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new  
evangelists  
monthly

*July*  
*2016*

# New Evangelists Monthly #43

July 2016

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## Forward

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

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

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

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# Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant [at Catholicism and Adventism]



## Woman of Revelation 12

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant contained the glory of God. In the New Testament, the Ark of the New Covenant contained God himself in the flesh.

Important parallels regarding the content of the Ark:

Manna – Eucharist (Jesus’ body and blood)

Rod of Aaron – Rod of Jesse (Jesus)

10 Commandments – Gospel

One of the most striking parallels in Scripture is [2 Samuel 6](#) and [Luke 1](#), which have so many parallel phrases one has to be blind or stubborn not to see the link between the Ark of the Covenant and Mary.

In [Revelation 11-12](#) we see the Ark of the Covenant in heaven, followed by a vision of a woman, who gave birth to Jesus ... obviously Mary, who Revelation indicates symbolises Israel and the Church.

Verse in Samuel 6	2 Samuel 6	Luke 1	Verse in Luke 1
2	David arose and went	Mary arose and went	39
1-11	Ark travelled to Judea	Mary travelled to Judea	39
11	Ark stayed there for 3 months	Mary stayed there for 3 months	56
9	David said “How shall the ark of the LORD come to me?”	Elizabeth said “whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”	43
	David shouted with joy before		

15	the Ark	Elizabeth shouted with joy before the Ark	42
14	David leapt with joy before the Ark	John leapt with joy before the Ark	43
11-18	“Blessed” x3	“Blessed” x3	39-45
12; see also 1 Kings 8:9-11	Ark returns and ends up in Jerusalem	Mary returns and ends up in Jerusalem	56; see also Luke 2:21-22

**Further reading:**

[What Catholics Believe – Mary, the Virgin Mother of God](#)

[4 Biblical Reasons Mary Is The New Ark of the Covenant ... St Peter’s List](#)

[Mary, the Ark of the New Covenant ... by Joe Heschmeyer](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://blog.theotokos.co.za/>  
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On this Feast of Saint Anthony of Padua, I just had to share an experience that my husband and I had while visiting the Basilica of Saint Anthony in Padua, Italy. We had planned on visiting Rome, Florence and a day trip to Tuscany. Padua was not originally on our schedule. However, while travelling from Rome to Florence on their high-speed train, I saw that a trip to Padua from Florence was only a 90-minute high-speed train ride away.

With Saint Anthony of Padua being my all-time favorite saint, I couldn't travel all the way to Italy and not visit his tomb, when he was only a 90-minute train ride away. So, my husband and I made the trip on June 16, 2011. I'll never forget this day.

As we entered the Basilica, my husband noticed that Saint Anthony's tomb was immediately to our left. As we approached the tomb, my husband noticed that everyone was heading toward the back side of the tomb. So we followed. Then we saw people touching the tomb. So we followed suit. Wow! What happened next is hard to describe.

## **How Saint Anthony Touched My Soul**

As I touched the cold stone slab, I felt this surge of energy flow through my veins. It was so warm, and filled with love – I didn't want to let go!!!! Ever!!!! I started to cry; no, make that sob; so much so, that I had to let go to blow my nose. I then touched the tomb once more, and again I felt that wonderful feeling. Was it a piece of Heaven residing in temporal form on earth? I'm not sure. All I can say is that it was a wonderful experience for me. What made it an extraordinary experience is what happened next.

After we left the Basilica, we journeyed across the street to have lunch at an outdoor café. I felt compelled to share my experience with my husband, Nick, if only to explain why I was sobbing in the Basilica. When I told him what happened, he simply said to me, "I felt it too." That sent chills down my spine on a warm summer's day in an Italian outdoor café.

God sends us miracles of His presence every day, if we are open to receiving them, and willing to use our eyes of faith. Saint Anthony helped me to find something that day, as he is so well known for finding things that are lost. Saint Anthony helped me to find Christ's peace, a peace that continues to reside within me to this day. Thank you Saint Anthony! Happy Feast Day!

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## A Church of a Billion Popes? [at If I Might Interject]

<sup>12</sup> You see those who are wise in their own eyes?

There is more hope for fools than for them. (Proverbs 26:12).

Christianity is a religion focused on knowing, loving and serving God. This consists of placing our faith in Him and keeping His commandments. Catholicism recognizes that this faith and obedience involves hearing and obeying His Church. So, in theory, there should be no problem in knowing where to look when we have disputes over the best way to live our faith. Unfortunately, we do have constant disputes over how to live. Some of it involves Catholics who believe that those entrusted in shepherding the Church are in the wrong. Some of it involves Catholics fighting over the best way to live our Catholic faith. In these cases, we have people usurping the authority to judge over the Church and condemning those who disagree with their views on leading the Church.

**IT'S GETTING TO THE POINT WHERE  
CATHOLICS THINK THIS GUY...**



**IS THE ONLY ONE WITH NO RIGHT TO SPEAK  
ABOUT THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH**

That leaves us with a situation where we have a Church of a billion Popes, each one deciding for himself how they and others should live. If the Church teaches differently than he should like, he judges the Church to be heretical. If another Catholic, striving to live faithfully, has a different view on how to best live the Catholic faith, others accuse him of being a “bad Catholic.” But with a billion “popes,” each person also takes offense at another speaking against his own interpretation. Mutual anathemas get hurled—by people who have no right to hurl them—and each person leaves convinced that the Church has gone to hell in a hand basket.

But the Church is not to blame for that situation. The cause is a massive influx of opinion and news (giving us much more minutiae than we would have had even 20 years ago) that, thanks to the smartphone, can reach us anywhere there is wireless phone service. We’re instantly told about what happens, but what

we're told is often untrue or misinterpreted by the reader. We pride ourselves on the ability to pick up our smartphone and read what the media or a blogger claims Pope says, but we seem to have lost our ability to investigate whether there is more to the story than what the headlines say.

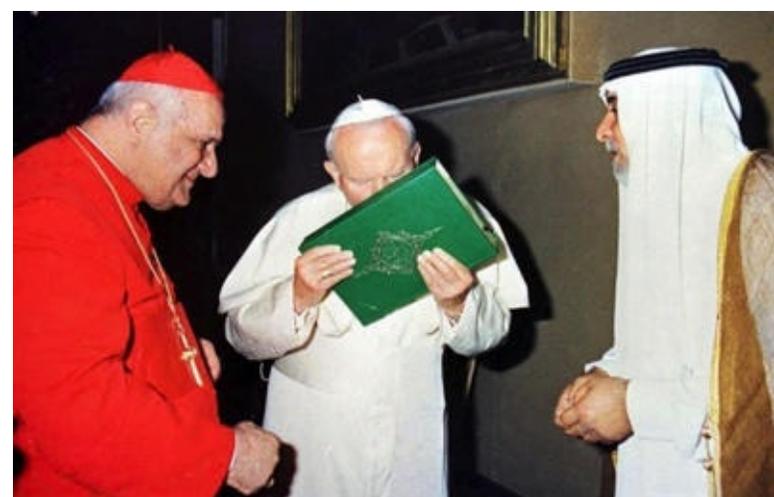


**(This is the real culprit in why we hear “off the cuff” remarks from the Pope today but not in the past)**

So, when the Pope speaks about many invalid marriages because people enter them without understanding what marriage *is*, people stop with the headline that screams *POPE SAYS 'MOST MARRIAGES INVALID!'* In other words, they take the sensational part out of context and accuse him of attacking their own marriage or of trying to undermine the sacrament. I've even seen some editorials claim the Pope says most children are bastards (in the literal sense), seemingly never having heard of a *putative marriage*.

A “church of a billion popes” means a tower of Babel where nobody knows what is going on. But the thing to remember is, the “church of a billion popes” is not the Church we have. The Church we have is the same one we had since Pentecost, AD 33. When it comes to teaching, God protects the Church from leading us astray. When it comes to the shepherds speaking and acting as private individuals (i.e. offering their opinions or living a certain way), we need to remember that until the 21st century, we only rarely heard of them. We only know of St. Peter eating apart from the Gentiles in Galatia because St. Paul saw a need to write about the controversy. Odds are, Christians in Jerusalem or Antioch didn't hear about it at the time it happened.

That's important to remember. If we had the internet in earlier centuries, people across Christendom would be rolling their eyes about Pope John XXII and his sermon on the Beatific Vision or of cardinals restraining Urban VI from physically attacking someone he disagreed with. Pope's don't behave impeccably, and sometimes they do things we wish they didn't...



What Catholics need to remember is we don't suddenly have a heretic or an idiot in charge of the Holy See. We don't have a case where a Pope is suddenly reckless about his words and actions while his predecessors were flawless in word and deed. This sort of thing has always been with us. It's only recently that we've had instant access to what the Pope says and does, and we think nobody else acted this way.

That brings us to what makes a “church of a billion popes” dangerous. Nobody considers the possibility that their own knowledge of the situation is lacking—that would feel like an admission we are stupid. We assume that our interpretation of a text *is* what the author meant and do not consider the cultural differences or our education drawing us to a meaning the author never meant. Whether it's a Bible literalist or a radical traditionalist, people are out there who confuse Church teaching with what they *think* a Church teaching means and then blame the Church for their own confusion. Then they take their own misinterpretation and condemn the Pope, the bishops or fellow Catholics for not accepting their view as Church teaching.

What we have to remember is there are not a billion popes. There is one Pope, and that Pope is Pope Francis. We have to remember that when he teaches, his teaching is not one of a billion opinions but something we have to give our assent to (see Code of Canon Law [#749-752](#)). When he says or something that is not teaching, we still have to be respectful to him—even if we wish he handled it differently.

We must also remember there are different ways to carry out our obedience to the Church and, so long as we are not seeking to justify disobedience in doing so, we can disagree (charitably!) on the best way to follow Church teaching. For example, we can never justify abortion and be a good Catholic, but we can disagree about the best way to deal with gun violence in our nation without being a “bad Catholic.” To demand that another Catholic embrace your opinion on the subject is to make yourself one of a billion popes again.

Dealing with the confusion within the Church is not a matter of muzzling Pope Francis or turning back Vatican II. It's a matter of realizing who the successor of Peter is (not us), realizing God protects His Church, and realizing that we are living in a wholly new situation in sharing data where fact checking and context is often far slower than the quotes we see. It's a matter of realizing our own limitations in comprehension and rejecting the idea of our interpretation being the same as what the Pope or other Church documents said.

If we can remember and follow this, we have a Church with one Pope who is the successor of Peter. If we

forget it, we have a Church with a billion popes and the chaos which goes with it. So when considering how to act, let's remember that the Church our Lord made has only one Pope.

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## Revisiting a Cry of Charity [at The Cloistered Heart]



Most people don't realize who they're quoting when they speak of catching more flies with honey than with vinegar. I was well into adulthood when I learned that this bit of wisdom had come from one of my favorite saints.

*"You can catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with ten barrels of vinegar." (St. Francis de Sales)*

I often think of this in connection with another quote from this Doctor of the Church.

*"It is an act of of charity to cry out against the wolf when he is among the sheep" (St. Francis de Sales)*

These two thoughts may not appear to have much to do with one another. But in my mind, they work together. In fact, I often strive to "navigate between them," as one might drive between two lines painted on a highway to keep vehicles moving safely.

As one of Our Lord's sheep, I am seeing wolves among us. I'm not thinking of people, but of ideas and ungodly "values" that creep in, usually in sheeps' clothing.

These generally enter in the name of freedom, tolerance, rights, pleasure, peace, fairness, love, correctness, justice for all. Not wanting to be unkind, we can let them prowl freely among our families and nations and parishes without our uttering so much as a whisper of protest. We don't want to rock boats, ruffle feathers, stir waters, or cause anyone to be uncomfortable. We'd like to be charitable.

It takes a lot to cry out against wolves. But if we know the truth and do not speak up for it, are we acting in genuine charity toward the sheep?

Francis de Sales would say no.

However, there are a couple of ways of speaking. We can lash out in anger, in sharp words that can sting and personally wound our "opponents"... in other words, we can dish out the vinegar. Or we can speak in honeyed tones. Not fake ones, but in words and actions spoken from a heart of love.

How do we have such a heart when we feel anything, perhaps, but loving? We pray. We seek God. We fast and sacrifice. We ask for wisdom. We dive into Scripture as if our very lives depended on it; because, really, they do.

We trust that God will show us when and how to act, when and how to speak, when and how to offer truth. We do well to remember that ears tend to turn off at the sound of vinegar. The truth we're trying to communicate can pass by totally unheard if we allow frustration and anger to "vinegar-ize" what we say.

We are seeing wolves among us. We find them in the media, in politics, in laws and schools and so many "areas of et cetera" that this page isn't long enough to list them. They rob children of innocence, families of stability, societies of integrity, preborn babies of life, and individuals of eternity spent with God. The cost of our silence could be staggering.

But we dare not speak without honey.

We dare not speak without love.

*Painting: Charles Sprague Pearce*

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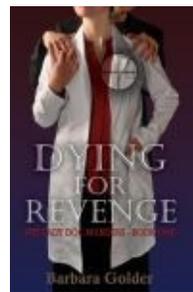
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# An Open Book: Beach Reads, Teach Reads [at Erin McCole Cupp]

[Carolyn Astfalk](#) has a first Wednesday of the month book review linkup!



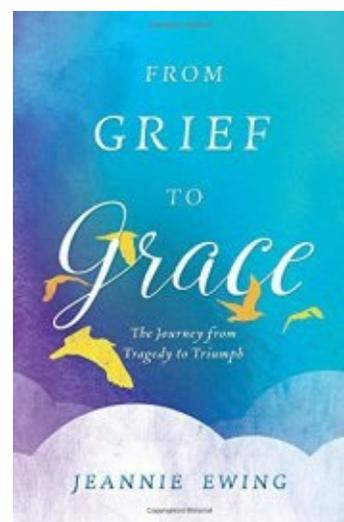
[Dying for Revenge](#) by [Dr. Barbara Golder](#)



This book rubbed the salt in the wound of what's wrong with our culture today, publishing and otherwise. Here we have a slick but gritty, sharp-edged murder mystery better than most secular crime novels I've read, but just because the main character side-eyes liberal culture and is struggling with/considering/reconsidering Catholicism, it's going to be looked over. It really shouldn't be. Don't YOU people pass it by, anyway.

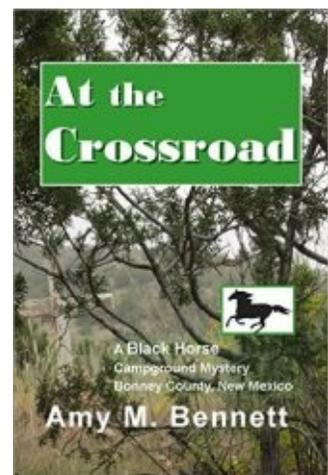
Okay, now that I have that off my chest, *Dying for Revenge* is the first book in a (hopefully well-populated!) series focusing on the work and struggles of Dr. Jane Wallace, a medical examiner and lawyer who has faced crime in her own past and come to hide from it in the mountains and canyons of Colorado. I finished it in the space of three days and would have taken less time if I could read in the car without getting car sick. Part cozy, part police procedural, part woman-in-peril (though Jane is so no-nonsense, that when the actual peril comes, I was *almost* blindsided), and with an enticing, mature, exile-from-The-Troubles, will-they-won't-they-can-they? love interest in Eoin Connor, *Dying for Revenge* kept me on the edge of my seat in every possible way. The climax was perhaps the most surprising—and surprisingly satisfying—part of the plot. In the end, it's just as much a mystery to solve as a progression of soul for the main character. Look for more about this here on June 5, if you're not already convinced to buy [Dying for Revenge](#).

[From Grief to Grace](#) by [Jeannie Ewing](#)



We all grieve in some way, because it's a fallen world: we all need to cope with things not going according to plan, in ways both big and small. *From Grief to Grace* is a manual on how to navigate that pain, from simple disappointment to world-changing heartbreak. Ewing does not focus merely on death-related grief but on any kind of soul-pain that knocks us down to depths we'd much rather not visit. Instead of looking at grief as something to just "get through," she gives us tools and the gift of her own personal experiences with grief, so that we can see our own suffering not as something to fear but as rungs on a ladder to God. How a book like this manages to be both practical and spiritually weighty is a testament to the author's skill.

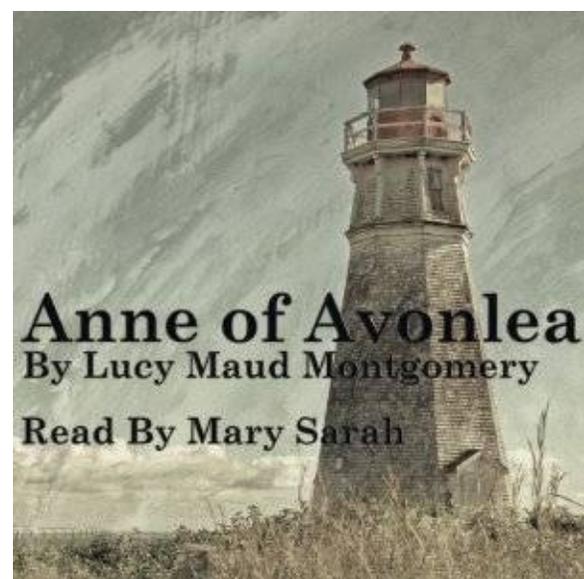
[At the Crossroad](#) by [Amy M. Bennett](#)



I am so excited to read this next book in [The Black Horse Campground Mysteries](#). I can't rightly say that I've read this and can give a review yet, but it is loaded onto my Kindle and it's what I plan to have in my waiting and recovery rooms while I'm in the hospital for tomorrow's gallbladder eviction (in fact, if I can steal a moment today to start reading, I most surely will). Amy Bennett has the dual gift of writing with a tender touch and a light heart. Each book is filled with characters facing believable struggles and everyday events but turned in an extraordinary way. The plot of each book keeps you guessing until the absolute very very very last minute. In this latest installment, we'll get to see which direction the love UST triangle takes. I love JD, but I think I might be Team Rick? Maybe. Maybe? Maybe. I mean, a man who bakes is pretty difficult to resist...

This month's audiobooks:

[Anne of Avonlea](#) (narr. Mary Sarah) by L. M. Montgomery

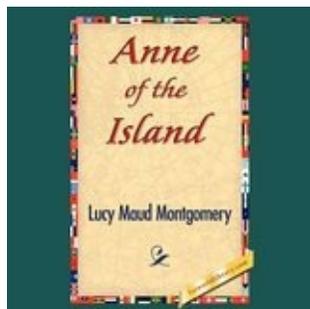


I'd read [Anne of Green Gables](#) in college for kicks and giggles but

never read any of the other books, so this was a first for me as well as for my children... and husband.

We listened to part of it on the way home from a Memorial Day road trip, and he said it made the trip go a lot faster than it would have otherwise. We even giggled together over Davy Keith's mischief, the tragedy of the blue hall, and I think hubby laughed louder than I did over a certain package being obediently yet quite reluctantly tossed into the school woodstove. So far I still like the first installment of this series best, but *Avonlea* is still well worth visiting, even in this perhaps more episodic tale. The narration on this one is nice but seems to have less wonder and perhaps too much whimsy, and the different voices of the characters were barely distinct from one another. All in all, though, it was a well-done production, and I'm glad we got to enjoy it.

[Anne of the Island](#) (narr. Barbara Caruso) by L. M. Montgomery

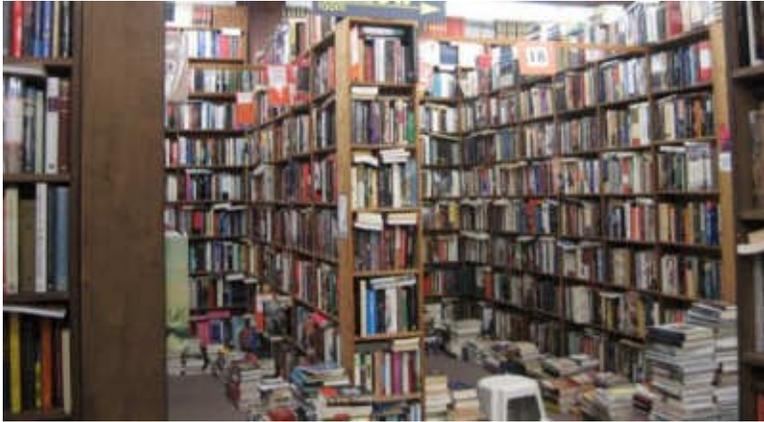


This version has my favorite narrator of the three Anne books we've listened to so far as a family. Caruso's voice has a timeless quality, and she gives each character a different voice but manages to avoid making any one of them a caricature. The story itself was typical, delightful Anne, again more episodic than narrative as *Green Gables* is. The narration in this production, however, really made it work for me best of the three Anne books we've heard.

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This contribution is available at <http://erinmccolecupp.com/2016/06/01/an-open-book-beach-reads-teach-reads/>  
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## On the Pleasures of Bibliochaos [at God-Haunted Lunatic]



*There is no book so bad but it has something good in it.*

~ [Cervantes](#)

**When I moved from Oregon to Chicago, I went to my death** – or so I supposed. Raised in the burbs and sheltered from anything resembling real urban life, I absorbed gritty city images from movies and TV (especially “[Hill Street Blues](#)”) as if they were gospel, and I was sure I wouldn’t survive my first subway ride.

Nonetheless, [I still went](#), intent on finding out what I could, especially about the Catholic Worker – to glimpse first-hand its traditions of hospitality, selfless service, and the corporal works of mercy. Given all that, and in order to travel as light as possible, I decided to divest myself of all “non-essentials.” I gave away my futon and bike, a bunch of clothes and assorted knickknacks, and books – plenty of books.



It wasn’t easy to whittle down the piles, but in the end, I arrived in Chicago with only one suitcase and one box – although the box was, to tell the truth, mainly books. Still, not a bad job paring down the personal library. Plus, I came to find out that none other than Benedict Joseph Labre, the homeless saint, tramped about 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe with more than just the rags on his back. “In a small wallet he carried a Testament,” writes [Joseph Delaney](#), “a breviary, which it was his wont to recite daily, a copy of the ‘Imitation of Christ,’ and some other pious books.”

Note: “Non-essential” is a relative term for bibliophiles.

This is all the more pertinent when two bibliophiles marry each other and the process of entwining two lives includes interweaving two libraries. Nancy and I never have come to full agreement on how to do that – which, if any, volumes to jettison; how to organize those remaining – but it little matters any more. Almost a quarter-century of marriage has steadily swelled our holdings beyond any reasonable limit, and with the blessing of seven kids rummaging around those holdings over the years, bookshelf organization is now a forgotten dream.

**That happens to be the way I like it anyway:** the more messy, the better. The best used bookstores are the same – Smith Family Books in Eugene, for example, and Pandora’s right here in South Bend. Another is Omaha’s [Antiquarium](#) – now defunct, unfortunately. It’s a book lover’s mecca, and I used to visit with [Tom](#), my father-in-law, whenever I was in town.

To get an idea of the appeal of these places, recall Woody Allen’s *Hannah and Her Sisters*, when Michael Caine is stalking Barbara Hershey and they wind up in a Manhattan bookshop. It’s a beguiling of seduction that ends with the discovery of an e.e. cummings anthology, but the best part is seeing the wild menagerie of tomes piled willy-nilly throughout the [store](#). You could find *anything* there, you see, especially something you *weren’t* looking for – adventures abound!



Such is the scheme of our own family collection that now sprawls through every level of the house. From basement to bedrooms, most shelves double-stacked, and there are haphazard mountains of volumes leaning in this corner and that. When the kids were younger, we at least attempted to parse out the massive assembly by diverting picture books, board books, and children’s literature to the family room, while the living room was reserved for more serious, *grown-up* fare – the Catholic Encyclopedia, for instance, along with our uniform G.K. Chesterton Collected Works and a set of the [Great Books of the Western World](#) that we inherited from Tom.

These days? Forget it. Pick out any random shelf in the family room – the so-called “kids’ library” – and you’ll find a slapdash muddle of genres and age appropriateness. Just now I went there and glanced at the eye-level shelves next to the fireplace: Allen and Greenough’s *New Latin Grammar* next to Sherlock Holmes; an Audubon guide (*North American Trees: Eastern Region*) adjacent to Encyclopedia Brown. There was Sophocles and a life of Edmund Campion, [Letters to Malcolm Chiefly on Prayer](#) and the Hardy Boys, and finally (my favorite pairing), Mark Twain’s bleak *Letters From the Earth* abutting *Who Is Coming to Our House*, a delightful Christmas board book.

**It’s all jumbled, and there are too many (according to my kids),** but I *enjoy* having plenty of books around I haven’t read, and I *like* encountering books *I might not otherwise seek out*. Plus, I’m convinced it’s been a good situation for my children as well. Say someone’s looking for a Harry Potter or a Calvin and Hobbes – lo and behold, what’s this? A history of Russia? A novel by Jules Verne or Michael Crichton? How about the Franciscan [Omnibus of Sources](#) or Darwin’s *Voyage of the Beagle*? Even if

these are merely picked up, flipped through, and replaced, that's at least *some* exposure to ideas and



images, writers and writing, they wouldn't have had otherwise.

If pressed, I imagine I'd trace my quirky passion for wall-to-wall books to "The Time Machine," a 1960 film based on the [novel by H.G. Wells](#). I saw the movie with my dad when I was a child, and it haunted me for years – less for the scary parts about subterranean monsters feeding on docile humans than for the in Victorian England. The story's hero, George, stops back in 1900 for a brief stopover after a variety of time-traveling adventures. Then, after certain preparations, he returns to the distant future to help restore humane civilization.

After he's gone, George's housekeeper notes that he apparently didn't take any provisions except for three volumes that appear to be missing from a bookcase. Filby, George's friend, asks, "Which three books?"

"I don't know," replies the housekeeper. "Is it important?"

"I suppose not...only, which three books would you have taken?"

Seriously? *Three* books? To rebuild a world? Why not five? Fifty? Why not make several trips to establish a futuristic depository? You've got a time machine, man!

**But that's beside the point.** What really bugged me was trying to figure out George's "THREE" – the Bible, sure, but what else? And that would still wrangle no matter *what* the number. I wanted to know what those three books were because I wanted to make sure I read them!



In the end, I decided it didn't matter which books were transported, but only that they *were* transported – the more the better. And as far as selection, I've settled on: *indiscriminate* – grab an armful and run. Think of it as a survivalist literary equivalent of William F. Buckley's famous [dictum](#), "I would rather be governed by the first 2,000 people in the Boston telephone directory than by the 2,000 people on the faculty of Harvard University."

After all, the rummaging can be as much an education as the reading, and I'd take a disheveled Antiquarium over three select volumes any day. Wouldn't you?

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

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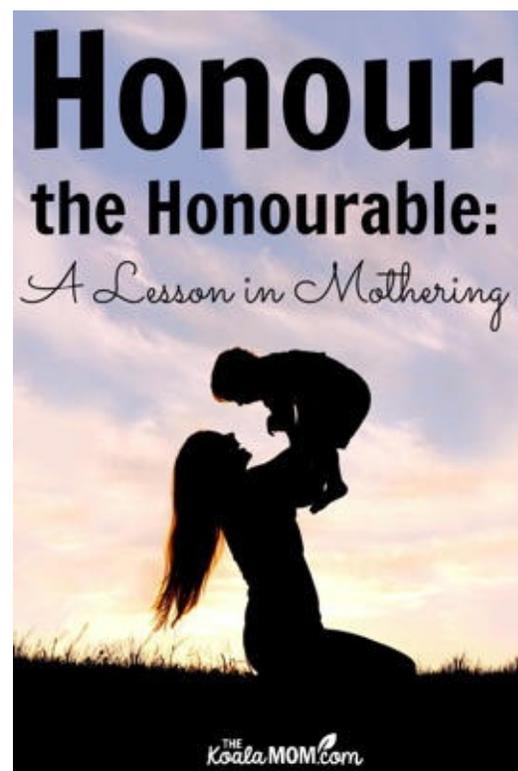
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# Honour the Honorable: A Lesson in Mothering [at The Koala Mom]

*Often, one piece of advice sticks in our minds long after we've heard it. Today, TKM contributor Anni Harry is sharing a piece of advice that has stuck with her for many years and recently made her rethink how she mothers.*

**A few years back, long before I had children, I met with a priest.** The topic on my mind was the 4th Commandment, “Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.” My question to the priest was, “What about in instances of [abuse](#)? How does one honor their mother or father if the Church supports a child reporting abuse?”

His response sticks with me over a decade later: **“Honor that which is honorable.”**



His guidance was given long before I had a husband, let alone my children. I took it to heart, and have since counseled many ladies, regardless of whether or not we talk about parental abuse, spousal abuse, or child abuse—which I do not condone or support—to “honor that which is honorable.”

My three-year-old son has always been strong-willed. On one hand, his strong-will is a trait I am trying to encourage and foster; on the other hand, as a parent, it provides a source of endless frustration when we are gridlocked in yet another battle of the wills.

**A couple weeks ago, my son and I had a rough day.** It culminated with my yelling at him and him spending some intimate time in time-out. The entire scenario resulted in crocodile tears on his part. As is customary, at the end of time-out, my son asked for his hug, and we sat there and cuddled for several

minutes.

At the end of the day, I spent time reflecting on the day's events. I began doubting the power struggle we'd engaged in—was it a battle I should have even chosen? As I was beginning to admonish myself, I reminded myself that, regardless of whether or not it was a battle I should have engaged in, the most important aspect was how I handled the battle, once engaged.

I then began scrutinizing the details of how the battle was conducted. When looking in the mirror, not liking the response I had given, I was reminded of those words long-spoken to me.

**Since then, I have made a concerted effort**, every time I begin to feel heated, to try to [take a moment to breathe](#). I admit I haven't been perfect in keeping my temper in check, but it's become more imperative for me to keep that phrase in mind.

The last memory I want my children to have of their mother is one who is stressed, worried about inconsequential matters, and rushing constantly to meet the needs of everyone else outside of the family. My family should be my third priority—after God and my husband. If I can impart the values of God, family, and country to my children, and have them remember a mom who, laden with foibles, loved God and her family with all her heart, then I will have done my job.

**I think the path to that end success** is to keep in mind that I want them to be able to honor me as their mother, and I have to be honorable, in order for them to “honor that which is honorable.”



*Anni Harry is a proud Catholic, Army wife, and mother to a three-year-old boy and five-month-old girl. She currently stays at home, but has a BA in History and a Masters of Social Work (MSW). She is a cradle Catholic who spent time exploring various other religions and reverted back to the Catholic faith. She blogs about her faith, parenting as it pertains to her family and her professional experience, and the adventures wherever the United States Army sends their family! You can [follow her blog](#) or [find her on Facebook](#).*



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This contribution is available at <http://thekoalamom.com/2016/06/honor-the-honorable/>  
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## Which is more important: the party or the guests? [at Kitchen table chats]



Here we are in the month of June and wedding season is upon us. As I began my daily constitutional of coffee and the crossword I ran across a Carolyn Hax advice column that addressed the issue of destination weddings. The questioner considered destination weddings incredibly narcissistic and was feeling pretty angry that a family member had chosen that option for her wedding.

### [Ms. Hax gave a good response](#)

as far as it goes but I think she left out a very significant factor:

I realize this goes against human nature at the molecular level, but please consider not having an opinion at all.

Instead: Are you able to go? Yes/No. Do you want to go on the given terms? Yes/No.

And then either go or don't go accordingly. If you can *stop yourself there*, without judging anybody, then you can emerge from this without emotionally downgrading someone you love or spending a nickel unwillingly spent.

This detached analysis is easy when it is a friend or acquaintance who is sending you the invitation to spend hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars on a trip to a destination not of your choosing. But when it is family, there are long-term consequences to be considered. It is not hard to imagine a sibling or parent accusing you of not really caring for the family if you don't accept the expense and move mountains to be at the wedding.

This sort of emotional blackmail is grossly unfair but that does not make it uncommon. There is no way to have a wedding without some terms. There is going to be a date. There is going to be a geographic

location. There is going to be a venue. There will be conflicts with any of these that prevents a guest from going. Anything added on to these basic constraints will exclude even more attendees.

What I think Carolyn Hax should have pointed out is that the more conditions and terms a bride and groom put on their wedding, the more exclusive it becomes. The bride and groom are making a statement as to what they value: the wedding event or the guests. If they design their wedding to be so expensive that they cannot afford to have the entire family there they have indicated that the party is more important than family attendance. Making the affair a black-tie event will leave out those who have no interest in renting a tux or procuring an evening gown. Making the event a no-children gala will give parents pause as they determine whether attending this wedding is worth the price of a babysitter. And if the excluded children are family members, it speaks volumes as to how much the bride and groom value family relations.

I have attended weddings that were simple church ceremonies with the reception being a potluck dinner in the parish hall. I have attended a wedding where the bride and groom were married on horseback in a riding arena. I have attended weddings that were so elegant they could have been scripted right out of Hollywood. I can assure you, the joy and celebration of these weddings had no relationship to the amount of money that was spent on them. Every bride and groom is free to select the type of wedding and reception they want. I do not begrudge them their choice at all. They should just realize that their choices have consequences and send a message to their invited guests as well as to their uninvited friends and family regarding what they truly value.

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## Straight From The Horse's Mouth [at A Faith-Full Life]

This oft repeated idiom correctly points out that you are most likely to get the truth – or at least a more accurate version of the event in question – if your information comes from a direct source. In the arena of racetracks, jockeys, and large wagers, it doesn't get much more direct than the horse himself! In the province of Protestant theology and belief, direct sources would be men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich (Huldrych) Zwingli, John Wesley, and the like – the fathers of the Protestant Reformation.

Many modern-day Protestants are reluctant, perhaps understandably, to listen to what Catholics have to say when it comes to the proper understanding of the Christian faith. That's why I would like to share a bit of insider information with you before we place our bets. I've got some direct sources for you; in fact, I got this straight from the horse's mouth!

The following quotes come *directly* from the fathers of the Protestant Reformation. These quotes reveal their theological positions on a variety of Christian beliefs. Today, many of these historic and orthodox Christian beliefs are assumed to be Catholic beliefs *only* – beliefs which the father's of the Protestant Reformation presumably *would not* have shared.

Keep in mind that these are but a small selection of their quotes relating to various topics. For the sake of brevity I've made just a few short selections for each category; but there is far more that we could look at, both on these topics and a variety of others as well. As it turns out, the father's of the Protestant Reformation were remarkably “catholic”<sup>1</sup> in their beliefs!

But hey, don't take my word for it – here it is, straight from the horse's mouth!

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### The Eucharist

*“I am not satisfied with the view of those who, while acknowledging that we have some kind of communion with Christ, only make us partakers of the Spirit, omitting all mention of flesh and blood. As if it were said to no purpose at all, that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed; that we have no life unless we eat that flesh and drink that blood; and so forth. Nay, the very flesh in which he resides he makes vivifying to us, that by partaking of it we may feed for immortality...by this food believers are reared to eternal life.”* John Calvin<sup>2</sup>

*“We must confess, then, that if the representation which God gives us in the Supper is true, the internal substance of the sacrament is conjoined with the visible signs; and as the bread is distributed to us by the hand, so the body of Christ is communicated to us in order that we may be made partakers of it.”* John Calvin<sup>3</sup>

*“Let every one, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love of his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can; like the first Christians, with whom the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day service. And for several centuries they received it almost every day: Four times a week always, and every saint's day beside. Accordingly, those that joined in the prayers of the faithful never failed to partake of the*

blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient canon: “f any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord’s Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the church of God.” John Wesley<sup>4</sup>

“Who, but the devil, has granted such license of wresting the words of the holy Scripture? Who ever read in the Scriptures, that my body is the same as the sign of my body? or, that is is the same as it signifies? What language in the world ever spoke so? It is only then the devil, that imposes upon us by these fanatical men. Not one of the Fathers of the Church, though so numerous, ever spoke as the Sacramentarians: not one of them ever said, It is only bread and wine; or, the body and blood of Christ is not there present. Surely, it is not credible, nor possible, since they often speak, and repeat their sentiments, that they should never (if they thought so) not so much as once, say, or let slip these words: It is bread only; or the body of Christ is not there, especially it being of great importance, that men should not be deceived. Certainly, in so many Fathers, and in so many writings, the negative might at least be found in one of them, had they thought the body and blood of Christ were not really present: but they are all of them unanimous.” Martin Luther<sup>5</sup>

“For this is...how it was accepted in the true, ancient Christian church of fifteen hundred years ago... When you receive the bread from the altar,..you are receiving the entire body of the Lord;” Martin Luther<sup>6</sup>

Martin Luther in particular was an outspoken advocate of the historic and orthodox Christian position regarding the Eucharist. These quotes represent but a small fragment of all that he had to say on the matter. Notice how he frequently appeals to the apostolic fathers and the “true” ancient Christian Church of fifteen hundred years ago. How is it that modern Christians have departed not only from historic position of the apostolic fathers and early Church, but even from the position of the fathers of the Reformation some mere 500 years ago?

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## The Virgin Mary

“[She is the] highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ . . . She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures.” Martin Luther<sup>7</sup>

“It cannot be denied that God in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of his Son, granted her the highest honor.” John Calvin<sup>8</sup>

“The more the honor and love of Christ increases among men, so much the esteem and honor given to Mary should grow.” Ulrich Zwingli<sup>9</sup>

- The Immaculate Conception

“It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary’s soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God’s gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin” Martin Luther<sup>10</sup>

- Mary's Perpetual Virginity

*“Scripture does not say or indicate that she later lost her virginity...When Matthew [1:25] says that Joseph did not know Mary carnally until she had brought forth her son, it does not follow that he knew her subsequently; on the contrary, it means that he never did know her...This babble...is without justification...he has neither noticed nor paid any attention to either Scripture or the common idiom.” Martin Luther<sup>11</sup>*

*“The inference he [Helvidius] drew from it was, that Mary remained a virgin no longer than till her first birth, and that afterwards she had other children by her husband...No just and well-grounded inference can be drawn from these words...as to what took place after the birth of Christ. He is called ‘first-born’; but it is for the sole purpose of informing us that he was born of a virgin...What took place afterwards the historian does not inform us...No man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation.” John Calvin<sup>12</sup>*

*“I have never thought, still less taught, or declared publicly, anything concerning the subject of the ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our salvation, which could be considered dishonourable, impious, unworthy or evil . . . I believe with all my heart according to the word of holy gospel that this pure virgin bore for us the Son of God and that she remained, in the birth and after it, a pure and unsullied virgin, for eternity.” Ulrich Zwingli<sup>13</sup>*

*“I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin.” Ulrich Zwingli<sup>14</sup>* \*Note: Zwingli used Exodus 4:22 to defend the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity.

Christians everywhere and in every time – up to and including the father's of the Protestant Reformation – have always held to the historic and orthodox teachings of the Christian faith in regards to the Virgin Mary. How is it that so many present-day Christians have strayed so far from these beliefs and are often openly critical of Christians who still honor Mary and hold to these historic and orthodox positions?

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## **The Necessity of Baptism for Salvation**

*“Baptism is the initiatory sign by which we are admitted to the fellowship of the Church, that being ingrafted into Christ we may be accounted children of God.” John Calvin<sup>15</sup>*

*“They who regard baptism as nothing but a token and a mark by which we confess our religion before men... have not weighed what was the chief point of baptism. It is to receive baptism with this promise: ‘He who believes and is baptized will be saved.’” John Calvin<sup>16</sup>*

*“Therefore, expressed in the simplest form, the power, the effect, the benefit, the fruit and the purpose of baptism is to save. No one is baptized that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare [of Mark 16:16], that he may be saved. But to be saved, we know very well, is to be delivered from sin, death, and Satan, and to enter Christ's kingdom and live forever with him...Through the Word, baptism receives the power to become the washing of regeneration, as St. Paul calls it in Titus 3:5...Faith clings to the water and believes it to be baptism which effects pure salvation and life...When sin and*

conscience oppress us...you may say: *It is a fact that I am baptized, but, being baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and obtain eternal life for both soul and body...Hence, no greater jewel can adorn our body or soul than baptism; for through it perfect holiness and salvation become accessible to us...*” Martin Luther<sup>17</sup>

*“The children of Christians are no less sons of God than the parents, just as in the Old Testament. Hence, since they are sons of God, who will forbid this baptism? Circumcision among the ancients... was the same as baptism with us.”* Ulrich Zwingli<sup>18</sup>

*“Little children...are free in every way, secure and saved solely through the glory of their baptism... Through the prayer of the believing church which presents it,...the infant is changed, cleansed, and renewed by in-poured faith. Nor should I doubt that even a godless adult could be changed, in any of the sacraments, if the same church prayed for and presented him, as we read of the paralytic in the Gospel, who was healed through the faith of others (Mark 2:3-12). I should be ready to admit that in this sense the sacraments of the New Law are efficacious in conferring grace, not only to those who do not, but even to those who do most obstinately present an obstacle.”* Martin Luther<sup>19</sup>

*“If reason is listened to, it will undoubtedly appear that baptism is properly administered to infants as a thing due to them. The Lord did not anciently bestow circumcision upon them without making them partakers of all the things signified by circumcision. He would have deluded his people with mere imposture, had he quieted them with fallacious symbols: the very idea is shocking. He distinctly declares that the circumcision of the infant will be instead of a seal of the promise of the covenant. But if the covenant remains firm and fixed, it is no less applicable to the children of Christians in the present day, than to the children of the Jews under the Old Testament. Now, if they are partakers of the thing signified, how can they be denied the sign? If they obtain the reality, how can they be refused the figure? The external sign is so united in the sacrament with the word, that it cannot be separated from it; but if they can be separated, to which of the two shall we attach the greater value?”* John Calvin<sup>20</sup>

You can read Calvin’s complete argument for paedobaptism (infant baptism) directly from his Institutes of Christian Religion here: [Paedobaptism. It’s Accordance With The Institution Of Christ, And The Nature Of The Sign](#)

Christians, including the father’s of the Protestant Reformation, have *always* held that baptism is the *normative* means of salvation and entrance into the Church in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures and the unanimous witness of the apostolic fathers. Christians, including the father’s of the Protestant Reformation, have also always practiced infant baptism<sup>21</sup>. How is it that so many modern Christians reject both the teaching of the ancient Church, and the teaching of the father’s of the Protestant Reformation, and consider baptism to be only for adults, entirely optional, and merely symbolic?

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**So, there you have it; straight from the horse’s mouth as it were.**

I will end with a final quote from Martin Luther found in a letter which he wrote to two pastors regarding the practice of re-baptism. In the letter he acknowledges many common beliefs shared by both Catholics and Protestants, even acknowledging, *“So we are all still under the papacy and therefrom have received our Christian treasures.”*

He writes, “We on our part confess that there is much that is Christian and good under the papacy; indeed everything that is Christian and good is to be found there and has come to us from this source. For instance we confess that in the papal church there are the true holy Scriptures, true baptism, the true sacrament of the altar, the true keys to the forgiveness of sins, the true office of the ministry, the true catechism in the form of the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the articles of the creed . . . I speak of what the pope and we have in common . . . I contend that in the papacy there is true Christianity, even the right kind of Christianity and many great and devoted saints. . . . The Christendom that now is under the papacy is truly the body of Christ and a member of it. If it is his body, then it has the true spirit, gospel, faith, baptism, sacrament, keys, the office of the ministry, prayer, holy Scripture, and everything that pertains to Christendom. So we are all still under the papacy and therefrom have received our Christian treasures. . . . We do not rave as do the rebellious spirits, so as to reject everything that is found in the papal church. For then we would cast out even Christendom from the temple of God, and all that it contained of Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

Sadly, in the centuries since the Protestant Reformation, it seems as if too many of these common Christian beliefs have been lost. Too many Christians today have cut themselves free from both historic Christianity and the Christianity of the Reformers. They find themselves set adrift in a sea of their own opinion and speculation, their own limited abilities as bible scholars and theologians, their own mistaken views and misunderstandings about the historical and cultural context of an ancient near-eastern world, a world that existed some two millennia in the past.

May I suggest something? Forget the televangelists of our modern day. Disregard the critical biblical scholars and the bestselling authors of our time. Don’t get your information from modern experts on Luther or Calvin – read Luther and Calvin for yourself. Get your information straight from the horse’s mouth.

And if you’re feeling especially adventurous? Go back even further. Read about Polycarp who was a disciple of the beloved apostle John himself. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* was written by Polycarp’s disciple Irenaeus, who went on to write *Against Heresies* circa 175-185 AD. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John. If you want to know what early Christians believed, taught, and practiced, it doesn’t get much earlier than that! Here’s a link to his work so that you can read it for yourself: [Against Heresies](#)

My advice to you? Skip the so called reformers who arrived on the scene some 1,500 years after the fact. Read the apostolic fathers – get it straight from the horse’s mouth!

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1. universal -according to the whole [↔](#)
  2. Institutes of Christian Religion Book IV 17 [↔](#)
  3. Short Treatise on the Lord’s Supper, 17 [↔](#)
  4. Sermon 101 The Duty of Constant Communion Text from the 1872 Edition [↔](#)
  5. Luther’s Collected Works, Wittenburg Edition, no. 7 p, 391 [↔](#)

6. Brief Confession Concerning the Holy Sacrament, September 1544; LW, Vol. XXXVIII, 291-292 [↔](#)
7. Sermon, Christmas, 1531 [↔](#)
8. Calvini Opera [Braunshweig-Berlin, 1863-1900], Volume 45, 348 [↔](#)
9. Zwingli Opera, Corpus Reformationum, Volume 1, 427-428 [↔](#)
10. Sermon: “On the Day of the Conception of the Mother of God,” 1527 [↔](#)
11. Luther’s Works, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan (vols. 1-30) & Helmut T. Lehmann (vols. 31-55), St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House (vols. 1-30); Philadelphia: Fortress Press (vols. 31-55), 1955, v.45:206,212-3 / That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew 1523 [↔](#)
12. Harmony of Matthew, Mark & Luke, sec. 39 (Geneva, 1562), vol. 1 / From Calvin’s Commentaries, tr. William Pringle, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949, p107; on Matthew 1:25 [↔](#)
13. G. R. Potter, Zwingli, London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976, pp.76 / The Perpetual Virginity of Mary . . . , Sep. 17, 1522 [↔](#)
14. Zwingli Opera, Corpus Reformationum, Volume 1, 424 [↔](#)
15. Institutes of Christian Religion Book IV, 15:1 [↔](#)
16. Institutes of Christian Religion Book IV, 15 Scripture cited Mark 16:16 [↔](#)
17. Large Catechism 1529 From edition by Augsburg Publishing House (Minneapolis), 1935, sections 223-224, 230, pages 162, 165 [↔](#)
18. A Refutation 1527 [↔](#)
19. The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520, from the translation of A.T.W. Steinhauser, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, rev. ed., 1970, 197 [↔](#)
20. Institutes of Christian Religion Book IV, 16:5 [↔](#)
21. Disagreements in the earliest Christian communities had nothing to do with *whether* infant baptism should be practiced, but rather with whether it should be given immediately after birth or whether parents should delay eight days in keeping with the Jewish ritual of circumcision. [↔](#)
22. Concerning Rebaptism: A Letter to Two Pastors, 1528, Luther’s Works [“LW”], Vol. 40, 225-262; translated by Conrad Bergendoff, pp. 231-232, 251, 256-257 [↔](#)

## Meditation on Rich Man and Poor Lazarus



*Lazarus and Dives*

, illumination from the

[Codex Aureus of Echternach](#)

Top panel: Lazarus at the rich man's door

Middle panel: Lazarus' soul is carried to Paradise by two angels; Lazarus in Abraham's bosom

Bottom panel: Dives' soul is carried off by two devils to Hell; Dives is tortured in

[Hades](#)

Taken from

[Wikipedia](#)

This was a powerful meditation. You'll have to excuse the seemingly disjointed thoughts. By the way, some people think it's sacrilegious to write in church, but it's one of the things I do regularly. I figure if the Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen did so in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, it's good for me as well :) And there's such a comfort to ask Jesus to write with me.

We are always being called by God to holiness. It's a continual conversion. Pray to help begin again. To have good desires, deeper faith. There is a certain lethargy even if we are busy. We say things like when we get over this hump, or when the kids graduate, then I'll have time to pray more, but the problem is, when we finish one thing, there's another. Our time is taken up with things of the moment, new things,

different things. It's like hiking – there's always another hill. We get older we feel more fragile. Our parents, our peers, they begin to die. What the heck is retirement? Life ends. We only are made in His image. Everything else reflects His beauty. So only we participate in His mysteries. To grasp the good and share it. At the end, we give an account to God for how we've used those gifts.

The parable of the [rich man and Lazarus](#) is one we cannot forget. When you die, it is too late. Life is finished and there's a gulf between heaven and hell. Nothing can be done. We have the Law of Moses and the words of the prophets. Even if a dead man arose, people wouldn't believe. A dead man did rise! Jesus. But how many believe?

Lord, help my unbelief!

The Holy Spirit does not force Himself upon us. The Lord will knock and waits for us to open the door. The Lord will never coerce.

When we take a class, students ask: Is this going to be on the test? It's an important question because at the end of life, when you stand before the throne of God, you will have to answer. And the consequences are eternal. If it's true, if Jesus is God, then our eternal life depends on it. It's going to be heaven or hell. If it's not true, why bother?

The Catechism says that upon death, we are judged according to our faith and works. How we lived. Our Lord is not trying to "get us" into trouble but always drawing us closer to Himself. See, for a person who hates Jesus, who does not believe in God, it would be hell for him to be in heaven, where it is all love. He couldn't stand it. That's why hell is an eternal separation.

So yes, you have to choose. We will be purged and purified. St. Augustine says the suffering in purgatory is greater than anything we can imagine but they are happier than anyone on earth because they know the purpose of suffering. They know they are on the road to heaven and so can endure this temporary separation from God.

Our Lord, Who always did good, dies as a criminal, abandoned by even his friends and betrayed by a close one. It is total devastation. But it turns into total victory because it is offered with total love for the salvation of the world.

So make each day count in spite of our personal wretchedness. Our eternal destiny is to be with God, with all the angels and saints. Be a saint!

This is the Christian vision of life. Eternity. But we've lost this and that's why we prescribe death as a cure. We euthanize. We abort. But this is false mercy. It is blindness. Everything that is not of God will pass away. Everything that is of God will endure forever.

Faith is a Person – Jesus Christ. The God-Man. It is a mystery of the Trinity. Jesus is sent by the Father so that we may get to know the Father by the help of the Holy Spirit. It is about coming to love someone. Not just a bunch of rules. Morality is the path to eternal life and love. To meet our Lord. In [John's first letter](#), he begins. ... we have seen, we have heard, we have touched. We testify. He wants us know Jesus so that our joy might be complete. That you may believe! He is an old man while writing this letter. He is one of the sons of Zebedee, sons of thunder because they were so full of fire. Jesus rebukes them but he is the beloved disciple. Doctrine helps us to understand who Jesus is.

I am just an ordinary woman, but I also need to write. It is an overflowing of the interior life. It is natural that I want to bring my greatest treasure – Jesus – to share. One of these days I will need to write my testimony in detail, not the [shorty one I wrote for Catholic Digest](#). When I read the [Purpose Driven Life](#), that is one of the important things Pastor Warren asks us to do.

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## How much is a pearl worth anyway? [at Ordinary Time]



A Reflection on the

[readings](#)

for Tuesday of the Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time (June 21, 2016)

[2Kings 19:9b-11, 14-21, 31-35a, 36](#) [Psalm 48](#)

Holy Gospel According to

[Matthew 7:6, 12-14](#)

When I was fourteen years old my grandfather gave me my first bible. Not that we didn't already have bibles in our home, but this one was 'mine.' I began to study it and go to bible studies on Wednesday nights. A friend of mine invited me to a 'lock in' service at a Christian school in Wise, Virginia. My mom and dad said I could go and I was excited. Not just because I had a thirst for all things to do with God, but because here I was going to spend an entire night locked in a gym with kids my own age. I did not realize that it was going to be a night that changed my life forever.

Halfway through the night they had an altar call. I had no intention of going up but I found myself led to the steps. I knelt down at the base of the platform and began to cry and gave my life to Christ to serve Him with all that I was. I am still learning what that means, and I've made mistakes on the way, but I have never lost that passion that I felt that night, that yearning to be one with God. I spent many years arguing, fighting, defending the faith in anyway I could. I felt I had to make people believe, time was short and they just didn't see. So I wanted to grab their heads, turn their eyes to Christ and demand that they open them and realize the beauty of what I had found. It wasn't until many years of this struggle of trying to proselytize that I even began to realize there was a difference in what I was doing, and what I was called to do. Evangelization. An offer, not a threat. An invitation given in peace and love, not forced in fear and hate.

The first reading reminds us of how the world behaves towards our God, our faith. Hezekiah has just received a letter from an opposing King. The letter mocks and taunts the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. What does Hezekiah do? He doesn't try to force Sennacherib to see the light, he doesn't even try to speak to him, but rather he goes to his knees in prayer and asks God to deal with it. Why? Because Sennacherib isn't going to listen. He doesn't care what Hezekiah has to say. All the fighting, arguing,

and shouting in the world will never bring about conversion. That's because it isn't our job to convert, it is not our job to convict either. It's only our job to offer to those who are open to listening.

God reminds Hezekiah that He is the one in control. He will protect His children and not a single one will be lost. Then through a miracle in the night the army of Sennacherib suffers a massive loss and retreats to where they came from, without ever a blow from mortal hands. He promises this in the name of David his servant, for He has promised that the Kingdom and throne of David will last for eternity. That's the promise that we true, the Church, trust in. Jesus is the fulfillment of that, the eternal and everlasting King from the line of David that will sit on the throne of judgement for all of eternity.

**CCC 303** The witness of Scripture is unanimous that the solicitude of divine providence is concrete and immediate; God cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history. The sacred books powerfully affirm God's absolute sovereignty over the course of events: "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases." And so it is with Christ, "who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens". As the book of Proverbs states: "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will be established."

Jesus reminds us that He is the one in charge. This is not our fight to win, not our argument to battle. Rather, we are to be fruitful and loving. We are to offer relationship with God to those who seek it, and to those who don't? Peace and service. Oh how often we fail at this. Arguing fruitlessly with those who were shut off to the message before we even began to speak it. What we have been given is a glimpse of Heaven. What we have is a relationship with Him who transcends time and space itself. Something more treasured than anything else we could ever receive. To offer that to someone who doesn't respect it, who has no interest in even attempting to understand it, well it's dangerous. It hurts. It saddens. To watch someone take that which we hold dear and demean it, to make fun of it... Jesus compares that to casting your pearls before swine. A pig will taste a pearl, maybe even sniff it, but then realize it's not food and just mash it into the ground.

Why do we do this? Are we afraid that Satan will win? Jesus has promised that the gates of Hell will never prevail against the Church. God is in charge of conversion. It is He who speaks to the heart. We just share in faith when someone is open to it, and tell them of the great love and peace we find in Christ. Then we give an example of that life through our actions. We love. We serve. We feed, clothe, and give drink to those in need. We have the unique and blessed opportunity to live in the Kingdom of God now, not just at the end of time, but right now! God has given us the ability to do that by showering us with His grace through the Sacraments of the Holy Church, the New Zion. Are you living in the place now? That's where Mass takes you. The book of Revelation gives you a glimpse of that eternity, that's why we in the Church follow that rubric of worship here and now... joining with the Angels and Saints around the altar of God with the Son of Man offering himself in Sacrifice at Calvary for our sins. We then offer ourselves on that altar, joined with Christ, because we alone are not enough to appease the debt of our sin.. but He is. This is the narrow gate through which we must enter.. through Christ himself. Do you wish to know more about this "road that leads to life?" I am there to talk when you wish to hear.

Remember as well that parable about the pearl of great price?

**Matthew 13:45-46**

45 *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

Jesus is the merchant who sold all that he had. He gave his life entirely for you. He sacrificed all honor, power, pleasure, and wealth to purchase you. You are the pearl of great price. Christian, do not allow the world to convince you to drag yourself through the mud of sin. Rather hold yourself away from the world as a living Saint, whose dignity is that of a member of the Royal Family. That we too might stand a chance to walk through that narrow gate into the Kingdom that is prepared for us, eternal in the Heavens.

His servant and yours,

Brian

***"He must increase, I must decrease."***

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This contribution is available at <http://the-friar.blogspot.com/2016/06/how-much-is-pearl-worth-anyway.html>  
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## Jesus Gives True Sight [at Pauca Verba]



They arrived at Bethsaida. There the people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him away out of the village. Then he spat on his eyes, laid his hands upon him, and asked whether he could see anything. The man's sight began to come back, and he said, "I see men; they look like trees, but they are walking about." Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; he looked hard, and now he was cured so that he saw everything clearly. Then Jesus sent him home, saying, "Do not tell anyone in the village." Mark 8:22-26

**Here is Buoninsegna's painting** of Jesus restoring the sight of the blind man. Notice that the artist has painted a scene within a scene. In the middle, the blind man stands before Jesus, then he's pictured a second time immediately to the right and walking down the road, one hand in the air praising God while with the other, letting go of the stick he'd used for so long to help him find his way.

The turreted city of Bethsaida is pictured in the background (remember we're told Jesus led the man outside the village). The spellbound apostles huddle close behind Jesus.

We must recall too that in the verses just prior to this miracle, the apostles are fussing about having forgotten to take bread along with them, though they had just witnessed Jesus feeding five thousand people with so little. Let's hear again the words of Jesus as they sailed along:

*Jesus said to them: "Why do you talk about no bread? Have you no inkling yet? Do you still not understand? Are your minds closed? Have you eyes: can you not see? You have ears: can you not hear?"*

Then right after calling the apostles *blind* and *deaf* to their faces, Jesus gave new sight to a blind man. Let's understand, this miracle isn't essentially about optical sight. Jesus would have me know that I can have 20/20 vision and detect even the most subtle clicks and beeps in the hearing test, and still be *blind* and *deaf*.

Likely Jesus wanted the apostles to understand HIM clearly - who he is. But I think there's even more to it than that - Jesus wants us to see and hear each other clearly. He wants us to understand each moment well. He wants us to understand ourselves clearly! When I was a boy, my father would sometimes take us to Yankee Stadium ballgames. It felt gentlemanly, men wearing hats, jackets and neckties. Conversely, this morning's news reported that now baseball games rather routinely feature violence - pitchers and batters throwing punches, whole teams rushing out onto the field in a frenzy of fighting, the stadium erupting into a celebration of cheers. *That's deaf and blind.*

But Jesus is patient with us. Notice the healing doesn't happen all at once but in stages. We grow in goodness. In the Gospel verses to follow, Peter will call Jesus Messiah, and then in a great misunderstanding, he will reject that Jesus will have to suffer as Messiah. Finally, Peter will even deny knowing Jesus the night of Jesus' arrest. Still, in one of the first Easter appearances, Jesus, ever patient, will recycle Peter in love, giving him new tasks, again inviting, *Follow me.*"

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# A Post-Moral Society Cannot By Definition Tell The Difference Between Good And Evil [at Brutally Honest]

“...we do what we need to do to clamp down on allowing radicals into the country...”

And the problem being, what is a radical and what isn't. Muslims have a vastly different idea what that means than you and I.

Many Muslims, including “non-radicals” who live in the west, believe in polygamy, female subjugation including but not limited to - genitalia mutilation, wearing of burkas, arranged marriages (often to first cousins), honor killings, and limited education.

Muslims also believe that Islam encapsulates all aspects of society, its laws and politics. That there is no separation between Islam and any aspects of daily life. Hence their Sharia Law, which many Muslims would like to have here, and Europe, even though they completely understand that it is not compatible with our Constitution.

Also, most dangerously, and where many Christians/Jews, etc. are completely ignorant, Muslims believe that Islam is the only true religion and those who are not Muslims are Infidels. (Think about that for a while). Muslims believe that Islam is dominate over any and all other religions, and its believers, and that Islam cannot be questioned, ever, and apostates must die. (What other religion believes such things?)

One only has to look at the Middle East, or any other predominantly Muslim country, to see the vast differences between their way of life and ours. They are not “misunderstood” or merely have some minor dissimilar societal mores than our traditional Western values. Islam is completely incompatible with our country. That's not me being hyperbolic, that's what THEY believe.

As your linked post concluded – “In so doing, they will continue to create, however inadvertently, their own highly toxic climate, which threatens a clash of civilizations on our own soil.”

Now tell me again why we should let them come here.

(BTW, Rick, I'm not some Right Wing lunatic bigot who hates on everyone who is different than me. I once was of the mindset like many Americans have - that Islam is “just another religion”, that it's just a “few” radicals who believe in terrorism, etc. I've come to know and understand what Islam truly is through years of reading and educating myself. Islam is nothing but a death cult. Maybe not all Muslims are dangerous, but all follow a dangerous belief system

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/ex-muslim-proposal-that-islam-is-tolerant-is-fallacious-dangerous-47349/>

tim, aka The Godless Heathen

This contribution is available at [http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally\\_honest/2016/06/-a-post-moral-society-cannot-by-definition-tell-the-difference-between-good-and-evil.html](http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally_honest/2016/06/-a-post-moral-society-cannot-by-definition-tell-the-difference-between-good-and-evil.html)  
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## Encrusted [at With Us Still]

It takes a fair amount of power to wash away 50 years' worth of grime.



Bring on the power...

A couple of my brothers and I discovered this semi-obvious fact last week when we teamed up to clean a pad of concrete in our mother's backyard, to prepare for the sale of her home.

“Her home” ...as in “our home” – the place where we grew up in the 1960s and 70s. The very backyard... and basketball court...where we honed our skills and dreamed our dreams of a future as professional baseball or basketball stars.



Worn and faded, the work of our hands...

Those aspirations faded long ago, of course. The memories today seem almost as ragged as the homemade backboard and hoop that still tower over the concrete. It'll be a while though before we let them go—the

blessed memories of our youth and the loving (if sometimes feisty) family in which we were raised.

Not even a power-washer operating at 4,000 P.S.I. could wash all that away.

Nor should it: There's something holy, something sacred, in the bonds of brotherhood we shared. It's a truth that surfaced again and again as we spent the afternoon forcibly removing the accumulated layers of dirt and mildew. Our work revealed what's worth saving: the original bright concrete, hard and solid as a brother's loyalty...and love.

In all honesty, though, reflecting on that gift makes it difficult for me to come to grips with the [message we encounter in scripture this Sunday](#). In the first reading from 1 Kings, a would-be prophet is initially rebuked for his family loyalty:

Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please, let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you." Elijah answered, "Go back!

In the gospel reading, Jesus strikes a similar theme as he issues invitations to several followers:

As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."

And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." To him Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

Harsh stuff, coming from the lips of Love Incarnate.

*'But Lord,' I want to protest, 'I have obligations. I have commitments. I would dearly miss the family who has loved me into being.'*

Reasonable observations, all.

And working through them, like a blast from the nozzle of a power-washer, the Lord shows me where my heart often lies...and how thickly encrusted it can become.

Reminding us, perhaps, that removing encumbrances is necessary work if we want to enter the Kingdom.



Removing encumbrances: Necessary work for entering the Kingdom...

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

*IHS*

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## Brexit: God Clearing His Throat? [at V for Victory!]



We have now a generation of adults too young to remember the Soviet Union and the Cold War, and to appreciate the amazing shock of the former's demise. We kids all knew who Leonid Brezhnev was, and the parade of his short-lived successors who were finally acknowledged to be dead after suffering from six-month-long "colds" was actually a topic of schoolyard conversation. By the time I started high school, the Soviets held a vast nuclear arsenal, thanks to the treason of the Rosenbergs; had conquered over eight and a half million square miles and reduced a quarter of a billion souls to serfdom; and, on the psy-ops front, had fought the West almost to a standstill. The mentality was widespread that containment of the "Evil Empire" -- always with the obligatory scare quotes -- rather than its unmitigated defeat, was to be the objective; and the Cold War and threat of nuclear holocaust would go on forever, thanks to the intransigence of the Western democracies. But just when the Soviet Union seemed most unmovable, then -- as William F. Buckley, Jr. described it -- God cleared His throat. And on March 11, 1990, little Lithuania declared herself independent from Moscow: the first falling pebbles presaging the avalanche that caved in the Soviet fortress.

But it would be a mistake to assume that the Communists and their fellow travelers all turned into freedom-loving capitalists just because their precious socialist paradise collapsed. They simply found new homes and brought their elitist, materialist, socialist, globalist, bureaucratist, collectivist, secularist, modernist, totalitarian ideals with them. One of their biggest new homes, judging by its fruits, is the European Union. And now, with the United Kingdom's vote yesterday to leave the European Union, over the opposition of political and economic elites all over the world, those presaging pebbles are falling once again. Other member nations will doubtless follow suit.

And this is no cause for regret. However motivated its founders might have been by a sincere desire for peace and the prevention of future world wars, the reality is that the European Union is just the Soviet

Union with velvet upholstery. To the EU, as to the Soviet Union, "peace" means the absence of opposition, and it is brought about by laying down a leaden blanket of minute regulations under which no one can move. The EU is a load of bureaucrats thinking they can run people's lives better than the people can themselves. It has no respect for democracy; no respect for freedom of association (including freedom *from* association); no respect for national identity; no respect for the principle of subsidiarity; no respect for private property. It subordinates flesh-and-blood human beings to ideology. It bullied Ireland into holding a new referendum to accept the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, after a 2008 referendum in which the treaty went down to defeat. It replaced the legitimate heads of government in Greece and Italy with its own appointees. In 2013, it confiscated money out of people's bank accounts in Cyprus to support a bailout of that country. Its grand schemes to manage the economy -- which in truth amounts to trying to control the movements, private decisions, associations and property of countless individual, flesh-and-blood human beings -- are calculated to spread misery rather than prosperity, except for the anointed few.

Which is why neither the EU nor any merely political institution is the last, best hope for peace in Europe, which has proven so elusive over the last century. These Eurocrats may love humanity in general, but clearly have no respect for human beings in particular, with their messy hopes and dreams, likes and dislikes, needs and wants. Individuals are merely means to an end. This is why the Eurocrats see no problem with moving people and their property around like the inanimate men on a chessboard, as if they do not care where they are put, or with whom, or with what, or what the consequences will be. At any rate, it is apparent that in the view of their betters in Brussels, they shouldn't care; after all, knowing better is what makes the betters...better.

After years and years of many people on both sides simply assuming that that is the way things are going to continue, there has finally been some pushback. Despite the Eurocracy's best efforts, Britain is pulling out. It is a hopeful sign that the tide is turning against the revolutionary ideologies and ideologues down the modern centuries that have busied themselves extinguishing the lights of Christendom, toppling thrones and altars, first in politics, then in men's hearts. There are already calls for exit referendums in other EU member states. The pebbles are falling. God, in His mercy, is clearing His throat and opening the door to a new beginning.

But it is only a beginning, and we cannot expect to gain anything by resting on our laurels. Perhaps now would be an opportune moment to suggest that the best insurance against tyranny and fratricidal slaughters like the two World Wars would be for Europe to return to her Catholic Christian roots. The trust is ill-founded, as the Psalm says, that is put in princes, the children of men in whom there is no salvation. It is men's hearts that need changing, and this cannot be effected by mere political institutions.

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This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2016/06/brexit-god-clearing-his-throat.html>  
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## Never Forget That Every Little Effort Counts [at Catholic365]

Last night, a friend of mine posted a Facebook invitation of sorts to one hundred of her closest, local friends. She knew we were all active in the pro-life movement in some way or another and felt called to ask us to write a Letter to the Editor of our local newspaper. Many of us had written in the past. Some still do, while others (like me) have been discouraged with too many rejections and a feeling [Like a Voice Crying out in the Wilderness](#).

Her Facebook post garnered a lively discussion that went on at length. We vented our frustrations and common concerns but, in the long run, many decided to accept the challenge and try again. The topic of our discussion was the Supreme Court ruling against a Texas law that protects women by requiring abortion clinics to follow basic sanitary guidelines, as is mandatory for other medical facilities as well as providing doctors with admitting privileges in case of a post-abortion emergency.

In the past, my letters to said hometown newspaper have hovered between pleading, sermon-like, and dripping with sarcasm. Having finally found my gentler side – at least when publicly pleading the case for protection of women and their unborn babies – my most recent attempts had toned down considerably. In this instance I decided to go one step further. I would take a more neutral tone and rely on common ground. The letter I submitted follows:

### **Sanitary Conditions and Properly Licensed Doctors Should Be a Woman's Right**

No matter where one stands on the issue of abortion, basic medical precautions should represent common ground – the well-being and safety of women. Laws providing for sanitary conditions and the necessity of doctors licensed to provide emergency medical treatment should be a basic right of any patient. While we see this ideal reflected in myriad laws throughout our country, from immediate care clinics to physician's offices, the abortion industry has somehow evaded these basic necessities.

That anyone, who purports to have the rights of women in mind, would fiercely battle against such basic healthcare is as alarming as it is duplicitous. Yet that is exactly what just happened in the great state of Texas. A state law that protects women's health by requiring both clinic sanitation and admitting privileges for the doctors who perform surgical abortions, was struck down by the US Supreme Court.

Federal usurping of the sovereignty of state law is treading on dangerous ground and flies in the face of how our government properly functions. Unfortunately, the pawns in this injustice are the women who are exposed to unregulated, unsanitary conditions and doctors who are not licensed to care for them should a post-surgical emergency arise. Sanitary clinic conditions and properly licensed doctors should be any woman's right – no matter the surgical procedure.

Birgit Jones

After turning to my daughter for a second opinion, I submitted my letter online. Imagine my surprise when the following response acknowledged my submission.

Welcome back. Haven't heard from you in a long while.  
Thanks for writing. We will publish your letter as soon as possible.

Isn't life funny? We have so many preconceived ideas that deter us from doing things. Maybe we think we will be rejected or that our little effort won't make any difference. Yet God teaches us in these small ways. By proving that it's the effort that counts, and not the result we demand, we are reminded that we should continue to try – try to live life according to His Will and His example. Through our small works we are even called to become saints!

As our little group proceeds with our plan to inundate the local newspaper with letters of concern for this unjust SCOTUS ruling, I'd like to invite you to do the same. Don't worry about the reception you may receive from your local paper. Simply make this little effort and ask your like-minded friends to join you.

Even if just one heart is touched – maybe even from an editorial staff member reading your thoughts – you have accomplished a great thing. You have put yourself out to scrutiny in an effort to proclaim the Gospel!

In what way can your little efforts make a difference? Share your thoughts and inspire us to join you.

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# The Window to the Soul [at On the Road to Damascus]

## Matthew 6:22

*“The lamp of the body is the eye.  
If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light;  
but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be in darkness.  
And if the light in you is darkness, how great will the darkness be.”*

A related saying is that the eye is the window to the soul. The saying means that you can see into the soul of another through their eyes. Windows go both directions and the soul can only see what passes in through them.

The saying, “You are what you eat.” is true for the body. If you constantly eat a diet of garbage you will have poor health and probably a short life full of suffering. Garbage in, garbage out. Then it is also true that, “You are what you see and hear.” is true for the soul. If you feed your soul corrupt things you will have a corrupt soul. No one raises roses by planting thistle seeds. The same concept applies – garbage in – garbage out.

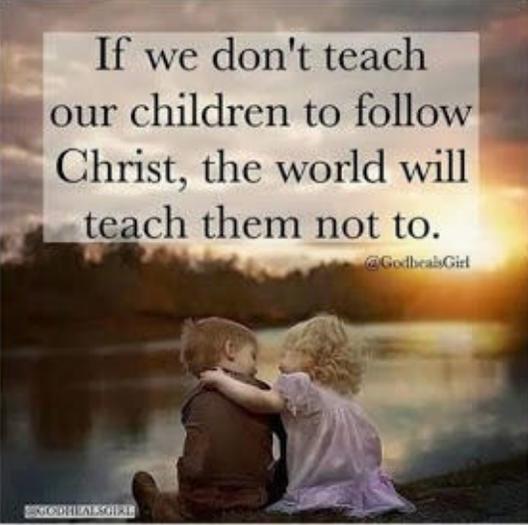
The brain is the world’s greatest super computer. It is constantly taking in information and storing it for later use. This information loaded into our memory banks is used to make decisions and drives the way we live our lives. When you load your mind with violent images from video games and movies or the dehumanizing images from pornography it changes the way you walk through life. It changes the way you see your fellow human beings. It is insidious in the way it works. The devil knows that he can’t get people to sin in one big step. He gets us to change one tiny step at a time over a long period of time. He gets us to accept the next step by making us numb to the step we are at.

How was the Grand Canyon formed? Was it through a cataclysmic event? Did a meteor crash to earth carving out the great valley? The Grand Canyon was formed by a trickle of water over millennia. Water – soft, cool water flowing over rock. It ate away at the rock one particle at a time. This is how sin works on the soul, one small step at a time.

60 years ago swear words were not used or permitted in movies. Today some of the most popular movies have a swear word uttered very seven seconds. Get numb to hearing one we will use three. Get used to three we will use nine. Get used to nine and the sky is the limit. Every aspect of our culture has morally eroded in this fashion, from how we speak to each other to the clothing we somehow find appropriate to wear to worship God.

C.S. Lewis said that the body and soul live so closely to one another that they share their diseases. What we do with our bodies we do with our souls. What we allow our souls to see will determine what we do with our bodies. When one is sick both suffer. No one becomes holier by watching or listening to unholy things. A body that has been fed nothing but junk food can heal once the diet has been changed. The same is true for the soul. Even the most porn addicted soul can be brought back to holiness by changing what the soul sees.

Parents, do you want to have good and holy children? If you do it is your responsibility to monitor what they watch and listen to. Just as you wouldn't allow your children to consume nothing but Twinkies and Big Macs you can't allow them to consume a constant stream of violence and pornography in what they see, listen to, and play. If you want roses plant rose seeds. If you don't care the world will plant thistles for you.

A quote graphic with a sunset background and two children. The text is white and centered in a semi-transparent box. The background shows a sunset over a body of water with two children sitting on the shore. One child is a boy in a brown shirt, and the other is a girl in a purple dress. They are looking towards the sunset.

If we don't teach  
our children to follow  
Christ, the world will  
teach them not to.

@GodhealsGirl

@GODHEALS GIRL

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This contribution is available at <http://damascusroadsojourner.blogspot.com/2016/06/the-window-to-soul.html>  
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## Our Terrible Vulnerability



my vulnerable ones

Last week, a precious little boy named Lane Thomas Graves was playing in shallow water on the edge of a lagoon when an alligator dragged him into the water and killed him. His father tried to fight off the alligator but could not. When I think about this story, I think of my own little boys and I weep for those poor parents. How do you recover from such a random, unpredictable, horrible loss? How do you return home without that child?

But if I'm honest, sympathy wasn't my first reaction to this story. My first reaction was to investigate the details. Was this a recognized play area, or a random alligator-infested lagoon where only crazy people would swim? Was he just splashing in the shallows or was he waist-deep? Only after I learned the truth—that he was wading in ankle-deep water in a beach area intended for play along with many other families, all watched over by lifeguards—did I open my heart. My first instinct, like that of so many others, was to see if I could apportion blame.

Incidents like this bring out our human tendency to blame. The nasty comments directed at these poor parents remind me of all the hateful blame thrown at the parents of the little boy who got into the gorilla enclosure. Why must we humans do this to each other?

On the face of it, it seems that the problem is a lack of compassion and empathy, a failure to put ourselves in the position of others and to feel the full weight of their suffering. It seems that our hearts and imaginations are just too small.

But perhaps that's not it. Perhaps we blame not because we don't feel the full weight of suffering, but because we do, and we don't want to shoulder that burden. We don't want to acknowledge that that horrible thing could just as easily have happened to us. We want to shove away the unwelcome reminder that these sorts of events provide: that all of us, by virtue of being human, are vulnerable to random suffering, pain, and loss. When we blame, we're saying, "That wasn't really random. I am safe from that. That form of suffering can't happen to me or mine." We blame to reject the possibility of suffering in our

own lives and in those of our loved ones.

The ancient Greeks had a saying: “Call no man happy until he is dead.” At every moment of our lives—crossing the street, falling in love, giving birth, going in for our annual check-up, watching our child splash in the water—our happiness is a terribly fragile thing.

Every human culture has to find an answer to our horrible vulnerability to suffering. Our pagan ancestors burned sacrifices to curry favor with the gods. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle insisted that living a virtuous life in pursuit of truth could make life meaningful, even in the face of misfortune. But it was Christianity that provided the ultimate answer to the problem of suffering. In Christ, God Himself suffered for us. Jesus’ suffering on the cross gave new meaning to our vulnerability to suffering. We serve a God who suffers with us, who loves us in our suffering, and who promises us that our suffering is not the end, but the beginning of an eternal life of unimaginable joy, a life He suffered to provide for us.

As our culture turns away from Christ, we are also turning away from the Christian answer to suffering. And without Christ, suffering loses meaning.

Of course it is good to alleviate human suffering. We must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoners, shelter the homeless, tend to the sick and dying, work to cure diseases, and engage in all the works of mercy. But there’s a big difference between sacrificing to aid the suffering and refusing to accept human vulnerability to suffering. We can do all these good works and nevertheless, many of us will suffer without cause or warning.

If we live only for happiness and success, then suffering robs of us of everything that matters. It cannot be borne. We cannot bear the thought of children being born poor and unwanted—better that they should die in the womb than to emerge so vulnerable. We cannot bear the thought of terminal disease—better to die before suffering and seeing one’s loved ones suffer. We cannot bear the thought of a random killing of a child by an alligator—surely his parents were negligent. And when we can’t kill or apportion blame? Then we look to laws and government programs to protect us from the horrible weight of our neighbor’s suffering. (This is what it means to make the government your God.)

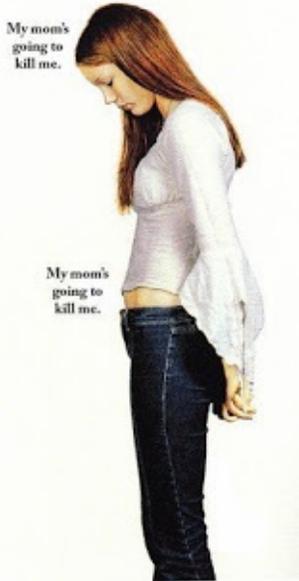
When we can’t find meaning and hope in suffering, we end up denying the innate value of human life. We start thinking that life is only worth living under certain conditions. We privilege the lives of the healthy, the lucky, the intelligent, the wanted, the educated, and the successful or potentially successful over the lives of the weak, the disabled, the failed, the ill, the ignorant, the unwanted, and the poor.

Our vulnerability is essential to our humanity, and when we deny that vulnerability, we become less than human.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.mollyoshatz.com/our-terrible-vulnerability/>  
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# When I'm Pro-life Except when it Really Happens [at Designs by Birgit]



## ABORTION:

The rationalizations are many...

“Why have a baby born into a family who does not want ‘it’?”

“What about school/career?”

“Should we really force a woman to bear a child against her will?”

“What if the baby is deformed or not mentally ‘normal’?”

“Maybe the woman just can’t afford a child right now!”

“It’s not my place to make such an intimate decision for someone else.”

“I’m personally opposed to abortion, but…”

I’ve heard them all. As someone who was in high school when the infamous

[Roe vs. Wa](#)

de and

[Doe vs. Bolton](#)

decisions were being discussed and then handed down, I have been transfixed by the topic for years. The research that was required for my first Social Studies debate on the topic, caught fire in my heart and soul and has been a burning flame of conviction ever since. An otherwise timid public speaker, I could rattle off facts and arguments with fluid ease when pro-life issues were involved. Some of the rationalizations were very simple to dispute with

[Developmental Charts](#)

and

[Biological Facts](#)

. Others would tweak at the heart and seem difficult to counter – but were they?

**“What about the rape/incest exception?”**

Aha! Yep, that one makes folks a bit more squeamish. Would you really expect a woman to carry her attacker’s child? Well, in a word, ‘yes’! After all, why punish a child for his father’s crime? Wouldn’t that just create another victim? That child has committed no crime, has been convicted by no jury, and is given a death sentence through no fault of his own. But, but, but…

**“Wouldn’t the woman’s life come to a screeching halt, with no chance of a future?”**

In a nutshell, no! What makes me so sure about my answer? Well, my ‘ace in the hole’ response comes from a very personal story...

Sometime in the 70’s I found myself the recipient of unwanted advances by a neighborhood boy – I was barely 14 years old. Weeks later I would reluctantly tell my mother the facts of that encounter and she would surmise that my persistent bout of nausea wasn’t the flu after all. She would fall to the floor with the shock of it all and I would be forced to let go of the denial that had kept me halfway sane. The ensuing months were a blur and yet time stood still. My early high school career came to a screeching halt and was substituted with a ‘homebound’ teacher and an algebra tutor. Time, however, marched on and adjustments were made. This wasn’t an era of ‘baby mommas’ and ‘baby daddies’, this was a more sheltered time and after a while we began to attend Mass in a neighboring town.

Then early summer hit and with it ‘the time’. I remember the kind-faced nurse with the gold watch who held my hand – no visitors in the labor/delivery area were allowed then. She kept me somewhat calm by talking about mundane things – like my nice tan. The hours ticked by and the pain increased. There was a recurring little stream of tears at the corner of my eyes but I never called out. I just looked at that gold watch on the nurse’s arm.

Then there he was – a blue eyed bundle of around 7 pounds. They laid him in my lap and I timidly poked at him – counted the fingers and toes, because that’s what I’d heard you did, and then quickly bundled him up again. I felt more fear than joy – more spent than at peace. I don’t remember much more of the hospital stay but I do remember the early days of being back at home. My jeans fit again quickly and I hesitantly went outside for a walk on the sidewalk in front of our house. I looked ‘normal’ again but couldn’t quite get the idea of what had happened to make sense in my 14-year-old brain. The sun was still shining but somehow it didn’t sink its warmth into my skin.

Inside the house were my sisters and that little wooden cradle with ‘him’ in it. My parents had stepped up in support of us and decided to adopt the child and raise him as my brother. We were a family of firm Catholic faith and there could be no other option. They would add this child of mine to their brood even though my mother was 4 months pregnant at the time of his birth. He would soon have a little brother! The adoption papers were drawn up and there was no fuss or disagreement – after all I was still a minor. This plan was for the best – for all of us. Sacrifices were made in families every day – for the good of all – especially the smallest, weakest members. This was our Catholic faith in action!

## **Another Baby In the Family**

The blue-eyed angel grew a full head of blonde hair and five months later his dark-eyed, black-haired 'twin' would become his sidekick. He always knew that I was 'special' and that he was adopted, even before he knew what that meant, because my parents wanted him to know the truth from the beginning. 'The Boys', as we called them, would grow up together as brothers with a bond that grew stronger and matured with adulthood. Our little family of 7 lived an idyllic life in our small town and acceptance was regained from most. The whispers would always be there but we all grew accustomed to them and we circled the wagons around our family and our Catholic faith.

## **Back to 'Normal'**

I returned to high school and met a young man during the summer of my sixteenth year. He was someone my mother trusted and the first one I dated. We became quite the pair and were soon 'going' steady. Another reminder of that time would come when we parked in a quiet meadow and I told him my story. He had heard the murmurs but I needed to tell him myself – that it wasn't quite the way it was portrayed in some circles. To my surprise and joy he accepted my tale with a loving calm! He was not in tune with the naysayers, his heart was his own – and mine!

We married the Thanksgiving weekend of my senior year, with the blessing of our parish priest. Our high school courtship had remained a chaste one – by our mutual agreement. After our wedding we approached my parents and asked if we could adopt the little one – now three years old – ourselves. My mother's answer was an unequivocal 'NO'! She explained that he was now her baby and she simply could not give him up. We did, however, have 'The Boys' over quite a bit. They were our 'practice kids' in those early years.

That fall, after having graduated from high school, I began my college life. Although my scholarships were rescinded when I married, I gained 24 credit hours by taking the CLEP test. I remained on track to graduate on time. In what seemed like no time at all I found myself in my senior year of college – and I was also pregnant with our first child! Our son was born before I walked the stage to receive my diploma.

## **Life Marches On**

Since that time many things have happened. After graduation with a BA in Art my various jobs have included Art Teacher, Office Manager and Catholic Book Store Manager as well as a Field Representative for a pro-life US Congressman. In the pro-life realm I have been an Executive Director of

Right to Life of Owensboro (twice), served as Newsletter Editor and Board Member of several pro-life groups,. My life has been full and fulfilling. I tell you these things, not to brag about my credentials, but to enforce the point that your life is never over – no matter what cards you are dealt.

During our 36 years of marriage, my husband and I have had three children and married off two of them. We have welcomed 5 grandchildren – gifts from their happy marriages. The two children born to my ‘special brother’ and his wife, round out our total of seven grandchildren. They are all 7 years old and younger. I am Godmother to all seven of these angels and we are quite the tight-knit bunch. Life prevailed and has come full circle. Contrary to being ‘ruined’, I can honestly say that my 54 years on this earth have truly been blessed!

## **The Rest of the Story**

When he was sixteen years old, I went for a drive with my ‘special’ brother. As we sat in an empty church parking lot, I filled him in on the grim details of his origin. I had, of course, gotten ‘our’ mother’s blessing. He had a right to know but it needed to be the right time for him. We talked and exchanged thoughts of Our Story. Our relationship had remained strong throughout the years and that would never change. We just needed to ebb and flow in our own time.

NOTE: This story and the addendum below were first shared in 2012

Fast-forward to a few days ago we discussed my idea of publicly telling Our Story . Of course the folks in our hometown know some version or another of the story and a few people currently in our lives know the details as well. I’ve also shared Our Story with frightened, pregnant girls and their mothers. I’ve shared it with intimate friends and fellow pro-life warriors. But it’s not mine alone to publicly tell. However, we are comfortable with each other and I knew he would honestly tell me how he felt. His answer was as straightforward as he, himself, is. He said, “It’s Our Story and it’s nothing to be ashamed of. Tell it like it is.”

We are quite the pair – praise God!



# At The Edge of Inside

June 24, 2016 by [Susan Stabile](#)

OK – I borrowed the title of today’s post from a David Brooks column in [today’s New York Times](#). But since he borrowed the phrase “edge of the inside” from Richard Rohr, I’m sure he won’t mind my using it here.

One of the [core principles](#) of Richard Rohr’s Center for Action and Contemplation is perspective, which he defines as meaning that “Practical truth is more likely found at the bottom and the edges than at the top or the center of most groups, institutions, and cultures.”

Rather simply insiders and outsiders (a view fostered by our tendency toward binary thinking), one can identify in any group, institution or culture also possesses people at the edge. As described by Brooks in his piece, these are people who are within an organization “but not subsumed by group think. They work at the boundaries, bridges and entranceways. Rohr adds that those at the edge of a group “are free from its central seductions, but also free to hear its core message in very new and creative ways.

Several thoughts strike me as I read this. First, all institutions need people at the edges. Without them it is not only very difficult to build bridges with other groups, but virtually impossible for an institution to grow.

Second, people at the edges run the risk of being criticized by both those insiders at the center of an institution and by those outside it. By definition, anyone who doesn’t fit cleanly into one category or another runs the risk of vilification.

Third, notwithstanding the second point, there are some of us who are most comfortable living at the edge of inside. I have a lot of thoughts about this third, but none formulated enough to share here. But you might find it interesting to look at where you find yourself in the institutions and groups to which you belong.

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This contribution is available at <http://susanjoan.wordpress.com/2016/06/24/at-the-edge-of-inside/>  
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## The Holy Oil and Wine [at The Shield of Faith]

This is a poem I composed when I was able to see in perspective the summer of 1967 (THE Summer of '67), which I spent as a true drop-out in the East Village. As a former Yale graduate school student in Psychology, that summer I got to know, meet, and/or rub shoulders with Harvard drop-out Timothy Leary, artist Peter Max, Alan Ginsberg, Ed Sanders and Tuli of the Fugs, Abbie Hoffman, Nico of the Velvet Underground, Louis Abalofia - artist and "King of the Hippies," Paul Krassner, Lenny Horowitz - N.Y. Times art critic, Diahnne Abbot (before she married De Niro), poetess Anne Waldman, and many of the early and original spiritually-oriented hippies and anonymous drop-outs and Village denizens, some of whom I met at the old Paradox Restaurant on E. 7th street - a popular macrobiotic eatery and gathering place.

That summer the "flower child" movement had a distinctive Franciscan flavor, until it succumbed to the forces of hedonism and sunk into the abyss of Woodstock two years later. Ironically, it was a book called

*The Little Flowers of St. Francis*

that restored my Catholic faith, as the decade of the 70's began.

This poem was inspired by my love for P. M.



The front entrance of the Paradox Restaurant on E. 7th St. NYC

I.

Deep deep deep within

Where music glides from clouds around

Where the beat is deep

Down down

Within the mind

Into into

Riding upwards into the mind

Where to descend is to rise

Where the way downward, in, in

Seems like the way upward and out

Where getting high is to sink into your mind.

And coming down

Is really coming up - out of your mind

Into the world around you

Outside of you.

Where to feel high is to go down into your mind

And come down is to rise up out of the mind.

So high is low

And low is high

And down is up,

Up is down

In is out, and out is in.

This way and that way

That way and this.

So here, so there, so everywhere

See, see, how it is.

II.

Rat tat tat

Rat -a- tat tat

One two

One two

Begin, let us begin.

Now, we see all about us

Empty lands

And tingling glasses

And echoes from the sun

And the beauty of a garbage dump

The excitement of an empty, brick strewn lot

The joy of an ambulance siren

The way the living gather around the dead

The holy oil and wine.

Rat tat tat

Rat -a- tat tat

Loneliness, emptiness - how joyful that was

If I only knew then

That when I was suffering,

I was in love.

Which is better?

To love, and not possess -

Or possess, and no longer love?

Rat tat tat

Rat -a- tat tat.

III.

Twist and twirl around

The ocean shall flow

Whether or not it is aware of itself,

To grow and to possess

Is our nature.

To grasp and draw within

To desire anew

When all hope of desire is gone.

To hate suffering

Then to wish for it again

And to give up hope

Of ever being allowed to suffer again

Then to suffer again.

This way and that way,

That way and this.

High tide and low tide

Shall come and go

Whether the sea

Is aware of itself or no.

And we shall grow

Whether we want to or no.

And she shall come

And she shall go

And she shall come again.

Sometimes here, sometimes there.

For how can the ocean

Stop its own flowing?

Now I know

That when I was suffering

I was in love.

IV.

Yet I shall suffer again

And say: This is not love.

And I shall seek an end

to suffering once more

by possessing the one I love and desire.

And I shall suffer no more

Neither shall I desire and love,

For that which I loved

Shall become part of me

And I shall have grown.

Again.

Rat -a- tat

Rat tat tat

Rat -a- tat tat.

This way and that way,

That way and this,

Joy and growth and happiness.

V.

To grow takes courage

The courage to commit oneself

Confidence and belief in oneself

To fight

For what belongs to us

When others would try to take it away.

To grow, needs

The courage to die for that which you love

And yet one loves many things -

Which one to die for?

Which one to give one's soul for?

Why her of course.

And they will tell you

That you do not love her.

The decision is all your own.

Your own and only your own

No one else's

But only your own.

Look inside, look outside

There is the tree

That is your own.

Know it is yours

And you have grown,

But oh the emptiness

And loneliness that follows.

And how disappointed we all shall be

When we come to know that

I am you -

And you are me.

What desires are left to be?

VI.

Does the universe

Go on and on?

Or does it stop and start again?

Does God keep growing and growing?

Poor fellow -

How hard it must be

To be where no one else has been before.

So many things we don't know

Such as

How far do we have to go?

Is there any end?

Do we decide to start all over again?

Ting -a- ling. Ding, ding

God falls in love with non-god

and non-god falls in love with God

And the one becomes the other

And the other becomes the one

So on and so on

Forever and ever.

Oh oh forever and ever

Ever and ever, ever and ever

On and in and up and out

High is low and low is high

God loves death and death loves God

Rat -a- tat

Rat -a- tat

Rat -a- tat -a- tat.

Copyright 1969 Frank M. Rega

View all of my

[books.](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://divinefiat.blogspot.com/2016/06/the-holy-oil-and-wine.html>  
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## **To the parents who feel like they're failing... [at Little Douglings]**

**To the parents who feel like they're failing at this parenting thing... It may not be you - it just might be them.**

I say this with full confidence as I've spent the day dealing with the one child, in a family of eleven children, who generally consumes 95% of my energy.

The other day, my seven year old interrupted my phone conversation. "She's using my toothbrush to scrub the inside of the toilet!!!" I nodded, blanked-faced. I knew exactly what child she was talking about. I calmly told my daughter to throw out the toothbrush and went to put her two-year old sister in yet another time-out. In my mind, I was trying not to dwell on the high probability that she had done this before, completely unbeknownst to the poor owner of the toothbrush.

The thing is, I'm no longer surprised at the risky, troublesome, chaotic, disastrous, ugly messes my little one gets herself into, because having many children with varying traits and personalities has given me some sweet perspective. So much so that I can honestly say that sometimes it is indeed 100% THEM.

You can be an amazing parent with great strategies for motivating, disciplining and forming your children, but then you get that one kid (or two) who makes you feel like you have the parenting skills of a blind, disoriented buffoon (or baboon for those who prefer animals to humans). These wild cards are treasures beyond the vocal range in the height of their tantrums. They are God's blessing to parents who feel like somehow their children who listen the first time, follow instructions and sit nice and quietly during Mass are simply products of excellence in parenting. These little heaven sent maniacs are the ones who restore our humility. They remind us that as good as we may have been in establishing our expectations with our children, we've been sustained considerably by God and that there are other factors at play when it comes to the level of obedience displayed by our little ones.

In our daughter's case, her mischievous endeavors are a result of an overly imaginative and curious mind that needs to know how everything works from the inside out. She's also fearless and surprisingly athletic, ready to climb to any height, Spider-Man style, to secure whatever treasure she covets. When she was 18 months old she had already mastered climbing out of her crib even at the lowest mattress setting. We considered adding a lid to the crib with a big, heavy duty lock, but realized it would then resemble a dog crate and child services probably wouldn't like that.

She's extremely clever, easily figuring out how to get into things or do things that leave adults baffled. She's tenacious, independent, strong willed and ready to persevere (tantrum style) to achieve her goals. I'm also convinced that she sees the world in grey, except for everything dangerous and off limits - those things glow bright red and are accompanied by special instructive signs: EAT THIS, TOUCH THIS, OPEN THIS, BREAK THIS, STICK THIS IN YOUR NOSE - LIKE WAAAAY UP THERE (see title image). These gems (pun intended) are destined for great things. They have the makings of strong future leaders, inventors or overall game changers, even if it means prompting current parental nervous breakdowns.

My brother-in-law entered his family room, with a look of mixed concern and disgust. "Um, your daughter

is standing on our dining room table." I mustered an apology and said, "Right. I'm on it." I knew he was totally freaked out and I was just like, "business as usual".

Because aside from the promise of greatness in these adventurous, extra demanding little ones, they bless their parents a special gift. We eventually become resilient. By the time they've plowed through childhood, we've seen, faced and (hopefully) conquered EVERYTHING! I've become 90% more laid back and optimistic since having a couple of these big handfuls. Finding our little one standing on the table, while it comes with a possible screaming removal process and subsequent time-out (perhaps tied to a chair this time), well, it makes me feel quite grateful. Why? Because I start thinking about other incidents we've faced and am just so relieved that there wasn't a chandelier hanging over the table - or she would have been swinging on it or licking all the crystals - although, secretly I would have loved to have seen my brother-in-law's face if that had been the case!

It's all about perspective and she's forever changed mine!

Also, being given a "bundle of trouble" is a nod from God. Because He only gives you what you can handle (with your hand securely fixed in His), so He must REALLY trust me!

But sometimes, as the great philosopher *Anonymous* says: "I just wish He didn't trust me so much!" It's a lot of work chasing a naked human being around in your backyard, praying the neighbors are safely in their homes, far away from their windows. It's all very consuming: emotionally, mentally, and physically.

I find great comfort looking to Saints Louis and Zelie, parents of St. Therese of Lisieux, who raised a very stubborn, spirited child, [prone to extensive tantrums](#) - they even had to tie her in bed at night for her own protection (crib crate would've been better). They struggled, but managed to raise one of the most notable saints! So there is hope!

I've also come to acknowledge that of all our children, this little one takes after me the most, so she comes by it honestly! And thankfully, I've now crowned my childhood with at least one significant act of obedience: I graciously fulfilled the wish of my parents by growing up and having a kid just like me. Maybe she'll do the same, or at least join a convent and stir up some serious mischief like Saint Therese, our friendly neighborhood Doctor of the Church.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.littledouglings.com/blog/2016/6/16/totheparentwhothinkstheyarefailing>  
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## Relationship or Method [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

This post, last published in 2010, formed the basis for my book, “Prayer Strategies: A Series of Helps.” It is available virtually free on Kindle (99 cents) and not much more than that in hard cover.

Anyway, sometimes I'm asked what method I use during my time of prayer. Truth is, I don't have so much a method as I have a relationship. The distinction is not simply semantics. Relationships are built over time. Methods can be developed or copied in a few minutes.

So if asked how I mature in my *relationship* to Christ – which then translates for me into the process I use in prayer – I would answer this way:

1. I spend an hour *each* morning with the Lord. I rarely miss a day through the year. To help myself settle into the attitude for prayer and meditation, I listen to one or two recorded Christian hymns or other worship songs through headphones. Then during that hour I read at least two chapters of the Bible. (I also read two every evening). Over the course of the last thirty-seven years I've read the Bible dozens of times. In addition, Scripture memory has always been an integral part of my relationship with Christ. I have memorized hundreds of verses, and can paraphrase hundreds more.

This treasury of God's word in my heart aids my meditation as the Holy Spirit brings those texts to mind to teach me something fresh or (more often) remind me of something I'd forgotten.

2. My reflections, meditations and prayers during the remainder of the hour are really birthed in my *daily* decisions to bring my will into conformity with Christ's. One of the books that has helped me understand the importance of obedience is *The Practice of the Presence of God*, by Brother Lawrence.

Brother Lawrence wrote that he would not so much as pick up a feather from the ground without permission from the Lord. It is that kind of obedience to Christ, even in the minutia of daily activities that I try to strive toward. However, I am learning such obedience does not happen in a vacuum. It requires many decisions during the day to either obey Him or rationalize why I do not have to obey. But each correct decision makes the next one easier.

Two of my favored prayer methods is *Lectio Divina* and St. Ignatian “*imaginative*” meditation.

*Lectio divina* is an ancient form of prayer often associated with the monastic tradition. As I read from the Bible I ask myself what the writer was trying to convey to his readers. Then I ask what the Holy Spirit might be trying to convey to me in the passage. As I ponder the questions, I mull those thoughts over and over.

Sometimes I will begin memorizing a particular verse in the text and speak it back to God as a form of prayer.

Ignatian prayer uses the power of imagination to draw me closer to God. As I read through the Scripture, or consider one of the mysteries of the Rosary, I meditate on a scene that might catch my attention – the

scourging of Christ at the pillar, for example. I try to imagine what it would have been like if I had been there, watching the horrible scene play out. I try to smell the dust swirling in the breezes, to hear the mob's shouts behind me, to watch our Blessed Mother crumble with grief to the dirt as the soldier's whip slices Jesus' back. And as I imagine myself in the moment, I pray whatever thoughts come to my mind as I watch the scene unfold.

At other times I pray my own spontaneous prayers, or recite some of the many prayers given us by the Church. St. Ignatius of Loyola's prayer is one example:

*Oh Lord, take my freedom, my memory, my understanding and my will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more.*

The prayer of Pope Clement XI is another (I include only a portion of his prayer here):

*Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith. I trust in you: strengthen my trust. I love you: let me love you more and more. I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow. I want to do what you ask of me: In the way you ask, For as long as you ask, Because you ask it. Help me to prepare for death with a proper fear of judgment, but a greater trust in your goodness. Lead me safely through death to the endless joy of heaven. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen*

One of my favorite prayers is the Humility Litany of Cardinal Merry Del Val. (I include only a portion of it here):

*O Jesus! Hear me. From the desire of being loved, From the desire of being honored, From the desire of being praised, From the desire of being preferred to others, Deliver me, O Jesus. From the fear of being humiliated, From the fear of being despised, From the fear of being forgotten, From the fear of being ridiculed, Deliver me, O Jesus That others may be loved more than I, That others may be esteemed more than I, That others may be praised and I unnoticed, That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should O Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

My prayer-life, deeply rooted in a long-term growing relationship with Jesus, is no different than the prayer lives of any other Christian during the past two thousand years who has had a passion to know Christ – not just know about Him. I hope something of what I have written here will stir you to seek more of our Lord and Savior.

It's not about a method. It's about a relationship.

And it's about starting sooner than later.

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This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2016/06/relationship-or-method.html>  
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# The Wisdom of *Humanae Vitae* and the Joy of Being Open to Life [at Plot Line and Sinker (Ellen Gable, Author)]



**The end of June every year** marks two very difficult anniversaries for me. On June 26th, 1986, I was rushed into surgery to remove a tiny baby from my right fallopian tube. This, after already miscarrying a baby from my womb. I woke up in the hospital with the knowledge that I had conceived twins...and I would be leaving the hospital with neither in my arms.

**At the end of June in 1993**, I found myself in an ambulance fighting for my life, bleeding internally as the result of ectopic pregnancy complications. It's hard to believe it's been 18 years.

The following is a reprint of an article I had published a few years ago which deals with the difficult decisions James and I faced when deciding whether we should limit our family to three boys after a life-threatening pregnancy in 1993.

Pope Paul VI in his papal encyclical [Humanae Vitae](#) states: “ *Responsible parenthood... has one further essential aspect of paramount importance. It concerns the objective moral order which was established by God, and of which a right conscience is the true interpreter. In a word, the exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society.*”

In the ambulance, as I drifted in and out of consciousness, I didn't have much time for retrospective thoughts, except “Please God, I can't die. I don't want my little boys growing up without a mom.” I was bleeding internally, the complications of ectopic pregnancy surgery two weeks previous, and quickly becoming weaker and weaker. Waking up later in the recovery room, I was thankful to be alive.

**“You should not be having any more children.”** The words were harsh and at first, we took them as truth. I was capable of having more, but after two ectopic pregnancies and complications from one of the surgeries, we were told that we must limit our family to three boys. The doctors suggested that I be put on hormonal contraception. They later urged me to have my remaining fallopian tube tied. The physicians weren't the only ones to give the ‘order’ to stop having children. Well-meaning relatives and friends felt it was their duty to tell us that we should not get pregnant again. “You don't want to be irresponsible, do

you?”

*“It concerns the objective moral order which was established by God...”*

**It became evident**, as we dialogued with both the physicians and the well-meaning relatives and friends, that they were concerned only about my physical health. Most of them cared little, if at all, for my/our spiritual well being. And, initially, in those first few weeks after my surgery, we felt that we ought to listen to the “doctor’s orders.”

However, as the months went by, I began to regain my strength. We continued using NFP in the most conservative way, often adding one or two days to the rules for extra security. A year later, with heaviness in my heart, I thought of the future and the fact that we would not have anymore children. I wondered whether God was calling us to actively seek another pregnancy. My husband and I discussed it, then brought our concern to our spiritual director, explaining to him that the doctor told us that we should not have any more children. “James and Ellie,” he said, “that is a decision to be made between the two of you and God.” He encouraged us to pray about it and he further recommended that we talk to a faithful Catholic doctor. We knew of a Catholic physician through a neighboring homeschooling community. Her response after reviewing my file was that we could try for more children, but that I would need to be monitored carefully in the first several weeks to confirm that it wasn’t another ectopic pregnancy.

*... a right conscience is the true interpreter...”*

For the next several months, **we prayed together**. We deeply desired another child, but we did not want to be careless or irresponsible. After much prayer and discernment, and weighing all the risks, we decided to actively seek another pregnancy.

*“...the exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities...”*

Ten cycles later, we were still not pregnant. We felt at peace with our decision to seek another pregnancy and, although disappointed, **we trusted that God knew what He was doing**. Eventually, we stopped charting. Another eight cycles went by with no pregnancy and I began to sell off most of my baby furniture. A few weeks later, it dawned on me that I hadn’t had a period in six weeks. The next morning, I took my temperature and it was 98.9. After 18 months of saying no to us, God was saying yes and blessing us with another eternal soul. I was thrilled that another new life, the fruit of our love, had begun, and would be sheltered lovingly in my womb.

With the blessing, however, soon came suffering. I began having debilitating migraine headaches and some days I could not get out of bed. Worse than the physical pain, however, was the emotional suffering. Doctors, well-meaning friends and relatives told us that we were being “irresponsible” and “selfish,” and that if I was suffering, “I had asked for it.”

At 30 weeks, our unborn baby was six pounds and I had already gained 50 pounds. That might not seem like much, but with my four feet nine inch frame, it meant that I could not drive (the seat had to be pushed back so far to allow for my large stomach that my feet couldn’t reach the pedals) and I could not walk the last six weeks of the pregnancy.

Our son, Adam, was born eight weeks later at nearly ten pounds. The pro-life Catholic doctor who

delivered Adam by C-section told me that we could try for another baby someday, but that the pregnancy would again have to be monitored. Three years later, our youngest son, Paul was born.

*“... recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society.”*

**The words of Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae* courageously proclaim the truth of responsible parenthood and openness to life.** The decision to have or avoid another child remains a decision between **the couple and God**. No one else ought to make such a life-changing and important choice because no one else will have to endure the consequences (and joys), nor will anyone else have to stand before God someday and explain their actions.

Although we could have used NFP to avoid pregnancy permanently and to limit our family size to three sons, we chose to listen to our hearts, to answer God’s calling, and to seek more children. When I consider that our two youngest sons (pictured above and below) might possibly not be here today, my heart becomes heavy. Both are unique, talented, funny and amazing human beings who have already given so much to our family and to society. I am grateful to God, because **I can’t imagine our family without them.**

Here they are posing for an updated shot of that same photo! (Now 20 and 17 years old.)

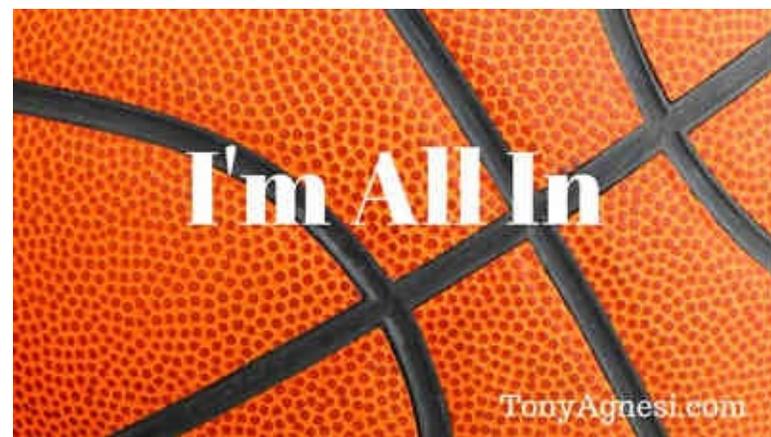
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# I'm All In



*“...one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” –Ephesians 4:4-6*

For the first time in 52 years the city of Cleveland, Ohio has a championship. The Cleveland Cavaliers have won the NBA title and all of Ohio has been “All In” for the team. Just like in playing poker being “all in” means to invest everything, put everything on the line for one goal.

Over 1.3 million people arrived to attend the championship parade and rally, some braving 3 hour waits at the bus and train lines, others parking miles away and walking to the parade.

Our hometown hero, LeBron James is being called the ‘chosen one,’ Cleveland’s “Savior,” Main Street in Akron has been renamed “King James Way,” and pundits are referring to his leaving Cleveland for Miami and returning as his “crucifixion” and “resurrection.”

Yes, Cavs fans are ALL IN!

Being a long time Cavaliers fan, I am thrilled. I attended game 3 of the finals with my son who flew in from Florida, a tradition that began last year with the loss to Golden State in game 6 of the finals, and continued this year, only this time with a title. Hopefully, we will be together as the Cavaliers defend their championship next June.

But, for me, being “All In” begs the question, “Am I “all in” for Jesus, too?”

With the love, good will, camaraderie, and common purpose, just imagine if we were as passionate about our salvation through Jesus Christ. The message of Jesus; the chosen one, King of kings, who truly was crucified and rose from the dead for the forgiveness of our sins, would look at lot different if more Christians were really All In for their faith.

Instead of church attendance being on the decline since 1950, churches would be overflowing, people patiently waiting in line just to get a seat.

Instead of being afraid to share our faith with others, it would become the main topic of conversation as the Cavs have become these past few weeks in Northeastern Ohio.

Instead of hiding our faith, we would be wearing tee shirts declaring our devotion being “all in” for Jesus.

Just imagine it! How would our world be different? Can you imagine the love, good will and common purpose that would exist if more Christians were “all in?”

So what can we do to be “all in” for Jesus?

- **Celebrate His victory!** Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection is the greatest victory ever. Not only was it a victory over death, but He died for our sins, not just yours and mine, but everyone’s.

*“But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” –1 Corinthians 15:57*

- **Find Victory in the trials of others.** Being a cancer survivor myself, I take great pride in celebrating with friends their victory over life’s many trials. Beating cancer, finding a job after a long wait, overcoming a physical handicap and succeeding when others might question why even try, these things are worthy of us being “all in” in our recognition of these victories.

*“Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” –James 1:2-4*

- **Give God the glory.** Having the physical attributes, height and weight, and the skills to be a great athlete are often genetic. We need to thank God for these gifts. For most of us, our gifts are different. We have the skills to be great in other areas. But, remember to thank God for these gifts.

*“And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” –Colossians 3:17*

It is a wonderful thing to celebrate a world championship for your town, especially when it has been over 50 years since the last title. Cleveland deserves it.

But, let me ask you. Are you “All In” for Jesus, too?”



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This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2016/06/im-all-in/>  
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## The Hail Mary and Prayer [at mommynovenas Catholic Book Club]

Por medio de esta bella presentación llamada [El Ave María y la Oración](#), el Padre Ernesto María Caro nos ayuda a entender cómo el rezo del Ave María enciende dentro nuestras almas una santa contemplación. El Ave María provoca dentro de nuestros corazones y mentes un profundo amor por nuestro Santísima Salvador. Padre Caro comparte con nosotros la profunda esencia thoological y lingüística de esta oración más querida, que con cada recitación teje místicamente en nuestros corazones una sed cada vez más profunda, de permanecer en la presencia de Jesús a lo largo de cada momento de nuestras vidas.



(Templo de Esquipulas, Chiquimula, Guatemala)



Through this beautiful presentation called the [The Hail Mary and Prayer \(Narrated in Spanish\)](#), Father Ernesto Maria Caro helps us to understand how the recitation of the Hail Mary ignites a holy contemplation within our souls. Praying the Ave Maria provokes a deep love for our Holy Savior within our hearts and minds. Father Caro shares with us, the profound theological and linguistic essence of this most beloved prayer, which, with each recitation mystically weaves within our hearts an ever deeper

thirst, to remain in the presence of Jesus throughout every moment of our lives.

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## Mourning My Loved Ones Lost to Abortion [at TASTE and SEE]

Below is a post I wrote back in 2010. I re-post it now because my heart has been actively aching lately, for the aborted children I personally knew in some way before they were taken from us. For me, anti-abortion work (which falls under the ProLife umbrella) had deeper meaning when it dawned on me that I knew real-life babies who were involved. As I mention in my original post, a co-worker, two of my friends, and two of my close relatives faced crisis pregnancies and chose to have abortions. More specifically, they chose to end the lives of the babies they themselves helped create. Focusing on my relations with them, they chose to end the lives of children with whom I would have played and taken care of. They were children for whom I would have made and decorated birthday cakes. Our decisions impact others. In this case, I am left to process my grief and mourning rather than my joy and celebration. I know, I am not one of the parents, so my feelings are secondary, but secondary does not mean negligible or worthless. Here is my original post.

### **A Repost of September 20, 2010**

I am not talking about mourning my loved ones who had a chance at life on earth. I am talking about mourning the babies in my life who never had a chance to begin with. More specifically, I am talking about the never-born babies of my coworker, my two friends, and two of my relatives. They were all aborted at some point, and today, I miss them.

Why today, I do not know, but I do know my grief is real. I was overwhelmed with it in Daily Mass this morning. A vision flashed before me. My "niece" and "nephew" and the other "children" were playing in a field, laughing. Tears literally came to my eyes. I will never get to know them, and they will never get to know me, or anyone else, even their very own parents.



Abortion is often close to home, as it is with me. That is because it is so prevalent and cuts across all boundaries in society, e.g. poor, rich, black, white, younger, older. It is one of the biggest kept secrets. Of course, the genders are not really known, but they were in my vision. Girl, girl, boy, girl, boy. God touched me and I wept because they were not with us.

This is one of the less talked about effects of abortion. Mourning, I mean. Mourning. Mourning like Mary mourned at the foot of the cross when Jesus was taken down dead. It does not matter that the child was never born and never had a body like we all have. The mourning still occurs. I am witness to it, and I am not even closest to these children. I can only imagine what their parents experience.

I doubt that abortion clinics tell the young women and men that they will mourn the loss of their aborted one some day, or that their relatives will mourn the loss as well. No. The aborted babies are not

considered people. They are not considered flesh and blood. They are inconveniences and money makers to the abortion clinic. Their loss, no, their murder, is job security for the staff.

I hope God continues to bring these visions to me. I hope He overwhelms me again and again with grief like this. It keeps me in touch with the horror of abortion, and it keeps my ProLife conviction alive. It also brings compassion in my heart for all those involved, directly or indirectly.

If you or someone you know is mourning the loss of an aborted child, consider [Project Rachel](#). There is hope after an abortion. *"It's normal to grieve a pregnancy loss, including the loss of a child by abortion. It can form a hole in one's heart, a hole so deep that sometimes it seems nothing can fill the emptiness."*

Kathleen

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This contribution is available at <http://tasteandsee2.blogspot.com/2016/06/mourning-my-loved-ones-lost-to-abortion.html>  
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# An Open Book

Welcome to the June 2016 edition of An Open Book, hosted both at My Scribbler's Heart AND CatholicMom.com!

My kids and I gave [Drinking with the Saints: the Sinner's Guide to Happy Hour](#) by Michael P. Foley to my husband for Father's Day last year (along with [The Catholic Drinkie's Guide to Home Brewed Evangelism](#), which I mentioned last month). This reference book is often open at our house, too. My husband and I were raised in suburban Pittsburgh in what could be called a shot-and-a-beer town. When our parents cleaned out their liquor cabinets, we inherited a few dusty bottles of vintage liquors that we didn't know how to mix. In other words, we were completely ignorant of cocktails, mixing, and anything more sophisticated than a can of Iron City. Organized according to the church calendar, this fascinating book matches the feasts of the saints with an appropriate drink. For instance, to commemorate St. Norbert on June 6, drink a White Spider, which is made with vodka, white crème de menthe and light crème de cacao. Why? Because "One of St. Norbert's symbols in Christian art is a spider. As the story has it, he was celebrating Mass when he noticed a venomous spider in the Precious Chalice but drank anyway rather than pour it out. He was miraculously preserved from harm." This beautiful hardcover book, complete with detailed recipes and illustrations of the saints, makes a beautiful and thoughtful gift. It has introduced us to some delicious beers and cocktails, as well as some extraordinary legends. My husband often shares the stories behind the saints and the drinks with the whole family even if he is the only one enjoying a drink.

When I was a child, my parents took me to a weekly series of classic movies, some of which were directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Among them was the haunting *Rebecca* (1940), which I loved. When I saw the Daphne du Maurier novel [Rebecca](#) available as a prize at our library's summer reading program last year, I snagged it. I've just begun reading it, on the heels of a book hangover from Amy Harmon's [The Song of David](#). (Amy Harmon's storytelling mesmerizes me.) Anyway, I'm looking forward to immersing myself in *Rebecca*, although my cover isn't as modern and attractive as the one shown here.

When I was scouring the library last month for historical fiction for my seventh grader, one of the librarians recommended [Onion John](#), a Newbery Medal-winning novel by Joseph Krumgood. Frankly, the Amazon reviews are mixed. My son, however, is enjoying it although he said it got off to a slow start. The description reads: "The story of a friendship between a 12-year-old boy and an immigrant handyman, almost wrecked by the good intentions of the townspeople." A Newbery winner and no one could come up with a tad longer blurb? Not that it makes a difference, but my son is reading the 1959 hardcover copy with what now looks to be a hokey cover image. It's interesting how the same novels are repackaged to suit the times (see *Rebecca* above).

I've done more middle-of-the-night parenting with my second-grade

daughter than with any of my other children. She suffers from fleeting belly aches and headaches that sometimes require the comfort of mom at two a.m. I often read aloud to help distract her from her discomfort. Our go-to books for healing, for some reason, are the Berenstain Bears. Not able to locate those books, I turned to Gus. Our hardcover version of [\*Gus Was A Friendly Ghost\*](#) by Jane Thayer belonged to my husband, but the second I first removed it from a box his parents had given us, I knew it. I had the same book, which my own mother read to me again and again. Each glimpse at the orange and purple illustrations in this book is so sentimental to me that I've lost all objectivity. Simply put, it's the story of a ghost who takes in a cranky mouse during the winter. Try it; you might like it!

After storytime at the library, my three-year-old selected [\*Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!\*](#) by Mo Willems, a Caldecott Honor Book. (I prefer Mo Willems' *Knuffle Bunny* books.) My little boy and his four-year-old sister love these pigeon books, which have grown on me over time. With simple text and equally simple illustrations, these books and the interaction they encourage seem to appeal to preschoolers.

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Want [more details](#) on An Open Book? You can also [sign up for An Open Book reminder email](#), which goes out one week before the link-up. No blog? That's okay. Just tell us what you're reading in the comment box.

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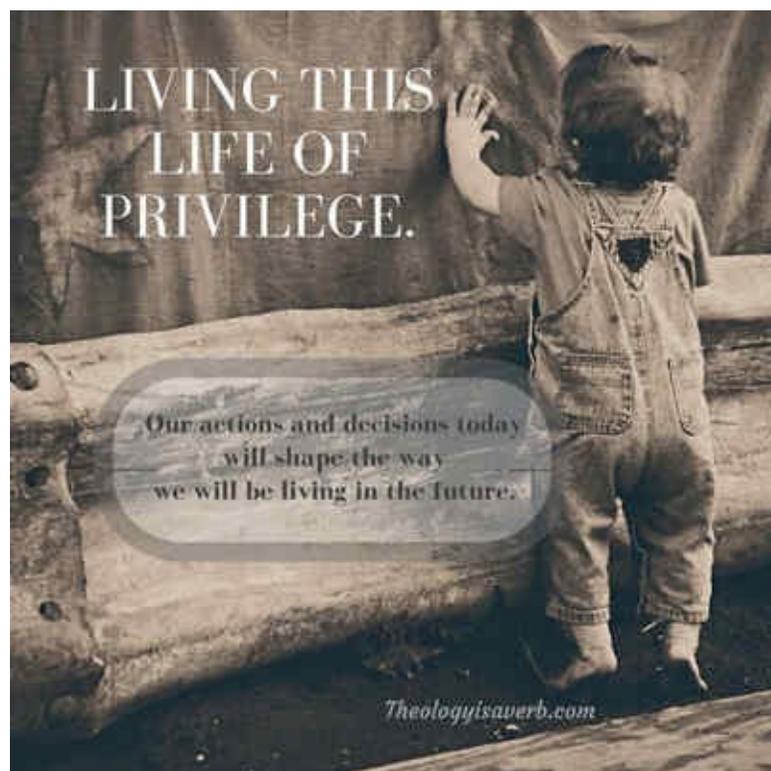
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# Living a Life of Privilege [at Theologyisaverb]

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## Living a Life of Privilege [at Theologyisaverb]



### privilege

*noun* priv·i·lege \ 'priv-lij, 'pri-və-\

I grew up in a single parent home, the daughter and granddaughter of educators, not affluent but replete with love and the basic necessities of life. While I didn't always like the food or the clothes I had, I never spent a day hungry or lacking shelter. Instilled in me was the understanding that despite the meager and lean times, there were always others who had so much less. I was indeed privileged.

One day when I was about 6, a young woman with three young children in tow approached the door of my house. I had recognized the two little toddlers clinging on her dress from the neighborhood, and had

curiously wondered where they actually lived. Entering, they were unusually quiet and withdrawn not even wanting to make eye contact. Immediately inviting them to take a seat, my mom got quickly to work. In what seemed like a blink of an eye, she had produced a fine meal from our dinner the night before. And using our best tableware she welcomed these new visitors as honored guests. The once shy faces lit up as they saw all of the food before them and boisterously became themselves once again.

Asking me then to go and play with them for a bit, my mom sat down with their mother as she fed the infant in her arms. In hushed tones they spoke, their conversation forever remaining just between them. Packing up more food and clothing for them to carry with them, my mom reminded them that they could always return. This they did, though not staying for any great length of time. I asked my mom once why she gave, when that merely meant that we had less that week, or had given up that shirt she had just purchased with the tags still on it.

“This is what it means to love unconditionally”, she told me, “to care for others more than yourself. You may not understand this today but you and I have been blessed with the opportunity to share”.

This is the very definition of privilege and with it comes a tremendous responsibility to do all this with great love. Perhaps you do not feel that you have much to give or that others more able will step up to help. Yet, **you have** what only **you can give**...yourself. God knows your struggles, your needs and desires but he also knows your gifts. After all, he gave them to you. You see the world and ask why it all seems so troubling and unchanging- it begins with each of us to be the change in the world around us. One life at a time, every day anew. I promise that one life that will most certainly be changed is our own.

***“You know well enough that Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them” – St. Teresa of Lisieux***

Peace,



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## Pope Francis Always "Sees People First!" [at A Moment From De Sales]

Soon after becoming Pope, Francis left his room at the Domus Marta and met a Swiss Guard standing at attention outside his door. He asked him, "And what are you doing here? Were you awake all night?" "Yes," the guard answered respectfully. "Standing?" Remarked Pope Francis. The Swiss Guard replied: "One of my colleagues gave me a break." The Pope quickly added, "And you're not tired?" The young Papal guard added, "It's my duty Your Holiness, for Your safety." The Pope looked at him with kindness.

Pope Francis went back into his apartment and quickly returned with a chair in his hand saying: "At least sit down and rest." Shocked, the Swiss Guard replied, "Forgive me, but I can't! The rules don't allow it." He continued, "The rules? My captain, Your Holiness." "Oh, is that so," said Pope Francis. "Well, I'm the Pope and I am asking you to sit down." So, between the rules and the Pope, the Swiss Guard, chose to sit down. After which the Pope brought him bread and jam for a snack, saying, "Buon appetito, brother!"

The Lesson of this little vignette is simple, and one we can easily learn ourselves. When Pope Francis sees another person, he genuinely sees an individual—unique and one of a kind. Pope Francis always *sees people first*. He never lumps people together in clumps, categories or stereotypes. He sees each person as distinctly chosen and beloved by God. Pope Francis always tries to see what God sees when He gazes on us.

God only sees a person so dear to Him that Jesus, His son, had to die to save him. Every person is that exquisite in God's eyes. Pope Francis too sees this potential which GK Chesterton describes as: *The innate ability to become "a beautiful, exquisite royal palace."*

It takes effort and a strong belief to see what Pope Francis saw outside his room early that morning. He didn't see only a Swiss guard or a brightly, colored uniform, a sword, rules or even procedure. Pope Francis saw a hungry, tired young man. And Pope Francis found a chair, a breakfast snack and a cup of coffee to alleviate his fatigue. Everything else for Pope Francis was secondary.

It's the same with God. We are God's children first and foremost, and this is what God sees every time—He looks at us. Everything else is secondary—our faults, mistakes, everything. God never judges us simply based on our last mistake.

Now, if this is how God sees us, why can't we do the same instead of separating others into a vast ocean of differences? We need to **“See People First.”** After that everything else is secondary. This sounds like the perfect rule to live by. It works for God and Francis, and it can easily work for us.

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# Meet the "Madman" of the Sacred Heart [at It Makes Sense to Me]

## *IT MAKES SENSE TO ME*

By Larry Peterson

\*An edited version of this article appeared in

[Aleteia](#)

on June 3, 2016

Every year, exactly 19 days after Pentecost, the Catholic Church celebrates the

[Devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus](#)

. It is a worldwide devotion and is always on a Friday. This year it will be celebrated on June 3. Stressing the profound relevance of this feast, Pope Benedict XVI said on June 5, 2007;

*"In the Heart of the Redeemer we adore God's love for humanity, His will for universal salvation, His infinite mercy. Practising devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ therefore means adoring that Heart which, after having loved us to the end, was pierced by a spear and from high on the Cross poured out blood and water, an inexhaustible source of new life."*

I have mentioned that this is a worldwide Catholic feast day our Pope Emeritus, has spoken to its importance. This caused me to wonder why so many Catholics around the world (including those in the United States) have never heard about the man from Mexico whose name was

[Jose Maria Robles Hurtado](#)

.



Jose Robles Hurtado was 25 years old when he was ordained to the priesthood. The year was 1913. He loved his priestly calling and, being a gifted writer, immediately began writing essays and lessons to teach and propagate the faith. He had such love of Christ in the Eucharist that within two years of his ordination he founded an order of religious called the

### [Congregation of the Victims of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus](#)

. But his love for his Lord was also being noticed by the authorities. Father Hurtado was already going against the new laws being enacted in Mexico.

The young priest was so devoted to the Sacred Heart that his fervor for this devotion became known far and wide. He even became known as the "Madman" of the Sacred Heart. But that was in Mexico. It was also during the intense anti-religious era of Catholic/Christian persecution that was beginning to rear its demonic head in the country. Evil finally became the rule of law when in 1917 the anti-religious Constitution of Mexico was enacted.

The new constitution prohibited public professions of faith, public processions and most devotional practices "outside" of church. (Have we heard this narrative advanced in our country?) Father Hurtado promptly proposed a project where a huge cross would be placed somewhere in the center of Mexico to honor Christ as the true King of Mexico. He was now in direct violation of the law.

The plans for the project began to come together as Father Hurtado led the movement to erect the giant cross. Signs were distributed throughout Mexico declaring Christ as the King of Mexico. These signs also proclaimed the nation's devotion to the Sacred Heart. Word spread quickly throughout the country and a public ceremony was scheduled for the laying of the project's cornerstone. Government leaders were furious.

In 1923 over 40, 000 Roman Catholics headed to a spot in central Mexico called "La Loma" (the hill). The groundbreaking took place and the government decided it was time to intensify the "law". Persecution of Catholics intensified and Father Robles Hurtado was singled out for intense scrutiny to make sure he stopped his "anti-government" practices.

Father Hurtado, despite demands by the government that he leave the country, continued his ministry, offering Mass, hearing confessions for hours at a time, visiting the poor and the sick, performing baptisms, anointing the dying and teaching the children the faith. Then came 1924 and a new president. His name was

## [Plutarco Elias Calles](#)

and he held a fierce hatred of Roman Catholics.

Presidente Calles was determined to stop all religious practices within Mexico. He ordered the Constitution of 1917 to be strictly enforced and the result was one of the bloodiest episodes in Mexican history. From 1927 through 1929 the

## [Cristero War](#)

ravaged Mexico and Father Jose Robles Hurtado was destined to be one of its victims.

As has been proven throughout history, when certain people gain power that power can become an evil aphrodisiac. Hiding behind "laws" enacted to help them attain their goals of domination, they can kill with a reckless, oftentimes vicious, abandon. The evil at work in Mexico was not about to ignore the young priest.

On June 25, 1927, while leading a family in prayer at their home, soldiers broke into the house and arrested Father Hurtado for "violating the law". He was immediately found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. In this world there would be no appeals.

The next morning, before dawn, Father Jose Maria Robles Hurtado, age 39, was led out to a nearby oak tree. The priest, facing his immediate death, offered an understanding and compassion for his executioners. He forgave them and insisted that he be allowed to place the noose around his own neck. This way none of the men there would have to feel guilty about what was happening. He was handed the noose, kissed it, and slid it over his head. Then he went to meet his beloved Sacred Heart.

Several of the executioners openly wept.

Father Jose Robles Hurtado, the "Madman" of the Sacred Heart. was canonized a saint by Pope St. John Paul II on May 21, 2000.

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## Visibly Anonymous [at Smaller Manhattans]

My Fabulous Wife and I went out to dinner for Mother's Day at our neighborhood Mexican restaurant. Our adult kids are living in other cities, or were at work in this one; I think it was just the two of us for the first time ever. Monterrey's is a middle-class to working-class place to eat, and a young married couple and their three kids arrived and sat across the aisle from us. I'd guess the kids to be 2, 4, and 6 years old. Mom and Dad on one side of the booth; two littl'uns on the other, toddler in a baby chair. A perfect portrait of modest married bliss regardless of job, income, or mortgages.

It occurred to me that I should pay for their dinner. But I didn't want to be seen getting up and sorting it out with the cashier- they'd figure out who had done it, and I wanted anonymity. But because we started eating first, I could take care of it when we left. That way we'd be long gone when they went to pay. No worries.

But they finished first! Aaack! Off they went to the cashier. Too late to treat them on the sly. I got up and went over to the counter. I said to the mother, "Are you having a good Mother's day?" She was indeed. I asked the kids, "Are y'all being nice to your mama today?" Yes they were! I turned to their father and said, "You have such a lovely family, I'd like to pay for y'all's Mother's Day dinner." He gave me quizzical look. "Really?" I said, "Look, I know what's it's like to take a family out to eat. But all my kids are grown, and I'm past that expense now. So y'all take off and enjoy the rest of Mother's Day." And you would not believe how happy the parents were- just beaming from this little unexpected treat. "Wow...thank you so much!" "Truly, it's my pleasure, 'bye now!" "Bye!"

Here's my point- I was wrong to think I should have done this without being seen. The human aspects of the exchange would have been missed, and that would have been a loss for all of us. I'd say that the act of freely giving and accepting this small gift counted for more than the meal itself. At the same time, although they saw me and spoke to me, I remain anonymous.

And without a doubt it was the best dinner I ever bought.

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## **Justice for Harambe? [at A Catholic Mother's Thoughts]**

It was a tragedy, especially so because the gorilla was an endangered species.

As Christians we have a responsibility to care for all creation and to respect and honor the nature of all of God's creatures. When a species is endangered, it naturally deserves special protection and care.

## **Justice for Harambe? [at A Catholic Mother's Thoughts]**

Merriam Webster defines a right as something to which one has a just claim: (as in) a. the power or privilege to which one is justly entitled. If Harambe has suffered an injustice, as some claim, is that because Harambe has rights tantamount to human rights?

No, Harambe is not entitled to human rights. He is not a human and, no, animals are not persons as some are actually claiming.

Did Harambe have a right to have his life protected even when a three-year-old child had fallen into his enclosure and the child's life was in grave danger?

Harambe did not have that right. And, therefore, there was no injustice. Whether he intended harm to the child or not is irrelevant. The behavior of animals is morally neutral. He was neither innocent nor guilty. He was a gorilla. And gorillas cannot safely be in proximity with humans.

Raising the concept of justice in regards to this case is troubling. It anthropomorphizes the gorilla. Thankfully even PETA is not saying that the gorilla should not have been sacrificed to save the life of the child. But they are saying that this was an injustice and therefore someone must be held accountable. And it is the mother who is receiving their disapproving gaze.

Really? I will grant you that it is highly unusual for a child to enter a gorilla enclosure with the mom standing right there. But she WAS standing right there. She also had other children with her. I prefer to assume, not that this mother was negligent, but that this three-year-old must have been one wiry, active little boy. Witnesses say that it all happened in a matter of seconds.

Had the mother been holding the hand of each child (never mind that she only has two hands), perhaps this would not have happened. Maybe had she turned to her son one nanosecond sooner, she could have grabbed him and stopped him. The fact that she looked away for a few seconds hardly makes her a negligent mother.

That a magnificent gorilla, an endangered species, had to be killed to protect a young child is a tragedy. It would have been an even greater tragedy had the zoo not acted and the child been killed by the gorilla.

We live in a fallen world. We do our best to make moral choices and to honor God (and his creation) as well as our neighbor.

Sometimes, accidents are accidents and not anyone's fault. It would seem that this is one of those times.

# Justice for Harambe? [at A Catholic Mother's Thoughts]

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## **A brother's unexpected compassion [at Peace Garden Passage]**

*[This is first in a series I'm calling "Mercy Chronicles," part of my quest to discover mercy and all that it means in this Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy and beyond. This excerpt was adapted from a portion of a talk, "Discovering Mercy," that I will give for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northcentral Region Conference this weekend here in Fargo, N.D.]*

Let me introduce you to my youngest two sons, Adam and Nick.

Adam, 13, is our fourth child and middle son. Though slight in build for his age, he makes up for that in his kindhearted ways and sharp and thoughtful mind. When Adam came into our family, everything came into balance. We now had four kids — two bookend boys, and two girls in the middle. Then came Nick. When Nick entered our world, Adam's was thrown topsy-turvy. To make things even harder for him, Nick, now 11 and nearly three years younger, has caught up with his brother in height, and exceeded him in strength and shoe size. From Adam's perspective, this is NOT a just situation, and whenever we go anywhere together, people "accuse" them of being twins, which is an unwelcome torment as far as the older brother is concerned.

Nick also does not share Adam's mild temperament. He is boisterous and creative with deep emotions. Where Adam is cautious, Nick is daring; he learned to ride bike before Adam because he had no fear. They each bring different and unique gifts and charisms to our family.

But it's not surprising that Nick drives Adam absolutely crazy, and tests his will daily. In moments of pure frustration, Adam has said he wishes Nick had never been born. I'm sure he's not the first sibling to utter such words. Little sisters and brothers can bring us to the end of ourselves, it seems, more quickly than anyone.

Well, I can only do so much to rectify these heartaches that Adam feels most of all. And lately, I have been frank with him. Just last week, I told him his little brother is his surest path to heaven. I explained that because Nick pushes his hot buttons with the precision of a heart surgeon, it forces Adam to see his lack, creating a need for refinement and restraint. And that while I know it's hard, very hard, in the end, it will help him get along with others in the world who try him — those who are perhaps in greatest need of mercy, but don't seem to merit it in any way.

Just a few days after this parent-child chat, we loaded these two up for Boy Scout Camp for a week, and that first night, I got one those rare glimpses a mother hangs onto with all her might.



Roxane and her youngest two sons just before their departure for Camp Wilderness, June 2016

Though Boy Scout camp is old hat for Adam, it's Nick's first year, and from the start we sensed things might not go well. That first evening, a text (today's equivalent of a camp letter) came in from Nick, telling of spider-infested latrines and stomachaches and ticks and terrible shivers. Later, he called in tears. We could hardly understand what he was saying; we only knew for sure that he was miserable. We encouraged him to stick it out, and assured him of our prayers. Not long after that, another text, this time from Adam – the one who, you might recall, wonders if God made just ONE mistake when he made his younger brother, Nick.

But reading his text, all of that vanished in an instant:

*“Mom, sorry for not responding earlier. I was thinking about Nick. I can't put into words how sorry I am for him and how I wish I could take his place. He really is suffering so please pray for him that he will feel better tomorrow. Good night. I love you and miss everyone already.”*

As you might imagine, his words — and the heart behind them — touched this mama's heart deeply. I can go so far as to say I witnessed a small miracle within those short but sincere sentiments, one brother to another.

It calls to mind something I read earlier this month, a meditation Pope Francis gave to priests on June 2. Our Holy Father said that if we look at the works of mercy as a whole, we see that the object of mercy is human life itself and everything it embraces, and that life, as “spirit,” needs to be educated, corrected, encouraged and consoled.

*“We need others to counsel us, to forgive us, to put up with us, to pray for us,”* our pontiff remarked. *“The family is where these works of mercy are practiced in so normal and unpretentious a way that we don't even realize it...”*

It's true. Our families really are the training ground for our mission of mercy. Because if we can't get this mercy thing right when we're at the dinner table and our little brother refuses to pass the ketchup when we ask and is making cat noises and tipping his chair for the 100<sup>th</sup> time, then it's going to be pretty hard to get it right in all the other places we'll end up in this life.

*[Update: As of this writing, just a few days following the boys' arrival at camp, the attitude and outlook expressed in camp "letters" had shown a great turnaround! We are grateful for God's provisions from a distance.]*

Q4U: Where did mercy show up in your life this week?

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2016/06/the-mercy-chronicles-a-brothers-unexpected-compassion/>  
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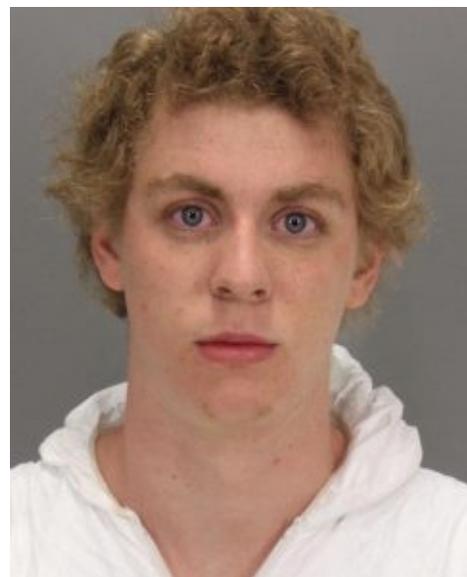
## The Stanford rape case and the politics of penance

When I chose to focus my graduate thesis on penance in the early Church, I believed that I was giving a lot of attention to wholly impractical topic (for such topics graduate study is made!), but I find myself coming back to one of the key ideas repeatedly as I observe news and society. The [travesty of justice](#) that occurred in the recent Stanford rape case calls this to mind again.

To early Christians, the idea of penance and reconciliation (which modern Catholics often call confession) was that it reconciled a person not only to God but to the Church. The Church Fathers believed that when one was reconciled they were reconciled to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. Penance was reserved for the most serious sins (generally apostasy, adultery, and murder), and was public.

Human nature makes public penance a very tricky business, but there are times I wish we saw more of it. What if our practices of rehabilitation included a public admission that we have sinned – and that such sin damages our relationship to the community? Perhaps then we could have true reconciliation.

As we learned more about the verdict in the Stanford rape case – about the defendant’s insistence that the only thing he did wrong was drinking too much, the judge’s leniency despite eyewitness testimony, [the eloquent, brave victim impact statement](#) that was seemingly ignored – I felt more and more disheartened. But it was the release of his [father’s statement before sentencing](#) that really caught my imagination.



It’s natural for a parent to want to protect their child. This father, though, diminishes the reality of the crime that was committed and asks the judge (and by extension, society) to move beyond the unfortunate “20 minutes of action” so that his son can have his life back. In other words, he wants to skip the penance and get to the reconciliation.

The father describes, in a monstrously tone-deaf way, that his son has no appetite, that he doesn’t want steak anymore, that his days and nights are painful. **That sounds like pangs of conscience to me.** What if the father, instead of blaming prosecution for his son’s malaise, told his son to lean into those feelings because they were signs that he recognized his sin? What if he were told – or if he had been told all along – that the way to “be a man” isn’t to be a star athlete and display sexual dominance and aggression, but to take responsibility for your actions and admit when you have done something wrong?

The public (or at least the public on the internet) saw through this and was horrified. We want penance. We instinctively lean toward a public admission of guilt before we are ready to admit someone back into society.

**The flip side of this, of course, is that we have to be open to reconciliation.** Jokes about him being raped in prison, or even about ruining his life, deny the truth that there is the potential for rehabilitation in most criminals. It is hard to many of us to envision this for a man who appears unrepentant for such a violent act, and it is hard for others to envision it for the many young men, mostly African American, who are warehoused in industrialized prisons in the United States. Our black-and-white (double entendre intended) mentality wants the guilty to be forever defined by their guilt, and the not guilty to be...us.

**In our nation, we don't do penance or reconciliation very well.** We don't have the processes in place to ritualize them. In the early Church, one was reconciled through a dramatic liturgical ritual, and penance, as noted before, was harsh and quite public. I think society still wants this: the community wants to see contrition, and the offender wants to know when they are back in good graces. Where is there room for that in our courtrooms and prisons?

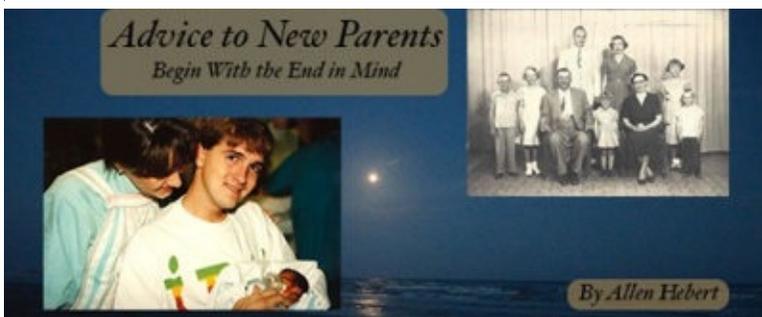
Imagining the American legal system to be more like the early Church both idealizes early Christianity and wastes mental energy on a synthesis that doesn't quite fit. **Where else can we imagine such reconciliation taking place? How can we continue to use penance and reconciliation to heal society and ourselves?**

*For further reading check out Rahner's "Penance as an Additional Act of Reconciliation with the Church" in Theological Investigations X, if you can get your hands on it. I marveled at the way he wrestled with Aquinas. It remains one of the most striking things I have read on the sacraments.*

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## The Keys to Raising a Holy Family

When speaking with new parents I often get asked what advice I have for them as they begin their family. It makes sense, they have a blank slate and they want to do everything they can to ensure success and happiness for their children. So for all of you who are in the same boat (or plan to be one day), here is my advice:

### Healthy Relationships

The overriding theme of our ministry is the importance of healthy relationships between family members. A strong relationship between you and your child can see them through just about any difficulty or struggle they may encounter along their journey of life. St. John Paul II called this the communion of persons. A family is a community of persons, the first and most important community for every human being. The family can be a community where the members love one another unconditionally or not; a place where the members feel safe, secure and loved, or not; a place where they know people care about them, or not. Parents have the most influence in defining the culture within their family. This culture should be healthy, loving and life giving. This culture is fragile, it needs to be cultivated and constantly monitored. It is easy for [excessive activities](#), negativity, sarcasm, the media, and unhealthy friendships to have an undesired effect on the culture of the family and on each member of the family.



At the core of the family culture is the relationships between family members, the primary being between the husband and wife and secondarily between parents and their children. If you get these right, the relationships between siblings will follow suit.

## **Make Sure your Kids know you Like Them**

There is a huge difference between your children knowing that you love them versus them feeling that you like them. Typically children in the teen years begin to wonder if their parents really like them. Think about it, do your kids know that you like them? Do you spend time with them for no particular reason, do you listen to their thoughts and dreams, do you ask them about their hobbies or interests. Sometimes the things your teens are interested in may seem juvenile and perhaps aren't the things that you consider exciting or even interesting. I like to say it is not simply the quality of time you spend with your kids, it is a quantity of time. You can't invest enough time in your children, so do your best and give of your time unselfishly to your children.

## **You Are the Parents**

Inevitably during the course of parenting, you will get a lot of advice from the experts (you will know them when you encounter them), take that advice with a grain of salt. No one knows you, your children or your family like you do. While it is wise to seek counsel from people whom you respect and have experience, you are still free to not follow their advice. In the end, you and your spouse are the only ones who will be held accountable for the job you did forming your children. God gave each of you special graces to be your child's parent, don't let anyone else tell you that you aren't good enough or aren't making the right decisions. Just make sure that you continually seek the counsel of the perfect parent, God himself. Through the persons of the Holy Trinity, God will provide you with ample guidance, perhaps through people you meet along the way. With a discerning and prayerful heart, seek to do the difficult work of [forming missionaries, martyrs and saints](#) for the kingdom of God, you are uniquely and perfectly qualified for the job.

## **You May Not Be Successful**

In the end, no matter how good of a job you do, you may not be successful. All we have to do is look at the first book of the bible. In Genesis, we see the story of the first family in creation and of the three children of Adam and Eve mentioned in the bible, one is killed by his own brother. We see this over and over again in the bible, even a father after God's own heart can have a son that dislikes and even attempts to kill them ([see David and Absalom](#)). None of us will be perfect parents, but we must give it our best shot, we must rise above the standards that this world sets for us as parents, we must be that parent who

says no to things we view as obstacles to our children's holiness even if everyone else calls us crazy and over protective. But we must also be those parents who love their children with a scandalous love and are willing to spend gratuitous amounts of time with our kids because we love them and genuinely like their company. This is what will give us and our kids the best chance of success in building a family of love and our family of love will impact the community around us and spread the good news in ways that we can't imagine.

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Here are some links to practical advice as well:

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## Running Toward Happiness [at Making It In Vermont]

Running is fast becoming a “thing” in our family this year. After years and years I have started running again and what used to be something very solitary for me has become something quite different as my four oldest sons begin running too.

So as summer has hit, most mornings I am out with at least a few of the boys while one or two of the older boys keep watch over the little ones as they sleep. What a change from my norm of stroller walks! I laugh at life and its twists and turns as I realize it only took *fourteen years* to get to this point. Running with my sons is such a pure joy it is truly beyond words.

And that makes me think of happiness and how elusive it can be. As a twenty something, before children and before I met my husband Kevin, happiness and finding myself was my goal. Each second counted, was I happy in this moment? What things could I do/what experiences/job/activities/deep thoughts brought me to that place of happy? I analyzed my life, stepped out brazenly into new experiences, wrote poetry about it, and reflected, reflected, reflected. Happiness was supposed to happen now, fast, in the moment.

It wasn't till I got “elbow deep into the muck of the world” and life was no longer all about me that I started actually getting somewhere. Children have a natural way of ripping off that self involved band-aid. As a new mom life was painful. I was just surviving, with twinklings of exhausted joy mixed in.

But motherhood has taught me to put one foot in front of the other literally. My happiness is of the fourteen year variety. Fourteen years of letting go of everything I thought I wanted to be to one day (*during vacation at my dad's last week*) go running on the beach surrounded by sons I never imagined, singing the theme to Chariots of Fire, the movie we had watched as a family the month before. -It was pure bliss.

And from that moment of bliss, it is back again to one foot in front of the other.

After our run this morning I sat perched in my upstairs bedroom listening to loud decisively angry yelling break the early morning quiet and then screams of pain. At first I am irritated that the two boys I ran with this morning may wake the little ones who are still asleep, but I tamp down the irritation, say a little prayer to remain calm and head downstairs to check on everyone and help parse this trouble. Thankfully instead of yelling about how they were impeding upon my time and their other brothers sleep (what I really wanted to do), I send the offending kicker out to take care of the recycling and I bring the yellor upstairs to talk. We say a decade of the rosary together, I feel the grace of Jesus through praying with Mary calm him, and give me peace. Afterwards we talk about what happened and what he could have done to have helped diffuse the situation. He apologizes to his brother (who had already quickly apologized for the kick moments after it happened) and we move on.

I didn't lose my temper, I gave my sons what they needed. I wasn't selfish.

My husband is working on the cleaning crew at our local elementary school for the summer. Up at 5:30 this morning and a little grumpy after I barrage him with too many questions for his foggy morning brain to

handle he works steadily to get himself out the door. My “go to” in this sort of situation is to get irritated by his grumpiness, continually convince him with my words that he shouldn’t be grumpy, and then slowly let self righteousness creep in and without consciously meaning to, lead us into an argument. Instead, this morning, by the grace of God, I let go of how his grumpiness affects me and instead of bringing on a fight, offer to make him some coffee, even though I really don’t feel like doing it. When it is time for him to go I give him a kiss, from my heart thank him for going to work for us, and wish him a great day.

This is not how I thought happiness would look, small moments of overcoming my selfishness, and bliss when I least expect it.

I am finding contentment in the soft clap clapping of foot in front of foot in front of foot on this old rocky road of life that we are all called to travel. It’s humbling this sort of running that isn’t so much about winning and catching happiness in all its immediate fruit as it is about slowing down when I’m winded, sprinting when I can, even walking when necessary, but always moving steadily and faithfully forward to the finish line.

Love to you all from the dusty back roads of Vermont,

~Lisa

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## Father forgive them, for they know not what they do



I simply worshipped the heroes of ancient Greece when I was at school. I loved to hear stories about Troy and the heroes who fought there. I loved to read about the Persian wars and about the warriors who fought for freedom at Marathon, Salamis and Thermopylae. Most of all I worshipped Alexander the Great and marvelled at the mighty empire that he set up before he was even thirty.

I couldn't help it if the hero I was introduced to in the religious class seemed to be rather weak compared with them. He didn't actually triumph over his enemies as my Greek heroes did, and there wasn't much in it for his followers either, unless you happen to like being thrown to the lions!

However, I had something of a conversion experience shortly before leaving school that led me to join a prayer group run by the school's spiritual director. It gave me a new vision of the faith in which I had been brought up. It enabled me to see that Jesus was a hero after all, who promised a new sort of heroism that was open, not just to a chosen elite, but to all. He showed, not just by what he said but also by what he did, that the human weakness that the Greeks despised, becomes strength when it enables a person to experience their need of God's strength.

It was this strength that enabled Jesus to do, not just all things possible, but even the impossible, that was way beyond the strength of the mightiest Greek warrior. When a Greek hero was persecuted, he would curse his enemies and plan revenge. When Jesus was persecuted, he would bless his enemies and grant them forgiveness. Moreover, the forgiveness that he readily gave was not given later from an armchair long after the event '*when time had healed*', but at the time when they are in the act of torturing him to the death. For it was while the nails were being driven into his hands and feet, sending shock waves of pain into every part of his person that he prayed for their forgiveness. This sort of heroism was way beyond the Greek heroes that I'd once adored. It demanded a quality of superhuman strength that was first embodied in the man I'd once considered weak and unworthy of my attention.

Now if all that is expected of us is to stand back and admire what Jesus did I could cope with it, but the truth of the matter is we are called upon to do the same. The words of the Gospel are clear and unyielding. "*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you.*" In addition, we are told to forgive them not once or twice, but time and time again. – "*Seventy times seven*".

Those frightening words are not just addressed to a chosen few but to all who claim to be Christian. If we don't think they ask the impossible then we should thank our lucky stars that we have never really had an enemy, never experienced what it's like to be hated, especially by those you thought were once your friends.

St. Francis used to say that we should call our enemies our friends, especially when they bring us down and humble us. For it is then, in experiencing our weakness that we will fall down on our knees in the true and certain knowledge that only God can help us. Then he will always give us the grace, that pride had prevented before, to do what no Greek hero has ever done, – *the impossible*. For it is only with God's grace that we can forgive our enemies without hesitation no matter what they would do to us. Then, when we've done that, we can be fully forgiven too, because at last we can pray more sincerely than ever before, "*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.*"

I may well have started my conversion as a teenager many years ago, but by this standard I've still a long way to go. It doesn't take me quite as long to forgive my enemies as it once did, but I'm still a long, long way from forgiving them at the time, especially when they're hell-bent on doing their worst to do me harm when I'm only trying to do my best!

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# Never Forget That Every Little Effort Counts [at Catholic365]

The Creeds are concise expressions of all that Christians believe. There are three Creeds which are called “ecumenical” because they express that which all Christians should believe and even the Reformed Christians accept these Creeds.

These three Creeds are the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed. All three of these date to a time before the Bible was canonized. Below, I’ve printed them out in their entirety, from a Protestant source.

## The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

## The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## The Athanasian Creed

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. As there are not three Uncreated nor three Incomprehensibles, but one Uncreated and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty. And yet they are not three Almighty, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none: neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before or after other; none is greater or less than another; But the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal: so that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped. He, therefore, that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe faithfully the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world; Perfect God and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood; Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but one Christ: One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; One altogether; not by confusion of Substance, but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ; Who suffered for our salvation; descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead; He ascended into heaven; He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give an account of their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.

**Did you notice something glaringly absent?**

These Creeds contain all the things which a Christian must believe. The first two, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene, say, "I believe in the catholic Church". And the Athanasian says, "it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith". And then goes on to explain that which is the Catholic faith.

**Not one of them says, "I believe that Scripture alone is the sole rule of faith".**

So, none of the Creeds say that we need to believe that Scripture alone is the sole rule of faith. Add to that

the fact that Scripture Itself says that the Church is the Pillar of Truth (1 Tim 3:15). And that we should hold Tradition and Scripture (2 Thess 2:15). And you've got a devastating argument against Sola Scriptura.

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## Fear the only trustworthy one [at Blog of the Dormition]

St. Basil the Great was not anxious about his life.



A prefect of the emperor came to him and demanded that he adopt the Arian heresy, as was the will of his sovereign. But St. Basil said to him, “It is not the will of my true sovereign.”

The prefect was enraged and threatened to confiscate St. Basil’s possessions. To which St. Basil replied, “What would you want with my tattered rags, and my few books?” He was not anxious about what he would wear or about his things.

So the prefect threatened him with exile. To which St. Basil replied, “Every land is God’s. I am only his guest here or anywhere else.” He was not anxious about where he would live.

So the prefect threatened him with torture. “As for torture,” said St. Basil, “I am so weak that the first blow would knock me out.”

So the prefect threatened him with death. “To me, death would be a kindness,” said St. Basil, “for it would bring me all the sooner to God.” He was not anxious even about his life.

The prefect exclaimed, “I’ve never been spoken to so boldly before!” “Perhaps,” said St. Basil, “you have never met a bishop....

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here the interests of God are at stake, we care for nothing else.”[\[1\]](#)

Like St. Basil, we should fear God alone and then fear nothing and no one else.

Today Jesus commands us not to be anxious. Yet, anxiety plagues many of us. A quick internet search about anxiety reveals a panoply of self-help books, aids, and supplements. We know that anxiety is our enemy. This is actually one thing about which our culture agrees with Jesus.

But the gospel is not a self-help book. It's not merely a set of suggestions for our happiness and well-being. Though, our Lord does care for us, so his commandments are for our good.

Contrary to the implications of some, God won't give us a life without suffering. Far from it. He teaches us instead that we are to take up our crosses. Suffering is going to be part of this. The Christian way is not going to be the easy way.

C.S. Lewis says, "I didn't go to religion to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of Port would do that. If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity." But if we are not seeking pleasure and happiness so much as truth and love, then that is to be found only in Christ, who is Truth and who is Love.



But all of that notwithstanding, I do not believe that God *wants* us to suffer. There's a difference between what God permits and what God desires. He tells us we *will* suffer, but today's gospel is good evidence that he does not want us to suffer needlessly. Anxiety is a needless suffering, from which he want us free. He did not make us just to be sufferers. He did not make us for endless anxiety.

I myself am anxious much of the time. I am often disobedient to this commandment of our Lord. May he have mercy on me, the sinner.

He commands us not to be anxious. This God and man who also tells us that we will be hated and persecuted and that we will suffer for his name's sake, that we must accept suffering, take up our cross, die; that we must go through death on our way to everlasting life. The one who afflicts us with such words, also comforts us. He tells us how to deal with these terrible things. That is, he commands us, do not to be anxious about your life. Be free. Do not be afraid. Be at peace. Trust.

[Mother Katherine](#), the local Orthodox nun, iconographer, and psychologist, points out that while we often think of peace as the opposite of anxiety, this peace must be grounded in trust. Trust “implies peace in relationship with something or someone else.” And so trust is also the opposite of anxiety. Anxiety is ultimately a failure to trust in the Lord. Trust that the Lord will give you what you need. He clothes the lilies of the field more splendidly than Solomon. He will give us what we need to wear. Trust in him. Do not be afraid. Be at peace. Do not worry.

All good things come from the Lord, really. Do not be deceived into thinking that we have earned all the good things we enjoy. Every talent and ability was given to us by God. Every opportunity. Every kindness in every heart that educated us and gave us a chance. All of this is from the bounty of God. We owe him all things. All things are truly his. Nothing is really our own. And gratitude for all these things is an antidote to the poison of anxiety.

Anxiety is an affliction. It is pain, even physical pain, about which our Lord is asking us, “Do you want to be healed?”

Anxiety is restless, undirected worry about all of things that might happen. Someone might not like me anymore. They might even hate me. Our stained glass windows might collapse. I might get hit by a car. We might be attacked by terrorists. These are things that might happen or might not happen. Worry and anxiety about these things are exactly what we are to avoid.

This doesn't mean we aren't to care about these things. The King James Bible says we are to have no care about our life, but the meaning of the word ‘care’ has evolved since the seventeenth century. Care and concern and prudence are good and necessary. They're even a part of love. Anxiety, on the other hand, does no good.

We should lovingly care for our old church buildings, blessings given to us by God that they are. That is love and care, not anxiety.

We should take care when we cross the road. Looking both ways is not anxiety. But looking both ways and then looking both ways again and again and then, seeing no cars, deciding not to cross anyway, in case there might be a car – that is anxiety.

It's alright to prepare for possible disasters. That's not anxiety – it's taking care. But living in such fear

about the possibility of a terrorist attack that you begin to ostracize and hate your neighbors – that is anxiety.

Anxiety has no real object. It has only imagined objects. It is worry about maybes and what ifs. Unlike fear, which does have real objects. We *are* to fear God. Jesus does not condemn this holy fear when he tells us not to be anxious. God himself is called the Fear of Isaac. Have this kind of fear, but do not be anxious.

I hear a lot of anxiety about what is happening against Christians in this country. But what are we afraid of? Since when do Christians fear persecution or even death? Have we forgotten the gospel and the resurrection? Do we think the culture or the government can triumph over the cross?

St. Basil wasn't worried about whether the government official would arrest him. Such worry would have only stifled his courage to witness to Christ and, like a coward, he'd have cowered instead for fear of repercussions. He did not fear the government, because he feared the only one worthy of his fear: the Lord God. When you fear God, then you need not fear anything. If I really fear God, and not people – not my enemies and not my friends – then I cannot be persuaded to act against my God-given conscience.

We often fear our friends more than we do our enemies. We fear losing our friends or offending them. We shouldn't be deliberately offensive, but we also shouldn't be so afraid of what people might think, say, or do that it inhibits our witness to Christ in word and in action.

Fear God instead. In that fear – fear of the only one who loves mankind, fear of the only trustworthy one – all fear melts away, because perfect love casts out fear. Our holy father Anthony the Great has two parallel sayings. The first is by far the more popular. He says, “I no longer fear God, but love him.” But he also says, in fact in the next sentence, “Always keep before your eyes the fear of the Lord” ([Sayings of Anthony](#), 32 and 33). This is the paradox. Only in the fear of the Lord is it possible to be truly fearless.

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[1] This story about St. Basil is adapted from St. Gregory the Theologian's Funeral Oration for St. Basil ([Oration 43](#), 48-50). This, and many ideas in this post, were inspired by [Fr. Thomas Hopko](#).

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## Reasoned Voting [at Practical Distributism]

# Reasoned ✓ voting

David W. Cooney

Keeping in mind that this site does not engage in party politics, I still feel prompted to share something in the context of the up-coming election in the U.S. Although most of this will discuss the political climate in the U.S. I also send this out to any readers "across the pond" in the U.K. as they approach the very important vote on whether or not to remain in the E.U. Distributism is based on certain philosophical principles which originate in a scientific view of philosophy. It has become all too common in our political environments to use fear tactics to try and convince people to vote a certain way. These tactics can sound reasonable, but are truly an attempt to get you to abandon reason. Therefore, I want to present certain principles of reason as I think they apply to deciding how to vote.

The philosophical principles of reason which come down to us from the great minds of the past like Aristotle and Saint Thomas Aquinas are those precepts which we must follow when applying reason to anything. The failure to do so will ultimately lead us to accepting absurd things. They are employed by all of our natural sciences. They are employed by all of our ethical reasoning. They are crucial to fulfilling our capabilities as rational beings. Unfortunately, some people throw around some of these principles in an incorrect or incomplete manner. Because we no longer learn true philosophy (even philosophy students seem to spend more time learning about philosophers – both good and bad – than about the actual science of philosophy) many people are ill equipped to see that these are false applications.

“Choosing the lesser of two evils”

This is a frequent claim used as an election draws near. In the U.S. It has long been used by pundits for the Republican party and has recently been used more by those of the Democrat party. The failure to nominate a candidate their voting base can really support has forced them to use this claim. They essentially say, “we know you think our candidate is bad, but he's not as bad as their candidate.” This call to choose the “lesser” of two evils is usually followed by the next claim.

“A vote for x is really a vote for y”

This is a double-attack on your reason. Not only is your decision not to vote for their candidate or policy

wrong, but you will somehow be guilty for the fact that the other candidate or policy won. In essence, the claim is that by voting other than the way they want, you are actually choosing what (presumably) neither of you want. This is used by both of the major parties in the U.S. as an attack against anyone who considers a third party option. It is based on the premise that the candidate or policy you want has no chance of winning, which leads us to the next claim.

“Don't let the best be the enemy of the good”

Politics is the art of compromise, so why don't you just compromise and vote for us? Since your position or candidate has no chance of actually winning, you should back down a little and vote for us. By doing so, you'll get at least some of what you want instead of "wasting your vote."

All of these arguments sound reasonable, but are actually not so, and a serious look at the principles of reason will reveal why.

When people use variants of the “lesser of two evils” argument, keep in mind that this is only a partial statement of the actual principle of reason. The actual principle is,

***“If one cannot avoid doing one of two acts, from both of which will follow an evil effect, one is obligated to choose the lesser of the two evils.”***

Note that the premise here, which is fundamental to the entire principle, is that you cannot avoid doing one of the two acts. For this to apply in the context of an election, you would have to be constrained to only choose one of two candidates and have no other option – you

*must*

vote and you must vote for one of the

*only two*

candidates presented to you. Is this the actual case in our elections? Do you really only have two choices? I am not speaking of the so-called “practical” choices, by which is meant those choices generally accepted as having a chance to win. If there is in fact another option, then you are not limited by the constraint of the principle, so it simply doesn't apply. Actually, if one were to insist on applying it to the case of an election, a reasoned expansion of this principle would be that, in the case of more than two choices, you must choose the one from which will follow the

*least evil*

effect. Don't forget that, when electing candidates in the U.S., there is usually a blank line where you can write in the name of a better choice than the ones being presented.

This leads us to the next claim. Is it true that choosing something other than the two “practical” choices is equivalent to choosing one of them? The answer is obviously no. They say that the only choices are A and B because C has no chance of winning. Therefore, if you vote for C, you are effectively giving the election to whichever option they don't want from the choices of A and B. This is nonsense. They are trying to shift the blame to you for the fact that they didn't present a candidate you would want to support. They are trying to blame you for all the others who also didn't want to support their view. This seems to

be a mangling of the principle which states,

***“Things that are identical with a third are identical with each other.”***

Your actual responsibility in an election is to vote for the candidate or position you think  
*should*

win. What you vote for represents what you choose regardless of the outcome. You are not to blame for the votes of others.

This leaves us with the only argument that actually deserves any consideration. “Don't let the best become the enemy of the good” is inherently incorrect, but it can actually be applied in a way that doesn't compromise the principles of reason. However, this argument must be properly understood in the light of those principles to determine if it actually applies to the current choices.

First of all, using the terms employed, the “good” must always be directed toward the "best" or it fails to be good. (

***“Every agent acts for the sake of an end.”***

) Therefore, one can accept the merely “good” for now, but only on the condition that is a movement toward the “best.” If this is not the case, then you would be violating the principle which states,

***“It is never lawful to reject a greater good for a lesser one.”***

The lesser good can only be accepted as a means to achieving the greater good, and never as an end itself. This is the essence of political compromise. Realizing that achieving the “best” may not currently be politically possible, achieving the "good" at this time with the intention of continuing to work for the “best” may be prudent.

Another consideration for this argument must be kept in mind. At what point does continual compromise from the "best" end up being an acceptance of the merely "good?" If you keep voting for an inadequate candidate on the grounds that "we can't let the other party win," what incentive will your party ever have to stop presenting inadequate candidates? If you continue to agree to legislation that falls short of what you really want, what are your chances of ever getting the legislation you really want? The pundits accuse those who choose to make a stand with their vote of wasting it, but the purpose of voting is to try and get the change you want. What vote could be more wasted than when you vote for something you don't want?

At what point do we wake up to the realization that the political machines of these parties are actively engaged in saying what their base wants to hear just to secure votes, but don't actually mean those things? How many times to we have to see them

[fail to even try](#)

to accomplish what they tell us they will before we accept the fact that it really isn't all the fault of the other party? Remember that this sort of compromise is only acceptable if it is both prudential and will actually help to move from the "good" to the "best."

A final consideration on this kind of compromise is that we have to examine the risks of the other side of the compromise. It is not enough to look at what we've gained, we need to look at what we've potentially lost through the compromise.

***“It is never lawful to take a risk with the right of another.” “It is never lawful to do an evil act to accomplish a good end.” “A good intention does not justify the use of an evil means for the end in view.”***

If your side of the compromise would fall into any of these categories, then the compromise cannot be made. Remember that your vote represents you. Your beliefs and values.

***“All human acts must tend towards the good of man.”***

I am also reminded of something posted by Ryan Grant. There is another claim that says that you have no right to complain if you don't vote. Of course, this is also nonsense. The officials of government have a moral responsibility in the exercise of their office. This is true even if those officials are not democratically elected. Citizens always have the right to complain about injustices regardless of how those officials came to hold their offices. In some election campaigns, there were movements of people who wanted a ballot option for “none of the above” as a way of indicating their dissatisfaction with all of the candidates. However, if you believe that elections are useless, because of the corruption of the political parties, the media, the voting process, or the ballot counting process, then why should you bother to vote even to say “none of the above?” Justice in government is a human right, not one just for those who engage in the system of voting.

Finally, I would like to point out how ironic it is when I hear Republican pundits heap scorn on those who would even consider a third party candidate. They seem to forget that their party was once the upstart third party in a political climate dominated by two other parties. The "Grand Old Party" is significantly younger than its chief rival. Why is it that they don't address the growing popularity of third party candidates among their voter base? The Republican party was propelled to electoral victory because the voting public got sick and tired of the fact that neither of the major parties of the time were putting forth candidates and positions that truly reflected their views. Well, the same thing is happening today in both of the major parties. It is common for pundits of both parties to lay the blame for an electoral loss on the votes "stolen" by a third party candidate. The truth is that these votes were not stolen because they didn't "belong" to any candidate or party. They never "owned" our votes and they shouldn't take them for granted. If they want our votes, then they should present candidates and positions we want to support. If they want to keep our votes, then those candidates better use their time in office actually trying to accomplish what they were elected to accomplish. In other words, voters need to remember that parties and individual candidates need to

*earn*

our votes, and need to keep doing so. If they fail to do this, then why shouldn't we look elsewhere and be proud of doing so?

# Futures Markets and the Absurdity of Capitalism [at Practical Distributism]



Capitalism is often celebrated by its supporters as the only economic system that can really deliver the goods, the only way of arranging our economic activity that has or that can lift mankind out of its supposedly otherwise inevitable poverty. And it is the case, one must admit, that capitalism does act as a remarkable spur to the manufacture of

*stuff*

, all kinds of stuff, sometimes useful, but just as equally useless or even harmful - anything, in fact, that the producer thinks can be marketed. But production of goods, even useless goods, is not the hallmark of capitalism. Rather capitalism, understood as the separation of ownership and work, has as its unique attribute not production, but selling, even, as we are about to see, selling of things that really do not exist.

The human race has always grown or otherwise gathered food, and there has probably always existed some kinds of exchange. But the growing or obtaining of food and the exchange of one desired object for another was always seen as a subordinate part of the life of the human race. Obtaining food was for the sake of living, exchange was for the sake of living better. But with capitalism this common-sense relationship of means and ends is very often perverted. Now all production is for the sake of exchange, social life becomes subordinated to the processes of production and exchange, and they in turn become subordinated to more exotic economic practices. This is because the capitalist imperative is always more sales, more profit, more speculative ways of making money, without any inherent limit or even a notion of what all this activity is for, except for the enrichment of those who own or control the economic processes. Capitalism as the separation of ownership from work creates a class of individuals who are removed from the production of useful objects and who regard the objects produced as primarily commodities to be sold, rather than useful goods to be consumed. Hence the imperative for more sales, ever increasing profits and market share, regardless of demand, because there is no natural limit, no end for which one is striving and with which, when obtained, one is satisfied. Let us look at the interesting example of the futures market in grain and see what we can learn from it as to the nature of the capitalist

approach to organizing an economy.

In his book,

*Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*

, William Cronon discusses among other topics how the grain trade gave rise to the futures' market in agricultural products. This account shows the absurdity of economic activity divorced from any rational end, and eventually even from a real product, the purposeless kind of economics fostered by capitalism. As long as something makes money for those who own or control it, capitalism cares nothing for whether the activity actually contributes anything toward meeting mankind's real needs for goods and services.

Originally, as has generally been the case with mankind, grain grown on the prairies of Illinois and neighboring states was a means of feeding the farmer, his family and his near neighbors. But as it became an item to be shipped and sold, and eventually turned into a commodity future at the Chicago Board of Trade, we can see the transformation of a human and natural object into the abstraction of a commodity, something regarded as merely a means of profit.

A certain amount of grain trading and shipping existed from the early 19th century using water transportation. But this was slow and awkward and did not reach every place. Before there could be a transformation in the understanding of grain, there had to be a more efficient means of transportation. This was provided by the railroads, which were built mostly to facilitate the capitalist imperative to totally commercialize every aspect of life. If people had thought of grain as primarily a food to be consumed pretty much where it was grown, then the huge railroad network of the Mid-West would probably never have come into existence, since the existing modest means of transportation would have sufficed. Thus to extend and fully implement the capitalist transformation of wheat from a food into a commodity, the railway system first had to exist. The building of the railroad network transformed not only food exchange, but the environment, both natural and cultural of the region and the nation. Capitalism, then, both building upon and transforming the human vice of greed, powerfully shaped the entire culture and violently captured such pre-capitalist aspects of society as food production and local exchange and bent them to its purposes.

The existence of the railroad network enabled farmers to conceive of themselves not as growers of food for consumption but as producers of a commodity. Grain was shipped via the railroads to Chicago where it was held in large grain elevators for eventual shipment to the East coast. Originally the ownership of any particular sack of grain was retained by the farmer who harvested it. But naturally sacks of grain differed from each other significantly in quality. The storage of these sacks in grain elevators created a problem: "elevator operators began objecting to keeping small quantities of different owners' grain in separate bins that were only partially filled.... To avoid that..., they sought to mix grain in common bins." To do this required some system of grain standardization or grading. After such a system was created it became possible for the elevator owners to contract for sale of a certain quantity of a certain grade of wheat, with no reference to any particular sack of wheat actually existing anywhere. But because of the ever-changing price of grain, sellers and buyers soon realized that they could essentially bet against the future price by contracting in the present for sale or purchase of a definite quantity of grain at some future date, hoping that the price would increase or decrease to their benefit by the time of the actual sale. Ultimately this created the final absurdity:

...futures contracts [which] were essentially interchangeable and could be bought and sold quite

independently of the physical grain... Moreover, the seller...did not necessarily even have to deliver grain on the day it fell due. As long as the buyer was willing, the two could settle their transaction by simply exchanging the difference between the grain's contracted price and its market price when the contract expired. [They] could complete their transaction without any grain ever changing hands.... The futures market was a market not in grain but in the *price* of grain...one bought and sold not wheat or corn or oats but the *prices* of those goods as they would exist at a future time. Speculators made and lost money by selling each other legally binding forecasts of how much grain prices would rise or fall.

Grain went from being a means for feeding the population of farmers and others who lived nearby, to being centrally stored in bins in Chicago and shipped throughout the Northeast United States and into Canada, into being merely a symbol, but nevertheless a symbol that enabled speculators to engage in exchange. The contracts themselves have become a commodity to be bought and sold, but the contracts now have no necessary connection with any object of real economic value.

Despite its claim to be the only economic system that can produce sufficient goods to satisfy mankind's needs, capitalism is really not interested in production at all, except as that can serve sales. It is interested in moneymaking, to be sure, but moneymaking by nearly any means that one can concoct. It might seem obvious, for example, that the financial sector would be a modest adjunct of the more primary economic activities of production or even exchange, sometimes necessary, often helpful, but always subordinate. But frequently someone can make more money by a merger or buyout, which often results in a

*decrease*

in real economic activity, than by actual production.

It should be obvious that mankind's economic activity exists to serve our need for external goods and services. Thus economic activity must always be subordinate to the genuine needs and interests of humanity. But when economic activity is seen as basically a means of getting rich by almost any method, it is apt to become entirely divorced from meeting our real economic needs. The economy becomes essentially a private playground for those with enough skill or money to manipulate it in their favor. Pope Pius XI wrote with regard to such types of economic manipulation, "A stern insistence on the moral law, enforced with vigor by civil authority, could have dispelled or perhaps averted these enormous evils" (

*Quadragesimo Anno*

, no. 133). But this is too rarely the case in a capitalist, commercial society, where indeed as Karl Polanyi noted, "society itself becomes an `adjunct' of the market."

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## St. Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis [at New Evangelizers]

When Jorge Bergoglio was elected to the papacy, I wrote about his choice of name “Francis.” As a Jesuit I wondered if he meant Francis Xavier. But it turns out that he made took on the name in honor of St. Francis of Assisi. I speculated the implications of the name and I think it is very helpful to look at how Saint Francis informs the papacy of Pope Francis.

There are many who contrast his pontificate with that of his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI. It should be important to note at the outset that these difference are difference is style and difference in emphasis. They are not differences in doctrine. Particularly, I would say that the main difference is between emphasizing orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

Orthodoxy is “correct teaching.” This involves making sure that all of the teachings of the church in all parts of her body are in alignment with the holy truth that comes from the Sacred Deposit of Faith given to us by Christ.

Orthopraxis is “correct action.” This means going out in to the world and living the way Christ wants us to and by our actions changing things for the better.

I think it is very instructive to look at the most influential saints in each of their lives.

For Pope Benedict, it was St. Augustine of Hippo. After the Divine and human authors of Scripture, there is probably know person more influential to the faith than Augustine (though you could argue a place for St. Thomas Aquinas). Augustine’s life was dramatic and passionate. He said in a general audience on February 27, 2008, “St. Augustine was a passionate seeker of truth... his passion for man and for the truth... led him to seek God...” And later he said “Augustine converted to Christ who is truth and love... and became a model for every human being, for all of us in search of God.”

Augustine struggled with sin most of his life, but when he converted he desired to live quietly in a monastery But when he was forced to serve as bishop, he shared the interior drama of his soul and showed that the spiritual life is passionate and dramatic and can change the person.

I believe Benedict saw that important connection clearly. That we cannot act well in the world until we convert our hearts to God. And once we do, we are given the light of His wisdom. All of us, in all walks of life, are seekers of truth. Benedict understood his job as to be a beacon of truth and “The truth shall set you free.” Hence Benedict’s emphasis on orthodoxy.

St. Francis of Assisi, like Augustine, lived a reckless life until his conversion. But unlike Augustine, Francis was nothing like an academic. Francis did not start an order of scholars and was himself not very well educated. Instead, Francis was more interested in getting out into the world and doing things. In Francis conversion experience, it was said that he heard Christ say to him, “Francis, rebuild my church.” Rather than discern and puzzle over what this meant, Francis immediately set out to rebuild the broken down Church of San Damiano. Of course Our Lord was calling him to rebuild the entire Body of Christ, but Francis was more interested in jumping in with both feet. Like Peter who dove into the water at the sight of Jesus, Francis was filled with active zeal.

My favorite story about this is when Francis's father made the bishop of Assisi discipline Francis, because Francis was giving away his father's hard-earned money to the poor. The bishop told Francis that it was wrong for him to give away his father's possessions, because they were his father's not Francis'. Francis in turn strips naked right there in front of the entire town including the bishop and gives his clothes back to his father. This story typifies St. Francis who would immediately act out of a burning sense of charity. But when he was corrected, he humbly made the correction and obeyed the Church.

Francis of Assisi seems very inspired by the words of the Apostle James *“What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”* (James 2:14-17) For St. Francis, without action, faith is empty.

And we can see this in Pope Francis. He is calling us to try new and bold things. At World Youth Day in Brazil, Francis said *““What do I hope for from World Youth Day? I hope for a mess ... that the Church takes to the streets. That we defend ourselves from comfort, that we defend ourselves from clericalism,”* He is incredibly open to out-of-the-box ideas like deaconesses. He wants to find new ways to reach out to the marginalized in the Church like homosexuals and those living in divorce and remarriage. In my article on Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*, I noted how often the Holy Father urged people to do something, anything, to care for the environment

I have spoken to a number of Catholics who are sometimes uncomfortable with Francis' off-the-cuff style. But that is very much in keeping with St. Francis of Assisi. And it must be noted that this emphasis on orthopraxis does not mean that we jettison orthodoxy. St. Francis of Assisi made sure to walk to Rome in order to get approval of his Order of Friars Minor from Pope Innocent III and he submitted all of his plans to the Holy Father.

Of all of the self-descriptions that Pope Francis uses, the one that strikes me most is how he constantly describes himself as a “son of the Church.” He makes clear that he is not here to contradict anything in orthodox Catholic teaching. He is obedient and submits to the truth of the Sacred Deposit of Faith. Like Saint Francis, Pope Francis understands that orthopraxis must bow to orthodoxy. But both Francises see the purpose of orthodoxy as being a guide to the real vocation of orthopraxis.

Because Saint Francis often leapt before he looked, because he focused more on action than theology, he would sometimes make mistakes. But because he was filled with humility, he would always take correction and adjust his actions. Pope Francis does not seem afraid to make mistakes, nor does he want us to be afraid to make mistakes. The real mistake would be to not do anything at all or to be closed to correction when you do make a mistake.

Again, neither Pope Benedict XVI nor Pope Francis are right or wrong. It is a matter of emphasis. God always sends us the prophets who best address the needs of a given age.

Saint Francis of Assisi wanted God to make him an instrument of His peace. And this helps us understand how Francis sees our role in the Church:

We are not passive receivers of orthodox truth, but instruments of God's active grace in the world.

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## Hope [at Bible Meditations]



*Then you will know that I am the Lord; no one who waits for my help will be disappointed.* Isaiah 49:23

How can God guarantee we won't be disappointed when, so often, the things we pray for don't happen the way we want or on our timetable?

The answer is knowing that God is the Lord. If our God is who he says he is, it's safe to trust him. He is all-knowing. He is all-powerful. He loves us. We can trust that he knows what he is doing—even when things don't go our way, even when we face challenging circumstances, even when we-or our loved ones—are in pain.

If we believe our Heavenly Father gave his only begotten son to save us from our sins, we can trust him. Jesus' understandable request to be spared the cup of suffering was not answered the way he would have liked. He wasn't spared pain and death, but that wasn't the end of the story. Resurrection triumphed.

Our God can bring good out of pain and weakness. When we are in the midst of it, it isn't easy to remember, but that's what faith is. If we're willing to wait, we've already demonstrated a faith beyond what our eyes can see or our intellects can understand.

Who can understand that when backed into a corner, a Red Sea can part? Who can understand that the death of Lazarus didn't stop Christ's healing power? Who can understand how God can bring good out of whatever we're going through? Trusting God doesn't mean we pretend things are fine or that we're not worried about a sick child, a rocky marriage, or family crisis. It means we acknowledge the suffering but trust God to provide what we need to get through it. We trust God to provide his help—not the help we demand or the help the world tells us to expect—but the help of Someone who has our best interests at heart.

If we wait to see what God has in mind, we won't be disappointed.

Prayer: Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.

Reflection: When have you waited for God's help? What happened?

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## TRUE Death with Dignity [at String of Pearls]



My brother-in-law is dying.

His poor body has been ravaged by a particularly unforgiving form of cancer called mesothelioma, with which he was diagnosed almost exactly a year ago. Fifty years after exposure to asbestos while doing chimney work as a young man, this terrible disease struck him like a thunderbolt, just as he and my sister-in-law (my husband's older sister and "Irish twin") had begun the process of fulfilling their dream of starting a craft brewery in an old stone Army barracks that dates back to the Civil War.

In spite of all he's been through this past year, this dream became a reality a couple of months ago, and the historical building he and my sister-in-law lovingly transformed into a brewery/sports bar/tasting room/event center/restaurant/B&B has opened for business and has been wildly successful, breathing new life into the hometown where my husband's family has deep roots, going back several generations.

There is nothing more that can be done for my brother-in-law medically now, other than palliative care. Surgery and chemo and trips back and forth to Boston to receive the most cutting-edge treatments from the foremost experts on the disease did not produce the hoped-for and prayed-for miracle, and he has come home to die. He is surrounded by people who love him dearly and upon whom he must depend more and more every day to help him with even the simplest of tasks.

This man has always been exceptionally strong, a warrior, a rock for so many people--both personally and professionally. It has to be hard--not just hard, but truly humbling--to depend on others for everything now, but this guy makes it look easy. No one who has been privileged to observe the manner in which my brother-in-law handled the news of his diagnosis a year ago, how he endured the harrowing and painful treatments and recoveries in the past months, or how he has exhibited such tremendous heroism as he walks his own personal way of the Cross on the road home to his Father, will ever forget what they have witnessed. He is showing us the way to die, the way to have a holy death; and it is a lesson I believe I for one badly needed.

Last night, my husband and I attended a party in one of the brewery's event rooms, and I got talking to my old high school biology teacher (who has a special place in her heart for the class of 1976, as we were

her first real teaching job after she got her degree). I mentioned that I was so awed and inspired by the dignity with which my brother-in-law is facing the end of his life. He is uncomplaining and serene, appreciative of every little thing his loved ones do for him and thanking them profusely. He is dealing with his own helplessness with such acceptance and grace, it's a wonder to behold.

"I don't like that word, 'dignity,'" she said. "It has a different connotation now." And she's right: the pro-euthanasia crowd has hijacked that particular term and made it mean something different to many folks. There are some who would look at this man who is suffering in a way that no one should have to suffer (yes, but who is surrounded by so much love, who still has the capacity to give and receive love and find an incredible amount of joy in that, whose dying days have profoundly changed and improved the lives of everyone around him) and say that to give him a dignified death, his pain should be ended at once. It would be more merciful, they would argue.

But I would argue differently.

I started out this post by saying that my brother-in-law is dying. Scratch that; what I should have said is that my brother-in-law is becoming a saint, right before our very eyes.

The first thing this man said when handed the worst news of his life was, "I want to become a Catholic before I die." Let that sink in for a minute.

Raised a Lutheran, he was inspired (not pressured, but inspired) by my sister-in-law to convert. He has been attending Mass for years, even going alone when my sister-in-law and he happened to be apart. But the official process of entering the Church had not been completed. Well, I am happy to report that last week, a priest at the parish my husband and his family always attended baptized him a Catholic, and he was able to receive First Holy Communion. If this had happened even a few days after it did, he might not have been able to swallow the Host. God is so good!

My brother-in-law is, as my husband says, giving the rest of us a clinic on how to die a holy death. He is facing the end of his earthly life with courage, grace, and deep faith. He is graciously allowing his loved ones to give of themselves unconditionally to keep him as comfortable as possible (a privilege which is in fact a tremendous gift that those who never get to witness a

*truly*

dignified death completely miss out on). He is not bitter or resentful, despite his suffering. He loves life, even now; but he is not afraid to die. This, I believe, is what death with dignity is really all about.

I realize that it is not our place to automatically canonize our loved ones, no matter how saintly they might seem, when they pass from this life; we are instructed to pray for them unceasingly, for no one but God can know the state of any individual's immortal soul.

But I can't help but feel as if I am watching the making of a saint.

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## Sitrep [at warriorsworlddad]

Our sons have autism and other challenges. The experts wrote them off. The experts were wrong!

It has been a long road. Nineteen years ago our son Kenneth was changed overnight (literally) from the sweet loving child he was into something uncontrollable. The experts – medical, psychological, educational, etc. were worse than useless in our search for answers. After three years of struggle, Sue and I discovered the word Autism. Stephen was also affected but in a different way. Joseph nearly died at age one due to a three-hour grand mal seizure brought on by a fever. The drugs they gave him to stop the seizure depressed his respirations so much he was life-flighted to a major medical center for care. Devon was almost missed in our efforts to care for Ken, Stephen, and Joe but he too was struggling in some ways and we discovered he



Ready to train!

was also legally blind in one eye. More visits to experts who only said that we should accept that our four youngest children would NEVER be able to care for themselves and would REQUIRE assistance their entire life.

I have never been one to accept pronouncements from experts as if they were carved in stone unless the expert can demonstrate their ability to walk on water and change water into wine. So Sue and I got up each day and did our best.

We eventually homeschooled our kids, all eight. Ken, Stephen, Joseph, and Devon all became altar servers at church, participated in Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, played Miracle League Baseball (not Ken he hates baseball), did Judo and Hapkido. They all received the Sacrament of Confirmation,

Ken asked to go to public high school when he hit 10th grade. With trepidation, we agreed because we could tap into their connections for vocational training. We had to constantly urge the school to challenge Ken to stretch his limits. Stephen, Joe, and Devon also entered public school, and for them too, we pushed the system to push them.

This past week, Ken and Stephen received their Red stripe in Hapkido and Joseph and Devon got their Yellow belt. Ken works about 25 hours a week at Kentucky Fried Chicken and has done so for about a year now. He is doing really good. Stephen is looking for work and now Joe and Devon as well. Devon

and Joe also babysit their 2-year-old niece each afternoon so her dad can go to work until mom, my daughter, gets home from work. So much for not being able to do anything.

The journey's not over and hopefully God will grant me enough years of life to get my sons to the point where they no longer need my or their mom's help.

The experts were expert ONLY in an academic field. They were not experts on our children. I was and so was Sue. We refused to give up on our kids when we constantly were told to do just that.

To any parent facing similar ordeals, please, Do Not Give Up. The journey is incredibly scary and hard. But I promise you, no one knows the future for your son or daughter. It is better that their reach exceeds their grasp than to set the bar so low that success is truly meaningless to them.

If you know one challenged person – YOU KNOW ONE CHALLENGED PERSON. The biggest obstacle people with mental and physical challenges face are the so-called normal people, especially the experts, who believe they can predict the future and assume incompetence and failure in the disabled. They need to get out of the way.

I do not know how much further my children will go but I will be both alongside them encouraging them and behind them nudging them to go further. One day maybe they will be in front of me as old age slows me down and I will be able to look to them for help. Who knows? Not me.

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## A Response to Evil [at Quiet Consecration]

The Catholic Church teaches:

*The fact that God permits physical and even moral evil is a mystery that God illuminates by his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose to vanquish evil. Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit an evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil, by ways that we shall fully know only in eternal life.*

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 324).

Suffice to say much of what the Church teaches must be accepted on Faith. I know that my journey Home involved my realizing that if the Church is right about some of the really obvious and important stuff, then I should be willing to accept that she is right about stuff I don't quite understand. In other words, Jesus was either lying or telling the Truth when He said that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church He founded. Jesus is God. God cannot lie. It is logical to believe, therefore, that the Church cannot be overcome by the forces of hell, though it is also pretty evident that in her 2thousand year history hell has given her a run for her money.

I accept, therefore, that God does not cause evil but allows evil - both physical and moral - and that from that evil will come great good. I accept it and I believe it...but I would be telling you a lie if I told you that it is an easy teaching.

The events I Orlando are just more of what makes this teaching so difficult. In a short period of time I have watched high school students in Colorado kill their teachers and fellow students, men who have hijacked their own religion fly planes into buildings, madmen shoot up movie theaters and elementary schools and young women whose only 'crime' was to get drunk at a party be ravaged by equally young men - some of whom were supposedly friends of their victims. I've cried when pedophiles have been paraded in front of the television cameras on their 'perp walks' and watched in horror as Christians were beheaded in the name of God. I've seen incredible acts of heroism by men and women in uniform and I have been horrified by those in authority abusing the power we give them in order to protect us from harm.

I have seen a lot, though I would not pretend to have seen it all.

Yes, it is a hard teaching. It is a teaching that boggles the mind and is often rejected by those who despise His Church and my religion. I am called a fool to cling to it - yet, cling to it I must.

To believe that God can pull great good from the physical and moral evil that is in the world does not excuse the evildoer. Nor does it mean that those of us who accept this hard teaching are naïve bubble heads who think the world is full of unicorns and pastel rainbows. Trust me, we are struggling with the same thing other people struggle with when it comes to a horror like Orlando. We struggle with the shock, with the disbelief, with our own anger and our own knee jerk want for revenge. I am having a hard time praying for this perpetrator. I am having a difficult time with people who think I am not being a supporter of the US Constitution because I dare to voice my belief that a man questioned twice by the FBI because

of his out loud admiration for ISIL and the Boston Marathon Bombers should not have been able to legally obtain an AR15 assault rifle.

I am angry at his ex-wife who endured physical abuse from this man and yet never left a trail that shows he is an abuser of women, which might have shown up and somehow prevented this nut job from obtaining that weapon.

Yet, through it all is my belief that some sort of great good is going to come from this and I strain to look for it now. I see glimpses. I see it in the young Iman who declared on Television that this man was not the face of Islam. I see it in the post by the Muslim American giving blood for the victims.

My hope is that this is the last attack we face on American soil. My hope is that more and more people will rise up and throw out those who would attack us before that next attack can occur.

My hope is that the great good that comes from this evil will be the unification of my country so that those who hate us will slink away, vanquished and banished to outer darkness.

Meanwhile, I will pray. I will pray for the souls of the dead and the healing of those that will be scarred and bruised and broken for a long time. I pray for the family of the perpetrator and the families burying their dead. Most of all I pray for my country, that this not tear us further apart.

Let's be one nation, under God, and pledge to live our lives in Liberty and Justice for all.

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2016/06/a-response-to-evil.html>  
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# Decaffeinated... I mean, Decapitated! The Power of Communication [at Catholic Conundrum]



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*"He was decaffeinated!!!"*

*"What?" came my reply to the pair of big blue eyes staring up at me in shock.*

*"He was decaffeinated! The main guy in the movie!!!"*

*It took my mind a few seconds to grasp what he was getting at.*

*"Oh! You mean decapitated?" I replied without thinking. "I mean, you're right! Decaffeinated! - Wait, where did you hear this word?"*

*"The big kids were talking about it."*

*Quickly trying to assuage his concern, I shrugged my shoulders.*

*"Oh! Well, he probably drank too much decaf coffee. I'm sure he'll be OK." I couldn't tell if he had bought my explanation and dismissal of his statement, but from the look on his face I think he was relieved.*

Communication. Proper communication. Just how important is it? So important that thousands of how-to books, ebooks and programs on every aspect of communication can be found online and in stores everywhere. So important that millionaires have flourished and millions of dollars have been made through developed seminars that can be attended throughout the world on this very topic. There is even a college degree with its name - *Communications*.

Lately, communication has been a hot topic in my family. For some reason, we just can't seem to get onto

the same page. Although likely due to our craziness of life and the need to fulfill many commitments, our conversations rival those at the Tower of Babel.

Me: *"Guys! Time to get going!"*

Child #1 entering the room in distress: *"Mom...I can't find my shirt! I had it right here but it's missing!"*

Me, confused: *"Why are you in your uniform? That's tomorrow!"*

Child # 2 - entering the room, emotions in full dramatic swing: *"Mom! I almost died!"*

Child #1: *"What? I thought you said it was today! "*

Me explaining to Child #1: *"No, I have a meeting today."*

Me addressing Child #2: *"What do you mean you almost died?"*

Me back to Child #1: *"I'll leave the younger ones home with Dad and drop you both off at the field while I get to my meeting at the Church."*

Child #4, calling down from upstairs: *"Mom!"*

Child #2: *"I tried climbing the wall but fell off!"*

Me, relieved but annoyed: *"Then stay off of the wall."*

Child #2: *"When will we get picked up?"*

Me: *"Still not sure...we'll have to wing it!"*

Child #3, still calling from upstairs: *"Mom! Did you get the email I sent?"*

Child #4 entering the room with a look of disgust: *"Mom...the cat threw up on the couch!"*

Me, groaning: *"We'll have to clean it up later...we've got to go!"*

Child #3, exasperated: *"Mom! Did you get my email?"*

Me, watching the clock ticking at lightening speed: *"No! I'll check when I get back! We've got to go!"*

Me: running out the door to wait in the car: Blessed Silence.

Sometimes our conversations can feel like we are on the floor on Wall Street in the middle of the throng of traders - is anyone really hearing anybody? And, if you are blessed enough to be surrounded by people who love to talk like my family, the challenge to truly hear each other escalates substantially.

Proper communication should be considered a virtue in many respects. The reason it can't be considered a singularly great virtue is because communicating effectively requires the use of more than one virtue: i.e. patience, kindness, and, most of all, love. Perhaps this fact alone is enough to explain why proper communication is such a difficult skill to master.

Communication is so vital to Christian living that the Holy Spirit, sent as the Paraclete, was sent to break down those communication barriers so present in the days of Jesus so that the ears of the people could truly hear and hearts could be truly opened to what the Apostles had to say during and after Pentecost.

Those same communication barriers still exist today. And the Holy Spirit is still here to help break down those walls. However, we need to ask Him. We need to realize that our communication with others can only be as effective as our willingness to allow the Holy Spirit into our conversations is.

Today, let's stop and ask the Holy Spirit to enter into our conversations throughout the day. Let's ask Him to not only guide our words, but give us the wisdom needed to listen well to what others are communicating to us.

Proper communication: success in almost anything depends on it.

May we never underestimate it's power as we endeavor to change the world!

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicconundrum.com/blog/decaffeinated-mean-decapitated-the-power-of-communication>  
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# Seeking the "Still Small Voice" of God [at Renew The Church Blog]

God said to Elijah,

“Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;

and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

(1 Kings 19:11-13)

It is an unmistakable and precious moment – a timeless moment – to be in the Presence of God. Such encounters are so precious, that one could say they are essential. How can a man or a woman keep sane, in this increasingly insane world, without moments – or at least memories – of communion with the One who is truth and reason, stability and sanity, faithful and strong, undying, eternal.

Elijah was given a moment of encounter with the Lord in a “still small voice” – and specifically not in a great wind, or an earthquake, or a fire – all events of power and dramatic significance. Only in the humble whisper that demands alertness, attentiveness, inner quiet and focus: there was the Lord waiting to meet with Elijah.

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of “making a retreat” – a time apart, a time dedicated to openness to the Lord, a time for prayer, meditation, silence, solitude, peace. It is a time for saying “Here I am, Lord, speak to your servant. Here I am, Lord: what would you have me do?” It is sad, but it is understandable, that human persons would not want to offer themselves to the will of the Lord in that way! It is sad, but understandable, that given the choice between Martha who kept herself busy and distracted, and Mary who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to His word (see Lk 10:38-42), that many would rather turn to preoccupation and busyness than offer themselves “blindly” to the service of the Lord! Who knows what He might ask of us? Who knows what that might cost? It might cost our very lives.

I was in my thirties when I made my first retreat. It was a 45 day directed retreat, “directed” meaning directed by a retreat master who provided daily presentations on the retreat theme, and as a priest also offered daily Mass and Confessions, as well as personal conferences if desired to discuss matters of spiritual concern. The theme of the retreat was the Gospel of John, and the length of the retreat allowed a slow and deliberate journey through that Gospel, listening carefully and prayerfully to what the Holy Spirit inspired John to write, for our salvation. It was a wonderful, truly beautiful experience.

The first thing I learned, which was a surprise to me, was the length of time it took me to “slow down” and begin to actually listen to the Lord in His Gospel! The retreat was held in an elegant beach-front – well, I would call it a “mansion.” Now a retreat house, it had been willed by a wealthy family, donated to a religious order of sisters. It was a beautiful place for quiet and prayer – well-separated from the

world of noise and busyness – here we could find the silence and solitude needed to listen to and be attentive to the movements and directions of the Lord. But to my surprise, after about four days, I noticed a change in myself: I had slowed down within myself; I had become quiet within myself; I had entered a space of solitude – separation from the other retreatants and retreat leaders and helpers – even though they were all around. In a mansion on the beach, in the midst of 35 or 40 people, I had become alone. This was not intentional! It happened; it was given to me; it was a surprise gift that I did not know I needed or wanted. I did not know I lacked it before it was given, but when I received it, I knew clearly the difference in me and the treasure that it was. I was alone, and I was ready to be with myself, with God, with Truth.

This was the beginning of the retreat, four days into it. Desert-time had come. Prayer-time had begun. The first lesson I needed to learn, was now dawning on me: I had not known what solitude and silence were; I had not known how busy and noisy I had been in myself! Now I knew, because God showed me. Now I could listen for Him; now I could listen to Him.

Here is the point of this blog: please, brothers and sisters, do not underestimate the immense value of silence, solitude and prayer. Do not underestimate the cost of it! In the beginning, it can take days – days in it, to arrive at it and willingly enter into it! A fish does not know of the water he lives in; we do not realize the conflict and chaos that surrounds us, nor perhaps do we suspect how much of it, and how deeply, it has permeated our very souls. We need to value silence, simplicity, solitude, prayer: listening for Him and for His life-giving words. Once we have learned the treasure of it, we will not resist or fight against it so much. It need not take four days, the next time. The next time, we may even hasten to meet it, and to meet Him. The time after that, no stranger any more to silence, simplicity, solitude and prayer, we may find it within ourselves, waiting within us for us to remember, and return, and maybe even remain as if home. We have there found Him; we have found love; we have found truth.

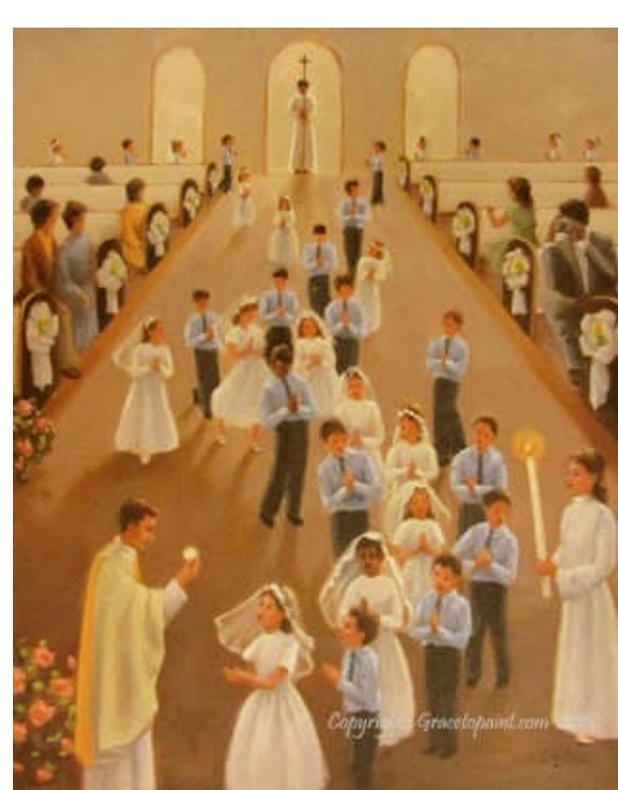
In that sacred place, that holy encounter, we have found our true home. In Him, with Him, we have all. He is faithful, and will never abandon His own. He will always be there, waiting. “Seek Him!” He urges us to ask, and seek, and knock: He will respond, He will reveal Himself in holy prayer. It is there, with Him and in Him, that we discover and begin to live the interior life.

St. Faustina wrote beautifully of this sacred place, where our Lord waits.

Although outwardly I meet with many sufferings and various adversities, this does not, however, lessen my interior life for a moment nor disturb my inner silence. I do not fear at all being abandoned by creatures because, even if all abandoned me, I would not be alone, for the Lord is with me. And even if the Lord were to hide, love will know how to find Him. For love knows no gates nor guards; ...; it will work its way through wilderness and scorching heat, through storm, thunder and darkness, and reach the source from which it came, and there it will endure forever. All things will come to an end; but love, never.

(St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, Diary, Notebook III, #1022)

# First Communion [at Grace to Paint]



My blog has been unattended too much lately, as I have tried to finish up a six painting project and have been away out of my studio, but hopefully, I will soon be on track once again. The above is a request of my client: six paintings of his color scheme and each one of a different celebration. Now maybe I am ready to show them all, though I am still doing some touching up.

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## Letting myself be led [at Meg's Life]

Yesterday morning I had my six week check up since Charlotte's birthday. All restrictions were removed at the conclusion of the appointment (yippee!!!) even though according to my doctor it will be six months before the pain is totally gone/I'm back to 100%. Due to the restrictions being lifted, I was able to drive for the first time since driving home from work on Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup> when an hour later, Aunt Marie and I took Charlotte to her pediatrician appointment. We celebrated the newfound freedom after the doctor appointment by grabbing brunch at a local restaurant. Afterwards, as we left, we saw two lovely ladies from work in the parking lot. It was great being able to introduce Charlotte to their smiling faces.

Back at the house I did a daily workout that I had been doing in the nine weeks leading up to when Charlotte was born. Like driving, Friday, March 4<sup>th</sup> was the last time I did this workout so it was nice to get back into it yesterday!! I also started carrying laundry baskets up and down the stairs and was even able to carry Charlotte in her carrier. By the time I fell into bed last night, my still numb lower stomach and incision were feeling the strain from the day's extra activity but I actually went to sleep excited about the prospect of driving to the post office to mail birth announcements the next day. My oh my, how times have changed.

Today continued with more "firsts" since before Charlotte's arrival. I enjoyed a bath (minus the bubble bath since I was worried the soap might burn the incision which I know it won't but mentally, I'm not ready yet). Taking this bath was very much enjoyed as I'm so not a shower person. I also drove my car alone for the first time when I drove to the post office this afternoon as Charlotte napped. On the way home, I made an impromptu stop at Office Max to pick up a purple folder and file for organizing Charlotte's papers/records. Yep, she is purple in my color-coded planner. ;) I bumped into two folks from work, including my day time sub, in the parking lot so my return home was about an hour later than expected. Fortunately, Charlotte was just waking from her nap when I walked in the door and I was able to relieve Adam by feeding her.

As we finished up the bottle, it was time to go meet Katy for our first walk in the neighborhood!! This was my first time pushing the stroller *and* taking Charlotte for a walk as the sun set, we breathed in the springtime breeze, and the birds chirped overhead. It was a glorious evening for a stroll and was great to catch up with Katy after having spent some time chatting with Ann last night when she swung by the house to drop off some Pampered Chef from a recent party she had hosted. We're certainly blessed with sweet friends in this little town that's for sure!

As I stared back into Charlotte's dark blue eyes on the walk back to the house this evening, I walked in awe looking at this beautiful little creation of God. What a gift it is to be entrusted with this little one.

Just as the tiniest of buds and leaves are appearing on the trees around us and the smallest shoots of branches are sprouting from the ground underfoot, new life is blossoming and blooming all around us including within our six week old and one day daughter. It's a tremendous honor to be the caretaker of this little person and I hope that I can do God proud in raising her with Adam. This is a new beginning, a new season and start, and much like the Gavin DeGraw lyrics that played on the wedding CD that played over the car speakers when I turned that key in the ignition for the first time in a long time this afternoon, "this is the start of something new...don't you agree??" I think back to the initial days after the surgeries that were so dark...to the shock, disbelief, and sadness of it all. I remember the automatic answer in my mind when yet another nurse would come in to draw blood and say, "Is this your first?" after seeing Charlotte lying in her bassinet next to my hospital bed that would resound in my ears but remain unspoken. "Yes, and last..." Now, I think, "Yes and thank God for her!!"

Last week, a well-meaning friend asked me why I am so sad when she stopped by to meet Charlotte and visit. It gave me pause. Yes, hormones are all out of whack. Yes, the events of the last six weeks were unexpected but there have also been some exceptionally beautiful moments thrown in there too. It's amazing how quickly each day seems to go with "just" tending to Charlotte's needs 24/7. In a way, I'm glad because this crazy pace (and lack of sleep) has kept me distracted and from focusing too long on the sadness. Also, by staying home in the safe cozy bubble we have created for ourselves, and in cutting off contact with others, it's easier to not face the feelings or maybe bury them deep inside me. It took this friend asking *why* I'm sad (and to force me to put it into words) to remind me of how difficult it will be once I do return to work or see others who, well meaning as they are, ask how I am that I might be reduced to a shriveling mess if I don't work to manage my feelings better. Keeping the feelings all bottled up inside won't be helpful-not to me and certainly not to the person who asked. I realized that part of keeping busy was a way I was subconsciously avoiding dealing with how I was feeling which has been something I've needed to work on in the past as well.

The grief comes in waves sometimes and hits me seemingly out of nowhere but then again it's hard to rationalize with grief. Social media, at times, doesn't help...especially when I see pictures of others with multiple children as seeing these images makes me grieve for what I feel as if I have lost. However, a friend did share with me last week a quote when she dropped off a delicious meal she had made for us, "Comparison is the thief of joy". I need to work on not comparing myself to others and to focus on what I can contribute in my own way now given the circumstances that we are currently in and facing. We discussed how hard it is to not look outward and engage in the "grass is greener" mentality especially if we set high expectations for ourselves and perceive ourselves as not meeting standards, even if those standards are self-imposed. I am trying to keep this in mind especially when I also get so angry when I think of those in less than ideal circumstances and how easily they can have multiple children yet that option was taken away from us when the uterus was taken away so abruptly...then I think of how poorly this line of thinking reflects on Charlotte as if she isn't enough but she is. No, I take that back as she is more than enough. I don't want her to grow up with extra pressure from us because all our hopes and dreams are pinned on her shoulders yet I don't want her to think that we had to settle for her since she is the only one we're going to ever have biologically...what an up and down roller coaster it all is but I can honestly say, six weeks out, that I'm seeing the light more and more. Charlotte will have special relationships with her cousins and friends not to mention with us as her parents. Maybe our family will

grow in other ways. Not all is lost. In the last several days, I have not cried more than I have cried. This is an improvement compared to when I couldn't get through a day without crying at least once. On Sunday, when I read the daily reflections I'm completing throughout the Easter season, these words leapt off the page and personally resonated with me:

God will wipe away every tear. ~ Revelation 7:17

*Tears are a natural part of being human.* (This made me think of how proud I was to not have cried that day...and how maybe I shouldn't be working so hard to get through a day without crying. If I'm sad and mourning the loss of something, I shouldn't work to ignore it or push it out of my mind but should allow myself to feel what I'm feeling in an attempt to process it. However, I don't want to get stuck in the grieving cycle and just stay in that spot. Looking at the last 43 days though I can see the small gains and steps I've taken in processing the information and moving forward with the help of a loving (albeit funny) husband who helps me to find my smile when I've lost it, supportive family and friends who are checking in/sending positive words of encouragement, the warm body of a cuddly puppy snuggling next to me as I feed the baby, through the touch of my daughter's tiny hand clinging to my finger reminding me she needs me, all of me not just a me going through the motions, and even the prayers of acquaintances/strangers, as well as God's hand in it all.)



*There is simply no way around it: at one point or another, each of us will shed tears of sadness. They could be the result of a sickness, the death of a loved one, a failed relationship, a dashed hope, or a host of other causes-but they will come. While many people spend their whole lives trying to suppress the pain and avoid the tears, our best strategy would be to find a way to survive these times of distress, not run from them (Revelation 7:14). For us believers, survival means trying not to let these times of pain separate us from the Lord or each other.* (Reading this passage made me think of the friends and moms who have been delivering meals to us. As the days are now a blur of tending to Charlotte, at times I can lose track of what day it is or even the time. On the darkest of days, I tend to want to just keep to myself shutting myself off from people and the outside world...holding on to the anger, resentment, and sorrow due to not "getting what I had assumed I would get" but isn't that how it is? We have an idea as to what something will look like but it is never guaranteed that the plan will unfold the way we envision it. I

can't imagine this profound despair ever dissipating but I know it will lessen over time as that is usually the nature of how these things go. Having come from a large family and having lived with my older brother's large family and being around my niece and nephews, through the years and years of babysitting growing up and elsewhere, through teaching so many years, and now living here in this little town that is big on large families/homeschooling I just can't help but feel like I'm entrenched in what I had always assumed I would have some day/was preparing for and will now always be reminded that Adam and I *won't* be able to create our own large family when I had assumed that that was what was coming next for us. So much so, especially in light of the fact that when Adam and I first started dating he hadn't really considered the size of his future family but then after prayer and reflection he actually wound up wanting a larger family than even I had dreamt of yet now I can't give that to him which is one of the biggest disappointments of all this for me. He has said that he has all he needs in Charlotte and me and how he's so thankful I'm still here after the scare we had before the life-saving surgery so I know it's all me bringing this on myself but it feels like I am failing at the one thing I was supposed to be able to do (have kids). Experiencing these feelings makes me empathize with those who struggle with infertility all the more. So I don't know what the lesson in all this is. Perhaps it is to be more accepting of other plans. Maybe it is to let go of control. Or is it to grow in solidarity with those who can't conceive? Shower all my time/efforts on one child instead of a bunch...which then leads me to think God didn't think I would be a good mother so that is why we are limited to just one, etc. etc. Maybe it's all of the above or some thing else I haven't even considered. The mind can be pretty cruel in thinking up all these "what if" scenarios but I have learned that drowning myself in the pity isn't good! It is during these times that I should reach out all the more and on the days meals are being delivered, I look forward to the conversation, advice, and kind words of these women and men (some Dads have delivered the meals) that help to shine some of the light into the darkness. So many individuals have been *so kind* to not only share of their time and food but of their thoughts and prayers as they drop off the meals. A couple surprises have been included in addition from beautiful flowers to a sheet of Jamberry wraps to an adorable set of shoes for little Charlotte. The love shown our little family, and to our sweet girl, has touched me deeply and I can't wait to "pay it forward" by making my own meal to take to a family in the near future.)





*Jesus knows that we all have scarred memories...Jesus promises to wipe away every tear we have ever shed. In the beauty and perfection of heaven, there will never be another reason to weep. Try to imagine what your mind would be like if you were finally set free of every sad, resentful, critical, or angry thought. Are you suffering right now? Does the pain feel like a weight around your neck or a dark cloud over your head? If so, remember that a day is coming when every problem will be resolved, every memory will be healed, and every tear will be wiped away. Jesus, teach me how to survive in faith. Fill me with hope and confidence that you will come and set me free. (This passage from this past Sunday gives me hope and helps me to realize just how much God loves me for me. The love I feel for Charlotte simply because she exists helps me to see that that is how God feels about me as His*

daughter. I ache when I see her cry. She now has tears when she cries and I do everything in my power to try to keep her from crying when she gets so upset. Think of how the Lord must feel when He sees us in pain and struggling. The way He must want to comfort us and wipe away every tear compared to how we do with our children is so reassuring to me. Instead of working to not cry each day and perhaps suppressing the feelings, I'm going to instead work to set myself free of every sad, resentful, critical, or angry thought....this is a lofty goal I know. It will probably take a lot of self-talk to change the automatic internal dialogue that plays in my mind but with practice, I hope to be able to focus more on the positive than on the negative. By focusing on the love of the Lord and all the supports He has placed into my life to help get through the challenges, I am leaning into the light and hope so that I can be set free from the shackles of the sadness. I snapped the photo below when we were at a state park the other day. Instead of looking at the dull stem that hasn't blossomed, I'm instead going to focus on the one bloom that has sprouted and is growing. My little flower, Charlotte, is the greatest blessing out of all this and I will do all I can to aid her in her growth so she can further blossom like this little flower in the image!)



Heather, our matron of honor, has been a source of reason and hope during these difficult days. I'm so grateful for that moral support and the fact she is willing to stand in the gap for me. She also said something recently that *really* helped to shift my line of thinking. She said that we are now painting a new picture (compared to what we thought we were painting before) and it will still be beautiful...maybe even better than the original. What an absolutely terrific quote and concept!!! Ever since hearing that, I've been actively working to embrace the new masterpiece, or the process of creating that work of art, more and let go of the previously imagined picture. Part of what's helping me to do that is to follow Charlotte's lead. She is always looking up whether we're holding her, she's laying down, or sitting up...she tends to have an upward gaze and is reminding me to keep the focus above me on the light as she does when she stares at the ceiling or to wherever the light is shining. I snapped this photo during a late night feeding as I held her. She kept squirming in my arms and was restless before I realized she was trying to look up regardless of the fact that it was 2:30am and completely dark in the room. She wanted to position herself so that she could see the twinkling lights of the tree I had left on in the living room as a night light.



As I strive to follow Charlotte's lead and put myself in the warmth of the light, I also like to think about the lyrics to our communion song from our wedding, "Shepherd Me Oh God", by Marty Haugen. Last spring, when planning out the music for our wedding, I got a little push back from the church music director when I requested this song be a part of our wedding due to this song typically being used for funerals. However, I wanted to include this particular song as Adam and I began our lives together and wanted it to be included as a reminder that our marriage and relationship is not about my wants or Adam's wants. As of the completion of the sacrament, it was now about putting the other person first and about looking at what God's will is for our marriage and putting it ahead of our individual wants and desires. This self sacrifice or denial for the good of the other all in the name of God is what it is all about and goodness gracious what a reminder I needed as I recently prayed over this psalm and the words from the song....since Charlotte's birthday, I have been focusing on what it is *I* wanted; what I thought our family would look like; what I desired and what I feared. In listening to this song (that I placed on the baby playlist in anticipation of the labor) with Charlotte the other morning, it dawned on me that I need to really need to rely on God shepherding me much like what we heard at mass during last weekend's Gospel and readings. Just like I have had to be dependent on so many over the last six weeks and as I begin to seek more independence now that I've been discharged from my doctor's care (at one point this past weekend, I said I felt so trapped by not being able to drive where I would like to drive when I want to drive), I need to remember to not be totally self sufficient and to continue to lean on and rely on others, especially on God, by putting my trust in Him and in others through recognizing that I don't need to do it all alone. What a lesson in humility to accept help from others and to realize where our shortcomings are so we can work on growing in our weaknesses. I'm thankful for the opportunities to grow that's for sure! God knows the areas in which I struggle but loves me anyway. I hope to continue to grow in surrendering as I can see the past six weeks have been teaching me as I also start to gain back some of my independence/go back to how things were but in a different way. Let us all truly move beyond our own wants, fears, and desires and more fully embrace what it is that God has in mind for us and grow in the grace to accept whatever that may entail.

### Refrain

Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,  
beyond my fears, from death into life.

1. God is my shepherd, so nothing I shall want,

I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love,  
I walk by the quiet waters of peace.

2. Gently you raise me and heal my weary soul,  
you lead me by pathways of righteousness and truth,  
my spirit shall sing the music of your Name.

3. Though I should wander the valley of death,  
I fear no evil, for you are at my side,  
your rod and your staff, my comfort and my hope.

4. You have set me a banquet of love in the face of hatred,  
crowning me with love beyond my pow'r to hold.

5. Surely your kindness and mercy follow me all the days of my life;  
I will dwell in the house of my God forevermore.

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This contribution is available at <http://pagirlmeg.blogspot.com/2016/04/letting-myself-be-led.html>  
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His Kingdom in us begins by His Spirit working in our lives to conform us to the image of His Son!  
Blessed be His Holy Name!

Recognizing that it is His work that must be accomplished, we ask for His daily sustenance and provision. Although most of us take this request to mean “food for the table”, the reality is, that it is a request for His continual and daily spiritual empowerment, the infilling of His Spirit, to be able to carry out His Will. For us today, it refers to the living spiritual strength that is derived from communion with Christ in the Eucharist.

In the prayer we also recognize that our human failings against Love are a major impediment to the fulfillment of His Will and therefore ask for His forgiveness, in accord with our forgiveness of those who trespass against us. In doing this we clear out anything in us that would impede His Will from being accomplished.

Recognizing, also, that the enemy will come against us through temptations to impede the Father’s Will from being completed, we also petition that He not permit any testing that goes beyond our ability to resist.

The reason this prayer, which we term “The Our Father”, is so important is because it is foundational to establishing the appropriate spiritual attitude of faith which underlies our ability to serve Him as His Children and fully committed disciples. That is why many have stated that this prayer really ought to have been named “The Disciples Prayer”.

If the problems of your life situation are creating impediments to your progress as a disciple, always keep in mind the admonition Jesus gave His disciples,

***“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ... [S]eek first the Kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you”. (cf., Mat. t6:25,33)***

Or, put in today’s modern dialect, ***“ Do not let the worries and concerns of everyday life deter you ... your first priority must be to let God reign in your life so that you are always faithful to accomplish His Righteous Will, then you will find that the worldly concerns in your life will be resolved appropriately”.***

### ***The Necessity of Prayer***

Once, when through faith in His Word and Prayer, you have entered into an intimate relationship with the Father through Jesus and deeply desire to follow Jesus in discipleship, you will find that your need for a deeper continuing prayer life increases. Just as Jesus, spent most of his evenings or early mornings in prayer, so to we who are following Him, must do the same. We will do so, not so much as an imposed devotional practice, but instead to fill our awareness of the increased spiritual need for His presence in our renewed lives.

As we go deeper into discipleship we will find that we will not be able to adequately deal with the events and situations which we are called to handle without our daily prayer encounters with Jesus and the Father. Once we begin our prayer encounters and see the results in our everyday lives, we will

willingly seek out these payer times on our own – for we begin to understand that our continuous need to tap into the source of LIFE without which we cannot function spiritually.

First of all we need to remember, that it is only through the intimacy of prayer that we receive from Him the wisdom, knowledge, empowerment, and Love we will need in preparation for the next day's events. Secondly, it is through meditative prayer in union with His Inspired Word, that we continue to be taught by the Holy Spirit in order to be formed and grow spiritually and learn from our experiences. St. Ignatius of Loyola tells us that ***“...there are very few people who realize what God would make of them if they abandoned themselves into his hands, and let themselves be formed by his grace.”***

Once we have entered into true discipleship we will find that we can no more do without daily prayer than we can do without food or water.

### ***The Need for Discernment***

One of the problems we face as Lay Disciples of Jesus, is that the modern church is not structured to properly assist lay people, who are not part of the “religious establishment”, to follow the personal path of discipleship the Lord is calling them to follow. The modern church establishment does not expect lay people to enter into such individual callings. The establishment expects that any one who has such a call to either enter a seminary to become a priest, deacon, or minister or to join some religious order. It is difficult to overcome the prejudices of the past that have placed lay Christians as passive , un-empowered, servants of the clergy, having no understanding of things spiritual.

As a result, until the Lord works to change the situation we must seek the Lord intensely for personal discernment and guidance for what the Lord wants of us each day– a discernment that goes beyond that of our calling – a discernment that leads us to hear the voice of the Head Shepherd, Jesus Our Lord! (Cf., [§ Hearing and Obeying His Voice](#))

It is only through hearing and living His Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit that we will be able to distinguish between our fleshly-driven instincts and the spiritual directives and revelations from Our Heavenly Shepherd. Praised be His Holy name!

Now, I don't discount our need of our earthly shepherds because they are still the dispensers of the sacraments, especially those of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. It is just that some of them cannot fully comprehend where we Charismatics are, spiritually, making it difficult for them to provide in-depth spiritual guidance for us when they themselves have never experienced the fullness and spiritual gifts of the Spirit and, in many cases, even resist them.

I try to maintain good relations with all members of the clergy, but I usually feel them out before going into spiritual issues until I sense they are on the same page with me and with the Holy Spirit. I know its not their fault, its just that the depth of their spirituality varies depending on their seminary and life experiences especially if they have not been introduced to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

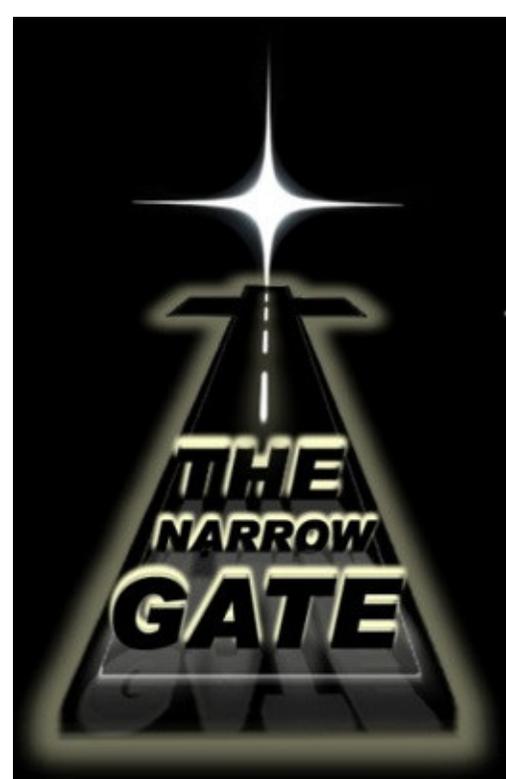
By the way, I expect that this spiritual lethargy that is still evident with some of our clergy will all be changing in the church of the new era we are entering, where the Spirit of God will overwhelm all Christians with His Glory and many of those who are now holding back will be surprisingly renewed in the Spirit. It will be a very difficult era for Christians and He is preparing us for those times when we will need to draw upon His power and strength to manifest His Kingdom on this Earth!

I must also mention that if you are struggling with discerning the Lord's Will in your life, obedience to the Father is of the essence. If you yoke yourself to the Lord He will bring you through the times when you are being tested because of the fleshly baggage we all have to contend with.

Even the very smallest thing that we allow in our lives that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit is completely sufficient to account for spiritual confusion, and spending all of our time thinking about it will still never make it clear. Spiritual confusion can only be conquered through obedience. As soon as we obey, we have discernment. This is humiliating; because when we are confused we know that the reason lies in the uncertain state of our mind. But when our natural power of sight is devoted and submitted in obedience to the Holy Spirit, it becomes the very power by which we perceive God's will, and our entire life is kept in simplicity.

### ***Relationship is Everything***

Finally brethren, in order to make clear the importance of our relationship with Jesus and the Father, let us recall the words of Our Teacher when he told His disciples to ...



***“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ “But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’ (Luke 13:24)***

Yes, we also may claim a mundane familiarity with Him through your religious practice and even have worked signs and wonders in His name, but unless you personally “KNOW” Him, He will tell you when you come to His door: “depart from me you workers of iniquity, I do not KNOW you”.

Relationship, then, is everything, and without it our works for God become meaningless for entry into the Kingdom.

I pray brethren that the preceding discussion has been of help in encouraging you to move through the “[narrow door](#)” into a personal and private discipleship relationship with the Father through Jesus. If you have that desire in your heart then you can be sure that the Holy Spirit placed it there. Pay heed, then, to that desire and seek the face of the Lord in prayer. If He placed it there He will confirm it and bring you to the open door to the Kingdom!

Baruch Ha Shem! Blessed be the Name!

Your Brother In Christ Jesus .... Bartimaeus

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### ***Related Links***

[<> Sweet Yoke of Love](#)

[<> Husbands Love your Wives](#)

[<> Walking the Walk](#)

[<> Discerning the Spirit's Call](#)

[<> Hearing God's Voice and Obeying It](#)

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This contribution is available at [http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2016/06/24/\\$-our-relationship-with-god-is-essential/](http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2016/06/24/$-our-relationship-with-god-is-essential/)  
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## Phoenix Ordinations and the Catholic Priesthood

Yesterday morning at [St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church](#) in Avondale, AZ, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of the Diocese of Phoenix ordained four men to the Catholic Priesthood – Rev. Mr. Sheunesu Utete Bowora, Rev. Mr. Daniel James Connealy, Rev. Mr. Ryan Christopher Lee, and Rev. Mr. David Michael Loeffler. It was a joyful day here in the diocese as these men were added to the ranks of the Holy Priesthood – “You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 7:17).

A [vocation boom](#) is happening in the Church – many young men are hearing God’s call to discern and eventually enter the Catholic Priesthood. It’s not as if God stopped calling men to the Priesthood, but what seemed to happen was that young men stopped listening to the voice of God. Many dioceses around the country and around the world, especially in Africa and Asia, are seeing an increase of men entering seminary. Please continue to pray for an increase to vocations to the Priesthood, so that we have more workers in the vineyard for the years to come.

The [Catholic Priesthood](#) is a topic that I have written on many times over the past 4½ years. When you witness on a daily basis the great example of holy men from different walks of life, and at different times in their priesthood, you want to share that with others in the hopes that they can experience the beauty and sanctity of the Catholic Priesthood that you see frequently. Although completely and totally human, the men I work with truly live their vocation day-by-day, always seeking to serve the parish/diocese and the culture as Jesus Christ. It is an honor to be around such individuals. For more of my writings from the past, I would encourage you to click on the link at the top of this paragraph to read more about the Catholic Priesthood.

To conclude today’s post, below are short testimonies from fellow Catholics speaking on what the Catholic Priesthood means to them. If you would like to add your own short testimony, I encourage you to do so in the comment section at the bottom of this post.

“Priesthood means allowing God to lead you to where he needs you. It means having a strong enough faith and support system to truly trust fully and give yourself to the Lord in service of him and his church. We need more good, holy, strong men for this vocation. I’m proud if those who answer the call!” – Dena

“My first time [yesterday] attending an ordination mass. It was incredible! Like Jesus, they give up everything for us! To serve us and bring Jesus to the world! I think all priests should forever be in our prayers. We should continually give thanks to God for our priests and follow their example and give everything to God.” – Cindy

“The priesthood is the ultimate example of dying to one’s self a vocation whose motto is “I am Third”. For me they stand as a benchmark in my relationship with Christ. Am I being as compassionate in my relations as Father is with those he comes in contact with? Is my prayer life anywhere near where Fathers is? I learn so much about what I should be doing in my vocation of married life from watching Father in his vocation.” – Chris



Bishops Thomas J. Olmsted and James S. Wall (Diocese of Gallup) with the newly ordained.

“The Catholic priesthood means we have more workers in the vineyard to help us find our way to true happiness.” – Sandy

“Catholic priests give us the blessing of the sacraments and guidance. It makes sense that we call our priests “Father” because they shepherd us on our spiritual journey. I pray that we will always have priests available to say Mass, give us the sacraments, and guide us closer to Jesus.” – Helen

“As a convert I have a profound sense of gratitude for the priesthood, as I know decades of Christianity without a priest. I have both sides of the coin to compare. When I see a priest I see Christ, the visible reality of living out our vocations. In Holy Communion, in confession, in confirmation and the rest of the sacraments there are my brothers in Christ being Christ for me and ministering to me. In laying down their lives for the sake of the flock they not only provide a holy example, but strengthen my resolve in my vocation and my pursuit of holiness.” – Dave

“Catholic Priesthood means that our Catholic tradition will be carried on by good and godly men...who ascribe to be true followers of Christ. In a time when there are so many assailants to our faith.” – Kathy

“No Priests means no Eucharist and no Sacrament of Reconciliation or other Sacraments. Our salvation depends on them.” – David

“I used to be very critical of priests. I have since, through grace, come to see them as super heroes. Not without human faults, but heroically living out a vocation that is countercultural and contains challenges I will never know. I marvel at their gift of self and hope to imitate them through my own vocation of motherhood.” – Amanda

“Through the Catholic priesthood, I am able to receive the Sacraments instituted by Christ, especially the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation. Catholic priests show an intimate love of Jesus, and through their humanity show that we are all able to have this relationship with our Lord. The priesthood relationship with the members of the church is a living example of the love we should all have for our family.” – Mike

“To me the priesthood means Christ representatives on earth who are able to sanctify the people of God through the power of the sacraments. As our shepherds they radiate the goodness, mercy, and love of God.

And they bring us the greatest gift ever Jesus in the Eucharist! I am eternally grateful for all the men who have answered the Lord's call and have given their Fiat!" – Nicole

## **St. John Vianney, Patron of Parish Priests...Pray for our Priests.**

This blog post is dedicated to Fr. Sheunesu Bowora, Fr. Daniel Connealy, Fr. Ryan Lee, Fr. David Loeffler, and all the other priests who were ordained this year in the Universal Church, including Fr. Mark Bristol.



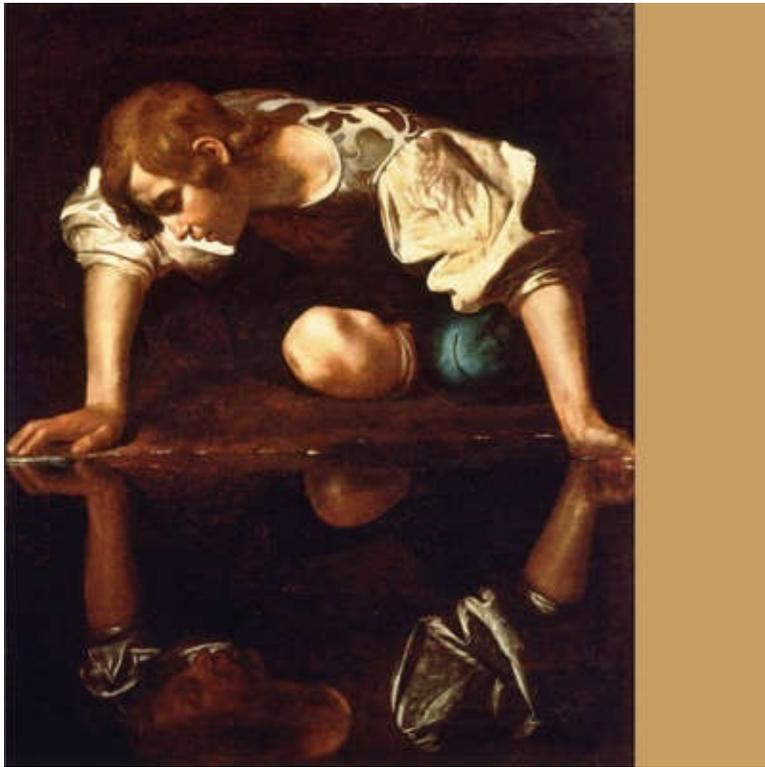
Newly ordained, Fr. Ryan Lee, blessing Bishop James Wall of the Diocese of Gallup.

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## The Real Apple [at WordPress.com]



I found myself in some redundant dismay in finding that an influential, syndicated columnist, professor at Georgetown University, and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, E. J. Dionne (I assume a Catholic?), has apparently little knowledge of what drives man to sin. Oops! He's in Wikipedia too, and the credentialed salutations of his experiences are lengthy. All the better, as with this immense resume he is so much better the perfect illustration of the difficulty in recognizing and understanding moral blindness. (I mean, if everyone of substance is blind to moral responsibility, how would you know it?)

In *Commonweal Magazine* recently, an article of his was posted: *Will Orlando Soften Our Ideologies*. For those who do not know, *Commonweal Magazine* is a Catholic website of journalism and news with a bend towards the more liberal viewpoints. I suggest you give his article a read; then continue with my post.

<https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/will-orlando-soften-our-ideologies>

His article in itself says little. Mr. Dionne must have been obligated to submit, and *Commonweal* must have had an open page to fill. The article is a logical whimper for gun control as being the panacea for two of the more directly-egregious sins that mankind commits: terror and murder. His selection of Orlando and the mass murders committed at the Pulse Nightclub are timely; timely in that he's relying heavily on the emotions, sympathies, and consciences of his readers more so than his own ability to mount an effective argument. Good timing on his part, as there's not much there. Sorry for the criticism, but really?

Mr. Dionne makes the argument that with mass murder being a real, constant condition of American society, it is only logical that our American society reflects upon the participatory role of firearms in these heart-wrenching actions, and that perhaps something should be done to curtail their involvement;

i.e., establish laws that prevent certain individuals' ability to buy or possess certain firearms. It's an emotional, man-made, knee-jerk reaction that focuses in on the object in preference to the subject; as if somehow the object is majorly responsible for affecting the moral choices an individual has to make when under the stress of their own intellectual inadequacies and deviancies.

I get it. I've heard it before. Frankly, I don't like firearms much myself, but they appear to have fundamental purposes that are clearly metaphysical in nature. That's because man is always temporal in his satisfactions and constant in his desires. As a tool, I cannot seem to evaluate which purpose this tool is better at: offence or defense. With the ever-increasing encroachment of our own government, as a dictatorial force overshadowing our individual and societal freedoms, and in the realization that our media has leaned well into a complicit position of actively participating in narrow political agendas that endanger Americans of all persuasions, I lean towards the defense option. How about you?

The only way to defeat active terrorism and mass violence is through the use of a form of human tool – that which we refer to as firearms – that silences terrorism and suppresses mass violence when education, social services, détente, negotiations, and temporary penalties do not work. These days, there's a lot of that, and thus such a tool is necessary because of something vastly other, and more grave, than the human tool of firearms. It's also something other that we refuse to consider, or even believe it to be in the room of consideration.

My dismay with Mr. Dionne is a simple one. The knee-jerk reaction I referred to earlier, is his assumption that the weapon that caused the immediate, devastating carnage at the Pulse Nightclub – firearms – is the only problem that requires a solution. He offers no other thoughts on this matter of terrorism and mass violence; that there might be another weapon in play here, that I assert, is far greater in its destructive power, far more blinding of man to the dignity that all mankind is deserved of, and far more dehumanizing, widespread, permeating, and lasting. It is man's insatiable appetite for himself.

The real story is that the vast majority of humanity refuses to compromise themselves to the greater good of society. In other words, give up their self-centered ideologies that instigate and then perpetuate egocentric practices. You know... be as the Christ has asked us to be. This writer knows, that to be truly Christian is to be it now; from one moment to the next moment, not at some convenient, temporary time in the future after one's ideological precepts and corporeal indulgences have been accomplished to one's own satisfaction. We always want the other to adjust their ways and suffer for the good of the whole, before we are willing (and we are not) to adjust our own ways and then stay on the path of good.

And when we do consider this possibility, we dismiss it with the fact that it would not have stopped this murderer, Omar Mateen, from his bloody path. Well, there's the problem I just mentioned. We always want to argue with a stop watch in our hands; asserting our primal position in time and space as the determining factor of absolute truth and the fate of mankind. It's all about the "me".

If this writer, and others, want to truly bring communion to all of humanity, they should realize it won't ever be accomplished by limiting the access to firearms. There is other technological weaponry that is vastly more harmful to mankind than firearms, and is directly related to all of the aspects discussed regarding the shooting in Orlando. One bullet, one person is an amazingly inefficient technology for the destruction of man. It's primitive; not the weapon of choice for the real miners of man's gluttony, greed, and pride. Far better is it to dehumanize a society by appealing to its deepest carnal and ego-illusional appetites. Even better is to dress such ultimate weaponry with the golden cloth of individual rights and freedoms; as if somehow indulging one's individuality strengthens commonality.

But you say, “How do you build an argument to support such a contention?”

Through the history and spectrum of man there have been and will be common thoughts and actions that mark the essence and metaphysical nature of mankind as a species. Regardless of the diversity of man, we all seem to embrace a code of morals, set forth in an ethical structure, that are similar in nature; astoundingly so. For a creature that reasons his free will to be at the top of his intellectual food-chain, it is surprising just how subservient man’s free will is to his and her ethical structure. We call this an absolute condition; a condition that rises above and is independent from our simple, temporal desires and rationales.

Our absolute, ethical structure provides for us, in the physical world, habituated reflections of the perfect and absolute. We call these reflections “virtues”, and as long as man has had the capacity of reason and communication, we have catalogued these virtues and demonstrated their efficacy in promoting the good of the society. Left alone in this absolute state, our ethical structure is marvelously effective.

However, when man uproots a virtue from the absolute, ethical equation of humanity, and secures it to himself in the temporal, physical realm, it is invariably deficient of its perfection, and becomes a relative condition; a condition fully subject to those temporal satisfactions and constant desires I mentioned earlier. The virtue is effectively rendered disputable and thus useless as any form of perpetual measure.

Let me use an example to illustrate my argument.

Justice originates from a higher plane than from man’s reason, yet as written and executed law it is rendered insufficient simply by its written tenants – a collection of interpreted premises, legislated by questionable individuals, and constantly subject to proceeding actions and historical findings. Justice is flubber.

Man takes such absolute things, as justice, and renders them into law and leisure, so that man need not burden himself with these things as part of his nature. It frees him to look away from his commonality and obligation to mankind and into himself. Such a narcissistic action frees man from spiritual sanctity so that he might indulge himself in sin. A tentmaker from the first century, Paul, wrote of this in his letter to the Romans.

Man believes that to free himself from virtue, in its absolute form, is to be free, yet in doing so, man has only found servitude and despair within his own relative condition. No relative model can ever be anything other than an imperfect representation of the true and absolute form of being, as created by the forces set into motion by God. (If you’re an atheist, substitute “nature” for “God” and you’re there. If you’re a Millennial, use “Gaia”.) The imperfection, I note, is the reliance the relative model has upon its creator; a mortal and temporal man who can only create within his own experience. No relative model of an absolute form can ever exist outside of its own conditions. Justice, through man’s law, will never be justice for all.

In 1961, on January 20<sup>th</sup>, our newly-inaugurated President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, spoke the following:

“My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

This Catholic and Democrat meant it. He was making a classic Catholic (Christian) call to service; a service that would require each of us to carefully examine our true nature and our true calling as a

societal creature. To fulfill such a call is to put away our needs for the needs of others, to dispense with our desires, and to lean our will on God's will as surely as our free will bows – at least in part – to our ethical nature. It's that other part – the uncooperative part – that we need to pay attention to, not firearms.

Consider how incredibly outdated Kennedy's quote from his inaugural address is in today's self-indulgent world. When he said those words, in 1961, they electrified and unified America into depths of character that had not been seen since World War II, and successfully created a bipartisan coalition amongst its common, everyday citizenry that changed the face of its racial past forever, as well as set man's footprint on the moon. It was not done through intolerant coercion by a heavy-handed government whose sole goal appeared to be the ruin of several of our amendments to our Constitution through the pandering to corrupted ideologues. Rather, it was accomplished by the communion of the American spirit. Yes. Laws were enacted to ensure what had been enshrined, but it was the people – in good conscience reflecting the absolute values of their ethical structure – that carried the day. No one was greater than the next, in their hearts and minds, and no one group was to be elevated above another to ensure the success of the process towards equality. We were to be one people.

Kennedy's quote laid out the absolute truth to a people who were looking for the light, and with that light they found the path with their own feet. His words announced that the one is to be in service to the many; that each one of us – no matter who we are – is a minority within themselves, and that minority – no matter the trials it had faced in its past – was bound to the majority; the common thought of man and his absolute ethical structure. It was a social message that carried the weight of the democratic dream as a self-worth of constant value; thus ensuring dignity for everyone, and not just those who have been singled out for political ends.

In America, today, we have turned that soliloquy – whose character held us close to the path – into a turned-upon-its-head farcical outrage; a near-comedic tirade of me first, and the rest of you later. Sacrifice is a sham; replaced now by the entitlement of being a new cause on the horizon, and masturbatory leisure that is no longer simply a pastime, but now an absolute right. We consume, and we want to consume now; immediately.

We always want the quick fix. Banning firearms is a quick fix, and perhaps one that would seemingly provide a temporary calm in a social-media, turbulent world. Yet we seem to not understand that terrorism comes in many forms; and not just religious.

There's a silent terrorism going on in America right now, and guns are not its weaponry of choice. Like carbon dioxide, it is a necessity for life on this planet, and like carbon dioxide, it is colorless and odorless. And like carbon dioxide, in too pure and sustaining a form, it is a toxin that kills. It is the evil of something hidden beneath the cloak of capitalist democracy and individual freedom; two conditions that, when poured pure, provide for the dignity of mankind, but when poured tainted, with the avarice of individual egotism and self-centeredness, it poisons. Its most effective weapon; the juxtaposition of good vs evil is played out in the media and political arena so as to provide for juridical red herrings that numb the collective consciousness and has nothing to do with human equality and dignity.

It tastes wonderful, goes down smooth, and leaves you with a sense of import in a complex and unsatisfying society. Yet ultimately it will render you senseless to your real individuality. Like carbon dioxide, in too high a concentration: you first experience a dizziness to the needs of others, then a headache brought about by what you perceive as the demands of others, and finally a complete lack of recognition that a person is nothing other than an object for your desires to squander. In the end, you'll

never know what you don't know, and you won't care. You'll be too busy playing with yourself.

Mark Zuckerberg, of Facebook, recently noted the expectation of the 'Matrix' within 50 years. What do you think that Matrix is other than your own sloth?

God Calls Us All Into His Service – Reese

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## Defending our Freedom [at Justin's Corner]



As we Americans prepare to celebrate Independence Day less than two weeks from now, we American Catholics are observing the fifth annual Fortnight for Freedom declared by our bishops, a two-week period of prayer, fasting, education, and activism in support of religious liberty that always begins on June 21 and ends on the Fourth of July. Recognizing the increasing frequency and intensity of the attacks on freedom of religion by militant secularists, especially in our government and the courts but also in the media and our educational and cultural institutions, in the spring of 2012 our bishops published an important pastoral letter entitled "Our First, Most Cherished Liberty." In this document, our shepherds recalled America's rich tradition of religious freedom spanning four centuries; listed more than a dozen examples of recent attacks on that freedom; called the faithful to be vigilant in defending their hard-won religious liberties against the ever-mounting assault of radical secularism; and finally announced the first annual Fortnight for Freedom, which was promoted by EWTN and observed by Catholics across the United States.

Of course, the main event that led our bishops to establish this annual observance was the controversial HHS mandate bombshell dropped by the Obama administration in January of 2012, which demanded that health insurance plans across the country include artificial contraception, sterilization, and abortifacients regardless of religious or moral objections to the distribution of such items. Although this mandate--the crucial centerpiece of the massively unpopular Affordable Care Act, generally known as ObamaCare--is still on the books four and a half years later, having been unfortunately upheld by the Supreme Court along with the rest of the ObamaCare travesty as somehow "constitutional" in June of 2012, dozens of lower court rulings against it have provided temporary injunctive relief to scores of Catholic and other Christian religious groups, healthcare providers, charitable organizations, universities, media entities, and other institutions that have rightly refused to comply with this unjust law despite the threat of crushing tax penalties. Furthermore, last year the Supreme Court ruled that most businesses that object to compliance with the mandate on religious grounds should be permanently exempt from it. So while some progress has been made against this particularly egregious and unconstitutional attack on our religious liberties, more remains to be done: it must be completely overturned.

Like the other freedoms we enjoy as Americans such as freedom of speech and of the press, freedom to peaceably assemble, and freedom to petition the government for a redress of grievances, freedom of religion is a gift from our Creator that is guaranteed by our Constitution and must accordingly be protected by our government. No one should be forced into providing anti-life products and services that he or she considers immoral, against the dictates of his or her religion and conscience.

However, as Yuval Levin pointed out in an article in

### *First Things*

magazine several months ago, we should beware of too narrowly individualistic, negative, and subjective an approach to religious liberty. Freedom of religion must not be confined to simply obtaining and retaining exemptions for certain individual persons and organizations that refuse to obey the law because they consider it wrong. Rather than being limited to a condescending exception for certain seemingly fanatical individuals within our society, religious liberty should be the rule for our society as a whole, as it was once upon a time. The idea here, which originated with our nation's founders, is that American society will flourish when

*all*

of its members are allowed to freely exercise their religious beliefs together as a community. In addition, it is fundamentally misguided to oppose the HHS mandate simply because we Catholics consider it an unjust law that attacks our religious liberties and moral conscience rights or simply because we Catholics regard contraceptives and abortifacients as immoral drugs. Such arguments are too narrowly focused and too subjective to be really convincing in the long run, and our radically secularist opponents have already seized on those weaknesses to bolster their own position. We must go deeper, building our defense on the bedrock of natural law and objective truth. Ultimately, we seek to rid America of the HHS mandate, not simply because we Catholics consider it an unjust law, but because it

*is*

an unjust law--not only for Catholics, but for pro-life Americans of all faiths and even for pro-life atheists. It isn't just an attack on our religious liberties and moral conscience rights; it's an attack on the natural law established by our Creator and upon our sacred right as human beings to act in accordance with that law.



Anchored firmly in the natural law, the concept of ordered liberty was a key founding principle of our nation that unfortunately is largely forgotten today. In a remarkably Catholic view of this concept, the Founders regarded freedom not as the totally unrestricted ability of human beings to do whatever the heck they may want to do, but rather as the ability to do what they

*ought*

to do, what they

*should*

do. While the freedom our Creator has given us is indeed very broad, it does have certain limits that He has laid down for our own good, and those limits are defined by the natural law, which is accessible to human reason. As long as we obey the natural law and thus act in accord with right reason, we remain truly free as individuals and as a nation. Morally speaking, to violate the natural law is an abuse of freedom, which was once commonly referred to as license or permissiveness.

A big part of the problem with America today is that we have largely abandoned this rational concept of ordered liberty rooted in the Creator's natural law in favor of a nebulous, ill-defined sort of "freedom" that is ultimately a product of moral relativism. In the past, our nation had laws prohibiting obscenity, indecency, and pornography in printed material and radio broadcasts; these entirely reasonable laws, which reflected the natural law, benefited our society by discouraging certain forms of immorality, which naturally helped to protect our freedom. No one at the time ever claimed that these laws violated anyone's right to freedom of speech. But if someone today advocates for bringing back such laws, he or she is derided as a crackpot fundamentalist who opposes freedom of speech. That's a shame. We must revive this forgotten concept of ordered liberty based on "the laws of nature and nature's God" in order to re-learn the true meaning of freedom, so that we can preserve this treasure and hand it on to future generations.

This is the first full Fortnight for Freedom since the Supreme Court's infamous ruling last June that overturned dozens of state marriage laws by elevating immoral homosexual relationships to the legal status of marriage throughout the country. As with the Obama administration's HHS mandate, this terribly misguided and wrong decision is not just a major attack on our religious liberties, but constitutes an assault on the Creator's natural law, in which the union of a man and a woman is the primary social institution for the good of the couple, their children, and the whole society. As we fight to defend our religious freedom on this particular front, our well-reasoned arguments must be grounded in the objective truth of the natural law and borne out by the personal witness of our own lives in order to resonate with the widest possible audience and effectively influence public opinion.

Returning to what was said above about the communal aspect of religious freedom, it should be underscored that only a truly religious people will value, fight for, protect, and defend their religious liberty. America's founders and colonists who fought for our independence from Britain and established our nation were deeply religious people of devout Christian faith, and we considered ourselves a Christian country until very recently. As the pseudo-religion of radical secularism increasingly dominates American society and strives to supplant the Judeo-Christian philosophy that made us a great nation, the question naturally arises as to whether we will remain a religious people tenaciously committed to defending our first freedom in an increasingly hostile cultural climate, or whether we will eventually surrender to the forces of militant secularism and allow this cherished freedom to be stolen from us by a handful of godless elitist pirates who have commandeered our Ship of State. It is to be hoped that we the people will retain the courage to stand up and retake control of our nation from the high priests of radical secularism; to recover and proudly reassert our nation's traditional Christian identity; and to consistently and vigorously defend the religious liberties and moral conscience rights of all Americans of good will, so that we can pass this great land on to our children and grandchildren as "one nation under

God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all".

Mary Immaculate, Patroness of the United States, pray for us!

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## The Sacred Heart and my breaking heart [at Maria Morera Johnson]



A year ago, almost to the day, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I sat in a little church off the main road to nowhere on the Gulf of Mexico, and had a deep conversion.

I'm not one to say the words, "Jesus spoke to me" or "the Holy Spirit prompted me" but rather, I feel a sense of peace and consolation when I believe my actions are reflective of the Lord's will in my life. It's taken me a lifetime to get to this place, believe me. If nothing else, St. Teresa's words below have given me the strength to move forward, instead of looking at the past and the mistakes I've made on this journey:

"To reach something good it is very useful to have gone astray, and thus acquire experience." St. Teresa of Avila

I don't recommend this route to holiness to everyone. In fact, it's usually easier to get it right the first time, but St. Teresa was a bit of a screw-up early on, and look at what a badass saint she became, so I'm in good company — saintly company. If that doesn't give me hope, I don't know what could.

So last year, I was in the midst of a personal crisis. Not a crisis of faith, but rather, a crisis of vocation, both in terms of employment, and more importantly, as a wife. I had reached that point in mid-life when, I suppose, people have the kind of breakdown that makes them buy Ferraris. Red ones. You know what I mean.

I bought a waterfront piece of property and decided to quit my job.

*Wait for it...*

**Jesus made me do it.**

I'd give the hairy eyeball to any one of my friends who came out and made such a wild statement. *What? God is telling you to quit your job and drop a load of money you don't really have on a move to another state? Now? With an ill husband?*

I'm telling you, Jesus said do it. So I did. Well, ***we did***. My husband and I.

You see, when we were first married almost 31 years ago, actually, years before we were married, we'd sit under the Banyan trees on the 9th hole of the Coral Gable Country Club golf course and look at the stars and talk about our dreams. I wanted to write a book. He wanted to be a millionaire by age 30 and buy a house on the beach. Neither happened in our 30s. Or our 40s.

In our 50s, it occurred to us that we might want to shit or get off the pot — you know, actually do something about these dreams. [I wrote a book](#).

He took a rather [unwanted disability retirement](#). Time wasn't on our side.

But that didn't matter. You see, [we have Jesus on our side](#).

So we decided it was time to make his dream happen. And we started looking for waterfront property. And looking. And looking some more. It wasn't happening. There's a difference between taking a risk, pushing the limits of your resources to a risky point, and completely losing your mind. In my experience, Jesus likes a good chuckle every once in awhile and *likes* to see us lose our minds.

OK. I get it.

***Jesus, I trust in you.***

Cue this road to nowhere. We went in search of a reasonably priced property we saw online. You'd think we'd know better. The property was a mess. I was a mess. I was a ***hot*** mess, folks, and poor John wasn't about to pour a bucket of ice over my head, though maybe he should have. He certainly had a right to do it given my tantrum, but no. He's a good guy, and found a church instead. So I could go cool off in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

This is why the sacrament of holy matrimony is so important folks. You need three to make a marriage work, but that's not today's point. Today's point is that I was a hot mess, and Jesus had to slap some sense into me.

You see, I didn't want that property because it wasn't what ***I wanted***. I wanted an open beach to take long walks. I wanted sand between my toes. My husband can't walk on sand. He needs a boardwalk. I had my dream, and wanted to design his, too. I didn't see that, but Jesus did. Oh, boy, did he. And he was mad at me for being selfish. It was at that little church that I heard him say to me, yes, heard, in my head and in my heart so there was no mistake, "I gave you your dream. Get out of the way so I can give him his."

I heard it. Loud and clear. ***Yes, Lord. Yes.***

When I came around the side of the building to get into the waiting car, I saw the For Sale sign behind John. He hadn't seen it because he was watching out for me. Ha. Ocean front property for sale. Right. There.

A lot happened since then. It has been a year of building, and I don't just mean a house.

Next week, we move in.

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# Charleston, The Stranger, And Orlando: The Power of Forgiveness [at Nisi Dominus]

## Love Overcomes Hate

One year ago, a shocking crime was dominating the news here in the United States, the vicious murder of nine members of a prayer group in Charleston, South Carolina. The killer, a young man named Dylann Roof, hoped that the crime would ignite a race war (Roof is white, his victims were black). It didn't happen. It's true that some political activists took advantage of the understandable outrage at Roof's racist massacre to push for various tenuously related pet causes, such as banning displays of the flag of the old Confederacy (never let a good crisis go to waste, someone once said).



More important than the machinations of the usual political agitators, however, was the reaction of the family and friends of the victims. They had every reason to rise up in a spirit of anger and righteous vengeance. Instead, they [came together in a spirit of love and forgiveness](#), forgiveness explicitly grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These grieving, wounded Christians gave the whole world a moving example of the healing power of Christ's love.

## A Stranger Comes To Town

Last year, however, was not the first time, and these were not the first Christians to have lived out the words of their Savior: "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). I was reminded of another such example a few days ago, when I paid a visit to the town cemetery in Gray, Maine. There, among other Civil War era graves stands a headstone which reads:

Stranger

a Soldier of the late war

Died 1862

Erected

By the Ladies of Gray

A star medallion accompanies the stone, to indicate that the man beneath was a combat veteran. There is usually a flag as well; when I visited last week, there were actually three small flags snapping in the breeze. The Stranger differs from the dozens of other Civil War veterans buried in the cemetery, however, in that, here in the heart of the northernmost state of Yankee New England, his grave is honored not with the American flag, but with the Confederate battle flag, an emblem of the enemy in that conflict.

There's an interesting story here, going back over a century and a half. At the time of the Civil War, soldiers who fell in battle would be buried in a military cemetery, usually not far from where they died. If a soldier's family wished to bury him at home, they had to pay out of their own resources for the transport of his body. And so it happened that when Lt. Charles Colley of Gray died in September of 1862, succumbing to wounds he received at the battle of Cedar Mountain in Virginia, his family paid to bring his body back to Maine.

An unpleasant surprise lay in store for Lt. Colley's family when they opened his coffin, however. They found in the casket not their son, but an unidentified young man in a confederate uniform. The government was not willing to ship him back, and besides, who knew where to send him? And so a group of local women arranged to have him interred in the local cemetery. There he lies today, the gray-uniformed Stranger side by side with one Johnson Smith, his blue-coated antagonist from the Maine Volunteers.

People Are More Than Symbols Or Categories

It might be helpful to consider who these "Ladies of Gray" were. First of all, the Town of Gray sent a larger proportion of its population to the war than any other community in Maine; 178 of them are buried in the town cemetery. The "Ladies" were mostly mothers of young men who had gone to fight against the Stranger and his comrades-in-arms. Many of these women had already seen their sons killed or grievously wounded. How tempting it must have been to take symbolic vengeance on the remains of this enemy. The Ladies of Gray were good Christian women, however, and saw him not as a symbol or a category ("The Enemy"), but as a fellow human being whose mortal remains deserved to be treated with the same dignity as any of their own.



The two cases above, in Charleston, SC in 2015 and in Gray, ME in 1862, are vivid reminders of what we can do if we take Christ's words to heart. And if Christ's love can help us to see, and to love, the humanity in someone who has murdered a brother or sister, or who has been making war against our sons, surely we can do the same with somebody with whom we simply disagree. That's why it was perfectly natural for Christians around the United States and around the world to offer prayers for the forty-nine people murdered and dozens more injured at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and offer support to their families. It doesn't matter if we disagree about the morality of homosexual acts or the proper legal status of homosexual relationships. They are our fellow beings, made in the image and likeness of God, unjustly slaughtered by a heartless fanatic. We Christians would be hypocrites indeed if we did not pray for their souls and for the consolation of their loved ones.

J' Accuse!

As it happens, however, there are some people who are accusing us Christians of hypocrisy *because* we pray for the victims of the Orlando massacre. They argue that because we oppose gay marriage and the homosexual lifestyle, we must therefore really hate the victims, since they were slaughtered in a gay nightclub. Some of these critics have even gone so far as to say that conservative Christians are really to blame and not radical Islam, nor even the Muslim jihadist himself who publicly declared his allegiance to the terrorist Islamic State in the midst of the killing.

Some of the purveyors of this venomous nonsense are political operators, intent on exploiting a tragedy to push their agenda. Most of them, on the other hand, are probably convinced of the current secular dogma that our worth derives not from the fact that we are human beings made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27), but from our membership in various ethnic or sexual identity groups. The fact that Omar Mateen's victims were mostly members of the LGBTQ community is more important than the simple fact that they were people cruelly murdered. In such a worldview there is little sense of shared humanity for its own sake, and to disagree with a particular group is necessarily to hate its members. In such a worldview it is impossible to love your enemies, and praying for them can only be pretense. And so large segments of the popular culture have proclaimed Christians who pray for the murdered men and woman of Orlando to be haters and hypocrites. Case closed.

Speaking The Truth In Love

Now, it's mighty tempting to lash out in turn at those who are exploiting the crimes of a fanatical jihadist, not to mention the deaths of his many victims, in order to slander Christians. I was ready to lash out myself a week ago. That is until I came across [this article](#) titled "Pastor: Have Mercy On Dylann Roof". It tells about a prayer service held in Charleston on the first anniversary of Dylann Roof's rampage:

Rev. Dr. Juenarrl Keith gave the invocation for the service . . . During the prayer, he asked for guidance and healing for the families, but also mentioned Roof, the man charged with the murders of the church members.

"Have mercy upon the soul and the life of young Dylann Roof," Keith told the crowd. Some in the crowd could be heard saying "Amen," and clapping after his statement.

Moments earlier, Keith told the gathered crowd inside the area, "help us o God never to deny humanity in others, for it is then we destroy humanity within ourselves."



After that, how could I not feel ashamed at my own anger at people guilty of little more than name-calling?

It's not for us, of course, to forgive Omar Mateen: that is for the loved ones of those he has killed, if God grants them the grace. It is our place to respond to our accusers with forgiveness. That does not mean that we agree to abandon the moral law or to reconfigure society based on the assertions of the ever-evolving sexual revolution. Nor should we allow slanders against us and our faith to go unanswered. The trick is to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), respecting our antagonists as human beings even as we point out where they're wrong (not coincidentally, what we saw will be much more effective if we match it with how we say it). That's not easy to do (certainly not for me), which is a good reason to keep praying for for God's grace to live up to the example of the families of Charleston and the Ladies of Gray. Only then can we hope to be that shining lamp (Mark 4:21) that Christ calls us to be.

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This contribution is available at <http://nisidominus1.blogspot.com/2016/06/charleston-stranger-and-orlando-power.html>  
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## Being Seen [at bukas palad]



Year C / Ordinary Time / Week 10 / Sunday Readings: 1 Kings 17.17-24 / Ps 29.2, 4, 5-6, 11-12a, 13b (R/v 2a) / Galatians 1.11-19 / Luke 7.11-17

*We walked to the sea Just my father and me, And the dogs played around on the sand. Winter cold cut the air Hangin' still everywhere. Dressed in gray, did he say Hold my hand? I said, love's easier when it's far away. We sat and watched a distant light. We're two ships that pass in the night. We both smile and we say it's alright. We're still here, It's just that we're out of sight.*

Barry Manilow sings these lines about an aging father and his adult son trying to reconnect. It comes from a song in my teenage years called “Ships”. Though father and son are physically present to each other, they are really disconnected emotionally. They have no relationship; they are two ships passing in the night. They are indeed out of each other's sight.

Isn't this true of how we are to one another sometimes? When husbands and wives refuse to forgive each other's faults, only to build the wall of anger higher everyday? When family members gather for dinner, only for each to do her own thing--photographing food for Facebook posts, or playing “Clash of Clans” or checking emails, or whatsapp-ing others? When we put our work before good friends, only to find there isn't much of a friendship to gather in the future?

I think all of us are guilty of not getting involved in one another's lives enough, every now and then.

Maybe this explains why we struggle to attend to those in need well. Like the pregnant and the aged in need of seats on the MRT. Like our foreign maids and workers whose just reward cannot just be better pay but our respect as people of dignity, like you and me. Like the sick, handicap and young ones with special needs who sit among us here, asking us not pity them but to welcome them.

**The wrong we do when we ignore others is that we choose to pass them by.** When we do this we hurt them with a pain so deep because all they need from us is to be seen, to be heard, to be understood, to be

accepted, to be loved, to have life shared with them. **Our sin is that we choose not to see them.**

We are familiar with today's gospel reading and Jesus' miracle of raising the dead young man to life at Nain. We interpret it to be about God's power to give life.

But we would forfeit its richer value for us to better live our Christian life if we don't pay attention to Jesus' encounter with the grieving mother. His action teaches us God's way to save others, and so save ourselves.

Luke describes a funeral procession going out of Nain to the cemetery. The crowds accompany a widow. Now she grieves her only son's death. Without husband and son, she has no ready means of support or protection. Her future looks bleak, hard and complicated.

Another crowd wants to follow Jesus into Nain. They interrupt the funeral procession at the town's gate. Jesus sees this widow. His heart goes out to her in a spontaneous act of compassion. Unlike other miracles and healings, no one asks him to do anything in this moment for no one knows him. But the sights and sounds of one in pain are too much for Jesus. Moved to compassion, he tells her, "Don't cry." He touches the coffin, raises the man to life, and gives him back to his mother.

Here is Jesus not by passing another in need. Here is Jesus seeing her need and getting involved in her messy, complicated, and painful life. Here is Jesus being compassionate. Here is Jesus incarnating God's mercy for one like himself, God's own.

Truly, here is the widow being seen by Jesus.

Like this widow, each of us here knows what it is to have been seen by another in our struggles and weaknesses.

Mine was when a good Singaporean Jesuit saw me as I grieved my father's death. I remember little of what happened when I received this news in Manila. I know that I had many things to do to come home to Dad, to be with the family in our grief and to prepare for the funeral. I know that I grieved a lot. But what I do recall clearly is my friend sitting beside me in those first few hours after Dad died and saying, "I want you to remember what your Dad said: he now has the best seat for your ordination". My friend's

simple and caring reminder consoled me very much.

I am sure you too would have had similar moments when family, friends or even a stranger saw you in your vulnerability or need and reached out to you. In those times, their care, concern and kindness embraced and calmed you in consolation, uplifted you in hope, and gave you peace to hope.

Let us remember these occasions when we have been seen by others. In those moments, they felt for us as Jesus saw and felt for the widow--with **a deep sense of compassion that passing us by cannot be the human thing to do.**

**Being merciful and getting involved are instead the only right and just actions a human being must do.**

“Mercy,” the Jesuit theologian, James Keenan writes, “is the willingness to enter into the chaos of another”.\* And by doing this, I will add, to get involved so as to accompany and uplift this other from darkness into light, from pain into healing, from sickness into health, from nothingness into fullness of life.

This is why we ought to pause and give thanks every time we are seen and helped by another: because no matter how brief such an experience is or how much help was offered, every occasion of being seen and attended by another is God’s way of interrupting our funeral-like moments in daily life.

Like Jesus consoling the widow, these moments are graced. First, they remind us that Christian life is about being merciful: we’re called to be compassionate towards others by getting involved in their struggles. Second, they give us hope that death and sin and all those things that take life away from us do not have the last say. God always has the final word: we hear it in when Jesus commands the dead young man: “I tell you, arise!”

God’s salvation is the light we need in our daily struggle to be better Christians for others. Raising the dead man gave unspeakable joy to his mother and holy fear of God to the crowds because Jesus made God’s compassionate presence real and alive.

When we recognize that God visits us through others who see us in need and uplift us in hope, like Jesus did for the widow, how can we ignore our Christian identity anymore--this identity of living fully by

entering into people's complicated, painful lives, by getting our hands dirty and by smelling like them as we help them?

Luke does not tell us what Jesus said to the mother. We can only imagine. Perhaps, this was what they exchanged:

"Who are you?" she asked. "Jesus. My heart is full of compassion. I've come to give life to the full".

"What happened?" she wanted to know. "God raised your son through God's mercy working in me."

"Why?" "Because God has kept you in his sight, and will always do so. God will never pass you by", Jesus answered.

**"Because God has kept you in his sight and will always do so. God will never pass you by".** Don't these lines sum up the truth of how God values us as we are? Isn't this Good News for us to hope in, and, more so, to proclaim to all who wait for us to see and uplift them?

\*"The Scandal of Mercy Excludes No One"

*Preached at St Ignatius Church, Singapore*

photo: [sonicsight.com.au](http://sonicsight.com.au)

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This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.com/2016/06/year-c-ordinary-time-week-10-sunday.html>  
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# Our first family fishing trip [at Catholic Review]

Our little boy has been asking to go fishing for months. He had never been fishing before, but he desperately wanted to go. When he received some money for Christmas, he went and bought a fishing rod, but we told him we couldn't go fishing until the spring.

Since then he has asked many, many times when we can go fishing.

Finally spring came. But spring is such a busy season for us that we had trouble finding a day to go fishing. Then we finally hit a lazy Sunday. The sun was shining, the rod was ready, and the fish...well, we could only hope they would be biting.

I wasn't entirely sure what to hope for, actually, but that's what our children wanted.

My husband had been fishing a few times before, and I can spell fishing, so we were clearly the perfect parents to teach our children all about fishing. But just in case we lacked some know-how, John went online and found a place with ponds stocked with fish, where we could focus on catch-and-release, and where we could even rent extra rods for \$5 each.

Since we have two children and only one rod, going to a place with extra rods seemed like a fantastic plan. So off we went to

[Fish-in Barrel](#)

As soon as we pulled in, I knew we were in the right place. It's a farm with a few beautiful ponds.

Other families were sitting and fishing with their children, but there were adults and teens fishing, too.

Our boys couldn't wait to get started. Although I think I'm a glass-half-full kind of person, somehow I hadn't thought we would actually catch a fish. So I was shocked when within the first 15 minutes or so, our older son had a huge catfish on the line.

My husband helped him bring the fish in and then they released it. I didn't get a good photo, so you just have to believe me when I say it was at least 6 feet long.

OK, so it was probably closer to 18 inches. Or maybe 12. But it was so exciting. And it turned out to be the only fish we caught that day. I thought that might be upsetting to the boy who fell in love with fishing even before he tried it.

But there was nothing disappointing about the whole experience. Both boys quickly learned how to cast their lines, and they fished in almost every part of every pond, as we moved from place to place, looking for fish.

We were surrounded by nature. It was peaceful and relaxing—especially when we didn't catch more fish—and the people there were friendly.

At one point I caught our 6-year-old fisherman walking along the edge of the pond, humming . He was in his element and completely content.

We came home without a fish, but with a fish story, which might be even better.

Now we can't wait to go fishing again. I think we're going to need to buy a second rod and maybe a third. But I think I'll be OK just watching and cheering the fishermen on...at least for now.

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This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2016/06/14/our-first-family-fishing-trip-and-definitely-not-our-last>  
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# Lose [at Loved As If]



We have so much to lose. We lose it everyday. It's heartbreaking. Terrifying. We long for safe spaces. There are none. Life that is not what we believe it ought to be. We anthropomorphize animals and share [funny memes](#). Then a real alligator kills a toddler. We make cool places to hang out with friends who are just like us. Then someone who ought to be a friend, someone who has made many visits rains death into our joyous safety. We make safe worlds for ourselves but the unsafe breaches our walls. It creates havoc. Summons terror. Fills us with horror. It's infuriating. It's unfair. It must be stopped. But we can't stop it. Our safe spaces are not safe.

There is one safe space. Christ.

But Christ's safety doesn't preclude havoc or terror or horror. Christ sets our paths amidst the scariness. He summons us to walk on the heaving waters. He leads us to Gethsemane where we beg for the cup to pass but it does not.

“If any man would come after me,  
let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.  
For whoever would save his life will lose it;  
and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it.  
For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world  
and loses or forfeits himself?” ([Luke 9:23-25](#))

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Updated: 17 June 2016 at 6.47 pm

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This contribution is available at <http://lovedasif.com/2016/06/17/lose-five-minute-friday/>  
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## Radicals Misrepresenting Traditionalism [at Servimus unum Deum]

Personally, I shudder at having to criticize or question John Paul Meenan, (herein, JPM) as a faculty member of what is possibly, the only (or first?) established, post secondary institution in Ontario, for orthodox, Catholic studies NOT poisoned by academia or liberalist/secular society, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom in Barry's Bay, Ontario. Might I add that the school is Latin Mass friendly and even has nearby St. Hedwig's Catholic Church that holds the Latin Mass, not to mention the school has a schola for Gregorian Chant and other fine works.

However, an educator and leader in the Church, in a prominent position such as OLSWA, has access to the young minds of our future Church, at their highest peak of philosophical formation. Their formation is CRUCIAL to becoming part of the leadership of the Church, and how they are formed will influence whether that leadership is TRUE evangelization and witness in the world, or just another recycling of lukewarm "c"atholicism, up to and including even becoming the next generation of heretics in the Church who will poison the next generation of minds when they reach power. That poisoning, is usually at the hands of the "liberals," but with their influence being sterile and self-suicidal, the new wave of such poisoning will be at the hands of the "conservatives" or "Traditionalists."

The youth are not stupid and they know they are being left without truth and answer. I'll share some personal examples to illustrate this. In the ministry I've been involved in recently, some of these youth are telling me they wish that their teachers would explain the Scripture that they read in class, which really means, "What is the TRUTH behind this, not the teacher's version of it, or the answer as they don't have it?" I also recently had a young lady ask me for help to prepare for her Gr. 11 World Religions exam, where her teacher did NOT educate the class on reasons for a Christian (incl. Catholics), or anyone for that matter, to follow the teachings of Christ and the Catholic Church. Regardless, that content was part of a review and would likely be on the final exam. All this in a catholic school classroom nonetheless.

When people like JPM contribute work that becomes part of the Radical Misrepresenting Traditionalist (RMT) media network, which innocent young minds like his students and other youth such as I, are highly likely to access publicly and in environments counter to 'modern practices' in the Church, I must fraternally correct and criticize the work, for the sake of the souls of those searching the web on Mr. Vanier's interview and Catholic Orthodoxy/the Latin Mass. I may not be a post-secondary Catholic studies student, or one who has graduated with a P.hD in some advanced field of philosophy/theology, but I will use what arguments and Church documents I must to prevent other young minds and souls from starting, or going deeper down the path of Hell via Radical Traditionalism, and thinking NOT with the Mind of the Church on such matters.

First, in order to assess the arguments of Meehan, and whether the RMTs have ANY validity to their claims, I read the interview done by CBC,

. The CBC does admit that "part of their conversation" is posted on the web, so one must either transcribe the aired interview in full from the audio recording, or watch the program for the full scoop.

As for the published internet interview parts on CBC, one can tell that the author Carol Off, is asking numerous leading questions to try and steer Mr. Vanier into supporting Euthanasia bill C-14. One example

is after Mr. Vanier talks briefly about lonely people and safeguards, she follows up with this: "

The next question, once again, talks about "rights" of the euthanasia patient.

Right to start with our breakdown, the actual source of the interview MUST be analyzed. Now, the CBC always has, and is, a left-wing, mainstream media organization. They usually would NOT have reporters, report with the conservative/right-wing slant in the majority of their coverage. One can also reason that based on the emphasis of "rights," this reporter is adhering to that slant, and continually wants Mr. Vanier to give the "correct, liberal" response. Rights in the liberal sense, is NOT the same as human rights. The Catholic Church's view of a human right is the right to live with dignity and respect, to have basic human needs as shelter, food, water, love, etc. Rights are what every human needs to survive and deserve, on account of their inherent dignity.

in this world. "Extras" as it were, extras that are even more important than those absolute human needs! More-so, that a "right" is a "demand" for whatever the minority or individual wants, regardless of the majority's contrary rights and freedoms. Said liberals will demand it to the highest of heights, even if that person will NOT benefit from the right being demanded to be accepted by the majority ... at all costs. On that note of liberalism, or more appropriately its origin in libertarian-ism, anything that impedes humanity's evolution and self-fulfillment must be challenged and all barriers broken to such fulfillment, including any opposing philosophies and/or understanding of the human person.

. If anything, he denied Mrs. Off's desire of him acknowledging the "human right" she wants do desperately, here, when she has the direct question of a patient having said legal right: "

Off then also tries to go for the jugular with the "personal" approach in her last question, whereby CBC reports (surprisingly in text ... as you'd think they'd want the full translation,)

" She tried, but failed.

Before I can analyze the direct arguments of Meenan, and the full text, one must discuss what is this "Mind of the Church" that a Catholic must have as their lens for interpreting documents, as well as that of any member of the faithful in regards to their faith.

The Mind of the Church,

can best be read about and defined in the New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia (

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15006b.htm>

) under

*TRADITION & CATHOLIC MAGISTERIUM.*

To think with the Mind of the Church, we obviously need a "benchmark" as to the major/central teachings of the Church, and what we can measure other things in this world against. With regards to the Church's teaching authority on faith and morals, in what is the Magisterium, and the deposit of faith:

*"There is a formula current in Christian teaching (and the formula is borrowed from St. Paul himself) that traditional truth was confided to the Church as a deposit which it would guard and faithfully transmit as it had received it without adding to it or taking anything away .... this idea of a deposit should not make us lose sight of the true manner in which traditional truth lives and is transmitted in the Church. This deposit in fact is not an inanimate thing passed from hand to hand; it is not, properly speaking, an assemblage of doctrines and institutions consigned to books or other monuments of every kind are a means, an organ of transmission, they are not, properly speaking, the tradition itself."*

This does not exactly mean that documents from the Vatican, catechisms written at X time periods and NOT rescinded, compilations of doctrine/dogma (etc.) are to be dismissed. Then you get heresy garbage like in Longergan Theology where people think if the majority of the Church rejects something on paper, it can be thrown out. That's how other non-Catholic churches function and look what it has resulted in: Numerous little churches that split off from the main to cater to individual feelings and ideas, until it is so far removed from the original mainline church, or THE CHURCH to begin with.

Rather, the concept of the Mind of the Church with regards to the individual and common doctrine is more along these lines: People can all have a common sentiment or idea about something that is absolute, or part of the Natural Moral Law and Divine Truths that God has established in existence. Individuals can have this common sentiment despite

"

*...the ideas and opinions of each man, but which take on a peculiar aspect in each man inasmuch as they are the ideas and opinions of all. The existence of tradition in the Church must be regarded as living in the spirit and the heart, thence translating itself into acts, and expressing itself in words or writings; but here we must not have in mind individual sentiment, but the common sentiment of the Church, the sense or sentiment of the faithful, that is, of all who live by its life and are in communion of thought among themselves and with her.*

"

Obviously, the Church itself is to exist for all time, until its existence, tied with all existence, is ended by God at that point in finite time He knows, and has chosen, to end the finite world. Of course, we do not know, but considering the Bible covers 5000+ years of history, and our last century has had the most moral, technological, etc. change in our world, including globalization, that won't come anytime soon. Over time, many different societies, cities, ways of life, etc. have become minimized or have become parts of history.

Now, through all that history, were the Church to remain static, and no new development in the Faith occurred,

*in the doctrinal, theological, AND the practical realms of application of said doctrine,*

the Faith might become a "dead" religion! God, in her wisdom, made sure that the essential "core" of the Faith, its deposit, remains intact (also with the guarantee against all evil in cf. Matthew 16:18,) while expanding and being able to tackle the challenges of each time period, even when crises have hit the Church (e.g. Arianism in the 400-500AD period.) This Magisterium, purposely is a living entity that "

.. searches in the past ... **The thought of the Church is essentially a traditional thought and the living magisterium by taking cognizance of ancient formulas of this thought thereby recruits its strength and prepares to give to immutable truth a new expression which shall be in harmony with the circumstances of the day and within reach of contemporary minds.**"

However, when people, both lay and clergy, try to put into concrete action the above in the boldfaced paragraph, trying to express the idea of these truths, to changing times, "

*... human groups [are prone] to error and thoughtless or culpable tendencies. The Spirit of God always living in His Church upholds the sense of revealed truth ever living therein.*

"

Henceforth, because of this error, we must always keep in mind that, "

**The Church is also (as regards religious and moral doctrines) the best interpreter of truly traditional documents; she recognizes as by instinct what belongs to the current of her living thought and distinguishes it from the foreign elements which may have become mixed with it in the course of centuries.**

"

The underlined is often where (Radical) Traditionalists err in their ability to engage in analyzing actions and theological arguments , and if necessary, engage in charitable, fraternal correction, with regard to events, actions, and both those of their fellow brothers and sisters of Christ. Like the Liberals that they decry against for being heretics/schismatics and breaking Church doctrines, based on their "interpretation" of the Truth, they commit similar error.

Where the RMTs, and now their I.W.S. allies, go against the underlined portions, is in interpretation, and application of the Church's teachings to situations and people. Firstly, they do NOT think with the mind of the Church, in that they do not allow for organic/expanded interpretation of the said common mind/spirit/sentiment of the core "T"radition of the Church. They take the stance that anything even remotely different in verbage or expression, is blasphemy against Her holy "T"radition, and it can be often confused with "t"radition or pastoral practice. While there are genuine cases where things "go to far" (e.g. "Clown" Masses of the initial peak of post Vatican II,) the majority of occasions are NOT so.

This also applies to people speaking on issues or on theology. One who, contrary to the RMTs, thinks with the Mind of the Church, adheres to that common truth or thought, even if their word or expression is not the most eloquent or blunt. In other words, it is when someone directly contravenes teachings that they go against the Tradition of the Church. "Lukewarm" language, incorrect terminology, or weak language, is not a disqualifying condition from them veering from Her Mind. An analogy would be in a legal courtroom, despite how much we desire and how badly the defendant LOOKS like he is guilty (and possibly is,) the defendant is declared ``not guilty`` as the Crown has not sufficiently proven the defendant is, without reasonable doubt, guilty.

RMTs and other extremist right wingers, also go against the underlined portions, particularly in adherence

to such strict doctrine, combined with their interpretation. The doctrines and/or, documents of the past, are often used to browbeat into submission, the person to adhere to the Lord's will. This is unacceptable, and the Church would NEVER forcibly make her members obey her commandments, against their free will. This includes wielding her doctrine against people as a weapon. Further, Her ultimate teaching authority is NOT solely restricted to the written word on paper. As much as humanity likes order and routine that does not change, this is NOT how the Church operates in a practical sense, akin to human systems like economics, law, politics, scientific research, etc. While yes, there is order to the Church, and an institution and hierarchy from within, the Church is MORE than just her physical constitution and word. Such a divinely instituted entity is beyond physical limitations of humanity, in thought and word.

Hopefully, you now understand, between my descriptions and especially the underlined portions of text, just WHAT the Mind of the Church is. We can now apply this to JPM's LSN article, in how he veers from the Mind of the Church and how Mr. Vanier does not, despite some of his possible, weaker words in defense of the principle/doctrine of Life from conception till death in the Church.

*The LifeSite News Article. "Truth?" or Another Biased Article of the Ultra-Right wing Media, and an Author Veering from Her Holy Church's Mind?*

We now turn to the matter at hand: The LifeSiteNews article by JPM that judges Mr. Vanier guilty of being Pro-Euthanasia. Each part will include what Meenan says, and then I will deconstruct these parts in my own analysis/criticism.

The beginning of the article starts of with brief, but positive acknowledgment of the good things of Mr. Vanier's education, his L'Arche community.

*ANALYSIS -*

This is a technique whereby you say good things about your target/opponent so that you are not said to be ignorant of the good a person has done, and putting it at the beginning allows people to forget those positive traits, as you go into your criticism of the person. Standard fare for debating, point-counterpoint.

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After the praise and adulation ceases, JPM begins his assault. He goes immediately to the first instance whereby biased reporter, Carol Off, asks Mr. Vanier if he is in favour of the proposed Euthanasia law. According to Meenan, in the actual recording of the interview, Mr. Vanier "... confesses on his own recognizance that he is in favour of a law" at the 36 minute of the program. Vanier's starting words are "

*Shouldn't we have some legislation to permit this? I say yes, but let's put in safeguards...*

"

*ANALYSIS -*

Here, simply because Mr. Vanier accepts the need for a legislation as a blunt yes, he is immediately kicked out of the "Pro-Life" camp's list of heroes, having violated their sacred cow of rigid adherence to pro-life "doctrine." Such doctrine of the camp, if one existed on paper, united or separate from the

Church, would state that 'in no way is one to even support anything against life' (e.g. abortion, euthanasia.)

### CRITICISM -

Surely, Mr Vanier would NOT be so ignorant or stupid, to ignore Canada's current laws with regard to pro-life issues, especially the legal situation of abortion in Canada ... of which there is NO legal situation, because there is NO LAW since 1988 surrounding abortions. You could murder a babe in the womb at any point up to where a baby is born and breathes at least a minute out of the birth canal, completely. Having the L'Arche ministry, he would be acutely aware that due to advances in genetic screening, many babies with abnormalities (e.g. Down's Syndrome,) are aborted before full term in pregnancy. So we can give the benefit of the doubt, that Mr. Vanier likely thought that the current euthanasia situation might end up being a repeat of 1988, and if not, that this juggernaut would likely [

**as of 15/6/2016, now has passed the 3rd and final reading in the House of Commons and will become law,]**

become passed as law in Canada. Therefore, as Catholics, we can at least, with the greatest vigor and protest upon Parliament Hill, and whenever publicly, as in this interview, push for safeguards so that we would not be killing people with wanton abandonment, or applying "merciful" euthanasia to patients who have decent to excellent prospects of recovery, yet are given the syringe because of a zealous doctor's (ill?) advised decision. Hence, we can give good

credit to Mr. Vanier, that he spoke in the best manner possible in context of the reality that Canada now faces with regard to this situation.

Furthermore, I would like to start using a strategy out of the Radical Traditionalists' playbook, to expand on this point and prove that Mr. Vanier is more in line with Church teaching in this statement than JPM is not implying: The quoting of sections from Church documents. Specifically, I will quote from one of the very documents JPM uses in his article to attack Mr. Vanier:

*Evangelium Vitae,*

by John Paul II in 1993, a document that addresses morality, and moral life issues such as abortion and euthanasia directly. Let's even go further and use portions of one of the VERY SAME paragraphs that Meenan uses: Number 65.

The Church in E.V. outlines a more effective strategy in tackling this issue of how to regulate Euthanasia, or convey what it is to others in the Church and the world. Paragraph 65 states at its beginning: "

*For a correct moral judgment on euthanasia, in the first place a clear definition is required. Euthanasia in the strict sense is understood to be an action or omission which of itself and by intention causes death, with the purpose of eliminating all suffering. "Euthanasia's terms of reference, therefore, are to be found in the intention of the will and in the methods used ....*

" (EV, 65)

Obviously, a law that outright bans euthanasia is an ideal, Catholic desire. However, with a Liberal anti-

life, majority government led by heretic and "c"atholic traitor, Justin Trudeau, a law such as this would NEVER come to pass in current reality. Therefore,

*having a law would be better than the 1988 scenario with abortion in Canada, with no law at all*

, and in passing a the euthanasia law, [

**though now that law has been passed,]**

the best option would be as stated in EV 65, so that it would, convey

*as best as possible in the given circumstances,*

that clear definition: an action or omission which of itself and by intention causes death with the purpose of elimination all suffering. This would achieve the Church's means of allowing people to see that the will, and methods, as well as morality in the Natural Law are part of this, in an absolute way, NOT for the good of humanity [

**though sadly, even that was struck down by our Senate for being "unconstitutional", and the law went through, without achieving the desire of EV 65.]**

So, for Mr. Vanier to make that statement, even if he did NOT read

*Evangelium Vitae*

, or read it so long ago, or best, has read it in full, he IS making a statement that squares more closely with Church teaching today on the issue of euthanasia, unlike the implications of JPM at that statement.

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Next, JPM goes for Mrs. Off's second direct question, the "personal opinion" route, to try to get a direct yes from Mr. Vanier for euthanasia. Mr. Vanier's reply is: "

*... That is certainly a very personal question, and I would say no...But I have never lived intense pain...*

".

### ANALYSIS:

JPM uses EV 65 in order to speak about palliative care in the context of Mr. Vanier's statement, and then uses paragraph 72-73 in order to rigidly state that ANY law that legitimizes killing the unborn or old people, oppose human dignity and the true "right to life." JPM's usage of the Church's major class of document, the encyclical, is being used to humiliate and enforce his target into submission, or prove Mr. Vanier is sinfully wrong. It is done NOT out of a true intention to enact the Spiritual work of Mercy of admonishing the sinner. Further, this is selective quoting from Church documents, with the rest of such documents abandoned usually by Radical Traditionalists, in order to thrust their arguments against others, and advance their *raison d'etre*.

## Criticism:

Ironically, it is the very reliance on specific pieces of Church doctrine, used as a "billy club" of a police officer to beat down Mr. Vanier, that also can discredit JPM's arguments. While Radical Traditionalists use selective quoting of Church documents, thankfully, the Church, in her wisdom, thinks as a whole on matters. She realizes the limitations the Faithful can have on the larger world and their society, and by what means they can achieve change in their society to that of the Social Kingship of Christ.

## *Evangelium Vitae*

, was ahead of its time (in Canada) with regard to forced euthanasia, and even realizes that radical enforcement of change in society is not likely a feasible means for Catholics to pursue, in paragraph 46:

"46.

**With regard to the last moments of life too, it would be anachronistic to expect biblical revelation to make express reference to present-day issues concerning respect for elderly and sick persons, or to condemn explicitly attempts to hasten their end BY FORCE.** *The cultural and religious context of the Bible is in no way touched by such temptations; indeed, in that context the wisdom and experience of the elderly are recognized as a unique source of enrichment for the family and for society ....*

" (EV, 46)

Clearly, John Paul II, in this encyclical, is conveying that the Church realizes, a) that flinging Bible verses as well as Church documents with them, straight out, isn't going to change the minds and hearts of humanity so engrossed in the world, flesh, and the Devil's desires, and b) that Catholics will NOT win the "culture war" as it is deemed by pro-lifers and Theo-political conservatives, through major enforcement of any kind, of the moral TRUTH contained in the Natural Law.

To add, a valid assumption, would be that a professor at an orthodox teaching institution, such as OLSWA, would NOT be so careless as to NOT read a whole encyclical. Likely, this was ignored by JPM for the purpose of concentrating and strengthening his arguments. Together, we can say that Meenan's

## **usage**

of paragraph 34 from

## *Evangelium Vitae,*

while being a nice reminder of the Church's position on the value of life from start to end, contradicts EV 46 in Two ways. The first is that the Church (JPII) realizes that such adamant force of the teaching of life on others is not proper for Catholics yet this is what JPM wishes of Mr. Vanier in how

*EV*

is used in the editorial/essay. The second is that the Church realizes that few people will be swayed by

Biblical/Scriptural including documentation with Revelation regarding end-of-life morality, yet here is JPM doing exactly that with

*E.V.*

, against another Catholic who WOULD listen to such arguments and who isn't the average 'Joe poorly-catechized "c"atholic.

---

As a final blow to show that Vanier is 'pro-Euthanasia, JPM had LSN issue a clarification of Mr. Vanier about his words in the interview.

*ANALYSIS:*

Mr Vanier clarifies his words in the interview as stating he stands "

*... by everything that I have said. The main thing is in any case to support life and to avoid all situations of suicide that originate in a situation of depression and solitude*

." However, the full transcript of his clarification at the bottom of the article adds insight from a relative who is a palliative care nurse, with two additional lines for attacking Mr. Vanier: "... If the correct sedative or medication has not been found one cannot oblige someone to live through an unrelenting agony ..." and "... Pope Francis continues to tell us that everything cannot be regulated by a law and there are always exceptions." With this clarification, JPM goes after the suffering angle, using Pro-Life Hero JPPI's

*Veritas Splendor*

and

*Salvifici Doris*

to say that you can't violate the moral law whatsoever and that " God always provides the helps and graces necessary to bear such suffering as He sends, whether through natural, medical means, or through supernatural, grace-inspired means." Since Mr. Vanier's words are not exactly this, Meenan then says that Mr. Vanier's words are "scandal."

*CRITICISM:*

Once again, JPM has overlooked issues practically, as well as Church document wise, in using

*Veritas Splendor,*

but especially

*Salvifici Doris*

, in an attempt to make Mr. Vanier deem euthanasia permissible in circumstances, by concentrating on his

remarks with regards to patients, palliative care, and suffering. JPM states above about patients suffering that "God always provides ..." in an absolute manner, so Mr. Vanier's statements about drugs and palliative care seem offensive to God and patients in end-stage of life.

Practically, not all patients have the will and mindset to go through to their death, and DO need the medication to sedate them to that point. While yes, there is grace at work in our lives, do you think that a patient can honestly be recipient of that grace, or more importantly, will actively CARE about that, and/or JPPII's statements? NO! They will be in excruciating pain or a mental state not fully cognoscente at that point due to the severity, or the shock, of having the terminal illness. Yet here, JPM applies the statement from

*Salvifici Doris,*

as if it does not matter what is happening with said patient, and they will carry on to that point. Such an expectation, and application of

*S.D.*

is highly unfeasible. Thankfully, the Church has spoken on this matter, not just through Vatican II pope and Pro-Life hero JPPII, but also through a Pre-Vatican II pope, Pius XII in a 1957 letter to physicians,

*Iura et Bona*

. Once again,

*Evangelium Vitae, paragraph 65,*

leads the way in what the Church has to say on the matter, courtesy of JPPII, a matter which contradicts JPM's rigorist interpretation and application of

*Salvifici Doris*

:

"... In modern medicine, increased attention is being given to what are called "methods of palliative care", which seek to make suffering more bearable in the final stages of illness and to ensure that the patient is supported and accompanied in his or her ordeal. Among the questions which arise in this context is that of the licitness of using various types of painkillers and sedatives for relieving the patient's pain when this involves the risk of shortening life.

**While praise may be due to the person who voluntarily accepts suffering by forgoing treatment with pain-killers in order to remain fully lucid and, if a believer, to share consciously in the Lord's Passion, such "heroic" behaviour cannot be considered the duty of everyone. Pius XII affirmed that it is licit to relieve pain by narcotics, even when the result is decreased consciousness and a shortening of life, "if no other means exist, and if, in the given circumstances, this does not prevent the carrying out of other religious and moral duties".**

**In such a case, death is not willed or sought, even though for reasonable motives one runs the risk of it: there is simply a desire to ease pain effectively by using the analgesics which medicine provides ..."**

(

*EV, 65)*

So as much as JPM uses

*S.D.*

to say there is grace to go ahead to the end of death, the Church realizes not everyone will have the capacity and means to become that "hero" of death, such as JP II was towards the end of his life. Yes, while palliative care is addressed by both JPM and Vanier in the article, it is clear that the rigorist application of

*S.D*

to attack Mr. Vanier, also betrays those patients who cannot actively accept that grace, and the Church in

*E.V.*

65 is more congruent with the sentiments of those dying patients and Mr. Vanier's clarification. Finally nowhere in the portion of the transcript dealing with palliative care, does Mr. Vanier outright advocate euthanasia for that minority of patients who cannot die fully conscious without suffering.

Since JPM is using

*S.D.*

in a way that applies to ALL humans, we should speak about them then. He also adds attacking the Holy Father, because Mr. Vanier uses a quote, likely from Pope Francis' recent

*Amoris Laetitia*

about legislating law. Meenan uses the following alongside the

*S.D.*

reference:

"... let it be said for now that although there may be exceptions to human law, there are never exceptions to the natural moral law, amongst which are suicide and murder, violations of which must be resisted even to the point of martyrdom, as Pope John Paul II declares so forcefully in his 1993 encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (cf., par. 76; 90-94). "

Meenan, myself, a small minority of good, practicing Catholics, and maybe (or maybe not,) Mr. Vanier, would be aware of the natural moral law. As to failing to educate people on that, in the Church and

without, there are many fingers to point for blame, but that is not the topic of discussion in this rebuttal. Rather, such knowledge would NOT be known, even by the majority of Catholics in the Church.

While the Church, via the doctrine of infallibility, does have supreme jurisdiction over Faith and Morals, most people in this world do NOT live by those morals/the natural law, nor do other lukewarm Catholics "care" about things in those realms. When a patient whose faith is near dead, or those who are NOT of the Catholic faith know little to nothing about the moral law, or are not of the Catholic faith, violation of the moral law would be the LAST thing on their minds. When the person is approaching that near-death experience, not knowing it will not be their last time on earth, or their family members, intending to end their loved one's current suffering with no foresight of the future, they then will opt for euthanasia when the doctor pushes it on them. We can only hope the doctor is not more inclined to it of an "angel of mercy" serial murderer, and has truthfully considered all medical options. Without the safeguards in the

**[now passed]**

euthanasia law, even those whose faith is lapsed, are non-Catholics, or secular, will consider it as the permanent solution to likely temporary problems, including mental illness complications, serious illness that can be treated, etc. Having the "grace" to go through till the end, would be the farthest thing from the mind of those patients, relatives, and medical staff. Also, people will blatantly abuse or ignore the Natural Law and/or Church law anyways, Catholic or not.

So, at the very least in thinking about all those other people that exist outside academia, dealing with the blatant realities of living, Mr. Vanier and Pope Francis, are thinking as realists who realize that not everything can be codified to force people to obey the Church and the moral law, and that civil/human law would at the very least prevent anarchy or wanton abuse of freedoms that would make our situation more tragic and volatile, as in other European countries whose Euthanasia laws are loose and not restrictive. While passing a euthanasia law is not true adherence to the moral law, at least what Mr. Vanier and Francis say, acknowledges the facts I've said and gives some minimal guideline for people to not descent into carnal depravity in this area.

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Finally, there is also contained in the last attack, sentiments of antipathy against Pope Francis. Between those in the extremist parts of the Pro-Life, Conservative, Radical Traditionalist, etc. movements of Christians/Catholics, anything uttered by 'Pope Francis the Destroyer' as he is now known on the Internet, and anyone uttering anything from, or defending, Pope Francis, is vilified and given spiteful names like ``papologist`` and ``ultra-monist``. Any defenders are hated by these champions of their social/liturgical cause, even when said champions literally say they do not hate the Holy Father, or couch their "concerns" in nice words that betray their true intentions. Unless Pope Francis says something that is usable to forward the cause you support, it is uncouth to have any association with the current Holy Father if you are a true Latin Mass devotee, pro-life warrior, culture warrior, social justice warrior, etc.

*Don't Forget The Human Factors: Age and Bias*

Finally, as an overall criticism of the article, we CANNOT simply take JPM's article on LifeSite News simply at face value. We cannot truly evaluate this scenario without examining the views of LSN and human factors such as age.

First is LifeSiteNews. One can see their public about page,

[here](#)

. In much blunter terms, LSN is a strictly, anti-culture, pro-life website that operates independently of any government body, or the Church for that matter. While it has people on staff who are Catholic, it is NOT run by a body of Catholics only, nor of Catholics of all shades and stripes. LifeSiteNews as an organization, does not have any

*Impriatur*

*Nihil Obstat*

in their content, bishop's blessing to operate, etc. by any authority or ordinary officer of the Magisterium (a.k.a. a bishop,) in any archdiocese including that which contains their base of operations. They speak not for the Church in anyway whatsoever.

LSN was set up purposely against the cultural narrative of anti-family, anti-pro-life, etc. operating independently of any government or Church oversight, they are free to attack anything that they stand for, without re-probation, or being governed by any laws of the Church and those in authority to implement that law, whether it be properly, loosely, or abusively. They likely did so, in their own words from the about page, to operate in the following manner: "Accuracy in content is given high priority. News and information tips from readers are encouraged and validated. Valid corrections are always welcome. Writing and research is of a professional calibre .... LifeSiteNews.com

**attempts to dispel confusion and ignorance, enable constructive dialogue and help informed decisions to be made and appropriate actions to be taken for the good of all."**

Understandably so, governance such as the civil government and the

*Institutional Body of the Church,*

would hamper them from their goals. The only laws possibly governing them would be civil law, though the only sort of action against them was a frivolous and false lawsuit by dead ex-priest, Fr. Gravel, which ended up being thrown out.

However, a cursory view of the articles, especially ones of the Church/Pope Francis, reveals that at times, LSN has skirted, if not borderline came close to not thinking with the Mind of the Church, and has reacted harshly, especially to Pope Francis. Basically any grave offense to their sacred cow of "pro-life" or not in conjunction with their right views, gets harsh criticism. They would not do this with prior popes. Just one example of their "spin" is

[here](#)

after Pope Francis' latest homily against rigid fundamentalism/Radical Catholicism, where they pit him against pro-life hero, John Paul II, as well as current "Trad hero" Cardinal Robert Sarah, because Pope Francis dared to criticize those who do not think with the Mind of the Church. This is only the first of

numerous lashings against the Holy Father,

In addition, while LSN has cleaned up their act a little with regards to their editorial staffing, they did skirt the line with Radical Traditionalism in the past, in the form of former LSN editorialist and journalist, Hilary White. Hilary is the main author and owner of the website What's Wrong with the Synod (started during the time of the extraordinary 2014 synod), who has consistently expressed anti-Church/anti-novus ordo sentiments in her writings, to the point, one could describe her like professional Catholic apologist Dave Armstrong does, as "quasi-schismatic," in her rejection of the Novus Ordo Mass and Church in the form of what Hilary calls, "Novusordoism." Hilary, has always been championing the rights of human life and dignity in her writings as a Catholic, and likely that's what got her on their editorial staff as of June 2014. She was writing articles for LSN, up until May 2015, with her last article being about two episcopal prelates and covering up crimes against youth in the Church. Judging by what she writes now on the blogosphere, the publications she contributes to (e.g. known Radical Traditionalist sites as the Remnant and OnePeterFive, unlike LSN and other mainstream Catholic online publications,) and Dave Armstrong's evaluation/conversations (see

[here](#)

and

[here](#)

) where Hilary has revealed her ever-sliding position downward the Radical Traditionalist (and separation from Holy Mother Church with her "novusordoism" statement,) it is clear that her extremism was the likely factor for her sudden 'disappearance' from the LSN blog page of the main site.

While there may be good souls with good intention contributing to the work for the sake of the pro-life movement (e.g. Ryan Bomberger) who are not Radical Traditionalists, in terms of LSN as a whole, one must realize that they are "right-wing" or staunchly "pro-life" in their media bias, even to the point that anything that contradicts their bias intentionally/unintentionally, will be met with criticism and have an implicit accusation of being anti-life, or taken personally against the pro-life movement and its champions. Further, due to their recent articles involving Pope Francis, and their recent flirtation with Radical Traditionalism in the addition (and recent dismissal of) Hilary White in the Blog page section, it is clear that LSN editorial analysis will not be as accurate as they tout their organization to be. This bias was on full display in their release of Meenan's article, as it fit squarely with their cause, all the while lambasting another Catholic who has done more ministry and the Lord's work than most cradle Catholics in their lifetimes in being `whole life,` not just pro-life.

Second, to Mr. Vanier's credit, we should give him more benefit of the doubt due to his age. He is currently an octogenarian of 87 years old. It is excellent that at his age he can communicate effectively with our cutthroat, mainstream media in an interview, and continue to play a vital role in the organization he founded for the mentally challenged, L'Arche, with a supportive community structure. However, being that old, it cannot be denied that there likely would be some, generalized cognitive decline, and perhaps certain thought processes, do not come to light as quick, or are momentarily forgotten. Are there seniors that are "sharp" as a tack in their fields of work or in reasoning? Yes, absolutely. Benedict Emeritus XVI is a perfect example (although some Radical Traditionalists are rejecting their one-time Latin Mass hero, blaming him for abandoning the Church and resulting in Bergoglio becoming Pope Francis.) when he has from time to time given speeches of importance, even in his "papal retirement." However, to expect an

octogenarian outside of Benedict XVI, to perfectly adhere to the Church's doctrines and teachings, and to apply and communicate such in regard to many moral issues and a perfect manner, is unreasonable. Not to mention try doing that, while under pressure from a journalist with her own, anti-life, pro-choice bias as part of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. However, to JPM and LSN, these factors are negated in the light of presenting their "accurate" news, news that is so accurate it can properly assess one's mind with regards to orthodoxy with Holy Mother Church and the state of a person's soul.

## Conclusion

When you think of it in a way, in an odd sort of irony and/or hypocrisy, in this matter, those RMTs, and new allies the "Ortho-Catholics" or "I'm with Stupid" crowd, who were quick to judge Mr. Vanier for his comments in this clearly biased interview, share a similar type of agenda to that of the pro-euthanasia crowd and our current Canadian government. What they share is this addictive desire to idol worship their side of the moral issue, but both have an underlying "false idol" that they worship, disregarding the common human, born and/or unborn.

Pro-euthanasia politicians and people, push their agendas through in society and in our civil laws. They tout that what they are doing is for the benefit of their citizens, or for those who deserve "mercy:" the suffering, the weak, etc. They tout that every citizen deserves what they are peddling. The truth underlying that crowd, is that they want

*CONVENIENCE, and the freedom to do away with whatever burdens them from their own selfish whims and progress*

. It is that convenience and narcissistic pleasure, that is truthfully at the core of their actions, their "golden calf." They do so at the expense of the constitutional rights, true human rights and freedoms, of every person, regardless of country or system of government.

And the Radicals Misrepresenting Traditionalists and I.W.S. crowd, including the article written by Prof. Meenan in LifeSiteNews? They might not be willing to break the moral law that God commanded, and might be on the side of "Pro-life" as it were against the pro-euthanasia above, but like those liberals/pro-euthanasia devotees, they also share the exact same, agenda driven madness of their enemies, but using, abusing, and misinterpreting the "T"radition of the Church. They take the opposite approach in that the moral law is vital, so vital with a Pharisaic rigidity that what is said by the Church is "set" in stone, and any violation of it is an offense greater than the deepest of crimes.

In using and relating established Church Law/Tradition in the Magisterium of the Church, they cast out the Mind of the Church, for the sake of the upholding the law, as codified in catechisms, encyclicals, etc. They do so,

## **stifling**

the Mind of Holy Mother Church and the organic development of the Magisterium, in addition to usurping her as the authentic interpreter of such Traditional documents. They disregard the ideas and applications of the individual, simply because it is not steadfastly adhering in a specific manner to every single printed word of the document. In their rush to be the Church's supreme officers, judge, and jury, of a Magisterium they feel is being hardly applied by the Church's true officers (the bishops,) they trample and violate those rights and dignity of other lay faithful and even the Church's own clerics. They too, have their own

"golden calf" in the law, documents, doctrines, etc. of the Church, and go so deep as to usurp Her Magisterium in such pursuit of Her laws, thinking NOT with Her Mind. In doing so, they express the opposite in action of the Church's Divine Mercy and Love, exemplified in our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The RMTs'/I.W.Ss' pursuit of their "golden calf," results in what you see in the LifeSiteNews article and on other blogger's websites: calumnies, detraction, and public shaming abound, disguised as "admonishing the sinner". It doesn't matter the person's age, past accomplishments, etc. The pursuit of the upholding of Church "T"radition, at all costs, disregards all other factors including Her Mind, and Her as interpreter of documents and doctrine, including documents on doctrine.

Like John Paul Meenan's sadness at writing such an article, I too, express a sadness at having to challenge a full time faculty member of one of Canada's few, "orthodox" Catholic institutions, where one can send a child after high school and not expect the university/college culture, or the institutions' department of Catholicism/Christianity, to destroy my child's faith. Sadly, Meenan's example of this contribution to LifeSiteNews, is another mark of the ever rising wave of Radical Traditionalism that is claiming the best and brightest, and most devout, honest, and faithful of Catholics, who do not realize that the Devil's works swing both ways: in extremes.

I hope this is honestly a one off event, or that Meenan is just one professor of OLSWA, with the rest not espousing to this Radical Traditionalist frame of mind that deviates from the Mind of the Church. If however, this is NOT just a one off, or that more people at OWSLA share this professor's thoughts, then at the very least, the "mark of orthodoxy" of an academic institution, CANNOT protect the individuals within from falling to 'intellectual sins,' such as Radical Traditionalism. At the absolute worse, this example from Prof. Meehan has now contributed to more internal strife and division, proving that not even our "orthodox" institutions can form students in their mental prime, in the Mind of the Church and in obedience to Her, and protect their Catholic Faith from spiritual decay.

As mentioned earlier, were the Spiritual works of Mercy. Two are ``Counseling the Ignorant``, and Admonishing the Sinner. I had to enact these two spiritual works of mercy, in order to make you, the readers, especially those of you young people valiantly searching for the REAL truth of the faith, realize that just because a Catholic sticks to the writings of the Church, and/or submits works with such writings, to sites that supposedly give the "read deal," on the Faith, that does NOT mean the work, the author, nor the blog/website is TRULY acting in line with Catholic teaching. What young people like myself, especially those hungering for the Lord, possibly including the Latin Mass, or orthodox TRUE Catholic teaching, don't realize is that their teachers or role models, are resorting to intellectual and theological sins and viewpoints, like the Pharisees of the Temple of old that were chastised numerous times by Christ.

It is bad enough that our rights and freedoms to live our our Christian Faith in developed countries are being eroded and attacked daily. Instead of becoming unified against these threats, it's other Catholics who fight among one another, in person, and especially, those of the more orthodox camps, launching attacks on other Catholics, in the hope of converting them to the lie of the "true orthodoxy of the Faith." To those in the Ortho-Cath camp, I can only say, please stop being like the Radicals Misrepresenting Traditionalists, and aiding them in their internal destruction of the Faith from within. You are not like them, don't become them.

And to all of you, lest you become bogged down with the next odd web report of some Catholic doing something, or the next speech of Pope Francis that has you questioning yourself in confusion,

remember, and seek out, the Love and Divine Mercy of our Lord in this, the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Ask for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to inflame within you once more to discern things properly with the Mind of the Church.

Pax Tibi Christi, Julian Barkin.

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This contribution is available at <http://torontotlmserving.blogspot.ca/2016/06/follow-up-to-jean-vanier-radicals.html>  
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## Seasons of my Soul [at Mother of the Fiat]

**"To be all for God; We must be willing to give all "**

## Seasons of my Soul [at Mother of the Fiat]



*Jesus in silence my soul waits for you*

*Purged in the crucible of suffering borne of love for you, in love I surrender all to you*

*Through the dark night I contemplate you giving my fiat I go to the cross with you*

*Perfect joy is found in you*

*Mercy a gift from you, Jesus I trust in you*

*In weakness you carry me when I fall you raise me up to you*

*When doctors can do no more you comfort me*

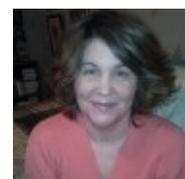
*When no one understands you listen to me what I cannot do you do for me*

*Love is all you want from me in love you died for me*

*Divine Providence leads me all that happens is God's will for me*

*Holy Spirit come and dwell in me*

*The Gift of life praise God endlessly*



The Author [tami schuelke](#)

Hi I am a catholic wife and mother of 7 "Gifts" from heaven. Happy to finally be a stay at home mother who enjoys homeschooling her children. With my faith as my shield I am fighting a cancer that nearly robbed me of life. I now look at life in a whole new way. I had much and now I have what I need. Everyday is a struggle, a struggle filled with much joy in knowing that I am loved by God and am the "Apple of His Eye."

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This contribution is available at <http://schuelketami.com/2016/06/06/seasons-of-my-soul/>  
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## A Different Kind of Revisit

Generally, when I participate in the #WorthRevisit Link-Up, I am posting something I wrote before; thus the revisit concept. Then I share it with the [Reconciled to You](#) and [Theology is a Verb](#) blogs. It's been a great way for me to "meet" other writers and speakers who enjoy sharing their faith. But today, I have a new post. And I have been struggling for days to write this. It's a bit jumbled, but it is from my heart. I am not revisiting something I wrote before, but instead I am revisiting someone dear to me.



You see, less than two weeks ago one of my brothers-in-law passed away. [Dennis Aloysius Padan](#). He was the second child of nine, including an infant brother who died just a few days after birth. Denny had numerous health issues which required a lot of help, so he always lived at home. My father-in-law died before I joined the family, meaning all the years I knew Denny, he was being taken care of by my remarkable mother-in-law, Dorothy. But this is a tight knit family, so siblings also helped, even after growing up and moving out. I have been a Padan for nearly 23 years, and my mind is filled with sweet images of the nieces and nephews playing with Uncle Denny. He often partnered up with Dorothy in Euchre games, and became quite feisty if he had a bad hand. He loved to watch football, especially the Indianapolis Colts, and would scream loudly at the television more often than not. I also think fondly of Denny's spring/summer greetings to me any time we arrived at a gathering. It always had to do with the Chicago Cubs. Usually, it went something like, "So Kimmy, what's wrong with the Cubs this year?" But this year, it was different. (It IS our year, you know!) In fact, the day before Denny passed, Bruce and I were visiting him in the hospital. He had surgery the previous day, and seemed to come out of it quite well. He was upbeat and talkative; not just about baseball, but also Indy & NASCAR racing. He asked, "So Kimmy did the Cubs win last night?" The Cubs had actually lost that game, but I reassured Denny that I was not worried at all! Bruce and I left after our visit, feeling so hopeful for Denny. Sadly, there were complications and he went to his eternal reward early the next morning.

When we heard about Denny's death, it stunned me. Less than 24 hours earlier, we were talking and laughing. How could this be? But I realize none of us knows the length of our days. Any one can leave this earth without warning. Perfectly healthy people may die suddenly before critically ill people depart. I knew immediately that the time Bruce and I spent with Denny that sunny Sunday was a gift to us. Other family also visited that day, and everyone said how happy Denny was. I cannot know the mind of God, but perhaps He knew Denny had suffered enough, and needed a Good Day before he left. I like to think

that is the case.

All the Padan siblings made it to Rockville for the funeral. Many in-laws, cousins, nieces, nephews, classmates, and church friends were present to share the burden of grief together. The stories shared were beautiful. I knew when Denny was healthier (including in my early years of marriage to Bruce) that Denny rode his bike to work at the local IGA. He faithfully stocked shelves, swept floors, and greeted people for years. Everyone loved him. But he also spent a lot of summer days at the community pool, throwing kids in with a big splash! Bruce said kids would go up to Denny directly, asking to be thrown in! Denny had so much joy, and shared it abundantly.

I sang for Denny's funeral Mass, barely getting through. At one point, I caught a glimpse of Dorothy and had to look away before I broke down. My mother-in-law is one of the happiest people I know, and this was one of the saddest days of her life. She lost a baby boy many years ago (before Bruce was born) and now she has lost a grown son. I know the pain of burying your own child, but even with the similarities, this is different. My memories of Gabriel are precious, but so few. Losing a child at birth makes you grieve what might have been. But losing a child after 56 years of caring for him? The depth of sadness is unfathomable.

Our sadness is real because we still are living on earth in the flesh. But the sadness will not last forever. It will come and go, in waves. Birthdays and holidays will be tough. The Euchre table will never be the same. And yet, there is Hope. We are people of Faith. We are believers in the Resurrection. Denny was baptized and received the Bread of Life, and with that comes the Promise of Eternal Life! Thanks be to God.

I can still hear Denny's voice, calling out "Hey Kimmy!" It's funny, because very few people call me by that name. As a kid, I hated it, and refused to even let people call me Kimmy. But for some reason, it always seemed to fit with Denny, so he got away with it!

I miss him already. Denny, May the angels lead you into paradise.

Love you buddy...Kimmy.

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# The Death And Burial of a Holy English Monk [at Monks and Mermaids]

## Requiem Mass for the Very Reverend Dom Luke Waring

23rd June 2016



*I first met Father Luke when I was a troubled adolescent of 14 and he was a newly ordained monk and my confessor at 24. This began a relationship which has lasted till now, when he has died at 89 and I have retired at 79. He was the nearest thing I ever had to being my spiritual father. We both have had a very varied life, and what gave both of us continuity and stability was his belief in the Providence of God and in the "sacrament of the present moment" in which every moment is a gift from God by which we can live in synergy with him. Luke, more than anyone else, taught me what it is to be a pastor and a monk of the English Benedictine Congregation. I miss him very much. Here is the abbot's sermon at his funeral.*

“They who trust in God will understand the truth, those who are faithful will live with him in love; for grace and mercy await those he has chosen.” We heard these words from the Book of Wisdom proclaimed this afternoon. Could there be a better text to sum up the nature and purpose of our Christian faith, the faith for which Fr Luke lived and in which he died? Trust in God, understanding the truth, being faithful, living in love, being chosen by God, waiting on his grace and mercy. These words sum up not only Fr Luke’s faith but the story of his life. We are gathered here today to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass for the repose

of his soul and to pray that God will be merciful to him on the Day of Judgement. No one more acutely aware of his sins than Fr Luke, he asked before he died that we always remember him in our prayers.

John Vincent Waring was born in Leyland on 6th April 1927 to Henry and Sylvia, the first of six children, two of whom died in infancy. He was proud to have been born in Lancashire and to be of recusant Catholic stock. In 1938 he passed from St Mary's School, Leyland, to the Jesuit run Preston Catholic College, where he excelled in studies, but not in music or in games: he was tone deaf and too uncoordinated to take part in ball games. Not that he wasn't athletic, for, with his tall, lean build, he was later to become a first class cyclist and a keen walker. After obtaining excellent grades in the Higher School Certificate, he came to Belmont as a postulant in 1945. When asked why he didn't become a Jesuit, he always said it was the example of the Ampleforth monks at St Mary's that made him dream of becoming a Benedictine. Throughout his life he retained a deep affection for his family, his hometown and the parish of his youth.

At Belmont he came under the influence of its cultured abbot, Dom Aidan Williams, and its saintly and austere novice master, Dom Benedict Adams. He was clothed in 1946 and made his First Profession on 29th June 1947. When he died on 9th June, he had been a monk for 70 years. He began his priestly formation at Belmont and in September 1949 was sent to Fribourg in Switzerland to study theology. In the meantime, on 15th September 1950, he made his Solemn Profession under Abbot Anselm Lightbound. Br Luke cycled to and from Fribourg each year and in 1950, the Holy Year, cycled to Rome on pilgrimage. He was ordained to the Sacred Priesthood by Archbishop Michael McGrath of Cardiff on 13th July 1952. He completed his Licentiate in Theology in June 1953 and returned to Belmont. In Switzerland he acquired a good knowledge of both French and German, which he spoke with a pronounced Lancashire accent, as well as furthering his studies in New Testament Greek and becoming a Hebrew scholar. Scripture and theology were to become the passions of his life, together with history, that of the Catholic Church in Britain and of the English Benedictine Congregation in particular.

On his return from Fribourg, Fr Luke was appointed Assistant Priest of Belmont, for the abbot was technically the parish priest. Although he did the work, he had no authority or control over the finances. It was not until 1963 that he was made Parish Priest. He became renowned for his pastoral zeal, visiting every home once a month on his bicycle, no matter the distance or the weather. He made many converts and loved having a few pints in every village pub, chatting with the men in the public bar and sharing his packed lunch, made by himself with the leftovers of his breakfast. However, he felt unfairly treated by the abbot and some of the brethren, who had little respect for the parish, and, to his dying day, he spoke of the hurt this caused him. Nevertheless, he became a legend in his own lifetime, wherever he served, and that began with the Belmont parish. He knew everyone by name and each family history in detail. People loved him because, like Jesus, he loved them and he would go out of his way to help them, no matter what the problem. Long before the phrase "preferential option for the poor" became common coinage in the Catholic Church, it was the poor, the needy, the marginalized and the underdog who were the focus of his attention. With Luke you could see what Jesus meant when he said, "The first will be last and the last first."

While looking after the parish, he also taught Philosophy, Canon Law and Sacred Scripture to young monks in formation. In 1966 he was appointed Novice Master by Abbot Robert Richardson. He was in post until 1971 and again from 1973 to 1976. Many of us passed through his hands and he left an indelible mark on our personalities and monastic vocations. He was strict and demanding, for ever checking up on us to see if we were all doing our sacristy work together or doing spiritual reading and mental prayer at the right time, sitting or kneeling in the correct position. But with the weak he was indulgent and far too kind. When an irate novice complained to him during Holy Week that one of his companions wasn't turning up to do his work, Fr Luke promptly replied, "He's just getting over Christmas!" At times he would have you pulling out your hair, like on those month days when he'd walk the novices all the way up Orcop Hill, for example, and make us take turns in carrying the heavy box of sandwiches, apples and crisps, only to be left with nothing to eat as he passed them round his cronies in the pub, "Have a sandwich." His classes, rather like his homilies, could be a struggle for his hearers, and so it seemed for himself, with his idiosyncratic delivery of strangled 'aaghs' and painful pauses, but he knew his stuff and shared with us a wisdom second to none.

In 1970 Abbot Jerome appointed him Claustal Prior, a role he was to take up again later under Abbot Mark. Then in 1971 he was named Bursar, hardly a task for which he was suited, but Fr Luke was an obedient monk, who did whatever he was asked, even the impossible, to the best of his ability. Two years later he was able to hand over to our first lay bursar, Major Leo Oddie. It's true to say that Fr Luke held every office at Belmont other than that of abbot. In 1976 he was sent to be Prior of Llanarth, our prep school in Monmouthshire. Sr Mavis Therese Baylis, now a Carmelite nun at Dolgellau and founder of a Carmel in Lithuania, has many fond memories of working with him. "I remember school holidays in France when we unwittingly did a good deal of smuggling, not having taken on board that minors were not allowed to buy and bring home bottles of wine for their parents. The coach driver was more clued up, packing the bottles right at the back of the boot, shielded by rows of strong smelling cheeses, and all concealed by suitcases. The customs officers were suffocated by the cheese and went no further in their investigation. Fr Luke stood by with his most characteristic and genial expression."

In 1977 he was appointed Parish Priest of St Begh's, Whitehaven, where his pastoral skills were put to good use in this large, traditional West Cumbrian parish, which at the time still had four curates and four Mass centres. However, in 1981 he was chosen by Abbot Jerome to be one of the founding fathers of our Peruvian monastery and its first Prior. After an intensive Spanish course in Bolivia, Fr Luke, Fr David and I arrived in Lima on 6th August, moving north to Tambogrande in the Archdiocese of Piura on 20th. Fr Luke was to remain in Peru for ten years, all of them spent in the vast rural Parish of San Andrés, the first five as superior, the last five as parish priest. Here Fr Luke became more than a legend, he almost became a saint. He served the people with a spirit of humility, self-sacrifice and heroic endeavour, witnessed only in the lives of the saints, to whom the people had great devotion. During the torrential rains caused by the Niño in 1983, strapping a kitbag to his back, he would jump almost naked into rivers and torrents in spate and swim to distant villages to celebrate Mass or anoint the sick. One such village, the poorest in the parish, was La Rita, with a population of 10,000. When the floods subsided, they decided to build a new church and named it St Luke, not in honour of the evangelist, but of Padre Lucas, their hero and their

friend. A book could be written about his exploits in Peru: it would make better reading than a novel by Vargas Llosa or Graham Greene.

On his return from Peru, he became assistant priest to Fr Thomas at Our Lady's, Hereford, before moving on to Weobley and Kington as Parish Priest, until, in 1995 he was asked by Abbot Mark to help out in Peru for a year before becoming Novice Master and Claustal Prior at Belmont. When I became abbot at the end of 2000, I asked him to become Parish Priest of St Francis Xavier, then, at the age of 75, to help out as assistant priest at Whitehaven and, finally, to be Parish Priest of St David's, Swansea, until, sadly, we relinquished that incorporated parish to the Diocese of Menevia at the end of 2008, by which time Fr Luke was almost 82. In January 2009 he became Chaplain to the Benedictine nuns at Colwich Abbey, Staffordshire, where he flourished in the company of the nuns and of his cat Diana. Fr Luke adored cats and in the course of his life had at least four, all called Diana. In recognition of his services to Belmont and the English Congregation, the Abbot President made him Cathedral Prior of Rochester and he was invited to preach at Rochester Cathedral.

Towards the end of 2012 he came home to Belmont to live in our infirmary and to be cared for by the brethren. At first he was mobile and took part in much of the daily life, but gradually he became more and more incapacitated, yet dismissing his physiotherapist and often disagreeing with the diagnosis and treatment offered by his doctor. Fr Luke was and always had been a hypochondriac, who enjoyed the attention of doctors and nurses, yet always preferring to seek a second opinion. This could be amusing and frustrating at the same time: he was not easy to live with. As he loved to say, "You can tell a Lancashire man, but you can't tell him much."

As he grew weaker, he found it difficult to accept the limitations of infirmity and old age: he always wanted to do more than he could and planned outings and holidays. In fact, he was just a few days' off a reunion with his altar servers' cycling group, when he suffered a stroke and had to be hospitalized. Fortunately, this happened during the night, so he didn't fall or break a bone, nor did he lose his memory. He was wonderfully looked after by the staff at Hereford County Hospital and then at Oaklands Nursing Home, where he died peacefully, shortly after being anointed, on the evening of 9th June. He simply stopped breathing. While still at Belmont, he spent a lot of time reading in a variety of languages and enjoyed talking about all aspects of the English Benedictine life, local history, Lancashire, his beloved family and Peru. He kept contact with friends and relations, writing letters, making telephone calls and receiving visitors. His powerful memory, that phenomenal gift of God, never failed him. He was knowledgeable about so many things. If you had a doubt about Greek grammar, the interpretation of a Hebrew text, some point of Canon Law, the history a Herefordshire village or a Whitehaven, Swansea or Tambogrande family, anything related to Belmont and its monks or any other topic, you simply asked Fr Luke. Long before Google and far more reliable, there was Fr Luke.

A great light has gone out in our lives. One of our great men has left us. We are the richer for knowing him, the poorer for losing him. But Fr Luke did not live for this world only: he lived and longed for

heaven. “I hope the Lord won’t keep me waiting,” he would say. The Lord answered his prayer and has taken him to Himself. As Catholics we believe and hope he is in Purgatory, that great furnace of love and purification, being prepared with the help of our prayers, to enter into the light of Heaven, where he will see the God he loved and served face to face. “Grace and mercy await those he has chosen.” This is what he truly believed, so we pray for him today, “Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.”

## BACK TO THE COUNCIL TOMORROW

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This contribution is available at <http://fatherdavidbirdosb.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/an-interlude-from-great-holy-council.html>

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# Pope Benedict XVI: Lecture by H.E. Cardinal Ratzinger "Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity" [at Monks and Mermaids]

Pope Benedict XVI: LECTURE BY H.E. CARDINAL RATZINGER "EUCHARIST, COMMUNION AND SOLIDARITY" March 3rd, 2008. [my source: Catholic Online](#)



Sunday 2 June 2002

Dear friends,

after preparing for your Eucharistic Congress with prayer, reflection and charitable activities under the guidance of your Pastor, Archbishop Serafino Sprovieri, the Archdiocese of Benevento decided to undertake a two-fold investigation. It began an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the deepest sacramental mystery of the Church – the Holy Eucharist – and the Church’s most practical, down-to-earth commitment: her charitable work of sharing, reconciling and unifying. The diocese proposed this exploration the better to celebrate the sacrament and to live more fruitfully Christ’s “new commandment” that we “love one another”.

“Agape, Pax’, Orthodoxy, Orthopraxis

Often, in the primitive Church, the Eucharist was called simply “agape“, that is, “love”, or even simply “pax“, that is “peace”. The Christians of that time thus expressed in a dramatic way the unbreakable link between the mystery of the hidden presence of God and the praxis of serving the cause of peace, of Christians being peace. For the early Christians, there was no difference between what today is often distinguished as orthodoxy and orthopraxis, as right doctrine and right action. Indeed, when this distinction is made, there generally is a suggestion that the word orthodoxy is to be disdained: those who hold fast to right doctrine are seen as people of narrow sympathy, rigid, potentially intolerant. In the final analysis, for those holding this rather critical view of orthodoxy everything depends on “right action”, with doctrine regarded as something always open to further discussion. For those holding this

view, the chief thing is the fruit doctrine produces, while the way that leads to our just action is a matter of indifference. Such a comparison would have been incomprehensible and unacceptable for those in the ancient Church, for they rightly understood the word “orthodoxy” not to mean “right doctrine” but to mean the authentic adoration and glorification of God.

They were convinced that everything depended on being in the right relationship with God, on knowing what pleases him and what one can do to respond to him in the right way. For this reason, Israel loved the law: from it, they knew God’s will, they knew how to live justly and how to honour God in the right way: by acting in accord with his will, bringing order into the world, opening it to the transcendent.

Christ teaches how God is glorified, the world is made just

This was the new joy Christians discovered: that now, beginning with Christ, they understood how God ought to be glorified and how precisely through this the world would become just. That these two things should go together – how God is glorified and how justice comes – the angels had proclaimed on the holy night: “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, goodwill toward men”, they had said (Lk 2,14). God’s glory and peace on earth are inseparable. Where God is excluded, there is a breakdown of peace in the world; without God, no orthopraxis can save us. In fact, there does not exist an orthopraxis which is simply just, detached from a knowledge of what is good. The will without knowledge is blind and so action, orthopraxis, without knowledge is blind and leads to the abyss. Marxism’s great deception was to tell us that we had reflected on the world long enough, that now it was at last time to change it. But if we do not know in what direction to change it, if we do not understand its meaning and its inner purpose, then change alone becomes destruction – as we have seen and continue to see. But the inverse is also true: doctrine alone, which does not become life and action, becomes idle chatter and so is equally empty. The truth is concrete. Knowledge and action are closely united, as are faith and life. This awareness is precisely what your theme seeks to state, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity”. I should like to dwell on the three key words you have chosen for your Eucharistic Congress to clarify them.

## 1. Eucharist

“Eucharist” is today – and it is entirely right that it be so – the most common name for the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, which the Lord instituted on the night before his passion. In the early Church there were other names for this sacrament – agape and pax we have already mentioned. Along with these there were, for example, also synaxis – assembly, reunion of the many. Among Protestants this Sacrament is called “Supper”, with the intent – following the lead of Luther for whom Scripture alone was valid – to return totally to the biblical origins. And, in fact, in St Paul, this sacrament is called “the Lord’s Supper”. But it is significant that this title very soon disappeared, and from the second century it was used no longer. Why? Was it perhaps a moving away from the New Testament, as Luther thought, or something else?

Certainly the Lord instituted his Sacrament in the context of a meal, more precisely that of the Jewish Passover supper, and so at the beginning it was also linked with a gathering for a meal. But the Lord had not ordered a repetition of the Passover supper, which constituted the framework. That was not his sacrament, his new gift. In any event, the Passover supper could only be celebrated once a year. The celebration of the Eucharist was therefore detached from the gathering for the supper to the degree that the detachment from the Law was beginning to take place, along with the passage to a Church of Jews and Gentiles, but above all, of Gentiles. The link with the supper was thus revealed as extrinsic, indeed, as the occasion for ambiguities and abuses, as Paul amply described in his First Letter to the Corinthians.

## Liturgy of Word, Prayer of Thanksgiving, Words of Institution

Thus the Church, assuming her own specific configuration, progressively freed the specific gift of the Lord, which was new and permanent, from the old context and gave it its own form. This took place thanks to the connection with the liturgy of the word, which has its model in the synagogue; and thanks to the fact that the Lord's words of institution formed the culminating point of the great prayer of thanksgiving – that thanksgiving, also derived from the synagogue traditions and so ultimately from the Lord, who clearly had rendered thanks and praise to God in the Jewish tradition. But he had emphatically enriched that prayer of thanksgiving with a unique profundity by means of the gift of his body and his blood.

Through this action, the early Christians had come to understand that the essence of the event of the Last Supper was not the eating of the lamb and the other traditional dishes, but the great prayer of praise that now contained as its centre the very words of Jesus. With these words he had transformed his death into the gift of himself, in such a way that we can now render thanks for this death. Yes, only now is it possible to render thanks to God without reserve, because the most dreadful thing – the death of the Redeemer and the death of all of us – was transformed through an act of love into the gift of life.

### Eucharist, Eucharistic Prayer

Accordingly, the Eucharist was recognized as the essential reality of the Last Supper, what we call today the Eucharistic Prayer, which derives directly from the prayer of Jesus on the eve of his passion and is the heart of the new spiritual sacrifice, the motive for which many Fathers designated the Eucharist simply as *oratio* (prayer), as the “sacrifice of the word”, as a spiritual sacrifice, but which becomes also material and matter transformed: bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, the new food, which nourishes us for the resurrection, for eternal life. Thus, the whole structure of words and material elements becomes an anticipation of the eternal wedding feast. At the end, we shall return once more to this connection. Here it is important only to understand better why we as Catholic Christians do not call this sacrament “Supper” but “Eucharist”. The infant Church slowly gave to this sacrament its specific form, and precisely in this way, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she clearly identified and correctly represented in signs the true essence of the sacrament, which the Lord really “instituted” on that night.

Precisely by examining the process by which the Eucharistic sacrament progressively took on its form, one understands in a beautiful way the profound connection between Scripture and tradition. The Bible considered solely in the historical context does not communicate sufficiently to us the vision of what is essential. That insight only comes through the living practice of the Church who lived Scripture, grasped its deepest intention and made it accessible to us.

### 2. “Communio”

The second word in the title of your Eucharistic congress – Communion – has become fashionable these days. It is, in fact, one of the most profound and characteristic words of the Christian tradition. Precisely for this reason it is very important to understand it in the whole depth and breadth of its meaning. Perhaps I may make an entirely personal observation here. When with a few friends – in particular Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Louis Bouyer, Jorge Medina – I had the idea of founding a magazine in which we intended to deepen and develop the inheritance of the Council, we looked for an appropriate name, a single word, which could fully convey the purpose of this publication. Already, in the last year of the Second Vatican Council, 1965, a review was begun, to serve as the permanent voice of the Council

and its spirit, called Concilium. Hans Küng thought he had discovered an equivalence between the words ekklesia (Church) and concilium. The root of both terms was the Greek word kalein (to call) the first word, ekklesia, meaning to convoke, the second word, concilium, to summon together. Therefore both words essentially signify the same thing. From such an etymological relationship one could say the terms Church and Council were something synonymous and see the Church by her very nature as the continuing Council of God in the world. Therefore, the Church was to be conceived of in this “conciliar” sense and “actualized” in the form of a Council; and, vice versa, the Council was seen as the most intense possible realization of “Church”, namely, the Church in her highest form.

In the years following the Council, for a time, I followed this concept – the Church as the permanent council of God in the world – which seemed at first glance rather enlightening. The practical consequences of this conception should not be overlooked and its attractiveness is immediate. Still, though I came to the conclusion that the vision of Hans Küng certainly contained something true and serious; I also saw that it needed considerable correction. I would very briefly like to try to summarize the result of my studies at that time. My philological and theological research into the understanding of the words “church” and “council” in ancient times showed that a council can certainly be an important, vital manifestation of the Church, but that in reality the Church is something more, that her essence goes deeper.

### **“Koinonia’ lives the Word of life**

The council is something that the Church holds, but the Church is not a council. The Church does not exist primarily to deliberate, but to live the Word that has been given to us. I decided that the word that best expressed this fundamental concept, which conveyed the very essence of the Church itself, was koinonia - communion. Her structure, therefore, is not to be described by the term “conciliar”, but rather with the word “communional”. When I proposed these ideas publicly in 1969 in my book, *The New People of God*, the concept of communion was not yet very widespread in public theological and ecclesial discussions. As a result my ideas on this matter were also given little consideration. These ideas, however, were decisive for me in the search for a title for the new journal, and led to our later calling the journal *Communio* (communion).

The concept itself received wide public recognition only with the Synod of Bishops in 1985. Until then the phrase “People of God” had prevailed as the chief new concept of the Church, and was widely believed to synthesize the intentions of Vatican II itself. This belief might well have been true, if the words had been used in the full profundity of their biblical meaning and in the broad, accurate context in which the Council had used them. When, however the main word becomes a slogan, its meaning is inevitably diminished; indeed, it is trivialized.

### **Synod of 1985**

As a consequence, the Synod of 1985 sought a new beginning by focusing on the word “communion”, which refers first of all to the Eucharistic centre of the Church, and so again returns to the understanding of the Church as the most intimate place of the encounter between Jesus and mankind, in his act of giving himself to us.

It was unavoidable that this great fundamental word of the New Testament, isolated and employed as a slogan, would also suffer diminishment, indeed, might even be trivialized. Those who speak today of an “ecclesiology of communion” generally tend to mean two things: (1) they support a “pluralist” ecclesiology, almost a “federative” sense of union, opposing what they see as a centralist conception of

the Church; (2) they want to stress, in the exchanges of giving and receiving among local Churches, their culturally pluralistic forms of worship in the liturgy, in discipline and in doctrine.

Even where these tendencies are not developed in detail, “communion” is nonetheless generally understood in a horizontal sense – communion is seen as emerging from a network of multiple communities. This conception of the communal structure of Church is barely distinguishable from the conciliar vision mentioned above. The horizontal dominates. The emphasis is on the idea of self-determination within a vast community of churches.

Naturally, there is here much that is true. However, fundamentally the approach is not correct, and in this way the true depth of what the New Testament and Vatican II and also the Synod of 1985 wanted to say would be lost. To clarify the central meaning of the concept of “communio”, I would like briefly to turn to two great texts on *communio* from the New Testament. The first is found in I Corinthians 10,16 ff, where Paul tells us: “The chalice of blessing, which we bless, is it not a participation [“communion” in the Italian text] in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is but one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread”.

### **Vertical dimension in Eucharist**

The concept of communion is above all anchored in the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, the reason why we still today in the language of the Church rightly designate the reception of this sacrament simply as “to communicate”. In this way, the very practical social significance of this sacramental event also immediately becomes evident, and this in a radical way that cannot be achieved in exclusively horizontal perspectives. Here we are told that by means of the sacrament we enter in a certain way into a communion with the blood of Jesus Christ, where blood according to the Hebrew perspective stands for “life”. Thus, what is being affirmed is a commingling of Christ’s life with our own.

“Blood” in the context of the Eucharist clearly stands also for “gift”, for an existence that pours itself out, gives itself for us and to us. Thus the communion of blood is also insertion into the dynamic of this life, into this “blood poured out”. Our existence is “dynamized” in such a way that each of us can become a being for others, as we see obviously happening in the open Heart of Christ.

From a certain point of view, the words over the bread are even more stunning. They tell of a “communion” with the body of Christ which Paul compares to the union of a man and a woman (cf. I Cor 6,17ff; Eph 5,26-32). Paul also expresses this from another perspective when he says: it is one and the same bread, which all of us now receive. This is true in a startling way: the “bread” – the new manna, which God gives to us – is for all the one and the same Christ.

### **The Lord unites us with himself**

It is truly the one, identical Lord, whom we receive in the Eucharist, or better, the Lord who receives us and assumes us into himself. St Augustine expressed this in a short passage which he perceived as a sort of vision: eat the bread of the strong; you will not transform me into yourself, but I will transform you into me. In other words, when we consume bodily nourishment, it is assimilated by the body, becoming itself a part of ourselves. But this bread is of another type. It is greater and higher than we are. It is not we who assimilate it, but it assimilates us to itself, so that we become in a certain way “conformed to Christ”, as Paul says, members of his body, one in him.

We all “eat” the same person, not only the same thing; we all are in this way taken out of our closed individual persons and placed inside another, greater one. We all are assimilated into Christ and so by means of communion with Christ, united among ourselves, rendered the same, one sole thing in him, members of one another.

To communicate with Christ is essentially also to communicate with one another. We are no longer each alone, each separate from the other; we are now each part of the other; each of those who receive communion is “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Gn 2,23).

### **Social universal union**

A true spirituality of communion seen in its Christological profundity, therefore, necessarily has a social character, as Henri de Lubac brilliantly described more than a half century ago in his book, *Catholicism*.

For this reason, in my prayer at communion, I must look totally toward Christ, allowing myself to be transformed by him, even to be burned by his enveloping fire. But, precisely for this reason, I must always keep clearly in mind that in this way he unites me organically with every other person receiving him – with the one next to me, whom I may not like very much; but also with those who are far away, in Asia, Africa, America or in any other place.

Becoming one with them, I must learn to open myself toward them and to involve myself in their situations. This is the proof of the authenticity of my love for Christ. If I am united with Christ, I am together with my neighbour, and this unity is not limited to the moment of communion, but only begins here. It becomes life, becomes flesh and blood, in the everyday experience of sharing life with my neighbour. Thus, the individual realities of my communicating and being part of the life of the Church are inseparably linked to one another.

The Church is not born as a simple federation of communities. Her birth begins with the one bread, with the one Lord and from him from the beginning and everywhere, the one body which derives from the one bread. She becomes one not through a centralized government but through a common centre open to all, because it constantly draws its origin from a single Lord, who forms her by means of the one bread into one body. Because of this, her unity has a greater depth than that which any other human union could ever achieve. Precisely when the Eucharist is understood in the intimacy of the union of each person with the Lord, it becomes also a social sacrament to the highest degree.

Martin de Porres, Mother Teresa

The great social saints were in reality always the great Eucharistic saints. I would like to mention just two examples chosen entirely at random.

First of all, the beloved figure of St Martin de Porres, who was born in 1569 in Lima, Peru, the son of an Afro-American mother and a Spanish nobleman. Martin lived from the adoration of the Lord present in the Eucharist, passing entire nights in prayer before the crucified Lord in the tabernacle, while during the day he tirelessly cared for the sick and assisted the socially outcast and despised, with whom he, as a mulatto, identified because of his origins. The encounter with the Lord, who gives himself to us from the cross, makes all of us members of the one body by means of the one bread, which when responded to fully moves us to serve the suffering, to care for the weak and the forgotten.

In our time, we can recall the person of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Wherever she opened the houses of her sisters to the service of the dying and outcast, the first thing she asked for was a place for the tabernacle, because she knew that only beginning from there, would come the strength for such service.

Whoever recognizes the Lord in the tabernacle, recognizes him in the suffering and the needy; they are among those to whom the world's judge will say: "I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Mt 25,35).

Briefly, I would like to recall a second important New Testament text concerning the word "communion" (koinonia). It is found right at the beginning of the first Letter of John (1,3-7), where he speaks of the encounter granted him with the Word made flesh. John says that he is transmitting what he has seen with his own eyes and touched with his own hands. This encounter has given him the gift of koinonia - communion - with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. It has become a true "communion" with the living God. As John expresses it, the communion has opened his eyes and he now lives in the light, that is, in the truth of God, which is expressed in the unique, new commandment, which encompasses everything - the commandment to love. And so the communion with the "Word of life" becomes the just life, becomes love. In this way it also becomes reciprocal communion: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we are in communion one with another" (I Jn 1,6).

The text shows the same logic of communion that we already found in Paul: communion with Jesus becomes communion with God himself, communion with the light and with love; it becomes in this way an upright life, and all of this unites us with one another in the truth. Only when we regard communion in this depth and breadth do we have something to say to the world.

### 3. Solidarity

We arrive finally at the third key word, "solidarity". While the first two words come from the Bible and from Christian tradition, this word comes to us from outside. The concept of "solidarity" - as Archbishop Paul Cordes has shown - was developed initially among the early socialists by P. Lerou (died 1871) in contraposition to the Christian idea of love, as the new, rational and effective response to social problems.

Without Christ there are no solutions

Karl Marx held that Christianity had had a millennium and a half to demonstrate its capacity to deal with poverty, inequality and injustice, and had only succeeded in proving its incapacity to do so.

Therefore, Marx claimed, new ways had to be employed. And for decades many were convinced that the Marxist socialist system, centred around the concept of "solidarity", was now the way finally to achieve human equality, to eliminate poverty and to bring peace to the world. Today, we can see what horrors and massacres were left behind by a social theory and policies that took no account of God.

It is undeniable that the liberal model of the market economy, especially as moderated and corrected under the influence of Christian social ideas, has in some parts of the world led to great success. All the sadder are the results, especially in places like Africa, where clashing power blocs and economic interests have been at work. Behind the apparent beneficial models of development there has all too often been hidden the desire to expand the reach of particular powers and ideologies in order to dominate the

market. In this situation, ancient social structures and spiritual and moral forces have been destroyed, with consequences that echo in our ears like a single great cry of sorrow.

No, without God things cannot go well. And because only in Christ has God shown us his face, spoken his name, entered into communion with us; without Christ there is no ultimate hope.

Christians have exemplified solutions despite terrible failures

It is clear that Christians in past centuries have been stained with serious sins. Slavery and the slave trade remain a dark chapter that show how few Christians were truly Christian and how far many Christians were from the faith and message of the Gospel, from true communion with Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, lives full of faith and love, as seen in the humble willingness of so many priests and sisters to sacrifice themselves, have provided a positive counterweight and left an inheritance of love, which even if it cannot eliminate the horror of exploitation, can help to lessen it. On this witness we can build; along this path we can proceed farther.

It was in this situation, in recent decades, that the understanding of the concept of solidarity – thanks above all to the ethical studies of the Holy Father – has been slowly transformed and Christianized, so that now we can justly place it next to the two key Christian words, “Eucharist” and “Communion”. Solidarity in this context signifies people who feel responsible for one another, the healthy for the sick, the rich for the poor, the countries of the North for those of the South. It means a sense of individual awareness, of reciprocal responsibility; it means we are conscious that when we give we receive, and that we can always give only what has been given to us and that what we have been given never belongs to us for ourselves alone.

Spirituality has to accompany scientific and technical formation

Today we see that it is not enough to transmit technical skills, scientific knowledge and theories, nor the praxis of certain political structures. Those things not only do not help, but even end up causing harm, if the spiritual forces which give meaning to these technologies and structures are not also re-awakened, so as to make their responsible use possible. It was easy to destroy with our rationality the traditional religions, which now survive as subcultures, remnants of superstition, which have been deprived of their better elements and now are practices that can harm people in mind and body. It would have been better to expose their healthy nucleus to the light of Christ and so lead them to the fulfillment of the tacit expectations within them. Through such a process of purification and development, continuity and progress would have been united in a fruitful way.

Where missions were successful, they generally followed this path and so helped to develop those forces of faith which are so urgently needed today.

In the crisis of the 1960s and 1970s, many missionaries came to the conclusion that missionary work, that is, the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, was no longer appropriate today.

They thought the only thing that still made sense was to offer help in social development. But how can positive social development be carried out if we become illiterate with regard to God?

Gospel and social advancement go together

The fundamental idea tacitly agreed upon, that the peoples or tribes needed to preserve their own religions and not concern themselves with ours, shows only that the faith in the hearts of such men had grown cold despite their great good will; it shows that communion with the Lord was no longer seen as vital. Otherwise how could they have thought that it was a good thing to exclude others from these things?

Basically it is a matter here – often without realizing it – of thinking poorly of religion in general and of not esteeming other religions. A person’s religion is considered an archaic relic to be left alone because, ultimately it is thought to have nothing to do with the true greatness of progress. What religions say and do, appears to be totally irrelevant; they are not even a part of the world of rationality; their contents ultimately count for nothing. The “orthopraxis”, which we then look forward to, will be truly built on sand.

It is high time to abandon this erroneous way of thinking. We need faith in Jesus Christ if for no other reason than for the fact that it brings together reason and religion. It offers us in this way the criteria of responsibility and releases the strength necessary to live according to this responsibility. Sharing on all levels, spiritual, ethical and religious, is part of solidarity between peoples and nations.

Globalization means seeking the welfare of all the continents

It is clear that we must develop our economy further in a way that it no longer operates only in favour of the interests of a certain country or group of countries, but for the welfare of all the continents. This is difficult and is never fully realized. It requires that we make sacrifices. But if a spirit of solidarity truly nourished by faith is born, then this could become possible, even if only in an imperfect way.

The theme of globalization arises in this context, but here I am unable to address it. It is clear today that we all depend on each other. But there is a globalization that is conceived of unilaterally in terms of personal interests. There ought to exist a globalization which requires nations to be responsible for one another and to bear one another’s burdens. All of this cannot be realized in a neutral way, with reference only to market mechanisms. For decisions about market value are determined by many presuppositions. Thus, our religious and moral horizon is always decisive. If globalization in technology and economy is not accompanied by a new opening of the conscience to God, before whom all of us have a responsibility, then there will be a catastrophe. This is the great responsibility which weighs today on Christians.

Christianity, from the one Lord, the one bread, which seeks to make of us one body, has from the beginning aimed at the unification of humanity. If we, precisely at the moment when the exterior unification of humanity, previously unthinkable, becomes possible, withdraw ourselves as Christians, believing we cannot or should not give anything further, we would burden ourselves with a serious sin. In fact, a unity that is built without God or indeed against him, ends up like the experiment of Babylon: in total confusion and total destruction, in hatred and total chaos of all against all.

Conclusion

The Eucharist as the Sacrament of Transformation

Let us return to the Holy Eucharist. What really happened on the night when Christ was betrayed? Let us listen to the Roman Canon – the heart of the “Eucharist” of the Church in Rome: “The day before he suffered, he took bread into his sacred hands, and looking up to heaven, to you, his almighty Father, he gave you thanks and praise, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said: “Take this all of you, and

eat it. This is my body which will be given up for you'. When supper was ended, he took the cup, again he gave you thanks and praise, gave the cup to his disciples and said: "Take, all of you, and drink from it. This is the cup of my blood the blood of the new and everlasting covenant, it will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me' " (ICEL Translation).

## Transubstantiation

What is happening in these words?

In the first place we are confronted by the word "transubstantiation". The bread becomes the body, his body. The bread of the earth becomes the bread of God, the "manna" of heaven, with which God nourishes men not only in their earthly life but also in the prospect of the resurrection – which prepares for the resurrection, or rather, already makes it begin. The Lord, who would have been able to transform stones into bread, who was able to raise up from rocks the sons of Abraham, wishes to transform the bread into a body, his body. Is this possible? How can it happen?

## Body given, Blood poured out

We cannot avoid the questions that the people posed in the synagogue of Capernaum. He is there before his disciples, with his body; how can he say over the bread: this is my body? It is important to pay close attention to what the Lord really said. He does not say only: "This is my body", but: "This is my body, which is given up for you". It can become gift, because it is given. By means of the act of giving it becomes "capable of communicating", has transformed itself into a gift. We may observe the same thing in the words over the cup. Christ does not say simply: "This is my blood", but, "This is my blood, which is shed for you". Because it is shed, inasmuch as it is shed, it can be given.

## Real transformation of violence into an act of love

But now a new question emerges: what do "it is given" and "it is shed" mean? In truth, Jesus is killed; he is nailed to a cross and dies amid torment. His blood is poured out, first in the Garden of Olives due to his interior suffering for his mission, then in the flagellation, the crowning with thorns, the crucifixion, and after his death in the piercing of his Heart. What occurs is above all an act of violence, of hatred, torture and destruction.

At this point we run into a second, more profound level of transformation: he transforms, from within, the act of violent men against him into an act of giving on behalf of these men – into an act of love. This is dramatically recognizable in the scene of the Garden of Olives. What he teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, he now does: he does not offer violence against violence, as he might have done, but puts an end to violence by transforming it into love. The act of killing, of death, is changed into an act of love; violence is defeated by love. This is the fundamental transformation upon which all the rest is based. It is the true transformation which the world needs and which alone can redeem the world. Since Christ in an act of love has transformed and defeated violence from within, death itself is transformed: love is stronger than death. It remains forever.

## Transformation of death into life

And so in this transformation is contained the broader transformation of death into resurrection, of the dead body into the risen body. If the first man was a living being, as St Paul says, the new Adam, Christ,

will become by this spiritual event the giver of life (I Cor 15, 45). The risen one is gift, is spirit who gives his life, “communicates”, indeed, is communication. This means that there is no farewell here to material existence; rather, in this way material existence achieves its goal: without the actual event of death (with its interior transcendence) all this complex transformation of material things would not be possible. And so in the transformation of the resurrection all the fullness of Christ continues to subsist, but now transformed in this way; now being a body and the gift of self are no longer mutually exclusive, but are implicit in each other.

Before going on, let us first seek to sum this up once more in order to understand this whole complex reality. At the moment of the Last Supper, Jesus has already anticipated the event of Calvary. He accepts the death on the cross and with his acceptance transforms the act of violence into an act of giving, of self-giving poured forth, “Even if I am to be poured out as a libation on the sacrificial offering of your faith”, St Paul says on the basis of this and in regard to his own imminent martyrdom in Philippians 2,17. At the Last Supper the cross is already present, accepted and transformed by Jesus.

This first and fundamental transformation draws to itself all the others – the mortal body is transformed into the resurrected body: it is “the spirit which gives life”.

#### Transformation of bread and wine

On the basis of this the third transformation becomes possible: the gifts of bread and wine, that are the gifts of creation and at the same time fruit of human labour and the “transformation” of the creation, are transformed so that in them the Lord himself who gives himself becomes present, in his gift of self-giving. His gift, himself – since he is gift. The act of self giving is not something from him, but it is himself.

And on this basis the prospect opens onto two further transformations, that are essential to the Eucharist, from the instant of its institution: the transformed bread, the transformed wine.

Through them the Lord himself gives himself as spirit that gives life, to transform us men, so that we become one bread with him and then one body with him. The transformation of the gifts, which is only the continuation of the fundamental transformations of the cross and of the resurrection, is not the final point, but in its turn only a beginning.

#### Transformation of communicants into one body

The purpose of the Eucharist is the transformation of those who receive it in authentic communion. And so the end is unity, that peace which we, as separate individuals who live beside one another or in conflict with one another, become with Christ and in him, as one organism of self-giving, to live in view of the resurrection and the new world.

#### Transformation of creation into dwelling place for God

The fifth and final transformation which characterizes this sacrament becomes thus visible: by means of us, the transformed, who have become one body, one spirit which gives life, the entire creation must be transformed. The entire creation must become a “new city”, a new paradise, the living dwelling-place of God: “God all in all” (I Cor 15,28) – thus Paul describes the end of creation, which must be conformed to the Eucharist.

Thus the Eucharist is a process of transformations, drawing on God's power to transform hatred and violence, on his power to transform the world. We must therefore pray that the Lord will help us to celebrate and to live the Eucharist in this way. We pray that he transform us, and together with us the world, into the new Jerusalem.

**THE ECCLESIOLOGY OF VATICAN II** Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith



Conference of Cardinal Ratzinger at the opening of the Pastoral Congress of the Diocese of Aversa (Italy)

On the afternoon of 15 September 2001, at the invitation of Archbishop Mario Milano, His Eminence, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, opened the Pastoral Congress of the Diocese of Aversa (Italy) dedicated to a re-reading of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. This is a translation of Cardinal Ratzinger's opening lecture in Italian.

Just after the First World War, Romano Guardini coined an expression that quickly became a slogan for German Catholics: "An event of enormous importance is taking place: the Church is awakening within souls". The result of this awakening was ultimately the Second Vatican Council. Through its various documents it expressed and made part of the patrimony of the whole Church something that, during four decades full of ferment and hope (1920 to 1960), had been maturing in knowledge gained through faith. To understand Vatican II one must look back on this period and seek to discern, at least in outline, the currents and tendencies that came together in the Council. I will present the ideas that came to the fore during this period and then describe the fundamental elements of the Council's teaching on the Church.

I. The Church, the Body of Christ

1. The Image of the Mystical Body

"The Church is awakening within souls". Guardini's expression had been wisely formulated, since it finally recognized and experienced the Church as something within us—not as an institution outside us but something that lives within us.

If until that time we had thought of the Church primarily as a structure or organization, now at last we began to realize that we ourselves were the Church. The Church is much more than an organization: it is the organism of the Holy Spirit, something that is alive, that takes hold of our inmost being. This consciousness found verbal expression with the concept of the "Mystical Body of Christ", a phrase describing a new and liberating experience of the Church. At the very end of his life, in the same year the Constitution on the Church was published by the Council, Guardini wrote: the Church "is not an institution devised and built by men ... but a living reality... It lives still throughout the course of time. Like all living realities it develops, it changes ... and yet in the very depths of its being it remains the same; its inmost

nucleus is Christ... To the extent that we look upon the Church as organization ... like an association ... we have not yet arrived at a proper understanding of it. Instead, it is a living reality and our relationship with it ought to be—life" (La Chiesa del Signore, [English translation: "The Church of the Lord"]; Morcelliana, Brescia 1967, p. 160).

Today, it is difficult to communicate the enthusiasm and joy this realization generated at the time. In the era of liberalism that preceded the First World War, the Catholic Church was looked upon as a fossilized organization, stubbornly opposed to all modern achievements. Theology had so concentrated on the question of the primacy as to make the Church appear to be essentially a centralized organization that one defended staunchly but which somehow one related to from the outside. Once again it became clear that the Church was more than this—she is something we all bring forward in faith in a living way, just as the Church brings us forward. It became clear that the Church has experienced organic growth over the centuries, and continues to grow even today. Through the Church the mystery of the Incarnation is alive today: Christ continues to move through time. If we were to ask ourselves what element present from the very beginning could still be found in Vatican II, our answer would be: the Christological definition of the Church. J.A. Möhler, a leader in the revival of Catholic theology after the devastation of the Enlightenment, once said: a certain erroneous theology could be caricatured with the short phrase: "In the beginning Christ created the hierarchy and had thus taken adequate care of the Church until the end of time". Opposed to this concept is the fact that the Church is the Mystical Body; Christ and His act of founding are never over but always new. In the Church Christ never belongs just to the past, He is always and above all the present and the future. The Church is the presence of Christ: He is contemporary with us and we are His contemporaries. The Church lives from this: from the fact that Christ is present in our hearts and it is there that Christ forms His Church. That is why the first word of the Church is Christ, and not herself. The Church is healthy to the extent that all her attention is focused on Him. The Second Vatican Council placed this concept masterfully at the pinnacle of its deliberations; the fundamental text on the Church begins with the words: *Lumen gentium cum sit Christus*: "since Christ is the Light of the World ... the Church is a mirror of His glory; she reflects His splendour". If we want to understand the Second Vatican Council correctly, we must always go back to this opening statement...

Next, with this point of departure, we must establish both the feature of her interiority and of her communitarian nature. The Church grows from within and moves outwards, not vice-versa. Above all, she is the sign of the most intimate communion with Christ. She is formed primarily in a life of prayer, the sacraments and the fundamental attitudes of faith, hope and love. Thus if someone should ask what must I do to become Church and to grow like the Church, the reply must be: you must become a person who lives faith, hope, and charity. What builds the Church is prayer and the communion of the sacraments; in them the prayer of the Church comes to meet us. Last summer I met a parish priest who told me that for many years there hadn't been a single vocation to the priesthood from his parish. What ought he do? We cannot manufacture vocations, it is the Lord who raises them up. Should we therefore stand by helpless? The priest decided to make a pilgrimage every year, a long and difficult pilgrimage to the Marian Shrine of Altötting to pray for vocations, and invited those who shared in this intention to join him in the pilgrimage and common prayer. Year after year the number of participants in this pilgrimage grew until finally, this year, the whole village with great joy, celebrated the first Mass in living memory said by a priest from the parish....

The Church grows from within: this is the meaning of the expression "Body of Christ". The phrase implies something more: Christ has formed a body for himself. If I want to find Him and make Him mine, I am directly called to become a humble and complete and full member of His Body, and, by becoming one of His members, becoming an organ of his Body in this world, I will be so for eternity. The idea of liberal theology that whereas Jesus on his own would be interesting, the Church would be a wretched reality, contradicts this understanding completely. Christ gives Himself only in His body, and never as a pure

ideal. This means that He gives Himself, and the others, in the uninterrupted communion that endures through time and is His Body. It means that the Church is not an idea, it is a Body. The scandal of becoming flesh that Jesus' incarnation caused so many of His contemporaries, is repeated in the "scandalous character" of the Church. Jesus' statement is valid in this instance: "Blessed is he who is not scandalized in me".

The communitarian nature of the Church necessarily entails its character as "we". The Church is not somewhere apart from us, it is we who constitute the Church. No one person can say "I am the Church", but each one of us can and ought to say, "we are the Church". This "we" does not represent an isolated group, but rather a group that exists within the entire community of all Christ's members, living and dead. This is how a group can genuinely say: "we are the Church". Here is the Church, in this open "we" that breaches social and political boundaries, and the boundary between heaven and earth as well. We are the Church. This gives rise to a co-responsibility and also the possibility of collaborating personally. From this understanding there derives the right to criticize but our criticism must be above all self-criticism. Let us repeat: the Church is not "somewhere else"; nor is she "someone else". We ourselves build the Church. These ideas matured and led directly to the Council. Everything said about the common responsibility of the laity, and the legal forms that were established to facilitate the intelligent exercise of responsibility, are the result of this current of thought.

Finally, the concept of the development and therefore of the historical dynamic of the Church belongs to this theme. A body remains identical to itself over the course of its life due to the fact that in the life process it constantly renews itself. For the great English Cardinal, Newman, the idea of development was the true and proper bridge to his conversion to Catholicism. I believe that the idea of development belongs to those numerous fundamental concepts of Catholicism that are far from being adequately explored. Once again it is Vatican II to which we owe the first solemn formulation of this idea in a Magisterial document. Whoever wants to attach himself solely to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures or to the forms of the Church of the Fathers imprisons Christ in "yesterday". The result is either a wholly sterile faith that has nothing to say to our times, or the arrogant assumption of the right to skip over 2,000 years of history, consign them to the dustbin of mistakes, and try to figure out what a Christianity would look like either according to Scripture or according to Jesus. The only possible result will be an artificial creation that we ourselves have made, devoid of any consistency. Genuine identity with the beginning in Christ can only exist where there is a living continuity that has developed the beginning and preserved the beginning precisely through this development.

## 2. Eucharistic Ecclesiology

Let us go back and look at developments in the pre-Conciliar era. Reflection on the Mystical Body of Christ marked the first phase of the Church's interior re-discovery; it began with St Paul and led to placing in the foreground the presence of Christ and the dynamics of what is alive (in Him and us). Further research led to a fresh awareness. Above all, more than anyone else, the great French theologian Henri de Lubac in his magnificent and learned studies made it clear that in the beginning the term "corpus mysticum" referred to the Eucharist. For St Paul and the Fathers of the Church the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ was inseparably connected with the concept of the Eucharist in which the Lord is bodily present and which He gives us His Body as food. This is how a Eucharistic ecclesiology came into existence.

What do we mean today by "Eucharistic ecclesiology"? I will attempt to answer this question with a brief mention of some fundamental points. The first point is that Jesus' Last Supper could be defined as the event that founded the Church. Jesus gave His followers this Liturgy of Death and Resurrection and at the same time He gave them the Feast of Life. In the Last Supper he repeats the covenant of Sinai—or rather what at Sinai was a simple sign or prototype, that becomes now a complete reality: the communion in blood and life between God and man. Clearly the Last Supper anticipates the Cross and the Resurrection

and presupposes them, otherwise it would be an empty gesture. This is why the Fathers of the Church could use a beautiful image and say that the Church was born from the pierced side of the Lord, from which flowed blood and water. When I state that the Last Supper is the beginning of the Church, I am actually saying the same thing, from another point of view. This formula means that the Eucharist binds all men together, and not just with one another, but with Christ; in this way it makes them "Church". At the same time the formula describes the fundamental constitution of the Church: the Church exists in Eucharistic communities. The Church's Mass is her constitution, because the Church is, in essence, a Mass (sent out: "missa"), a service of God, and therefore a service of man and a service for the transformation of the world.

The Mass is the Church's form, that means that through it she develops an entirely original relationship that exists nowhere else, a relationship of multiplicity and of unity. In each celebration of the Eucharist, the Lord is really present. He is risen and dies no more. He can no longer be divided into different parts. He always gives Himself completely and entirely. This is why the Council states: "This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local communities of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament. For in their locality these are the new People called by God, in the Holy Spirit and with great trust (cf. 1 Thes. 1,5)... In these communities, though frequently small and poor, or living in the diaspora, Christ is present, and in virtue of His power there is brought together one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" (Lumen Gentium, n. 26). This means that the ecclesiology of local Churches derives from the formulation of the Eucharistic ecclesiology. This is a typical feature of Vatican II that presents the internal and sacramental foundation of the doctrine of collegiality about which we will speak later.

For a correct understanding of the Council's teaching, we must first look more closely at what exactly it said. Vatican II was aware of the concerns of both Orthodox and Protestant theology and integrated them into a more ample Catholic understanding. In Orthodox theology the idea of Eucharistic ecclesiology was first expressed by exiled Russian theologians in opposition to the pretensions of Roman centralism. They affirmed that insofar as it possesses Christ entirely, every Eucharistic community is already, in se, the Church. Consequently, external unity with other communities is not a constitutive element of the Church. Therefore, they concluded that unity with Rome is not a constitutive element of the Church. Such a unity would be a beautiful thing since it would represent the fullness of Christ to the external world, but it is not essential since nothing would be added to the totality of Christ. The Protestant understanding of the Church was moving in the same direction. Luther could no longer recognize the Spirit of Christ in the universal Church; he directly took that Church to be an instrument of the anti-Christ. Nor could he see the Protestant State Churches of the Reformation as Churches in the proper sense of the word. They were only social, political entities necessary for specific purposes and dependent on political powers—nothing more. According to Luther the Church existed in the community. Only the assembly that listens to the Word of God in a specific place is the Church. He replaced the word "Church" with "community" (Gemeinde). Church became a negative concept.

If we go back now to the Council text certain nuances become evident. The text does not simply say, "The Church is entirely present in each community that celebrates the Eucharist", rather it states: "This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local communities of the faithful which, united with their pastors, are themselves called Churches". Two elements here are of great importance: to be a Church the community must be "legitimate"; they are legitimate when they are "united with their pastors". What does this mean? In the first place, no one can make a Church by himself. A group cannot simply get together, read the New Testament and declare: "At present we are the Church because the Lord is present wherever two or three are gathered in His name". The element of "receiving" belongs essentially to the Church, just as faith comes from "hearing" and is not the result of one's decision or reflection. Faith is a converging with something I could neither imagine nor produce on my own; faith has to come to meet me. We call the

structure of this encounter, a "Sacrament". It is part of the fundamental form of a sacrament that it be received and not self-administered. No one can baptize himself. No one can ordain himself. No one can forgive his own sins. Perfect repentance cannot remain something interior—of its essence it demands the form of encounter of the Sacrament. This too is a result of a sacrament's fundamental structure as an encounter [with Christ]. For this reason communion with oneself is not just an infraction of the external provisions of Canon Law, but it is an attack on the innermost nature of a sacrament. That a priest can administer this unique sacrament, and only this sacrament, to himself is part of the *mysterium tremendum* in which the Eucharist involves him. In the Eucharist, the priest acts "in persona Christi", in the person of Christ [the Head]; at the same time he represents Christ while remaining a sinner who lives completely by accepting Christ's Gift.

One cannot make the Church but only receive her; one receives her from where she already is, where she is really present: the sacramental community of Christ's Body moving through history. It will help us to understand this difficult concept if we add something: "legitimate communities". Christ is everywhere whole. This is the first important formulation of the Council in union with our Orthodox brothers. At the same time Christ is everywhere only one, so I can possess the one Lord only in the unity that He is, in the unity of all those who are also His Body and who through the Eucharist must evermore become it. Therefore, the reciprocal unity of all those communities who celebrate the Eucharist is not something external added to Eucharistic ecclesiology, but rather its internal condition: in unity here is the One. This is why the Council recalls the proper responsibility of communities, but excludes any self-sufficiency. The Council develops an ecclesiology in which being Catholic, namely being in communion with believers in all places and in all times, is not simply an external element of an organizational form, it represents grace coming from within and is at the same time a visible sign of the grace of the Lord who alone can create unity by breaching countless boundaries.

#### I. The Church, as the People of God

After the initial enthusiasm that greeted the discovery of the idea of the Body of Christ, scholars analyzed and gradually began to refine the concept and make corrections in two directions. We have already referred to the first of these corrections in the work of Henri de Lubac. He made concrete the idea of the Body of Christ by working out a Eucharistic ecclesiology and opened it in this way to concrete questions about the juridical ordering of the Church and the reciprocal relations between local Churches and the universal Church. The other form of correction began in Germany in the 1930's, where some theologians were critical of the fact that with the idea of the Mystical Body certain relationships were not clear between the visible and the invisible, law and grace, order and life. They therefore proposed the concept of "People of God", found above all in the Old Testament, as a broader description of the Church to which one could more easily apply sociological and juridical categories. While the Mystical Body of Christ would certainly remain an important "image", by itself it could not meet the request of theology to express things using "concepts".

Initially this criticism of the idea of the Body of Christ was somewhat superficial. Further study of the Body of Christ uncovered its positive content; the concept of "People of God", along with the concept of the Body of Christ, entered the ecclesiology of the Council. One wondered if the image of the Mystical Body might be too narrow a starting point to define the many forms of belonging to the Church now found in the tangle of human history. If we use the image of a body to describe "belonging" we are limited only to the form of representation as "member". Either one is or one is not a member, there are no other possibilities. One can then ask if the image of the body was too restrictive, since there manifestly existed in reality intermediate degrees of belonging. The Constitution on the Church found it helpful for this purpose to use the concept of "the People of God". It could describe the relationship of non-Catholic Christians to the Church as being "in communion" and that of non-Christians as being "ordered" to the Church where in both cases one relies on the idea of the People of God (*Lumen Gentium*, nn. 15, 16).

In one respect one can say that the Council introduced the concept of "the People of God" above all as an ecumenical bridge. It applies to another perspective as well: the rediscovery of the Church after the First World War that initially was a phenomenon common to both Catholics and Protestants. Certainly the liturgical movement was by no means limited to the Catholic Church. This shared character gave rise to reciprocal criticism. The idea of the Body of Christ was developed within the Catholic Church, when the Church was designated as "Christ who continues to live on earth" and so the Church was described as the incarnation of the Son that continues to the end of time. This idea provoked opposition among Protestants who saw in the teaching an intolerable identifying of the Church herself with Christ. According to Protestants the Church was in a way adoring herself and making herself infallible. Gradually, the idea struck Catholic thinkers who, even though they did not go that far, found that this understanding of the Church made her every declaration and ministerial act so definitive that it made any criticism appear to be an attack on Christ himself and simply forgot the human, at times far too human, element of the Church. The Christological distinction had to be clearly emphasized: the Church is not identical with Christ, but she stands before Him. She is a Church of sinners, ever in need of purification and renewal, ever needing to become Church. The idea of reform became a decisive element of the concept of the People of God, while it would be difficult to develop the idea of reform within the framework of the Body of Christ. There is a third factor that favoured the idea of the "People of God". In 1939 the Evangelical exegete, Ernst Käsemann gave his monograph on the Letter to the Hebrews the title, *The Pilgrim People of God*. In the framework of Council discussions, this title became right away a slogan because it made something become more clearly understood in the debates on the Constitution on the Church: the Church has not yet reached her goal. Her true and proper hope still lies ahead of her. The "eschatological" import of the concept of Church became clear. The phrase conveys the unity of salvation history which comprises both Israel and the Church in her pilgrim journey. The phrase expresses the historical nature of the pilgrim Church that will not be wholly herself until the paths of time have been traversed and have blossomed in the hands of God. It describes the unity of the People of God amid the variety, as in all peoples, of different ministries and services; yet above and beyond all distinctions, all are pilgrims in the one community of the pilgrim People of God. In broad outline, if one wants to sum up what elements relating to the concept "People of God" were important for the Council, one could say that the phrase "People of God" conveyed the historical nature of the Church, described the unity of God's history with man, the internal unity of God's people that also goes beyond the frontiers of sacramental states of life. It conveys the eschatological dynamic, the provisional and fragmentary nature of the Church ever in need of renewal; and finally, it expresses the ecumenical dimension, that is the variety of ways in which communion and ordering to the Church can and do exist, even beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church. However, commentators very soon completely handed the term "people" in the concept "People of God" to a general political interpretation. Among the proponents of liberation theology it was taken to mean "people" in the Marxist sense, in opposition to the ruling classes, or more generally, it was taken to refer to popular sovereignty at long last being applied to the Church. This led to large-scale debates on Church structures. On occasion the expression was understood in a peculiarly Western sense as "democratization" or more in the sense of the so-called Eastern "People's Republics". Gradually this "verbal fireworks" (N. Lohfink) died down either because the power games ended in exhaustion and gave way to the ordinary work of parish councils, or because solid theological research had irrefutably demonstrated the impossibility of politicizing a concept that had arisen in an entirely different context. Bochum Werner Berg provides an example of the meticulous exegesis that characterized this theological research when he affirmed: "in spite of the small number of passages that mention the 'People of God' (it is a rare expression in the Bible) one common element is immediately apparent: the expression 'People of God' describes the relationship with God, the connection with God, the link between God and those designated as the People of God, it is therefore a 'vertical relationship'. The expression does not lend itself easily to

a description of the hierarchical structure of this community, especially if 'People of God' is used in "contrast" to the ministers..." If we begin with the biblical meaning of this expression it can no longer be easily understood as a cry of protest against the ministers: "We are the People of God". Josef Meyer zu Schlochtern, the Professor of Fundamental Theology at Paderborn, concludes his discussion of the concept "People of God" with an observation on Vatican II's Constitution on the Church. The document concludes by "depicting the Trinitarian structure as the foundation of the final determination of the Church...". The discussion is brought back to the essential point: the Church does not exist for herself; rather, she is God's instrument to gather mankind in Himself and to prepare for that time when "God will be all in all" (I Cor 15,28). The very concept of God was left out of all the "fireworks" surrounding this expression, thus depriving the expression of its meaning. A Church which existed only for herself would be useless. People would realize this immediately. The crisis of the Church reflected in the expression "People of God" is a "crisis of God". It derives from our abandoning the essential. All that remains is a struggle for power. This sort of thing is already abundantly present in the world—there is no need for the Church to enter this arena.

### III. The Ecclesiology of Communion

Around the time of the extraordinary Synod of 1985 which attempted to make an assessment of the 20 years since the Council there was a renewed effort to synthesize the Council's ecclesiology. The synthesis involved one basic concept: the ecclesiology of communion. I was very much pleased with this new focus in ecclesiology and I endeavoured, to the extent I was able, to help work it out. First of all one must admit that the word "communio" did not occupy a central place in the Council. All the same if properly understood it can serve as a synthesis of the essential elements of the Council's ecclesiology. All the essential elements of the Christian concept of "communio" can be found in the famous passage from the First Letter of Saint John (1,3); it is a frame of reference for the correct Christian understanding of "communio". "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship (communio) with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete". The point of departure of communio is clearly evident in this passage: the union with the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who comes to mankind through the proclamation of the Church. Fellowship (communio) among men is born here and merges into fellowship (communio) with the One and Triune God. One gains access to communion with God through the realization of God's communion with man—it is Christ in person. To meet Christ creates communion with Him and therefore with the Father in the Holy Spirit. This unites men with one another. The goal of all this is the fullness of joy: the Church carries in her bosom an eschatological dynamic. This expression "fullness of joy" recalls the farewell address of Jesus, His Paschal mystery and the Lord's return in the Easter apparitions which prefigure His definitive return in the new world. "You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy ... I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice ... ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full (Jn 16, 20.22.24). If this verse is compared to the invitation to prayer in St Luke (Lk 11,13) it is apparent that "joy" and the "Holy Spirit" are equivalent. Although John does not explicitly mention the Holy Spirit in his first Epistle (1,3) he is hidden within the word "joy". In this biblical context the word "communio" has a theological, Christological, soteriological and ecclesiological characteristic. It enjoys a sacramental dimension that is absolutely explicit in St Paul: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body ... " (I Cor 10,16ff.). The ecclesiology of communion at its very foundation is a Eucharistic ecclesiology. It is very close to that Eucharistic ecclesiology that Orthodox theologians so convincingly developed during the past century. In it—as we have already seen—ecclesiology becomes more concrete while remaining totally spiritual, transcendent and eschatological. In the Eucharist, Christ, present in the bread and wine and giving Himself anew, builds the Church as His Body and through His Risen Body He

unites us to the one and triune God and to each other. The Eucharist celebrated in different places is universal at the same time, because there is only one Christ and only a single body of Christ. The Eucharist comprehends the priestly service of "repraesentatio Christi" as well as that network of service, the synthesis of unity and multiplicity which is expressed in the term "communio". Without any possible doubt one could say that this concept conveys a synthesis of ecclesiology which combines the discourse of the Church with the discourse of God, and to life through God and with God. This synthesis assembles all the essential intentions of Vatican II ecclesiology and connects them with one another in an appropriate fashion.

For these reasons I was both grateful and happy when the 1985 Synod placed "communio" at the centre of their study. The following years demonstrated the fact that no word is safe from misunderstanding, not even the best and most profound word. To the extent that "communio" became an easy slogan, it was devalued and distorted. As happened to the concept 'People of God', one must point to a growing horizontal understanding that abandoned the concept of God. The ecclesiology of communion was reduced to a consideration of relations between the local Church and the universal Church; this in turn was reduced to the problem of determining the area of competence of each. Naturally the egalitarian thesis once more gained ground: only full equality was possible in "communio". Here again was the exact same argument that had exercised the disciples about who was the greatest amongst them. Obviously this was something that would not be resolved within a single generation. Mark's description of the incident is the most forceful. On the road from Jerusalem Jesus spoke to His Disciples about His coming Passion for the third time. When they arrived at Capernaum He asked them what they had been talking about on the road. "They were silent" because they had been discussing who among them would be the greatest—a sort of discussion about the primacy (Mk 9, 33-37). Isn't it just the same today? The Lord is going towards His Passion, while the Church, and in her Christ, is suffering and, we on the other hand are entangled in our favorite discussion: who comes first with the power. If He were to come among us and ask what we were talking about we would blush and be silent.

This does not mean that there should be no discussion of good government and the division of responsibility in the Church. It is certainly true that there are imbalances that need correcting. We should watch for and root out an excessive Roman centralization that is always a danger. But questions of this sort ought not to distract us from the true mission of the Church: the Church should not be proclaiming herself but God. It is only to assure that this is done in the purest possible way, that there is criticism within the Church. Criticism should insure a correlation between discourse on God and common service. To sum it up, it is no accident that Jesus' words "the first shall be last and the last first" occur more than once in the Gospel tradition. They are like a mirror constantly focused on us all.

Faced with the post-1985 reduction of the concept of "communio", the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith thought it appropriate to prepare a "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion". The Letter was issued on 28 May, 1992. Today, any theologian concerned about his reputation feels obliged to criticize all documents from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Our Letter met with a storm of criticism—very few parts of the text met with approval. The phrase that provoked the most controversy was this statement: "The universal Church in her essential mystery is a reality that ontologically and temporally is prior to every particular Church" (cf. n. 9). There was a brief reference to this statement being based on the Patristic notion that the one, unique Church precedes the creation of particular Churches and gives birth to them. The Fathers were reviving a rabbinical concept that the Torah and Israel were pre-existent. Creation was conceived as providing space for the Will of God. This Will needed a people who would live for the Will of God and would make it the Light of the world. Since the Fathers were convinced of the final identity of the Church and Israel, they could not envision the Church as something accidental, only recently created; in this gathering of people under the Will of God the Fathers recognized the internal theology of creation. Beginning with

Christology this image was amplified and deepened: they explained history—under the influence of the Old Testament—as a story of love between God and man. God finds and prepares a Bride for His Son—the unique Bride who is the unique Church. In the light of Genesis 2,24, where man and woman become "two in one flesh" the image of the Bride merges with the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ—an analogy derived from the Eucharistic liturgy. The unique Body of Christ is prepared; Christ and the Church will be "two in one flesh", one body and in this way "God will be everything to everyone". The ontological priority of the universal Church—the unique Church, the unique Body, the unique Bride—vis-à-vis the empirical, concrete manifestations of various, particular Churches is so obvious to me that I find it difficult to understand the objections raised against it. These objections only seem possible if one will not or cannot recognize the great Church conceived by God—possibly out of despair at her earthly shortcomings. These objections look like theological ravings. All that would remain is the empirical image of mutually related Churches and their conflicts. This would mean that the Church as a theological theme is cancelled. If one can only see the Church as a human institution, all that remains is desolation. In this case one has abandoned not only the ecclesiology of the Fathers, but the ecclesiology of the New Testament and the understanding of Israel in the Old Testament as well. It is not just the later deutero-Pauline letters and the Apocalypse that affirm the ontological priority of the universal Church to the particular Churches (reaffirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith). This concept can be found in the great Pauline letters: in the Letter to the Galatians, the Apostle speaks about the heavenly Jerusalem not as something great and eschatological, but as something which precedes us: "This Jerusalem is our mother" (Gal 4,26). H. Schlier comments that for St Paul, inspired by Jewish tradition, the Jerusalem above is the new aeon. For St Paul this new aeon already exists "in the Christian Church. For him the Church is the heavenly Jerusalem in her children".

Let me conclude. To understand the ecclesiology of Vatican II one cannot ignore chapters 4 to 7 of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. These chapters discuss the laity, the universal call to holiness, the religious and the eschatological orientation of the Church. In these chapters the inner goal of the Church, the most essential part of its being, comes once again to the fore: holiness, conformity to God. There must exist in the world space for God, where he can dwell freely so that the world becomes His "Kingdom". Holiness is something greater than a moral quality. It is the presence of God with men, of men with God; it is God's "tent" pitched amongst men in our midst (cf. Jn 1,14). It is a new birth—not from flesh and blood but from God (Jn 1,13). Orientation towards holiness is one and the same as eschatological orientation. Beginning with Jesus' message it is fundamental for the Church. The Church exists to become God's dwelling place in the world, to become "holiness". This is the only reason there should be any struggle in the Church—and not for precedence or for the first place. All of this is repeated and synthesized in the last chapter of the Constitution on the Church that is dedicated to the Mother of the Lord.

As everyone knows, the question of dedicating a specific document to Mary was widely debated. In any event I believe it was appropriate to insert the Marian element directly into the doctrine on the Church. In this way the point of departure for our consideration is once more apparent: the Church is not an apparatus, nor a social institution, nor one social institution among many others. It is a person. It is a woman. It is a Mother. It is alive. A Marian understanding of the Church is totally opposed to the concept of the Church as a bureaucracy or a simple organization. We cannot make the Church, we must be the Church. We are the Church, the Church is in us only to the extent that our faith more than action forges our being. Only by being Marian, can we become the Church. At its very beginning the Church was not made, but given birth. She existed in the soul of Mary from the moment she uttered her fiat. This is the most profound will of the Council: the Church should be awakened in our souls. Mary shows us the way. Taken from: *L'Osservatore Romano* Weekly Edition in English 23 January 2002, page 5 *L'Osservatore Romano* is the newspaper of the Holy See. The Weekly Edition in English is published for the US by: The Cathedral Foundation *L'Osservatore Romano* English Edition 320 Cathedral St. Baltimore, MD

**Pope Benedict XVI and the Church** Posted on: 16th September 2010 |Author: Thomas P. Rausch SJ  
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Photo by patkoszeg at flickr.com

*As Pope Benedict XVI is welcomed by the Scottish public on the streets of Edinburgh, there is much anticipation of what he will say to the people of the UK over the course of his four-day visit. Thomas Rausch SJ, author of *Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to his Theological Vision*, looks closely at the ecclesiology of the Pope, who has already begun to present his thoughts on the Church and society in the first address of his visit.*

Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, has long been interested in the theology of the Church. His doctoral dissertation, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* ('The People and the House of God in Augustine's doctrine of the Church'), at the University of Munich was on Augustine's ecclesiology. Though only 35 years old when the Second Vatican Council opened, he attended as a peritus ('expert') to Cologne's Cardinal Joseph Frings and played an important role in developing some of the Council's most important documents, among them the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*), and the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad gentes*).

From 1959 to 1977, Ratzinger was professor of fundamental theology, first at Bonn, then at Münster, Tübingen, and finally Regensburg; in March 1977 Pope Paul VI named him Archbishop of Munich and Freising and then, in June, cardinal. Pope John Paul II appointed him prefect of the powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1981 and he moved to Rome. He was elected to the Chair of Peter on April 19, 2005.

### **Pope Benedict's Ecclesiology**

Ratzinger/Benedict's ecclesiology is biblical, grounded in Christology. The Church has its origins in Jesus's gathering of the community of the new covenant (Luke 22:20). From the beginning, the Church has a structure; it is not 'an amorphous mob,' but centred on Jesus's choice of the Twelve and Peter. [1] He stresses that the primacy of Peter is recognised by all the major New Testament traditions, and that even the great Rudolf Bultmann acknowledged that Peter was entrusted with the supreme leadership of the

Church, though Ratzinger rejects the Protestant view that the Petrine succession consists solely in the word as such, rather than in any ‘structures,’ since the New Testament is careful to bind the word of Scripture to specific witnesses.[2]

Two themes stand at the centre of Pope Benedict’s ecclesiology. One is that his vision of the Church is fundamentally eucharistic. Appealing to Paul’s description in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 of our becoming the one body of Christ by sharing in his body in the Eucharist, he argues that the Church is founded on the Eucharist: ‘The Church is the celebration of the Eucharist: The Eucharist is the Church; they do not simply stand side by side; they are one and the same.’[3] Sharing in the Eucharist, for Benedict, breaks down the divisive walls of our subjectivity, gathering us into a deep communion with Christ and with each other. Thus from this eucharistic ecclesiology flows the second theme so important to Benedict, the Church as a communion (*communio*). The recovery of this ancient concept since the mid- twentieth century[4] has helped move official Catholic ecclesiology from a juridical, institutional ecclesiology to a more theological one based on a shared life in Christ and in the Spirit. United by word and sacrament, especially the Eucharist, the Church is a communion, a uniting of men and women vertically with the triune God and horizontally with one another, becoming truly one body. The Church has its origins, not as a club or circle of friends, but as the ‘people of God’ coming together for the word of God and especially the Eucharist. Thus, ‘the centre of the oldest ecclesiology is the eucharistic assembly—the Church is *communio*.’[5]

For Ratzinger, the Church cannot be understood as a ‘federation of communities,’ still less as different denominations as it exists today. More properly, the primitive Church was an *ecclesia in ecclesiis*, one Church existing in many local Churches: the one body of the Lord, whole in every community, each united with its bishop, who were all in communion with each other and with the bishop of Rome, symbolising the one Church of God in this world.

He is critical of efforts to reduce an ecclesiology of communion to an aggregate of self-sufficient local Churches. A Church that does not live in visible, sacramental communion with other Christians, or that does not seek communion with the worldwide communion of the *ecclesia catholica* may be an ecclesial community, but not a Church in the proper sense. Hence his emphasis on apostolic succession, understood as the succession in the historic episcopacy. This is one of his foundational ecclesiological principles, the essence of the Church’s catholicity and apostolicity. He sees this as the key question between Catholics and Protestants, arguing that Luther reduced the Eucharist to an ‘assurance to the individual’s troubled conscience that his sins have been forgiven,’ with the result that the Reformation lost a sense of the eucharistic context which constitutes the Church as a communion.[6]

Nor can the Church be separated from the kingdom of God, as not infrequently happens in some liberation or pluralist theologies. The 2000 declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, issued under Ratzinger’s presidency, insists on the inseparability of kingdom of God from Christ or from the Church (no. 18). From the days of his study of Bonaventure, Ratzinger has been strongly against what he sees as any effort to ‘immanentise’ the eschaton, to use a term of Eric Vögelin.[7] That would mean for him making salvation something within history, rather than beyond it, reducing the Church to a Church of the poor, with a mission which is primarily social rather than based on hierarchical mediation. [8]

### **Leadership in a Global Church**

The Roman Catholic Church over which Pope Benedict presides has a number of unique claims. It is the world’s oldest institution, with a continuity of identity, structures, and faith that reaches back to the first Christian communities. Even as outspoken a critic as Hans Küng acknowledges that only one Church from the time of Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110) has been known as the ‘Catholic Church,’ despite the wish of other Churches to be called catholic. Even if other Churches do not wish to be considered ‘new’ Churches and are not ‘uncatholic’ communities, each of them owes part of its nature as a Church either directly or

indirectly to its relationship with the Catholic Church.[9]

Second, the Catholic Church is already a world Church, linking Christians locally and universally into one communion. Embracing more than half of all Christians in the world, some 53 percent, it is present in almost every country. At the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, 74 percent of the bishops attending came from countries other than those of Europe or North America. At the 2005 Synod on the Eucharist, the 244 bishops present came from some 118 different countries. With international structures such as synods of bishops, religious orders and lay movements, a developed social teaching and a universal spokesman in the person of the pope, the Catholic Church is uniquely positioned to witness to the kingdom of God in an era characterised by globalisation. With such structures and networks in place, it could link other Christian Churches together into a communion of communions that would be truly catholic.

Pope John Paul II was remarkably creative in showing the potential of the papacy for religious leadership on a global level during his pontificate, calling the Church to a 'purification of memory' and asking forgiveness of those the Church had unintentionally offended in its long history at the beginning of the new millennium, and gathering religious leaders from around the world at Assisi for prayer and the renunciation of violence after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

It is perhaps too early to assess what Pope Benedict's legacy will be. There are a number of positive signs of his leadership. First, he has been particularly concerned with what Pope John Paul II termed the 'new evangelisation' or 're-evangelisation,' calling back to the practice of the faith in countries with Christian roots entire groups of the baptised who have lost a living sense of the faith, or no longer consider themselves members of the Church.[10] Benedict sees this especially as his mission to Europe. Even his choice of his papal name was related to this at least in part, as he explained a few days after his election. His nominal predecessor Benedict XV was the pope who worked so hard for peace during the First World War, and Saint Benedict of Nursia, the great founder of the Benedictine Order, represented 'a fundamental reference point for European unity and a powerful reminder of the indispensable Christian roots of its culture and civilisation.' [11] But today the culture of Europe is determinedly secular. With negative birth rates and the Churches' continued loss of members, the only religion that seems to be growing is Islam.

Second, under Benedict, relationships with the Orthodox, particularly the Russians, have improved considerably. Both the Orthodox and Benedict are concerned with the secularism of Europe and the growth of Islam. But there has been little progress in relations between Catholics and Protestants. The 2007 document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) on 'Response to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church' makes it evident that Rome is a long way from recognising the full ecclesial status of the Reformation Churches. Relations with the Anglican Communion have been complicated by the decision of the Church of England to proceed with the ordination of women to the episcopacy, while Benedict's 2009 Apostolic Constitution, *Anglicanorum coetibus*, which provides for 'Personal Ordinariates,' preserving some Anglican usages for those Anglicans unhappy with changes in the Communion and wanting to enter into full communion with Rome, took Canterbury by surprise. Thus full communion with Anglicans and Protestants remains a more distant goal.

Finally, while Ratzinger may have been initially slow to grasp the enormity of the problem of sexual abuse by clergy, he has shown himself to have been much more proactive than his predecessor and other Vatican officials in addressing it. In spite of the unfair criticism he has received, he has played an important role in centralising the way the Vatican dealt with accusations of sexual abuse. In 2001 he ordered that all cases be reported to the CDF. According to Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster, he helped bring about changes in church law, among them 'the inclusion in canon law of Internet offences against children, the extension of child abuse offences to include the sexual abuse of all under 18, the case by case waiving of the statute of limitations and the establishment of a fast-track dismissal from the

clerical state for offenders.’[12] Furthermore, as Prefect of the CDF, he reviewed all these cases,[13] which provided him with a long and painful education. Shortly after becoming pope, he ordered the founder of the Legionaries of Christ, Father Marcial Maciel Dellogado, against whom at least nine former seminarians had brought allegations of abuse and who later was found to have fathered at least one child, to cease all public ministry and to retire to a life of prayer and penance. Though these allegations went back to at least the mid nineties, Maciel had been repeatedly praised by Pope John Paul. In 2004 Ratzinger initiated an investigation of the charges on his own authority.

During his visit to the United States in 2008, he met with five men and women who had been abused by members of the clergy in what all accounts described as a very moving meeting. He also raised the scandal of sexual abuse by clergy at least five times, acknowledging to the bishops that it had been ‘sometimes very badly handled.’[14] He has since met with victims in Australia and on the island of Malta. In his letter to the Catholics of Ireland, he expressed his willingness to meet with some of the victims.

From a more critical perspective, Benedict seems to address these cases of sexual abuse as a spiritual problem, a crisis of faith, brought on by secularisation or even by misinterpretations of the Second Vatican Council. His solution is turning to prayer and penance, but he does not raise questions about church structures or the way in which clerical authority is exercised. He once described church reform as consisting, not in remodelling the Church according to our tastes, but in clearing away subsidiary constructions, like the sculptor allowing the image hidden in the stone to be revealed.[15] In his 20 May 2010 pastoral letter to Catholics in Ireland, he used very strong language, speaking of the shame and betrayal felt by Irish Catholics, the ‘often inadequate’ responses and ‘serious mistakes’ of the bishops, but apart from ordering an apostolic visitation of Irish dioceses and religious houses, his suggestions were spiritual rather than practical or structural.

What might he do to address this problem in terms of church governance? In an interview with the Italian paper *La Repubblica*, Cardinal Walter Kasper called for a ‘serious housecleaning in our church.’ While he said that the Pope was not standing by idly, he also suggested that with such a difficult problem emerging not only in Ireland, but in Holland, Germany and the United States, ‘perhaps it deserves a more general analysis that applies to the universal church and not just a single nation.’[16]

One thing Benedict might consider would be to ask a Synod of Bishops to address this problem in the near future. Another might be to review the question of how bishops are advised. How often have we heard that if parents had been among the advisors of those bishops who reassigned offending priests they would not have done so? Making sure that there were lay men and women among the bishops’ advisors or consultants would have a number of advantages. It would broaden the base of the bishops’ advisors by expanding it beyond the clerical circle. It would address what remains a major failing of the way authority is exercised in the Catholic Church, the virtual exclusion of the laity from the bishops’ decision-making. It would also recognise more clearly the Church’s nature as a communion of all the baptised, rather than a top down structure in which authority moves only in one direction. Finally, the presence of such advisors in the bishops’ inner circle would keep them informed on what lay people are really thinking about a number of other issues that remain just below the official surface of the Church, foremost among them issues of sexuality, gender and ministry.

It is also true that Benedict has done little to undo the re-centring of authority in Rome that took place under his predecessor. Though shortly after the Council ended he wrote positively about moving beyond papal centralism, reforming the Curia, and collegiality, including the rediscovery of the local Church and the ‘long-awaited’ synod of bishops as a collegial organ rather than a papal instrument,[17] in more recent times he has stressed the ontological priority of the universal Church over the local or particular Church and made a number of decisions without consulting the bishops, for example, his 2007 apostolic letter *Summorum Pontificum*, giving general permission to celebrate the ‘Tridentine’ Mass and his lifting

the excommunications on the four Lefebvrist prelates in 2009.

While he insists that the universal Church does not mean Rome, a number of theologians argue that Vatican II not only failed to develop an adequate theology of the local Church, but also that since the Council, Rome has emphasised a universalist ecclesiology which has resulted in many bishops putting the priority on their relationship with Rome, to the detriment of their accountability to their local Churches. With the relationship between the universal and the local Church unresolved, Christopher Ruddy maintains that Church documents remain universalistic, and thus 'a juridical ecclesiology triumphs over an ecclesiology of communion.' [18] This affects everything from how bishops are selected, whether local and regional Churches can effectively address their own issues, and how local experience enters into decision-making in Rome.

Pope Benedict remains focussed on the Church's official language, its theology. Today his tone has changed. The critical analysis of the university professor has given way to the more positive tones of the pastor. But if he is to contribute significantly to the reconciliation of the Churches, a task which remains one of his priorities, he will have to find ways to show those other Churches that the government of the Roman Catholic Church is truly collegial.

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[1] See Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991) 24.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 52-67.

[3] Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987) 53.

[4] See Ludwig Hertling, *Communio: Church and Papacy in Early Christianity*, trans. Jared Wicks (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1972) first published in *Miscellanea historiae pontificiae*, 7 (1943).

[5] *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 254.

[6] *Ibid.*, 260-61.

[7] See Eric Vögelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952) 120.

[8] See Thomas P. Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI: An introduction to his Theological Vision* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009) 53-54.

[9] Hans Küng, *The Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967) 307.

[10] Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 33.

[11] Benedict XVI, "General Audience (April 27, 2005).

[12] [catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1001299.htm](http://catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1001299.htm).

[13] 'Three Catholic Church reformers reflect on latest sexual abuse reports'; [http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2010/03/three\\_catholic\\_church\\_reformer.html](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2010/03/three_catholic_church_reformer.html).

[14] Pope Benedict XVI, 'Meeting with the Bishops of the United States,' April 16, 2008; see *Origins* 37/46 (2008) 737.

[15] Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 140-41.

[16] Catholic News Service; <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1000962.htm>.

[17] Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, (New York: Paulist, 2009) esp. 91-93, 135-

39, 161-76, 199-206; first published 1966.

[18] Christopher Ruddy, *The Local Church: Tillard and the Future of Catholic Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 2006) 52.

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## Esperanto vs. Latin [at LMS Chairman]



The weekend *The Catholic Universe* has printed quite a long letter of mine on the subject of Latin and Esperanto, in response to an equally long letter praising Esperanto in last week's *Letters*.

Last time I mentioned Esperanto on this blog - as an aside - I got some rather irate comments, so this time, well, come and get me! My sympathy with the idea of an artificial language of any kind is simply zero. If people want to learn Elvish, Klingon or Esperanto, they are, I suppose, no more wasting their time than if they were playing patience on their iPhones (which seems to be *de rigour* on the commuter trains out of London these days). I don't want to criticise such harmless recreations. But to propose it as an educational task for children is as insane as suggesting it as a substitute for Latin (or any other language) for communication within the Church. Artificial languages are languages without a history, culture, or literature, or at least without one going back before (in the case of Esperanto) 1870.

I have far more time for the revival of dead languages, even if this seems equally Quixotic. People learning Cornish or Manx from books are putting themselves into contact with a culture which cannot easily be expressed in any other language. Great written (or indeed aural) works of art and science, which are among the most important aspects of a culture, can only fully be appreciated in the original. If the language dies, works written in it die as well, and the culture is mortally wounded. This is why anyone who takes Irish culture serious must be serious about the Irish language. Anyone who cares about the achievements of Scots Gaelic poets must care about the preservation of Gaelic. Interestingly, one of the Latin Mass Society's early supporters was a proponent of the Welsh language.

As well as being the repository for a major part of the Church's thought and culture, Latin, of course, is not a dead language. It is not no-one's *cradle* language, but it remains a *working* language. Things are

composed in and translated into Latin, which isn't something which happens in dead languages.

To the Editor of the *Catholic Universe*.

Catherine Venture (Letters, 27th May 2016) writes to promote Esperanto as an international 'bridge' language.

Given its steep decline in popularity in the UK, I suppose it needs all the help it can get. But since it is based on the Romance languages—the European languages derived from Latin—with a bit of Yiddish thrown in, it would be more logical to suggest studying Latin as a 'bridge' language, a function it actually served for many centuries.

Ms Venture objects that 'Latin is only ok for the Classical scholar', inviting the obvious retort the Esperanto is only ok for the Esperanto scholar. Unlike Esperanto, in which there are no Government-recognised qualifications, Latin is taught in 600 state schools, up from 100 a decade ago. Esperanto is taught in four.

No doubt Esperanto is easy to learn—at least for speakers of major European languages—but Latin was described as the 'language of the Church' by Pope Benedict XVI. Pope St John Paul II said it was a 'disgrace' not to know Latin, and that the Church has an 'obligation' towards it. Bl. Pope Paul VI called it a 'divine' language, and Pope St John XXIII praised Latin, 'full of majesty and dignity', precisely because, as Ms Venture says of Esperanto, it is 'equally friendly' to native speakers of all languages.

The Church desperately needs a common language, for communication between her children who come from every nation, culture, and language on earth. What Catholic Esperantists miss, of even greater importance, is the need for a common language of communication between the generations. It is essential for serious students of the Church's theology, law, history, and literature, to be able to read what their predecessors wrote, in the original.

For the Church, the only possible 'bridge language' is Latin. It is time all Catholic schools recognised their obligation to open the door to the treasures of Catholic culture and thought to their pupils, by equipping them with Latin.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph Shaw  
Chairman, The Latin Mass Society

For more on the study of Latin in the Church, see the Position Paper on

[Latin in Seminaries](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://www.lmschairman.org/2016/06/esperanto-vs-latin.html>  
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