

new
evangelists
monthly

May
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New Evangelists Monthly #53

May 2017

- [New Evangelists Monthly - May 2017](#)

New Evangelists Monthly - May 2017

- [**Forward**](#)
...about this eBook
- [**The Passover of the Jews**](#)
Catholicism and Adventism by Stephen Korsman
- [**Emmaus: Looking Back and Ahead**](#)
A Catholic Citizen in America by Brian Gill
- [**You Are Not At Home - You Are in God's House!**](#)
Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation by Michael Seagriff
- [**Reflections on Regaining a Proper Sense of Ecclesiology**](#)
If I Might Interject
- [**Things I'm Still Learning After 20 Years of Marriage**](#)
by Carolyn Astfalk
- [**Holy Wednesday: The Day Before the World Would Change Forever**](#)
by Virginia Lieto
- [**Padre Pio and the Easter Eggs**](#)
The Shield of Faith by Frank Rega
- [**A Good One**](#)
Third Place Project by Mike Landry
- [**Ballet While Pregnant - Yes You Can**](#)
Under Thy Roof by Kirby Hoberg
- [**Error-filled fumble fest**](#)
With Us Still by John Schroeder
- [**I Will Try Again**](#)
The Not by Mary Cooper
- [**Sabbath Skip Days**](#)
Shifting My Perspective by Claire McGarry
- [**Revisiting Bethany**](#)
The Cloistered Heart by Nancy Shuman
- [**White Lilacs 1895**](#)
Pauca Verba by Fr. Stephen Morris
- [**Do You Believe This?**](#)
Creo en Dios! by Susan Stabile
- [**One Sure Way to Make God Smile**](#)
A Moment From De Sales by Fr. Richard DeLillio
- [**Although Pregnant, Imprisoned and Severely Abused, She Refused to Deny her Faith**](#)
It Makes Sense to Me by Larry Peterson

- **Random Thoughts on a Friday**

Quiet Consecration by Leslie Klinger

- **Book Club "Meeting" #27: Marketing**

String of Pearls by Laura Pearl

- **Rabboni**

Grace to Paint by Sister Maresa Lilley

- **The liberating power of washing feet and sharing the Body**

walk the way by Deacon John Donaghy

- **Degenerate language; degenerating faith**

Catholic Deacon by Deacon Scott Dodge

- **Inside, She Weeps**

FranciscanMom by Barbara Szyszkiewicz

- **Grief and Gratitude on Good Friday**

by Ellen Kolb

- **A guide to Seeking Christ in Every Moment**

CatholicSoup by Vinny Carr

- **True faith is accompanied by good works**

Washed, Sanctified and Justified by De Maria

- **Dawn Of The Living Dead**

PURE HOMILETICS by Tucker Cordani

- **The Scythe of Saint Thorlak**

The Mission of Saint Thorlak

- **Blessed Because He is With Us**

CF Family by Allison Howell

- **Quick Takes**

Catholic Kids by Theresa

- **Please, talk to me about love, Mommy, Daddy.**

In the Breaking of the Bread by Fr. Gilles Surprenant

- **Was the Blessed Virgin Mary the first to see the Resurrected Lord?**

by Tom Perna

- **Not Another Sunday**

bukas palad by Fr. Adrian Danker

- **A Stone Tomb**

On the Road to Damascus by Robert Collins

- **Question on the final judgement**

Catholic365 by De Maria

- **The reverence was palpable.**

Boldly Catholic by Rick Rice

- **Compassion**

Bible Meditations by Barbara Hosbach

- [**Called to Greatness: Saints from Super-sized Families**](#)
Little Douglings by Carissa Douglas
- [**'A lil' bit of hope' can go a long way, says 'The Vow' couple**](#)
Peace Garden Passage by Roxane Salonen
- [**An Email**](#)
Do Not Be Anxious by Tom Smith
- [**The Harrowing of Hell**](#)
by David Torkington
- [**The Last Supper and the Passover -- Do John and the Synoptics Agree?**](#)
Broad and Deep by Ashley Crane
- [**The Messiness of Mary's Motherhood**](#)
Everyday Ediths by Alicia
- [**Let Love Prevail**](#)
Bartimaeus' Quiet Place by Bartimaeus Timeo
- [**The Patience of God**](#)
Walking the Path by Christian Miraglia
- [**Trying to be tough: the cultural poison of bravado**](#)
by Margaret Felice
- [**Saint Jean de Brebeuf's Second Missionary Trip to New France**](#)
The Koala Mom by Bonnie Way
- [**Inspirational Speaker**](#)
by Kim Padan
- [**Charlotte Bronte's 201st: Celebrate 7 ways**](#)
Erin McCole Cupp by Erin Cupp
- [**ADHD and the Divine Mercy Chaplet**](#)
Catholic Conundrum by Christina Nagy
- [**DIY Heirloom Play Mass Set**](#)
Equipping Catholic Families by Monica McConkey
- [**The Harrowing of Hell**](#)
V for Victory! by Anita Moore
- [**Living With Only a Thin Veil Between Heaven and Earth**](#)
joy of nine9 by Melanie Jean Juneau
- [**Never Force It Upon Me**](#)
by Thomas Cruz-Wiggins
- [**Quit Your Complaining!**](#)
by Tony Agnesi

Forward

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

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

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The Passover of the Jews [at Catholicism and Adventism]

Three times the Bible refers to Passover as *the Passover of the Jews*. John 2:13, John 6:4, John 11:55.



The Sacrificial Lamb – Josefa de Ayala, ca 1670

The Apostle John, in John 6:4, explains it to his readers:

John 6:4 (KJV) – And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

Language like that would not make sense in a community of Passover observers, especially a Passover that resembled the Jewish one. That doesn't sound at all like he, his readers, or his community kept it.

Nor do I. I am not a Jew. I am a Christian.

Christians, [as I have shown](#), properly celebrate Sunday, as a little Easter every week, and an [annual Easter](#) every year. Very early on in the Christian world, however, two different customs developed.

Custom 1 – Jesus rose from the dead on the Sunday during Passover, so most Christians celebrated Jesus' death and resurrection on the [Friday to Sunday](#) during Passover. They called it Pascha.

Custom 2 – Jesus died on 14 Nisan at the time of the Passover lambs, so some Christians celebrated Jesus' death on 14 Nisan and his resurrection on 16 Nisan, the third day. They too called it Pascha. Because it used 14 Nisan to find its date, it was called [Quartodecimanism](#).

For a while, these two customs lived in harmony, to some extent.



Saint Polycarp

Around 160 AD, [St Polycarp](#), one of the Apostle John's disciples, and one who followed Quartodecimanism, met with St Anicetus, bishop of Rome, who didn't, and discussed their different practices. They departed unable to convince each other to change, but happy to keep their respective practices and respect each other's. Nobody claimed back then that the Jewish calendar was important – they respected each other's legitimate practices. (Much like modern Catholics, who celebrate Pascha at different times – most with the Western date, but some, with the go-ahead from Rome, with the Orthodox. In fact, all of Israeli Catholics – Latin rite and Eastern rite – celebrate Pascha on the Orthodox date from 2015.) Eventually the Quartodeciman controversy unfortunately became less civil, and the minority Quartodeciman practice died out.

Nowhere do we see Christians keeping the Passover of the Jews. Both groups kept a derivative of Passover, a Christianised version, that looked back on the new creation instead of the old, the true Lamb instead of the symbolic animal, the new Exodus instead of the old, as a memorial of our salvation from sin instead of Israel's salvation from Egypt.

Why keep the Passover of the Jews when the Pascha of the Christians is so much better? The Jewish Passover prepared us for Christ, and ended with him, as did the sabbath and the rest of the Mosaic law.

Further reading:

[Is Easter Pagan?](#)

[Is Easter Christian? A reply to Samuele Bacchiocchi](#)

[Why Sunday is an improvement on the sabbath](#)

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Emmaus: Looking Back and Ahead [at A Catholic Citizen in America]



We hear about the ‘road to Emmaus’ event in today’s Gospel, [Luke 24:13–35](#).

There’s been speculation about why folks didn’t recognize Jesus at first, after Golgotha.

It wasn’t just the ‘road to Emmaus’ thing. Paul lists some of our Lord’s meetings in [1 Corinthians 15:3–8](#).

Paul’s list doesn’t mention any of the times Jesus talked with women, I’m not sure why. Maybe Paul had a mental blind spot that way, or he figured he was giving the folks in Corinth enough to think about as it was, or maybe there’s something else going on.

Mary of Magdala, we read about her meeting in [John 20:14–17](#), was a bit quicker on the uptake than some, and that’s probably another topic.

About why folks didn’t recognize Jesus, I figure there’s a reason, maybe more than one, but I’m also pretty sure I can’t be sure. Not at this point. That won’t stop me from sharing — not so much my guess, as something I think seems reasonable.

“...Dead as a Door-Nail....”

I think Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” is a good way to start.

“Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge’s name was good upon ’Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

“Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did....

“...There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate....”

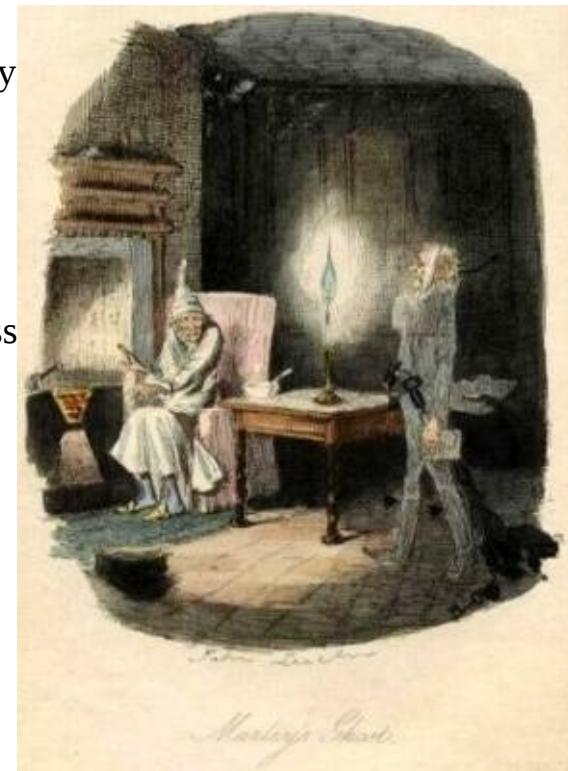
(“[A Christmas Carol](#),” Charles Dickens (1843) via Project Gutenberg)

“Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail” — that’s why Scrooge didn’t believe what he saw when Marley came calling after business hours one Christmas Eve. He even tried telling Marley’s ghost that he was a hallucination:

“...You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato....”

(“[A Christmas Carol](#),” Charles Dickens (1843) via Project Gutenberg)

You know how the rest of the novella goes: Scrooge and Marley’s ghost talk about chains and opportunity, Marley backs out of an open window, and we don’t see him again.



The point of this excerpt is that Marley was dead, and Scrooge knew it.

About today’s Gospel, there wouldn’t be anything wonderful about the Emmaus encounter if the two disciples had been talking with a ghost. They were talking with someone who was very much alive.

In principle, I suppose they could have realized that Jesus wasn’t dead any more.

They knew that two women had a wild story about an empty tomb and angels.

They knew that the story had verifiable details which, on investigation, checked out.

On the other hand, I might not have done any better in their position. Experience tells us that folks who are dead, particularly if tortured and executed as our Lord was, stay dead.

Our Lord: That’s another matter. But I’m getting ahead of the story.

“Before Abraham ...”



(From John Martin, via WikiMedia Commons, used w/o permission.)
('Now that I have your attention')

About one and a half or maybe two millennia before the Golgotha incident, someone named Abram moved out of Ur, changed his name to Abraham, and settled near the east end of the Mediterranean Sea.

The [Late Bronze Age Collapse](#) happened a few centuries later. We survived and rebuilt, but lost quite a few records. Since then we've seen empires rise and fall, the last pharaoh, and that's yet another topic. ([April 14, 2017](#); [March 12, 2017](#); [July 24, 2016](#))



A descendant of Abraham was sold as a slave. He wound up running Egypt, saving many lives during a famine. That account starts in [Genesis 41:40](#).

Fast-forward a few centuries to a refugee named Moses having a face-to-burning bush talk with God:

“But,’ said Moses to God, ‘when I go to the Israelites and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” if they ask me, “What is his name?” what am I to tell them?’

“⁶ God replied, ‘I am who am.’ Then he added, ‘This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you.’”
([Exodus 3:13–14](#))

Egypt's ruler learned — the hard way — that ignoring what God says is not prudent, and descendants of Abraham moved back to the east end of the Mediterranean.

More centuries passed, and descendants of Abraham finally got it through their heads that God, the great **I AM**, is **ONE**.

Then a [Nazarene](#) miracle-worker said, as plainly as possible, “I am God:”

“So the Jews said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham?’ ²³

[“24](#) Jesus said to them, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.’ ”
[\(John 8:57–58\)](#)

In a way, it's a bit surprising that folks didn't kill him on the spot. They **knew** what happened when they worshiped anyone or anything besides the God of Abraham, and didn't realize that Jesus really is I AM.

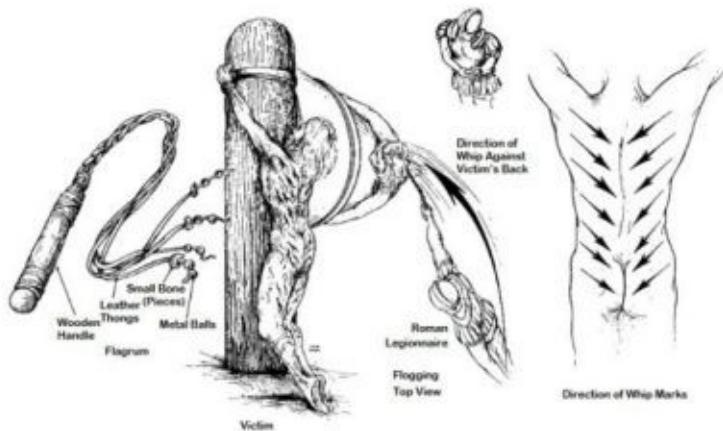
Our Lord's own disciples didn't catch on much faster:

“Philip said to him, ‘Master, show us the Father, [7](#) and that will be enough for us.’

“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?’”

[\(John 14:8–9\)](#)

Jesus Died — — —



(From “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” used w/o permission.)

Now, back to events we review before every Easter.

Our Lord was railroaded through a trial by the Sanhedrin and taken to Pilate, who sent the case and Jesus to Herod. Herod wanted to see Jesus “perform some sign.” That didn't work out, Herod mocked our Lord, and it was back to Pilate.

Pilate said that Jesus wasn't guilty of a capital offense, and tried to get our Lord released after a flogging.

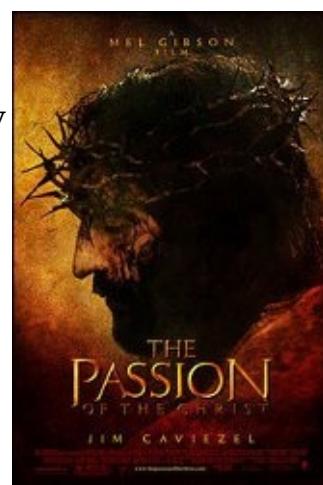
That ended with “the chief priests, the rulers, and the people” telling Pilate to release Barabas instead of Jesus. ([Matthew 26:57–66](#); [Mark 14:55–15:5](#); [Luke 22:66–23:18](#))

I sympathize, a little, with movie critics who said “[The Passion of the Christ](#)” (2004) was ‘too violent,’ and that all the blood obscured the film’s message.

Americans have gotten used to nice, clean, ‘decently’ sanitized versions of our Lord's crucifixion. The typical Hollywood version is arguably less unpleasant than reality: but it's not real.

Jesus was dead.¹ Roman soldiers had been running the execution, and knew the difference between a

dead body and someone who had fainted, or was pretending to be dead.



Folks have been bothered by the idea that Jesus could be the Son of God **and** really die for a very long time. ([John 1:1–5](#); Catechism of the Catholic Church, [430–451](#), [456–478](#), [595–618](#), [638–655](#))

For anyone else, death and burial would have been the end.

Our Lord's disciples might have tried returning to normal lives, hoping that the authorities would let them.

— — — and Stopped Being Dead

But Jesus isn't anyone else.

Two millennia later, we celebrate Good Friday and Easter — because Jesus didn't stay dead. If that seems unbelievable, it should.

It took a series of meetings and working lunches to convince the surviving 11 that our Lord was really, no kidding, break-bread, eat-a-fish, put-your-hand-in-my-side, **ALIVE**.

“And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.”



“With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.”
([Luke 24:30–31](#))

“While they were still incredulous for joy and were amazed, he asked them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’

“They gave him a piece of baked fish;

“he took it and ate it in front of them.”
([Luke 24:41–43](#))

“Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’

“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.’ ”
([John 20:26–27](#))

After they'd been convinced that Jesus had stopped being dead, small wonder that all but John chose a painful death, rather than deny that our Lord lives.

They'd gotten a glimpse of the big picture, the reality that our Lord has opened a way into God's

presence.

“Who will condemn? It is Christ (Jesus) who died, rather, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

“What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?...

“...For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things,
[9](#) nor future things, nor powers,

“nor height, nor depth, [10](#) nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

([Romans 8:34–35](#), [38–39](#))

John might have made the same decision, but didn’t have the opportunity. Instead, he lived to a ripe old age, in exile on Patmos, and that’s yet again another topic.

The Last Hour — Two Millennia and Counting

Before leaving, our Lord gave standing orders:

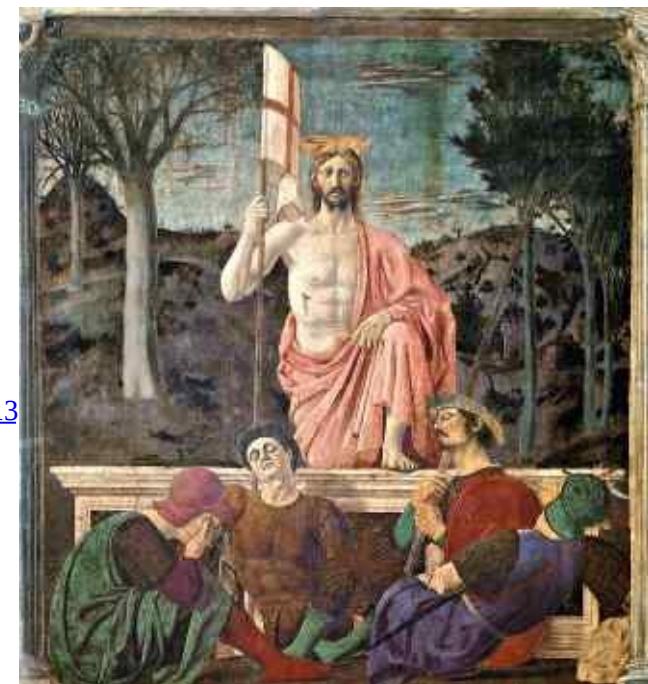
“[11](#) Then Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

“Go, therefore, [12](#) 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. [13](#) And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

([Matthew 28:19–20](#))

Two millennia later, those orders haven’t changed.



“Making disciples” isn’t the sort of ‘convert or die’ thing Charlemagne did at Verden, by the way. We’re still cleaning up the mess from that atrocity. ([November 6, 2016](#))

I’m expected to act as if ‘Love God, love my neighbor, everybody’s my neighbor’ is true — and matters. ([Matthew 5:43–44](#), [22:36–40](#), [Mark 12:28–31](#), [Luke 10:25–30](#); Catechism, [1825](#))

Loving my neighbor means working for justice and bearing “witness to the truth.” ([John 18:37](#); Catechism, [2471–2474](#))

Transcendent Dignity and the Long View

Respect for the “transcendent dignity” of humanity demands that I work for justice — “as far as possible.” (Catechism, [1915](#), [1929–1933](#), [2820](#))



That involves an inner conversion within each of us: starting with me. (Catechism, [976–980](#), [1888](#))

I can’t reasonably expect to end hunger, establish a lasting peace, or abolish some great social injustice.

But I **can** keep passing along the best news we’ve ever had. God loves us, and wants to adopt us. **All** of us. ([John 1:12–14](#), [3:17](#); [Romans 8:14–17](#); [Peter 1:3–4](#); Catechism, [1](#), [27–30](#), [52](#))

Part of our job is working with all people of good will, building a better world for future generations. (Catechism, [1917](#), [1928–1942](#), [1825](#), [1996](#), [2415](#); “[Laudato si’](#); “[Gaudium et spes](#)“)

We’ve made a little progress. ([October 30, 2016](#); [September 25, 2016](#))

We have a great deal left do do. Humanity has a huge backlog of social issues.

My guess is that we’ll still be working when the [8.2 kiloyear event](#), [Y2K](#), and [Y10K](#) seem roughly contemporary.

But — I’ve said this before,² and almost certainly will again — **the war is over. We won.** We’re already in “the last hour,” and have been for two thousand years. This world’s renewal is in progress, and nothing can stop it. ([Matthew 16:18](#); [Mark 16:6](#); Catechism, [638](#), [670](#))

More; mostly about Jesus, and acting like God matters:

¹ This analysis of our Lord’s torture and execution isn’t an easy read, but worth the effort. My opinion:

² Humanity, love, and the long view, my take:

You Are Not At Home - You Are in God's House! [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

Another Wednesday and another opportunity to thank Allison Gingras and Elizabeth Riordan for their weekly invitation to re-post our favorite posts on Worth Revisiting.

I wanted to share this post:

Monday Musings - You Are Not At Home - You Are In God's House!

(Originally published November 28, 2017)

When we enter any Catholic Church, we are entitled to a sacred, silent space. Our loving Lord who resides there deserves nothing less than our adoration and worship. We should, as Blessed John Henry Newman, comport ourselves as the angels do in heaven:

"When, then, a man enters Church, as many do, carelessly and familiarly, thinking of himself, not of God, sits down coldly and at his ease, either does not say a prayer at all, or merely hides his face for form's sake, sitting all the while, not standing or kneeling; then looks about to see who is in the Church, and who is not, and makes himself easy and comfortable in his seat, and uses the kneeler for no other purpose than to put his feet upon; in short, comes to Church as a place, not of meeting God and His holy Angels, but of seeing what is to be seen with the bodily eyes, and hearing what is to be heard with the bodily ears, and then goes and gives his judgment about the sermon freely, and says, 'I do not like this or that,' or 'This is a good argument, but that is a bad one,' or 'I do not like this person so much as that', and so on; I mean when a man acts in all respects as if he was at home, and not in God's House, - all I can say is, that he ventures to do in God's presence what neither Cherubim nor Seraphim venture to do, for they veil their faces, and, as if not daring to address God, praise Him to each other, in few words, and those continually repeated, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

From *Parochial and Plain Sermons, Vol. VIII* by Blessed John Henry Newman)

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2017/04/worth-revisiting-you-are-not-at-home.html>
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Reflections on Regaining a Proper Sense of Ecclesiology [at If I Might Interject]

In opposition to the teaching of the Church, I see multiple factions. While these factions oppose each other on what is right, they are united in one way—the belief that the Church has taught error in maintaining a doctrine or changing a discipline while they are in the right. Some think the Church has erred on her teaching on contraception or homosexual acts. Others think she has erred on making changes to the Mass. But these groups don't consider the possibility that they have gone wrong. They think everybody else has erred, even going so far as to imply that the Pope is a heretic. To such factions, the Church will remain in the wrong until she changes to suit their preferences.

This has never been the way of the saints. Yes, some saints were reformers and, yes, the Church has needed reform. But these saints all respected the binding authority of the Church to teach and to command obedience. That's something we lost. For a time it was easy to attribute this disobedience to one faction—the rebellion against the authority of the Church involved matters of sexual morality. Blessed Paul VI, St. John Paul II, and Benedict XVI were attacked as if their affirmation of Church teaching was the invention of petty rules which went against God's love.

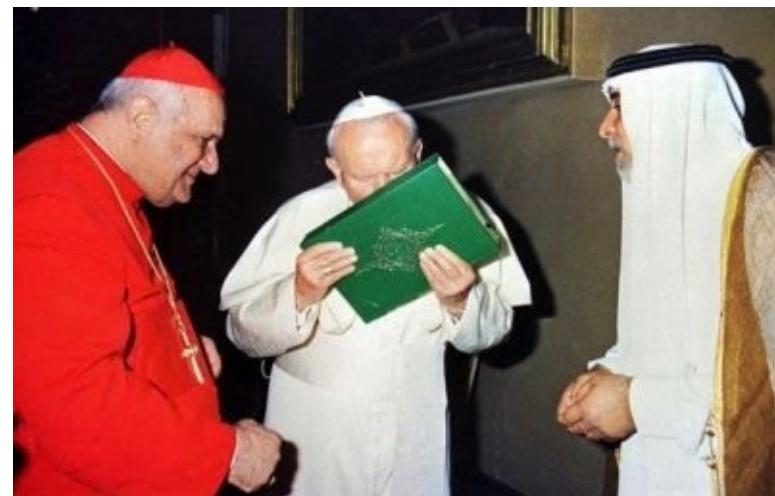
But it wasn't the only rebellion. While it wasn't as widely noted, other Catholics opposed Catholic social teaching. They called this a political platform disguised as a Church teaching, or merely an opinion of the Pope. Still others alleged that the Church outright erred in changing disciplines, confusing them with doctrines. Whether political left or right; whether traditionalist or modernist these groups broke with the faith—knowingly or not—that God protects His Church. By breaking with this belief, some Catholics turned things on their heads. Instead of the Church being both mother and teacher, she was now seen as needing guidance. The general assumption was, "If the Church wasn't in error, she wouldn't be doing these things."

To set things aright, we need to go back to the idea that God protects His Church under the headship of the *present* Pope and the bishops in communion with him. That doesn't mean we can't have bad popes or heretical bishops [†]. It means that God prevents the Church from teaching error when we are bound to obey...and we are indeed bound to obey when the magisterium teaches.

Scripturally, we follow a chain of reasoning. We can begin with John 14:15 and Matthew 7:21-23. If we profess to love God, we must keep His commandments. From there, Matthew 16:18 shows us that Our Lord intends to establish a Church with Peter as the rock He builds on. Matthew 16:19, 18:18, and John 20:22-23 show that Our Lord gave this Church His authority to bind and loose. Matthew 28:19 shows that the Church mission is to baptize and to teach them His ways. Matthew 28:20 shows that He will be with His Church always. This mission and authority will not end before the end of the age (i.e., the end of the world). Once we recognize this, Luke 10:16 and Matthew 18:17 show us that obeying His Church is mandatory and disobedience is fatal. To reject the Church teaching is to reject Christ.

Theology justifying dissent comes from the fact that human beings are sinners, and the Pope and bishops are human beings. Therefore the Pope and bishops are sinners. This is true, and we've had some sad examples of that through history. But the personal behavior of men who are Popes and bishops do not change the protection God gives His Church. So morally bad Popes like Benedict IX or John XII,

theologically bad Popes as some claim for Liberius and Honorius I, and confused Popes like John XXII, do not disprove this protection because these Popes did not teach error as truth binding on the faithful. Yes, some did wrong and some believed wrong. But God prevented them from *teaching* wrong.



That doesn't mean the Pope is *inerrant* in his personal behavior. There are times when Popes do regrettable things. St. John Paul II kissed a Quran, which led some to accuse him of religious indifferentism. Benedict XVI invoked the image of a "gay prostitute with AIDS" that led people to think he was giving permission to use condoms. Then there was the embarrassing case of Assisi in 1986, where Buddhists set up an image on a tabernacle. These things did cause scandal—but what the Popes intended and what the critics/exploiters assumed were vastly different.

Nor does it mean we're bound to obey a bishop who teaches contrary to the Church in communion with the Pope. Sadly, some bishops have taught error. But they had no authority to do so. In those cases, it was by turning to the Bishop of Rome and following his teaching that people stayed out of error. Church historians are divided over whether Popes Liberius and Honorius I *held* heresy privately. But these historians are unanimous in stating the Popes in question did not teach error publicly.

This is why it is false to claim that the past bad behavior or mistakes of Popes "proves" Popes can publicly teach heresy. St. Peter withdrew from eating with gentile Christians, and St. Paul rebuked him for it, but there was no teaching of error involved.

With this understanding, we see that Catholics who claim that the Church has been in error ever since X are actually undermining the authority of the parts of the Church they want to defend. If the Pope can teach error on *Laudato Si*, why not on *Humanae Vitae*—or vice versa? How can one appeal to Familiaris Consortio while rejecting *Amoris Lætitia* (again, or vice versa) when both teach with the same level of authority? If Blessed Paul VI erred in establishing the Missal of 1970, then how do we know St. Pius V didn't err when he established the Missal of 1570?

In all of these cases, the Popes exercised their authority as the Vicar of Christ, binding or loosing as needed to help people follow the teachings Our Lord handed on to His Apostles and their successors. When they bound something, we were required to give assent. When they loosed something, we could not call them faithless to Our Lord.

Our Lord's words in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 require us to recognize His protection. If He did not protect the Church, then we would be in the situation where God would bind us to obey the Church in being disobedient to Him—which is absurd. But there is the choice. Either we accept that God will bind

error and loose truth in Heaven if the Church does so, or we accept that God will guide those shepherds in the Church from teaching error. In the latter case, we trust the Church *because* we have faith in God.

I think we who profess to be faithful Catholics will have to show it by our lifestyle. If we want Catholics to be obedient to the Church on matters they find difficult, like sexual morality and social justice, then we have to be faithful in lesser matters. As Our Lord said:

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? ¹² If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? (Luke 16:10–12).

Once we remember that Our Lord established the Church and gave her the authority to teach in His name, then obedience is a necessity for our own salvation and is also a witness to others. If we pick and choose when to obey and when to disobey, the witness we give is that one can pick and choose what to practice and what to reject. But when people follow that example, and are told to depart from Him (Matthew 7:23), we will have to face the judgment of the One who said in Luke 17:1-2, “*Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the person through whom they occur. It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.*”

But we can't contrast loving God with obeying the Church. Because Our Lord made clear that obeying Him means keeping His commandments, and keeping His commandments means hearing the Church.

This is the base of ecclesiology we need to remember.

This contribution is available at <http://www.ifimightinterject.com/2017/04/reflections-on-regaining-proper-sense.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Things I'm Still Learning After 20 Years of Marriage

My husband and I will be married twenty years this week. Twenty years. Not sure how it's even possible that so many sunsets have slipped by me.

As a twenty-five-year-old bride, I thought I came into marriage well-prepared. Relatively speaking, I did. My parents provided a good example of a long and faithful marriage. (Remote preparation.) I understood, more or less, what marriage entailed, at least as well as any never-been-married person can. We attended the Church-required marriage preparation and consulted with a priest. (Proximate preparation.) We discussed the important stuff: faith, babies, finances, and lifestyle.

And yet, surprise of surprises, the rose tint faded from our glasses somewhere along the way. Despite good health, steady employment, the blessings of children, and constant faith, married life has not been all sunshine and roses. Sometimes it's been dreary and rife with noxious weeds.

I haven't kept a meticulous accounting of our life together, but I think the good years have exceeded the bad ones. We've continued to love, even when it hasn't been easy. Even when we didn't feel like it. Even when love wasn't deserved. Because that's what we vowed to do.

This contribution is available at <http://www.carolynastfalk.com/2017/04/18/top-10-tuesday-things-im-still-learning-20-years-marriage/>
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Many people approach Holy Week in great anticipation of liturgical rites scheduled for Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Many even enjoy taking part in the blessing of their Easter food on Holy Saturday. For me, I find Holy Wednesday to be quite intriguing every year; for Holy Wednesday is representative of the day before the world would change forever! By that I mean that on Holy Thursday, the Lord would institute the sacrament of the Eucharist, where He would, for the first time, change bread and wine into His own Precious Body and Blood.

Jesus knew exactly what would happen over the Sacred Triduum (Holy Thursday-Friday-Saturday). Therefore, everything was in place, with a plan ready to execute. I often wonder what was going through Jesus' mind on Holy Wednesday. I'm sure that He made the most of the day, surrounded by His mother, friends and followers – loving others and being loved in return.

Approaching Holy Wednesday

Holy Wednesday is the “calm before the storm.” I always take solace in the calm of this day. I make a special effort to go to Adoration on Holy Wednesday; to spend an hour with my God, in the peaceful surroundings of my local parish Church. I enjoy visiting with the Lord, where His Blessed Sacrament is exposed in the Monstrance. Choosing to go on this day makes Holy Wednesday special. I am fortunate that my parish routinely exposes the Blessed Sacrament every Wednesday afternoon and evening. Yet, on this Wednesday, my visit is different; more meaningful, more purposeful. Meditating on the mystery of the Eucharist, I offer special prayers for those who offend God; in reparation for their sins, and for my own.

We all need to set aside some quiet prayer time to be alone with God; to enhance our relationships with Him; to grow closer to Him. I hope that you, too, will take advantage of this opportunity today. Join me, by spending some quiet time with God, during this calm before the storm. What better time to do so, then in remembrance of the day before the world would change forever!

This contribution is available at <http://virginialieto.com/holy-wednesday-day-before-world-change-forever/>
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| [Contents](#) |

Padre Pio and the Easter Eggs [at The Shield of Faith]

This story appeared in one of the early issues of the magazine "The Voice of Padre Pio," published by St. Pio's Friary in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy. I began looking through my older copies of this magazine after learning that someone had inadvertently thrown away the entire set of them starting from the first issue, that belonged to my friend and Padre Pio author Jeanette Salerno. I found this gem of an article that related a few charming and mysterious little "miracles" involving Padre Pio, two of which appear below. They are presented here with the permission of the current editor of the

["Voice" magazine](#)

"Personal Experiences - Padre Pio and Our Easter Eggs;" by Miss Margherita Hamilton as told to Fr. John Schug, Capuchin.

Nothing very spectacular ever happened to me, but what happened was surely very strange. The second time I visited San Giovanni Rotondo was many years ago, right before Easter. At the time there was only one hotel, and no rooms were available there, so we had to stay in a boarding house.

It was a terrible, terrible place. Everything was dirty. We didn't even dare open our luggage. We didn't sleep in the bed. We put a big blanket on top of the bed and slept on it. We never unpacked our things.

Clarice said: "I want to take something out."

But I told her: "Don't you dare take anything out in this filth and grease, because bugs will be running around in five minutes." So she didn't open anything.

The next morning was Easter Sunday. We have a custom that the first thing we eat on Easter Day is blessed hard boiled eggs. I had been doing that all my life. But on this Easter Day, I grumbled and kept saying: "This will be the first time in my life I won't be able to eat blessed eggs on Easter Day, because we had to stop in this filthy place, and we won't even have the Easter eggs tomorrow morning."

We got up at 4:00 to go to Mass at 5:00. Mass was beautiful. When we left the church, we were very happy. I had on a big coat, because it was still cold. Suddenly, as we walked, I felt something in my pocket. I said: "What's this? There was nothing in my pocket when I went to church."

I reached into my pocket and found two boiled eggs. I said to Clarice: "You put them there."

She said: "I didn't bring any eggs, so there's no way I could have put them in your pocket."

The same afternoon we found two good rooms elsewhere, and we moved our suitcases and boxes. I opened my valise and found two little packages which my maid Pasqualina had prepared. One package had six sandwiches, and the other had four eggs. But the strange thing was that the parcel was all tied up with a ribbon, and there had been six eggs in it. But only four eggs were left. The other two were

eggs which Padre Pio had blessed and put in my pocket. Nobody could have taken two eggs out of a tied box without opening the parcel.



Giovanna, my very dear friend, was staying with me in my house. She slept in a big bed near the wall. There was a little table nearby. Across the room there was another table, a bit larger. Giovanna had been ill, so she was in bed most of the time.

Just outside the bedroom, on the terrace, there was a magnificent rose, really a splendid rose. We went out onto the terrace to look at it. The first moment she returned to the house, she said: "Give me that rose."

I told her: "No, this is the first rose of the arbor, so you can't have this one. This rose goes to the Madonna, to Mary."

The next day another rose was open. I cut it and said: "Giovanna, here is your rose. You can have this one, because it is the second rose."

Giovanna said: "All right." I answered: "It can't have a better destination."

On the table near the wall there was a color picture of Padre Pio. I put the rose in a small vase and set the vase on the table.

In the afternoon, another friend of ours came. Giovanna still wasn't well. So we sat on one side of her bed. The rose was near the portrait of Padre Pio. Our friend remarked: "Oh, how pale Padre Pio is. I hope he isn't ill."

"No," I answered. "It isn't that he is pale. He only looks that way because the color of the rose is so strong."

I walked around the bed and took the rose away. "Look," I said, "Padre Pio is quite normal." We all agreed that it was true - that it was the rose that made the color of the picture so weak. I put the rose back in its place.

Suddenly my friend cried out: "B...b...b... but..."

"What's the matter?" I asked. "What are you saying?"

She could only stammer: "The...the...the...the...the rose!"

The rose was not there!

"But I put it there on the table," I said, quite matter-of-factly.

"Yes," she said, "I know you did."

Giovanna, too, said: "Yes, you put it there. Perhaps it has fallen."

We looked all over for it. We even got Giovanna out of bed to see if it had fallen on the bed. But it had disappeared completely. It was no longer there. Then Giovanna said: "It seems that Padre Pio has accepted it."

Almost twenty days later, we went to San Giovanni Rotondo, and Giovanna went straight to Padre

Pio. Whenever she visited him, they always met in the small office of the 'convento.' He was waiting there for her when she arrived. He had a red rose in his hand. He had the rose, *the* rose, in his hand.

He said: "Thank you very much for the rose. I appreciate it very much."

She answered: "Father, give it back to me."

He said: "Yes, I'll give it back to you."

Now Giovanna preserves this rose in her home.

From The Voice of Padre Pio, Vol. V, no. 4, 1975, pp. 10-12.

Please click

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| [Contents](#) |

A Good One [at Third Place Project]



I've been married to my beautiful wife, Jennifer, for nearly twelve years now. Looking back, there are a number of moments in our relationship that terrified me: working up the courage to talk to her, actually asking her on a date, holding her hand for the first time, proposing marriage... and the day I had to explain to her how I spent WAY too much money on playoff tickets in 2006. But these were nothing compared to the fear I felt when, for the first time, I met her dad.

I think every young man has some trepidation about meeting their girlfriends' father. Many of these relish the chance to make the young men interested in their daughters quake in their boots – I have a teacher friend with a sword collection mounted in his living room for precisely this purpose. I was more than a little afraid to meet Bob Hagel for the first time. My future brother-in-law, Doug, was aware of my trepidation, and he made sure that Bob was aware and prepared for this first meeting.

In June of 2004, Jen's brother was ordained a priest for the diocese of Calgary. Since we'd been dating a few months, this seemed to be the easiest time for her to bring me back to meet her family. Following the ordination, we made our way back to the farm where she grew up. While there, Bob offered me a tour of the farm, which culminated in the barn. There, he demonstrated (on my arms) how calf pullers work – wrapping the chains around my arms and locking them in place. With me trapped, he pulled a .22 off a shelf in the barn, and with what I remember to be a rather serious look on his face, spoke five words which seemed to confirm all my fears:

“So, let’s talk about Jennifer.”

I began to wonder how long it had been since my last confession... mercifully, the serious look didn't last more than a few seconds before Bob began to laugh, and I realized I'd been had. I don't imagine that most relationships that begin with one party pulling a firearm on the other part tend to blossom into something good or healthy, but I can say without a doubt that I am a better man for the thirteen years I've known Bob.

While for me, living in third place is still a project, for Bob, it was a *masterpiece*. His Christian faith and his care for others are among the most genuine I've ever encountered.

Bob and his wife, Martha, raised three children who inherited a deep love for their faith, and who've dedicated their adult lives in some way to sharing that faith. Sure, Jen's brother is a priest, but she and

her sister also both married youth ministers. This comes from the way in which Jen's family made the Rosary and Sunday Mass non-negotiable pillars in the daily/weekly life of their family. In retirement, this commitment increased. It wouldn't be odd for Bob to serve in different ministries at each of the Sunday liturgies for his parish in Medicine Hat (music ministry, Eucharistic minister, adult server, usher, and even sound technician!) Nights where he couldn't sleep weren't filled with snacks or surfing the internet – Bob would give this time to prayer.

Bob's care for others seemed to come naturally and knew no limit. From helping a scared young man ask his blessing on his intended marriage proposal (I actually almost blacked out while I did it), to filling my gas tank every time we would visit, to helping a blind relative get out and about on a regular basis – Bob embraced the opportunities to serve whomever, every time the circumstances arose. A few years ago, some friends of ours needed a place to stay in southern Alberta for some specific medical treatment, so (of course) he and Martha opened up their home to this little family – and he played with their son with the same care and attention as he did his own grandchildren. And boy, did Bob care for his grandchildren. When each one was born, he'd give up his wife for weeks as she'd travel up north to be with us to cook and clean and cuddle the baby. When he'd get the chance to come up and meet them, it always amazed me how delicately he'd hold each one, and how he'd relate to each of them a little differently. Whether it was playing mini-stick hockey or Mario Kart, turning on the treadmill at a low speed to they could ride it, fall off, and get back on again, or singing/dancing with a one-year-old, he made a point of getting into their respective worlds... and sharing his own with them. From football to crokinole to John Deere tractors, some of his loves certainly rubbed off on my kids.

You'll notice that I've bounced back and forth between present and past tense while writing this post. The sad fact is that my wife's beloved father, my father-in-law, (and "Grandpa" to my kids) passed away this past Sunday. While there are many more stories to be told and tears to be shed by people who knew him far better than I did, I am most grateful for his life which has left a permanent imprint on mine. I am most grateful that we got well beyond my fears about our first meeting, as I'll certainly treasure the memories we made in the years that follow.

Rest in peace, Bob, and thank you for sharing with so many of us such a truly beautiful life.

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| [Contents](#) |

Ballet While Pregnant - Yes You Can [at Under Thy Roof]



One of the big contradictions in pregnancy advice surrounds exercising while pregnant. Generally everyone accepts that exercise of some sort during pregnancy is to be encouraged. Where the disagreement happens is when we try to decide what we mean by "exercise". EVERYTHING is, apparently, potentially dangerous.

Yoga - might stretch something wrong

Running - might fall

Pilates - might use your core muscles

Biking - might bounce too much

The list could go on and on. Some of these fears are valid and some are due to outdated understandings of pregnancy. But what, especially first time, pregnant moms hear is "this is something that could potentially hurt my baby" so they don't do it.

Y'all most pregnancies are not that fragile.

Birth is a marathon of an event. I can guarantee you it will be much much harder than necessary if you have not allowed yourself to maintain strength and flexibility.



Some have been surprised that I have still been taking my regular Ballet classes - even well into my

second trimester. Most are a little shocked when they hear that I fully intend to keep dancing through my third trimester too. When I push a little about why they find this surprising they mention that they assumed it would be too hard to do Ballet while pregnant, especially showing. Some insist it is dangerous.

I suppose it is dangerous, but so is crossing the very busy streets around here. I have yet to hear anyone suggest I avoid doing that.

Last night I had my last in-studio class. Not because of the pregnancy but because we're moving. I fully intend to keep training on my own. I can give myself a barre and center fairly well at home.

I don't do pointe work on my own (nor do I encourage anyone to do so, pregnant or not), but I can certainly keep up the training exercises that will allow me to get back to pointe work when I pick a studio.

I believe pregnancy is actually an excellent time to be dancing Ballet. Pregnancy forces me to pay much more attention to how I'm holding my center and turn out. I cannot cheat strength when my center changes so much from week to week. Being forced to be honest about my current abilities can only lead to better work.

Yes, exercise can be dangerous during pregnancy, but I believe most women have the common sense and wherewithal to listen to their bodies and be honest about their limits.

If you did not have a regular exercise routine pre-pregnancy, don't be afraid to start movement now! You will need to start slow and steady, preferably with a teacher, but there are certainly more choices available to you than just walking the entirety of your pregnancy.

How did you keep moving during pregnancy? What is holding you back from starting movement?

This contribution is available at <http://underthyrooF.blogspot.com/2017/04/ballet-while-pregnant-yes-you-can.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Error-filled fumble fest [at With Us Still]

Sometimes, grace peeks through under the oddest circumstances.

Take Tuesday night's Cardinals game, fer instance. The home-boys have had a rough start to their season, and that game against the Toronto Blue Jays was no exception: Indifferent offense and sloppy glovework turned it into an error-filled fumble fest—and yet another home loss, in 11 innings no less.

Grandson Francis, taking in his very first Major League Baseball game, was unimpressed.



'Hey, Gramps, these guys STINK!'

But as other, unrelated events have unfolded this week, I have come to see the game—and Francis' presence there—in a slightly different light. At seven months old, Francis can afford to take the long view. One day's errors...one game's mishaps...don't make the team, or the season, or the franchise, irredeemable. [*Heck, even the Cubs win a World Series every century or so...*]

Still, disappointment has been weighing heavily on my spirit all week long. We learned on Monday that there'd been a violent incident at Menard...just a few days ahead of [our scheduled retreat Weekend there](#). As a result, the whole prison has gone on lockdown—no visitors allowed. For a while, there was hope the lockdown would be lifted in time for us to go in next week, at least, on our make-up date. But word came yesterday that "Kairos Weekend #13" is officially cancelled.



20 bins of cookies...

Poof: Three months of formation for our 36 team members, up in smoke. Countless hours lovingly

spent on posters and placemats and hand-written letters, now seemingly wasted. And cookies: The 17,000+ homemade cookies collected for our inmate participants, now re-directed to area food pantries and soup kitchens instead.

It's hard...not to take it hard.

It's hard to see the *grace* in these unfortunate circumstances. Hard to think about the men—and the Christ-joy we had in store for them, now put on hold for who-knows-how-many months. Hard to imagine how *all* the inmates and officers and staff now must suffer at that place, because of the violent actions of a few.

But *grace comes*, I noticed at Mass this morning, when we choose to take the long view.

We [heard two stories along those lines today](#). The first, from the Acts of the Apostles, recounts how the early disciples were persecuted for preaching in Jesus' name. Hauled before the Sanhedrin, they were jailed and flogged. [*That fact alone tends to put a much different perspective on my 'Kairos' disappointment.*] Then Gamaliel, a respected elder, says something interesting:

If it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy [it]...

Reason enough, it seems to me, to start planning our *next* Kairos Weekend at Menard.



Then in the Gospel, St. John recounts how Jesus fed a crowd of more than 5,000 with five barley loaves and two fish. Like a bunch of crestfallen Kairos team members, the apostles don't hold out much hope ahead of the miracle. In fact, the prospect of failure seems to depress them: '*Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?*'

But taking the long view, we can see how the story ends: There's more than enough to go around. Not only that, but Jesus puts the *scraps* to work.

'Gather the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted.'

Yes, even the scraps...and the failures...and the cancellations...can be the stuff of miracles in the Master's hands.

So especially in our disappointments, we pray: *Lord, give us eyes to see!*



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

IHS

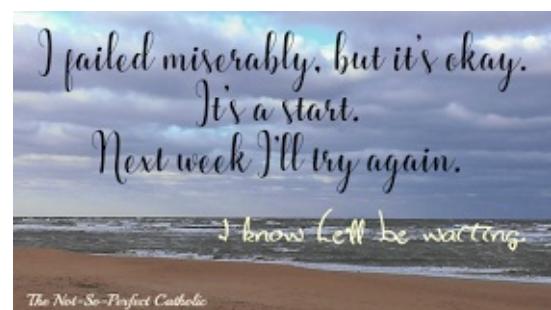


All in all, a beautiful day at the ballpark!

This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2017/04/28/todays-find-error-filled-fumble-fest/>
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| [Contents](#) |

I Will Try Again [at The Not]



When I walked into the Adoration Chapel the Thursday following Easter Sunday, I was struck by how differently things looked after being covered up with purple cloth. The white on the Virgin Mother statue seemed whiter, with the blue rosary draped around her seeming to be bluer. Jesus on the cross appeared to be more life-like. This is the same crucifix that I looked at in my parish while growing up, so it's very familiar. Even so, his face looked as if he could come to life at any minute. The harder I stared, the more life-like it became. I thought of the disciples locked away, scared of what was going to happen to them. I can imagine his head straightening and I have to admit that I am just a tad bit frightened until I hear the words "*Do not be afraid. I am with you.*" It is then that I can actually feel his presence.

The blood on his knees and feet seem more pronounced. I can almost see the blood dripping from his feet. In fact, I would swear that I see it dripping.

And then I get sidetracked. I make the mistake of looking at my phone for the time and see a message. That leads to another thing, and I've lost this state of mind I was in.

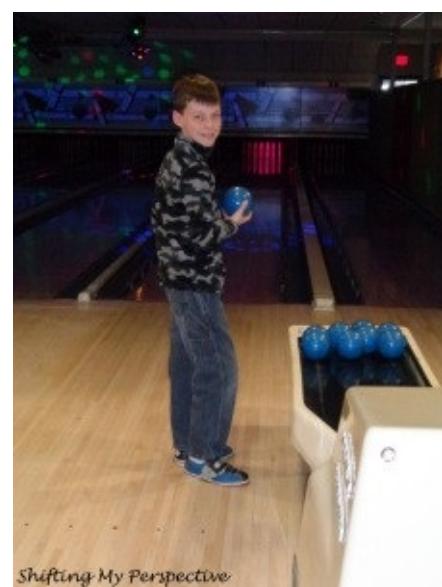
I didn't take any reading materials with me this time. My plan was to just sit, be still, and listen. I failed miserably, but it's okay. I had a few minutes of that deep state of mind with Jesus. It's a start. Next week I'll try again. I'll turn my phone off (or leave it in the car) and not worry about the time. I'll gaze at Jesus' precious wounds and imagine what it must have been like to be with him on his journey to the cross. I'll know that he forgives me for my short attention span. I know that he will still be here, waiting for me.

This contribution is available at <http://thenotsoperfectcatholic.blogspot.com/2017/04/i-will-try-again.html>
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HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Sat, 13 May 2017 20:44:15 GMT Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 Transfer-Encoding: chunked Connection: keep-alive Strict-Transport-Security: max-age=86400 Vary: Accept-Encoding Last-Modified: Sat, 13 May 2017 20:43:15 GMT Cache-Control: max-age=240, must-revalidate X-nananana: Batcache 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.atl _dfw

Sabbath Skip Days [at Shifting My Perspective]

Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. Genesis 1:11



Shifting My Perspective

I've often said I don't suffer much from mother's guilt. On the one hand, that's good: I don't needlessly beat myself up for things that roll off my kids' backs. On the other hand, some mother's guilt is healthy; it creates very important checks and balances.

An appropriate amount of guilt makes us routinely question whether our approach with our kids is working. If it's not, hopefully that guilt motivates us to make the necessary changes. That's how we'll successfully raise well rounded kids.

Ironically enough, I've been suffering from some mother's guilt lately.

I know my kids are only little for a short while. As a chronic overachiever, I am trying to teach them something during every moment of every day, while they're still young enough to listen to me.

God only created vegetation with its seed already in it. That way, each plant would live on. Likewise, I'm trying to take the same approach and capitalize on every single solitary thing that happens in our household, good or bad, to plant lesson-seeds in my kids, hoping those lessons will take root and live on.

But I'm exhausted. The constant watching, and critiquing, and teaching, is wearing me thin. I think my kids feel the same way. They seem bruised and battered from me constantly digging into their little

psyches, cramming those lesson-seeds down their throats, and ripping out weeds they didn't even know were inside of them.

Genesis talks about how God created for six days, and then rested on the seventh. That rest is called Sabbath. I think it's not only time to reclaim my Sabbath, but I need to help my kids reclaim theirs as well. We're all desperate for a rest.

Additionally, after each day of creation, God looked back over what He did and called it "good." Like Him, I want to create the time and space with each of my kids where we can look back on how "good" they are. I want to highlight and celebrate their outward accomplishments, and their inner growth.

Years ago, my friend Kellie told me about her "skip days" with her kids. Randomly, throughout the school year, she holds one of her kids back from boarding the school bus in the morning. She whispers, "Today's your day!" Together, just the two of them, they spend the entire day doing anything the child wants.

From the moment she told me this, I've been putting it in my calendar to do the same. But every time the scheduled days rolled around, there was always something else that took priority. As I never told my kids about them, and therefore wasn't disappointing them, I kept postponing and postponing them. It has literally been years; and I have yet to do it once. Now that Jocelyn is in full-day school, there really are no more excuses. It's time for my own version of skip days.

Yesterday, Mason and I had our first "Sabbath Skip Day." Working for my husband in the morning meant it couldn't be a full day, but I think our quality half-day was just as good. I dismissed Mason from school at noon. He didn't have a clue why.

It was so much fun surprising him, and watching him absorb the skip day concept. As we sat in a restaurant booth eating lunch, he never once stopped bouncing up and down. When I told him the next couple of hours were his to plan, for just the two of us, he got a delirious and dazed look in his eyes. It made me wonder what was so important over the years, causing me to postpone this moment. One of my biggest priorities in life was sitting right across from me; yet I had been too preoccupied with other things to give him 100% of my time and attention. Silly, silly me.

It's never too late though, especially with kids. When we went bowling, it was all about him. When we went for a walk on the rail trail, I went on and on about all the things that were so amazing about him. I even pulled out a list I had made in advance so I wouldn't forget to tell him one single thing that made him so special. He soaked it all up like a plant desperate for water; I soaked him up, appreciating him more than I ever have.

Just about everything we do with our kids does plant seeds. Despite my lack of mother's guilt, the day in, day out rhythm and tone in my household either waters or starves them. When I stop and look, it really is obvious: the more I yell, the more they yell at each other. The more patient I am, the more patient they try to become.

Breaking that rhythm for a Sabbath Skip Day is the best fertilizer I have ever found. It feeds all the good in our kids' souls, causing them to grow a foot taller, in all the right ways. As a bonus, it starves their negative traits, causing them to shrink into the background, far from sight.

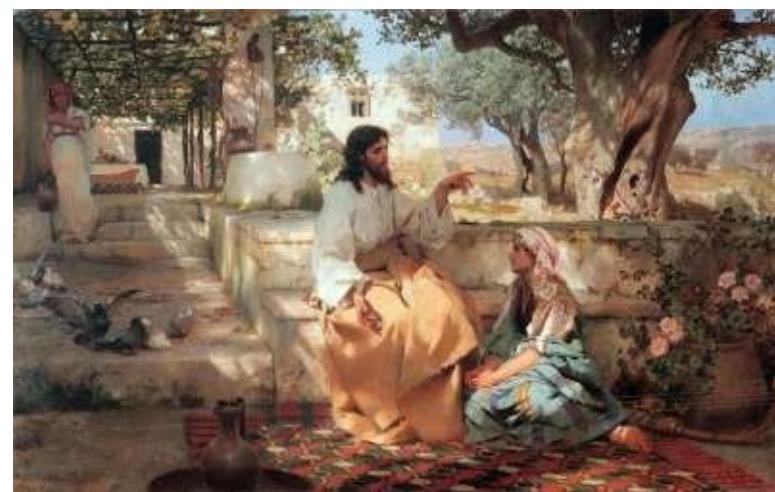
Questions For Reflection:

- * ***Do I capitalize on the moments of the day with my kids, turning them into teaching moments?***
 - * ***If so, do I do it in moderation? Or have I become too critical?***
 - * ***Do I ever have an opportunity to spend one-on-one time with each of my kids, to water their souls?***
 - * ***If not, can I somehow create those opportunities?***
-

This contribution is available at <http://shiftingmyperspective.com/2017/04/20/sabbath-skip-days/>
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| [Contents](#) |

Revisiting Bethany [at The Cloistered Heart]



I was seven years old when I learned I had a soul. This was where Jesus would come when I received Holy Communion, and I was to prepare the place carefully. Sweep it clean and tidy, Sister instructed; no sin allowed.

I pictured this item of my personhood quite vividly. I saw it as oval shaped, pearly white, and resting in the center of my chest. A venial sin would spot it, a mortal sin (heaven forbid) would turn it black as a lump of coal. It was like a little house inside me, where Jesus could come and rest.

I'm now many years past seven. I no longer envision a white oval, shining like a pearl. I do, however, marvel at the truth embedded in this simple childhood picture. *"Here I stand, knocking at the door. If anyone hears Me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with Him, and he with Me."* (*Revelation 3:20*)

What an astonishing reality. There really IS a dwelling place inside me, set aside for God Himself. A cloister of the heart, a sanctuary. And it's not a refuge for me alone.

In the days when He walked the earth, Jesus found places of refuge. Certainly He was in need of them, as He was hunted down, mocked, misunderstood, beaten, spat upon, and finally killed. He found refuge in a womb, a manger, the arms of Mary and Joseph, with friends, and in a little house in Bethany. In such places Jesus was cared about and loved.

As we know, misunderstanding of Jesus did not cease with His crucifixion. The world has never, as a whole, reached out to embrace Christ and His teachings. He is still “spat upon.” He’s discounted, laughed at, shunned in various ways – often before our eyes. I may hear Him mocked this very day.. or dismissed as unimportant. I might hear His Name used as a swear word.

If that happens, can I remember to take a moment to offer a prayer of praise and love to Him in the solitude of my heart?

“A cloistered heart accepts God’s grace to love Jesus Christ in the midst of a world that does not love Him; to embrace His will in a world which does not embrace it. Thus the cloistered heart becomes a place of refuge not only for us, but for Christ Himself. To create such a refuge is a primary part of the cloistered heart’s apostolate.” ([© The Cloistered Heart](#))

“Make my soul...Your cherished dwelling place, Your home of rest. Let me never leave You there alone, but keep me there all absorbed in You, in living faith, adoring You.” (Elizabeth of the Trinity)

“I want to repose in your heart, because many souls have thrown Me out of their hearts today.” (Jesus to St. Faustina)

“I try always to be a Bethany for Jesus, so that He may rest here.” (St. Faustina)

White Lilacs 1895 [at Pauca Verba]



Speaking with a Jewish friend about the Sabbath, she said its first purpose is to *take a break from the money wheel* we ride and to give God what is God's due. It's increasingly difficult (*seemingly impossible?*) for Americans to take a weekly rest from that money wheel, Sunday now just another day for making and/or spending money. Many of us will remember childhood Sundays when stores were closed and family was strengthened.

Sabbatical means creative rest. When I was twenty-five years ordained I arranged for a three month sabbatical to Assisi, Italy. While preparing for the time away I asked my priest-spiritual director what he thought I should do during that time. That I framed the question in terms of *do-ing*, indicates I was still riding the wheel - if not the money wheel, at least the American busy-wheel. And he said, "*Each day find a place to sit: above a valley, in a forest, in a garden, on a mountain, by a stone wall, by a church, near a field...and just sit there...even for hours.*"

The idea terrified me because I couldn't see how it would be productive. I get it now, that when we sit, attentive, focused and appreciative of what's before us, something happens inside, and we are somehow changed or evolved. I believe it.

Here, Levitan has placed a bunch of white lilacs in a glazed vase for us to look at and enjoy. Thousands of tiny, fragrant, white flowers, joined together in clusters called *panicles*. The flowers have become a kind of fountain with some green leaves interspersed. There is nothing else around or behind the vase to distract us.

Was it an American who invented the term, *multi-tasking*? We're not served well spiritually or humanly living that way. "But when you have your cup of tea," the priest said, "just enjoy your cup of tea."

We might resist the temptation to glance quickly at these lilacs and then run away to DO something productive. If we're honest, fair and kind to ourselves, we can take a little sabbatical *everyday*, if even for some minutes.

This contribution is available at <http://paucaverba.blogspot.com/2017/04/white-lilacs-1895.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Do You Believe This? [at Creo en Dios!]

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent, we hear in today's Gospel St. John's account of the raising of Lazarus.

Jesus' friend, Lazarus is dying and so his sister's send for Jesus. When Jesus hears the news of Lazarus' illness, his response is strange. "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." And Jesus delays two more days before going to Lazarus.

By the time Jesus announces to his followers that they will go back to Judea, Lazarus is already dead. In fact, by the time Jesus arrives, Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha hears Jesus has arrived, she runs out spitting nails. "Where were you?...If you had been here my brother would be alive?....You should have been here...You should have done something."

Jesus doesn't defend himself. He says simply, "Your brother will rise." Martha, immediately and impatiently says, "Yes, on the last day, he will rise."

And Jesus says: "I am the resurrection and the life; whosoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." Do you believe that? Yes, she says. And Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, presaging not only Jesus' resurrection, but our Resurrection.

I think it is crucial when we reflect on the Resurrection that we remember that what is central is not merely the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, but also what His resurrection means about our own death and resurrection.

At a very basic level, God had no reason to incarnate, die and rise for God's own sake. God was already eternal, already not subject to death, already alive forever. It proves nothing new about God's nature for God to die and rise. So if Christ's Resurrection is not about our Resurrection, there was no reason for Christ to die and rise (or indeed to be incarnated in the first place). In one sense, the whole point of God becoming human was to make resurrection a reality for us...to carry us along so to speak, such that the resurrection of Christ inherently implies our resurrection. Thus Paul says "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised...if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised.

I find it telling that this is the first time Christ talks in a really direct way about resurrection (i.e., I'm not including His mystifying statements to His disciples like "the temple will be destroyed and rebuilt in 3 days – statements about which no one had a clue what he was saying). The first time he talks about resurrection it is not about His own resurrection, but about the resurrection of Lazarus. When Jesus asks Martha, Do you believe I am the resurrection and the life, He is not asking her whether she believes He (Jesus) will rise. He is asking her whether she believes her brother can be raised through Him. The question is do you believe you will rise.

And that is the fundamental question of our faith. Not do you believe the historical figure of Jesus rose from the dead, but do you believe that, through Jesus death and resurrection, even if you die, you will live....that you will never really die?

This is a question we need to be able to answer. Dom Helder Camara writes, "So, in those most critical, most agonizing of moments, we Christians have no right to forget that we are not born to die; we are

born to live. We must hold on to hope, to inner peace, since we have the deep certainty of having been born for Easter, the everlasting Easter Day.”

In the words of Psalm 30, “Weeping may linger in the night but joy comes with the morning.”

This contribution is available at <http://susanjoan.wordpress.com/2017/04/02/do-you-believe-this-2/>
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| [Contents](#) |

One Sure Way to Make God Smile [at A Moment From De Sales]

As we know--Lent is the time to give back to God for all the wonderful things He gives us whenever we ask. God gives us life, sustains that life, and walks with us until we cannot walk any further on our personal journey and then are welcomed cheerfully into His heavenly home.

I can't imagine what God looks like smiling, but I know He does from just looking at the many portraits of His son, Jesus. God has to be cheerful or we would not be here.

We were brought into existence to be God's companions, to help God run things, *i.e.*, watch over the animals, tend the plants, tend to the environment, to laugh, have fun with friends and enjoy each other's company. Heaven is only an extension of these happy times.

St. Francis de Sales says: "It's a great consolation to know that the relationships begun on this earth will continue in heaven." What a comforting thought that is, as I have met so many wonderful people along the way, as I know we all have! And just to think of them now causes me to smile. Something God likes to do as well. And God does that with us -- especially during our Lenten journey. And, even in Lent, when God thinks of us, He has to smile, because He enjoys us and our company.

I truly don't think our creation was meant to be all work, and serious moments. We can take time to have coffee with acquaintances, go to the movies with friends, laugh with school chums about silly things, or simply just take a quiet walk on freshly fallen snow. If you were God, wouldn't you like to do the exact same things?

We can't just look for God when we are mad, or seek Him when we need something. God doesn't want to hear only gripes about something or be asked to fix a situation which we have messed up. God also wants to hear us tell a funny story that happened on the way to work.

Why? Because God is a friend. Friends want to hear everything about us, even if it means sharing a funny story. Its true that no matter how busy our friends are they like to know what's happening or not happening to us on any given day.

This Lent ask something from God that will make him extraordinarily happy and eventually ourselves too. From right where we are simply reaching out and ask forgiveness from His son, Jesus, for any hurt or pain we aimed at those we love the most.

Then in its place find ways to pour in our love and watch God smile. Did you know that each time we love another human being, we are loving the God who made them.

Lent is the time to give back to God. And loving those God made is a great way to show our gratitude. Try it, it's true!

Although Pregnant, Imprisoned and Severely Abused, She Refused to Deny her Faith [at It Makes Sense to Me]

IT MAKES SENSE TO ME

By Larry Peterson

In 1936,

[Civil War](#)

erupted in Spain after the Nationalists, led by General Francisco Franco, overthrew the government run by the left-leaning leaders of the Second Spanish Republic. What followed was a period in Spanish history that is known as the

["Red Terror"](#)

.

During the three year period of 1936 thru 1939, tens of thousands of people were murdered by those on the secularized

["left"](#)

as this faction enacted an anti-clerical reign of terror against religion and all things Catholic, especially the clergy, who they hated more than can be imagined. The violence was even directed to churches and monasteries and many were burned and pillaged.simply out of hatred.

What follows is the story, not about a priest or a nun but, rather, about a gypsy girl whose name was Emilia Fernandez Rodriguez. On March 25 of this year, Emilia joined the ranks of those honored as martyrs from the Spanish Civil War. In addition, she will become the first gypsy woman ever beatified by the Catholic Church.



Juan Jose Fernandez and his wife, Pilar Rodriguez, were gypsy people who lived in a "grotto" (cave) in Tijola, Spain. On April 13, 1914, Pilar gave birth to a girl and she was named Emilia. Emilia, the second of three children, was baptized on the same day of her birth in the Church of Santa Maria. As Emilia began to grow she was taught how to make wicker baskets. This was how the family earned their living.

Juan Fernandez and his wife were survivors. They had no political ideology and worked hard at their meager wicker basket business trying to live their lives as quietly as possible. So did most of the other gypsy people. When the Civil War of 1936 erupted there was no reason for the gypsies to feel in any way endangered. They just kept living their lives doing the best they could with what they had. But circumstances sometimes reach out and grab hold of the unsuspecting and pull them into a world they could never have imagined.

In 1938 Emilia entered into a marriage contract with Juan Cortes, who was her distant cousin and a year younger than Emilia. Emilia's new husband was apolitical and, like Emilia, did not care one bit about either side involved in the Civil War. But those on the "left" thought differently. They demanded that Juan Cortes join their ranks.

Juan had Emilia help him concoct a potion to rub in his eyes causing a temporary case of blindness. His ruse worked and the powers to be considered him unfit for service. But his "blindness" began to clear up. When the soldiers came back and discovered that Juan could see again they were outraged. They knew Juan had tricked them.

He and Emilia were immediately arrested and both sent off to prison to await trial. The date was June 21, 1938. A few weeks later, on July 9, 1938, Emilia was tried in "court" and sentenced to six years in prison. She was absolutely terrified. She was pregnant and feared for her baby's life.

Emilia felt completely alone in the dank, smelly confines of the prison. She tried to avoid the other inmates but her youth and vulnerability drew the sympathy of some of them. One girl, whose name was Lola and was about the same age as Emilia, was able to befriend her. Lola was a devout Catholic and began teaching Emilia about the faith she knew so little of.

Lola made sure that Emilia made the sign of the Cross properly and taught her the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory Be. Emilia was soon participating in praying the Rosary with some of the others. She even learned to say "ora pro nobis" in response to the litanies being said in Latin. Soon, the commander of the prison, Pilar Salmeron Martinez, found out that Emilia, the uneducated, ignorant gypsy girl, could pray the Rosary. He was determined to find out who had the audacity to teach her.

Martinez called her into his office and demanded she tell him who taught her to pray. He even told Emilia that he would not only get her released from prison but would also get Juan out of his prison. He told her to think of her "poor baby" and how living in a prison cell was no place for a child. Martinez considered Emilia weak and was sure she would agree. He was wrong.

Emilia's faith was beginning to sprout strong and true. She was only 24 years old, was afraid and pregnant yet she would not reveal the name of Lola. Furious at this "gypsy girl", Martinez ordered her into solitary confinement. He also ordered Lola to be thrown into solitary also. He knew she was the "troublemaker" who was teaching prayers to the inmates. The conditions in solitary were horrendous.

Winter came and the evil Martinez, still trying to 'break' Emilia, cut her already meager food rations.

The young woman was getting weaker and sicker by the day and her baby was soon to be full term. At two o'clock in the morning of January 13, Emilia gave birth to a girl on the floor of her filthy cell. That same afternoon Lola baptized the baby. Emilia and her baby were taken to the hospital. Four days later they were returned to the prison.

Emilia became so ill that they had to return her to the hospital. She died on January 25th, never having turned on the one who had taught her to pray the Rosary. They dumped her body into a common, unmarked grave. No one ever knew what happened to the child. It is assumed she was put up for adoption.

The Catholic Church leaves no doubt that those who die from inhumanity inflicted upon them because of the 'hatred' of their faith are considered martyrs and attain

beatification

immediately. Many Catholics have died because of "hatred", especially in Nazi and communist internment camps. This is known as "

in odium fidei

" which means "in hatred of the faith".

Blessed Emilia Fernandez Rodriguez, please pray for us.

*This also appeared in

Aleteia

on April 11, 2017

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This contribution is available at <http://slipperywillie.blogspot.com/2017/03/although-pregnant-imprisoned-and.html>
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Random Thoughts on a Friday [at Quiet Consecration]

I have kept some sort of journal since I was around 11 or 12 years old. Most of those old spiral notebooks I still have, squirreled away in a safe place where no one will find them. I doubt they would be of real interest to anyone but I have left strict instructions to destroy them when I die.

Most are filled with the kind of random goofiness - an attempt at a first novel when I was 11 for instance, which reads suspiciously like

The Outsiders

- one would expect from an over wrought and extremely dramatic tween and teen. Some of it, however, is really sad and really dark. The fact that I kept writing during the depth of my alcoholism is amazing to me. I am, however, very glad I did.

I got sober in 1992. The program I use to stay sober emphasizes the concept of 'one day at a time' - in other words, don't act all happy over something that has not happened yet because anything can change in a split second. I agree with that philosophy. I am, after all, a woman who hung up the phone at 4:15pm after telling her husband she loved him and then found him dead an hour later when she got home from work. I know how fast life can change and I appreciate that I am not going to celebrate something today that did not happen until it does - and it did not happen back in 1992 until 12 days from now.

What I am celebrating today is the journey that took me on the last big bender, the giant drunken rage and tantrum that, by all rights, I should not have survived. I think back on why I decided that 'those people' didn't really have the answer and were too mean for a delicate flower such as myself. I wrestle with the emotions - gratitude, shame, dark humor and outright amazement - I feel around this time of year. It is a tough time for me. It is one of those things that I love and I hate.

I am sad because today a woman's body - naked and abused - was found in an alley in Modesto. Someone's daughter is dead. It could have been me. I do not know what killed this woman, but I know that it could easily have been my mother mourning my death 25 years ago because of the way I was treating the disease of alcoholism.

I love that I found the answer. I hate what the disease did to me, the time I wasted and the relationships I destroyed. I hate that the answer to the disease did not make me so wonderful that I have not destroyed other relationships while being stone cold sober. I love that I found my way Home to Rome. I hate that it took me so long. I love the life I have today....I hate how much I had to shed and change and give up but in all honesty? The reward has been infinitely wonderful. I wish I could package it, give it to everyone. I know so many who are lost - including those who don't know it - and I weep that I can do nothing for them but pray.

Gratitude cannot begin to describe the way I feel when I think about where I am today and where I was on April 21, 1992.

I am overwhelmed.

Now if only Madbum had stayed the heck off that dirt bike.....

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2017/04/random-thoughts-on-friday.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Book Club "Meeting"

Hey, did you know that I have this online book club called Grace-filled Tuesdays (where I discuss my two Catholic novels,

Finding Grace

and

Erin's Ring

, and the things that inspired me to write them)? If you didn't know before, you do now. And it's Tuesday, so welcome to the club! Grab yourself a cup of coffee (that's what I'd do, anyway, because that's what I

always

do) and have a seat. I'm so glad you're here!



You know, I have to say that I am proud and honored that both of my novels made it into print (proud and honored, and also deeply humbled), because they are filled with lovable Catholic characters, inspirational story lines, and plenty of positive messages for readers of all faiths. I feel this way in spite of the fact that neither has enjoyed wide readership. I admit that sometimes I feel a bit discouraged by my books' lack of worldly success (something I vowed I'd never do...but I am only human, after all). On occasion, I'll say to my husband, "I think my little experiment with being a writer has been a dismal failure." But then he'll remind me again of the reasons I wrote these books in the first place, and those reasons have nothing whatsoever to do with money or acclaim; instead, they have everything to do with trying to use the gifts God gave me, such as they are, to their fullest potential, and more importantly, striving to use them for

His greater glory

. If achieving that goal is the point of it all, then I need to have a "mission accomplished" attitude and go a little easier on myself.

So yesterday, in an effort to make more of an effort in the marketing department, I ordered new business cards. (The information on my old ones was a bit out-of-date.) You can custom-design them at Vistaprint for an extremely reasonable price: \$9.99 will get you 500--which is about 480 more than I would probably ever need, mind you, but you just can't beat that price!

So I'm having this one made for

Finding Grace



And this one for

Erin's Ring



I should have figured out a way to put both titles and both book cover images on one card, but I am not tech-savvy enough to manage that. So I'm going to have 1,000 business cards in all. That should be plenty. I should be set for years to come, even if I finally get brave enough to put myself "out there" on a more regular basis and end up doing some book signings.

I am enjoying having a wonderful office in our new house in VA, where my husband and I each have our own desks, our own rolling desk chairs, our own printers, our own file cabinets, our own shelves, etc. I would have loved to have a set-up like this one back when I was working on my books. It almost makes me want to write another one...but before I do that, I think I need to figure out how to market the first two!

As I was unpacking boxes after the move and organizing my new office space, I came across a letter

that I had forgotten about, and it was a good reminder that I am not in this business to make money but instead to touch the heart and soul of even a single reader who might benefit from reading my work. These are the words of one such reader, who contacted me last year via email (most likely by clicking the "Email Me" link on the sidebar of this blog):

Mrs. Pearl,

I recently finished your book "Finding Grace" and wanted to thank you for writing it. My mother read it and gave me a copy quite a while ago. I am ashamed to say how long it sat on my book shelf. My mother grew up in Rutland, VT [across the lake from Plattsburgh, NY, the setting for *Finding Grace*] and went to Catholic school. I think that probably made her love the book even more.

I know your book is aimed towards teens or youth, but I think it has a very wide appeal. I am a 39 year old mother of 6 (two boys, then four girls) and I found lots of inspiration to be a better mother, wife, daughter, and human within its pages.

I found myself wiping tears from my face when I got to the part at the end of the book when Irene was at the church. You tackled some very tough subject matter with kindness and grace. I am hoping to get my oldest daughter to read it (she will be 13 this summer). I find myself wanting to recommend it to everyone. Again, thank you so much for writing this book and sharing it with the world.

I find myself wiping tears from MY face, dear reader of

Finding Grace

. Because of your kind words of affirmation, I dare to believe that the four-and-a-half-year stretch I spent bringing Grace Kelly's story to life was not a waste of time. And I find myself inspired to become a better marketer. (Also, you have my permission to share it with the world. Share away!)

In the world of Catholic fiction publishing, word of mouth is the very best tool for getting books into the hands of readers. I've been blessed to have Internet friends like

[Aileen](#)

, who has voluntarily helped me to spread the word on various forms of social media.



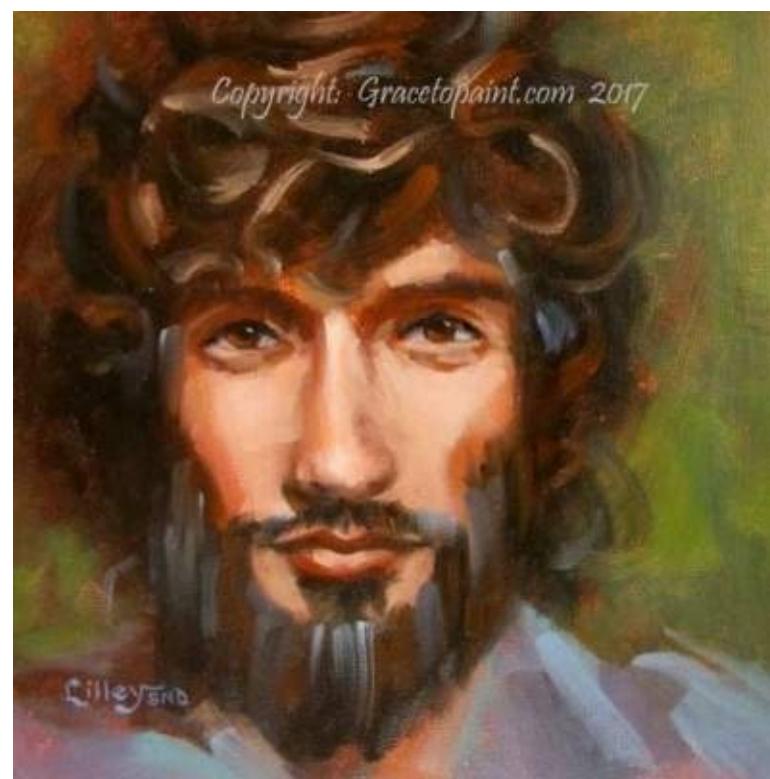
If you feel moved to do the same, I could use all the help I can get!

God bless you with faith, family, and friends--and let's not forget fiction. Okay then, this meeting is adjourned. (But if you have any questions for me regarding either of my books, or if you would like to receive a copy for review, or if you are a teacher interested in purchasing some copies at a reduced rate for classroom use, please contact me!)

This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2017/04/grace-filled-tuesdays-book-club-meeting.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Rabboni [at Grace to Paint]



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

And the day of the empty tomb, Jesus said to her, “Mary,” and she said to Him, “Rabboni!”

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2017/04/17/rabboni-2/>
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The liberating power of washing feet and sharing the Body [at walk the way]

Notes for a Holy Thursday homily, in Honduras, translated and edited from Spanish

Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14

1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

John 12: 1-15

Today, in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, only the second reading speaks of the Eucharist. We begin with the retelling of the Paschal Meal.

Jews celebrate, even today, the Passover, the Exodus from the slavery of Egypt, with a sacramental meal. It is not a drama – for them, the Meal is a way of living again the liberation from the Egypt. They recall the mercy of God who heard the cries of the people and intervened to rescue them. The Passover Meal is a way to celebrate the liberating presence of God.

The Last Supper of Lord Jesus was probably a Passover Meal. With his disciples, Jesus celebrated the liberation of the people of Israel from Egypt in the midst of the occupation of Israel by the troops of the Roman Empire. The Passover was a very tense time in the days of Jesus. Recalling their liberation from the Pharaoh, many Jews of his time awaited their liberation from the foreign Roman troops. Some wished to throw them out violently.

Jesus came to liberate his People – but not by killing others but by handing over his life for all. In the Last Supper he gave his disciples his body and blood, under the forms of bread and wine, to show his commitment, his handing over of his life even to death, a death that he would suffer in less than twenty hours. The liberation from slavery, on God's part, is an act of handing oneself over on behalf of others.



But, after the Supper, Jesus gave us an example of his style of liberation. He washes the feet of his disciples.

This too was not theater. It was an act of service, of making himself nothing, of putting himself in the midst of the servants and slaves. In the days of Jesus, only the slaves would wash others' feet – and

those feet were assuredly dirty, from walking on dirt roads and in streets full of dung and refuse.

When we lower ourselves before another person, kneeling at their feet, we recognize that we are not those who are the big guys, the powerful, those who matter. We are the lesser ones, the lesser brothers (and sisters) as Saint Francis of Assisi called his friars. We put the needs of others before our own. We recognize that God wishes a community where there is the connection of love, of tenderness, of mutual support.

Why. Because we have a God who loves us, who has lowered himself, and has handed himself over, even to death, for us.

And doing the same as He does, we can experience true liberation.

This contribution is available at <http://walktheway.wordpress.com/2017/04/13/the-liberating-power-of-washing-feet-and-sharing-the-body/>
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| [Contents](#) |

Degenerate language; degenerating faith [at Catholic Deacon]

In my

[earlier post](#)

on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord I alluded to the mystery of the uniting of the divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, noting that the dogmatic definition of this mystery is denoted as the "

hypostatic

union." The Church's dogmatic definition of this mystery was promulgated at the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451, which set forth the following concerning Jesus Christ:

acknowledged in Two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the Natures being in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the properties of each Nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and One Hypostasis; not as though He were parted or divided into Two Persons, but One and the Self-same Son and Only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; even as from the beginning the prophets have taught concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath taught us, and as the Symbol of the Fathers hath handed down to us

Reading section 7c of Heidegger's

Being and Time

, I was struck by a passage that seems quite relevant to the domain of Christian dogma. This passage was well-summarized by Pope St. John XXIII in his

[speech](#)

to open the Second Vatican Council:

What is needed is that this certain and immutable doctrine, to which the faithful owe obedience, be studied afresh and reformulated in contemporary terms. For this deposit of faith, or truths which are contained in our time-honored teaching is one thing; ***the manner in which these truths are set forth (with their meaning preserved intact) is something else*** (emboldening and italicizing emphasis added)

In section 7c, in which he seeks to describe and define phenomenology, Heidegger, in discussing how phenomena, which he understands as the objects of philosophical inquiry, can be covered up, concealed, "buried over," or distorted observes- "It is possible for every phenomenological concept and proposition drawn from genuine origins to degenerate when communicated as a statement." This happens when truthful, or authentic, propositions start to be "circulated in a vacuous fashion," thus becoming "free-floating" theses. In other words, the historic, time-conditioned, contextualized nature of the proposition

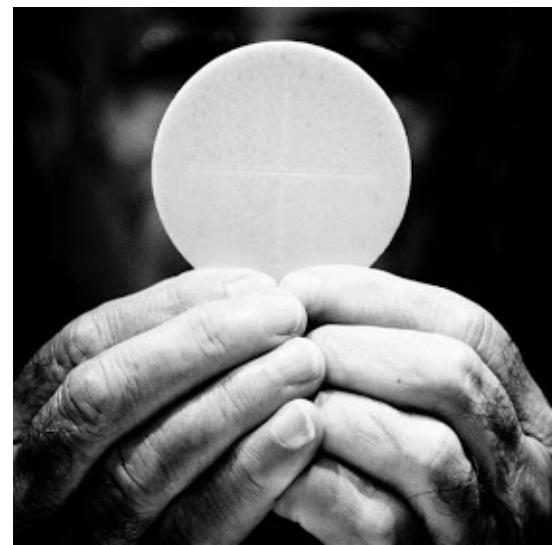
is lost and, along with it, an adequate understanding of its meaning.

In the realm of dogma, it usually becomes the answer to the question nobody is asking, or repeating incomprehensible formulae in response to genuine questions. In the first edition of her translation of

Being and Time

, Joan Stambaugh, translating the sentence I just cited, uses the word "autochthony" to describe what happens when a proposition that adequately conveyed a phenomenological concept degenerates.

"Autochthony" means both that it originates where it is found and it is native to the system in which it is produced. De-contextualized, de-historicized, de-temporalized, I think, gets at the matter quite well.



As with the

hypostatic

union, a concept must first be grasped to some extent before it can degenerate. Just as most Christians, to paraphrase Karl Rahner, remain mere monotheists rather than full-blown Trinitarians, so most Christians merely pay lip service to Christ's humanity, his consubstantiality with the Blessed Virgin and so with us. While revering him as divine, many Christians, implicitly adhere to a sort of Docetism (from the Greek verb "to seem," meaning he only seemed to be human) with regard to his humanity.

In my view, a dogmatic concept that seems to have degenerated in the manner described is that of transubstantiation. To be clear up-front-I do

NOT

deny and fully accept the dogmatic definition concerning transubstantiation, which seeks to explain
how

the bread and wine become, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, in order to accept it, I have to grasp in its historical context- the counter-Reformation, a time when Christ's "real" presence was beginning to be denied by Protestant reform groups and rethought by others; Thomas Cranmer's own views on Christ's "real" presence in the Eucharist, which

he never denied, for example, evolved over time to a quite subjective understanding. The Council of Trent sought to teach very clearly that Christ is truly present

in

the consecrated elements in what might be described as more or less "objective" manner. Nonetheless, this explanation, rooted as it is exclusively in the Aristotelian metaphysics of substance, as all dogmatic explanations are bound to be, does not take us to the core of the mystery.

No statement, dogmatic or otherwise, could ever fully explain

how

Christ comes to be present to us through the

sacramentum caritatis

, the sacrament of love, any more than a dogmatic definition can fully convey to us the mystery described as the

hypostatic

. Perhaps the best such a statement can do is enable us to rationally grasp

that

it can happen by giving a plausible explanation as to how, according to Greek metaphysics, it

can

be so. While we understand Christ's presence in the consecrated species to be "real," an action of God's, as it were, we cannot discount that sacraments depend, at least to some extent, on the faith of recipients. In other words, our insistence on objectivity (just as there is no pure subjectivity, there is no pure objectivity- it is a self-refuting claim because only a subject can posit the concept "pure objectivity") can turn sacraments into something akin magic tricks, which is why a strictly

ex opere operato

understanding of sacraments is a degeneration of their original meaning, rendering sacraments static.

At least in my view, sacraments need to be grasped phenomenologically, as philosopher Fr. Robert Sokolowski's work suggests (as an example see his article

["Steps into the Eucharist: The Phenomenology of the Mass"](#)

), not in some manner that plays the subject off against the object, which playing off suggests a fundamental incongruity between subjects and objects, which metaphysical mismatch phenomenology helps us to overcome. This is exactly why we must do what Good Pope John urged in conveying our understanding of what God has revealed in ways that make sense to intelligent people living today.

As Anglican theologian John Macquarrie (among others) suggested in his book

Pathways in Spirituality

(a book I just finished), perhaps the best attempt to describe how Christ comes to be present to us in the Eucharist since the Council,

transignification

, is not incompatible with transubstantiation. In other words, entertaining such explanations as transignification does not require rejection of transubstantiation, even in an implicit way. Our understanding of a mystery as deep and unfathomable as the Eucharist, resting as it does, as all the sacrament do, on that Mystery of mysteries, the Incarnation, can certainly benefit from a variety of explanations.

I believe it was theologian Nicholas Lash who wrote something along the lines - A theologian is a person who watches her/his language in the presence of God.

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2017/04/degenerate-language-degenerate-faith.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Inside, She Weeps [at FranciscanMom]

There is an image in the Adoration Chapel this week: an artist's depiction of the Pietá — but unlike Michelangelo's famous sculpture, this one portrays Mary looking straight ahead as she cradles Jesus in her arms, holding him so that His face is next to hers.

Her eyes are not downcast as she holds her crucified Son. They are wide open, staring back at the beholder, filled with emotion.

But what emotion, exactly?

Defiance? I can imagine that her inner Mama Bear comes into play here. She grasps her Son's body and looks straight ahead, daring anyone to take Him from her.

Shock? She has just watched her only Son complete his earthly mission, culminating in a death so horrible that no one would wish it on his worst enemy, and she witnessed it all. Is she numb from the shock of it?

Grief? Surely. Those eyes, partially in shadow from the veil that covers her hair, are deep pools of grief and pain. Her heart has, indeed, been pierced.

Strength? No tears are on her face. She is hanging on, not allowing herself to give in to those other emotions, sitting straight and not crumpling to the ground, holding Jesus and not letting go.

She will have to let go soon enough. She will have to allow Joseph of Arimathea to take Jesus' body from her for a hurried burial before the sun goes down.

But not yet. Not at this moment.

For now, she holds on — to her Son, to her composure. She looks straight ahead.

But inside, she weeps.



William-Adolphe Bouguereau [Public domain], [via Wikimedia Commons](#)
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| [Contents](#) |

Grief and Gratitude on Good Friday

Great griefs are like great joys: they bend time. My sister died twenty years ago. Sometimes it seems so long ago that mercifully, I can barely remember the details. Other times, those details rush back at me so sharply I have to steel myself for impact.

Suicide does that.

I can smile now at the memory of my sister. I felt disloyal the first time I did that, as though permanent grief could be the only fitting monument to her memory. Time, mercy, and God's grace have done their work, bit by bit.

For the first time since her death, I am writing about her and about losing her. This is an anniversary, and the time is right. For years, I thought she had taken Easter away with her and left nothing behind but wreckage. Gradually I found that she left me other things: a greater appreciation for the gift of my family, and how to live with gratitude despite wounds that are bone-deep. Those aren't compensations. They don't cancel out anything. They are gifts nonetheless.

I extend my hand to anyone who's facing a loss, or anniversary of a loss, this Good Friday. I can't make the pain go away. I can only say that you're not alone. All I have is compassion, "suffering *with*," in whatever way I can manage. The time and mercy and grace I mentioned were not my doing, and I couldn't rush them.

Learning to Mourn

My sister died sometime around Good Friday or Easter weekend in 1997. She died alone, and so the time of death was estimated by the authorities using observations I'd just as soon not know about. I almost hope it was Good Friday. I can't bear the thought of depression washing over her for the last time as the sun rose on Easter morning.

My mother gave me the news by phone from 1500 miles away, with unearthly pain in her voice. "Honey, it's Jeannie." My sister, all of thirty-five years old. Impossible. *How?* "She did it herself."

The word "suicide" never passed Mom's lips in my presence. It was an obscenity to her, compounding the horrible grief that went with outliving her child.

The shock left me feeling scalded from head to toe.

Lent came back that day for my parents and me, and it went on for months, as if the recent Easter had never happened. We felt abandoned by God Himself. I uttered prayers in those first days out of sheer habit and discipline, for there was no feeling of peace or union with God. As far as I was concerned, He had some explaining to do.

I thank God that no one around me told me to "offer it up." Those words have their limits. A loved one's suicide renders them useless. Trust me on that. Certain bits of advice should be strangled in their

figurative cribs. Add to that “something good will come out of this.” The words may be true, but in the immediate aftermath of loss they are incomprehensible.

A friend whose brother had committed suicide called me as soon as she heard about my sister’s death. “You’ll learn to live with it, but you’ll never get over it.” She was telling me something I had to take on faith but have since learned to be true. There’s no “getting over” a loved one’s suicide. Don’t even mention the word *closure* to me. I did indeed learn to “live with it,” though, thanks to the grace of God as shown through the people around me. It hasn’t always been a gentle or easy grace, but it has carried me for twenty years.

The grace came in little things, slowly, a day at a time. It came from the people around me, even when I didn’t want anyone around me. It came in faith that was sometimes practiced as a mere habit, when I didn’t have any heart to put into it.

The rituals of Good Friday became unbearable to me for several years following my sister’s death. As we venerate the Cross, we know that Christ rose again after three days. Only three days of suffering and loss? The parents of a dead child should be so lucky. *So when do I get my sister back? When do our parents get to hug her again?*

Easter’s answer was too cosmic. My parents and I didn’t want the *promise* of new life. We wanted my sister’s suicide never to have happened. The weeks after her death were the Easter season, liturgically speaking, and I went to church out of habit and discipline even though I sure didn’t feel like going. It was unreal, and too real, to be mourning my sister when everyone around me was singing Alleluia.

Suicide: Call It What It Is

Can we agree that suicide’s a bad thing? That’s not always a given these days, with choice and autonomy valued in our culture the way they are. My sister committed suicide; that was her “choice.” I can’t imagine saying, “well, I’d never choose that for myself, but it was the right choice for her at the time...” Nope. I do not endorse the idea that the word “suicide” should be destigmatized and avoided, and that we should call the taking of one’s own life by gentler names.

Humanity never gets tired of twisting language to pretty up the taking of human life.

No one who commits suicide bears any stigma in my book. Suicide itself is another story, as an act and a phenomenon. It’s savage and brutal. Changing its name won’t change its nature. Likewise with its near relative, depression.

Suicide was the official cause of my sister’s death, but depression was the underlying disease. I didn’t know she had been enduring it. No one did. We knew she had been going through serious personal, financial, and professional changes in the months before her death. In retrospect, it’s easy to see that those were all manifestations of depression. They could just as easily been symptoms of something else or nothing at all. I for one dismissed them.

That was before I read her suicide note. I only read it once; reading it twice would have taken far more strength than I had then or now.

Would a screening for depression have helped? I don’t know. I wish I could be sure the screenings could

reach the people who need them. How can we force someone to acknowledge depression's presence, much less deal with it? I still don't know, twenty years after it devastated my parents and me.

Yes, strive to be in tune with your friends and loved ones. Yes, encourage professional support if needed. But can you force the issue? Can you assume that every person who ends a marriage or changes jobs is in the grip of a clinical malady? I don't think so.

Perhaps I'm making excuses for missing the obvious in my sister's life.

We were close, and not close. We loved each other, and we couldn't be together five minutes without a disagreement. As children, we bickered constantly. Each of us seemed to define herself by what the other wasn't. "You've got book smarts. Jeannie's got street smarts," our mother once told me as Dad nodded his agreement.

Living 1500 miles apart once we were adults meant an end to the day-to-day abrasions. With distance, I came to respect her strengths. She was a manager by profession in the food service industry, a problem-solver. She was always dressed and groomed just so. She married a high-school classmate of mine, a great guy whom my parents loved dearly. She was the best aunt my kids could ever hope for – oh, my word, she spoiled them to pieces. In some ways, Jeannie had it all *together*.

Having it all together didn't protect her from depression. It didn't protect us, her family, from the catastrophe of losing her, from that emotional Lent.

Grace in the little things

In the weeks following Jeannie's death, my kids were the only reason I got out of bed. My husband and I have five children, and they were ages four to 15 when Jeannie died. My two youngest needed me in the morning for all the practical Mom stuff: serve the breakfast, wash the clothes, read to the kids, play with them. Jeannie wasn't much more than a faraway name to them (whereas our three older children were old enough to have gotten the full-on Aunt Jeannie treatment).

Jeannie, who loved kids dearly, would have loved the way all five of my children forced me to face life with grief when I really didn't want to bother. Action driven by love was the therapy they imposed on me, with the help of my husband. Little things, daily things, one step at a time. Normal, necessary things. As I came to understand that those habits and patterns were actually healing graces, I could almost see my sister giving me one of her "well, duh" looks.

Eventually, thanks to my husband and kids and the everyday family things, I was able to laugh at things again. That's a grace, too.

Ministering to Each Other

What parents endure upon the death of a child is unspeakable. I have never felt so helpless as when I saw my parents face the reality of life without their younger daughter. I wanted so badly to make it up to them. That was impossible.

Sudden death illuminates the value of a single human being, created in the image and likeness of God,

created with intention and unique purpose. There are no duplicates, no replacements.

Confronting that fact, I saw my parents minister to each other in ways I couldn't approach.

My dad had always had a whiff of king-of-the-hill around him. He knew he wasn't the center of the universe, but he didn't mind if Mom pretended otherwise. He lost the attitude suddenly and for good when Jeannie died.

His love for Mom was transformed. He turned to her as though taking care of her were the most important thing he could be doing – as indeed it was. He expected nothing in return. Some of his rough edges were gone, never to return.

I remember visiting my parents on Mother's Day shortly after Jeannie's death. Dad was so cheerful that I was startled. I asked Mom, "Is he doing this for me?" "No, honey. This is your father now."

That spirit of patient service was a divine gift to Dad and to everyone around him. Perhaps that gift had always been his for the taking and he had spent a lifetime saying "no, thanks." In the shock and pain of losing his daughter, he took hold of the gift, with deliberation and purpose.

Mom needed every bit of help Dad could give her. She was ravaged by Jeannie's death. She had been the heart of our home. Suddenly, she was emotionally and spiritually hollowed out. She wrongly blamed herself for Jeannie's death. As a daughter, I couldn't understand that. As a mother, I could.

Three years after Jeannie died, lung cancer claimed my dad's life. Mom methodically put her affairs in order. Suicide was out of the question for her, but she was ready to die. She was just waiting for nature to take its course; grief had broken down her health.

God had other plans. She couldn't see what was coming, and neither could I, although I caught on a little ahead of her.

Through unlikely circumstances – "like something out of Oprah!", as a friend of mine remarked – she became re-acquainted with a man who had been the boy down the street 65 years earlier when she was growing up. He had suffered losses of his own, widowed twice over by cancer. He and Mom hit it off; no one was more surprised than she. One thing led to another, and in 2003, I was matron of honor at my mother's wedding. She and my stepdad had five glorious years together before she passed away.

I got to hear my mother laugh again. That was a miracle.

Those years were a huge blessing – unsought, unexpected, and treasured all the more because they came after so much loss.

My Mother's Passing

Mom's death was difficult. She took a bad fall, and her body shut down a piece at a time until her death three weeks later. Her mind was not spared. She had a bad reaction to a painkiller, going into delirium. The painkiller was stopped immediately, and the doctor assured us that she was likely to become lucid again once the drug had cleared her body.

That never happened. She was too weak. Her mind, once knocked off-kilter, stayed that way. One day, she knew me. The next time I saw her, she thought I was 15 years old, and she was scolding me for my messy habits. The time after that, she didn't know me at all, and she wanted me out of her room.

I was heartbroken. When she forgot me, though, she also forgot about Jeannie. Her last days were unmarred by the memory of Jeannie's death and the years of self-blame.

Surviving, With Gratitude

I'm the sole survivor of my family of origin, the only one left to testify to our loss and recovery. I'm here to acknowledge that wreckage is not the end of the story when a loved one commits suicide, even though wreckage is the only thing in sight at first.

To my twenty-years-younger self, I offer two words: *hang on*.

There's laughter ahead. There are unexpected relationships. Some family bonds may fray, but others will mend. There are new things ahead that the present grief obscures. Believe in them. Give them time.

His mercy endures forever, sang the Psalmist, who knew a thing or two about loss and survival and mercy.

I gave advance warning of this post to my sister's former husband, whose own life has known incredible blessings that I rejoice to see. He gave me his blessing. "She always believed in the promise of Easter," he said.

She always believed in the promise. On this Good Friday, I take what he said as yet another sign of merciful grace and a reason for gratitude.

This contribution is available at <http://ellenkolb.com/2017/04/14/grief-and-gratitude-on-good-friday/>
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| [Contents](#) |

A guide to Seeking Christ in Every Moment [at CatholicSoup]



It's the Second Sunday of Lent and coming up to half way through our journey of faith. We walk with Jesus through the desert for 40 days--fasting, praying and observing.

This Sunday Jesus takes Peter, James and his brother John up a mountain. According to scripture, it's a pretty high one too. It's here that Jesus reveals to his disciples His glory. He is transfigured and his face "shone like the sun" and his clothes becomes a bright white as light. The clouds open and out from the sky we hear the same voice that spoke to his at Jesus' baptism saying, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, Listen to Him." What happens next from Peter is very much a response to Christ's magnificence and glory and I think we can use it as a beautiful lesson to keep in mind as we continue through our Lenten journey. Peter is captivated by God's revelation and power through the light of Christ transfigured and he intends on sticking around, so much that he plans on spending the night. He has recognized God's presence in that very moment, without even thinking his first response is to pitch a tent and stay, totally emerged in the Divine and in awe because of it. So what can we learn from Peter? Basically this, to seek God in every moment of our lives and learn to stay in those moments with your whole heart. Pitch your tent, to live in every grace filled moment that God gives. Here are some ways for us to be open to God's powerful presence in our lives, like Peter.

Be grateful.

Being grateful is more than not complaining. It means showing appreciation for things that might not even be recognized. Learning to see the good in everything even the worst of times. The fact is that God reveals himself to us through every living thing, powerfully and specifically with the help of grace. When we are grateful for God's goodness and beauty in the world we are able to more receptive of the deeper ways He communicates himself like in the Eucharist, encounters with people, the Cross. This reception is the cause of a response, to love and carry out his will. Be grateful, appreciate God's presence in your life.

Be Silent

. being silent is a difficult thing, but in my mind it can be a way to listen. Paying attention and with great awareness of God alive in every moment. Taking on an interior silence that comes from God allows us to respond to His graces and also to the needs of our friends, family, maybe those strangers. The beauty is that the silence is more than just not talking, it can be stripping ourselves of any noise that

keep us from responding to God's love and invitation to serve.

Be Prayer full.

learn the ways that help you pray and use that to be open to the presence of God. Prayer is simply having a conversation, there is no rubric and no guideline to pray. God is a Father who loves and listens to everyone. The church uses different expressions of prayer that have been handed down through tradition. The Holy Mass is a prayer of Thanksgiving, the Liturgy of the hours is a prayer of communion. The beauty too is that every moment of our lives can be a prayer, our walk, our talk, and our breath. Learn to be prayerful through the day, the great saints tell us that prayer is like a cleansing for the soul.



With these three guides we can respond to those moments of grace in prayer, in love, in silence and with grateful hearts. It's here in our response that we are able to see God clearly, his transforming light and his perfect plan for us. God through our action of love and prayer, will make his glory known as believers we are called to seek out these moments, listen to these moments that Christ makes himself known and pitch our own tents. Lord, let your glory be made known to us!

This contribution is available at <http://catholicsoup.blogspot.com/2017/03/pitch-your-tent-guide-to-seeking-christ.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

True faith is accompanied by good works [at Washed, Sanctified and Justified]



Quote:

To have true faith is to be saved.

True. But who is the judge of true faith, you or God?

Quote:

Many Protestants use the language of salvation ("I am saved"; "Are you saved?") as a short hand for speaking of faith in Christ. To have faith in Christ is to be saved. True faith will be evidenced by a change in heart and life. From this conversion and growth in grace flows good works.

One difference. They claim faith ALONE saves. Whereas Scripture says differently.

Salvation is granted to them who OBEY Christ:

Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

But, one is not even justified by faith ALONE.

James 2:24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Much less is one saved by faith ALONE.

Quote:

It is also Protestant teaching.

That depends on the Protestant. There are some Protestants which hold the Catholic Teaching. But, for the most part, they deny the Catholic Teaching and call it blasphemous.

Quote: Faith alone. But what is true faith? What does it mean for someone to truly believe in Jesus. Well for starters, we will see a true conversion of heart and life growing out of that faith. If we do not see good works present in someone's life, we cannot say with confidence that their faith is genuine.

So Faith Alone. But a living faith. It must produce good fruit. "You shall know them by their fruit." So works follow faith. True faith will produce good works. Or to use the salvation terminology, a person who is really saved will do good works.

You contradict Scripture and Catholic doctrine and then confirm Scripture and Catholic doctrine in one fell swoop.

First, faith, if it is accompanied by the fruits it produces, is not alone. That confirms the Catholic doctrine and the Scripture.

Second, true faith produces good works and salvation follows. Here it is, in Scripture:

James 2:14What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

The implication is obvious. Faith, without works, faith unaccompanied by works, faith alone, can not save. Period. The end.

Whereas, faith which produces good works, does save. You have said so. That is the Catholic Teaching.

Quote: But we already have "CONFIRMATION" by God that he hears "the repentant

sinner and washed away their sin." We have this confirmation by warrant of Scripture: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) What other confirmation is needed?

Are you making an entire theology out of one verse? Scripture tells you what else is needed. Baptism (Mark 16:16). And after, Confession (Heb 13:17) and throughout your life, good works (Matt 25:31-46). Do you take one verse and discard the rest of the Gospel?

Why? That is why you need the Church. The Church understands the Word of God and explains it infallibly to all:

Ephesians 3:10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Sincerely,

De Maria

This contribution is available at <http://washedsanctifiedandjustified.blogspot.com/2017/05/true-faith-is-accompanied-by-good-works.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Dawn Of The Living Dead [at PURE HOMILETICS]



EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Jn 20:1-9

He had to rise from the dead

Mary Magdalene wept. Inconsolably. Bereft. What's going on here? she thought. I think I need to go lie down, put a warm towel across my forehead and drink a cup of herbal tea.

They say it is darkest before the dawn and so it appeared to Maggie. She cried; the Lord was dead. Worse, the body of he who raised her from the gutter had been stolen. Grave robbers!

She only told the Carpenter that she was a farm girl to hide the truth of her former life of ill-repute. How could he not know? When he wrote her name in the sand she still bore the bruises on her cheeks from the stones that the hypocrites hurled at her as retribution for her former occupation as an all-night girl.

But the Lord, who was kind and merciful, met her where she was; he admitted her to the prestigious College of Apostles. (Title IX? Doubtful.) Jesus was down with the women's movement and he commissioned Mary Magdalene, formerly of the Jerusalem red-light district, to be the Apostle to the Apostles. Jew, Greek, slave, freeman, woman. Jesus drew no distinction. He was an equal opportunity evangelizer. Maggie was first responder to the Resurrection. She saw and believed.

The Bible says it. I believe it. That settles it.

What Maggie Mae could not yet understand was that, with the death of the Lord, a new era had been ushered into history: the break down of the barrier between life and death, truth and lies, love and

hate, fortitude and fear. In a word—the Resurrection.

The Resurrection is the greatest event in human history, that and the Incarnation that preceded Christ's rising from the dead. Like an onion we can peel back the layers with stinging tears but never reach the core. It is a matter of faith, and if we're honest with ourselves we don't have to think too hard on it. If we believe that God created the heavens and the earth and turned himself into a man to walk but thirty years among us, then it's possible to understand albeit cursorily that he raised his Son Jesus from the dead. Let's think on that a moment.

Maggie held great faith in Jesus. He forgave her sins. He raised her up. He revealed to her his plan of salvation. For her that morning in the cemetery sealed the deal.

Based on my own reflections on her as a central character in the gospel I don't believe she struggled with the truths of the faith as much as I have, but I do know that she struggled.

Understanding the Resurrection is not a question to be answered but a mystery to be solved. I prefer to follow the money until I stand before God who says, "I told you so, you of little faith."

At sunrise a gravedigger appeared to Maggie, dressed in sheets as white as the woman's face. "Woman, why are you weeping? Why do you seek the living among the dead? Behold, he is not here; he has been raised."

O-M-G. My Lord. My GOD. "Rabbi!" she cried.

"Atta girl. Now go, tell Peter and his mob to get off their duffs and to start moving. We've got work to do."

"How? What if they don't believe me."

"Tell them to turn off ESPN, put away the Xbox, get out the door, light out, and look around."

The conversation with a man she believed to be dead enlightened and empowered the mind of this timid woman. An evangelizer is somebody who fearlessly proclaims the Word of God. Despite her incredulity she remembered her Job. "I know that my redeemer lives and in the end he will stand upon the earth." She knew the Woman at the Well, four times divorced, who said, "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called Christ; when he comes he will tell us everything."

From beyond the grave the Christ he speaks.

The mystery of the Resurrection will never be solved. When we celebrate Easter we stand among the pioneers who lived, loved, evangelized, and were martyred because they believed that the words spoken by Jesus about his passion, death, and resurrection are true. Neither a wise man nor a fool would die for a lie. The Easter proclamation is Ancestry.com, the story of our forebears who blazed great trails. The Song Remains the Same.

Maggie was not disobedient to the gravedigger. She ran to Peter and Jon-Boy the beloved disciple who would never die, and told them, “The Lord has risen!” The men sat up. Then her girlfriends burst through the door, clucking parallel accounts. But their stories seemed like nonsense. The men dismissed them as a flock of gossiping hens.

The fishmonger Peter (aka “Rocky”) wasn’t so sure. Maggie and the other women might have been hysterical but something about their story rang true.

“Let’s go check it out,” Fish said and he and Jon-Boy bolted out the door.

The story circulating from the denizens of the Temple, Caiaphas the high priest and his myrmidons, was that Jesus’s disciples stole the body to claim proof of a resurrection. Officials hired mall cops to stand watch over the sepulcher but when Jesus broke through the stone the mall cops dropped like flies.

Rocky and Jon-Boy arrived at the cemetery and inspected the grave. Maggie’s story was true. The tomb was empty! Jesus had told them, “The Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, who will mock and scourge and spit upon him and crucify him, but on the third day he will be raised.”

The followers of the Carpenter learned to speak the language of the heart. They reached out to anyone willing to buy the ticket and take the ride.

This was the eight-day, a sabbath that never ended. Many fine books have been written in prison. Jon-Boy composed a story based on his jailhouse re-conversion, and an eye-doctor named Lucas penned an epic novel based on the ministry of Peter and Paul.

The Apostles marshaled their forces, crafted a message, and took the Word into the streets. They preached in the Temple and in the synagogues. To ease the substantial burden laid upon their shoulders, they selected servants, the deacons, to help them do the heavy lifting.

They worked double-shifts to baptize believers, an Ethiopian eunuch who bathed in mysterious rivers, and accepted a young man named Paul, formerly of the law firm of Caiaphas, Annas, and Saul. Always the smartest person in the room, Saul worked with Barnabas, a realtor. Barnabas and Paul shared a universal vision, but Barnabas’s nepotism caused a falling out and they broke up the act.

On the Road, Peter and Paul arrived in Rome. In imitation of the Lord they earned the crown of martyrdom. They took up permanent residency in the kingdom, flanking Jesus and God as twin pillars with the Spirit hovering over them like a dove.

So today, on the birthday of our faith, I enjoin you to offer joyful sacrifice and praise to God who raised his Son Jesus from the dead. God is a Father who keeps his promises. The Paschal Lamb has been sacrificed and yet we live, no longer for ourselves, but for him who died and rose again for us.

This contribution is available at <http://quodscrpsiscrpsi.blogspot.com/2017/04/dawn-of-living-dead.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

The Scythe of Saint Thorlak [at The Mission of Saint Thorlak]

One of the only recorded prayers calling on St. Thorlak was written around the year 1350 (see end note) and bears these words: “**Cut with the scythe of your workings the thorns casting shadows in my unclear mind.**” Scythe? Thorns? That’s some powerful imagery. After all, a scythe is no little pocket knife, and any thorns requiring a tool that big must be some serious, menacing thorns – the kind that keep people away.

Those familiar with St. Thorlak recognize the paradox of this image. While his stature and authority were both scythe-worthy, his nature was anything but threatening. Gentle, modest, clement, placid – those were more frequent descriptors of St. Thorlak’s disposition (also used in the same prayer cited above). A scythe is probably the last thing anyone would imagine in the hands of a quiet, scholarly bishop. So, what kind of thorn-slashing weapon did this author have in mind, if Thorlak was not known for using aggressive force?

Voluntary humility.

St. Thorlak struggled with varying degrees of social anxiety and difficulties speaking throughout his life, often finding his public duties quite distressing. Yet, he willingly accepted the obligation of every office to which he was appointed, believing that his mission was to serve other people in complete charity. His commitment to CARITAS made these impossible tasks possible for him.

St. Thorlak dedicated his life to promoting social and clerical reform among a very resistant crowd. He unceasingly met, counseled and instructed the people in his pastoral care. Although he was opposed and outright mocked by many powerful leaders, he won people over time after time without using harsh or aggressive tactics. How did someone who was painfully shy, who dreaded crowds, was considered overly serious, and who was chronically misunderstood by his peer group win so many hearts?

Voluntary humility.



So: What does voluntary humility look like, and how do we use it? Here are some illustrations.

- **Voluntary humility** does everything with open hands, acknowledging the ways we are at someone else's mercy, in every situation.
- **Voluntary humility** does not fear our own need to be noticed and understood.
- **Voluntary humility** is our willingness to feel uncomfortable in the shadow of our needs... for the sake of CARITAS.
- **Voluntary humility** is a choice (... hence, "voluntary") to be needy.
- **Voluntary humility** says: "I need you to notice and understand me, even if I am too embarrassed by my weakness to face you."
- **Voluntary humility** says: "Even if I do not yet understand you, I am going to speak to you in a way that dignifies you, affirms your importance as a person and lets you know it's okay if you don't reciprocate."
- **Voluntary humility** accepts those moments when anxiety makes it hard to face other people... when eye contact is painful... when our palms sweat and our hearts race... when the thorns of doubt cast shadows in our unclear minds.
- **Voluntary humility** says: "Since I'm not hiding the fact that I am just as needy as you are, you have no need to feel intimidated."
- **Voluntary humility** says: "I can learn a lot from you. Can you be my friend?"

This voluntary humility defines us as Missionaries of St. Thorlak. Traditional mendicants start out from plenty but take vows of voluntary poverty, spending their time begging for material charity. Missionaries of Saint Thorlak start from spiritual poverty and sincerely embrace voluntary humility, spending our time begging for spiritual, fraternal charity (= CARITAS). Thus, Missionaries of Saint Thorlak are equally people with autism and people approaching those with autism. The only prerequisite for being a Missionary of Saint Thorlak is having humanity... and, as we see this week, a willingness to take up St. Thorlak's Scythe. Who's ready to start reaping?



End note: The prayer referenced above is very nicely detailed in the work of Susanne Miriam Fahn and Gottskálk Jensson, *The Forgotten Poem: A Latin Panegyric for Saint Þorlák in AM 382 4to*', *Gripla*, 21 (2010), pp. 19-60). The words “cut with the scythe of your working...” originally referred to the 14th century author’s appeal for clarity in recalling the details of St. Thorlak’s biography.

This contribution is available at <http://mission-of-saint-thorlak.weebly.com/activities/missionary-thought-for-the-week-of-may-1-2017-the-scythe-of-saint-thorlak>
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| [Contents](#) |

Blessed Because He is With Us [at CF Family]



Addie had another clean culture last month: normal respiratory flora and normal vitamin levels. We're all happy she's had such good luck. And I do call it luck, not blessings or hard work paying off. I don't know why saying "We're blessed" bugs me so much. I know that all good things come from God. I also know that some Christians have terrible problems. The ending of Hebrews 11 (verses 32-40) tells of those who had miracle lives and those who "did not receive what was promised." After all, Christ Himself said that the heavenly Father, "makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust." God does not bless Addie more than Rees (who has had more trouble with his health) and I do not work harder at taking care of her than I did Rees.



I've knelt in our hospital's chapel after a CF clinic visit with a kid and given thanks together; and I've knelt in there alone, having signed over a kid upstairs for an admission. Tears both times, the crucifix and tabernacle before me a physical reminder of life's true love and pain. I turn to God in good luck and in bad luck through this journey from womb to earth and beyond. We all get through on our own trajectory and Eternal Love surrounds us whatever the lab reports read. That surrounding by God is his blessing.

I don't think to be blessed by God means health and prosperity. I think it means that we are watched by our Creator throughout this valley of the shadow of death (And aren't we CF families living with a

shadow of death?) where we fear no evil because he is there to comfort us. We are blessed, then. When the cultures come back badly, we are blessed; and when they come back clear, we are blessed. He is with us.



I did a little digging on the word Blessed and found that it is used in the Scriptures several ways.

*To praise God: Bless the Lord oh my soul.

*As a desire for goodness: Blessed are you among women.

*For sanctification: He took bread and blessed it.

*As a gift: Children are a blessing.

I did not look these up to be an annoying know-it-all, though!

I needed to make sense of things. And my studies blessed me (haha, yes).



A friend of mine lost her son last month and a friend of hers wrote about the question of blessings for some and not others (

[Why Us and Not Her?.](#)

We're all trying to make sense of things, aren't we? I wonder if I bristle at reports of health blessings because of the reminder that some are not blessed that way and the unfairness of it all exhausts me. It is still a good word, however, because it brings our focus back to God, so I need to

not bristle

(Help, Holy Spirit!).



I do hope and pray for all of us in this fight, that we rest in the blessing of God's presence in good luck and in bad luck.

Love, Allison

This contribution is available at <http://northerncffamily.blogspot.com/2017/04/blessed-because-he-is-with-us.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Quick Takes [at Catholic Kids]

{1}

I posted a new

[Saint Story this week--the Apparitions of Mary](#)

! This is a perfect addition to your lessons for the Month of Mary. We're doing May crowning next week, if my Kindergartners were better readers, we'd do this skit before we head in for the prayer service.



{2}

I also created another

[Seek and You Shall Find game](#)

...this one has alphabet letters and animal pictures. My 4yo can't really play the Easter version, what with all the reading, so I thought he deserved a cute version of his very own.



{3}

[Saint Gianna's](#)

feast day was last week, and conveniently, I have a

[Saint Story](#)

for that if you want something to throw into these rushed end of the year class periods.

{4}

Seriously--the Wonder Series by R.J Palacio...I know I already freaked out about it

[here](#)

and

[here](#)

but I read

[Shingaling](#)

and

[Pluto](#)

and I just can't believe it...the whole series is awesome.

[Julian](#)

is my favorite of the series--I just love how the whole story comes full circle! I geeked out about it too much, so now my daughter doesn't want to finish reading it. But, she admitted that a friend at school is ALSO freaking out about it, so she may get back into it.



{5}

It's May!

[The May bulletins are ready to go--print away!](#)



{6}

I have 2 boys--ages 6 and 4. They are either playing and loving each other like crazy, or they are fighting and crying. There is no in-between. At the playground this week, between Jake hitting Nick with a small tree and Nick throwing sand at Jake's face, they played on the swings and had fun for a solid 10 minutes. It was a miracle.



{7}

I'm not usually one to freak out about pens. I keep my calendar, notes, to-do list, etc. online. I use

[Publisher](#)

for the bulletins. I draw pictures with these

[sharpies](#)

--only because I can't get used to drawing digitally. But, I got some of

[these pens](#)

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholickidsbulletin.com/2017/05/seven-quick-takes-6.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Please, talk to me about love, Mommy, Daddy. [at In the Breaking of the Bread]

“Please, talk to me about love, Mommy, Daddy.”

Notes from a conference in French “S'il-vous-plaît, parlez-moi d'amour” given at the Diocese's offices March 29th, 2017 by Inès Pélissié du Rausas, a mother who has [written books](#) on how parents can form their children well at the various stages of their development in ways appropriate to each age to understand and live well their human sexuality.

Inès advocates precocious but progressive education of children with tenderness by their parents in contrast to the intrusion of culture and society which, truthfully, is erroneous, violent, and damaging, all too often ruining or at the very least hurting our children's innocence and ability to appreciate all the beauty, truth, and goodness of the gift of life entrusted to them by God and their own great dignity and that of others.

As lionesses are so ferocious in defending their young; so too should we be as parents to defend and form our children regarding their vocation, their calling to eternal life, which is at stake, and the spiritual strength God offers us with Marriage and family life. Let us think not only of our own children, but also of the children of others and of the poor. We need to rediscover or to acquire for the first time our spinal column, our backbone, and stand up for our children, for our family, for our Marriage, for others, for the poor, for the Church, for humanity, and for God.

With the Holy Spirit we have at hand an infinite variety of new solutions to age old problems created when people – motivated by so many hidden goals driving them – tamper with our children and seek to “play around” with their innocent, vulnerable, trusting and hearts.

No one must play around with our children's hearts!

There are 3 lobbies and “outside interests” putting considerable pressure everywhere and all the time on our children, and particularly on what the marketing strategists call “pre-adolescents”. In reality, there is no such thing as a pre-adolescent unless it is in the interest of someone to target children in the “latency stage” in view of influencing them in advance of becoming adolescents. The latency stage is what children live from the age of 6 until puberty, when in principle all sexual things don't interest them or are even repugnant to them. In other words, there are interests out there addressing our children in the latency stage as though they were already adolescents, or potential adolescents, or children wanting to become adolescents. These interests threaten to interrupt the safety of the latency stage as they

prematurely stimulate the imagination of children and, in so doing, to damage their innocence.

Tactic # 1.

Under the pretext of taking the defense of freedoms / liberties and equality, such as, for example, the fight against AIDS, all manner of misinformation and outright lies are propagated, always with the overhanging threat of severe reprisals upon anyone who might dare to oppose this tactic in real life and time.

Tactic # 2.

Consider all the frantic activity around pornography – such as with the considerable pressure on parents to provide their young children with an I-Pad, or I-Phone, or Laptop, or their equivalent – to sever the safety ties of young children to their parents and make them free to “roam” and be led astray by any number of “wolves” in sheep’s clothing presented to them in any number of creative and cleverly disguised ways.

All pornographic voices and images and words speak of prostitution – none of them speak of love, not of true love, nor of divine love – but always of pleasure, greed, power, and domination. Solicitation to draw children into various forms of prostitution of their bodies as pleasure objects and to treat others not as persons but as pleasure objects often takes violent forms but is always aggressive with dangerous consequences.

The person of the child is hurt, damaged, within their very self, but they also become dangerous for others by being conditioned to believe that they are incapable of mastering or restraining their own impulses.

SOLUTION

We must do all we can to protect our children against these attacks and form them to learn to avoid such animal and predatory behaviors as are portrayed and promoted by pornography in all its forms. What is hopeful is that with children we can always repair any damage, and they can always learn and grow. With a child we can always love and begin afresh.

Tactic # 3.

We have all become painfully aware of and familiar with the latest new ideology which aggressively seeks to impose on young and vulnerable children and adolescents and even young adults a burden to select their own gender, as if our gender were an “à la carte” activity for human beings. Gender ideology negates human sex and gender by replacing male and female with homosexual and heterosexual, M - F with H - H.

This new ideology seeks to replace the individuality and complementarity of our human nature as designed by God with pleonasm – that is, with what is the same as, with redundancy – favoring what is the same as me, rejecting what is different from me. It is the destruction of the richness of complementarity for the sake of the identical.

SOLUTION

We must avoid using any other terms than those given to us by God – male and female – and simply say that I am woman, or I am man, girl or boy. The term “heterosexual” was coined by a German who wanted to promote homosexual activity in the 18

th

/19

th

century. He used from the Greek “heteros” which means different and “sexue” or in Latin “sexus” which means separate or different. In other words, the term is redundant, saying the same thing twice. It’s a clever trick to annihilate the final purpose of our human sexuality – which is life and union for life and stability in Marriage and family life – and replace it with individuals seeking after their own pleasure.

In the Creator’s plan for our happiness, the finality of our human sexuality is union and fecundity, life and family. These other “interests” want to promote “sex ed” – that is, education to sexual practices that it is claimed “everyone wants” and how to practice them providing safety and protection from sexually transmitted infections and diseases. However, there is never any question or concern in “sex ed” to protect the person in all that we are and can be.

Such “sex ed” ignores and tramples the meaning and beauty of the human body as well as the body’s union to relationship, marriage, children, and family, and the truth that we all want to be loved. All the “dirty” content damages the child’s heart by presenting a perversion of human sexuality. The solution is to reach the child’s heart by treating with the truth, love, beauty, and life, which is good news, and “different from what you have seen”, what is presented out there in the world, in culture, and in the various media of mass and social communication.

SUMMARY

The pre-adolescent or rather the child in the latency and innocent stage is “beaten up or mugged” by publicity which treats him like an adolescent when he isn’t one yet.

First we have to present love as beautiful before we can treat what is dirty, false, violent, etc. We only have to look at video clips that turn various scenarios into pornography. Porn is to be avoided by everyone in all of its forms, because this garbage expresses itself in the heart and hardens it. The world of “hot” folks is actually glacial... cold... without real love which builds the other up without exploiting him or her.

7 to 8 years old is the age of reason which introduces a new form of stability for the child who leaves infancy behind.

6 or 7 to 12 is the latency period during which a form of modesty awakens and manifests itself in different ways. From now on the child wants to bathe alone, now having a greater awareness of himself, of his body.

As a result the boy displays a kind of repugnance for everything sexual and even for marks of affection for members of the opposite sex.

The young girl for her part may begin to keep an intimate diary which must be protected from her brothers.

In any case parents must gently open their child to others during this period during which both girls and boys are inclined to close in on themselves.

In the west for the past 100 years puberty has been advancing and showing itself younger; without doubt due to pollution and the increased presence of estrogen in the environment due to the pill and other sources which end up in the waters and the soils and, as a result, in the food chain.

THE CHILD IN THE LATENCY STAGE

Paradox # 1.

The child is really connected but very alone. He has a great need to be loved. Parents

should ask themselves, “Does my child know that I love him?” Even in the culture we see evidence of this unavoidable truth as, for example, in the “Harry Potter” series of novels we see from beginning to end the conviction that “evil can do nothing against the sacrificial love of a mother.”

Our children need to be absolutely loved by their parents, no matter the conditions. In addition there is the even greater good that they are wanted and loved by God. Let’s do what we must so that they can bathe in the love of God.

Paradox # 2.

During this latency stage the child puts forward “me by myself” but for all that we continue to deliberately accompany, congratulate, and surround him with our love, perhaps a little more discretely, but just as truly and personally, despite the new “distance”.

Paradox # 3.

External autonomy versus interior liberty – The child now becomes more competent in getting around and doing things, but going about taking care of his own needs by himself requires maturity, more than he is likely to have at this age. His incomplete maturity requires a degree of support that varies from one child to another. Parents need to observe and realize that during this latency stage the child cannot yet be really mature or entirely autonomous.

Here lies the great challenge for the parent who is too busy and tired: to recharge his strength and energy for the good of the child in his suffering, pain, and shadows. The challenge is all the greater for the parent still living with his own sufferings, pain, and shadows; which he must manage privately in order to continue providing the emotional education of the child. This emotional education of the child becomes all the more difficult in view of the child’s own interior states. At this level, what the parent is going through can make him more compassionate to the states through which his child is passing, and this same compassion can allow the parent to sufficiently forget himself to attend to his child’s needs.

In the matter of emotional education in his human nature and sexuality, the child has the right to see, to hear, and to know his parents’ love story, and thus, his origins. It doesn’t matter if one of the parents and spouses is no longer around. The remaining parent must put aside all recrimination he may feel against his ex-spouse; because the child has both the right and the need to know about his origins in the love that his parents had for one another, and hence, for him their child.

EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN BEFORE ADOLESCENCE

The emotional and sexual education of our children needs to happen before they enter into adolescence, and it can begin as soon as they ask questions that remotely or closely touch all that has to do with their origin or sexuality. This education of the child by their parent must always be done with great

tenderness and affection; for this is the most faithful expression of the truth about love which gives life not only at the beginning but which continues to give life all during life. Given the human and cultural situation in which we currently live, parents need reference points in order to effectively embark on the emotional and sexual education of their children.

Reference point # 1.

Human love is lived in the world of

human persons

. Human beings are not things, not animals, not machines, not toys, but persons. We, human beings, we are a living network of body, soul, spirit, mind, and heart. So we're not talking about a model of animal instinct as in wild or domesticated beasts. We are not human beasts, but rather human persons. This is why we absolutely reject all forms of pornography, of prostitution, or of perverted sexuality which, in every case, showcases instinctual, impulsive, and therefore, animal behaviors and activities.

Reference point # 2. **Your body – is you** – it is not a thing which belongs to you, but **you are your body** at the same time that you are also your soul, your spirit, your mind, and your heart, which all together form the person that you are. So what your body lives, you live it too. That is why all behaviors which deform the human person and human sexuality by whatever pornographic expression – such as submission to concupiscence or instinctive behaviors such as fellatio and others – are a disruption of your dignity.

Serial or repeated sexual relations harden the heart

which becomes incapable of truly loving or being loved; which brings deep suffering of isolation and interior cold. Having recourse to pornography causes the person with a hard heart no longer to believe in real love or even in life. Such a person may either be swallowed up in the impulse to suicide or may seek an escape in the artificial option of “no sex” or refusing to identify with any gender: “I am neither male nor female, neither man nor woman”.

Reference point # 3. Faced with all this pollution of ideas, of propaganda, and of interior states, what do we say to our children? "**I am made to love... I have a heart.**" The parent can and must soak the heart of their child in love and the child will himself or herself recognize "garbage" assertions. In the same way that one must wax well with many repetitions a piece of furniture made from high quality wood to protect it from stains; so must parents "wax well" their children's hearts, spirits, minds, and souls. The "layers" of wax are so many intimate moments of complicity with their child as they entertain all sorts of assertions about love – about their parents' love but also about God's love – of which he, the child, is the product and of which he continues to be the object, and of which he is also now becoming the subject, capable of loving in his turn in a disinterested fashion with a sacrificial love.

VOCABULARY EVOCATIVE AND FORMATIVE TO THE VOCATION TO LOVE

The mommy's tummy, the mommy's uterus is a

safe cradle

for the baby right next to the mommy's heart where the baby hears his mommy's heart, and together they make the music of two hearts beating together.

How will the baby come out of mommy's tummy? The baby will come out by

a little path reserved for life and for love

, reserved for the baby to live, and also reserved for love and therefore for the daddy.

The vagina of the mommy is

made only for life and for love

.

The anus is for something else, to let the body get rid of garbage.

The channel for pee is also for getting rid of garbage, even if it seems to be the same channel for two different things, it is only part of it which is shared, but by only one thing at a time.

THE TIDAL WAVE OF INNOCENT CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS

How did the baby get into mommy's tummy?

Path of love # 1.

The baby entered into mommy's tummy be the same special path that the baby will take to come out on his birthday. It is the little path reserved for life and for love, for the heart.

Path of love # 2.

Daddy and Mommy love each other and tell each other, but it isn't enough – just like when you are glad to see me and give me a hug – so Daddy and Mommy give each other a special hug.

Path of love # 3.

When the heart of the daddy and the mommy are full of love; then the daddy's heart is also full of love and he is able to give all his love to the mommy. The Daddy's rod gently lifts up and is able to enter into the mommy's path which is reserved for life and for love.

Path of love # 4.

Then there is a crowning of their love... there is great joy in their united hearts and bodies, and it is from this love that the child begins to exist in the mommy's tummy.

The education of our children belongs to our right and our duty to think and to speak. Various ideologies try to intimidate us and reduce us to silence, but it is more essentially our right and our duty to speak more precisely to our children who, for their part, have both the right and the need to know the whole truth about their life and their origin, their human nature, and their human sexuality. Adolescents now observe the dichotomy among the various voices demanding their attention and allegiance; so we must approach them with a much more precise language.

Approach # 1. Confronted by all the voices speaking of human sexuality, with adolescents we need to **talk all the more precisely**, because they have a greater need to understand more concretely.

Approach # 2. We must also speak to them of the **interior battle** and of **self mastery**; that as human persons we have a great capacity for self-control, but we must exercise it, and that our self mastery grows with time and practice, and that the love of God is the source of our interior strength. It is God who loves us first and who draws us to love Him, to love others, and to love ourselves.

Approach # 3. It is good and necessary for us to elicit in **the child** – and eventually **the adolescent – admiration** for the perfection of love. Loving is like having a good voice. To sing well one must see and know the partition well. The lyrics and notes of the partition are: respect for the other, fidelity to the other, tenderness towards the other, and paying attention to the expectations of the other.

Approach # 4. **Homophilia** – at the beginning of adolescence youth find reassurance in their peers and can feel all kinds of emotions towards their peers, but there is nothing sexual about it. However today the culture (which for decades has been manipulated by those with strategic agendas to change society's attitudes) so the culture tries to sexualize the other. Unfortunately, this sexualization of the other renders more difficult any ordinary true and disinterested friendship without any sexual overtones.

Approach # 5. One must certainly not listen to voices that advocate “trying everything” in terms of sexual activity, because we have a “body memory” which even after a single act colors everything that follows. That is why outside of the loving relationship of one man and one woman in a committed, permanent, exclusive, and faithful union, such as in marriage, all sexual activity conditions the human heart on a path of egoism and the quest for personal pleasure; which hardens the human heart and makes true love all the more difficult.

Approach # 6. A youth can become aware of a “dragger” or homosexual predator trying to impose on him or her. This youth must understand – this is absolutely essential – that “feeling” something is not “consenting”. The youth, like any human person, remains ever free to ask himself, “What do I want?” and “Is this good or not?” the “No!” of which I am capable in my conscience protects me in order to one day be able to say a beautiful “Yes!” to the person that I will choose to love and who will love me in return.

Approach # 7. The young adolescent woman like the young adult woman can find herself temporarily in the condition of “homo femini” or fear of male sexuality because of its violent portrayal in pornography. She must learn from her parents that it isn’t really like that in a loving relationship between human persons.

Parents, have many gratuitous moments sitting down face to face with your child. See the relationship of befriending when the fox meets the little prince. We must approach gently, and that takes time. For boys, it's better by the father; but if not, the mother must do it. For example, the mother can say to him, "Your father and I want to tell you..."

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF CHILDREN

Original sin consists in man and woman turning away from their relationship with God the Creator to prefer making up their own life, their own reality, their own universe, their own definition of human life and of good and evil. There is nothing more painful in our human condition than this isolation from God, who is not only our origin in love but also our destiny.

That is why it is essential for parents to introduce their child to God. However, we cannot give what we do not already possess. Still, with God, it is never too late. So, the simple realization by parents that there is somewhere within them some sort of desire to give their children what is best can already open within them the gateway to all that is "beyond". These are the opportunities in real time, in the present moment, to give their children the "sacraments" or knowledge of God, or prayer, or spirituality, or faith.

The heart of the Judeo-Christian Tradition is clearly that the God who is good and loving, the Creator of the Universe, wants to have a relationship of friendship and love with every human person. God, who is infinitely rich, wants to give us everything, but all the obstacles that exist are within us... the "gates" within us are not always open, or else they are not always open wide.

BAPTISM – At Baptism God the Holy Trinity engenders within the human person a "family relationship" of adoption introducing the person – even a newborn baby – into the heart of the relationship of communion already existing from all eternity and which "defines" the divine being we call God and whose nature Jesus has revealed as a "communion of divine persons in a single divine being". The life that exists in God in perfect love and perfect harmony begins to "flow" or "vibrate" in us, and we begin to "live in God". As for everything else regarding our human life on Earth, this new life "in God" must be cultivated, first by our parents and godparents, but gradually by the free and motivated participation of the child himself or herself.

CONFIRMATION – Whether it is the day after its birth or at 11 / 12 years old, at its confirmation or chrismation the child receives a new "effusion" or "outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God" as the apostles and 100 or so other disciples received as they gathered around the Mother of Jesus in the Upper

Room on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is ever at work to infuse his gifts: piety for greater respect for the works of God, especially man and woman, girl / boy; and all the other spiritual gifts for the person and the charisms for the good of others and the Church. Parents can and must help their child to see himself or herself as loved by God and that they receive themselves from God in love. Their gender – female or male / man or woman – was given to them at their conception and will ever manifest itself and develop.

HOLY COMMUNION – as the mother gives of her blood / milk in nursing her baby at the maternal breast, so does Jesus – risen from the dead and Son of God – give of himself as spiritual food to communicants, giving us in holy communion a veritable “transfusion” of the divine life He possesses with his Father and the Holy Spirit. Our sharing in the divine life of love which is in God and in which we are initiated through Baptism is not yet “permanent” on this Earth, but it will only be permanent in Heaven when we will have accomplished our life and mission.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK – As He did in Palestine, Jesus continues to heal the sick and wounded while forgiving sins and driving out evil spirits who at various times torment the baptised.

PENANCE – RECONCILIATION –

Jesus allows us to meet Him face to face as He did when He walked the Earth through the representatives He gives himself and whom He sends us in the persons of his priests

(HOLY ORDERS)

.

MARRIAGE – To those who believe in Him and who put their trust in Him Jesus vouches that their love will reflect his faithful and sacrificial love for his Church, his Beloved, the body of all his assembled faithful disciples.

P.S.: Genesis portrays God’s creation of humans as man **and** woman in original innocence. Sin divided us into man **or** woman. Patriarchy is domination **by** man. Feminism reduces us to **neither** man **nor** woman. Gender ideology seeks to **neutralize** our innate human gender as woman or man by replacing our identity with the illusion of a “choice”. For its part, the “gay” culture and homosexual “lobby” prey on young children before puberty and young adolescents who are likely to be experiencing temporary “Homophilia” as they develop, in a deliberate strategy to impose their ideology on them precisely when they are most vulnerable. Their objective is to have the young “fall” and identify themselves as “gay” or “lesbian” and, in effect, **deny** and **abandon** their great dignity as girl or boy, woman or man, in accord with the gender with which they were endowed at their conception. The good news is that Jesus Christ

our Lord restores lost innocence and our capacity for the reciprocal gift of self for which our gender as man or woman empowers us, and which is God's gift to us to enable us to live our human life and love in the image and likeness of God the Holy Trinity.

These notes were taken from a conference given March 29th, 2017 at the offices of the Archdiocese of Montreal by Inès Pélissié du Rausas with added thoughts by me. He book containing a much more complete and detailed explanation of her instructions to parents is entitled:

“S'il te plait, parle-moi de l'amour ! »

It is available from Amazon in [France](#) at this link: <https://www.amazon.fr/Sil-te-pla%C3%AEt-parle-moi-lamour/dp/2351170059>

or at [Amazon.ca](#) at: https://www.amazon.ca/Sil-plait-maman-parle-moi-lamour/dp/2351170644/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1492705376&sr=8-1-fkmr0&keywords=S%27il+te+pla%C3%AEt%2C+parle-moi+de+l%27amour+%21%2C+In%C3%A8s+P%C3%A9lissi%C3%A9+du+Rausas

This contribution is available at <http://fathergilles.blogspot.ca/2017/04/please-talk-to-me-about-love-mommy-daddy.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

In a recent homily at our monthly Latin Mass, my boss and Pastor, made reference to something he once heard – the Blessed Virgin Mary was the first to see Jesus after his resurrection instead of St. Mary Magdalene, as the Gospels proclaim. It was a footnote in his homily more than anything else. As he said it, I thought to myself that I had never heard of such an idea. I just know what the Gospels tell us.

After Mass, Father said he was looking towards me when he said it thinking that I would have heard of it somewhere in my studies and in my writings on Mary via this blog. I told him I had never heard of it and asked him where he read it, but he said he didn't read it. He heard it somewhere, however, he couldn't remember where it was specifically.

Not thinking about researching that idea that night, I just came home and wrote on something else. As I was trying to figure out what to write for today's "Mondays with Mary", I was doing some online searches since I hoped to incorporate Mary with Easter. Not thinking I was going to find anything specific, I came upon an older Catholic website asking that same question I am asking today – *Was the Blessed Virgin Mary the first to see the Resurrected Lord?*

The website lead me to the Papal Audience of none other than – Pope St. John Paul II!!



Christ Appearing to His Mother – Rogier van der Weyden; Flemish, ca. 1445

Before you read this, I would say – *go into it with an open heart*. This is not definitive Church doctrine, but something we could reflect and contemplate in our hearts during this Easter Octave. Again, I don't believe the Catholic Church doctrinally teaches on this point anywhere specifically, I would be interested to know the Orthodox view; but John Paul II gives us the opportunity here to use both our reason and our hearts to discover something about the relationship between Jesus and His Mother we may have never thought happened.

Instead of providing you with the entire text, here is the link to the Vatican website – [General Audience – May 21, 1997 – Mary was witness to whole paschal mystery.](#)

Pray about it this week and if questions come up – feel free to write me one in the comment section. I

may or may not be able to answer them completely. If you are a Scripture buff, just keep in mind that the Gospels themselves do say that many other things happened which is not recorded in these writings. Could this interaction between Jesus and Mary be one of them? Remember also that the Gospels talk about Jesus appearing after his Resurrection to more than 500 individuals – if such a big event – why wasn’t it recorded either? Something for us to think about then.

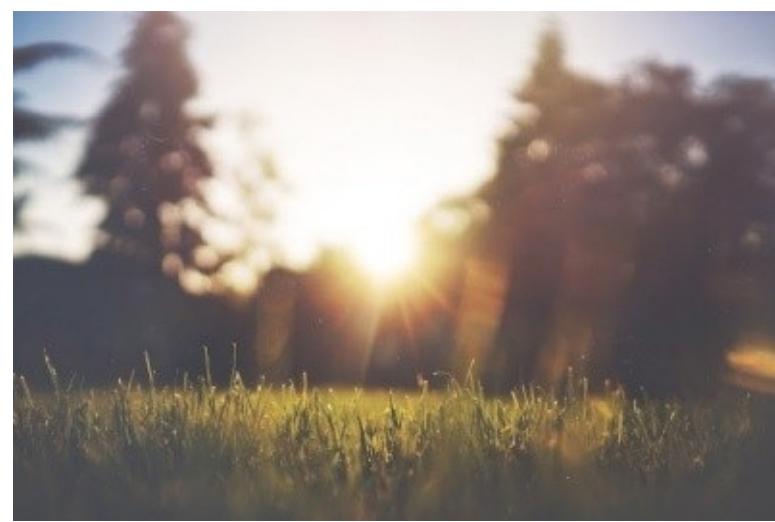
Post Script: Just as I was about to publish this post, I found [this article](#) from May 2011 on *The New Theological Movement*.

I hope that you all had a blessed and joyful Easter Sunday and that your Easter Octave is as equally blessed.

This contribution is available at <http://tomperna.org/2017/04/17/mondays-with-mary-was-the-blessed-virgin-mary-the-first-to-see-the-resurrected-lord/>
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| [Contents](#) |

Not Another Sunday [at bukas palad]



Year A / Eastertide / Easter Sunday

Readings: Acts 10.34a, 37-43/ Psalm 117.1-2, 16-17, 22-23 (R/v 24) / 1 Corinthians 5.6b-8 / Matthew 28.1-10

Here we are on the first day of another week. Dawn is breaking. Darkness is lifting. And here we are again at the same seats we sit at every Sunday, at the same time, to celebrate the same Eucharist. The altar servers, the communion ministers, the lectors, even the priest are familiarly the same. Is anything different today from other Sundays?

Let's slow down, you and me, and begin to understand how different today must be. Let's slow right down and notice where I am, notice what is around me, notice the people here, what they look like, the expressions on their faces, notice what they are doing. What do I really see?

Perhaps: someone we know; some action that delights; something to be fixed. With eyes of faith, we might say "God and God's goodness". We might say this with more certainty because today is Easter morning: Christ is risen; Christ has triumphed over sin and death; Christ has saved us for eternal life. Alleluia!

Yes, Happy Easter, everyone! But has anything changed, really changed, for you, this Easter morning?

Our gospel reading tells of the experiences Jesus' disciples had that first Easter morning. Dawn was breaking but they were grieving, confused and fearful because Jesus, their rabbi, their expectant Messiah, died crucified a criminal just two days ago.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to Jesus' tomb. They remembered the burial: his body wrapped in linen and placed in the tomb; a great stone rolled over its door. Reaching the tomb that Sunday morning, what they saw and heard turned their world upside down: the great stone was rolled back; an angel announced Jesus' resurrection; the tomb was indeed empty.

Where is Jesus? What has happened to him? They struggled to understand. Yet, they hasten to the disciples to inform and to echo the angel's announcement: "He is not here: for he has been raised". They could because these wonderful words changed their lives: they were fearful yet overjoyed. "He is not here: for he has been raised": these words should change us too: mend our brokenness; renew our lives; uplift us in hope. Will we let these words change us?

More than a new day dawned upon the women then, as it now dawns on us. What scatters the darkness of night, of sin, of death for us is the radiant light of God's power to raise Jesus to life, never to die again. Love is the source of this light; God's love that makes real and alive something remarkably different, something indescribably good, something profoundly new breaking into our lives because Jesus Christ is risen.

What is this newness Easter brings? We can appreciate it by going with the women to the tomb. It is empty yet the promise of new life abounds, not death. Yes, "He is not here: for he has been raised". Then, with the women running to announce this good news, we meet the risen Jesus who greets us with these words, "Do not be afraid".

"Do not be afraid" because **the newness of Easter calls us to a new way of living**. We learn about the disciples' new experience of eating and drinking with the Risen Jesus in the first reading. We hear Paul's call for Christians to celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection with new dough, new unleavened bread of sincerity and truth with and for one another in the second reading.

Through the risen Christ, with the Risen Christ, in the Risen Christ, then, you and I are invited to new ways of interacting with God and with one another. To live this call is to live in the newness of Easter. **What Easter brings about is the grace of transformation.**

This allows us to have a new relationship of intimacy with God. Because Jesus has forgiven our sins on the cross, and God has raised him from the dead into fullness of life, we can know God and call him Abba, Father. He is our Father who will never abandon his children; he will look for them, save them, and bring them into eternal life. This is the Easter truth Jesus' resurrection proclaims to everyone.

This also moves us into new relationships of intimacy with one another. We hear the form and depth of such relationships in a word Jesus uses in today's Gospel reading—one word, which is extraordinary, and we oftentimes miss it. We hear the risen Jesus say to the women, “Don't be afraid, go and tell my brothers”. My brothers. Its Greek translation is *adelphoi* referring to those who share spiritual relationship with each other in God.

Until this moment, Jesus has never called his disciples “brothers”. “Disciples,” yes. Even, in John’s Gospel, “friends,” but never brothers. But now brothers, now *adelphoi*—now one in God’s family with Jesus, our brother. In him, we are brothers and sisters to each other. This is the Easter joy Jesus’ resurrection ushers into every heart.

The gift of intimacy is the newness Easter brings into all relationships. Because of Jesus’ victory over sin and death, we are not just his followers, or his disciples, or even his friends. We are more. We are God’s children and we are Jesus’ brothers and sisters. This is why Easter must matter—in raising Jesus from the dead, God empowers us to live anew by sharing intimately in their divine life and from this sharing to draw others to participate in it.

This is possible, as Pope Francis reminds us, because “Jesus transforms our sin into forgiveness, our death into resurrection, our fear into confidence...that's why with Jesus all our darkness can be transformed into light, every defeat into victory, every disappointment into hope. Every? Yes, every” (12 April, 2017). Even the relationships we have—they will be transformed in the light of the Risen Christ.

So, let's slow down again and look around this holy space we are in together. We are here not as acquaintances or strangers but as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are here not to be served but to serve. We are here not to judge and condemn but to forgive and mend our brokenness together. We are here not covet and hoard but to share our giftedness, talents, riches. We are here to partake of the Eucharist and become like Jesus, bread broken for all. We are here not to come and go as weekend worshippers but to build each other up as a Christian community that cares for and uplifts each other. We are here not to do and do and do, but to be formed in God’s ways so that we can work with Jesus to serve all, especially the poor. We are here because God calls us to be here together.

What transforms these relationships? What makes intimacy possible? The love of God in the risen Christ that lifts us up and binds us together. **Today, the risen Christ is calling us to enter into the intimacy of his own Easter joy.**

We cannot really enter this intimacy of Easter joy unless we roll away obstacles, like the great tomb stone, that block us from letting God raise us up into his life. Is there something, some unacknowledged sin or activity that is damaging your relationship with Jesus, who longs to call you “my brother, my sister?” Jesus longs to roll it away. Will you let him?

The newness of Easter makes this the most joyful day of the year. It must be because God in the risen Christ has overcome sin and death, and made all things new. Renewed again is our broken relationship with God. New now is Jesus calling us his brothers, his sisters.

Let's look up now: see this newness in the light of this day streaming into church now, all around us, and its promise of relationships with new intimacy, new life, new possibilities. Truly, then, how can today be just another Sunday?

Preached at St Ignatius Parish, Singapore

Photo: <http://salfraedimedferd.is>.

This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.sg/2017/04/homily-easter-not-another-sunday.html>
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A Stone Tomb [at On the Road to Damascus]

“When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.”

Matthew 27, 57-61

When Jesus had died they placed his body into a stone tomb and sealed it with a large rock. Jesus body was placed in a cave, a cold, dark, lifeless cave.

I have heard it asked if God is all powerful could he make a rock so heavy that even he couldn't move it. If he can then he isn't all powerful and if he can't move that rock he also isn't all powerful. The truth of the matter is that God did make a rock so heavy that even he can't move it. That rock is called our hearts and out of love for us he chooses not to move it if we do not want to be moved.

My stone heart is a cold, dark, lifeless place. My heart is the tomb where Jesus was laid to rest. It is precisely because my heart is stone and I do not hear the voice of the Lord that he had to give his life for me.

In the early morning of Resurrection Sunday a bright light filled the tomb of Christ. This was the light of God's love. This was the Light returning to the world. This was the Light who conquered death and paid the ransom for the sins of humanity. The angels of the Lord ministered to him, releasing him from his burial cloths.

If my stone heart is the tomb in which Jesus was buried then my heart will be filled with the light of God's love when Jesus conquers death and is raised up. The light of God's love is a transforming light that will turn my stone heart into a natural heart bursting with love for my Lord. At that time God will have moved the immovable showing us that he indeed is capable of all things through love.

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.”

Ezekiel 36, 26 – 28

Prepare you hearts of stone. Allow God to move them. Be filled with the light of his love when we celebrate Jesus resurrection this Sunday. Empty yourself and become a lantern to carry the light of God's love with you wherever you do. Be filled with the Holy Spirit and rejoice knowing that death has been conquered.

Become the person God created you to be.



This contribution is available at <http://damascusroadsojourner.blogspot.com/2017/04/a-stone-tomb.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Question on the final judgement [at Catholic365]

I've heard that at the Final Judgment, each soul has to make account of his sins.

According to Scripture:

[2 Corinthians 5:10](#) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil.

The Catechism says:

1039 In the presence of Christ, who is Truth itself, the truth of each man's relationship with God will be laid bare.⁶²⁶ The Last Judgment will reveal even to its furthest consequences the good each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life:

All that the wicked do is recorded, and they do not know. When "our God comes, he does not keep silence." . . . he will turn towards those at his left hand: . . . "I placed my poor little ones on earth for you. I as their head was seated in heaven at the right hand of my Father - but on earth my members were suffering, my members on earth were in need. If you gave anything to my members, what you gave would reach their Head. Would that you had known that my little ones were in need when I placed them on earth for you and appointed them your stewards to bring your good works into my treasury. But you have placed nothing in their hands; therefore you have found nothing in my presence."

What about the sins we confessed in the Sacrament of Confession? Aren't they forgiven and forgotten?

Yes. They are forgiven and forgotten before you get to the Judgment Seat. But not before Final Purification. Let me back up.

They are forgiven. But there remains a price to pay for the "temporal consequence" of the sin.

Baptism washes away sin. There is nothing that remains of sin when one is baptized. No temporal consequence. Even Original Sin is washed away. Nothing remains. If a person dies right after Baptism, without having committed any other sins. He will have a clean slate when he appears before the Judgment Seat.

Confession is different. If a man is baptized and then commits sin again, as most of us do. He must return to the fountain of grace, the Sacrament of Confession and ask forgiveness. The sin is forgiven, if the man is sincere. But, there remains a "temporal consequence" which must be atoned by suffering or by doing good deeds.

For me, the best illustration of this concept is in the Bible, when King David had an adulterous affair with Bathsheba and murdered her husband. God sent the Prophet Nathan to visit him and the story goes like this:

2 Samuel 12:

Nathan's Parable. 1 The Lord sent Nathan to David, and when he came to him, he said: "Tell me how you judge this case: In a certain town there were two men, one rich, the other poor. 2 The rich man had flocks and herds in great numbers. 3 But the poor man had nothing at all except one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He nourished her, and she grew up with him and his children. Of what little he had she ate; from his own cup she drank; in his bosom she slept; she was like a daughter to him. 4 Now, a visitor came to the rich man, but he spared his own flocks and herds to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him: he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the one who had come to him." 5 David grew very angry with that man and said to Nathan: "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves death! 6 He shall make fourfold restitution for the lamb because he has done this and was unsparing." 7 Then Nathan said to David: "You are the man!"

Nathan's Indictment. "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel. I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave you your lord's house and your lord's wives for your own. I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were not enough, I could count up for you still more. 9 Why have you despised the Lord and done what is evil in his sight? You have cut down Uriah the Hittite with the sword; his wife you took as your own, and him you killed with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. 11 Thus says the Lord: I will bring evil upon you out of your own house. I will take your wives before your very eyes, and will give them to your neighbor: he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. 12 You have acted in secret, but I will do this in the presence of all Israel, in the presence of the sun itself."

David's Repentance. 13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan answered David: "For his part, the Lord has removed your sin. You shall not die, 14 but since you have utterly spurned the Lord by this deed, the child born to you will surely die." 15 Then Nathan returned to his house.

Notice that God forgave King David. But read the underlined words. All those punishments came to pass. If you read on, you will see that David's own son tried to kill him, chased him out of the Kingdom and slept with David's wives on the roof of his house so that all of Israel could witness it. Not only that, but his children went to war with one another and his Kingdom was divided.

God forgave David, yet David had to pay for the "temporal" consequences of his sins.

We also must pay. God was kind enough to send His only begotten Son to die for our sins upon the Cross. Thus, we were washed of those sins in Baptism. He made us Priests, Prophets and Kings. And God then made us part of His household. God made us His own children. But then we chose to sin again. For His part, God forgives us, if we repent. But, we must pay for the temporal consequence of these sins, ourselves.

If we haven't paid for them before we die, we will be cleansed of them in Purgatory. The Final Purification.

Now, when we appear before the Judgment Seat. Our sins, which we confessed in the Sacraments, are forgiven and forgotten.

The reverence was palpable. [at Boldly Catholic]

I wrote what follows 7 years ago after attending my first Good Friday service since returning to the Church:

Last night, the missus and I were part of something remarkable, something that though terribly solemn, serious and contemplative, filled us with a sense of holiness and yes, lifted us.

We attended a Good Friday service, within which we, for the first time in either of our lives, participated in the veneration of the cross with a kiss.

I confess now to you that initially, I was uneasy. This sort of thing is not looked kindly upon by some of my Protestant brethren, and I, at one time, had come to agree with them. So I actually hesitated as it was our turn to join the procession to the cross. But I overcame that hesitation. And I'm glad I did. Very glad.

I'll not dwell on our own experience other than to state succinctly that it was powerful and most holy and made me keenly aware of God's gift in Christ and what Christ has done.

It was an uplifting and remarkable moment yet the highlight of the evening came just a few minutes later.

The cross had been processed into the sanctuary by our blind priest as part of the rite and placed in the front center of the circular sanctuary. We were seated in a front row maybe 30 feet from the cross. Congregants lined up from the center of each side of the sanctuary and approached the cross from opposing sides.

We watched as young and old, large and small, tall and short came to either touch or kiss it or bow or genuflect before it. The reverence was palpable. Most kneeled before touching or kissing. The choir sang quietly throughout the rite with some moments of silence between songs.

It was during one of these quiet moments when the silence was broken by the surprisingly loud sounds of very slow yet very steady footsteps. I turned to my right and back to see an elderly man with a cane being led by a woman I presumed then and now to be his wife. They alone were coming down an aisle adjacent to the aisle set aside for the congregational procession to the cross.

His steps were tiny and his efforts obviously labored but I was close enough to see his eyes. They were shiny, as if on the verge of loosing tears, but determined. It took him a good while to simply approach the cross and by this time, those in line had paused to allow him access.

His wife glanced from the path forward and back to her husband time and again while they slowly, so slowly, approached but his eyes were locked on the cross.

After some time and obvious struggle, he arrived. He appeared to initially bend as if to kneel but stopped abruptly, perhaps in pain. He then reached out to the cross, touched it lightly, brought his

hand back to his mouth, and then back to the cross and then did his best to bow and here he paused for what seemed like a long moment. I wondered what he was thinking, what was going through his head. He then ever so slowly, turned back to his wife, and they resumed their struggling stepping back toward their seats.

At this point, I could see his face clearly, and though I know not what was going through the man's mind, clearly I saw that he had been touched by the experience. As he slowly, ever so slowly, struggled past us back to their seats, I lowered my head in respect but to also hide the fact that I had become emotional. I was overcome by a man's faith in God and his manifest hope in what was yet to come.

I had witnessed a suffering servant connecting to The Suffering Servant and in that connection and in that moment, my own bond with Christ was strengthened.

Remarkable indeed.

This contribution is available at <http://www.boldlycatholic.com/2017/04/the-reverence-was-palpable.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Compassion [at Bible Meditations]



Tell them not to speak evil of anyone, but to be peaceful and friendly, and always to show a gentle attitude toward everyone. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, and wrong. Titus 3: 2-3a

It's so hard to keep from judging others. People do some stupid, infuriating, hurtful things. So how do we begin?

We might start by admitting that if we're looking at others' failings, it doesn't mean we don't have any ourselves; it just means we aren't paying attention to them. So when we find ourselves looking down on others, it might help to call to mind the times we've done thoughtless, hurtful things. In fact, the things that annoy us most about others are often the very traits we have ourselves. You spot it, you got it, as they say.

We don't have to beat ourselves up over the poor choices we've made. We can be honest about them and still offer ourselves some compassion. Prostitutes and tax collectors flocked to Jesus. He welcomed those who were well-aware of their own shortcomings. We tend to be open and receptive to those who are friendly and welcoming.

When we ease up on ourselves, we naturally ease up on others, too. We're all in this together. Only One is perfect and he offered himself for us *and* for those we look down on.

Prayer: Lord, help me see myself and others with eyes of compassion.

Reflection: Who do you look down on? What do you have in common with them?

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| [Contents](#) |

Called to Greatness: Saints from Super-sized Families [at Little Douglings]

We recently brought our family to see the [Treasures of the Church](#) - an amazing collection of about 150 relics, including one of the largest pieces of the true cross (YES!) and also a piece of Mary's veil (as in MARY THE MOTHER OF GOD!). Wow. Just wow.

It was pretty amazing. We traveled through tables displaying the various relics of our favorite saints, and we were even permitted to touch them and pick them up (except a few of the larger items). I showed the kids how to bless themselves with the little reliquaries. I may have caught our three year old using St. Aloysius as a back scrubber, but if I did, I stopped her immediately. Also, if I did, I'm hoping St. Aloysius has a great sense of humor and was laughing it up in Heaven.

At times, I was pretty frazzled trying to do constant head counts, and pleading with the oldest five to help my husband and I keep an eye on the youngest six. But one thing kept jumping out at me as I toured the display and read many of the bios of the saints: a good portion of them came from very large families.

Pope St. Pius X was second of eleven, St. Gianna Mola was number ten of thirteen, St. Faustina was third of ten, St. Louis de Montfort was one of eighteen, St. Catherine of Siena was the twenty-third of twenty-four, St. Joan of Arc was one of five, St. Casimir of Poland was number three of thirteen, and there are so many others who either came from large families or were the parent of numerous offspring (which gives me hope).

This is obviously not the criteria, many saints were "only" children, but it made me look differently at my children as they roamed amongst the remains of all the saints. I kept thinking how amazing it was that these incredible figures who impacted the world in an astounding way, came from ordinary homes (most anyway). They played and prayed with their families, they helped out around the house, probably had to keep their eye on younger siblings, and, more than likely, bumped heads with older siblings, but every one of them was called to greatness.

We are potentially raising the next St. Joan of Arc, the next Padre Pio, the next St. Bernadette of Lourdes (one of six siblings). And especially in a world so radically deprived of authentic, selfless love, we are called to foster that greatness within our children. It's so easy to lose sight of this when we are wandering through the mundane and desperately seeking comfort, when we convince ourselves that our goal as parents is to see our children rise to successful careers, surrounded by adoring peers and perhaps, at some point, maybe give us some cool grandkids. But our goal is to see our children become a light to the world, to bring hope to all those God places in their paths, to give of themselves with ardent love, as a reflection of Christ's love. We want them to be the full, wondrous version of the person God created them to be. We want to be with them in Heaven for all eternity - in essence, we want to raise saints (and hopefully become saints ourselves in the process)!

So, almost as a fun reminder, I've started a little series of illustrations. They're based on pictures I've been taking of my kiddos, that I've altered into reminders of the great saints who started out in families just like mine and yours. Hope you enjoy my first two attempts above (starring Angelica as St. Joan of

Arc and Mary as St. Therese of Lisieux)!

This contribution is available at <http://www.littledouglings.com/blog/2017/4/3/calles-to-greatness-saints-from-super-sized-families>
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| [Contents](#) |

'A lil' bit of hope' can go a long way, says 'The Vow' couple [at Peace Garden Passage]

Last year, I had the privilege of reading Scripture at a prayer breakfast that has been happening in my city of Fargo, N.D., for the past 40 years. [The New Life Center](#) has been offering hope for the homeless and hurting in our community since 1907. That's 110 years of commitment.

For their final prayer breakfast — the mission is transitioning to a fall fundraising event now — they fittingly asked Kim and Krickitt Carpenter, the couple whose story was made famous in the movie, "The Vow," and who focus on the topic of commitment, to be their keynote speakers.

I enjoyed talking with the couple by phone from their home in New Mexico recently to write [a preview story](#) ahead of their visit, and also, hearing them share their story in person just a few blocks from my home.



Krickitt and Kim Carpenter sign [their book](#) at the Hilton Garden Inn in Fargo, ND, on April 20

Bits of their real story, and the feelings they have about it now, seemed worthy of highlighting, since, as Kim said, we all need hope, and sometimes "a lil' bit of hope" is what it takes to keep living after a difficult time.

For those who don't know the story, it's easy to find in an internet search, such as [here](#). Briefly, though, Kim and Krickitt experienced a life-jolt just a few months after their wedding in 1993 when they were in a car accident that claimed Krickitt's short-term memory. The span of her memory loss went from 18 months prior to the accident to four months afterward. In other words, she lost all memory of meeting, falling in love with, and marrying her husband, Kim.

Reliving this story with them brought much emotion. When Krickitt described what it was like to view her wedding video and have no connection with the woman in the white dress who looked just like her, "I had no idea what was going through her mind; I have no memory of it," my heart broke for her, for both of them really. It's unfathomable, what they must have endured.

In the end, however, that's not the story. The story is that, despite this horrible occurrence, they stayed together. Why and how? Well, as their children said during a television interview several years ago, it's actually quite simple. "They just did what they said they were going to do."

Kim told me by phone that the spread of this story still baffles him, and says something about our culture today. "Forty years ago, this wouldn't even be a story," he said. "Back then, people understood what commitment was."

But somewhere along the line, we lost sight of its meaning. Commitment, Kim told me, is "not necessarily a firm belief in people's hearts, and this is having an adverse effect on family dynamics."

One of his and Krickitt's goals in their travels is to restore the importance of "meaning what we say," and bring hope.

During their Fargo visit, each talked separately, telling the real story through their perspectives. "My love grew for my husband," Krickett shared, after admitting that initially, she didn't want him around, and actually resented his presence as he tried to help her rehabilitate.

Eventually, a counselor identified the main reason the couple was struggling, being the first to discover and name Krickitt's short-term memory loss, despite her long-term remembrances being intact. "He said, 'You have no idea who this man is,'" she explained, noting that the discovery changed their lives, and helped them reclaim their past by creating a new one.

The counselor suggested they act as if they were single again, and date to get to know one another. Eventually, they decided to have a second wedding so that Krickitt could have some real memory of having married her husband. All these things proved healing, and important to their moving forward.

But it was a moment earlier, during the rehabilitation period, when Kim recognized God was still working in their lives, despite the despair in the aftermath of the accident. At the time, he was working away from home as a coach and traveling home on the weekends. He was committed to helping Krickitt — once an accomplished gymnast who now had to learn to walk again — gain strength physically.

And every night during his absence, he would call Krickitt to check in, even though she never really seemed to want to talk to him, he said. One night, however, things had gotten busy and he couldn't call. About 9:30 p.m. that evening, Kim said, his phone rang, startling him. He wondered right away what was wrong.

Krickitt's mother was on the other end. "Someone wants to talk to you," she'd said. Krickitt got on the line, and they had a short conversation before she flitted away again, "I gotta go now."

But to Kim, it was "the greatest words I'd ever heard...because I knew then that we were going to make it." God had not abandoned them; there was hope. "It was just a lil' bit of hope, but it was enough," he said.

During their talk, the couple also mentioned the tremendous role their faith had played in their staying together, which led, eventually, to bringing two children into the world, "the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," as Krickitt says she likes to think of it.

"I had agreed, on Sept. 18, 1993, that death would be the only thing that would separate us," Krickitt said. "The circumstances didn't matter. I was committed to the promise I'd made."

She also realized that someday, she would have to answer to God for how she'd lived her life, and said she knew she wouldn't be able to explain to God that an accident had made her leave her husband.

"Even though the feelings were completely gone, I figured if I liked him before, I could learn to like him again," she said, noting that eventually, "my love grew for my husband. My heart didn't necessarily go pitter-patter. It was a choice. Love is a choice."

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2017/04/a-lil-bit-of-hope-can-go-a-long-way-says-the-vow-couple/>
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| [Contents](#) |

An Email [at Do Not Be Anxious]

Dear Ann;

After our conversation about the Eucharist, I wrote you how this week the Gospels are all from John Chapter 6, and how our little Bible Study group was discussing those words. Those discussions gave me great consolations and new understandings, and thoughts of them, I pray, are some encouragement to you. But it seems I have been blessed with more thoughts on the topic, which I now dare to share.

Late yesterday afternoon I was asked and agreed to substitute at the adoration chapel for someone who was ill. I had already gone and spent time there, completing my usual evening prayers and readings, so when I went for the 11PM hour I took along a book that had lain on my shelf for a while --- from its title I did not expect it to be too interesting. It was titled: Littlest Suffering Souls – Children Whose Short Lives Point Us to Christ.

Was I ever wrong in my expectations!

The first chapter of the book was only 5 short pages --- which took me an hour to read and pray over. Little Nellie of Holy God, as she is called, died in 1908, at the age of four and one-half. She was amazingly aware of Christ during her illness-riddled life. The words which particularly struck me, however, were how near the end she began asking to receive the Eucharist. Told she was too young, she begged every day, and then asked her nurses to come straight to her after they had received the Eucharist and to kiss her lips, so she could at least receive the Eucharist indirectly. Eventually her faith led a bishop to be consulted, and he agreed she could be an exception to the rule, and receive. Little Nellie was overjoyed: "I will have Holy God in my heart. I will have Holy God in my heart." She received the Eucharist only 33 times before her death. During that time, miracles occurred around her. Years later her body was found to be incorrupt, and it was because of her example that the age allowed for first communion was lowered from 12 to 7 years old.

I think the people in the chapel, strangers to me last night, thought ME a little strange, as I prayed and sobbed over the love of God shown by such a little angel. The short story of her short life had huge depths, and sitting before the large host on the altar I could not but feel some of those depths.

This morning I arrived early for mass, but the door of the church was strangely unlocked. I went inside the dark church and lit a candle by the statue of Mary, and in the dim light read the Office of Readings meditations, including the following simple explanation of the Eucharist, by St. Irenaeus:

If our flesh is not saved, then the Lord has not redeemed us with his blood, the Eucharistic chalice does not make us sharers in his blood, and the bread we break does not make us sharers in his body. There can be no blood without veins, flesh and the rest of the human substance, and this the Word of God actually became: it was with his own blood that he redeemed us. As the Apostle says: *In him through his blood, we have been redeemed, our sins have been forgiven.*

We are his members and we are nourished by creation, which is his gift to us, for it is he who causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall. He declared that the chalice, which comes from his creation, was his

blood, and he makes it the nourishment of our blood. He affirmed that the bread, which comes from his creation, was his body, and he makes it the nourishment of our body. When the chalice we mix and the bread we bake receive the word of God, the Eucharistic elements become the body and blood of Christ, by which our bodies live and grow. How then can it be said that flesh belonging to the Lord's own body and nourished by his body and blood is incapable of receiving God's gift of eternal life? Saint Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians that *we are members of his body*, of his flesh and bones. He is speaking of a real human body composed of flesh, sinews and bones, nourished by the chalice of Christ's blood and receiving growth from the bread which is his body.

The slip of a vine planted in the ground bears fruit at the proper time. The grain of wheat falls into the ground and decays only to be raised up again and multiplied by the Spirit of God who sustains all things. The Wisdom of God places these things at the service of man and when they received God's word they become the eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ. In the same way our bodies, which have been nourished by the eucharist, will be buried in the earth and will decay, but they will rise again at the appointed time, for the Word of God will raise them up to the glory of God the Father. Then the Father will clothe our mortal nature with incorruptibility, for God's power is shown most perfectly in weakness.

I found the words, which I re-read to be a most compelling explanation of the Eucharist, by this saint, who died in 202AD. From the earliest point, the Church always believed Christ's words, that the eucharist became his body and blood.

And later, before the Gospel this morning, the priest recited these words, which were also from my morning prayer readings: "Alleluia, alleluia! Amen, amen, I say to you: Whoever believes in me will live forever. Alleluia, alleluia!" And the Gospel went on to say Jesus's subsequent words: "I am the bread of life."

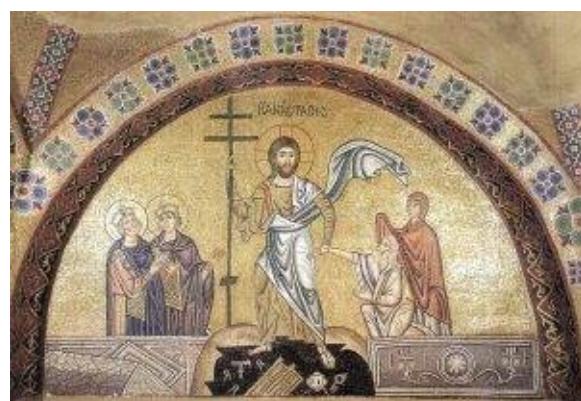
All these words and their timing, gave me great peace as I received Him, His Body and His Blood, this morning. I share them with you, Ann, because for some reason I think I should. And perhaps you also will find some measure of peace in them.

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The last few months I have read some really remarkable books (amidst the many so-so ones). I am derelict in writing reviews of these good reads, which shall occupy my next few postings --- including the book I referenced in this one.

This contribution is available at <http://do-not-be-anxious.blogspot.com/2017/05/an-email.html>
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The Harrowing of Hell



I first began to understand certain mystical truths as I prayed at the place where Jesus was crucified on the first Good Friday. I have written about some of these insights when I spent a night in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, but some were too much for me to understand at the time, and it has taken some years for me to grasp them in such a way that I can commit them to writing. I do not therefore promise that this will be an easy read, but I hope it will be a rewarding one.

The prolonged and unprecedent eclipse of the sun that plunged the world into darkness during Christ's terrible death on the cross, replicated the inner blackness that plunged his heart, his mind and his soul into pitch beyond pitch of anguish, grief and unutterable agony. No other will experience the hideous horrors that he experienced as the power of evil engulfed him and forced out of him that primeval *cri de coeur*, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*" It received an immediate response that raised him from the malign maelstrom that lay siege to every part of his being, and into the world where the goodness of God's glory enfolded him, obliterating the evil that had threatened to destroy him before.

The very moment after this evil threatened to obliterate him, was the moment when he descended from the heaven that he had so recently entered, into Hell. Now, the love that had done to death the evil that had so recently threatened to annihilate him, could also annihilate the evil in those who had gone before him. This is the meaning of the descent into Hell as depicted by the earliest icons. The Aramaic word Sheol was used to describe the place where those who had preceded Christ waited for his coming. Misunderstandings arose when the word Hell was used in translation to describe this place of waiting. The Jews used the word Gehenna to describe the place of eternal punishment that was full of flame and fury. It took its name from a valley near Jerusalem where some early kings of Juda were said to have burned their own children in sacrifice. The custom of misusing the word Hell to describe Sheol, has created an ambiguity that has prevented us from understanding fully the meaning of Christ's decent into Hell to bring salvation to the decent, the good, and the just, who had preceded him. The whole purpose of his descent was to infuse into them the love that he now shared with his Father, so that they could rise in, with and through him to enjoy what God had created them for in the first place.

However, Christ's descent into Hell has a further mystical meaning that is relevant to us all here and now in our daily spiritual lives. For Christ is at all times poised to release that same love, to do to death the evil that is within us, now. This is the fuller and mystical meaning of the descent into Hell, and of the icon that can remind us of it. It reminds us too of our responsibility to respond to the same love that destroyed the power of evil that once threatened to destroy Christ. What was done in him, will also be done in us, if we are only patient and persevere in the mystic way for long enough. Here we are

gradually purified sufficiently to be taken up in, with and through him, into God's glory, beginning in this life and continuing in the next.

When we look on this icon then, we are not just reminded of what once happened to those who preceded Christ, but what will happen to us now if we allow his love to do in us what has already been done in them. It is in this way that the prayer that we make to be delivered from all evil is answered. This icon is the best possible reminder for all who are travelling on the mystic way, of how we receive from Christ all the divine love that is necessary for the power of evil to be destroyed within us. Then, how our weak human love is infused with the divine to enable us to travel in, with and through him to the Paradise that Jesus promised to the good thief moments before he died. I refer to the good thief because it is never too late to start again, no matter how many times we have failed, no matter whether it is the last second of extra time, or whether we have our whole life before us. Agnes told me that I had my whole life before me to journey onwards toward the heaven that, as Dante insists in his Inferno, passes through Hell. She gave me a copy of an ancient Icon depicting Christ and his Harrowing of Hell that still hangs on the wall of my hermitage. But before I left she explained the difference between the descent into Hell that immediately followed Christ's death, and his continual descent into the Hell that is within us all. This second descent began after the Ascension, after the sending of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost, and it is ongoing.

Please do not be put off by the phrase the mystic way. This is just a traditional way of describing the daily hidden journey of all who try to transpose their morning offering into all they say and do each day. In the spirituality that Jesus gave to the early Christians, they tried to carry their daily cross, and so practised what came to be called 'white martyrdom' in which they died to self by living for God and for others. As followers of what was called the Way (Acts 9:2), they prayed five times a day as Jesus had done with his disciples. This came to be called the mystic way because it takes place within the Mystical Body of Christ, unseen and hidden to view. Later this regular daily prayer was transformed into what came to be called the divine office, but in those early days when of necessity people were busy about many things to earn their daily bread, they learnt to pause briefly during the day. It was then that they learned to send up what St Augustine first called ejaculations, short prayers similar to those used by the Desert Fathers:

"O God come to my aid, O Lord make haste to help me".

This is how they received the help and strength to make every moment of every day into what came to be called the prayer without ceasing. In this way, their continual giving enabled them to receive the love that would purify them of all the evil that would prevent them becoming Christlike people.

It was my mother who first taught me something so profound that I would never forget it. She said that even though I may make my morning offering alone by the side of my bed, I am not alone. Nor would I be alone even if I became a hermit and lived in the middle of some distant desert, or a prisoner locked up in solitary confinement at the other side of the world. My prayer would always be made in, with and through Jesus, and so with all other living Christians wherever they are.

She taught me that praying to the Father in Jesus also means praying with all those who have died, and who are now alive again in him. That means that when we pray, we pray also with Mary and Joseph, with St Peter and St Paul, St Dominic and St Francis, with St Catherine of Siena, St Teresa of Avila and St Thérèse of Lisieux, and all the other great saints and mystics. It also means praying for, with, and to, all my own relatives and friends both living and dead, who are alive again in him, and all who are dead,

but not yet fully alive in Christ. She especially taught me to pray for the Holy Souls, those who have died but who are not yet fully prepared to be united with the Risen One for the sins and the fruits of their sins that keep them at bay until they are fully purified.

Unlike things cannot be united, so we must be cleansed from all that prevents us from having full union with God. That is why, as we turn to receive his love that can and does descend into the evil that is deep down within us, all that separates us from him is gradually destroyed. And that is why it is here, and here alone in this profound mystical purification, that we are prepared for the full and everlasting joy of being united with God forever. Here in this home from home, all our hopes and all our dreams are finally realized with all whom we have loved and cherished here on earth.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.davidtorkington.com/the-harrowing-of-hell/>
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| [Contents](#) |



The Last Supper and the Passover

<https://broadanddeep.blogspot.com/>

We have at least a dozen children's storybook Bibles in our house. Some of them are fantastic. Some of them I don't read to the kids--I let them look at the pictures while I tell them the story. Most of them are pretty good in general, but have a couple problem spots.

The Last Supper tends to be one of those problem spots. In fact, one of our (otherwise favorite) children's Bibles actually separates the washing of the disciples' feet and the Last Supper into two separate meals. In the first story they "all got together for dinner" and in the second they were just "eating supper together."

Well. That's problematic on several accounts. Didn't Jesus wash his disciples' feet

at

the Last Supper? And what about the Last Supper being a Passover meal?

As it turns out, this kind of interpretation isn't limited to overly-creative retellings in storybook Bibles. The accounts of the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Gospel of John are commonly understood to contradict each other.

John's "Passover problem"

All four gospels agree that Jesus was crucified on Friday. The Synoptics clearly present the Last Supper as a Passover meal occurring before the crucifixion (see Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12, and Luke 11:15). But at first glance, John's gospel seems to propose a somewhat different set of events.

John tells us that when the Jewish leaders brought Jesus to Pilate, they did not enter the praetorium "so that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover" (John 18:28, RSV-2CE). A few verses later he tells us that the day on which Jesus was crucified was "the day of Preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14). These verses have led many to conclude that John places the Passover meal after the crucifixion, and therefore his account of the Last Supper contradicts the accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Considering the historical claims of the gospels--not to mention the Church's teaching that all of Scripture is divinely inspired and without error (see the

Catechism of the Catholic Church

paragraphs 105-108)--this apparent discrepancy is disconcerting, to say the least. So what are we to do

with it?

What does John mean by "the Passover"?

The word "Passover"--*pesach* in Hebrew and *pascha* in Greek--was used to refer to more than just the Passover Seder meal. It could refer to the entire week of Passover and Unleavened Bread, the sacrificial Passover lamb, the Seder, as well as the additional peace offerings sacrificed and eaten during the week of Passover (see Leviticus 23:4-8).

So when John tells us that the Jewish officials wanted to remain ritually clean so that they could "eat the Passover," he's not necessarily referring to the Passover Seder meal. "Eating the Passover" could also refer to partaking of the peace offerings sacrificed throughout the week of Passover.

In the same way, when John identifies Good Friday as "the day of Preparation of the Passover," he is simply telling us that it is Friday of the week of Passover, not necessarily the day of preparation for the Passover meal. The Greek word *paraskene*, "day of preparation," is the word commonly used for Friday because Friday is always the day of preparation for the Sabbath.

John is merely referring to the various elements of the week-long feast of Passover in simple and common terms for a first-century Jew. He is not necessarily setting up a timeline where the Passover Seder occurs on Friday night of Holy Week rather than Thursday.

Is this the only explanation?

No, but it's the simplest and the most compelling.

Another explanation, commonly referred to as the Calendar Proposal, suggests that when Jesus celebrated the Passover Seder at the Last Supper he was following an alternative Jewish calendar which placed the Passover meal on Tuesday of Holy Week, while the mainstream calendar followed by the Jewish leaders placed it on Friday night. This way, the gospels are correct in calling the Last Supper a Passover meal, even if John really does mean "the Passover Seder" when he refers to "the Passover" in 18:28 and 19:14.

This theory is certainly plausible. There is evidence that Judaism was divided over the liturgical calendar in the first century. There are also a few early Christian texts which state that Jesus celebrated the Last Supper and was arrested on Tuesday night. However, the clear sense of all four gospels is that the arrest, trials, and condemnation of Jesus take place in the span of a single night and the following

morning. This solution requires that we assume a different timeline than the gospels seem to present.

But wait! I thought John depicted Jesus as being crucified at the same time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple?

Some people suggest that John deliberately manipulates the historical timing of the Last Supper/Passover/crucifixion in order to present the sacrifice of the Passover lambs and the crucifixion as happening at the same time. Scripture clearly presents Jesus as the new Passover lamb, and wouldn't it be fitting for the sacrifice of the old lambs and the new Lamb to occur at exactly the same time?

Although this reading of John certainly has some appeal, it's more than a little problematic in light of John's multiple claims to be giving trustworthy, eye-witness testimony (see John 19:35, 21:24).

But the Passover is not the only sacrifice replaced by the Lamb of God.

The forgotten sacrifice

When we hear "sacrificial lamb" most of us probably think of the Passover. But every single day, morning and evening, the Jews sacrificed a lamb for the *Tamid* (continual or daily) offering. These unblemished, one-year-old male lambs were sacrificed along with an offering of bread and wine (see Exodus 29:38-43 and Numbers 28:1-8).

Josephus, the first-century Jewish priest and historian, tells us that the evening *Tamid* sacrifice was offered at the ninth hour (3pm) every day (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.4.3).

Does that time sound familiar? It should. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all include the detail that Jesus died at about the ninth hour (Matthew 27:46-50, Mark 15:33-37, Luke 23:44-46). Mark even tells us twice. Mark's is the shortest gospel--he doesn't waste words on any unnecessary descriptions or details. So why the precision and the repetition?

Because Jesus breathed his last as the evening

Tamid

was offered.

But wait, it gets even better!

Every morning and evening the

sacrifice was accompanied by particular prayers. While the lambs were being sacrificed--and while the Lamb of God was offering himself for our salvation--the Jews were praying for God's redemption, the forgiveness of sins, the coming of the Messiah, and the resurrection of the dead. Check out t

[his article by Dr. Brant Pitre](#)

for more detail.

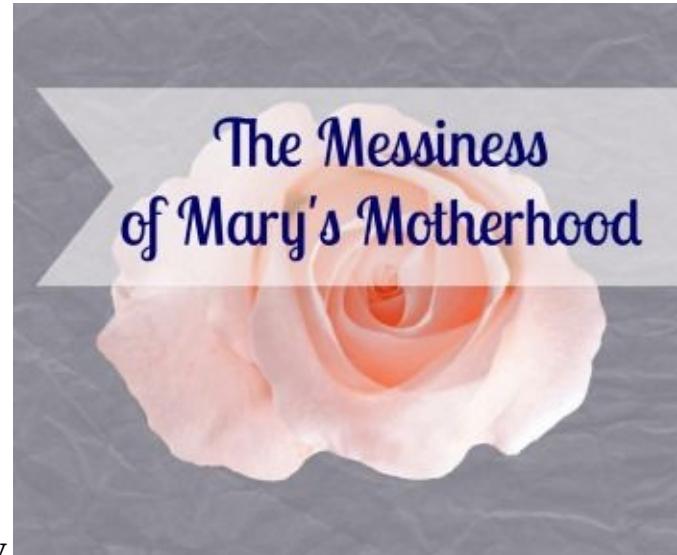
Want to go deeper? If you want an in-depth analysis, there is an entire chapter on it in [Brant Pitre's Jesus and the Last Supper](#). If you're looking for something a little lighter, the [Ignatius Catholic Study Bible](#) has a great essay comparing the various solutions to the "problem" of the timing of Passover (the essay is located at John 13).

This contribution is available at <http://broadanddeep.blogspot.com/2017/04/last-supper-and-passover.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

As I contemplate “Motherhood” for this month’s theme on Everyday Ediths, Mary is an obvious source of inspiration. May is the month of Mary, after all.

But this isn’t *that* post. (*You know, the one where I convince you that Catholics don’t worship Mary. There’s been about a million books and articles about that subject. For the record, we don’t, but that’s not what this is about.*)



This is about Mary and my own mothering journey.

Through the years I’ve seen a multitude of images of Mary. We have several in our home. Largely these statues and pictures convey the faith, hope, and love of our Blessed Mother. Gentle smiles and rosy cheeks offer an example of who we should be as mothers—whether that’s spiritual or physical—offering our fiat to whatever we are called.

But this whitewashed, glowing image of Mary isn’t the whole picture.

I’m in the business of growing little people. (That makes me picture a lawn gnome farm...) But I’m not talking about ceramic people, I’m talking about human people. Motherhood is literally my life’s work. There are moments I’m like the images of Mary, when the kids do something unexpectedly kind, and I smile gently, finding satisfaction in how good and holy and lovely life is. Then someone throws a shoe at someone else, and the moment is broken.

Most the time I do not have a gentle smile and peaceful heart. I’m trying. But if I’m being honest, when confronted with tantrums and drawn-on furniture, I often miss the mark.

The images in my home of Mary offer me something to shoot for. A goal. A model. Mary is my model. My momdel. (Get it?!?! Mom-del?)



I look at this image on display in my living room and remember to breathe. To pause and enjoy this present moment in my life. Most the time, I appreciate the reminder to embrace a calmness in my mothering. However, these images are not an invitation to gloss over the messiness of Mary's own life.

She was found to be pregnant before she was married. (In a time where stoning was a thing, this is not an unimportant detail.)

Consider also the traditional “Seven Sorrows of Mary.”

- The prophecy of Simeon (Luke 2:34-35)
- The flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-14)
- The loss of the Child Jesus in the temple (Luke 2: 43-45)
- The meeting of Jesus on the way of the Cross
- The Crucifixion
- The taking down of the body of Jesus from the cross
- The burial of Jesus

Mary might be the perfect image of motherhood, but that's not because she faced no challenges. **She is the perfect image of motherhood because she faced complete tragedy with faith.**

When confronted with suffering in my own life, I find comfort in images of Mary's sorrow.

Although the music in the video is secular (and isn't perfect in its theology), it does offer insight into Mary's motherhood.

The way she looks heartbroken. Her Jesus. Her Jesus is hanging on a cross. The little boy she watched grow into a man. As she cradles His body in her lap, it is apparent that her heart has been pierced, just as Simeon prophesied.

If the perky images of Mary encourage us to be virtuous, the sorrowful images of Mary remind us that we aren't alone in our suffering.

Motherhood is something beautiful. Special. Sacred. As someone who has experienced the tragedy of [losing a child during pregnancy](#), I have a keen awareness of how delicate the gift of motherhood is. Mary knows, too. She gets it. With her quiet acceptance, she has faced the worst. And still she chooses trust.

He gives her to us from the cross. Jesus offers Mary to us, not only as a model and intercessor, but as

someone who will hold our face in her hands and wipe our tears when life doesn't make sense. When we can't grasp how things can possibly get better. When we can't imagine how we'll get through the next day, the next minute, the next second because it hurts so much.

She knows. She's been there. With a future full of question marks. With a hole in her heart that can't be fixed with chocolate and a good nap.

The next time I see a stained glass window or gorgeous oil painting depicting Mary, I'm going to see past her perfectly coiffed mantle and downcast, humble eyes. I'm going to see her sufferings and mine intertwined in mess of tears, sweat, and blood. And I'll have confidence that someday my messy motherhood, my fiat, will bear fruit as well.

We Catholics don't worship Mary. But we do hold her hand as she leads us to Jesus in her example of faith, hope, and love.

For more on suffering and faith:

[She Will Not Get Better](#)

[The Lenten Luck of a Serious Diagnosis](#)

[Hope for Crushed Cans](#)

[Accepting the Ugliness of Suffering](#)

[Anxiety and Faith](#)

This contribution is available at <http://everydayediths.wordpress.com/2017/05/02/the-messiness-of-marys-motherhood/>
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| [Contents](#) |

Let Love Prevail [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

Let Love Prevail – Love Never Fails!



“Listen, stay alert, stand tall in the faith, be courageous, and be strong. Let love prevail in your life, words, and actions” (1 Cor. 16:13-14).

...

My fellow pilgrims and bothers and sisters in Christ,

In reading the words of the opening citation some of us who are struggling to move forward in our spiritual lives might be tempted to say: “easier said than done”.

Without realizing it, we are actually stating a realization of a truth that God the Father wants us to be fully aware of. Namely, that when we attempt to grow spiritually out of our own human zeal and drive, no matter how well intentioned, our devotions, we will always be disappointed.

The main reason being, that somehow, because of the lack of inspired catechesis and prayer, we do not realize that spiritual growth CANNOT come from within us. It must come from the the Holy Spirit giving us Spiritual Birth, Spiritual Food, and Spiritual Energy. I say this, remembering what Jesus told His disciples... ***“[only] Spirit can beget spirit”*** (see Jn 3:6) and ***“without me you can do nothing”*** (see Jn 15:5) , we begin to understand that there is nothing in our unredeemed human nature that can generate or maintain spiritual life, we must totally rely on God for all that is spiritual.

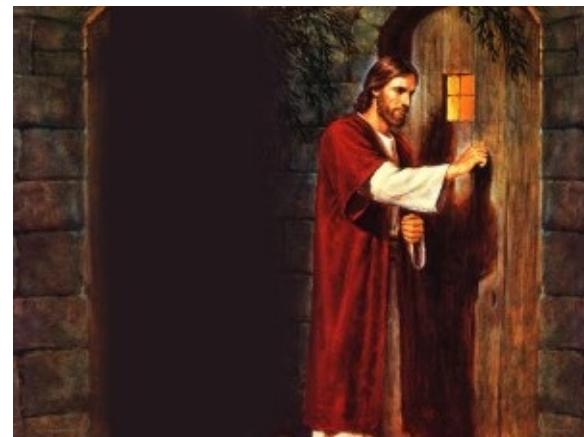
That is why Jesus also told us that He was ***“the Door”*** and that ***“no one can come to the Father But by Me”***

True Spiritual Life can only come when we, through an act of faith willingly acknowledging that Jesus died for our sins and, through believing in Him in repentance for our sins, we repent, yielding ourselves to Him and accept to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Now, what we also don't understand is that if we are baptized as babies and confirmed at 13 years of age, the Spirit of Christ may be in us but has not necessarily been activated through a deep personal knowing and willing act of our will. Without such an activation the Holy Spirit may work around us or

through the circumstances of our lives but He will not be active in the inner sanctuary of our lives, “our spirit”, because He respects our inner self so much that He will not force Himself on us.

This lack of understanding will prevent us from establishing a true and living personal relationship with Jesus. There may be various reasons and circumstances why this happens, but the main one being that we don’t come to “know Jesus” as a living person, who loves us and lives in us. Such a personal relationship with Jesus begins when we open the our hearts to Jesus the Son of God, not only as Our Savior but also as Our Lord who earnestly desires for us to know Him and dialogue with Him. Remember Jesus, Himself, expressed His desire to commune with us as follows...



Jesus is knocking at your door ...

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” (Rev. 3:20)

Incited by His Word, we may ask ourselves, “I want to yield to Him and activate His Presence in me – how do I go about doing that?”

First of all, I suggest that we put ourselves in the right state of heart and, meditating on His Word and especially, what the Lord said through Jeremiah, and speak out His promise: , “***And [if] you shall seek me, [you] will find me, when you search for me with all your heart.***” (Jer. 29:13)

We do this in such a manner that we express our utmost desire to be with Him with all our heart Then, as you sense His Presence before you, in your spirit, open the door and let Him into your heart by praying smoethiung like this ...

(Prayer of Commitment)

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

...

It is because I have a burning desire to know you and abide in you that I now yield myself completely to you and your love. I open the door to my heart so you can come in and sup with me and thus begin the special relationship with you for which you died and for which I hunger. At this moment I yield myself to

your love. Enter in and activate my spirit with your Holy Spirit so that I can go beyond just mere intellectual belief in you to a personal spiritual knowledge of you and the Father.

...

Lord, cleanse me from my sins and make me a fit vessel for your presence. Permeate my entire being with your life and your love so that I can truly be your instrument in this world. Be my Lord, Be My God, Be my King to rule and to reign in me. In faith and by your grace I receive you and I receive your word. Abide in me just as you abide in the Father and the Father in you! Thank you for giving yourself for me. Amen

...

Admitting Him in this way, personally into our lives, also means that not only are we yielding ourselves to His reign, but also we enter into His Kingdom – The Kingdom of His Divine His Love. And it is His Love that must prevail in our lives if we are to fulfill the Father's for each of us!

That my brothers and sisters, is why at one point this is what Jesus was emphasizing to His disciples when He told them about seeking the Kingdom (of Divine Love)...

“... seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness and everything else in the Father’s purposes for you will follow” (see Mathew 6:33).

This Kingdom – the Kingdom of Agape Love – is what Jesus was referring to, not only to His disciples then but to us, His disciples today. This is the Kingdom of Love that you have just yielded yourself to. Praised be His Holy Name!!

We also should note that the prayer that we call the “Our Father” was, in fact, intended by Jesus to be a prayer for his disciples teaching them on how to dedicate themselves to the “Kingdom of Love” and how to maintain themselves in that “Kingdom” so that His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Here is prayer Jesus taught them....

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matt. 6:9-13)

However, because we believers sometimes practice our devotions with such a routine of custom and tradition that we lose sight of the inner depth of what Jesus was really teaching in this prayer.

First of all we must remember that this was NOT Jesus' exact prayer to His Father. If it were His prayer it would have begun with “My Father”, since He always made the distinction: “my Father and your Father” to indicate their adopted status versus His as “only Begotten”. So the prayer that He taught them should really be termed the “disciple’s prayer”, since it was tailored for them, so that, in praying to the Father, they made clear that the person they were praying to was so Holy or hallowed, that they should not even pronounce His Name! However, the Key point was that as His adopted children in Christ they now could petition Him as “Father”.

The second thing to remember is that the first petition of the prayer was not just a petition that the Lord

sovereignly bring about His Kingdom on Earth. NO, the petition He was asking His disciples to make was to yield themselves totally, body, soul and spirit to the Father so that by His Spirit of Love working in them and through them His Will could be accomplished in this world “as it is in Heaven”. Rephrasing the prayer accordingly it could be more appropriately stated as follows:

“Our Father... [Let] Your Kingdom come [into me so that the Your LOVE will reign in me and through me, so that] Your will may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven”.

This brethren, is the key offering or dedicating of oneself, totally to God – it is how one truly enters into true discipleship under the kingdom of His Love. It is the same as St. Therese give herself fully to God’s “Agape” Love, which she termed “Charity” and entered into her discipleship following Jesus. (“***It was December 25, 1886, that I received the grace of leaving my childhood, in a word, the grace of my complete conversion . . . I felt charity enter into my soul, the need to forget myself and to please others; since then I've been happy!***” – St. Therese of Lisieux)

For you see, the “Kingdom” that Jesus referred to in the “Our Father” was not an apocalyptic “kingdom” to come in the future but a Real Spiritual Kingdom that all believers can enter right NOW! And it we enter it when we yield ourselves totally to the Father’s Love that is in us (Rom. 5:5) and submit ourselves to His reign, the reign of Divine Love in us and through us every day of our lives. This is what St.Therese did and why she manifested God’s Divine Life through the remainder of her life!

Now, in order to fulfill our yielding to the Divine each day of our lives, our commitment to God needs to be strengthened and affirmed on a regular basis. That is why the Disciples Prayer continues by asking for the Spirit to re-affirm His Love in us through a frequent, if not daily, reception of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of His Love! And also to forgive us our sins that tend to weaken our fellowship with the Divine and thus our ability to truly be a channel go His Love to others. For, Jesus told His disciples (and us) that we are to “***Love one another as I have Loved you***” (John 15:12). And not just the human kind of love, but the Divine kind... “***As the Father has Loved Me so I have Loved you***” (John 15:9).

The common way we understand Jesus’ directive to “Love one another as I have Loved you” is to think we are to force or discipline the natural love with which we have been endowed to imitate Jesus’ love for his disciples. We take to this understanding because the real spiritual meaning is too hard for us to believe. For you see the Love which Jesus is asking us to place into action in our lives is the Divine Love that the Father has placed in us for His Glory, not ours.

This kind of love is the supernatural Divine Love that flowed from Jesus to His disciples through the Holy Spirit, who is the Divine Love. It is a Love that can only be experienced through a relationship with the Divine. It is such a Love that He is now asking to flow between each of us as the manifestation of His Kingdom.

This is the Divine Love that has been poured into our spirits. However, Living out our lives in this type of Love is not easy. The following is what the Apostle Paul says about living out the spiritual pathway to this type of Love...

“ ... we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His [divine, agape] love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us”.
(Rom. 5:3-5)

This kind of Love cannot be forced through any natural discipline it can only come when we Christians enter into a personal relationship with the Father through the Son and surrender ourselves completely to the Holy Spirit so that we are totally free to be channels of this Divine Love to each other. In order for His Kingdom of Divine Love to come in us we must, out of our faith and will, come to the awareness of this divine type of Love and, surrender our human selves to its embrace, and the dying to self that it entails.

Now, besides our Faith and the free will offering of ourselves, there are conditions placed on our entering and maintaining ourselves in His Kingdom of Love.

<> *The first of these conditions is that we Love One another:*

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make Our home with him. Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words. The word that you hear is not My own, but it is from the Father who sent Me....“ (John 14:22-24)

We must rely continually on His Spirit to strengthen us in our resolve – that is why we need to repent, and receive our daily bread from the Sacrament of His Love – the Eucharist.

<> *The other condition being that we express our Love by forgiving others in the same way He has forgiven us.*

“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matt. 6:14)

<> *If we are faithful to His Command of Love Jesus will ask the Father to empower us with the Holy Spirit so that we can fulfill our role as the messengers of His Love.*

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.” (John14:15)

...

In conclusion brethren, I pray that His Kingdom Of Love come into each one of us so that, in yielding to His Reign, we may become His instruments in seeing that His will is accomplished, here on earth as it is in heaven! Praised be His Holy Name!

Your Brother In Christ and Fellow Pilgrim ... Bartimaeus

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The Patience of God [at Walking the Path]



PATIENCE

Throughout today's readings the theme of patience appears. It seems no matter what God will patiently wait until the time is right and then they will be rewarded. In Ezekiel the Lord tells the people I will open your graves and have you rise from them (

[EZ 37:12](#)

). Paul's letter to the Romans talks of the body being dead, but the Spirit providing life(

[ROM 8:8](#)

). And finally in John Jesus's patience is keenly demonstrated as he waits for Lazarus to pass away and then despite protests from his disciples, returns to Bethany to resurrect Lazarus (

[JN 11](#)

). The word patience has its origins from 12th century according to the website Online Etymology Dictionary. I

t refers to patience as the "quality of being willing to bear adversities, calm endurance of misfortune, suffering." How contradictory is this definition to the secular society today. Moreover, how challenging is this to one who attempts to live out their Christian faith.



WAIT WAIT WAIT

I know that I am not a very patient person. I cannot wait for someone to finish talking so that I can get my word in. I fret over traffic signals that seem to take an eternity. I don't like waiting for water to boil for my pasta or rice. And at times I can't wait for the day to end.

What is interesting is watching other people being impatient. Over the last few weeks I have watched the NCAA basketball tournament. I was mesmerized by the panel of analysts who were talking about the games in progress or that had just ended. Many of them were tapping their fingers or fidgeting with their pens as their colleagues were talking. They could not wait to jump in to get respective point heard. Sometimes the segment ended and they were left silent. I am sure they were able to talk off the set about their take on the situation.



However despite all of this I just cannot see God tapping a pencil as he waits for me to fall in line, to rid myself of the many sins that bind me. If so he would go through lots of pencils. Instead taking the various passages of Scripture today mercy and patience prevail. Despite the fact that it took over half of my adult life to figure out that God was being patient with me as I drifted.

PATIENTLY CARING We hear of the patience of Job and how he endured despite his friends who mocked him. Suffering patiently is not something most people long for. Our nation and world is full of problems that can be directly attributed to the lack of patience and mercy as well as suffering. So-called mercy killings and over-medicating are rampant problems. Suffering patiently is contrary to societal norms. However, there are those standout, who take on roles of caring for those with dementia, care for the disabled, poor and those on the fringes of society. They themselves are models of patience living out the example of the Gospel.

PATIENT PRAYER



I somewhat understand the idea of patience and mercy. I pray for patience as I drive, I pray to be a better listener, I pray to be patient and merciful with those around me. I pray and I pray.

Sometimes there is a breakthrough, other times I see that those faults which I so desperately want remedied seem to take forever. This is a chance for further reflection. Jesus waited quite a while for Peter to figure things out so I see myself in Peter at times. God waited many times for the Jews to follow the teaching of prophets so I also see myself in the Jews who seemed to wander aimlessly in the desert. Through the workings of the Spirit I am redirected as I veer off the path. My faith tells me that Jesus is waiting for me patiently as he did for the four days to cure Lazarus. I hope that there many others as well with me.

This contribution is available at <http://walkingthepathtoholiness.blogspot.com/2017/04/the-patience-of-god.html>
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| [Contents](#) |

Trying to be tough: the cultural poison of bravado



I was in high school when the OJ Simpson verdict came down. I hadn't followed the story with any great care, and I didn't really have an opinion on it. But when I heard the news from a fellow student at our lockers, I muttered "he should have fried."

Immediately I felt uneasy. I didn't really mean that. I was trying it out to see how it sounded (which is something lots of teenagers do). And I really, really wanted to sound tough.

The more time I spend on the internet, the more convinced I become that most of the "hot takes" and controversial statements that provoke fights on the internet are caused by the desire to sound tough. But rather than outgrowing it, as I have tried to, it seems that many people have become coarsened by it. It has made us stingy and cruel, and it breaks my heart.

Who decides what we deserve?

I often hear the statement that one shouldn't give a panhandler money "in case they spend it on drugs". I have written before about how [my choices to be generous have less to do with the recipient](#) and how I might judge their want, and more to do with the kind of person I want to be.

If I am really committed to generosity and charity (which as a Christian I claim to be), it shouldn't matter whether or not the recipient meets my standards. **I feel a moral responsibility to figure out where the line between prudence and stinginess lies in my heart and pocketbook, and to make sure I'm always on the right side of it.**

The right kind of suffering

The current debate about how laws about health insurance will treat those with pre-existing conditions has raised this issue again. Yesterday with "those people who lead good lives" and "who have done things the right way."

Since I have a pre-existing condition, of course that caught my eye, and I was fired up about this fallacy that health issues are always the fault of the sufferer. But as I thought more I detected a remarkable stinginess in it that betrays a fundamental concept of insurance: not only do we contribute to insurance so that we may be protected in the future, but **so that others in our community may also be protected.** And it shouldn't matter whether or not I think someone "deserves" to be sick.

Laugh if you want at this idea, but I don't think it's that off base. Long before I developed Crohn's I happily paid into insurance and planned to never use it. I pay taxes so that there can be improvements made to my city, state and nation, even if I don't directly benefit from those things. I don't think I'm

unique in this regard. The challenge I face is not to give into the temptation to judge who is worthy of being helped.

Tough about death

Also in the news recently was [Arkansas' rush to execute multiple inmates before their execution drugs expired](#). The stories that came out about these convicts were heartbreaking. Some had lived through extreme child abuse, some had diminished mental capacity, most had lived in poverty, and because of their poverty had horrendous representation in the legal system.

But for some death penalty proponents, their insistence on promoting the state's right to kill prisoners outweighed all of these things. Staying tough was more important than determining if justice had been done. Even for someone who thinks the death penalty is moral or just (which I do not), it should be troubling that men who are vulnerable – or even innocent! – are being executed. But to be troubled by that wouldn't be "tough".

"The Sacred Right of Self-Defense"

In a recent speech to the NRA, President Trump referred to a "[sacred right of self-defense](#)". This was my first time hearing the term, though it seems to be popular in certain circles (I'll leave you to guess which circles those are). I fail to see any Scriptural basis for this, particularly in the life and example of Jesus, but I guess if you read the quasi-Christian Deist writings of the Founding Fathers in the right light and squint, you might be able to find it.

There are lots of reasons to own and use guns, but in the last 15 or 20 years one has risen to the top: to kill people if you decide you need to. As someone who grew up thinking of the NRA as a group for hunting enthusiasts, I have been saddened and troubled by this change in rhetoric. Some speak so blithely about the possibility that they might need to kill someone, and take for granted that they will have the judgement to decide if this is necessary. We have even codified in Stand Your Ground laws that you don't even have to be right about whether you were threatened – you need to prove your feelings, not an actual threat. What have we become?

This in a land of safety and abundance

Crime rates are low. People have more technology to lock their doors and surveil their property. And on top of that, many, many people we meet everyday are good and kind. But we put up our hackles, imagine offense and assume the worst.

Many of us – not all, but many – have more than enough. I am included in this group. I could be more generous and less judgmental of those who present themselves to me and proclaim their need.

America has astonishing amounts of wealth, and an even higher amount of creativity and ingenuity. We *could* educate and feed every child. We *could* structure a health care system that isn't focused on enriching insurance and pharmaceutical companies. We *could* create a restorative justice system that treats people with dignity. We *could* make beautiful open spaces where people come together. We *could* live in diverse neighborhoods where we learn from each other. **America could do all of these things, but we choose not to.**

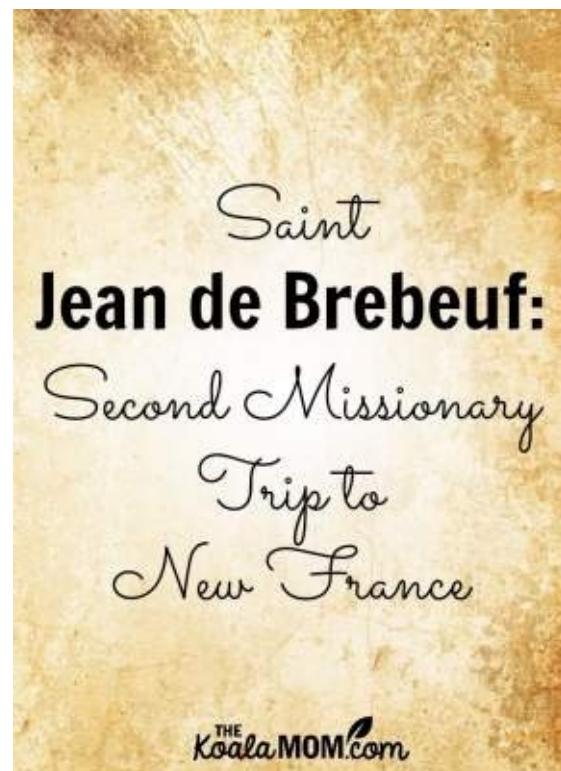
I don't know if this is because we are obsessed with being tough, or if we terrified of losing what we have, or because we have been trained to be terrified of others, or if we are so used to radical independence that we are blind to our interdependence. I wish I had more of the answers. For now I see too many symptoms of cruelty and hardness but fail to see a cure, other than to keep working on keeping that plague of bravado out of my own heart and voice.

This contribution is available at <http://margaretfelice.com/2017/05/02/trying-to-be-tough/>
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| [Contents](#) |

Saint Jean de Brebeuf embarked on [his first missionary journey](#) to New France in 1625. He spent four years among the Huron, learning their language and customs. Then war between the English and the French forced him to return to France. There, Fr. Brebeuf made his final vows as a Jesuit and served as steward, minister and confessor at the College of Eu.

Relationships with the people of New France were very important to Fr. Brebeuf and his companions. It's hard to share stories and God's love without a relationship with the person listening. Despite this, it wasn't easy for the priests to get to know the Huron and Iroquois. Often as moms, we may also struggle to form relationships with those around us. Just as the priests were viewed with suspicion for what they did, we may be judged by other moms for what we do. Yet like Fr. Brebeuf, we can continue to reach out with love to those around us, and to live our faith for them.



Saint Jean de Brebeuf Returns to New France

In 1632, England and France signed a treaty returning Quebec to the French. Fr. Brebeuf, along with [Fr. Antoine Daniel](#), returned to the Huron missions. Despite the fact that Fr. Brebeuf had made no converts in his first missionary journey, he had apparently formed good relationships with the Huron. They "lamented the loss of their robust and intelligent priest who regarded the Natives as his own brothers and sisters" ([Schmidt](#)). On his return, however, Fr. Brebeuf found it difficult to re-establish relationships.

Political problems abounded, despite the truce with England. Samuel de Champlain, the re-appointed lieutenant general, had to partially rebuild Quebec. The Iroquois, who traded mostly with the Dutch, attacked the Huron and the French repeatedly and blockaded their trade routes. This postponed the missionaries' journey to Huronia from 1633 to 1634, and when Fr. Brebeuf and Fr. Daniel did go, it was "by a more desolate northern route that included eight hundred miles by canoe" ([Schmidt](#)).

The Mission to the Huron

Arriving at Ihonatiria (near the village where he had lived from 1626-1629) in 1934, Fr. Brebeuf was named Superior of the Jesuit missions. He held this position for the next four years. With help from the Huron, the priests built themselves a dwelling, similar to those of the Huron. Fr. Brebeuf compared them to “bowers or garden arbors—some of which, in place of branches and vegetation, are covered with cedar bark, some others with large pieces of ash, elm, fir, or spruce bark” (John Wynne, *The Jesuit Martyrs of North America*).

Besides teaching the Huron, Fr. Brebeuf also taught Fr. Daniel to speak Huron. They found it hard to overcome the superstitions of the Huron. During their first year, they baptized only twelve, all of whom were ill or elderly and about to die. Historian John J. Wynne explains that they would “confer baptism on adults only after mature preparation and proof of constancy.”

During Fr. Brebeuf’s years at Ihonatiria, illness ravaged the Huron. [Latourelle](#) notes, “The epidemics of 1634 (smallpox combined with dysentery), 1636 (malignant influenza), and 1639 (smallpox), reduced to 12,000 a population that Sagard, Brébeuf, and Champlain estimated at 30,000 souls.”

These epidemics were blamed on the missionaries. In 1637, Fr. Brebeuf wrote a letter to his superior predicting that they could be massacred. That year also had some good news, though: the priest baptized their first healthy adult convert.

The Jesuit Village of Ste. Marie

In 1636, Fr. Daniel returned to Quebec to found a boys’ school and Fr. Jogues joined Fr. Brebeuf in the mission. Two years later, Fr. Brebeuf established a new mission at Teanaostaiaë. It was beset by difficulties, however, especially when the smallpox epidemic of 1639 caused riots, beatings, and the desertion of most of his converts.

The rivalries of the various Huron villages caused the missionaries to change their tactics in 1639. Fr. Brebeuf and his companions established a new village, Ste. Marie, on the Wye River, a short distance away from their other missions. They had found that identifying with one village made them less welcome in other villages. From the new mission, they were able to make trips to new tribes as well as to their current missions.

In 1641, Fr. Brebeuf returned to Quebec, where he coordinated the missions for the next three years. During that time, he wrote the Huron Christmas carol, still a popular Christmas song today. These were difficult times for the missions, as the threat from the Iroquois was stronger than ever. Mission convoys were often captured by the Iroquois, and in 1642, [Rene Goupil](#) became the first martyr and Fr. Isaac Jogues spent a year as an Iroquois prisoner.

Saint Jean de Brebeuf’s Final Years

Fr. Brebeuf returned to his work among the Huron in 1644. In the next four years, three more missionaries were martyred by the Iroquois. Fr. Brebeuf had once witnessed the Iroquois torture their victim (one of his recent converts) and knew what death at their hands meant. Despite this, he remained

with his people, teaching and helping. In 1649, the Iroquois attacked the village where Fr. Brebeuf was serving with Fr. Lalemant. After being tortured, they were martyred on March 17.

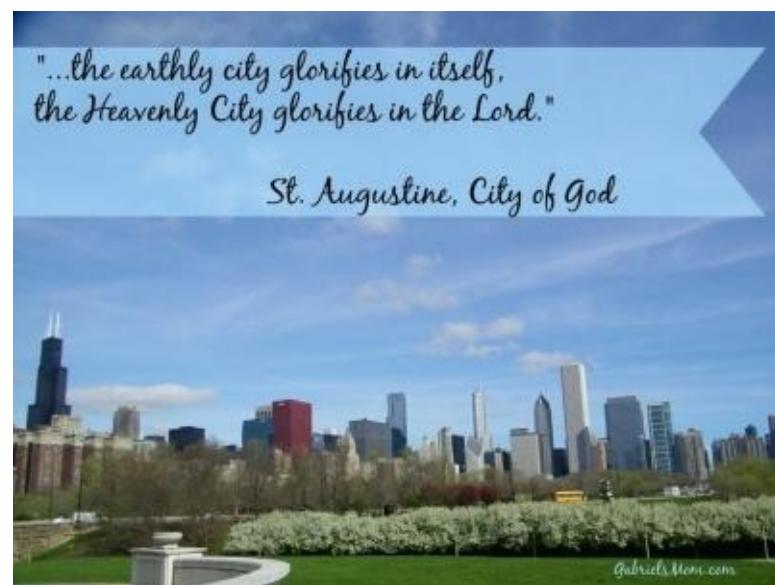
St. Jean de Brebeuf, you didn't let superstition or fear prevent you from trying to form relationships with those you met. Pray that I might also reach out to those around me with friendship and kindness. May my relationships reflect God's love, even when I am judged and persecuted as you were. Amen.



This contribution is available at <http://thekoalamom.com/2017/04/saint-jean-de-brebeuf-second-trip/>
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| [Contents](#) |

Inspirational Speaker



Last week, I was blessed to attend the annual [Heartbeat International](#) Conference, held in Chicago. The theme was “On a Mission from God,” inspired by the classic 1980 film “The Blues Brothers.” We all received dark sunglasses for fun, and I swear I saw Elwood greeting people at the door!

I attended many of these conferences while I was working at Women’s Care Clinic, and I have continued going because I always learn something new. Not to mention, I just love these people! Seriously, this is a happy bunch who are committed to helping women in need, treasuring babies unborn and born, and encouraging men who feel unprepared to be dads. It’s tough work, but it is all done in love.

At the opening session, Jor-El Godsey, President of Heartbeat International, spoke of the incredible significance of being in Chicago this year. I confess that, due to my level of excitement, I was thinking he was referencing the fact that Chicago is home to the World Series Champion Cubs baseball team! But quickly I knew he was speaking of far more important things. Illinois has recently passed legislation requiring all medical professionals to provide abortion referrals to anyone who asks for one. This is clearly a violation of conscience rights. Some pregnancy centers have filed suit; I hope many more do as well. But Jor-El made a powerful statement about our situation in Illinois:

This gathering is a declaration that we will obey the laws of God over the laws of man.

Our culture is growing increasingly secular, and so any “Mission from God” is mocked or attacked. Opposing voices describe Christian pro-lifers as judgmental, ignorant, and brainwashed. The notion that faith and reason can, and should, coexist is lost on many people. But this conference was filled with professionals such as physicians, lawyers, and counselors who do combine faith and reason on a daily basis. Many individuals in the movement may not have the same credentials, but they, too, combine faith and reason when they take their incredibly relevant life experiences into helping women experiencing unplanned pregnancies. I have been involved in the pregnancy help field for more than 20

years now (gasp!), and I have seen more and more training provided for people in all roles. Conferences, webinars. And it is quality training. We love what we do, but we take it seriously. We serve a Mighty and Excellent God, therefore we should always serve with excellence. We also serve with joy! (Cue the sunglasses)

I remember in late 2006 when the local ministry was wrapping up our preparation for “medical conversion,” that is, to add ultrasound. I was on the phone in the evening with a someone who sees the world very differently than I do. When I told her about our upcoming visit and review from Focus on the Family for the Option Ultrasound Project, I talked about the added medical policies and training we had to complete. She seemed surprised. I told her that using an ultrasound machine is not a game or a gimmick; it is a real medical procedure that would be done by real medical professionals. This fact did not fit the “pro-choice” narrative she had heard so many times.

Of course, the added benefit for us at Women’s Care Clinic and all affiliates of Heartbeat International is the element of faith in a Loving God! We believe He created each person uniquely. Yes, some pregnancies happen in unfortunate circumstances, but God knows the identity of every child. Whether conceived through the love of marriage, the after-school misbehavior of teens, or even the violence of rape, God knows and loves every child. Every mother. Every father.

Every. Single. One.

So we do this work...this mission...because we are called by God to reach out and protect unborn babies. We are called to support mothers and fathers. We are called to do this in His Name. The One True God, Who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit forever and ever! Amen!

This contribution is available at <http://gabrielsmom.com/2017/04/a-mission-from-god/>
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| [Contents](#) |

Charlotte Bronte's 201st: Celebrate 7 ways [at Erin McCole Cupp]



Mrs. Bell Nichols! Currer Bell! The most esteemed author of *Jane Eyre*, *Vilette*, *Shirley*, and co-author of myriad tales from Angria! She is 201 years young, and many more to her! Here are seven ways you can get down with your bad, Gothic romance-loving self and celebrate the day!

-1-

Creep down from your attic and let loose with your bad self!



To reveal my soul
From its quiet heart; And it is too painful,
With blushing lips on the floor, to speak of me.

Has someone been keeping you in the dark? Not letting you honor that burning fire within your soul? Put a stop to that smothering of your wild, feminine self and rip it up!

-2-

Have a tea party and invite your guests to play “Pin the Madwoman in the Attic!”*

*Please see printable for disclaimer regarding the humane treatment of individuals suffering from actual mental illness.

-3-

Knock someone off his high horse.



Be assured the knock-ee will call you in to his study to question you at length on various subjects, including whether or not you think him handsome.

You don't, of course.

-4-

Trick your crush into thinking you're a travelling fortune teller, and tell really passive aggressive fortunes.



Not sure if your plot to make bae jelly is working? There's only one way to find out. It's this one. The fake fortune teller thing. Works every time.

-5-

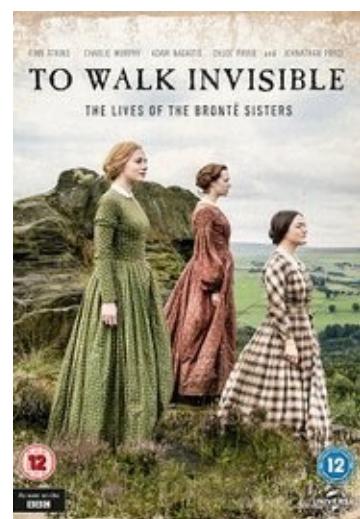
Have a heartbreakingly romantic reunion with your favorite Byronic hero.



YES I'M CERTAIN LET'S GET MARRIED!!!!!!11!1!

-6-

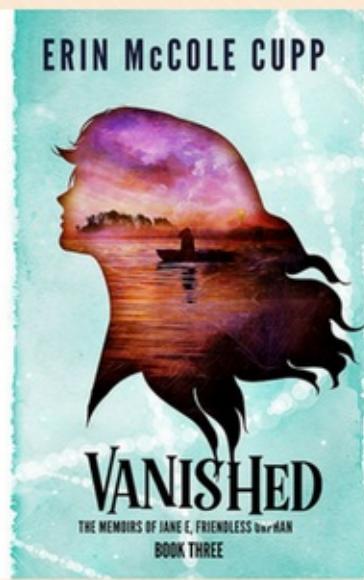
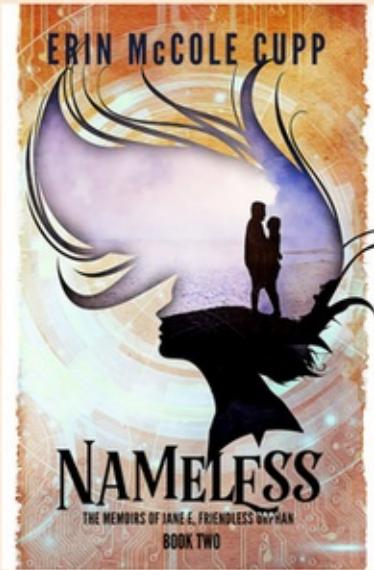
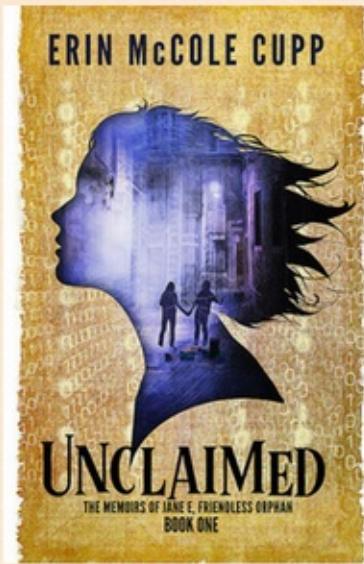
Get to know Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell!



Have you seen [To Walk Invisible Yet](#)? I have not. Your thoughts? I've heard both good and bad on it. Still, I do hope to catch it soon (once tech week for the play I'm directing is over). I think I should wait for a dreary day when the wind is howling across the moors and the weather is so bad that only Lowood

School would send its students out to walk in it.

-7-



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“I love the old classics but I also love futuristic stories. *Unclaimed: The Memoirs of Jane E.* combines both elements in a fun-to-read, hard-to-put-down book. With imagination and a great writing style, Erin McCole Cupp has created a powerful futuristic story that is a real thought-provoker. Science fiction readers will love the creative futuristic elements. At times humorous and other times heart-wrenching, this story delves into issues worth considering as society advances.” [Theresa Linden, *The Liberty Trilogy*](#)

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“A brave and thought-provoking story rich with vivid details and authentic, memorable characters.” [Therese Heckenkamp, *After the Thaw*](#)

What other ways could you celebrate this famous literary birthday?

Comment below with your plans!



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| [Contents](#) |

ADHD and the Divine Mercy Chaplet [at Catholic Conundrum]



I have a problem. I LOVE the Divine Mercy Chaplet and all of the beautiful and incredible blessings that it offers. BUT (and this is a huge BUT), I have an enormously difficult time praying and focusing on it. I am not diagnosed with ADHD (although several family members fervently maintain that I have it), but I do have, at the very least, some of its tendencies. Add to these a full life of constant balancing and I guess that it is not difficult to see why true focus seems almost impossible.

I had begun to feel real frustration with getting through the Chaplet. It completely amazed me that I could start it with a full heart, focused and ready to go, and then suddenly realize that I am at the end, having little memory of focusing on His mercy, but plenty of memory of the dozens of places my thoughts had run off to.

I actually began to consider that this beautiful prayer just wasn't for me. What good was praying it if I was unable to make it true quality time with my Lord?

However, despite these thoughts, I couldn't shake the feeling that God still wanted me to continue trying. So, since nothing is impossible for Him, I asked for help, since it had become painfully clear that I was completely unable to do it on my own.

And, answer He did! One day, on my way to a preparation meeting with a core team before a retreat, I tried praying the Chaplet in the car. Again perplexed at my inability to concentrate, I prayed an exasperated prayer of help. Suddenly, distinct thoughts of each of the talks that were to be given for the retreat came to mind, and He gave me the idea to focus each decade on a particular one. I was absolutely amazed at how much easier it was to focus on each talk as I concentrated on praying for the speaker and those attending the retreat who would be receiving his/her message, all in the light of God's mercy!

Truly in awe of the difference, I have gone on to focus on His mercy in regards to other things and

people in my life as well. Then, today I felt called to change it up even more. I began on the first bead to pray for someone I knew that was struggling. My mind immediately went to others involved in his struggle (a person suffering from cancer), and my mind prayed for mercy for each of them, moving on to a new bead each time. This was truly an inspiring and incredible gift from God. Amazingly, as I continued, more people kept popping into my head, some related to previous ones, and some not. By the time I was done I had sincerely prayed for God's mercy to be poured out upon 50 people!! How incredibly amazing is that??

The experience meant so much to me that I felt that I just had to share it!! I will admit sheepishly that there are probably many of you who already pray the Chaplet using these approaches and many other ones as well. However, I really feel I would be remiss if I didn't express my joy in finding a way to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet more effectively despite the challenge of attention deficiency - a challenge that so many people deal with daily.

I also praise the Lord Who showed me how to spend my time with Him in a way that not only brings me more intimately closer to Him, but also allows me to share in a deeper connection with the Body of Christ.

I do pray that this post is able to provide someone the hope of a similar intimacy and connection to what I have experienced by inspiring new approaches to this beautiful gift of prayer from Our Lord.

May your day be TRULY blessed with continued Easter joy!!

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This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicconundrum.com/blog/adhd-and-the-divine-mercy-chaplet>
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| [Contents](#) |

DIY Heirloom Play Mass Set [at Equipping Catholic Families]

It's hard to believe that Adam is going to be seven this week!



Last year, I made a Play Mass kit for Adam...and I love the way it turned out!



I put a quick little 'how-to' craft kit for you with information for my favorite wood supply store... complete with an itemized purchase list to make it easy for you. See below...

The Play Mass Craft Kit includes the *itemized order form as a PDF* to order your own pieces!

You will purchase the materials directly from the wood company. No, I'm not getting any commission =), I just really like what this company has available (including the [peg dolls](#) I've been using for years), along with their awesome customer service...*and the fact that they do ship to Canada!*



© equippingCatholicfamilies.com



© equippingCatholicfamilies.com

I glued a couple pieces together, painted the hosts and the pall white and added a clear coat to everything. The pieces need at least 24 hours to dry so that they don't stick to each other, once they're stored.



© equippingCatholicfamilies.com

I chose to use the battery-powered tealights and the little cork-stopped bottles from the Dollar Store to make the kit a little extra fun.

I found the cross at a craft store, but if you have a small standing crucifix, that's even better!

I raided the family linen closet and borrowed some awesome heirloom napkins for the special altar linens (Corporal and Purificator).

I even ironed tri-folds into them, to be more like the real thing.



© equippingCatholicfamilies.com

So far, all the vessels fit in a nice wooden craft box!



Here's a **Picture Tutorial** of all the components of the basic set, including the *cruets* and the *tealights* I purchased from the Dollar Store.

Equipping Catholic Families
with the
Play Mass Kit

Alternate Cruets



© equippingCatholicfamilies.com

Here is the lavabo dish and the alternate *cruets* from the same wood company. These cruets have a hole in the bottom, so you might want to fill the holes if they're going to be used with actual liquid.

Equipping Catholic Families
with the
Play Mass Kit

(Add-On)

altar bells
(in progress)



thurible
(in progress)



monstrance
(in progress)

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And here are my planned “Add-Ons”...although I haven’t completely worked them out and may add more materials as I find the pieces I’m looking for.



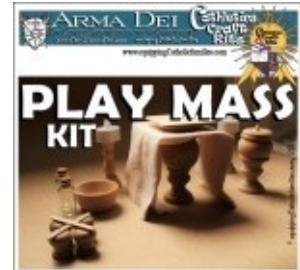
© equippingCatholicfamilies.com

We learned that our hand-me-down piano bench makes a great altar.



© equippingCatholicfamilies.com

So here is the Play Mass Kit and Order Form, if you'd like to make your own set just like we did! The Craft Kit includes special tips and an itemized order form at our favorite wood company!



[Play Mass Kit \(Tutorial PDF\)](#)

The **Play Mass Kit** offers itemized ordering information for our favorite wood company to compile your own heirloom wooden Play Mass Kit *easily* for about \$20! Special tips are presented in a picture tutorial within the kit!

\$2 PDF Download



...and check out the Heirloom Child Chasuble I made as well!



Tutorial here: [**Heirloom Child Chasuble**](#)

This contribution is available at <http://equippingcatholicfamilies.com/2017/04/diy-play-mass-heirloom/>
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| [Contents](#) |

The Harrowing of Hell [at V for Victory!]



I will deliver them out of the hand of death. I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite...

Osee (Hosea) 13:14 (Douay-Rheims translation)

Because Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust: that He might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit, in which also coming He preached to those spirits that were in prison: which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe, when the ark was a building: wherein a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.

1 Peter 3:18-20 (Douay-Rheims translation)

...He suffered, died and was buried. He descended into hell...

From the Apostles' Creed

In this age of modernist obfuscation and general graying out of vivid supernatural reality, the Harrowing of Hell is probably the most ignored of the creedal doctrines. Yet as Catholics, we are bound to believe that sin shut the gates of heaven against the souls of men; that it was only Christ's Passion and Death on the Cross that opened heaven; that until then, the souls of the Just were imprisoned; and that, after His death, Christ liberated these souls. Perhaps one reason we do not devote more time to considering this stupendous event is because it has been obscured by the modern obsession with avoiding any and all mention of Hell: its edge has been blunted by the milquetoast English rendition of the event as "He descended to the dead." This bland, pedestrian translation fails to confront us with the startling fact of Christ in Hell; we are not inspired to inquire further into its meaning. It seems obvious that while His Body lies in the tomb, the Son of God is among the dead, having died on the Cross; but how can He, pure and sinless, be in Hell, and why?

First of all, what is the Hell to which Christ descends? We think primarily of the Hell of the damned, from which there is no escape, and from whose punishments there is no reprieve. Before the coming of Christ, sin barred the gates of heaven to men. The souls of the Just could not get into heaven until after Jesus had sacrificed Himself to pay the penalty for our sins. [As St. Thomas Aquinas says](#) in the *Summa Theologica*:

[T]hrough Christ's Passion the human race was delivered not only from sin, but also from the debt of its penalty.... Now men were held fast by the debt of punishment in two ways: first of all for actual sin which each had committed personally: secondly, for the sin of the whole human race, which each one in his origin contracts from our first parent, as stated in Romans 5 of which sin the penalty is the death of the body as well as exclusion from glory, as is evident from Genesis 2 and 3: because God cast out man from paradise after sin, having beforehand threatened him with death should he sin.

So what happened to all the good people who lived before Jesus' time, and died without ever having the opportunity to believe in Him or receive the Sacraments? They dwelt in a place of waiting -- variously called, among other things, the Bosom of Abraham, or the Limbo of the Fathers, or the Limbo of Hell. There they did not suffer the torments of the damned, but they did suffer privation. [Aquinas elucidates](#):

After death men's souls cannot find rest save by the merit of faith, because "he that cometh to God must believe" (Hebrews 11:6). Now the first example of faith was given to men in the person of Abraham, who was the first to sever himself from the body of unbelievers, and to receive a special sign of faith: for which reason "the place of rest given to men after death is called Abraham's bosom," as Augustine declares (Gen. ad lit. xii). But the souls of the saints have not at all times had the same rest after death; because, since Christ's coming they have had complete rest through enjoying the vision of God, whereas before Christ's coming they had rest through being exempt from punishment, but their desire was not set at rest by their attaining their end. Consequently the state of the saints before Christ's coming may be considered both as regards the rest it afforded, and thus it is called Abraham's bosom, and as regards its lack of rest, and thus it is called the limbo of hell.

[Aquinas goes on to explain](#) that the Limbo of the Fathers is not qualitatively the same as the Hell of the damned, because the damned suffer eternal torment without hope of reprieve, whereas the Just before the coming of Christ suffered no sensible torments and had hope for a release from imprisonment. On the other hand, situationally, the Limbo of the Fathers was probably the same as the Hell of the damned:

For those who are in hell receive diverse punishments according to the diversity of their guilt, so that those who are condemned are consigned to darker and deeper parts of hell according as they have been guilty of graver sins, and consequently the holy Fathers in whom there was the least amount of sin were consigned to a higher and less darksome part than all those who were condemned to punishment.

So, [as Aquinas says](#),

Directly Christ died His soul went down into hell, and bestowed the fruits of His Passion on the

saints detained there; although they did not go out as long as Christ remained in hell, because His presence was part of the fullness of their glory.

We come to the reasons for the Harrowing of Hell, which we have already begun to touch on. [The Angelic Doctor gives three reasons](#) why it was fitting for Christ to descend into Hell. Firstly, to bear the penalty for sin -- namely, death of the body and descent into Hell -- in order to free us from penalty (though we are not yet delivered from the penalty of bodily death). Secondly, to force Hell to disgorge its righteous captives. And thirdly, to show forth His power and glory even in the domain of the devils.

This last point is worth lingering over. Because the wills of the damned are confirmed in evil at the moment of their deaths -- just as the wills of the righteous are confirmed in goodness and charity at the moment of their deaths -- Christ did not rescue any of the damned from Hell. In His essence, He visited only the Limbo of the Fathers; but the effects of His power reached every part of Hell. [Aquinus:](#)

A thing is said to be in a place in two ways. First of all, through its effect, and in this way Christ descended into each of the hells, but in different manner. For going down into the hell of the lost He wrought this effect, that by descending thither He put them to shame for their unbelief and wickedness: but to them who were detained in Purgatory He gave hope of attaining to glory: while upon the holy Fathers detained in hell solely on account of original sin, He shed the light of glory everlasting.

In another way a thing is said to be in a place through its essence: and in this way Christ's soul descended only into that part of hell wherein the just were detained. so that He visited them "in place," according to His soul, whom He visited "interiorly by grace," according to His Godhead. Accordingly, while remaining in one part of hell, He wrought this effect in a measure in every part of hell, just as while suffering in one part of the earth He delivered the whole world by His Passion.

He puts it briefly in another place thus:

When Christ descended into hell, all who were in any part of hell were visited in some respect: some to their consolation and deliverance, others, namely, the lost, to their shame and confusion.

When Christ descended into hell He delivered the saints who were there, not by leading them out at once from the confines of hell, but by enlightening them with the light of glory in hell itself.

Think of it. Hell is the privation of God and His glory. For the imprisoned elect who found themselves in the presence of the living God and beheld the light of His glory, *Hell, in that moment, ceased to be Hell. Hell was overthrown.* No wonder it is written in Philippians 2:10-11 "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."

Today at Matins (Office of Readings) according to the revised Breviary, we read the following ancient, anonymous Holy Saturday sermon:

Something strange is happening - there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and He has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, He has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won Him the victory. At the sight of Him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: "My Lord be with you all." Christ answered him: "And with your spirit." He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: "Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

I am your God, who for your sake have become your Son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by My own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of My hands, you who were created in My image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in Me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.

For your sake I, your God, became your Son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden. See on My Face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in My image. On My back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See My hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree. I slept on the Cross and a sword pierced My side for you who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in hell. The sword that pierced Me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will enthrone you in heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The kingdom of heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.

Living With Only a Thin Veil Between Heaven and Earth [at joy of nine9]

I tend to rush through my daily duties like a solitary soul, disconnected from God and other people. However, I became aware that humans are actually intimately connected not just to God and the living but also to those who have died and are alive in Christ after recent encounters with birth, death, and dying. There is only a thin veil between heaven and earth; I can communicate with all who abide in the Mystical Body of Christ simply because I am a member of the communion of saints.

A Near-Death-Experience

Exactly three years ago, I finally became cognizant of how thin the line between life and death really is when I nearly lost one of my daughters as she struggled to give birth. During labour, she almost bled out when she lost a litre of blood in mere seconds after an emergency C-section, the result of a series of unforeseen complications, a one-in-ten-thousand chance.

Of course, in a large teaching hospital with an excellent Maternity Ward, an emergency team of no less than ten people descended on her in the recovery room, whipped off the sheets and even her nightgown which upset her husband. *He* had to be dragged out of the room and told why she was being treated like a piece of meat, naked with doors and curtains around her bed left wide open on a public corridor. It took ten minutes to restrain him and keep him out of the room. Life comes before propriety. No one stops to close a door when a life is at stake.

An hour later, I gazed down at my daughter's limp form, as a tear trickled down her pale face. She whispered, "I felt myself slipping away." The veil separating life from death is thin, indeed. My daughter knew she was dying. Years ago she would have died. Even today, in the third world, she would have most certainly died. She was so weak after this near-death experience that her husband had to carry her to the washroom, and the nurse supported her new son's weight as he nursed.

Life is precarious. Life is fragile.



The process of birthing is similar to the process of dying because in both cases, a person must give up control completely and allow a force of nature stronger than themselves take over. I admit, every time I gave birth, there was a moment of panic, terror really, during the transition period when I had to completely surrender even though I was in excruciating pain. Giving birth and dying are not that different. Life and death are not as far apart as I had once presumed but this is no longer a depressing thought.

Looking Death In The Eye

An encounter with death shook me to my core last year. One of my husband's athletic younger brothers, Mark, lay dying of cancer. The day before his death, he had been semi-conscious but unable to speak as a priest administered the Last Rites. While the priest led the family in prayer, Mark looked extremely self-conscious, hard, and even angry. It seemed like he was still rejecting grace. Unbeknownst to me, the grace of that last Sacrament was working in my brother-in-law as the priest prayed over him:

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world
in the name of God the almighty Father,
who created you,
in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God,
who suffered for you,
in the name of the Holy Spirit,
who was poured out upon you.

Go forth, faithful Christian! May you live in peace this day,
may your home be with God in Zion,
... .May you return to [your Creator]. – [CCC, n. 1020](#)

The next day, I was finally alone with Mark, sitting beside his narrow bed with the sound of ragged breathing filling the hospital room. It felt eerie, unnerving even because he was now in a cancer-induced coma. Hours before death, his tanned, chiseled face was propped up by white pillows, a dramatic testament to the rough life he had embraced as the self-proclaimed black sheep of his religious family. Since he was unconscious and he could not interact in the normal manner, I decided to pray right into his inner spirit:

Mark, I call your spirit to attention and invite you to turn to your Heavenly Father because He created you, called you by name, and now welcomes you home again with outstretched arms. His Mercy is boundless. God sees you exactly as you are; He knows all your sins yet still loves you. The moment you turn to God in repentance, He will embrace you as His son.

I opened my eyes and my heart started pounding because Mark's eyes were wide open. Even though brain cancer had left him comatose, he was looking right at me with intelligence. His gaze was not that of a jaded adult but like a child who was vulnerable and afraid of the unknown. His eyes seemed to plead with me. This brief glimpse into that man's inner spirit is seared in my mind.

Flustered, I did not know how to respond, so I simply closed my eyes and continued praying. When I dared open my eyes again, my brother-in-law had slipped back into a coma but, this time, I was filled with joy. There was a tangible presence of peace in the room. I knew he had turned his face towards God and his spirit was forever connected to mine in the Mystical Body of Christ.



The Other Side of the Veil

Death itself *is* final in that the soul has left the body, not to rejoin it until the Second Coming. For many people, it feels like there is an impenetrable wall between themselves and those who have died, most probably because they cannot see the dead with their own eyes.

Yet death does not end our relationship with the deceased because those who have passed on are not lost to us. The veil between the living and the dead is thin when we are part of the Mystical Body of Christ. This might sound like a pious phrase memorized and repeated to offer shallow comfort to the grieving. However, Christians have the ability to communicate with each other in prayer when we are rooted in Christ. This is the communion of the saints who are alive in Christ in heaven, which we declare we believe in every time we repeat the Creed.

When Jesus speaks about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Gospels, he explains that the Father "is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living" ([Matt. 22:32](#)). Luke adds, "He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him" ([Luke 20:38](#)). Abraham is alive in heaven and can communicate with the rich man. Furthermore, the saints and angels see and hear what we say and pray; they are alive in God and intercede for us.

Even though the Catholic Church teaches us about our relationship with those who have died in Christ, people fail to grasp this truth and then actually live it out in prayer. When we do learn how to pray for

and relate to those in purgatory and in heaven, a whole new heavenly world opens up to us. My husband and I “see and hear” those in purgatory we pray for and sense their gratitude and joy.

The Fear of Death

Death is usually avoided in our modern society. Most fear death and do not know how to prepare to die. Bishop Barron, [in his reflections on John 11:1-45](#), addresses this fear of death:

[D]eath as we experience it—as something fearful, horrible, terrifying . . . comes from having turned from God and is a sign of spiritual dysfunction. The story of Lazarus represents someone who is totally sunk in sin, totally dead spiritually. The voice of Jesus calls Lazarus, and all of us, back to life no matter what we've done, no matter how dead we are.

It is precisely during the important process of dying that God often manages to pierce through people's wounds and the walls they have built to shut out His love. God tries to lead people who are dying back into His heart. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us the real meaning of a Christian death:

Death is transformed by Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father's will. The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing. Because of Christ, Christian death has a positive meaning: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” . . . In death, God calls man to himself. Therefore the Christian can experience a desire for death like St. Paul's: “My desire is to depart and be with Christ. “. . . I am not dying; I am entering life. – [CCC, n. 1009-1011](#)

For a Christian, death is not the end but the beginning.



My Father Is Dying

And now, I face death once again in western Canada, three time zones away from my husband, nine children, and seven grandchildren with my eighty-four-year-old father who is dying, slowly fading away. At 132 lb, he is a shadow of his former self, staying in bed in a dim room with his eyes closed for 23 hours a day. Perhaps he is giving up on life because he is deaf, almost blind from macular degeneration, and is in pain all over, making even swallowing difficult. Although he is not fighting to live, he is afraid of death, of the unknown.

My father's family left the Church after the tragic death of his mother when he was just nine years old.

Even though he faced tragedy after tragedy during his life, almost always due to the failings of others, he remained an honest, good, kind man, even when living with integrity meant he suffered financial setbacks. He faithfully loved only one woman for sixty-three years, giving his all to raise his family. He is not an outwardly religious man and does not speak of his faith, so my Evangelical sister is frantic that he might not be saved. As for me, when I pray for my dad, I experience pain, tears, and joy all at the same time while entrusting him to the Mercy of God. I have to let go and surrender once again.

I have an inner sense Christ will reveal Himself to my father, perhaps at the instant before death when my dad will be free enough from childhood wounds to see and choose eternal life. God comforts me with a recurring inner vision which never fails to bring tears to my eyes. My father is walking towards Christ who is surrounded by a semi-circle of saints clothed in white, all smiling with their arms outstretched. His mother, who died in the 1940's, steps forward as a young woman dressed in 1940's style clothes and reaches out to embrace her son. As my dad walks closer heaven, he slowly stands more erect, grows younger and younger and begins to smile.

When my father dies, I don't have to say goodbye but just whisper a prayerful hello as I let go of our earthly relationship and embrace a new, invisible relationship with him. God mysteriously unites all of us and I know from experience there is neither time nor distance when we live and move and breathe in the Spirit. Life and death are not as far apart as I had once presumed.

This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.blog/2017/04/18/living-with-only-a-thin-veil-between-heaven-and-earth/>

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| [Contents](#) |

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Universal Utterings

NEVER FORCE IT UPON ME!!!

On an appointed day, Herod, attired in royal robes, [and] seated on the rostrum, addressed them publicly. The assembled crowd cried out, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.” At once the angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not ascribe the honor to God, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. But the Word of God continued to spread and grow. Acts 12:21-24

My soul is depressed; lift me up according to Your Word. Psalm 119:28

(Jesus) said to them in reply, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the Word of God and act on it.” Luke 8:21

Acts 12:21-24, Psalm 119 & Luke 8:21

Herod openly promoted the faith of death from denial of Divine instances similar to those here in power showing minds openly representing the evil call of making America Muslim. The senior advisor openly declares this but refuses to discuss this desire of the Barry-O signaling she no more shares what the POTUS believes openly when they are called to “smile with a heart wanting your demise.” Below you can learn more about what their book penned for domination really says. How did this happen in America so quick? Well, it seems quick. We pray America won’t deny. In His Precious Name we pray. Especially we pray for those who deny because of hurt feelings as these people change the very rights we have created for freedom and peace. There is no peace when we live deceptive becoming a cry baby over political truth. There’s an oxymoron. The Government has turned into what our Founding Fathers did not want.

We all know this yet Big Brother grows and grows giving more than we need wanting social laws of chauvinist people willing to sacrifice children for perversion somehow letting another woman claiming to be of faith human openly define a new American Muslim? Yet, the real human world knows these men will ALWAYS dominate women and children. This is what frights me; why would we allow this privately if we assuredly won’t allow it publicly? Just saying. Can anyone help us figure this one out? Do you support a person who would allow this to happen in America? They openly say it while our country allows more-and-more refugees here that are surely going to wreak havoc on our neighborhoods, cities and towns as well as our own military bases. Please help me understand why we allow this? I am a man of God who seeks to share Charity in life’s call of love, faith and hope of freedom. Not the open detriments deluded in the press yet knocking on our very back door.

God will act in you to live America Free abiding by the laws of the people not woman and children pimps allowing fantasy to swallow their soul. We are called to help them in prayer and local home building locales not a rush to demonize America. In 50 days we make a choice of this; Patriotic

Freedom. Worship a Tree or Golden Calf you see yet remember to NEVER FORCE IT UPON ME!!! Lord we call Your Name. Help us LORD. Help USA stay that way... Thoughts please? Please, please, please. Even if you disagree. That is what America is about freedom of speech some think the president should be impeached while others think Christ to be weak. Pray my friends what Jesus gives you and me Life Eternal to speak not hate or control over the least they seem to feast. Amen.

Let us pray Lord let us come alive in a place of grace to state Salvation's Taste. Closerwalkmedia.com WedSun 7:55 AM EST friends like Mary Lou Holland in Los Angeles. Praying for little new born girl of our neighbor. Chanting for families of the world our daily Psalm. IN Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

I am a poet obedient to Christ,
Evangelist Thomas Cruz†Wiggins
†Spirit led God inspired Christ fed†
Ephesians 6:17-20

Acts 12 20 thru 25 Will conclude on our next broadcast.

Today I offer the original of a soul wanting freedom wanting peace. Man says to me he is nothing he is the police as they descend upon a bus bleeding on a seat. I wonder how the world has made him disagree seeing anger not love as I described his duty to live free. Free to smell or taste the sea seeing life without selfish grief sounds pleasing even a screech. He protects I said the rights of Truth when we find this to be what gives us pleasure unafraid to share the Divine as I do with thee. See no color when people can't scream forgive anyone the past use language respectively make God First your task.

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Can somebody say, "Amen?"

Here are some of the grisly passages from the Koran: "Kill the unbelievers wherever you find them." Koran 2:191 "Make war on the infidels living in your neighborhood." Koran 9:123 "When opportunity arises, kill the infidels wherever you catch them." Koran 9:5 "Any religion other than Islam is not acceptable." Koran 3:85 "The Jews and the Christians are perverts fight them."... Koran 9:30 "Maim and crucify the infidels if they criticize Islam" Koran 5:33 "Punish the unbelievers with garments of fire, hooked iron rods, boiling water melt their skin and bellies." Koran 22:19 "The unbelievers are stupid urge the Muslims to fight them." Koran 8:65 "Muslims must not take the infidels as friends." Koran 3:28 "Terrorize and behead those who believe in scriptures other than the Qur'an." Koran 8:12 "Muslims must muster all weapons to terrorize the infidels." Koran 8:60

This contribution is available at <http://purelycatholic.com/never-force-it-upon-me/>
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Quit Your Complaining!



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

Every March, Diane and I are blessed to spend the month in sunny Naples, Florida. We love the nearby Vanderbilt Beach and walk the beach every morning for an hour and a half. We are so grateful to share this time together. Every year, I comment on how I missed my life's calling as a beach bum!

Naples is an upscale city and most of the people here are retired successful folks from other parts of the country and seasonal vacationers. I love everything about the area except for one thing. In the 20 plus years we have been coming here I can't believe is how unfriendly everyone is.

You would think that with the beautiful sunshine and near perfect sunny days everyone would be in a grateful, cheerful mood. But, that doesn't seem to be the case. People here are always complaining about something. Somewhere along the way being grateful for your blessings has disappeared.

"And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

" –Colossians 3:17

And, what do they complain about? Here is sample of what I overheard in just one day.

A wealthy woman complained that her smart phone battery wasn't lasting as long as it should. She blamed the sales clerk at the phone store.

A man complained that he had his drink flag up at the Ritz Carlton for over five minutes before the waiter arrived. He wanted his drink for free.

A woman at the coffee shop complained that the foam heart on her cappuccino was misshaped and wanted it replaced.

A young girl arrived at Dunkin' Donuts in her daddy's Tesla and ordered a jelly doughnut with the jelly on the side and was disturbed that they couldn't fulfill her request. She reluctantly took the regular jelly doughnut (with the jelly inside) and paid for it with Apple Pay on her iPhone 7.

An elderly woman complained that there would be a 30 minute wait to be seated in a popular restaurant. Her husband offered, "What else do you have to wait for besides death!" I liked him.

As I walked the beach, I smile and say good morning to everyone I passed. Of the many people I recently greeted one morning only one responded with a good morning reply. Most ignored me, turned their heads away or even worse, looked at me in disgust.

My point is that, even in arguably the sunniest, prettiest city on the gulf coast, people can't even say good morning. And for some reason they are ALWAYS finding something to complain about.

Gratitude and humility just doesn't seem to exist!

"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

" –2 Corinthians 9:15

I was almost ready to give up on humanity when I had an encounter with a migrant worker.

His skin was dark and stained from too much sun exposure. His hands were chapped and cut. His clothes dirty from the fields.

As we made eye [contact](#), I smiled and said "Hello."

"Hello," He quickly responded.

"How are you?" was my automatic response.

He paused for a moment, raised his hands toward heaven, tipped back his head and rolled his eyes skyward, and didn't say a thing; not a single word. Without [speaking](#) he spoke volumes!

Without saying a word I heard;

Thank you God for my life.

Thank you God for being able to support my family.

Thank you for all the blessings you have given me.

Without speaking, he restored my faith in humanity. This man understands that all that we have is a gift from God and gratitude and humility lead to happiness.

Quite a contract, right? So I ask you, who is happier?

On one of our beach walks, Diane and I agreed that for the entire vacation we were not going to complain about anything. Every time one of us complained (OK mostly me) she would stop me and I

would have to say something that I was grateful for. After a while it became second nature.

I can honestly say that when you are conscious of your complaining and make an effort to stop and instead find something to be thankful for, it works! Why not give it a try.

Quit Your Complaining!



TonyAgnesi.com

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| [Contents](#) |