

NewEvangelists.org

new
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New Evangelists Monthly #46

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Forward

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

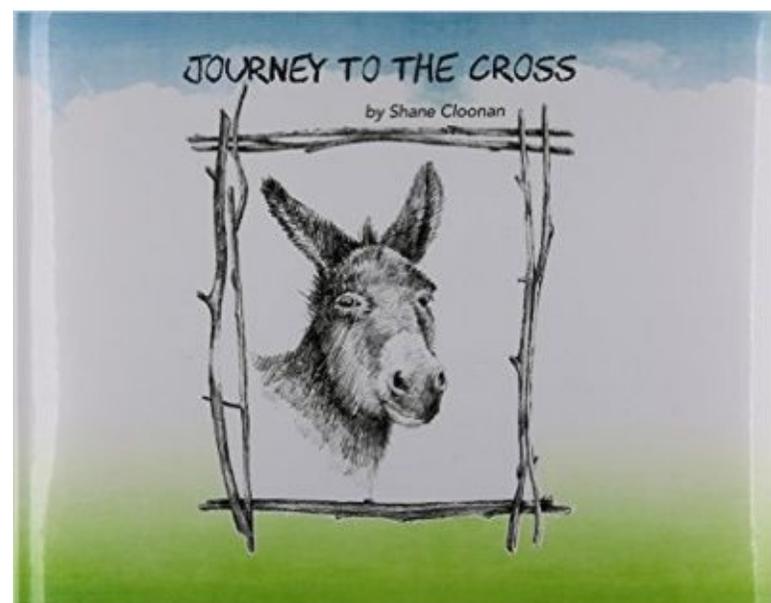
Contributing authors submit their very best piece from the prior month between subsequent first and second Saturdays. Readers are welcome to visit anytime, even while contributions are still being accepted for a new issue. Back issues are available in the archive.

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

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I recently attended the National Marketing Network Trade Show / Catholic Writers Guild Conference in Chicago this summer. At the tradeshow/conference, we Guild members got to meet many authors and receive free autographed books! I had a great time. Yet, the most memorable moment for me occurred as I traversed through the Trade Show booths. I came across a table with a certain children's book on it: *Journey to the Cross*. I said to myself, "Hey, that's the book that won in my category at the National Indie Excellence Awards contest this year!" Okay, now I must see what's so special about this book that it beat out my own book in the contest (mine was named a finalist). What occurred next was beyond awesome.

I stepped up to the table and met the author's mother. Yes, I said "mother." That took me aback, because she looked so young. I asked, "where is the author?" As I asked this question, a teenager walked up to me. At this point, I'm stunned at the young age of the author! I got to meet Shane Cloonan and immediately learned what a humble, respectful, and kind young man he has become. For some reason, Shane didn't know that his book, *Journey to the Cross* won the 2016 National Indie Excellence Awards in the Children's Religion category. I had the absolute honor of informing him. I wish I could have captured the look on his face. He was in awe. Eyes wide, he quietly said in a whisper, "Why this is really huge, isn't it?" Yes, Shane, it is huge!

My Thoughts on Journey to the Cross and Shane Cloonan

Later that evening, after he had autographed my copy, I sat down to read the story, and instantly understood why Shane's book won the award. Everyone knows the story of Jesus' birth, life, passion and death. However, no one has ever told the story from the view of the ever-faithful donkey who was a part of Jesus' life. By the time I reached the last page of the book, tears flowed down my cheeks; for this story, told from this perspective, touched my heart to the core. The donkey had such love for Jesus throughout the story; only wanting to be Jesus' faithful servant. Shane Cloonan has a definite talent for writing children's books. The etchings by Richard Browning are exquisite; giving our little ones an ability to grasp the message of the story, via illustration.

I am so glad that I made a point of asking Shane to sign my book as follows: "From the award winning author, Shane Cloonan" because, one day I hope that the name of Shane Cloonan will be a household name. I plan to keep my eye on what else this young man produces; once again requesting a signed copy

from this award winning author!

If you would like to get your copy of *Journey to the Cross*, [click here](#).

This contribution is available at <http://virginialieto.com/journey-cross-book-review/>
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7 Reasons I Do Not Wear a Chapel Veil [at Catholic Stand]

Because I Am Not More Holy than You

Many people these days look at women who choose to practice the devotion of veiling as ‘holier than thou’ – most characteristically in Novus Ordo parishes. Nothing could be further from the truth. In my personal experience, the reasons women veil are [numerous](#). Their motivation includes emulating the Blessed Mother because she is the consummate female role model. Another reason is that, often times, sacred things are veiled – the tabernacle, for example. As life-bearers, we women, have a sacred collaboration with our spouses and God. We carry the treasure of little souls within our bodies for nine months before introducing them to this world.

Because It Is a Fashion Statement

There are so many ways to embellish our appearance. We wear flattering clothing, jewelry, and perhaps a bit of makeup. Yet a chapel veil is not a fashion accessory. If the temptation to look on the veil in this way, it may be wise to reconsider this pious practice. Conversely, wearing a veil is often a hindrance to fashion. That carefully coifed head, adorned with a beautiful hairstyle may very well be [flat and unflattering](#) by the time the final blessing of Mass is given. Wearing a chapel veil can, however, affirm the recognition of our God-given femininity as complimentary to the masculinity of our spouses.

Because I Am Not Stuck In The Past

Some Catholics of good faith believe that the obligation for women to cover their heads continues to be binding to this day. Others know the law surrounding veiling was abrogated and therefore, believe the practice to be passé. A quick study of [Canon Law](#), however, confirms that, while the devotion is no longer binding, it is acceptable, and even desirable, as a [voluntary practice](#).

Because It Is a Distraction

Wearing a chapel veil is, for me, a tangible way of removing myself from this world and entering into Heaven on Earth. As I clip my veil to my hair, my demeanor changes, and my soul stills. Yes, I am in communion with the others in surrounding pews but my soul is in still deeper communion with God. The distractions of life as usual fade away and my soul is transported to the Cross. There, Mary stands at my side and we ponder together this Son she bore and the Salvation He brought.

Because I Am Not Vain

Realistically my almost sixty years have left their mark. Short-cropped, salt and pepper hair that is left undyed, a body not nearly as svelte as my younger self, and creases etched into laugh lines at mouth and eyes – that is the reality of my present self. Wearing a chapel veil of the finest, imported lace would do nothing to change these realities. If anything, donning a veil when few or no others do is the opposite of vanity. It speaks of humility and a comfort with the God-given self.

Because I Do Not Want to Call Attention to Myself

How easy it is to seek acceptance – to be one of the crowd. When we blend in we are almost anonymous. That bit of extra weight, the charcoal hair, and unexceptional face can make for a monolithic scene. It is exactly when we step out of our comfort zone, for the sake of the spiritual, that we become different. Although this is never the intent, especially for an introvert, it speaks of a devotion that overcomes. It overcomes the trepidation of being judged and presents a vulnerability not usually sought. It could be called a childlike gift to Father God, one of the ways to show Him love.

Because I Do Not Want Praise From Others

“She’s such a good Catholic; look at how modestly she dresses and wears a chapel veil!” No, that is not at all what wearing a veil is about. If anything, those of us who practice this optional devotion would rather not be called out as holy women. Speaking for myself and those friends who also veil, we are a sorry lot. Our lives have taken us on many crooked paths and self-inflicted detours. We have not always listened when the Holy Ghost whispered, much less when He hit us in the head while shouting at us, like the sinful children we are, to please pay attention.

Women Who Veil

Women who veil vary as much as our chapel veils do. We come from all walks of life – cradle Catholics, converts, young, old, Latin Mass devotees, Novus Ordo attendees, married, single, and myriad other characteristics. Even our [reasons for covering our heads](#) are numerous. The common ground is our devotion to our beautiful Catholic faith, handed down to us directly from Jesus to his disciples in an unbroken piece of Heaven on Earth.

We seek forgiveness, sin and confess, resolve and fall – but we pick ourselves back up again, keeping our eyes on the Prize. Whether you join us in the devotion of wearing a chapel veil or not, we are your sisters. Let us truly be in communion. Let us pray for one another.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicstand.com/7-reasons-not-wear-chapel-veil/>
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Like Arrows in the Hand of a Warrior [at Plot Line and Sinker (Ellen Gable, Author)]



“Children too are a gift from the Lord,

the fruit of the womb a reward

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior

are the children born of one’s youth.

Blessed are they whose quivers are full.

They will never be shamed

contending with foes at the gate.

Blessed is the man who has filled his desire from these things...” Psalm 127 3:5

So how many arrows make a full quiver?

The answer is that it depends on the quiver...and the size of the arrows.

Our publishing company’s name is [Full Quiver Publishing](#).

We now have 14 books (most published by other authors) and four books coming in the next year.

Often, people assume that we are part of the “Quiverfull” Movement. At Wikipedia, Quiverfull is described as: “a movement among conservative evangelical Christian couples... it promotes procreation, and sees children as a blessing from God eschewing all forms of birth control, including natural family planning and sterilization. Adherents are known as “quiver full”, “full quiver”, “quiverfull-minded”, or simply “QF” Christians. Some refer to the Quiverfull position as Providentialism...”

An internet search of the words “Full Quiver” shows our website on the first page, along with a majority of websites and blogs devoted to the Quiverfull Movement.

I admire couples who follow this ideology, especially in this day and age when the majority of married couples are using artificial contraception or becoming sterilized.

However, we are not part of the Quiverfull Movement. Instead, we proudly use and teach [Natural](#)

[Family Planning](#) to plan, space and limit births. When we are teaching NFP, we always encourage generosity and always stress there should be serious need to avoid pregnancy. We agree with the Church's teachings on the Theology of the Body and are well-versed in the two encyclicals [Humanae Vitae](#) and [Familiaris Consortio](#). Our publishing company publishes fiction and non-fiction that promotes the Church's teachings on sex and marriage.

So why the name?

Years ago, I listened to a talk by Kimberly Hahn, in which she quoted the Scripture passage above and talked about the great gift of children and why generosity was so important. She later stated this concept in her book, [Life-Giving Love: Embracing God's Beautiful Design for Marriage](#): *"We are in a spiritual battle, and our children are our arrows: How many arrows do you want in your quiver when you go into battle?"*

This talk made a deep impression on me. So when we were forming our publishing company, after discussing different names, this is one that we felt God calling us to use: "Full Quiver Publishing." It never dawned on us that we would be confused with the Quiverfull folks and that, occasionally, we would receive an email or a call from someone in the Quiverfull movement.

Back to the number: most quivers hold about 12 arrows. My husband and I have lost seven babies through miscarriage and are raising five sons: we thank God for our "full quiver."

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This contribution is available at <http://ellengable.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/like-arrows-in-the-hand-of-a-warrior-or-how-full-quiver-publishing-got-its-name/>

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September's Open Book & Sabbath Rest Book Talk [at Erin McCole Cupp]

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

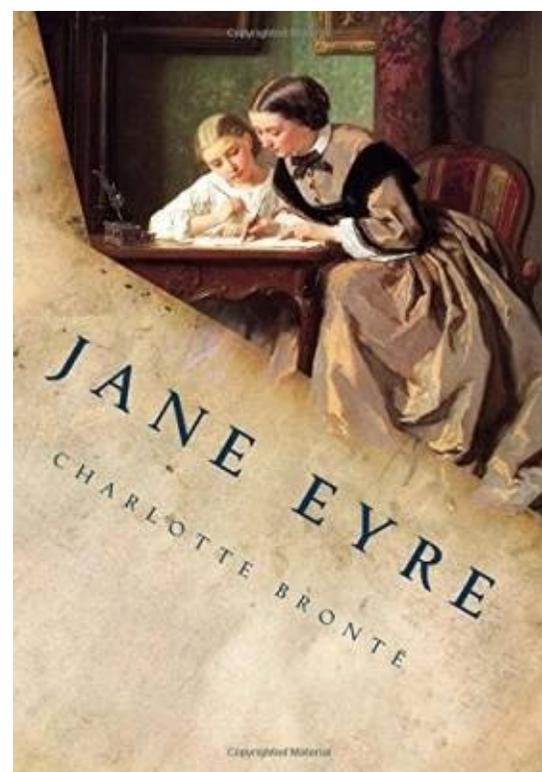


In the interests of being as efficient with my time as I possibly can, I'm killing two birds with one stone. In addition to reviewing books for #OpenBook, I've started a monthly event on [Facebook Live over at my author page](#). It's called **Sabbath Rest Book Talk**, and in it I'll talk about a few of the books I've read in the past month in terms of how they, as fiction, help us grow in humanity.

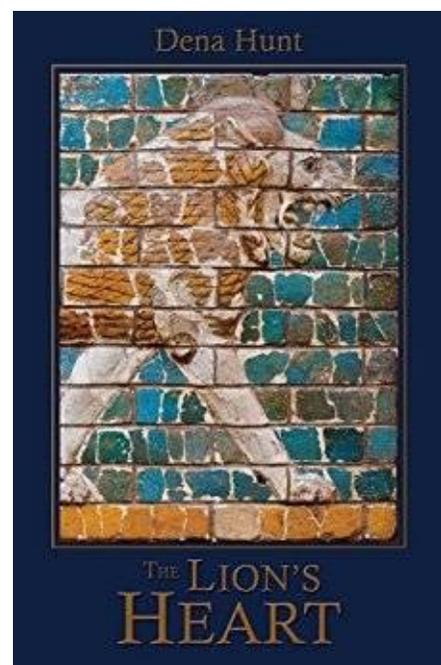
This month's focus was on **meaning**, or how fiction uses meaning to convey layer upon layer of experience, understanding, and dimensionality of the human experience. When we humans use symbols to communicate meaning, we give flesh and bone and substance to the invisible.

September's SRBT Featured Fiction:

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte

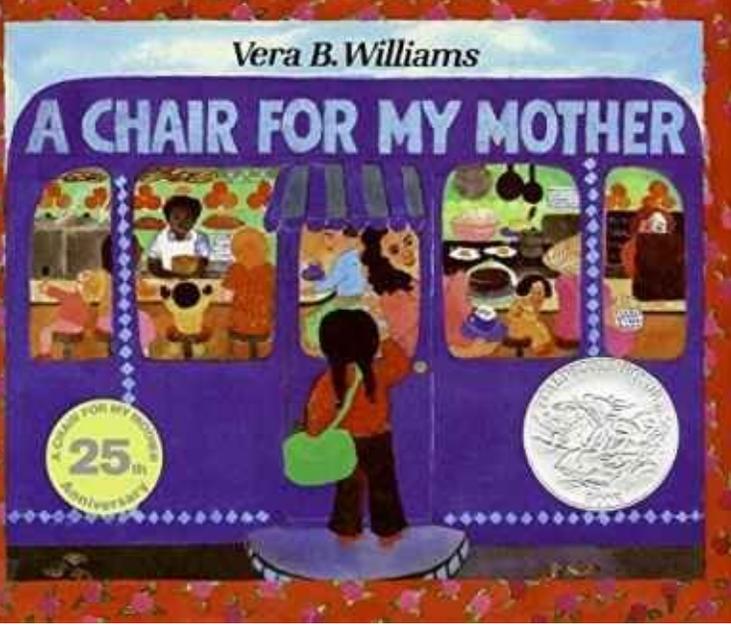


[The Lion's Heart](#) by Dena Hunt



[\(Click here for my more detailed review of The Lion's Heart\)](#)

[A Chair for My Mother](#) by Vera B. Williams



Other stuff I'm reading:

[It is Right and Just](#) by Rev. John Cunningham, OP & Rev. George Cardinal Pell [nonfiction]

It Is Right AND JUST

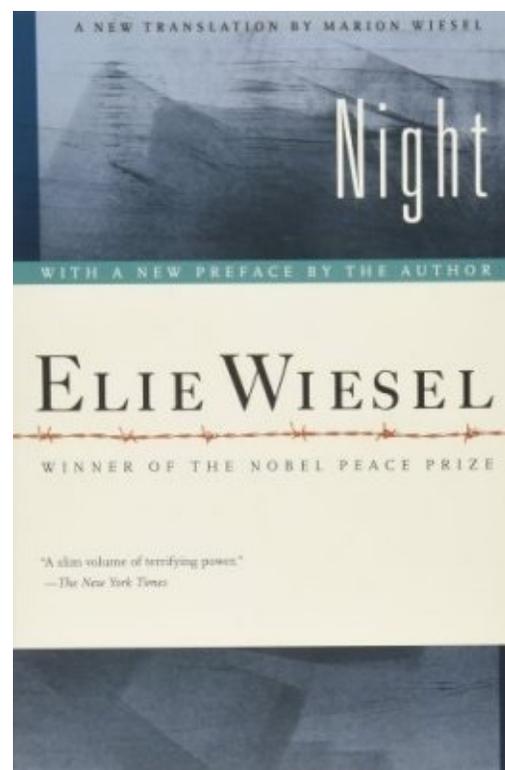


Responses of the Roman Missal

John M. Cunningham, O.P.

NEWMAN HOUSE PRESS

[Night](#) by Elie Weisel [narrative nonfiction]



And here's [September's Sabbath Rest Book Talk video](#):



What are you reading? Don't forget to [link up YOUR #OpenBook reviews over at Carolyn's!](#)

This contribution is available at <http://erinmccolecupp.com/2016/09/06/septembers-open-book-sabbath-rest-book-talk/>
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Essay on Partisan Dissent Leading to Rebellion [at If I Might Interject]

INTRODUCTION

Benedict XVI, in one of his pre-papacy books, discussed turning the Catholic faith into partisan factions. In it, he pointed out what faith was in contrast with what people were trying to do with the Church.

When I advocate a party, it thereby becomes *my* party, whereas the Church of Jesus Christ is never *my* Church but always *his* Church. Indeed, the essence of conversion lies precisely in the fact that I cease to pursue a party of my own that safeguards my interests and conforms to my taste but that I put myself in his hands and become his, a member of his Body, the Church.

Joseph Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 158.

The faith of the Church calls us to change to grow closer to God. Partisanship calls on the Church to change to match what is most pleasing to us. If we're not careful, we might find ourselves rebelling against God in the name of "reforming" or "restoring" the Church to what we want while pretending we're doing it for the benefit of others. As always, this is not a case where only one faction is guilty. Any time we get angry at the Church for changing things from, or *not* changing things to, what we think is best, we're behaving in a partisan manner.

Clarifications

I'd like to clarify something first. What I wrote above does not deny the right use of [Canon Law #212 §3](#). I'm concerned, however, that some people who appeal to this canon are misusing it to demand the Church become more like what they want, not considering (or, perhaps, refusing to accept) that the Church might have valid reasons for making some changes and refusing to make others.

I would also like to clarify that this does not mean the laity has nothing to say when a priest or bishop misuses his authority and acts against the teaching of the Church. Our Lord gave His authority to St. Peter and the Apostles, and is handed down from generation to generation to the Pope and bishops in communion with him. The priest or bishop who acts against this magisterium abuses his office. Such a one cannot demand that the laity act against what the magisterium teaches.

PART I: AUTHORITY AND DISSENT

Who Has the Authority to Determine Proper Interpretation and Church Practice?

However, Catholics do go wrong when someone claims that the Pope and bishops today are in error and go against the teachings of earlier Popes and Councils or that they were wrong in the past and finally are getting it right. The magisterium decides how to best apply the timeless teachings of the Church to the

problems of today. In contrast, someone who claims that a recent Pope “violates” what St. Pius X said, or someone who claims St. John Paul II “violated” Vatican II, has no standing to interpret the documents against the magisterium today.

This confuses some people. After all, aren’t they appealing to the magisterium? No. They are appealing to their personal opinion on how they think the document *should* be interpreted against those who actually have the right and responsibility to determine how the document *is* to be interpreted. It’s like a person trying to argue that his interpretation of the Constitution is right and the Supreme Court is wrong. The individual simply does not have the authority to interpret the Constitution in a binding manner on the country, and the individual does not have the authority to interpret magisterial teaching in a binding manner on the country.

Selective Obedience is Dissent

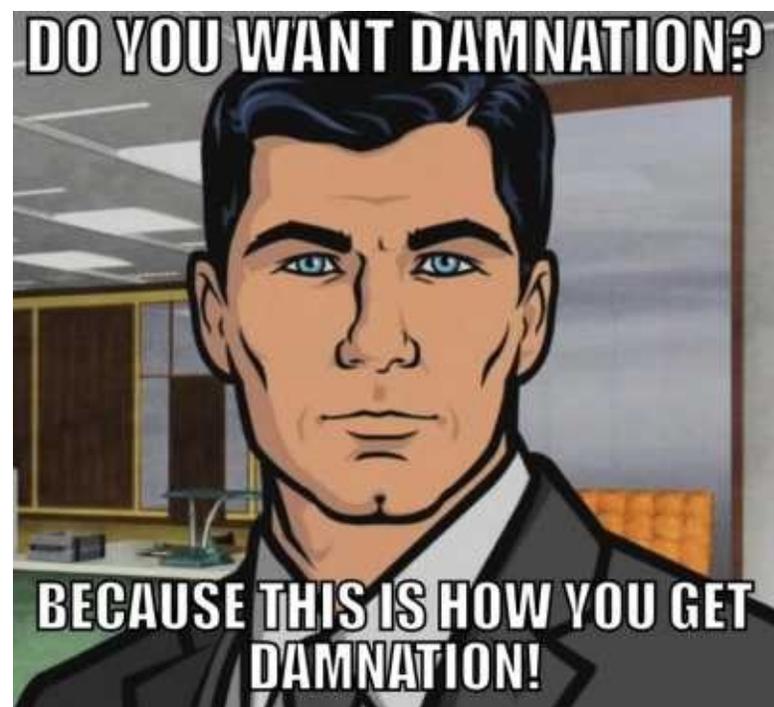
The problem is, people assume that they only have to listen to the Church if they agree with what she says. If she teaches something they don’t like, dissenters accuse her of becoming “conservative” or “liberal.” They’ll accuse her of betraying tradition or betraying Vatican II. Because the Pope and bishops are deemed “wrong” in these areas, dissenters claim they don’t have to obey the shepherds of the Church. They’ll appeal to conscience or tradition when it suits them and treat the teaching they don’t like as if it were an opinion or even an error.

The problem with that view is the Church is not an invention of men with arbitrary rules. Catholics believe (if they’re not grossly deficient in their religious education) the Church established by Our Lord and the Catholic Church today are one and the same. This means she teaches with the authority given by Christ (Matthew 16:19, 18:18, 28:18-20). Since Our Lord likens rejecting His Church with rejecting Him (Luke 10:16, cf. Matthew 18:17), dissent is a serious matter—rebellion against God Himself.

Church teaching is not arbitrary. The teachings are made for our benefit. How do we live to be faithful to God? What is incompatible with loving Him? Church teaching exists to make His teaching known. The Church is the means Our Lord chose to bring knowledge of His salvation of the world and the commandments we must keep if we would be saved (see John 14:15). Obeying only the parts of His teaching we agree with anyway is rejecting Our Lord on the rest. If we reject Him, it will not go well for us (Matthew 7:21-23).

PART II: SOME DANGEROUS ERRORS THAT LEAD TO DISSENT

The danger for Catholics today comes from the fact that rejection of authority (dissent) has metastasized. It’s no longer a case of aging modernists and radical traditionalists like the SSPX. It has spread to the mainstream of the faith, so that a growing number of Catholics who once defended the faith now believe the Church is in error to the point that they openly question or even reject *legitimate* teaching authority when it goes against their preferences, forgetting that God [punished](#) such behavior as rebellion.



Why do we assume God won't punish our rebellion,

when He punished it in others?

With that in mind, I'd like to look at some of the dangerous errors that lead people to dissent while believing themselves to be "faithful" to the "true" Church (while rejecting those given the task of shepherding it today).

Vincible Ignorance

When a person has no way of knowing what the truth is, but follows one's conscience and seeks to do what is right to the best of their knowledge, God does not condemn him for what would be impossible to know. But when a person could know if they bothered to do the research, then they do not have this excuse. When someone makes an accusation against the shepherds of the Church, we must find out the context of what was said, taking into account the difference of culture, history, and other conditions that lead to misinterpretation. Because [Rash Judgment and Calumny](#) are sins, we can't just repeat what we heard. We have to actually learn the truth about what was claimed.

For example, when people condemn (or praise) Pope Francis for "supporting same sex marriage" because he said "Who am I to judge?" they are guilty of vincible ignorance. They could look it up and read to the [transcript](#), which shows those words had nothing to do with what people think. Because they could learn, but prefer to remain in their ignorance, their lack of knowledge will be judged by Our Lord.

This leads us to our second problem.

Knowing Less than You Think You Do

Relativism must be rejected. We cannot twist Church teaching to turn "Thou shalt not do X" into "X is OK!" The problem is, some people know less about what the Church intends to teach than they think they do. There's 2000 years of Catholic theology out there, dealing with countless ways people can sin, as well as knowledge of reasons why their guilt may be increased or decreased. A person ignorant about these things might see two different issues and assume they are the same—and that one must contradict the other. So they choose the one that fits their preference and say the other one is wrong. But if the differences between the two cases are greater than the similarities, we can't compare them and claim they

contradict each other.

For example, recently on Facebook, I encountered someone claiming that St. Pius X said that secularism was a "pernicious error" and that Pope Francis said states must be secular. Therefore, this person reasoned that this "proved" Pope Francis was a heretic. A person seeing this might think this statement was proven. To which I say, "Not so fast."

St. Pius X did say this in the encyclical "[*Vehementer Nos*](#)" (#3), written in 1906. The context of this encyclical was France establishing anti-Catholic laws absolutely excluding the Church from any role in the state (a situation worse than in America today). Under those conditions, all religions were equally isolated. Put in context of today, what he was condemning was the expulsion of the Catholic Church from the public square. In contrast, Pope Francis, [speaking about France 110 years later](#) spoke about a nation needing to be secular in the sense of not harassing religions in favor of one, but also insisting on religious freedom which France did not provide in 1906. The context missed by accusers was 110 years of experience. St. Pius X was writing about a new rebellion. Pope Francis spoke about what the Church learned since then. For example, the experience of totalitarian hostility to all religion and religious persecution from a sectarian state in the Middle East.

In other words, St. Pius X wasn't wrong in condemning France for their attack on religion, but Pope Francis spoke from the perspective of things not yet present in 1906 and did not contradict his predecessor.

False Dualism

One common assumption is that if you don't support a preferred position, you support the antithesis with all the evils it involves. One common example in the election season is targeting Catholics who oppose both Trump and Clinton. Because they will not vote for Trump, they are accused of voting for Clinton and supporting all areas her politics violate Catholic teaching. Another example might be assuming that whoever thinks certain government programs don't work must favor letting people suffer.

The error here assumes that there are only two possible solutions and if a person does not support the accusers favorite position, he must be guilty of supporting the evils of the other side. But if there are more than two possibilities, this accusation is false. Assuming there is no attempt to evade Church teaching, a disagreement over the best way to carry it out is not endorsing evil. Traditionalism and Modernism are not the only two options. Conservative and Liberal are not the only two options. These factions do not express whether a person is a faithful Catholic or not. If X is wrong, all Catholics must reject X regardless of their political or liturgical preferences.

CONCLUSION: FROM FALSE ASSUMPTIONS TO DANGEROUS ERRORS

I could come up with several more errors, but I want to wrap this article up by discussing why they are dangerous. The danger is these errors lead Catholics to think that the person who has different preferences on how to proceed is acting out of malice. So the conservative Catholic assumes that the liberal Catholic (or vice versa) automatically embraces everything evil about that political view. The radical traditionalist assumes the non-traditionalist is a modernist. People assume that Popes and bishops speak as 21st century Americans and don't consider the times and places they knew when speaking.

Accusers see differences and assume the difference means a rejection of Church teaching, or a rejection

of what Jesus said in Scripture. The accusers don't consider whether they've gotten something wrong and make unjust accusations. When these accusations are made against the Pope and bishops when they teach, they separate the accuser from the Church while thinking they are in the right. They also cause scandal by undermining faith in Our Lord protecting His Church and leading others to disobey as well.

What we have to remember is we need to know the facts and circumstances involving the acts before making an accusation. When the accused is the Pope or a bishop properly exercising his teaching office, we need to remember we have to give our assent. In all cases we must remember charity and make sure we properly understand and not act rashly. The Church does not turn wrong into right, but circumstances *can* mean that two events that look similar can actually be very different. If we rashly assume evil on the part of the shepherds of the Church, we can't just shrug off the false accusation on Judgment Day. We'll have to answer for our rebellion.

So to avoid judgment, we must recognize we might not have all the facts and therefore might not properly understand what seems wrong at first glance. Yes, there will be sin out there and we must correct sinners. But we must not assume we are always in the right and the Pope must be wrong if he rules differently than we want.

This contribution is available at <http://www.ifimightinterject.com/2016/09/essay-on-partisan-dissent-leading-to.html>
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The Lie of the Apostolate {How I Left My Children Poor} [at Blossoming Joy]

They said that I should have an apostolate if I wanted my kids to grow in faith. That I should build up the kingdom. Use my skills. Be a leader. Be salt and light to the world. They said that it wasn't enough to love my kids... that God made me for more.

They were wrong.

My family is my apostolate. My home is my headquarters. My husband my fundraiser. If God calls me to do some further outreach, it will only be that which does not leave my family unloved, uncared for, or with only the leftovers of who I am.

My apostolic works have often been excuses... distractions... ways of feeling like a productive Christian while avoiding the harder work. A way of breaking up the boredom of sacrificial work done without devotion.

I would have been a better woman, wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend, and homeschooler over the last 20 years if I hadn't bought into the idea that I needed to become some kind of minister to the world. Some moms have the gift of being high energy. I am not one of them. And I have expended myself in so many different directions and I was convinced that my outreaches and apostolic works were the moral equivalent of what I was doing at home. I now believe I was wrong.

I once printed out the words of Pope St. John Paul II to recall them in my daily work. He said:

"You must never be content to leave them just the crumbs of the feast. You must take of your substance, and not just of your abundance, in order to help them. And you must treat them like guests at your family table."

I fancied myself a real winner because I thought I understood his message which was to care for the poor of the world in a way that costs something. I knew what it meant to be on the receiving end of Christ-like sacrificial love and I knew the power of the mercy of Jesus and I wanted to be that for others. My problem was that I didn't see the hypocrisy of leaving the crumbs for my own children while I fed strangers.

I didn't see them as guests.

I didn't see them as the poor.

I didn't see them.

Not through the lens of Christ anyway, but only as a shallow mom.

Oh, how the narcissism of our age seeps into the cracks of our ships!

As we approach Mother Teresa's canonization, I hear her words with a new intensity because I realize that I never fully understood her even though she was bold and simple in her message. I was too busy patting myself on the back for being apostolic.

Her words became placards to console myself that I was doing just fine. *Point to Jesus. Love all the people.* I did. But... it was shallow. It was the easy way out. Kind of like buying pretty trinkets at the Dollar Tree to feel good about saving money instead of showing up for work to pay the bills. An apparent good that distracts from the hard work to which we are really called.

This contribution is available at <http://blossomingjoy.squarespace.com/blog/the-lie-of-the-apostolate>
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What About “I’m Sorry”?

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

Two incidents in the last two days prompt this post.

First, yesterday I learned that someone I had shared some news with confidentially had shared the news with at least one other person. He knew what I shared was confidential, he knew why I did not want him sharing it, and he agreed to keep the news quiet. Yet, from the timing of when the person he told turned around and shared the news with a third person, it appears he wasted no time in breaching trust. When I confronted him yesterday, telling him I was angry, all he said was “You have a right to be angry.” No hint of apology.

Second, we have a group of students for whom it is extremely difficult to find times to schedule meetings given their varied schedules. Having found two time blocks that work for everyone, we have told the group (multiple times) to keep those two blocks free until they received an actual schedule of meetings. A meeting was scheduled for Friday (yesterday) afternoon and notice of that sent out earlier in the week. On Thursday late afternoon one of the students rushed in to me to say she had, several weeks ago, planned to be away this weekend and was leaving Friday morning. The most I got, after reminding her that she was told to keep the block open was “I probably should have told you this earlier.” Ya think? No “sorry for causing you all wasted time and energy” or “I’m sorry for the inconvenience.”

We get this sort of thing all the time in the public realm. Public officials who can’t get any further in acknowledging their wrongdoing than “mistakes were made”, as though those pesky little mistakes created themselves. The words “I’m sorry” rarely pass their lips.

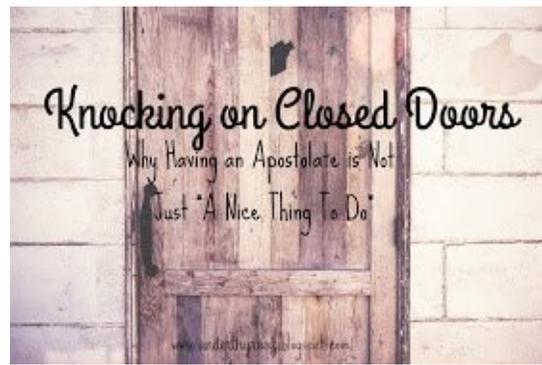
But I guess I don’t expect that same inability to apologize in personal relations. I never liked the line in *Love Story* that “love means never having to say you’re sorry.” It matters to say “I’m sorry.” It matters both for the person who messed up – intentionally or not – to take ownership of the impact of their action or inaction on the person they affected. And it matters to the person harmed to hear the words.

The First Letter of John asks if we don’t love the people we can see, how can we love the God we cannot see. I wonder if we might ask: If we can’t express contrition to those we can see, how much do we really mean it when we express our contrition to the God we cannot see.

Update: I just received an e-mail apology from one of the two people described above. Whether it was a result of reading my post, or just having had time to reflect, the apology is appreciated.

This contribution is available at <http://susanjoan.wordpress.com/2016/09/24/what-about-im-sorry/>
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Knocking on Closed Doors - Why Having an Apostolate is Not Just "A Nice Thing To Do" [at Under Thy Roof]



A friend linked to a recent blog post

[The Lie of the Apostolate](#)

. The post really bugged me. The main call of the post is good - that we should make sure our families are loved and cared for - but it went about it in a way that did not sit well with me.

I think what bothered me is that the post gave the impression that serving beyond your family is optional. That it is something that's great if you get around to it, but no biggie if you don't.

That is selfish naval gazing masquerading as holiness, my friends.

You know what happens when people feel that serving in their parishes, neighborhoods, schools is optional? The work does not go away, it shifts onto someone trying to fill in the gaps - or worse, that support network disappears for good.

Lately, that's been me for my parish. I've been attempting to carry the weight of five people. I'm only one person, and it shows.

You know the saying "Many hands make light work"? I think one cannot appreciate how much the many hands are needed until one tries to do the work of the many. It's not pretty.

I cannot express how much even a little assistance would help. It may not feel like much, but someone volunteering to set up drinks before a parish event, print out fliers, or be a greeter at the door takes loads of burden off of those people who are trying everything they can to keep this ship afloat.

When I look around trying desperately to communicate how much those willing hands are needed, all I've been seeing are closed arms.

There are typically reasons, many of them are good, to have the decision to volunteer be "not right now", but there will ALWAYS be a reason not to step up.

It may feel to you like you're just saying "not right right now", but to the people who are left to try and

keep things afloat it feels more like you're saying "not my problem". When not one helper can be found, those volunteers that are left are being disrespected and taken advantage of by the very people they are trying to serve.

If you want to have a healthy neighborhood, parish, or school, you have to show up. It is not someone else's problem, it is your problem. My problem. Our collective problem.

You CAN find some way to contribute! I really truly believe every person is valuable and needed, and that every person can give back to those communities they so freely utilize.

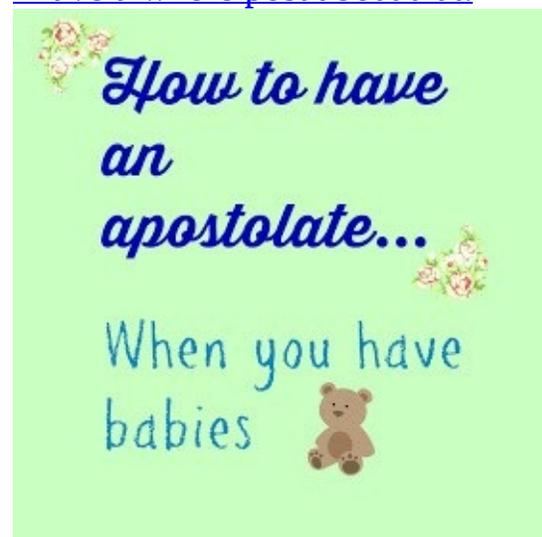
Tap the old lady on the shoulder who you see always doing something for the parish, tell her how much you appreciate it, and ask how you can help. (Seriously, I cannot recommend this highly enough. You have no idea how long it has probably been since anyone told her "good job".)

Fill a need that you see in your neighborhood.

Ask your kid's teacher if there is something they wish they had available for their classroom.

What if you have babies and this is all scary and overwhelming?

[I have a whole post about that!](#)



The idea that your family is your apostolate is all well and good, but it is not ok to use that as a reason to ignore your larger family. Don't forget about us! We haven't forgotten about you.

This contribution is available at <http://underthyroof.blogspot.com/2016/09/knocking-on-closed-doors-why-having.html>
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HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Tue, 11 Oct 2016 15:07:15 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 and apply to join the fun, mention this header. X-Pingback: <https://shiftingmyperspective.com/xmlrpc.php> Link: ; rel=shortlink X-ac: 3.ord _dca

Bed Time Blessing Bags [at Shifting My Perspective]

“But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation.” Luke 6:49



I am a terrible mother at bedtime. By that hour of the day my tank is empty, and there’s not a shred of patience left in me. To protect my kids from the mean mommy that lurks within, my husband usually puts our kids to bed.

That being said, in our household my husband has every Wednesday night off (my night off is Thursday). So tag I’m it for Wednesdays. Knowing this, I’m very conscious of keeping some energy and patience in reserve on Wednesdays so I can make it through bedtime.

However, last Wednesday was a longer day than usual. Mason had baseball practice at night. I should have known what was coming.

Although bedtime is typically 8 p.m., we were just leaving the ball field at that hour. I spent the short drive home stressing the fact that my kids had to get ready for bed the second we got in the door. Despite my lecture, Zack decided to sharpen his drawing pencil at 8:30 p.m. and accidentally detached the sharpener from the pantry wall.

Putting aside my own desperate need for the freedom that was already supposed to be mine, I tried to help him. But three seconds into it, when I couldn’t fix the situation, the switch flipped inside of me. I COMPLETELY lost it: screaming and yelling to the point of flapping my arms like a crazy lady!

Immediately, there was the frantic pitter-patter of little feet running up the stairs and bedroom doors slamming as all three kids ran for cover.

My kids know this side of me all too well. I suppose I don't have enough mommy guilt to feel bad about it; a person can only do so much. We all have our breaking points, and bedtime is mine (there are a lot of other times too, but...).

I justify it by saying it would be worse if I were a perfect mother. My kids would have to live up to that when they're parents. I jokingly say I'm saving them from therapy by being so flawed.

The real truth is, I know I need to try harder. I can't be like the person in the parable from Luke 6 who listens but does not act. At the very least, I need to put some sort of bedtime safety net in place, a foundation of sorts: a way to smooth things over if I misstep while walking through the bedtime minefield.

Over the summer I saw the movie [Miracles From Heaven](#) (a movie I highly recommend). Jennifer Garner plays the mom. Each night, she visits each of her kids after they have gone to bed. She asks them what they prayed for that night. I loved that the last memory each of her kids had before drifting off to sleep was of sharing their deepest hope with their mom.

I've always been a big fan of [gratitude](#) and [Karen O'Connor's](#) Blessing Bag idea. So I'm combining concepts. This past weekend, I hung [Blessing Bags](#) off each of my kids' beds. Every night now, I visit each of them after they have gone to bed. I ask them what they are most grateful for from that day. I write whatever they say on a little piece of paper, fold it, and then together we say, "Thank you God," as I drop the paper into their bag.

No matter what transpired during the day, no matter if I lost my cool or not, their final memory before going to bed now is one of a loving time with me. More importantly, they are expressing deep gratitude to God. In my mind, there can be no stronger foundation to build upon.

Questions For Reflection:

**** When is my weakest point in my parenting day?***

**** Is there a safety net, a foundation of sorts, I can put in place to either avoid the pitfall, or redeem the moment?***

This contribution is available at <http://shiftingmyperspective.com/2016/09/15/bed-time-blessing-bags/>
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Politics is personal because to be alive is to struggle [at Catholic Deacon]

In the first section of the second chapter of his book

Jesus & Salvation: Soundings in the Christian Tradition and Contemporary Theology

, in which he introduces New Testament soteriology, Robin Ryan, in reference to "the reign of God" proclaimed by Jesus, notes, "There is an inescapable tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet'...that should not be dissolved." He then invokes the great New Testament scholar, Raymond Brown:

The kingly rule of God was already making itself present in Jesus' person, proclamation, and actions, but the complete and visible manifestation of the kingdom lay in the future and would also be brought about through Jesus, the Son of Man



"This tension," Ryan concludes, "is intrinsic to the Christian understanding of God's saving work in Jesus" (29). What is often left out at this point is that the Holy Spirit, as Luke Timothy Johnson notably pointed out, is Christ's resurrection presence among us. In other words, God's kingdom didn't appear, disappear, and will come back in full when Christ returns. It's been present all this time, striving towards realization, but never being fully realized. Living the tension between the already and the not yet, which can truly be described as dialectical, is precisely what it means to live as a Christian. Living this tension is how you are saved.

God's reign must never be conceived of as another human-enacted utopian scheme. Living the kingdom as a present reality is not primarily, or even necessarily, political, at least not as commonly understood today: activism at the expense love. Striving to live God's reign as a present reality is the embodiment, I think, of what Václav Havel dubbed "anti-political politics." It seems to me that the most compelling glimpses of God's reign present in the world, ancient and modern, have been given when Christians lived God's reign as a present reality under hostile regimes: St. Lawrence/St. Maximilian Kolbe; Sts. Perpetua & Felicity/St. Maria Skobtsova.

It's important to point out a few people who've made God's reign visible in societies that are hostile due to indifference: Dorothy Day and Brazilian Archbishop Helder Câmara. It was Câmara who observed, "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist." Living God's reign between the already and the not yet is intensely personal, but by no means private. "Our faith can only be lived through the

absence

of manifestations of the power of Christ according to our expectations," Luigi Giussani observed way back in the 1960s. "Our Christian vocation," he insisted, "becomes

authentic

only through this absence [...]. Where Christ is no longer visible as personal action, then His action coincides, becomes one with, the motivation and action of our person..."

["I Have Loved You With an Everlasting Love. I Have Had Pity On Your Nothingness,"](#)

Spiritual Exercises of Communion & Liberation 2016, pg. 2).



Young Steel Workers, by Ivan Bevzenko, 1961- an example of Soviet-style socialist realism

Havel, who was often considered naïve, grasped the danger of utopian schemes:

A heaven on earth in which people all love each other and everyone is hard-working, well-mannered, and virtuous, in which the land flourishes and everything is sweetness and light, working harmoniously to the satisfaction of God: this will never be. On the contrary, the world has had the worst experiences with utopian thinkers who promised all that. Evil will remain with us, no one will ever eliminate human suffering, the political arena will always attract irresponsible and ambitious adventurers and charlatans. And man will not stop destroying the world. In this regard, I have no illusions (*Summer Meditations* 16)

He went on to describe the struggle for a better society in terms of a war. "Neither I nor anyone else," he went on to observe, "will ever win this war once and for all. At the very most, we can win a battle or two - and not even that is certain." Nonetheless, he still thought it important to engage in the struggle, pointing out it is a centuries old war that will likely stretch for centuries into the future. He speculated that perhaps God wants it this way, which I take to mean it's simply the given nature of reality- you don't have to like it, but you can't avoid it except by self-deception. Never forget you bear some responsibility for reality being this way.

Havel firmly maintained fighting this war "is the right thing to do." "It is an eternal, never-ending struggle," he continued, "waged not just by good people...against evil people, by honourable people against dishonourable people, by people who think about the world and eternity against people who think only of themselves and the moment. It takes place inside everyone. It is what makes a person a person, and life, life" (

Summer Meditations

16).



In wake of the woman pouring ointment on his feet in the house of Simon the leper, Jesus told his disciples, who complained the ointment could've been sold and the proceeds used to help the poor, they would always have the poor with them (

[Mark 14:3-9](#)

). The reason for this is

not

because God wills there be poor among us, but because we refuse to live the tension required to make God's reign a present reality. The woman's action shows the seeming incongruity that happens when the not yet collides with the already. Very often the result of such a collision is beautiful.

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2016/09/politics-is-personal-because-to-be.html>
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Doors Wide Open And The 800th Post [at Pauca Verba]



Today marks the 800th post for the *Pauca Verba* blog. And here is a photo of the monastery chapel in Cyprus dedicated to the *Mother of God Trooditissa*. The doors are wide open, inviting us to enter our own inner room, our secret place, to pray. Like *open doors*, that's all these 800 posts have hoped to do.

After the shepherds visited the cave of Bethlehem and returned home praising God, Saint Luke tells us: *But Mary treasured up all these sayings and reflected on them in her heart. Luke 2:19*

To treasure. To reflect. To ponder. To turn the things of God over and over in our hearts. Thanks to all who enter here with me. I send good wishes and a blessing.

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**Here is the icon** of the Trooditissa Mother of God found in the high-altitude Cyprus monastery bearing her name. The monk who painted the icon spared no effort, enfolding the Holy Mother and Her Christ-Child in great folds of embroidered fabric. Angels burst through the clouds placing heaven's crown; the Child sits in the crook of his Mother's arm as if on a throne. Mary seems to stand at heaven's window looking out at us happily, while Jesus wondrously reads his open book. Maybe he is reading the ancient prophecies which tell of his birth or maybe his favorite psalm.

But the Trooditissa icon has a specialty. Under this title, Mary is invoked by women who can't conceive. "Women who are *infertile*," the tradition says. And while this is notable and many couples will give testimony about the wonder-working icon, I'd suggest the Trooditissa might understand *fertility* as a matter *of the heart even more than obstetrics*.

So to explore this larger sense, I looked up the word *fertile*, *discovering* many synonyms and other beautifully related words that can deepen our prayer and help us to advance in spiritual understanding.

From the infertility of so much arguing - *deliver us, O Lady*.

From the sterility of cynicism and complacency - *deliver us, O Lady*.

From the barren inner world of suspicion - *deliver us, O Lady*.

From fruitless opinion-ating and arrogance - *deliver us, O Lady*.

From the unproductive rehearsing of resentments - *deliver us, O Lady*.

From the impoverishment of harboring old wounds - *deliver us, O Lady*.

From the fallow mind of fevered imaginings - *deliver us, O Lady*.

From the death of ingratitude - *deliver us, O Lady*.

O Lady, make us bountiful in love,  
and rich in mercy.

O Lady, give us a high yield of hope;  
bring forth goodness in us.

O Lady, guide us to plentiful rejoicing,  
generative of trust in God  
and the child-ing of kindness.

O Lady, that we would flower compassion,  
and be fruitful in good deeds.

O Lady, that we would be birth-ers of love,  
our minds teeming with good thoughts of others,  
our words bearers of peace.

O Lady, mother something new of Jesus in us;  
smile into us an abundance of joy-carrying faith.

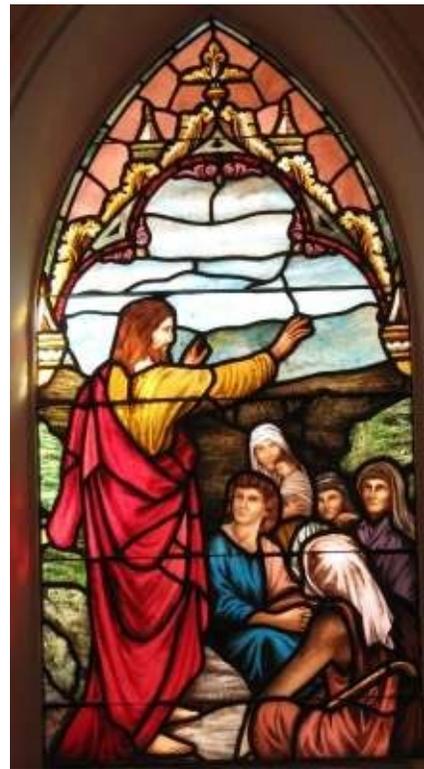
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This contribution is available at <http://paucaverba.blogspot.com/2016/09/doors-wide-open-and-800th-post.html>  
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# Teaching Through Stories

(The following article originally appeared in Today's Catholic Teacher magazine.)



By Cadetgray (Own work) [[CC BY-SA 3.0](#) or [GFDL](#)], via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

***Once upon a time, there was a treasured and beautiful art. It was held in high esteem by all, and practiced wherever people gathered. This beautiful art was known as storytelling.***

The early Christians lived in a storytelling culture. In fact, in her book [Around the Year with the Trapp Family](#), Maria Augusta Trapp says that “It is quite probable that there was story-telling going on in the evenings in the little house in Nazareth.” Certainly, it is easy to imagine St. Joseph telling Old Testament tales to the attentive Child Jesus on his lap, while Mary listens nearby. Perhaps it was this storytelling tradition that helped form Our Lord as a superb storyteller. The parables he told – the Prodigal Son, the Lost Coin, the Good Samaritan – touched the hearts of his listeners in a way that simply stating the parables’ core lessons could not. It’s no wonder that, in instructing the people, Jesus “did not say anything to them without using a parable.” (Mark 4:34)

Many generations later, storytelling still held a respected place in society, both as an art form and as a means of passing down values. In the Middle Ages, the principles of the Faith were communicated in the form of stories called *exempla* (from “example”). Exempla made use of everyday people, places, and things to illustrate points of faith and morals. The popularity of exempla to teach catechism was based on belief in the adage “Verba docent, exempla trahunt”: “Words instruct, examples illustrate.”

Today, the universal Church still recognizes the usefulness of stories for religious instruction. According to the Asian Catholic newspaper UCA News, religion teachers in Indonesia have adopted a teaching method that incorporates storytelling and folklore. The article reports that “teachers’ experiences are the most effective means to transfer religious values to schoolchildren.”

## **Catechizing from Scripture**

While Indonesian catechists are engaging their students with folk tales, Christian LeBlanc is telling stories to his sixth grade class at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Greenville, South Carolina. LeBlanc, an AmazingCatechists.com columnist, is the author of [\*The Bible Tells Me So: A Year of Catechizing from Scripture\*](#).

LeBlanc's method of Bible-based catechesis is unique in that it involves plenty of give-and-take between teacher and student. LeBlanc believes that a child's experience of listening to a story read aloud from a book – although famously compared to “tangible wealth untold, caskets of jewels and coffer of gold” (Strickland Gillilan) – is “passive,” and thus less effective when it comes to learning the faith.

“Reading aloud is fine,” he says. “I used to read to my kids too. But only half of storytelling is the telling, the other half is the personal witness of the storyteller. The kids need to know that the story matters to the teller.”

“Remember that Bible stories all started off as oral accounts and then had to be edited way down for practical reasons,” says LeBlanc, “so you should plan on not reading them straight from the book without lots of commentary and embellishment.”

To parents who aren't used to interactive storytelling, LeBlanc offers these tips for spinning a stirring story:

- Let the kids chime in with what they know and can tell. They'll love to actively participate.
- Ham it up! Become the characters in the story by changing your voice and demeanor.
- Draw pictures, or have the kids draw pictures. Include the illustrations in the storytelling process.
- Ask the kids questions that pull them in and cause them to think. Make some of the questions silly and some serious.
- Connect themes/lessons in the story to their everyday life. The Parable of the Mustard Seed, for example, can be related to the child's own experience of planting a garden and watching the seeds sprout.

## **Catechizing from Life**

Catholic educator and storyteller Alyssa Bormes agrees that real-life experiences can be powerful educational tools. Bormes' book is an example of a narrative that teaches the faith. It tells the incredible story of the 1980 Men's Olympic Hockey Team and its unlikely gold medal win over the Soviet Union team. According to Bormes, the account is “the story of every underdog, full of suffering, doubts, and determination.”

Bornes believes out that, in order to learn, we need concrete, relatable examples. She uses [\*The Catechism of Hockey\*](#) to illustrate the power of example in storytelling.

“Just imagine Grandpa telling this story to his grandchild. Imagine him taking the child on a virtual ‘pilgrimage’ to the arena where it all happened, and ‘hearing’ the crowd cheering ‘U.S.A., U.S.A!’ The

account is, in essence, the David and Goliath story, and it has now made an indelible mark in the mind of the child, who can draw upon it later in life when facing overwhelming odds.”

Observes Bormes, “Jesus found ways to express age-old truths in new stories. We can do the same in the midst of the everyday goings on.”

### **Catechizing from the Church**

In his article [The Birth of Catholic Evangelism](#), Deal Hudson stated: “The Catholic version of Christianity has far more stories ready-to-hand than any other denomination – from its 2000 year history and its role in the creation of Western Civilization to the stories of its saints, martyrs, clergy, and religious. If it’s true that good storytelling is the basis of effective evangelism then the Catholic Church is the most fertile soil one could imagine.”

Adding that “the very simple can be the key to the very mystical,” Bormes advises parents to look close to home for storytelling inspiration.

“The Church has given us all the tools to catechize our children,” she says. “We, as parents, just need to know the Story!”

Bornes offers these suggestions to parents:

- Take your kids to your parish church. See how many symbols they can find in the windows and art of their own parish. What and where are the symbols of baptism in your parish? Why does the baptismal font often have eight sides? Where are the symbols of the Eucharist? What does IHS stand for?
- Find out which saint is the patron of your parish. Get the whole story of that saint, including the atmosphere of the world at the time the saint was on earth. Tell the children the saint’s story with the passion due to it! Then, go on a pilgrimage to your own church, or across town, to the side-altar with that saint, thereby *meeting* the saint and giving the child a new friend for the journey of life.
- Talk about the stories behind the feasts of the Church year. Are there any ethnic traditions relating to your family’s observances of feast days and holy days? Does your family enjoy special foods on certain holydays? Does your parish have special customs relating to the liturgical year? Find out the stories and share them!
- Prop it up! The Church in Her wisdom uses “bells and smells” to help engage all of our senses and connect us to Heaven. Parents can make use of practical, everyday things to help children grasp the truths and beauty of the Faith. Bormes says, “I often use stick figures to explain the Trinity; I use a baseball diamond to explain actual time that we live in, and God being outside of time; I use a bag of holy cards to explain chastity.”

Bormes stresses the importance of having children do more than just listen to a story. By encouraging their children to walk through the church, finger the baptismal font, or sample a feast day meal, parents have “attached the story to more senses than just hearing. The children have *touched* the story...and it has touched them.”

## Beginning Storytelling

Perhaps you still just can't picture yourself as a storyteller. Maybe you're afraid that, in your first attempt at sharing a Scripture story, you'll mix up Dathan with David, or confuse Jericho and Jeroboam. Perhaps a verbatim reading of [The Poky Little Puppy](#) is all you think you can handle.

If that's the case, then repeat after me: "I think I can, I think I can." The fact is that you don't need to be a LeBlanc or a Bornes – or a Grimm or a Geisel – to tell a good story. Here are a few jumping-off points for the reluctant storyteller:

- Take off your "parent" hat

Remember when, as a child, you met your teacher at the grocery store or the mailman at Mass? You were surprised that the teacher and the mailman had lives outside their respective workplaces. Delight your kids by telling them about demure Mother's adventures as a competitive skier, or staid Father's antics as the class clown. I guarantee that your children will be thrilled to hear about Mom and Dad before they became Mom and Dad.

Kids love to hear about their baby days, and many mothers love to recall the details of their children's births and earliest days. What was the weather like on the day the child was born? What did Mother say when she first saw him? Tell about his Baptism. Did he cry when Father poured water over his head? At home, was he content or cranky? Did he sleep much? When did he first smile? These minutiae are bound to captivate the child who is the story's central character.

Take a tale that you loved as a child and personalize it for your kids. I've had fun retelling the beloved story of "The Glorious Whitewasher" from [Tom Sawyer](#), replacing Tom's name with that of the entranced young listener, and the names of Tom's compatriots Ben Rogers, Billy Fisher, and Johnny Miller with those of the listener's siblings and friends. The child will enjoy imagining himself the owner of Tom's amassed "wealth" – which included a kitten with only one eye

twelve marbles, a piece of blue bottle-glass to look through, a tin soldier, a couple of tadpoles, six fire-crackers, four pieces of orange-peel, a dilapidated old window sash, and a dead rat and a string to swing it with.

- Begin with "When I was a kid ..."

"And then my dad took off his shoe and smacked it against the window, shattering the glass." That's the climax of a story about my family getting locked out of our house some forty-odd years ago. I must have told it to my own kids, by request, a thousand times over the years. Part of the story's appeal lies in its quaint details, e.g. Cell phones didn't exist, so we couldn't call our neighbors for help. Bonus interest-clincher: Mom, who was thirteen at the time, was mortified that the episode had been witnessed by the boy across the street, whom she *liked*.

"You become a great storyteller by telling stories," says Bornes, "and over time honing your craft."

Adds LeBlanc, "Don't *just* tell the story. Share it so that your listeners will be *imbibed* with it."

*And everyone lived happily ever after.*

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This contribution is available at <http://celestebehe.com/2016/10/01/the-value-of-storytelling/>  
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# University Life! [at CruceSignatiBlog]

Well, I moved out and have been living in a university residence for four weeks now. The homeschooler is alive and in fact, thriving! I've certainly learned a lot in the past few weeks, about myself, my family, school, city life, and people in general.

## #1. Homeschooling *can* prepare you for life 'in the real world'.

September 7th dawned bright and sunny, and the whole of creation seemed cheerful that morning. I was feeling anxious, though. It was my first day of school. Ever. With the exceptions of a driver's ed course and giving a presentation to some fourth graders on composting, I had never even set foot in a classroom before. So as I left the residence, I recalled Julie Andrews singing "I Have Confidence" in *The Sound of Music* and by the time I reached my first class, I was feeling much better. This 'real school' thing is not as hard as I thought it would be, and all 6 of my courses are going very well now.

Because I have some dietary restrictions I opted not to eat at the cafeteria. So that means buying my own groceries and cooking for myself on top of school. Good thing I have lots of practice in this area! Cooking for the family over the past four years has certainly paid off. Grocery shopping and budgeting are not new to me, but I am still learning to check flyers for savings, use the store rewards card, and avoid impulse buys. The nearest grocery store is a 15 minute walk from my residence, so I can combine exercise and errands into one trip.

Learning to manage my time throughout my high school years was the biggest blessing in disguise. Although it was difficult at the time, it prepared me for living on my own and university life. In high school I used a study technique called the [Pomodoro technique](#). I do 25 minutes of studying/writing/reading, take a 5 minute break, and repeat. A few hours of studying go by very quickly this way. I can complete projects way before the deadline if I manage my time and exercise self-control. Weekends are my time to catch up on laundry, cook for myself, or spend some time with friends, which leads to my next point...

## #2. Have a support system.

There is no way I would be coping so well if it weren't for the support of my friends here in the city. My family lives 3 hours away, so Mom has been texting me often to make sure I'm doing alright and sometimes the fam-jam will call me or Skype message me because they miss me quite a bit. This contact with them is great, but it doesn't replace real life contact. Thankfully, I've got friends here in the city and in the past few weeks, we've gone for walks, had coffee at various shops, gone swing dancing, went for a beer after Adoration, and sat on a park bench watching the sun set and the city lights come on. This support system has kept me optimistic and I know that no matter what struggles I face, *I am not alone*.

## #3. Prayer life is vital.

vital: *adj*, essential to or supporting life; necessary to existence. From the Latin *vita* meaning *life*.

Indeed it is. When planning out my day, I set aside 45 minutes for prayer in the morning. Angelus, morning offering, Rosary, and some time in silence can be fit into this block. I find that this time in prayer is a good

way of preparing for the day and fortifying myself through God's grace. I feel WAY better when I start my day like this. Because of my class schedule, I can't make it to daily Mass, but I try to go to Mass or Adoration at some point between Monday and Friday. I need to recharge and be filled by my Savior.

That's all I have for reflection now. Praise God for all the blessings He has given me! Not everything has been perfect, but His love endures and overcomes even the greatest sorrows. Remember that He loves you and nothing can separate you from that love!

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This contribution is available at <http://crucesignatiblog.wordpress.com/2016/10/01/university-life/>  
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# Savoring

A friend and I recently drove upstate on business. We stretched the drive home into a winding trip through two notches (local parlance for a mountain pass) before finally settling down to I-93. After all, it was early autumn. Even if the leaves weren't turning yet, the crisp air was worth taking time to enjoy.

There were things waiting to be done at home. My friend and I had every reason to scoot back at top speed once the business meeting was over. We decided instead to savor the mountains as best we could from the car. We are both of a political bent, and this is the high season for that. All the more a treat, then, to decide on the spur of the moment to put busy-ness and campaigns aside for a few hours.

At home later, I found these words from Pope St. John Paul II. They fit the day. John Paul understood savoring the right things.

*Whoever really wants to find himself, must learn to savor nature whose charm is intimately linked with the silence of contemplation. The rhythms of creation are so many paths of extraordinary beauty along which the sensitive and believing heart easily catches the echo of the mysterious, loftier beauty that is God Himself, the Creator, the source and life of all reality.*



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This contribution is available at <http://ellenkolb.com/2016/09/28/savoring/>  
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# **My Winged Messengers [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]**

Thank you Allison Gingras and Elizabeth Riordan for your weekly invitation to re-post our favorite articles on Worth Revisiting.

## **My Winged Messengers**

(Originally posted August 29, 2016)

The presence of my feathered friends at these times of prayer is God's way of reminding me that if He cares and provides for these little creatures, how much more certain I can be He will do so for me.

I can never be reminded of this truth enough.

However, during my most recent retreat there, God used a winged messenger in a totally different way. You see in all the years I have been coming to the Abbey, I have never heard any birds chirping while I was in in the main chapel in the monastery – located a mile from the retreat house.

Silence reigns supreme in that Sacred space, since words – written or spoken – are not always necessary. Our loving Lord is able to communicate with us in silence. It is for that reason that I have come to relish and enjoy these quiet times in His Presence. The peace and solitude serves as reminder for me to increase the frequency with which I sit in silence gazing at Him either in the exposed Monstrance or behind locked tabernacle doors when I am not on retreat.

But on the last day and my last Holy Hour of my most recent retreat there, I was gifted with the song of a single singing bird, penetrating through the soothing and comforting silence of the Monastery's main chapel. That had never happened during prior visits.

Since there are hundreds of acres of land surrounding the Monastery and its retreat house, what brought this particular bird to this specific spot to interrupt the sacred silence of this space on this one single occasion? And for that matter what brings the chirping birds to serenade me at the retreat house chapel every time I begin to pray there?

God!

Why would He bless me so?

Because He wants me to understand He will bring me to where He wants me to be if I but trust Him and obey His promptings as do his little feathered friends.

Will I listen to Him?

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This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2016/09/worth-revisiting-my-winged-messengers.html>  
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## Life is... by Saint Mother Teresa

I remember my mother copying this poem of Mother Teresa's in her own notebook. I can still picture her clear and beautiful handwriting. How we longed to meet her!!! She was a living saint, like Father Damien of Molokai. She taught by example. She made me want to be a nun (well, I did go to a Convent school and I loved those sisters, so they may have something to do with this desire as well). She made me want to be good. She made me want to be holy. How wonderful of the Church to recognize her sanctity after all these years. Pray for us, Mother Teresa.



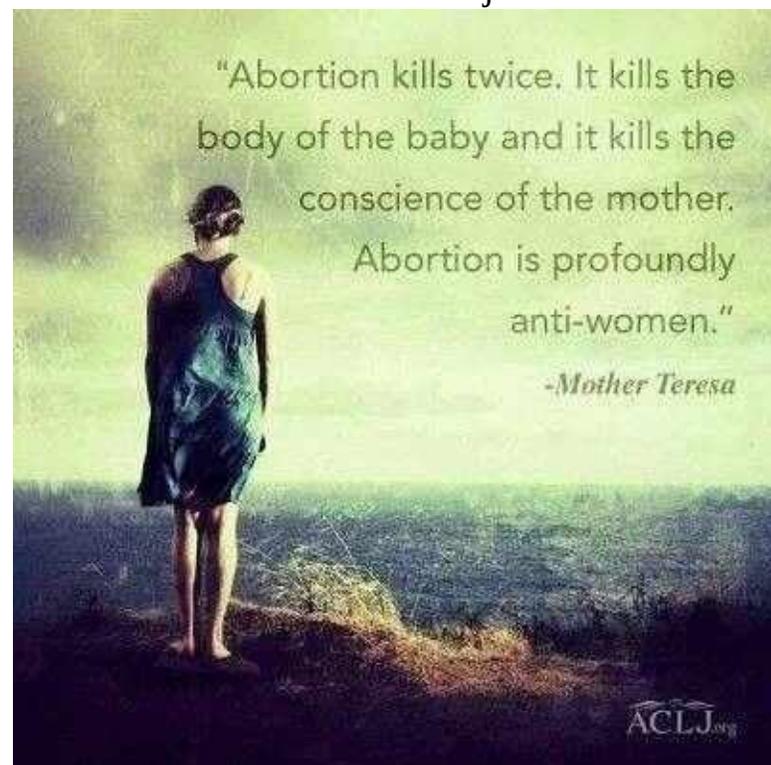
*Life is beauty, admire it,*

*Life is bliss, taste it,  
Life is a dream, realize it,  
Life is a challenge, meet it,  
Life is a duty, complete it,  
Life is a game, play it,  
Life is precious, care for it,  
Life is wealth, keep it,  
Life is love, enjoy it,  
Life is mystery, know it,  
Life is a promise, fulfill it,  
Life is sorrow, overcome it,  
Life is a song, sing it,  
Life is a struggle, accept it,  
Life is tragedy, confront it,  
Life is an adventure, dare it,  
Life is happiness, deserve it,  
Life is life, defend it.*

~ a poem by Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta

(I love this photo, swiped from [Tan Books FB](#) page. So joyful. Just discovered the name of the photographer: Michael Collopy. Here are some of his [other photos](#).)

A beautiful reflection on [Mother Teresa and motherhood](#) by Father George Rutler. There are many [beautiful books](#) about and by Mother Teresa. Favorites include: Come Be My Light and No Greater Love. Here I share just a few of her thoughts about the great evil of abortion.



**ON ABORTION**

Abortion "is murder in the womb ... A child is a gift of God. If you do not want him, give him to me." 

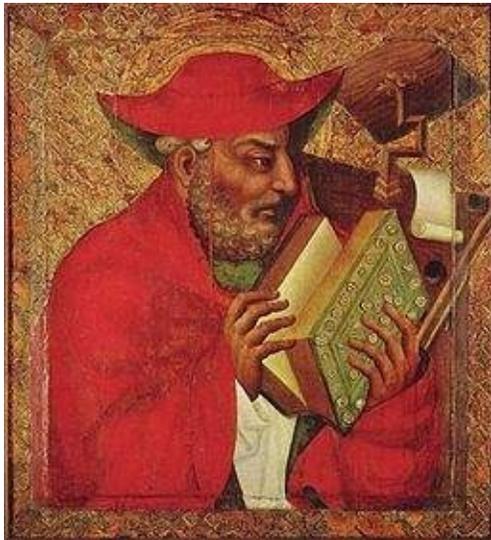
 "The greatest destroyer of peace is abortion because if a mother can kill her own child, what is left for me to kill you and you to kill me? There is nothing between."

"It is a poverty to decide that a child must die so that you may live as you wish." 

And here is the [full text of Pope Francis' homily](#) at the Mass for canonization.

This contribution is available at <http://vijayabodach.blogspot.com/2016/09/life-is-by-saint-mother-teresa.html>  
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## St. Jerome, Doctor of Translation [at The Catholic Spiritual Life]



### St. Jerome and the Bible

I'm sure you know that St. Jerome, whom the Church celebrates today, said, "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." It should be underlined that he didn't say this in passing. Jerome's whole life was oriented around his love of Scripture. He was an irascible monk from Dalmatia (just to the east of northern Italy), who did Biblical work in Rome and then was sent by the Pope to Bethlehem, where he lived in a cave, studied with local experts, including Jews, and translated the Bible into Latin. He wasn't the first one to do that, but he did it well.

But though the best name for St. Jerome would be "Doctor of the Bible," today I would like us to consider him as the "Doctor of Translation."

Doctor of the Church (ironically, since we're talking about a Doctor of Translation) is a poorly translated term. In Latin, doctor doesn't mean healer, it means teacher. (We professor-doctors are more properly doctors than those so-called medical doctors!) The phrase is used by the tradition to talk about that particular group of saints whose writings are especially important: the "doctors" are the great teachers of "doctrine." The title seems to have grown up in part as a kind of liturgical category: some saints' feasts deserve special liturgical emphasis (and later, a special liturgy) because it is so important that we learn from their writings.

In the West (where they spoke Latin, and so used the Latin word "doctor") the title first went to St. Augustine, arguably the greatest teacher of the Western tradition (at least until St. Thomas, who viewed him as such); also St. Ambrose, his great and spiritual teacher; St. Gregory the Great, one of the most important ones to translate Augustine into spirituality; and St. Jerome.

Later some Eastern, Greek fathers were named: St. John Chrysostom – his second name means "golden mouth," because he was the greatest preacher of the early Church, bringing his monastic wisdom to the metropolis of Constantinople; the monk-bishop friends St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzus, who especially enriched the teaching of the Trinity; and later, to give the East four like the West, St. Athanasius, great defender of the divinity of Christ.

Later on, Thomas Aquinas was added to the list – and after that the title was extended to many great writers. The point of all this is that the doctors are great writers. It is a distinction meant to point us toward writings of the saints as an important part of our faith.

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St. Jerome, St. Francis, and Our Lady

Now, the interesting thing for us today is that Jerome is not an especially important writer. Don't get me wrong: he was a saint, and like many saints of the early Church, he had interesting things to say about spirituality, and Jesus, and the Bible. But even his commentaries on Scripture are not that important.

Jerome is not a doctor of the Church because of his original writings. Jerome is a doctor of the Church because of his translation – of the Bible.

Understand this, and a key element of the Latin tradition suddenly comes into focus. Jerome is one of the favorite saints of the Middle Ages – and their very most important “writer” (doctor) – purely because he put the Bible into a language people could understand.

The deepest thing we learn from this devotion to St. Jerome is how much the tradition loved the Bible. But the other thing we learn is how much they loved translation.

\*\*\*



St. Jerome (on the right) and the Cross

Let me be blunt. This is something completely inside out about “traditionalism.” Some Catholics today love Latin because it's not the vernacular. But the Middle Ages loved Latin because it was the

vernacular.

Some people know that the Church – in authoritative documents, such as at Trent and Vatican I – said that the Vulgate, Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible, is authoritative. But people wrongly interpret that to mean that Latin is a unique Biblical language. To the contrary, the tradition – and those documents: read them! – understands the Vulgate to be an endorsement not of Latin, but of translation. What’s amazing about St. Jerome, for the middle ages, is that he took the Bible out of a language that Westerners could not understand and translated it into a language they could understand. What’s amazing is that we can hear the Bible in a language we understand.

St. Jerome is, first of all, a saint of loving the Bible. But he is also, and inseparably, a saint of loving translation into the vernacular. Vulgate means vernacular, the “vulgar tongue,” the language dumb people speak (or spoke).

If we want to love the Bible – and to love the Tradition, which loves the Bible – we too need to learn to love translation. Like Jerome, it’s best if we can learn the original languages. But for all those people who can’t, thank God for saints like Jerome who make the Bible (and the liturgy) accessible in the language of the people. Thank God for translators.

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This contribution is available at <http://professorjohnston.com/st-jerome-doctor-of-translation/>  
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## About a Boy [at String of Pearls]

Once upon a time, there was a little boy who lost his dad to suicide at the tender age of six. "Don't be mad at him," he remembers his paternal grandmother, "Grammy," tearfully pleading with his mother in the days following his father's funeral. "Why would my mom be mad at my dad for dying?" the little boy wondered.

That boy wouldn't know the details surrounding his father's death for many years, until he was a 21-year-old newlywed with a niggling suspicion that he hadn't been told the whole story...and spent hours in the library poring over old newspapers until he uncovered the devastating truth, and then shared his newfound knowledge with his beautiful young bride.

Not a great way to begin a marriage, you might say; but that tall, handsome newlywed with the Paul Newman-blue eyes and the movie star good looks just celebrated 60 years of wedded bliss with his one and only sweetheart. I'd say that's not too shabby, for a boy whose life could have been irreparably shattered by events that took place when he was only six.

After his father died, the boy's mother (who was the eldest of six siblings) went away to attend nursing school and get her career started, so that she could eventually become the sole supporter of her children. The grieving widow left the boy and his younger sister with her mother, who'd become the head of the family after the crash of '29 robbed her father of his financial success and left him a broken man. "Mimi" was a tough-as-nails matriarch, a sensible, hard-working, no-nonsense woman who, when it came to her fatherless grandson (an admittedly sometimes naughty little tyke!), never thought it was best to spare the rod if it meant spoiling the child.

This might sound like some horrifying Dickensian tale, but never fear: that boy adored his upbringing in that tiny town in upstate NY, describing his seven years in his beloved grandmother's care to his own offspring in later years as

*the most idyllic of childhoods imaginable*

. He was surrounded completely by women (his grandmother, his sister, and several teenaged aunts who were still living at home at the time); he had no strong males in his life to use as role models for later on, when he would become a husband and dad himself. And yet he was married at 21 and soon after became the dad of many. By the time that boy was just 28, he was already the father of five: three daughters and two sons.

Once, when that boy's eldest daughter's fourth son was six years old, it suddenly occurred to her that he was the same age as her dad had been when he lost his father. The idea of leaving her own boy motherless was so difficult to contemplate that she asked him if he had any memories of his father. "Nope," he said, in the tight-lipped fashion typical of him when he didn't feel like talking about something. "None at all." And the boy's daughter was unspeakably sad when she heard his answer.

But a few years later during a thunderstorm, the daughter realized that her dad hadn't been entirely truthful when he gave her that curt reply. As a fierce storm raged outside, she told him how much thunderstorms

frightened her. "Oh, not me," he replied. "I love 'em. One of the earliest memories I have from when I was a little boy is of sitting on my father's lap on the porch, watching the lightning come down."

"Aha!" thought the daughter. "So he

*does*

remember his father!" And she was happy, because that meant if she'd died when one of her own boys was only six, he might remember her, too.

That boy is an old man now. His health is deteriorating, and he is facing the end of a long life well lived. He's handling the most recent prognosis from his doctor with his usual courage...because at six, he had to learn how to be brave and strong at a much younger age than most of us have to; at six, he learned to take what life threw at him without complaining or asking for pity. He didn't have a father to show him the ropes when he was growing up, but he learned how to climb them on his own. He was a boy who figured out, all by himself, how to be a man.

I am proud to call that boy my father.



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This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2016/09/about-boy.html>  
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## Why I didn't want to write... but needed to. [at Theologyisaverb]



Why I didn't want  
to write..  
but needed to.

TheologyisAverb.com

Today, the advice of a good friend of mine Sr. Marie Paul, a Pauline sister by vocation, echoed in my mind. “If you find yourself at a loss of what to write or how to write what you feel you need to, just write about why you cannot write.” Why? First, it gets the flow going but also there may be something there worth exploring-*the reason behind* why you are feeling blocked or resistant. Doing this has helped me to see more clearly what it is that is holding me back and captive.

And so I begin..no longer a slave to fear but recognizing that it is with God , with his strength and desire that I can do all things. It isn't that I am fearful of writing, or surrendering my inmost thoughts and feelings, but that the task of writing with and for a purpose takes both time and energy. Two things that can far too often seem in short supply. For, introspectively I understand my own tendency to give fully of myself to whatever I commit to. Not treading in the shallow, I long to see things to completion and rest only when I feel I have given my all. Yet, in my desire to serve, have I neglected my own cup that longs to be filled? Is this why I am clinging to down time, and stingy when it comes to writing lately?

And still I know that spiritually that tending to the seed of a budding question, or emerging prayer through

writing is more than a facet of self expression. The fruit of which has, for me, been a window of clarification and a path of discernment. It is an opening of mind and heart to the Spirit, a discovery of areas of needed improvement, an acceptance of mercy and a recognition that I am loved. Even still it can be a means to encourage others in their walk of faith too, who may wonder if they are alone. In need of a Savior? Wonderful, there is much companionship in the journey! However, for this to be possible we must be authentic-sharing equally of the challenges and successes, of the sorrows and joys and of a brokenness that is only made complete through Christ.

So, it is then that I am called to write. Hanging by a thread I cannot see the entire tapestry that God weaves. Perspective. Writing spiritually becomes a way to better see the gifts that we have and understand the why behind what we are to do. Up, down, in and out his hand guides my heart towards his purpose. With each word written and each pause placed -there is a conversation between my heart and God. A seeking and a finding, and a renewed desire to stay near when I once again have strayed. "There you are!", I say. "I am where I have always been, right beside you." He says.

While I initially had little inclination to write today, God knew that it was exactly what was needed. Have you considered writing as a way to move your heart, or as a means of discernment? What is holding you captive today?

Peace,

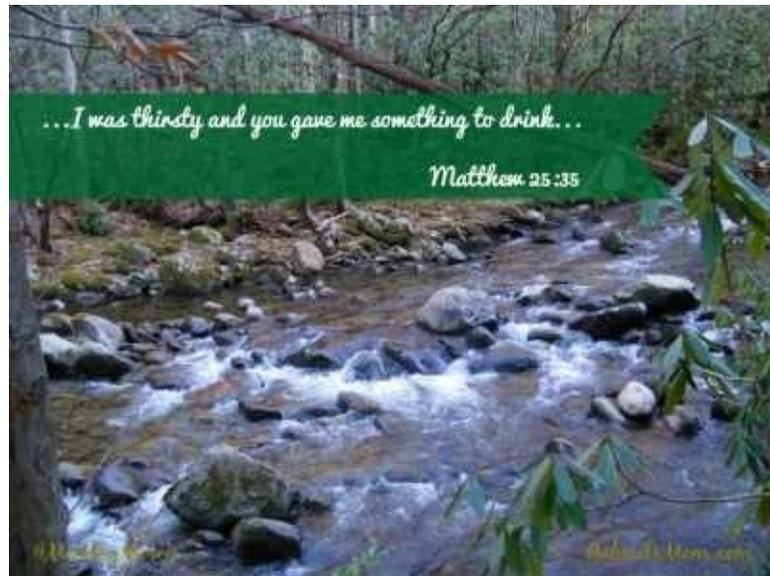
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth".

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## Give Drink to the Thirsty



Many months ago, as I was preparing for my first Embrace Mercy talk, I contemplated doing a series on the Works of Mercy. I forgot all about that idea until this morning when I had an a-ha moment. There are not enough Mondays left in this Jubilee Year of Mercy to give each one of these works its own separate post, so I will likely combine them from time to time. Here's hoping for good follow-through!

So what was my a-ha moment? I was filling a pitcher with water so I could brew some tea which I will then pour over ice. I do this often; generally not noteworthy. But then I noticed a bug...a very tiny bug... floating in the water. We have had windows open for a week, and our screens are not in the best of shape. I promptly poured the water down the drain to start over. Then, I felt a tinge of guilt.

I was reminded of a conversation I had nearly 20 years ago with a college student who spent her summer in Haiti with the [Missionaries of Charity](#). We were on retreat, and a few of us team members were in the kitchen debating whether or not we should drink the unopened milk which had "expired" two days previous. This young woman told us how people in Haiti would just about give their right arms to have such a luxury as a gallon of cold milk. She continued to share about her summer experience, including how she witnessed women sifting flour daily to get bugs out before they cooked their meager meals. She made these points firmly, without heaping guilt on us, but instead with a challenge to be more grateful for all that we had. Needless to say, we used the "expired" milk that day.

That entire conversation entered my mind as I watched my water go down the drain. All because of a gnat. What's worse is that I don't even drink water straight from the tap anyway. I run it through my special pitcher, sitting in my office, that has a filter. Yep, I'm that picky. I don't like drinking plain water at all, and definitely not tap water. I can taste a difference in my tea with unfiltered water, or at least I have convinced myself of this. I have access to clean drinking water. Every. Single. Day. And yet I want it cleaner and tastier. May God have mercy on me.

Now I realize that God created me to live in a time and place with such a blessing. I don't think He wants me to feel guilty every time I enjoy a glass of cold milk or a fabulous cup of English breakfast tea. What I do think is that God wants me, and all of us to be more mindful of those who don't have these blessings.

Beyond being mindful, we must do something about it. I decided to ponder this more.

Many poverty-relief charities assist communities by building wells for safe drinking water. One such organization is Catholic Relief Services, whose programs are varied, but include [clean water initiatives](#). Other charities deal specifically with clean water alone, recognizing it will inevitably impact community health, agriculture, and education, along with just about everything else. Today I discovered [Charity: Water](#) and was deeply moved by their bold mission. I spent a crazy amount of time watching their videos on YouTube. I encourage you to check them out.

Financially supporting such organizations is good, but how else can we heed Jesus' words to give drink to the thirsty?

- Consider looking into area food pantries or your local [St. Vincent de Paul Society](#). Perhaps you could donate bottled water on a monthly basis to stock their shelves
- Sometimes a lack of clean water comes from unpaid bills. By helping to pay water and sanitation bills for people in need (such as through your church), families will be healthier.
- Keep some bottled water, hand sanitizer and other hygiene products in your car as care packages to give away when you see someone in need.
- Pray. Without ceasing. The issue of drinking water can be overwhelming if we try to take care of it on our own. God has already created the water. Let's ask Him how we can share it more abundantly and generously.

I know I will still enjoy my tea, iced or hot. Hopefully, however, I will be a better steward of the water that is available to me. And hopefully I will grow in gratitude for that water, and every blessing that is showered upon me daily.

What simple blessings do you have that have been easy to take for granted? How do you offer up prayers of thanksgiving? In song? A journal? Feel free to share below.

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This contribution is available at <http://gabrielsmom.com/2016/09/mondaymercy-give-drink-to-the-thirsty/>  
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# "Abortion in Good Faith" and "Abortion Care": These Phrases Are Nonsense [at It Makes Sense to Me]

## *IT MAKES SENSE TO ME*

By Larry Peterson

I usually walk 45 minutes to an hour before dawn. A black sky, splattered endlessly with twinkling stars (sometimes accented by a full moon) allows a person to witness the handiwork of God's creation up close and personal. It is (for me anyway) a magnificent and humbling sight. Perfection just does not happen. You know God is. The proof is right above you.

I get home and it is 5:40 and still black outside. I clean up, pour some coffee and open the newspaper. This is "my" time. I am seizing the moment. Today, staring at me is a full page, color ad from an organization called "Catholic for Choice". The site is called, "Abortion in Good Faith". The site wants you to "take the pledge". I breathe in, sip the coffee, and read on. The banner proclaims;

***Public Funding for abortion is a Catholic social justice value.***

***Equal access to comprehensive healthcare, including reproductive health services, is a moral imperative.***

~~~~~

The funny thing was, I was not appalled or even angry. Instead, I found myself actually shocked and scared. I was shocked at the seemingly Catholic nature of this ad and because I knew it was not. I was scared because it was so well done. Never doubt for a moment that the devil is the master of deceit and deception. He had prompted some fine work with this ad. It appeared to be, more or less, "Catholic".

Pope Francis has said, "*The right to life is the first among human rights. To abort a child is to kill someone who cannot defend himself.*"



St. John Paul II said, *“The cemetery of the victims of human cruelty in our century is extended to include yet another vast cemetery, that of the unborn.”*

The preceding two quotes are from two Popes, one a canonized saint. They both were chosen to occupy the Chair of Peter and were entrusted with the Keys to the Kingdom. Their words express the teaching of Holy Mother Church, the Bride of Christ. We cannot claim to be Catholics and reject or ignore the teaching of the Church. We cannot be “cafeteria Catholics”, picking and choosing what suits us. It is not about us. It is about following Christ and His teachings.

The Right to Life is our most basic and fundamental right as children of God and human beings. The miracles of science have shown us that a child is functioning in the womb at six weeks of development (I hate the word gestation). Usually, at that point, most women are just acknowledging what could be happening inside their womb. That is when testing begins.

Now is when the smooth pitch for “Abortion in Good Faith” kicks in. Here is the pledge:

The harsh restrictions on public funding for abortion mean that lower-income women don't have access to abortion when they need it. Women who are dependent on Medicaid, employees of the federal and state governments, military members, and millions of others who are dependent on public funding simply don't get the same kind of care as women with money. That is not Catholic.

Our campaign tells the stories of Catholics across the country who want meaningful, accessible reproductive healthcare choices for everyone, no matter how much money they have, where they live or what they believe.

We believe that everyone deserves access to abortion.

A young man named, John, who describes himself as a student community organizer and a Catholic says, *“Denying someone abortion care, or any healthcare, simply because they cannot afford the procedure is an assault on their God-given dignity.”* He never mentions that Planned Parenthood receives more than a half-BILLION dollars a year in taxpayer money and is the biggest abortion provider in the country.

“Abortion in Good faith”, “Abortion care”, “and an assault on our God- given dignity” are terms and phrases that do not even make any sense. Whatever is “abortion care”? Emergency health care to save a life of a woman after a botched abortion would be “abortion care”. The sentence suggesting that denying someone an abortion is an “assault on their God-given dignity” is so far-fetched it rejects simple common sense.

Catholics who follow the tenets of their faith and all those who respect life are under serious attack in today’s secular driven environment. For some inexplicable reason many in today’s world have gone “meistic” (my word). Self-gratification dominates the landscape. Self-sacrifice and saying no to one’s impulses and desires is mocked. We have heard the anti-Gods sing the song of, “Don’t worry-be happy, God loves you, wants you to enjoy yourself and would never punish you.”

God certainly does love us all and He wants us to enjoy eternity with Him in His home. But to get to His home there are rules to follow and consequences for not doing so. The “Abortion in Good Faith” ad is dangerous because so many Catholics are faith-deprived. They are easy prey to this genteel persuasion. They have lost the fortifications of a faith filled existence.

In today’s politically correct environment talking about our faith and Jesus and His church is not an easy thing to do. But those of us who do believe and follow the guidance of Christ’s church have to somehow reach outside the doors of the church and grab some of those just looking in.

If all else fails maybe we could just get them to look up at a black, starlit sky. The proof is in the perfection right above them. Going back to basics may be a start.

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Momming in Solidarity [at Sweeping Up Joy]



I am the mother of four. In some circles, that's an enormous number. In other circles, that's just getting started.

At any rate, I've gone through four births, three potty-training-s, two kindergartens, and one learning-to-read-s. There's a lot in between each of those milestones. Like trips to the emergency room, family gatherings interrupted by vomit, and threats of running away.

Here's the thing: **Even after having all these kids, I know nothing.** And my kids do weird stuff all the time. Little kids are learning to be human, which is a tough job. (*Heck -- I'm still learning to be human!*)

Furthermore, being tired, hungry, or bored can become catastrophic quickly. My kids delight in teaching me that lesson over and over again until I finally get it and pack enough snacks and things to do in our already enormous diaper bag.

I have witnessed kids from other families throw fits. Call names. Bite. Refuse to move. And the moms always get apologetic, probably because (*like me in those situations*) they feel filled with guilt and shame during public incidents. As if the behavior of their child indicates complete mothering ineptitude.

In the vast majority of cases, though, the mom is doing just fine.

I really, really, really want a sign for Mom Solidarity. Like a secret handshake, only cooler. Because there's not a clear way to say "I'm not judging you" to an embattled mom without making a scene. The sympathetic smile can be misconstrued as judgement. The nod, the look away-- all those could be perceived as judgement. Anything I can think of to say is so...awkward. "You go, girl," "You got this," and "Keep on keepin' on?" Lame-o.

I tried to poke around on the internet to see if such a thing exists. [This article](#) had some nice ways to be supportive, but not an actual secret handshake. [One mom](#) used the gesture from The Hunger Games, but I'm not sure I love that.

Here's what I propose.



Why yes, the baby is climbing on the table during my “fistie.”

This is the ASL letter “M.” (*Watching a couple [Signing Time DVDs](#) does not make me fluent in ASL, but it has given me a great respect and appreciation for the power and beauty of sign language.*)

Making the “M,” fist pump twice. Boom. A quick, subtle way to let another mom know that we’re all in this together. Even if we’re making different choices. Even if we parent differently. Let’s give up this whole “mommy wars” thing. We’re all just doing the best we can.

If you’re one of the 5 people I know in real life, and you see me make the M fist pump, here’s what I’m saying:

You are a good mom. You’re doing your best. Could you be doing better? Sure! All of us could. We could all be a little more patient, a little more understanding of our kids. But don’t beat yourself up for not being pinterest-able all the time.

You think your kid just did something awful? I don’t mean to be that guy, but probably my kid has done something worse. Way worse and involving poo. **So whatever it is that you’re feeling embarrassed about, I’ve probably been there—but with poo.**

So keep on keepin’ on. You’ve got this. Let me know if you need some emergency snacks or baby wipes. We’re all in this together.

There you go. Let’s start using this in grocery stores and at playgrounds everywhere. Mom solidarity!

This contribution is available at <http://www.sweepingupjoy.com/momming-in-solidarity/>
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THE CLOISTERED HEART IS a way of living for God in the midst of the world. It is heart monasticism that can be embraced by married or single persons, religious or lay. It's an analogy in which our lives can be "monasteries," our hearts can live in the "enclosure" of Christ, and all things may be viewed through the will of God as through a "grille."



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Your novels fly in the face of the mistaken notion that saint stories are dry, boring, or irrelevant to modern life. They are lively, gritty, and despite the time periods, relatable. How does your storytelling compare to the style of other stories of the saints?

As a mother of eleven, I've read an *awful lot* of books about saints over the years, believe me. I've invested more money than I care to admit, always hoping, of course, to find stories that would not only inspire my children to love and imitate these incredible heroes and heroines of God, but, more importantly, make them realize that the saints were true flesh-and-blood human beings who started out with the same struggles, temptations and weaknesses that plague every one of us since Adam bit that stupid apple. But the more books I crammed into our bookshelves, the more apparent it became that the majority of saint novels (often reprints from the 40's and 50's) are agonizingly dull. It's awful to say, but it's true. I'm sure everyone knows the kind of books I'm talking about – where the author wheels out a cardboard cut-out saint and plops him on the page. There he sits, in perfect holiness, from his first breath. From that point on, things only get worse. Long-winded passages, flowery archaic prose, little action, dead-boring dialogue. Basically a bunch of lifeless characters tripping across the pristine white pages of your newly purchased twenty-dollar book, while you yawn your way through the story waiting for SOMETHING exciting to happen to these people. Sound familiar?

Don't get me wrong. There are some excellent saint novels out there. But the majority (deep sigh) are drab, predictable, plot-less, and worst of all, hopelessly discouraging. They give the impression that if you weren't born with bees miraculously coming out of your mouth, you don't stand a chance when it comes to holiness.

Teenagers, even more than young children, are very discerning in what they read. A little child can be dazzled by any book (especially if Mommy reads it out loud) but for teens it's different. In today's world, what attraction does a saint story have, when competing against action-packed Harry Potter, heart-pounding vampire tales, or whatever else out there is being shoveled at our kids? It stands then to reason that if teens are going to read a saint story, it better have a lot of ACTION and EXCITEMENT. Something fast-paced and rollicking and fun . . . And above all, it needs a hero they can relate to. The saints weren't boring, and neither should their stories be. So I try to make the pages of my novels brim with adventure and choose saints that even today's teens can identify with. Adults sometime criticize me for using too modern a style. But I hear over and over again from my teen readers that it's precisely that which makes them keep coming back for my next book.

Your series is entitled “God’s Forgotten Friends: Lives of Little-Known Saints.” Why God’s forgotten friends? Why not the saints who are familiar?

“In many chapels, reddened by the setting sun, the saints rest silently, waiting for someone to love them.”

Years ago I came across these words, written by an unknown priest, and they struck me with such urgency that I knew those were the saints I was going to write about. Every Catholic has heard of St. Francis, St. Therese, St. John Bosco. I love all of them. Everyone does, and books about them abound. But what about the obscure saints that no one has prayed to in centuries? Saint Magnus, Saint Ansgar, Saint Dymphna, Saint Cloud or John the Dwarf or Moses the Black? Even my

absolute favorite saint, Camillus de Lellis, has his own Proper in the Missal, yet almost no one knows a thing about his wayward youth. (As you can see, my list of planned novels is endless!) I imagine all these saints in Heaven, looking down with yearning in their eyes, hoping someone, someday, will discover them and fall in love with them. So that's what, with their help and the grace of God, I want my novels to do!

How difficult is it to research these “forgotten friends”? And how do you fictionalize events in their lives while remaining true to their known histories?

I spend a lot of time on research. Sometimes even years before I actually sit down and type those ominous words, “Chapter One.” But researching is part of the adventure of discovering my saints. Having said that, I have a confession to make. . . With thousands of forgotten saints to choose from, I usually go for the ones whose lives are veiled in the most obscurity, or where historians differ so much in their accounts that I can allow myself a fair degree of creative license without feeling guilty. Did St. Camillus fight at the Battle of Lepanto? Did Baldwin have 700 or 300 knights at his miraculous victory of Ascalon? How old was St. Magnus when he died? It all depends on which historian you read, so I simply take my pick and use the version that will best fit my story. My intent is never to present a definitive biography. My books are novels and I think my readers know that.

How has writing about these saints affected your own spiritual life?

On one hand, I realize in writing about my heroes that I am nowhere even close to being holy, like they were. But because I try to draw out their human sides, I come to know them as fellow human beings who struggled and fell and were sometimes afraid and had the same emotions we all do. That gives me hope that sanctity is within reach and God's grace will never fail anyone who surrenders himself entirely to His love. Ultimately that's the message I want to give my readers. By the end of my own books, I also discover I've fallen in love with my saints and they are my truest and most powerful friends for life, even if I didn't start writing the book with a ton of devotion to them. Again, it's these true friendships with the saints that I hope my readers will take away with them when they close that final page of one of my novels and return it to the shelf.

You have experience in writing plays. How did you come to writing novels? How has script-writing been helpful to you in that regard?

Writing novels has been part of my life ever since I learned how to hold a pencil. I wrote my first “book” long before I could even spell by dictating it to my big sister, and things just kept moving from there. My entire childhood I dreamed of becoming a novelist. My husband and I got involved in writing plays in the early 90's for a small Catholic company, and although it was far removed from my dream of writing books, it turned out to be the thing that launched my writing career. In fact, *A Soldier Surrenders* started out as a movie screenplay, co-written with my husband Jeff. Later I adapted the script into my first novel. With fear and trembling—and absolutely no clue how to go about it—I submitted the manuscript simultaneously to every Catholic publisher I knew. (Hint: NEVER DO THAT!) To my shock, no less than four publishers accepted it, forcing me to turn three of them down (I still cringe when I think about that!). But God made my dream come true. Back to Carolyn's question . . . The single most valuable lesson screenwriting taught me was *definitely* how to write dialogue.

You've released a series of books for young children as well. My youngest children enjoyed the "Animals of God" stories (told from an animal's point of view) as well as the illustrations. What was it like to work with an illustrator to bring your characters to life?

I was truly blessed to team up with Martina Parnelli, a wonderful artist who shares my triple love of children, animals and obscure saints! At present we're working on our fourth picture book together, *The Man God Kept Surprising: Saint William of Bourges*. I find it so exciting to send her one of my stories and see what she will do with my characters. We start each book by deciding on a list of scenes I want her to illustrate, based on my page count, typesetting options, and so forth. But once I submit the scenes to her, I leave it entirely to her to do what she wants with them. Opening her emails and finding her delightful results are like Christmas! My first love will always remain writing novels for teens, but working on children's books with Martina has been extremely fun and rewarding.

What projects are you working on now?

My current work-in-progress is *The Hunted Princess*, a young adult novel about Saint Dymphna. Martina Parnelli and I are also working on our "God's Forgotten Friends for Children" series, which kicked off with *Small for the Glory of God: Saint John the Dwarf* and will soon have Saint William added to it.

So many little-known saints to write about and never enough time . . . !

Website: susanpeekauthor.com

A Soldier Surrenders, also available en Español: [*La rendición de un soldado*](#)

This contribution is available at <http://www.carolynastfalk.com/2016/09/19/reviving-gods-forgotten-friends-author-interview-with-susan-peek/>
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Of Family Mantels and the Notre Dame Basilica [at Clinging to Onions]



Winter is a hazy abstraction and seemingly a long ways off these warm autumn days.

Aside from the

[Christmas decorations already on display](#)

in the Dollar Tree, what's to remind you of the coming precipitous drop in temp and the mad rush to get your presents wrapped before December 25th?

At my house, there's a constant reminder: a neat line of small gold hooks permanently installed above our fireplace. They're for Christmas stockings, ten hooks total – nine for my immediate family and one extra in case we host an overnight yuletide reveler. It was a bit of a pain to get the intervals between them fairly even, so I just leave them there year round. These days, they're sporting key chains and lanyards, a rosary and, until recently, a Dr. Who necklace. It's like a Hanging Garden of post-summer flotsam and a centrally located household Lost and Found.



Come November, though – hoo, boy! The flotsam will be excised, and it'll be time for radical reassignment when it comes to our home's interior décor – yours, too, most likely. For us, the fireplace mantel is key: The stockings will take their rightful place on those hooks, of course, and the mantelpiece

clock, front and center, will be packed away. The same goes for all those family photos – group and individual, family and friends, school portraits, graduation shots, Baptism and First Holy Communion – carefully stacked and stowed to make room for candles, crèche, and myriad festive decorations.

It's a temporary renovation, however. Once Christmastide starts waning in the new year, the crèche will come down and the photos will once again take their place – as much of a tradition as anything we'd been doing throughout December. And like most traditions, we don't give it much thought – where else would we stick all those portraits and goofy snapshots?



Yet, think about your own behavior

when you visit a home for the first time. If you're like me, you make a beeline to the bookcases – what do they have and how is it all arranged? Eventually, however, even I wander over to the mantel to join my wife in perusing the photos. It's a way of getting to know a family: Who the players are, past and present; the faces that express a family's history and personality – who are these folks? What are they all about?

That's what I think of when I step inside churches – especially big ones like the

[Basilica of the Sacred Heart](#)

at the University of Notre Dame. The walls and ceiling are awash with Biblical heroes and heroines as well as saints and martyrs from Church history – a true "

[cloud of witnesses](#)

." All those icons, stained glass windows, and painted images help keep the campus community tethered to its Catholic heritage, and they serve to orient visitors to what that community is all about.

Just like a family mantel.

For a guided tour of one family's connections with the Basilica's iconographic "mantelpiece," follow [this link](#).

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The Weariness of Remembering



Where I Was

This is the time when we are exhorted to remember the tragedy of September 11th. We hear stories of sorrow and heroism that have been told hundreds of times, and we hear the stories that are still being revealed, knowing that there is an endless supply of such stories.

[On the tenth anniversary I happened to be in that liminal place between having a disease and knowing I had a disease.](#) My stomach hurt but I still thought I was fine. I continued reflecting on [a new normal](#) with no idea how prescient those words would be. I poo-pooed remembering:

I know it's trendy to say "Never Forget" on a day like this, but I don't think there is any danger of anyone forgetting. It is a beautiful tribute to hear the stories of those killed on this day, and to memorialize them at the site of the attack. They shouldn't ever be forgotten. But I refuse to turn into a pillar of salt, looking back and looking back until I forget which way is forward anymore. Maybe a sister motto to "never forget" would be "keep going".

We never know what we can accomplish in the shadow of tragedy and gloom. We finish races, we sing songs, we write, we teach, and in the course of it we remember even while we're looking forward. The stories we remember from September 11, 2001 are those of action – people rushing into buildings, calling loved ones, even taking down attackers. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe a moving target can be hit, but I'm not quite sure it can be destroyed.

This year, in 2016, we entered September and the memorials started, on the TV and radio, in cultural programming. These made my soul feel heavy and tired, and I wasn't sure if I didn't need to be reminded, or I didn't want to be reminded.

The memory of that day is written in my bones – and perhaps in all of ours. There was a life before the dread and fear and conflict, but maybe I, a college senior at the time, am just young enough not to remember it. Maybe it's easier not to.

The truth is that first trauma is mixed together with the constant readiness for mourning that the last 15 years have demanded of us. I have held comfort and hope in my heart despite the ever-increasing onslaught of bad news, and I will continue to – what else can I do? But I am suddenly so weary of remembering.

I now understand even more when so many faith traditions hold remembering as a virtuous – even sacramental – act. We must do it even when it is the hardest thing for us. So we continue to hold tragedies in our hearts, and pray that we have no more such tragic deposits to make in our accounts of heartbreak.

This contribution is available at <http://margaretfelice.com/2016/09/10/the-weariness-of-remembering/>
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7 Reasons I Do Not Wear a Chapel Veil [at Catholic Stand]

How does the Mass compete?

The scenes from World Youth Day in Poland give hope that all is not lost. There is still a zeal for the Faith among young Catholics. Yet whenever I gather with other Catholic mothers of grown children there is always a sad story of a child who has left the Church. During one of these conversations a mother spoke of her daughter, “She says she doesn’t get anything out of Mass. She goes to Protestant services and they are so entertaining. How do I answer that?”

Unfortunately, I am not very quick on my feet with replies so all I could do was offer my sympathy and prayers. But the question nagged at me. How should a parent respond to that question? How does the typical Catholic Mass compete with dynamic motivational speakers and rousing praise music?

The Mass is about Him

The answer is, “It is not about you. It is about Him.” If we look at the Mass as a concert or a Jesus pep rally we are going to be disappointed. If we want to slide into our pew and be passively entertained for an hour then we do not understand the reality of the Mass. We do not come to Mass on Sunday for happy-clappy toe-tapping choruses. Nor should we be expecting self-esteem lifting pop psychology. The purpose of the Mass is not even to experience those warm fuzzies of Christian fellowship. We come to Mass to transcend our earthly bonds and physically experience Christ. His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity become tangibly present in our midst through the Eucharist.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI, pointed out in his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy* that the real action of the Mass is the Eucharistic Prayer:

This is what is new and distinctive about the Christian liturgy: God himself acts and does what is essential. He inaugurates the new creation, makes himself accessible to us, so that, through the things of the earth, through our gifts we can communicate with him in a personal way. (p. 173)

There is no musician or dynamic speaker who can top that.

To Serve and Not Be Served

Many years ago the laity spoke not of attending Mass, but of assisting at Mass. Christ will be present on the altar whether or not we are in the pews. We are there to assist the priest with our prayers and participation as he offers the sacrifice of the Mass. We are there to serve, not to be served. Our reward is that we have the opportunity to share in the Real Presence and be nourished by His Body.

Few people memorize the [Baltimore Catechism](#) these days, but it is still a useful resource in explaining

Church teachings. In particular, [Question 6](#) helps put our relationship to God and the Mass in perspective:

Q: Why did God make you?

A: God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.

Here on earth our mission is to know God, to love God, and to serve God. We are created for eternal happiness, but this joy awaits us in Heaven. If we approach the Mass with this in mind, the Mass is awe inspiring and mesmerizing.

Knowing and Loving God

First we are to know God. To know God we must spend time with Him. Like Martha's sister Mary, we sit and listen. We get to Mass early enough to settle our hearts in His presence. We hear His voice through the Scripture and through the reflections offered in the homily. No matter how familiar we are with the prayers and readings, we should try to open our minds to a new insight or a new understanding of the words. This is not necessarily a soothing experience. Living the Christian life is a challenge. Christ offers us a cross, not a featherbed. But knowing God also means trusting God. There is no cross that Christ does not carry with us.

We are called to love God. In the Gospel of John, Christ says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" ([John 14:15](#)). This does not mean that we follow without thinking. It means that if we love God, we will align our will with His. Jesus taught us to pray "*Thy will be done,*" not "*my will be done.*" God commands us to keep the Sabbath holy. If we are aligning our will with the will of God we will make Mass a priority.

Is there anything in this world that is so important that it trumps spending time with our Lord? The very first commandment is, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me" ([Exodus 20:2-3 DRA](#); cf. [Deuteronomy 5:6-7](#)) When we choose sporting events, vacations, or just sleeping in over going to Mass, we have made these activities strange Gods and placed them ahead of the one Lord.

The Mass prepares us to serve

Finally, we are called to serve God. Christ commands us to "go and make disciples". We cannot make disciples unless we are first disciples ourselves. Therefore, we must place Christ and His Church at the center of our lives and let everything radiate outwards from that. At the heart of this is Christ in the Eucharist. [As the fathers of Vatican II proclaimed:](#)

Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It. Thus both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion all take part in this liturgical service, not indeed, all in the same way but each in that way which is proper to himself. Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most august sacrament. ([Lumen Gentium § 11](#))

Through the Mass, we now more deeply know God, love God, and can serve God. When we hear the final dismissal at Mass, we are ready to go in peace and glorify the Lord with our lives.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicstand.com/mass-know-love-serve/>
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Election 2016, Pray and work! [at Catholic365]

I am so thankful to God! I believe He is answering our prayer (See [Election Novena 2016](#)).

Since then, I learned some things.

There are more choices for President.

They need to be included in the Presidential debates in order for the Country to take them seriously.

There's a website that helps you identify the candidate that matches your issues.

We need to pray and work to make these other candidates known.

Let's start with the last one.

We need to pray and work to make these other candidates known.

I'm not going to vote for anyone that I don't trust. Therefore, I'm not going to vote for Hillary or Trump. So, I'm asking you to join me in prayer again, that the Presidential Debate Committee will open the debates for third party candidates. To date, as far as I know, only one third party is being considered. [The Libertarian Party](#). And yes, I do trust those candidates more than I trust either Hillary or Trump. They both sound very honest and have a proven track record as Governors, where they successfully improved the quality of life in their respective states. I also like their idea that they will run the country as co-Presidents. It reminds me of the way the Catholic Church was moved to Rome by Sts. Peter and Paul.

But, I have learned that there are other Parties out there, who have not been given attention by the Media. Letting them into the debates would allow the voting public to be more completely informed on the options that they have for President.

There's a website that helps you identify the candidate that matches your issues.

[Isidewith.com](https://www.isidewith.com/elections/2016-presidential-quiz) (<https://www.isidewith.com/elections/2016-presidential-quiz>).

Until I went to this website, I thought I was a one issue voter. But, they offer a quiz which is very detailed. You even have the option to write in some of your answers. I did, on two or three occasions. It took me about an hour to complete the quiz. It came up with several candidates in order of which I matched more closely. I only looked as deeply as the first five and I don't remember how many choices it produced. But it was nice to know that we are not necessarily locked in to the two candidates that the Media and the Establishment are trying to shove down our throats.

They need to be included in the Presidential debates in order for the Country to take them seriously.

Folks, we've prayed for God to give us candidates worthy of our vote. God has revealed that there are other people out there. Now, let's work to get these people on the Presidential debates and in the News so that we can make an informed decision on who we want for President. To that end, I ask you to again, join me in prayer. This time to the Patron Saint of Politicians.

Dear St. Thomas More, in your earthly life, you were a model of prudence. You never thrust yourself rashly into any serious undertaking; instead, you tested the strength of your powers and waited on God's will in prayer and penance, then boldly carried it out without hesitation. Through your prayers and intercession, obtain for me the virtues of patience, prudence, wisdom and courage. Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...

Glorious St. Thomas More, I beg you to take up my cause, confident that you will advocate for me before God's Throne with the same zeal and diligence that marked your career on earth. If it be in accord with God's will, obtain for me the favor I seek, namely that the Presidential Debate Committee be persuaded to permit Third Parties to participate in the Presidential Debates.

V. Pray for us, O Blessed St. Thomas More.

R. That we may faithfully follow you on the hard road that leads to the narrow gate of eternal life.

In Conclusion

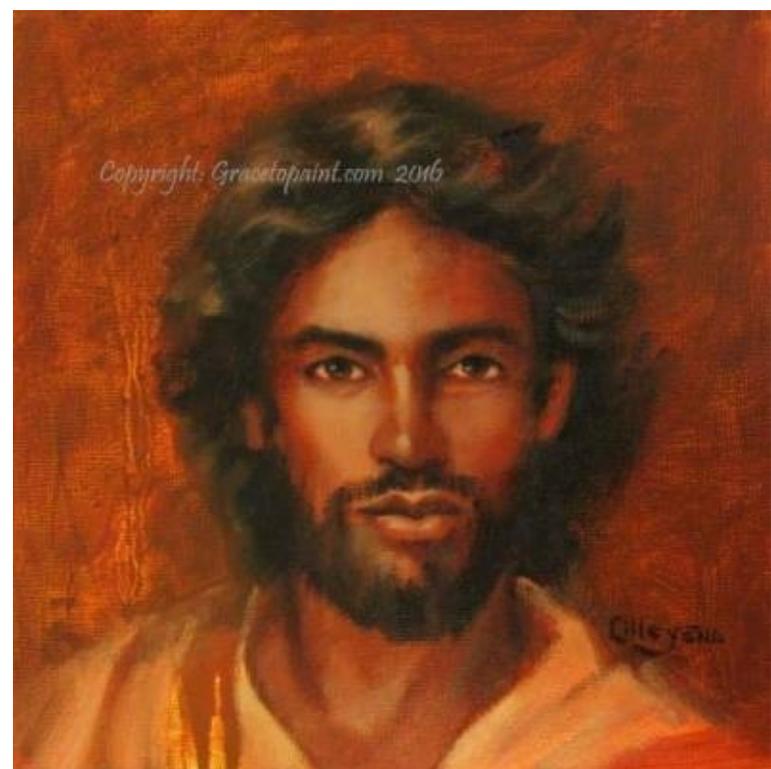
Folks, thanks for participating with me. I hope that you agree with me that the People of these United States deserve better than the two choices which are now being forced upon us. And I hope you will join me in bringing these other choices to light, so that we can all make an informed decision.

I firmly believe that a vote for someone in whom we don't trust, is a wasted vote! Let's identify good people to vote for. And let's vote for them.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholic365.com/article/5128/election-2016-pray-and-work.html>
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Jesus (Mediterranean Appearance) [at Grace to Paint]



8×8" oil paint on primed artist board; use "comment" below to inquire.

I have been painting Jesus with some mix of ethnicities.

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2016/09/23/jesus-mediterranean/>
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Padre Pio was not a rigid Traditionalist [at The Shield of Faith]

There is a wonderful meditation composed by Padre Pio in which he states: “He [Jesus] sees the sacrileges with which priests and faithful defile themselves, not caring about those sacraments instituted for our salvation as necessary means for it - now, instead, made an occasion of sin and damnation of souls.” From this it can be seen that Padre Pio viewed the sacraments as the “necessary means” of salvation. However, in studying the course of his life and ministry as a Catholic priest, evidence can be found that he understood the sacraments as necessary for all in general, but not for all in particular. Thus, while he believed that the sacraments of the Church are necessary as the normative means of salvation, Padre Pio was willing to admit of exceptions on an individual basis. But these exceptions did not compromise his conviction that the one true Church founded by Jesus Christ is the Roman Catholic Church.

The following documented cases are presented as evidence that Padre Pio believed that non-Catholics could be saved and even receive the sacraments.

Adelaide McAlpin Pyle, a Baptized Protestant

“She will be saved because she has faith.”

Most of the information for this first account comes from the English version of the book *Mary Pyle*, by Bonaventura Massa. This work was diligently compiled from written documents and taped oral testimonies, kept on file in the archives of Padre Pio’s friary in anticipation of the process for Miss Pyle’s Cause for Beatification.

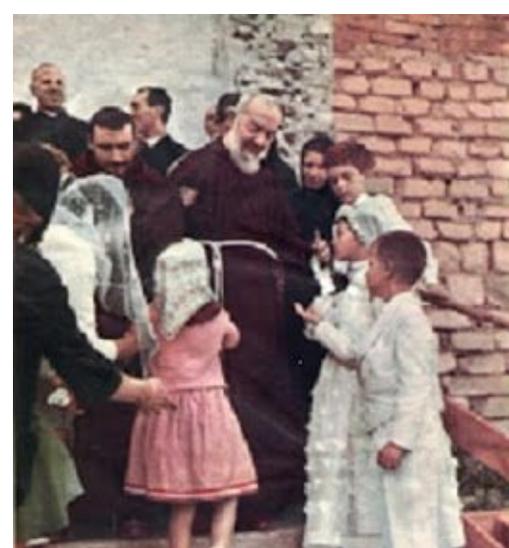
The wealthy Presbyterian, Adelaide McAlpin Pyle, was the mother of Mary Pyle, a well-known convert to Catholicism who renounced her family fortune in order to spend her life near Padre Pio. The Pyle family was related by marriage to the Rockefellers, and made their fortune in the soap and hotel business. After Adelaide found out that her daughter Mary had chosen to move to southern Italy to learn about God from a saint, curiosity impelled her to travel from her plush New York townhouse to medieval San Giovanni Rotondo, in order to meet this holy man.

In spite of an unpleasant initial encounter, Adelaide eventually became quite friendly with Padre Pio. She made numerous journeys from America, beginning in the mid-1920s, to visit her daughter Mary, and to meet with the Padre. Mary often tried to convince her mother to convert to Catholicism as she herself had done, but Adelaide reportedly said in Padre Pio’s presence, “I would rather allow myself to be burned alive for my religion!” Padre Pio advised Mary not to push her mother to convert: “Let her be! Don’t upset her peace.” However, Mary continued to worry because her mother was not a Catholic, and Padre Pio counseled, “Let’s not confuse her. She will be saved because she has faith.”

In 1936, Adelaide, who had grown older and was nearing death, made one last trip to San Giovanni Rotondo. As she said good-bye to Padre Pio at the end of this visit, the saintly priest pointed heavenward, saying to the Protestant Adelaide, “I hope we will see each other again soon, but if we don’t see each

other here, we will see each other up there.” She passed away in the fall of 1937 at the age of seventy-seven. Her daughter Mary then became pre-occupied about her mother’s salvation. After dreaming that her mother was in Rome standing in front of the Vatican, she poured out her anxiety to Padre Pio. He replied, "And who told you that your mother could not be saved?"

Did Padre Pio receive a revelation that Adelaide Pyle had secretly ‘in pectore’ converted to the Catholic Faith? If that were true, he most certainly would have told this to her daughter Mary, who was obviously distraught from worrying over her mother’s salvation. Further, it seems likely that if Adelaide had converted, she would have shared this good news with her convert daughter. It is reasonable to conclude then that Padre Pio believed that this particular person who died outside the Church could be saved. In addition, there is evidence that Padre Pio would have been willing to hear Adelaide’s confession, and grant her sacramental absolution. On one occasion, she had confided to her daughter her great desire to kneel before Padre Pio in his confessional, but she lamented that her inability to speak Italian made this impossible. When Padre Pio heard of this, (apparently it was after her death), he bemoaned, “Oh! If she had only done it! As for the language, I would have taken care of that!”



King George V of England, a Baptized Protestant

“Let us pray for a soul . . .”

One evening in 1936 Padre Pio was conversing with some dear friends in his cell. Among those present were Dr. Guglielmo Sanguinetti and Angelo Lupi, who would respectively become the medical director and the builder of Padre Pio’s hospital years later. In the middle of their conversation, Padre Pio suddenly interrupted the discourse with the words, “Let us pray for a soul soon to appear before the tribunal of God.” With that he bowed his head, and his guests, although astonished, knelt and joined him in prayer. When they had finished, Padre Pio announced that they had been praying for the king of England. The next morning, the news blared forth on the friary radio of the unexpected death of King George V of England the previous evening. Two of the sources for this story report that Padre Aurelio was also present in the room, while another source states that Padre Pio went to the friary cell of Padre Aurelio at midnight that evening and asked him to join him in prayers for the king of England who “at that moment” was to appear before God.

An Anglican and the son of the future King Edward VII, George was baptized on July 7, 1865 in the

private chapel of Windsor Castle. Upon accession to the throne in 1910, the new king swore the following required oath: "I, N., do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God, profess, testify and declare that I am a faithful Protestant, and that I will, according to the true intent of the enactments to secure the Protestant Succession to the Throne of my realm, uphold and maintain such enactments to the best of my power."

In all likelihood, the king was in his final agony or had already died when Padre Pio requested prayers for him, since he was "at that moment" to appear before God. If he believed that the soul of this Protestant were doomed to the everlasting fire, why would he pray for him, and also ask others including another priest to do likewise, other than to ask for his conversion? However, it is not recorded or implied that he asked his confreres to pray for the deathbed conversion of the king – an important intention that Padre Pio in all likelihood would have explicitly stated, if such were his purpose. Although he mentioned the king to his priest colleague, he did not tell the friends in his room that they were praying for a non-Catholic until they had finished their prayers. One cannot therefore say that it is to be assumed that as Catholics they were praying for the king's conversion.

Since as far as is known they were not specifically asked to pray for his deathbed conversion, there are two alternatives. The first is that they were simply praying for the salvation of a Protestant whom Padre Pio did not consider doomed because of his non-Catholic religion. Of course this scenario would not be acceptable to one who holds that Padre Pio subscribed to a literal

extra ecclesiam nulla salus

position. Those who hold that position are left with the unlikely alternative that they were praying for a Catholic, and that Padre Pio had requested the prayers because he was given a private revelation that King George V of England was secretly a Roman Catholic, loyal to the Pope!

Julius Fine, an Unbaptized Devout Jew

"Julius Fine is saved . . ."

Fr. Alessio Parente, O.F.M. Cap., lived and worked alongside Padre Pio for many years in Our Lady of Grace Friary at San Giovanni Rotondo. He wrote numerous books about his confrere, and his works provide reliable source material for the saint. The following information is from Fr. Alessio's book *The Holy Souls*, and was related by a "very good friend" of his, Mrs. Florence Fine Ehrman, the daughter of the person in question.

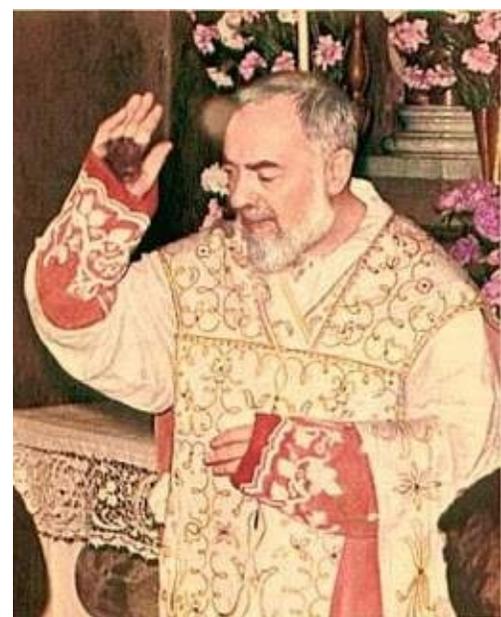
In 1965 her father, Julius Fine, who had practiced the Jewish faith all his life and believed firmly in God, was stricken with what is commonly called "Lou Gehrig's disease." Mrs. Ehrman wrote to Padre Pio beseeching a cure for her father from this fatal illness. A short time later she received the reply that Padre Pio would pray for her father and would take him under his protection.

When her father passed away in February of the next year, she was able to accept his death peacefully. However after some time, she began to worry about whether or not he was saved, even though he had been a very loving and kind husband and father. "This fear came about because I began to hear many people, Protestants and Catholics alike, say that unless person had been baptized they could not be

saved.”

On a visit to the friary at San Giovanni Rotondo in the fall of 1967, she was told by a personal friend (quite possibly Fr. Alessio himself) to write down whatever she wished to ask Padre Pio, and this friend would present the letter to him. She of course wrote down her concerns about the eternal state of her father’s soul – this good and gentle Jewish man who had never been baptized. The reply from Padre Pio, which she received in writing, was this: “Julius Fine is saved, but it is necessary to pray much for him.” Her mind was put at ease by such a “sure and definite” statement,” since she understood that her father was in Purgatory, his salvation guaranteed.

Whether Padre Pio was enlightened by his Guardian Angel, the Holy Spirit, interior locution, or some other means is not known. What is known, however, is his ability to make such determinations after intense prayer, nourished by his mystical union with Christ during his Mass and Holy Communion, and by the offering up of his sufferings, especially the painful bloody wounds of his stigmata. In this instance, Padre Pio committed himself to assuring a grieving daughter that her father, who was not baptized, and was not a Roman Catholic, was saved. As in the case of King George V, someone who wishes to force Padre Pio into the strict “absolutely no salvation outside the Church” camp, is only left with this improbable scenario: it was revealed to Padre Pio that the devout Jew, Julius Fine, was secretly a baptized Roman Catholic!



Padre Pio a True Catholic

From the above examples it appears that Padre Pio did not blindly adhere to the proposition that only baptized Catholics can be saved. Yet, it would be difficult to find someone more committed to the Catholic Church throughout his life than was Padre Pio. His obedience to the hierarchy was legendary, and he humbly submitted to Vatican-authorized suppression and even persecution without resistance. The spirituality of his epistles astonished even Carmelites, and his writings and teachings, born of the school of suffering, are the basis of an effort to make him a Doctor of the Church.

Padre Pio lived by the Spirit of God, not by the letter of the law, except when his superiors in religion routinely commanded obedience of him. His ingenuous openness to the plenitude of God’s mercy

anticipated the explicit declarations of the Church during and after the Second Vatican Council on the possibility that non-Catholic churches can be a “means of salvation,” and on the reception by non-Catholics of the sacraments in certain cases. Padre Pio actually believed that the gospel of Jesus Christ was Good News!

Posted 9/22/16, the eve of Padre Pio's feast day.

Much of this article was featured in the December 2006 edition of “Christian Order.” A formal footnoted version comprises one of the chapters in my book

[The Truth about Padre Pio's Stigmata](#)

View all of my [books](#).

This contribution is available at <http://divinefiat.blogspot.com/2016/09/padre-pio-was-not-rigid-traditionalist.html>
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Suffering in the Role of the Divine Comedy [at Catholic Conundrum]



Images: Trey - Aplastic Anemia patient and bone marrow recipient/ Luca - brother and bone marrow donor

"It hurts, Mom. Every time I pray for him it hurts." Honest, heartfelt words from my 7-year-old boy. Recently, we had learned about the story of the young grandson of a friend of ours who was diagnosed with Aplastic Anemia and was needing a bone marrow transplant. Praise God, his brother was found to be a match and the miraculous transplant took place on Sept. 28th. A continuing uphill battle is on its way for this blessed young boy, his beautiful brother, and their family, so prayers are desperately needed! My kids, very touched by their story, have become quite the prayer warriors for Trey and Luca, and it has warmed this mother's heart. Still, I needed to talk to my little guy about why he felt that "it hurt" to pray. "It could have been me!" was his response. "We're about the same age. I could be sick like that. It makes me sad that he's so sick and I'm not." I understood. Boy, did I understand. I'm not sure I could count how many times I have felt that way towards others in my life that have and continue to suffer.

Sometimes, suffering can be almost as hard to watch as it is to be going through it. But, suffering takes on a mystifying yet incredibly important role in our lives here on earth. And, we, no matter where we are on the side of suffering, have our part to play. As crazy as it may seem to a 7-year-old (and myself, at times!), God is using suffering to save us, to purify us, to bring us Home. Due to the Fall of Man, suffering is now a part of the Divine plan for each of us, and only I can fulfill my part of the Plan...only I.

What can I do as a watcher of suffering? Although probably obvious and I KNOW that we've all heard it a million times, we must pray. *God Himself has ordained this moment of encounter with suffering*; it is no fluke. What do we pray for? Healing. Seriously. DO it. I have met so many who are afraid to pray for healing because they have done so in the past and have seen no improvement. Please believe! We can't forget that each of us needs healing in so many ways - physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc. God will not always show us where the healing is taking place because only He knows what that soul needs for eternity. Our prayers for healing NEVER - can I repeat that? - NEVER - are for nothing. And guess what? Whether we are allowed to witness a healing is not the point. Sure, this is an amazing bonus when it happens, but it is not what matters. What IS important is that we have participated in God's plan, fulfilled our necessary role in this great Divine Comedy, and have done what God has asked of us. When

we do that, our soul finds itself one step closer to heaven, and the sufferer we are praying for one step closer to the Healer. Believe. *"Pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects."* James 5:16PS...If you would like to read more about Trey and Luca, here's a link to their Go Fund Me Page:<https://www.gofundme.com/teamtreysinomore>Also, you may note that their Go Fund Me page has exceeded their goal. The family set a low goal so as not to burden others, but with the ongoing care for the upcoming months, their expenses will greatly exceed their expressed goal. Feel free to donate to give them a hand-up...they are a beautiful Catholic family with a great love for God and is overwhelmingly grateful for all of the support shown so far.God bless your day!!

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicconundrum.com/blog/suffering-in-the-role-of-the-divine-comedy>
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Vineyard of Love [at CatholicSoup]



In the Gospel of John we hear about a vineyard and how so much of keeping up with that vineyard, maintaining it, requires attention. It requires pruning, cultivation, sacrifice, and connection. All of these things have come to life for me in a very real way and it also helped me understand a little more of what Christ speaks of in John 15

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing." John 15:1-5

The image of the vine and branches becomes a very beautiful way of understanding God's love and the different gifts and graces He can provide to us throughout our lives. The vineyard in the gospel is symbolic of our spiritual life and our relationship with Christ. How we maintain our "vineyard" will determine how successful the fruit of our own harvest will be. Cultivating the ground requires water, turning and clearing from weeds that prevent a strong healthy vine. Pruning, in our lives as we all know, is a very painful thing to do and so often requires sacrifice. But Christ calls us to prune, and he's there to help. In an unpruned vineyard, the water, the life-giving nutrient is being divided among so many branches and vines that the grapes become small, with little or no chance of growing. That concept, is having our focus on so many things that there is never really a full, concentrated attention on one thing, our fruit

becomes virtually small and therefore useless after harvest. The invitation is to place all our trust and focus on Christ being the living water, providing for us all that we need. Christ says that the Father prunes so that the vine bears *more fruit*, and much bigger fruit. God being the vine-grower, knows exactly what parts of us to keep, and those parts to throw away. So what might the challenges be for us?

Pruning away those extra things in our own lives so that we become liberated from the distractions and divisions that keep us from a fruitful and complete relationship with God the Father. Having so much trust in God that, upon pruning those things out of our lives, we are able to enter into a greater, fulfilling and life-giving connection with God.

"Remain in my love."

As we were harvesting our year's grapes, I found a prayer rising out of my own heart. To let God be the vine-grower in my own life, pruning away things that so often get in the way, distract or prevent me from being all that I can be. To help me place a complete trust in Him so much that within me there is always a desire to remain in His vineyard, and in His love.

This contribution is available at <http://catholicsoup.blogspot.com/2016/09/vineyard-of-love.html>
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The first Christian Evangelist [at Thoughts of a Young Catholic Medic]

As Christians, the importance of evangelization to our faith cannot be over-emphasized. It occupies so central a place in our very concept of faith- for if God, out of love for us, sent his son to lead us back to him by reproducing his very life in us, the fruit and indeed the proof of that very life of God in us is a life that seeks to also reach out to others. Like I have pointed out in a previous article, we were saved by the one mediator between God and man- Jesus Christ, who scripture says, '*gave himself a ransom for all*'. (1 Timothy 2:6). A true Christian spirit therefore consists in a '*being for all*'. Also, as St. Paul points out in Philippians 2, it follows that the kind of mind we should have amongst ourselves is such that was present in Christ Jesus who '*emptied himself*' (Gr. Kenosis) for us, and so we should empty ourselves for others.

I sometimes like to put it this way; Jesus died on the cross for us so that we may die on the cross for others. The divine life that was emptied out into us was not just meant to be contained in us-No. It was rather meant to be emptied out as well into others. Evangelization is therefore a fruit of conversion, of salvation. Imagine a world full of Christian evangelists, of '*other christs*'.

The centrality of this truth is shown forth from the very first day the good news of Christ's birth came to earth- to man. I feel very confident to say that the very first Christian conversion happened on the Annunciation in Luke 1:26, when heaven brought the good news to earth. On that very day, and in that very hour, the first person who received the definitive word of God did so from the mouth of the angel, from God. She did not just receive it through her ears, she accepted *him* through her *fiat* to give the Logos flesh and bear him to the world. In her acceptance therefore was contained not only a conversion to receiving and believing in Christ, but also an acceptance to bear him to the world, despite all obstacles, challenges and danger to her own life. Is this not the right attitude to Christian evangelization that has also been exemplified by the Saints and heroes of our faith? By giving birth to Christ, she gave birth to divine life- divine life for all men, for all of us, and so she became our Mother.

St. John would agree with me, for he said, 'those who *receive* him, who *believe in his name*, he gives *power* to become *children of God*. ' (John 1:12). And so she became the *first child of God* by Christ, for as the angel said to her, *the holy spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you...*(Luke 1:35) and also about her later on, *blessed is she who believed...* (Luke 1:45).

What we are told next however was that she *rose and went out with haste*. (Luke 1:39) Again, we see an evangelical spirit. She who was first to receive the *holy spirit* in her christianization now went to her cousin Elizabeth and once she greeted Elizabeth, Elizabeth herself was *filled with the Holy Spirit*.(Luke 1:41) and the babe in her womb leaped for joy, John the Baptist had received the good news as well. (Luke 1:41)

Who better can we learn the centrality and mode of Christian evangelization than she who became the Mother of my Lord, who in herself was the simplest christian model of evangelization? For from her we learn that true evangelization is a *fruit of our believing*, that it consists in *going out* of ourselves, of our comfort zones to meet others and to *stay with them*-as Mary did with Elizabeth.(Luke 1:56). From her we

learn humility of heart as central to conversion and evangelization for she who was full of grace, who had in her womb a child who was to rule all nations and whose kingdom would never end, **greeted** another whose child was not even worthy to untie the straps of her son's sandals. From her we learn a heart constantly attuned to God in prayer-indeed that first act of evangelization began with a dialogue with God in Luke 1:27 and ended with a communication with God- a prayer of praise in Luke 1:46-55.

We learn that the first Christian evangelization was a **family evangelization** . For as people love to say, 'Charity begins at home'. And so, the family, should represent the unit of evangelization, our homes should be transformed by the love and spirit of God that dwells within each and every one of us, every member of our families should be touched and filled with the spirit of the gospel that we have received, just as Mary did for her cousin Elizabeth.

Finally, we learn her **magnanimity**, that inner spiritual disposition within her to want to do great things for God, to desire to let the will of God-no matter what it is, or how tough it is, or how uncomfortable it will make us- be done in our lives. She teaches us to never look back when the spirit calls us to do great things for God, to evangelize, to challenge the way status quo in so far as it's not God's will, such that the Kingdom of God will be made manifest in the world.

Are you being stirred by the Spirit of God to do something great for him? Is the Lord calling you for a special mission of evangelization? Look to her, take her as your model, ask her to teach you to please him.

In case you forgot , her name is Mary and She is my Mother....

image

from http://reclaimingourchildren.typepad.com/lumina_a_ray_of_light_aft/2016/01/abandonment-mary-mother-of-us-all.html



This contribution is available at <http://myclassicrooz.wordpress.com/2016/09/25/the-first-christian-evangelist/>
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Sometimes, when you least expect it, you hear something that causes you to pause; or, in my case made me stop and think, “Seriously? They even USE that word today”. This happened to me when I heard the word Mankind in a daily reading.

Upon deeper reflection I wondered if they even teach the word ‘mankind’ to elementary students. And then, if they DO teach this word, would they even know what it means? Many words end up by the roadside because they are not relevant. This particular word could very well go the way of VCR, disposable film, bubblers, floppy disk, britches, hootenanny, icebox, and then my favorite, the ‘yuppie’.

When there is no longer a need for the word, the word quietly fades away.

When the word is no longer relevant to people’s lives it loses its very definition.

And, when you break apart MANKIND, are the two parts mutually inclusive, or exclusive?

During a sermon this past month, St. Luke catechized:

**“The person who is trustworthy in very small matters
is also trustworthy in great ones;
and the person who is dishonest in very small matters
is also dishonest in great ones.” (Luke 16:10)**

Hearing this, I *almost* wished I were in a Baptist Church where I could have stood up quickly and shouted out ‘Amen Father! Alleluia’.

St. Luke was giving ‘mankind’ direction on how to live the kind of life which brings out the best in all, but today it seems as if the very word is an oxymoron. How can the word ‘man’ be united with the word ‘kind’? There are so many instances in the media where ‘man’ is anything but ‘kind’. The way society interacts is anything but ‘kind’. The ability of a person to anonymously be ‘unkind’ has grown exponentially in our interactions with others on social media sites.

As parents it is our duty to teach our children to be ‘kind’. It is a simple word, but action is needed to exemplify the word, to do honor to the word. So it is with some irony I came across an idea to help others in need on the social media site Pinterest. Many are creating [Blessing Bags](#).

How to Pack a BLESSING BAG



Photo courtesy of ThriftyNorthwestmom.com Used with permission. All rights reserved.

“We are keeping a “Blessing bag” in our car in case we find someone in need. You can make these up with items from the Dollar Tree such as gloves, thermal socks, beef sticks, crackers, candy bars, toothpaste, toothbrush, wipes, deodorant, snacks and other items that may help someone who is homeless or in a bad way

What a simple ‘kind’ idea.

When they see someone in need they roll down their window and give them this bag. Anything can go into the bag, but what truly made me see the ‘kindness’ of others was seeing how many people are doing this. One person was using gift certificates for McDonald, Burger Kings. Another was using certificates to Walmart for a shampoo and cut. Some made bags just for women, some just for kids, and others created bags for seniors.

So many people excited to be ‘kind’ to those in need!

Showing how to be kind in small interactions with others is key to our children learning how to being kind in larger interactions. We begin teaching the small acts of kindness, and our children will have the tools to be as St. Luke states ‘trustworthy with the large’. Something this small teaches them to look for Christ in others and allows them to discover the goodness in everyone.

Random acts of kindness done by ‘mankind’ for others, without a thought of anything in return.

‘Mankind’ it seems is not an oxymoron.

Almost makes me want to throw a hootenanny to celebrate.

Stop, Re-set, Live [at bukas palad]



Year C / 25th Week / Sunday

Readings: Amos 8.4-7 / Psalm 113. 1-2, 4-6, 7-8 (R/v cf 1a;7b) / 1 Timothy 2.1-8 / Luke 16.1-13

“Look at this one: he’s cheated the poor; she’s ill-treated her maid; they’ve exploited the foreign workers”.

“Look at this one too: she’s ignored her aged parents; he’s neglected his children for his self-pleasure; they’ve bullied the odd one out in class; they’ve slandered their work colleague”.

“Yes, look at them”, we cry, pointing our fingers at these bad and sinful ones.

Many of us do this when we especially see or experience injustice. This is why I believe most of us here can identify with the message in today’s first reading. We hear Amos announcing God’s displeasure with greedy people whose sole focus is to increase their wealth by cheating the poor. Throughout the Old Testament, prophets like Amos tell us how God’s people ought to live out their covenant relationship with God: by being generous to others; by ensuring everyone has a fair share; by caring for all, especially the poor, needy and outcast. This knowledge makes us quick to identify those who are unjust; they are like the irresponsible, sinful people Amos chastises. Our anger at them leads us to point our fingers at them and to talk about them to others.

But do you and I dare to look at ourselves and admit that we often fail to be generous, to share equally, to care for all? Dare we point our own fingers at ourselves because we are like the greedy, the irresponsible, and the sinful Amos chastises? Dare we confess that “I fail most sadly in my relationships with family and friends?” Dare we, when admitting our wrong with the nameless stranger and the anonymous crowd is much easier?

When we dare to do this, we will confess that we are just as sinful as those we point our fingers at and talk about. In this moment, we might judge ourselves unworthy of God’s love. We thus cry for God’s mercy. We also struggle to answer this fundamental question: “Can I believe that God will forgive me and lift me up into fullness of life again?”

Our gospel reading today tells us that we can for **God’s mercy is always ours, especially when we fail.** But we need to listen very carefully to Jesus’ parable of the dishonest but clever steward to hear this hope God’s mercy promises.

A steward misuses his master’s property. Money and possessions have gotten him into trouble; he has just been fired for his mistake. He then makes deals to reduce the debts others owe his master. He does this to increase his own chances that the other debtors will be good to him when he is jobless. Seeing his actions, the master commends the steward for being prudent.

How nonsensical that his master should commend him. Why would he when the dishonest steward is wasting away even more of his money by slashing the debts others owe him? And isn’t the dishonest steward taking further advantage of his master to selfishly care for his future when he loses his job?

I’d like to suggest that stepping into the dishonest steward’s shoes might help us understand the master’s praise.

Like the steward, we’ve all made mistakes, messed up our lives and found ourselves in trying situations. In such moments, all we want, like the steward, is to find a way out and to start over.

Starting over. This is about making a change in how we live or re-prioritizing our life choices, or reconsidering what we ought to value. **For Christians, starting over gives us a chance to hit the reset button with Jesus’ help and to begin anew our relationship with God.**

We can do this by not squandering opportunities before us to start over. This is what the steward does when he makes the clever decision to reduce the debts others owed to his master. These actions can help him avoid the unemployment line. They are preparations for life after being dismissed; they are steps to prepare for this “after-life.” They enable him to re-set his life because he is doing what Amos reminds anyone who is in relationship with God to do: to care for the poor and the needy.

This cleverness of not squandering the opportunity to start over is what the master commends the steward for. Jesus tells this to his disciples. In two verses that follow today’s gospel, Jesus also directs this message to the Pharisees whom he condemns for appearing virtuous publicly but whose hearts God knows loves money. What Jesus wants of them, as he does of his disciples and us, is that all take the right steps to prepare for our “after-life” with God.

Such preparation involves taking advantage of life’s opportunities to choose real life—life with God. This is why today’s gospel ends with Jesus urging us to serve God and not wealth. Wealth gives us a false sense of having arrived in life. But freedom from wealth for God protects us from arriving at what fails to truly satisfy.

How do we find these opportunities to start over? By paying attention to the doors God opens up for us in life, especially when we, ourselves, through our sinful mistakes, shut and close them. These doors are the life opportunities God always presents us with whenever we make a mistake.

We’ve all heard the phrase, “when one door closes, another door opens.” God opens doors to bless us and to move us onward in our life’s journeys. God opens doors to tell us, “I am with you and for you always”. **God opens doors because this is what God’s mercy does best—to always give us the chance to start over.**

And hasn’t God repeatedly opened doors whenever you and I have made a mistake and others have shut us out? Opened doors when our differing opinions and values have led others to close their doors on us? Opened doors when we are misunderstood and are no longer welcome through another’s door?

I believe that each time a new door opens for us to start over, God is inviting us to practice the kind of astuteness the steward had to prepare for the “after-life”, whether it be after a mistake we’ve made or for the future eternal life we yearn to have with God.

This practice is how we can overcome the human tendency to make ourselves victims of our

wrongdoings, saying, “I am never good enough”. We would be wise to learn from the steward and transform our bad and difficult situations into occasions that can benefit others and ourselves. By reducing other people’s debts, the steward cares for his master’s debtors who are poor and in need. His actions uplift them. More importantly, they create a new set of relationships that will support him in life after he is dismissed. They also create new relationships between these debtors and the master. These new relationships no longer exploit, like that those lenders and debtors have; rather, they are reciprocal like caring friends share.

Indeed, being astute and investing in such relationships, especially, in the most difficult moments in our lives, is probably the wisest and most Christian action we can do to start over again. Wise, because what we will seize, and not squander, is the gift of relationship God offers to us in such times. And Christian, because it is with and through relationships that God’s reign will emerge in our midst.

In God’s reign, oppression will be overturned and fraternal love and care will flourish. The lesser, the poorer, even the “”badder”, we ignore and despise will become the very ones God will use to save us and help us start over. Indeed, these are the ones who will help us glimpse God’s promised eternity as they embrace and accept us, as they affirm and encourage us, and as they speak hope-filled words and do life-giving deeds that empower us to live life anew.

If this is what we can hope for when we seize opportunities to start over, wouldn’t it be right for us to embrace and celebrate the astuteness of the clever steward? May be when we practice the kind of astuteness the steward had, others will observe us and say, “Look at this one: he has learnt from his mistake; now he lives better; truly, God has opened a door for him and he has seized it well to live again.”

Preached at St Ignatius Parish, Singapore.

artwork: from the internet (www.jazzadvice.com)

Who would like a Skittle? [at On the Road to Damascus]

There has been a lot of hubbub bantered about lately about the United States taking in refugees from war torn countries. One of our candidates for president has advocated for building a wall on our southern border to keep the undesirables out. The same man has used an old analogy about a bowl of candy in regards to the middle east refugees.

As his version of the analogy says the refugees are like a bowl of Skittles. In the bowl of one hundred Skittles there are one or two that are poisonous. If you eat one you will die. Who is brave enough to grab a handful and munch away?

He is correct in as much as there is no perfect way to check every refugee to ensure he or she is a peace loving person who wishes us no harm. People who wish to kill us are going to slip through and innocent Americans will die as a result. We are much safer as a nation if we do not allow any refugees into our country.

It is easy to hate a group of people when you don't have to look at the person. Instead of Skittles imagine one hundred starving children. These children will die if you do not come to their aid and give them food to live on. One of those children will grow up to be an Adolf Hitler and be responsible for the death of tens of millions of people. Do you allow one hundred children to starve to death in order to save the tens of millions?

A leader of a country has to put the good of the country as first priority. The people have to be protected. The needs of the many out weight the needs of the few or the one. We must do whatever is necessary to protect the tens of the millions from the one. This argument sounds as logically sound as the bowl of Skittles argument and it is just as wrong.

It is never just or acceptable to use an evil act to stop an evil act. The good intent does not negate the evil of the act. For a Christian who honestly follows the teachings of Jesus it is never permissible to allow the ninety-nine to die to prevent the one from doing evil. It isn't even permissible to allow the one to die to stop the one from doing future evil.

Jesus gave us the corporal works of mercy. As his disciples, we have been told to feed the poor, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, give shelter to the homeless, visit the sick and imprisoned, and bury the dead. Jesus did not say to do these things only for those who wish you well. Jesus said to do these things for all in need, friend and enemy alike.

“Whatever you have done for the least of these you have done for me.” – Matthew 25:45

Do you think Jesus will be accepting of the excuse that we did not provide for the refugees in their time of need simply because there were men with evil intent among them? Would Jesus have eaten the poisoned skittle? A quick glance at a crucifix gives us the definitive answer.

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.” – Matthew 16:24

If we are true followers of Jesus we have to be willing to eat the poisoned skittle as well. We have to care for all those in need regardless of the intent in their hearts or the actions they have done. If we are to be a moral and just nation, we must recognize the importance and dignity of the individual. A society begins with the individual, not a group. Even a mass murderer has dignity that must be respected.

Jesus prayed for his persecutors and told us to do likewise. He told us to care for all life. Christians throughout this land have a mandate to care for those in need, including our enemies hiding among the innocent or posing as refugees. We have the duty to care for those in need outside of our borders and have been given the means to do so. If we fail in this mission we will receive justice instead of mercy when we stand accountable before the throne of the Lord.



This contribution is available at <http://damascusroadsojourner.blogspot.com/2016/09/who-would-like-skittle.html>
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Scandal and the November Election [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. (Galatians 2)

One plus one equals two. That simple equation is the foundation of virtually everything that makes our lives easier. Tailors could not create clothing without the ability to measure material, architects could not design homes without the use of consistent numbers, engineers could not design cars if one plus one did not equal two.

Not only has God provided us with consistent mathematical truths, He has also provided us with consistent moral truths, and He has made them available in the Scriptures for anyone with an open heart to understand.

There are multiple issues that divide the two major parties and their nominees this November. However, abortion and same-sex marriage most clearly illustrate the difference between the godly and the ungodly moral truths promoted by each party.

One party wants us to believe one plus one equals three. The other insists one plus one always equals two.

Jesus said to His disciples, *“It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. (Luke 17:1-2)*

Americans have killed more than 56 million babies since 1973 when the US Supreme Court ruled that a woman has the right to kill her baby in the womb. Mathematically, 56 million equates to approximately 1.3 million abortions in America each year. That number equates to 3500 killed each day Monday through Sunday in our nation.

Today 3500 babies will die. Tomorrow, 3500 more will die. The next day another 3500. And so on. 24,500 by the end of seven days. More than 100,000 by the end of this month. And so on. And on. And on.

Stop for a moment and picture in your mind the map of the United States. That number of killed babies since 1973 equals the COMBINED populations of Missouri, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia.

Not only does this election have to do with that kind of slaughter, but it also has to do with protecting the largest provider of abortions to continue selling baby parts to alleged researchers.

Let's now turn our attention to another issue that should be of critical importance to the Christian: Same-Sex Marriage.

One of the political parties asking Americans to put them into power in November has stuck their collective thumbs in the eyes of 10,000 years of human history when they recently enshrined into the law of the land the rape of the sanctity of marriage. They boast that one plus one now equals three, and that the God-ordained sanctity of marriage established by God in the Garden is good only for the manure pile.

Many of you who know me respect me as a man of God who does his best to follow the fundamental truths of the gospel. If I told you I will vote for the party that insists one plus one equals three – I guarantee I would cause great scandal and confusion among the faithful Christians who know me. And they would have every right to wonder – if I would vote for such people, then perhaps one plus one sometimes DOES equal three, and the issues of abortion and same sex marriage are not as serious as other Christians say they are to God.

And yet, I know of many who attend church every week, and those who wear a clerical collar, and those who teach Bible classes, and who sing in choirs – who call themselves Christians and yet will vote for the candidate and the party that spits in God's face every day.

Think of the scandal this is causing among our weaker brothers and sisters in Christ. What happens to their faith and ability to live a holy lifestyle?

No wonder Jesus said, and I will quote it again for emphasis: Luke 17:1f *“It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.*

The Psalmist tells us in the 11th psalm: *For, behold, the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”*

Satan has an army of disciples who have not only bent their bows and readied their arrows, but they have now let them loose. They have let them fly against God’s faithful to destroy the bedrock of our faith and culture – which was built on obedience to God’s word.

And if that foundation is destroyed, what can the righteous do? If one plus one is no longer two, then everything we have known and hold dear is in grave danger of disappearing. Just as one plus one always equals two, voting for those who promote abortion and same-sex marriage is always wrong.

Christian, what will you do in November?

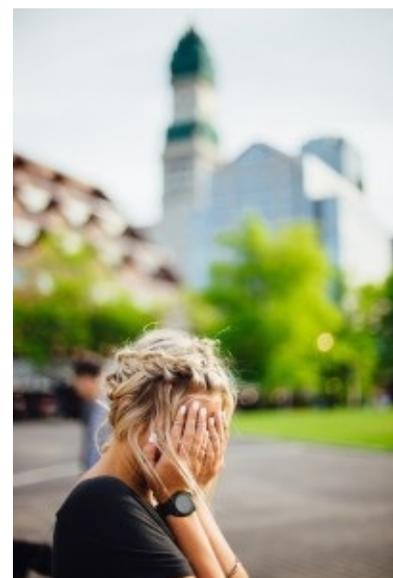
This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2016/09/scandal-and-november-election.html>
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My Husband Cheated: Healing and Thriving after Infidelity [at Conversation with Women]

I begin my story by giving all the glory to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without Him, this story would have a completely different ending. It would have ended in divorce as most marriages with infidelity do.

My husband and I were happily married in 1991. We both wanted children but initially struggled to get pregnant. After a few years, God gave us the beautiful gift of a son.

On the surface everything appeared to be going well. We both worked full time jobs and were raising our child. However, we were so busy working and taking care of our son that we forgot to pay attention to each other. Although we didn't have intimate relations anymore, we never fought. There was no physical abuse or name calling. We went to church every Sunday and sent our son to Catholic schools. We were a family. We were looking good!



Then one day in the fall of 2006, my life fell apart. I learned through my two brothers (they all worked in the same office for my uncle's company) that my husband was cheating. He was having an affair with a woman in their office. I was completely devastated and filled with anger.

I cried. I screamed. I yelled! I tried to gather myself to think of what to do next. Not only had my husband betrayed me, but my own family had also betrayed me by not coming to me or my husband when they first suspected the affair (many months prior).

During our crisis, my family and even some close friends distanced themselves from us. They completely abandoned us and did not speak to us. One family member handed me information to see a divorce attorney. It blew my mind.

My family may have abandoned us but God showed up in a big way! He sent His angels to support us through our tough trial. My husband's family was also very supportive. They wrapped their arms around us tightly. They walked with us and encouraged us to fight for our marriage. I also had a dear friend who stepped in and worked every day with both my husband and me. God truly anointed her to nurture us back

to see His love and grace. She spent many long hours listening and reminding us of God's love for us and our marriage.

I needed to separate from my husband in order to begin healing. My husband moved in with a relative so my son and I could stay in our home and keep our routine of school and work. Through this separation we stay connected and maintained a relationship through our shared commitment to our son. He was our first priority.

We placed our faith in God and asked for His help and guidance. My husband had reached out immediately to our pastor at our church. Knowing God was with us and having immediate access to confession and the Eucharist was such a comfort. The sacraments began our healing process from the inside.

We both started going to a Christian counseling center seeing different therapists. We did this for many months and slowly started to talk and see where we had neglected one another for so many years. As our eyes opened, we began to realize and address how each of us had failed to care for each other and our marriage. Then we began seeing my husband's therapist together.

I struggled with forgiveness in a big way. It is the hardest thing I have ever had to do. It took a good year to truly forgive my husband and I had to check myself on that at times. My faith is what enabled me to forgive. I would contemplate what Jesus endured through his passion and crucifixion and it helped me through my struggles.

It was very difficult for me to forgive my family. I found it harder than forgiving my husband. I have made a great deal of progress but still struggle on occasion. I pray about it every day as most of them still do not speak to me, my husband, or son after nearly 10 years.

The healing process took time but we eventually grew in our relationship. I must say I never felt like giving up only because I saw the work my husband was doing and the change that took place in his heart. God, in His mercy, allowed me to see that first hand. Our faith in God did not allow us to end what God put together.

Today, we are not a surviving married couple, we are a *thriving* married couple! We make the time to pay attention and really talk to each other every day. God gave me back a new husband and I became a new wife for him. We are better connected today than when we dated!

There is always hope. Hope in Jesus Christ. He died for all of our sins, even the ones not yet committed. He saved our marriage when there were many people who kept telling me it would fail. The naysayers now stand back years later only to see we have defeated what this secular society believes should end in divorce. Every day I thank God for where He has brought us and where I know He is taking us. Praise the Lord for He is merciful! To Him be all the Glory!

This contribution is available at <http://www.conversationwithwomen.org/2016/09/28/778/>
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You can't fight it [at LMS Chairman]



I have to confess that developments over the last few years in the Church and the world have left me a little dispirited. Not all the news has been bad--far from it--but on a series of issues fundamental to the continued possibility of civilised life, the forces ranged against sanity have, at present, considerable momentum. Not only is it difficult to see how they can be defeated on the current balance of forces, but the balance of forces is becoming progressively less favourable as time goes on.

To give an example from secular politics, here in the UK we have no serious political party which supports anything recognisable as social conservatism. To give an example from the Church, although numbers attending Mass have been bolstered by immigration, the decline in marriages celebrated in church continues. On previous occasions when, after all kinds of difficulties, the Church has experienced a great revival, it has been because Catholic families survived the crisis in sufficient numbers to provide the priests, lay leaders, reformers, and above all the foot-soldiers of a revived Church in the new situation. How many faithful Catholic families are there going to be, in England and Wales or indeed anywhere in the West, in 20 or 30 years' time?

Come to that, how many are there now? How many nominal Catholics have any serious formation in the Faith, as would have been taken for granted sixty years ago? How many believe the less popular doctrines? How many seriously aspire to a morally well-ordered lifestyle? And how many are free from intense pressure to conform to the false maxims of the World?

The work we can do in the Vineyard of the Lord is, for each of us, of negligible overall effect, in relation to the huge trends which I been noting. I rather think this is even true for Bishops, perhaps even for the Pope. A good Pope with good ideas applied with vigour would, of course, do good, but he won't necessarily change the course of history. I think of Pope Leo XIII, for example, or Pius IX, or St Pius X. These weren't just good Popes, they were men of great intelligence and education, acutely attuned to the problems of their day, who furthermore wielded considerable power with great energy, for a long term of office. One can hardly say that they lived in vain, but nor did they turn the tide. It is given to few human beings to do such a thing.

A great many Catholics, or nominal Catholics, have taken the obvious conclusion: you can't fight it. The particular thing right now they are declining to fight is gender ideology, despite the repeated and powerful

protests of

[Pope Francis](#)

on this issue--protests many of his self-described supporters would rather not hear. But they have been failing to fight the secularisation of Catholic education, the culture of death, liturgical anarchy of all kinds, and a host of other things, for a long time now. It is tiring to keep up the fight. And if you show a bit of enthusiasm for the other side of the argument, the world will often reward you well.

To avoid despair, I want to make two distinctions. The first is between our duty as Catholics and worldly success. Our duty as Catholics is to live in accordance with God's (and the Church's) law, and give witness to the Gospel according to our abilities and opportunities. It is not to convert X number of heathens, or be part of an expanding parish, or even to knock on a certain number of doors like the Jehovah's Witnesses. It can be very hard work doing what we are obliged to do, and it is made harder by all kinds of trends and developments, but it is not something which will ever become impossible. The task we have been given to do--to cooperate in our own salvation--is not only not impossible, but we are actually guaranteed the necessary graces, and told that this burden is light, this yoke easy, in the sense that with that grace we will be able to do it without regrets, with joy, knowing that life in God's friendship is preferable to life without God's friendship, regardless of the possible worldly disadvantages of the former over the latter. We aim make a success of our particular projects, but that success, at least by any tangible measure, is not necessary to the success of our lives as Catholics.

The other distinction is between trends in the world and developments in the Church. It is possible that the governments of the world will adopt the most pernicious principles and remain wedded to them for centuries to come. That is not possible in the Church. Catholics and their allies can be comprehensively defeated in the political arena--and this has indeed often happened--but it is not possible that Christ will allow his bride to be taken from him.

Throughout history there have been those who have wanted to efface the teaching of the Church and replace it with falsehood, and right now we are facing a particularly powerful and concerted effort to do this. It will not succeed. In past crises there have been mass defections to heresy by members of the clergy, by bishops, and by whole national populations of the laity (as happened with Protestantism), but when the dust settles the Church, and her teachings, remains. Even if the Pope falls silent, even if he allows himself to pronounce ambiguous formulations or indeed outright error (I'm thinking, of course, of Pope Honorius and Pope John XXII), the teaching of the Church does not change, the Church remains, and the visible, human aspect of the Church recovers from the crisis.

So in these two senses, it is not at all true that 'you can't fight it': as far as our own lives are concerned, our own living according to the truth, and insofar as the fate of the Church as an institution is concerned, the opposite is true. For ourselves, the battle can go either way: there is everything to fight for. For the Church, victory for the truth is actually guaranteed.

Indeed, the frustration of the opponents of the Church's teaching not infrequently breaks through the facade of optimism. They think the Church must be conformed to the world, and it just won't. They can't control all of the people, not even all of the bishops and cardinals, and they can't erase the historical record of the Church's teaching, and if the people were silent the stones themselves would proclaim the kingship of Christ.

In the meantime of course they do great harm to souls, and it is our obligation to oppose them with every lawful means available. If they want to win, though, they need to give up on the Church and join a political party.

I've recently read two helpful articles on related matters, which I recommend. Pat Archbold on '

[The Most Radical of Traditionalists'](#)

, and Fr David Nix on

['The Birth Pangs of the Church'](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://www.lmschairman.org/2016/09/you-cant-fight-it.html>
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Bless God's Creatures Great and Small [at joy of nine9]

When God's creatures are blessed and surrounded by the love of God, they absorb and reflect His love back in seemingly miraculous ways. My husband and I stumbled on this truth during the twenty years we raised nine kids and an odd assortment of farm animals and pets on a small family farm in eastern Ontario, Canada. Naturally, I was delighted when Pope Francis's environmental encyclical, [Laudato Si](#), clearly explained why people must learn how to cherish animals:

“Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another”.

“It would also be mistaken to view other living beings as mere objects subjected to arbitrary human domination”.

The Cat Shall Nurse The Bunnies

God's creatures constantly surprised us, especially when they reflected unconditional love to other animals. For example, a friend of the family gave our kids a huge, white rabbit. However, even though she was litter trained, she would leave a few tiny balls of poop on the floor. Unfortunately, baby Daniel crawled faster than I could sweep, so we moved the rabbit to the barn. A week later, when I moved a couch to vacuum under it, I was shocked to find two baby bunnies under it. The rabbit had given birth without us even realizing it.

Of course, the kids and I panicked at the thought of starving babies and ran all around the barn and the fields trying to find the mother rabbit. In the midst of all the turmoil, our mother cat who had only one kitten in an upstairs closet, calmly walked over, laid down and let the baby rabbits nurse. We were stunned, quickly taking a picture of this black cat with her white nursing bunny babies and kitten because we knew no one would believe us.



Perhaps there was a slice of heaven on earth on our hobby farm because animals who were natural enemies in the wild became friends. In Isaiah, we are told a sign of the kingdom of God is when:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. – [Isaiah 11:6](#)

Those verses from Isaiah came alive in our home.

Animals Respond to Love

Stray cats and dogs were often dropped off at the end of our long lane and managed to wiggle their way into our hearts and home. I must admit some fleabag tomcats had to be fed in our barn; I couldn't bring them into the house with babies crawling on the floor. One particular tomcat, Amos, was an old curmudgeon with battle scars proving his scrappy disposition. Finally, my husband had enough of this feline bully and took him for a long car ride to get rid of him. Three days later, I opened the kitchen door and there sat Amos, glaring at me. When Michael, my husband, came charging to the door yelling, "No way!", in utter disbelief, the kids and I couldn't stop laughing. Seems like even old Amos sensed love and simply could not stay away. All day the kids and I joyfully sang a [Fred Penner](#) children's song, much to their father's chagrin:

But the cat came back the very next day,
The cat came back, we thought he was a goner
But the cat came back; it just couldn't stay away.

Once we realized Amos considered himself to be part of the family, we prayed and started the work of taming him.



Blessing God's Creatures

[Catechism of the Catholic Church:](#)

2416 *Animals* are God's creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory.¹⁹⁷ Thus men owe them kindness. We should recall the gentleness with which saints like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Philip Neri treated animals.

Consider the effect prayer of on Buster, who was a depressed, neurotic, springer spaniel when we first took him into our home. This dog had lived a happy country life until his owners divorced. Unfortunately, for the next two years, he had languished in the garage of a townhouse during the day and slept crated at night. Buster was lucky to get two quick walks a day on a leash, no less. For a dog, such an existence was equal to solitary confinement in a maximum security prison for a human being.

The first month on our farm, Buster ran off all his extra weight and started acting like a normal dog. The former owner phoned us a couple of times, certain we would be fed up with Buster's obsessive compulsive habits. Honestly, most of his irritating traits vanished as he began living the life of a typical dog.



However, my husband and I noticed Buster still seemed to need inner healing from his traumatic prison sentence. So we decided to pray over the dog. When Buster started panting because he was getting hot, my eyes sprang open, my eyebrows shot up and I looked over at Michael. His eyebrows were raised even higher than mine. Then Michael chuckled, "It's getting hot, isn't it Buster?" Buster just panted faster. When the dog's eyelids began to close and he started swaying. Michael encouraged his pet, "It's okay boy. Just relax."

Suddenly Buster keeled over sideways and dropped to the floor as if he had died. Startled, I knelt down to peer into the dog's face and observed, "He is still breathing but out cold!" My husband and I looked at each other and started to laugh once again. To use Pentecostal terminology, our *dog* was *slain* in the Spirit. It worked, though, because Buster was more relaxed and peaceful after his prayer session.

Laudato Si

In [Laudato Si](#), Pope Francis explains how Saint Francis of Assisi understood that animals are spontaneously drawn into our praise and worship:

Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human. Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the

smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them “to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason”.^[19] His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists. His disciple Saint Bonaventure tells us that, “from a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with even more abundant piety, he would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of ‘brother’ or ‘sister’”

All God’s Creatures Great and Small

Michael especially enjoyed his intelligent pigs. When animals feel loved, they relate to people in extraordinary ways. When my husband scratched behind his beloved pig’s ears while praying a blessing over them, they actually fell asleep. All four pigs would lay down on the straw around my husband. It was a startling scene to walk in on.



Daisy, our goat, and our pony Starlight always climbed the steps onto the porch and tried to turn the doorknob to get into the house because they considered themselves part of the family. Daisy did not like living in the barn. Although she produced milk like any normal goat, she was a socialized goat who had a charming personality. So we usually tied Daisy to a post so she could see the kids playing outside. If she hadn’t seen anyone in a long time, she’d bleat until someone at least poked their head out of the door and talked to her. A couple of times a week we let Daisy follow us around in our huge vegetable garden. As long as she mainly ate weeds, we let her join us.



Old Moonlight, our magnificent Arabian stallion, was a patient with little people. This gentle giant allowed toddlers to run under his belly, a three-year-old child feed him carrots, two little people sit on his back and little girls braid his mane and tail, *all at the same time*. Through the entire ordeal, Moonlight barely flinched. If he balked at all, I would look him in the eye, pray that peace and love would soothe him, and he immediately calmed down. God's creatures sense the peaceful presence of the Creator.

Visitors were amazed by our cat's behaviour. They always curled up beside our hunting dog because he was soft and warm. It was also a conundrum to local farmers who had never seen anything like it.

Then there was Mickey, a tomcat, who always followed my husband around the barnyard as he did chores. One morning, Mickey was sitting on top of a fence post when a cow licked him right into the air, till he was standing only on his back feet. Afterwards, Mickey merely sat back down, shook himself and calmly turned his head to look right at Michael.



Yup, on our little farm, all God's creatures were definitely transformed by the Love of the Father.

The cat shall nurse the bunnies and the hunting dog shall lie down with the kitten; the cat shall stand up to the cow, the goat shall be part of the family and the pigs will sleep after prayers.

This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanuneau.wordpress.com/2016/09/24/bless-gods-creatures-great-and-small/>
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'shroom [at With Us Still]

We've reached the tipping point, I think, with the annuals that adorn the planters on our front porch. After giving us a summer of vigorously contained beauty, the blooms are just about tuckered out heading into these last days of September.

Not like this is any great news flash: As we've been hearing of late in the [daily Mass readings from Ecclesiastes](#), *'there is a time to plant and a time to uproot the plant.'*



Fading beauty...

Even so, having personally tended the porch plants throughout the spring and summer, I find that their fading glory afflicts my spirit just a tad. *'Vanity of vanities'*: I wouldn't mind having my meager landscaping energies rewarded with beautiful blooms for another week or two.

Traipsing about our suburban lot yesterday – as I ruminated over whether to accede to the inevitable...and move the planters to their winter resting spot on the backyard patio – I encountered something of an overnight sensation: A gargantuan mushroom, the size of a football.

Not nearly as fetching (to my mind at least) as the colorful blooms in our planters, this fungus is no less impressive in its vigor.

It's huge.



Hello, Handsome...

And it got that way in just a day or two—a phenomenon that stirred my curiosity a bit—so I set out to learn something about this massive new fungus-among-us.

A few quick clicks brought me to the highly informative [Radical Mycology website](#), where I learned that this unexpected lawn ornament is actually a fading bloom itself: the ‘fruit’ of a complex lifecycle that occurs mostly underground.

Mushrooms, it turns out, are key actors in the ecosystem – change-agents that serve to underscore the insights we find in Ecclesiastes. Among other functions, certain *mycelia* have ‘*adapted to break down lignin, the highly complex compound that makes wood hard and rigid, something few things on Earth are able to accomplish.*’

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust – and part of that cycle wouldn’t happen without mushrooms working their magic.

I was even more intrigued, however, by this little note:

As the mycelium grows through its substrate, this thread-like structure continuously branches in all directions, forming an incredibly dense network (imagine a web with clearances smaller than any woven structure humans can produce) in the search for water and food.

Mushrooms have already figured out, in other words, what Jesus seems to be trying to teach us in [this Sunday’s gospel reading](#): That we are *all* connected—the rich man, living sumptuously...and the beggar at his front door.

When we work to build walls, it signals a failure in our ability to recognize the web that binds us...just beneath the surface of our lives.

Our self-centered choices can create [create a chasm](#) that keeps us from becoming fully human, and bearing the fruit we were meant to produce.



Mushrooms...modeling a radical connectedness, just beneath the surface.

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

IHS

This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2016/09/25/todays-find-shroom/>
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Shopping Center Attack: Why I Care [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

Saturday night's attack in a St. Cloud shopping center was uncomfortably close to home. Crossroads Mall is about an hour down the road from where I live, and a place I've enjoyed visiting.

Only one person died, the attacker: a 22 year old St. Cloud-area student.

1. [Death in a Shopping Center](#)
2. ["Let's Spread Love, not Hate"](#)



Caring About Human Life

The incident hasn't exactly been headline international news, but the attention it's gotten is impressive, considering what else has been going on:

Getting back to what happened in St. Cloud, I'm still upset about the attack: and sorry that the attacker is dead. That, I'd better explain.

I believe that human life is sacred: **all** human life. Each of us has equal dignity: no matter where we are, who we are, or how we act. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, [360](#), [1700–1706](#), [1932–1933](#), [1935](#), [2258](#))

Murder, deliberately killing an innocent person, is wrong. (Catechism, [2268–2269](#))

Maybe the young man didn't really mean to kill anyone: but what he was doing with a knife apparently looked like murderous attacks. I can't say that I am sorry that his attacks were stopped.

But I do regret that he is dead.

His actions disturbed his community, which is uncomfortably close to mine. If he had lived, it's possible that he could have made some reparation, "paying" in some way for his actions; and helping to heal his community.

One of these days I'll talk about justice, the common good, and all that. But not today. (Catechism, [1905–1912](#))

Why should I care? Like I keep saying: I should love God, love my neighbor, see everybody as my neighbor, and treat others as I'd like to be treated. ([Matthew 5:43–44](#), [7:12](#), [22:36–40](#), [Mark 12:28–31](#);



[Luke 6:31](#), [10:25–27](#), [29–37](#); Catechism, [1789](#))

Somali-Americans and Leviticus

He was a Somali-American, born in Kenya. There's been a civil war in [Somalia](#) since around 1990, which encouraged many families to get out while they were still alive. Many of them came to [America](#) — mostly Minnesota.

Some will probably decide to move back, when and if things settle down in the old country. I hope some decide to stay: if for no other reason than that I haven't had a chance to try their coffee yet.

Part of my attitude toward Somali-Americans comes from my family background and personal experience. But even if I wasn't inclined to accept folks who don't look and act exactly like me: I'd be obliged to cultivate that acceptance:

“The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.

“Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.”

(Catechism, [2241](#))

An 'open door' immigration is not a new idea:

“You shall not oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt.”

([Exodus 23:9](#))

” ‘When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him.

“You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God.”

([Leviticus 19:33–34](#))

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,”

([Matthew 25:35](#))

About Catechism, [2268–2269](#) and the newcomer's obligation “to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens” — it looks like many Somali-Americans in St. Cloud are as upset about the young man's



actions as I am.

More so, since they're still at the stage my ancestors were, just a few generations back: trying to convince 'regular Americans' that they're new neighbors, not threats. More of that below, under ["Let's Spread Love, not Hate"](#).

1. Death in a Shopping Center



(From AFP, via BBC News, used w/o permission.)
("Dahir A Adan had been in the US for 15 years, his father said"
(BBC News))

["Minnesota mall knifeman was student, says father"](#)

BBC News (September 19, 2016)

"A knifeman who stabbed nine people at a Minnesota shopping centre at the weekend has been identified by his father as a 22-year-old student.

"Dahir A Adan is a Kenyan-born ethnic Somali who had been in the US for 15 years, his father told the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

"He said he had 'no suspicion' that his son was involved in extremist activity....

"...The Islamic State group claimed responsibility. Rasd, a news agency linked to the group, claimed on Sunday the Minnesota attacker was a 'soldier of the Islamic State'.

"The attacker, who was dressed in a security uniform and carrying what appeared to be a kitchen knife, reportedly made at least one reference to Allah and asked a victim if he or she was Muslim before attacking, said police.

"Adan had been working as a security guard for the mall's Electrolux Home Products store, according a company spokeswoman...."

We still don't, as far as I've read, know why Dahir¹ A Adan decided to attack those folks. What does seem clear is that he cut or stabbed several people at a shopping mall, and was killed by an off-duty police officer.

I'm sorry that those folks got hurt, and that young Mr. Adan is dead. But I'm not going to denounce Crossroad Mall for inciting violence against shoppers, or call for stronger anti-knife legislation.

There's been enough craziness this year:

“The Least Force Necessary”

I went over legitimate defense on [September 11, 2016](#).

I'm allowed to avoid or resist the attack; using the **least force necessary**. The same principle applies to groups of people. ([2263–2267](#), [2307–2317](#))

Ideally, someone would have found a way to restrain Dahir A Adan, not kill him. But everything I've read says that he started this mess, attacking folks with a knife.

I'm not going to criticize someone for protecting innocent shoppers: particularly since a knife, even a “kitchen knife,” can be a lethal weapon. It's a wonder that more folks didn't end up hospitalized.

[Non-lethal weapons](#) have been moving out of pulp science fiction and into research and development. But even those are controversial, and that's another topic.



2. “Let's Spread Love, not Hate”



(From Jared Goyette, via The Guardian, used w/o permission.)

(“Somali-American leaders hold a press conference in St Cloud, Minnesota, to address the mass stabbing attack of Saturday night.”

(The Guardian))

“[Somali-American leaders speak out in press conference](#)”

Ben Rodgers, St. Cloud Times (September 18, 2016)

(Includes video)

“A group of St. Cloud Somali-American leaders, as well as other community leaders, spoke out in a nationally televised press conference on Sunday afternoon at Lake George.

“The press conference came after an incident Sunday night involving a stabbing attack at the Crossroads Center in St. Cloud. The community leaders used it as an opportunity to stress the attack was perpetrated by a single individual, that it does not represent the Somali-American and Muslim community and to express support for the victims....

“...Mohamoud Mohamed, executive director of the St. Cloud Area Somali Salvation Association: ‘They are minorities in our faith that are misusing the credibility of our faith. Islam is peace.’

“Lul Hersi, member of the St. Cloud Somali-American community: ‘Let’s unite as one Minnesota. Let’s take love instead of hate. Let’s preach the good of us, not the bad that happens just once in a while. ... I said last night, not in St. Cloud. That is what I told my kids, not in St. Cloud. I hope my neighbors, my co-workers, my friends, my community member, my elders and other take this to heart. Let’s spread love, not hate.’



“The Rev. Randy Johnson, pastor at First United Methodist Church: ‘As Christian leaders we have come to gather with our brothers and sisters who are Muslims on this day to say the work will continue. That peace is our goal and we will continue together to make this a community that is known throughout this nation as a community that never quits working for peace.’...”

The press conference isn’t the highest-profile item around, no surprise considering how much else has been happening, but it’s getting a bit of attention:

Some of the bad news is good news, sort of, from the ‘you’re known by the enemies you make’ viewpoint —

“...Jaylani Hussein, the executive director for the Minnesota chapter of the Council of American-Islamic Relations, said central Minnesota has a history of anti-Muslim organizing. He pointed to a string of incidents dating back years, including visits by well-known anti-Muslim speakers and a recent billboard, eventually removed, that read ‘Catholic Charities Resettles Islamists, Evil or Insanity.’...”

(Associated press, via [ABC News](#))



I don’t know which “Catholic Charities” the billboard folks had in mind. There’s Catholic Charities [of the Diocese of St. Cloud](#) and [of St. Paul and Minneapolis](#), among others.

According to the [Minneapolis Star-Tribune](#), it was a complaint by the St. Cloud Catholic Charities that encouraged Franklin Outdoor to take the message down.

There's an interesting conflict between freedom of expression, civic responsibility, and common sense involved: but I can't say that I'm sorry to see that particular bit of [anti-Catholic xenophobia](#) gone.

Tolerance and Hope

Over the centuries, America's government and has showed an increased tolerance of non-English, non-Protestant Americans.

I see that as a good thing, partly because many of my ancestors are of 'low type.'² I'm nearly half Irish.

Most Americans eventually realized that many if not most Irishmen were **not** violent drunkards with criminal tendencies.

I'm pretty sure that a century from now most of us will have gotten used to the descendants of today's immigrants. And, most likely, a few will be upset about some other bunch of newcomers.

My hope is that folks with [get-up-and-go](#) will keep getting up and going: to America. I think we all benefit when folks add new ideas and fresh enthusiasm to America's mix.

More of my take on:



(Image from Daniel Schwen, via Wikimedia Commons, used w/o permission.)

¹ On a poignant note — apparently the name [Dahir](#), or Daahir, comes from a Somali word meaning “pure” or “religiously pure.”

My native culture was more apt to give girls names like Chastity or [Katherine](#) — which may or may not be from Αικατερινη. [Tohar](#), טוהר, apparently means “pure,” but I’ve never run into someone with that name.

² I really do not miss the ‘good old days.’

W. COLE, No. 8 Ann-st.

GROCERY CART AND HARNESS FOR SALE—In good order, and one chestnut horse, 8 years old excellent saddle horse; can be ridden by a lady. Also, young man wanted, from 16 to 18 years of age, able to work. **No Irish need apply.** **CLUFF & TUNIS, No. 270 Washington-st., corner of Myrtle-av., Brooklyn.**

BILLIARD TABLE FOR SALE—Of Leona manufacture; been used about nine months. Also, fixtures of a Bar-room. Inquire on the premises. No.

(From The New York Times, via Wikimedia Commons, used w/o permission.)
((Some) help-wanted ad in The New York Times, 1854.)



The Iberians are believed to have been originally an African race, who thousands of years ago spread themselves through Spain over Western Europe. Their remains are found in the barrows, or burying places, in sundry parts of these countries. The skulls are of low prognathous type. They came to Ireland, and mixed with the natives of the South and West, who themselves are supposed to have been of low type and descendants of savages of the Stone Age, who, in consequence of isolation from the rest of the world, had never been out-competed in the healthy struggle of life, and thus made way according to the laws of nature for superior races.

(From H. Strickland Constable, via Wikimedia Commons, used w/o permission.)
(Allegedly-scientific reason for keeping ‘low types’ in our place.)

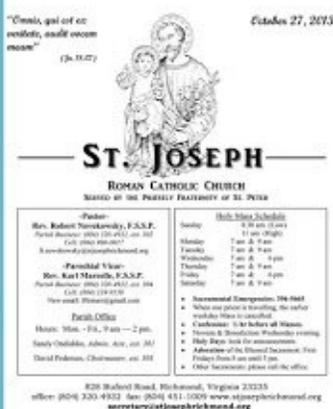
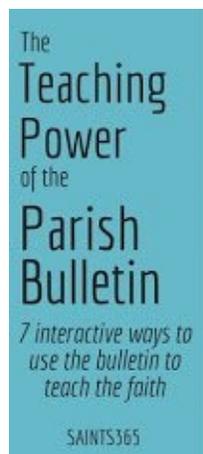
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(From “Ireland from One or Two Neglected Points of View,” H. Strickland Constable, 1899)

I used the Constable illustration last month. ([August 26, 2016](#))

This contribution is available at <http://brendans-island.com/catholic-citizen/shopping-center-attack-why-i-care/>
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The Teaching Power of the Parish Bulletin [at Saints 365]



You read that title right. I know, I know - you must think I am out of my mind - I mean, does anyone even *read* the parish bulletin anymore?

I believe that the parish bulletin provides a unique tool which can aid in illustrating how the teachings of the Church are lived out in a practical, local way. Inexpensive, readily available, and easy to use, the average parish bulletin provides a wealth of examples which can assist students of all ages to recognize how the church’s teachings “work” in the parish community they call home.

Here are seven tenets of the faith that can be illustrated using the parish bulletin:

The Sacraments Dates, times and locations for the celebration of the Sacraments can be found in nearly every parish bulletin. After completing a lesson on the seven sacraments, have your students scour the bulletin to find information for each of the sacraments. Ask them to try and identify which sacraments are celebrated most frequently – this can lead to a fruitful discussion about how some sacraments can be received only once, some more than once but also infrequently, and some on a regular, even daily basis.

The Scriptures

St. Jerome’s famous axiom “Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ” can be the basis of your using the local bulletin to underscore the importance of scripture in the life of every Catholic. Most bulletins list the citations for the daily Mass readings. Some bulletins even contain reflections on the Sunday readings. Have your students search for all references to the Scriptures in their local bulletin – if they are old enough, ask them to look up several of the citations in their Bibles and use those readings during prayer time.

The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

Perhaps no teaching of the Church is more easily illustrated in a parish bulletin than the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. Activities such as faith formation (instruct the ignorant), pastoral counseling (counsel the doubtful) and the bereavement ministry (comfort the sorrowful) provide vivid examples of a

few of the Spiritual Works of Mercy. The parish food pantry (feed the hungry) and even the advertisement for the local funeral home (bury the dead) can illustrate some of the Corporal Works of Mercy. Encourage your students to find examples of all the Works of Mercy and challenge them to see how they might participate in one of these ministries of the parish.

Intercessory Prayer

Praying for others is a holy act of charity that even the youngest child can readily understand. Your parish bulletin can highlight the fact that as a parish community we are all called to pray for each other. Many parishes list the members of the community who are sick. Often, parishes will list the Mass intentions, which are most frequently offered for deceased members of the community. This provides a great opportunity to discuss the doctrine of purgatory and the merit of praying for our loved ones who have died. Invite your students to find these names in the bulletin and then incorporate these intercessions into your family prayer time.

The Communion of Saints

Devotion to the saints and reliance on their prayers is an integral part of Catholic life. The bulletin is replete with opportunities to discuss the saints. If you are a member of a parish that is named after a saint, make learning about the life of that saint part of your religious studies. Have your students search the bulletin for groups named after a particular saint, or devotions being offered to a saint. These too can be used as springboards for the study of the virtues and the unique contribution each saint made to the treasury of the Church.

The Church's Hierarchy

Most parish bulletins have a listing on their covers of the Pastor's name, as well as any other priests and deacons assigned to the parish. The bulletin may also list the name of the Bishop of the Diocese and even the name of the Holy Father. Having students look through the bulletin of their own parish as well as other local parishes for the names of these members of the Church's hierarchy is a great way to personalize the titles of "Bishop", "Pastor" and "Deacon". The activity can be extended by looking at the Diocesan or parish website to place a picture with the names.

The Four Marks of the Church

The four marks of the Church (one, holy, Catholic Apostolic) can appear very esoteric. After explaining the characteristics of the four marks, ask your students to find evidence for the four marks of the church in the bulletin. Examples include: the sacraments for one; prayers and devotions for holy, references to the Bishop or Pope for Apostolic, and missionary activity or RCIA for Catholic.

Using your parish bulletin as a teaching resource has benefits beyond a mere pedagogical tool. By exposing students to the bulletin they will begin to understand the breadth and the depth of the life of the Church and see how their participation in the activities of the local parish is an integral part of their lives as Catholics.

This post originally appeared on Seton Magazine.

Be sure not to miss a post by subscribing today to receive new posts directly in your email by

entering your email address below.

This contribution is available at <http://saints365.blogspot.com/2016/09/the-teaching-power-of-parish-bulletin.html>
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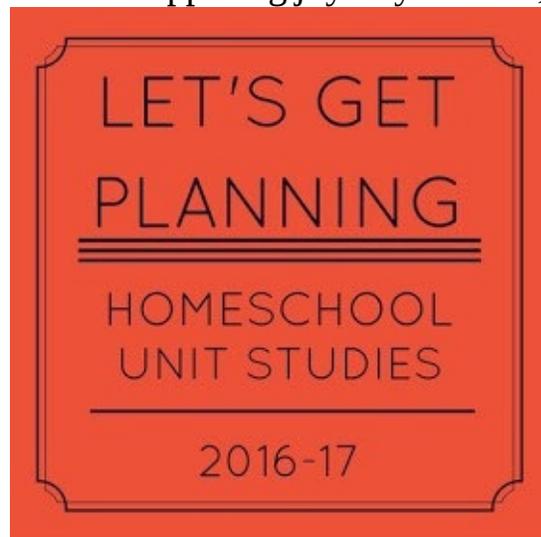
Great Books Preschool Story Time [at Veils and Vocations]

So, I am finally getting to sit down and publish the next set of plans. I really wondered how much I should do with Little Man this year and what type of curriculum would work best for him. Then I thought of one of his favorite activities, sitting on my lap and reading. Every time I sit down, he grabs a book he wants to read. This could be why I haven't gotten much posted lately.

I didn't want to just read, though. I wanted to read him great books. So, I sat down and looked through our collection, what was available at the library, and what I wanted to order online. Here is the list of what I chose. Certainly, there are more great books to read, but I am only one mama and have only so much time.

We are keeping a small stack of books (I really want to get a basket) next to the upstairs sofa, so that we can read while the other kids are doing their independent work. I let Little Man choose what to read and then swap out the ones we have read over and over again at the end of the week. This way it puts him in charge, but makes sure that we cover all the books I've chosen.

That's it, that's all we are doing. No fancy projects, no workbooks, no formulaic study, just reading from great books. And you know what? He's learning! He is already learning to recognize some of his letters, making comparisons between stories, and telling me about different animals. It isn't happening quickly, but it is happening joyfully and that, for me, is more important!



So here it is my " **Great Books Preschool Story Time.**" Enjoy!

***Please note that most of these links are for Thriftbooks.com. If you have not joined them, I highly recommend that you do. They have made homeschooling so much more affordable. On top of great prices, they offer free shipping on orders of \$10+, and a \$5 coupon off your next order, every time you*

spend \$50 cumulatively. Can't be beat! Click [here](#) and sign up for a 15% off coupon for your first order, any size. (I will receive a small reward for you signing up to help my family keep reading! Thanks.)

Literature:

Math:

Religion:

Science:

Have any you would add?

This contribution is available at <http://veilsandvocations.blogspot.com/2016/09/great-books-preschool-story-time.html>
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How to Teach Current Events Without the Evening News [at Seton Magazine]

4 minutes

Summary

Understanding current events is essential to the learning process, but as Jennifer Elia explains, parents should be the newscasters for their children.

There is a lot going on in our world today, and for us to raise responsible and well-rounded citizens, our children need to understand the world beyond their front door.

However, a 24-hour news cycle was not designed for young minds and hearts. Here are five tips for teaching your children about the current events in a loving, Christ-centered way.

1. Stay Informed.

Stay on top of current events yourself and make sure you know as much as you can about important news stories. There are times I would rather avoid the news altogether. It can be depressing and difficult to handle, even as an adult.

However, it is important to know what is going on in our world. An informed citizenry is better able to elect responsible leaders, react to tragedies in a charitable and productive way, and understand how and why other major world events are occurring.

While ignorance may seem to be bliss, it is not a state that we are called to occupy. For us to be effective parents, citizens, and Christians, we must keep our ears and eyes open. Stay tuned-in to current happenings and look for multiple reliable sources for pressing issues or high profile events.

Follow up on events that you deem important, even once they have been pushed off the front page. Make it a point to educate yourself first.

2. Act as a filter.

Children are sponges; they soak up even what they don't understand. While we have to keep our children informed, as well as ourselves, we also have a duty to protect them. Decide how much your child really needs to know.

With our constant access to media and communication there is more coverage of more events than ever before. While every crime and tragedy is important, it doesn't all have to make it to your dining room table.

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HOMESCHOOL NOW

On September 11, 2001, I was a public school teacher, just fifty miles from the tragedy in New York City. One of my young students, only about seven, came in with wide, scared eyes the next day and said, “They just keep hurting our buildings, the whole city is almost gone.”

He didn’t understand that the endless loops of the attack were of a single event. In his world it was happening over and over every few minutes.

As a rule, in our home, we do not listen to or watch any news programs with the children present. It is too hard to predict what will be discussed, and even worse, displayed.

Just as we don’t allow our children unbridled access to the internet and we do preview movies and books, we preview the news, do our research, and discern what, if anything, our children really need to know about what is going on. For your children’s sakes, filter out the fluff, the [anti-Christian messages](#), as well as the sensationalism, and give them only bite-sized snippets of what is truly newsworthy.

3. Discuss at an age appropriate level.

We live in an unpredictable world. Terrorism is the scourge of our time. My children have not lived through an earth shattering day such as 9/11, but they still need to be aware that there are groups of people who wish to harm our country. How much they need to know, though, depends upon their age.

Our newly turned three-year-old son just needs to know that there are people who do the wrong thing or try to hurt other people, but that our civil servants, like the police, work hard to protect us.

On the other hand, our almost twelve-year-old has been part of our discussions on the upcoming election and the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, (filtered still, of course).

Remember that you can always add more details if the child is truly ready for it or is searching for answers. However, information cannot be taken back. While all of our children know that there are martyrs even today, and that we need to stand up for our faith, we do not go into the grisly details of how the people were martyred.

4. Relate current events to your history lessons.

It’s been said that there is [nothing new under the sun](#). Everything that we are dealing with now has been going on, to some extent, since the fall of Adam and Eve.

Studying history, especially Church history, shows how people have overcome challenges in the past, and that we can learn from knowing history well. Those who don't learn it are doomed to repeat it, after all.

There are many modern concerns that hit the news—Christian persecution, wars, economic crisis, slavery, natural disasters, crime—that relate to the lessons we are already studying in history. In an age appropriate and filtered way, you could connect St. Patrick being taken prisoner and sold as a slave to the kidnappings and abuse perpetrated by ISIS today.

Likewise, discussing the Great Depression can lead to a look at why there are so many foreclosed homes in your area, and a talk about using treasures responsibly. History truly is a circle, and though the events of today feel particularly intense, that doesn't mean we cannot still learn from history.

There is also comfort for children and adults in knowing that bad things have happened in the past, but that great men and women have found a way through them by the grace of God.

5. Remind everyone that this is a fallen world, but our hope is in the LORD.

My husband has a saying: “Not our kingdom, not our home.” As distressing as current events can be, we need to remember that the LORD is still in charge, and wants us to [have peace, not anxiety](#). It can be difficult to understand why, and there are many whys that have no reasonable answer other than that this is a fallen world.

Yes, God still loves us and is with us through it all. However, once sin entered the world, so did [destruction and suffering](#).

Pray for resolutions to tragedies, both natural disasters and man-created chaos, but realize that the course of history rests in God's perfect hands. It may never make sense why or how things have been allowed to happen, but trust that it is all a part of His Plan.

Assure your children that our [goal is to make it to Heaven](#) where there is no suffering, no tears, no crime, no disasters. We must do our part to help others, but must never lose sight of our eternal home.

For in the end, no matter what happens in our world today, Jesus still rose, and God has already won!

[Header photo CC WavebreakmediaMicro | adobestock.com](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://www.setonmagazine.com/family/how-to-teach-current-events-without-the-evening-news>
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A new Political Party [at Quiet Consecration]

I am intrigued.

Normally I do not pay much attention to the Catholics currently ranting and raving about politics. I have watched those who hate the current candidate for their party point fingers at those who disagree with them, declaring their opposition to be crazy, uneducated or downright sinful Catholics. I have read posts on FB that make me smile because they are so condescending towards people who may disagree with the poster that they skirt the boundary of decency.

Watching one FB rant and its subsequent replies (including my own, asking for the poster to please cite a reference for some of his quotes so I could read the whole article) I was amused to have someone point me in the direction of an interesting attempt at the establishment of a third political party.

[The](#)

American Solidarity Party defines itself as " the only active Christian Democratic party in the United States" and from what I have read so far they are telling the truth. If there is another group banding together to make a run at gaining political power in this country that embodies the youth, the ideals and the declarations of this group I don't know where it is or what it's called.

The ASP (and yes, I immediately looked at the logo to see if it was a big ol' snake. It isn't - phew!) states that it stands for the sanctity of human life, the necessity of social justice, responsibility for the environment, and hopes for the possibility of a peaceful world.

Good GOD you can't get much better than that!

At this stage of my life, I do not see where voting my conscience will gain either Mr. Trump or Mrs. Clinton my endorsement. Unlike the sparkly eyed 18 year old who first stepped into a voting booth, I am now a gimlet eyed, cranky ex-rock and roller filling out an absentee ballot at my kitchen table and writing in the name of my cousin for president. I cannot stand either candidate, cannot trust either party and wish everyone would stop screaming at each other about walls and guns. I am tired of being insulted by Mrs. Clinton and her minions and I am tired of the antics of Mr. Trump. Both are an embarrassment to the American people and the fact that this is the best we have to offer should be a wake up call for the lot of us.

Instead it has caused otherwise loving and kind Catholics to degenerate into tribal factions of screaming harpies. We are rude to each other. We are cruel to each other. We claim rich athletes are incapable of holding an opinion about oppression because they ARE rich athletes and we refer to people who call female candidates by a crude slang term reserved for women's genitalia as good citizens exercising their 'right to freedom of speech'.

Every day we reveal ourselves to be ignorant and cruel when it comes to our inability to have a civil discussion about politics or religion. Yet let anyone utter even the smallest condemnation of behavior by someone deemed untouchable by today's society and the backlash will be swift and unforgiving. I was told I should move to Russia because I suggested we need to establish boundaries and basics for good

interaction - in other words, stop using foul language when discussing a candidate. I was told that I did not have a right to establish boundaries or hold to standards, that to do so infringed upon a person's right to freedom of speech. I responded by suggesting that standards and boundaries are set all the time to restrict our freedom of speech and these standards and boundaries might be tested but they are there. The lady exploded on me. She offered to purchase my ticket to Russia.

This morning I read a post where a convert to Catholicism (and a fairly new one at that) declared that a priest holding an opposing political view had obviously looked at the 'state of his own soul and discovered his 'sin'. Why? The priest had stopped posting anything on his site that supported the 'other' Candidate.

Shame on us.

I have sent in an 'interest' request to the American Solidarity Party. They do not have a snowball's chance in hell to succeed. However, it has dawned on me lately that it doesn't matter if they win or lose. You see, I am a Catholic. I know that my side wins in the end.

But until then, by golly, it just might be interesting.

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When the Sign of the cross said "Thank You, Lord!" [at A Moment From De Sales]



While watching the summer Olympics in Rio, we felt the excitement of the many athletics winning events and getting a prized gold, silver or bronze medal. But every once in a while, an unknown athlete spirited to the front carried by the wild, enthusiastic cheering crowds.

And suddenly we witnessed the surprised face of a flabbergasted, but happy and totally astonished unexpected winner. With TV cameras beaming in on a joyous face, we saw a hastily made **sign of the cross**. It's true. It was the sign of the cross done before millions of world watchers.

Yes, it was hurried, but deliberately done. And it said to all who watched—that gratitude for this victory belonged first to God. It was the particular athlete's way of showing humble gratitude to God for helping with the victory. Doesn't Scripture say: "**When we humble ourselves before God the more favor we get from God?**"

Now we know that God didn't actually run that race or swim in that particular lane, but this tiny, action reminds us of how God fits into the daily routine of our lives—all of our personal lives—even "athletes going for the gold."

God made us to enjoy and God appreciates all we do. It's God's way of rekindling those precious Garden moments with Adam and Eve—walking closely with them in the "cool of the evening."

Wait a minute! Surely, God loves all equally and the same—athletes and non-athletes alike. We understand His love puts everyone on this earth—and our creation is the first gift for which to be thankful. Everything else follows from that initial first gift.

The second gift is everything else we do – like swimming, cycling, playing the piano or enjoying a good novel. The purpose of this extra contribution like a beautiful singing voice—is to praise God. Now, as simple as that statement is, it isn't always clear to us.

We like to take credit for all the good things that happen to us, and give God the "blame" for all the bad things. Yet it only takes a small action- like the sign of the cross- to tell the world "God deserves credit too." God is not interested in a medal, a victory parade or any other fanfare. God only desires some modest respect for His love for each of us.

Like that athlete, we too can easily recall from where our successes and gifts flow. When we do, we can unassumingly utter a **“Thank You”** with this added plea **“Lord, Help me in those times when I don’t finish first.”** With these few words, God is praised and we live humbly **in His favor!**

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Mother Teresa - My Friend, My Mentor, A Saint [at Our Home, Mary's Mantle]

Happy Canonization Day Sweet Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

I'm so happy for you and proud of you, you dear, sweet lady!

Your love and sweetness live on all over the world - thank you for being salt & light! Sigh!

Of all the pictures I've ever seen of her, these are my favorites:





I love these pictures

because you can see the love. It's a great reminder to **BE THE ONE! BE THE LOVE! BE THE HOPE! BE THE SMILE! BE THE LIGHT!**

For the past week or so, everywhere we look, as Catholics people are giving the History of and listing the Quotes of Mother Teresa... which I have thoroughly enjoyed re-reading. Bloggers and artists and stores, they want us to buy the things they have depicting this great Saint... and we do... and I did! And to tell you the truth, I had a similar post written, but I don't want MY post to be like everyone else's, so I want you to hear my heart on this one.

I first saw Mother Teresa, she was with Saint (then Pope) John Paul II. I had heard of her here and there... but I was young and she was on the other side of the world, and I was still pretty non-committed to living my life FULLY the right way. Sigh. The next time I remembered seeing her was with Princess Diana. I knew a little about her, other than articles I read here and there. Everyone was fascinated with her. She brought the plight of the poor in Calcutta to the forefront, in my opinion. And she was always smiling.

It wasn't until I dug deeper that I learned about how scared and lost she was just like me. Not because of the same situations, but still - we have that in common. You see, God is not always OBVIOUS in our hearts and minds. And she didn't even know for sure He was with her. She couldn't feel HIS presence... "not even in the Eucharist". She had a huge crisis of Faith and she kept on serving and giving because THAT is what she knew how to do. None of us ever knew it. When I read this about her, I was so deeply and personally touched by that.

Can you imagine how scared she was? How lost she felt? And she persevered. We could all see God in her. We could all see Him all around her. No doubt He was there all along, but she could not feel Him. Scary! God blessed her heart though. He showed her. And I'm so happy for her.

I will share with you that I have been there. I have had crisis of faith moments, days, weeks, months... I know God is here. But I can't feel him. I push away because I feel so very unworthy. My life has been full of strife, abuse, etc... and there have been many times it sure was hard to even feel like there was a God. I used to say to myself, "how can you possibly really be a Christian if you doubt so much?" "Maybe you really are NOT a good enough Catholic for God to embrace you!" "After all, I thought I was Catholic, and practiced for decades, and I wasn't." "Was God angry with me that He let so many bad things happen to me?" And my sweet friend and Mentor came into my life when I needed her most.

Mother Teresa was instrumental in helping me TRULY forgive myself for having an abortion. I thought I had forgiven myself with the help of Father Henry, but it wasn't until I read her speech on abortion that she gave in DC, where I realized no matter what I did, God still loved me. He made me... He loves me.

[HERE](#)

is a blog post I did where I include that speech (It's long, look for the blue lettering).

Look at her face, how loving she is in the pictures. When I think of her, I picture her rough hands around mine, her wrinkly sweet face with the loving eyes, saying, "come with me child, walk in my steps. Don't give up on yourself, God won't. I won't. It's ok!"

If I was going to write her a letter, it would look like this:

Dear Blessed Mother Teresa,

You were a living Saint and now your day has come that you will forevermore be Saint Teresa of Calcutta. We all knew you were going to be a Saint. I'm so sorry that you lived your life scared and in a dark place. But I'm so thankful that you share this part of your life so that people like me, who have dark periods, can be assured that God is with us.

Thank you for your example. Thank you for your love of God. Please continue to watch over me. Pray for me and all our brothers and sisters. Congratulations!

Love you dearly, Emily

I am still a work-in-progress. I need more humility, less ego. I need more patience (ACTUAL patience, not trials to learn it).... I need to keep busy in better ways and get things done. I need to believe God when He says he loves me and put the past behind me... boy, I have so much work to do. Sigh. But through Saints like her, I know I am not alone. They worked, they struggled, they went through everything I did and

more... and they are SAINTS! It gives me so much HOPE! She's my friend, She's my Mentor, She's a SAINT! Glory be to God!

I'm so excited for today. I already have these things at home. It's a

[Saint Teresa of Calcutta Back Pack Zipper Pull and Card](#)

. SaongJai is one of my favorite shops on Etsy. Anyway... The card is in my son's room and the pull is on my Bible Cover. YAY



[My Little Felt Friends](#)

!

Thank you for reading my post. Saint Teresa of Calcutta, PRAY FOR US! May we live our lives in love

and mercy like you did, even in the dark times.

Hugs & Blessings, Dear Ones!

Emily

This contribution is available at <http://davishomemarysmantle.blogspot.com/2016/09/mother-teresa-my-friend-my-mentor-saint.html>
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When You Grieve the Living [at The Pitter Patter Diaries]

It's been awhile since I've updated anyone on my mom. She remains basically in the same condition. There was some hope that she would regain some memory as she continued to recover after her stroke. Unfortunately, there has been little change. As I like to say: crazy as a bat, happy as a clam!

I mean no disrespect. In all that has happened, the saving grace is that she is usually quite content and happy with her present circumstance. Sure, Bill Clinton still visits a lot . . . and may be my new daddy . . . but she's usually smiling and has a rich life she has filled in where her memory fails her.

With as busy as the year has been, I have been rolling with it. It is what it is. I cannot change what has happened, so there really is no good that comes from dwelling on what isn't. Except that what isn't here anymore hits you in the face every time we see what is. It is new mom versus the memory of old mom. Those memories are still hard, especially when I still have sell her house and go through all the things she has collected over the decades of her life.

Life isn't business as usual. You can't simply sweep someone under the rug. There is a process to the grief that comes from losing someone even while they are still living. She is still my mom, but she is not the mom I have known and loved for forty years of my life. In order to truly give honor to the woman she has become, it is necessary for me to grieve who she was. Mom, my mom, is gone. The one who sewed my clothes, who fed the masses, who waited up for me during my college years and talked into the wee hours of the morning - that mom no longer exists. I cannot say for certain if those memories still remain with "new mom." Threads of her certainly do. She still has a feisty spirit - some things just do not change!

As I avoid cleaning out her house, sifting through the memories of days long past, I find that grieving her as I knew her is inevitable. It is not only unavoidable, but it is necessary. I miss the mom who would stay up late with me when I came home from college. I miss the mom who would gladly go hunting for a good bargain. I miss the mom who could whip up some comfort food when I was sick or just a little blue.

In some ways, her widow's grief stole her from me years ago. Now that loss just seems more final and irreversible. There was always hope of healing and restoration of her spirit when depression stole her spunk and laughter. The damage from the stroke seems to have left its permanent mark, though. This is the first year she didn't call me on my birthday. Part of her remembered somewhere deep down that it was someone's birthday, but she couldn't remember.

Josiah is the first grandchild she hasn't finished a blanket for, though God in his infinite mercy lit a fire under her tush to begin it early enough that I found it mostly done when she was in the hospital. Yet, when she holds him there is momentary joy, but she will never truly know him as she does the other two. There is a grief that goes with that.



It seems wrong on the surface to say we grieve someone who is very much alive, especially in the Church. It could seem as though we are not upholding the value of her life as she struggles through the path dementia has set out for her. That just isn't the case though. It is entirely possible to love and value someone, while grieving what you knew.

I remember when I was pregnant with Gianna, there were some soft markers for Downs Syndrome found during our 20 week ultrasound. Like a good crazy pregnant woman, I went online. While I learned that those soft markers were actually not markers for Asian women (hello?), I also came across a blog post from a mom of a special needs child. She gave me the freedom to grieve the child I expected. In fact, and this was what was revolutionary to me, she shared that it helped her to love the child she had *more* to be able to fully grieve and let go of the one she thought she would have.

I recently read Kimberly Williams Paisley's new book, *Where the Light Gets In: Losing My Mother Only to Find Her Again*. She shares her journey with her mom who is suffering from a rare form of aggressive dementia. In her story, I could relate to that feeling of not knowing my mother anymore, of being reluctant to visit because she just wasn't my mom. In the great words of C.S. Lewis, I found myself saying, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one."

Friends, especially Church friends - the struggles in life can't always be tied up with a nice and neat theological bow. While we know that every life has dignity and is worth living, that dementia doesn't steal someone's importance, or a special needs diagnosis doesn't invalidate someone's worth, as those who love and live these stories, sometimes we need to cry. We need to grieve what we knew, what we expected, what we longed for to make room for the beauty God is creating in the suffering He leads us through.

Sometimes, it just sucks, even if it will be okay in the end. Sometimes we just need someone to cry out to God with us - to scream our WHY? - without it meaning that we have lost sight of His goodness. Sometimes we need you to remind us of His goodness when the darkness threatens to overpower us. We know it cannot, but sometimes the emotion of the moment can choke out the memory of the promise of God's eternal goodness. He is always good, but life is not always fair. And sometimes - just sometimes even when you are well beyond your youth and adolescence - you need to throw a temper tantrum and declare that the cards you are dealt stink. It doesn't make God any less good or God, and it doesn't make the one we are grieving, even though they may still be living, any less beautiful or worthy. It simply makes us human and makes greater room for them in our hearts.

Until next time, be gentle with one another and love each other like Jesus. <3 p="">3>

Blessings,

Rakhi

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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.

²⁵ *Great crowds were traveling with him, and he turned and addressed them,*

²⁶ *“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.*

²⁷ *Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

²⁸ *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?*

²⁹ *Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers*

should laugh at him

³⁰ and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’

³¹ 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?

³² But if not, while he is still far away, he will send a delegation to ask for peace terms.

³³ 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!

Listening to Hear the Word of God in Our Lives [at Blog of the Dormition]



Let us press in upon Jesus to hear the word of God (Luke 5:1). When we do, maybe he'll withdraw a little, as if getting into Simon's boat and putting out a little from the land, but he won't neglect to teach us (Luke 5:3). We must each seek out and listen to the word of God in our lives. He is always speaking to us, I believe, in the language of our lives. But it can be difficult to make out what he's saying over the crashing of the waves.

The word of God to us is often counterintuitive.

What he's telling us often isn't what we want to hear.

It's often not easily recognized or understood, agreeable or believable to us.

Hearing the word of God and keeping it requires a little faith.

Hearing the word of God is like toiling all night in a boat on the lake in the grueling and backbreaking work of fishing. Casting out your nets, pulling them in, catching nothing. Casting again, pulling in again, catching nothing again. All night long. Hour after hour. Then, exhausted and disheartened, giving up, coming near the shore to wash your fruitless nets and call it quits only to hear a man command you to put out *again* into the deep and to let down your nets *again* for a catch (Luke 5:4).

You know how good it feels to get home from work after a long day. But how would it feel if, when you just get home, your boss calls you and tells you to come back in and get back to work? My first thought probably wouldn't be that this is the word of God to me. That wouldn't be my *first* thought. To recognize such a seemingly mad suggestion as the word of God would take a little faith.

Simon, who Jesus will later call Peter, has a little faith. He says to Jesus, "Master, we toiled all night and

took nothing! Nevertheless, at your word I will let down the nets” (Luke 5:5). Notice that he doesn’t say, “for a catch.” Jesus tells him to let down the nets “for a catch,” but Peter just says that he’ll let down the nets. He’s holding on to a little skepticism, but he also has a little faith. As it happens, God is the master of more than just fish, and so the haul they take in by heeding his word was enough to nearly sink two boats.

We must listen carefully for the word of God in our lives and be open to it, because it can be counterintuitive. Our God is a God of surprises.



Hearing the word of God is also like long suffering from a thorn in the flesh – a weakness of body or spirit or condition of life – and asking the Lord to remove it, yet still suffering it and so asking the Lord again to remove it and yet *still* suffering it and so asking a *third* time for the Lord to remove it, and finally hearing the word of the Lord: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power reaches perfection in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

The word of the Lord isn’t always what we want to hear. Sometimes he has to tell us three times before we’ll accept it. Accepting it requires a little faith. Paul finally accepts his weakness and even boasts of it, saying, “for the sake of Christ, I am content with weaknesses” (2 Cor 12:10).

The word of God can be hard to hear.

Hearing the word of God is also like trying to sleep at night but being woken by the voice of your teacher calling your name, getting up, going to see what he wants and hearing, “I didn’t call you. Go back to sleep.” Then, trying to sleep again, hearing him call you again, getting up and going to him only to hear

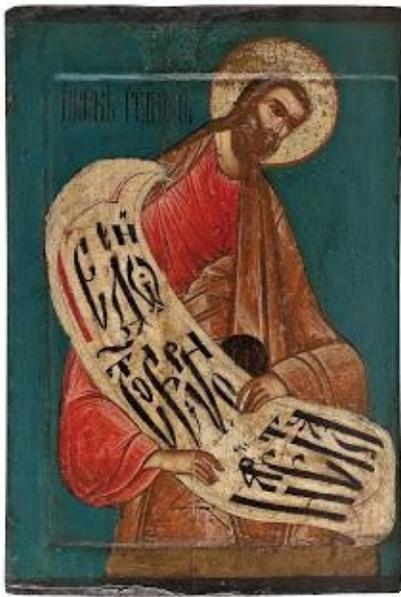
again, “I didn’t call you, my son. Go back to sleep.” And again a third time – but this time at last your teacher recognizes that the voice you’ve been hearing is the voice of the Lord (1 Sam 3:3-10).

Sometimes we mistake the voice of the Lord for the voice of our human teachers, just as sometimes we mistake the voice of our human teachers for the voice of the Lord. His voice in our lives can be hard to recognize, but our teachers, if they are wise and humble, can help us to recognize him when he calls us.



The priest Eli is a good example of this kind of teacher, even though he had failings (1 Sam 2-3). It is Eli who finally recognizes the Lord calling the boy Samuel in the night, only to learn that the Lord will punish his house for the iniquity of his sons, to which news Eli says, “It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him” (1 Sam 3:18). This demonstrates a rare humility and openness to the word of God, necessary in teachers who would help us to hear the word of God in our own lives.

Hearing the word of God is also like suffering the oppression of another nation for seven years and them destroying all the produce of the land and taking all the livestock, instigating famine, making you so weak and so powerless against them that you just know that there’s nothing you can do about it , so you call out the Lord and ask him, “Why don’t you do something? Where are your wonderful deeds? Why don’t you deliver your people?” only to hear back from the Lord, “Why don’t *you* deliver your people?” (Judges 6:1, 4, 13-15). Sometimes we ask the Lord, “Why don’t you help us?” only to hear him say, “You are the help I have sent.” Sometimes we see our own particular problems because God is telling us to deal with our own particular problems.



This is how it went with Gideon against the Midianites (Judges 6). What the Lord was asking him to do to was unbelievable to him. He was of the weakest clan in Manasseh and he was the least in his family and yet the Lord chose him, of all people, to deliver Israel from the Midianites (6:15). He took a lot of convincing.

The word of God can be like that. It confounds us. It calls us to do things we think are impossible. And they would be impossible without God, but they are *not* without God. When God calls us to seemingly insurmountable tasks he says to us, as he says to Gideon, “But I will be with you” (6:16), and that makes all the difference.

Sometimes people say that God will never let you suffer more than you can bear, but I don’t think that’s quite right. Rather, we may get crushed by our problems, but he will bear them in us. Be with us. Raise us up when we fall (Ps 145:14). It really was impossible for Gideon to drive out the Midianites, but God in Gideon can do anything.

Of myself, I can’t do anything.

In God, I can do anything God wills.

So, with the guidance of wise and humble teachers, we must listen carefully for the word of God in our lives so that we can know his will for our lives and live in him who accomplishes great, surprising, new, impossible, confounding, and glorious works in and through us.

This contribution is available at <http://holydormition.blogspot.com/2016/09/listening-to-hear-word-of-god-in-our.html>
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Patron Saints of Students [at The Koala Mom]

For some students, September and the start of school is an exciting time. For others, school is an ordeal to be endured. When I was an elementary and secondary student, school was something to be completed so I could do something I liked better. As a university student, I loved my studies. Now, as a homeschool mom, I'm trying to instill in my daughters a love of learning. Thankfully, there are a host of saints to help me. If you're looking for inspiration, perhaps these patron saints of students and schools can inspire or uplift you as well.



Patron Saints of Students

St. Catherine of Alexandria

Catherine of Alexandria was born of a noble family in the time of the Roman persecution of Christians. She attempted to persuade the Emperor to stop persecuting Christians. He called upon his scholars to debate with her and prove her wrong, but instead, Catherine converted all of them. The emperor then had her executed. Her feast day is November 25. She is the patron saint of female students.

St. Thomas Aquinas

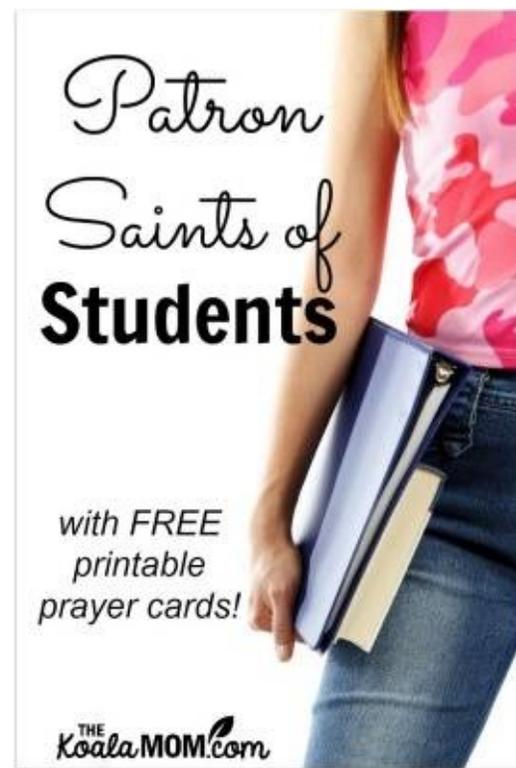
Thomas Aquinas lived in Italy in the 1200s, the youngest son of well-off parents. He joined the Dominicans, with whom he studied and taught extensively. He tutored his own sisters and was a scholar of Aristotle. He is a Doctor of the Church and had an immense impact upon western philosophy. His feast day is January 28. He is the patron saint of schools, universities, and students.

St. Scholastica and St. Benedict

Scholastica and Benedict were twins who lived in the 500s. While he founded an order of monks, she founded an order of nuns. They often conferred together about spiritual matters. Both died in 543. His feast day is July 11 and her is February 10. They are patron saints of students.

St. Albert the Great

Albert the Great studied and taught at some of the great universities of Europe in the 1200s. He was considered an expert in biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geography, metaphysics, and mathematics, as well as Biblical studies and theology. He was one of St. Thomas of Aquinas' teachers. He is a Doctor of the Church and the patron saint of scientists and students.



St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

[Elizabeth Ann Seton](#) founded the first free Catholic school in America. She grew up in New York in the late 1700s, married a businessman and had 5 children (whom she homeschooled). After her husband's death, she converted to the Catholic Church. At her bishop's urging, she started a girls' school and an order of nuns. Known lovingly as Mother Seton, she died in 1821 and was canonized in 1975. Her feast day is January 4. She is the patron saint of Catholic schools.

St. Gemma Galgani

Gemma Galgani lived in the late 1800s, one of eight siblings. She was a conscientious student, although illness forced her to stop her studies early. She was miraculously cured of meningitis during her life. A mystic, she received the stigmata, knew her guardian angel personally, and had many ecstasies. She died of tuberculosis at age twenty-five. Her feast day is April 11. She is the patron saint of students.

What patron saints of students have inspired you?

FREE Printables to Inspire Students!

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Not Knowing [at Bible Meditations]



He said to me, “Mortal man, can these bones come back to life?”

I replied, “Sovereign Lord, only you can answer that!” Ezekiel 37: 3

It’s okay not to have all the answers. There are some questions we can’t know the answers to, this side of heaven. There’s no shame in knowing what we have no way of knowing.

Why did God ask Ezekiel if those bones could come back to life? God already knew the answer. Surely God also knew that Ezekiel didn’t know the answer. Why ask? Maybe God just wanted Ezekiel to pay attention to the issue, to consider the possibilities, and to do just what Ezekiel did: stand in humble silence and watch God’s power in action.

At the transfiguration, we’re told that Peter offered to build three shelters for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, although Peter really didn’t know what he was saying. The proper response when we don’t know what to say is to keep silent and listen. Then we will find out what we’re meant to know.

If we have questions, maybe it’s because God wants our attention so he can give us the answer or just demonstrate his power.

Prayer: Lord, help me trust that when I don't know, you do.

Reflection: What question does God want you to consider but leave in his hands today?

This contribution is available at <http://www.biblemeditations.net/archives/3045>
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We Need the Holy Spirit! [at Renew The Church Blog]

“Lukewarm” is not a good word, in the Christian lexicon. It is not a good state of the human soul. The alternative – fervor, zeal and whole-hearted commitment – in the heart and soul of a Christian – ought to be the norm! Every Christian church ought to be on fire for Christ and the Gospel, and thus for the mission of the Church:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (Mt 28:19-20)

There is not a lot of “Go” from many Catholic churches; even the going to search for the lost sheep – the former Catholics who have drifted away from the Faith – is not a big priority among many of our parishes and dioceses. So much of our activity and concern, in my experience, is directed within – within the parish and for the parishioners. And sadly only little of that activity is focused on the great need among our adults for catechesis and growing in the life of prayer. We need renewal.

Vatican II called us to renewal, in so many ways! The universal call to holiness was proclaimed by the Church to the Church, in that Council, a call to remember who we are, and what we are to be about. We all, every one of us, have a vocation, a divine calling, to be light in this darkening world. We all have been entrusted with Bread from heaven, in a world hungry for that which finally satisfies. We all have been infused with a share in the divine and eternal life – the Holy Spirit – in a world stumbling toward death. How can we be so quiet?

The Holy Spirit is the great awakener of lukewarm and sleepy souls. We need the arousal of the Holy Spirit.

A New Article in HPR

An essay I wrote recently on this matter has just been published on-line, at the website of Homiletic & Pastoral Review, as an article titled [The Church Needs the Holy Spirit!](#) I hope all my readers here will click on the title-link, and read the article. And as usual, I’d be grateful for your comments either here on the blog or added on the HPR site at the bottom of the article.

Finally, let me recommend to you the encyclical of Pope St. John Paul II on the Holy Spirit, which can be found on the Vatican website. This document was the foundation of a “Novena” of nine presentations on the Holy Spirit which I presented recently in my home parish. The title of the encyclical (and the link to it) is [Dominum et vivificantem](#). It is lengthy! But it is worth the “price of admission,” in time.

This contribution is available at <http://renewthechurch.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/we-need-the-holy-spirit/>
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From Mystical Premonition to Contemplation



Sometime ago I was speaking about what I called *Mystical Premonitions* or *Touches of God* when one of the audience asked, “Are we talking about something that is a particularly Christian experience, or does everyone experience God’s touch?”

“It’s for everyone,” I replied emphatically. “God loves everyone, not just Christians, but Christians do respond in a unique way.” Let me explain what I mean. Long before he became a saint when he was still a pagan, St Augustine experienced those *touches of God*. In writing about the way he reacted to them in his *Confessions* he gives us a perfect example of how we should react too, in order to deepen our spiritual life. From his *Confessions*: –

“When first I knew you, you lifted me up so that I might see that there was something to see, but that I was not yet the man to see it. And you beat back the weakness of my gaze, blazing upon me too strongly, and I was shaken with love and with dread. You called and cried to me and broke open my deafness and you sent forth your beams and shone upon me and chased away my blindness. You breathed fragrance upon me, and I drew in my breath, and do now pant for you. I tasted you, and now hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I have burned for your peace. So I set about finding a way to gain the strength that was necessary for enjoying you. And I could not find it until I embraced the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who was calling unto me and saying, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’.”

Many of us have had what are sometimes called ‘*natural mystical experiences*’, especially when we were young, but few of us are able to describe them in the sublime language that St Augustine uses. Whilst many of the great romantic poets spend their entire time trying to transpose their experiences into words, capturing them in sublime poetry, Augustine rushes on to seek the source whence they came. His search leads him to Jesus Christ, for he finds in him *the Masterpiece of God’s creation*. The fragments of God’s beauty and goodness and truth that are scattered in the rest of creation are to be found fully in *the Masterwork*.

This is why he spent years getting to know Jesus Christ by poring over his every word in the scriptures and by responding in his own words, until a sort of spiritual conversation developed in his prayer life. To begin with, the knowledge was predominantly intellectual, but it gradually became more and more emotional as he experienced the love of Christ reaching out to envelop his mind and heart and his whole being. Now he began to respond in the language of love as his deepest feelings awoke to the love he experienced, reaching out to envelop him. Finally, when everything had been said that needed to be said, he found that all he wanted to do was to be still to savour in silence what he had received in a deep

but *heart-felt* contemplative stillness. This experience of St Augustine follows a similar pattern to human loving.

To begin with the couple talk, but the more they talk to each other and get to know one another the less they need to speak. The more the spark of love that was there from the beginning begins to flicker into a flame, the less they need words to express how they feel. It is now enough just to be together and to savour one another's presence and the love that binds them together. This profound *at-one-ment* is beautifully expressed in John Donne's poem, *The Ecstasy*: –

“We like sepulchral statues lay;

All day, the same our postures were,

And we said nothing, all the day.”

The same sort of idea is expressed by D. H. Lawrence in *Women in Love*, when he writes: –

“Words travel between the separate parts.

But in the perfect one there is a perfect silence of bliss.”

St Augustine knew it was Christ whose love he experienced enveloping his whole being as the first part of his spiritual journey reached its climax. Medieval spiritual writers used the words *Meditatio*, *Oratio* and *Contemplatio* to describe how the initial intellectual beginnings of prayer develop through highly charged emotional aspirations, to the still and silent gaze upon God. During the Counter-Reformation, when spiritual writers became a little more analytical and psychological, they used the terms *Meditation*, *Affective Prayer*, *Prayer of Simplicity* and *Acquired Contemplation* to describe what their medieval forebears had described before them. The phrase *Acquired Contemplation* was coined to describe the final stage of this process, because it can be reached by human endeavour, to distinguish it from true *Mystical Contemplation* which, as we will see, is a pure gift of God that cannot be attained by any man-made methods or techniques.

Given serious commitment to prayer, love grows and grows with ever deepening knowledge of the Lover, that comes through listening to his words and discovering that they are not only charged with meaning that had not been understood before, but loving that had not been experienced before. This is why the slow meditative reading of the words of Jesus in the sacred Scriptures has always been the primary way that the heart and mind of the believer is raised to the Father through the Son. As the desire that was there from the beginning is buoyed up by human feelings and emotions, it is able to remain focused on God and to remain so for longer periods of time than before. Prayer now becomes no more than a simple, silent, contemplative gaze upon God. What I call *Adolescent Prayer* has now reached a climax, which suddenly changes when the heart's desire that had been sustained and supported by a whole range of human emotions before, is suddenly raised above and beyond them as it reaches out to experience the Unknown who beckons them onward. It's as if the heart or the will has suddenly fastened on to some mysterious magnetic power that draws it relentlessly towards itself. Once this happens, *Adolescent Prayer* comes to an abrupt end. There can be no going back even if a person wants to. The days of this exciting, exhilarating, emotional prayer have ended, never to return in quite the same way again.

Let me give you an analogy to explain a little more clearly what has happened. When a rocket or a

spaceship destined for the planet Mars is ready to depart, it has attached to it boosters huge canisters of fuel whose job it is to raise it up off the ground and out of the earth's atmosphere. When they have done this they will be of no further value, so they must be detached from the spaceship or they would impede its progress towards its destination. As the spaceship comes closer to Mars it comes under the planet's magnetic force and travels faster and faster. The boosters or the canisters of fuel then, fulfill exactly the same function for the spaceship as do the emotions that have been activated in *Adolescent Prayer* as they raise and direct the heart's desire towards God. They raise it up off the ground, as it were, where it has been earthbound. They raise it higher and higher for as long as it takes to latch on to the mysterious magnetic pull of the divine love. This is now the beginning of *True Contemplative Prayer*.

Published on [Catholic Stand](#)

David is the author of [Wisdom from the Western Isles](#) which teaches the reader how to pray, from the very beginning to what St Teresa of Avila calls the Mystical Marriage.

This contribution is available at <http://www.davidtorkington.com/mystical-premonition-contemplation-2/>
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What is the moral response to the dueling problems of strangers in need of refuge and rank wickedness? [at Brutally Honest]



Jen Fitz has put up a must read in a piece she's titled [Immigration Policy and the Moral Law](#):

On the right, if you scratch the surface of the internet, you'll encounter staunch xenophobia. Foreign Criminals = All Foreigners Must Go. I'm seeing a resurgence of nativist arguments among Americans like something out of 1850.

On the left, there's worried hand-wringing and fretful apologies for those poor foreign people who just haven't been taught their manners yet, and terrible fear that if we acknowledge any cultural aspects of this particular set of crimes then we are bad, bad people.

To make an analogy, it would be like addressing the US illegal drug trade by either banning tacos or else pretending there are no cartels south of the border.

This is not the way.

Christianity: Always Simple, Never Easy

What is the moral response to the dueling problems of strangers in need of refuge and rank wickedness? It isn't complicated. But it does require a willingness to accept the entirety of the Gospel.

Here are the principles:

- *We are obliged, as much as we are we able, to welcome the foreigner. That's what the Bible says.*
- *We have a right to legitimate self-defense. ([It's in the Catechism.](#))*
- *Government authorities have a responsibility to uphold the law.*
- *Crime is crime. It doesn't matter who is doing the raping, serious crimes have be dealt with*

frankly and unequivocally.

This creates some tension for public policy. If a nation is in fact unable to receive immigrants due to an inability to maintain civil order, that is a legitimate reason to set limits on the borders. Doing so, however, doesn't allow us to wash our hands of our obligation to welcome the stranger. Rather, public policy should be oriented towards strengthening the institutions and general tenor of the nation so that in the future it is possible to provide more assistance to our neighbors in need.

There is much more, all of it thoughtful and persuasive... [read it for yourself and decide](#) and while doing so, read [this statement put out by The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention](#) published last week:

Terror attacks around the country in recent months have raised questions about national security. In response, some elected officials have called for dramatic changes to United States refugee policy. To be sure, there are legitimate security concerns in the United States, but when it comes how the debate about refugee policy is being framed, there's an important element often missing.

In November 2015, 130 people were murdered in Paris by terrorists who were French and Belgian citizens. None of them were refugees or otherwise displaced Syrians. Yet, within a week of the attack the U.S. House of Representatives voted to effectively shut down the refugee program, citing fears that the refugee program would be infiltrated by terrorists. Congress has not attempted to restrict French or Belgian access to the United States.

In December 2015, a natural born U.S. citizen and his Pakistani wife killed 14 in San Bernardino. The wife had entered the U.S. on a fiancé visa. In [2015 the U.S. issued](#) 35,559 fiancé visas and 74,150 visas to Pakistanis. To date, neither the president nor Congress have taken any action on either fiancé visas or Pakistani visas.

Instead of "pausing" or reforming visa categories that actually correlate to the cited terror attacks, several elected officials have decided to use those attacks to stoke fears about Syrian refugees. Of all the legal pathways to enter the United States, the Refugee Admissions Program features the most rigorous screening. It is correct to say the program can't guarantee perfection (no program can), yet even those who wish to shut down the program don't deny its security relative to non-immigrant visa entries.

If politicians claim to act on behalf of our security, and if the refugee program is the most rigorous of all U.S. visa screening, then shouldn't they also scrutinize all the less secure ways people enter our country from around the globe? If security is all the rage this election season, why hasn't any representative held a hearing or introduced legislation for increasing security on any of the nonimmigrant visa categories, all of which require less screening than refugees?

For example, no politician has called for "pausing" or otherwise reforming business and tourism visas. Neither the B-1 or the B-2 visas require screening at a level comparable to the refugee visas. If the refugee program is so vulnerable, then the threat we face from the relatively insecure B-1 and B-2 visas must be staggering.

Indeed, the 9/11 terrorists arrived on U.S. soil [using business and tourist visas](#) (one was a student

visa). The Boston Marathon bombers arrived as minors with their parents who obtained tourist visas. Nevertheless, in fiscal year 2015 alone, the U.S. government issued over 7 million B1/B2 visas. And yet, ten months after Paris and nine months after San Bernardino, we have not seen any hearing or legislation intended to pause or otherwise modify pathways into the U.S. that would have made any difference in the terror attacks cited by those stoking fears about refugees. Visa categories for business, tourism, fiancés, and Pakistanis remain unquestioned.

Shutting down legal pathways of entry out of fear isn't exactly the response of a confident, free nation. It's also unlikely the federal government will meaningfully curb any pathway that would hamper industry and tourism. But political conservatives, particularly Christians among us, claim to be truth tellers. Congress reacted to Paris and San Bernardino, yes. But have they actually put forth a policy directed at the threat they identify in those attacks? The answer is no, but they claim yes. While claiming to act for the sake of our security, Congress has given attention only to what is already the most secure while ignoring what is least secure. This reveals either incompetence or dishonesty.

National security is a valid priority for the state and citizens can disagree in good faith on the particulars. Southern Baptists have passed numerous resolutions affirming both the responsibility of sovereign nation to protect its people and [encouraging ministry to refugees](#). At the same time our [statement of faith](#) calls for us to influence government with the principles of “righteousness, truth, and brotherly love” and to “be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause.”

Americans might disagree on specific policies, politicians have an obligation to correlate their solutions with the problems they identify. And scapegoating vulnerable people with political smoke screens and buzzwords is not the way forward.

For a better understand about how refugee resettlement works, [this Q&A explains why, when and how refugees are resettled](#).

Refreshing stuff from Jen Fritz, a practicing Catholic and from the Southern Baptists.

Most helpful... and hopeful.

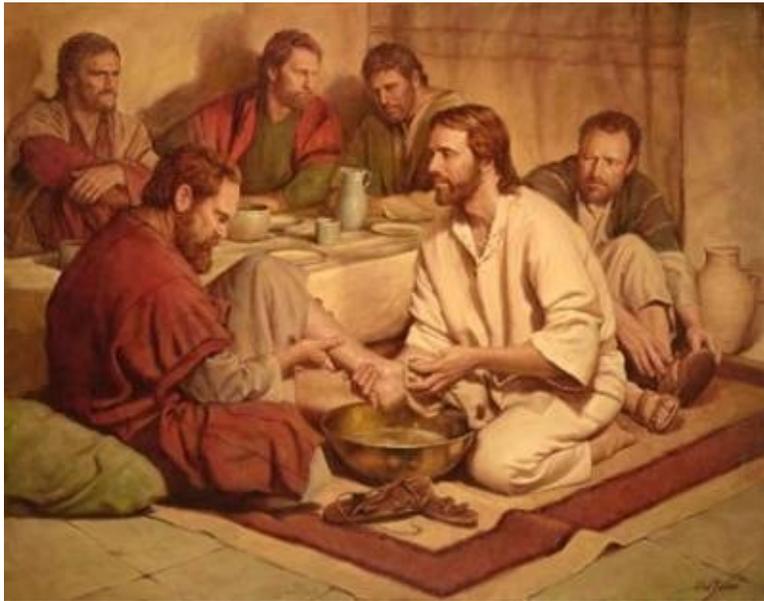
Carry on.

This contribution is available at http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally_honest/2016/09/what-is-the-moral-response.html
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The Essence of True Discipleship... [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

The Essence of true Discipleship ...



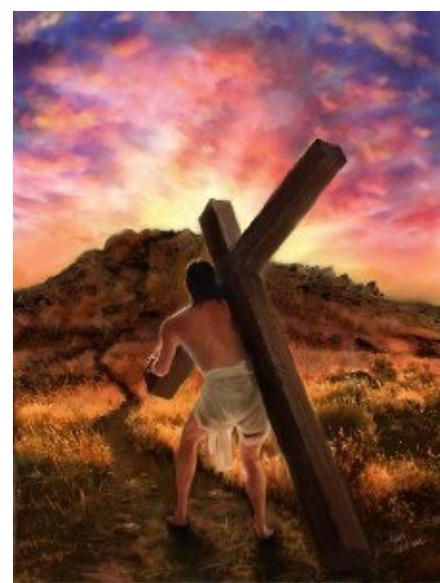
True Discipleship begins in Imitating Christ's Humility

“If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross ...” (Phil.2: 1-8)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Just as Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, emptied Himself of His divinity to fulfill the Father's purpose for Him (Phil.2:5-8) — So also we Christians, as His clay vessels that He created, need to empty ourselves, out of Loving response to His sacrifice (agape), so that in abandoning our self-centered and self-driven egocentric approach to living religiously, we may be filled and activated with the very Life of Jesus to bring forth His Kingdom in us for the Glory of the Father!

Paraphrasing this principle as John the Baptist expressed it: ***“ the “I” in me must decrease so that “His Life” in me may Increase ...”*** (John 3: 30, my translation)



The Way of True Discipleship

That, in brief, is the founding precept behind discipleship – releasing our very selves to be conformed to Jesus. Or, as St. Paul reiterated the goal for the true disciple: “... ***I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ (who) lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.***” (Gal. 2:20)

Of course, this intrinsic principle and essence of discipleship stated above seems impossible for any human to achieve. And that is exactly the point. Only the Holy Spirit working in us and through us can conform us to this image of Christ. And any attempt by us to “be His disciples” through human effort or discipline alone will utterly fail. It is only when we willingly surrender the right to ourselves that the Spirit will begin His work of conformance in us, But it must be His Work in us, NOT our human zeal to “do something” for Christ. It is ONLY “Having the mind of Christ” that permits us to cooperate fully in Faith with the Spirit of God in His work of transformation in us.

All believers are called to be disciples but it is not a condition for our salvation. In order that our conformance to His image be a work of Love, the Lord has designated becoming a disciple as free choice made willingly with no consequences on our salvation. He specifically stated that “***many are called but few are chosen***” (Matt. 22:14). There is no condemnation, if we do not choose to enter into full discipleship, it is really just up to us if we wish, out of pure love, to offer our total self to Jesus or not. We can still be fully fulfilled believers as Lay people serving the Lord.

Yielding Ourselves to The Spirit to be “Disciples”

The Apostle Paul, whose own yielding to discipleship is well documented in the New Testament, exhorts us regarding yielding ourselves to our formation as disciples as follows:

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Rom12:1-2)

This work of transformation in us begins when we “intentionally” offer ourselves up as a “living sacrifice” to the Father so that so that His Holy Spirit will begin His work of transformation in us,

beginning with the renewal of our mind so that we, indeed will have “the mind of Christ” throughout our spiritual formation.

We also begin to understand that this work of transformation is also the “Cross” that Jesus said we, that we “intentional disciples” must bear daily. Once we begin, it encompasses all the instances in our lives where we must divest ourselves of all our self-willed desires and thus be conformed to the Father’s very specific will in every aspect of our lives in Christ.

Now it is true, that as our transformation progresses, and we are more and more conformed to Christ, our own will and desires become more and more like His, then our main responsibility will be to carefully discern those areas in our life where our human will and desires still rule in our lives and where the weight of our cross still has its impact.

Discipleship is Sometimes Misunderstood

One of the things that saddens me most about we lay Catholics in our modern western culture is the extent to which we misinterpret our call to discipleship as merely using our human talents in complying with the demand for stewardship we all have in our Christian communities.

When we comply with the demand for stewardship that is placed upon us, not out of our love and dedication to Jesus, but out of our own self-will and need for recognition, zeal and ambition within the parish, then we are not acting out of true “agape” discipleship but rather out what might be considered as good human intent but lacking a surrender of our self will and yielding to the Holy Spirit so that what our efforts are directly due to God’s Grace working in us and through us.

If you sense this is happening to you, use this opportunity to repent and change your intent to give of yourself totally out of “agape” Love and truly make it a part of your commitment to discipleship.

Also, we tend to give ourselves to, piety and religious services, mainly where we feel more comfortable among our peers and neglecting God’s calling you to ministries where you feel out of place with respect to how others may view you. In fact, sometimes we go to extremes to avoid entering into a true and deep spirituality. A spirituality that results from being filled with the Holy Spirit and manifesting His Gifts in our communities. This is especially true of the Charismatic Ministries within the Parish.

That is why we need to continuously examine our walk with Christ to be sure we are being faithful to what He desires of us and NOT what we desire for ourselves.

If you fall into any of these categories, it may be that the Lord is testing your call to discipleship so that you may discern where He wants you to be. All you have to do is ask the Father in prayer as to where He wants you and, by responding, remain a faithful disciple. That is why having a personal relationship with the Shepherd is indispensable if you truly wish to be a disciple.

Yes, in our religious practice we have all the major doorways to let the Spirit of God enter into our hearts (ie., the Sacraments) but somehow we fail to release the Holy Spirit into our lives so that He will manifest himself in us and through us in everything we do! We just expect that the Holy Spirit will automatically work in us without any faith underlying our beliefs.

While it is true that through the sacraments the Holy Spirit works in our lives to forgive us our sins and

maintain our fellowship with Christ through the circumstances of our lives, nonetheless, we do not seem to realize that without our yielding our very selves to His Spirit He will NOT enter the spiritual tabernacle of our spirit and the door of our will to do the works of Christ in us and through us as He desires!

The Spirit of God respects our personal FREE WILL to the ultimate, even to the degree that He will NOT force us to do anything IN US or THROUGH US without our FULL cooperation. He will work around us and through our circumstances and our labor but He will not force Himself on our will and our spirits because He desires that we yield ourselves to Him solely out of love and NOT from obligation..

The Father Desires that we Yield Ourselves Freely to His Spiritual Formation

The Father's greatest desire for us, indeed, His predestined will for us, is that we, out of our own free will, offer ourselves to His Spirit (cf., Rom. 12:1,2) so that we may be conformed to the Spirit of His Son (cf., Rom.8:28-29) and thus become His partners in manifesting His Kingdom in today's world! . He will not do this unless we willingly open the door of our spirit man to Him so that He can carry out His deepest spiritual calling on our lives. Praised be His Holy name!

Now, I also do not want you feel any condemnation. For there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Rather it is my hope that through my message and the inspiration His Word and of His Holy Spirit you will turn to God in prayer, in Jesus' Name, and ask for the understanding and wisdom you need to have Him activate your spirit so that you may hear His Voice and Understand His Word so that you may become aware of your need to enter into His "Spiritual Kingdom".

For, without incurring any guilt, the problem with all of us humans is that our human senses are so overwhelmed by the world and cosmos around us that we are essentially blinded to the reality of the spiritual in which our existence is embedded. Only through by yielding ourselves to the Holy Spirit can He reactivate and empower our abilities to see and hear Jesus Voice as He speaks to us from the spirit realm.

It is only natural to be cautious in seeking to enter into the realm of the spiritual, since Satan is also a spiritual being and he relishes in beguiling us through false and deceptive experiences. This is also the reason that we should NOT attempt to enter into this realm unless we are truly dedicated in Faith to Christ through Baptism and filled with His Holy Spirit.

Then, and only then, when we have given ourselves to Christ and are truly His, the enemy cannot deceive us. For we are His Sheep and are Called to Hear His Voice — and ONLY His Voice. Jesus tells us that, when we are in Him and in His Flock we will not listen to the voice of a stranger.

So do not be afraid my brethren, go to Him in prayer so that He may confirm through His Word all that I am now telling you. And having the Spirit's confirmation in your hearts surrender your very "Self" to Him and let Him baptize you in the Spirit so that you may truly begin to experience your relationship with Him and be able to worship Him in the Spirit and in Truth! praised be His Holy Name! (cf., Prayer of Commitment)

When your spiritual ears are opened as we'll as your spiritual eyes, then the Lord will permit you to experience snapshots of His spiritual Kingdom – a reality that is beyond the natural realm in which we live. And indeed, it is the eternal reality that awaits us when we are separated from our bodies to be

with Him Forever!

In Conclusion ...

By now Brethren, if you feel the Holy Spirit has nudged you regarding “discipleship”, I recommend that, after praying for the Holy Spirits advise, you look into reading Sherry Waddell’s book: “Forming Intentional Disciples – The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus” *

May the Lord Richly Bless you and Lead You Into The Kingdom!

Your Brother in Christ Jesus Bartimaeus

(© B.R.Timeo and Bartimaeus’ Quiet Place, [2008-2016])

[* Note: In her book [“Forming Intentional Disciples – The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus”](#) Sherry makes it clear that there are three concurrent spiritual journeys to what one might call “normative” Catholicism. She lists these as:

1. The personal interior journey of a relationship with Christ resulting in intentional discipleship.
2. The ecclesial journey into through the Church through the sacraments of initiation.
3. The journey of active practice (as evidenced by attending mass, receiving the sacraments and participating in the life and mission of the Christian community).

She also makes it clear that in a study conducted by her and a Catholic Cleric indicated that the majority of Lay Catholic Christians basically assume that all that is needed to be “Catholic” are to be involved in paths 2 and 3 (the ecclesial journey and the practice of the religious tenets of the faith).]

Relevant Links for Those Interested in Continuing in this Topic...

[The Transforming Work of the Cross](#)

<http://www.focus.org/blog/posts/forming-intentional-disciples.html>

<http://www.amazon.com/Forming-Intentional-Disciples-Knowing-Following/dp/1612785905>

Catherine of Sienna Institute

<http://www.siena.org/Article/who-we-are>

CDM Discipleship Resources

<http://www.navigators.org/us/ministries/cdm/about/>

CDM Intentional Discipleship Ministry

<http://www.navigators.org/us/ministries/cdm/idc/>

[Prayer to Receive the Holy Spirit](#)

This contribution is available at <http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2016/10/03/s-the-essence-of-true-discipleship/>
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What Our Lady of Sorrows might be asking of us [at Catholic Review]

A smiling Mary holding a lively Christ Child is much more appealing to me than Mary holding her Son's body at the foot of the cross.

But although I would prefer to stay with the lighter, joyful images, as time goes on I realize the importance of focusing on how our Blessed Mother faced grief and loss.

Because as much as we might like for the greatest challenge in life to be greeting Jesus in a stable, life asks so much more from us. And it is in watching how she faced those moments herself, as we reflect on the

[Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows](#)

today, that we see her strength, her courage, her love.

Even in those dark days before the Resurrection, we see that she is full of conviction that Jesus is still very much with her—and each of us. If Mary can have faith and hope even before she experiences the glory of our Risen Lord on Easter Sunday, how can anything plunge us into despair?

But as time goes on, I realize that the face of a grieving but faithful Mary may be asking even more of me. Because the Blessed Mother, gazing in peaceful sadness on the face of her dying Son, is not simply offering me strength during difficulty. I believe she is also asking me to consider that I do not know the weight of the burden another person is carrying.

Even as Mary portrays strength even through her loss, I cannot fully understand the pain in her heart. That is true of every person I encounter every day.

Perhaps that more than anything is what I need to keep in mind—not just to think of Mary’s sorrows, but to recognize the sorrows others carry, and to encounter them with peace, grace, and understanding.

I can’t change the world, but I can certainly be gentler and more open to how I interact with others.

“The smallest thing when done for the love of God is priceless,” said St. Teresa of Avila.

Maybe today we can do something small for the love of God.

This contribution is available at <http://catholicreview.org/blogs/open-window/2016/09/14/what-our-lady-of-sorrows-might-be-asking-of-us>
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Everything You Wanted to Know about RCIA & How to Join the Catholic Church [at A Catholic Newbie]



If you are curious about the Catholic church, want to learn more about it or are even ready to convert, what can you do? Join your local Catholic church's RCIA program. What in the heck is RCIA, you ask?!

What is RCIA?

RCIA stands for Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and it is the formal program that allows individuals to become members of the Catholic church. RCIA programs tend to start in the fall, so NOW is the time to make your move if you've been considering it :).

RCIA programs generally go from September through Easter, at which time individuals are officially brought in as members of the Church at the Easter Vigil Mass, which is the mass held the evening before Easter. It is a beautiful mass and ceremony where you are baptized (only if you have not been baptized by a Christian church in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), confirmed and receive the Eucharist (which Catholics maintain is the actual Body and Blood of Jesus Christ).

How do I sign up for RCIA?

First, visit a few local Catholic churches and find one that feels "right" to you. Then visit their website and look for Faith Formation, Adult Formation or RCIA. If you can't find it, simply call the main office at the church and tell them you are interested in RCIA or in learning more about the church as a non-Catholic and as an adult and they will direct you to the correct person for more information.

RCIA programs usually meet once a week, some on weeknights, others on weekends. So you will want to

consider a program that works for your schedule as well, as you'll want to be there as often as possible.

What is RCIA like?

While each church is different, throughout the process you will learn about key tenets of the Catholic faith and its history, and have an opportunity to ask questions, inquire about your doubts and concerns and discuss different aspects of the faith.

There are also various welcoming ceremonies held during mass to provide “grace” (help from God) and prayer as you go through this process so that God might guide you as you grow in your learning and practice of the faith. These ceremonies are no big deal — simply standing up at mass with the priest saying a prayer over you along with others in your group. The Catholic church wants to welcome you and educate you, never pressure you, and that is what the process is about.

If you find an RCIA group that does not feel like a fit, don't be afraid to opt out and look for a different parish. Pray that God will guide you to where you need to be.

Why do people come to RCIA?

I have been involved with RCIA at my parish both going through it and assisting for several years. We hear all kinds of stories of why people have joined RCIA. Here are a few: someone who was inspired by Pope Francis, other who are marrying Catholics and wanting to raise kids in the same faith, spouses who are converting after as many as 20 years, those feeling a direct calling from God, and those who are simply just interested in exploring Catholicism more in depth and learning the truth about the faith.

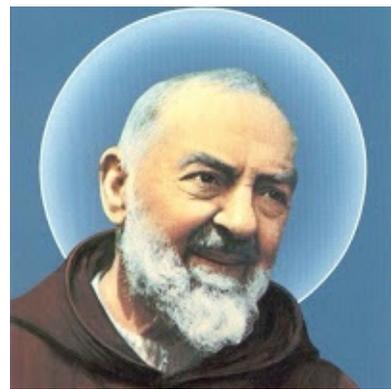
We've had people who are already Catholic who don't feel like they know as much as they'd like about their faith and others who simply just come to welcome newcomers to the church. They are single, married, in high school, grandparents, pregnant, going through an annulment, former atheists, Baptists and Methodists. You name it, they've been there! So never feel like you're alone or have too unusual a story to join the group.

What questions do you have about RCIA? What's stopping you from signing up? How can I help?

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicnewbie.com/everything-you-wanted-to-know-about-rcia-how-to-join-the-catholic-church/>

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St. Padre Pio - His Wisdom in 25 Quotations [at BIG CATHOLICS]



St. Pio of Pietrelcina was a humble friar whose holiness and patient suffering won many souls for Christ. Pope Benedict XVI said he "'prolonged' the work of Christ: announcing the Gospel, remitting sins and healing the sick in body and spirit". Here are twenty-five quotations from this much beloved saint illustrating his wisdom, humanity and deep spiritual insight.

In the uproar of the passions and of reverses of fortune, we are upheld by the comforting hope of God's inexhaustible mercy.

Jesus is with you even when you don't feel His presence. He is never so close to you as He is during your spiritual battles. He is always there, close to you, encouraging you to fight your battle courageously. He is there to ward off the enemy's blows so that you may not be hurt.

God leaves you in that darkness for his glory; here is a great opportunity for your spiritual progress.

The storms that are raging around you will turn out to be for God's glory, your own merit, and the good of many souls.

Happiness is only found in heaven.

The greater your sufferings, the greater God's love for you.

Be certain that the more the attacks of the devil increase, that much closer is God to your soul.

You complain because the same trials are constantly returning. But look here, what have you to fear? Are you afraid of the divine craftsman who wants to perfect His masterpiece in this way? Would you like to come from the hands of such a magnificent Artist as a mere sketch and no more?

Bless the Lord for your suffering and accept to drink the chalice of Gethsemane.

If we earnestly endeavor to love Jesus, this alone will drive all fear from our hearts and soul will find that instead of walking in the Lord's paths, it is flying.

Suffering born in a Christian way is the condition that God, the author of all grace and of all the gifts that lead to salvation, has established for granting us glory.

How unbearable is pain when suffered far from the Cross, but how sweet and bearable it becomes when it is offered close to the Cross of Jesus!

Remember that we cannot triumph in battle if not through prayer; the choice is yours.

You say you are anxious about the future, but don't you know that the Lord is with you always and that our enemy has no power over one who has resolved to belong entirely to Jesus?

When we suffer, Jesus is closer to us.

When you feel despised, imitate the kingfisher, who builds its nest on the masts of ships. That is to say, raise yourself up above the earth, elevate yourselves with your mind and heart to God, who is the only one who can console you and give you strength to withstand the trial in a holy way.

Faith guides even us and we follow its sure light on the way which conducts us to God and His

homeland.

Fear nothing. On the contrary, consider yourself very fortunate to have been made worthy to participate in the sufferings of the Man-God.

The best consolation is that which comes from prayer.

I want to be only a poor friar who prays - if God sees blemishes even in the angels, can you imagine what He sees in me!

Always humble yourself lovingly before God and man, because God speaks to those who are truly humble of heart, and enriches them with His gifts.

In order to attract us, the Lord grants us many graces that we believe can easily obtain Heaven for us. We do not know, however, that in order to grow, we need hard bread: the cross, humiliation, trials and denials.

Every Holy Mass, heard with devotion, produces in our souls marvelous effects, abundant spiritual and material graces which we, ourselves, do not know... It is easier for the earth to exist without the sun than without the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!

It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do so without the Holy Mass.

Our Lord sometimes makes you feel the weight of the cross. This weight seems unbearable but you carry it because in His love and mercy, the Lord helps you and gives you strength.

This contribution is available at <http://www.bigccatholics.com/2016/09/st-padre-pio-his-wisdom-in-25-quotations.html>
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[no-title]



I sometimes forget we met at an altar.

As Catholics, man and woman don't meet in a field or on the beach, in a forest or under the local golf course trellis. We meet at the altar. The structure for sacrifice. Perhaps, so used we are to seeing them, we forget. It is an ancient construct, one that -if we haven't forgotten- calls to mind sacrifice and death. It is a table where life is lost and blood is spilled. It is there - *there!* - where we vow our lives to each other completely, witnessed by family and friends and an ordained minister of the Church until death do us part. Before a table of sacrifice, *the* Sacrifice.

This is why in the Catholic Church it is required that the marriage ceremony be done in an actual church, unless extraordinary permission is granted otherwise. Because marriage is a bit of a death, a sacrificial offering of our very selves. It is where we pledge to another human being to love as He loved, all the way to the cross. Completely free, we choose to give up that freedom out of love for the other. **We meet at an altar, before the image of Him who became the ultimate Sacrifice and we pledge to give ourselves until it hurts.** "It is therefore fitting that the spouses should seal their consent to give themselves to each other through the offering of their own lives by uniting it to the offering of Christ for his Church made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice, and by receiving the Eucharist so that, communicating in the same Body and the same Blood of Christ, they may form but "one body" in Christ" (CCC, 1621).

It is this idea that led to the Catholic custom of married couples hanging a crucifix over their beds. It is a symbol of that culmination of gift of self, right down to their very bodies. They give of themselves first at the altar and complete that total gift within the bedroom. Their gift of self truly encompasses all of them - soul *and* body. And it is only when we have completely given our selves in spirit, pledging the total, free, and faithful love of the rest of our lives before that altar that we can enter the physical self-gift of love

honestly. It is this complete gift of self that brings new life.

The world's says marriage is about happiness. The Church says it's about holiness. One certainly doesn't exclude the other, of course, but we recognize the reality that life is hard, sometimes brutally so. We claim that marriage is for those times and lives, too, perhaps especially. We see in marriage a chance for real love, an active love that pours out its life for the sake of the other, no matter the cost to itself. We see an opportunity to mimic our first Love, who laid His life down for His beloved so that she might be free. "Their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man" (CCC, 1604). We remember that it is through those times of deep suffering and pain and darkness that real love is proven. It is those times that water the ground for a new and profoundly more fulfilling and fruitful redemption.

Christian sacramental marriage is strikingly different from the way that the world views it. The world wants happy, we want holy. They want pleasure, we want joy. They want pretty, we want stunningly beautiful. **Their marriage exists until someone has "changed," ours desperately hopes that we will be.**

Christian marriage takes something natural and human - a happy partnership - and elevates it to something supernatural, to something filled with the life of God and able to bring us to heaven. Perhaps if it *doesn't* lead us to change, we're doing something wrong. Our marriages are meant for far, far more than what the world would give - they are called to be a share in the work of God Himself as He purifies us and calls us to complete and total lifelong love the way that He loves. **Our marriages are meant to change us.** We are called to be transformed little by little into the people He has created us to be in what the Catechism calls *a daily mutual self-giving* (1644). We begin this life before an altar, that table of sacrifice. We call to mind His death for His bride, He who showed us the epitome of self-gift and we remember that we are called to do likewise. We pledge to love as He loved, laying our lives on that same table for the sake of our beloved, giving and loving even when it is not always well returned. And the beautiful kicker is, the more we give of our own self, the more we find who we truly are meant to be as well. God help us if we *don't* change.

As our marriage grows and changes and deepens and enters into more blessedly joyful moments and more bitterly painful ones, I am called to remember this. I as a wife remember that I am to lay down my life for my husband and he for me. Forgetting this has proven itself over and over again to be the recipe for discontent, frustration, and cynicism. Remembering it is the prescription for joy. He called us to a lifetime of real love - a love that sacrifices, changes, purifies, redeems, and lays down its very self. He called us to an altar.

"The marriage of baptized persons thus becomes a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant

sanctioned in the blood of Christ. The Spirit which the Lord pours forth gives a new heart, and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us."

Familiaris Consortio, 13

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Eucharistic Love and the Exaltation of the Cross [at Amazing Nearness]

“It’s cancer.” His voice trembling, my husband brought me the news of my new reality. *Breast cancer, I have breast cancer.* The thought just kept replaying in a terribly painful loop.

This is so hard to write about. I don’t want any reminders of cancer or the painful treatment required to save my life. I don’t want the physical reminders still left on my body in the form of scars and fatigue and lymphedema. I don’t want to be reminded of what I lost and what I cannot now recover.

My body, both the source of life for so many children is also my betrayer. Having allowed this cancer to grow and spread, my body betrayed me. How can I see it any other way? Only, I need to see it differently. I must in order to heal.

How can the scene of such pain and suffering, my body, become in my eyes something worthy and good again? How can any such contradictions ever be reconciled?

For a time, I was resigned to ignore the problem. I hoped that with enough distance from the trauma of treatment that these feelings would go away. However, two years later, I realized that scars don’t fade that much, especially to the eyes of the afflicted.

In fact, the more I tried to distance my thoughts from cancer’s assault on my body, the more distance I felt from God. I hated the physical part of His creation in me. ***I became disembodied in my relationship with God.*** Somehow in wanting to avoid the trigger for my pain (my body), ***I blinded myself to my faith’s mystical and unique ability to reconcile the contradiction of love and suffering.***

Ours is a bodily faith, a Eucharistic faith, a faith that exalts the Cross of Christ. The Cross is the greatest of all contradictions; an instrument of both death and salvation. The source and summit of our faith is the sacramental reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. His Body and Blood upon the Cross. His wounded and scarred body. His sacred Blood that flowed for my sins. Ours is a mystical and yet also a bodily, tactile faith.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 195) wrote, “He [Jesus] has declared the cup, a part of creation, to be His own Blood, from which he causes our blood to flow; and the bread, a part of creation, He has established as his own Body, from which He gives increase to our bodies.” According to this early Church father, it is the Eucharist that causes “our blood to flow” and “gives increase to our bodies.” A mystical marriage of the supernatural and corporal indeed!

St. Irenaeus was writing before the third century to dispel the heresy of ***a disembodied faith – a faith divorced of the supernatural grace of the Eucharist and the Real Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood!***

His words ring true today! Modernity promotes a spirituality devoid of the sacramental life. Modern culture is content to be “spiritual but not religious,” forgetting ***the heart from which the spiritual lifeblood flows – the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist!***

Even within the Church Jesus established, Catholics are ignorant of Our Lord's True Presence in the Eucharist – ***Ignorant of Our Lord waiting for you in the sacrament of his sacrifice and love.***

God who is all-powerful chose the Cross for our salvation. He could have chosen another form, right? He can do anything. Instead, Christ's spiritual and physical obedience onto the Cross was God's perfect means for our salvation, ***both a physical and spiritual surrender to God the Father.***

The physical, the bodily has become a perversion in today's culture. We separate the body from the soul in order to abuse one another. We deny the personhood/soul of the unborn to crush the life of the most helpless. This "freedom" is dehumanizing, dividing what God designed in His work of creation. We are meant to be body and soul and both are "very good" in his eyes. We are meant to be fully alive in Christ in body and soul. This life flows from the Eucharist.

My Lord Jesus gazes back at me from the Cross, as I adore Him in the monstrance. His spiritual and physical presence radiate Love. Knowing that He would ascend to the Father, my beloved left Himself as the Eucharist here on Earth. He left this gift of Himself for me to adore and receive into my body as food for my spiritual and physical life. ***In fact, because Christ holds my body in such high esteem, making it the means through which I am able to receive Him in the Eucharist, I am no longer disembodied.*** I have reconciled the contradiction of cancer in this body. I accept that which God loves and uses to come near to me – the Eucharist in me.

By the Cross of Christ, I have begun to reconcile physical suffering with love even as I struggle physically each day. Humanity cannot artificially divide body and soul or sacrifice and love. This is the lie of modernity and it separates us from God. God wants us body and soul just as he offers us His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Eucharist.

The greatest mystery of our faith is that to experience His [amazing nearness](#) in the Eucharist is to truly possess Love Itself. The Gospel of John is clear; "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (John 6:56)

He is waiting for you in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

This contribution is available at <http://amazingnearness.com/2016/09/13/eucharistic-love-and-the-exaltation-of-the-cross/>

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My Tribute to Saint "Mother" Teresa of Calcutta [at From the Pulpit of my Life]

I haven't posted much lately, but today is special. This is a little article about the canonization of Mother Teresa, that I wrote for my parish bulletin.

Model of Mercy: Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta will be canonized a saint today. How fitting that a modern day exemplar of God's mercy and an incomparable humanitarian will be so honored during the Jubilee Year of Mercy!

In 1946, convinced that she had been called by God to serve the poorest of the poor, Mother Teresa set out to fulfill God's will. All alone, she taught illiterate slum dwellers how to read, studied nursing to help alleviate the physical sufferings of the poor, and opened shelters for those dying in the streets, so they might have a dignified death knowing that they were loved. Eventually



others were attracted to help her, and she founded the Missionary Sisters of Charity.

Eschewing the limelight that others tried to thrust on her, Mother Teresa humbly insisted that she was merely a pencil in God's hand. Despite facing obstacles and spiritual desolation Mother Teresa kept faith, prayed, and worked tirelessly to fulfill her mission.

What can we learn about mercy from Saint Teresa's life? Cooperate with God's grace. Start with small deeds of mercy in our homes and communities. Persevere.

~ Contributed by Ruth Ann Pilney

The year 1946 when Mother Teresa heard her special call from the Lord is also the year that I was born. For whatever reason that makes her life all the more special to me. The only book about her that I recall reading was *Something Beautiful for God* by Malcolm Muggeridge. Most of what I knew about her life, other than from that book, was what was reported in periodicals during her lifetime. I saw the movie, "The Letters," earlier this year with my husband. I didn't think I would like it, because movies about holy people never seem to get it right. However, I *did* like the movie and so did my husband. He asked me if she was a saint—meaning canonized—and at the time I wasn't sure, mainly because I already considered her a saint.

This contribution is available at <http://www.fromthepulpitofmylife.com/2016/09/my-tribute-to-saint-mother-teresa-of-calcutta/>

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What is Home? [at Lord, Make Me a Saint]



So, I have a friend that we met down in Texas. Her and her husband sold their home and bought one of these. It has me so curious. I think they traveled all summer, because I saw pictures like this at times on Facebook. They will be heading down to South Padre Island, TX to park and live in this for the winter soon.

It has me thinking and wondering and almost, I guess, attracted to the idea of getting rid of everything and just living simply and someplace warm. Someplace beautiful. Having the ability to travel anywhere in the United States and still be home.

It has me wondering if "home" is a place, or the people you love. Is home just my husband? Or is home my children too? Of course now, it is my children too, but, you know, when they are all grown does that change? Do I want to have the "come home to mama's" type home/life?

If you did something like this, what would you keep? I'd have to store my pictures I suppose, you know, the pictures I'd developed before everything was digital. I think we'd have to have a 5th wheel type RV, you know the type you'd pull with a truck. Then, we'd have a vehicle to drive around without pulling it behind the camper.

Where would you live in the off season, like in the late spring, summer and early fall? Would you rent a space on a lake somewhere in the Midwest? Would you get tired of a small place? (although, this looks big, it's much smaller than an actual house)

I don't know. I have tons of thoughts and questions about this. After thinking about this, I think I'd love it for sometimes, for certain seasons, but not all the time. I'd love to have a place for the kids to come home to, but then, that too, opens new questions and some of the same questions. Like what is "home"? Would it matter to my kids if "home" were in a different house, like a patio home, or a condo where the yardwork would be taken care of and maybe there would be a pool and workout room? (and in a warmer state, like Arizona)

After thinking quite a bit about this, I think I'd like a "house" with space. just space to be alone sometimes. (not that that happens ever here)

After spending one winter and another 5 weeks on South Padre Island, Texas, boy, that is something to dream about. I loved it so much. The people, the area, the ocean, the humidity, the salty air, the small-town feel it has. Now, wintering in this way, also opens a ton of questions. (I think I'll save that for another

post!)

I think "home" is family. My husband and children and someday grandchildren. If my parents moved away from the home they've lived in for the past 29 years, I'd be OK with that. Because seeing them is all I care about, not the house they live in. Besides, since my mom remodeled her kitchen 18 years ago, I still don't know where anything is.

The wonderful thing about our beautiful Catholic faith is that no matter where you are, the Mass is also and it is the same in every Catholic church across the country, even world. It is the first thing I look for when we travel and plan a move, the church. If they have Adoration, if they have Confession, if they have daily Mass. I have to admit one of the things I missed most when we were in Texas (for 3 months) was our church family. Seeing the same people every Sunday. In a city by the ocean, you rarely see the same people each Sunday.

I'm curious, what do you think? Given a choice, what would

you

do?

This contribution is available at <http://makemeasaint.blogspot.com/2016/08/what-is-home.html>
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A Quiet Ego



“..With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.” –Ephesians 4:2-3

What ever happened to humility? In the past century it has been replaced with the “looking out for number 1” mentality. Americans have become so self-centered, so self-absorbed that they rarely see beyond their own needs.

Walk the rows of self-help books at the local book store and you will see hundreds of self-help books. And, the overwhelming majority are so centered on self that humility and gentleness, patience and other virtues are left behind.

A study by Pelin Kesebir at the University of Wisconsin-Madison took a look at the books written between 1901 and 2000 and the results are startling. In the last century there has been a 74% decline in the use of virtuous words in all writing. Words like honesty, compassion and patience are slowly being removed from our writing.

The words humble and humility are down over 43% in that period.

“Humility, the highest virtue, mother of them all.”–Alfred Lord Tennyson

If Tennyson is correct and humility is truly the mother of all virtues, where does that leave us as a society, and what can we, as Christians, do about it.

In the past couple of decades, psychologists and social scientists have sought some middle ground. How do we balance our ego with a humble regard for others. What has emerged is the “quiet ego.” It’s perfectly normal to have a healthy sense of self. It can be one of our greatest strengths. But, it can also be our greatest enemy!

So, where does that leave humility? Can we have a healthy ego and still be humble? Can we find the balance?

They answer is yes! And, the bible tells us that there are real benefits to being humble. Here are a few:

Humility brings wisdom. Too much self-centered thinking brings an unhealthy sense of pride and that can

become your undoing. Americans love boastful athletes and celebrities only to attack them when they fall, attacking them in disgrace. Humility is the prerequisite for wisdom.

“When pride comes, disgrace comes; but with the humble is wisdom.” –Proverbs 11:2

Humility brings God’s mercy. As we become more successful, holding on to our humility will keep us closer to our Lord. We realize that everything we have is a gift, and our talents and hard work are also from God. Staying humble in success opens us to God’s grace and mercy.

Humility brings social benefits. Humble people are less prejudice, more helpful, have more self-control and form better relationships. They are better learners, make higher grades, and perform at a higher level at their jobs.

“Humble yourself the more, the greater you are and you will find mercy in the sight of God.” –Sirah 3:18

Sounds good right! So how do we quiet our egos and find that balance? Here are a few thoughts:

1. **Put God first!** There is nothing wrong with a good sense of self but always remember that all that we have and do is ultimately a gift from God.
2. **Be aware of others around us.** Sometimes we get so hung up on our own day to day problems that we fail to see or acknowledge our family, friends and co-workers who could use a helping hand or a strong shoulder to cry on or someone that will listen to their story.
3. **Prayer and meditation.** Let’s spend some time each day in prayer asking God to calm our ego and make us more aware of others in our lives. I love the [Litany of Humility](#) and pray it often.

If humility is the mother of all virtues, then, a quiet ego might just be the key to leading a better life. Maybe, one by one, we can change to narrative of the 21st century from a decline in virtues to a more virtuous, joyful and wisdom filled life in Christ.



This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2016/09/a-quiet-ego/>
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I know we've all heard stories in the Bible when God speaks to His people. Sometimes we're not sure how that was manifested: a feeling, a message spoken through someone, a voice booming down from the sky. Almost every month I come across at least one person who uses the term "God spoke to me" - a friend, an enlightened blogger... a televangelist - "God spoke to me and told me you need to sign over your yacht - that vessel is keeping your soul in the devil's grip!"

I sometimes wonder how God actually spoke to them. For myself, I've experienced many ways in which God is very clearly leading me, directing my path, and speaking to my heart in a way that just somehow perfectly answers the questions before me - it's usually a moment of true wisdom and understanding. He's also spoken to me through someone completely oblivious to my predicament, who says exactly what my soul needed to hear at that moment.

But one time, I literally heard God speak to me. I heard His voice. No, I don't need to seek out a psychiatrist.

It was ten years ago. I was changing my two year old son, Christian's, diaper. My older son was three years old, my daughter was one, I had recently miscarried my fourth, but was newly pregnant with my fifth little one.

As I peeled back Christian's diaper, I gasped. There was blood. I checked for lesions, but soon realized that the bleeding was coming from something internal. He had also developed a fever, so I was worried about a possible infection. I took him to a medical clinic and they sent us to the ER. An ultrasound revealed he had a tumor on his right kidney. They were quite certain it was what's called a Wilm's tumor. Cancer.

The tumor, and his kidney, would have to be surgically removed, but he also had a blood infection (unrelated to the cancer) which had been the source of the fever, and they couldn't operate until that was resolved. For two weeks I lived at Sick Kids with my son. My two other little ones were being cared for by various family members. It was so painful every time they would call to inform me that the toddlers were not adjusting well to my absence, and yet, I knew Christian needed me more, as he was terrified by every poke and prod, so confused by everything that was happening to him.

One day, my mother-in-law called to say that my one year old was very sick. She wasn't able to keep anything down and had been lethargic for days. She said she would need to go to the ER. My husband dropped her off to me and I sat holding her in the waiting room. I was so worried about her. Already small for her age, she looked especially fragile. When it was my turn to speak with the attendant, he began to ask me a bunch of questions about my daughter: *When did the fevers begin? How much had she been drinking? How long had she been lethargic?* Every question was painful for me, as I mustered out a feeble "I'm not sure. I haven't been with her." And then I fell to pieces. Stammering out, "My son has cancer. He's up on the eighth floor right now recovering from surgery. I haven't been there for my little girl. I'm so sorry, but I can't answer your questions." I could hardly get the words out. Tears streamed down my face.

Up until that point, I had been so strong. I hadn't even cried and I had resided in a state of calm and trust, feeling that somehow, everything was going to be okay. But suddenly, the reality, the magnitude of all I

was facing was hitting me full on. The world seemed to drop out from beneath my feet. I thought of my baby girl, my sick little boy, my other baby boy at home who was feeling completely abandoned by his mother... I felt like the biggest failure. The world was pressing down on me I was too weak to stand, and I kept thinking that if I couldn't handle this, how would I be able to care for the little one still growing in my womb. I couldn't take the weight, the oppressive, crushing weight of it all. I couldn't breathe.

And then, all at once, it was lifted. Everything was taken up off my shoulders and I felt like I was being carried, enveloped - inexplicably wrapped in peace. And that's when I heard the voice. I heard it as though it was being spoken aloud. It was clear and powerful. I felt each word resonating in my heart. I knew no one else could hear it, I knew it was from within, but it was real, almost more real than anything I had ever experienced.

He said, "See this is how it would be if I were not carrying you."

I breathed in His graces and once more, I was calm, serene and unafraid. From that point on I seemed able to meet each demand with grace. My daughter soon recovered from her illness, I was able to return home to my three year old son and after six months of chemotherapy, Christian was completely cancer free (he's a healthy twelve year old now). I gave birth to my daughter, Mary, a month after his last dose of chemo.

I know that God almost never speaks to us with a clear, audible voice - He doesn't usually work that way. I was already madly in love with Him, I had already placed my life in His hands, but much of it stemmed from the gift of faith. Everything up to that point was simply a sense of His presence, a continuous knowing that He was with me, and a state of amazement time and time again as I experienced personal miracles and direct answers to my prayers. Faith is such a precious gift given to His children, and I never needed a physical voice to confirm the reality of who He is: a loving Father who desires to work for our good - for love of us. But He left a profound mark on my heart that day.

I wanted to share this blog today, because so many people close to me are really hurting, really finding it hard to surface - drowning in life's trials. So I wanted to share His message - that if we place our lives in His hands, He will lift us up, pulling us out of the suffocating anguish.

He may let us experience a taste of it, a moment (or sadly a period of greater duration) where we are overcome by distress, but it should only serve to help us understand how very much we need Him - how lost we would be if it weren't for His great love for us, and His desire to draw us back up into His arms. This message isn't some crazy, religious platitude, He has remained constant and faithful throughout the ages - His voice ever clear, cutting through the chaos.

This contribution is available at <http://www.littledouglings.com/blog/2016/9/2/when-god-speaks-to-you-literally>
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Goodness: The Case for Christianity [at Peace Garden Passage]

I've been thinking a lot lately about the transcendentals — especially the three that are credited with drawing people to the Church: goodness, truth and beauty.

These three have a magnetic force about them that seems to transcend the din. In our world of constant chatter and dog-eat-dog discussions about why we're right and everyone else wrong, they rise above, and shine. In a way, they don't need words. They just are, and what they accomplish comes straight from the heart of God. They draw us to Him, the lover of our lives, our purpose for being.

God wants to share his love with us. It is a love that spills over, begging for a lover to which it can connect. We are the subject of God's desire; his love for us is unending, and woos us into eternal life.

I just felt it time to pull back from the loudness of the world to zero in on these simple realities that give life such meaning. So in the course of three posts, I'll do so, beginning with GOODNESS.

God is good, and so it makes sense that goodness would draw us to God. And it's not always in the ways we're expecting.

This past summer, an example came before me boldly, though in the most unobtrusive manner, when someone from our school community passed away. I attended the funeral, and was struck by one of the readers, who happens to be a very good friend of mine. This friend had spent countless hours with the deceased, out of the goodness of her heart. She was not family, but had grown very close to her. And so, she was asked to read at her funeral Mass.

As Ann walked up to the ambo to read, I was struck with her goodness. She has been such a good friend, for one, but even if I had not been privileged to be among her friends, I would still see it. Before we crossed paths long enough to form a friendship, I noticed it. It caught my attention. She exuded goodness, and I was drawn.

To me, this just cuts to the heart of our faith. It is GOOD. And it results in good. And it draws good. And it manifests good.

And when you see it, there are no words. When you see it, it fills your interior with light and joy. I see it in the person of my friend Ann. There is a humility that comes with this goodness that is truly beautiful.

Speaking of goodness, there is perhaps no other model of it most fitting than Mary, mother of God, vessel of our Savior Jesus Christ. Here, Ann and I pay tribute to this gentle and good woman at a shrine in Philadelphia, one year ago, while in the city for the World Meeting of Families.



Another source of goodness to me is my mother. I know that any goodness within me comes from having been raised by such a good person; I mean, truly and genuinely good. What a gift. It started many years ago, when she comforted me and pulled me close, and she still does this. And it is good, and I know I am blessed immeasurably through her good and loving touch.



Mom and Me, circa summer 1969

In both of these examples, I know there is a source beyond this goodness that points to a God who is VERY GOOD, so when I see this goodness emanating from these special people in my life, I cannot help but be inclined to peek behind them to find the source. We are born good, yes, but on our own, we cannot bring the goodness that is in us to completion. It is because of God, through God, that we allow this

goodness to shine, that we cultivate it, that we return to it.

When all of the ugly is happening all around, goodness enters in, and shatters the darkness. And we are the beneficiaries. Praise God.

Speaking of good, I have made it to my 48th year of life as of today! God has been very good to me, and for that, I am deeply grateful.

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31)

Q4U: What is the good in your life that draws you back to God?

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2016/09/goodness-the-case-for-christianity-part-i/>
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You Are Not Stuck [at Sunflower Sojourn]

Feelings of hopeless situations and being stuck keep us there. It's like someone in deep mud. They realize that they are stuck, and they stay in the mud as they continue to sink deeper and deeper. Because they are already stuck and sinking, they don't believe there is a way out of the mud.



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So, in certain situations where I was not moving forward, can you guess why there was no progress? It was my attitude keeping me stuck. Because I believed that the situation wouldn't change, it didn't. I kept sinking deeper into the belief that things were the way they were, and that was that.

I wasn't thinking outside of the box. I failed to remember that faith moves mountains. When I thought certain situations would stay the way they were—they did. Sadly, I failed to remember that we serve a God bigger than any situation we will ever face. **Our God can do anything, and believe me—there are some pretty creative ways that He changes situations and help us out!**

I have been reflecting a lot on Ephesians 3:20: *“Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.” His mighty power is at work within us—wow! Are our thoughts and attitudes cooperating with that mighty power?*

As God has blown me away with open doors, and situations have changed that seemed but a dream, I have begun to work harder on shedding those attitudes that keep me stuck. As my attitudes have changed, new possibilities and realities are coming into view. **Living in faith is living in freedom!**

I am ready to put on the attitude of faith and expectation, ready for the miracles that are sure to come. I am stepping out of the mud. How about you?



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Random Thoughts [at V for Victory!]



-- In my experience, there are three areas where people consistently feel exceedingly pleased with themselves, regardless of justification: (1) driving; (2) in bed; (3) performing field sobriety tests.

-- As the daughter of a combat veteran, I have always been suspicious of anyone whose tongue wags too freely about their alleged combat experiences. Persons who hold forth to casual acquaintances about "atrocities" they committed overseas are, I believe, worthy only to be dismissed out of hand as liars. Persons who speechify about the deaths of buddies as a means of drawing attention to themselves or making excuses for their own failures were probably in the rear with the gear, if indeed they were ever near the combat zone in question. Now, there is nothing wrong with being in the rear with the gear: somebody has to be, and the soldier on the front line could not function or survive without such. But if that is where you served, then say so and stick with the truth. Real combat veterans don't say much about their experiences at all, except maybe to other combat veterans; and they would be ashamed to capitalize on the deaths of their friends for selfish purposes.

-- When I was a kid, my afternoon cartoons were periodically interrupted by a PSA warning us against -- of all things -- not drowning our food in sauces and dressings. I of course am guilty as charged. I have even taken to making my own ranch dressing so that I can control the calorie content while still enjoying volume. But my biggest downfall is butter. Fortunately, butter in reasonable amounts is good for you -- unlike margarine, which is basically plastic and deposits itself like silt on the human midsection. But somebody needs to get busy and invent a negative-calorie butter so I can have the unreasonable amounts I want.

-- And speaking of cartoons, a lot of the ones I grew up on that were produced in the '30s, '40s and '50s are considered anathema today, mostly because they made fun of people's ethnicities. Now, the world

would not be a better place if we could just get back to the halcyon days of belittling ethnic minorities with impunity. Still, we did not make a better world by trading that state of affairs in for one which has everyone living in dread of transgressing the ever-shifting and often invisible rules against giving offense.

-- If you are couch-surfing, and can't hold down a job, and have a string of drug- or alcohol-related convictions on your record, then maybe -- just maybe -- you are not as smart as you think you are.

-- The liberals' claim that illegal immigrants do jobs Americans are not willing to do is false. Of course Americans are willing to do those jobs. I myself have done those sorts of jobs. What Americans are not willing to do is work for slave wages. So what the liberals -- and, by the way, big business -- are really saying is that we need a permanent underclass of fellow human beings who can be exploited on account of their willingness to be paid less than their labor is worth. In fact, the opposite is true. Defrauding a worker of his just wage is one of the four sins that cry out to heaven for vengeance.

-- And speaking of defrauding workers, there is more to the concept of a living wage than merely making employers pay people more money. A living wage requires a just society that does not confiscate excessive amounts of people's dollars or the value of those dollars. What is really necessary is a return to the Catholic principle of subsidiarity -- the running of affairs by the smallest, most local unit of competent authority capable of handling them. The absence of subsidiarity is immoral. The usurpation of local functions by big government requires massive taxation. A social structure that diverts so much wealth away from the individuals who earn it, until they can no longer advance materially, support themselves and their families, or maintain themselves in a condition worthy of their human dignity, is evil.

-- And speaking of the welfare state: it seems that a good many decent people support the concept of the welfare state out of a belief that, without the state's coercive police power, no one would ever care for the poor and needy. But in a Christian society, this is a lie. Long before we got FDR's New Deal or LBJ's Great Society, the Catholic Church was a powerhouse of charity, operating untold numbers of hospitals and orphanages and schools and soup kitchens down the centuries, and giving birth to numerous religious orders dedicated to teaching, nursing, ransoming captives, and spreading the Gospel to foreign lands to inspire more and more people to do likewise. The Christian spirit is so potent that even in a degraded and diluted state, it moves people to take pity on their fellow creatures; but a welfare state is calculated to deprive them of the means.

-- I am beginning to think that the number of people I know who do not have tattoos, besides myself, can be counted on one hand. There are many tattooed faces out there: I even saw a guy the other day who had tattoos on his eyelids. And then there are the many piercings: I feel like an aberration with only one hole in each earlobe. Apropos of this phenomenon, my late friend

[Gary Reedy](#)

once observed that 30 or 40 years from now, nursing homes are going to be some of the scariest places on earth.

-- There are too many adolescents running around in adult bodies. The latest manifestations of this seem to be (1) running around in public in pajama bottoms, and (2) the application to hair of unnatural colors like pink and purple. Even middle-aged and elderly people are doing this, especially item (2).

-- Another trait of adolescence is thinking you can make up your own reality. Sadly, many of us are failing to grow out of that.

-- What I do for a living can be summarized as follows: you provide the bubble; I provide the pin. Bubble-popping is not an occupation calculated to make a person popular. Sadly, I cannot seem to get out of doing it even on my off-time.

-- Of course, even I have my own bubbles that require popping. As much as we hate to have our bubbles burst, the world will be a far sorrier and more wretched place the day we run out of people to do it.

This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2016/09/random-thoughts.html>
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