heart looking down on me from his picture on the wall. I remember two buckets of sand for ‘incendiaries’, standing each side of the grandfather clock. I remember running into the shelter that had squatted in our dining room. I remember the sirens sounding as my mother bandaged my feet. I remember kneeling to say the rosary with my parents, and my brothers. I remember praying for the bombs to stop, for our family to be kept safe and for other families too, and for all our relatives at the ‘*front*’. We prayed the same every night of the week before we went to bed, as we prayed at the Sunday Masses that were always crammed to the full. I remember how they gradually emptied, as the forties gave way to the fifties, and work filled people’s pockets again. I remember how God gradually began to come second, as the ‘*swinging sixties*’ put pleasure first.

I remember the Council called to make us turn back to him once more. I remember the re-birth of the ancient Liturgy in a language that we could all understand. But, as the seventies moved into the eighties, I remember how it failed to do all that we had hoped it would to renew the Church that we loved. Priests and Religious left in droves and the churches began to empty with each passing year. I remember the scandals that arose from those who remained behind. I remember the abuse, the cover ups, and the injured innocents. If it’s by their fruits that you are to know them, then there must be something wrong with the soil in the vineyard that was right in the beginning. It is certainly not that the changes had gone too far, but rather that they had not gone far enough, I mean deep enough to reproduce the soil that once brought forth such good fruit in the beginning. They had not gone deep enough to re-create the spirituality that Jesus had lived and bequeathed to his followers, to light them with the flame that set the ancient world on fire.

It was this that inspired and energized the weekly liturgies that depended for their leaven on the profound spirituality that Jesus had lived himself, and given to his followers. Every day of his life he had prayed more than five times a day, as he had been taught to do at home, like the disciples he chose to follow him. As he had prayed so also did they, as he loved and cared so also did they, as he served the poor and the

needy, so also did they. As he learned to carry a daily cross and live and die for God, so also did they. When he was with them they did all these things with him, but after he was glorified they did them anew. Then they did them *in, with, and through him*, to offer themselves to their common Father. They did it together at each Sunday Mass, where they received the power to do it again and again in work, prayer, and service throughout the following week. For the whole point and purpose of the Mass is, in the words of Karl Rahner, *'That our whole life becomes the Mass, the place where we continually offer ourselves in, with and through Christ to the Father.'*

There was only one Mass a week for more than a Millennium that lasted for an hour or more like ours. But it received its power and vitality from every minute of the preceding week in which believers tried to observe the new commandments. Their daily offering, thanksgiving, praising, glorifying, and adoring, paved the way for their love to enter into God and his love to enter into them. Their daily sympathy, empathy, caring, and sharing paved the way for their love to enter into God, in the neighbour in need, and his love into them. What would the final sacrifice of Jesus have meant, if it didn't embody all that he said and did each day for the Father who sent him, and for us for whom he was sent? What does our Sunday Mass mean or do for us, if we have done nothing to prepare for it in the previous week? After appearing to three girls in Northern Spain the eldest asked Our Lady, if she would take them back to heaven with her? She replied, "Whatever for, for your hands are empty." What would she say if we arrived for Sunday Mass with our hands empty? Any great enterprise of any moment whether it is a wedding, an anniversary, or even an important game or match, or any crucial event for that matter, will only be as successful as the time given to preparing for it. The Mass is no different, except that it is the most important event in our lives, and on which our lives depend. Regular failure to prepare for it will lead to spiritual suicide.

If there was to be another Council called to complement the last, then I would set our best scholars, theologians, and liturgists to follow in the footsteps of Blessed John Henry Newman, and go back to the first Christian centuries once more, as they did before. No need to seek out the shape and form of the Liturgy that has already been done, but this time to seek out and detail the profound mystical spirituality that Jesus practised each day with his disciples. Then see how it was continued, and brought to perfection after his glorification, to transform the lives of all Christians by teaching them the daily prayer that leads to *'the prayer without ceasing'*. Let them not only show how Christ became tangibly present in those who gave their lives for him in *'red martyrdom,'* but how the same happened in those who gave their lives for him in what came to be called *'white martyrdom.'* In those, in other words, who tried to convert every moment into the daily liturgy of selfless living and giving that enabled them to carry their daily cross for Christ. Let them explain for us the new means of Christian prayer called *'meditation'*, that taught how, from meditating on Christ as he once was, we can come to contemplate him as he is now, and through him to contemplate the Father. Let their scholarship and spiritual guidance help us to focus more attention on the weekly domestic and workplace liturgy that was so important to our early forbears. Once this is done, the same Sunday liturgy that we celebrate now will be transformed into what they called *–The Heavenly Liturgy*, because that's what it will become, as our giving enables God to give to us in ever greater abundance, making something that we can so easily take for granted, into a foretaste of heaven on earth.

That all this be brought about we need to hear, from priests, to be led by priests, to learn from priests. I don't just mean from those in the pulpit, but from those in their homes, who are fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, and from those in the work-place, who are employers and employees, students and teachers, specialists and non-specialists, young and old, poor and sick. Their personal experience of selfless giving and receiving, suffering and dying in every nook and cranny of human existence is the example we need to hear about, to help us cheerfully exercise the priesthood that we are called to practise

every day of our lives. They are already with us now, for I have been deeply moved, encouraged, and inspired by their contributions, but we need to hear from more of them, not just as voices on the fringes, but from the mainstream of the 'New Spring' that John Henry Newman promised would come, but never lived to see.

For this 'New Spring' to dawn we need a deep spiritual and theological renewal, where scholarship is placed at the service of practical daily living, in and for Christ: When more and more theologians can be defined as the Desert Fathers once defined them: '*Theologians are people of prayer and people of prayer are theologians*': When liturgists give as much, and more time to detailing how we can transform the daily liturgy of work, prayer and play, on which the Sunday liturgy depends: When more and more missives from above are directed to guiding us in our daily lives, into an ever deeper and ever more profound spiritual endeavour 'til we can say as St Paul said before us,:- '*We live, no it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us.*' When this begins to happen, the touch paper will be lit to set every sacrament, every sacramental, every structure, and every institution in the Church alight with what, or rather with whom, originally set it on fire. Then more and more '*spirit filled*', apostles will surge out, as before, to do for the modern world what was done for the ancient world, for nothing here on earth can resist the power of love, the love of God that can only be embodied in those who choose to receive him.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.davidtorkington.com/i-remember-i-remember/>
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The Wearin' O' the Green: Envy

Envy is ugly. And selfish.

I should know.

Last week a simple social media post written by a lovely, young Christian woman sent me into a pit of envy for the better part of an afternoon.

If wasn't her post, of course, which I assume was meant to be innocuous and helpful. It was me. *My pride. My discouragement. My envy* that lay at fault.

I'll refrain from reposting what she shared – though my envious self made sure to screen capture it so I could mull over the ways in which it got under my skin. In sum, it was a simple shot of a basket of books, an open daily planner, and a mug of coffee. Sounds pretty harmless, doesn't it? A day later, my over-reaction stupefied me.

Yet at the time, it drove me BANANAS! This simple post embodied everything I currently lack in my home and my life: order, beauty, simplicity, quiet, piety. The accompanying description enumerated an additional list of ways (in my mind), I didn't measure up. My schedule includes no time for structured prayer or study, no housekeeping agenda or workout routine. Nor an upcoming opportunity for a retreat.

When I got to the end of the post, the simple question meant to engage followers tempted me to spew every one of the ways in which I resented this woman's plan for the day (and my polar opposite non-plan) into the empty, waiting combox. I longed to belabor how her Pollyanna routine, so saccharine and *perfect*, sickened me.

Thankfully, I'm not completely daft. I knew what I experienced was an unreasonable flash of envy and that it was grounded in vice rather than virtue. I knew better than to fire off a snippy comment that I'd later regret or that might hurt her.

Instead I stewed.

I lost hours – precious hours I should've been serving my family or others or actually writing – to an Instagram feed. I scoured all her photos, the post – again and again – dwelling on the details that irritated me. Everything looked perfect – from her straight, white teeth to her figure, exercise routine, husband, baby, and home decor. I searched for something, *anything*, by which I could summarily dismiss her superiority. Some flaw or deficiency by which I could write off her and her perfect little routine.

The photos rankled like a bristly clothing tag on the back of my neck. Did she have a photographer follow her everywhere? Or was she THAT good at selfies? Is that what her home actually looks like?

I could tell myself that she took thirty selfies to get an acceptable one. That behind the camera there's a heaped-up mess worthy of a [“Hoarders”](#) special event. Of course she'd want to put her best foot

forward, especially if it's her "brand." I could chalk it up to sudden onset of [social media envy](#).

A litany of excuses for my inferiority followed: She has fewer children. She has more money. A nicer home. And on, and on.

I could appreciate a more self-confident, less self-deprecating style than I prefer without resorting to envy. I could just [un-follow and be done with it](#). Couldn't I?

Why couldn't I assume that all she purports is reality and be satisfied? Why should I hope for someone seeking to inspire others to look more like a screw-up to appease my failings?

Why did it bother me so much?

It's not been a huge struggle in my life, but [envy crops up from time to time](#). More often than not, I'm the one in our home offering the reminder to avoid comparisons. I've experienced peace by shunning comparisons about writing, living, and, I thought, every facet of life. There's a billion non-comparison memes. I should be [concerned about me](#), not others, right? I'd beaten envy.

Boy, was I wrong, as evidenced by the green-eyed monster that reared its ugly head.

What exactly is envy?

The [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)* defines it as such:

2553 "Envy is sadness at the sight of another's goods and the immoderate desire to have them for oneself. It is a capital sin."

How about this passage? No glossing over the hideous nature of envy here:

2538 The tenth commandment requires that envy be banished from the human heart. When the prophet Nathan wanted to spur King David to repentance, he told him the story about the poor man who had only one ewe lamb that he treated like his own daughter and the rich man who, despite the great number of his flocks, envied the poor man and ended by stealing his lamb.³²³ Envy can lead to the worst crimes.³²⁴ "Through the devil's envy death entered the world":³²⁵

We fight one another, and envy arms us against one another. . . . If everyone strives to unsettle the Body of Christ, where shall we end up? We are engaged in making Christ's Body a corpse. . . . We declare ourselves members of one and the same organism, yet we devour one another like beasts.³²⁶

Let's pile on, shall we?

2539 Envy is a capital sin. It refers to the sadness at the sight of another's goods and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself, even unjustly. When it wishes grave harm to a neighbor it is a mortal sin:

St. Augustine saw envy as "*the diabolical sin*."³²⁷

"From envy are born hatred, calumny, joy at a neighbor's misfortune, and sadness

at his prosperity” (St. Gregory the Great).

So, what’s to be done about it?

2554 The baptized person combats envy through good-will, humility, and abandonment to the providence of God.

2540 Envy represents a form of sadness and therefore a refusal of charity; the baptized person should struggle against it by exercising good will. Envy often comes from pride; the baptized person should train himself to live in humility:

Would you like to see God glorified by you? Then rejoice in your brother’s progress and you will immediately give glory to God. Because his servant could conquer envy by rejoicing in the merits of others, God will be praised.³²⁹

And, of course, there’s time. A day later I looked at the post and shrugged. It’s a mood. It comes, it goes. Sometimes all I need is a reminder that [patience is required](#) in different seasons of life.

At any rate, it became clear what I should be doing for Lent. I’d long forgotten to say the daily decade of the Rosary or to get to Friday afternoon Stations of the Cross. For the first time, this year, I hadn’t really given up anything, which was a mistake. I downloaded [this little book](#), and I will work at transforming envy into good-will.

I’ll fix my eyes more firmly on the cross this Lent. Death, after all, is the great equalizer. The green of envy pales as its pettiness is glimpsed through an eternal lens.

*** (numbers and notes preserved for convenience)**

This contribution is available at <http://www.carolynastfalk.com/2016/03/07/the-wearin-o-the-green-envy/>
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A Belated Thank You: Thief on the Cross [at Theologyisaverb]



In reading the passages from Luke today on the way of the cross and crucifixion of Jesus, **(Lk 23: 26-49)** I was struck with gratitude for the thief on the cross beside Christ. Mocked, insulted and shamed- Jesus endured not only the painful, sorrowful physical pain of the cross but rejection of the people that he loved and came to save. There were those like Simeon, Veronica and of course his mother Mary who were present along the way of the cross to offer strength, tenderness, and comfort. Yet, it was the unexpected conversion of the thief that was there beside Christ in those last moments. His witness of faith is to me a gift to our Savior, a beautiful reminder of the redeeming potential of mankind.

Over the years, I have heard many scoff at the thief on the cross, as I am sure they would have done in his day. "So sad to see how his life turned out, he was brought up in the faith you know. I heard he asked the priest to come at the end...guess that is between him and God." Yes, and still this holds true for each and every one of us. One glimpse at the story at the woman to be stoned and the heaviness of the stone in our hands, the weight of our sins, should remind us of the profound unmerited gift of salvation.

So what differentiated the thief on the cross and the other criminal hanging there? Awareness and Repentance.

First, the thief on the cross was attentive to who he believed Jesus to be- in light of an intimate unique relationship to God. Saying to the other criminal beside him, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation?" **(Lk 23:40)** Here too, the thief acknowledges his own sin, unworthiness, and deserved punishment. In the considered opinion of the world, there was no redemption, no more chances, this was the end. Yet, the thief also confesses an understanding that Jesus' kingdom was not of this world and a new desire to belong to Christ. "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." **(Lk 23:42)**

Wait..there was still hope? Was it truly possible to trade the consequences for his decisions, the weight of his shame for a place in God's kingdom that very day? And, "He replied to him, 'Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'" **(Lk 23:43)** The beauty of Christ's victory over death reminds us

of the ever present reality of the eternal promise of life. Yet, as God's divine love and mercy are always more than we could ever conceive, gratefully we are reminded that God has yet to give up on any of us. So, to the thief on the cross I would like to say thank you.

“Thank you for witnessing that not one spiritual journey is ever the same. Called to conversion, continually, we are a people always in need of a Savior. Though in mankind's eyes your profession of faith might be considered last minute... it is in truth timeless. It is truly a graced beneficiary of the unrestrained and limitless love of a Father- who time has no hold upon.”

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth".

This contribution is available at <http://theologyisaverb.com/2016/03/21/a-belated-thank-you-thief-on-the-cross/>
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12 Books to Read When You're Considering Catholicism [at Catholic Cravings]

Catholic Conversion Stories

One of the best ways to understand why and how to become Catholic is to follow those who have done it before you. Enter Catholic converts. These three books of my favourite Catholic conversion stories.

- [Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic](#) by David Currie — My favourite Protestant-to-Catholic conversion story, if only because it was the one that tipped me over the edge into the Catholic Church. It's clear, charitable, and compelling. What more can you ask?
- [Something Other Than God: How I Passionately Sought Happiness and Accidentally Found It](#) by Jennifer Fulwiler — A very different style of Catholic conversion story, this time from atheism. It's the perfect complement to Currie's book with much more on suffering, sexual ethics, and the general messiness of life.
- [On Being Catholic](#) by Thomas Howard — Not strictly a conversion story but the author was a convert from Protestantism and immerses you into the Catholic worldview in a way few other books can. His chapter on the saints blew my mind.

Catholic-Protestant Debates

Along with personal stories, you also need to really dig into the differences between Catholics and Protestants. Why did the Reformation happen? I'd focus on the three most controversial issues between Catholics and Protestants: the authority of the Church, justification by faith alone, and the role of Mary, the Mother of God.

Catholic Prayer

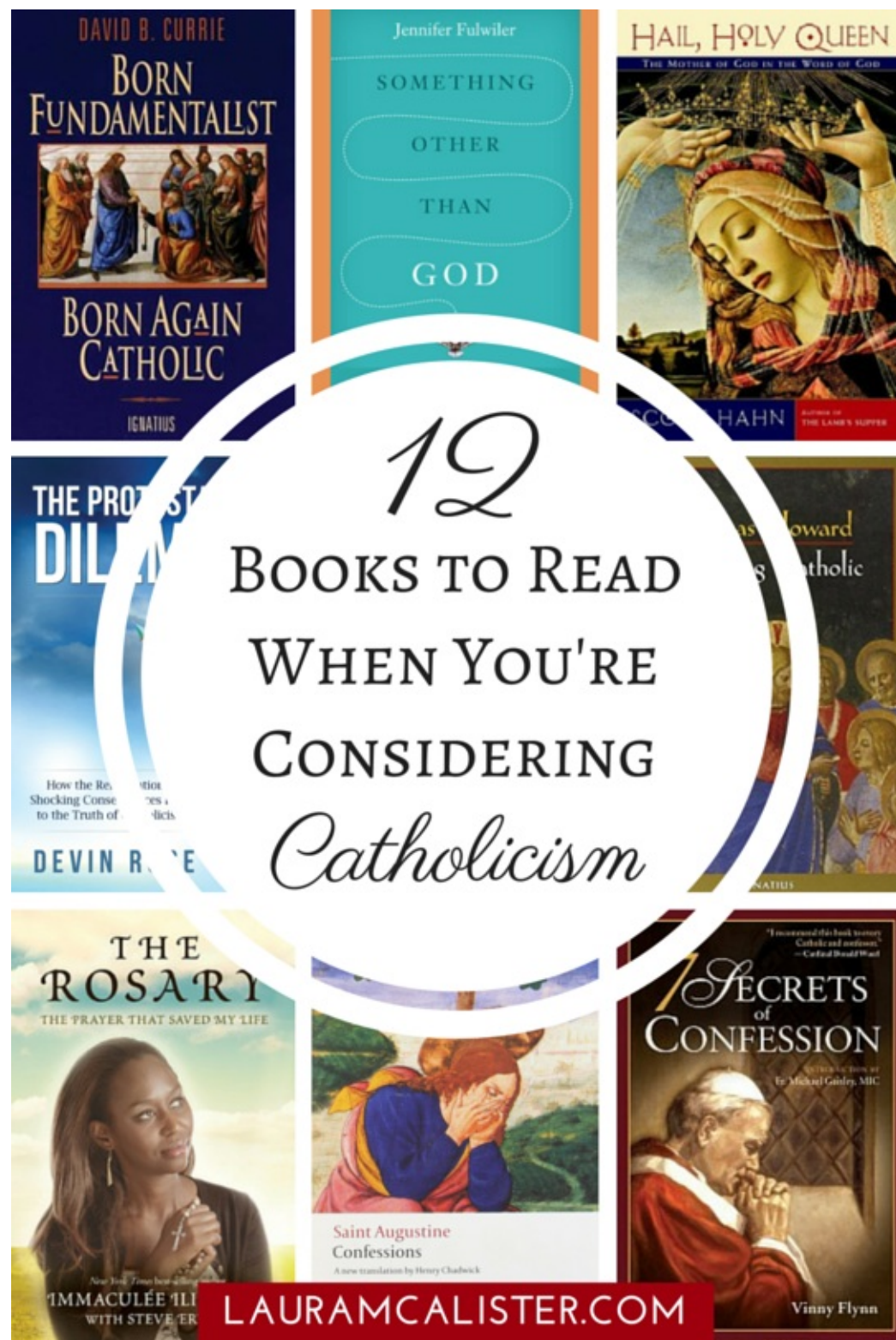
The sacraments are the heart of the Catholic life. The two most familiar sacraments for Catholics are the Eucharist and Confession. They are our spiritual food and spiritual cleansing. So you'll want to cover both of them. Plus, you need the most quintessentially Catholic prayer, the Rosary.

- [Eucharist](#) by Fr Robert Barron — If you want a book on the Eucharist, you need a priest and you can't get much better than the superb Fr Barron. If you want more on the Eucharist, it's worth checking out [Jesus and the Jewish Origins of the Eucharist](#) for how the Mass fits in the fulfillment of the Old Testament.
- [7 Secrets of Confession](#) by Vinny Flynn — Confession is one of the harder sacraments to understand and it's even harder to practice well!
- [The Rosary: The Prayer That Saved My Life](#) by Immaculée Ilibagiza — I'd recommend this book out of the many on the Rosary because it *really* shows the power of the Rosary, even in the midst of the Rwandan genocide.

Catholic Spiritual Classics

Finally, you need to get into some Catholic classics. When you're considering Catholicism, it's important not to stuck on intellectual arguments but really get into the heart of the Faith.

- [Confessions of St Augustine](#) trans. F. J. Sheed — Peter Kreeft says this is the best translation of St Augustine's Confessions so I trust him.
- [Introduction to the Devout Life](#) by St Francis de Sales — It's hard to pick one spiritual classics but this is the one that revolutionised my life. St Francis manages to be both very 17th Century and very relevant in teaching the timeless truths of the Catholic Faith with real gentleness and clarity. Yeah, I'm a Salesian fangirl at heart!
- [Life of Christ](#) by Ven. Fulton Sheen — He might not be be a saint yet but give him a few decades and he'll probably be one. Either way, his writings are an absolute must for thoughtful Catholics.



12
BOOKS TO READ
WHEN YOU'RE
CONSIDERING
Catholicism

LAURAMCALISTER.COM

This contribution is available at <http://www.lauramcalister.com/2016/03/11/12-books-considering-catholicism/>
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Thankful February! [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



Thankful on February 1st, we left for Texas!!



Backpacks and suitcases packed!



Watching the airplanes



Thankful for the Beach house we are staying in!

Last year, we stayed in a condo....boy this year has been so much better in a house!

We have room to move around, room to have privacy, and it's just better to have a house!

(especially with 6 kids)



Thankful for our car rentals!

I haven't driven a car since before children!

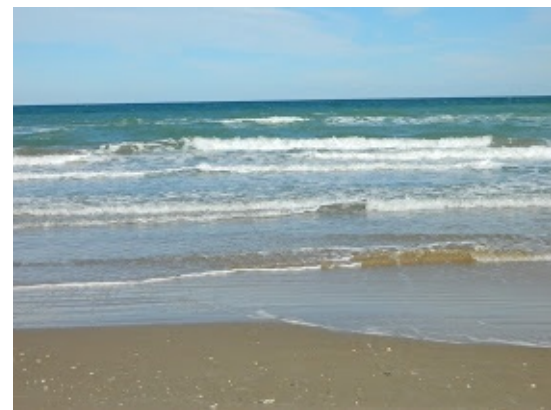
(that's 16 years)

I'm loving this cool little car!

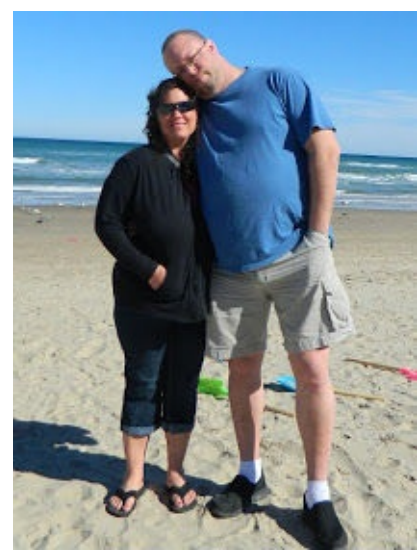
(we had to rent 2 cars to fit us all)



Thankful we are just a block from the beach and can head out there every day!



Cutest little bird feeder. Ever.



Thankful for hole digging



and shell finding.

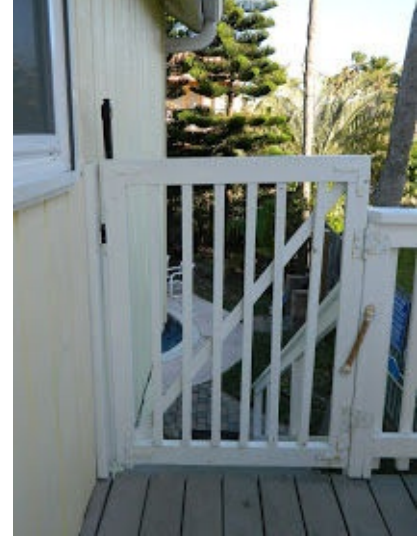


Thankful for Texas Grapefruit!!

It is SO good!!

(sweet and juicy!)





Thankful our beach house has a high lock



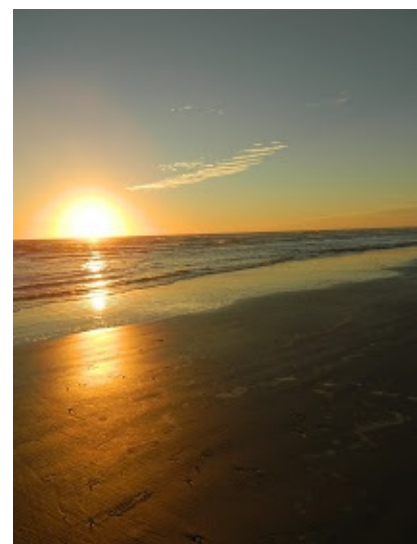
It makes having a heated saltwater pool, worry-free!



(the hot tub is not on, he thinks it's *his* own little pool)



Thankful we still have hot cocoa!
(little kiddos get cold after the pool!)



Thankful for sunrises



and my sunrise walking partner!

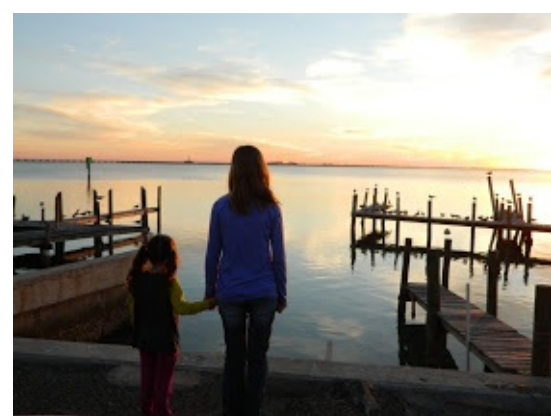


(and our tag-alongs!)





Thankful for freckles on girls....



Thankful for sunsets



Thankful for sun-kissed kiddos!



Thankful



Her masterpiece!

She worked for 2 hours making this one!



Thankful for games on our porch!
(you know I love porches!)





The kids love the porch too!



Suuuperman!!

Thankful to see my kids be so care-free!

This is my favorite video!



Thankful to be able to see my kids love each other so much.



Thankful for my in-laws that made this trip possible.

Thankful to be able to feel God's Love and Peace within our hearts,
and to see His beauty and goodness down here on South Padre Island!

When Was The Last Time You Really Looked At A Crucifix? [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

Be sure to visit Allison at [Reconciled To You](#) and Elizabeth at [Theology Is A Verb](#) during the rest of the week. You will find much spiritual nourishment and encouragement there.

When Was The Last Time You Really Looked At A Crucifix?

(Originally posted August 2, 2015)

There are still Catholics (albeit their numbers are dwindling) who attend Mass on Sunday, even though some of them often complain that Mass is boring and/or that they get nothing out of it.

Let me ask two questions.

When was the last time you really looked at a crucifix? I mean really gazed at one and pondered the realities it depicts.

When was the last time you went to Mass and reminded yourself that you were about to spend time at the foot of Jesus' cross?

If you have never done either of these exercises or it has been some time since you did, take a few minutes today to read and meditate on the following reflections of Father Raymond and author John Lynch.

Then when you next go to Church, arrive a few minutes earlier than normal. Gaze upon the crucifix and recall what is about to take place at the Altar of Sacrifice.

“You have never looked upon a crucifix and seen what the early Christians saw. They had seen men nailed!

*‘They'd seen them, twisting, sinking of their own
Weight pulled upon the nails; with tongues extended,
Heads that swung in torture side to side,
That lifted up and cried for death in babbled
Spurts of sound. They'd seen them. They had seen
Men nailed . . .’*

So must we look - until we see! For this is the Mass - the only important thing in all the world! This sacrilege which wrought salvation. We must look as Mary looked. We must stand as Mary stood.”

(From *God, A Woman and The Way* by Rev. M. Raymond, O.C.S.O. wherein Father includes the italicized excerpt from *A Woman Wrapped in Silence* by John Lynch)

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2016/03/worth-revisiting-wednesday-when-was.html>
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Who's a Christian: of Trump, the Pope, and the Benefit of the Doubt [at God-Haunted Lunatic]



“I don’t want to belong to any club that would accept me as one of its members.”

~ [Groucho Marx](#)

We’ve already grown accustomed to it – almost come to expect it. Pope Francis travels overseas, and at some point in his informal chats with journalists, he drops a verbal bombshell that screams across headlines the next day. We grin, shake our heads, and wait for the inevitable spin.

The most recent example took place on the Holy Father’s flight back to Rome from Mexico. His visit there included a stop at the U.S. border and a call for greater hospitality toward immigrants, which gave rise to some pointed criticism from presidential candidate Donald Trump. The Holy Father, speaking to reporters on his plane, alluded to Trump’s policy proposal to build an impenetrable fence along the border and suggested that those who prefer building walls to building bridges are not Christian.

That’s the part that [played in the press](#), and the Pope’s follow-up comment that he gives such people the “benefit of the doubt” was lost in the shuffle. Unsurprisingly, Trump shot back that it’s outrageous for any religious leader to judge the faith of an individual believer, and his supporters seemed to agree, for



Trump’s campaign, far from being damaged by Francis’s remark, took a bump in the polls. The negative fallout fell primarily on the Pope’s defenders who had to expend a bunch of effort squaring what the Holy Father *seemed* to say with what he apparently *meant* to say.

And what did he mean to say? From everything I’ve read, Pope Francis was merely attempting a

commonsense observation that those who call themselves Christians don't always act accordingly. In this case, the Holy Father also seemed to assert that a particular approach to solving highly complex issues of immigration and human rights, law and economics is *required* of those who claim to be Christian – at least *Catholic* Christians, anyway – and he implied that Trump was falling short.

That might be, but does that make Trump any less a Christian than you or me? The record is clear that the Republican front-runner grew up and was confirmed in the Presbyterian Church, and it's a faith tradition he still identifies with. Consequently, Trump is unquestionably a baptized and professed member of the Body of Christ, and, by definition, my brother in the Lord – and yours.

Perhaps that makes you squirm – you're not alone! Candidate Trump (not to mention Private Citizen Trump) has flouted commonly accepted Gospel values in word and deed so many times and in so many ways that it would be nigh impossible to catalog them all. Large sectors of the electorate find it unthinkable that this man might become President – as it's unthinkable, for some of us, that *any* of the remaining candidates from *either* party might achieve that goal – but that's beside the point.

Of greater interest to me is the Trump phenomenon as a case study in our understanding of Christianity itself – of who's in and who's out. Consider these words of [Msgr. Romano Guardini](#): “The great revolution of faith is not a lump of reality fallen ready-made from heaven into our laps,” he wrote. “It is a constant act of my individual heart and strength.” That is, for Trump, for you, for me, Christianity is a religion of constant conversion that commences with our baptismal grafting into the vine of Christ, but which recurs daily, constantly, every moment even. There's no resting on our laurels, no plateaus. Once we think we've finally “arrived” is precisely the moment we've essentially removed ourselves from the taproot of grace. Either we're growing in Christ, or we're dying – maybe even dead.

The worst-case scenario is when we delude ourselves into thinking that we *are* growing when we're not – that we're very much alive when we're actually on the way out. Here, too, Guardini offers insight:

Woe to me if I say: “I am a Christian” – possibly with a side-glance at others who in my opinion are not, or at an age that is not, or at a cultural tendency flowing in the opposite direction. Then my so-called Christianity threatens to become nothing but a religious form of self-affirmation.

Ours is an “already/not yet” religion – both fixed and fluid. When we formally embrace the faith through sacrament and interior assent, we can “already” legitimately call ourselves Christians. However, that's only the beginning, and we're compelled by the knowledge that we're “not yet” saints to continually conform ourselves to Jesus.

Your parish's candidates and catechumens are learning about this in their Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) classes. They're very much looking forward to receiving Easter sacraments and making their profession of faith on Holy Saturday – at which point they'll “already” be Catholics – but they're also anticipating an ongoing formation and deepening of understanding that will follow. It's called the “post-baptismal catechesis,” or *mystagogy* – a reference to the further unveiling of those “mysteries” of



grace that the new Christians (“neophytes”) will have received on Easter. “This is a time for the community and the neophytes together to grow in deepening their grasp of the paschal mystery,” the [RCIA](#) reads, “and in making it part of their lives.”

Now, for those neophytes, mystagogy instruction will last until Pentecost or thereabouts, but will they be done then? No, of course not – no more than you and I are ever “done” with regards to our own Christian walks. In that sense, all of us are perpetually in the mystagogy period of faith.

And that includes Donald Trump – along with most of the slate of presidential candidates. If you’re like me, you’ve just about had it with all the vitriol and carping that goes on in the news and on the internet regarding this election. Next time you heave an exasperated sigh as you switch off whatever gizmo had been feeding you Trump’s latest outrage, say a prayer for the guy – it can’t hurt, right?

If Pope Francis can give him the benefit of the doubt, so can I. In any case, I certainly hope that same benefit applies to me.

This contribution is available at <http://godhauntedlunatic.wordpress.com/2016/03/13/whos-a-christian-of-trump-the-pope-and-the-benefit-of-the-doubt/>
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Remembering the Lord's Supper [at Grace to Paint]



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

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2016/03/24/the-lords-supper/>
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One Day at a Time [at The Baby Loss Club]



I open my eyes, and I immediately realise that nothing has changed overnight. There is still a huge ache in my chest, and one all-consuming thought in my mind: Thomas. Although it is still very early- the sun has hardly risen – I know I have to get up. If I stay in bed, I will start to think about my baby. I will wonder if I will survive Thomas’ death and the tears will again begin to flow. I don’t want to start the day in a melancholy mood without hope, so I swing my legs over the side of the bed and get moving.

I shower and dress and eat breakfast automatically, and soon I find myself standing in the kitchen. A wave of grief sweeps through me, but I set my lips firmly together, and I banish all thoughts of my baby. Instead, I think about washing the dishes.

But a voice says, “Give in. Cry!”

And the tears start to seep from my eyes.

“Who can be expected to shoulder this burden? It’s too much. No one cares that you’re hurting so much. Give in. It will never get any better.”

The tears are flowing freely now, and I sob. I want to sink to the floor, allowing my misery to overcome me. I want to cry, “It’s all too difficult. I’ve had enough.” I want to despair.

But I don’t.

I start to say, “Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in the battle. Be our protection against the malice and the snares of the devil...”

I put one foot in front of the other and keep going, and somehow I make it through this difficult moment. I call upon St Michael the Archangel many times, and I keep moving through the day until it finally ends.

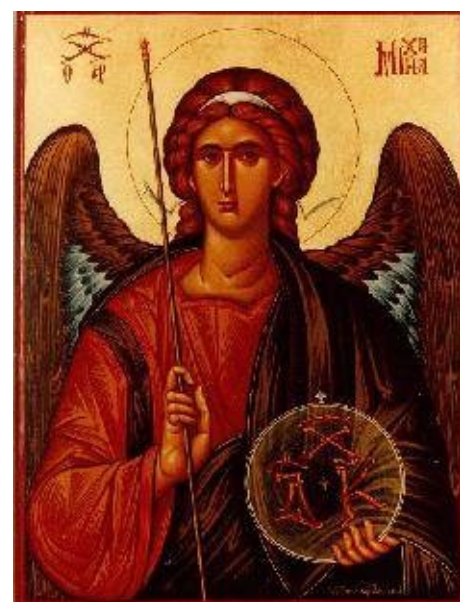
As I climb into bed, I think about the next day and the next and the next. How long will I have to keep

struggling through this dark grief-filled world? Will it really get any better?

And then I realise something. I have survived another day.

I hear a voice, “Don’t look ahead. Take one day at a time. That’s all you have to do. You’re doing well.”

And I reply, “Jesus, I trust in you.”



Saint Michael the Archangel,

defend us in the battle.

Be our protection against the malice and snares of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray;

and do Thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host,

by the Divine Power of God,

cast into hell Satan and all the other evil spirits

who roam through the world seeking the ruin of souls.

This contribution is available at <http://thebabylossclub.blogspot.com.au/2016/03/one-day-at-time.html>
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Do you believe that Jesus Christ promised to lead the Church unto the end of the world? [at Catholic365]

Protestants say that they believe in Jesus Christ and in Scripture. But not that the Catholic Church is infallible. In fact, they don't believe that any Church is infallible. Not even their own. What is it that they are missing?

As for me, I think it is a lack of faith in Jesus Christ. Let me explain. Do you believe these things? Yes or no?

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is God? Yes or no.
2. Do you believe that Jesus Christ established the Church? Yes or no.
3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ gave the Church, His Word? Yes or no.
4. Do you believe that Jesus Christ commanded the Church to proclaim His Word? Yes or no.
5. Do you believe that Jesus Christ promised to lead the Church unto the end of the world? Yes or no.

If you believe all those things, then, the logical conclusion is that you believe your Church is infallible, because Christ is infallible. But, if you answered, "yes" to all those questions, but you don't believe that your Church is infallible, then you don't really believe in Christ. Or you don't believe that Christ is guiding your Church. Or you don't believe Scripture. There's something wrong with your faith.

Isaiah 55:10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Jesus said that He would be with the Church forever. Do you understand the word, "forever"? It's the opposite of "sometimes". That means that Jesus is leading the Church and guiding the Church and Teaching through the Church. That means that whatever the Catholic Church Teaches, is what Christ commanded the Church to Teach.

Conclusion

If you claim to believe in Jesus Christ, then believe in the Catholic Church. Because Jesus Christ instituted the Catholic Church and speaks through Her to this day.

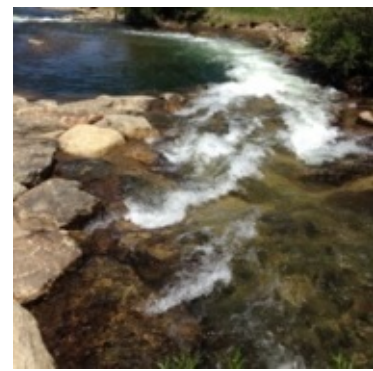
This contribution is available at <http://www.catholic365.com/article/3776/do-you-believe-that-jesus-christ-promised-to-lead-the-church-unto-the-end-of-the-world.html>
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Same Either Way [at A Spiritual Journey]

Whether you receive unexpected joy or sorrow, Jesus is drawing you closer to him.

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2016/03/same-either-way.html>
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The Two Necessary Lifetime Journeys We All Need To Make! [at A Moment From De Sales]



During our lifetime, Jesus invites us to make—**with Him**—two important journeys. The first is Jesus’ pre-resurrection walk to Jerusalem, a journey filled with fearfulness about His future and much squabbling with and among His disciples.

Jesus spent most of His three-year ministry preparing Himself for His entrance through the imposing gates of Jerusalem. Although Jesus always knew He had to enter that city, He also realized that when He did—He would die on the cross for all of us. This journey had to fill Jesus with both anxiety and apprehension—each step and every mile of the way to Jerusalem.

Besides these interior misgivings, Jesus faced other challenges. His disciples quarreled about earthly power, including such matters as sitting in like the special seat at Jesus’ right hand. And not too much later, Jesus had a strong confrontation with Peter.

As you may remember, Peter didn’t want Jesus to enter Jerusalem if it meant danger. Rather, Peter, always protective, suggested Jesus not go. Jesus exasperated, by all their lack of understanding, snapped at Peter.

“Get behind me Satan. You are a stumbling block to me; you surely don’t have in mind the concerns of God, but merely the things of men...” Matthew 16:23.

Sounds harsh, yet Jesus wanted to be forceful to remind His disciples then and now that passing through a “Jerusalem-like” experience as He was about to do is—in all of our lives.

He wanted us to grasp that discipleship came with a steep price. We may be rejected, falsely accused, not believed, or even destroyed in some form or another. The clear message was that these same occurrences might one day be ours.

Jesus, as we know, promised another ending to all this pain. He rose up from His torture and abandonment to live again at home with His loving Father; and, as we believe, the same ending was is ours too.

The Second journey is more about enlightenment than sorrow. This is Jesus’ post-resurrection journey to Emmaus and in His meeting with His despairing and disgruntled disciples.

These pilgrims are upset because they saw Jesus die on the cross in Jerusalem. Walking with these disappointed disciples Jesus asked, “Why are you troubled?” Well, they told Him, they believed Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, but He died and now they know it can’t be true. Jesus listened and then explained through the Scriptures how this had to be true.

Listening to Jesus’ explanations, these wayfarers’ hearts burned with delight with every word spoken. Later, while He ate a meal with them, they saw it was Jesus, the Savior.

Jesus had risen, they now believed He had risen, and they rushed back to Jerusalem to tell the others. These Emmaus Road travelers had become true believers, because of this meeting with Jesus and their breaking bread with Him. Then, they began to spread the Good News to all they met. They were now witnesses for the Risen Jesus Christ.

This is why we need to walk these same roads in our lifetime. We journey through struggles, disappointment and doubt to pass through our Jerusalem. Once through, however, we head for Emmaus to understand what Jesus is all about, and Jesus unfolds it all for us.⁴

On these journeys with Jesus as our guide, we transform our lives and witness with our lives—the Jesus—who lived through Jerusalem and begs us to follow Him all the way to Emmaus and finally to His home—where Jesus resides happily with His father.

This contribution is available at <http://livetodaywell.org/>
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This Is My Body [at Little Douglings]

"Are you sure you're not having twins?"

It's the question you might think I'd get from a stranger, but I find it's the question I ask myself as I look in the mirror and then I reply... to myself, "Nope, that was the last pregnancy."

It's days like these that I have to do some serious reflecting to pull myself back to the reality of what it is I'm doing.

Years ago, I was helping out with a retreat. I was expecting my sixth... or seventh... I honestly can't remember, and I was leading a small group of teens, a couple of whom were reluctant to add much to the conversation. I kept praying for this one girl in particular, who appeared to be high maintenance incarnate. She was thin and attractive and had an air of condescension and my heart hurt for her, because I could sense great pain. Near the end of our session, I had just about given up, when a crazy thing happened, there was a huge roar as a great gust of wind blew open a heavy set of metal doors near us. It shook us and when I turned back to the girl, I saw she was sobbing. She let out a wail, "I hate myself!" It was as though the Holy Spirit tore her heart open with the same intensity as the doors beside us. "I can't look at myself in the mirror. I can't eat because I feel so ugly. I'm bulimic and I can't stop because I hate myself. I hate my body. I don't know how to break free from this."

I was stunned. She looked perfect! How could she feel that way? There I was sitting with my swollen face, big belly, stretch marks and puffy feet and in spite of it all, I didn't hate my body. But then it hit me. I knew my worth because I could see myself through the eyes of the One who chose me and formed me. He is the One who loves me and has made me aware of my dignity as His irreplaceable daughter. My mouth opened and a song of the Father's love for His daughter poured out. I don't remember everything I said, but her heart had been opened and I felt like the Holy Spirit was rushing in to assure her of her innate worth and to infuse her with hope and healing. I knew she would have a long journey ahead, but something beautiful had begun within her.

I think about that experience often when I'm feeling like I ate the Goodyear blimp. Pregnancy with all its beauty has been a sacrifice. It seems that every time I work hard to lose weight, I learn I'm pregnant again and while I'm so excited every time, I still have to sigh as I realize I'm not going to fit back into pre pregnancy sized clothes for a very long time. I have stretch marks from the highest point of my belly all the way down. It looks like a tiger was sharpening his claws on my stomach and I have to prepare a farewell speech to my dear friend *Energy* - parting is such sweet sorrow! But I've been given the gift of understanding that my body has the potential to bring a new, unique, eternal soul, full of unimaginable potential into the world. This sacrifice I'm making (though I may no longer fit the secular world's standard of beauty) is actually what makes me shine in my Father's eyes, and in the eyes of my family.

In a culture that screams, "THIS IS MY BODY, I can do what I want!" I long to be the echo of my Savior's voice, "This is my body, given up for you."

I want to look at my scars and unite them to the marks of a body scourged and given freely so that I might live, "***...By His stripes, we are healed.***" (*Isaiah 53:5*) **Then I could see the stretch marks as**

extraordinarily beautiful, an offering for my babies and a reminder of His love poured out for me. When my back gives out, I want to reflect upon the weight of the cross on Christ... and I can't wait to look into my little one's eyes in a couple of months, knowing that I was willing to hand over my body so that he or she might live, just as my Lord did for me.

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I had the good fortune to be able to go to confession the other day. A part of my penance was to meditate on the Parable of the Prodigal Son (**Luke 15:11-32**). My confessor emphasized that the father in Jesus' story, who extravagantly welcomes back his wastrel son, is the true "prodigal". In the context of Sacrament of Confession we can see a clear identification between this father and the loving and forgiving God, with ourselves as the erring son who, having wasted his father's generosity, returns home chastened and knowing that any any kindness he receives will be more than he deserves. "Father", he says, "I have sinned against Heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (**Luke 15:18**).



There is another son in the story, however, the Good Son, who remained faithfully at home and, as he tells his father, “ 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command” (Luke 15:29). Angry that his erring brother is receiving a huge “welcome back” party, while his father “never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends” (Luke 15:29), the obedient son stubbornly refuses to come in and join the celebration. He is, in fact, still obstinately standing outside the house at the end of Jesus’ parable, and the last thing we see is his father pleading with him “to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:32).

Thinking about this second son, I was reminded of the story of Jonah. I had never before considered how closely Jesus’ parable of the Prodigal Son parallels the last two chapters of the book of Jonah. In the Old Testament book we see the people of Ninevah, like the Prodigal Son himself, whole-heartedly repent, and in turn receive whole-hearted forgiveness. Who could object to that? As it turns out, Jonah could, and does, object:

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the LORD and said, "I pray thee, LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and

repentest of evil. Therefore now, O LORD, take my life from me, I beseech thee, for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:1-3).



Jonah stays angry, at least as far we can see. God tries to soften his heart, first with kindness, by growing a large plant to shield him from the sun; next, a harsher approach, in which he kills the plant and exposes the sulking prophet to the ravages of sun and wind. Jonah's heart is unchanged: "I do well to be angry," he says, "angry enough to die" (Jonah 4:9). The story ends, as does Jesus' parable, with the voice of the Father explaining to his angry son why it is better to show compassion for those who were lost in sin:

"You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:10-11)

In both places, it is left unsaid whether the Father's kindly words eventually pierce the heart of his unforgiving son.

Which brings us back to Luke's Gospel. The parable of the Prodigal Son is the culmination of a series of parables illustrating that, as Jesus says, "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). He is addressing a group of Scribes and Pharisees who were grumbling about Jesus, saying "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). The angry son in the parable is obviously intended to represent Christ's hard-hearted critics.

Scripture, of course, always works on numerous levels, and we can see other meanings in the unforgiving brother as well. As I meditated on this passage I could see myself in this unlovely figure; as much as I can identify with the erring but repentant son, I can also be the judging, unyielding son who refuses to share his Father's joy in the redemption of those who had previously fallen. Sometimes, amazingly, I can be both at once.

In his way, the angry son is the worse sinner. There can be no doubt that the first son has indulged in serious and destructive wrongdoing, but because it's so obvious, and the consequences so inescapable, he

knows he needs to repent. The second son appears to be doing all the right things, and in fact he is . . . on the outside. He is really like (again) the scribes and pharisees, whom Jesus says "are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness" (**Matthew 23:27**). The appearance of probity keeps him from seeing his own sinful heart, and he willingly removes himself from his father's house. Jesus makes the same point with a different parable in Matthew's Gospel:

A man had two sons; and he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he repented and went. And he went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." (Matthew 21:28-31)


This is, I think, a good point to consider as we embark upon Holy Week. It may be that the inspired author of Jonah, and Jesus himself with his parable, finish with a open-ended question, because we, in the person of the (self)righteous son, are being invited to give up our stubbornness and embrace the Father's compassion. All of us need to throw ourselves on the mercy of God, Who in his prodigal love for us gave His only Son to suffer and die for our sins. Who am I to place my judgment over His?

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When the Answer is No [at Veils and Vocations]

This is a post that I hoped I would not have to write, but His Ways are not our ways. His Plan is perfect even when it is not the plan we would every choose for ourselves or our loved ones. Thank you all who have joined me in praying for James Fischer--praying, pleading, begging for a miracle. I know that God could have just spoken a word and James would have awoken, completely healed. He could have easily reached down and performed a mighty miracle. Our God is completely capable, capable beyond our highest of thoughts and our wildest of dreams. But...sometimes the answer is no. Sometimes the yes and the miracle that we are pour our heart and soul into obtaining isn't the one that is what we should seek.



When the Answer Is No

God has healed James in the most profound and complete way possible. His broken body and fallen nature are now completely whole. There is no more pain, there are no more tears, no disappointments, no longings, no regret from missteps or bruises from tumbles along the way. With God there is only peace and love. With Him, there is only truth and justice--sorrow and lies have fallen away. This new dawn for James is one of perpetual light.

Yet, we are hurting. It does not make sense, it seems so wrong! With all the faith and hope, there are still questions and disappointment that our prayers were not answered in the way of our choosing. I do not know why it was Charlie and Bill's son who was involved in that horrific crash--why them, why doting parents, fervent believers, model citizens. I do not know why it was James whose life was cut so short--a young man so full of promise, hard work, and compassion for his family and all those he met. Why God? Why him? Did he not prove his work ethic? Did he not serve you enough? Did you not see how the love for him overflowed from his parents' hearts? Do you not know how desperately they will miss him, how badly they need him home?

Sometimes God's no is a yes in disguise. Losing James will be that hardest road his parents ever walk. Yet, there are fates worse than death. While we hope for years of life here on this earth, we all hope for life eternal after our death. A life lived basking in God's Glory for all eternity is not a defeat, it is a tremendous reward. James lived a life of faith and good works, though his tangible life has ended, there is hope that his soul lives on in peace and joy forever and ever, amen.

Death hurts so much on this side of heaven, because it was never meant to be. How it grieves Our Father,

also. He wished for us to live in tranquility and plenty all the days of our lives, a life without end, without grief or bloodshed. However, sin entered His paradise and a fallen world has become our plight. Death has not won, though. Hell shall not prevail. In His perfect, adorable Plan, God provided for our ungrateful misdeeds and won for each of us a share in His eternal Kingdom.

This is the day that the LORD sacrificed His only Son for us. How terribly he must have wept to watch His Beloved Son suffer so heinously. How truly pierced was the heart of His mother, who surely begged for a miracle to save her only Son. Yet, through that terrible tragedy the greatest victory of creation was won, the gates of heaven were opened once more that none should perish.

There still are no words to take this hurt away, no consolation that will act as a balm for the hearts who loved James. All there is is hope in our eternal inheritance and faith that God is in control and He has already won. Death has been vanquished. The overwhelming sting of loss is conquered by the endless mercy and depth of compassion that is Our LORD.

Our answer was no...but the LORD has still won, may He heal our hearts, in time, and comfort all our afflictions.

This contribution is available at <http://veilsandvocations.blogspot.com/2016/03/when-answer-is-no.html>
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Teaching Vocations through Family [at Veils and Vocations]

This is the first part of a new series on teaching vocations. I hope that this will help you in your walk of faith and in helping your children find God's Call for their lives. Thank you.



In the Beginning

The family is the very core of Creation. In the beginning, the LORD, Our Father, spoke the words of creation, which were sent forth by the Spirit, the Holy Spouse, in order to bring forth life. All creatures were brought forth into families--male and female together for the propagation and rearing of offspring. God's crowning jewel of Creation was the first family, Adam and Eve who were instructed to go forth and multiply and fill the earth with their children. Family is the heart of all that we believe, so it is no wonder that every vocation is rooted in the context of family.

When we speak of raising our children for vocation, most often that implies the holy vocations of the priesthood, and holy sisters and brothers. However, every child is created and called for a specific vocation. Every child is sent forth by the Father to construct a family in this world and to lead that family into the Heavenly realms of the next.

Marriage was the first vocation instituted by God. Adam and Eve were given to each other in service and love for the purpose of producing offspring for the LORD. There were no priests before the Fall, for the LORD God walked throughout the Garden of Eden. Man for the first and last time since the dawn of time, could freely meet with God face to face. Adam and Eve's purpose was not only to serve each other, but to lead each other in praise and obedience to God. Their children were meant to be raised up for Heaven and to spread the perfect Love of the Father to the ends of the earth. However, instead they were tempted, turned from God to self, and were forever banished from paradise. Marriage is still a holy and worthy vocation, it is necessary for the Church here on earth to continue and for saints to be brought forth to guide us in this journey, and then stand with the LORD in Heaven.

Once man was cast out and stained with sin, the doors of Heaven were locked and the face of God concealed. Thus, the vocation of the priesthood arose. Priests in the Old Covenant were the people's one link to God, their only means of communicating with their Creator. Priests now are ministers of the mercy and grace of Christ, who celebrate the ultimate sacrifice each day for the Church, the Body of Christ, the

family of the Living God. Priests are wed to the Holy Mother Church. Their vocation is to bring forth spiritual children and raise them up for the Kingdom, teaching them to serve God and man. Priests must sacrifice, just as any spouse does, their will for the good of the other. They must be fruitful and multiply in spiritual terms, shepherding their flock. This is why they are called "father."

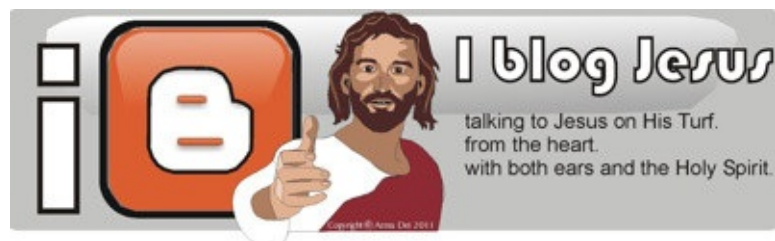
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6 Steps for a Lifelong Confession [at Equipping Catholic Families]

Originally published on [my secret blog](#) in 2012, 10 years after my lifelong confession



I was speaking with my spiritual director and confessor. Almost as an afterthought, I told him that sometimes I didn't feel forgiven, even after confession. He explained that it was possible to be overscrupulous...but he also mentioned *the lifelong confession*.

I knew instantly that I was being called to do this...and it was terrifying.

I spent the next 2 months preparing for a lifelong confession...not because anyone should necessarily take two months to prepare, but because the only confessor I could imagine asking...was the one who had suggested it...and he lived 4 hours away. We booked my lifelong confession for a retreat that he would be chaplain at.



I prayed. I reflected. I asked the Lord to show me what I needed to confess...and boy, did He.

I remembered things from a long time ago...and other things that I had probably already confessed...loosely, vaguely, conveniently omitting frequency or severity.

I wrote everything down, especially if I wasn't sure if I had confessed properly before.

I remember crossing the threshold into the room where I was to have my lifelong confession.

As I stepped through the doorway, I looked down at my shoes and I was thinking “I can still turn around and run!”. It was kind of how I felt every time I walked into the hospital to have a baby...a little anxious and fearful; only then...running away wasn't an option.

It wasn't easy...in fact it was one of the hardest things I have ever done...to speak, out loud, a bunch of things that I was ashamed of. I had never been so deliberate or specific or thorough ...during confession.



I can still feel how incredibly, awesomely relieved I felt **after** that confession. I understood the Mercy of God and the power of **confession monumentally, unbelievably, giant-steps bigger** in the absolution of that confession, than I had ever felt or understood before. It really took.

Things that I had felt mortifyingly embarrassed and ashamed about, have been released from my guilt. I know it's the Mercy of God, and Jesus' humongous Suffering and Death on the cross that gives us the incredible gift of confession and ability to erase our sin...but there is no doubt in my mind that I paid the little tiny price...as big as I could offer by humbling myself in front of a priest, a friend who I love and respect so much. This was no anonymous confession.

I think being prepared and having true contrition are conditions for confession (I've been trying to look up the exact wording, but I can't find it). I don't think I could have been more prepared or more (mortifyingly!) sorry. No detachment, but full accountability ...and in return I received Jesus' Love and Mercy... **just for me.**

My confession was one of the most powerful experiences of God's Love that I've ever had.

It almost made my heart stop to do it, but I wouldn't have changed a thing.

And that list I wrote of my past sins? I destroyed it. I would have set it on fire if it wouldn't have set the sprinklers off at the hotel where the retreat was.

Feeling called to lifelong confession?

1. Pray about it. Are you being called to do a life-long confession?
2. Talk to a priest and book an appointment. You should probably give him the heads-up that this would be a **life-long confession**. This is **not** a 5-minutes-before-Mass-starts-and-there-are-people-waiting-in-line-behind-you kind of confession.
3. Spend time in prayer, in preparation for this special confession. **Ask the Lord to help you**

remember everything that you need to confess.

4. Write it down...but you might want to keep that list hidden or use short form that only you will understand.
5. **Be open to God's Grace, His Infinite Mercy and His Unconditional Love for you. Remember that you are unconditionally loved by God ...and sustained at every moment by His Grace.....** no matter **what** you have to confess to Jesus, through a priest. Priests are AWESOME and compassionate and have **the power through Jesus** to free you from whatever you need to be freed from.
6. **Go to confession. Have a blessed Lent!**

If you have read all the way to the end of this post or if you have been affected by this post, please leave a comment.

Just checking if anyone is reading this. =)

This contribution is available at <http://www.equippingcatholicfamilies.com/2016/03/lifelong-confession.html>
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10 Sins That Must Be Confessed [at GADEL.info]



You can't receive the Eucharist if you've:

- 1) Missed a weekend or Holy Day Mass without a valid reason
- 2) Having sex outside of marriage, with yourself (masturbation) or someone else
- 3) desecrated the Eucharist
- 4) haven't been to confession in a year
- 5) Use artificial birth control – condoms, pills, patches, IUD's, etc
- 6) sponsor or help in any way with an abortion or any destruction of an embryo
- 7) Murder
- 8) Hate/Anger
- 9) Lust after someone
- 10) Pride, Greed, Sloth, Envy

etc. etc. The list is not exhaustive, and any sin that we have meditated on before hand, understood its gravity and still chosen to do it can be a deadly sin.

Blogger Note ([Courageous Priest website](#)): Numbers 8 through 10 would depend mostly upon the gravity of the sin.

C.C.C. 1857 For a *sin* to be *mortal*, three conditions must together be met: “Mortal sin is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.”¹³¹

1 Corinthians 11:27 ²⁷ Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord.

Don't step out of bounds...and by all means...if you do...get back in bounds through confession! Don't desecrate the Eucharist and receive it as some sort of prize you've earned simply by showing up for Mass!

By Fr. John Hollowell
Source: [On This Rock](#)

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Easter Wonder [at bukas palad]



Year C / Eastertide / Easter Sunday

Readings: Acts 10.34a, 37-43/ Psalm 117.1-2, 16-17, 22-23 (R/v 24) / Colossians 3.1-4 / John 20.1-9

When I was five years old, my Mom and Dad gifted me with a red tricycle for my birthday. I had pined for one for the longest time. My Dad named it “Speedy”. I would ride “Speedy” every evening when my parents took a walk with us, their children around the neighborhood. I would pedal furiously to race ahead of them. Fast and far I would ride. And I never worried about falling off my tricycle.

One day, my Dad said it was time to learn to ride a bicycle. He took off the two smaller training wheels that supported the rear wheel. He got me onto my bike. Pushing me forth he said, “Pedal”. I did and “Speedy” moved forward. Then, I wobbled; I was losing my balance. Finally, I fell. Dad encouraged me to try again. Each time I would go a little further; then I’d fall. After a while I feared falling down. But Dad was always there to catch me. In time, I found my balance and my stride, and I rode far and fast.

Experiencing Easter is like learning to cycle: **Easter helps us to learn that we need not fear falling down any more because God is with us and will always hold us safe.** It is the graced time to remember, to celebrate and to believe in our confidence in Easter hope. And this begins in wonder. For me at five, the wonder was that Dad always chased after me to pick me up. For the disciples that first Easter morning, the wonder must have been the sure possibility that Jesus had truly risen from the dead as he said he would.

Indeed, I’d like to believe that wonder allowed John in our gospel story to believe so readily when he entered the empty tomb. He ran with Peter to the tomb; he looked in; he saw Jesus’ burial cloths folded

up, and, taking a deep breath, he believed.

We are here because we also believe that Jesus has risen from the dead; he has overcome death, trampling it down by death itself. Our Eastertide will see us rejoicing in our belief in the risen Jesus. We will sing Alleluia over and over in the next fifty days in a seemingly unending joyful refrain. Our Alleluias resound our wonder at the beauty as well as the incomprehensibility of Jesus' Resurrection. Such is Easter wonder.

Easter wonder happens when we allow ourselves to be disarmed by God's surprising action in our lives and we respond to it with reverent awe. When we dare to let ourselves wonder about God, we'll find ourselves honestly admitting that we cannot comprehend God with our minds. We'll know God and understand God's actions in a different way: with our hearts.

John saw the folded burial cloths; he believed Jesus had arisen as he said he would. John believed with his heart. And it did not matter that he had not yet fully understood Scripture and why Jesus had to rise from the dead.

John's way of knowing reveals a hidden humble faith. It is a belief founded on wonder: **the wonder to see God's surprising action and to believe it is for our good.**

When we are in love, love colours everything we see, we know, we believe in, we do. Wonder has the same hold on us: wonder allows all things, believes all things. Indeed, such wonder allows us to acknowledge all miracles, including Jesus' resurrection, as John did. And, the amazement a five year old has when he successfully rides his bicycle without falling for the first time.

Such wonder says, "Yes." It does not demand certitude of knowledge or sureness of reason or confidence of logic. Instead, it simply and trustingly says, "Yes, why not?"

It is when we allow such wonder to seize us that we will let God be God when the beauty of Easter dawns in our hearts and breaks them open. Then our human fear that we are sinful and damned is overwhelmingly embraced and calmed by God's mercy. This is our blessed assurance for we are still God's beloved and worthy for salvation.

In this moment, who among us here cannot believe that God who is still incomprehensible is truly magnificent, extravagant, and always loving? How can this be? Because wonder humbles us to be amazed by God's marvels in us and around us. Wonder moves us to say, "You are God, you can do all things", even break the bonds of pain and death for us, forever.

And it is wonder that brings us to that startling realization that the holes and marks of Jesus' passion in his risen body are not disfigurements. Rather, they are the ever-present channels of God's divine mercy to redeem us always for eternal life.

Now, if all it took John was the wonder of glimpsing the folded burial cloths to believe, what will it take you and me this Easter to better understand the Christian truth that Jesus is risen and we are redeemed by God's favor?

I'd like to suggest that it will take us each a moment to pause amidst today's celebrations and to begin savoring the joy of this Easter reality: that "when Jesus came into our midst to redeem us, he descended so low that after that no one would be able to fall without falling into him" (Hans Urs von Balthasar).

As Pope Francis preached in his Easter Vigil homily this year, this reality of being saved by Jesus expresses the foundation of our Christian hope—that Jesus died for us so that God may rise us with him. Yes, "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).

Maybe when we claim this truth as our own true wonder of Easter, you and I can better ride the multicolored bicycles of our lives. We can ride them to go as fast and as far as we want to. And we can do this confidently because **Easter reminds us again that whenever we fall, we'll only fall into the hands of the risen Jesus who will raise us up to live fully and happily.**

Now isn't this sense of Easter wonder God's gracious gift for us to live in hope and joy?

Inspired in parts by the Monks of Spencer

Preached at St Ignatius Church, Singapore

Photo: from jupadilha.blogspot.com

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Good Friday Thoughts [at Miss Alexandrina]

Although the days passed quickly this year, we are approaching the end of Lent with Easter Sunday and the Resurrection of Christ. This year especially, I have noticed that, even though I've been busy with my dissertation and still more essays this year, I have drawn closer to Christ. Not through prayer or alms-giving or abstinence, as I would have expected and have tried to utilise, but through my thoughts and observations.

So, for 7 Quick Takes Friday, I'd share some of the realisations and feelings this Lent has delivered to me.

1. Giving

Something I wish I'd been truly aware (instead of just knowing it, but feeling it too) of before this year is how much God is always there, always permeating our lives. I've been following the CATHOD blog since the genesis of this little blog, and I am enjoying their series at the moment about the challenges their volunteers have been doing as part of Lent, including things like cutting down the amount of water they use per day as solidarity for those in low income countries who have to walk miles daily just to get dirty water.

Only the last couple of days has it hit me that giving during isn't just involving others; giving can be giving one's self challenges to make one conscious of how much luxury the first world situation is. Maybe I can try and do something challenging, like cut down the amount of washing I do. I am sure I can live more cost-effective and world-aware.

2. Fasting

Today has been one of my best days fasting that I have had. I don't tend to fast except on days of obligation, but to focus the mind on God, it might be good to fast more often. I think I could do it tomorrow as well. I put on a nice dress, had a shower – I even walked 3 miles! What's wrong with not eating?

3. Abstinence

I am definitely considering trying to make my Fridays permanently meat-free (as well as my usual Thursdays and Wednesdays). I mean, I can't afford much meat as a student anyway, but limiting the amount of meat I buy can be beneficial for the environment and my giving up something I like on a long-term basis will help me to think of those who have no choice with their diets.

The only complications are when visiting friends and my tendency to have pizza on Fridays (and pizza is just bland without meat 😊).

4. Respect

Having not been to a proper Triduum before, I was surprised by the feet-washing part of the liturgy for the Celebration of the and the little note in today's Mass saying "If you would like, like may follow the ancient tradition of removing your shoes before the Cross." Surprised, but delighted, though. One of the reasons I was drawn to the Catholic Church is because I have always been naturally traditionally-minded.

I took off my shoes. Not just because it's something different, but because of how it made me feel in relation to the Cross. Taking my shoes off meant respecting the ground on which Christ walked, setting God apart from mortals. It meant showing belief with my whole body, not just my voice and my mind.

5. **Community**

What's more, this Lent has brought me closer to the Church community. Not just with those I know from Sunday Mass and the musicians and readers there, but also the strangers I have sat next to these last couple of days. They're not the people I would normally spend time with – or even see in daily life – but we know we are united through Christ, and that can bring a sense of community to anyone.

6. **Peace**

With each service, reading, performance I am part of, I feel closer and closer to God this time of the year. With it is a sense of Peace, that post-Eucharist floatiness, a mix of prayerfulness and quiet. Of all the emotions, this is the one that hits me the greatest after Mass, but I honestly could not wish for more.

7. **Sorrow**

Why sorrow? Well, this is Good Friday. Really this year have I felt the genuine sorrow of Christ's sacrifice. No one should have to go through anything as tortuous as what He went through. Yet...indeed we still have prisoners and modern martyrs of faith, and people who suffer just for what they believe. Almost worse is it to not be able to openly practise one's faith.

We are the lucky ones – who can go to Triduum and not find a seat because the church is so full – and we celebrate with very little prejudice. But there are so many around who cannot practise safely. Nevertheless, in Christ's sacrifice today, He has saved us from sin.

God bless for the remainder of your Easter.

Making A Difference, Loving Your Neighbor [at Our Home, Mary's Mantle]

Happy Happy Tuesday.

Happy Feast Day -

[Saint John of God.](#)

I love reading about Saints, don't you?

I should say Happy Stormy Tuesday! We have already been in the closet this morning.

Picture this... we have a long coat-closet under our stairs. And when the tornado days come, we get to the back of the closet. In said closet is a comforter and a horse blanket (no it does not smell like a horse), water, shoes, bike helmets, lights that run on batteries, a weather radio, animals and whatever humans are home. Sigh - doesn't that sound fun? I really SHOULD get a picture.



So the topic of my post is Making A Difference, Loving Your Neighbor.

Throughout the Bible and in Church Doctrine, we can find examples of people loving their neighbor. Our Lord Commands us to in the Ten Commandments. And, we must find a way. We must find our gift to share.

I confess that I am not always great with other people. I get nervous/anxious in a crowd. I like peace and I am a people pleaser. This gets on people's nerves. Truly. You know it, I know it... I'm a work-in-progress. I grew up in a Military Family and I married a Military Man. When you grown up that way, at least back in the 60's-70's - it was all about helping one-another. Everyone pitched in. As I child I have such great memories of that.

As an adult, I don't always fit in. I have strong opinions. I have a big heart. I don't have an agenda. I wasn't raised by a woman and my brain doesn't play the same games and process things like a normal woman (so I've been told). It's all hard for me to process and wade through in forming friendships... I don't

understand why people react the way they do... But my heart, I've learned to listen to it. And I don't let anything stop me from helping where I can... and being myself...which brings me to this...

Twice in the past month, women from the Altar Society at Church have stopped me to thank me for the cards I've sent them. For decades I have sent cards to people in need, many strangers, and I'm not often thanked because the cards go to strangers - it's not why I do it, anyway - but it was nice to hear that these cards really do make a positive difference.

I joined the Altar Society but have missed every single meeting this year because Marke has been out of town. I have done some volunteering at events, but we don't get to know one another well, that way. We get notices when people ask for prayer and I always ask if I can send a card. Most of these women I hadn't met when I sent the cards, but I feel they need to receive one.

One lady's mom is very sick. I sent a card telling her I was praying for her mom and for her. And when I ran into her, she started crying. She said the card made her so happy and it just really touched her heart. The second lady's mom was sick and I sent a card, but the next day she passed, so I sent a second card... and while we were volunteering the other day, I introduced myself, and she said she had been trying to figure out how to find me to thank me. She said that the knowledge that a stranger was praying for her was so soothing to her when her Mother passed. She was teary as she told me how it made her feel.

I don't tell you this to pat myself on the back. I'm not that person. God is completely and beautifully in charge of my doing this. He has put me in the position to get to know people in our Parish and make a difference and it's such a blessing to me.

Nice people aren't nice to be thanked. But it is sometimes NICE to be thanked. Does that make sense? It is a peaceful and loving feeling.

This year is the year of Mercy. Use your talents to reach out... make a difference... touch the heart of someone suffering (or anyone)... love your neighbor.

Finding Your Gift...

My advice. Do what you know you are good at! We are happy doing what we love. If you knit or crochet, make socks, hats or scarves for the elderly, or homeless, or babies. If you are a baker, take cookies or baked goods to brighten someone's day. Take a group of children to visit the elderly. If you make cards - always send cards out. I have a friend with cancer. I sent her 30 cards. Now, she has cards to thank people who bring meals or whatever. It's that simple. Sing someone a song if you are a singer (ok, maybe if you aren't... because at least you are trying). You get my point. It's there. Find it! Share it! God will bless you for it!

I have stepped out of my comfort zone in joining the Altar Society and I may join another group too, I'm working on getting information. It's a Serra Group and it has to do with supporting Vocations.

Do what you can... Listen to God. It's amazing how happy it makes me, even on my most tired days...

MOTHER TERESA

(1910-1997)

NOT ALL OF US CAN
DO GREAT THINGS.
BUT WE CAN DO
SMALL THINGS
WITH GREAT LOVE



Have a blessed Tuesday.

Praying for you all.

Love & Hugs,

Em

This contribution is available at <http://davishomemarysmantle.blogspot.com/2016/03/tuesdays-tidbit-making-difference.html>

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Mary: Unimportant Woman or Faith Perfected? [at A Catholic Newbie]



To those outside of Catholicism, Mary is an enigma. Yes, she gave birth to and raised Jesus but her role beyond those duties is not explored in any depth and sometimes dismissed over confusion about different passages referring to her in the New Testament that are seemingly dismissive.

I could talk about Mary for centuries and never be done :), but in this post I want to explore what I have found to be one of her most important roles in salvation history: God's model of ultimate faith. And I'll show you why.

But first, I want to explore some reasons why I've heard from others that Mary is, instead, unimportant:

- 1) God "tells" Mary she will conceive Jesus; it's not a choice for her to accept or reject, even though she assents.
- 2) Jesus calls her "woman" multiple times not "mother"; therefore, he is dismissing her importance.
- 3) Jesus is the only intercessor between us and God; we should not pray to Mary.
- 4) She is rarely mentioned in the New Testament.

Now I want to address why I believe Mary is God's example to us of how have perfect faith, which will dispel many of the above.

Abraham & Mary

I am currently reading the Bible all the way through (beginning Jan. 1) using a great [Bible reading plan from the Coming Home Network](#). I highly recommend reading it all the way through, as in the previous post about the book [EVERY Catholic should read by John Bergsma](#), you truly cannot understand the New Testament or Old Testament alone. They must be looked at together to truly see what God is telling us.

I had never made any parallel between Abraham and Mary, have you? But Fr. Michael Gaitley in his book ["33 Days to Merciful Love: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat,"](#) compares the two in faith — and amazingly so. Abraham is our "Father in Faith" because he believed what God said to him even when it seemed impossible.

God told Abraham he would make his descendants as numerous as the stars, yet he asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the one through whom God had promised to make of Abraham a great nation. How could he have descendants and be the forefather of a great nation if his son was dead? Yet he proceeded. Hebrews 11:19 says “He considered God was able to raise men even from the dead.” Now, THAT is faith.

Mary, too, was asked to watch as her only son was given up to death. Fr. Gaitley says, “...while Abraham ultimately did not have to go through with the sacrifice, Mary had to watch and be present during the torture and slaughter of her dearly beloved son all the way to its agonizing end” (p. 36, Day 5). Do you think she was wondering how what the angel Gabriel told her — that her Son would “reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there would be no end” — could possibly come true now?

Yet, she never lost her faith, and because she saw the act to its completion, where Abraham did not, she perfected faith for us. The New Testament is so much about the perfect fulfillment of the things of the Old Testament and Mary is just one more example.

Supportive Scripture

Though Mary’s mentions are few in the New Testament (St. Louis de Monfort tells us this is by her humble request of God), she is over and over again associated with “faith” when she IS mentioned.

The Annunciation

At the annunciation, the angel Gabriel calls Mary “full of grace,” using a word that means blessed but that is uniquely used only to describe Mary (showing us that she is entirely set apart for God in a unique way) and says God is with her. Also, if you are “full” of something, there is no room for anything else; if she is full of grace, there is no room for sin, thus, her Immaculate Conception.

While the Angel does not ask for her assent, Luke records it as “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” Why record her assent if it is not important? If God didn’t need it? Don’t we have free will? Mary’s cooperation here is crucial; she undoes the knot of Eve’s lack of cooperation with God, which stemmed from Eve’s lack of belief in what God told her. Mary DOES believe and she is held as an example for it as we’ll see below.

Also, in an earlier passage in Luke, Zechariah is also visited by the angel Gabriel and told his wife Elizabeth, who was barren, will conceive John the Baptist. Zechariah DOES NOT believe and has his voice taken away as a result. The two stories parallel each other in such a way as to show us what true faith looks like.

Elizabeth’s Blessing

Inspired by the Holy Spirit (that means the triune God is speaking!), Elizabeth declares Mary is blessed for believing that “what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” She is “blessed” declares the Holy Spirit specifically for this reason! Sidenote: the Holy Spirit, through Elizabeth, also names her as “the Mother of My Lord” here; thus, the title Mother of God (“Lord” in this passage clearly refers to the Father, not the Son).

Jesus to the Woman in the Crowd

This is a verse that many take to be dismissive of Mary, but give it a second look.

“While he was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, ‘Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed.’ He replied, ‘Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.’” (Luke 11: 27-28)

Do you see the blessing? Do you see how Jesus is revealing Mary as the ultimate believer, with full trust and faith in God? Jesus says Mary is not blessed because she is his mother; rather, He turns it back to her. She is blessed because she listened and had faith in God.

Your Mother and Your Brothers

Here’s another that is taken to be dismissive of Mary, but again, I ask you to look at it with fresh eyes:

“He was told, ‘Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and wish to see you.’ He said to them in reply ‘My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and act on it.’” (Luke 8:20-21)

Why would Luke include this verse? Is it necessary that we read a seemingly unimportant moment of Jesus’ family asking to see him? No. Would Jesus be saying that Mary was not his mother? No. He would be breaking one of the Ten Commandments by not honoring his mother.

Rather Luke is reminding us of what Jesus wants to show us about Mary. Again here, Jesus says that Mary and His brethren (cousins/family) are not important because they are related to Him, but because they “heard” the word of God (listened, trusted and had faith) and were obedient to His will.

The Wedding Feast at Cana: “Woman”

Here, Jesus and Mary (the new Adam and the New Eve, not coincidentally presented at a “wedding”) attend a wedding and the bride and groom run out of wine. Mary states to Jesus, “They have no wine.” (John 2:3) (Mary also gives us a clue here about praying to Jesus: State your request and then let go and give it up to Him.)

“And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.’” (John 2:4)

First of all, “woman” presents Mary as the New Eve and refers back to Genesis 3:15 that says “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel.” Mary is this woman and Jesus is her offspring; by cooperating with her Son, together they will defeat Satan. “Woman” is not meant as a derogatory term for Mary (again, would Jesus dishonor his mother?).

Second, Jesus refers to “his hour”. In John 12:23 Jesus says His hour has come, referring to His crucifixion and Resurrection. So we know that is also what He is referring to in the Cana passage. While you can make your own interpretation of this passage, I agree with experts who say Jesus essentially means: Mom, are you really ready to embark down this difficult journey that will result in my death? Once we begin, there is no turning back.

Because guess what he does? He honors his mom’s request. Thus, she spurs the beginning of his ministry and of his road to the Crucifixion. But Mary humbly leaves it up to Jesus, saying to the servers: “Do

whatever he tells you.” Again, though, she has faith in God and Jesus. If it’s meant to be addressed, He will address it; if not, He will not. But she does not insert her own will into the matter beyond making the request.

This also is part of the reason why we pray to Mary. She looks after our earthly concerns, even as seemingly insignificant as running out of wine (though this would have been highly embarrassing for the married couple at the time), presenting them to her son. And when your mom asks you to do something, it has a bit more weight than anyone else. Plus, as we see in the Genesis passage, Mary cooperates with her Son in our salvation and the defeat of Satan. Mary also represents the queen mothers of the Old Testament who presented requests to their sons, the Kings, to have them granted. So many layers...

The Thread of Faith

Do you see the thread of faith weaving through all these passages about Mary? If you are struggling with complete faith or trust in God, ask Our Mother to help you. Ask her to allow you to see her son through her eyes of faith and trust. Ask her to increase your faith and trust in God.

Mary is not an intercessor for God; she only wants to bring us to her son and bring our requests to Him, as well. Doesn’t it make sense that God came to be in our midst through Mary and so going through Mary would be a way to reach God? And she is a gentle and loving mother, who lived as a human being here on earth just like we do. If she can do it, so can we. We just need to ask for help.

Blessed Mary, Ever Virgin, Mother of Mercy, Pray for Us! Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicnewbie.com/mary-unimportant-woman-or-faith-perfected/>
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Willingness Good Friday Meditation [at Bible Meditations]



“Father,” he said, “if you will, take this cup of suffering away from me. Not my will, however, but your will be done.” Luke 22:42

Jesus didn't *want* to suffer but he was *willing* to suffer. Even though he knew suffering and death waited for him in Jerusalem, he'd set his face like flint and headed there. His prayer in Gethsemane expresses the tension between his desire and his commitment to follow his Father's will, all for love of us. In his beautiful, heart-felt cry Jesus asked his Father to take the suffering away. That was what Jesus wanted, but he deferred to his Father's will.

We can learn from this. We don't have to pretend we don't have wants or feelings. It's more than okay, it's essential that we're honest with God about what we truly want. That doesn't mean demanding that he do things our way. We can lay our wants at God's feet and leave the choice up to him. We can exercise our free will by choosing to give our will back to God. We hold our faith hostage if we insist God do things the way we think he should. Insisting on our way may seem like freedom, but it's not. Freedom is the choice to act without being bullied by our feelings.

Jesus' prayer is a beautiful balance of honesty and surrender, of requesting and accepting instead of insisting. We have a choice at every moment: to insist our will be done or to lovingly entrust our will to God's wise and loving plan. It isn't easy. It will cost us. But I have to believe it is worth it. I have to believe that God isn't cruel or abandoning us if pain isn't taken away on our terms. I have to believe he will give us what we need to get through whatever challenges we face and will somehow bring good out of it. I've seen it happen. Besides, if God can bring good out of the crucifixion, he can bring good out of anything.

Prayer: Father, thy will, not mine, be done.

Reflection: Where are your wants flexing their muscles today? Are you willing to surrender them to God's care?

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In favour of liturgy shaming [at LMS Chairman]



I was struck reading

[this](#)

, from my

[old friend](#)

William Bornhoft (linked to by the normally sensible

[Deacon Greg Kandra](#)

), about people who posted negative comments on a parish's Facebook photo album of grotesquely inappropriate and mostly illicit liturgical frolickings.

Parish problems should be dealt with on the parish level, when possible. If that fails, they should be dealt with on the diocesan level, and so on.

Excuse me, but

have you tried it?

Bornhoft is a young man, and doesn't know any better. Indeed, his naivety on this subject might even be said to do him credit, insofar as it is not a matter of wilful refusal to face the facts. The reality is, however, the course of action he recommends will very rarely have any tangible positive effect, but unless handled very carefully can easily do harm.

As Chairman of the Latin Mass Society I know a thing or two about appealing to the proper authorities, and I have heard the stories of people who have been in this game since the 1970s. Whether it is liturgical abuses, heretical school textbooks, or refusals to allow the Traditional Mass, the pattern is the same. Yes, we have had our successes, but success requires a combination of factors which rarely occur.

1. An exceptionally clear-minded and brave parish priest, bishop, or Roman curial official, who must be prepared to suffer the consequences, including removal from office, of enforcing the law once too often. Naturally, such men pick their battles, so there are further conditions.
2. It must be a really extreme and clear-cut violation of norms.
3. You must be able to provide totally irrefutable evidence that the violation took place.

I have written to Rome on a number of occasions, having gone through all the proper channels, with full documentation, and expert canonical advice. It hasn't been a complete waste of time, but getting an acknowledgement is not to be taken for granted. And I am writing on behalf of a lay association in good standing with the Church, with 2,000 members.

I think it is worth doing this because it leaves a paper-trail and goes into files. When history comes to be written, no one will be able to say that the laity acquiesced in what is going on. Historians with access to the files will be able to see that we constantly tested the system, and were constantly, with rare exceptions, rebuffed.

But we pay a price for this activity. Mr Bornhoft will be mortified to learn that this kind of thing is regarded, and denounced, by many of the people who hear our complaints or see our letters as aggressive, uncharitable, and contrary to a proper Catholic attitude. The accusations he makes of those posting comments on Facebook are exactly those made of those who are doing what he thinks they should be doing. It has happened to me, it has happened to people with far more native tact and personal skills than I can lay claim to. When push comes to shove, these accusations against whistleblowers and 'delators' (those who 'delate', denounce, to Rome) can be made public. There can be public scandal, division, and bitterness; the whistleblower can find himself

persona non grata

in the parish and diocese; he can lose friends, be excluded from activities and ministries, and be ostracised.

This of course is exactly what happened to those complaining about clerical sex abuse. For while the Church has gone a long way to institute procedures and change attitudes about sex abuse, few people have noticed the parallel. In abusive liturgy, the laity, seminarians above all, but often ordained clerics as well, are treated unjustly by those with power over them. They are humiliated and made to suffer. They are forced to act against their conscience. They are persecuted in subtle ways if they do not acquiesce, or at least stay silent. And many, sadly, are driven from their vocations, from the practice of the Faith, and even from the Church, by this injustice. And there is nothing they can do: the 'proper procedures' and 'proper authorities' do not want to know.

Now we have a new situation, with social media. It is possible to use ridicule, larded with references to Canon law and other authoritative documents, to raise the issue of liturgical abuse, not personally, in a parish where one can be punished for it, but with a degree of anonymity, about parishes the other side of the world. Parishes which, in the example Bornhoft raises, glory in their abuse, boast about the injustice which they visit on the wounded body of the Church, and plaster their Facebook pages with photographs to leave us in no doubt about what they have been up to. Should good Catholics stop themselves responding to this kind of thing? Out of

charity?

Well here's a thing. I too have qualms about the kinds of things which can be said by social-media lynch-mobs. I too have concerns about the deformation of soul which can result from endlessly using vituperation to attack easy targets like liturgical dancing. As Bornhoft says, people can be too quick to attribute base motives for what they see, and don't always understand the niceties of liturgical law. I myself gave up banging on about liturgical abuses - I had got to the 'letter to the parish priest' stage of irritation - when I started making the Traditional Mass my habitual form of worship. Thereafter, forays into the Novus Ordo simply confirmed me in my decision: it wasn't very prayerful to see abuses, but it no longer drove me to despair. I think it would be better for the souls of those unhappy folk who don't like liturgical abuses to make the switch, if it is physically possible for them, to regular attendance at the Traditional Mass. We sometimes disagree about specific liturgical practices, but it is vanishingly rare to see anything which is actually sacrilegious. Come over, calm down, and say some prayers.

But I know not everyone is ready to do that. And as one priest said to me, about his own celebration of both Forms, you can't just let the Novus Ordo 'collapse like a soufflé'. And I will not condemn those who take the

only means available

to express their entirely justified anger and to oppose liturgical abuses.

What is more, contrary to Mr Bornhoft, this method

works.

Yes, it has worked, not every time, but again and again. The priest

[with the hoverboard](#)

in the Phillipines: suspended. The Australian priest allowing 'help yourself' Communion, leading to

[Communion being given to a dog](#)

: excommunicated. Even in the weird and wonderful diocese of Linz in Austria, they aren't still having the Blessed Sacrament procession with a

[foccacia in a huge pair of tongs](#)

. It is almost inconceivable that a written complaint to a bishop would have resulted in action in cases such as these, had not the incident gone around the world's media. In the case Bornhoft mentions, the parish took the FB page down. The deacon whose preaching implied

[Pope Benedict was a show-off](#)

for wearing red shoes took his sermon off YouTube. Again, the Gay activists who used to gather in Our Lady of the Annunciation, Warwick Street, in London, learned eventually that they could not put their

[Bidding Prayers of thanksgiving for Civil Partnerships](#)

online, without generating the wrong kind of publicity. Small victories, you may think, but significant ones, because it means that they will never again gloat over their implied heresy or their liturgical abuses, and say to each other: well, no one cares about the rules any more, we can be as open as we like about what we do.

There is an

enormous

difference between doing these hideous things in secret, worrying that there might be someone in the congregation with a hidden camera in his lapel or a microphone in his pocket, and bragging about them online. Can Mr Bornhoft not see it? The latter is vastly more scandalous, vastly more dangerous to souls, vastly more undermining of the Faith, to a potentially vastly larger audience. Feeling able to do these things openly gives them far more confidence, it emboldens them in going further and doing more. If only the social media had been around in the 1970s, when parishes in the USA were encouraging people to bring honey cookies they had made to be used in Mass - despite their being invalid matter. This scandal, public in the sense that the recipes were in parish newsletters, went on for years and years before pressure from Rome finally suppressed the sacrilege, which actually involved not only depriving the Faithful of Holy Communion but idolatry: the worship of biscuits. Social media would have blown it open in a matter of weeks, and the ridicule and outrage would have made it unsustainable, at least in months.

Conservative prelates and indeed Curial officials hate this kind of pressure. But if they had been doing their jobs, it wouldn't happen. As it is, it is the Savoranola, the St Catherine of Siena, the Erasmus, the Robert Grossteste, of our times. It should be done with care, with charity, dispassionately, with reference to authoritative documents, but it would be completely wrong to say that it should not be done at all. And it can be done with humour, and it can be done, with persistent offenders, with the kinds of measured mockery used by so many saints and great men in the Church, and by the Prophets and by Our Lord himself, when faced with a situation in which appeal to the 'proper authorities' gets you nowhere.

So no, Deacon Kandra, it is

not

a Lenten good work to allow Our Blessed Lord to be trampled underfoot, sometimes literally, and turn a blind eye to it. It is

not

something to be recommended to those outraged by abuses, as a good action, that they should see their fellow Catholics spiritually abused over and over again, and give it tacit consent. And unless you are doing it just to prove a point,

and

know how to write a letter,

and

have a good canon lawyer, a liturgical expert, and a Latinist, to help you,

and (above all)

can't be harmed by the reaction of those who could see your letter, then you'd better think twice about using the 'proper procedures'. You will be doing far more good, dear reader, sharing the latest scandal with your Facebook friends. It might even make a difference.

But don't forget to feed your own soul with the liturgy and the sacraments. Don't only go to Mass to make a list of abuses. Don't only go online to vent your fury. Come to the Traditional Mass. Calm down. And say some prayers.

This contribution is available at <http://www.lmschairman.org/2016/02/in-favour-of-liturgy-shaming.html>
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On the Necessity of the Resurrection [at New Evangelizers]

We have now come through the long lonely days of Lent to celebrate new life in Easter.

So now what?

Lent is the spiritual boot camp where we are training our souls towards greater holiness. We concentrate on the sacrificial love of God and meditate on his Passion on the cross. Catholics have many devotions to the suffering of Our Lord. Sometimes we get accused of being morbidly obsessed with guilt and suffering. And while it is fundamentally necessary to enter into the cross, the story does not stop there.

The cross must end with Resurrection.

This is difficult for many of us. None of us have experienced the full Resurrection. But all of us have suffered in this world. The cross feels more tangible to us than the Glorified Body awaiting us. As Fr. Benedict Groeschel once said, “I don’t know what it’s like to rise from the dead. But I’ve been to Calvary several times in my life already.”

It takes no faith to believe that we will suffer in this world. The faith comes in believing that the suffering end. But unlike Buddhists who believe that the most we can hope for is simply an end to our pain, we Christians are promised a whole new life.

When Christ rose from the dead, it was not merely a resuscitation. Death is the separation of the body and the soul. A resuscitation is when the soul is reunited with the mortal body. We see this all the time on medical TV shows where they do CPR. And it is also what occurred with Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, and the widow’s son. Jesus raised those last three people from the dead and their souls were reunited with their bodies. But those were not Resurrections, they were resuscitations.

What is the difference?

In a resuscitation, the reunion of body and soul is temporary because eventually the mortal body will get old, sick, and die. Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, and the widow’s son all eventually succumbed to death. But Jesus was not resuscitated. He Resurrected.

Do not think of the Resurrection as merely coming back to life. If all we have here is a reanimated corpse, then it would almost sounds like Jesus is the original zombie. But that is not what we have with Jesus. The Resurrection is a transformation.

Think about the Disney cartoon Pinocchio or Beauty and Beast. In both cases, the hero dies. But they do not simply come back to life in their imperfect form, be it as a wooden child or a hideous monster. Instead, they are transformed completely in something else. And in the fairy tales, they say that will live happily ever after. Now you might dismiss this as a wishful fantasy. But it is the promise of Christ: we are promised the Resurrection of the Glorified Body.

What is this new, Glorified Body like?

We are never given a full description of it is like. We have hints at it from the Gospels. The Risen Jesus can change His appearance, walk through walls, appear and disappear at will. This body is free from the corruption of sin and death. Sometimes my students ask questions about whether Jesus will be reborn before the end and will He come and die on the cross again. The answer is no. Jesus is already Incarnated. There is no need of reincarnation. His body is pure and perfect.

And this body is what is waiting for each one of the faithful at the end.

A human being is defined by Aristotle as the rational animal. We are a union of body and soul. Sometimes we think like Plato did and believe that we are souls trapped in prisons we call bodies. The Gnostic heretics believed this. But this ignores the reality that we are not irrational animals like the beasts nor are we purely spiritual like the angels. We are both. If we are not, we are not fully human.

This is why there must be a Resurrection. If after death our souls went to Heaven and our bodies rotted in the Earth, there would still be something missing. That isn't to say that the souls in Heaven are unhappy. But the souls in Heaven are not fully human. Perhaps this is where people came up with the idea that we become angels when we die.

Catholic teaching is very clear: angels are a different species than humans. We do not become another species after death. God made us human and we are forever meant to be human. But human beings are, by definition, bodily creatures.

But how horrible would it be to live forever in the bodies we have now. Buddha figured that out. Hindus believe that we are eternally dying and reincarnating. The Buddha looked at that perpetual experience of living in a mortal body and concluded that to live is to suffer. Buddha's conclusion was to prevent reincarnation by extinguishing your soul so that you cease to exist.

If we were stuck on a perpetual cycle of reincarnation, Buddha would be correct. An eternity in the mortal body would be a kind of hell.

Perhaps this is why God drove man out of the Garden of Eden after eating from the Tree of Knowledge and prevented them from eating from the Tree of Life. Perhaps He was not punishing, but protecting. Imagine I said to you that I would grant you immortality. But the tradeoff is that you would be forever in the condition you are right now. So if your leg is broken it would remain broken forever. If you were overweight, you would be overweight forever. If you were experiencing depression, you would be depressed forever. I would imagine most of us would wait until we were rid of those imperfections and sicknesses before we embraced immortality. I would also imagine that we would find it difficult to find a perfect moment to choose.

After the fall, man was broken. To be given immortality in that broken state would have been a damnation. We need something free from all of the pain and suffering and death to receive perfect immortality. As Christ says, "No one puts new wine into old wine skins." (Mark 2:22) Our mortal bodies are too imperfect to receive everlasting life.

We need the transformation of the Resurrection. And it is only in this state of perfection, both of the soul and the body, that we can truly live happily ever after.

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Three Years of Mercy [at Justin's Corner]

On Sunday, March 13, we celebrated the third anniversary of the election of Pope Francis. I can still vividly remember that Wednesday afternoon three years ago when I was glued to the television set, watching the live EWTN broadcast of the second day of the conclave, when white smoke suddenly began pouring from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel. It was a cold, rainy evening in Rome. After a brief time of expectant waiting and wondering, it was announced that Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio had been elected the 265th Successor of Saint Peter and had taken the name Francis. Unfamiliar with the name, I scrambled upstairs to my computer and checked my list of

papabili

(likely papal candidates) in an article I had just published speculating on who the successor to Benedict XVI might be. I found Cardinal Bergoglio at number 20 on my list of thirty-three papal candidates. I quickly revisited my source article on Wikipedia and found that he was from Argentina. That was interesting to me because I had a wonderful Catholic pastor who was from Argentina when I was a boy at my small-town parish in California. I had included Bergoglio a ways down the list because I felt he was a longshot candidate due to his age and his inability to speak English. When the newly elected pontiff finally appeared on the central balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica, I was initially unsure whether I would like him or not as he seemed a bit reserved, but I was soon won over by his profound humility, simplicity, prayerfulness, charity, and joyfulness. Paying closer attention to videos of the first public appearances of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, I have since come to realize that every modern pope is a bit nervous when he is first elected because he realizes the enormous responsibility of that office to which he has been elected by his brother cardinals and which he has accepted for the sake of his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are currently observing the Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis. Yet in a certain sense, the past three years of Francis' pontificate have been years of mercy for the whole Church and for the world. God has given us a special pope to reform and cleanse the Church by challenging each one of us--from the highest-ranking cardinal to the lowest layperson--to examine our lives, identify patterns of worldly and sinful thought and behavior that are not in conformity with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and undertake a lifelong journey of daily personal conversion. Through his simple and direct preaching and the simplicity of his own lifestyle, Francis has been effectively training us to reject the materialistic and elitist attitudes so prevalent in our age and to follow Christ faithfully in our everyday lives. He has reminded us of the need to be good stewards and protectors of all the gifts that God has given us, from the innocent unborn child in the womb to our beautiful planet Earth. He has brought renewed vigor to the Church's missionary mandate by urging her members to go out and meet people where they are instead of waiting for people to come to her. And his vision of the Church as a field hospital after battle, with his emphasis on Divine Mercy and the importance of works of charity, is appropriate and welcome at this particular moment in history when so many people are hurt in various ways and desperately in need of the touch of Christ's healing love and compassion.

Given that Pope Francis is such a blessing to our Church today, it is painful to see him being often so profoundly misunderstood, both by the secular international news media and by many well-intentioned "conservative" Catholics. Worldly journalists frequently view and portray Francis in their own image as

some kind of radical, revolutionary pontiff who is open to changing certain Church teachings in the name of mercy and compassion toward those in sinful situations, while many faithful and fearful Catholics, including certain cardinals--misled by that inaccurate portrayal--apprehensively view him the same way, as a disastrously "liberal" pontiff who's ready and willing to attempt to share Christ's mercy with unrepentant sinners at the price of apostasy from the objective truths of the Faith. Nothing could be further from the truth. Francis' pontificate has not been a radical departure from that of his predecessors; on the contrary, as those close to Francis always emphasize, it has been an exercise in continuity with the other recent popes on all essential matters of doctrine and discipline.

This becomes abundantly clear when you start to read his writings: quotes from Benedict XVI, John Paul II, Paul VI, and John XXIII are to be found all over the place. And when you listen to his Angelus addresses and homilies and then compare them with those of our previous great popes, you find the very same themes being repeatedly echoed and explored: God's infinite love for each one of us, the universe as His creation, our role as stewards of creation, the dignity of each human life, salvation through Christ alone, freedom and personal responsibility, marriage and family life according to God's plan, justice and human rights, the existence of Satan and the fallen angels, sin and grace, conversion and Divine Mercy, the joy of being Christian, the redemptive value of suffering, authentic liturgical renewal in line with Vatican II, ecumenism and Christian unity, the principle of subsidiarity, the proper role of the free market in wealth and job creation, government as service to the common good, and so on and so forth. And thanks to his Jesuit training, Francis is a highly competent and accessible teacher.

Just like his predecessors, Francis takes Catholic doctrine seriously, and his pastoral outreach is in no way opposed to that doctrine but simply flows out of it naturally. With the arrival of Pope Francis on the scene of the Church, there has been no change of substance or essentials, only a change of style and emphasis. But that very change of style is often mistaken for a change of substance. Hence the calls from certain well-meaning Catholic critics for Pope Francis to clearly reiterate and clarify Church teaching on sexual morality, marriage and family life and to refrain from changing the teachings on those subjects. If the critics would take the time to read some of Francis' writings, addresses and homilies, notably his opening address at the recent Synod on the Family, they would find that he has already done this. And as for changing Church doctrine on marriage and family life, the critics seem to have forgotten that Pope Francis couldn't change any doctrine even if he wanted to, because the Holy Spirit protects the Church, and in a special way the pope, from teaching error in matters of faith and morals. And despite the vain hopes of some and the solemn warnings of others, Francis himself has no intention of altering any part of Catholic doctrine.

None of this is to say that Pope Francis has not made any mistakes in non-essential matters or that there is no room for legitimate and respectful criticism of his decisions and actions in certain areas that lie outside his proper competence. For example, I think that his acceptance of the human-induced global-warming hypothesis will end up damaging the Church somewhat in the long run given that NASA satellite data actually indicate a general decline in average global temperatures over the past eighteen years despite continued accumulation of carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere, and that cooler temperatures are likely to persist through the next three decades thanks to reduced solar activity. No pope is infallible on scientific matters because science is a search for truth--often clouded by human bias and tainted by corruption--not the truth itself. But even if Francis turns out to have been wrong on global temperatures, this should not obscure the central message of his important and wide-ranging encyclical

Laudato Si

or the many aspects of Catholic social teaching and care for God's creation clearly reiterated for our time within that landmark teaching document. And we should remember that no human Vicar of Christ, not even a saint or a genius, is perfect, or ever will be. Pope Francis himself is keenly aware of his ability to sin and make mistakes, which is why he goes to confession frequently and is always asking us to pray for him.

Francis' pontificate offers us an important lesson: We should read the pope's actual writings and listen to his addresses and homilies for ourselves if we want to know what he thinks and to understand what he does, rather than relying on hearsay evidence from the radically secularist (and notoriously unreliable) mainstream media, which has its own agenda diametrically opposed to that of the Church. To paraphrase G. K. Chesterton, it is Francis who is sane and his critics who are mad. We Catholics are truly blessed to have such a Christ-like pope, the latest in a remarkable chain of holy popes stretching back at least to Pius XII. And may we use this Year of Mercy profitably to repent of our sins and to share the Divine Mercy we have received with our brothers and sisters through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, following the lead of our wise and courageous Holy Father, Pope Francis.

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Mysteries of Rosary with Littles - Joyful Mysteries [at Under Thy Roof]



I've been trying to pray the rosary with the kids more often this Lent. They are currently 3.5 years and 18 months old so attention spans are short. In order to get through an entire rosary I have taken to making the rosary mystery announcement into an exciting little story.

All of them start like this.

Me: Who knows what the ___th _____ mystery is?

John: ME!

Me: What is it?

John: I don't know....

Repeat for all mysteries. Eventually, he'll say something besides I don't know. (Maybe? Hopefully?)

From there I tell a little story about the mystery. Because this is mostly to draw their attention back to the rosary, these stories have become kind of hilarious due to John's responses. I wanted to write them down before the kids get too big to do this anymore.

Joyful Mysteries

1st Joyful Mystery - The Annunciation

Me: This is when the angel Gabriel came to tell Mary she was going to have a baby!

John: Where?!

Me: A long time ago.

John: Is the baby going to want to play with my toys?

Me: John, the baby was Jesus.

John: Oh....so he only play with church toys then?

2nd Joyful Mystery - The Visitation

Me: This is when Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth to help her have her baby John the Baptist!

John: ME?!

Me: No, different John.

3rd Joyful Mystery - The Nativity

Me: The Nativity is when baby Jesus was finally born - Christmas!

John: Momma, it's not Christmas time. It's not Advent time. It is Lent. Time.

Me: I know John, but Jesus was still born on Christmas.

John: Oh, maybe he get presents later then.

4th Joyful Mystery - The Presentation

Me: This is when Jesus' mommy and daddy brought him to the temple. It was a very special day, like how your mommy and daddy brought you to the church to be baptized.

John: He got water poured on his head?

Me: No, that came later.

John: Oh good. Jesus not very dirty. He don't need no water.

5th Joyful Mystery - The Finding in the Temple

Me: One time, Jesus went missing for three days! He did not tell his parents were he was going.

John: What?!

Me: Yup. His mommy and daddy were very worried. They looked everywhere for him. Eventually they found him in the temple teaching the teachers.

John: He got in trouble?

Me: He got in a little trouble. But then he decided to be very good and listen to his mommy and daddy. He always listened to them after that.

John: Jesus was a good boy?

Me: I think so.

Let's hope John doesn't get any sneaky ideas from that last one. I'm hoping we cling onto the "listen to mommy and daddy" part.

Stay turned for the Sorrowful Mysteries!

This contribution is available at <http://underthyroof.blogspot.com/2016/03/mysteries-of-rosary-with-littles-joyful.html>
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Fighting back [at Mere Observations]

There has long been a deep reservoir of hate in this country just waiting to be tapped. Now Hillary Clinton on the left and Donald Trump from wherever he comes have both tapped it – it is open and gushing, it is vile, and it is threatening to bring this country down.

The only thing that will stop it is prayer – the ONLY thing. – online commenter Terry at [Crisis Magazine online](#)

The life of man upon earth is a warfare... – Job 7:1

Last night I entered the fray.

I joined the battle.

We established a beachhead.

I haven't been writing much for more than a few weeks now. My efforts to continue with *The Screwtape Letters* project is, for now, on hold. I got tired of staring at an empty screen and will try to continue another day.

The bitter and honest truth is that I've been...how to say this...out of sorts.

Out of whack. Lost my equilibrium.

I've been under attack.

I've said before that I believe the great battle of our times is before us. I've also said that it will be a spiritual war.

After the events of the last month I stand behind those assertions.

It's been a rough year. A year filled with self-doubt and second-guessing. A year of "what ifs". Through it all I've struggled to keep my balance and maintain both my optimism and stay upright. At times I've come perilously close to giving in to despair. One beam of light guided me through this fog.

Prayer, specifically the Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office.

We are living in strange times. Or hadn't you noticed? Many have not. Distracted by the soft comforting glow of their various screens they are oblivious to history's verdicts. How else does one explain our youth's embracing of the culture of death and socialism? How else to explain the unhinged, vehement attacks levied at anyone who points out the obvious lack of conservative bona fides in the candidate

widely embraced on the right as “the true conservative candidate”?

Thought and reason have no traction today because emotions and slogans have superseded them.

What the hell is going on?

And that’s the answer. Hell *is* going on.

Of late I’ve read many things online to ramp up my sense of urgency regarding this war. If the results from [this survey by the Barna Group](#) are in fact true, then I’m already to be considered an extremist in the eyes of many. The war is already being waged against me. I just as well fight back and make damn sure I live up to the evidence and label that may someday be used against me.

Society is undergoing a change of mind about the way religion and people of faith intersect with public life. That is, there are intensifying perceptions that faith is at the root of a vast number of societal ills.

Though it remains the nation’s most dominant religion, Christianity faces significant headwind in the court of public opinion. The decades-old trend that Christianity is irrelevant is increasingly giving way to the notion that Christianity is bad for society.

A new major study conducted by Barna Group, and explored in the new book *Good Faith*, co-authored by Barna president David Kinnaman, examines society’s current perceptions of faith and Christianity. In sum, faith and religion and Christianity are viewed by millions of adults to be extremist.

A growing portion of society considers me an extremist by virtue of my actually professing and living by my beliefs as a Christian. As a conservative I’ve watched myself or anyone else who questions the candidacy of Donald Trump be labeled a “rich, establishment, power mad” fool who is not a “true conservative” and will get “what’s coming to you!”. Ummm...*what?* I’ve watched those members of the media who call themselves conservatives outed for the carnival barkers that they are, nothing more than shills looking to make a book for the *candidate du jour*.

I’ve seen spleens vented at Pope Francis and any Catholic who dares call him or herself Catholic while pleading for some decent human decency be shown the less fortunate or the poor.

Obama voters the past two elections just pissed me off. I laughed them off as unserious kids fawning over an unqualified leftist. Supporters of Trump who spew their hatred and bile towards anyone who dare point out the flaws in their reason or simply ask for clarification on their stance scare the hell out of me because this lot is filled with rage and they are looking for someone to pour it upon. And I get it. I’m as upset with the Republican party leadership as anyone on how they’ve said one thing to get elected and then done the opposite once in office, while sending out letters for more money. I stopped supporting the GOP in 2006 when despite having control of all three branches of government they did not one blessed thing about abortion in this country. But as soon as Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid took over in 2006 the fundraising letters once more were filling the mailboxes of pro-lifers everywhere.

So I get the anger and disillusionment. But Trump? And to vent that anger out on not just your fellow citizens of either party, but against those who are in tune with the Constitution and our nation's history?

It's nothing new. History has shown us examples of a citizenry embracing anger during the Reign of Terror in France, in Puritan England, and in pre-World War II Germany.

The lessons from this history is that it never ends well for the likes of people like me.

Already being bloodied from the blows received, I read the following from scripture one evening while in prayer:

My brothers, count it pure joy when you are involved in every sort of trial. Realize that when your faith is tested this makes for endurance. Let endurance come to its perfection so that you may be fully mature and lacking in nothing. – James 1:2-4 (Evening Prayer for January 29)

The very next morning I read this during Morning Prayer:

In everything you do, act without grumbling or arguing; prove yourselves innocent and straightforward, children of God beyond reproach in the midst of a twisted and depraved generation—among whom you shine like the stars in the sky. – Philippians 2:14-15 (Morning Prayer for January 30)

I decided I needed to make a call.



During mornings or evenings above 30 degrees you will find me outside with these.

It has been a long-time goal of mine to initiate the praying of Vespers, or Evening Prayer, at my parish. A few weeks ago I finally got around to setting up a meeting with my parish priest to discuss it. I say finally because I could no longer ignore what I see going on. I needed to stop fighting alone, and begin to form a squad to wage the only form of warfare that matters and the one for which I'm best equipped. My son is a United States Marine. He's trained for the more conventional battles of this world. He has been raised to fight the other, too, but for now his task is elsewhere.

Mine, however, is not. Mine is against the "powers and principalities" of this world.

This is your fight as well.

I have prayed the Liturgy of the Hours for just about fifteen years, ever since I first worked up the nerve to ask our former assistant pastor Father Hottovy to show me the book he always carried with him. It was slow going and a struggle at many times, but I persevered until now my day feels unbalanced if I fail to pray at least Morning or Evening Prayers. Being a historian I researched its origins and revisions over the years, even purchasing an expensive set of pre-Vatican II era books containing the Divine Office in both Latin and English.

But mostly I have done so in order to sanctify time for God. Except for a handful of occasions I have prayed this communal prayer alone.

I wanted to change that. Father Johnson agreed. And we selected Wednesday evenings at 6pm immediately following 5:30 Mass. We agreed that instead of announcing it in the bulletin for now or at weekend Masses he would simply announce it at the end of last night's Mass and invite people to stick around to join me.

About the same time that I first contacted Father for a Saturday morning meeting over coffee the attacks upon me intensified. As last night drew near they threatened to suffocate me. I struggled to smile or find happiness. Optimism about almost anything seemed to disappear. I found myself hit with dreams and visions in broad daylight...horrible and awful images of my family, especially my children, and at times my friends. I saw horrific scenes, too terrible to recount, that involved my children bloodied, in danger, or worse. I couldn't sleep and had little energy. My despair would turn to frustration and in a flash my anger would flare with words against those who mean the most to me. Two days ago I was sitting at a red light when one flashed before my eyes and caused me to cry uncontrollably as the light turned green through my tear-streaked eyes. The devil knows our weakness. It has ever been so.

I honestly thought I was falling apart. Believe it or not thoughts of my own death and of not being a burden to my loved ones crept into my mind.

But then little pinpoints of grace would shine forth. Nothing huge, but small indications that I did have worth, that I mattered, and that I made a difference began to emerge. Two examples:

Two weeks ago my Marine and I were texting about his younger brother's upcoming baseball season. Jonah is twelve and at this point in his young life already a much better baseball player than his older brother. Considering that Nolan was able to contribute and then start on two spring high school state champion baseball teams and compete for summer state titles as well, that's saying a lot about his younger brother. A back injury almost cost Nolan his high school baseball career and deeply affected his attitude, causing lethargy and depression. Prior to his sophomore year he was going to quit and we argued back and forth about it for weeks before the treatment and work he'd been doing to heal his injury caused him to relent and play. Ever since 2012 I've beat myself up and wondered how much resentment my coaxing him to play had caused. I wondered if he'd ever appreciate all that he and his buddies had accomplished. Lately I've wondered if I would have the strength to do so again with Jonah should he travel a similar path.

It turns out I won't have to get after Jonah. His big brother will. This is a part of our text exchange:

Nolan: Make him play at least through high school. He'll be glad one day.

Me (after taking a big gulp): Are you thankful I pushed you to play?

Nolan: More than anything. I've been talking to some of the guys out here. We all want more than anything to be able to go back and play under the lights one more time. Whether it's football, baseball, basketball, soccer, whatever...everyone wishes they could go back just one more time.

I hoped I would hear those words before I was 60, never dreaming I'd hear them at 48.

The last occurrence was the unexpected gift of a book from a friend. I had loaned her five books from the World War II era on the fate of Christians, including St. Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein to use as research for a college paper she was writing. Becky is my age but has gone back to school in order to finish up her teaching degree. Several weeks later she showed up unannounced and unexpected in order to present me with a copy of a book published late last year called [*Church of Spies*](#). For fifteen minutes we stood outside as she talked about her research and thanked me several times for the use of books from my library. She couldn't see it in the twilight, but I was so quiet because I was trying to keep from crying after being overwhelmed by her simple generosity. I'd been beaten down and was nearly exhausted, but her gesture was like a cool drink of fresh water.

And then yesterday I began to understand what was happening. While praying during my lunch hour at the Pink Sisters chapel and sitting before the Blessed Sacrament, I began to understand that I was under attack. Satan did not want me to introduce Evening Prayer at St. John's nor did he want those I met with to understand they could use this great treasure of the Church themselves. The tradition of sanctifying time to God through the praying of the psalms goes back thousands of years before Christ when the Jews would pray them throughout the day. Jesus himself prayed these same psalms. The Catholic Church has done the same ever since. But not just Catholics. Anglicans, Lutherans and other Protestant denominations all have their own traditions that grew from the trunk of this tree.

While sitting slump-backed in that pew yesterday I was encouraged and renewed. Despite my self-doubt and fears I would press on. I was too close to quit now after wanting to begin for so long.

In the grand scheme of things it was hardly noticeable. After Mass last night I stood in front of the sanctuary with the booklets I'd printed for use. I made only ten, hoping for at least one or two people to join me. After a few minutes of thinking no one would I found myself suddenly surrounded by around 15 people. After a brief introduction on my part we began. Fifteen minutes later it was done. We finished while the church was filling for a 7pm First Confession service held for our second graders and their parents. I doubt very many were aware of us or what was going on.

But something did happen. A toe-hold was made. A command post was established.

Last night we began fighting back. In community. Communion.

I slept like a baby last night for the first time in months.

We will continue every Wednesday night going forward. We may grow in number or we may not. But I believe we will see an increase in numbers over time.

I believe there are many who want to fight back. They see the shroud of darkness descending and are hungry to learn about whatever weapons available to them.

Based on the comments and positive feedback received last night I stand by that belief. And I will be better prepared in the future for the spiritual attacks that I know will come. There's always a counter-attack.

I'm hopeful that last night we struck a blow and that as we continue others will have their eyes opened to the beauty and power contained within the Divine Office. All are welcome to join us for 15-20 minutes of prayer. Perhaps in time we'll extend it for 15-30 minutes of discussion. In the meantime I have made plans to include a sheet each week that teaches on some aspect of the Liturgy of the Hours and history of the Divine Office.

But I'm taking it slow. Better a start than none at all. For while we live in seemingly more desperate times and there is a sense of urgency, I feel a calm that tells me to not rush according to my own schedule.

It's *His* time, after all. Sanctified.

History.

His story.

For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. – 2 Corinthians 10:3-4

This contribution is available at <http://jeffwalker.wordpress.com/2016/03/03/fighting-back/>
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Spiritual Life Insurance for Children [at The Koala Mom]

Today I'm delighted to introduce a new blog contributor, **Sarah** from [Wild Things Farm](#). Sarah will be writing about motherhood once a month here on the Koala Mom. As a convert, I love this post about creating spiritual life insurance for our children through the joy and beauty of Easter.



Happy Easter! The Church proved Her wisdom when She gave us fifty days of Easter, following a mere forty days of Lent! We are a people who don't always suffer well, but we do like to rejoice.

Our parish welcomed a whole host of [new Catholics](#) this Easter Vigil, among them some friends of our family. A party was planned after the Easter Vigil Mass to welcome these friends Home to the Faith. Easter Vigil at our parish starts at 8 pm, but is extremely long, so this party would not begin until closer to Midnight.

Here is where I feel I must defend my parenting. We planned to attend this party, in the darkness of night, with our brood of six children. In the end, only some were still awake, so my husband and a few of the children attended without me. None the less, they were there and I believe the joy of midnight parties, infused with the joy of new souls in the Church, is far more important than prompt bedtimes.

We count these joy-filled experiences, with the thrills of staying up late, as **Spiritual Life Insurance** for our children. The memories that stay with our children are often the ones that are slightly out of the ordinary—the skipped bedtimes or sugary treats before meals. The thrills and excitement of these things are the memories they will take with them. In that sense, we try to tie our Faith to these benign thrills, so that as the kids grow and perhaps if they waiver, they'll remember this joy and come home.

New souls joining the Church is important. It's one of the most joy-filled moments in the Church! Easter is our salvation. It could not be a more important day! Easter and new Catholics call for the

greatest of celebrations. This is a lesson we want to really drive home for our children. This is why we are here. This is the why and the how of serving Our Lord.

The excitement of late night parties, grown-ups toasting wine, and children sneaking extra cookies is the Spiritual Life Insurance that we give our kids, so that when they're grown and free to make their own choices, they choose Christ. And His Church. And that Joy will always bring them home.



Mama to six kids ranging from teens to tots, Sarah spends her days homeschooling the littles and delivering forgotten lunches and homework to the bigs. The family lives and homesteads a little piece of Indiana countryside and she chronicles their wild adventures at [Wild Things Farm](#).



This contribution is available at <http://thekoalamom.com/2016/04/spiritual-life-insurance-for-children/>
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My Lord and My God! [at Journey to Wisdom]

Sunday April 3, 2016

A Reflection on John 20:19-31, N.A.B.



By: Larry T

As far as I am concerned the only reason to eat cake is for the frosting. I always maneuver for the corner piece of a rectangular or square cake; I don't have to explain the reason for this to my fellow icing lovers. On the other hand, my wife doesn't share my love for frosting and will carefully scrape it off when it's too thick for her taste. Including the icing most 3-layer round cakes are about 8-inches in diameter and 6 to 7-inches tall. A generous layer of icing is usually covering the top of cupcakes, so we don't want to overlook them. They are usually 3-inches in diameter and 2-inches tall.

Does Thomas's faith resemble a 3-layer cake or is it more like a cupcake in this Gospel reading?

¹⁹ *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

²⁰ *When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.*

²¹ *[Jesus] said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."*

²² *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit.*

- 23 Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”*
- 24 Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.*
- 25 So the other disciples said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*
- 26 Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.”*
- 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.”*
- 28 Thomas answered and said to him, “My Lord and my God!”*
- 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.”*
- 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of [his] disciples that are not written in this book.*
- 31 But these are written that you may [come to] believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.*

Prior to Jesus’ crucifixion and death Thomas’s faith was no doubt the size of a 3-layer cake, but after Jesus’ death Thomas’s faith must have been crushed. We can easily imagine Thomas shaking his head in wide-eyed disbelief as he listened to reliable eyewitness descriptions of Jesus’ crucifixion and death. Why couldn’t Jesus have saved himself? After all, it was because of His many healings, miracles, and teachings that Thomas had come to believe in Him. But, witnesses saw a Roman centurion thrust his spear directly into Jesus’ heart, so there was no denying His death. In the end was Jesus just another in a long line of Jewish prophets to be put to death by his own people?

Upon discovering Jesus’ empty tomb Mary of Magdala tearfully reported, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.” Had grave robbers stolen His body, or had the Jewish authorities taken it away? What was Thomas to make of the empty tomb?

Thomas had probably been wandering the streets aimlessly, carefully avoiding Roman and Jewish authorities, while trying to sort out the roller coaster chain of events. And now his friends were telling him that Jesus had been raised from the dead? Well, that was too much to accept! That is, until he spoke with the raised Jesus and touched His physical body; his “My Lord and my God!” was a public profession of faith in the Divinity of Jesus.

What are we to make of it all? We've seen that on its own Jesus' crucifixion and death would have been just another ghastly execution at the hands of the Romans. Likewise the empty tomb on its own would have meant nothing. Take away Jesus' crucifixion and death and the empty tomb, and there would have been nothing unusual about his sharing a meal with his disciples. But when we combine Jesus' crucifixion and death with the empty tomb and with His bodily resurrection, we have the three pillars that support Christianity. Take away any one of these three Easter events and we might as well take away all twenty-seven books of the New Testament!

As Christians these three events are the main ingredients of our faith cake. How long does it take a faith cake to rise to its full potential? It takes a lifetime to reach 3-layer cake dimensions. But, what goes into the icing? Having a good priest as a spiritual guide, studying Holy Scripture, enjoying Christian music, and associating with the right kind of friends are some of the elements that go into the icing, but in the end they only make up the icing. If we try to heap enough frosting on a cupcake to make it pass for a 3-layer cake we wind up with a shapeless blob. Sadly, too many of us try to cover our lifeless, stagnant faith with layer upon layer of frosting. God charges each of us with the responsibility to grow in our faith. Happy cooking!

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2016/04/my-lord-and-my-god.html>
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Veer Right Off of Ego Central, then Go Straight on Aridity Ave [at The Beautiful Gate]



If Pride is considered the "mother of all sins", it's time to introduce you to a sibling of hers: Self-love. Pride and self-love, are the prime movers of the deadly sins, along with fear. But the reason we have fear is

because

of pride and self-love.

I mean, let's face it, the ego serves itself. Sometimes we THINK we are doing things for the Lord only to find out later that it was simply a secret supply line to the ego.

And the hard thing is that all these "secret supply lines" that feed self-love have to be cut off. This includes our attachments to spiritual consolations and even our secret attachment to "doing good" if we have it (and which we may not be aware of) - many of these things secretly feed our ego, our pride, and so must be stripped from us for our own good. It's a very painful process but one that helps us direct our hearts to our true end.

Which is God.

Think of it as a purification of our intentions. Of our secret motives. Motives that we aren't even aware of. A purification that will eventually give us that perfect purity of heart which allows us to see God.

You just can't bear good fruit with the water of your own self-love. No, in order to bear good fruit our own water lines must be shut down completely so that the heavenly water lines may open.

The shutting down of our secret supply lines, the ones hidden below the surface, takes a long time. The greater the self-love, the more intense the process will be. Thus we suffer from a great and terrible aridity during these times. There is no longer attraction to the things of the world, nor is there much to things of the spirit when pride and self-love are being stripped from the soul. This isn't even something we can do ourselves because the root of it is beyond our ability to access.

It's like being caught betwixt and between. Our hearts feel like a barren wasteland. No joy in earthly things and nothing but fizzle instead of sizzle when it comes to heavenly things.

Yes, think "desert". A long dry season but one that has a purpose - to bring you out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

(Ooops... I almost wrote "dessert". You know, one of those Lenten Freudian slips. It's a "chocolate" thing in my case.)

At the beginning of the spiritual life we can do a great deal to help shut down the supply lines feeding self-love but eventually you get to a point where your own power is insufficient (and really just gets in the way) and you must rely on God to do the work in your soul.

Though it does seem as if God took a vacation without you and forgot to tell you when he'll be back.

Humility is THE virtue to pray for as we undergo this stripping. The more I learn about humility, the more I realize the importance of praying for it daily.

Without it, we can't make progress spiritually.

Without it, we can't bear fruit.

Without it, we cannot bear our time in the desert and tend to return to the slavery of "Egypt" (read - "slavery to the world").

Perish the thought.

The plus side of the desert is that it's where we become aware of just how strong our attachment is to self and where God weans us from this attachment.

There is a direct correlation between our ability to surrender to God and our humility. Because, in order to surrender to God we need to let go of self.

You can't cling to God if your hands are too busy hugging yourself.

*Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. **The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, You are my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all. The one delights in its own strength, represented in the persons of its rulers; the other says to its God, I will love You, O Lord, my strength.***

St. Augustine, The City of God

(The bold is mine)

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Has Jesus Arisen in Your Heart? [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

Has Jesus Arisen in Your Heart?

— *Are You Being Conformed into His Image ? (Part 1)*



He Is Risen!

“... those whom He foreknew, He also predestined [to become] conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” (Rom.8:29-30)

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have just celebrated the solemnity of the Resurrection of Christ – a feast which, along with His crucifixion and burial are the keystones of the Christian Faith. However, in the practice of our faith, some of us tend to overlook the fact that the Resurrection took place on the Jewish feast of Firstfruits and that Jesus was indeed the first fruits of a new creation. You see, Jesus not only died to pay for the sins of humanity but also so that He might be the first among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). So that He, living in us and through us believers, might continue the work of bringing the Good News of God’s Kingdom here amongst the people of the world. He was leaving, but He was passing His anointing unto us so that we might continue His work.

In order to fulfill this, our role in this world, we need to be conformed to His image by the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:29) and yield ourselves to His rule so that we can be empowered to be His instruments in bring in forth the Kingdom. However, this cannot happen unless we, of our own free will, permit the Son of God

to “arise in our hearts” so that we can experience His resurrection presence in us – only then can we be His partners in being instruments of the Father’s Will here on this earth!

Because the Father will not impose Himself on us, our salvation is NOT contingent on our decision to become His bondservants – it must be a free will decision of “agape” Love to give ourselves as a living sacrifice to the Father, in Jesus’ Name! (Rom. 12:1). Our decision will then allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us to renew our minds and empower us for the work of the Kingdom and for the final transition to union with Him!

To begin this spiritual transformation the Holy Spirit begins by first awakening our spirits to His leadings – an awakening that can only be accomplished by Him, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus (a leader of the Sanhedrin). In essence, our spirits have to be re-born from above so that the Spirit of Christ may come into us. This, the Arising of Jesus in our hearts, is the first step in being conformed to His Image.



“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (Jn. 1:1-8)

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We ended this Lenten season with the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord and Savior from the dead and as the harbinger of our own spiritual transition that begins with our transition from unbelief to a Living Faith and a renewed Life in the spirit as Children of God – a renewed awareness, which permits you to sense the “wind” of the Spirit.

In this series of articles I will be discussing the various levels of transitions we must all go through in our journey to spiritual maturity as the Spirit Conforms us to the Image of Christ. Besides laying the groundwork for an understanding of the nature of these transformative stages, the first stage I will be discussing will be our coming to the awakening of our spirit. If you can sense the “wind” of the spirit then you have an awakened spirit and are beyond this first stage. If not, then you need to ask God to send His Holy Spirit to renew you.

We cannot live in this world without undergoing transitions – in fact, natural life, itself, is a process in which transitions are of the essence. What we don’t realize or sometimes take for granted is that the development of our spiritual life itself requires a series of transitions in order to mature our spiritual nature sufficiently so that we may enter into a true and fulfilling intimate living relationship with the Divine through Christ Jesus who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We all are tripartite beings composed of body, soul, and spirit (1Thess. 5-23). Our body and soul are designed to permit us to interact with our natural and time constrained environment in order to be able to subsist and procreate to thus fulfill our natural role in this world. Our spirit, is, essentially, our inner sanctuary, designed to permit us to interact with our creator so that He may partner with us in the living out of our our lives, and thus be His instruments in bringing forth His will into this creation in our God-intended role for us.

However, as natural descendants of Adam, and victims of his rebellion against being ruled by God, we are born with an inactive spiritual connection to the Father – with an empty and desecrated sanctuary, so to speak. In this, our natural state, we are, of necessity, controlled by the physical and emotional necessities of the world around us as well as the forces of darkness which utilize our weakened state to foil the Father’s true purpose for the human race and, essentially, attempt to bring us to a final destruction.

Jesus, the Father’s Only Begotten Son, was sent not only to save us from our sins by satisfying God’s justice but to restore our spiritual nature to its original state before sin entered into human nature and thus reconnect us to the Father via the Holy Spirit and His Word. Because of sin, our human body is destined to return from the dust from which it came. But our soul and spirit are destined for a recreated body at the resurrection of the dead when Jesus returns – no longer as just our savior, but to judge the living and the dead, to determine where we will spend eternity.

Before that day comes, we who have believed in the Christ and the Good News of Salvation must pass through a series of spiritual transformations or transitions, not only to be saved but also so that we may be His instruments in bringing the same Good News to this fallen world. These transitions begin with the first stage: the re-birth of our spirits, just as Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born of water and the spirit” in order to enter into this stage of spiritual renewal.

From the scriptures we can identify at least three major stages of this transformation. The Holy Spirit whom the Father sent to us at the behest of His Son is God’s Agent of Grace and His Word to bring us through this process. I propose that the main stages where Grace intervenes in our spiritual formation to be as follows:

Stage 1 – Unbelief to a Living Faith and Spiritual Awakening

Stage 2 – Spiritual Awakening to Spiritual Empowerment and Consecration

Stage 3 – Spiritual Consecration to Spiritual Union With Christ

If the naming of these major stages surprises you, don't worry, most people brought up in our traditional religious culture, as I was, would not be familiar with these terms. They are unfamiliar because our religious culture uses other terminology to express them. The reason is that our culture of "intellectual enlightenment" tends to avoid using the terms, "spirit" and "spiritual" – which are considered to be too theologically abstract for the common man.

For instance, in our cultural thinking the term "conversion" is considered as merely coming to a different intellectual understanding or assessment of certain philosophical or cultural tenets and the realignment of our lives to that renewed understanding. It cannot even conceive that the term, as used in scripture, refers NOT to an intellectual change of mind but of our response to hearing the Word of God in our "heart" or "spirit" thus evoking an understanding in us that tells us that we are not walking in harmony with God's Spirit – a level of "spiritual awareness" that brings a deep desire in our hearts to repent and turn to follow His leading so that we can be in alignment to His will.

Now, About Stage 1

When Jesus told the crowds that **".... unless you are converted and turn [repent] you shall all likewise perish"** (Luke 13:5) He was not speaking about them accepting a new philosophy or theology but about something that had to occur in their "spirits", not their minds through the Word preached to them – a spiritual impartation that would cause them to accept the Good News of Salvation that the Father was offering them through Jesus' preaching and teaching.

It is true that sometimes a true conversion or "turning to God" is preceded by an intellectual reassessment of what we believe, but that happens because our intellectual preconceptions are blocking what the Holy Spirit is telling our hearts or our spirit



Jesus Offers Living Water

As an example of this take the instance where Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman who came to the well to draw water, asking her to give Him a drink. She was taken aback that a Jewish man, especially a rabbi, would ask a foreign woman for a drink...

So Jesus [said to] her, **"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."** (Jn 3:10)

The woman, of course, did not understand what Jesus was saying about “living water” in a “spiritual” way so she responded, just as we would, in a natural way, asking Jesus, “how are you going to get this water? You don’t have anything to draw water with?”

Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (Jn:3-13-14)

Now, the woman’s spiritual ears perked up and, sensing that what Jesus was referring to was “spiritual”. she said, ... “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” (Jn 3:15)

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” (jn 3:16-18)

She now recognized “in her spirit” that Jesus was speaking from His spirit as a prophet of God and so, sensing an opportunity, tried to get Jesus to tell her about where God intended men to worship. But Jesus answered her:

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know [from tradition] that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.”

Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.” (Jn 3:21-26)

Here Jesus, by direct revelation, makes it clear exactly who He is and that the Father desires for us to come before Him “in [a renewed] spirit and in truth”. Jesus came just so that we could have a reborn spirit so we could worship the Father as He desires to be worshipped. How many of us can say that we “know” that our worship is “in the spirit”? I, before my spirit awakened, a compliant baptized Christian, did not even know what being “in the spirit” was!

Now, for the Samaritan woman, the transition from unbelief to belief was completed when she understood “in her spirit” who Jesus was, so she immediately got up and went to give her witness to the villagers and...

Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.” (Jn.3:39)

It is important to note the significance that, once awakened, the woman’s witness of her faith had on the villagers. Yes! Her faith was contagious! And, yes, the faith of the villagers was also connected them to the person of Jesus and who He was. However, their initial level of belief was still at the “human” initiation stage, a stage that was calling them to go further in their faith. It was an intermediate state that

was inciting them to seek out Jesus for themselves. The Holy Spirit was drawing them to go further and experience and hear Jesus for themselves. In their curiosity the Holy Spirit drew them to seek Him personally and, when they did He preached and taught the Word of God to them and them several days. It is, at this point, after they had heard the WORD directly from Jesus ...

They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” (Jn3:42)

Just as the Word had to be heard directly from Jesus to be able to be received spiritually to activate their spirits, so also we who have heard the testimony of “tradition” must spiritually seek out Jesus for ourselves and hear the Word directly from Him in order to complete the first stage of transition from unbelief to belief and have the Risen Jesus present in our hearts (spirits). Praised be His Holy Name!!

In living out our faith however, we get stuck at the intermediate stage,” the testimony of tradition”, and never seek out Jesus for ourselves to activate our spiritual awareness. We don’t do it because we cannot comprehend that, “in faith” we can transcend our human circumstances and reach out to Him “in the spirit”- our reborn spirit that is NOT bound by the natural circumstances in which our physical self is embedded!

One of the reasons we don’t even try is because our religious culture is very cautious in teaching us about our newly awakened spiritual nature and what our spiritual legacy in Christ really is! And that legacy is that we now abide in HIM and HE in us in our spirits and that because of this we can take the next step in faith into spiritual waters and actually experience His presence and Hear His Voice in the here and now! Again, let us give praise to His Holy Name!

Remember the two disciples who, depressed by the circumstances of Jesus’ death, were on their way to a village called “Emmaus” when they encountered Jesus (without recognizing Him). In conversing with them He chided them, saying,

“O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?” And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Lk 24:25-27)

As the day was ending they said to Him ...



Unless you eat of my flesh and drink my blood...

“... Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is now far spent”. And he went in to abide with them. And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, “Was not our heart burning within us, while he spoke to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Lk 24:29-32)

Our religious initiation, again, tends to major in the doctrinal portion of catechesis and glosses over the “spiritual” portion also required so that, although new initiates are given the basic teachings as the church’s testimony of the necessary tenets of the Faith, they are not usually given any spiritual direction or incentive to seek out Jesus, personally, “in the spirit”, so that they too may recognize Him in the breaking of the bread, confirming His Word in their hearts and thus truly letting the Holy Spirit awaken their spirits through the Word.

Listen to what the Apostle Peter says to the church:

“... since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you...” (1 Ptr 1:14-25)

Here, Peter clearly indicates that it is the anointed preaching of the Good News, the Word of God, which awakens our spirit and brings it to a new life in Christ.

For those of you who have been baptized and have not yet completed this stage of your transition to a full awakening of your spirit, all you need to do is

“... ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” (Luke 11:9)

Once you have sincerely asked, in prayer, then partake of the Word in faith and it will be opened to you so that you also may hear the Word of the Good News with your “spiritual” ears and if you respond to that Word you will receive the grace of God for a ‘spiritual’ awareness of His Presence in you – the

beginning of an intimate personal relationship with Him!

Just as Jesus said, ***blessed are those who hear the word of God and act on it.***” (Luke 11:27-28)

My Brothers and sisters NOW is the time to act on the WORD and receive all that the Lord has provided for those who believe! May He reveal His Presence in you and may His Word burn in your hearts forever!

Baruch Ha Shem! Blessed be the Name!

Your Brother in Christ ... Bartimaeus

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[Has Jesus Arisen in Your Heart? \(Part 3\)](#)

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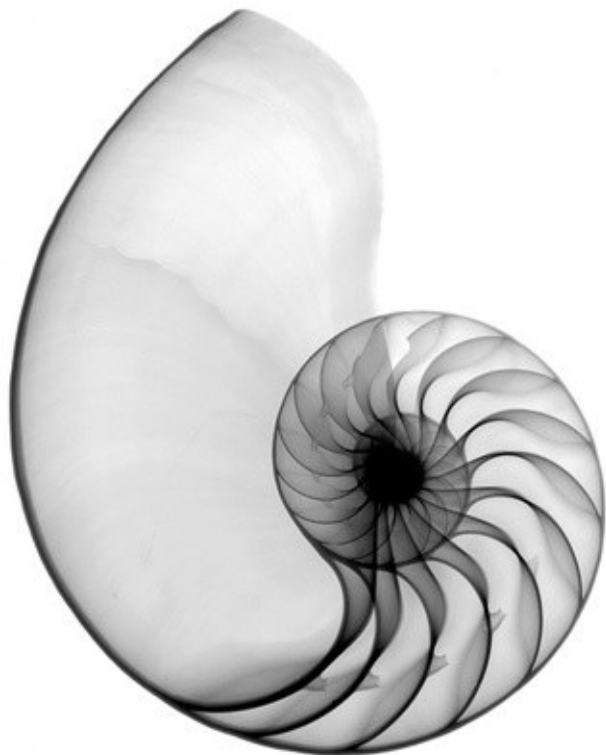
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How Stats and Heidegger Showed Me that I Exist (or Happy Birthday to Me) [at Backs of People's Heads and Baby Faces]



Saturday was my 47th birthday

. It's been a tough birthday to face down. In three short years, I will be 50. I kept thinking all weekend, "Wasn't I just 25 last year?" But I was not. It's time for me to face facts: I am getting older. I am not a girl; I am a woman and a middle-aged woman at that.

Between the breast surgery (the masses were not cancerous, but the surgery is still painful), the pneumonia I'm still fighting off, and the ups and downs of everyday life, I have realized that my life is passing by me very quickly. I am struck by the fact that I have wasted a great deal of time and I am filled with regrets.

This is not the first time I have faced down a tough birthday

. When I was turning 29 I had been married for about 7 years and had two kids and had already had a couple of miscarriages. Something was missing and I couldn't lay my finger on it. I was not sure what I wanted to do with my life and time was passing me by in a flurry of day-to-day sameness. Struggling with depression, I checked myself into the hospital in order to sort out some of my more self-destructive issues and realized that I hated what I was doing. I was bored by the "sameness" of it all: Get up. Go to work. Come home. Eat dinner. Kiss kids. Lose time on the internet. Go to bed. Repeat daily.

As I looked back over my 20s, I regretted not getting to "have fun" as if "fun" was the end all and be all of existence. To shake things up, I did some things I am not proud of and destroyed many relationships in the process. It has taken almost 20 years to repair some of them, and others will never recover. No, fun was

not the answer. It was a change, but not for the better.

As I entered my 40s, I can remember, once again, feeling like there was something missing. My kids were getting older, but I was not in a place where I could effectively help them navigate the transition into adulthood. After some soul-searching, I decided at 42 to go back to school and get my Bachelor's degree in Philosophy. Best decision I ever made.

Now, I am working on a Master's Degree I only partially care about having.

I want to study Philosophy, but in the absence of a local program, I am taking a Master's in Business Administration instead. I enjoy learning and seek new information all the time, but Business Administration is not something that fascinates me. It simply doesn't captivate me like Philosophy did and does. So, as I was in recovery from my surgery last month, I decided that life was entirely too short to waste my time on things that I hate to do. I came back determined to finish the semester and then drop the program.

This Saturday, as I got up to attend my first Stats class, I was more annoyed about my chosen program than ever. What a way to celebrate my birthday: taking a class I was dreading and had no interest in taking. I made myself get dressed and go anyway. And I am so glad I did!

I gained understanding of a concept that eluded me before, and in that moment a hundred other pieces fell into place as well.

I realized that it is through struggle and change that we know that we are living. Not just alive, but living. It is in finding Understanding, no matter where it is, that I find joy.

In his work

Being and Time,

Martin Heidegger characterizes Being (as in existence) as

Da-sein

. Translated from the German literally it means "There Being" or "Being There". The English doesn't quite capture the nuance of Heidegger's idea, though. There are a couple of ways that you can say "there" in German. There is "dort" which is a more fixed sense of "there" and there is "da" which contains a sense of movement, as well as a sense of arrival. Consequently,

Da-sein

projects itself into the future, and because of that, there is a sense of motion to Heidegger's

Da-sein

that pushes it forward. If you are always going to be "there", then you are never "here", because once you "arrive" you are not going anywhere else. (I know --dense --but stay with me.)

In highly simplified terms, Heidegger's concept means that when we stop changing, when we stop

growing or decaying, when we stop moving forward, we cease to be.

As I was learning how to calculate a standard deviation this realization hit me like a lightning bolt: pushing myself to be in the next place will never be a waste of time. As long as I am learning, pushing and growing, I am not wasting my life. I am simply becoming more of what I am created to be.

As I have made my way through the first few months of the MBA program, I have found that my passion for Philosophy has come into play in unique ways. I have used it in leadership and management classes, in Economics and now in Statistics. I have always believed that Philosophy is the root of all learning, but it is truly the search for Understanding that fires my passion.

There is a pattern to all life - there are relationships that are not always obvious to the naked eye -and understanding this is what fascinates me about Philosophy. So, taking these classes is an opportunity for me to see the relationships that I have missed between business and Philosophy. This should be interesting.

At the very least, I can say I exist. *Photo credit: "X-ray Nautilus Shell" by Bert Myers via IainClaridge.net*

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The Book of Revelation Is a Sure Guide to What Is Really Going On [at Community in Mission]



In the Office of Readings this Easter season, we are reading from the Book of Revelation. This choice might seem surprising, but there are good reasons for it.

While many suppose that the Book of Revelation is merely about the end of the world, it is about far more; it is also about what is happening right now. It was not written only for the end of the ages but for all ages. It is a book of glory that discloses the victory that Jesus has already won. Don't get lost in lots of exotic theories; Revelation is a book of glory that prophetically declares what is really going on.

Its title in Greek is Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Apokalupsis Jesou Christou), which literally means "The Unveiling of Jesus Christ." It is as if Jesus is pulling back the veil to show us what is really going on. He shows us the great drama of history and tells us that He has already won the victory. He declares that we should not to lose heart while the dust settles, while the wheat is separated from the chaff and the harvest is brought in.

We are too easily mesmerized or terrified by our limited view of history. We think that life depends on which political party wins, or whether a cure is found for some disease, or whether world leaders can reach rapprochement. But the battle is far higher and deeper than our little sliver of the early 21st century. It is far deadlier and is about more dramatic issues than what will happen to the GNP of the U.S. or which of the latest political theories will prevail.

This is a great drama between good and evil. It concerns the far more fundamental issue of where you will spend eternity. Yes, there is a great and cosmic battle in which we are all caught up; it is happening all around us. St. Paul says,

For we do not contend against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the high places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm (Eph 6:11-13).

The Book of Revelation is speaking to the same reality. It unveils the true and cosmic battle. In so doing, it declares without ambiguity who the victor is: Jesus Christ our King, who has already won. There are only two kingdoms, two armies, two sides. You must decide whom you will serve: the prince of this world or the King and Lord of all creation.

Revelation opens with a vision of the glory of Jesus the Great Lord and Son of Man:

I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead (Rev 1: 10-17).

Yes, here is our Lord Jesus in His resurrected and conquering glory! *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2:10-11).*

Yes, Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen (Rev 1:5-7).

The second part of the Book of Revelation calls the Church and us as individuals to repentance and perseverance. The cosmic battle reaches the Church and individual disciples. The battle is in the Church and in the heart of every person. Thus, the letters to the seven churches. We are not to lose the love we had at first. We must be willing to endure hardship and persecution. We are to reject the fornicators and all those who propose any sort of sexual immorality. We are to resist syncretism and every form of false religion. We must resist all of the deep secrets of Satan; we must not be in any agreement with his ways. We must resist sloth and not fall back. We must resist lukewarmness and every sort of pride and self-satisfaction. The Church, clergy, and laity must fight the good fight, must persevere. We must endure hardship and always keep in mind the reward that awaits the courageous and the eternal disgrace that is coming to cowards and to all embrace the world, the flesh, and the devil.

John is then caught up into Heaven to see the glory of God and the heavenly liturgy. He has revealed to him what must take place soon. Historically, the Book of Revelation pointed to the destruction of Jerusalem and to the end of an era. Down through the ages, empires and nations have crumbled; eras and epochs have come and gone; only God's Kingdom, as proclaimed and made sacramentally present by the Church, has or will survive.

Today we are arguably at the end of another era and epoch. The West is crumbling and decadence

abounds. Confusion about basic reality is so widespread that our current cultural situation can credibly be described as a lunatic asylum. Even within the Church, voices that should speak out prophetically are silenced by fear and infected by worldliness. There is among Church leaders, clergy, and laity a widespread softness and a feeling that the risk of speaking out is too great.

The message of the Book of Revelation is a strong antidote to times like these as well as to times that have gone before and may well come after. The message is clear: be strong, be prepared, and be willing to suffer, realizing that no matter how powerful and glamorous evil may seem, Jesus is the victor. We must persevere and realize that we are swept up into a cosmic battle that is much larger than our current situation, but which reaches us nonetheless. We must choose sides. Don't think that you can sit on the fence. Satan owns the fence and he is coming for you and will say, "You belong to me."

The seals, the bowls, and the trumpets of Revelation are but a further description of the cosmic battle and the wretched defeats that ultimately come upon the defiant and disobedient. God will not leave unpunished those who despise His Kingdom and His holy ones. These seven ordeals times three are a call to repentance to those who survive. They are also a manifestation of God's justice and ultimate authority over history.

A crucial battle comes in Revelation 12, when the red dragon with seven heads and ten horns besets Mother Mary, who is also an image of the Church. But note this: the devil cannot prevail in the war that breaks out in Heaven. He is hurled to the earth, where he unsuccessfully pursues the woman (who is Mary and the Church). He is a big loser, and in a rage he continues to pursue us.

For the time being, the cosmic battle continues. But Satan rages, for he knows his time is short. He is a big loser.

But even losers still have an odd ability to dupe and impress foolish, gullible people. And so Satan still flashes the cash, makes empty promises, and dangles passing pleasures before us. Sadly, many of the worldly and unspiritual foolishly fall prey to his pomp and lies. Mysteriously, God permits this until the full number of the elect are gathered in.

And then comes the end:

And fire came down from heaven and devoured Satan and his armies and followers. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will

be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new.” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true” (Rev 20:9-21:5).

Yes, it is good that we read the Book of Revelation. It is a pulling back of the veil, wherein the Lord tells us what is really going on and what the outcome shall be. He is telling us not to lose heart. *“In this world you shall have tribulation, but have courage, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).

Be not dismayed, fellow Christians. Do not be fearful of what is coming upon this world. Even if it is the end of the era or epoch, the Church has endured such sea changes before. Christ has already won the victory and has promised that the Church will remain indefectible. When the current foolishness has runs its course, we will still be here preaching the Gospel, even if we have become a small remnant and are preaching from jail!

Do not be fearful. Do not be a coward. Preach boldly and with love. Continue to shine the light of the Gospel in the darkness. The Gospel will win; it always wins.

Don’t get lost in all the details about the Book of Revelation and miss its message. The message is one of victory in the midst of persecution and trial. It is a call to persevere. It is a pulling back of the veil to show us what the end shall be! Be strong, be courageous, be certain. Jesus has already won the great victory in the cosmic battle. The dust is still settling. But know for certain that Jesus has won and if you choose Him, so will you!

He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev 21:7-8).

Regardless of what you think is going on, this is what is really going on. Choose sides. I urge you to choose Christ with courage. Don’t look back. Come what may, Viva Christo Rey!

This contribution is available at <http://blog.adw.org/2016/04/book-revelation-sure-guide-really-going/>
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The Religiosity of March Madness [at Brutally Honest]



Many of my fellow Virginians, including more than a couple of family members, are having a tough time getting over [UVA's loss last night to Syracuse](#), particularly after blowing a 16 point lead. A number 1 seed getting beat, in an incredible way, by a number 10 seed.

C'mon Wahoos... what the heck happened?

We'll likely never know but what is clear is that March Madness is yet again living up to its moniker.

Which brings us to [a piece over at Aleteia](#) I found rather fascinating, more particularly, the video that's featured, starring (if you will) Fr. Rob Ketcham. I think it's excellent... take a peek and let us know what you think:

Fr. Ketcham's got many more insightful, educational and inspiring videos at

[PetersBoat.net](#)

You're seriously missing out if you're not keeping up with the guy.

Carry on.

This contribution is available at http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally_honest/2016/03/the-religiosity-of-march-madness.html
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How We Say the Stations of the Cross at Home and a Soccer Sunrise [at A Slice of Smith Life]

[Back in March 2011](#)

, I wrote about how we say (or better yet, pray) the Stations of the Cross at home when we can't make it to our parish's community Stations of the Cross each Friday during Lent. This post will be similar, but with updated photos that include our current youngest child enjoying this church and family tradition.

It is a Lenten tradition in the Catholic Church to meditate on the passion and death of our Lord by participating in the Stations of the Cross. What are the Stations of the Cross? You can go

[HERE](#)

for more information and read the history behind the devotion.

"For Roman Catholics throughout the world, the Stations of the Cross are synonymous with Lent, Holy Week and, especially, Good Friday. This devotion is also known as the "Way of the Cross", the "Via Crucis", and the "Via Dolorosa." It commemorates 14 key events on day of Christ's crucifixion. The majority concern His final walk through the streets of Jerusalem, carrying the Cross." (quote credit)

Many Catholic Churches say the Stations of the Cross each Friday during Lent (this devotion is on Friday since this is the day Jesus died on the cross). With our family's schedule it is sometimes difficult to head out the door and visit the Stations at our local church. So when we can't make it to our church we say the Stations together at home. I love meditating on the stations with our church community, but I also love sharing this tradition and devotion in our home with family. It is simple, takes no preparation time and it is a meaningful way to focus on Lent and Jesus' passion and death before the joyous celebration of the Easter season!



Many years ago my two oldest children each colored free printables of each of the 14 stations so we hang these up around our dining room. One day I would like to "update" these and use

[Kristen's Stations of the Cross printables at Drawn 2B Creative](#)

and have all my children participate in the coloring.



While we stand and kneel at each station hanging on our wall we use a children's version of the Stations of the Cross from a magazine I found several years ago.

[Here](#)

is another great children's version that can be read and printed out.

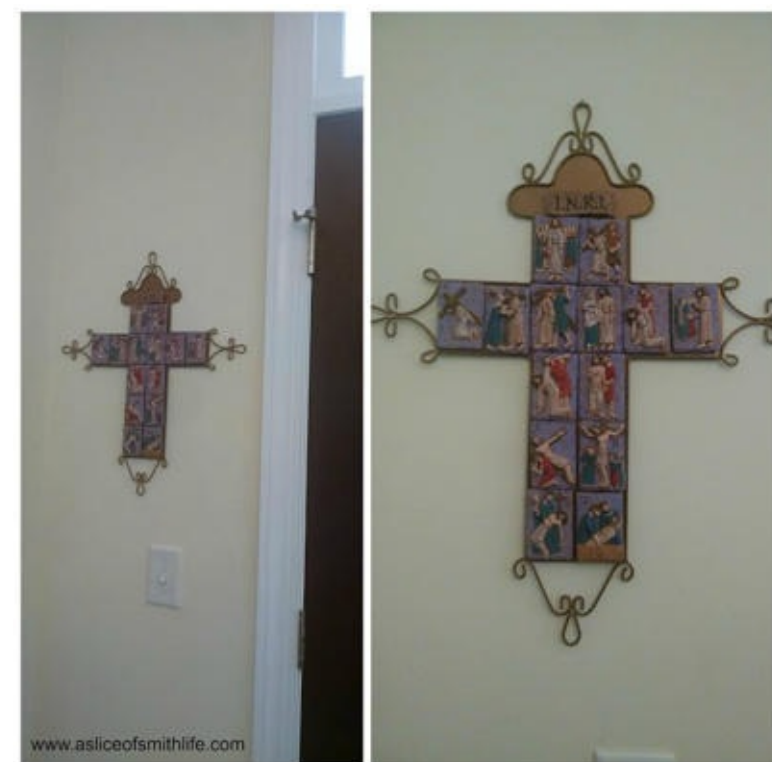
While we are reading through each station we use this

[Magnetic Stations of the Cross 18" Plaque](#)

that is hanging next to our front door year round in our home. I gave this cross as a gift to

[my husband's cousin who entered into full communion with the Catholic Church with my husband on Easter 2006](#)

. When she passed away, our family inherited this beautiful cross.



It is magnetic so before we start reading through the prayers for each station, we take all the magnets off the cross. Then each child takes a turn putting the next numbered station on the cross to fill the cross back in as my older children and my husband and I take turns reading the prayers that go with each numbered station. (And sometimes there is even some bickering and arguing with my younger kids of who goes next! Grrr....) Each magnet is numbered with a Roman numeral in the corner, it's just hard to see this in the photos. My 8 year old likes to walk around the dining room with the cross and stand in front of each station as we read and pray.



Here is our 2 year old playing with the magnets and counting them before we ask her to hand us the next Station. This keeps her busy and is a great way to get her involved!



Do you meditate on the Stations of the Cross with your parish and/or family? I would love to hear your traditions in the comments!

Before I sign off I thought I would share this beautiful sunrise I took a photo of with my Android phone

this past weekend when our family traveled to Myrtle Beach, SC for a soccer tournament that 2 of my children played in. It was a beautiful "soccer" sunrise before an early 8:00 game and a great tournament for both of my children!



Hoping the rest of your Lent is a blessed one!

I linked this post to



[40 Days of Seeking Him During the Season of Lent](#)

I also linked this post to link up spot #79 at

[New Evangelists Monthly - April 2016, Issue #40](#)

Tracy

This contribution is available at http://www.asliceofsmithlife.com/2016/03/how-we-say-stations-of-cross-at-home_10.html
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The Church Deemed the Emancipation Proclamation Hypocritical [at The Shield of Faith]

We learn this from Adam S. Miller's

The North, the South, and Slavery

, the second of his series four books on the civil war, written from a traditional Catholic perspective. One might ask, how could there be anything hypocritical about setting slaves free? The truth, however, about that famous Proclamation, is a different matter, one that those of us indoctrinated in the politically correct view of the Civil War will find difficult to accept. The fact is that, legally, not one single slave was set free by that document.

"

L'Osservatore Romano

[the Vatican's newspaper] condemned it as a desperate and hypocritical measure which freed no slaves but encouraged rebellion in the South. The Jesuit Journal,

La Civiltà Cattolica,

portrayed the war as a hopeless and unjust war to punish the South." (p. 95.) Lincoln's Proclamation only

applied to those Southern states or parts thereof that were not already controlled by Federal troops. It did not apply to slaves in Northern or border states, nor to slaves in the areas of the South that were under Union control. It did not free any slaves in those domains; that is to say, it freed no slaves in areas under the jurisdiction of the United States. Rather, it applied only to Confederate states or sections which were still in rebellion, and over which the North had no legal jurisdiction. Hard to believe?

[Read the Proclamation](#)

yourself.

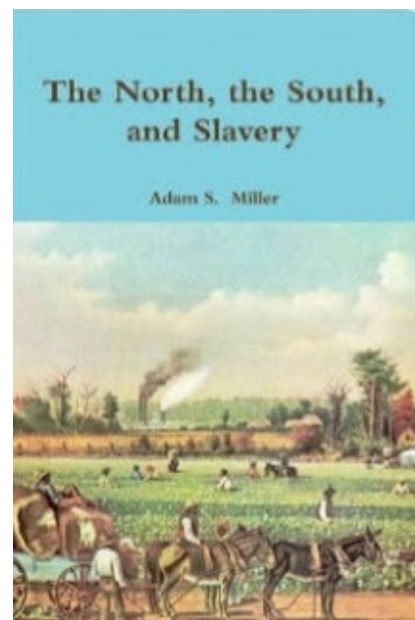
Miller writes that the implications of this should shock those who subscribe to the myth that Lincoln was a great humanitarian. The Proclamation of 1863 was actually a war tactic, whose purpose was to encourage slaves to flee from their plantations, disrupt farm production, and join the war against the South. Lincoln wrote later that year that he hoped "the Negroes should cease helping the enemy, [and] to that extent weaken the enemy in his resistance." (p. 92.) Shortly after it was issued, the

New York World

editorialized that the Proclamation "was not merely futile, but ridiculous." The paper exposed the fact that "The President has purposely made the proclamation inoperative in all places where we have gained

a military footing which makes the slaves accessible. He has proclaimed emancipation only where has notoriously no power to execute it." (p. 94.)

Was Lincoln actually a racist in the worst sense of the term? In an 1862 speech to Northern black leaders, he told them that blacks "are far removed from being placed on an equality with the white race." Thus, they "didn't belong in this land of whites." (p. 97.) During the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, he said that "I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races - that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes. . . I, as much as any other man, am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race." (p. 96.)



What has been presented so far is only a glimmering of the truth behind the "official" view of the Civil War and the issue of slavery in the South. Miller's book exposes a plethora of the "Northern myths," revealing, for example, that the first slaves brought to the future United States were not Africans, but were Irish, English, and Scottish Catholics, and certain legitimate criminals, all white. In later years, there were thousands of non-whites, including freed blacks and Indians, who owned slaves. "Slavery in America was not strictly based on racial prejudice, since there were black masters of black slaves, and white masters of white slaves." (p. 40). The hypocrisy of the North: by 1760 the North had at least 41,000 African slaves, and 3000 white, mostly Irish Catholic, slaves. When the Revolutionary War broke out, New York was the second largest urban center for slavery. In the first U.S. census of 1790, there were 12,422 registered slaves in New Jersey (p. 45).

Written from a Catholic viewpoint, this work also contains sections on Church teaching on slavery, Catholic slaves and slaveholders, and even lists the many canonized slaves and even slave masters.

This short review cannot possibly enumerate the facts presented in this powerful, compact, myth-busting book. It is not written in a sensationalist manner, nor does Miller intend to justify the immorality of slavery in any way. If you can handle a serious paradigm shift in your view of the Civil War, and are open to shedding any pre-conceived, politically-correct understanding of that conflict, I highly recommend reading this book.

The North, the South, and Slavery

is the second of a projected four-part series on the Civil War by Adam S. Miller. The updated editions of the author's books are best obtained from his website

<http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/tower7>

This contribution is available at <http://divinefiat.blogspot.com/2016/03/the-church-deemed-emancipation.html>
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Hello Everyone,

I realize I have been snoozing away at blogging here on Servimus. I've been busy between my other ministry activities as well as my wedding preparations, with only two short months away. The date is set for May 14, 2016. Please everyone, pray for us both, as the Devil is seriously trying to wreck things for us, now and for our future, and sometimes I feel he is using anything and even anyone in my vicinity as pawns to destroy us.

Anyways, I know a few people do read this blog or check it every so often, so to keep things fresh, I'll feature a "highlight" of one of my favourite blogs, "

[Standing on my Head](#)

" under Fr. Longenecker. This priest thankfully is orthodox, and detest Radicals Misrepresenting Traditionalists. This priest is even hated right now by the so-called "true remnant" of the Church because he has respectfully called out the Godless and amoral man that may possibly be the United States' next president, Donald Trump. Unfortunately, in hypocritical and

commandment violating action

, the RMTs have made Mr. Trump their newest "golden calf" to idol worship, over the Lord Jesus Christ. They think Trump will be some kind of saviour against "those damn Lie-berals" in the church and society, and he's a bully and loudmouth just like them.

Now, what I am featuring is Fr.'s latest article, which is a top ten list of vile and I daresay, Protestant and Satanic behaviours that these RMTs exhibit. Seriously, suck this in and take note, because if you don't know what constitutes an RMT,

you will know.

With this handy list, you will now know that if you see these actions, who one is.

I'll leave it up to you when you do identify an RMT, if you even

dare

to try and employ fraternal correction or counsel of these wayward brothers, frequently displaying little to no mercy or reception to spiritual counsel. They abhor mercy and it's current minster of proclamation, Pope Francis. More likely, this list will help you to know who to stay away from, as they are spiritually damaging the souls of the faithful from within the Church (including you.) As arbiters of the Devil's works (unwillingly, or maybe even willingly???) the RMTs rightfully deserve to be isolated and ignored in the Faith when not adhering to the teachings of the Catholic Church and virtue, and if necessary, need to be policed spiritually, and/or civilly/criminally to stop malicious behaviour.

Enjoy from the words of Fr. Dwight Longenecker. Pax, Julian.

Radical Traditionalist - AKA Protestant who is "Legally" Catholic [at Servimus unum Deum]

Radical Traditionalist - AKA Protestant who is "Legally" Catholic [at Servimus unum Deum]



Within Catholic ultra traditionalist circles a new wave of ugliness has arisen. Numerous traditionalist blogs, websites and publications spew disrespectful hatred towards the Catholic church. They mock the Mass by despising the “Novus Ordo” they denigrate the Holy Father referring to him as “Pope Frank” or “Bergoglio” and refer to their mother the Catholic Church with adolescent disrespect as “FrancisChurch”.

I avoid commenting on the filth because, why wallow in sewage? I’m not going to link to the aggregators and websites in question because if you’re interested all you have to do is snoop around a little and follow a few links. You’ll see how they lie, misrepresent and tear down fellow Catholics, how these self appointed prophets ridicule, gossip and slander their fathers in God, and how these self righteous, pretentious Pharisees vomit their bile on all they meet.

It is pointless to ever argue with these people because they are always right. They have no true repentance in their hearts, but are driven by the worst kind of pride: spiritual pride.

Instead of arguing I would like to point out what is going on. First of all, I think it is unfair to use the term “traditionalist” for these people because it pulls down the many good, sensible and holy Catholics who are traditionalist by nature and by their devotions and worship. These people are my friends and family. I am on their side.

They work hard for the church. They live their faith. They build up their families and their parishes in the faith. These good folks deserve to keep the term “traditionalist” and to honor it with their good, strong, faithful and humble Catholicism.

We should separate the paranoid hate mongers from the rest of the traditionalists. They are not traditionalists. They are Protestant fundamentalists wearing traditionalist Catholic clothes.

I know about Protestant fundamentalism. I was raised and educated among Protestant fundamentalists. Among them were many good and sincere Christian people, but also among them, and driving their religion—was a certain type of religious person whose attitudes mirror exactly the Catholic

fundamentalists on the rise today.

Here are ten principles things that connect them:

1. **Private Interpretation** – Protestant fundamentalists rely on their own private selection and interpretation of the Scriptures. Their interpretation is always the right one. Catholic fundamentalists rely on their own selection and interpretation of church documents. Like the Protestant fundamentalists they know better than the Pope.
2. **Cafeteria Christianity** – The Protestant fundamentalist picks and chooses which parts of the Bible he wants to adhere to. Catholic fundamentalists do the same. They pick which parts of Catholicism they consider “authentic” and ignore or denigrate the rest.
3. **Private Prophets** – Protestant fundamentalists always raise up their own preachers and prophets. Mini demagogues—they cultivate a celebrity status and promote them as infallible mini popes. Catholic fundamentalists fall down before their own prophets and preachers who they also raise to a status of authority that supersedes the bishops and even the Holy Father.
4. **Fortress Mentality** – Protestant fundamentalism thrives on the fortress mentality. The little group gets together and builds walls and peers over them at all the “sinners” who are outside the enclave. Catholic fundamentalists practice the same ghetto mentality. “We few, we faithful few!” We are the Remnant of faithful ones who remain. Their response to this blog post, for instance, will be to retreat further into their self made holy fortress and throw stones over the parapet at me—not addressing my points, but resorting to name calling.

5. Invincible Self Righteousness

– Protestant fundamentalists are totally convinced they are right. There is no argument or discussion. Catholic fundamentalists are the same. They have their proof texts. They have their watertight world view. No discussion. No dialogue. It’s their way or the highway. Their response to this blog post will prove my point, for the ones to whom I am referring will not engage my points, but dismiss me and my message.

6. Anger and Violence Fundamentalism is always tinged with anger. There’s no sense of humor here. There’s no joy. There’s no laughter. Especially there is no sense of humor about themselves. Fundamentalists are angry and aggressive, and given enough rope they will move from verbal violence to physical violence. The Catholic fundamentalists who bother to read this far and react in anger to this blog post, for example, will prove my point and they will not even be able to see this themselves.

7. Fear and Loathing Protestant fundamentalists are fueled by fear and loathing. Catholic fundamentalists are the same. There is little light, joy, peace and confidence in their lives. Instead life is narrowed down by fear and loathing. Where there is fear there is darkness.

8. Suspicion and Separation Those who are outside the group are the sinners and suspect ones, but those who seem to be inside the group, but do not share the group think are suspected even more. The only ones who are worse than the sinners outside are the sinners inside the fortress. Therefore everyone inside must conform constantly, and anyone who steps outside the rules or exhibits the wrong attitude will soon be shunned, then excluded.

9. Conspiracy Theories – the atmosphere of suspicion and fear inevitably breeds conspiracy theories. The big, dark nefarious secret powers are always thought to be behind the scenes planning some sort of hostile attack on the select few of the faithful.

10. Persecution complex Fundamentalists do just about everything possible to make themselves obnoxious and unlikeable, then when people dislike them or get down on them they love to play the persecuted victim. It is almost as if they are not only looking for persecution, but are anticipating it with a sick kind of thrill.

Why take time to analyze these ten principles? Because what we see in the extreme religious behaviors of fundamentalists is not limited to Protestants or Catholics. It is actually the sick form of any religion. There are fundamentalist Muslims, fundamentalist Hindus, fundamentalist Jews, fundamentalist Mormons.

You name it. This is the form of religion that is a kind of anti-religion.

Furthermore, as we approach Holy Week, remember that it was this kind of religion which drove the Scribes and Pharisees who eventually scapegoated Jesus and made sure he was killed.

Finally, the analysis is not just a critique of fundamentalists. It should be a sober critique of all Christians because all of us, at one point or another, if we are not careful and prayerful, will fall into these traps to a greater or lesser extent.

I know what I'm talking about because, on my worst days, I see that kind of Catholic looking back at me from the mirror.

This contribution is available at <http://torontotlmserving.blogspot.ca/2016/03/highlight-fr-longenecker-shows-you-how.html>
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Another Easter [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

There have been only three to six major events so far, depending on how you count them: the creation of this universe; humanity's creation and fall; and our Lord's arrival, execution, and resurrection.

There's another big one coming, eventually, and I'll get back to that.

Cosmic Scale

I'm a Catholic, so I take Sacred Scripture very seriously,

[1](#)

including this:

"God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed - the sixth day."
([Genesis 1:31](#))

We've known that God's creation was big and old, and been impressed, for a long time:

"¹ Think! The heavens, even the highest heavens, belong to the LORD, your God, as well as the earth and everything on it."
([Deuteronomy 10:14](#))

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the sky proclaims its builder's craft."
([Psalms 19:2](#))

"³ Raise your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth below; Though the heavens grow thin like smoke, the earth wears out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies, My salvation shall remain forever and my justice shall never be dismayed."
([Isaiah 51:6](#))

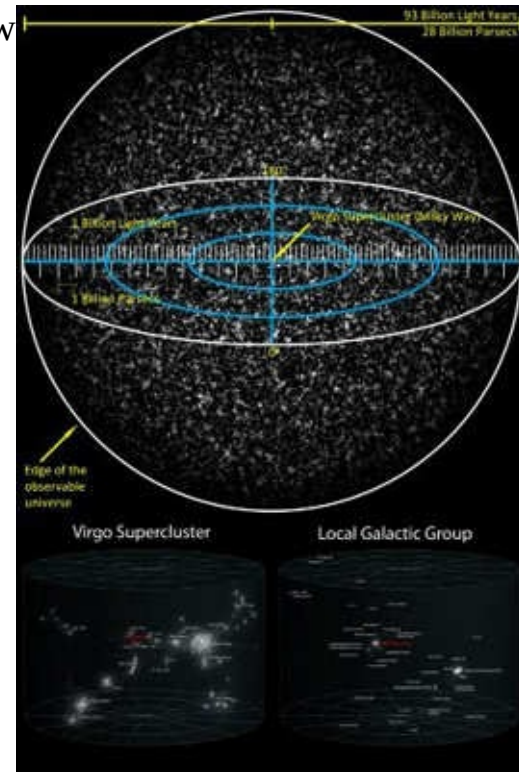
"⁴ Indeed, before you the whole universe is as a grain from a balance, or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth."
([Wisdom 11:22-25](#))

I also believe that God is infinite and eternal, almighty and

[ineffable](#)

: beyond our power to describe or understand. (Catechism of the Catholic Church,

[202](#)



,

[230](#)

)

I might not have created a universe as big and old as the one we're in: but God's God, I'm not, and that's a good thing.

As I see it, what we're learning about the cosmic scale of this creation is cause for greater admiration of God's work, and that's another topic. (

[July 26, 2015](#)

;

[March 29, 2015](#)

;

[September 21, 2014](#)

)

Wounded, but Basically Good

I've said this before: God doesn't make junk.

The universe is basically good. So are we — basically. (

[Genesis 1:26](#)

-

[27](#)

,

[31](#)

; Catechism,

[31](#)

,

[299](#)

,)



The first of us — Adam and Eve

[aren't German](#)

— listened to Satan, ignoring what God had said. Then Adam tried blaming his wife, and God, which did not end well. (

[Genesis 3:5](#)

-

[13](#)

)

That was a very, very long time ago. We've been living with the disastrous consequences of their decision ever since. (Catechism,

[396](#)

-

[412](#)

)

Humanity is still made "in the divine image;" (

[Genesis 1:27](#)

)

But loving ourselves, others, and God is a struggle because the harmony we had with ourselves and with the universe is broken. Human nature is wounded: but not corrupted. (Catechism,

[355](#)

-

[361](#)

,

[374](#)

-

[379](#)

,

[398](#)

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[400](#)

,

[405](#)

,

[1701](#)

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[1707](#)

,

[1949](#)

)

True God and True Man

About two thousand years ago, our Lord arrived:

"For God so loved the world that he gave [Z](#) his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

*"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn [8](#) the world, but that the world might be saved through him."
([John 3:16-17](#))*

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Shepherds and Magi thought it was good news, Herod didn't, and that's another topic. (

[January 3, 2016](#)

)

The Word has become Flesh, true God and true man. (Catechism,

[456](#)

-



)

Anguish, Betrayal, Blood, and Death

We reviewed Luke's account of our Lord's final Passover meal last week; and kept reading until

[Luke 23:55](#)

-

56

, where some women spotted the tomb his body was in.

The whole week has been like that. Friday's Gospel,

[John 18:1](#)

-

[19:42](#)

, was similarly uncheerful:

"[1](#) [2](#) When he had said this, Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to where there was a garden, into which he and his disciples entered."

...

*"So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by."
([John 18:1,19:42](#))*

There's been a lot of anguish, betrayal, torture, blood, and death, in this week's Sacred Scripture.

All four Gospels agree on what happened next, although the accounts don't quite match up: by American standards.

2

*"[1](#) [2](#) [3](#) On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb."
([John 20:1](#))*

It took time and effort, but our Lord finally convinced the surviving Apostles that they weren't seeing a ghost. Our Lord had stopped being dead. (

[November 22, 2015](#)



;

[October 18, 2015](#)

)

That's where it gets interesting.

The Eighth Day: Life, Death - - -



Two millennia later, we're still celebrating.

Pope St. John Paul II called the Resurrection of Jesus "the fundamental event upon which Christian faith rests ... the fulcrum of history."

[3](#)

Death, physical death, happens: but it is not the end. (Catechism,

[1007](#)

,

[1010](#)

-

[1014](#)

,

[1022](#)

,

[1682](#)

)

"[7](#) [8](#) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

"[9](#) For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being.

"For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life,"

([1 Corinthians 15:20-22](#))

What happens next is up to each of us: whether we've decided to accept or reject God's grace, and what we've done with our life. (

[John 14:15](#)

;

[2 Timothy 1:9](#)

-

[10](#)

;

[James 2:14](#)

-

[19](#)

; Catechism,

[1021](#)

-

[1022](#)

,

[1987](#)

-
[2016](#)

)

What our Lord expects is simple, but not easy.

I should love God, love my neighbor, see everyone as my neighbor, treat others as I want to be treated. (

[Matthew 7:12](#)

,

[Matthew 22:36](#)

-

[40](#)

,

[Mark 12:28](#)

-

[31](#)

;

[Matthew 5:43](#)

-

[44](#)

;

[Mark 12:28](#)

-

[31](#)

;

[Luke 10:25](#)

-

[30](#)

; Catechism,

[1825](#)

)

I try to love God and neighbor because I follow the Man who is God: who died in my place; descended to the abode of the dead; rose from the tomb; and lives today and forever. (

[Matthew 28:1](#)

-

[10](#)

;

[Mark 16:1](#)

-

[11](#)

;

[1 Peter 4:6](#)

; Catechism,

[631](#)

-

[635](#)

,

[638](#)

-

[655](#)

)

We are living in the eighth day of creation, a day of life and hope: and have been for two millennia. (Catechism,

[349](#)

,

[1166](#)

,

[2174](#)

)

- - - and Beyond

There's more to being a Christian than celebrating, and waiting for our Lord's return.

[4](#)

We're expected to live as if loving our neighbors and loving God matter.

Truly respecting the "transcendent dignity" of humanity, and each person, isn't easy: but it's something we must do. Also building a better world for future generations. The job starts within each of us, with an ongoing "inner conversion."
(Catechism,

[1888](#)

,

[1928](#)

-

[1942](#)

)

We've made some progress: and have a very great deal left to do.

As I said last year, my guess is that we'll still be waiting and working when the

[8.2 kiloyear event](#)

,

[Y2K](#)



, and

[Y10K](#)

are seen as roughly contemporary. (

[December 28, 2014](#)

;

[November 23, 2014](#)

;

[October 26, 2014](#)

)



(From Jaime Jasso, via DeviantArt.com, used w/o permission.)

But —

the war is over. We won.

We're already in "the last hour," and have been for two thousand years.

This world's renewal is in progress, and nothing can stop it.

(

[Matthew 16:18](#)

;

[Mark 16:6](#)

; Catechism,

[638](#)

,

)

More of my take on the best news ever:

1

Reading the Bible is a very Catholic thing:

"The Church 'forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful. . . to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."¹¹²

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, [133](#))

It's literally 'Catholicism 101:'

2

As I keep saying, Sacred Scripture wasn't written from a contemporary Western viewpoint:

3

From Pope Saint John Paul II's "

[Dies Domini](#)

" (Day of the Lord):

*"...The Resurrection of Jesus is the fundamental event upon which Christian faith rests (cf. [1 Cor 15:14](#)). It is an astonishing reality, fully grasped in the light of faith, yet historically attested to by those who were privileged to see the Risen Lord. It is a wondrous event which is not only absolutely unique in human history, but which lies **at the very heart of the mystery of time**. In fact, 'all time belongs to [Christ] and all the ages', as the evocative liturgy of the Easter Vigil recalls in preparing the Paschal Candle. Therefore, in commemorating the day of Christ's Resurrection not just once a year but every Sunday, the Church seeks to indicate to every generation the true fulcrum of history, to which the mystery of the world's origin and its final destiny leads...."*

("Dies Domini," Pope Saint John Paul II (Pentecost, May 31, 1998))

More about the Resurrection:

4

Our Lord's return, and the Final Judgment, will happen: and is the next major event. As for when it's coming — I have enough on my plate, without trying to outguess God.

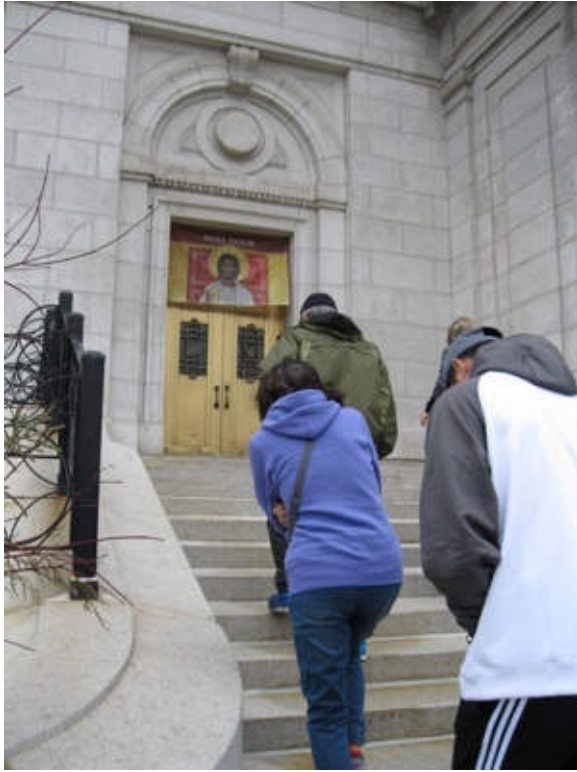


(From Wily Miller's Non Sequitur, [June 14, 2011](#) and [May 3, 2010](#), used w/o permission.)

More of my take on Final Judgment and getting a grip:

This contribution is available at <http://catholiccitizenamerica.blogspot.com/2016/03/another-easter.html>
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Mercy Between My Toes! [at Onward and Upward]



Approaching the Door of Mercy at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis.

"BAM!" That should be the sound of walking through (not just into . . .) a Door of Mercy.

People around me don't seem to be very excited about these doorways established by the Catholic Church at cathedrals all over the world as a physical sign of the Year of Mercy.

Mercy is different than forgiveness, you know. You have to do something to get forgiveness. Like the

[FLYLady's Shiny Sink](#)

, you get all clean and forgiven at baptism then you need to go regularly to confession to keep the gunk off your soul.

Non-Catholics, too, know you need to at least ask for forgiveness before you usually get it. And there is this messy thing about sin always having a price and your forgiveness not really being free for EVERYONE. In the end, the sufferings of Christ paid that price long ago but in a very real, concrete way that did not involve fairy tale unicorns but instead involved your True Lover shedding his own actual human BLOOD! Ouch.

But then there is mercy.

Mercy - ". . . the ready willingness to help anyone in need, especially in need of pardon or

reconciliation." -- *From the Modern Catholic Dictionary*

And it is poured out free from God - guaranteed! Remember when Jesus told Peter . . .

" 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 16:19

Well in that verse he first establishes the papacy and then gives the Pope the power to "loose" goodies from heaven. Imagine Pope Francis shaking and loose-ing all the fruits on the tree of mercy so they fall (BAM!) into your lap!



The Church now is busy writing fancy-sounding theological statements about what all this means and talking a lot about this being a year for us Catholics to GIVE mercy. This is definitely a great time to refresh our memories on the

[spiritual](#)

and

[corporal](#)

works of mercy.

This is also a time we get to feel all creepy talking about plenary indulgences and abuses the Church is (unfairly, I think) accused of back in the middle ages. Which gets us talking about purgatory . . . and all of these discussions are good for another day.

But I just love the idea that I can walk through a special door, close to home or far away, and receive mercy in my sinfulness from God. Not necessarily forgiveness, but mercy.

Can you get mercy from God in other ways and places and times? Absolutely! But for the Year of Mercy, the Church gives you a way, a place and a guarantee*, care of Matthew 16:19.

If you think you are exempt from/not eligible for mercy, check out

[this Father Mike homily](#)

. It is the best thing I have ever heard anyone say on the matter.

So walking through the Door of Mercy for me is like: Mercy in my hair! Mercy between my toes! Mercy under my fingernails! BAM!!!



Hmm. For some reason, this is making me want to clean my sink.

*Guarantee of mercy offer expires November 20, 2016 with the conclusion of the Year of Mercy. For mercy after expiration date, consult your priest or pastor - or try this: "Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy."

This contribution is available at <http://onwardandupwardcatholic.blogspot.com/2016/03/mercy-between-my-toes.html>
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The Bridegroom of My Soul [at From the Pulpit of my Life]



Jesus, the bridegroom of my soul

Since moving to my new parish I have heard and sung a classic Catholic hymn, called “O Lord, I Am Not Worthy.” I hadn’t heard this hymn since my childhood. The lyrics that I learned in my childhood included these four verses.

O Lord, I am not worthy that thou should’st come to me;
But speak the word of comfort, my spirit healed shall be.

And humbly I’ll receive thee, the bridegroom of my soul,
No more by sin to grieve thee or fly thy sweet control.

Eternal Holy Spirit, unworthy though I be,
Prepare me to receive him and trust the Word to me.

Increase my faith, dear Jesus, in thy real presence here,
And make me feel most deeply that thou to me art near.

This was one of the hymns that my brother, sister, and I sang with our dad as part of our bedtime ritual. I remember asking, “Dad, what does ‘bridegroom of my soul’ mean?” Dad explained that Jesus is the bridegroom who loves you and comes to you in Holy Communion. Your soul is like Jesus’ bride. You love Jesus with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. He makes his home with you in your soul.

Dad’s explanation made sense to me and I looked forward to the day of my First Holy Communion.

Do you remember the family rituals and lessons that helped you grow in understanding of your faith?

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”~Matthew 7:7



(courtesy of unsplash.com)

During this season, there are many people waiting on open doors. I sense that this will be a big year for a lot of people. In fact, when I think of my friends and acquaintances, it is hard to recall someone who *isn't* discerning some sort of change in their life path. I myself am seeking another path. However, these steps will not be achieved overnight. They take prayer, discernment, and trial and error. Our steps must be directed by the LORD. Proverbs 19:21 reminds us that, “many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.” ***We must wait for open doors.*** We ourselves cannot open the doors. They are locked, until Jesus directs us to our open door. It’s not to say that every open door is worth walking through—sometimes we can walk through a door and find that we’ve walked into something we shouldn’t have. In these cases we must continue to search. During these seasons of waiting and journeying towards new paths, it can feel like doors are slamming in our face, over and over. We can grow tired of knocking and getting no answer. It can feel frustrating as we try to turn the key in numerous doors, but they just won’t open for us. ***Trust that it will be worth it to walk through the door that Christ has opened for you.***

I came across this great word. It’s worth a watch. I like how Stephanie keeps it within the realm of God’s will—we must not think of the closed doors as rejection, but *redirection* by our loving Father to something better!

Dear friend, keep walking! Keep to the path of righteousness. Your Father has prepared you a room, and you will come to your open door. Be patient, keep seeking and asking, and don’t give up knocking!

“I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name.”~Revelation 3:8

This contribution is available at <http://sunflowersojourn.wordpress.com/2016/03/14/the-god-of-open-doors/>
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Between Two Resurrections [at Blog of the Dormition]

“Lazarus! Come out!” So Jesus calls to his friend who has died, over whom he has wept, and who has lain four days in the tomb. Cyril of Jerusalem points out, “One day had passed, and a second, and a third: his sinews were decayed, and corruption was preying already upon his body.”[1] And yet Lazarus does come out, still wearing his grave clothes, but as alive and well as you or me.



When the One Who, in the beginning, speaks life into being tells one of us, his creatures, to live, though we lie in a tomb, we will live. Whether we have been dead four days, like Lazarus, or four thousand years, we will heed this command of our master. When the one who made us out of dust tells us to arise, though our bodies have turned to dust, we will arise. Dust cannot resist the divine word at resurrection time.

The resurrection of Lazarus was yesterday and the resurrection of Jesus is next Sunday. Between these two resurrections is today and Holy Week. Today, Palm Sunday, is inextricably linked to yesterday, Lazarus Saturday. Liturgically, they form a unit all their own, between the Great Fast and Holy Week. So, though we rightly call today Palm Sunday in commemoration of Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem as King and Messiah, let’s not forget the place of Lazarus in all of this, who appears at the beginning, the middle, and the end of today’s gospel.

The gospel begins with Lazarus, who had been dead, eating supper with Jesus and his disciples. This is one of the signs of the resurrection of the body. Only a truly embodied person eats food. Jesus will repeat this sign after his own resurrection, when he will eat broiled fish with his disciples in Jerusalem (Luke 24:42). By this sign, we know that Lazarus and Jesus are truly risen in the body and not merely ghosts or visions.

And then, in the middle of the gospel, we learn of a further connection between Jesus and Lazarus. Not only are the chief priests now plotting to put Jesus to death, but also Lazarus, “because, on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.”

According to tradition, Lazarus, unlike Jesus, escapes their plot and lives on another thirty years. When he dies a second time, they lay him in a sarcophagus on which they write, “Lazarus of the four days and the friend of Christ.” For four days, Lazarus knew death, which no one else among the living has ever known. The Synaxarion says he never spoke of it and some say he never laughed again until he saw a man stealing a clay pot. And then he laughed, saying, “One earth steals another” (cf. [Sanidopoulos](#)).

And then at the end of today’s gospel, after Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem, we learn *why* the great crowd is so exultant and why they hail Jesus as their king: because he has raised Lazarus. *This* miracle more than all the others convinces multitudes that Jesus is the Christ. By raising Lazarus, Jesus shows that he can raise us all and that he will save us – even from the last enemy, even from death. This divine triumph even over death is the sign that brought so many to belief in Jesus.

And this belief of the people is what motivates the Pharisees and chief priests to take action against Jesus. They see that, due to this great sign, many are believing in Jesus and they fear that this will provoke the Romans to come and destroy them. The high priest Caiaphas, though motivated by cowardice, unintentionally prophesies, saying, “It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish” (John 11:50). And so, in the gospel of John, they plot to put Jesus to death as a direct result of his resurrection of Lazarus.

Jesus’ resurrection of Lazarus leads today to his triumphant entry into Jerusalem – but it will soon lead also to his death. Quite directly, Jesus lays down his own life in exchange for giving life to his friend Lazarus. There is no greater love. Ultimately, Jesus lays down his life to give life to us all. It is good to be a friend of Christ Jesus. Even though you die, he will give you life.

Christ our God, before your passion you confirmed our common resurrection when you raised Lazarus from the dead. Therefore, like the children, we carry the symbols of victory and cry out to you, the Victor over death: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

I believe that, through Lazarus, Jesus has something to teach us about death. When Lazarus dies, Jesus weeps. And then, he raises Lazarus from the dead. This is our perfect model for how to approach death.

First, death is an occasion for weeping. It is a sorrowful thing. It is a terrible thing. It is an unnatural thing.

It is the last enemy. It is not a natural part of life. It is not “going to a better place.” It is a thing to be lamented. It is a thing to put an end to.

Nevertheless, for each of us there is a time to die (Eccl. 3). For Lazarus, there are two times to die. And for Jesus, there is a time to die. The death of Jesus is like no other, because he alone *is* Life. And so death cannot keep him in his clutches. When life enters into death, it is death that dies at last.

Loretta Lynn sings, “Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.” And that’s mostly right, and for good reason. Jesus did not want to die. And he wept again when his time for death drew near to him in Gethsemane. “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.” (Heb 5:7).

So in the face of death, first we weep, as Jesus weeps, and then, after our weeping, we accept death. We embrace the cross, as Jesus does. We learn to love our enemy. And then, on the other side of that gaping chasm of Hades, there is hope, because Jesus, the way and the life, has gone there first. In him, there will be a restoration of all things to right. After death, there comes a better life with the resurrection. It is not better for us to be dead. It is not better for our souls to be “freed” from our bodies. It is better for us to rise in Christ and live again in bodies freed from mortality. So, yes, we grieve in the face of death, but we do

not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.... For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first... and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1Th 4:13-18).

[1] Cyril of Jerusalem, “Lecture V - Of Faith,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Series 2): The Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril*, ed. Alexander Roberts et al., vol. 7, *Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Hendrickson Pub, 1996), 31

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