

NewEvangelists.org

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Forward

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

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

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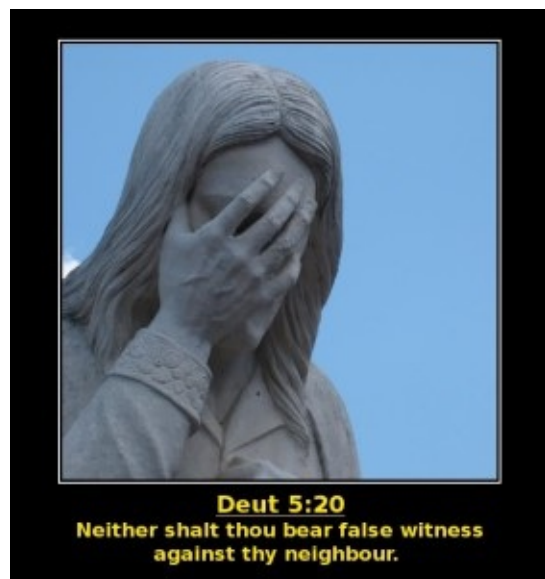
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Socrates and Sozomen on Christian observance of the Sabbath [at Catholicism and Adventism]

I've discussed Socrates before, and shown how Adventists have misquoted him to make it appear that most Christians in the 400s AD kept the sabbath, and only Rome and Alexandria didn't. They have a quote from Sozomen that seems to say something similar.



Jesus doesn't like lies being told about Christians.

Something didn't register with me with my first readings of the sources Adventists quote, but it's actually quite obvious now that it's clicked in my brain – typical weekends were not being discussed at all. I'll get to that.

Adventists quote selectively to make it look like many Christians assembled on the sabbath, every sabbath. It's clear from the source documents that they fasted on the sabbath, in memory of Jesus being in the tomb – it wasn't a sabbath observance like the Jews and the Adventists have. What I now realise is both Socrates and Sozomen were referring to the Saturdays during Lent – not every Saturday, just those in Lent. Their entire discussion on their respective chapters is about customs during Lent and Holy Week.

There are two well-known quote from Socrates' Ecclesiastical History that Adventists put forward as evidence for 5th century sabbath observance by Christians (one of the quotes is actually from Sozomen, not Socrates). I am sure most Adventists and those who have come across what they teach are familiar with them. I was recently referred to the Sabbath Truth (sic) website, where the argument for the Christian observance of the Sabbath is weak, and where truth is even weaker.

The first quote:

“The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which **custom** is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.” – Socrates, “Ecclesiastical History,” Book 7, chap.19. [[Quoted here](#), and is actually Sozomen, not Socrates]

And this:

“For although almost all churches throughout The World celebrated the sacred mysteries (the Lord’s Supper) on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, refuse to do this.” – Socrates, “Ecclesiastical History,” Book 5, chap. 22, p. 289. [[Quoted here](#)]

This is used to pretend that all Christians, except those at Rome and Alexandria, kept the Sabbath.

But the context is conveniently left out.

Here are the source documents that you can read to see the context:

[The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus, book 5, chapter 22](#)

[The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen, book 7, chapter 19](#)

Starting with Socrates:

I quote a broader section in blue, and the limited quote usually given by Adventists is in bold red. Important qualifiers are underlined.

And among various nations there are other usages, for which innumerable reasons are assigned. Since however no one can produce a written command as an authority, it is evident that the apostles left each one to his own free will in the matter, to the end that each might perform what is good not by constraint or necessity. Such is the difference in the churches on the subject of fasts. Nor is there less variation in regard to religious assemblies. **For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this.** The Egyptians in the neighborhood of Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Thebaïs, hold their religious assemblies on the sabbath, but do not participate of the mysteries in the manner usual among Christians in general: for after having eaten and satisfied themselves with food of all kinds, in the evening making their offerings they partake of the mysteries.



Donkey, Boston Public Library

So the passage is NOT telling us that all the Christians, except those at Rome and Alexandria, kept the Sabbath. It is telling us that the Christians believed that they were free to follow Romans 14:5-6, and worship God in spirit, not bound to a specific day. They chose to continue a custom (even called a custom by Socrates – see the bold underlined section in the first quote of Socrates from Adventists above) that

only resembles Jewish/Adventist sabbath observance.

In fact, the part of the longer quote from Socrates, showing context, shows that the difference between the Alexandrians and other Christians is that the Alexandrians and Romans did not observe a Saturday Eucharist along with their Saturday fast! Other Christians did. So it was not a case of observing the Sabbath and not Sunday – it was a case of whether or not they fasted on Saturdays (all Christians except the Egyptians fasted) and whether or not they celebrated the Eucharist on Saturdays (all Christians did except the Alexandrians and Romans) like most Christians.

Christians celebrated the Eucharist every day, and fasted on Fridays and Saturdays. The exceptions were the Egyptians (who didn't fast on Saturdays) and the Alexandrians and Romans (who fasted but didn't celebrate the Eucharist on Saturdays).

And now notice the kicker – chapter 22 is all about Easter and the period of Lent:

As we have touched the subject I deem it not unreasonable to say a few words concerning Easter. ... But that the time of keeping Easter in various places is dependent on usage, I infer from this, that those who agree in faith, differ among themselves on questions of usage. And it will not perhaps be unseasonable to notice here the diversity of customs in the churches. The fasts before Easter will be found to be differently observed among different people. Those at Rome fast three successive weeks before Easter, excepting Saturdays and Sundays. ...

[the part quoted above, the part cited by Adventists, is located here in the text]

... At Alexandria again, on the Wednesday in Passion week and on Good Friday, the scriptures are read ... I have also known of another peculiarity in Thessaly, which is, that they baptize there on the days of Easter only ... The Novatians, as I have stated, were divided among themselves on account of the feast of Easter ...

The entire section is about observances related to Easter. Most Christians celebrate the Eucharist on Holy Saturday but fasted on that day; Egyptian Christians celebrated the Eucharist and did not fast; Roman and Alexandrian Christians fasted and did not celebrate the Eucharist.

You will find many references like this that are used by Adventists to make it seem as if early Christians observed the Sabbath because they believed it was binding on them. But context always proves the Adventist claims wrong. In every case, what is really happening is that Christians continued with customs they inherited from the Jews, but knowing that their only purpose was to give God glory, and they could do that with any day.

I'd conclude that this Sabbath Truth website has not dealt honestly with the evidence. Why not? What does it have to hide? What doesn't it want us to know about the reality of what Saturday meant to the early Christians? Why pretend it meant more than it did?

Let's take a look at Sozomen now.

He starts off as Socrates did:

We have now described the various usages that prevailed in the celebration of the Passover.

He ends off still discussing Easter:

Similar motives must be attributed to those who observe different practices in the celebration of the feast which has led us into this long digression.

Between those two quotes is this:

In some churches the people fast three alternate weeks, during the space of six or seven weeks, whereas in others they fast continuously during the three weeks immediately preceding the festival. Some people, as the Montanists, only fast two weeks. Assemblies are not held in all churches on the same time or manner. The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria.

Adventists only quote the last sentence. They omit the part about the fasting, just as they omit the part about fasting from their quote from Socrates. It's less clear in Sozomen that the last sentence deals with fasting, but the parallel sentence in Socrates clearly does. Most Christians celebrate the Eucharist on Holy Saturday but fasted on that day; Egyptian Christians celebrated the Eucharist and did not fast; Roman and Alexandrian Christians fasted and did not celebrate the Eucharist.

So much for the butchering of historical sources to make Easter customs look like permanent, year-long sabbath observance.

This contribution is available at <http://blog.theotokos.co.za/>
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The Myth of the Spanish Inquisition: It Wasn't as Bloody or as Brutal as Often Described [at BIG C CATHOLICS]



The Spanish Inquisition has frequently been used to portray the Catholic Church as hypocritical and malevolent. However, recent scholarship proves that it wasn't as bloody or as brutal as the Church's detractors contend. The BBC documentary,

The Myth of the Spanish Inquisition,

refutes the false narratives surrounding this Tribunal. Below is a partial transcript of the program:

Starting at 3:02:

"Four centuries of condemnation have made the Spanish Inquisition a byword for cruelty, terror and tyranny. But this image is false. A distortion disseminated 400 years ago and accepted ever since. Now, a new generation of historians is looking at the inquisition afresh. Every one of the cases that came before the Spanish Inquisition during its 350-year history had its own file. These files, gathered together from sources such as this library in Salamanca, are being properly studied for the first time. (Prof. Henry Kamen speaking) 'I think our views of the inquisition have been changed largely by the opening up of the archives of the inquisition. They had everything on tape, as it were, hidden away in their archives. And we can go there, calculate, put it all on computer, and arrive at very firm statistics about its activity. And so all of this has opened wide the debate about the inquisition; and has also demolished totally the previous image which all of us had.'

The files are detailed and exhaustive. The inquisition kept its activities secret from the outside world, but its clerks wrote down every detail, in the confidence that their records were for the eyes of the inquisition

only. The huge task of sifting this material, previously scattered throughout Spain daunted earlier generations. Systematic analysis is only just beginning, but already, a very different version of the Spanish Inquisition can be brought to light.

The Spain that gave birth to the Inquisition in the 15th century was barren and isolated, on the fringe of Europe. Half of its land unproductive, half barely sustaining a meager living. A monotonous burning plan. No easy routes, no natural center, no one leader. Spaniards could only dream of Hispania, the country that had been united during the days of the Roman conquest. All that was to change.

On the morning of October 18th, 1469, Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Aragon, and Isabella heiress of Castile, were married. Their wedding ended centuries of rivalry between the two Spanish kingdoms, and would unite the country. Spain, for so long merely a name on the map, had become a historical fact. The itinerant royal court often convened in the city of Ávila, here at the monastery of Santo Tomás its facade triumphantly incorporating an 'H' for the reunified Hispania. But for Ferdinand and Isabella there could be no political unity without religious unity. Pressure was exerted on Spain's large Jewish population to convert. Many did. But traditional Christians were suspicious that these Conversos were practicing their former religion in secret.

Synagogues such as this one in Toledo came under scrutiny. In 1480, a new body was appointed to investigate. Entitled the

Santo Oficio de la Inquisición

, it is better known to us as the Spanish Inquisition. The Inquisition's task was to discover heresy, deviation from the true Faith. Conversos accused of continued Jewish worship could be burnt at the stake.

The Inquisition had begun, but the myth had yet to be created. For while these years between 1480 and 1510 were by far the most active in the entire history of the Inquisition, the rest of Europe did not hurry to condemn it. (Prof. Jamie Contreras speaking.) 'We have precise reports from Italian and French ambassadors who wrote to Catholic Kings congratulating them because at last Spain had become Christian.' The truth is that the Inquisition was applauded for its persecution of Spain's converted Jews."

The Black Legend is Born

In 1517, the Protestant Reformation split the Church in two. For the first time in human history, Protestants fought a deliberate propaganda war against their enemies; accusing them of unspeakable acts, and setting the stage for centuries of anti-Catholic scholarship. The fraudulent accounts of Montanus about the torture methods used by the Inquisitors and the deplorable conditions in which prisoners lived, were especially damaging.

Starting at 9:01:

"The Church's champion, defender of the faith, was Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor. As leader of the Habsburg dynasty, he also commanded the most powerful armies in Europe. But Charles was more than just a Habsburg. As Ferdinand's grandson, he acceded to the throne of Spain putting that country at the forefront of defending the Faith. At the Battle of Mühlberg in 1547, his enemies were virtually annihilated. Routed on the battlefield the reformers attacked elsewhere...

Protestants used the newly invented printing press to wage a propaganda campaign against the Church and the Spain's Habsburgs. Here is an example of the type of bitter invective they employed:

'This scum of barbarians, this mongrel generation Spain is and ever hath been the sink the puddle and fifthly heap of the most loathsome infected and slavish people that ever lived. Their more than tigris cruelty, their lustful and inhumane deflowering of their matrons, wives and daughters, their matchless and sodomitical ravishings of young boys which these demi-barbarian Spaniards have committed.'

Within a year of the Battle of Mühlberg, a stream of anti-Spanish invective began to pour off the printing presses of the Reformation. But the polemic needed a focus. It found one in the body expressly designed to uphold the Catholic faith -- the Inquisition. A myth was in the making.

All the different acquisitions came together in this document:

A Discovery and plain Declaration of Sundry and Subtill Practices of the Holy Inquisition of Spain,

printed in 1567. Within the year, it was translated into English, French, Dutch and German. Its author, masquerading as a Protestant victim of the Inquisition, wrote under the pseudonym Montanus.

By identifying with the victim, Montanus brought the supposed horrors of the Spanish Inquisition vividly alive. It is his work which introduced to the world an image of the Inquisition which has persisted ever since." (The "Black Legend" originated as an anti-Spanish propaganda campaign disseminated through the printing press. The Inquisition and the Catholic Church were its primary targets.)

This contribution is available at <http://www.bigccatholics.com/2016/08/the-myth-of-spanish-inquisition-it.html>
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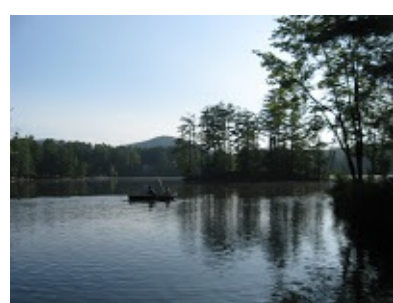
Adirondack Memories 2016 [at Campfires and Cleats]

Joining the tribe of Five Minute Friday writers

for a piece in five minutes flat with a prompt of *loyal*

...annnnnd 5,4,3,2,1...begin~

The clink of the backgammon dice on a rainy day and the splash of dockjumping and King of the Hill on a scorched, sunny one.



The glassy lake reflecting pines and the lemon yellow and ivory lily pad flowers arching heavenward....

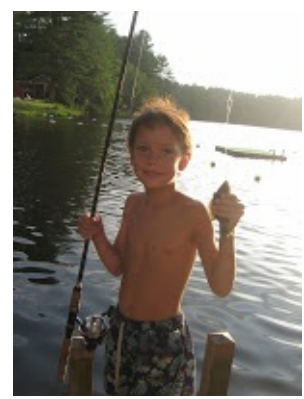
The connect the dots pattern of mosquito bites we all bear and the roasted to perfection s'mores. The pungent aroma of a campfire through hair and sweatshirts.

And nothing says 'summer' like that smell.

The whispers of "Did you SEE that one?" as a midnight meteor arcs across black velvet sky, centuries old pine trees framing.

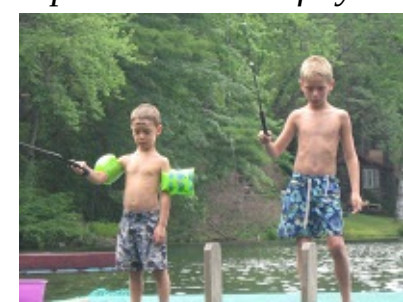
And the hushed, "Hey can you find Cassiopeia up there?"

And the tapestry of our family history, here, in this serenity? Often it comes crashing with such ferocity, I am back again. It is 1973 or it is 1978 or it is 1982. And I am here as a child.



2008

Or it is 2012. Or 2016. And these squealing, splashing, fishing, frolicking kids are mine. Loyal? Yes, I'd label that loyal. The memories, the constancy, the sameness. And most vividly, the hushed, happy voices, familiar lilts and inflections, saying nothing of huge importance, but oh so important. The safety net of loyalty.



Please click over to Kate's for some truly beautiful pieces of writing.....

and glimpses of hearts.

This week, Kate has details on the soon to be released FMF book!

And can I tell you~

I'm SO honored to be included within its pages.....

The FMF book is due to be released on September 26th! ~~~

I'll keep you posted on purchase information, as all

the proceeds will go toward two vital charities in South Africa.



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

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

If not, just enter your email address here
so we can be in touch regularly!

Enter your email address:

~Chris

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2016/08/adirondack-memories-2016-loyal-five.html>
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Secret to Life [at A Spiritual Journey]

As Jesus said, narrow is the gate that leads to life. Do you know that if you open wide your heart to God, that gate opens wide too?

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2016/08/secret-to-life.html>
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Ben-Hur 2016: Of Film, Faith, and Indirect Communication [at God-Haunted Lunatic]



“The proclaimers of Christianity who begin right off with orthodoxy actually do not have much influence and only on a few.”

~ [Søren Kierkegaard](#)

My wife and I really wanted to like the new Ben-Hur movie, we really did. And we were willing to make allowances for the extremely high bar set by the [1959 version](#), which is, let’s admit, a remarkable cinematic feat start to finish. Hardly a cheesy moment in the entire thing, and the special effects hold up after 50+ years – try it out on your own kids and you’ll see.

After seeing the for the new *Ben-Hur*, I was even willing to overlook the presence of Morgan Freeman. Sure he’s a great actor, and his sheik get-up seemed pretty snazzy, but I knew he’d be a distraction because, for me, he’ll always be frozen in celluloid time: Morgan Freeman=Red in [Shawshank Redemption](#). Not even his role as God in *Evan Almighty* and *Bruce Almighty* could shake that.

I even tried to ignore the pre-release hype which was, well, hyped, although I couldn’t help wincing a bit at a radio spot featuring praise from some mega-church pastor I’d never heard of. My thought bubble at the time: “If the marketing guys in Hollywood had to resort to blurbs from celebrity preachers, then something is definitely amiss.” Nevertheless, I was willing to suspend judgement until I saw it for myself.

Then it hit the theaters, and all pre-release buzz was effectively killed. *Ben-Hur* collapsed at the box office, and so when Nancy and I decided to go anyway just days after the opening weekend, we expected a lighter crowd – but not *that* light. Aside from one other couple and a guy sitting by himself with a huge tub of popcorn, we were the only ones in the joint. “This can’t be good,” I muttered to Nancy. She shrugged and settled into her seat, determined to enjoy our outing. The lights dimmed, the PSAs shunned us about our cell phones, and we were off.

Hoo, boy, what a disappointment, and that’s a reaction shared by many if you go by the [Tomatometer](#) movie review aggregator. They rate the new [Ben-Hur](#) at 28%, which is down in the cellar with this

summer's apparently forgettable [Ice Age reboot](#) (12% – a flick-bullet I managed to dodge despite the clamors of my Sid-loving kids), and an embarrassment when you consider the commanding 88% attached to the [Charlton Heston classic](#). Our theater jaunt wasn't a total waste however. Timur Bekmambetov's newfangled Ben-Hur was, I'll grant you, mildly diverting. The performances were adequate (including Red's), the galley scenes appropriately wrenching, and the chariot race, pretty decent.

But, look, cheesiness abounds, and not even the much ballyhooed expansion of the Messiah's role could save this clunker. There's only a couple scenes featuring Jesus in the Ben-Hur saga, but they're key – so much so that Lew Wallace sub-titled his original [1880 novel](#), "A Tale of the Christ." But in the latest movie iteration, the second Person of the Trinity is a hipster beefcake who spouts platitudes – almost as if he'd just come from a Bernie Sanders rally and was trying to entice our votes. The most telling moment was the scene when the enchaind and dehydrated Ben-Hur begs for water and the Roman guard objects. The Savior glibly talks of loving your enemies and avoiding violence, and when he confronts the interfering guard the latter is paralyzed – as if Jesus used the Force on him or something. "These aren't the galley slaves you're looking for," he might've said with a wave of the hand.



In the 1959 version, you never see the Lord's face nor hear him speak. Even so, director William Wyler was still able to conjure up an air of majesty and mystery in that brief – a palpable sense that this obscure carpenter was somehow set apart and different in an unprecedented way. Heston's Ben-Hur gasps, "God help me!" and Jesus supplies the drink. The guard steps up to intervene, but then backs away in consternation. The Roman's face reveals that he doesn't know how to deal with this Son of Man, "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" ([I Cor. 1.23](#)). There's no preachy one-liners, no awkwardness. Just a powerful depiction of an incarnate divine presence and its ripple effects on a hungry humanity.

It's an example of what Søren Kierkegaard called "indirect communication," an oblique approach to deliberation which the Danish philosopher relied on to shake people out of their religious slumber. "The point of indirect communication," writes [William McDonald](#) of Kierkegaard's approach, "is to position the reader to relate to the truth with appropriate passion, rather than to communicate the truth as such." I'm guessing the Hollywood execs who took on the new *Ben-Hur* thought that dropping all pretense of subtlety and having the Son of God speak for himself would somehow appease the Christian movie-going public. Maybe it did at some level, and I suspect plenty of Sunday schools will be purchasing the DVD when it comes out. But the direct Jesus approach detracted from the new film's overall artistry and appeal, and it's certainly not going to help reach a broader audience.

In a post-Christian society such as ours, better to have an indirect Christ in the movies, or, better still, no full-monty Christ at all. [George Hunter](#) has observed, following Kierkegaard's lead, that "storytelling and other appeals to the imagination are effective, even essential" in a culture inured to explicit Gospel themes. Consequently, instead of banking on preachy blockbusters that end up busting – *especially* tepid remakes – we might want to consider the kind of indirect narratives about faith that have proven successful in the past. Think of [Chariots of Fire](#) about Olympian and missionary Eric Liddell, or

[Babette's Feast](#), a superb treatment of Isak Dinesen's moving novella about a heavenly banquet. Or how about [The Mission](#), a drama about enslavement and liberation, or [Romero](#), the true story of El Salvador's martyred archbishop.

So, filmmaking powers-that-be, enough with the sententious retreads, which movie consumers, Christian and otherwise, consistently jettison anyway. How about taking a chance on some fresh material with indirect Gospel content? If I had millions to burn, I'd be underwriting a screen adaptation of [A Canticle for Leibowitz](#), for instance, or John Kennedy Toole's [A Confederacy of Dunces](#). How about any story by Flannery O'Connor or Walker Percy? Just trying to help you out here.

But listen, Hollywood, one last thing: If you *must* do remakes, especially religious remakes, try older films with indirect potential that actually *require* re-making. I mean, whose idea was it to redo *Ben-Hur* in the first place? You were just asking for trouble – anybody could've told you that – and there are so many other movies in dire need of updating. [Kristin Lavransdatter](#) is an obvious contender in that regard, but I particularly want to draw your attention to [Brother Sun, Sister Moon](#), Franco Zeffirelli's groovy take on St. Francis. It happens to be one of my favorite films, but my wife makes fun of me. "It's such a hippie Francis," she says. "And the trippy Donovan soundtrack only makes it worse."

OK, I'll grant her all that, but I still like it, for it was instrumental in drawing me as a young Catholic convert to the poor man of Assisi. Francis, a mini-incarnation of Christ, became my first role model for holy striving, and his story is timeless – an indirect Christian narrative if there ever was one.

Hey – here's a thought! We have a popular pontiff who adopted Francis as his namesake, and he has a penchant for indirect communication himself. Could there be a more opportune moment for a *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* redux?

Where do I sign up to invest?

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[no-title]



*The
Doctrine
Is
Love.*

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With the excitement of Mother Teresa's canonization coming up on Sunday, like everyone probably, I've been thinking a lot about her life and her message. I've been thinking about how, with someone of her caliber and fame, her life and words will in many ways become dangerously like a token, as people want to be a part of the excitement and share in the experience. I read something the other day where a woman used words from the soon-named saint to justify her "friendly" divorce. I wanted to cry and had to fight not to let that distortion disturb my peace. Someone may be whispering those words to sway her decision but it's not Mother, I promise you.

I don't consider myself a great student of Mother's by any means. At least, not in the ways that it counts. I've read her book, many of her words, and much about her. I feel a little connection with her sharing a birthday and a namesake. I hope she prays for me and I hope I can learn to love as she did. Love was her lesson and I've a long way to go.

What was it that made Mother so attractive, so famously holy, so iconic? Certainly, it was God's Providence deigning to choose her as this international symbol of love. But I think it's safe to say He used her because she chose to give herself so fully to the doctrine of love. We are made to become like God, to be drawn fully into His mystery, a God Who IS love itself. The more we love fully, to let Love take hold of us, the more we will naturally draw others to their deepest longing of union with Love. Put more colloquially, the better we love, the more others will see and feel God in us, and people can't help but want that.

We are simultaneously drawn to Love and yet...yet when ways to become it are presented to us in reality, we cringe. It's so easy as we see or catch a glimpse of the demands of love in our daily vocations to want to run away, to claim exemption in the rules, to hide behind a false model of doctrine.

You got nothin' on me, Lord. See? I'm not breaking any rules!

But we fail to see that clinging to the rules is exactly the lifestyle that Jesus warns against time and again in the Gospels. He didn't want a Church of rule followers. He wanted a Church of lovers.

In the Christian life, the rules are obviously followed. They are an outline of the way of love. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments," He says. We can't claim to be following Christ if we're ignoring the basic tenets of the Faith. A love that encourages self or others to dismiss the rules is no love at all. Many who faun over Mother's acts of charity are ignorant of the ironclad will and rule of life that supported them. But tiptoeing the line is not the goal. Following the rules is not the benchmark of the Christian. Sainthood is. Love is.

Modern thinkers would have us believe that the freedom Christ presents us sets us outside of the rules. But in fact, Christ sets the bar higher than it ever was before! The rich young man was a great rule follower yet he walks away from Christ disappointed and sad because Christ asked for more than not breaking the rules. "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," He even dares to say. His answer about the greatest commandment simultaneously simplifies the old commandments and expands them beyond anything they ever were before. No, Christ didn't intend for us to cast off the rules. **He intended us to so fully love that the rules would take care of themselves.**

It all reminds me of the anxious, hormone-fueled question we would ask years ago in youth group chastity discussions.

No, really, how far can we go?

That's not the right question, they would answer.

Love doesn't ask that.

It's how much can you love?

We have a God Who wants more from us than a life spent not sinning. He wants - He offers - a life of beauty, of gift, of heroic love and virtue. He wants us to love as He does, a heart so absorbed with how much more we can do that the question of how much we can get away with is unthinkable, a love where the bare minimum seems ludicrous. That's how Mother lived. *How much more can I love?* He doesn't want us slipping into heaven by the skin of our teeth, pointing to the list of unbroken rules in our hand. He wants our hearts so like His that we can barely see where earth stops and heaven begins.

Outdo one another in love, the great apostle tells us. It's not outdo one another in piety or rule following or in toeing the doctrinal line. Outdo one another in *love*, the greatest, most important commandment of all, the one which he says encompasses all the other commandments. And this love? "Love to be real must cost." says Mother. "It must hurt. It must empty us of self." We are called to live a life of real love, to do more, far more, than the bare minimum. It is a life that seeks even in the littlest, most obscure ways to give of self for the sake of the other. In this way Mother Teresa beautifully lived and shared the Little Way of her namesake, teaching us that holiness was to be found in our own homes and in the tiniest of actions. **It is a way that says, yes, *the little things matter for they can make us holy.*** It is a way that makes the daily life and choices of each one of us something that matters to Him. It is a way that makes decisions not asking *what can I get away with?* but rather, *how much can I love?*

Saint John Paul the Great and Mother Teresa were closely tied spiritually and in human friendship. He, like her, invited the Church time and again to this great love that stretches far beyond rules and doctrine. "*Do not be satisfied with mediocrity,*" he reminded us so many times. We are not to be time-bidders, not to be checking off boxes and simply making sure we pass the Catholic Test. Mediocrity is doing just enough to get by without consequence. But we are called and invited to so much more. We are called to be passionately in love with Jesus, living lives of sincere and heroic holiness, dissatisfied with a religion of not breaking the rules. We are called to the doctrine of love, pouring out our own lives that we may become the saints we were created to be. This is what Mother did. That's why she radiated Christ and that's why she changed the world. It's why she is a saint and how each one of us can, with the grace of God, become one, too.

This contribution is available at <http://www.betterthaneden.com/2016/09/the-doctrine-is-love.html>
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Reflections on Mercy and Justice [at If I Might Interject]



(The Last Judgment—Fra Angelico)

Mercy has been the theme of Pope Francis' pontificate, and it has been badly misunderstood. Many people see Mercy and Justice as polar opposites, thinking that an emphasis on mercy means a belief that God will not punish and that the Pope will change Church teaching and no longer call sin a sin. The people who hold this view fall into two camps—those who think this is a good thing and those who think it is a bad thing. Neither group asks whether they got it wrong in the first place.

We call God merciful because He constantly calls us back to Him, always willing to accept our repentance, even if we struggle with habitual sin. But he doesn't violate our free will in doing so. That's where justice comes in, giving a person his due. The person who spurns God's mercy or acts presumptuously by assuming God will forgive whether we repent or not will eventually face judgment for refusing to heed God's pleas and warnings.

As each of us is a sinner, each one of us needs God's mercy. As God tells us that the merciless person will not be shown mercy (Matthew 18:33, James 2:13), we need to show mercy to each other when we are wronged. We can't turn a person away who seeks our forgiveness. If we want God's mercy to be limitless, we cannot put limits on our own. But there is another side to the coin. Mercy involves forgiving the repentant and providing a way for the sinner to turn back. But it does not mean excusing the sin as if it was not a sin.

To seek mercy is to humbly recognize one's wrongdoing and intend to change to the best of their ability and assisted by grace. If we refuse to admit we do wrong, we're not seeking mercy. We're demanding that the Church condone our actions. It's saying "I've done nothing wrong—you're wrong for insisting on this teaching!" Since we Catholics believe the Church only teaches on right and wrong because of the mandate and responsibility Our Lord gave, to demand the Church change her teaching from "X is a sin" to "X is *not* a sin" is to reject God's teaching (see Luke 10:16).

And that's where God's justice comes into play. He offers us every chance to change our ways, and every grace to do so. But if we refuse the opportunities and the graces, if we refuse to listen and choose to do what is evil in His sight, we will answer for it. We have an immortal soul. After we die, we will eternally go some place. If we have sought to be faithful to him, cooperating with His grace, and do not have unrepented mortal sins on our conscience, we will go to Heaven (whether directly or through purgatory first). If we put ourselves first and willingly live against His commands, we will go to Hell. That sounds blunt, but our Lord put it bluntly too:

²⁵ You say, “The Lord’s way is not fair!” Hear now, house of Israel: Is it my way that is unfair? Are not your ways unfair? ²⁶ When the just turn away from justice to do evil and die, on account of the evil they did they must die. ²⁷ But if the wicked turn from the wickedness they did and do what is right and just, they save their lives; ²⁸ since they turned away from all the sins they committed, they shall live; they shall not die. ²⁹ But the house of Israel says, “The Lord’s way is not fair!” Is it my way that is not fair, house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not fair? (Ezekiel 18:25–29)

Our ways are not fair because we want [Cheap Grace](#). We want the right to live as we please and then go to Heaven. But that is an impossibility. If we want to go to Heaven, we need to live as God calls us to live. God will give us the grace to do so, and provides us with the sacraments—including the Sacrament of Penance for when we fall short. But He won’t *force* us to change our ways. We have to respond to His call and His grace.

So that brings us to the tension between the Christian and the world. We’re called to evangelize the world (see 1 Corinthians 9:16), bringing people knowledge of God and His gift of salvation, and how to follow His ways (Matthew 28:20). But because that involves telling people they do wrong, people respond with hostility. We’re bigots and judgmental in their eyes because we tell them what they practice is evil and not good.

Yes, some Christians do behave wrongly. They seem to relish a kind of vengeance where wrongdoers suffer, and they seem to take satisfaction in the belief that their enemies are going to go to Hell. They get outraged at the thought that the sinners might get to Heaven before they do (Matthew 21:31). But these are Christians who fail to do what God tells them to do. They are an aberration. But warning sinners to change so they are not excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven is *not* that kind of behavior.

If we want mercy from God, we must show mercy (Matthew 7:2). That means forgiving those who wrong us, and it means keeping the [door open](#) for people to reach God. Of course, this is something greater than we are. God is the one who brings people to salvation. But we can’t view ourselves as bouncers at the door, deciding who’s good enough to get in. The criminal, the unscrupulous politician, or (perhaps hardest of all) the person we can’t stand are all called by God. We should desire their salvation. That means speaking the truth with love. We don’t compromise on doing what is right, but we also don’t get so caught up in our own views, that we keep people away who are earnestly seeking God and want to turn to Him with their whole heart.

This contribution is available at <http://www.ifimightinterject.com/2016/08/reflections-on-mercy-and-justice.html>
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The Church as the sacrament of the body of Christ [at Catholic Deacon]

This summer I have been slowly reading through the late Fr. Eugene LaVerdiere's

[*Dining in the Kingdom of God: The Origins of the Eucharist in the Gospel of Luke*](#)

. I would be hard-pressed to think of a book on Luke's Gospel I would recommend over this one. It is at one and the same time scholarly and accessible. It has helped me more effectively preach from Luke over the past few months. Fr. LaVerdiere was a priest of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, founded by the Apostle of Eucharist, St. Peter Julian Eymard- members of which have been very good to me over many years.

Theologically it would be difficult to exaggerate the centrality/importance of the Eucharist, of the Lord's Supper, in/for Christian life. As I grow older I experience this at deeper levels facilitated, I believe, by grace through participation in the sacred mysteries. When I think of the Lord's Supper in light of the institution narratives found in the synoptic Gospels, I realize how important is the diversity of its celebration in both historical as well as some fairly new forms. I also think it is easy to reduce the Eucharist in a variety of ways.

I find LaVerdiere's exegesis of the Last Supper in

[Luke 22](#)

very insightful. He sees the meal the Lord shares with the Twelve a consisting of two parts: Last Supper and Lord's Supper. The Last Supper portion takes place in Luke 22:15-18, while the Lord's Supper is originated in Luke 22:19-22.

Before dealing with a fundamental matter concerning the Lord's Supper there is an exegetical note I want to pass along from the book. It has to do with where Jesus and the Twelve took their shared meal together- the upper room. Luke calls the room a

kataluma

, which in the Gospel seems to be a room built as a second story of a house and accessed by stairs leading up, not from the inside the house, but from the courtyard. According to LaVerdiere, in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures- Old Testament- in use among Greek-speaking Jews of the diaspora in Jesus' day and beyond) the word

kataluma

indicated "a place of hospitality for people on a journey" (130). Of course, in Luke's Gospel the Last Supper takes place in Jerusalem after the journey of Jesus and his disciples from their native Galilee. The Church was and remains the Pilgrim People of God, a people on a journey together, companions who share bread- as our readings from Hebrews over these weeks of listening to the Journey Narrative

highlight. The seventh chapter of the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,

[Lumen Gentium](#)

, is entitled "The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and Its Union with the Church in Heaven":



DaVinci and Warhol, The Last Supper

Already the final age of the world has come upon us and the renovation of the world is irrevocably decreed and is already anticipated in some kind of a real way; for the Church already on this earth is signed with a sanctity which is real although imperfect. However, until there shall be new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church in her sacraments and institutions, which pertain to this present time, has the appearance of this world which is passing and she herself dwells among creatures who groan and travail in pain until now and await the revelation of the sons of God (par. 48)

Referring to what we commonly call the words of institution, Fr. LaVerdiere observes that our tendency is to interpret the word "this" in the phrase, "This is my body," which the priest says as he holds and slightly elevates the host, as referring to the host itself.

In Luke's context, LaVerdiere asserts, "this" "refers directly to Christ's

action

, to what he did, and indirectly to the whole event" (138-9). "This" is the celebration of the Eucharist whole and entire with all of its full meaning, including the intended effect of the sacrament, which is accomplished once we are dismissed. By taking "this" in the phrase "this is my body" as referring specifically and/or exclusively to the bread is highly reductive. This is important because it often has a negative impact on our

praxis

, on what happens once we are sent forth. In short, such a view runs the risk of making the Eucharist, to cite Pope Francis, self-referential, turning it into an end and not a means. Because we remain a pilgrim people until God's reign is established, made Christ's Body by the Eucharist we share, the Eucharist remains the means God uses to restore the world to communion through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why, as Christians, we must live sacrificial lives. To believe or live otherwise is to let go of the tension and either mistake the already for the not yet, or to reject the not yet altogether.

On LaVerdiere's reading, "The liturgical proclamation, 'This is my body, which will be given for you,' recalls the words of Christ offering himself, and speaks the words of the church associating itself with Christ's offering and making his offering present sacramentally. The body given is that of Christ. It is also that of the Church, the sacrament of the body of Christ" (139).

At least for me, keeping these fundamental truths in mind helps me not get bogged down in the liturgy battles, which I don't mind admitting I find not only tiresome, but increasingly silly.

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2016/08/the-church-as-sacrament-of-body-of.html>
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Why Sing? (and Why Sing with Choir?) [at The Beautiful Music Challenge]



This past weekend I celebrated an unbelievable event: the 30th Anniversary of my involvement with a specific choir - The All-Ohio State Fair Youth Choir (AOSFYC).

This is unbelievable to me because it all happened 30 years ago. I am pretty sure that I am not old enough to have done anything of any import 30 years ago.

In 1986, I was honored to be a part of a 282 voice choir of high school students drawn from all 88 counties of the Great State of Ohio. Some of these people have subsequently become my life-long friends. We have lost touch, regained touch, fallen in and out of love, had kids (some of us even had kids with and married each other).

It was a life-changing event and it was all about a choir

. In 1986, there were no soloists. There were no duets. There were no special groups. Our founding director, the late Glenville Thomas, knew that the power of a choir was about unity, not individualization.

The shared experience of making music together is a powerful one. We mark our important pieces of knowledge and rites of passage with music --weddings, funerals, our first kisses, the times tables and the alphabet, graduations --all of these have music associated with them, but more importantly, it is an experience that is shared. Usually, this blog focuses on music for the liturgy, but this time I want to talk about what music does for our communities.

This weekend, as I was sitting in the audience listening to my nephew and his fellow choristers sing in the 2016 AOSFYC, the director made a comment about the power of communal singing and how much our society has lost by not honoring and promoting opportunities to sing as a community.

One needs to look no further than James Corden's wildly popular Carpool Karaoke to see the appeal of singing together (whether we do it well or not). Everyone wants to be a part of the fun.

There are a few things that singing with a choir teaches us that simply is not realized by singing solos and

is only partially realized in small, exclusive groups. Charity, teamwork and perseverance immediately come to mind.

It takes a great deal of perseverance to learn a difficult piece of music. What is difficult for you, might be easy for me, but when we stretch to achieve, we always come out better for the effort.

Teamwork is a given when singing with others. Learning about the other choir members' strengths, weaknesses, working with them and working to improve them, are all a part of what it means to be part of a team. It is a skill that takes people from the choir room to the boardroom.

And finally charity. When I say charity, I am speaking of the theological virtue --not giving food or alms to the poor, but loving someone enough to help them be the best they can be.

I have sung with people who probably should not sing in a choir, but in charity, they have been allowed to participate and it has greatly benefited all of us. Not only do they have a community to turn to in a time of need, they are also able to provide for others who are in need --becoming conduits of Grace. In addition, the joy of being a part of something that inspires or entertains cannot be underestimated as a way to feed our souls.

School and choir season are right around the corner. I encourage you to get involved with a choir (whether sacred or civic). You might just find that you learn more than a piece of music to sing.

This contribution is available at <http://beautifulmusicchallenge.blogspot.com/2016/08/why-sing-and-why-sing-with-choir.html>

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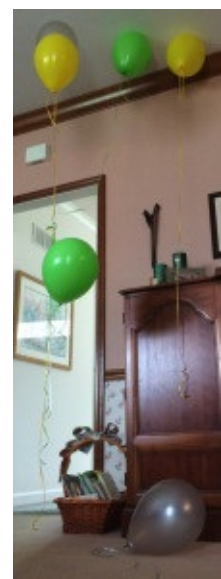
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Dry Bones [at With Us Still]

Live long enough, and you're bound to encounter it I suppose: A feeling of utter helplessness.

'*So what do you do?*' a friend asked, as he shared the story of a 31-year-old step-niece who's turning tricks to support her drug addiction.

The question cut me to the quick this morning, having spent some considerable energy in recent days helping a friend—from an entirely different circle—deal with the pain of a binge-drinking spouse.



'*So what do you do?*'

You pray, of course. But doing so can seem like a rather pathetic solution to the slo-mo horror unfolding before your eyes.

You pray, and God answers the prayer.

God responds to your groaning...by taking your hand...and leading you alongside the prophet Ezekiel into the center of the vast plain 'now filled with bones.'

He made me walk among the bones in every direction so that I saw how many they were on the surface of the plain. How dry they were!

He asked me: Son of man, can these bones come to life?

I answered, "Lord GOD, you alone know that."

We heard Ezekiel's remarkable story [proclaimed at Mass this morning](#), and as I reflected on it I realized it was something I very much needed to encounter today—a balm for my helplessness.

Then God said to me: Prophecy over these bones, and say to them:
Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!

Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: See! I will bring spirit into you, that you may come to life. I

will put sinews upon you, make flesh grow over you, cover you with skin, and put spirit in you so that you may come to life and know that I am the LORD.



A balm indeed it is—to be reminded that I am not God, and that there are circumstances in life entirely beyond my control.

That life *itself* is beyond my control.

For it is [in God that we move and live and have our being](#). My own ‘dry bones’ (and those of every addict I encounter) depend on the Spirit to animate them.

And, as the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner reminds us: These dry bones, our helplessness, are God’s gift, too:

Our heart is so inert and tired. It is worn out with everyday things. And God is so far away—so it seems to us, the spiritually blind and lame. Consequently our heart feels it cannot love...No, of ourselves, we have not got the love of which [the first commandment](#) speaks. Only [God] who demands it of us can give it to us. And so, we will at least seek this Love from [God]. We will pray for this Love...We must pray for this Love.

—Karl Rahner, S.J., *Everyday Faith*



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

IHS

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The Analogy of Progress - The Plans of the Enemy Exposed!!! [at My Classic Creedz]

‘At the beginning of the world, God commanded the earth to bring forth “the green herb, bearing its seed, and every fruit tree yielding fruit, each after its kind, which also has its seed in itself.”’ (Gen.1:11) This was the passage of scripture the wise and blessed Francis de Sales made use of in his book, ‘Finding God’s Will for You’ which I have started reading and which from the beginning has captivated me. What was he trying to say with regard to this text? He was trying to draw what I would like to call an ‘**analogy of progress**’, By this I mean that from that verse we see that in the way God created the green herb ‘**bearing its seed**’ and every fruit tree yielding fruit, each after its kind, ‘**which also has its seed in itself**’ an analogy of progress or continuity is drawn by God himself. He did not create the trees and the herbs to just live on their own and in a way remain stable or lasting in a fixed manner of existence, he created them with a view to increase, to grow. The essence of the ‘**seed**’ is to, in a way, create a pattern for a growth potential, an increase potential.

He does this as well with Man, creating him and the Woman and blessing them to ‘**increase and multiply**’ (Gen. 1:27-28). For me this was a spectacular observation from the scriptures. Sometimes we tend to ignore the great treasury of knowledge and example that are stored up with the saints. The truth is, this is part of the codes with which God built the whole of creation, and for blessed Francis this is also part of the codes for our supernatural lives in Christ. For him, our hearts are like the earth nourished by God’s very life and Word to bring forth spiritual plants which bear fruits of holy works that are impregnated with seeds of desire to further advance in the journey to perfection. This means that our lives in Christ are not meant to be static, or set in a particular field of existence rather they are meant to be in a continual state of advancement towards perfection. Our Lord himself speaks of this when he says to us in the Gospels, ‘Be ye Perfect’ (Matthew 5:48). It then seems to me that ‘perfection’ is not that stable, unchanging state of existence, or that peak or set point, but consists in that dynamic flux that is charged towards the infinite mystery that is God with a zeal for continuous advancement in justice and righteousness. And so it is not possible to have such a state in our spiritual lives where it doesn’t get better and it doesn’t get worse.

But in reality we find that many of us find ourselves set in such an illusion of a state. The enemy of our salvation delights that we are set there because it’s so bad a position, it’s such a position where we have no idea of what is going on in our spiritual lives, we become directionless and even worse, careless about directions. We become complacent in that illusion of deceit that we do not see ourselves drifting far away from God and yet not realize it. What a terrible way the subtle serpent uses to catch us off guard. I believe dearest friends that it is in this illusory state that most Christians of our day, in my country are caught up in. It is even worse that it is sometimes implied in certain sermons by some certain churches when they preach a theology of complacency and lack of involvement of the Christian himself in working out his salvation. (cf. Phil. 2:12). I do not need to give examples of the various ways we are set in this state of illusory spiritual inertia because some of us, if not most, need but only examine our journeys with God and ask where we are actually headed, perfection or just on the average ‘a good Christian’ or ‘a good Catholic’. What motivates us to the relationship it seems we have with God- Law, Society or Love?

Many of us have been drenched in minimalism and a drought of love in our hearts that we only ask what is the least we could do and still be called Christian and also not be doomed for hell. We go to Mass on Sundays, we say morning and sometimes evening prayers, and we belong to one group or another in Church and we think, 'Oh that should be good enough, even my friends don't do as much'. We frown at people who are actively trying to find God in their daily lives and accuse them of wanting to be too Catholic than the Pope. We are satisfied by being caught up in the observances without having a spiritual foundations for the fruits of those observances to take root within us for active progress towards perfection etc.

This illusory state is what the Bible calls 'Lukewarm' in Rev.3:15-16. In this message to the Church of Laodicea, the Lord says, 'I know thy works, that thou art **neither cold nor hot. I would that thou were cold or hot, but because thou art Lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth**'. One thing I observed in particular was that this Church of Laodicea was called in verse 14, '**the beginning of the creation of God**', in many ways this represents us Christians in who God started his work of the new creation in Christ, especially Catholics, the first Christians and beginners of Christendom. Some of us have abandoned the journey towards perfection through the grace Christ gives us in the Sacraments and have begun to embrace the illusory wiles of Lukewarmness that that Ancient dragon who has sworn not to leave us at peace I setting before us. (cf. Rev. 12:17).

This particular evil, blessed Francis reveals to us. has even taking another dimension, in what I would like to call '**the trap of starting and never continuing**', many of us who try so hard to be zealous in the spiritual life, we begin a particular spiritual exercise only to stop half-way as we are attracted by another and then we also stop along the way as another comes along. The enemy presents to us multiple and increasing ways of achieving holiness, capitalizing on our poor desires for God and our weak human wills and virtues in a way that after dragging us through a series of virtuous beginnings, we are no more than how we started, we find that nothing has changed; something I would like to also call an '**ideology of false continuity**'.

We all are summoned back to that Spiritual Warfare my brothers and sisters. We thank God for the gift of his holy ones and special ones among us whom he continues to use by his inspiration to point us to the path of righteousness and holiness. It would pay us to take full advantage of this message, come to our Lord in holy reparation and make firm resolutions to be afire with his Spirit working in and through us for his good pleasure. We need to once again rekindle the fire of Divine Love in us that we may once more and forever be the burning ones who would shine God's light to a world so confused and in need of Christ's Light. May Our Lady, the Woman of Revelations 12, who continues to protect us from the various machinations of the evil one through her many visits to us continue also to intercede for us that in the end, Victory shall be ours in Christ.

St. Francis de Sales, Pray for us!!!

From your Friend and Brother: Chibuzor F. Ogamba

This contribution is available at <http://myclassiccreedz.wordpress.com/2015/07/02/the-analogy-of-progress-the-plans-of-the-enemy-exposed/>

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When did the U.S.A. become the U.S.S.R.? [at In the Breaking of the Bread]

In recent decades we in Canada have heard echoes from our American neighbors of controversies over issues of faith. Prayer, the Bible, and even simple mention of or reference to God have all become prohibited in American public institutions, especially in schools and even colleges and universities. Anyone can be accused and criminalized for daring to include their thoughts, beliefs, or experience of faith or God in their free exercise of public life. Some of the most vehement defenders of the public virtue of tolerance turn out to be people who are most intolerant of anything having to do with God or Jesus Christ or Christianity or Judaism or the Torah or...

Christians and Jews have come under fire before, such as during the industrial revolution when some of them argued in favor of just labor laws and safe labor practices in defense of laborers who were ostensibly being exploited by capitalist interests, that is, by business people and owners. It is primarily due to their efforts, struggles, and sacrifices, even of their lives, that the work week went from six days a week of twelve hours to five days a week of seven hours, to give only one example.

The latest rounds of resentment towards the very existence of Christians and Christian institutions may very well come coincidentally by virtue of what has been called the sexual revolution. Christians generally abide by the principle that human beings are free in conscience to think, speak, behave, act, and live in accord with their conscience or lack of same. They avail themselves of their own freedom of conscience and liberty to think, speak, behave, act, and live in accord with their conscience and beliefs; as well as to speak openly of them in the interest of dialogue, personal sharing, and the free exchange of ideas and best practices. Christians, like Jews and other people of moral and religious conviction, will resist being coerced to think, speak, or act in contradiction of their values, but for all that do not stand in judgement of those who disagree or choose to live differently.

Any number of adherents and promoters of various interest or lobby groups - whether for gay rights or for the right of unlimited free access to abort unborn babies or any number of other life and lifestyle claims - are not satisfied, as Christians and other citizens might be, with their liberty to do as they wish or believe. What they now manifestly insist upon is the unfettered approval of all segments of society for their life choices, on the one hand, and on the other hand, they militate for the condemnation and suppression of all disagreement or dissent from their own convictions and subsequently they militate for the suppression of all dissenters. What we now have is an inverse form of tolerance, that is, grandiose claims of open social tolerance for every point of view except Christianity, to name only one faith tradition.

The irony is that whereas one of the chief principles and policies of the now defunct U.S.S.R. had been precisely the suppression of all religion in general and of Christianity in particular; this public policy is now increasingly being embraced and implemented by the United States of America. The U.S.S.R., like other ideological movements and states, fell upon the suppression of the Christian faith in particular because they saw it as the greatest enemy to their policies and the greatest influence that would empower citizens to resist their rule, however unjust.

It seems to me, as a casual Canadian observer, that America has lost its way and the citizens seem to be in a process of surrendering their rights to those most able to manipulate the public institutions by means of

wealth, influence, and any or all means necessary or useful in their drive to remake the country into their own image. Going... going... is the free republic dreamed of and enacted by the "Founding Fathers"... it is giving way to new forms of repression.

However, I am not a pessimist, nor am I an optimist, nor even perhaps a realist. I have met many wonderful Americans who are also frustrated to find themselves being manipulated by those with ready access to the "levers of power" and they have no intention of giving up their freedom or their hope. Believers are also confident in the victory of God in human affairs, not only his ultimate victory at the end of time but more importantly his victory now in the lives of those willing to believe and put their trust in Him.

There is undeniable power in the very notion of God, in the very name of Jesus Christ, in the principles of the Torah such as expressed in the Ten Commandments. Those most opposed to the deity or faith or religion turn out to be those who would brook no resistance or challenge to their own thirst for unlimited power to impose their own will or ideas upon society.

It could be said that those who broker in power over others are perhaps the most to be pitied. I pray and invite any and all believers to join me in prayer that they may be freed of such constraints on their understanding and appreciation for the value of life and of each human life. May the Spirit of the living God come upon them and by revealing itself to them show them that our Creator does not desire to take anything away from us in his moral expectations of us but rather is offering to give us everything.

This contribution is available at <http://fathergilles.blogspot.ca/2016/08/when-did-usa-become-ussr.html>
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The Mixed Blessings of Progress

For the first time in four years, we spent some time in [Shenandoah National Park](#). We typically tent camp, but there was a period in which my husband feared having two toddlers in the wilderness (along with our other kids). We gave it a shot last week, choosing a spot in the [Big Meadows Lodge](#) over a tent this time out.

It's no secret to anyone that frequents my blog how much I enjoy the park. I love its lush rolling mountains, its wildlife, and nearly everything about it. It's even a [setting in my novel *Stay With Me*](#). I'm grateful that its beauty is accessible to me and thousands of others for our enjoyment. I'm often surprised at the number of international visitors to the park that we meet; it's a worldwide vacation destination.

To its credit, the National Park Service, which is currently [celebrating a century since its creation](#), doesn't whitewash how the park came to be. Many mountain residents, [deemed "uncivilized," "disreputable," and worse](#), were evicted from their beloved homes, some even as part of a [eugenics program in which they were forcibly sterilized](#).

Educator and social worker [Miriam Sizer](#) characterized the mountain families thusly: "Steeped in ignorance, wrapped in self-satisfaction and complacency, possessed of little or no ambition, little sense of citizenship, little comprehension of law, or respect for law, these people present a problem that demands and challenges the attention of thinking men and women . . ."

Shenandoah National Park's history leaves with me mixed feelings – grateful for the park's existence and sorry for the circumstances of its creation. If you ever have an opportunity to visit, I encourage you to spend some time in the Byrd Visitor Center at Big Meadows, learning of its history.

The park, which employed the Civilian Conservation Corps for its creation, is a natural treasure. Its history is a sober reminder of the ever-present threat of dehumanization, eugenics, and invasive government. Sometimes progress isn't all it's cracked up to be.

This contribution is available at <http://www.carolynastfalk.com/2016/08/29/mixed-blessings-progress/>
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Martha & Mary: Portraits of Discipleship [at Theologyisaverb]



As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary [who] sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me” The Lord said to her in reply, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.” Luke 10:38-42

Personally, I have always been able to identify strongly with the personality and perspective of Martha. Ingrained with a strong work ethic and desire to serve, I have been often called and always quick to step forward. Discernment and ample grace have even helped me to see how best to use my gifts to help others. Yet, with a “Martha” disposition there can also be a temptation to frustration and jump to judgement of those *not* working. Likewise while true that “many hands make light work”, not all are being called to serve at that time.

Two different but essential illustrations of what it is to follow Christ in our daily lives are given here. An inner awareness and desire to seek to simply be with Christ as well as an outer response of that encounter with Christ provides a balanced portrait of what a full life in Christ entails. For how can we serve fully without time and prayer spent at the feet of Jesus? Without our labor being sourced and steeped in love from the One who is love itself? This is the better part that Jesus speaks of- that continual respite and turning of our hearts to God and the journey he has intended. Pulled by the pace of the day and the weight and concerns of life we may have found that we have wandered far away.

Becoming Mary

With a quick cup of coffee, light breakfast and short reflection I pause as I head out the door. Having tended to the most immediate needs of my family, I recognize all of the others things that were left undone. Laundry that needs to be folded, homework that needs supervision, and errands to be run. Very easily I

could (as before) allow these loose ends to consume my thoughts and keep me from becoming Mary. What then is the difference in today? Simply, I have chosen in this moment to sit at the feet of Jesus, to listen in silence. An appreciation that though the world is moving swiftly my soul is not. As the sunlight streams through my window and the trees sway in the breeze I am in utter awe for the beauty of the day. As the rain beats upon the windshield in the grey of the day I feel refreshed again. Whatever the day might bring, it is here in the place of Mary that I find rest and am able to see God in every detail. Though broken and imperfect, I am loved and this time with my beloved is beyond measure. No longer far away, though the Eucharist I find myself ever closer- intimately sharing in the very real presence of Christ. Breaking into my day, God has confirmed that I am where I am meant to be.

Active like Martha

If our journey were to remain here, I am sure that you might agree it is a graced place to be. And still, like the disciples our path of discipleship carries us out into the world to share this love that we have received. Within our families and communities there is a hunger for love and a tendency to be fed by everything that leaves us unsatisfied and unfulfilled. The need and work ahead can seem overwhelming if we go it alone. That is just it- having spent time with our Father we know we are not alone in the work that we do. Our prayer lifted, our petitions spoken, now with Martha we step ahead. With faith in the one who is always faithful, we seek guidance and strength to be attentive to the needs of others. Following Christ is not passive, but calls forth from us a response and a challenge. Though we know through scripture that Jesus spent much time in prayer he also encountered. The lost, broken, and marginalized sought, taught and healed were not to be his alone.

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.” Isaiah 6:8

Wherever you are in your walk of Christian discipleship take time today to rediscover Mary and Martha. We have much to learn from these two close friends of Jesus, and all of the saints in discerning the path ahead.

Peace,



This contribution is available at <http://theologyisavverb.com/2016/08/01/martha-mary-portraits-of-discipleship/>
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In Defense of the Handsome Priest [at Blossoming Joy]

A Catholic woman recently told me that she thinks it is unfortunate for a priest to be young and handsome. Her thought was that it's best to save the ugly men for Holy Orders and leave the good lookers for the nice Catholic girls. She also worried that a priest's ministry might be compromised by his dashing smile and draw him (and others) into temptation.

I've heard it before and I'm sure I'll hear it again. Even when my son announced that he was leaving for seminary, an elderly parishioner said her piece while shaking her head: *Well, good luck to him. But it is a shame. I have a lovely granddaughter...*

There are many variations of the same theme. A new priest is ordained and...

Oh, tsk tsk... what a waste. Such a shame... so many broken hearts he's leaving behind. You know, he's going to be a real distraction to the ladies during Mass! We'll see how far he makes it before he leaves with some pretty Betty on his arm.

From a wordly perspective, those sentiments might make sense, but my Catholic heart knows better and is stung. There is definitely a dearth of good Catholic men and I have seen the tears that flow when the apple of a gal's eye heads off to seminary. It is hard. But these men... whether young, old, seminarian, husband, ugly, handsome, religious, single, priest... they are not objects to be coveted or possessions to be held. They are beloved sons of God. We love... but like all earthly love, it must be laid at the foot of the cross to be raised up and transformed.

The tears are real. The sacrifice is real. *But it is not a waste.*

Two of the most hurtful names in the Catholic world (even when said in fun) are "Vocation Wrecker" (referring to women who marry Catholic men discerning the priesthood) and "Fr. What-A-Waste" (referring to handsome priests who gave up girls for God). Don't use them. Let the sacrifices mean something. Let the world know that every true vocation -- married, consecrated, priestly, or single -- is a love freely given for Christ and for souls and should be celebrated. Nothing wrecked. Nothing wasted.

Holy and Handsome. A Reckless Temptation?

Should I have married an ugly man? After all, he goes out into the world daily and has been the object of advances in spite of his wedding ring. He must remain faithful to *one* woman even though he may attract and receive inappropriate attention from many lovely women. Single handsome young men must also remain chaste in spite of the fact that they are attractive and additionally, available.

Is it different for a priest?

The priest is not truly "single" even though he remains unmarried, because has given himself body and soul to Christ and His Church. As for the young handsome ones? Who are we to set limits on God's work? I am grateful that not all priests are old and I cannot see the benefit of wishing physical ugliness upon any of them. God's garden is flourishing with beauty and variety. And chastity is not necessarily less difficult for the priest who is lacking physical beauty.

The issue ultimately hinges on holiness and love of Christ. God bestows beauty at His pleasure and calls *all* to holiness and purity. We do not sin because we are more or less susceptible to temptations but because we fail to remain vigilant in defense of love.

God bless our faithful priests; the homely ones and the handsome ones. May He bless them with a fervent and holy desire that overcomes all passing desires of the flesh.

UPDATED: Here is my handsome seminarian son with his handsome seminary rector. **Not a waste.**

This contribution is available at <http://www.blossomingjoy.com/blog/in-defense-of-handsome-priests>
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Garage Sale Fail - A Lesson in "Gratitude Attitude" [at Catholic Conundrum]



9 hours.
10 visitors.
Thirty-two dollars.

That about sums up our garage sale attempt yesterday. One would venture to say that the effort involved in preparing the sale was not exactly worth it! (Actually, I didn't realize one could have a garage sale with so few customers!)

We were more than disappointed. This was mostly due to the fact that we had decided to carve out time for this sale so that we could declutter as well as contribute to a little end-of-summer trip. \$30 would cover our gas expense, but that was about it!

Still, as disappointed as I was, for some reason I really felt called to thank God for the outcome of the sale.

Sure, we are encouraged repeatedly to "Thank God at all times for all things," but I tend to struggle with this one, I'll admit.

I have been trying harder lately to thank Him when I don't feel like I am very grateful, but I have been quickly learning just how incredibly hard that is!

I mean, think about it. God asks us to really, truly be grateful for ALL things. Not just the happy things. Not just the things that bring me joy. ALL things.

One might think that given our fallen nature this might be asking too much, but in all honesty, this concept - although radical - is the necessary ingredient for a life of liberation, freedom and true joy.

And, it is actually possible to live life embracing this concept. Having been blessed to witness this in

action by others in my own life, I am inspired and long to live lives like theirs.

The thing is, people like me have to take embracing the "gratitude attitude" in baby steps. For me, this means that each day I need to find at least one thing that bothers me and send a prayer of thanks upward.

I used to take a different approach. My attempts to develop this attitude included thanking God every time I actually felt thankful. I was pretty excited when I found myself doing it without having to make reminders. But just how difficult was this really? Although certainly a step on the path towards holiness, I was basically taking the very easy way. I needed to change my approach and start looking for those rough stones along the way to thank Him for.

And our discouraging garage sale is a perfect example of one of those small rough stones. To my honest surprise, I was amazed at how much better I felt after thanking Him. Today, our family gave the sale another shot, leaving it truly in God's hands this time (although Rod very kindly set up some extra signs in the area!). The outcome was much more in line with original expectations.

Am I grateful? Of course. But I'm even more grateful that I was able to step on and pass that rough stone with a heart closer to His. I just hope I can do it when I come across the really rough ones!

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicconundrum.com/blog/garage-sale-fail-a-lesson-in-gratitude-attitude>
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An Integration of Church and State [at A Faith-Full Life]

I don't often post political pieces. In fact, this may be a first. But as I sit at my desk writing this, I find myself deeply troubled by our current state of affairs. In our nation, the term, *separation of Church and state*, has been aggressively employed in an effort to remove any influence of religion or faith from the public sphere. We live in a nation where we are proud of our ability to compartmentalize our morality and beliefs – effectively neutering them from any practical application within the society in which we live. And, as a people we wouldn't dream of “imposing” our beliefs or morality on anyone else.

We are the “good men” who nevertheless do nothing while evil accomplishes it's purposes, and we console ourselves with the reminder that our religion must *never* influence our politics. [[Tweet This](#)]

We are loyal sons of the state, and as such we believe wholeheartedly that the Church has no place within it's boundaries. The merest imagination of an integration of Church and state, the very idea of bringing our religious beliefs to bear on our current sociopolitical sphere, makes us break out in a cold sweat.

Take for instance our current political candidates.

Render Unto Caesar...

Donald Trump, the Republican nominee for president, claims to be a Christian, yet virtually every time he opens his mouth at political rallies and press conferences he makes statements that are in direct opposition to the teachings of Christ. The Huffington Post recently posted an article listing Trump's “beatitudes” and comparing them to Christ's actual words. Here are just a few examples:

Jesus ~ “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”¹

Trump: “*My entire life, I've watched politicians bragging about how poor they are, how they came from nothing, how poor their parents and grandparents were. And I said to myself, if they can stay so poor for so many generations, maybe this isn't the kind of person we want to be electing to higher office. How smart can they be? They're morons.*”

Jesus ~ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”²

Trump: “*I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose voters.*”

Jesus ~ “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you.”³

Trump: “*When people wrong you, go after those people, because it is a good feeling and because other people will see you doing it. I always get even.*”

Jesus ~ “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”⁴

Trump: “*Why do I have to repent, why do I have to ask for forgiveness if [I'm] not making mistakes?*”

Jesus ~ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for

*yourself treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*⁵”

Jesus ~“*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in...Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*⁶”

Jesus ~ “*This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me...This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.*⁷”

Trump: “*Part of the beauty of me is that I’m very rich.*”

Trump: “*I’m putting people on notice that are coming here from Syria as part of this mass migration, that if I win, they’re going back!*”

Trump: “*When I go to church and when I drink my little wine and have my little cracker, I guess that is a form of forgiveness.*”

Personal or Political?

Meanwhile, Tim Kaine, the Democratic nominee for vice president, is a Catholic who very clearly delineates between his “personal positions” and his political policies.

“I have a traditional Catholic personal position, but I am very strongly supportive that women should make these decisions and government shouldn’t intrude,” Kaine said. *“I’m a strong supporter of Roe v. Wade and women being able to make these decisions. In government, we have enough things to worry about. We don’t need to make people’s reproductive decisions for them.”*

And as Christians we’re pretty okay with the nominations. Evangelical Christians are flocking to Trump in waves while liberal Catholics praise Kaine for keeping his personal beliefs out of public policy. Separation of Church and state indeed. But I think it is high time for a different approach.

An Integration of Church and State

Perhaps a better way to say it would be, “I want to see an integration between people’s faith and their life.”

Look, wordplay aside, I’m not looking for the United States to become a theocracy. I don’t want the Church involved in making political decisions. But that’s really not what we’re talking about here is it? We’re talking about how adept we as individuals have become at separating our faith and morals from every other aspect of our life.

For a political candidate to state that they are personally opposed to something due to their religious or moral beliefs, but that they believe that their “personal moral opinions” shouldn’t affect government policy is ludicrous. If we substituted any other human rights issue for the discussion that is currently taking place regarding abortion we would immediately see just how ridiculous this is.

“Due to my religious beliefs and upbringing, I believe that the objectification of women and their use as sex slaves is morally reprehensible. I also am personally against using violence to force women into

sexual acts. Having said that, I support the rapist's right to choose and would never dream of imposing my own personal beliefs on him! Pornography is legal in the US and it provides legal employment for tens of thousands – surely the good that pornographers bring to the economy outweighs the unfortunate aspects of their trade?"

"I am personally against slavery. Nonetheless, I will not enforce my own personal morality on others, nor do I think that the government should. In this country slavery is legal, and slaveholders should have the right to choose for themselves whether or not they own slaves. It is ultimately a landholders own decision what he does with his property. Just because I personally disagree with his choices doesn't mean that I would object to the law of the land!"

When it comes to abortion, I don't want to "break" the law of the land. The law is already broken. I want to see it fixed. US law used to uphold slavery. The law was wrong. It was broken. It needed to be fixed. And it required lawgivers who were willing to challenge the laws of the land in the greater interest of human rights. The law has been wrong many times in the past. It is wrong now on a number of issues. We should, as people of principle, seek to change the law, rather than using it as an excuse for our own lack of character and resolve.

"Let not any one pacify his conscience by the delusion that he can do no harm if he takes no part, and forms no opinion. Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing." John Stuart Mill⁸

Abortion as a Human Rights Issue

With that in mind, I don't believe that human rights issues are a matter of imposing ones religious beliefs on others. The state forms laws that protect human rights and enforce morality all the time; virtually every nation has laws against slavery, murder, rape, theft and so forth. If they don't, we tend to try and compel them to change their laws on human rights issues by means of economic sanctions and the like. I've yet to hear anyone object to any of these state mandated laws on the grounds that the religious beliefs and personal moral opinions of others are being imposed on them...

When it comes to the abortion issue I would simply point out that the question of when human life begins isn't really a religious question (or a matter of personal opinion) but rather a scientific question.

We can demonstrate that the unborn are alive because they take in nutrients and grow via cellular reproduction. We can demonstrate that the unborn have human DNA and are produced by human parents and are therefore human beings. Embryologist E.L. Potter points out that, *"Every time a sperm cell and ovum unite, a new being is created which is alive and will continue to live unless its death is brought about by some specific condition."*

It seems logical that since the unborn are living growing human beings in a particular stage of natural development, then their basic human rights should be protected by the state in the same manner that the state is responsible to protect any other human beings rights. Arbitrarily denying them basic human rights because they are at a particular stage of natural human development seems to be a logically weak position in addition to being morally problematic.

Citizens of Another Kingdom

In St. Peter's first epistle we are reminded that we are "aliens and strangers" in this world.⁹ But, somehow we have forgotten that we are not truly citizens of this, or any other, earthly nation. We have forgotten that our first allegiance isn't to this country or its laws, but to a heavenly kingdom with Christ as its head.

*"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone."*¹⁰

As Christ's emissaries in this world, we have an obligation to speak, *and act*, on behalf of His kingdom. Obviously this should be done in charity and with mercy, but the reality is our Christian faith should influence *every* aspect of our life.

We desperately need Christian men and women who are not afraid to take a stand for their faith and who are actively engaging with the culture around us. We need Christians who allow Christ to work through them to bring truth to every aspect of our culture; medicine and bioethics, arts and entertainment, commerce and industry, immigration and services for the poor, and yes, even to the political sphere.

I don't want politicians representing us who claim the title of Christian while denying the message and example of Christ. I'm tired of Christians who have been conformed to this world, rather than allowing Christ to transform and renew their minds so that they can discern the will of God – that which is good and acceptable and perfect.¹¹ And yes, all too often I include myself in their number.

Lord have mercy.

*"I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."*¹²

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1. Luke 6:20 [↵](#)

2. Matthew 5:9 [↵](#)

3. Luke 6:27-28 [↵](#)

4. Luke 5:32 [↵](#)

5. Matthew 6:19-21 [↵](#)

6. Matthew 25:34-35, 45 [↵](#)

7. Luke 22:19-20 [↵](#)

8. Inaugural address at the University of St. Andrews, 1867 [↵](#)

9. 1 Peter 2:11 [↵](#)

10. Ephesians 2:19-20 [↵](#)

11. Romans 12:2 [↵](#)

12. John 17:14-18 [↵](#)

This contribution is available at <http://adamncrawford.com/an-integration-of-church-and-state>
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Surrendering Out of Love - Thy Will Be Done [at Amazing Nearness]

“Fine!” That is usually the sound of surrender in my house. Sometimes a small person is mumbling it under their breath or sometimes a grownup, who should know better, allows it to pass their lips with a tone of resentment and sarcasm. Yikes!

Let’s face it, we don’t do surrender well. Culturally, we act like we are allergic to this condition. We are supposed to win and dominate! Surrender means defeat, right?

The first time I heard Hillary Scott’s song “Thy Will” from her album *Love Remains*, it hit me like a load of bricks. Surrender. The song is about surrender.

What is remarkable about Scott’s lyrics is the feeling of confusion and broken heartedness she communicates *while* falling to her knees in childlike submission to God’s will. Whaaaaat? This is exactly the time we are not ready to surrender to God’s will!

Truth be told, we are only comfortable surrendering to God’s will if it looks exactly like our own plans. Our will, not God’s will – so that we remain in control. We aren’t ready to surrender control because ***we lack trust borne out of love.***

God is saying, “Come, follow me.” Our response, “Where are we going? How long till we return? What will the journey require, and can you wait until I am ready?” And the God who offered everything to us and for us in love unto the cross *waits*. He waits and waits. ***The God who created time waits for our love.*** Meanwhile, we stubbornly mumble “fine” in defeat, but not loving surrender.

In our relationship with God, surrendering is not defeat. ***Surrender is an act of love. In order for our soul to sing “thy will be done” we must first fall deeply in love with God.***

This contribution is available at <http://amazingnearness.com/2016/08/30/surrendering-out-of-love-thy-will-be-done/>
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3 Steps to Save Your Children's Minds [at Beware Yon Dragons!]

We all want to help our children go to Heaven. In seeking this, we all know that our children need to learn the basics of the Catholic faith. Therefore, we teach them; at home, in Sunday School, etc. It does not take a genius to figure out these details. Yet, if we all know the importance of a religious education, why is it that so many children still fade away from the Church? Yes, many of them come back eventually, but that does not make it acceptable to fall away in the first place. Just because people survive plane crashes, does not make me want to be in one.

I would like to present the idea that the child's mind is not a neutral object that we can "pour" catholic doctrine into, and expect them to behave rightly as a result. Taking them to weekly Mass and a religious education class are good, but not the sum total of the parent's responsibility. We need to "fertilize the soil" of the child's mind in order for the seeds of God's truth to survive in that soil and take root. Parents need to be working actively to help their children's minds be spiritually healthy, or all the Sunday School classes on the planet will not be enough to keep them in the faith.

Here are three simple steps to help save your children's minds:

1. Reduce their time in front of a video screen (in some cases, drastically reduce it); generally, the more video they see, the less they will be interested in the truth of God.
2. Give them activities that strengthen and stimulate the mind (rather than those that turn it to mush); if you reduce their video time but do not stimulate them with something good in return, their minds will stagnate. The mind is like a muscle; it needs to exercise.
3. Assert your loving authority as a parent (so that they understand you really want what is best for them); if you are wimpy in your leadership, the children will not take you seriously.

In the ideal world, parents should begin doing all this before their children turn three years old. I know for many of you reading this, however, your children are already older than three. That does not mean that the work is useless, or that success is impossible, it merely means that you have to put more effort into accomplishing this. Depending on the children's age, you will need to explain to them the need for some changes in their lives (i.e. point three above), and do so in a manner in which they genuinely understand that you are not doing this merely to maintain control over their lives, but to save them from a lifetime of pain.

I know that these three steps run counter to much of what parents are being told today. Someone said to me recently that "unless you entertain children, they won't listen to you in religious education classes". She then proceeded to ask "what can we do that will entertain them better, because they still are not listening". That is the wrong question. The assumption that we have to respond to these children's problems (an obsessive need for entertainment) by making concessions to them (and giving them more entertainment), is wrong from beginning to end. All we are doing with this response is enabling them to avoid overcoming their problems. We cripple their minds, and do not help them to learn how to think.

We need to ask "how can we help them

to reject

the self-absorbed demand for entertainment?" What would that look like if we actually carried it out? Maybe some parents would take away their children's cell phones (!). Maybe some parents would throw their television sets in the trash. I certainly am not advocating a radical and sudden change in the home that will only alienate the children. What I am advocating, however, is that parents (especially fathers) need to disciple their children and teach them what it means to "love God with all our heart, soul,

mind

, and body". They need to educate them, and get them to the point where the children see the need for change. This is not done overnight, but it must start sooner rather than later.

I found it difficult to answer the earlier question about "better entertainment" in the religious education class because my children do not currently (and never have) needed to be entertained in order for them to pay attention. In fact, they appreciate learning about God without any desire for "a new and entertaining methodology" to keep their attention. No, they are not perfect; we have just avoided letting them become obsessed with having a constant barrage of entertainment.

Yes, there will be children who resist this. In my experience, however, I have found that the children will generally follow through with changes for the better if the parents explain things all along the way, and make it clear that they doing this for the good of the family (and also show that they themselves are willing to sacrifice for the sake of the children). In general, it is the parents who resist the changes far more than it is the children. Parents will say, "that's too hard", or "they won't listen to me", or "they'll never let me do that". We are not talking about choosing a different brand of socks, we are talking about their eternal souls; we cannot afford to find excuses.

In a mindless culture, children need to learn how to use their minds, and this goes beyond a class in logic (though, please be aware, that logic is incredibly useful). It means that we need to work, intentionally and purposefully, to help our children to think like Christians. We cannot merely throw a couple Bible stories at them and hope that they will make the right choices when they grow up. Parents have done this, and it fails every time. This is treating the child more like a puppy than like a human. They have minds, and those minds can be cultivated and made fertile ground for the truth of God. Parents, begin the work today.

This contribution is available at <http://bewareyondragons.blogspot.com/2016/08/3-steps-to-save-your-childrens-minds.html>

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The Catholic Mom's Prayer Companion launch at Catholic Marketing Network Trade Show (Photo provided by Nancy Ward)

It was such fun to meet many of the co-authors of *The Catholic Mom's Prayer Companion* at the book launch last month at the Catholic Marketing Network Trade Show. What a thrill to be one of the authors of this classic book of daily reflections!

When my copies of *The Catholic Mom's Prayer Companion* arrived in my mailbox, I was elated. What a joy to have this in my hands and leaf through it to see the abundance of wisdom flowing from these CatholicMom.com authors to moms everywhere.

I looked up my pages that I wrote a year ago to review the dates that I selected for my personal reflections. When I read what I had written, I remembered typing those words, editing them, and sending them to Sarah Reinhard. Reading them now gives me a little chill of excitement and a dose of humility. Why? I realized that these reflections were not my words, but like the quotes that begin each entry, those of the Holy Spirit. He inspired me with the words he gave me to inspire others. I can unabashedly recommend this precious book because I believe the Holy Spirit inspired the other authors as well.

I selected January 2, the Feast of St. Seraphim of Sarov, because I loved his devotion to the Holy Spirit. One of his sayings, "Acquire the Holy Spirit and thousands around you will acquire salvation" is as challenging as it is mysterious.

For April 7, "Today's Good News," I began with a favorite quote from Pope Francis, well known as the Pope of evangelization.

"Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God's presence." Pope Francis (Evangelii Gaudium no. 259)

August 12, the feast of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, gave me the opportunity to get to know her better. She inspired me to write, "Leave the Doing to God" with this theme:

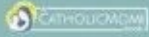
"Hold your eyes on God and leave the doing to him. That is all the doing you have to worry about." That date is also "Middle-Child's Day" and I had fun reminiscing about my role as the middle sister.

EDITED BY LISA M. HENDEY
AND SARAH A. REINHARD



The Catholic Mom's
**PRAYER
COMPANION**

A Book of Daily Reflections



"Thoughtful and eminently readable."
—Jennifer Peckham, Catholicmom.com and
author of "Something Other" (Plus-Old)

My fourth contribution comes up on November 7 with “Name Your Battles” and a familiar scripture for that day, Philippians 4:12-14.

I know indeed how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.” How fitting for this group of writers who were empowered with the strength of the Lord and the leadership of Lisa Hendey and Sarah Reinhard to produce this impressive volume.

Join me in a year of special moments we can treasure together as these passages unite us in the Spirit no matter where we are reading them.

You will find the Prayer Companion discounted at <https://joyalive.net/shop/>. Or order it from AveMariaPress.com, [Barnes and Noble](http://BarnesandNoble.com), Amazon.com.

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This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/catholic-moms-prayer-companion-launched/>
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7 Ways to Prevent a Full On Parental Freak Out! [at Little Douglings]

When I had five children in five years, there were times when I was exposed to a grotesque symphony of noise and whining that penetrated my brain, causing an internal vibration. Well beyond the phase of yelling or crying, my eyes glazed over, as I stood frozen with my mind throbbing, "MALFUNCTION, MALFUNCTION," over and over again.

I created a term for this, complete with a catchy acronym: IFOM (pronounced *eye-fom*) - Interior Freak Out Moment. I spent a long time trying to figure out how I could avoid these incidents, being that it was the climax to the song...I Can't Do This! And after extensive personal research in childhood development, complete with a home study expanding just beyond a decade, I've come to the conclusion that there are seven effective ways to prevent the occurrence of an IFOM.

- 1. Drop the Personal Agenda.** I used to try to "fit in" illustrating, writing, cleaning, business/important calls, etc., while the toddlers were playing nearby. I soon realized that this was the overture to my personal hell. The needs of the littles became deterrents to all I wanted to accomplish. My tone would resonate with annoyance and my patience became nonexistent. My short, exasperated responses to my children were mirrored by my impressionable babies and soon, they would become more irritable and would turn on each other, screaming and fighting (which would then take my splenetic state to new heights) - a perfect setting for an IFOM. When I laid aside my expectation of getting anything done while in the midst of a bambino bash, I was able to face the tasks of caring for them with grace and even joy... and if by some miracle I was able to get some work or personal items accomplished, I considered it a huge bonus and felt pretty good about it. Otherwise, I'd save the items on my personal agenda for nap times, showtimes (which was limited) or after the kids had finally been put down for the night.
- 2. Simplify Your Home - Strip it Down.** Cast out the clutter. If you're like me, you might be affected by the state of cleanliness of your humble abode. My youngest children turn our home into some sort of bizarro world. Everything in the cupboards needs to be taken out, closed drawers need to be open (except if you're trying to put something in them, then they need to be pushed closed), food needs to be thrown on the floor, and floor lint needs to be put in your mouth, every single toy in the house needs to be displayed on the display mat (which is the floor), some toys go in the display cabinet (which is the toilet). Living in this sort of environment is expected with little ones (although child locks and gates can help a little), but it can push you to your personal limit and put you at high risk for an IFOM. So, simplify your decorum and strip down on excessive items. Limit the number of toys your children have access to at any given time. I used to have a shelf full of puzzles (silly, self-torturing parent). The clean up of a bunch of mixed up puzzle pieces all over the floor is downright cruelty to parents - as is trying to keep your little ones focused if you have them assist you in the tedious task. I now have only a few puzzles, hidden in an undisclosed location, and will pull out one for them from time to time. I'm trying to limit items in drawers and on surfaces, making for an easier clean up and keeping my sanity intact.
- 3. Simplify Your Life.** We are in the midst of an over-scheduling crises of epidemic proportions! Stress and anxiety are at an all time high with the demands we place on ourselves. With children, we can easily

fall prey to thinking we need to fill their lives to the brim with scheduled activities, especially those run outside the home. I think most parents can attest to the mental strain experienced when you are running from place to place, ensuring all the requirements and needs are met to engage in the various activities (bringing equipment, footwear, clothing, supplies), cleaning up surprise messes or outfits that were clean two minutes beforehand, squeezing in appointments, all the while dealing with surprise obstacles that often arise in life: sick kids, car breakdowns or empty tanks, needs of friends or extended family. All this puts parents into a fragile state and if you're tired, worn out or spread thin from trying to meet too many of those demands, you are priming yourself for a serious IFOM. Scale it down. Choose the activities that really matter to your family and invest in them, but learn to say no to the others. Resist comparing yourself to other families. You don't have to have your children in everything! Pope Francis recently advocated for fathers to "waste time" with their children, which is hard to do when your day is full of commitments outside the home, or chock full of extra curriculars! But he's right, children crave that time with their parents. And we desperately need it too!

4. Find the Humor in it. This! There have been moments when I could either cry out in desperation like Bastian trying to name the Child Empress in the NeverEnding Story (sorry for the total geek metaphor), or laugh. I'm really trying to choose the laugh option more and more. My two year old would have me in an asylum if I didn't appreciate the humor of her ways. Today was one of those days. She had been sneaking food all day. We had a lot of extra treats being the Feast of the Assumption. I was about to blow my top when I caught her for the umpteenth time. She had snuck a cupcake into the mud room and was looking at me in terror. But I stopped when I realized that she had made a banquet table out of the bench. She was using a shoe box as a chair and had a flip flop as her plate. A boot sitting on the bench served as a vase and she had stuck in a few fake flowers. She had even pulled in a step stool from the bathroom, as though she was ready for a guest to join her... sure enough her four year old brother walked in and said, "Oh, is this my party?" It was pretty cute. She still got a time out... and I was forced to eat the cupcake (it would have been wrong to let her have it). But I appreciated the humor of it all and it really helped me keep my cool. Oh, oh, oh, and I also laughed today when my two month old spat up a frothy, white ocean into my freshly-washed hair. For the WIN!

5. Give Yourself a Time Out. There were times when I felt like I was going to completely lose it. If my husband was around, I knew to enthusiastically hand off the torch and run straight for the shower or out the door. If I was on my own, sometimes it meant making sure everyone was safe in their cribs/rooms/pack n' play and taking a moment to either find a quiet area in the house to regroup, or perhaps to sit outside on the porch and sing the whole last act of Phantom of the Opera... it's a fun option. *IFOM prevention time outs* may also include scheduled weekly date nights and a monthly girl's night out. *Where my girls at?*

6. Eat, Sleep and Be Merry! We are much more likely to hit the cray button if we're sleep deprived, malnourished, or generally caught in blah mode. Want to prevent an IFOM? Find ways to make sure you're getting enough sleep (I know easier said than done), remember to eat (I remember too much), and fill your love tank. My love language is *words of affirmation*, so I rely on my husband and those close to me for encouragement to keep me going strong. If your language is *touch*, than you may need to cuddle up to your spouse. Whatever it is that sustains you, seek it out. Make sure your spouse is aware of what your love language is and find out his or her language too so you can help fill each other's tanks and thrive in spite of the chaos.

7. Pray. I'm convinced that parenting requires supernatural graces. The things we face are not for the faint of heart, so we need the strength of our faith. In the moments leading up to an IFOM, throw your head back

and send up a prayer. Say it out loud - it might come out louder than you intend and it might just sound like, "HEEEELP ME LORD!", but it may be good for your kids to see how you turn to God when you're struggling. Persevere in your daily prayer life to help equip you each day. My husband and I pray the rosary daily. When we made this commitment, my instances of IFOMs significantly decreased. His grace can sustain us through all things, if we just keep remembering to ask.

I haven't had an IFOM incident in years, which I'm really hoping means that God has been able to refine me to some extent. When I think back on my earlier years as a parent, I fully admit that nothing I had ever experienced beforehand was able to stretch me, try me and bring me to my knees quite like the encounters with the little beings sporting 50% of my DNA. - and thank God for that, because it was the perfect posture for much-needed humility and prayer.

This contribution is available at <http://www.littledouglings.com/blog/2016/8/15/7waystopreventafullonparentalmeltdown>
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Because Saint Ann conceived our Blessed Mother in her womb without original sin, and because Mary remained sin-free for her entirely earthly life, God assumed Mary into Heaven, body and soul, at the end of her earthly life. Mary's refraining from sin resulted in no need for her earthly body to decay; to experience death as we know it.

In stark contrast, for everyone else, our souls separate from our bodies at the time of our earthly deaths. Our bodies decay because of the original sin committed by Adam and Eve, and from our own concupiscence to sin. God created Adam from dust, and as a result of Original Sin, unto dust we all shall return. Our departed souls await the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when He will resurrect our glorified bodies, reunited with our souls, in perfect union with the Blessed Trinity. This is Catholic dogma, a tenet of our faith.

Our Blessed Mother, A Cause for Hope

Mary's Assumption into Heaven is cause for our hope in the fulfillment of Christ's promises (1 Cor. 15: 50-58) to raise us from the dead with glorified bodies; incorruptible and immortal. Therefore, not only do we celebrate this Feast Day because Mary deserves it, but also for the hope it gives to each and every one of us that one day, we too, like Mary, will be with Our Lord in Heaven; body and soul.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Happy Feast Day to Mary, our Blessed Mother! Please Mary, always keep us in your loving care.

The Deadliest Forest Fire in U.S. History was No Match for The Blessed Virgin Mary [at It Makes Sense to Me]

IT MAKES SENSE TO ME

By Larry Peterson

On October 8, 1871, in or around a place called Peshtigo, Wisconsin, several men were setting small fires in the woods. This was a common practice in clearing land for expanding railroads or for expanding farm land. Except on this particular day something unexpected happened. A cold front moved into the area creating winds that were close to hurricane force. The winds fanned the flames and the resulting

[Peshtigo Firestorm](#)

still can claim the ignominious title as the "deadliest wildfire" in American History.

To this day, no wildfire in the U.S. has ever caused more deaths. It is estimated close to 2500 people perished in the raging 2,000 degree inferno. But there is an incredible side-bar to this story. Miraculously, there was a small group who were not harmed at all and they were right in the middle of the blaze. This small group of people were with

[Adele Brise](#)

Adele Brise was 24 years old when she arrived in Wisconsin with her parents from Belgium in 1855. A devout Catholic, Adele had a great devotion to the Blessed Mother and prayed daily. On Sunday, October 2, 1859, Adele was walking home through the woods when she saw a woman clothed in white standing between a hemlock and a maple tree. The woman was encased in a bright light and had a yellow sash around her waist. A crown of stars was above her long, blond hair. Adele, filled with fear, began praying and the vision disappeared. She told her mom and dad about it and they told her that maybe it was a soul in need of prayers.

The following Sunday, Adele, was on her way to Mass with her sister and another woman when she saw the apparition a second time. But her sister and friend, who were walking a bit ahead of her, did not see anything. Returning from Mass, the Lady appeared to Adele for the third time. Adele, who had confided in her parish priest about the mysterious lady, did as he told her. She asked the lady the question, "In the Name of God, who are you and what do you wish of me?"

The Lady answered, "

I am the Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners and I wish you to do the same. You received Holy Communion this morning and that is well. But you must do more. Make a general confession and offer Communion for the conversion of sinners...Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation."

Adele was afraid. She knew little about her faith. She asked how she was supposed to do this with so little knowledge. The Blessed Virgin told her, "

Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the sign of the Cross, and how to approach the Sacraments; that is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing, I will help you."

Adele took the Blessed Virgin's words to heart. She began her new, lifelong ministry of teaching children the Catholic faith by traveling by foot from house to house to instruct children in their homes. Adele's dad, Lambert Brise, built a small wooden structure at the sight of the apparition and a few years later, after Isabella Doyen donated five acres around the site, Adele, started a small school.

In addition, a bigger wooden church was built and it was named Our Lady of Good Help.

In the meantime the magnificent woodlands of Wisconsin were being harvested for their fine lumber. Mounds of sawdust and dried branches were being littered about with no sense of cleanup or conservation ever considered. Then came the evening of October 8, 1871. The Peshtigo Fire quickly exploded and began to devour the entire area with its rushing flames and 2000 degree heat. The firestorm began to head for Our Lady of Good Help.

People nearby the chapel began heading there. There was never an accurate count but many people came, some even bringing their livestock. Sister Adele organized them together and they all prayed the rosary. Outside the chapel they processed, holding high a statue of Mary pleading for her protection. The fire kept coming and the people moved inside the chapel and continued praying. Soon the fire raged all around the compound and the flames even arched over it. But the fire never touched the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Help or the people that were there.

Over one million acres were destroyed in the Peshtigo Firestorm. As far as the eye could see was total devastation. Yet, in the middle of it all, the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Help and the fenced property surrounding it, was untouched. The property had been spared and no-one had been hurt, including the animals. The five acres sat amid the charred landscape like an oasis in the desert. People who came and saw this incredible sight knew it was the Hand of God at work that night. The faithful all had no doubt that the Blessed Virgin, Our Lady of Good Help, stood outside the chapel deflecting the raging inferno away from her children inside.

The story of Sister Adele and Our Lady of Good Help was always well known within the local culture and to the faithful but many considered it "urban legend". That was because there was never an "official ecclesiastical judgment" rendered. Then, in 2009, the Diocese of Green Bay launched an official investigation. On December 8, 2010, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a special Mass was offered on the site by Bishop David Ricken. At the Mass the bishop declared that the Marian apparitions seen there by Adele Brise were "worthy of belief".

The site of the apparitions of Our Lady of Good Help is only one of 15 worldwide recognized for Marian apparitions. It is the only one in the United States. Since its ecclesiastical recognition and approval, The

[Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help](#)

is rapidly growing as a site for pilgrims from around the world. It is a beautiful thing.

*An edited version of this appeared in

[Aleteia](#)

on July 28,2016

*On August 15, 2016, the site was declared a National Shrine:

<http://www.thecompassnews.org/2016/08/olgh-shrine-receives-national-shrine-recognition/>

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This contribution is available at <http://slipperywillie.blogspot.com/2016/08/the-deadliest-forest-fire-in-us-history.html>

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An Unexpected Delivery [at THE SOULS OF THE DAMNED ARE IN THE HANDS OF GOD]



An important visitor arrived at Villa Cordani one recent Friday morning.

No, don't wish me "mozzletoff," Yiddish for "congratulations," and I won't be passing out cigars. In my post-marital status I bear no burden of hungry mouths to feed but two—myself and Sicily, my two-year-old Hemingway tortoise-shell cat.

That is, until that Friday when she delivered a litter of kittens.

But wait. The animal shelter assured me that Sicily was spayed. Surprise! I wasn't planning on having company that weekend but suddenly I had several teeny houseguests. Not a bad thing but it was an unexpected delivery.

That morning at my desk I heard the pleas of fragile creatures. Peeps and chirps, as shrill as a dog whistle. Did I leave the window open last night? Did a bird get into the house? No. The truth hit me like egg on my face.

I suspected that she was with kitten but denied the truth. I adopted her last winter from the Cascade Human Society in Jackson to replace her predecessor, Silver, after a Ford F250 locomotive laid him to rest in a pothole across the road from the Villa.

I didn't carry the torch for him or seek grief counseling. However, I couldn't take the silence of an empty nest. A baby—or a dozen of them despite the species—changes everything. I was not up for an adventure, had been battling the flu for the past two weeks and wanted recovery. What could I do with these new arrivals? I couldn't send them back, yet here they were, big as life.

When I adopted Sicily she weighed about five pounds. Since June—the gestation period of the domestic cat is about 65 days—she put on weight, blew up like a football. Inflate gate. I tried to

convince myself that she was buffing up from stalking gophers and climbing the maple, the elm, and the oak in our yard.

An exceptional animal, Sicily taught herself how to open the back door and let herself out. I felt powerless to stop her; she would not be denied. Look what happened. Feral cats trespassed in her territory but she vanquished them. Except one.

Sicily loves other animals, especially the chipmunks she digs up to make sport of them until she gobbles them up. They must be pretty fattening, I thought. At least she doesn't purge in the toilet.

One day while working at my desk I saw a yearling in our yard standing stiff as pine. For thirty minutes it stood still in the yard but when I looked out the window I saw Sicily crouched on the porch eye-to-eye with the deer. Her eyes were bigger than her stomach but if she could kill it we'd have enough venison to last through the winter. She let herself back into the house and the fawn disappeared.

I couldn't complain about the kittens. The surprise package infused mirth here. Sicily was a single mom and some tomcat from the woodlands contributed his DNA. I stepped up to the plate, became a proxy proud papa for Silver who possibly incarnated himself in her from his place in the scratching post in the sky. Hats off to him and give that tom a catnip cigar.

What could I do with all these dependents? Could I write them off my on tax returns? In great need I drove to the CHS for guidance. It was about noon and when I left Sicily she was still pumping out kittens in her crate in the spare bedroom. I had no idea how many there were because they were wrapped around each other and elbowing one another for their Mama's milk.

The shelter people met me at the door. "Are you here to adopt a pet?" I was asked.

"Heck, no. My house is crawling with critters."

"Mice? Use no-kill traps."

"That's not it. I adopted a cat here in February. You told me that she was spayed, but my house is full of kittens. Where did they come from?"

"The Stork. Did she 'unfix' herself?"

"No. This isn't Jurassic Park."

"Cute. What should I do?"

"It's too soon to report the official body count."

"Relax. We'll take care of it for you."

"When I looked into the crate Sicily's ears pinned back."

They consulted her chart. It turned out that Sicily was surrendered by a family who told the CHS that she was spayed. "It happens a lot more than we wish it did," they admitted.

I shook my head. It was a set up job. Animal do-gooders will say whatever they need to liquidate their inventory. At least Sicily wasn't a Great Dane.

They were very helpful. They issued directives on how to care for the litter. "Leave them alone for six weeks then separate them from their mother so that her milk will dry up. Then bring in the kittens and we'll place them with families."

"Won't they be too young to be adopted?"

"Kittens and puppies fly off the shelves. Bring in the mother so that she can be spayed."

"How much does that cost?"

"Nothing. We'll do it for free."

"What about the litter box and the afterbirth? Won't they soil all over the carpet?"

"The mother will take care of that."

"Make sure that she has plenty of water. She'll be more thirsty than hungry."

Then they thrust a 50-pound bag of kitten food into my arms (probably to ease their consciences) to take back to the villa and dole it out to the cats.

"I don't wish to duplicate this experience," I said.

"Bring her back here in September and we'll make sure that won't happen again."

That saddened me because I believe that nothing should stop the circle of life. But this wasn't Planned Parenthood, it was good husbandry. I wanted what was best for the new mother, a *quid pro quo*.

So I watched a miracle as Sicily pushed from her womb one kitten after another. I haven't witnessed the birth of critters since my mother raised dachshunds in our basement. She served as midwife to Dame Gretchen who snarled and chased off Hans the sire.

I've always been an animal lover. At the Labor Day weekend fair I tended the 4H booth, showcasing my collection of white mice, gerbils, rabbits, and Guinea pigs. In our back yard I dug up moles and settled them in a fish tank filled with earth and watched them tunnel and sift through the dirt and fed them crickets. When I see a deer carcass on the road I say a prayer.

That's why I love Michigan, the equines, the bovines, and even the buzzards that picked Silver's bones clean. Nature happens all the time and, despite what humans think, there is nothing that we can do to stop it. The human is the only animal that thinks it can control Mother Nature.

My first cat was Cross, a Siamese. As a boy I feared the dark and refused to be put down without him. Cats can't really see in the dark; their eyes just collect more light than ours. Domestic cats, *Felis Catus*, live about 15 years. Cross lived to age 30 (not uncommon for his breed) and died a toothless bag of bones and I never forget him because he helped me overcome my fear of the dark.

Well, now Cross is gone but I have several kittens in need of warmth and love and homes. The addition to our family at Villa Cordani has changed me. I turn down the stereo and turn up the A/C to offer comfort for these urchins who know nothing of the world. I'll keep the pick of the litter, the blond one. I named my new friend who doesn't know me yet *Puma*, Spanish for cougar. The rest will go to good homes and if you want a kitten I've got plenty. Free of charge and free shipping. *Mozzletoff*.

This contribution is available at http://quodscrpsiscrpsi.blogspot.com/2016/08/an-unexpected-delivery_64.html
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Mother (soon-to-be) Saint Teresa of Calcutta's daily prayer [at A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars]



Dear Lord:

Help me to spread your fragrance wherever I go.

Flood my soul with your spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly
that all my life may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through me, and be so in me that every soul

I come in contact with may feel your presence in my
soul.

Let them look up and see no longer me, but only
you, O Lord!

Stay with me, then I shall begin to shine as you
do; so to shine as to be a light to others.

The light, O Lord, will be all from you; none of
it will be mine; it will be you shining on others through
me.

Let me thus praise you in the way you love best,

by shining on those around me.

Let me preach you without preaching, not by

words but by my example, by the catching force, the

sympathetic influence of what I do, the evident fullness

of the love my heart bears to you.

Amen

- John Henry Newman

This contribution is available at <http://acatholicmumclimbingthepillars.blogspot.com/2016/09/mother-soon-to-be-saint-teresa-of.html>

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Praying in the Night Time [at Pauca Verba]



Carthusian monks and nuns go to bed around eight o'clock but then they're up and out of bed at one in the morning, the start of their day. They pray through the night: praising and thanking God, watchful and anticipating the resurrection-dawn over the world in its darkness. Mind you, *darkness* doesn't simply mean sin, but human need, pain, ignorance, fear, trouble, confusion. Here is a picture of a Carthusian monk praying at night. He's wearing his cowl up; perhaps the chapel is cold or it helps to keep him in his interior place.

Sometimes we're awake at night too. Maybe we've had caffeine too close to bedtime or some anxiety is disturbing us, a dream or some outside noise has woken us. Usually we fuss about it and lament that we're *losing sleep*, but I'd suggest when we're awakened in the night we can become aware of the monks and nuns who are praying and join them, if even for a short while. Here's some ideas.

Right now, monks and nuns are praying.

Right now, there are people wandering~looking for a place to sleep.

Right now, some people are restless, their bodies filled with aches and pains.

Right now, there are people who are afraid of the night.

Right now, a baby is being born.

I intercede for peace around the world.

I intercede for all the children of the world.

I intercede for homes where there is fighting.

I intercede for those whose lives are ruined by drugs.

I intercede for anyone far away from home.

Comfort for those who are dying tonight.

Comfort for those who keep vigil at deathbeds.

Comfort for those who are suffering terrible loneliness.
Comfort for those who are weeping.
Comfort for those who are exhausted from the day.

*In a prayer-solidarity with parents awake with sick children.
In a prayer-solidarity with those who feel forgotten.
In a prayer-solidarity with those who are in danger.
In a prayer-solidarity with anyone dreading tomorrow.
In a prayer-solidarity with those who are beginning their day.*

Bless the people filled with anxiety.
Bless those awaiting help in Emergency Rooms.
Bless the night doctors and nurses.
Bless the rescuers.
Bless all who work the night-shift.

*I pray for those who keep us safe through the night.
I pray for prisoners.
I pray for those who are doing criminal things right now.
I pray for those who can't sleep because they are hungry.
I pray for those who plan violence and death.*

Rest for those who work hard for very little.
Rest for those who are discouraged.
Rest for those consumed with anger and resentment.
Rest for those with no inner peace.
Rest for those who are insomniacs.

*A prayer for the safety of soldiers and sailors under every flag.
A prayer for people who live where there's war.
A prayer for those who are running for their lives.
A prayer for those who are frantic for the welfare of their children.
A prayer for the elderly and the frail who are left behind.*

Blessings for this country and its leaders.
Blessings for my neighborhood.
Blessings for night-time travelers.
Blessings for my parish.
Blessings for my family and friends.

And, O God, a blessing for myself: that I would know how to love and serve you tomorrow. Amen

True Humility [at Bible Meditations]



The emperor of Assyria boasts, “I have done it all myself. I am strong and wise and clever. I wiped out the boundaries between nations and took the supplies they had stored...”

But the Lord says, “Can an ax claim to be greater than the one who uses it? Isaiah 10: 13; 15a

The emperor of Assyria probably was strong and wise and clever. He didn't have to pretend he was weak and stupid and inept in order to recognize the true source of his abilities.

We don't have to put ourselves down in the name of false humility. Denying our abilities is just as wrong as bragging. True humility is being honest about our strengths and our weaknesses. It's recognizing that our abilities were God-given. Although we have free will, which means much of what we do depends on our own choices, there is so much that is beyond our control.

We did not create ourselves. We did not pick our parents, determine our genetic make-up, or the environment—or even the century and locale—we were raised in. All these internal and external factors had a hand in shaping our development.

An honest look at the world around us will tell us that we are not in control of the universe or even our tiny corner of it. But there is One Who is in control. What we achieve is partly up to us, and how we use—or don't use—the abilities and opportunities God gives us.

Our best efforts are up to us. The outcome is never up to us. Our part is to do our best. When we do, we can let go of the rest. If it turns out well, we can take pride in our achievement without being egotistical, as long as we remember to thank the Giver for His gifts.

Prayer: Lord, help me recognize Your gifts to me.

Reflection: What have you accomplished? What gifts helped you accomplish it?

This contribution is available at <http://www.biblemeditations.net/archives/3030>
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Bitter or Better?



“You either get bitter or better. It’s that simple. You either take what has been dealt to you and allow it to make you a better person, or you allow it to tear you down. The choice does not belong to fate, it belongs to you.” —Josh Shipp

Everyone at some time in our lives will face bitterness. The death of a loved one, a divorce, sickness, job loss, or a betrayal can rock your very being and send you into a pit of bitterness, self-pity and defeat.

For many, the feelings are just temporary, but for some people bitterness overcomes them and becomes a part of their lives, something that they can’t get rid of, what they talk about all day, and the central focus of their lives.

They just never seem to get better.

We all know people like this. They can’t get over their divorce, the loss of a child, a financial setback, losing a job or their home. It is all they think about talk about and worry about. And, they blame God!

How about you?

Have you been going through life bitter and angry? Have events of the past clouded your hope for a bright future? Do you find it difficult to even get up in the morning?

“Hatred stirs up disputes, but love covers all offenses.” —Proverbs 10:12

Do you wake up to “Good God, it’s morning” instead of “good morning God?”

Then, you need to make the decision to get better not bitter!

As Christians, we are not promised a pain free life, bad things happen to good people. But He does offer us hope and a way out.

There is an old saying, “God didn’t promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, or sun without rain, but He did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears, and light for the way. If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it.”

If we turn to Him!

In Isaiah 41:10, God offers to strengthen us, *“Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”*

In 2 Corinthians 1:3, God offers comfort, compassion and encouragement, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction.”*

And God’s *“word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path,”* as we read in Psalm 119:105.

You can do this, my friend!

Turn to God in prayer and asks Him to help you find wisdom in the bitterness, comfort when your emotions get the best of you, and to light the way to a happier life.

It won’t be easy but it will be worth it. Decide right now to choose getting better over getting bitter.

I’ll be praying for you, my friend.



This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2016/08/bitter-or-better/>
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At Ease Homeschooling

This August marks my eighth year as a homeschool teacher. I'm starting a part-time environmental law practice the same year that I'll be teaching four different grades, along with a 4 year old who wants to be in the academic mix and a nutty 18 month old who has a knack for finding trouble the exact moment that an older sibling makes progress with multiplying fractions.

My life in West Virginia is certainly one of a kind. Yet my process of cultivating a peaceful academic environment inside my home is something that is easy to replicate even if you live far from the Appalachian Trail.

Abigail's Recipe for "At Ease Homeschooling"

1. Invest In Yourself

I've got an active intellectual life that happens outside of teaching my children. I check out my own library books. I watch documentaries. I read fiction and the Washington Post. I write. I volunteer. Soon, I'll practice obscure areas of law for pay. Homeschooling is an act of mercy that is about as emotionally exhausting as picking up a nursing shift. It's really important to have my own places of nourishment and adult engagement during the school year.

2. Help Your Kid Design Their Own Curriculum

Kids who are curious and creative have a lot of ideas about what they want to learn, and how they want to learn. Taking the time to help them plan out their own education goals saves so much frustration during the school year. I have a future pastry chef who spent an entire year studying the history of food. Did you know Alexander the Great discovered sugar? I do, thanks to teaching 2nd grade for the third time.

Each kid is unique and quirky. I've got my favorite methods of teaching phonics and spelling. Yet I really had to be fearless in making sure that I was matching the right teaching method to the right kid. One of the best ways to encourage a growth in basic skills was allowing the kid direct their own path.

This year I've got some kids studying Japanese, the violin, a third year in Greek History, paper art, and wildlife management. I make sure that we're following a plan that is "legal" for the State. Basically that means, even though no one likes it, we do long division, spelling and lessons on passive voice. The "this is what we have to learn" is pretty light. I've learned to count reading Percy Jackson and Graphic Novels as legitimate Reading Lessons. I was totally shocked that my 5th Grader handled college level chemistry with interest as long as it was hands on science done inside a local stream. Often a change in setting can really spark focus and passion.

3. One Pencil and a Library Card Accomplish Much

I'm a big fan of simplicity. I tossed my shelves of references books and pre-packaged curriculum sets. My home looks like a house and not a school room. I do most of my kids school work with a pencil, the internet and a library card. We plot out our research questions. We check out our library books. We search the internet. They write the reports and I nag them about grammar rules and standardize their spelling.

They rewrite the reports and I file both the rough draft and the final draft in a slim file for the official homeschool review. Then the books go back to the library. The big curriculum sets don't stand around taunting me.

For the first years, I spent a fortune on Math U See and picked up those plastic pieces out of my vacuum bag. No more. Khan Academy is free and works for almost everyone. This year I bought one math book for a picky student, instead of 4 math books. Heaven.

4. Use Carrots, Not Threats

Is serious Christian gaming a thing yet? Because I'm raising six of them. My kids love Minecraft Story Mode and Mario Kart. We have a firm rule that you can't use an electronic device until all school work is done, your chores are finished, and you've played outside. Finding the right "kid currency" knocked out 99% percent of our homework fights.

Teaching is a life long process. Thanks to cultivating a calm and peaceful teaching method, I'm able to homeschool year round, even when I'm doing intensive things like surviving emergency pregnancy bedrest or studying hours for a bar exam. I'm so happy so many of my friends teach well. I'm so happy they teach with dedication. I wish more teachers taught "with ease" because surviving burn-out is an important transition from growing from a first-year teacher to veteran teacher.

Abigai is a homeschool teacher of a 7th grader, 5th grader, 3rd grader, and kindergartener. She is officially registered as a Department of Environmental Protection, "Project WET" teacher. She has a B.A. in American Studies from Smith College and a J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School.

This contribution is available at <http://www.abigailbenjamin.net/abigailsblog/2016/8/5/at-ease-homeschooling>
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Sunday Best

This post originally appeared on [Da Tech Guy blog](#).



Photo: St. Stanislaus FSSP Catholic Church Facebook page.

The Latin Mass can pack a room, and it ain't all about nostalgia. (Or, as friend used to spell it, "naustalgia," which I always took to mean the past making you sick.) One of the old ethnic churches in my New England city has just been re-opened after being shuttered for 15 years. Our bishop asked an order of priests dedicated to the Tridentine Mass to set up shop, and the order obliged. The first Sunday Mass was held recently, and it was an eye-opener.

First of all, the number of young families was staggering. They're looking to the future. Talking with them after Mass was like a tonic.

The church was packed, people standing in the back, even 40 or so standing on the steps outside when the church filled up. It's possible some were there for the novelty, or to see what a Latin Mass was like. There were a few folks who had been parishioners back in the days when it was "the Polish parish." There were certainly some pre-Vatican II Catholics who wanted the liturgy of their youth. Most of the attendees, though, looked like they'd been born well after the mid-1960s.

Second, the bumper stickers out in the parking lot indicated a lot of politically-engaged people in attendance. There were humorous (not to say barbed) slogans and serious ones, many explicitly pro-life, few explicitly partisan, yet all designed to give a Democratic nominee the vapors.

So what?

I'll tell you what this looks like to me: these people praying together are not cultural refugees. They're not wringing their hands. They're looking past the next election. They're steeped less in tradition *per se* than in faith in God. And they're bringing that faith with them as they raise their kids, go about their daily business, and prepare to vote.

Read the rest of the post at [Da Tech Guy blog](#).

This contribution is available at <http://ellenkolb.com/2016/09/03/sunday-best/>
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Faith, the Universe and Wisdom [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

I think the universe is billions, not thousands, of years old; Earth isn't flat; Adam and Eve aren't German; poetry isn't science; and thinking is not a sin.

If you've been reading my posts, you know why being a Christian doesn't interfere with my interest in science.

Feel free to skip the rest of this post. It's mostly about reading the Bible, the universe, and getting a grip.

I'll be back next Friday,¹ most likely talking about [Proxima Centauri b](#), a planet orbiting the next star over from ours: in Proxima's habitable zone.

Meanwhile, maybe you've got something better to do: like sorting your socks, taking a walk, or watching grass grow. Or maybe looking at my 'science posts' link list:

Reading the Bible, Using Our Brains

I take Sacred Scripture, the Bible, seriously. It's a vital part of my faith. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, [101–133](#))

The Word of God wouldn't do me much good sitting on a shelf, though, which is why reading the Bible, often, is so important. (Catechism, [133](#))

“...in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets His children with great love and speaks with them...”
(“[Dei Verbum](#),” Pope Blessed Paul VI (November 18, 1965))

The idea is that we learn what we need for our salvation: and “...learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation, as well as its role in the harmonious praise of God....” (“[Lumen Gentium](#),”² Pope Blessed Paul VI; Catechism, [337](#))

We don't read the Bible to learn how the universe works.³ That we can work out on our own, using the brains God gave us: which is what we're **supposed** to do. Use our brains, that is, and keep learning about this marvelous creation. (Catechism, [35](#), [50](#), [159](#), [2292–2296](#))

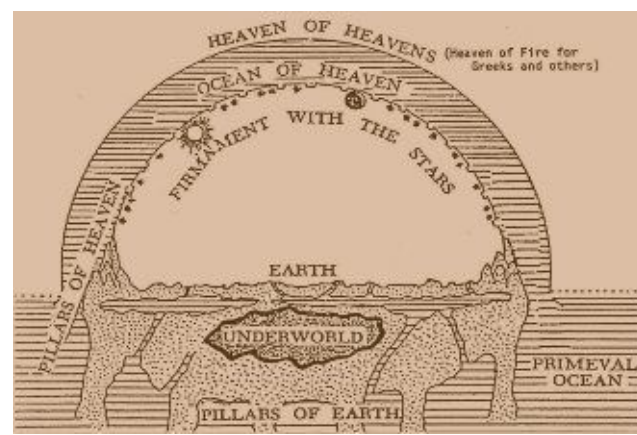
“Waters Above the Heavens”



I could follow our Lord if I believed that we live on a flat plate with nothing between us and the [cosmic ocean](#) but a solid dome that holds the stars.

But maintaining ignorance of what we've learned over the last two dozen or so centuries isn't necessary.

Imagery in [1 Samuel 2:8](#) and [Psalms 148:4](#) is beautiful, poetic, and consistent with [Mesopotamian cosmology](#). No surprises there, considering where the Hebrews lived.



We've learned quite a bit about the universe since the days when [Urukagina](#) tried cleaning up the government in [Lagash](#). Then [Lugal-zage-si](#) conquered Lagash, after which [Sargon of Akkad](#) came along, and that's another topic.

Ancient Mountains, Grasshoppers, and Baron Kelvin

We've known the universe was big and old for a long time:

“³ Terrible and awesome are you, stronger than the ancient mountains.”
([Psalms 76:5](#))

“He sits enthroned above the vault of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; He stretches out the heavens like a veil, spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.”
([Isaiah 40:22](#))

“³ Raise your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth below; Though the heavens grow thin like smoke, the earth wears out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies, My salvation shall remain forever and my justice shall never be dismayed.”
([Isaiah 51:6](#))

[James Ussher](#) wrote “*Annales veteris testamenti, a prima mundi origine deducti*” around 1650: in which he pegged the [day of creation](#) as near the autumnal equinox in the year 4004 BC.

It was pretty good scholarship for its day, and some Christians still insist that Ussher must be right. I'm not one of them.

If Christianity depended on a 17th-century British cleric being right, our faith would have started unraveling in 1778, when [Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon](#) published “*Les époques de la nature*.”

He had carefully measured how fast iron cools, extrapolated from that data, and found that Earth was about 75,000 years old. He was wrong by several powers of ten.

[William Thomson, 1st Baron Kelvin](#), using similar methods in [1862](#), calculated an age of Earth at somewhere between 20,000,000 and 400,000,000 years. That was pretty good work, considering that



scientists didn't know about heat from radioactive decay, and effects of [convection currents](#) in Earth's mantle yet.

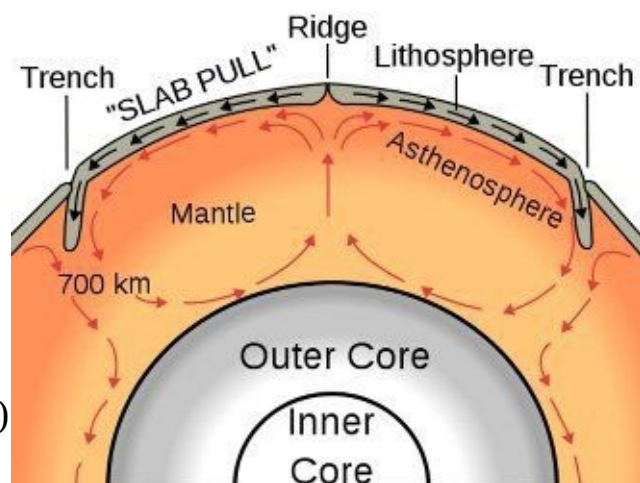
So how come I don't cry out "let the smiting begin?!"

Basically, it's because I'm a Catholic: and understand my faith.

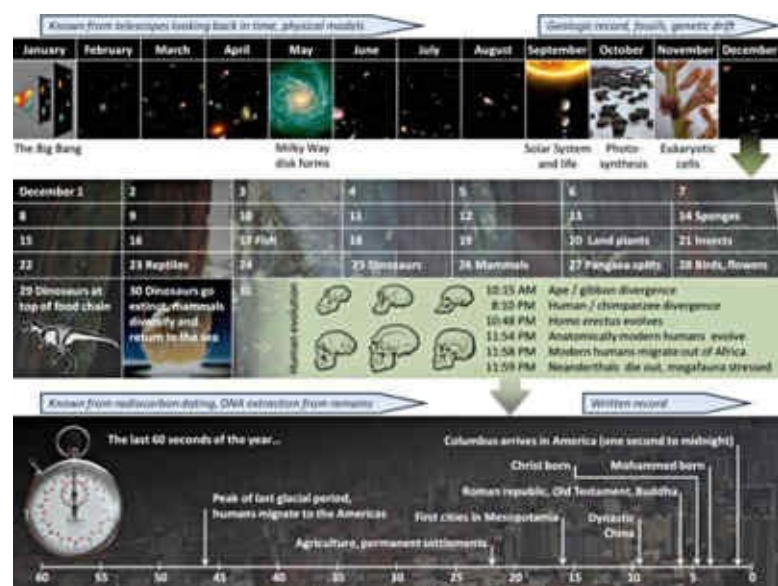
I must believe that God created, and is creating, a good and ordered physical world: one that is changing, in a state of journeying toward an ultimate perfection. (Catechism, [282–308](#))

Studying of this astonishing creation honestly and methodically **cannot** interfere with faith, because "the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God." (Catechism, [159](#))

Like I've said before, I figure part of my job is admiring God's creation, not telling the Almighty how it should have been made. That, I think, is pretty much the opposite of humility. ([July 31, 2016](#))



The Last Few Billion Years, Briefly



(From Efbrazil, via Wikimedia Commons, used w/o permission.)

(This universe, so far: 13,800,000,000 years mapped onto a 12-month calendar.)

About [13,799,000,000](#) years back, give or take 21,000,000, this universe started so abruptly that Fred Hoyle called it a [big bang](#).⁴ The cosmic fireball [cooled down](#) and became transparent, some 380,000 years later.

Massive stars formed, ran out of fuel, collapsed, and [exploded](#); adding heavy elements to this galaxy's interstellar mix.

About [4,600,000,000](#) years ago a [cloud](#) of the stuff got dense enough for [molecules](#) to form. Part of it collapsed into a dusty spinning disk with a bulge in the center — which became the star we call [the Sun](#).

[Earth](#) took shape some [4,540,000,000](#) years back, plus or minus 50,000,000. These numbers have changed, by the way, over the last few years: but only by a few fractions of a percent.

Our home cooled down, oceans formed, and life began here. The oldest fossilized bacteria are about [3,000,000,000](#) years old, and we're still not sure exactly when the first microcritters began.

Fast-forwarding over the next two and a half billion years, [Dickinsonia costata](#) flourished from 560,000,000 to 555,00,000 years ago. Scientists think it was an animal, a fungus — or something else, a member of an “extinct [kingdom](#).”

Something dreadful happened about [66,000,000](#) years back, one of [Earth's glacial epochs](#) started some 63,000,000 years later, we appeared, and that brings me back to James Ussher, William Thomson, and Fred Hoyle.

Cosmic Scale and Wisdom

The scale of this universe doesn't bother me. Even if it did, my preferences wouldn't count for much. As [Psalms 115:3](#) says, “...whatever God wills is done.”

I'm quite confident that God isn't overwhelmed by the size of this creation, and that's yet another topic. Topics.

“⁴ Indeed, before you the whole universe is as a grain from a balance, or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth.

“But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook the sins of men that they may repent.

“For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.

“And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?”

([Wisdom 11:22–25](#))

Somewhat-related posts:





(From NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA) – ESA/Hubble Collaboration; used w/o permission.)

¹ I **plan** to get next Friday’s post ready by Friday. But like [Proverbs 19:21](#) says, “many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the decision of the LORD that endures.”

The August 19 ‘Friday’ post is a case in point:

² Resources:

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, [101–133](#)
- [“Dei Verbum”](#)
Pope Blessed Paul VI (November 18, 1965)
- [“Lumen Gentium”](#)
Pope Blessed Paul VI (November 21, 1964)
- USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops)

³ Background:

“...**Know what the Bible is – and what it isn’t.** The Bible is the story of God’s relationship with the people he has called to himself. It is not intended to be read as history text, a science book, or a political manifesto. In the Bible, God teaches us the truths that we need for the sake of our salvation....”

(“[Understanding the Bible](#),” Mary Elizabeth Sperry, USCCB)

That’s from “10 points for fruitful Scripture reading:”

1. Bible reading is for Catholics
2. Prayer is the beginning and the end

3. Get the whole story!
 4. The Bible isn't a book. It's a library
 5. Know what the Bible is – and what it isn't
 6. The sum is greater than the parts
 7. The Old relates to the New
 8. You do not read alone
 9. What is God saying to me?
 10. Reading isn't enough
- (From "[Understanding the Bible](#)," Mary Elizabeth Sperry, USCCB)

⁴ That was 1949, after astronomers had noticed that galaxies were running away from us, but before [COBE](#) data backed up the Big Bang model.

This contribution is available at <http://brendans-island.com/catholic-citizen/faith-the-universe-and-wisdom/>
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A Catholic Militia Force? [at The Shield of Faith]

A Catholic Militia Force - not as far-fetched as it may sound.

In this era of mercy, does one dare talk about justice? But, there are times when the most merciful action that can be performed in favor of the oppressed is to execute justice against their oppressors. This calls to mind the Lord's injunction, "Seek first the kingdom and God and His Justice . . ." (Matthew 5:33).

Padre Pio: "You who are responsible for souls try with love, with much love, with all your love, exhaust love; and if that is useless - punish, because Jesus, who is our model, taught us this by creating Hell, as well as Paradise."

The ruthless Jihadist killing of Fr. Jacques Hamel a short time ago has inspired the founding of a Catholic military order. From the

[website](#)

of the new "

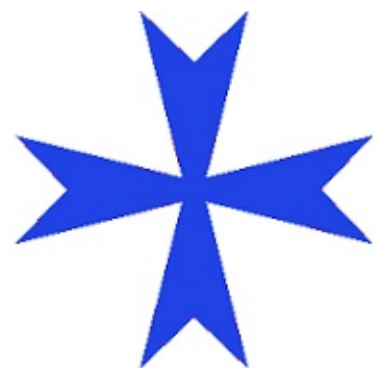
[*Ordo Militaris Catholicus:*](#)"

"After the martyrdom of the French Catholic priest, Fr. Jacques Hamel — who had his throat slit and was stabbed repeatedly, in Church during mass, by 2 Jihadis, in July, 2016 — our founder, Br. Alexis Bugnolo, a Franciscan hermit, who had been thinking of such an order for nearly 20 years, decided that instead of waiting for military personnel to start such an organization, to work to found it. In prayer it seemed to him that the Lord was saying, "Go and round up the men, you will find them." We the first members are all Catholics, military, religious and civilians convinced already that this is a holy work which God wills for our present age and committed to seeing it thru."

Recall that, as

[reported on this blog](#)

, St. Francis of Assisi himself supported the Crusades. The rise of a military order in these latter ages has often been prophesied. Some of the most specific of these oracles were pronounced by St. Francis of Paola.



St. Francis of Paola is one of the great saints of the Church (1416 - 1507). Not only did he raise people from the dead, but his own body remained incorrupt in its tomb for over 50 years until Protestants dragged it through the streets and burned it. St. Francis founded a religious order called the Minims, who were to be even lesser than the Friars Minor of St. Francis of Assisi. He was favored with the spirit of prophecy, and foretold the taking of Constantinople by the Turks and the fall of the Kingdom of Naples to the same infidels, and their subsequent rout soon after from the Italian peninsula.

From the seventh letter (circa 1490) of "Friar Francis di Paola" to the Lord of Montalto, of the Kingdom of Naples:

"Let your soul rejoice! For his Divine Majesty manifests through you such wonderful signs and great miracles, according to what I, by God's will, have often and again written and foretold to you. One of your posterity shall achieve greater deeds and work greater wonders than your lordship. That man will be a great sinner in his youth, but like St. Paul he shall be drawn and converted to God. He shall be the great founder of a new religious order different from all the others. He shall divide it into three classes, namely:

1. Military knights.
2. Solitary priests.
3. Most pious hospitallers.

This shall be the last religious order in the Church, and it will do more good for our holy religion than all other religious institutes. By force of arms he shall take possession of a great kingdom. He shall destroy the sect of Mohamet, extirpate all tyrants and heresies."

The editor of the 1878 book of prophecies from which the above letter is taken, Fr. Gaudentius Rossi, writes the following comment:

"Moreover, the new religious Military Order so often foretold in these letters will be animated by the true spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of charity and justice. They will not wage any unjust war, nor will they practice cruelties and barbarities even in just wars. They will fight because they shall be obliged to fight, for the defense of their just rights, for the rights of God and religion, of conscience and of Christian society. The modern pagans, the Turks, heretics, and other sectaries and impious men, have already too long violated the rights of true Christianity, of justice, and of conscience. They will soon become even worse, and attempt more than ever to oppress the true believers, persecute them in every way in their power, and attempt to exterminate the Catholic religion if they could."

The Christian Trumpet

, by Gaudentius Rossi (Pellegrino), 1878, reprints available at online booksellers. Also, the complete book is

[online here](#)

View all of my [books](#).

This contribution is available at <http://divinefiat.blogspot.com/2016/09/a-catholic-militia-force.html>
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Sunday, August 14, 2016 [at Daily Reflections]

Hebrews 12: 1-4

Brothers and sisters:

*Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,
let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us
and persevere in running the race that lies before us
while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus,
the leader and perfecter of faith.*

*For the sake of the joy that lay before him
he endured the cross, despising its shame,
and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God.
Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners,
in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart.*

*In your struggle against sin
you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.*

For far too many of us our religion, our faith, is often secondary to our lives instead of being the driving factor behind our lives. We fit faith in where we can. We do the minimum to meet our obligation to God, if that.

Christians should never be of the mindset of how little they can do. Jesus did not just meet the Law as the Pharisees did. Jesus fulfilled the Law. He exceeded it. He showed by example how to put God first and live life with that end goal in mind.

We make time to eat. We make time to sleep. We make time to watch our favorite shows on TV. How many of us make time to pray? How many of us use Sunday as our only God time and then feel that it is an inconvenience?

Let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us.

We were made by God for God and, God willing, we will spend eternity with him at the end of this age. Let us rightly put God first in our lives and not just an afterthought or something we squeeze in. Let us ask how much more we can do and not what the bare minimum is. Let us remain strong and not grow weary or lose heart.

Let us run this race to the end.



This contribution is available at <http://drsreflections.blogspot.com/2016/08/sunday-august-14-2016.html>
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Dad, just Dad [at Peace Garden Passage]

I awoke Thursday morning with a start, and a feeling that something about the day was important. But the busy week prior — one outing, followed immediately by another, followed by a visit from a dear friend — had not given me time to have a heads up.

And then, it came to me. Dad... He would have been 81 on Aug. 4.

My memories are somewhat muted now. He hasn't been around for three and a half years. And yet, if I close my eyes, there he is, and there's his voice, and his laugh, and the hug that I miss.

I go in search of an image. This one is a favorite of my mother's. And now, more than ever, I can see why.



It's the image of a tiny daughter reaching for the face of her father as she listens to his soft song calling her name. That face first introduced me to the love of God. I reached for it, I sought comfort in it, and I found love through it.

There were rough years, too, confusing years, worried years, confounded years, sad years with Dad. He was a talented writer, witty, deeply compassionate, creative. But he hit some roadblocks that prevented him from completely opening the gift of God's perfect plan.

For years, feeling inadequate, he pushed God away and turned his back on him. And yet...every once in a while he'd glance over his shoulder and see his loving Father staring back, with an embracing smile waiting, calling, "Dear son, come home."

And then Dad did. After 35 years he finally found himself back in the arms of his Father through his Church.

What a grace that when Dad died, he died in God's embrace. What a grace to know that he'd received the sacraments and had been made completely new — that all those years feeling he was an embarrassment to God disappeared, and were replaced by truth. What a grace to know of Dad's final "yes."

I pray for his soul. I pray that by now, he's reached all the way to heaven. In his life here, Dad quietly searched out those in need and would do his best to respond, even in the smallest of ways — an affectionate joke that would bring a smile, a secret act of kindness, a conversation over coffee. He also served as a chaplain's assistant in Japan through the U.S. Air Force for a time, and once pursued the priesthood.

I can imagine that now, if Dad has reached the final rung, he's busy as an intercessor. I can see him dipping down to purgatory — if that's possible — to help draw those still being purified toward God's face.

I miss Dad, and I know my Mom misses him even more — just having that presence always around, to spend her days with, to remember with, to converse with. But it's an incredible realization that that much love is already where I want to be someday. It makes me yearn for what's next all the more.

For now, I belong here, where there is much work to be done and others who need my love.

I'm glad to know I don't walk or work alone — that my earthly father is near, though no longer in my physical presence — and that he will be one of the first to lead me to the Father he already knows so intimately when the time comes.

Thank you, Lord, for placing me in the arms of this dear soul, for whom I reached all those years ago in my brand-new search for love; for letting him be one of the first to help me find You.

Happy birthday dear Robert “Bob” Emmett Beauclair, a.k.a., Dad!

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2016/08/dad-just-dad/>
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Work. And more work. [at Maria Morera Johnson]



This slideshow requires JavaScript.

I didn't mean for this to be a Labor Day post. I really have been enjoying watching the construction of a pier in our back yard, and I've enjoyed speaking to the men building it over the course of several weeks as they've moved in and through our property, and as I've gotten in their way to go and investigate in this final phase.

In short, I'm impressed with their work ethic. I sit around on my butt typing. It's a strenuous day if I have to get up twice for coffee because the first (or third) cup got cold.

These guys are working in the sun in 90 degree weather. Woof. Can't do it. Yet they do. It's their livelihood. But it's something else. Talking with them and cutting up during breaks has been delightful. Today, in particular, they were taking a break by sitting on the end of the pier and looking around. They weren't talking, just looking...perhaps admiring the view.

I saw in their look a little something of what I feel when I stand on the porch — surveying the water, the waves, the pelicans and other birds that fly by. I enjoy this new world, or at least, this part of the world that is new to me. Each sweep of the horizon is like a prayer — a moment of joy captured by my eyes. The camera lens comes later, but it never captures the prayer.

I could see in these guys pride in a job well done. They enjoy the labor, the sweat and the physicality of moving heavy wood planks, and dodging waves, and ultimately, creating something that complements the landscape. There's beauty in this different kind of ballet, the kind that swings hammers and balances logs.

Human work proceeds directly from persons created in the image of God and called to prolong the work of creation by subduing the earth, both with and for one another. Hence work is a duty: "If any one will not work, let him not eat." Work honors the Creator's gifts and the talents received from him. It can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work in union with Jesus, the carpenter

of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish. Work can be a means of sanctification and a way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ. CCC2427

This contribution is available at <http://mariamjohnson.com/work-and-more-work/>
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For the Love of Boys [at String of Pearls]

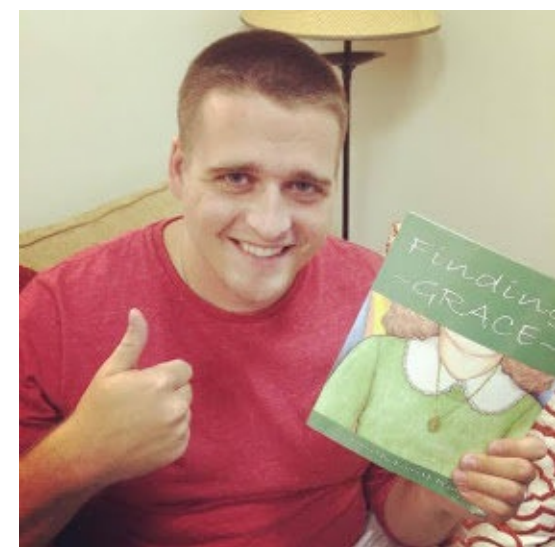
"Write what you know."

That's the advice authors are often given when it comes to writing fiction.

I don't know much about many things; but I do know about boys. And I know about how a mother's heart can literally ache with love for her sons. So I decided to use my own five lovable sons as the inspiration for Grace Kelly's five older brothers in my first novel,

Finding Grace

(published in 2012 by Bezael Books), and myself--at least parts of me, anyway--as the inspiration for their adoring mother, Peggy Roach Kelly.



Here's an excerpt from Chapter 6 of

Finding Grace

:

It was interesting how much the five brothers resembled one another, particularly from behind, where one couldn't see the variations in their facial features. They were all Roaches, similar in height and build, and all had Peggy's chestnut-colored hair (only Grace had inherited the stature and coloring of the Kelly side). They shared a gait that was uniquely their own, genetically programmed, so it seemed--the "Kelly boy walk": they sort of dragged their feet, yet bounced, with hands jammed in their pockets and shoulders slightly hunched, their heads leaning forward a bit. The five of them laughed together easily as they made their way over to the church, looking and acting for all the world like a set of giant quintuplets. They seemed nearly identical in appearance

from this view, and as they say about babies of multiple births, they had almost a language of their own. They often finished each other's sentences, and laughed at the same moments. Their hand gestures and the inflections of their speech were uncannily alike. They shared a tight bond that was indeed extraordinary, one that their parents hoped would never be broken. Peggy drank them in with her eyes; Grace saw the expression on her mother's face and wished for a moment that she had ever been the one to produce such a look of naked adoration. Then she watched her brothers loping along ahead of them, and if she'd had a mirror she would have realized that her own face bore an expression very nearly the same as her mother's. "Aren't they something special?" Grace thought, filled with tenderness. Right then she knew more clearly than ever that she hoped she would one day be the mother of many boys.

Although this book is most definitely a work of fiction, the feelings these five endearing Kelly boys stir up in their mother and baby sister were very easy to write...because I've had these very same feelings myself so many times, while watching my boys walking along together, their pleasantly deep voices (and sometimes high-pitched hysterical laughter) filling the air with the best music my ears could ever hear. In their boyhood days, my husband and I would often follow behind them as they made their way across the church parking lot for Sunday Mass; we'd remark on how they had the same walk, the "Pearl boy walk," and I would drink them in and think that there wasn't a mother alive who had sons as wonderful as mine. So in the book, I just had to have Peggy and Jack, the boys' parents, and Grace, their sister, following along behind them as they cross the church parking lot.

I wrote what I knew. I knew those Kelly boys, because they were so much like these guys.





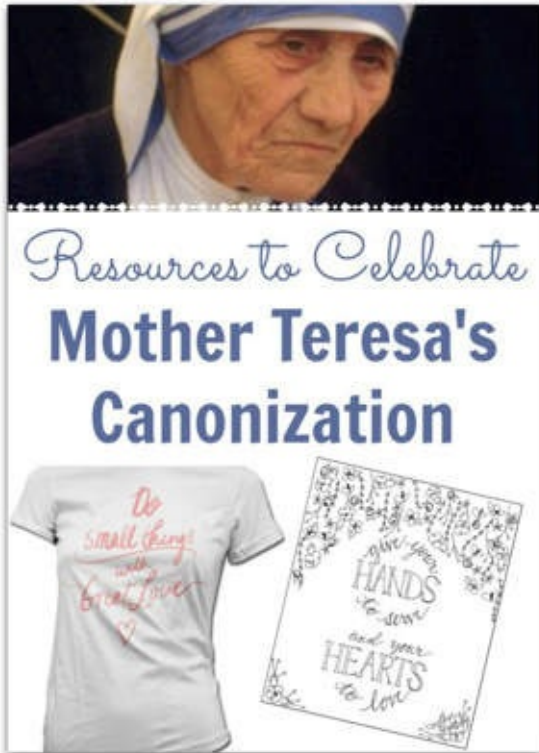
Good boys. Sweet boys. Faith-filled boys. Boys who, while being unique individuals, share so many fine traits and are fiercely protective of one another. And boys who've always treated their mom like a queen (there's that, too!).

This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2016/08/grace-filled-tuesdays-book-club-meeting.html>
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Celebrate Mother Teresa's Canonization with Resources & Articles [at The Koala Mom]

This Sunday is a long-awaited event, for both Catholics and the world. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, one of the world's most beloved nuns, will finally be canonized a saint by Pope Francis. To celebrate Mother Teresa's canonization, I've gathered a list of resources and articles about her life and work. Plan a party, do some colouring, or just wear the shirt!



Activity Ideas to Celebrate Mother Teresa's Canonization

[10 Simple Ways to Celebrate the Canonization of Mother Teresa with Your Family](#)—*The canonization of another Saint is worth celebrating for sure! I want my children to be excited about this historic day. It is my hope that this blog post of ideas/links I have collected will inspire others (and myself) to honor and celebrate Mother Teresa's canonization with our families.*

[Feast Day Fun: Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta](#)—*Blessed Teresa is known for her virtue of compassion and for being the "icon of the Good Samaritan", caring for the sick and the poor in India. She models for us the Scriptural Works of Mercy... meeting both the Corporal and Spiritual needs of each person she encountered.*

Mother Teresa Products

[Mother Teresa Quote Colouring Pages](#)—if you or your children enjoy colouring, check out these

beautiful colouring pages. Each of the 8 pages features an inspirational quote from Mother Teresa. These are a free PDF download.



[Rosary Teething Chews in Mother Teresa's colours](#)—this beautiful blue-and-white rosary is soft and chewable for teething babies. Perfect for them to play with while Mom prays a rosary and reflects on Mother Teresa's life!

[Mother Teresa Wooden Peg Doll](#)—if you collect wooden peg dolls, check out this adorable little doll. Each doll is handmade and fits well with Little People playsets. Spend \$20 or more in the shop during September and get a Mother Teresa doll for free. Dolls are about \$10 plus shipping.



[**Holy Heroes CD and Colouring Book**](#)—the story of Blessed Mother Teresa is one of our favourite Glory Stories. Right now, all Mother Teresa products at Holy Heroes are on sale (\$10 for the CD instead of \$15!).

[**Do Small Things with Great Love T-shirt**](#)—this T-shirt is a great visual reminder of one of Mother Teresa’s most famous quotes. She’s famous for doing great things, but she started by doing small things for the ignored people of India. We can do the same in our little corner of the world! T-shirts start at \$20.



Advice and Inspiration from Mother Teresa

[**Mother Teresa’s Advice for Teachers**](#)—*Tosha and Jeanice walked into my classroom and gave me one of those looks only women have the power to give. The look that says, “I don’t like you and I don’t trust you.” I felt it penetrate me. It was my first year as a teacher, and I was doing my best to act un-phased. But I was phased. The way they looked at me got me to the core. And I will admit, I was a little intimidated.*

[**Celebrating a NEW \(and favorite\) Saint: Saint Teresa of Calcutta**](#)—*I’ve watched with excitement and joy as the Church beatified and will soon canonize this amazing woman. For the second time in my life, a living saint I “knew” during their life on earth is to be canonized and added to our official list of saints in heaven! This is so exciting!*

Why It's Important to Celebrate Mother Teresa's Canonization Even When You're Not Catholic—

As a child, I always remember people referring to Mother Teresa and her work and “saintly” life. I saw pictures of her on TV and magazines periodically. It wasn't till I was a bit older that I understood the enormity of what she represented and not until recently how much she impacted a whole generation through her mercy.

A Personal Tribute to Mother Teresa: My Mystical Journey to Darjeeling—*It happened one morning during my High School English class when I was asked to select and write about my role model. Mother Teresa's image with the iconic blue and white habit immediately came into my head. Looking around, I noticed that others were writing about Madonna, Sandra Day O'Conner, and Geraldine Ferraro, to name a few. And, I began to wonder why I had selected a woman so detached from this world living a life of self denial with a singular focus to care for the poorest of the poor. And so began my journey of self discovery.*

Blessed Mother Teresa: Lessons from a Little Lady with Lots of Love—*Love. That is the one word I choose to use to summarize Blessed Mother Teresa. She was and is the definition of true love. If you've read my other posts you know that I have this thing for love. Not the touchy feely kind of love that our world is convinced is love, but the true, deep kind of love—the kind of love where you make the conscious choice to give of yourself to another. That is what she was and that is what she did.*

A Life of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta—*Just over one hundred years ago, a young girl named Agnes was born on August 26th in Yugoslavia. She would someday become known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta. I didn't join the Catholic Church until ten years after her death, but I still remember hearing about her. This little Catholic nun caught the attention of the entire world for her work in India's slums.*

Are you excited about Mother Teresa's canonization? How is your family celebrating?



This contribution is available at <http://thekoalamom.com/2016/08/celebrate-mother-teresas-canonization/>
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Question: On Devil's Advocates and Infallible Canonizations [at Quidquid Est, Est!]

Would you look at this.

A Q/A post!

Renee Lin from [Forget the Roads](#) [go check out her blog] asked me several years ago (sorry I'm just now getting to it, Renee):

“Perhaps you know the answer to this. It is my understanding that the position of “devil’s advocate” in the canonization process has been done away with. Could you tell us why? I think the process is fascinating – I also think that the idea of a devil’s advocate was a good one, so when, why and by whom was the decision made to eliminate the position? I was also wondering if the declaration of sainthood is infallible.”

Let’s look at the infallibility of canonizations first. This is a topic which comes up every so often when there is a big name canonization and in particular came up when the canonizations of John Paul II and John XXIII happened. It would take a while to get into the gritty details of the discussion, so see the For Further Reading below for a plethora of articles discussing this point.

The simple answer is yes, canonizations are infallible, in that during the canonization the Pope states, without error, that the saint is in Heaven and that the universal Church can safely turn to him or her to intercede for us. However, it is not the sort of infallible declaration one finds, say, in Pius XII’s declaration defining the dogma of Mary’s Assumption into Heaven. It isn’t an infallible statement about dogma, because the fact that an individual is in Heaven is not drawn from Divine Revelation, as are the other declared dogmas on faith and morals. In other words, we know that Mary was assumed into Heaven because we can draw the conclusion based on Scripture, but Scripture does not tell us that any specific saint is in Heaven, so we cannot declare the saint is in Heaven based on Divine Revelation.

The canonization is infallible not because it was directly revealed by God but because the evidence collected (miracles through the saint’s intercession, his life of heroic virtue, etc.) points to the fact that the saint is in Heaven.

Here's the actual prayer the Pope says when canonizing:

To the honor of the Holy Trinity, for the exaltation of the Catholic faith, and for the increase of the Christian life, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and Our own, after due deliberation and having implored the Divine Assistance by prayer, and by the counsel of many of our brothers, we declare and define Blessed [insert saint's name here] to be a saint, and we enroll him/her in the catalog of the saints, commanding that he/she be held among the saints by the universal Church, and to be invoked as such by pious devotion. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

It's a pretty powerful prayer. It cuts no corners, leaves no doubt as to what is going on.

The way in which a canonization is not infallible is in reference to the specifics of the individual's holiness. The pope is not teaching that the person being canonized is perfect, or even great at what he or she did. What is being declared is that the person is in Heaven. True, saints tend to be models of sanctity, but they are not always models for living other ways of life. Pope St. Celestine V, famous for being one of the popes to resign, was a terrible papal administrator. He was a very holy man, but he was not strong in policy. We should not look to him for an example of how to lead others; instead we should see in Pope Celestine an example of humility. He was canonized not because he was a great pope, but because he made it to Heaven.

Like I said, check out the "For Further Reading" for more on this.

On to the Devil's Advocate.

No, not the movie with Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves.

The role of the Devil's Advocate, officially known as the Promoter of the Faith (the *Promotor Fidei*), was one of canon law, both the Promoter of the Faith and his "opponent," the canon lawyer tasked with arguing the sanctity of the proposed saint. Prior to the 1980s, when Pope St. John Paul II changed some of the regulations for the canonization process, the Devil's Advocate had the role of raising objections to someone being considered a Servant of God. Sometimes they were legitimate concerns, such as concerns about the person that had not been brought up by the postulator for the cause, but sometimes they were

really nitpicky, focusing in some cases on the use of particular words found in the documents of the case. These objections would be answered by the side supporting sainthood, and then the Promotor of the Faith would send more objections. This happened three times before the person was declared a Servant of God, allowing the canonization process to move forward and the reports of miracles to be examined.

On the one hand, having the Devil's Advocate in such a direct, constant position in the canonization process helped make sure that there was no doubt about the sanctity of the people canonized. It made the process go slowly, to be sure. However, in some cases the cause of a canonization could be held up for decades because of the debates, all written, back and forth between the two sides. The canonization process, then, relied heavily on the arguments and arguing skills of these canon lawyers.

This brings us to Pope John Paul II and his changes to the canonization process in 1983. In his apostolic constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*, the Holy Father laid out the changes to the process, streamlining the whole thing. He didn't get rid of the Devil's Advocate entirely; instead, the position of Protector of the Faith received a more concentrated role. Instead of running the entire opposing position in the process, the Protector is part of a group of figures who read through the Position (the evidence that a person led a holy life) and submit questions about it. As one commentator puts it, "Instead of a candidate being on trial and having to face accusations by the *Promotor Fidei* as the Church's 'prosecutor,' the procedure now takes the form of a committee meeting where experts present reports." The emphasis in the canonization process is no longer the legal debates but rather the weight of the biographical study within the Position. The direction of the canonization process is not directed by canon lawyers but rather by historians.

There is still an area for debating the merits of a particular person, but it is no longer the role of one man, one Devil's Advocate.

This, of course, does not mean it is easy for a person to be declared a saint. It isn't, and it can still take many years and be stalled in the early investigation process. There is also the process of going from Servant of God to Blessed (which used to require two verified miracles but now only requires one) and Blessed to Saint (again, only one miracle needed instead of two), which can take a very, very long time. Think, for example, of Queen Isabel of Spain (died 1504) or Mateo Ricci (died 1610), who have both been declared Servants of God but have not had any miracles reported in their name to move them on to become Blesseds. The same could be said about Pope Benedict XIII, who was declared a Servant of God in 1755, with no progress to his cause since.

Again, see below for some more to read about this.

I hope this helps answer your questions, Renee.

God bless!

For Further Reading

On Canonizations and Infallibility

Donald S. Prudlo, "[Are Canonizations based on Papal Infallibility?](#)"

Dr. Prudlo also recently published a book examining how the Church's understanding of papal infallibility grew out of its teaching about canonizations. Something like that. I haven't read it yet, just going from the short info you can read online (you can get it [here](#) or [here](#))

Edward McNamara, "[Canonizations and Infallibility](#)"

La Stampa with Giuseppe Sciacca, "[Are canonizations infallible?](#)"

Camillo Beccari, "[Beatification and Canonization,](#)" *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1907 edition)

On the Devil's Advocate

Unam Sanctam Catholicam (blog), "[History of the Devil's Advocate](#)"

Matthew Bunson, "[Devil's Advocate Role Eliminated from Canonization Process](#)"

John Paul II, [Divinus Perfectionis Magister](#)

Richard Burtzell, "[Advocatus Diaboli](#)" *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1907)

William Fanning, "[Promotor Fidei](#)" *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1907)

Jason A Gray, [The Evolution of the Promoter of the Faith in the Causes of Beatification and Canonization: A Study of the Law of 1917 and 1983](#) [Note: I didn't actually read through any of this one, as I found it towards the end of writing this post. However, it looks interesting, so check it out.]

Kenneth L. Woodward, [Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes A Saint, Who Doesn't, and Why.](#)

This contribution is available at <http://quidquidestest.wordpress.com/2016/08/15/question-on-devils-advocates-and-infallible-canonizations/>
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Just Before Dawn

When I first met my husband, and we were living hours apart and still figuring out if we were going to give it a shot, I woke many mornings around 4:00 am and lay in bed and agonize. ([“I’d lie awake and think about the boy, and never even think of counting sheep” to quote the song.](#)) When I couldn’t take it anymore, and if the weather was warm enough, I would roll out of bed and into my sneakers and pound the anxiety away on the city sidewalks, running into the sunrise.

When I was sickest and Crohn’s symptoms were at their worst, my sleep was often dozey all night long. [Pain woke me and exhaustion knocked me out](#): my very own sleep cycle. If I woke before dawn, I tossed as I always did, trying to find a posture that would give me some respite. Sometimes I would think about how I was going to get myself out of the apartment that day, but I often didn’t waste much energy considering that question, knowing that I would get where I needed to be, because I had to.

When I was ostensibly on the other side of these things, when we were married *and* living in the same place (a feat we weren’t sure we would accomplish so soon after our wedding), when we had bought a condo, [I’d had surgery to take me apart and put me back together](#) and [was on the road to physical healing, the pre-dawn hours were when the crazy came in.](#) I fretted and beat myself up. Eventually those morning torture sessions clued me in to my post-traumatic stress, and I got help.

This morning I woke earlier than I expected, a combination of heat in the apartment and having gone to bed early last night. I started rolling around different ideas in my head of projects, chores and things I want to accomplish. I started to harangue myself for the content of those imaginings (because what would the early morning be if not for self-doubt!), thinking that if I focused on one thing I would never have time for the others, and my life would slip away from me (because what would the early morning be if not for melodrama!)

So I rose and tiptoed to the kitchen to put on coffee, and I got to work.

Who knows what the rest of my life will hold, and how the early mornings will change. Today the sun rises on another day of hope and potential, and there is so much to be done, and so much that already has been.



What goes through your head just before dawn?

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Trying to be a Good American (and Catholic) when I don't Agree with You [at Quiet Consecration]

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

1951

Law is a rule of conduct enacted by competent authority for the sake of the common good. The moral law presupposes the rational order, established among creatures for their good and to serve their final end, by the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator. All law finds its first and ultimate truth in the eternal law. Law is declared and established by reason as a participation in the providence of the living God, Creator and Redeemer of all. "Such an ordinance of reason is what one calls law."

Alone among all animate beings, man can boast of having been counted worthy to receive a law from God: as an animal endowed with reason, capable of understanding and discernment, he is to govern his conduct by using his freedom and reason, in obedience to the One who has entrusted everything to him.

This has been a tough couple of years in the United States. The unrest and worry has been palpable. The frenzied media has made heroes by making stuff up out of whole cloth, but at the same time we have had to address racial tensions and misuse of authority. It has been a bumpy ride. The problem has not been helped by the element of violence against Police Officers carried out by people who claim it is in retribution for unlawful killing of Black men at the hands of Law Enforcement.

Recently a well-known athlete chose to demonstrate his solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement by not standing during the National Anthem before a televised football game. He did not violate employer policy as the NFL does not require its employees to stand during the National Anthem as a way of protecting possible religious beliefs (there are some sects of Christianity that do not take oaths or stand during the anthem or serve in the military). His demonstration had actually been going on for sometime but oddly enough the very day he was scheduled to return to active player status somehow his stance (or lack thereof) was leaked to the press.

The outrage has been immediate and almost comical. He has actually been 'accused' of converting to Islam, being un-American, called foul names, I mean it has been amazing. His jersey has been burned, Facebook Memes have flooded the internet...it just goes on and on and on.

This kid did not make any obscene gestures. He did not use foul language. He stated that he has the utmost respect for Law Enforcement and the Military. He did not grab an assault rifle, hide in a building and start shooting at police. He sat down.

I am often accused of being too lenient when it comes to people I love but this is not a similar case. I

don't love this guy. I barely know him. For all I know he

is

converting to Islam. I don't really care other than I wish he would throw the football better and learn how to properly read a defense.

Here is what I care about: I care that we as a country not forget that the reason men and women serve in the military is to preserve a freedom not always honored in the rest of the world. That freedom is essentially a freedom of thought and expression. If I believe that the intentional abortion of an unborn child is immoral, the fact that it is legal is immaterial. I have the right to protest that law, to protest that action in a peaceful and non-violent manner. I do not have the right to burn down an abortion mill or bomb a Planned Parenthood office.

If this young man believes there are injustices being perpetrated against people of color in this country and those injustices are not being properly addressed by the powers that be OR by the country's own citizens then his is the right to take an action that would bring our attention to that issue. He does not have the right to walk up to one of the cops on duty at the football game and punch them in the face as an act of protest.

Look, do I agree with his stance? Kinda sorta. I know there are problems in this country that must be addressed if we are going to move forward. One of those problems is crime in our African American Community. Another of those problems is racial prejudice, religious bigotry and the true war on women which is the perpetration of the lie that abortion on demand is somehow liberating. We have a lot of problems - poverty, poor education, lack of opportunity and the fact that we have been in an almost constant state of war since our revolution of 1776. We have a lot of wounds to heal.

I also believe this country, this America, is still the best game in town. It is the fundamentals upon which we were founded that allow for a rich young athlete to stage a protest without being hauled off to a gulag somewhere to disappear. It is the rights upheld in our US Constitution that make it possible to change laws and, eventually, hearts and minds so that we no longer legally sell human beings. It is this country that stands against places that would shove people into ovens and it is the actual laws of this country that make it possible for me to attend Mass without being shot.

Do we have problems? Oh you bet we have problems. We are more concerned with what bathroom someone goes into than the fact that 12 year old girls are driven to Planned Parenthood by their 'boyfriends' for artificial birth control and abortions. We are more concerned with using correct language than we are about a crumbling infrastructure. We care more about football than God.

I am going to be unpopular with a lot of people because I support this young man's right to do what he did without agreeing with everything he states. People on both sides of this issue are going to be angry with me because I don't think he really gets it right AND I support his right to protest.

However, I know what I think and I know what I mean. I know what is important to me and I know why it is important. I care more about people and their rights than I do the egg of a California Condor.

I have to - I'm a Catholic.

I hope you can accept me but if not....well.....

You are in my prayers.

PS: please pray for the healing of Sister Pauline Quinn, OP. Sister Pauline established the program in prisons all over the world that unites inmates with shelter dogs. The dogs are trained in basic obedience with an eye towards having them develop into Service Dogs for the disabled. She has been diagnosed with cancer.

St Peregrine, pray for her.

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2016/08/trying-to-be-good-american-and-catholic.html>
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Patron Saint of Missing Socks, Pray For Us [at joy of nine9]

As a mother of a large family, struggling to wash, dry, and fold three or four loads of laundry every day, I secretly wondered if there was an obscure saint, with little to do, who could fill in as my patron saint of missing socks. Little did I know, God was using the dilemma of unpaired socks to purify me because I was trying too hard to be the perfect mother and housekeeper.



This earnest striving was a weakness, not a virtue because my diligence was rooted in insecurity, unbelief but most of all in pride. Again and again, as I read spiritual material, God tried to teach me that true Christianity is not focused on personal perfection but founded on the power of the Cross and Resurrection to set us free.

“We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures, we are the sum of the Father’s love for us.” -St. Pope John Paul II

“The crucifix does not signify defeat or failure. It reveals to us the Love that overcomes evil and sin.” – Pope Francis

“Don’t worry about being effective. Just concentrate on being faithful to the truth.”- Dorothy Day

In Control

People’s mouths drop open and their eyebrows shoot up when they discover I raised nine kids because I am tiny and do not look like a worn out, frazzled wreck. God has blessed me with a gift of joy which defies my circumstances. Mothering came naturally to me; it was easy to look like a saint on the outside as I mothered nine little people. The trouble was, although I looked like I lived a life of self-denial, losing myself to give life to others, I tended to over control. I depended on my strength to get through the overwhelming chores which were part of running a household of eleven. In all honesty, though, the only chore which actually threatened to kill me as a mother of a large family was the laundry, specifically pairing all the socks.



Relying on Myself

There are solutions to the sock problem. Some are outrageous. For example, I remember a crazy, campfire song, from my childhood, that we usually sang in rounds.

“Black socks, they never get dirty;

The longer you wear them, the blacker they get.

Some times, I think I should wash them

But something keeps telling me
Oh, not yet, not yet, not yet”

I did not seriously consider this option, though. Socks reek after only one day stuck inside an active child’s running shoe. I had 154 stinky socks to wash every week, at the bare minimum. Oh well, sometimes I did four loads of laundry a day and socks really didn’t take up that much room.



The trouble was, socks seemed to disappear into mountains of clean but unfolded laundry or never made it into the washing machine in the first place. Do you have any idea where 154 socks can hide every week? I had to look between sheets, under the Chesterfield and chairs, behind closet doors, inside wet boots, in school bags, under toy baskets, inside of pant legs and even, if I was lucky, in one of eleven dirty clothes baskets. But, I *had* to pair them all, or did I? That was the brilliant, out of the box sort of question I asked myself one day. I was sure my intellect had finally solved my problem.

Department of Missing Socks

"No Sock Left Behind"



New solution. Buy lots of black socks in every size. Surely some semblance of a pair would be easier to find. I simply tossed the black socks into a wicker basket with a three-foot circumference and a height of two and a half feet and hoped for the best.

However, I had managed to overlook one important fact. I had six daughters. Little girls don't like black socks. They like pink ones. To make matters worse my mother bought cute socks with frills and bows and patterns that the girls really needed and loved. None of them were the same. So although I used the toss and throw method of pairing, some mornings found us frantically searching through my huge, unpaired sock basket.



At times, I had to literally toss the newly discovered pair over the upstairs railing. One of my kids, who already had their coat and school bag on their back, would catch them in mid-air. They quickly pulled on their socks, stuffed their feet into boots or shoes and flew out the door, barely making the school bus.

People joke about washing machines eating socks. Rationally, I know this is a silly answer to my dilemma but the more I think about it, the better I like the whimsical answer. I could kill myself trying to control everyone's bad habits but really, life is much more interesting if I finally relaxed a bit and joked about my failings and foibles. God seems to like those who realize they are failures because then He can finally save them from themselves.

It Is All About Grace

Surrendering to the power of the Holy Spirit within our spirits can seem like a rather esoteric activity, something to talk about, write about, and perhaps pray about but it often is not part of our daily lives. However, our inner and outer lives are intricately entwined. If we depend on our own efforts in our day to day life, we will inevitably think we can earn salvation by praying, attending mass, confession, and saying the rosary. All these activities place us in God's presence but they do not justify or sanctify us. As the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) explains:

Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is *favor*, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.

This vocation to eternal life is *supernatural*. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature.

The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the *sanctifying* or *deifying grace* received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification:

Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. *Habitual grace*, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification.

Forgetting What is Not Essential

Slowly, I learned how to let nonessentials go and centre on loving and receiving love. Maintaining a perfectly clean house with all the laundry folded in dresser drawers was not central to my vocation as a mother but having time to spend with God and nurture my kids was. The benefit of letting go of control in my daily life was that this attitude of surrender spilled over into my inner life.

Patron Saint of Missing Socks, pray for us, so we receive the grace to surrender to the power of Christ crucified and allow Him to save us.

This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com/2016/08/08/patron-saint-of-missing-socks-pray-for-us/>
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Forty-five days a deacon [at Hermano Juancito]

The other day driving in to Santa Rosa with Padre German, he asked me how I was being a deacon.

My first response was that in many ways I'm not doing a lot more than I did before my ordination. I'm preparing catechists, working with youth groups, visiting communities, assisting at Mass with Padre German several times a week, consulting with people about preparing upcoming feasts. I am preaching occasionally and baptizing.



But most of all I feel graced to be able to serve the people in varied ways.

Yesterday I went to Santa Rosa on a few errands. On the way a young guy in Candelaria hitched a ride to Dulce Nombre. (My policy is not to give rides when the busses are running but I knew there were no busses at that a hour and the kid was familiar.) He told me that his grandmother had died and he was going to Dulce Nombre to see about a few things. We talked a bit. When I was driving back I noticed people around a house on the road in Candelaria and stopped to offer my condolences.

This morning I stopped in Dulce Nombre to see what was going on in the parish and to see how I could help Padre German. He had four Masses today, the first of which was the funeral in Candelaria. I accompanied him.

As he was preparing for Mass, he asked me to preach. I was hardly ready – but the Spirit inspired me (and I preached less than ten minutes). After Mass he had to see some sick persons and so I went to the cemetery and led prayers at the graveside. Sadly I didn't have the ritual book and couldn't pray my

favorite prayer for those who had died – the “In Paradisum.”

"May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs receive you at your arrival and lead you to the holy city Jerusalem. May choirs of angels receive you and with Lazarus, who once was poor, may you have eternal rest."

Comforting those who are mourning and burying the dead are not easy, but I find these an important part of my ministry as a deacon.

I also find myself spending a bit more time just being with people – especially those who are on the margins of the church.

I have often noticed how young men will come to the church but will congregate around the church door. I often go and speak with them and jokingly call them the church's bodyguards!

But in Plan Grande I have tried a different tactic. The municipality is putting in a sewer line and will be paving the road from the church up to the top of the hill. Males in town, especially adolescents, are working on this project.

I showed up the first day and did some work with the pick axe. Needless to say, I am not in shape and couldn't do more than a few hours in the morning. It didn't help that it was very hot and sunny. I didn't work in the afternoon since I had to go get a homeless man living here in Plan Grande from the hospital in Santa Rosa. (He has no home but is well-cared for by the people here.)



But what I have been doing, when I'm in Plan Grande, is bringing the workers one or two three-liter bottles of pop (soda, for you non-Iowa folks).

Another way of serving – and trying to reach out to a group that is not always present in the church.

What else have I been doing? Proclaiming the Gospel at Masses and occasionally preaching, visiting the sick, connecting with various activities in the parish and in the diocese.

Last Saturday, I went with Padre German for the Mass in the Santa Rosa cathedral which was part of the novena before the canonization of Mother Teresa. Last Sunday, I participated in the special Mass in San Agustín on their feast day. Tomorrow I will go to Amigos de Jesús, a center for children about two hours from here, for the Mass of installation as lector and acolyte of a young man preparing for the priesthood who will be serving them. Next Sunday, there will be a special Mass in honor of the canonization of Mother Teresa. I'll be there to proclaim the Gospel.

Next week is the Pastoral Study week for the clergy which I'll attend. I'll stay in Dulce Nombre each night (since I need to leave my car at the mechanic's for three days to get the valves fixed.) And then, on Monday, September 12, we'll celebrate the feast of the parish.

Such is my life as a deacon now. What it will be later, we'll see.

But I continue to pray that God may use me to serve the People of God and give me the joy and courage I need.

This contribution is available at <http://hermanojuancito.blogspot.com/2016/08/forty-five-days-deacon.html>
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Celebrating adoption: The day you meet your child for the first time [at Catholic Review]

There's nothing like that first time you see your child in person.

You see his picture and fall in love. You fill out piles and piles of paperwork, get fingerprinted twice, fill out more paperwork, and then finally pack your bags to travel to the other side of the world.

Even once you're in China, the minutes drag by. You're always on the brink of laughing and crying, a bundle of nerves and excitement and wonder and hope.

You're about to hold your son in your arms.

This little one's story doesn't begin with you, just as your story doesn't begin with him. But your stories are intersecting and once they do, they will be joined forever. You can't wait.

But you have to wait. One more day. Three more hours. Thirty more minutes.

Just when you think you might explode from impatience, you're there—and hold on, so is he. Is that the child you've been waiting for? That little boy clutching a bag of snacks?

It is. He looks tired and hot—it's August in Guangzhou, after all—and he's absolutely beautiful.

He has silky hair and deep brown eyes, perfect sweet little lips, a SpongeBob outfit his big brother at home will envy, and a head he buries in your shoulder—and then his father's.



You're strangers and yet family. You're joined forever and yet you can barely communicate. You're promising to love and protect him forever, and yet he isn't sure he trusts you enough to accept that sippy cup of apple juice.

You can't blame him. You can't even guess what he's thinking.

But day by day, hour by hour, you learn one another. You grieve together. You laugh together. You hear him call you "Mama" and "Baba" on your first night together. You watch this shy little boy with a whispering voice start to sing songs for you in Cantonese and then become the life of the party. You marvel at him and wonder how you could ever have been granted the tremendous gift of being his mother. You still don't know.

Five years later, you're telling him again about that day—as you have so many times before. He doesn't remember it. He was only a 20-month-old toddler, not the 6 1/2-year-old dynamo he is now. But he listens to you tell a story from another side of the world, from another moment in time, the story of the day you became his parents and this amazing child became your son.

Then he runs off to play with his older brother.

When you adopt—or even when you give birth—you know you're saying yes to parenting a child. That's a yes, you could argue, that we voiced as a couple on our wedding day nearly 12 years ago. But you don't know all that "yes" fully entails. You don't know who that child is. You don't know who that child will grow to be. And so every day is like opening a present.

That day we first met our son was a gift. So is today. And so was every day along the way.

But today is extra special, especially because, as our younger son reminds us, “it is my Gotcha Day”—the anniversary of the day we met, five years ago.

How will we celebrate? Our little guy wants to go fishing, eat lunch at his favorite Mexican restaurant, take in an Orioles game, have his cousins over for dinner for Chinese food and brownies, buy a new toy, hunt for Pokemon, get fresh flowers for our house, and do a thousand other activities he's still thinking of.

Somehow I don't think we will be able to fit that all in. But we will make sure we celebrate this little boy we held in our arms for the first time five years ago. We are so blessed, and he is so very loved.

~~~~~

**A Prayer for the Anniversary of the Day a Child Joins His/Her Family**

On this day and every day, Lord,

we thank you for bringing us together as a family.

Thank you for giving this child life

and for giving him/her so many loving people

who have helped him/her along the way.

We ask that you continue to bless

all those who have loved and supported this child,

especially his/her birthparents.

Wherever life leads this child, please let him/her know

that he/she can always turn to you

for strength, for courage, and for peace.

Please help our family continue to

grow in love of one another and of You,

and let us never take for granted

the love and the life that we share.

Amen.

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This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2016/08/21/celebrating-adoption-the-day-you-meet-your-child-for-the-first-time>  
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## Reclaiming Our Legacy in Christ [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]



But as if that were not enough, the Holy Spirit, through the immeasurable grace of redemption also makes us new creations in Christ (cf., 2 Cor. 5:17) and provides entrance into the Kingdom where, by the unmerited grace and Love of the Father, we are seated at His right hand of Christ to share in His reign forever (cf., Eph. 2:6). By this grace granted us through His sacrifice on the cross and His victory over death, we are, upon acting on our faith, made heirs of the Kingdom and the adopted children of the Father. Praised be His Holy Name!

***“But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”*** (Eph. 2:4-10)

The “***..good works***” spoken of here are those works through which Jesus continues His ministry in us and through us for the Glory of the Father and the benefit of the community (cf., Acts 10:38). As His adopted children, then, we form the Body of Christ and, thus, are also the Father’s representatives or envoys in world to continue the ministry of His Son so that the Glory of the Father’s love may be manifested through us to all humanity.

However, in order to fulfill this calling on our lives it is necessary that we also share in the empowerment that was on Christ when he was in the world. This is the mantle that He passed on to us at Pentecost (cf., [“The Double portion Anointing”](#)), this is what the “Promise of the Father” is all about. And, it is in accepting and receiving the Promise of the Father through the baptism of the Spirit that we reclaim the fullness of our spiritual inheritance in Christ (cf., Eph. 1: 16-18).

At Pentecost, “The Promise of the Father” was purposely given to the body of Christ, a body composed of all who believe in Him and are called according to His purpose, specifically to empower us to carry on His ministry in this world. The Spirit endows all believers with this empowerment from generation to

generation until Jesus comes again to judge and to reign over His Kingdom (cf., Acts 2:38-39).

Because He gave us a free will, He does not impose these latter gifts upon us, but instead, they are offered to us free of any obligation or condemnation. Our salvation is not contingent on our acceptance of the Promise of the Father – it must be by our own choice – our choice of becoming His partners in the work He continues to do in this world to bring more of humankind to Himself. There is only one pre-condition, you must be a child of God through repentance and baptism (cf., Acts 2:38) in order to be considered an inheritor of the Kingdom and the empowerment that comes with it (cf., [\*“The Kingdom of God Our Spiritual Inheritance”\*](#)).

Now, normally, we receive this “empowerment” or “strengthening” when we receive the sacrament of confirmation. However, as with all things of faith, if you receive without faith, the manifestation of the sacrament remains latent in you (cf., Heb. 4:2). For instance, in my case, I am a cultural cradle catholic and have been baptized and confirmed, but I never manifested the empowerment gifts on the receipt of the sacrament because I was never taught to expect these gifts at confirmation, so my faith was not awakened. If I had been taught from the Word, and my faith had been awakened appropriately, I would have received them, then and there. It was not until later in my adult life that the Holy Spirit worked in my life through His Word and circumstances to bring me to conversion, accept Jesus as my personal Lord and savior, and baptize me in the Holy Spirit. It was not until then that I began to manifest the special supernatural gifts the Spirit had destined for me.

As the empowerment gifts were realized in me, the Spirit opened up the Word of God in a deeper more intimate way so that I began to understand the gifts I had just received (cf., [\*“The Key to the Kingdom”\*](#)). This understanding clearly led me to the knowledge that these gifts were part of my legacy in Christ Jesus and that they were there, not for my benefit but so that Jesus Himself could minister to the community through my person (along with others who have been likewise blessed).

In responding to the prayer for renewal of Pope John XXIII (ca.1962), the Lord has, in His own sovereign power, initiated a work of spiritual renewal in His Church that permits us to reclaim the fullness of our legacy in Christ (cf., [\*“The Charismatic Renewal”\*](#)). By His Grace, I am a participant in this movement of His Grace and I am here to proclaim to you the Good News that the grace of God is here for you also – the Kingdom of God is here for you to enter into the fullness of His blessings and receive the Empowerment Gifts of the Spirit through the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, just as was prophesied by the Apostle Peter at Pentecost (cf., Acts 2:38-39). As the Apostle Paul once said, ***“As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says, ‘In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.’ I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation!”*** (2 Cor. 6:1-2)

If your faith has stirred you to action then the next step for you is prayer. Faith without action is “dead faith”(cf., James 2:26) so by asking we are taking action and thus activating the faith that the Holy Spirit has placed in us. This is in accord with what the Lord told his disciples,



***“So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:9-13)***

In order to facilitate your asking, I present to you in the sections below, two prayers that encompass re-dedication to Christ and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Normally this type of prayer(s) are presented at the conclusion of what is called a “Life in the Spirit Seminar” conducted within a Charismatic Prayer Group or a Charismatic Parish. This seminar is the usual venue where one is prayed for to receive the “Baptism in the Spirit”. The community setting is appropriate because it is within such a community that the spiritual gifts are, fostered, nurtured and practiced. However, in the global outreach of these articles there are many who do not have direct access to a charismatic community, thus these prayers are provided so that you may, in private or in your own small group pray for the Baptism In the Holy Spirit. You do not need to wait to find a prayer group – activate your faith as soon as possible, while the fire of your faith is strong. Later when you do encounter a Charismatic community you can revitalize your commitment at their services (see Community Links below). And, I might add, if the Spirit leads you, begin your own prayer group!

### ***Prayer of Dedication***

***Lord Jesus, I believe that you, the Son of the Living God came down from heaven to reveal the Father’s Love to me by suffering and dying for my sins. I believe that through your death and resurrection you have brought redemption and life not only to me but also all else who believe in you. I further believe that it is only through knowing you in a loving personal relationship that I can know the Father. ...***

***It is because I have a burning desire to know you and abide in you that I now yield myself completely to you and your love. I open the door to my heart so you can come in and sup with me and thus begin the special relationship with you for which you died and for which I hunger. At this moment I yield myself to your love. Enter in and activate my spirit with your Holy Spirit so that I can go beyond just mere intellectual belief in you to a personal spiritual knowledge of you and the Father. ...***

***Lord, cleanse me from my sins and make me a fit vessel for your presence. Permeate my entire being with your life and your love so that I can truly be your instrument in this world. Be my Lord, Be My God, Be my King to rule and to reign in me. In faith and by your grace I receive You and I***



**receive Your word. Abide in me just as you abide in the Father and the Father in You! Thank You for giving Yourself for me. Amen!**

### ***Prayer for Empowerment in the Holy Spirit***

***Father, as your child in Jesus I desire to be totally an instrument for Your Kingdom to manifest through my life. I desire to receive your Promise of the Holy Spirit to those who believe. Jesus, my Savior and King, baptize me in the Holy Spirit so that the power of your resurrection will work in me and transform me according to your will. Holy Spirit, empower me and fill me to overflowing. I hold nothing back from you. Work your gifts in me and through me so that the Father's Kingdom may be manifested in and through my life. I ask this in Jesus' mighty Name. Amen!...***

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This contribution is available at [http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2016/09/02/\\$-reclaiming-our-legacy-in-christ-2/](http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2016/09/02/$-reclaiming-our-legacy-in-christ-2/)  
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After a month and a half of working on other projects, I seem to have gotten my blogging mojo back. (Of course, this means the other projects have gone back to the back burner.) However, as much as I kvetch about the culture-warrior role I've been stuck in for lo these eight years — more, if you count my long-lost-and-best-forgotten first blog — I keep returning to politics, every once in a while mentioning God or the Catholic Church to remind myself and others that I am a Catholic writer. Fortunately,

[über-apologist Devin Rose recently wrote a post on obedience](#)

which is not only worthy of comment but isn't about politics (well, it's not directly about politics).

## “Demand I Do Something!”

Says Devin:

I recently finished [Rod Dreher's book on life lessons from Dante's \*Divine Comedy\*](#), and one fascinating part of his story was his interaction with his Eastern Orthodox priest.

Dreher left Catholicism and became Orthodox in response to the priestly sexual abuse scandal. His local priest at their small Orthodox church is also a convert to Orthodoxy, and this priest became Dreher's spiritual director, confessor, and pastor.

Well, we have that in the Catholic Church, too, but what's different is the level of pastoral care that his priest could give him. *Dreher's priest put him under obedience to pray 500 [Jesus prayers](#) each day.*

Now think about that: has a Catholic priest ever put you under obedience to do *any* spiritual discipline, beyond a few Hail Marys for a penance after Confession? I've never experienced that, nor even heard of it happening.

One Catholic friend of mine has actually begged his priest to put him under obedience! “Please, as pastor of my soul, demand I do something!”

# Bloggng in the Wild, Wild West

Devin's concern is the relative freedom with which we Catholic bloggers expound on the faith. In theory, we're accountable to Christ, to the Church, to our bishops and pastors, and to the truth of the Faith. In practice, we tend to be accountable only to our intra-ecclesial tribes, our audiences, and our hit counters, tailoring our messages according to SEO plug-ins.

Devin does concede that Orthodox writers have a more advantageous priest-to-layman ratio, and that Catholic bishops are way too busy to keep up with even the most prominent members of the Blogisterium. Nevertheless, "As it is now, we public Catholics are renegades in the Wild West, posting whatever we want with impunity. Most bishops and priests I wager have no idea who the prominent Catholic personalities in their area are and what they are writing."

(I've seen my bishop. Once. We didn't actually meet, though; the church was kinda crowded at the time, and I had to get Mom home right after Mass.)

No one thinks twice of following a sports coach's directives to train: eat this, work out in that way, X times per week. If a coach didn't do that, we would think he was doing a poor job!

Priests and bishops are our spiritual coaches: we need them to train us, to push us to go beyond our comfort zones. Yet this rarely happens.

## I Confess ... Sometimes

Then Devin says, "Now imagine if we public Catholic personalities were meeting with our priest and local bishop and receiving spiritual direction from them regularly. Imagine we were as close with them as Dreher is with his priest."

Ah. Oh. Um.

There are reasons why I call this blog "The Impractical Catholic". One of them is that my practice of the Faith is imperfect. Another reason for the name is that, when practiced fully and meaningfully, Catholicism can be pretty darned impractical precisely because it can set you against the *Zeitgeist* and make inconvenient demands of you. Just ask St. Thomas More.

Before I began my reversion, I spent many years living one of those lives that, while doing no spectacular evil, doesn't really strive to be better; the C-and-E Catholic's motto is "Be 75% of all you can be". The [precepts of the Church](#)

only require Confession once a year, and to receive Holy Communion at least once during the Easter season. Forming good habits can be as difficult as getting rid of bad habits, especially when the threshold is set so low.

The *really good* Catholics confess at least weekly, and receive Communion every freakin' day, rain or shine. Here I am, patting myself on the back because I've made every Holy Day of Obligation this year (so far). I know my pastor, and my pastor knows me. I go to Confession every once in a while. But to call Fr. George my spiritual director would be a stretch similar to calling Jon Bon Jovi an actor ... except that the fault lies mostly with me, not with Fr. George.

## **Take Your Medicine, Layne**

I say all this, not as an excuse for slacking, but to explain where and how Devin's post hit me. Perhaps the thought of putting myself under obedience to my pastor hits my "not-the-boss-of-me button"; I am, after all, a middle-aged man who's fairly conversant with the moral teachings of the Church, and have been responsible for my own life for many years now. (Which, I suppose, is why I made such a hot mess of it.) Perhaps the thought of regularly baring my soul — to anyone — makes me quail; as a very private person, what I've confessed publicly is very little, and my most besetting sins are also the most obvious: Gluttony and Sloth. The thought of it is like seriously considering a daily spoonful of cod-liver oil. Or a deliberate glass of Scotch whiskey ... neat. Glah.

Those are also quite likely the strongest arguments for putting myself under obedience. The most relevant question concerning any medicine, whether for the body or for the soul, is not whether it tastes good but whether it will do you good. You can get used to just about anything, no matter how disgusting or distasteful (though why one would deliberately cultivate a taste for Scotch remains beyond me). I am reminded of Tertullian's thoughts on the subject:

Yet most men either shun [confession], as being a public exposure of themselves, or else defer it from day to day. I presume [they are] more mindful of modesty than of salvation; just like men who, having contracted some malady in the more private parts of the body, avoid the privity of physicians, and so perish with their own bashfulness. ([On Repentance, 10](#))

Tertullian wrote in a time when confession was public; now that confession is private, I don't have even the slim pretext the men of which he wrote had.

*Deny yourself. Take up your cross and follow Me*

(cf.

[Matthew 16:24-25](#)

). It's not as inconvenient as crucifixion, Layne, you big crybaby.

## Summary

I should think that Catholics who believe they're beyond need of spiritual direction are most in need of it. Pride is the capital sin that's most subtle, and has the most ramifications. Blogging, especially if you have any success at it, is a terrible temptation to Pride; you have to have enough confidence in your opinions to expose them to a harsh and critical world, yet also have enough humility to recognize when a criticism is apt. Many bloggers write to show off their brilliance; but there's nothing like writing for public consumption to expose the ass you really are.

If I can bare my asininity to the rest of the world, I can certainly bare it to my priest.

As a guarantee of orthodoxy — it's a Catch-22. Since there are dissenting priests, you have to be orthodox enough to recognize an orthodox priest; if you weren't orthodox, how would you know if your priest's correction put you on the orthodox path? I think it's enough for now to return to the practice of placing ourselves under obedience to our pastors, and hope they find time to read what we write without expecting it. After all, parish priests are awfully busy.

And, as the late Ralph McInerney said, no one owes you a reading — not even your pastor.

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This contribution is available at <http://impracticalcatholic.blogspot.com/2016/08/the-next-step-blogging-under-obedience.html>

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# Political Control and the Freedom of Weakness [at Catholic Stand]

There's a certain freedom in powerlessness, the loss of control. Recently, [Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput](#) wrote that the "astonishing flaws" of both major candidates was "depressing and liberating at the same time. Depressing, because it's proof of how polarized the nation has become. Liberating, because for the honest voter, it's much easier this year to ignore the routine tribal loyalty chants of both the Democratic and Republican camps."

## Control of Our Lives

It's liberating when you realize that, [no matter what you do, the results will be the same](#). You don't always have the luxury of knowing that your action will have only minimal effect on the outcome. It's like a message from God: "Dude, I got this. You go do the right thing, and let Me handle the rest."

Have you ever just sat and thought about all the ways in which your life is affected, impacted, changed for better or worse, by people whom you will most likely never meet and over whom you have no control or even influence? I'm sure commercials promising you security from identity theft and credit-card fraud have got you to thinking, now and again, how your financial security is tied up in a network of computers over which faceless strangers must keep perpetual watch against other faceless, more malicious strangers. Think of the people in the security agencies and defense services laboring 24/7 to prevent a terrorist attack from occurring or a war from breaking out.

Something so simple and quotidian as filling your gas tank doesn't just involve you and the pump. It involves hundreds of people in a number of industries moving the original oil from the well to the refinery to the distributor, as well as making the pumps, the tanks, the trucks, the pipes, and the car you're putting it in. And as you're cruising down the six-lane expressway, do you think about all the people who labored for months to expand the original two-lane blacktop highway while you suffered delays and jams in frustration? Whatever made you think you were independent? Whatever made you think you had complete control of your life?

[Usain Bolt](#) hits the gym every day for 90-minute workouts to develop explosiveness and build stability while staying lean. He controls when he shows up at the gym, how rigorously he follows his workout routine, and what he eats. He can't control the possible rise of another runner even faster than him, or the potential for career-ending injury, or the slow wear of entropy that will eventually subtract from his speed. Why worry about these things, when worrying about them won't prevent them from happening?

"Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to your span of life?" ([Matthew 6:27](#))

**"Teach the Monkey to Talk!"**

Everyone knows the Parable of the Rich Fool ([Luke 12:13-21](#)), so let me try another story, courtesy of [the late Leo Rosten](#):

A long time ago, a mad king in a Middle Eastern country had a pet monkey, which he wanted to talk. His advisors told him of a very wise rabbi, whom he sent for. When the rabbi appeared before him, the king demanded, “Jew! Teach my monkey to talk!”

The rabbi replied, “Your Highness, that is a very difficult task you ask of me. Please give me ten years to complete it.”

The king replied, “I’ll give you five years, and not a day more. If that monkey can’t talk by then, I’ll have you executed.”

The rabbi had a daughter, who found out about the strange demand and threat. So when the rabbi returned home, she was disturbed to see him so peaceful. “Father,” she asked, “why aren’t you frightened by the king’s order?”

The rabbi shrugged. “I have five years. In that time, I could die. Or the king could die. Or the monkey could die. Who knows? Maybe by then, I’ll have taught the monkey to talk!”

## **Who Knows?**

Today has enough troubles without borrowing tomorrow’s. It looks right now like Hillary Clinton will be our next President. What will she do then? *Who knows?* We’re not there yet. She might drop dead of some natural cause the day after the election. Some kind of catastrophe could strike between now and January 20th, destroying us all. Or maybe — and we could try praying for this — HRC will have an experience of grace that will remake her heart and mind. We don’t even know what kind of Congress she’ll be working with/against, so she’s not guaranteed to get her own way about everything.

But let’s say Donald Trump overcomes his current meltdown and wins in November. What will happen then? Again, *who knows?* We’re not there yet. He could turn out to be more sane, responsible, and restrained once in office than he has been on the campaign trail so far. His pro-life stance could turn out to be the insincere ploy many of us believe it to be, or he could be genuinely evolving. We could try praying for him, too, you know. Or, some kind of catastrophe could strike, yadda-yadda-yadda.

In that time, we could die. Or they could die. Who knows, maybe in that time God will have taught the monkey to talk. So many things we don’t control. Why worry about them?

*Dude, I got this. Do the right thing, and let Me take care of the rest.*

## **The Mystery of God’s Purposes**

*None of us are in complete control.* It’s not even necessarily something we’d want, for ourselves or for any individual. The act of praying is not a demand but a surrender, the acknowledgement that we depend on God for everything, especially our existence. *Scitote quoniam Dominus ipse est Deus: ipse fecit nos et non ipsi nos.* (Psalms 100[99]:3 Vulg.: “Know ye that the Lord is God: He made us and not we ourselves.”)

The story of Job teaches us that God is transcendent: no one can fully know His purposes and reasons, why He does and permits what we suffer. We have the revelation, but not everything has been revealed yet. Our perception is framed by our human limitations. We're like children whom our Parent has told, "One day, when you're grown up, you'll understand." Why can't we understand *now*? "And under that rebuke there is always a sudden hope in the heart; and the sense of something that would be worth understanding." (G. K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, p. 98)

*Credo ut intelligam*, said St. Anselm of Canterbury — not "I believe so that I *shall* understand," but rather "I believe in order that (in time) I *may* understand." The subjunctive mood is contingent; it speaks not of what *is* or what *will be*, but only of what is *possible*. "For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. ... For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood." (ASL, "[I Believe ... But I Don't Understand](#)"; cit. [1 Corinthians 13:9-10,12](#))

## Signs of Hope

This isn't to deny that we're on a social trajectory full of dangerous portents. The "culture wars" are almost over, and I'm sorry to say we Catholics are on the losing side. As Pope Benedict XVI predicted in 1969, the Church in the West "will become small, and will have to start pretty much all over again." Rod Dreher's "[Benedict Option](#)" may be the only alternative to marginalization and oppression by an increasingly secular, statist, and totalitarian society.

However, there are also signs of hope.

For one thing, as both [Patrick J. Deneen](#) and (more recently) [Fr. Dwight Longenecker](#) have pointed out, the leftist attempt to corrupt the Church in America is at a dead end. "Liberal Catholicism," says Deneen, "has no future — like liberal Protestantism, it is fated to become liberalism *simpliciter* within a generation." For a time, there will continue to be "token" or "house" liberal Catholics, like Vice President Joe Biden, Rep. Nancy Pelosi, and Sen. Tim Kaine. However, the millennials that don't leave the Church, particularly those with religious vocations, will be more solidly Catholic than their Generation X parents and Baby Boom grandparents.

On the other hand, this means that [conservative "cafeteria Catholicism"](#) is also coming to an end. The [ideological polarization of America](#) has led both liberal and conservative Catholics to ignore or minimize the parts of [Catholic social teaching](#) at variance with tribal dogma, and to criticize each pope in succession as he criticizes partisan shibboleths. Explains Fr. Longenecker, "The young people who have kept the faith are, for the most part, simple, by the book, faithful Catholics. They view the church differently and don't see it in such stark 'liberal' and 'conservative' terms." Without the Cold War-shaped ideological commitments and biases of the Boomers and Gen-Xers, it may be that the coming generation of American Catholics will form the nucleus of a new countercultural, populist movement, to which neither *liberal* nor *conservative* nor *libertarian* nor *socialist*, as we understand those terms now, will apply. (Perhaps [distributist](#)? Who knows?)

Finally, the Culture of Death is unsustainable by its very nature. Its victory is but temporary; its fall will be inevitable. Technology will not prevent it from falling; the fatal weaknesses are philosophical, social, economic, and political. Unfortunately, there are so many global economic and political connections that,



when the cascade failure strikes, the US will likely take down the First and Second Worlds with it. While this may seem a strange thing to call a “sign of hope”, the truth is that the Catholic Church will survive the cataclysm, and will climb out of the wreckage to help the world rebuild and regain its sanity. There will be no second culture war; for Moloch eats his own children.

## **No More Need for Fear**

In the meantime, we should not mourn our loss of political power, or dwell too much on Christianity’s future in the US. The center of the Christian message is not how we control the government, but how we love and serve one another. If the victors of the culture wars push us back into the catacombs, perhaps there we can re-learn to trust in God rather than in political parties or government figures: “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no help” ([Psalm 146:3](#)). Our loss of political control may allow us to be zealous for the Lord once more.

When nothing you can do will change the outcome, there’s no more need for prudence, discretion, or fear. It’s in God’s hands, not yours. For the sake of Christ, be content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; there will you find strength (cf. [2 Corinthians 12:10](#)). Do the right thing, and let God handle the rest.

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## To Welcome, Be Humble [at bukas palad]



Year C / Ordinary Time / Week 22 / Sunday

Readings: Sirach 3.19-21, 30-31 / Psalm 67.4-5ac, 6-7ab, 10-11 (R/v cf 11b) / Hebrews 12.18-19, 22-24a / Luke 14.1, 7-14

“You never grasp the fruits of your education until you give it away. So, I say to you: Give it away.” This was Fr Michael Himes’ challenge to the students and faculty, alumni and Jesuits when he ended his homily at the Mass celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Boston College. I was there four years ago. Yet, Fr Himes’ words still resonate with me for they express a hope Catholic educators strive for: to teach students that their education and lives are meant to make the world better.

“Give it away”, Fr Himes advocates. Or, as I dare our students at SJI, “waste it; waste your giftedness on a world in need”. But it is Jesus who says it best however: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15.13). To give away our education, to waste our giftedness, to lay down our lives is to en flesh **Jesus’ call to practice self-sacrificing love for God and neighbor**. Jesus lived like this to show us that we are most human when we give of ourselves to others. Then, we become a little more like God who first gave Godself to us.

“Is this how I am living my Christian life?” is not the question we must answer. That’s too simple: just a “yes” or “no” will suffice. The more challenging and honest question for us who come Sunday after Sunday to Eucharist is this: “Why do I want to live like this—live my life and all I have by giving it away, by wasting it in self-giving, by laying down my life for others?”

We have our own answers to the question. Whatever it is, I believe that we all share in that **holy boldness to ground our lives on Jesus**. This is that holy boldness of loving and believing in Jesus though we have not seen him yet (1 Peter 1.8). Such boldness also gives us strength to live and serve like Jesus did, which is what Christian discipleship must always be about.

In today's gospel, we hear of how the Pharisees watch Jesus as he enters one of their houses for a meal. They look not to welcome or love him. Rather, they look to evaluate, judge and catch him out for possibly committing an error. Isn't this how we experience others looking at us in church sometimes: judged because we understand God differently; judged because our kids are noisy; judged because our life choices seem unChristian? But don't we often give this same look at home, in school and at work when we judge, condemn and cannot forgive?

A few sentences after the opening line in today's gospel passage have been omitted. One of them is short but telling. It reads: "Just then, in front of him was a man with dropsy". It presents a contrast between Jesus' way of looking and the Pharisees' way of looking. Here is Jesus looking attentively and compassionately to welcome and care for another, despite the Pharisees' expectation on him. Knowing how Jesus looks can help us better appreciate today's gospel passage.

We are familiar with its ending. Jesus teaches about hospitality. We're to welcome all, and we're to especially go out of our way to welcome those who are deemed unsavory and undesirable. But if we value position, privilege and power, like the wedding guests who scan the seating plan for the best seats of honor, we will not see the humanity and needs of others who may just be in front of us.

We can however see them and be hospitable to them when we look with Jesus' compassionate way of seeing others. Of living and interacting with the look of love. Of being attentive to those just in front of us. Of dying to ourselves to love another.

I believe we all want this. We want to see and act like Jesus. We know that grounding ourselves in Jesus is the way to do this. It involves living the virtue of humility he also teaches in today's gospel. Humility comes from the Latin word "humus" whose Greek origin is "homa". "Humus" and "homa": they refer to the soil, the ground. Humility is therefore wisdom for our earthly life.

Humility enables us to know our place in society, where so often degree, or pedigree, or income dictates our social worth. It is not about self-deprecation or self-effacement. And **humility well practiced in the light of faith, as Jesus teaches throughout the gospels, also helps us know ourselves before God and others always**—"for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will

be exalted” (Luke 14:10-11).

When we know our rightful place in God’s Kingdom, we’ll know we are infinitely loved, and constantly called to love others with infinite love. And when we’re infinitely loved by God, it really doesn’t matter where we sit at God’s table, or if we have a chair, does it?

Hasn’t God done this for us through countless individuals in our own lives who have been inviting us to God’s banquet, again and again? Whether we felt most Christian or utterly unworthy, didn’t they draw us close to God’s love and point the way to the table prepared for us—as God’s honored guest?

We have all savored God’s love and mercy, especially at this table. How can we not welcome others in turn?

We can welcome them by practicing humility because **humility frees us to be ourselves as God’s beloved and secures us to act in God’s ways of being hospitable to all**. This was really how Jesus lived his life and ministry amongst us—in the newness of God’s way. This is why he is the way for us to see the world and to live and help others in it.

Such living is courageous: we do not have to conform to others’ expectations of who we have to be and how we have to act. We are free to live the Christian values without fear. Such living is holy because of integrity: we only need to be true to who God created us to become and to how we should live as God wishes us to act—his people of love, loving through self-giving. All who live like this can indeed echo Paul’s joyful claim to the Philippians: “For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1.21).

And isn’t this gain of redemption, like all other gains, possible only because someone willingly gave away what she learned for us, because others readily wasted their giftedness on many, because we can freely choose to lay down our lives for others? Nothing but humility makes this possible.

When we do this, we can welcome family and stranger, friend and foe, the desired and the unwanted to sit at the tables where we feast at, to come to the tables where we recreate at, to partake at the tables where we pray at. Most of all, welcome everybody to this eucharistic table—as God welcomes all here—to give thanks for Jesus: Jesus who assures us that we are always welcome to feast with God.

When we let ourselves do this, we make real what God once did for us in Jesus: God humbling Godself to become like us so as to die for us and save us. Such is humility well lived in love for another. Such is Jesus' example for you and me.

Our first reading ends with the image of a sensible man listening attentively to God. Today, Jesus teaches us—sensible people, faithful people—about **humility: it is the wellspring for a self-giving love that can always welcome all.**

So, let us listen and do. After all, **humility is how all of us can become a little bit more divine by becoming a lot more human.**

*Preached at St Ignatius Parish, Singapore*

Photo: still shot from the film, *Eating Alabama* by Andrew Beck Grace ([www.drawlmag.com](http://www.drawlmag.com))

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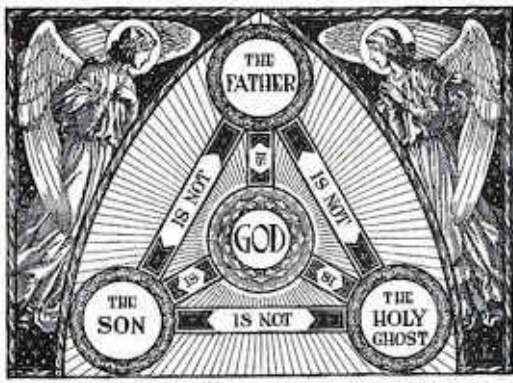
## I need more! [at Ordinary Time]



We are always looking for something a little more exciting, a little more stimulating. As a young man I put that into action when it came to church. I went around looking for worship that was a little more upbeat. A little more loud. From stage band worship to Pentecostal shouting, I kept going to find that next mountain top experience. Wherever I was, regardless of the quality of the music, or the eloquence of the preacher... it wasn't enough. I needed more... because the one thing I was doing wrong was trying to find something for me in it. I wasn't worshipping God because it was the right thing to do. No I was trying to find my next experience, me... my.. I... ego.

In our search for the perfect experience we often forget exactly what we have been given. The enormous gift of the Holy Spirit is too frequently ignored or placed in the back of our minds. As Christians we do not believe the Spirit is just some sort of non-tangible, ethereal force that can be controlled with enough knowledge or somatic gestures. The Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of the Trinity. One we should have a relationship with. One who as St. Paul eloquently puts it describes to us "spiritual realities in spiritual terms." When our minds are so caught up in our own selves... that's what St. Paul calls the natural man... that's when we are unable to experience fully who God is. It's in this ignoring of the Holy Spirit, the presence of God in us, that we completely miss the amazing gift we are endowed with!

In our daily lives we are bombarded with desires and emotions. From the flooding of sexual images in the various media to the constant attack on the sanctity of marriage we are called to be worldly, natural people. What God wants to give us though is a fuller existence, a more joyful reality that exists. He wants to give us the life He created us for! We are called to be Spiritual people, a living temple for God. Just as Jesus commanded the demon in the Gospel to be quiet and come out of the man in the synagogue, He is calling out to those things which stand in our way of being who we truly are. He is telling our addictions, our sorrows, our fears... "Be quiet! Come out of my child!" We have to let go of our self though and let Him work in us through the Holy Spirit we received at Baptism.



A good concrete illustration of the Blessed Trinity is an equilateral triangle. Such a triangle has three sides equal in every way, and yet distinct from each other. There are three sides, but only one triangle. As we see in this illustration, each Divine

Person is different from the other two, but all three are God. Each one is God, distinct from the two others, and yet one with them. The three Persons are equal in every way, with one nature and one substance: three Divine Persons, but only one God.

We do not need a better Parish. The music whether excellent or sub-par is not why you are there. The homily, while an important and beautiful part of the spiritual nourishment you receive, does not have to be the best or most powerful one. The Priest does not have to be the kindest or most generous man alive, he alone is not who you are there for. You are there for Christ. Present in the Sacraments of the Holy Catholic church. You're not going to find a different one the next town over... He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. It's not about

*you*

, it's about

**Him**

! That's why we go to Mass... to worship the most High God. Not to get something out of it. Now if there are problems in those other areas? Do something about it instead of bickering and gossiping. Join the choir. Become a Lector. Join the building and grounds committee. Volunteer on the Pastoral Council so you can get to know the Priest.. but above all spend some time speaking and listening to the Holy Spirit in your prayer life... for it is through Him that we can "understand the things freely given us by God.

A Prayer for Today

Come Holy Spirit

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.  
 Enkindle in them the fire of your love.  
 Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created,  
 And you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful  
 by the light of the Holy Spirit,  
 Grant us in the same spirit to be truly wise,  
 And ever to rejoice in his consolation, Through  
 Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

His servant and yours,

Brian

"He must increase, I must decrease."

A reflection on the

[readings for Tuesday of the Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time](#)

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# "Spirit of Vatican II" and "I'm a Pope Francis Catholic" [at Kitchen table chats]



I ran across this article that proposed

[five phrases](#)

that should be banished from the Catholic lexicon. Among the collection was "Spirit of Vatican II". I am old enough to have lived through the liturgical turmoil that followed Vatican II so I do remember this phrase being used to justify all sorts of innovations that had no grounding whatsoever in the documents of Vatican II. However, I think currently when the phrase is used, it is done so in a pejorative way to condemn actions or ideology that are contrary to Catholic teaching. It now refers to an inappropriate twisting or erroneous interpretation of the work and documents of Vatican II. So, when it is used in that context, I am not so sure it needs to go away.

For many years I thought that if Vatican II had occurred in the internet age, all of the ridiculous liturgical and catechetical initiatives that were wrongly attributed to Vatican II could not have occurred. I was certain that all the incorrect assertions would be rapidly called out because the truth would be so readily available. However, after the election of Pope Francis I have revised my opinion. Currently all sorts of incorrect statements about Church teaching are being attributed to Pope Francis and are flying around the internet at lightning speed. Since far too many people blindly read the latest 140-character twitter post or Facebook meme and accept it as Gospel truth, we are hearing that Pope Francis is changing the Church teachings on homosexuality, marriage, Communion, and abortion. Vice-Presidential candidate Tim Kaine claims he can support legalized abortion because he is a "Pope Francis" Catholic.

The truth is, Pope Francis has not changed a single Church teaching. He has not lessened the severity of a single sin. He has been steadfast in his support for marriage as the unique union of one man and one woman. However, he is more of a pastor than a teacher. His language is imprecise and lends itself to cherry picking phrases that when taken out of context can be construed incorrectly.

For example, take his "Who am I to judge" phrase that is quoted all over the place as a call to accept homosexual behavior.

[The phrase in context is](#)

:  
*That is the first question. Then you spoke of the gay lobby. Mah! So much is written about the gay lobby. I have yet to find anyone who can give me a Vatican identity card with “gay” [written on it]. They say they are there. I think that when you encounter a person like this, you must make a distinction between the fact of a person being gay from the fact of being a lobby, because lobbies, all are not good. That is bad. **If a person is gay and seeks the Lord and has good will, well who am I to judge them?** The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains this in a very beautiful way, but says, wait a moment, how do you say... it says, [that] these persons must not be marginalized for this, they must be integrated into society.”*

He refers to the Catechism as giving the correct response to homosexuality. In other words, someone who suffers from same-sex attraction but seeks to live according to God's will must be supported and loved. All sinners must be welcomed into the field hospital of the Church. The Catholic Church does not shun anyone. Nowhere has Pope Francis supported homosexual behavior or minimized its sinfulness.

As long as we have a large number of people willing to swallow anything agenda driven media outlets propose without questioning its authenticity and accuracy, we will have claims that the Church is changing and there is a new "spirit" leading the way. There is no such thing as a "Vatican II" Catholic or a "Pope Francis" Catholic or even a "Pope John Paul II" or "Pope Benedict XVI" Catholic for that matter. There is only one, holy catholic, apostolic Church founded by Christ on the Rock of Peter. If you want to know what that means, do as Pope Francis suggests and pick up the Catechism.

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# I Was Blind, But Now I See



My latest post at [Catholic Mom.com](#):

When I was eight years old, I had no idea that what my eyes were seeing was, in actuality, a huge blur. Even my parents didn't realize that I needed glasses. Because my eyesight had gotten worse so gradually, no one knew that I could not see well until the religious sisters at school sent a note home to my parents indicating that I should have my eyes checked.

There were hints, of course, that neither my parents nor myself noticed. I used to watch TV basically within an inch or so of the TV. When I read, the book was on top of my face. However, according to my mom, she never noticed me squinting. Again, I thought what I was seeing was normal and didn't realize I couldn't see clearly.

My mother eventually took me to an optometrist in downtown Philly to have my eyes tested, then we ordered glasses. I could not suspect how much my life would change with that small pair of (ugly) glasses. When we returned to Philly to pick them up, the elderly optometrist put me on a booster seat in the chair, took out the glasses and put them on my face. My eyes widened and my mouth fell open. I gasped. I could see every detail and every letter of every word in that office. I could see across the street. I remember the wide smile the optometrist had on his face as I was pointing out everything I could see.

On our way home, I kept pointing to everything. "Look, Mommy, I can see the Horn and Hardart's sign! I can see that store says "Lit Brothers! I can see that pretty dress in the window over there!" Colors were brighter; it even seemed like I could hear better now that I could see so clearly. I was still in awe that night when I could watch *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* from 20 feet away and still see everything clearly. To me, it was nothing short of a miracle.

In the years following, although I went to Catholic school, my family had begun to fall away from the regular practice of going to Mass and I began learning my morals from television.

Fast-forward to 1979. I had visited my [pen-pal in Canada and met my husband through her brother](#) at a rock band jam session. [We fell in "like at first sight"](#) and began a long-distance relationship with me in NJ and him in Canada. However, when we were together, things usually got pretty intense, given that we rarely saw each other. I wanted to enter into a sexual relationship, but thankfully James had a pretty strong

Catholic grounding so he kept us from going farther than we should. Three years later, when we were engaged and about to be married, it was James (age 19) who insisted that we use Natural Family Planning (NFP) and not artificial birth control. I saw no moral reason why we shouldn't use artificial birth control, but he remained adamant. "I would rather have sex once a month without birth control than use birth control and have sex every day." I remember thinking, "What planet is he from?"

However, as we communicated through letters (back in the early '80s there was no free long distance, no texts, no SnapChat, no Facebook, no Instant Messaging, no Skype, no Facetime, no Instagram or any other instant communication), I realized this was no ordinary young man. The advantage of writing with snail mail letters is that we were able to take time and reflect on what we wanted to say. It became obvious that contraception was something that James was not willing to budge on. When he said, "Ellie, trust me and trust God," I said say yes and agreed to go to an NFP class with him. I learned that NFP works in this way: a couple charts the woman's signs of fertility and infertility. If they are avoiding pregnancy, they abstain from relations when the woman is fertile.

One thing we both agreed on and that was that we should wait for a few years to have children since James was only in his first year of college. A few days before our wedding, we realized that I would be right in the middle of the fertile time, which meant that our consummation would have to wait until a week or so after the wedding. After waiting three years, I was resentful. I went along with NFP, but was not happy about it. NFP seemed like a burden, not a gift.

A few months into our marriage on an evening that would be the beginning of Phase III (the infertile time), we had a romantic dinner and a beautiful evening of intimacy after a period of abstinence. All of a sudden, as I was lying in bed later that night, I realized that James and I were truly one, physically and spiritually, with nothing separating us: no pills, devices, no chemicals, no surgeries. With each act of marital intimacy, I felt as if we were renewing our marriage vows with our bodies.

That evening (and many others to follow) truly felt like another honeymoon night. Until that moment, I went along with NFP to please James. I wasn't enthusiastic about abstaining. But when that light bulb moment hit, I realized what a beautiful gift NFP is, despite its challenges. Not only that, but I realized what a great gift it was to us that we had not had intercourse until marriage. "I was blind, but now I see." NFP became glasses for my soul, and the reasons for NFP became much clearer to me.

From then on, I became a big promoter of chastity before marriage and a loud and enthusiastic proponent of NFP. In the grocery store, dentist's office, anywhere that someone would listen, I would tell people about NFP, just like the time I got my new glasses: "Look, NFP has no side effects!" "Look, NFP means a couple can be truly one when they are making love!" "Look, NFP doesn't harm fertility!" "Wow, NFP is 99% effective when a couple has serious reasons to avoid pregnancy and can even be used to achieve a much-wanted pregnancy!"

For me, without NFP, our marital union would have existed in a blur. With NFP, our marital union is clearer and more meaningful. NFP truly is like a pair of glasses for the soul. NFP has been nothing short of a miracle for our marriage. Does it mean there have never been problems or that I've never resented the abstinence? Of course not. But NFP truly is a marriage builder, one that I can honestly say has been the main reason that the romance, intimacy and closeness has remained even after 34 years of marriage.



1968, with my new glasses

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## Thankful Catching Up! [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]

I've decided it's time to catch up on this long-neglected blog of mine! So much has happened and yet all is the same! We had some disappointing news in March and were not able to move. We took our home off the market. We ended up owing a ton of taxes and it just takes money to move and we are secure here. (tight and secure) We really had our hearts set on Arizona. I couldn't even talk to anyone the first couple months without tearing up and getting all emotional about it. It took me time to work through it all. To work through God's plan for us. It's funny, too, looking back, because we had prepared ourselves even emotionally to move and then when we couldn't move and had to stay, well, it was a whole new set of emotions! I can't even explain some things I've learned about myself. I didn't think I'd get depressed about something really, in the big picture of life, that is so small. I had to pull myself out of it. After lent was over I'd stopped going to daily Mass, and all the extra devotions that I'd done during lent were done. I was dry. And disappointed. And sad. Only God can heal those things. So I started going back to daily Mass as much as I could and started another 54 day rosary novena and before I knew it, I was back to normal. Happy to be wherever God wants us to be.

(and still dreaming of Arizona)



By June, the 3 oldest kids were in a play and that involved daily play practice and lots of ways for me to keep busy and preoccupy my sadness. The kids were in the play "Brigadoon" (our homeschool theatre group)

Rosie's solo part right here, Kind of hard to hear, but she did wonderful!



Jedi has a fun love song here and if you watch the whole play on YouTube you can see his other solo song, it's a really fun one! (YouTube version below)

The kids made new friends and so did I! I am so very

### **Thankful**

for our wonderful Homeschool Theatre and feel so very blessed we were still here in Minnesota to experience it!



### **Thankful**

for my sweet new 10 year old! 10 is such a fun age, she's growing up and at the same time holding onto her childhood play.



We had a simple birthday party painting birdhouses and having ice cream sundaes after lunch!



**Thankful**

for summer parades for our unicyclists! It's such a fun thing to do in the summer.





**Thankful** for our newest unicyclist!



**Thankful**

for sidewalk chalk and kiddos that still love to play with it! These 2 littles bring so much joy to my life!



**Thankful**

for summer campfires that must include s'mores!





**Thankful**

for stories on the porch



all summer long!



**Thankful**

for breakfast on the porch, all summer long also!



**Thankful**

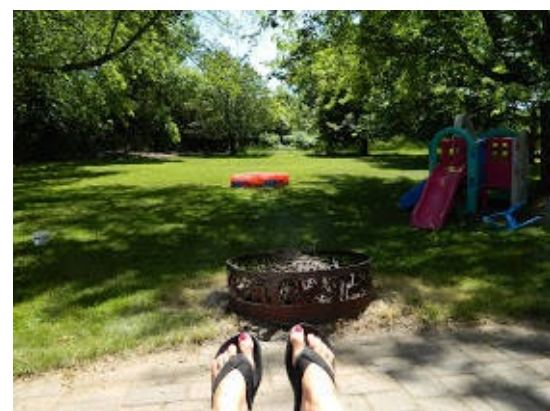
for my porch! I love everything on the porch! My husband loves the air conditioning so I love to go to the porch to warm up! I also love to do my morning prayers there and whenever anyone comes over I ask, "Would you like to sit on the porch?"



So

**Thankful**

it's summer and we can spend so much time outside!



**Thankful**

for my backyard view! Want to know what I'm watching here?



These cutie pies! OH, my!

**Thankful**

for little \$9.99 blow-up pools and water from the hose!

Watch this next video, so so cute!

**Thankful**

for joy-filled laughter and pure JOY.



Pure JOY, I tell you, pure JOY! Isn't this just the picture of happiness and SUMMER? (above)

Go ahead, click on the picture, see the joy!



**Thankful**

for cute little kiddos on the 4th of July sporting their red, white and blue for our country!





**Thankful**

the 4th of July means grilling pork chops and spending time together all day!

(after the parade of course)



Yep, you guessed it, I'm on the porch here.



**Thankful**

for our messy, loud and flawed life. We are far from perfect, but our goal is holiness.



**Thankful**

for red, white and blue firework painting! This easy project turned out really nice!



(it was not night time, it was dark and raining out here!) (not that we wouldn't paint at night time because we would)



**Thankful**

for a brand new 14 year old! She's grown up so fast, I just can't believe it.



**Thankful**

for a "Lake Birthday" party with her friends, because her friend Lily has a mama



that's my friend!

[Sarah](#)

and I spent the whole day talking while the girls were in the water doing this:







**Thankful**

for non-photogenic kids. Oh, my goodness. "Pretend you are smelling the flower"

"Like this mama?" "No, OK you can really smell the flower, just smell the flower" "No" "That's not how to do it honey."



"No, never mind, you don't have to smell the flower. Or eat it."



Let's just give that up and take a selfie!



**Thankful**

for sun tea!! One of my very favorite things. (to sip on the porch, of course)



**Thankful**

for smart little boys that LOVE to do 1000 piece puzzles with their daddy!

I'm serious, he sits there so patiently and looks and looks. He put at least 50 pieces in this puzzle.

(Daddy did the rest)

**Thankful**

for a wonderful husband that loves to do puzzles!



**Thankful**

for beautiful sun-kissed freckles on beautiful almost-12 year old girls



**SO very Thankful**

I got to see one of my very favorite people in the whole world!! SARAH!! She used to live in Fargo, ND and we were able to drive to see each other a couple times a year, but last year, she moved away to Colorado. We had not seen each other in almost 2 years!!



**Thankful**

this beautiful girl got to see her godmother!



**Thankful**

for my beautiful mailbox this year. It was looking so nice until....



The dang deer ate all my morning glories. NOT Thankful for the deer. AT all. Not even a little.



**Thankful**

for vocation camps, theater camps, Sisters of Schoenstatt camps, Steubenville weekends, surprise overnight visits from cousins (above)



## Thankful

we spent as much time here playing at the local wading pool, it's already closed for the summer.



## Thankful

we were able to meet my cousin Kristin and her beautiful children at the wading pool a couple times!



**Thankful** my school room is back in order and hopefully we be ready for school in just a couple weeks! Speaking of school, Jedi is starting PSEO classes Monday at our local Community College! He also started a couple weeks ago working his first job! SO many things are going to change in our family this next year as he prepares to get his drivers license and saves for his own car! **Thankful** I still have him home for 2 more years. Hug your kids extra, they grow SO fast. The days are long, but the years are short, so very short.

If you are still here after this very long "catch up" post, thank you, may God bless you! Thank you to the few ladies that emailed me with their loving concern, you are a gift. I hope to come back soon with my movie reviews!



# We Found a Network of Faith for Families and Aspiring Authors [at Seton Magazine]

3 minutes

## Summary

Do you have an aspiring author in your family? Dennis McGeehan recommends a Catholic conference that could be an ideal field trip and network destination.

Our children were often enthusiastic when they were given school assignments to complete during their vacations—because the assignments included visiting the aquarium, climbing up lighthouses, hiking a historical trail, or visiting a really cool museum.

As a Catholic family, we always planned ahead to where we could attend Mass during our trips, and as a homeschooling family, we used each destination as a school field trip.

Had I known then of the annual joint conference of the [Catholic Marketing Network](#) (CMN) and the [Catholic Writers Guild](#) (CWG), it would have been a candidate for a vacation destination.

During their high school years, our two oldest children tried their hand at writing a novel. Our oldest, Sabrina, crafted an opus that she admits could go to two hundred thousand words. It was a fantasy with magical creatures, heroes, and arch-villains.

Our son, Sean, forged a tale of dragons, great battles fought by armies, and duels between lone warriors. He was writing it mostly as a fun way to meet a graduation requirement, but our daughter did express an interest in pursuing a career as an author. Thus, the conference would have fit both as a Catholic destination and as an academic field trip.

Imagine the following scenario: you arrive at the conference and are checking in at the registration booth. The person working the booth is cheerful and greets you with a smile. All around you is the buzz of dozens of conversations. You are inquiring about the day's scheduled events when suddenly the hall is enveloped in silence.

The person at the booth disappears behind it; they have dropped into a kneeling position. You look around and see others kneeling on the floor. Then you notice a priest coming towards you bearing the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance, followed by a line of people softly singing a hymn.

You drop to your knees and bless yourself as Jesus passes in front of you.

Advertisement



The procession enters a room and the conversations resume. The person at the booth points out that Eucharistic Adoration is available during most hours of the conference.



The Confession schedule is posted on the wall and a bus trip to the Marian Shrine will depart this afternoon precisely at 3:15 p.m. from the front of the hotel.

Yes, this did happen at this year's 2016 conference!

Each year, the CWG and CMN gather for four days of networking, educational seminars, and faith building. The Catholic Marketing Network is composed of Catholic gift stores, Catholic media consisting of television, radio, magazines and newspapers, Catholic music artists, publishers, and more.

The Catholic Writers Guild is a group of men and women who pledge their faithfulness to the Pope and his bishops and who use their talents to answer the call of Pope Saint John Paul II to evangelize the world. They do this by writing non-fiction and fiction stories in all genres, such as historical fiction, young adult, children's books, science fiction and fantasy, poetry, devotionals, and inspirational biographies.

During past conferences, breakout sessions led by Guild members provided the details of: World Building, The Mechanics of Good Writing, Indie Publishing, Crafting a Plot, Character Development, The Use of Dialog, Sharing Your Faith, Interview Skills with the Media, How to Become a Freelance Writer, and other topics. Special sessions with the Marketing Network can feature world-renowned speakers who are in high demand and who talk on a variety of issues.

The conference show floor has a large array of booths from the various vendors. The 2016 international show had 130 different companies in attendance. There are, of course, Bibles and devotionals, rosaries and statues of all sizes.

There are books and curriculums that Catholic schools and homeschoolers can use as well as DVDs on a variety of topics. Unique gifts such as Holy Bears and technology such as Biblezon are present as well as opportunities for personal growth such as Live the Fast. Those in attendance may also have the opportunity to view, for free, a soon to be released faith-related film. This occurred at the 2015 conference.

The Catholic Writers Guild has a booth at which attendees can talk to the authors and peruse their books.



Each book that the CWG brings to the conference has received the Catholic Writers Guild Seal of Approval indicating it contains nothing contradictory to Church teaching. The CWG also bestows the Catholic Arts and Letters Award or CALA at the conferences.

A popular event at the conferences is the author Meet & Greet sponsored by the publishers in attendance at the conference. At these events, attendees are able to obtain newly-printed books, often for free, and get the authors' autographs.

I have attended two conferences and can attest to the wonderful atmosphere present. Children are a part of it. They belong to the families of the store owners or are members of some ministry that is in attendance such as The Children's Rosary. Indeed, ministry is the word most attendees use to describe their work, whether they are store owners, writers or members of the media.



They are there to learn how to make their calling prosper with the understanding that God is ultimately in charge. The presenters of the breakout sessions are willing to answer questions, and many will often arrange to meet with attendees during downtime if their schedules allow. A sense of unity and charity pervades the conferences.

On top of these reasons to attend, these events are held at world class locations, and attendees can receive discounted rates for the hotels when they register.

For a Catholic homeschooling family with a budding author in the ranks, a trip to the conference is definitely a good choice. You will be immersed in a thoroughly orthodox Catholic environment. You will have the opportunity to learn from successful authors, develop contacts with publishers, and become friends with great people.

You will be introduced to items you have never seen, and many will carry a show discount. The only downside is you will not want it to end, and you will be tired when it is over.

[Catholic Marketing Network](#) [Catholic Writers Guild](#) [confession dennis](#) [dennis-mcGeehan](#) [faith faithfulness](#) [mcGeehan network](#) [network of faith](#) [pope procession](#) 2016-08-27

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This contribution is available at <http://www.setonmagazine.com/dad/we-found-a-network-of-faith-for-families-and-aspiring-authors>  
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## Why I WANT My Toddler to be Angry [at Under Thy Roof]



I've been blessed with relatively even-keeled kids. They have their toddler over-reaction moments (trust me) but they really are pretty well behaved kids. But situations come up when I really WANT them not to react calm and serene. I want them to be angry when anger is needed.

This came up at the park the other day.

Therese was playing around in the sand, and another little kid came up and started messing with her dress. She did not like it. She slapped the kid's hand down, said "No!" nice and loud, and shook her little finger in their face telling the kid how not ok she was with this in toddler babble. Ended with "Bye!" which we all took to mean "I'm done, leave now." Kid scampered off, and a few minutes later they were playing nicely together in the sand with no more attempts to cross Therese.

I was super proud of her. But not everyone was. Another adult tried to say how the other kid "didn't really mean it" and "it's really ok". No, no it wasn't ok, and I do not want to teach my kids that you shouldn't react strongly when your boundaries are crossed.

I was reminded of this meme that I first saw pinned to our parish business manager's bulletin board:



We SHOULD be angry sometimes. It's called

[righteous anger](#)

We are now in a social situation where we have to have college orientation events about "

[No means No](#)

" and teaching 18 year olds how to establish boundaries.

*Because they don't know this*

We should be ashamed of ourselves. What have we been doing all along to not teach our kids how to say, and hear, the word no?

We should be angry at injustices and boundry tresspasses. It's not ok. Social life depends on the establishment of social norms

*and their enforcement*

. Expecting little kids to be ok with their boundaries being disrespected opens the door to all those later issues.

If we've learned anything from our many failed attempts to correct rape culture it's that this is a highly entrenched problem. The solution cannot be had from catching kids at orientation - I believe it must start as little kids. I have to allow my one year old to have boundaries, and I have to be ok with her enforcing them.

My job as parent is to teach my kids how to go about enforcing boundaries appropriately. Therese did it perfectly. She knew when something not ok started to happen, reacted with appropriate vigor, and, the important bit,

*the other kid heard her*

. She expected to be heard and she was. The issue rested with the adult who expected her to take whatever happened and deal with it silently.

Big Fat No to that. Every time.

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This contribution is available at <http://underthyroof.blogspot.com/2016/08/why-i-want-my-toddler-to-be-angry.html>  
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## Stories from the Early Church on the Birth of Mary [at Podcast]

September 8th. is the day we celebrate the birth of Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ. The readings and the gospel for that day speak appropriately of the Messiah however they also speak of what preceded Jesus' birth and how God is truly the Lord of History.

Mary by herself is only another human, as is her husband Joseph. But Mary and Joseph are forever joined to Jesus. To study Joseph you must study Mary, and to study Mary you must speak of Jesus. They are the Holy Family. It is because of their close relationship to Jesus that we speak of Joseph and Mary and Mary always says, "Do whatever He (Jesus) tells you to do." Joseph, though silent of words, always stands ready to serve God the Father by giving his all to Jesus and Mary.

It is dogma that Joseph and Mary always lived a chaste life as husband and wife. Some believe that Joseph was previously married and that his first wife died. They point to the scripture passage where the brothers and sisters of Jesus are mentioned as proof. But other theologians of high regard from the Early Church adamantly insisted that Joseph only ever had one wife and that was Mary.

Jacob was the father of Joseph. Joachim and Anne were the parents of Mary. Joseph's mother's name is lost in time. We do know that Jacob was related to Anne, and thus Joseph and Mary are related, both of them descending from the House of David.

Tradition, with a small "t", relates how Joseph decided to take a vow of celibacy while he was young man so he could totally serve God in any capacity he was called to. This vow he kept a secret from all.

Joachim and Anne, Mary's parents, lived twenty years together as husband and wife without the gift of a child. Tradition, again small "t", tells how on a visit to the Temple they each vowed to God that if He favored them with a child, they would dedicate the child to God.

Being childless was considered a curse by the culture of the day. One story speaks how Jacob was chastised by a Temple Priest for even presenting himself in the Temple when he was so obviously a sinner and under God's wrath. Despite the pronouncement of the Priest, God heard the fervent prayers of Joachim and Anne and she became pregnant with Mary.

Some believe that Joseph used his skills as a Tekton, often translated as Carpenter, in the expansion and adornment of the Temple that Herod ordered. Herod undertook this project as a political move to gain the approval of the Jews. If Joseph did indeed work on the Temple, he would have lived in Jerusalem. If that is so, then Joachim and Anne would certainly have visited him when they traveled to Jerusalem for the various feasts. Joseph would have been aware of the sadness the holy couple felt at the barrenness of their marriage. As such, he also would have joined in their delight when Anne finally conceived.

The first reading for September 8 says,

***Whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne...***

While the second reading states,

***We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son ...***

It is estimated by some of the Early Church Fathers that Joseph was in his twenties to thirties when he married Mary, she being fourteen years old at the time. This is in conflict with many of the images depicting Joseph as a man of advanced years, but it makes sense when you consider how arduous the work was that Joseph did to support Jesus and Mary, not to mention their trek to Egypt to escape Herod's plot to kill Jesus.

If this is correct, then we see God at work in calling Joseph to remain celibate and also the delay in the conception of Mary.

Joachim and Anne fulfilled their promise to God by sending Mary to live in the Temple at the age of three. Small "t" tradition states that while she lived in the Temple, Mary felt called to make a vow of celibacy herself, a decision contrary to her culture. By the time she was fourteen, her father had died and she was now in need of a guardian as was her mother. According to Jewish law, it fell to a relative to marry her. Enter Joseph, an unmarried male relative with the skills of a craftsman to earn a living.

To select an appropriate husband, the small "t" tradition says, Joseph was summoned to the Temple along with other eligible bachelors. They were instructed to leave their staffs with the Priest. The next day it was discovered that a lily had sprouted from Joseph's staff indicating that he was God's choice.

So we can now put the chain of events together. Mary's birth is momentous. The Angels in heaven must have rejoiced as they knew this was part of the Plan of Salvation. But it is tied to Joseph's earlier decision to remain celibate and also to the period of childlessness of Joachim and Anne. With his selection by the Sign of the Flowering Staff, Joseph's can keep his vow as the chaste husband of Mary and Mary is also permitted to remain celibate with Joseph as her husband.

God's timing and methods are always perfect although for us they may be difficult to understand.

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## A Rosary Shower for Baby [at Veils and Vocations]

I have so much updating to do, including finishing my posts on the mother/daughter event. Where did the time go? As the summer draws to a close, I am getting more excited for fall and our coming child, as well as overwhelmed, by everything I must accomplish in the next three months.

Every child is a cause for celebration and a special gift from God. I wanted to do something for this baby to celebrate the amazing joy that has come to our lives through this pregnancy. Despite all the difficulties and complications I have faced over the years with every pregnancy, I still truly have enjoyed being pregnant whenever I have been blessed to be so. However, there is something truly special about this pregnancy.

I have not had one single complication or issue, it has been smooth sailing the whole way. If I were only about six years younger, it would be considered a picture perfect pregnancy. It has been a great blessing and gift, and my husband and I are just overflowing with joy and happiness.

One of the members of my online pregnancy group posted the idea of a rosary shower. It seemed like just what I was looking to do. So, I sent out evites to the special ladies in my life from church and long time friends asking them to gather for a rosary to pray for baby.

*Every new baby is a cause to celebrate. Come celebrate with us as Jennifer gets ready to welcome her new child.*

*Please join us for a "Visitation" where we will pray the joyful mysteries of the rosary for Jennifer, Drew, and Baby.*

*The Annunciation – Like Mary she has conceived and will bear a child*

*The Visitation – Like Mary, she has been blessed and prayed and trusted in God to give her children*

*The Nativity – We will celebrate the birth of her child*

*The Presentation in the Temple – Like Mary & Joseph, Jennifer and Drew will bring their child up in the Catholic faith, beginning with a baptism*

*The Finding in the Temple – Jennifer and Drew will teach their child to proclaim the messages of the HEAVENLY FATHER*

*Please join us for a tea and light refreshments. This is NOT a gift giving event, only a chance to gather and pray. Thank you.*

**Pretty**





I truly enjoy fancy tablecloths with linen and lace. Pink is my favorite color, always has been. I agonized over whether to use a pink or blue tablecloth, though. Pink because it is so pretty, blue for Our Lady. I knew either one would leave people reading into my choice, when it had nothing to do with the baby itself. I was relieved when I realized we needed two tables. So, I used one of each.

I even broke out the good china, silver flatware, and crystal glasses. Some of my guests were a little afraid to use such nice pieces. If a miracle baby isn't reason enough to use the good stuff, I don't know what is.



A dear friend from church brought me this beautiful rose. It made the perfect centerpiece. Have I mentioned that pink roses are my favorite flower?



I was blessed to be able to have the pilgrim statue this week. She was really the only decoration I had for the shower. I found my mother's pressed rose rosary and her Infant of Prague statue to complete my display.

### *Happy*



I was so happy that my best friend and college roomie was able to make the long drive for the shower. We are like sisters and often got mistaken for twins in college. There are many things that computers mess up, and quite honestly they often complicate life instead of fixing it. However, a computer randomly matched us up and it couldn't have been more right. Kim is the perfect compliment for me as far as friends, and one of the only people I would ever willingly choose to be my roommate. I always joke about playing the lottery to win millions, but truly I have already won the best lottery there is. I not only ended up with the best roomie ever, I have a best friend for life!

### *Funny*





I have not perfected the art of entertaining, serving, AND photographing events. Photos always seem to fall off the radar for me. However, I wanted some photos of the event. My Comare (Godmother) always takes pictures of the food at events, then we discuss the amazing menu. She was sick the day of the shower, so I wanted a photo for her. I was rushing, and am not quite tall enough to get a good aerial view, so this is what I ended up with. Please, believe me, it was much more impressive in person. We dined on Gluten free goat cheese, cherry tomato, and purple basil pizza, zoodle cucumber salad, homemade caponata (an Italian eggplant stew), roasted chicken, farro salad, gluten free blueberry lemon cake, vanilla meringues, hazelnut chocolate wafers, and lemon tartalettes.

I also found it funny that I discovered this delicious, yet incredibly easy, recipe for caponata for the first time. For generations, my family has been paying exorbitant prices to buy little cans of the stew imported from Italy. It is a family favorite, but we only ever had it at major events and holidays because it cost so much for so little. All this time, we could have just made it in the slow cooker. Wish I could have brought a pot of it to my grandmother, she would have enjoyed it so, and was always my best cheerleader.



So, rushing around and trying to take photos before anything got moved led to very blurry photos. My little set up looked so lovely, if I do say so myself, with my crystal stemware, pretty, blue china, crystal ice bucket, and selection of drinks on a beautiful cream table cloth. Please, close your eyes and imagine. I purchased a couple of French sodas, my favorite splurge drink ever. (You can keep your wine and fancy mixed cocktails, I'll savor my French lemonade soda.) a delicious peach nectar, and seltzer. What's that you say? There's no tea at my tea party. Well, you are correct. I got so caught up in everything, I forgot to make it. Mea culpa. No one missed it, though.

***Real***



I have been acutely aware of my grandmother's absence this pregnancy. I miss her so very much and wish she could be here to share in my joy. It seems difficult to comprehend that this child will never know my parents, nor my grandparents who have meant so much throughout my life. My heart aches for them every day, but they will only be vague stories and old photographs to my baby. I prayed on my grandmother's silver rosary and wore her MOM bracelet that my mother had bought her.

I also wore coral beads that I discovered in the jewelry box I inherited from my grandmother. There isn't anything very special in there, all her fine jewelry was stolen in a burglary over two decades ago, however it is priceless to me. I love to go in there and explore to find a piece that matches my outfit. The best part, though, is when I pull out a drawer or open a side, it still smells like her, and for that moment she is close to me, like she never even left.



A friend gave me a beautiful swing that her daughter has outgrown. It couldn't be more perfect. Another special blessing. Teddy is keeping it warm for baby. Despite all that has been lost, every goodbye that I have cried through over these past eight years, there is still so much hope and joy to be sought. Last year, beginning at Christmas 2014, was a heartbreak of a year. I lost my mother and my grandmother in four and a half months. I bid goodbye to my grandparents' home just two weeks later, my favorite place on this earth, as a child, and the most welcoming little space I ever knew. My heart was shattered, my soul crushed, I reeled from the intensity of the loss, and the trauma of watching the two most important women in my life slip into the hereafter. I was determined to make 2016 a fresh start, to find my joy and purpose

once more. Now, after all those who I bid goodbye, I am preparing to welcome a new little love. Life truly is a circle, and God has been so good to me.

Stay safe little one, Mommy longs to hold you close, but for now rest well deep within me and remind me that the best is always yet to be!

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# Joining Christ To Save and Heal the World

August 15, 2016 by [Susan Stabile](#)

Earlier today I had the privilege of leading a day of reflection for the faculty and staff of Cristo Rey High School in Minneapolis. I have known about and admired the mission and approach of the Cristo Rey high schools for a long time. This past June I had the fortune of attending a celebration of the school's alum and was enormously impressed by the students I met. As a consequence I was grateful for the opportunity to spend a number of hours with those committed to the school and its mission.

Since the theme the school has adopted for the year is *Contemplation in Action*, a central Ignatian theme, I divided our time together into two parts. In our first session, I focused on God's invitation to use to be part of his plan for the salvation of the world. The second was devoted to considering the challenges of sticking close to our commitment to God in the face of the temptations of the world in which we live.

I ended my second talk by sharing Louis Savary's phrasing of Christ's invitation to stand with him. I read it slowly, pausing after each question or statement, to give the faculty and staff the ability to note where they felt discomforted or challenged as well as where they felt comfortable. I thought I'd share it here as well, since whenever I have read it to a group, people have asked me for a copy.

Here it is:

If you wish to follow me, to live and work under my standard, here is what I will look for from you.

Are you willing to be poor in spirit, that is, to realize how much more you need to grow in realizing who you are called to become?

Are you willing to learn to mourn and deal with loss and failure in your own life, as well as how to comfort people who are grieving?

Are you willing to be gentle, docile, and unassuming, for you will be required often to show compassion to the lost and forgotten, the poor and the sick, the anxious and the discouraged?

Are you willing to be continually merciful and forgiving toward others – even toward your enemies and toward yourself?

Are you willing to be open and pure in heart, for only then will you be able to recognize my presence in the least likely places?

Are you willing to be a peacemaker, willing to keep searching to find ways to mutual understanding with others and defending the innocent without resorting to violence?

I am looking for men and women who hunger and thirst for honesty and truth and are willing to take a stand against injustice.

I am looking for men and women who expect to be persecuted for being good, honest, and

compassionate, and who will not be surprised to be scorned falsely and hear all kinds of evil spoken against them on my account.

In addition, I am looking for you to be proactive and creative, to be the sale of the earth, never losing your taste for the kingdom.

I am looking for you to be a lamp for the world, letting God's light shine through you, so that others may see the good works around them and give glory to the Creator.

Can you be these things for me?

Can you believe that I am always with you, even in the direst poverty or the deepest grief?

Can you believe that even when you are persecuted or rejected by others, you will have all the grace you need to grow and do your task?

Savary's rendition of Christ's all offers us a good opportunity to see where we are on the path to discipleship. I encourage you to spend some time with it.

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# How My Grandmom shrunk her world is a lesson for Us All! [at A Moment From De Sales]



Often, glaring TV “breaking news” or “horrendous morning headlines” overwhelm us. We don’t know how to go about fixing the problems, remedying the volatile situations, or simply making a difference that will change these situations.

Then I think about how my Grandmother fixed her problems when they seemed too big to handle. Grandma humbly “shrunk her world” and made it manageable. She stretched paychecks when food became scarce, or clothes for school had to be bought and mortgage payments paid. She shrunk her world to be proactive—instead of waiting for life to happen around her. Grandmom made it work!

One tender memory stands out. My grandfather was extremely ill, and the doctors decided to stop all treatment. My grandmother took over. She decided to walk barefoot in the upcoming Saints procession through our parish streets. Now this was no easy task, as it was June and the summer sun was just beginning to bake the streets of the procession’s route.

Yet, Grandmom choose to do what she was able to do. Shrinking her world, she turned to faith, and her trust in God. She reduced her sad situation to a realistic size capable of her handling. She walked the two hour route in her barefeet, praying her rosary, telling God of her love for Him, and asking God for His mercy for her husband.

What I admire about this story is how my Grand mom didn’t sit wringing her hands and crying “poor me.” Instead she reached for what she knew—her confidence in God and prayed. Now Grandpop later died, but a satisfied wife knew she gave this situation all she had. My Grandmother literally shrunk her “world” and acted.

This great life lesson still remains with me today. Instead of asking **why** this is happening, our faith teaches us to ask—“Now that this is happening. **How** can I manage it in the best way possible?” And like Grandmom—with God’s help we can, and we will feel better—no matter the outcome.

This was Grandmom’s approach to life, an immigrant who never quite learned the language, but still managed her family quite well. She simply made her life a size she was able to handle—and then lived it by acting.

Like Grandmom, we can’t let life overwhelm us, rather we have to reshape it into a “doable” size and

act. For instance, we realize that we can't feed all the hungry in our world, but we can start with those we see around us. We also know that we can't shelter all the homeless, but again we can try with those who "live" near us. Finally, we know that we can't erase all the intolerance and bigotry in this world today, but we can remove the strands of small-mindedness that linger in our lives.

In these ways "shrinking the world" becomes a practical way of tackling the bigger picture. In the future, remember when life's difficulties swamp us, reach for my Grandmother's approach—and "shrink your world"—and it will work!

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## Sunday Scripture [at Miss Alexandrina]

*Gospel reading for Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2016, Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time*

26 ‘Anyone who comes to me without hating father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple. 27 No one who does not carry his cross and come after me can be my disciple.

28 ‘And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? 29 Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, anyone who saw it would start making fun of him and saying, 30 “Here is someone who started to build and was unable to finish.”’

*Luke 14:25-33*



Which this scripture might seem contradictory to what else Jesus taught – to love without condition one’s parents, friends, and even those who want to harm one – he is making a clear point here, not only about having to lift one’s own cross, ie. to go through hardship, but also about what is required, or rather *not required*, when it comes to being a disciple of Christ.

The trials of the earth are base and seemingly heavy. However, Christ advises that these gifts weight us down. We shouldn’t be obsessed with our material products, as they will, in the long run, get us nowhere. This scripture, too, advises against a pretence (for, surely, one cannot not hate one’s closest, by human nature that we have expectations, which will undoubtedly be broken and cause anguish in relationships) of happiness for a life of honesty, even if it that causes judgement our way.

“...would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it...” We ought to give our all and be honest with our all. In this same way, it is not easy to give up what we love or habits that seem natural in the modern secular, but in God’s world as close to useless. In this way, we have sacrifices just as Jesus made the Ultimate Sacrifice. When we take up our individual crosses, we become closer to Christ and his suffering that was solely for to save our souls from sin. An honour that we can but



repay via discipleship.

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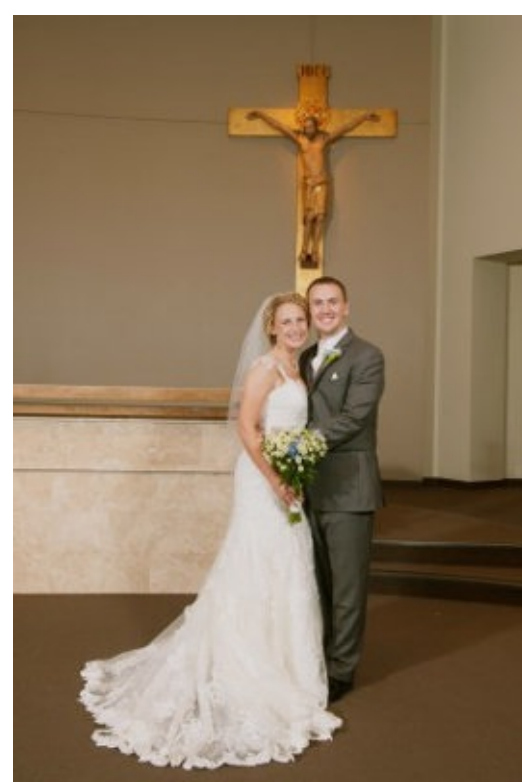
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This post is part of a series on the lives of the saints. If you are interested in more information about what a saint is, check out [this introductory post](#). Basically, saints are holy men and women whose lives demonstrate the glory of God and are now in heaven in his presence.



Today's new friend is St. Edith Stein also known as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. [Another 20th century saint](#), this one has a special place in my heart as she is the patron of the church in which I was confirmed, married, and our Anna was baptized. In 2001, we attended the first service at the first church named after St. Edith Stein. The service was in my junior high cafeteria, and it began a wonderful journey for our family, under the patronage of St. Edith Stein.



## Life History

St. Edith Stein was born in Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland) on Yom Kippur, October 12, 1891 to a prominent Jewish family. She was the youngest of a large family and her father died when she was two years old. Her mother stepped up and advanced the family business to great success. Edith was a gifted child, and born in a family that encouraged critical thinking. Despite an admiration for her mother's faith, at the age of fourteen she stopped believing in God.

St. Edith attended both the University of Breslau and University of Gottingen, she briefly paused her education during WWI, when she volunteered as a Red Cross nurse in an infectious disease hospital. She eventually pursued and received a doctorate in philosophy, focusing and excelling in phenomenology, a

philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness. Her dissertation, inspired by her time as a nurse, was titled “On the Problem of Empathy” and she worked very closely with prominent professor Edmund Husserl. After her studies, she struggled to find work as a university professor, as many German institutions were not ready for a female professor, despite her clear qualifications.

Edith eventually became a member of the faculty at the University of Freiburg, where she worked as a teaching assistant to Husserl. It was in the years following her graduation, that the faith of those around her began to make her rethink her view of religion.

Her passion for philosophy and truth led her back towards a faith. After devouring the autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila in one night, St. Edith resolved to follow truth, which led to her Baptism in 1922, at 30 years old in the Cathedral Church in Cologne, Germany. Although, her conversion was not easily accepted by her Jewish family, she said the truth would allow no other action. On her night of conversion, St. Edith writes...

‘I picked a book at random and took out a large volume. It bore the title *The Life of St. Teresa of Avila*. I began to read, was at once captivated, and did not stop till I had reached the end. As I closed the book – it was already dawn – I said, “This is the truth”.’

What I love most about St. Edith Stein’s story to Christ, is that through her conversion she never released her love and mind for reason and philosophy. Reason led her to a belief in God and was compatible with her faith. As she continued to study and grow St. Edith Stein developed a love and devotion to the cross of Jesus, meditating on and accepting the role of the cross in Christian history along with her own personal crosses.

Shortly after her conversion, she began teaching at the Dominican nuns’ school in Speyer from 1923 to 1931. She also continued to find her place in the academic world of philosophy and theology, she corresponded with many leading German professors and translated Thomas Aquinas’ *Disputed Questions on Truth*. During this time she worked to reconcile her study of phenomenology with Catholic thought, specifically Thomism, through writing, research, and reason. By 1931, she was a professor at the German Institute for Scientific Pedagogy in Munster. St. Edith Stein became a renowned lecturer, speaking at philosophical seminars in France, Switzerland, and Austria.

As The Nazi party grew in Germany in the early 30s, St. Edith Stein wrote a letter to Pope Pius XI describing the situation in Germany and imploring the Vatican to take a stand against the tide of anti-Semitism. Her letter received no answer, and it is not known whether the Pope ever read it. But in 1937, the Pope issued an encyclical in which he criticized Nazism and condemned antisemitism.

Twelve years after her baptism, with a great love for both St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, St. Edith Stein chooses to become a Carmelite nun, taking the name Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

She continued working as a lecturer of philosophy until Nazi pressure ended her position. She lived at the monastery in Cologne where she studied and devoted herself to kreuzwissenschaft, the science of the cross. Her life began to focus on the mystery of joy in suffering, of victory in failure, and of dying and rising with Christ.

In 1938, she made her final vow and permanent commitment to the Carmelite order. At the same time, there was fear of Nazi retribution amongst the Carmelites in Munich because they had sheltered

vulnerable Jewish and Catholic citizens. Eventually, her superior insisted she move to a Carmelite monastery in the Netherlands.

The Dutch Catholic church formally protested the policies of the Nazi occupation troops and the treatment of the Jewish people, and after a letter from the bishops read aloud in the churches of Holland, the Nazi's arrested hundreds of Catholic Jews. St. Edith Stein and her sister Rosa were among those arrested. The sisters were transported by cattle train with 987 other prisoners, many of whom were dead and dying, to Auschwitz in August 1942. She is said to have huddled with terrified children, speaking reassuring words and attempting to offer comfort. As the Nazi's led them away, St. Edith Stein said to her sister "Come, Rosa, we are going for our people." These sisters offered their lives in solidarity with the Jewish people. Alongside millions of other Jews and dissenting citizens, St. Edith Stein was stripped of all dignity, starved, and brutally abused. She died the same year in Auschwitz gas chambers.

Edith Stein was beautified in 1987 and canonized by St. Pope John Paul II in 1998 after a confirmed medical miracle involving Teresia McCarthy the daughter of a Melkite Catholic priest in Boston.

## **The Saint in Art:**

St. Edith Stein is typically depicted in art wearing a Discalced Carmelite nun's habit, a blue veil and brown tunic. Other common symbols are the yellow star of David, flames, a book, barbed wire, and/or a cross.

## **Patron Saint Of**

St. Edith Stein is a patroness of martyrs, loss of parents, converted Jews, World Youth Day, and is one of the six patron saints of Europe.

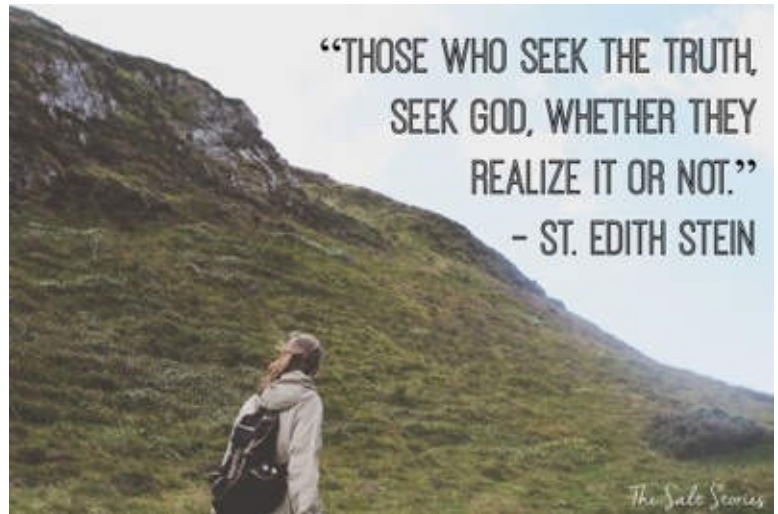
## **Quotes:**

"Ave Cruz,  
Spec Unica"

-St. Edith Stein

"Hail cross, our only hope"

*The Salt Stories*



"Let go of your plans. The  
first hour of your morning  
belongs to God. Tackle the  
day's work that he charges  
you with, and he will give  
you the power to  
accomplish it."

- St. Edith Stein

*The Salt Stories*

"Ave Cruz, Spec Unica" translates to "Hail Cross, Our Only Hope." – St. Edith Stein, the words that she left behind for her Mother Superior that were scribbled on a scrap of paper and thrown from the train to Auschwitz.

"Those who seek the truth, seek God, whether they realize it or not."- St. Edith Stein

"To suffer and to be happy although suffering, to have one's feet on the earth, To walk on the dirty and rough paths of this earth and yet to be enthroned with Christ at the Father's right hand, to laugh and cry with the children of this world and ceaselessly sing the praises of God with the choirs of angels. This is the life of the Christian until the morning of eternity breaks forth."- St. Edith Stein

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

"O my God, fill my soul with holy joy, courage and strength to serve You. Enkindle Your love in me and

then walk with me along the next stretch of road before me. I do not see very far ahead, but when I have arrived where the horizon now closes down, a new prospect will open before me, and I shall meet it with peace.”- St. Edith Stein

“On the question of relating to our fellowman – our neighbor’s spiritual need transcends every commandment. Everything else we do is a means to an end. But love is an end already, since God is love.”- St. Edith Stein

## Ways to Celebrate

Feast Day: August 9

### Activity:

1.) Do some research about [Auschwitz](#). As hard as it may be, familiarize yourself with the history so that it is something that we never allow to happen again in human history. You can also read this [lesson about religious life in Auschwitz](#).

2.) St. Edith Stein teaches us how to relate to our brothers and sisters, both Jewish and others alike, by standing and dying alongside of them. Consider what you can do to stand up for current injustices.

“Those who remain silent are responsible.”- St. Edith Stein

3.) Celebrate with our Jewish brothers and sisters by eating kosher, a honey cake, latkes, or [kugel](#). You can also celebrate by listening to [Jewish folk music](#) and stand firm in the truth that salvation is from the Jews. You can also check out this list of [conversion stories from Jewish](#) brothers and sisters.

4.) Put your family’s geometry and crafting skills to make your own [St. Edith Stein Star of David](#). Or check out this sweet [St. Edith Stein coloring page](#) and wisdom activity.

5.) This brilliant and prolific Saint left her philosophical work for others to read. Check out Edith Stein’s writings. A few I found particularly interesting are her [Essays on Woman](#), [The Vocation of the Soul to Eternal Life](#), [Verses For a Holy Spirit Novena](#), and [The Science of the Cross](#). You can also check out a quick post about this strong lady’s thoughts on [womanhood](#). Girl power!

6.) St. Edith Stein appreciated a good book, an earnest struggle toward truth, and [the arts](#). Find a book, artist, or activity that brings you closer to beauty and truth and let yourself be immersed in the art or experience. Maybe pull an all nighter with the [Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila](#), like our dear saint did.

7.) Rethink your morning routine with this St. Teresa quote. Consider how to change the first thing on your mind and if there is a way to offer more of this time to God in prayer.

“Let go of your plans. The first hour of your morning belongs to God. Tackle the day’s work that he charges you with, and he will give you the power to accomplish it.”

### Prayers

Dear St. Teresia Benedicta of the Cross

Child of the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur,

Daughter of Abraham,

Bride of Christ,

Seeker of truth,

Scholar of the Church

Handmaid of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel,

Servant of the Suffering Servant,

Presence of mercy,

Victim of victimizers,

Embracer of the cross of Christ-like love,

Martyr of Auschwitz,

Imitator of Jesus,

Conqueror of evil,

Friend of God, Edith,

Please pray for me. Please intercede for this petition of mine. (Here mention your petition).

Amen.

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Join me in celebrating this strong woman and brave Saint. Hopefully you have gained a new friend in heaven. I know I have.

To meet more saints, check out some of my earlier posts in this series:

Sources:

- <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/day.cfm?date=2016-08-09>
  - [http://lekcja.auschwitz.org/en\\_18\\_duchowienstwo/](http://lekcja.auschwitz.org/en_18_duchowienstwo/)
  - <http://stedithstein.org/our-patron-saint>
  - [http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=179](http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=179)
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## Bishop Fulton Sheen and 'The Assumption and the Modern World'

When I read many of the great Catholic authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – G.K. Chesterton, Bishop Fulton Sheen, Flannery O’Connor, Romano Guardini, and others like them, it seems to me as if they are writing today and witnessing the same distorted elements of the secular neo-pagan culture we see everyday. I think that many of these writers were prophets in their own times – for they saw then what was coming to the world in which we live in today. To understand the present, I believe we must look into the past.

So for today’s “Mondays with Mary”, I draw from one of the great Catholic Bishops of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, a figure I spoke about from above, and fan favorite of many devout Catholics today – Bishop Fulton Sheen.

In his book, [\*The World’s First Love – Mary, Mother of God\*](#), Bishop Sheen writes about the contrast between today’s modern philosophies and the fourth Marian dogma – The Assumption of Mary into Heaven, which by the way is today’s Solemnity. Although I would love to explain in great detail the words of Fulton Sheen to you, I just don’t have that kind of time nor should you hear it from me. Reading him your self is the best option since I only have a small fraction of his intelligence.

The modern philosophies that Bishop Sheen begins with are Darwinism, Marxism and Totalitarianism. He continues down the rabbit hole of modern secularism by explaining the damages of not only the three philosophies above, but also dives into Jean-Paul Sartre and Sigmund Freud – two philosophers that have sowed countless seeds of confusion and distortion regarding the human person and human sexuality. Each of these modern philosophies has developed like weeds, seeking to destroy the fruit that grows around it – and this is what we witness today in our modern culture.

This however is only one side of the battlefield, for the Assumption of the Mary into Heaven brings light into the darkness, pouring upon us Love and Life. Even though the modern world seems to be heavily steeped in the philosophies above, the Assumption of Mary takes these head-on and insures us that these philosophies are bound to fail, finding themselves upon the trash heap of history and eternity. It is in Love and Life that the Assumption finds its home and rest.



Assumption of the Virgin Mary, Rubens.

To conclude today's post, I now give you seven quotes from Bishop Fulton Sheen focusing on 'The Assumption and the Modern World' –

1. "This 'pull' on our hearts by the Spirit of God is always present, and it is only our refusing wills and the weakness of our bodies as a result of sin that keep us earth-bound...If God exerts a gravitational pull on all souls, given the intense love of Our Lord for His Blessed Mother that descended and the intense love of Mary for her Lord that ascended, there is a created suspicion that love at this stage would be so great as 'to pull the body with it'.
2. "Love in its nature is an ascension in Christ and an assumption in Mary...One thing is certain: the Assumption is easy to understand if one loves God deeply, but it is hard to understand if one loves not."
3. "To a world that worships the body, the Church now says, 'there are two bodies in Heaven, one the glorified human nature of Jesus, the other the assumed human nature of Mary.' Love is the secret of the Ascension of one and of the Assumption of the other, for love craves unity with its beloved. The Son returns to the Father in the unity of Divine Nature, and Mary returns to Jesus in the unity of human nature. Her nuptial flight is the event to which our whole generation moves."
4. "In this doctrine of the Assumption, the Church meets the despair of the world in a second way. She affirms the beauty of life as against death. When wars, sex, and sin multiply the discords of men, and death threatens on every side, the Church bids us life up our hearts to the life that has the immortality of the Life that nourished it...Eat the food of earth, and one dies; eat the Eucharist, and one lives eternally. She, who is the mother of the Eucharist, escapes the decomposition of death."
5. "The modern man gets back to nothingness through despair; the Christian knows nothingness only through self-negation, which is humility. The more that the pagan 'nothings' himself, the closer he gets to the hell of despair and suicide. The more the Christian 'nothings' himself, the closer he gets to God. Mary

went so deep down into Nothingness that she became exalted...And her exaltation was also her Assumption.”

6. “In Mary there is a triple transition. In the Annunciation we pass from the holiness of the Old Testament to the holiness of Christ. At Pentecost we pass from the holiness of the historical Christ to the holiness of the Mystical Christ or His Body, which is the Church...The third transition is the Assumption, as he becomes the first human person to realize the historical destiny of the faithful as member of Christ’s Mystical Body, beyond time, beyond death, and beyond judgment.”

7. “Mary is always in the vanguard of humanity...by her Assumption, she goes ahead like her Son to prepare a place for us. She participates in the glory of her Son, reigns with Him, presides at His Side over the destinies of the Church in time, and intercedes for us, to Him, as He, in His turn, intercedes to the Heavenly Father...Mary always seems to be the advent of what is in store for man.”

In a time, when humanity seems to care nothing for the supernatural that pertains to God, let us ask for the intercession of Venerable Bishop Fulton Sheen to intercede for not only our country, but for all of humanity. Let us pray that the Assumption of Mary will wake up the world to beauty, love, and life – the same Beauty, Love, and Life that not only died for the world, but also intercedes on its behalf.

**Blessed Virgin Mary, in your Assumption, as the Immaculate Conception...Pray for Us.**

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This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2016/08/15/mondays-with-mary-bishop-fulton-sheen-and-the-assumption-and-the-modern-world/>  
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# Not Voting For Hillary (or Trump): A Moral Dilemma [at Designs by Birgit]



Last week I wrote an article for Catholic Stand Entitled

## [10 Reasons I Can Not Vote for Trump \(or Hillary\)](#)

. In the ensuing days I've been called a few names, told I don't know my faith, and have been accused of shilling for Hillary Clinton. It has also been stated, in no uncertain terms, that all of my research of sources from various positions - mainstream media, pro-life sites, Catholic voters guides, and actual video footage - is based on hearsay and devious editing.

My opinion of Mr. Trump was formed long before he became one of many Republican candidates and rebirthed himself from his lifelong pro-abortion, Democrat views. Yet the accusations (against me) and the defensive measures (for Trump) continue.

Yes, I weighed the (supposed) consequences. I just don't believe Trump when his newly minted persona says he will appoint pro-life justices (after he just said his pro-choice sister would be an excellent addition to SCOTUS).

Yes, I know that the various moral choices Catholics have include voting for 'one who will do less harm'. Yet, still, here I am exercising one of those moral choices presented by the Church, reached with much soul searching, prayer, and a fully formed conscience. I don't expect to change the minds of the blindly supportive Trump supporters (just as I doubt they can change mine). What I am attempting to do is to give some solace to those who, like me, get a greasy, queasy feeling when thinking of all that a Trump presidency could very well entail.

Here, then, are my ten reasons for not voting for candidate Trump (or Hillary). For the details, refer to the

1. Trump is a Political Chameleon
2. The Lessor of Two Evils (Or the one who would do less harm) Isn't a Valid Reason
3. He's a Loose Cannon
4. Having Abortion Exceptions Makes Him Pro-Choice
5. Trump Is In It for Himself
6. I Am Only Accountable for My Own Vote
7. No, Refraining from a Trump Vote is Not a Vote for Hillary
8. He's a Democrat in Republican Clothing
9. One Presidency Cannot Repair the Damage That Took Decades to Create

The only Savior this world has ever seen – or will ever see – is Jesus Christ. The faulty thinking that seeks to justify a vote for Trump is impossible to realize in real life. The litany of problems faced by our nation – healthcare, terrorism, financial ruin, loss of religious liberty, commercialization of women and sale of unborn baby parts – will take decades of righteous leadership to undo. Donald Trump is not the person to begin the pilgrimage down that path.

Even if a moral champion was elected, years of Congressional failure would have to be addressed as well. Instead of placing all of our hopes in one candidate, we should address the moral failure of all representatives. Accepting empty speeches and backtracking leaders has been the norm far too long. Every vote should be carefully discerned by moral standards. Hold the feet of our representatives – from dog catcher to president – to the fire of righteous judgment. Isn't it time to aspire to be led by those who lead us to salvation?

This would be a good to time ponder, "What would we get if Trump won?" Within the answer lies the source of my trepidation. Based on the facts garnered about candidate Trump there are certain conclusions to be drawn. What we get from a Trump presidency will not be like anything we have ever had before – because Trump is unlike any candidate we have ever had. His positions come from a position of power. Morals and ethics are not really given a seat at his table.

How terrible would it be to have the strongest

[pro-life/moral plank](#)

ever in the GOP platform and then have a president who adhered to it even less than any previous one?

++++

Editor Update 8-5-16:

**Alternatives?**

""You shall not murder' contains no exceptions. If there are exceptions made, there can be no equality.

Which means there can be no justice. The premises for the rule of law, and any decent claim to liberty, are completely destroyed. What part of this do American Christian 'pro-lifers' fail to understand? The main obstacle to saving our country is not Planned Parenthood, or Obama, it is "conservatives" who don't seem to understand what it is that must be conserved if we are going to survive as a free, secure, prosperous people. I'm sorry if this message is offensive to some, but it's the truth. And it's a truth everyone needs to hear, and act upon in their politics, before it is too late for America and for our posterity."

--

[Tom Hoefling](#)

or

"...

[Darrell Castle](#)

, the Constitution Party nominee. His platform is straightforward: the Constitution must be upheld, ALL human life must be protected, the Federal Reserve must be abolished, and national sovereignty must be defended."

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This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2016/08/not-voting-for-hillary-or-trump-moral.html>  
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# God, Family, Work, Then Play [at Journey to Wisdom]

Sunday September 4, 2016

A Reflection on Luke 14:25-33, N.A.B.



A bathrobe-clad sleep-eyed husband balefully watches his wife prepare to leave for Sunday morning church services; finally he mutters, “Isn’t all of this praying at church just a waste of time?” A defiant teen age boy whispers to his younger sister, “Boy, have things changed around here since Dad got religion!” A bright young woman, a college student majoring in microbiology, returns home for the summer and announces, “I’m sorry Mom and Dad but science just doesn’t support religion, so I’m not going to go to church with you this morning, and in the future I would appreciate it if you wouldn’t talk about God in front of me!” And, so it goes!

Jesus was, and still is, the supreme master of capturing an audience’s attention with thought-provoking concepts. In this Gospel reading Jesus’ rhetorical statement about *hating family* would have astonished many of those in his audience; no doubt some of his listeners immediately turned their backs on him and stomped away.

<sup>25</sup> *Great crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and addressed them,*

<sup>26</sup> *“If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.*

<sup>27</sup> *Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

<sup>28</sup> *Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion?*

<sup>29</sup> *Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers*

*should laugh at him*

*<sup>30</sup> and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’*

*<sup>31</sup> Or what king marching into battle would not first sit down and decide whether with ten thousand troops he can successfully oppose another king advancing upon him with twenty thousand troops?*

*<sup>32</sup> But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms.*

*<sup>33</sup> In the same way, everyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple. – Luke 14:25-33 N.A.B.*

In our present day, as in Jesus’ day, when we answer the call *to go to him* we should be prepared for some negative consequences: estrangement from family and friends, and yes, sometimes even persecution. Tragically, those who suffer the disapproval or ridicule of family or friends are sometimes persuaded to ignore God’s call to discipleship; some even lose their faith.

In our modern chaotic world God has to come first, then family, then work, and lastly play. True disciples put God before everything else in their lives, including family. A wife reading this might respond with, “Wait a minute! Family has to come first!” Really? What is the probability of a man who puts God first in his life abandoning his family or becoming a spouse abuser? A husband reading this might think, “The kids and I had better come first!” Really? What is the likelihood of a wife who puts God first in her life being unfaithful to her husband? What the odds of a marriage ending in divorce when both the husband and wife put Jesus first in their lives? Can a true disciple neglect her children?

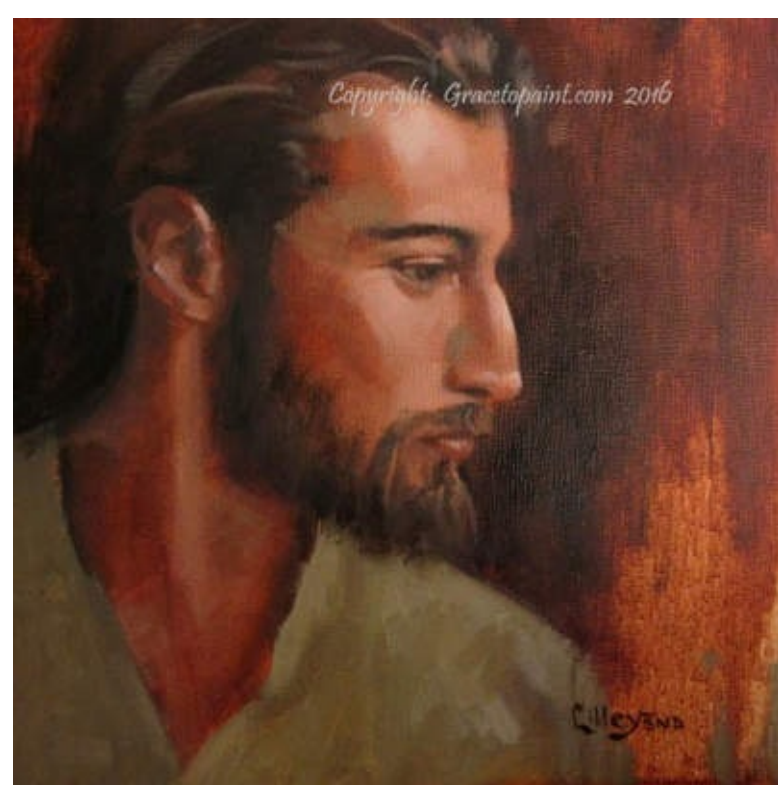
Putting God first in our lives doesn’t mean spending all of our waking hours in prayer; it can mean choosing to attend Sunday church services instead of going on a Sunday morning fishing trip with friends; it can mean shopping at the mall on Saturday instead of Sunday, it can mean being habitually polite instead of being customarily rude, it can mean driving safely instead of cutting another car off in traffic; it can mean spending fifteen minutes reading Scripture instead of watching television, it can mean refusing to use profanity when everyone else in the group does; the list is endless.

The urge to worship God (discipleship) is a deep-rooted and powerful and supernatural force which is ingrained in our souls. True disciples are at peace with God, themselves, their family, and their neighbors. Those who refuse to accept God’s call are predictably angry, hostile, and resentful because of the Godless existence they live. But there is always hope because God never abandons his people – even when they reject him!





# Jesus (profile, green robe) [at Grace to Paint]



8×8" oil paint on cradled artist board; use 'comment' below to inquire.

I try to enjoy the looseness of oil paint when I can; the danger is always getting too tight.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2016/08/26/jesus-profile-green-robe/>  
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## **So what are we to do this election cycle as Catholic voters? [at Brutally Honest]**

*So what are we to do this election cycle as Catholic voters? Note that by “Catholic,” I mean people who take their faith seriously; people who actually believe what the Catholic faith holds to be true; people who place it first in their loyalty, thoughts and actions; people who submit their lives to Jesus Christ, to Scripture and to the guidance of the community of belief we know as the Church.*

*Anyone else who claims the Catholic label is simply fooling himself or herself — and even more importantly, misleading others.*

*The American bishops offer valuable counsel in their document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*(available from the USCCB), and this year especially, they ask us to pray before we vote. This is hardly new “news.” Prayer is always important. In a year when each Catholic voter must choose between deeply flawed options, prayer is essential. And prayer involves more than mumbling a Hail Mary before we pull the voting booth lever for someone we see as the lesser of two evils. Prayer is a conversation, an engagement of the soul with God. It involves listening for God’s voice and educating our consciences.*

*It’s absurd – in fact, it’s blasphemous – to assume that God prefers any political party in any election year. But God, by his nature, is always concerned with good and evil and the choices we make between the two. For Catholics, no political or social issue stands in isolation. But neither are all pressing issues equal in foundational importance or gravity. The right to life undergirds all other rights and all genuine social progress. It cannot be set aside or contextualized in the name of other “rights” or priorities without prostituting the whole idea of human dignity.*

*God created us with good brains. It follows that he will hold us accountable to think deeply and clearly, rightly ordering the factors that guide us, before we act politically. And yet modern American life, from its pervasive social media that too often resemble a mobocracy, to the relentless catechesis of consumption on our TVs, seems designed to do the opposite. It seems bent on turning us into opinionated and distracted cattle unable to gain mastery over our own appetites and thoughts. Thinking and praying require silence, and the only way we can get silence is by deciding to step back and unplug.*

*This year, a lot of good people will skip voting for president but vote for the “down ticket” names on their party’s ballot; or vote for a third party presidential candidate; or not vote at all; or find some mysterious calculus that will allow them to vote for one or the other of the major candidates. I don’t yet know which course I’ll personally choose. It’s a matter properly reserved for every citizen’s informed conscience.*

*But I do know a few of the things I’ll be reading between now and November.*

And pray sincerely about what you’ll do in November.

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This contribution is available at [http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally\\_honest/2016/08/so-what-are-we-to-do-this-election-cycle-as-catholic-voters.html](http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally_honest/2016/08/so-what-are-we-to-do-this-election-cycle-as-catholic-voters.html)  
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HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Sat, 10 Sep 2016 21:26:18 GMT Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 Transfer-Encoding: chunked Connection: keep-alive Strict-Transport-Security: max-age=86400 Vary: Accept-Encoding Vary: Cookie X-hacker: If you're reading this, you should visit [automattic.com/jobs](https://automattic.com/jobs) and apply to join the fun, mention this header. X-Pingback: <https://shiftingmyperspective.com/xmlrpc.php> Link: ; rel=shortlink X-ac: 3.atl \_dfw

# Curiosity Questions [at Shifting My Perspective]

**“Do you not yet understand?” Matthew 16:9**



Jocelyn with MaryAnn and Anna

My kids and I went to the new [Discovery Woods](#) a few weeks ago. We met up with my husband’s cousin MaryAnn. After, we went back to MaryAnn’s house and had dinner with her and her two grown children, Jonathan and Anna.

It always amazes me how much Jonathan and Anna engage my kids. Although they’re in their mid-twenties, they show such a sincere interest in whatever my kids’ passion of the day is: Pokemon, Harry Potter, you name it. I watch my kids grow a few feet taller with all the attention.

As we drove away, I asked my kids what that felt like: to have people so interested in them that they dropped whatever they were doing to focus and shine the spotlight on them. Of course my kids said it felt wonderful. Then they quickly went back to their own kid conversation and didn’t give it a second thought.

But I did. As I drove home, I wondered what MaryAnn had done to raise two amazingly bright and sincere people who were fantastic conversationalists?



Jonathan with Mason and Zack

I once read that the only common denominator among [Rhode Scholars](#) is they all sat down to dinner every night with their families. That little factoid intrigued me. I immediately vowed to myself that when I had a family of my own, I'd keep dinner time sacred.

For years I have been scolding and disciplining my kids at the table. I have also tried a million and one tricks attempting to keep that long ago vow to myself. It all seemed to be a futile exercise as chaos reigned, until recently. After more than ten years of sweat and tears, all my efforts have FINALLY payed off. I am thrilled to report that dinner time is actually enjoyable now.

During the school year, we each take turns sharing three things about our day that no one knows. During the summer, we each take turns sharing about the books we're reading. My number one rule is that no one interrupts the one who is sharing. At last, dinners were peaceful... but something was still missing.

If my research is correct, Jesus asked 153 questions over the course of the four Gospels. He didn't just preach, using monologues. He asked questions of His listeners to engage them, to create dialogue. Not only did He push them to ingest what He was trying to teach them, I think He was trying to role model the best way to learn anything, and the best way to read the Scriptures: we need to listen, get curious, ask questions, and then listen to the answers. That's what leads to more knowledge, and better understanding.

Bingo! That was my missing dinnertime piece. Focusing so much on getting my kids to not interrupt each other, I had established a rhythm where everyone took turns giving their own monologues. Sure, my kids had gotten so much better at listening, but they hadn't learned to be engaged. They were just biding their time until they could give their own monologue. That wasn't broadening their horizons at all, and I'm sure that wasn't the way those Rhode Scholars broadened theirs.

After this revelation, I recently brought up our time with Jonathan and Anna again at dinner. Through a series of questions, I led my kids to the conclusion that it was so enjoyable talking with Jonathan and Anna because they listened deeply, got curious, asked questions to learn more, and then listened to the answers. I called the process "Curiosity Questions." Then I said that from now on, we each have to come up with at least one Curiosity Question to ask after each of us gets to share.

Wow! The difference that one new element has made is unbelievable! I can literally see my kids listening deeply as their little minds work to formulate a Curiosity Question. Moreover, the one being asked feels so special that we care enough to want to learn more about what matters to him or her.

By no means am I aspiring to create my own little Rhode Scholars at my dinner table. But truly listening to people, and caring about what matters to them, are gifts in and of themselves. If I can raise my three kids to do that, I will be blessing the world three times over.

***Questions For Reflection:***

- \* Are my kids engaged while listening to each other at the dinner table?***
- \* Do they get curious enough to ask questions to learn more?***
- \* Do I get curious about what they share, asking questions to learn more from them?***

Thank you so much for reading! **Could you please vote for my blog and put me back in first place again?!!!**

All it takes is 2 quick clicks:

- Click on the cute pink and brown “Top Mommy Blogs” icon in the top right margin.
- Click on the mom on the left with a pink check mark over her.

It’s that simple! That wonderful site ranks mommy blogs based on votes. So feel free to vote up to once a day! Thanks so much!

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This contribution is available at <http://shiftingmyperspective.com/2016/08/11/curiosity-questions/>  
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# Imagine God Embracing You While You Pray! [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

If you read that simple reflection, you will understand what a blessing it was for me to return to that special place a few weeks ago and to hear Father John Denburger, O.C.S.O. discuss prayer once again.

Father did not disappoint. Underlying all prayer, he told us, is God's decisive love for each of us.

During the course of his presentation, this soft-spoken and insightful teacher drew a distinction between two types of prayer: maintenance and spousal.

"Maintenance prayer," he said, "is that which gets me through the day, helps me to do this or that, or to ask for this grace or that benefit, etc. This type of prayer has value and is okay." But it is not enough. "It has no room for conversion because I am not thinking of my relationship with God but asking for something. Therefore, we also need Spousal prayer – "prayer that draws us into an intimate relationship with God."

It should be obvious that we cannot develop much of a relationship with the God we profess to love if we rarely speak to Him. "Religion," Father said, "is an intimate relationship with God, not a second hand experience." Prayer therefore cannot be sporadic.

"The Psalms," Father stated, "are both prayer **and** a teaching on prayer; they are theology but in prayer form." Unfortunately, many of us who pray the Liturgy of the Hours often do so distractedly, inattentively and negligently". As a result, we miss the lessons being taught.

To buttress his point, he shared two Psalms. The first was Psalm 27:8-9:

*Of You my heart speaks; You my glance seeks;*

*Your Presence, O Lord, I seek:*

*Hide not Your face from me.*

*Do not in anger repel your servant.*



*You are my helper; cast me not off;*

*Forsake me not, O God, my Savior.*

He told us to look at Psalm 119 the longest of the Psalms – 176 verses. The first three verses refer to God as “Him” Then something happens. From verse 4 and thereafter God is referred to as “You”. “God,” he exclaimed, “has become personal to the psalmist.” Our Lord “desires to be with you and me...Prayer is a very intimate act between lovers – Lover and lover.”

God must become personal to each of us!

Among other additional lessons on prayer we may have missed while reciting the Psalms inattentively, distractedly or negligently, Father suggested these two:

*“Even when we feel nothing while praying, the Holy Spirit penetrates our soul while we pray – even when we are not aware of it.”*

and

*“Feelings in response to our prayer are not necessary; they are mere icing on the cake should we be blessed with some.”*

But how do we get to the type of prayerful intimacy that Jesus seeks with us flawed and sinful souls? Father suggested that we imagine God embracing us during prayer!

This image of an embracing God appeals to me. It came to Father one day while he was reflecting on Jesus’ interaction with lepers. In Jesus’ time, as we know, lepers were required to keep their distance from those considered clean. No Jew would ever approach, let alone physically touch a leper.

Yet Jesus did both. In order to touch that diseased and ostracized soul, Jesus had to first walk up to him. Such conduct would have shocked those who observed Jesus doing so. Actually, Father imagined Jesus going further than merely touching the leper. He saw Jesus embracing the leper as did the Father upon the return of the prodigal son.

Why would God do less to one seeking an intimate prayerful and personal relationship with Him?

To help us enter into a similar frame of mind during prayer, Father challenged us to ponder and keep these two additional thoughts ever in our mind:

*“I would not be praying unless God was embracing and inviting me into prayer.”*

and

*“Before I even make the Sign of the Cross, Jesus has embraced me!”*

I intend to follow this good priest's advice. How about you?

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This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2016/08/monday-musings-imagine-god-embracing.html>

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## Election Novena 2016 [at Catholic365]

If you're anything like me, you're probably asking yourself, "how could this happen in America?" Yep, folks, I can't bear to choose between Hillary or Trump. I don't want either one of those to be Commander in Chief of our country.

But, that's just one more reason for me to get on my knees and pray. I firmly believe that God is still in charge and although, we probably deserve that one of these two should lead our country, I'm asking God to be merciful and send us someone who pleases Him.

My family and I just started praying a Novena to St. Jude for that intention, that God may provide us with a Godly person to lead our country. I hope that all of you are praying for the same cause. For those who have not yet started, perhaps, you will join us.

### Novena To St. Jude

Most holy Apostle, St. Jude, faithful servant and friend of Jesus, the Church honors and invokes you universally, as the patron of difficult cases, of things almost despaired of, Pray for me, I am so helpless and alone.

Intercede with God for me that He bring visible and speedy help where help is almost despaired of. Come to my assistance in this great need that I may receive the consolation and help of heaven in all my necessities, tribulations, and sufferings, particularly - that God may grant us Godly men for whom we may vote who will uphold His will.

- and that I may praise God with you and all the saints forever. I promise, O Blessed St. Jude, to be ever mindful of this great favor granted me by God and to always honor you as my special and powerful patron, and to gratefully encourage devotion to you.

Amen

### PRAYER

May the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, and loved in all the tabernacles until the end of time.  
Amen.

May the most Sacred Heart of Jesus be praised and glorified now and forever. Amen

St. Jude pray for us and hear our prayers. Amen.

Blessed be the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Blessed be the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Blessed be St. Jude Thaddeus, in all the world and for all Eternity.

(say this prayer, followed by the Our Father and the Hail Mary)

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