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new  
evangelists  
monthly

*June*  
*2017*

# New Evangelists Monthly #54

June 2017

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# New Evangelists Monthly - June 2017

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# Forward

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

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

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

For the latest edition of *New Evangelists Monthly*, or for more information about this New Evangelization initiative, visit us at:

[NewEvangelists.org](http://NewEvangelists.org)

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*Mother's  
Day:*

*Sadly, No  
Reason to  
Celebrate*

*virginialieto.com*



I don't know about you, but I am always thankful for the day after Mother's Day, as Mother's Day is a very difficult one for me. The television ads end. The happy wishes cease. I find the television ads for Mother's Day gifts difficult to watch, as I have no reason to make a purchase. I cringe when people wish me a happy Mother's Day, as I have no reason to celebrate, because I have no children. My mother-in-law died in 1985, and my mom died in 2000. So, for my husband and me, Mother's Day is just like any other day of the year. I'm not asking for anyone's pity. Rather, this post serves as a reminder that days set aside to celebrate something, aren't always joyous for all people.

Instead of gaily wrapped packages, a home cooked meal (by me), and time spent with my mom, I now use Mother's Day to remember my mom, and my mother-in-law. When I attend Mass, on Mother's Day, I say extra prayers for their souls, offered as a spiritual bouquet. I spend the afternoon quietly remembering the love my mother gave to me. I make dinner, using a recipe learned from my mom.

## **Make the Most of Mother's Day**

Here's your take away from reading this post: If you are fortunate enough to still have your mom in your life, then make sure you tell her how much you love her and appreciate all that she did to make your life the best she could. And don't just tell her; show her your love, and do it often! She won't be here forever. One day, you, too, might grow weary of Mother's Day ads and good wishes, like me. Love your mom, now, with all you've got, while you can!

Photo: Of my Mom, Virginia Duffy, taken circa, 1940's!

If you would like to purchase a copy of *Adventures of Faith, Hope and Charity: Finding Patience*, then [click here](#).

Sacramental time is upon us!

Those red robes of Confirmation and white dresses and veils

of First Holy Communion are popping up all over!

This week, my youngest received confirmation.

It was an absolutely wonderful day for so many reasons!

I'll be back with a glimpse soon.....

we're still riding the excitement!

In the meantime, I put together this gift list.

For my son and his sponsor, we (and confirmand's older brother!)

purchased six of the seven gifts here.

They're perfect keepsakes of the day

and reasonable priced too.

Here goes....happy shopping!

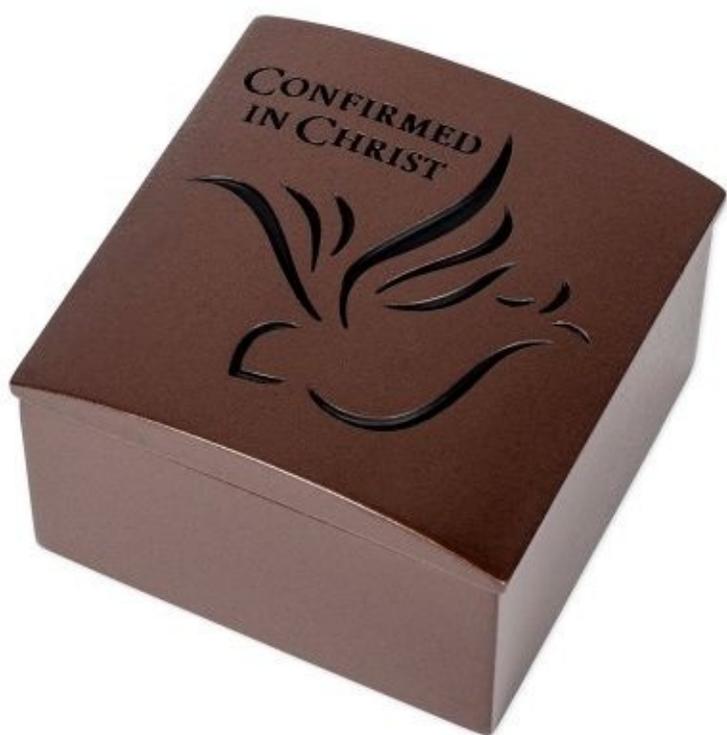
## **Sacrament of Confirmation: Gift Guide for Confirmand & Sponsor [at Campfires and Cleats]**



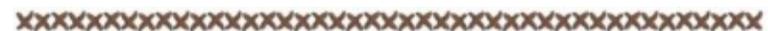
My son's a rosary collector.

He's made a few, been gifted a few for special occasions...

But we felt he needed to have this special set with the dove/ Holy Spirit cut out on the cross....perfect, no?

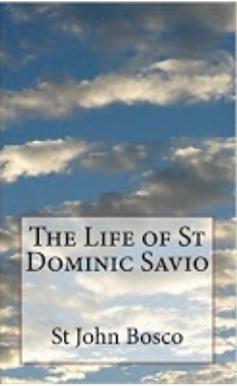


Keepsake box for rosaries, prayer cards!



is taken by the confirmand.....

the saint's highly acclaimed [life story](#) penned by his teacher, St John Bosco!



Pictured here, the [St Dominic Medal](#) we bought our son. Amazon has thousands of options!





He chose his aunt, who's also his godmother, as his sponsor and she loved loved loved this pewter standing cross. He wrote his own message on the back in sharpie too..... there's room enough for that if your confirmand wants to do the same.



God with silver, or vice versa:



I adore these pendants! Definitely bookmarking them as gift options for the next confirmation we attend!!



# Sacrament of Confirmation: Gift Guide for Confirmand & Sponsor [at Campfires and Cleats]



This is another beautiful cross in my pocket choice~



Thank you for spending some of your precious time today here at my home on the web!

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

If not, just click here to

quickly and easily so we can be in touch regularly!



This post may include amazon affiliate links....

In this way, I will receive a small commission on the purchase.....

at no cost to you.

THANK YOU!

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This contribution is available at [http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2017/05/sacrament-of-confirmation-gift-guide\\_12.html](http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2017/05/sacrament-of-confirmation-gift-guide_12.html)  
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## Truth and Love [at A Catholic Citizen in America]



I take God very seriously. I also think people matter. I care deeply about truth and love.

By some standards this isn't a particularly "religious" blog.

For one thing, I keep saying that loving my neighbor and seeing everybody as my neighbor is a good idea. I'll get back to that.

For another, I write about science each Friday; **real** science. And I don't see it as a threat.

I don't 'believe in' science, in the sense that I expect it to replace God. That would be as silly as trying to find life's meaning in the [second law of thermodynamics](#). It would also be a very bad idea. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, [2112–2114](#))

But I also do not fear truth and knowledge. For a Catholic, that would be illogical.

### “The Whole Truth,” Faith AND Reason

Like I said Friday, faith means willingly and consciously embracing “the whole truth that God has revealed.” (Catechism, [142–150](#))

That includes truth we find in the natural world's order and beauty. Appreciating the wonders surrounding us is a good idea. (Catechism. [32](#), [41](#), [74](#), [283](#), [341](#), [2500](#))

Faith isn't reason: but it's reasonable, and certainly not against an honest search for truth. (Catechism, [31–35](#), [159](#); “[Fides et Ratio](#),” “[Gaudium et Spes](#),” 36)

It's faith **and** reason, science **and** religion. (Catechism, [159](#), [2293](#))



This is not a new idea.

“**Faith and reason are like two wings** on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. [Ex 33:18](#); [Ps 27:8–9](#); [63:2–3](#); [Jn 14:8](#); [1 Jn 3:2](#))....”

(“[Fides et Ratio](#),” Pope Saint John Paul II (September 14, 1998) [emphasis mine])

“...if **methodical investigation** within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it **never truly conflicts with faith**, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. ... we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, which are sometimes found too among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science and which, from the arguments and controversies they spark, lead many minds to conclude that faith and science are mutually opposed....”

(“[Gaudium et Spes](#),” Pope Bl. Paul VI (December 7, 1965) [emphasis mine])

“...God, the Creator and Ruler of all things, is also the Author of the Scriptures – and that therefore nothing can be proved either by physical science or archaeology which can really contradict the Scriptures. ... Even if the difficulty is after all not cleared up and the discrepancy seems to remain, the contest must not be abandoned; **truth cannot contradict truth....”**

(“[Providentissimus Deus](#),” Pope Leo XIII (November 18, 1893) [emphasis mine])

“Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air.... They all answer you, ‘Here we are, look; we’re beautiful.’... ”

“...So in this way they arrived at a knowledge of the god who made things, through the things which he made.”

([Sermon 241](#), St. Augustine of Hippo (ca. 411))

## Loving My Neighbors: All My Neighbors

Again, I think loving my neighbor is a good idea.

It’s not easy, particularly when a neighbor isn’t acting neighborly. But nobody said this was going to be easy.

Nobody who know much about people, anyway, and that’s another topic.

“He said to him, <sup>22</sup> ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

“This is the greatest and the first commandment.

“The second is like it: <sup>23</sup> You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

“<sup>24</sup> The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

([Matthew 22:37–40](#))



If what Jesus said sounds familiar, it should. The same ideas are in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

“<sup>1</sup> Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

([Leviticus 19:18](#))

“<sup>1</sup> “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone!

“Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

([Deuteronomy 6:4–5](#))

My neighbor isn't just the chap with a wheelbarrow across the street, or the folks who moved in on the corner north of me. The parable of the good Samaritan in [Luke 10:30–37](#) makes that pretty clear.

([February 1, 2017](#))

## Working Toward a Civilization of Love

[Philippians 3:20](#) says “...our citizenship is in heaven...” But sitting around and thinking lovely thoughts about heaven won't cut it.

I must act as if what I believe matters:

“Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that faith without works is useless?

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?

“You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works.”

([James 2:20–22](#))



I'm supposed to be a good citizen here in America: contributing “...to the good of society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom...” That makes social justice a priority. (Catechism, [1928–1942, 2239](#))

Social justice starts with respecting the transcendent dignity of everyone. And that starts inside me, with an ongoing “inner conversion.” (Catechism, [1888, 1929](#))

Our goal is, or should be, building a better world: a civilization of love.

“...The answer to the fear which darkens human existence at the end of the twentieth century is the common effort **to build the civilization of love**, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice, and liberty....”

(“[To the United Nations Organization](#),”<sup>1</sup> Pope St. John Paul II (October 5, 1995))

## What's “Love?”

I can “love” hamburgers, my wife, and God. But those aren't all the same sort of “love.” They'd better

not be.

[1 Corinthians 13:4–6](#) talks about what one sort of love does, and what it doesn't do.

You know how it goes: love is patient and kind. Love isn't jealous, pompous, inflated, rude, self-serving, or quick-tempered. Love doesn't brood over injury, either; and celebrates truth, not wrongdoing.

I checked the Catechism's glossary for a definition of "love," and got this:

**"LOVE:** See Charity."

([Glossary](#), Catechism of the Catholic Church)

That's informative, but not very. The "charity" entry says that charity is a virtue:

**"CHARITY:** The theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God ([1822](#))."

([Glossary](#), Catechism)

Love and charity, in the Catholic sense, aren't just feelings. Doing what's right is easier when emotions are in sync with our reason — but we're supposed to do what's right, no matter how we're feeling.

Feeling angry, for example, happens. Emotions are part of being human. They're not good or bad by themselves. (Catechism, [1501](#), [1763–1767](#))

Thinking is part of being human, too; or should be. Having a good, or bad, feeling about something may mean that it's good or evil — or not. Either way, I should **think** before responding. (Catechism, [1765–1770](#))

And I certainly shouldn't hang on to anger until it becomes hate. That's a really bad idea. (Catechism, [1762–1775](#), [2302–2303](#))

I can't love someone and hate the same person. Not at the same time.

I must not hate folks whose actions make my faith look like a psychiatric disorder.

But loving someone doesn't mean ignoring daft behavior. Imitating their bad attitudes makes even less sense.

## God, Love, and the Best News Ever

I don't know how many "Catholic" blogs are in the "cesspool of hatred" that Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation CEO Fr. Thomas Rosica talked about last year.<sup>2</sup>



“...’Many of my non-Christian and non-believing friends have remarked to me that we ‘Catholics’ have turned the Internet into a cesspool of hatred, venom and vitriol, all in the name of defending the faith!’ he said....

“...’Often times the obsessed, scrupulous, self-appointed, nostalgia-hankering virtual guardians of faith or of liturgical practices are very disturbed, broken and angry individuals, who never found a platform or pulpit in real life and so resort to the Internet and become trolling pontiffs and holy executioners!’ Rosica said....”

(Catholic News Service, via Crux ([May 17, 2016](#)))



I have noticed that venom-spitting religious rants, Catholic and otherwise, are fairly easy to find. That’s one reason I started a [blogroll](#) of non-ranting Catholics.

Since I think loving my neighbor matters, and that everyone is my neighbor, hating someone isn’t an option. When I notice myself starting to hate someone, my job is removing that hate: not expressing it.

On the other hand, loving my neighbors doesn’t mean pretending that we’re all perfect people. (Catechism, [1778](#), [2401–2449](#))

I get angry more often than I like, but don’t see much point in ranting. That’s partly because I take love and God seriously.

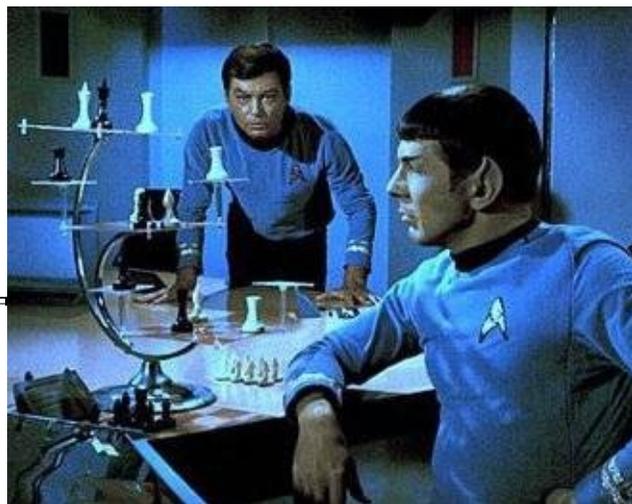
It’s also because I would much rather share what scientists are learning about this wonder-filled universe we live in, and pass along the best news humanity’s ever had —

**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, [27–30](#), [52](#), [1825](#), [1996](#))

Besides, ranting is — illogical.

“... If Vulcans had a church, they’d be Catholics.” ([John C. Wright](#), [johncwright.livejournal.com](#) ([March 21 2008](#)))

More, mostly about love and truth:



<sup>1</sup> A civilization of love, background:

- “[Caritas in veritate](#)”  
Pope Benedict XVI (June 29, 2009)  
(From [vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate.html](#) (May 6, 2017))
- “[Dialogue between cultures for a civilization of love and peace](#)”  
Pope St. John Paul II, XXXIV World Day For Peace 2001 (January 1, 2001)  
(From [vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-](#)

[ii\\_mes\\_20001208\\_xxxiv-world-day-for-peace.html](#) (May 6, 2017))

- [“To the United Nations Organization”](#)

Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Journey to the United States of America (October 5, 1995)

(From [vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/october/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_05101995\\_address-to-uno.pdf](#) (November 26, 2016))

- [“Evangelium Vitae”](#)

Pope St. John Paul II (March 25, 1995)

(From [vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae.html](#) (May 6, 2017))

<sup>2</sup> Venom, vitriol, and online social media:

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## We Have Forgotten [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]

*When we lose the sense of sin, when we fail to appreciate the eternal value of embracing suffering, when we no longer give any thought to making reparation for our sins and the sins of the world, evil triumphs and souls are lost:*

“We moderns shrink from pain; we shun all that can afflict body or mind. We have forgotten that we were saved by the Body’s agony and the Mind’s torture. We have forgotten that the problem of evil was solved by ropes, whips and thorns, by nails that were pounded through the flesh of God and by three hours of anguish such as no other human has or ever will know.



We have forgotten that pain has a sacred purpose; that all suffering can be and should be sublimated into Sacrifice – His Sacrifice. We have forgotten that we are Christians – members of a Body whose Head is thorn-crowned! We have forgotten that since there is sin, there must be suffering that will atone.”

(From *God, A Woman and the Way* by Father M. Raymond, O.C.S.O.)

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This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2017/05/monday-musings-we-have-forgotten.html>

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## Those short-sighted minds who reject Luisa Piccarreta [at The Shield of Faith]

On those Short-sighted individuals and critics who reject Luisa Piccarreta's Divine Will teachings.

Their greatest difficulties and most serious doubts occur because Luisa Piccarreta is called to a unique and special mission – to live in the Divine Will and make it known. But the Lord would not have composed a prayer asking that “Thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven” if it already existed on earth. It says “come,” and He would not have composed this prayer unless He wanted to obtain its effects. In order to reach this, could He not choose a woman to confound the infernal serpent, as He had chosen His mother to effect the Redemption?

This was the reason for all the Lord's preparations, visits, graces and communications to Luisa Piccarreta. But it raises doubts and difficulties, and simply sounds bad, when people read that among so many great saints in the history of the Church, none except for Jesus and Mary, have lived in the Kingdom of the Divine Will. Then they read that He is placing Luisa near the Sovereign Queen so that she can imitate the way Mary lived in the Divine Will. He places Luisa in Mary's hands, so that she can be guided and assisted by her, to be a copy that resembles her. That Luisa might imitate Mary in everything seems so absurd to them, and in a sinister manner they make it sound as if Luisa was to become another Mary. But the Lord wants Luisa similar to her, in the way that He wants souls dear to Him to be similar to Him, but this does not mean to become God like He is. He does not say Luisa is like the Celestial Queen, but similar to her.

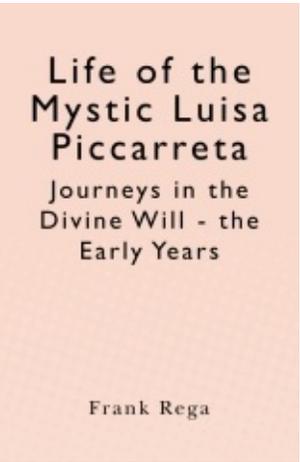


But time will reveal everything, and just as they can't deny that the Virgin of Nazareth is the Mother of Jesus, so will they not be able to deny that Luisa has been elected for the sole purpose of making the

Divine Will known. Through her He will obtain that “Thy Kingdom come” will have its fulfillment. Creatures are instruments in the Lord’s hands, and He does not look at who they might be, but whether they can fulfill His highest designs. In due time, He makes use of the doubters and their difficulties to confound and humiliate them.

From their way of thinking, it shows that they have only considered the person of Luisa, and have not calculated what the Divine Will can accomplish. It knows how to operate, and if it decides to work in one creature in order to fulfill its greatest designs in the midst of humanity, it lets no one dictate to it the conditions – who that person can be, nor the time, nor the way, nor the place. Rather, the Divine Will acts in an absolute way. Nor does it pay attention to certain short-sighted critics, who are not able to elevate their minds to the divine and supernatural order. Nor can they bow their forehead before the incomprehensible works of their Creator. While they want to reason with their own human reason, they lose the divine reason, and remain confounded and incredulous.

But who am I to judge such critics as being short-sighted? Who do I think I am to say that they are incapable of raising their minds to the supernatural order? Well, it is not I who make these statements, but they were made by the Lord Himself. The above paragraphs are a paraphrase of what Jesus told Luisa, as reported in her books of revelations, Volume 29, on May 19, 1931.



Life of the  
Mystic Luisa  
Piccarreta  
Journeys in the  
Divine Will - the  
Early Years

Frank Rega

View my Luisa Piccarreta books and others

[HERE](#)

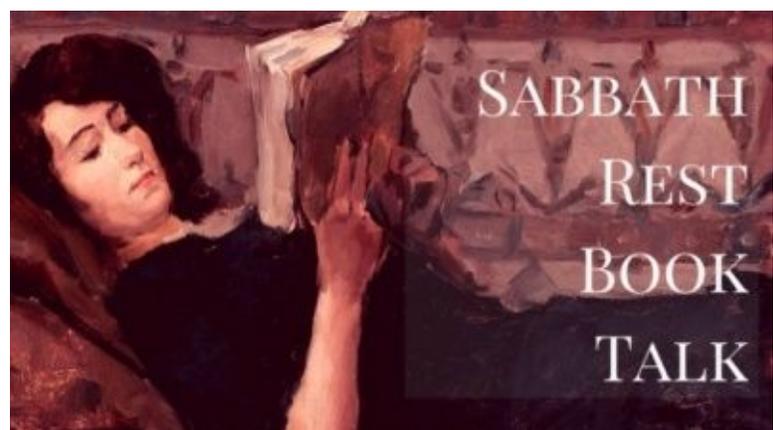
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This contribution is available at <http://divinefiat.blogspot.com/2017/05/those-short-sighted-minds-who-reject.html>  
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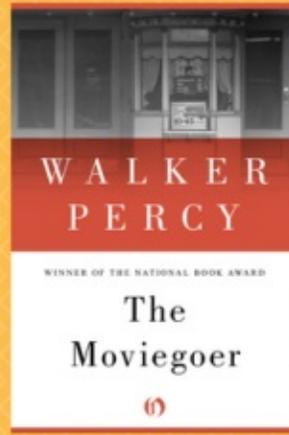
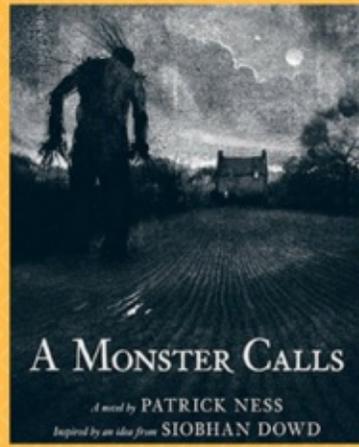
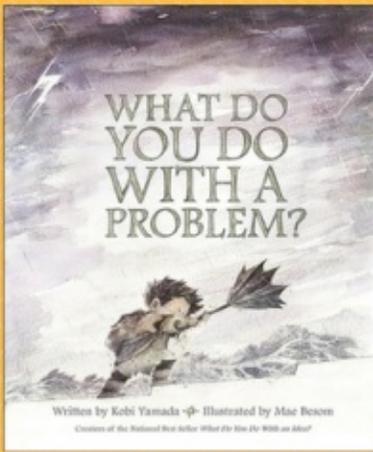
[Carolyn Astfalk](#) has a first Wednesday of the month book review linkup!



The aforementioned Carolyn also joins me and [Rebecca Willen](#) every month for [Sabbath Rest Book Talk](#).



[Our next SRBT will be Sunday, June 4 at 7pm Eastern Time.](#) What are we reading?

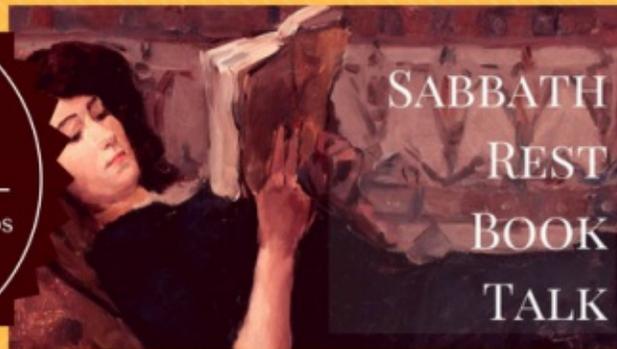


WHAT CAN  
**FICTION**

*teach us about suffering?*

4JUN2017

<http://bit.ly/EMCVideos>



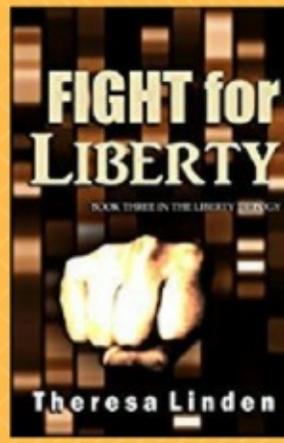
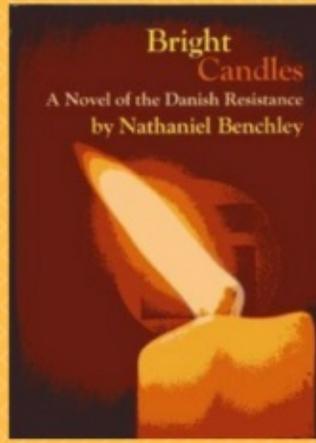
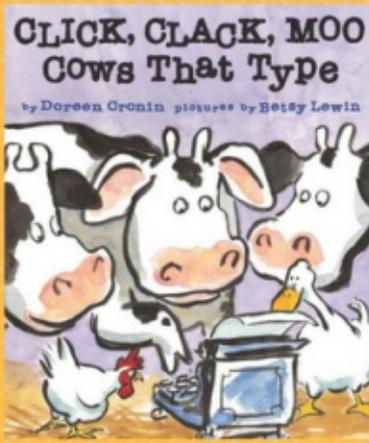
Adult Book: [The Moviegoer](#), Walker Percy

YA Book: [A Monster Calls](#), Patrick Ness

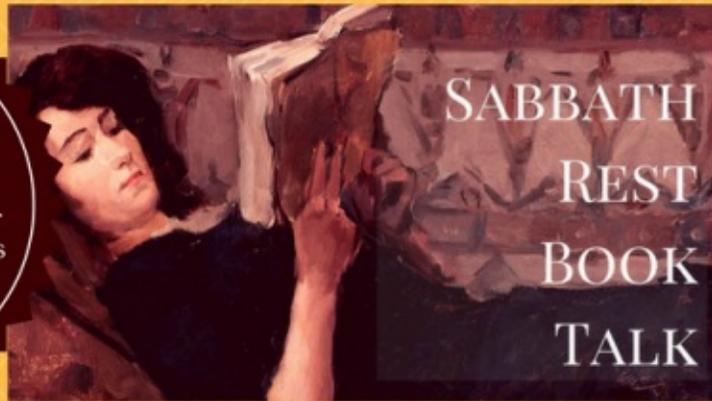
Children's/Readaloud: [What Do You Do With a Problem](#), Kobi Yamada

**[Want more? You will just have to watch this month's Sabbath Rest Book Talk.](#)**

Remember, all SRBTs here on out, I'll continue announcing the book selections and focus ahead of time, so you can read along and join the discussion a little more easily and thoughtfully. Voila, for [July](#):



What can fiction teach us about *revolution*?



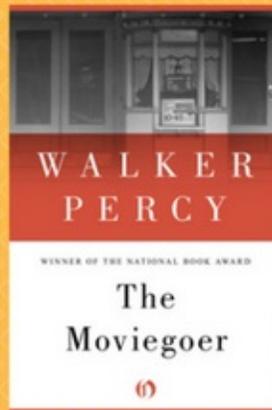
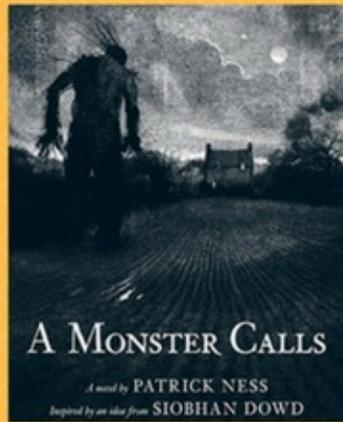
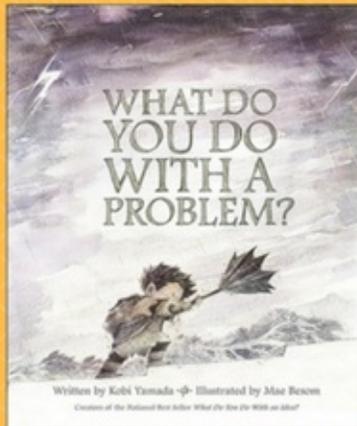
Adult Book: [Fight for Liberty](#) by Theresa Linden

YA Book: [Bright Candles: A Novel of the Danish Resistance](#) by Nathaniel Benchley

Children's/Readaloud: [Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type](#) by Doreen Cronin

**Sabbath Rest Book Talk [at Erin McCole Cupp]**

**Sabbath Rest Book Talk [at Erin McCole Cupp]**



WHAT CAN  
**FICTION**

*teach us about suffering?*

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<http://bit.ly/SabbathBooks>

# A few thoughts on the Sacrament of Confirmation [at Catholic Deacon]

Because I have been preparing 7 adults from my parish to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation next Saturday at The Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City, which will be administered by the Most Reverend Oscar Solis, bishop of Salt Lake City, and because Bishop Solis is coming to my parish, St. Olaf in Bountiful, Utah, the following Saturday to administer Confirmation to 20+ teenagers, and because I am giving the retreat for these young women and men the day prior to their Confirmation, I have been reading and studying

## [\*The Order of Confirmation\*](#)

, the English translation approved by the Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, His Eminence Robert Cardinal Sarah, with the go-ahead from Pope Francis, on 25 March 2015, and published in 2016. In my opinion, all members of the clergy and catechists engaged in sacramental preparation should spend significant time studying the Church's sacramental rites and ritual books. Among the many important reasons for studying the ritual books is that we should use the rites themselves to catechize and evangelize both ourselves and those we serve. Studying the ritual books and all that pertain them should also assist the clergy in our preaching.

Because in most dioceses of the United States, including my own with the exception of our Cathedral parish, the Sacrament of Confirmation has been displaced from its rightful order (i.e., between Baptism and First Holy Communion) there are a lot very defective ideas promulgated concerning the Sacrament of Confirmation. Perhaps the most pernicious of these is the idea that a teenager "chooses" to follow Christ for himself/herself, as opposed to when Baptism was "foisted" on her/him by their well-meaning, but perhaps misguided, parents when s/he was a mere baby. What is missing from such a defective account of Confirmation is that first and foremost the sacraments are about what God the Father is doing through Christ by the power of their Holy Spirit and

*not*

what we are doing, apart from being open to receiving what God freely gives us, which is nothing other than God's very self. It would be futile to argue that Catholic parents don't choose to have their infant children baptized. Clearly they do and, for the most part, with a few exceptions, we need to see the factors, no matter how mundane, that cause parents to have their children baptized as the working of the Holy Spirit. My fundamental point is simple: in Baptism Christ chose you. In Baptism Jesus called you by name and, by the Holy Spirit, gave you new birth as a child of the Father. Of course, you are created and redeemed to be a child of God. As a result, we can say that Baptism makes what is implicit in each and every person, who is created in the

*imago Dei*

, explicit. Just as Jesus' identity was "confirmed" as he emerged from the waters of the river Jordan by the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove and the voice of the Father declaring him to be his "beloved" Son with whom he is well-pleased, in Confirmation our baptismal identity is likewise

"confirmed."

Because it is so closely linked with Baptism, Confirmation, too, requires faith, no matter how small. While the subject of the

*actus fidei*

is inexhaustible, it is safe to say that in its most basic articulation, faith is our response to God's initiative towards us. Typically, we call God's initiative towards us "grace." Hence, even as Catholics, we can say without hesitation, "We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ." But see faith as our response to God's initiative towards us is different than insisting that faith is simply a voluntary choice on our part. In a very real sense, by means of grace, God both pulls and pushes us towards him.

Stated simply, in an important way, Confirmation "completes" Baptism. When preparing parents for the Baptism of their infant children I note that the way the Rite of Baptism for Children ends tends to feel a bit incomplete. The rite ends with the celebrant blessing the mother, the father, and then all the baptized gathered for the celebration, and then blessing everyone in the name of triune God. But there is no dismissal and the rite does not call for either a processional or a recessional out of the church. I am convinced it is supposed to have the effect of something beautifully begun but not yet finished. I encourage people to spend time mingling, in a reverent manner, in the church after the celebration of a Baptism. Of course, Baptism is made what we might call more sacramentally complete by Confirmation, which is what the anointing with sacred Chrism after Baptism points to, and sacramentally completed by reception of Holy Communion.



In his Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation,

[Divinae Consortium Naturae](#)

(i.e., "Sharing in the Divine Nature") promulgated on 15 August 1971, Bl. Pope Paul VI noted

In Baptism, the newly baptized receive forgiveness of sins, adoption as children of God, and the character of Christ, by which they are made members of the Church and for the first time become sharers in the priesthood of their Savior ([1 Pt 2:5,9](#)). Through the Sacrament of Confirmation those who have been born anew in Baptism receive the ineffable Gift, the Holy Spirit himself, by whom "they are endowed... with special strength" ([Lumen Gentium](#) par. 36) Moreover, having been signed with the character of this Sacrament, they are "more perfectly bound to the Church" ([Lumen Gentium](#) par. 11) and "**they are more strictly obligated to spread and defend the faith, both by**

***word and deed, as true witnesses of Christ"*** ([Ad Gentes](#) par. 11). Finally, Confirmation is so closely linked with the Holy Eucharist that the faithful, after being signed by the Holy Baptism and Confirmation, are incorporated fully into the Body of Christ through participation in the Eucharist ([Presbyterorum Ordinis](#) par. 5- I added the emboldening and italicized emphasis)

In my pastoral experience, we are usually far too dismissive of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Like all of the sacraments that together constitute the divine economy of grace, there is nothing dispensable about Confirmation. While we must never doubt the outpouring of Divine life that occurs whenever and wherever Confirmation is validly administered, we need to make every effort to assist those who are preparing to be confirmed, helping to ensure that they are properly disposed outwardly and inwardly. What God gives in and through the sacraments we call grace. Grace is nothing other than God sharing divine life with us, that is, the very life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which is characterized by love, called

*agapé*

in our uniquely Christian Scriptures, which together we refer to as the New Testament. This is precisely what the opening words of Bl. Pope Paul's Apostolic Constitution on the Sacrament of Confirmation indicate:

*Divinae consortium naturae*

..., which, translates as, "The sharing in the divine nature..."

I am aware that, when juxtaposed with yesterday's post, today's post might indicate something like cognitive dissonance. I would dispute any charge of cognitive dissonance, however, but certainly admit to a dialectical tension. At least for me, hope lies well beyond optimism. Participating in, administering, and assisting in the administration of the Church's sacraments reinforces this perception even as such participation provides a point of connection. My participation in and assisting with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, administering the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony, making use of Penance, assisting in the administration of the Confirmation and sometimes with Anointing of the Sick and in the conferral of Orders, give me a glimpse over the horizon, as it were, providing me a fuller perspective, one that allows me to engage reality according to

*all*

the factors that constitute it and not just those that weigh it down but those that liberate and correspond to my deepest longings, if not yet completely fulfilling them.

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This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2017/05/a-few-thoughts-on-sacrament-of.html>  
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## My Finest Hour in New York [at One Thousand Words a Week]



Let me see new ones every day! let me hold new ones by the hand every day!  
Give me such shows! give me the streets of Manhattan!

~ [Walt Whitman](#)

**It's complicated**, but decades ago I lived in Manhattan with a bunch of Mennonites. I had a room in their Gramercy Park townhouse for a few months, and the rent was cheap-cheap-cheap. The room was no bigger than a closet – actually, it originally *had* been a closet – but I only slept there, so it didn't matter.

The rest of the time I wandered around the city, taking the subway here and there, bebopping and cavorting, looking, listening, checking things out. Up to the Cloisters,



down to the Battery, Columbia and [the Village](#), St. Pat's and St. John the Divine, riding, walking, drinking it all in. Sometimes I'd pick a random neighborhood I hadn't been to, find it on my map – a *physical* map, a paper map with lots of creases and impossible to refold – then head out on bus and train to find it. Other times (my favorite times) I'd dip into Dorothy Day's [autobiography](#) and locate the sites she mentions like they were hallowed shrines – which they were because she'd been there, because she'd taken note of them. Dorothy was my lodestar in New York, a mentor as I stumbled my way into the practice of the Faith and adult freedoms.

So that's how I spend most of my time in Manhattan, but I still had to pay my cheap-cheap rent, so I worked at a bookstore. Logos Bookstore of Midtown, on Madison Avenue, between 43<sup>rd</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> (I think). It subsequently [moved further north](#), but at the time it was definitely in the thick of urban things, at least from my suburban perspective. Grand Central Station was my subway stop; Times Square right down the street.

**What happened was this.** I was working the counter, ringing up books and magazines, answering questions, and Dan, the manager, took over. “Time for lunch,” he said – gladly. I hit the street, did a brief wander in the general vicinity, and settled on some eatery around the corner from the store and across the street. When it was time to head back to work, I maneuvered through the traffic, crossed back over 43<sup>rd</sup> and I noticed something in the gutter. It was a wallet – an oblong, brown wallet. I picked it up and looked around: nobody close by, nobody looking for it.

“It’s already been rifled,” I thought to myself. “Probably empty.”

It wasn’t.

I could feel through the leather that there was something inside. I undid the snap, and there were credit cards and pictures, a woman’s driver’s license and...cash! Maybe thirty, maybe forty bucks. I looked up again, sharply, glancing left and right – nobody around, no one near. Glory! A fortuitous moment – a serendipity; grace! I was in the right place at the right time, and I rescued this woman’s wallet from oblivion!

When I got back to the store, I showed off the wallet to my coworkers. “Can you believe it still has everything in it?” They couldn’t believe it either.

“Should I mail it to her?”

“Call information and get the phone number,” said Dan, “and call her.” Obviously. I gave the operator the address listed on the card and she gave me the number.

I dialed; a woman answered: “Hello?” I asked if I had the correct person. Pause – “Yes.” Pause – “Who is this?”



“I work at a bookstore in Midtown and I found your wallet today – on the street, on 43<sup>rd</sup> near Madison.” There was silence, another pause. “It was in the gutter – everything’s still in it.”

Again, another pause as she took in my outlandish claim. “You have my wallet?”

I assured her I did. “I’ll hold it here behind the counter for you.” I gave her the address and my name. “You can pick it up next time you’re in town.” We hung up.

**She appeared the next day, accompanied by her brother, I think,** or maybe a boyfriend. He hung back, but she inched up to the counter and identified herself, brow furrowed. I’m not sure what she expected – it was just a bookstore, after all, and a religious bookstore at that. Of course, these was the

wild days of [Mayor Koch's New York](#), and I suppose it made sense that she took precautions. Perhaps she imagined a set-up for some kind of elaborate con, a rip-off in the spirit of *The Sting*, with Scot Joplin melodies tinkling in the background.

Nope. Just ordinary small-town decency. “Here it is,” I said, handing over the wallet. She immediately unsnapped the cover and looked inside: Cards, cash, license, all there. She glanced up at me through the furrows. Without a word she removed a bill – a ten spot maybe? – and held it out.

“That’s not necessary,” I said with a wave. She put away her money – it was an awkward moment. “Thanks,” she uttered as she turned to go. Her man-friend lingered, perhaps out of an abundance of caution, but eventually he exited as well.

That’s it. So simple, so straightforward, it wouldn’t even rate a second thought in the Midwest – in Dubuque, for instance, or Wichita.

**But in Manhattan?** I know I would’ve been shocked if a stranger had contacted me about a missing wallet, and even more shocked when he restored it to me intact. The whole episode would’ve entered my lexicon of family lore, a story told over and over whenever New York came up in conversation.



Which is why I call my own part in a surprise wallet recovery my finest hour: not because my actions were particularly meritorious, not because I did the bare minimum that most folks would do, especially those that aspire to be Christians. Frankly, if I’d been a real Christian, I would’ve hopped in a cab and delivered the wallet in person, on the spot.

No, I call it my finest hour because the unusual circumstances allowed me to become, just that one time, a bit player, an active player, in someone else’s New York sojourn. That lucky, that providential wallet find made me a character in a stranger’s memorable Manhattan moment that’ll stand out into her dotage, a story that her kids and grandkids will hear over and over, a command performance at Thanksgivings and other family gatherings. “Tell the one about losing your wallet in New York, grandma!”

**And she’ll tell it with pleasure.** “It was the strangest thing,” she’ll say. “I knew it was gone, and I was making plans to get a new license when I got this odd phone call....” And that’s me, in her New York story! What a gift, what a gift to add to her story, the city’s story, after having received so much.

She might’ve even told our story today, who knows? Wouldn’t that be a coincidence?

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

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This contribution is available at <http://onethousandwordsaweek.wordpress.com/2017/05/21/my-finest-hour-in-new-york/>  
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# "Little Nellie of Holy God" -- The Toddler Who Inspired a Pope [at It Makes Sense to Me]

## *IT MAKES SENSE TO ME*

By Larry Peterson

Ellen Organ was born on August 24, 1903 in what was known as the "married quarters" of the Royal Infantry Barracks in Waterford, Ireland. Her dad, William, was a soldier in the British army. Shortly after Ellen's birth she was baptized into the faith at the Church of the Trinity. No one knows why, but from that point on Ellen Organ was called "Nellie".



Nellie's parents were both devout Catholics and her mom, Mary, had an especially deep devotion to the Blessed Mother. She would take walks with Nellie always talking about Jesus and Mary. She and her husband also made it a family custom to pray the family Rosary every day. Nellie, doing as her mom showed her, always kissed the Crucifix and the large beads between decades. The first words she learned were "Jesus" and "Mary".

By the age of two, Nellie displayed a pronounced spirituality rarely seen in a child, especially one so young. While walking to Mass holding her dad's hand she would constantly talk about seeing "Holy God". This was something she began saying without having heard such an expression. Even her dad admitted years later he had no idea why his daughter began saying "Holy God".

Nellie's life and the lives of her brothers, Thomas, David and their sister, Mary, were about to change dramatically. Their mom became very ill with tuberculosis. Nellie, the youngest of her siblings, was by her side constantly and was actually hugging her mom when she died in January of 1907. Nellie was three years old.

The children's dad could not provide proper care for them. Consequently, he turned to his parish priest for help. Thomas, who was the oldest at age nine, was sent to the Christian Brothers and David to the Sisters of Mercy. Mary and Nellie were taken in by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Cork City. They

arrived there on May 11, 1907. The sisters treated them kindly and were very good to the girls. Nellie was happy to call all of the sisters, "Mothers."

Nellie was three years and nine months old when she arrived at the Good Shepherd Sisters home. A young girl named Mary Long, slept next to Nellie. Nellie never complained but Mary heard her crying and coughing during the night. She told the sisters and Nellie was moved to the school infirmary.

Upon examination it was discovered that Nellie had a crooked spine (the result of a serious fall) that required special care. Sitting up was very painful for the child and sitting still for any length of time caused her great pain. Her hip and her back were out of joint. She was only three and she tried to hide her pain. But she could not "fake" feeling well. All the sisters could do was make the child as comfortable as possible.

Nellie astonished the nuns with her insight and knowledge of the Catholic faith. The sisters and others that cared for Nellie Organ believed without reservation that the child was spiritually gifted. Nellie loved to visit the chapel which she called "the House of Holy God." She referred to the tabernacle as "Holy God's lockdown." And she embraced the Stations of the Cross. Upon being carried to each station she would burst into tears seeing how Holy God suffered for us. She also developed an acute perception of the Blessed Sacrament.

One day Nellie was given a box of beads and some string. Being a three year old she put some in her mouth and inadvertently swallowed them. People saw her gagging and choking and rushed her into the infirmary. The doctor present was able to remove the beads from Nellie's throat.

They were all amazed how brave the little girl remained as the doctor probed into her throat removing the objects. She never made a sound. At this time it was discovered that, just like her mom, she had advanced tuberculosis. The doctor told the sisters there was no hope for recovery and gave Nellie only a few months to live.

Nellie loved the Holy Eucharist deeply. She would ask the sisters to kiss her when they were coming back from Communion so she could share their Holy Communion. She desperately wanted to receive her First Communion. But the rule of the Church was a minimum age of 12. Nellie was only three.

Nellie told of visions she was having of "Holy God" as a child and the Blessed Mother standing nearby. Her faith was so pronounced that the Bishop agreed (since she was close to death) to confirm her. She received her Confirmation on October 8, 1907. Then, on December 6, 1907, after considering all the facts, the local bishop, in consult with the priests, allowed Nellie Organ to receive her First Holy Communion. Nellie Organ died on February 2, 1908.

### [Nellie Organ's story](#)

spread throughout Europe and reached the Vatican. It was presented to

### [Pope Pius X](#)

by his Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val. It was providential because the Holy Father had been looking for a reason to lower the age of receiving First Communion to the age of seven but was not sure about doing it.

When Pius X read the documents about "Little Nellie of Holy God", he immediately took this as a sign to lower the age. The Pope immediately issued a

[Papal Decree called \*QuamSingulari\*](#),

changing the age of receiving First Holy Communion from 12 years old to age seven.

Pope Pius X, who would become St. Pius X, after issuing

*Quam Singulari*

, took up his pen and wrote, “

***May God enrich with every blessing ---all those who recommend frequent Communion to little boys and girls, proposing Nellie as their model.”***

***Pope Pius X. June 4th, 1912.”***

\*edited version published in

[Aleteia](#)

on March 3, 2017

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# What We've REALLY Lost [at If I Might Interject]

## Introduction

I encounter some Catholics who tell me we've lost a lot since we stopped using Latin, stopped using *ad orientem*, stopped using Communion on the tongue, stopped using the 1962 Missal. Other Catholics tell me we've lost a lot since Blessed Paul VI, St. John Paul II, and Benedict XVI “betrayed” the Second Vatican Council. Both groups tell me that, to get back on track, the Church needs to recover what they think is important—that the Church fell into error when it went against what they think best.

The problem I have with this is: the arguments seem to be based on the *post hoc* fallacy. X happened, then Y happened. Therefore X *caused* Y. But before we can accept that, we have to prove that X caused Y, not accept it as true. If there are other factors that explain Y *better* than X, It is wrong to blame X. For example, Lateran Council V (1512-1517) preceded the Protestant Revolt. Does that mean Lateran V *caused* the Reformation? Of course not. The roots of the problem preceded the Council, and would have happened regardless of whether Lateran V happened or not.

## What the Problem *Isn't*

I'm inclined to think that the current crises in the Church have a much broader set of causes that can be traced back at least 70 years, perhaps longer. For example, the horrors caused by totalitarian governments; the numbers of people killed in WWII who might have served the Church in clerical, religious or lay roles; the unusually high numbers of men entering the seminaries after WWII—perhaps some of them not really suited for ordination; the increased efforts among American Catholics to become socially accepted, which sometimes meant downplaying their faith; the development of The Pill, which changed the view of sex to look at fertility as a burden; the growing mistrust of authority in the 1950s (especially after what's commonly known as “The Red Scare”) and 1960s (Vietnam); the heavy handed attitude some members in the Curia used to deal with new ideas; and so on. While any of these factors alone would not explain the widespread revolt in the Church, combined they do show a problem that was in place long before the Missal of 1970 or even the Second Vatican Council.

I think what really happened was the disruptive factors influenced all sections of life in the West, including the Church. There was a rebellion against all that had been respected and revered, and I think society simply couldn't adapt to this rejection (I think the movie, [Paul VI: The Pope in the Tempest](#) did a good job in capturing this sense of chaos). No doubt, changes in Church discipline were jarring to some people and, combined with the general rebellion going on at the same time, it would have been easy to make that *post hoc* fallacy. However, I suspect this widespread rejection would have happened whether Vatican II happened or not.

As for the Catholics who claim that Popes after St. John XXIII “betrayed” the Council, it looks more like Catholics who were swept up in the spirit of rebellion sweeping the world were seizing upon selective portions of Church teaching to justify what they wanted to do anyway. The “Spirit of Vatican II” has nothing to do with what the actual documents of Vatican II actually said, after all. Among these Catholics, there was a false belief that the Church *could* change teachings they didn't like, wrongly thinking the Church could go from “X is a sin” to “X is not a sin.” When the Church refused to go

along, it was labeled “a betrayal,” based on the false assumption that everything was up for grabs.

## **What the Problem Is**

That being said, I think we *have* lost some things to the detriment of the Church. However, these things are not what critics of the Church think. Rather what we have lost are attitudes found in the saints, but absent among many Catholics today. When I look at the writings of saints who faced down crises over the centuries, I see men and women who loved Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and loved the Bride of Christ, His Church, living their lives in love and obedience. In doing so, they accomplished many things that spread the faith.

I think we have lost that sense of obedience. The Church has always insisted that when the Pope and bishops in communion with him taught, we were bound to give assent. But in modern times, liberal Catholics reject *Humanae Vitae* and conservative Catholics reject *Laudato Si*. False theologies have been developed justifying this rejection, mainly by denying that it is authoritative, but the root is Church teaching goes in a direction Catholics do not *want* it to go, and think the Church *must* be making a non-binding (and therefore, error-prone) statement, instead of a binding teaching. It is easier for them to believe that than to believe the possibility that they are living in opposition to God. Of course, both sides are happy to point to the *disobedience* of the other side, while thinking their own behavior *justified*.

We’ve also seen a loss of respect for the office of the successors of the Apostles. The Pope is treated disrespectfully, as if respect is only due him when he acts in the way the Church approves. The problem is, obedience and respect to the Church is part of the teaching of Christ, passed on to the Apostles. We can start with John 14:15, where Our Lord tells the disciples that to love Him is to keep His commandments. We can look also at Matthew 7, where Our Lord says:

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> Then I will declare to them solemnly, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.’ (Matthew 7:21–23).

Obedience to His teachings is mandatory. So, when we look at Matthew 16:18-19 and 18:18, we see Our Lord giving authority to His Church, with the promise to protect her, and if we look at Luke 10:16 and Matthew 18:17, we see that Our Lord sees rejecting the teaching of the Church as a rejection of *Him*. When we consider rejecting a disliked Church teaching, we should consider the consequences.

## **Conclusion: Turning Back Before It Is Too late**

When I look at what shows up on the internet, I see contempt and anger. I see Catholics seem willing to tear down the Church if the Church does not act as they think best. These Catholics claim to be acting to defend the Church, but I don’t see the unconditional love and obedience the saints had.

I think of this every time I see a Catholic calling for a return to the way things were in the past. If we can just go back to the Latin Mass, if we can just return to *ad orientem*. I think of this every time I see a Catholic calling for the Church to abandon her teachings to bring in more people. I don’t see unconditional love here. I see a case of, “I will only love you if you do as I want.” I don’t doubt they

*think* they are serving the Church like the saints did, but I believe they are misguided. When people tell me that all we need to do is to “go back” to the practices of an earlier era of the Church, or that we need to “move forward” to get with the times, I find myself wondering—perhaps these, and not the current crop of shepherds, that harm the Church.

If we really want to save the Church, perhaps it is time we start by looking into our own hearts and asking how we measure up to what God wants us to be. Do we love God, and entrust His Church to Him? Or are we constantly watching for another Catholic to do something we disagree with, so we can denounce him? The former is the attitude of the saints, and it is the attitude we need to pray for. The latter may result in our damnation if we do not repent.

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# A Desert Season [at Sunflower Sojourn]

**I feel like my Lord is leading me into the desert.** The old routines and ways of life that I've followed for years will change. The daily circles that surround me will be different. **It's amazing how much we like to be comfortable as humans, and how difficult**



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**it can be to truly embrace change.** I've been aching for change and known that He's leading me to new paths, but I didn't realize how difficult it could be to change course. I didn't realize how much struggle there would be interiorly. **When I decided to surrender my life to Him, I didn't know how unexpected the journey would be.** Oh, yes, there are so many blessings! He provides over and beyond in every area of my life. Yet it is not at all what I ever expected. **When push comes to shove, the newness will be uncomfortable. I will be challenged in every way. The only stability I can hold onto is my Jesus. And shouldn't He be everything?** How easily we humans become attached to people, places, and routines!

*"The world promises you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness."  
— Pope Benedict XVI*

**Jesus is our Shepherd. Not just any shepherd, either: He's the Good Shepherd.** As the priest at Mass reminded me today, a shepherd knows what is best for His sheep. The shepherd leads the sheep where they need to go and ensures that they are nourished and safe. I can trust, too, that He is leading me somewhere good. **The Good Shepherd knows what is best for this little lamb of His—and for you, too!**



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***Friend, don't fear the desert season.*** He will be our Living Water and our nourishment in the desolation. He will lead us through the desert and sand. He will lead us exactly where we need to be. One day, we will find that we have made it out of the desert. **We can trust that there will be abundant fruit after the desert. Follow His voice, and He will be with you all the way.**

## Sunflower Sojourn

I am committed to sojourning with you toward Jesus Christ, the Son, as we seek to become the people we are called to be in every aspect of our lives.

May 7, 2017

[Uncategorized](#)

[abundance](#), [changes](#), [desert](#), [difficulty](#), [Good Shepherd](#), [Jesus Christ](#), [journey](#), [Living Water](#), [routines](#), [sheep](#)

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## **Beware Yon Dragon of Emasculation! [at Beware Yon Dragons!]**

After an extended time where I do not post anything on this blog, I find it helpful to begin my return to writing by thinking about the things that kept me away. Those are not always bad things, sometimes they are just a matter of having to prioritize. No, I am not necessarily busier than a celibate priest because I have family to attend to, but I do have that on my list of responsibilities in life. Being busy was not, however, what really kept me away this time.

Sometimes we can get caught up in the numerous activities that are so common in modern society and those pull us away from "normalcy", yes, but that was not what held my attention. It was more of a time of "study". Not theological study; but studying the world around. I have been watching things from a somewhat different perspective lately. I have thought for a long time that there has been a steady emasculation of men, and I have seen it even more lately. I am not about to give a list (it would be long) of the things I have been noticing, but I have come to believe that it is even more pernicious than I thought before.

Picture the Church like a city on a hill. It has precious land and there are many enemies who wish to take it by force. If the enemies believe that the city is well defended, then what are they going to do to overcome the defenses? Although there are many ways an enemy can attack, the most effective will certainly be if they can convince the men of the city not to fight in her defense. If the army willingly lays down her weapons of defense, then the enemy can march right in and take what she wants without firing a single shot. I think that is what we are going through right now. Rather than being attacked directly, Catholic men are being convinced by this sinful world (usually in a very subtle manner), not to defend themselves or their families and churches.

I have always been moved by the words of Psalm 149. It is recited regularly in the Ordinarate lectionary for the Daily Office and it seems to hit me more deeply every time I read it. Let me quote it here:

Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful! Let Israel be glad in his Maker, let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King! Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with timbrel and lyre! For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches. Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to wreak vengeance on the nations and chastisement on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgment written! This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the LORD!

Particularly I am thinking of the last few verses (even though many people would rather skip those verses). No, I am not advocating war (but self defense is a godly behavior). That combination of "let high praise be in our throats" with the idea of keeping "two-edged swords in our hands" should make every man realize that he is called to a battle. Not a battle with guns, tanks, and bombs (those weapons are too petty and weak for this battle that I am speaking of). We are called to do battle with the devil, the world, and our own flesh. We are told that "this is glory for all God's faithful ones". Tough words, yes, but they are something of a battle cry that speaks to us as men.

Time to get ready for the battle. Time to accept what it means to be a Catholic man. Time to recognize that every one of us has been tempted by cowardice and foolishness. I am reminded of the verse in 1 Corinthians that says essentially the same thing. The Apostle speaks boldly about this very subject, and yet I know of few men who are aware of this verse. Unfortunately, some translations water the idea down with a phrase like "be courageous". That is not, however, all that the Apostle is saying. A more literal rendering of the original Greek is found in the good old Douay Bible.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, **do manfully**, and be strengthened" (1 Cor 16:13, Douay Rheims).

Sounds to me like a rally cry. "Do manfully." This is needed, and I wish to encourage other men (and especially young men) to accept what God has made them to be, and let us help one another to take the stand we need to take. Let us have "high praise" for God as well as the "sword of the Spirit" in our hands. This blog is supposed to be about slaying dragons, and the emasculation of men is a dragon that needs to be slain. Pray for me as I continue to write on this subject.

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## Guadalupe [at Hermano Juancito]

On my way back from a visit to the US I decided to stop in Mexico City to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe.



As I walked from the METRO (subway) to the grounds of the shrine, passing beggars and vendors of all sorts, I saw the old basilica at the end of the street – a welcoming sight.



Entering the grounds and approaching the new basilica, I could see the

*tilma*

of Juan Diego above the altar in the rather modernistic basilica. The image is smaller than I had thought and is high above the main altar.



I passed in front of the image a few times and then, after a visit to the shop in the basilica, I entered the basilica for the next Mass, which was accompanied by children and teachers from a Catholic school.

You cannot get very close to the image but have to pass on moving walks under the image. I passed there many times – but it seems strange craning your neck to see the image (and take photos).

Then I decided to walk around the grounds, visiting the various churches and the museum. I was deeply moved by the bright image of San Juan Diego above the altar in the Antigua Parroquia de los Indios.



Then I passed to the Capilla del Pocito, the site of an ancient well. Entering the church and passing by the well there is a strong smell, possibly sulfur. The well shows the effects of earthquakes and other movements of the earth.

The church has paintings of the four apparitions. As I read the descriptions, I noted a classic translation fail. More on that later.

But then I walked to the area call La Ofrenda. There is a life-sized panorama of statues of the Virgin of Guadalupe with people, mostly indigenous, coming to pay her homage. I do not know how authentic they are, but I was moved especially by the man offering incense and the child offering lilies.



But then I walked nearby and came across an image of Juan Bernardino, the sick uncle of Juan Diego. On his woven mat,

*un metate*

, he is reaching out to the Virgin who appeared to him and healed him.



As I approached the area, I was three young people from Jalisco in native clothing taking pictures. I offered to take a picture of all of them and they gladly accepted. I was glad to see young people, conserving their indigenous identity and their Catholic faith. Passing them later, I heard them speaking a language other than Spanish.

As I reflected later that day, I was not very moved by what I saw except for the image of Juan Diego, the statues in La Ofrenda, and the young people I encountered. Even though I passed by the image many times, I was not moved by the image – as much as by bronze sculptures of Juan Diego by the moving walkways.



I think it was partly because I am more moved by the story and by the encounter of Mary and the Americas, in the person of Juan Diego than by an image. Also, I had no one to really share the experience with.

But I decided to return the next day. I sat for Mass in a different place and saw the image from a different angle – with the cross at one side and an image of Juan Diego at the other. Sitting quietly, waiting for Mass, I felt much more connected to

*Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*

- who makes sense in the light of the Cross and in the light of the indigenous of the Americas.



As I left I saw two people approaching the basilica on their knees in the plaza in front of the church. I had seen two during Mass the first day.



During that second visit I experienced a peace that still pervades me, as I have returned home to Honduras.

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This contribution is available at <http://hermanojuancito.blogspot.com/2017/05/quadaalupe.html>  
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## Together with Mary [at Writer with a Cause]

So what did we learn from the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe? Perhaps, the fact that millions of people were converted following the appearance of Our Lady was no coincidence. What if Our Lady is the key to the New Pentecost?

*After Jesus had been taken up to heaven the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away.*

*When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.*

*All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and his brothers.*

– Seventh Sunday of Easter; Reading 1 [ACTS 1:12-14](#)

Remember this picture?



Need I say more? Mary is like, “hello my spouse, now everyone gets to experience the communion I have with you!” She is greeting an old friend, while the Apostles are terrified and bewildered.

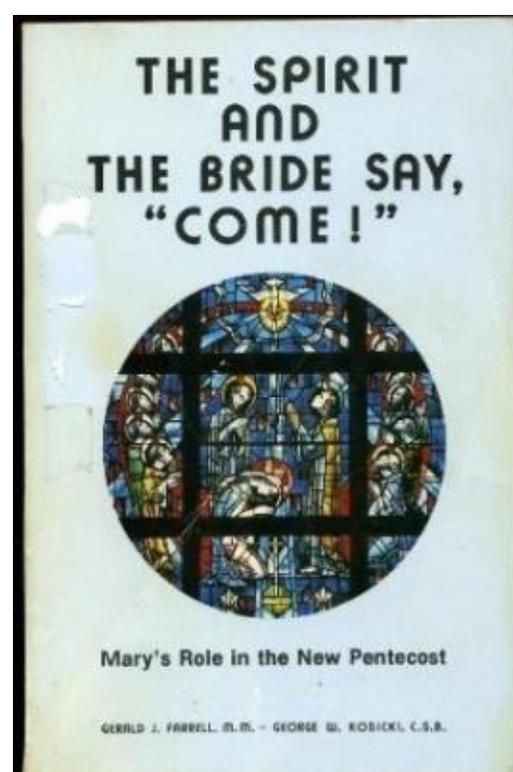
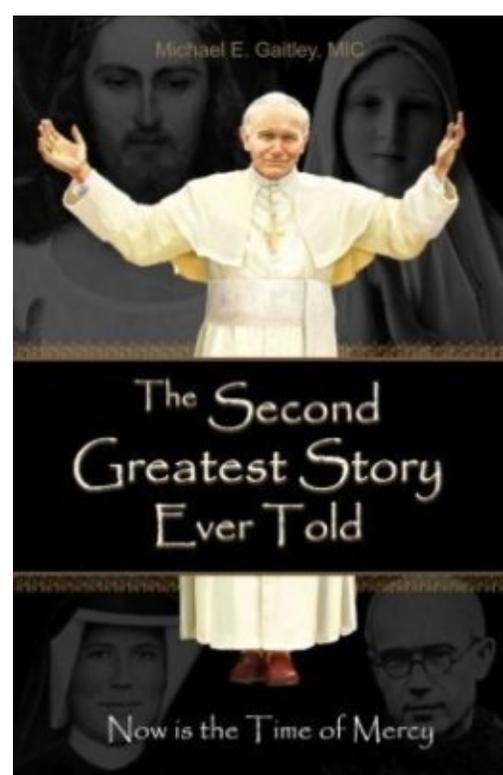
In all things, Mary is the first pilgrim – she goes before us, showing us the way to Jesus, the Father and eternal life. So it is fitting that she should experience Pentecost long before anyone else did.

*But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.*

– [Lk 1:34-35](#)

The Holy Spirit conceived Jesus in Mary, so essentially, she is the Spouse of the Spirit – they are one. So we can't have one without the other. At the first Pentecost, the Apostles needed Mary to intercede for them in the Upper Room, they needed her to help them be open to the coming of the spirit. She probably helped to prepare them by showing what a life in the Spirit could look like.

When I was first pondering this New Pentecost and Mary's role in it, reading these two books together is what really opened my eyes to and helped me begin to understand all of this. I cannot recommend them enough!



“Renew Your wonders in our time, as though for a new Pentecost, and grant that the holy Church,

preserving unanimous and continuous prayer, together with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and also under the guidance of St. Peter, may increase the reign of the Divine Savior, the reign of truth and justice, the reign of love and peace. Amen.”

[St. Pope John XXIII, Convocation of Vatican II](#)

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## Beauty Tuesday [at Veils and Vocations]

I decided to add a new tradition to Veils and Vocations. Each Tuesday, we will be having a link up party where you can share your latest post about the beauty of the world, the Church, your life, etc.

We are bombarded with darkness everywhere we turn, but God created this world to be filled with beauty, goodness, and joy! Please link your post below and help spread some light.

Oh, and don't forget to link back to my post so others can find the collection of lovely posts each week. Thanks.

Speaking of beauty, in my book there is little more beautiful than women and girls who veil as a devotion to our LORD. It is a devotion that is close to my heart and part of my inspiration for this blog.

Next week, I will be sharing my story of how I came to veiling. However, this week, I want introduce you to something that is very exciting for me.

In an effort to find ways to encourage and support my readers' journey of faith, I opened my [etsy shop](#)

. I will be the first to admit that it has not been very active of late. Right now, though, I am working on restocking it and am overjoyed to now be carrying Fleur de Lis veils--lovingly, handcrafted by Marsha.

Her veils are true works of art. I am thankful to have gotten to know Marsha and can tell you that her heart is just as beautiful as her veils.





As a special gift to my readers, I am offering free shipping in my store through June 30th with the code FREESHIPMAY. Thank you for being there to read my humble blog. I know this isn't the fanciest nor most popular blog out there, but when I read the stats of how many visit this little corner of the Internet and how many countries are represented by my readers, I am truly touched.

You may come here because you like my blog, but really I keep coming back because of all the love and support that has been shown to me by every click on this blogger link. God bless you all!

Please link up your post below. Show the blogging world the beauty that surrounds you!

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This contribution is available at <http://veilsandvocations.blogspot.com/2017/05/beauty-tuesday-link-up.html>  
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# Homeschool Tips Veils and Vocations [at Sun, 07 May 2017 12:00:00 EST]

School is almost out over here at the

[Academy of St Therese for the Glories of God](#)

. It has me thinking quite a bit about next year. There is so much I want to do, but only so many hours in a day and these kids are growing like weeds! Here are some tips to keep the homeschool ball rolling AND enjoy your children's childhood.



## Tip #1

Take time

[outside the classroom](#)

. We have had a crazy year with the new baby and all so I have felt more guilty than usual taking a day off to do something different. However, those field trips and projects are still learning. They are also special memories!

## Tip # 2

Don' be afraid to change the plan. We've all been there. The year's plan is meticulously done. You envision a year full of growth and success beyond your wildest dreams, and then it happens. That perfect book/program/course just isn't working. Everyone is miserable--but what about the plan?

[Man plans, God laughs!](#)

When it isn't working, be willing to change. Maybe it needs a different approach. Perhaps your child needs to jump ahead, or step back a bit. Whatever it is, be willing to be flexible. In the end it will be for the best.

**Tip #3**

When it isn't working read a good book or two! This one I borrowed from

[Andrew Pudewa](#)

and it is my go to tip. Books are so much more than reading practice. Lose yourself in some good literature. Learn while you spend some quiet time together. Regroup and move on!

**Tip #4** Trust your instinct! You know your child better than anyone. Plus, even the best curricula is written in a one size fits all fashion. If you know your child could succeed if she only got x, y, and z but your instructions say to do r and q, go with your gut. Wish I could have told that to my homeschooling newbie-self.

**Tip #5**

Foster your child's interests and his God-given skills. We all want our child to have a successful and prosperous future. Let's be honest, though, not everyone is meant to be a lawyer, doctor, or engineer. God made each of us unique, and that is a blessing. It not only makes the world go around, it keeps life interesting. Make time and space in your lesson plans for your child to explore what excites him. Who knows, that could just be

[his calling](#)

?

**Tip #6** Let someone else do the teaching! This has been a huge sanity saver and has also greatly enriched our experience. I am test driving several online resources for next year, but I also have to give a plug to really good movies. I know, I know--screen time!

Well, I am one who seriously limits screen time but I use the tie my kids do spend plugged in to enhance their learning. I am always on the hunt for new videos--especially since my children can pretty much recite the entire script of favorites like Liberty's Kids and Wild Kratts.

Pure Flix has a nice selection of

[Christian movies](#)

, especially education videos that I plan to learn more about. Check out their suggestions below!



Tip #7 Remember the ultimate goal is leading your child to Heaven, not just graduation!

Do you have any tips to share? I'd love to hear them.

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# Saint Joseph the Worker, Pray for Us! [at Broad and Deep]

May Day! What's not to love? Spring... Flowers... The first day of the month of Our Lady...

## ***And Communism!***

Wait, what?

In the late 19th century, international communist, socialist, and anarchist movements established May 1st as a day to celebrate laborers and the working class. Today, many countries throughout the world celebrate a Labor Day holiday that coincides with

## [International Workers' Day](#)

on May 1st.

But in 1955, Pope Pius XII dedicated May 1st to St. Joseph the Worker as a counterpoint to the socialist and communist ideology behind International Workers' Day.

Side note: this co-opting of the socialist holiday and, as it were, baptizing it for the use of the Church follows a long and venerable tradition; the early Church often took pagan holidays and transformed them into Christian celebrations. (Which is certainly not the same thing as, for example, claiming that Easter is some

## [vaguely disguised celebration of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar.](#)

)

So. Why have a feast dedication to St. Joseph specifically as the patron of workers? Is it just to Christianize the concept of labor and show the working-class that the Church really does care about them? Is it just a way to oppose Communism and give faithful Catholics an alternate celebration for May 1st?

Or is it something deeper? Something that, perhaps, goes all the way back to the beginning?

## ***In the beginning...***

We all know the story of Genesis 1-3. In the beginning God created the world and everything in it. He created man and woman in his image and likeness, and he placed them in the garden. But the serpent showed up, and Adam and Eve gave in to the temptation to eat the forbidden fruit. As a result, they were exiled from their easy life in paradise. Instead of their perfect, endless life in the garden they faced a life of suffering and, ultimately, death. Because of sin we have pain, suffering, and death. Because of sin we must "toil" for our food (see Genesis 3:17-19).

Right?

Well, mostly.

### ***The primordial vocation of work***

Prior to Adam and Eve's sin, there was no suffering or death. They experienced no sorrow in the garden. But they did work.

When God placed Adam in the garden he commanded him "to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15) God "planted a garden in Eden" (Genesis 2:8), but it still required the work of man. Even before the Fall, mankind had to work. Why? Precisely because we are created in the image and likeness of God.

God chose to make mankind in his image and likeness. This means that we are his sons and daughters (the next time the phrase "image and likeness" is used in Genesis is in 5:3, describing the relationship between Adam and his son Seth).



It means that we have an intellect and will, so that we can know and love in imitation of God who is all knowing and is Love himself.

But it also means that God, the creator and ruler of all creation, entrusted mankind with the stewardship of creation, as we see when Adam is given the authority to name the animals in Genesis 2:19-20.

God has created us to share in his magnificent work of creation. There is an inherent dignity and value in work that relates directly to what it means to be human. But when human nature was damaged by that first sin in the garden, one of the consequences was that work would no longer always be the gift it was intended to be. Hence:

*"Cursed is the ground because of you;  
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.  
In the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread  
till you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return."*

--Genesis 3:17-19

### ***A punishment that heals***

Work is not a curse of the Fall. But work that does not bring forth its intended fruit, work that is burdensome and toilsome, work that wears us down instead of fulfilling us--this is a result of the disorder brought about by our first parents' sin.

However, the very consequences of the Fall "embody remedies that limit the damaging effects of sin" (

[CCC](#)

1609). Submitting to and persevering in toil and the sweat of our brow draws us away from pride and self-centeredness and leads us into love and the service of others. Work is still a gift from God, even though it often involves difficulties and sufferings that were not part of the original plan.

And work is still inherently tied to the dignity of the human person. And so the Church continues to affirm both the dignity and the duty of work, as well as its potential as a channel of grace and

sanctification (

[CCC](#)

2427).

## ***St. Joseph the Worker vs. International Workers' Day***

So why not just go along with International Workers' Day? The Church teaches that everyone has a right to work, and that there is a great dignity in work. Why do we need to co-opt this holiday and make it something that is particularly Christian?

It is certainly necessary to recognize the dignity and rights of the worker, as International Workers' Day claims to do. And it is certainly true that capitalism often fails to do this, frequently exploiting workers rather than fully respecting their dignity and rights.

But the crucial difference is that the Church sees the dignity of work as having its source in the inherent dignity of the human person--not the other way around. As St. John Paul II so succinctly put it, "Work is 'for man', not man 'for work'" (

[Laborem Exercens](#) or "On Human Work,"

6).

On this feast of St. Joseph the Worker, we celebrate the value and dignity of human work *because it is done by human persons*. Ultimately we recognize and honor the dignity of each and every human person--not because of what they can (or cannot) do, but because of who they are: individuals created in the image and likeness of God.

We are all called by God to be "workers"--whether that work brings in a paycheck or not. Doing laundry, constructing buildings, washing dishes, performing surgery, changing diapers, discovering new solar systems, teaching young minds, tending gardens, running a business, creating art, vacuuming, serving food, writing--we bring the dignity to these tasks as sons and daughters of God. We do not derive our dignity from them, or from the money or recognition they may (or may not) bring.

Work is for man, and it is for every man (and woman, obviously). The Church teaches that every person has a right to work that matches one's dignity as a human person and that allows one to provide for one's needs and one's family. This doesn't mean that any person has a right to any job they want, regardless of qualifications, etc. But it does mean that unemployment is more than a merely practical problem--it's a

human rights issue. As the

*Catechism*

puts is, "Unemployment almost always wounds its victim's dignity and threatens the equilibrium of his life. Besides the harm done to him personally, it entails many risks for his family" (

[CCC](#)

2436).

***St. Joseph the Worker, pray for us!***

The Church didn't really choose St. Joseph as our model and our patron in the vocation of work--he was chosen for us. When the Word of God became incarnate he chose to spend 30 years living a quiet, ordinary life in Nazareth. And he chose St. Joseph as his protector, his foster-father, and his teacher.

Jesus, the Son of God, placed himself under the protection of this carpenter from Nazareth. He apprenticed himself to him, learned from him, and worked under him. He lived his silent life of labor and love alongside him. We could certainly do no better than to imitate our Lord and place ourselves under the protection and patronage of St. Joseph.

And so we beg the prayers of St. Joseph for all workers, and especially for those who are without work, for those who are exploited in the workplace, for those who cannot work, and for those who are responsible for the well-being of workers.

***Want to know more about what the Church says about the dignity of the worker and the right to work?***

This is a huge, complicated, and unspeakably important issue, and the Church has many beautiful things to say about it. I highly recommend the following for further reading:

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## Revisiting the Fence [at The Cloistered Heart]



A cloistered nun told me, some years ago, that my life for God in the midst of the world was more difficult than hers. At the time, I didn't think that was possible. I did not have to rise every morning at 5:30, show up in chapel when a bell rang, and spend most of each day in silence.

In the twenty-five years since Sister said this to me, I've gained a better idea of what she meant. I believe she was saying that the framework of my life was one in which it was difficult not merely to live, but to **live for God**. Which is, after all, the point of life... to live **for God**.

The life of a nun would be impossible for me, because I don't have grace for it. Sometimes, however, I long for the framework of such a life. I long for physical structure to securely fence me in and keep me from getting sidetracked by things that are unimportant, frivolous or even sinful.

In the midst of a society that finds the very thought of living "for God" repressive, fanatical, and politically incorrect, I find myself not securely fenced in, but camped out and **living on** the fence. I don't intend to embrace the world's standards, but in my attempts to blend in with the rest of society, sometimes I just might find myself compromising.

The fence is where I settle in to watch a PG-13 movie while trying to close my ears to the language and my eyes to "those scenes." It's where I enter a party determined not to gossip, but wind up laughing along with those who do. It is where I know I'm to stand up for Christ, for life, for morality, for biblical truth - yet I pull back for fear of what others might think. In a monastery, questionable movies would not be seen, and speaking ill of others would be frowned upon. Distressing news items wouldn't be matters for debate, but for prayer. God would be the center, there, of *everyone's* life.

I realize that religious life is not utopian; I do know this. But I would love to live within a structure where prayer times are scheduled, outward distractions are minimal, and God is never forgotten. The world is crazier than ever at this point in time (yes, I realize that's an understatement), and sometimes I would love to just hide away from the insanity. But my call is not to do that. My call is to live for God,

love others for God, and pray for God's loving will to reign over all.

My call is to step off the fence and live fully, not just partly, for God.

*"Faith is one foot on the ground, one foot in the air, and a queasy feeling in the stomach." (Mother Angelica)*

*"Great saints have often been made out of great sinners, but not one was ever made out of a wimp." (Peter Kreeft)*

*"You cannot be half a saint. You must be a whole saint or no saint at all." (St. Therese of Lisieux)*

*"Do not be satisfied with mediocrity." (Pope St. John Paul II)*

*"You want to do something for the Lord.. do it. Whatever you feel needs to be done, even though you're shaking in your boots, you're scared to death... take the first step forward. The grace comes with that one step and you get the grace as you step." (Mother Angelica)*

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## The Path to Forgiveness [at Plot Line and Sinker]



Photo by Kayla Hrkach, used with permission

[My latest article at Catholic Mom:](#)

*“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”*

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught us to “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Many of us say this prayer multiple times every day if we are saying the Rosary. It’s important to take these words to heart **every time we say them**.

I’ve heard many people say “I’ll never forgive him,” or “I’ll never forgive her.” However, Christ didn’t qualify it. It doesn’t matter what the person has done to us or the heartache they caused. We must do our very best to forgive the person. This is NOT an easy thing to do, especially if the person you’re trying to forgive isn’t sorry for the pain they’ve caused you.

For most of my life, I had a difficult time forgiving an older female relative who verbally abused me throughout my married life. I spent years avoiding this relative, but sometimes it wasn’t possible. And while I thought I had forgiven her, a few years ago when someone asked me what had happened, I let it all come out and began reliving all the difficult moments. That’s when I realized I needed counseling and/or spiritual help. Later we discovered that she suffered from a mental illness and I just happened to be the convenient target for her verbal abuse.

As a grade school student, I was bullied by one particular girl who made my life extremely difficult. The religious sisters at the school loved me and I was a good student. But I was also the shortest in the class and probably weighed 45 pounds soaking wet. The girl was not that much taller than me and I was an easy target. I spent years holding onto a grudge against this girl and found myself thinking, “I hope she’s had a hard life.” But that isn’t forgiveness. I suspect now that she was probably enduring her own

abuse and projecting that onto an easy target.

After my father's death at the young age of 49, I found out that he had been molested by a priest when he was a boy. Because of the shame, he never told anyone except for my mother. He suffered from addictions and mental disorders and these all seemed to make sense in light of this information. I spent years thinking, "I hope that priest burned in hell." I have always wished that there had been some justice for my father and for our family, who suffered along with him in his struggles. However, the thought that this priest's soul was burning in hell was not forgiving at all. But truthfully, I didn't want to forgive him for all the heartache he caused my father and our family.

**So how can you forgive?** First, ask the Blessed Mother to help you. She stood by, quietly, with great sorrow as her Son was beaten, scourged and hung on a Cross to die a painful death. She cradled Him in her arms afterward. She heard Him say, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Mary forgave them because that is what her Son asked.

Second, when I was in confession with a priest a few years ago, he told me to pray for every person who has ever hurt me. So that's what I did. I prayed for them, offered up sacrifices and prayed a blessing on them. I also prayed that the Holy Spirit would bring to mind all those that I needed to forgive. As well, I prayed that the Holy Spirit would bring to mind all those who needed to forgive me for any wrongs I've done, and I prayed for those people as well, that they would find it in their hearts to forgive me.

Then I began fasting, especially for those people I have had a hard time forgiving: the bully, the relative, the abusive priest. It wasn't easy in the beginning. I didn't like sacrificing for those who had hurt me. However, because fasting invites the Holy Spirit into our hearts and souls, He gave me the grace to forgive. Forgiveness didn't happen overnight, but I was finally able to forgive the abusive relative, the priest and the bully and to love them unconditionally. I was finally able to think of these people in love, rather than anger. A burden had been lifted. I was also able to sympathize with what these two women and the priest must have gone through in their lives to treat others so badly.

Forgiveness doesn't excuse the behavior. And it doesn't mean that we don't want justice if the person has committed a crime. It also doesn't mean we should stay around and continue to be a target. However, embracing anger and holding onto a grudge hurts us and our souls. It doesn't matter whether the person is repentant and/or wants to be forgiven. It's important for us to be as merciful to others as we expect God will be with us.

If you find yourself in a position where someone is hurting you, offending you or being unkind, stop and say a quiet prayer of blessing on the person and the silent words, "Father, forgive him/her, for they know not what they do." This is extremely helpful whether the offense is big or small.

To read an inspiring and compelling story of forgiveness, I highly recommend Immaculee Ilibagiza's book, [\*Left to Tell\*](#). She was able to forgive the people responsible for murdering her family.

Forgiving others is one of the very foundations of Christian life. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." If we find forgiving someone too difficult, ask Our Lady to help, then pray and fast for those who have offended us. If we can't forgive those who have hurt us, how will God forgive us for our sins?

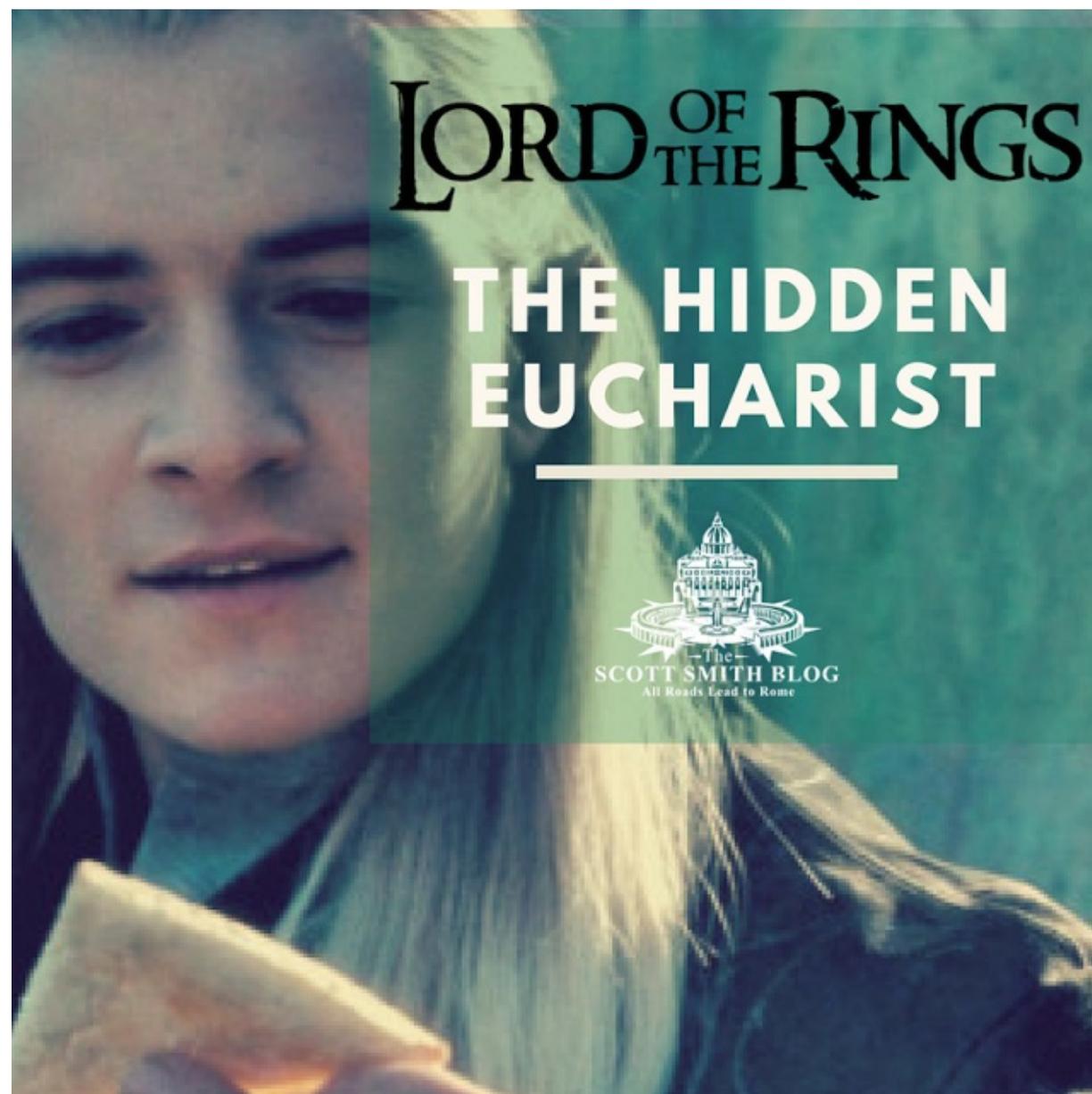
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## The Hidden Eucharist in the Lord of the Rings

What is "the one great thing to love on earth", according to J. R. R. Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings*? Find out below and in this series of posts on the Catholic symbolism in *The Lord of the Rings*.



The Lord of the Rings can't be fully understood without understanding the hidden Eucharistic significance of the novels. What's more, perhaps: [J. R. R. Tolkien](#) can't be fully understood apart from his Catholic identity and his devotion to the Eucharist.

The Eucharistic symbolism in Tolkien's writing runs deep. Since the Eucharist is so deeply entrenched in Scripture, this and the upcoming posts will touch on a number of different subjects. Tolkien's treatment of the Eucharist is amazingly thorough. Following the thread of the lembas bread will take us back to the Eden of Middle-Earth, where the Two Trees grew. The last surviving descendant of the Two Trees will take us to the last surviving descendent of the Kingdom of Númenor and, ultimately, to the Return of the King.

**Here are several quotes from Tolkien regarding the Eucharist. [\[1\]](#) Reading these, one begins to understand how significant the Eucharist was to Tolkien's thinking and, what's more, his imagining.**

Out of the darkness of my life, so much frustrated, I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament. . . . There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity, and the true way of all your loves on earth, and more than that: Death.

By the divine paradox, that which ends life, and demands the surrender of all, and yet by the taste—or foretaste—of which alone can what you seek in your earthly relationships (love, faithfulness, joy) be maintained, or take on that complexion of reality, of eternal endurance, which every man's heart desires.

How many of Tolkien's characters experience “sagging” faith and require almost “eternal endurance”? And what nourishes Sam and Frodo on their journey into darkness? The Eucharist, which is “the only cure”:

The only cure for sagging or fainting faith is Communion. Though always itself, perfect and complete and inviolate, the Blessed Sacrament does not operate completely and once for all in any of us. Like the act of Faith it must be continuous and grow by exercise.

Tolkien also has words of wisdom for those, like so many of us, that complain of Mass being boring or full of distractions and so lose track of what really matters:

Frequency [of the Eucharist] is of the highest effect. [...] Seven times a week is more nourishing than seven times at intervals. Also I can recommend this as an exercise (alas! only too easy to find opportunity for): make your Communion in circumstances that affront your taste. Choose a snuffling or gabbling priest or a proud and vulgar friar; and a church full of the usual bourgeois crowd, ill-behaved children—from those who yell to those products of Catholic schools who the moment the tabernacle is opened sit back and yawn—open-necked and dirty youths, women in trousers and often with hair both unkempt and uncovered. Go to Communion with them (and pray for them). [...] It could not be worse

than the mess of the feeding of the Five Thousand—after which our Lord propounded the feeding that was to come. [...] It will be just the same (or better than that) as a mass said beautifully by a visibly holy man, and shared by a few devout and decorous people.

Eat little at a time, and only at need. For these things are given to serve you when all else fails. The cakes will keep sweet for many many days, if they are unbroken and left in their leaf-wrappings, as we have brought them. One will keep a traveler on his feet for a day of long labour, even if he be one of the tall men of Minas Tirith.[\[2\]](#)

You can hear echoes of Tolkien's own words in those of Lady Galadriel. One wafer, the Lady says, "will keep a traveler on his feet for a day of long labour." Or, as Tolkien wrote of the Eucharist, one "taste" provides for "eternal endurance" to reach that ultimate goal "which every man's heart desires." It will be described in a later section how Lady Galadriel is a symbol for Mary, and, as such, it is highly significant that she supplies the fellowship with Eucharistic bread.

Tolkien hints at the Eucharistic significance of the lembas bread. He wrote that the lembas "also has a much larger significance, of what one might hesitatingly call a 'religious' kind. This becomes later apparent especially in the chapter 'Mount Doom'."[\[3\]](#)

Tolkien is likely referring to this passage from the chapter "Mount Doom":

As for himself, though weary and under a shadow of fear, [Sam] still had some strength left. The lembas had a virtue without which they would long ago have lain down to die. It did not satisfy desire, and at times Sam's mind was filled with the memories of food, and the longing for simple bread and meats. And yet this waybread of the Elves had a potency that increased as travellers **relied on it alone** and did not mingle it with other foods. **It fed the will, and it gave strength to endure**, and to master sinew and limb beyond the measure of mortal kind.[\[4\]](#)

Relying on the lembas bread *alone* is reminiscent of the many saints, including Saint Catherine of Siena during the last years of her life, who survived by eating the Eucharist alone. Many of the saints survived on the Eucharist alone during the fasting seasons of Lent and Advent. St. Joseph Cupertino also lived on the Eucharist alone for five years.

The lembas is also described as “[feeding] the will” of Frodo and Sam, who are on the final leg of their journey to Mount Doom.<sup>[5]</sup> This strengthening of the will that comes from eating lembas is the effect of the [Viaticum](#). The Viaticum is the Last Eucharist given to those who are dying. The [Catechism of the Council of Trent](#) says: "Sacred writers call it the Viaticum as well because it is the spiritual food by which we are supported in our mortal pilgrimage, as also because it prepares for us a passage to eternal glory and happiness."<sup>[6]</sup>

Have you enjoyed learning about the Eucharistic meaning in *The Lord of the Rings*? Please comment and share below!

Also, this is only the beginning! Check out the [next post](#) on the "The Hidden Manna".

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<sup>[1]</sup> *The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind The Lord of the Rings*, p. 219.

<sup>[2]</sup> *The Fellowship of the Ring*, "Farewell to Lorien"

<sup>[3]</sup> *Letters*, p. 274-275, 1958.

<sup>[4]</sup> *The Return of the King*, Book Six, Chapter III, "Mount Doom"

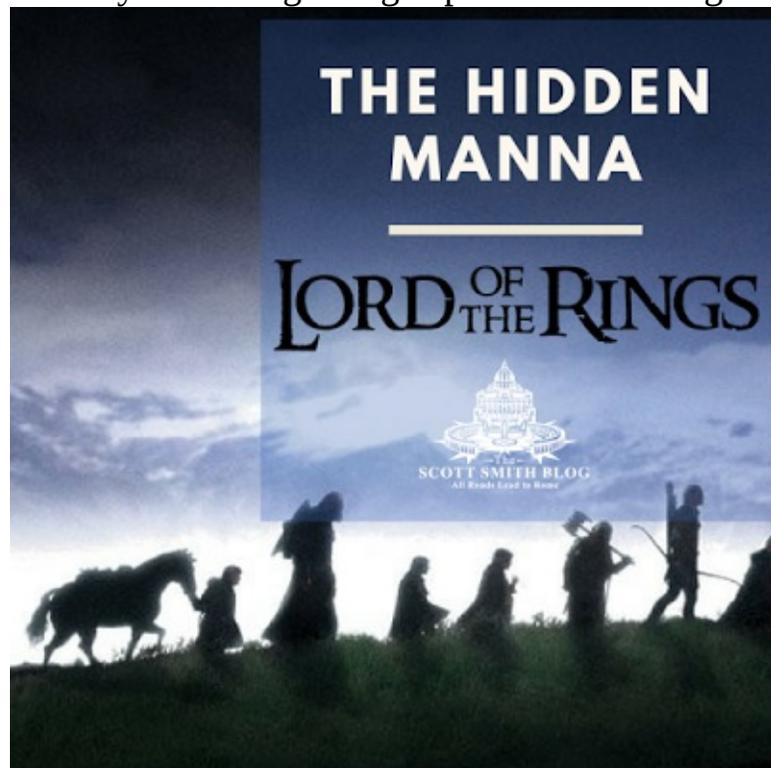
<sup>[5]</sup> This is also seen as Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas hunt the orc pack across the plains of Rohan: “Often in their hearts, they thanked the Lady of Lórien for the gift of lembas, for they could eat of it and find new strength even as they ran.” (*The Two Towers*, Book Three, Chapter II, “The Riders of Rohan”)

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Did you know *The Lord of the Rings* has its own Exodus and Moses? You need to understand this before you can begin to grasp the full meaning of the Tolkien's writings.



In the [last post](#), we talked about the basic connection between the Lembas Bread and the Eucharist and J. R. R. Tolkien's devotion to the Eucharist. Now, let's follow Tolkien down the path a bit further: "it's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to."

## Where did the Lembas bread come from?

Tolkien provides us with some of the bread's history elsewhere in his writing. It is interesting that Tolkien should dedicate so much time to writing about bread if he was not hinting at a greater significance to the bread.

It is said by the Eldar that the art of preparing the Lembas came from the Vala Yavanna. Yavanna was one of the Ainu or the "Holy Ones." These were the first and mightiest of the beings created by Eru Ilúvatar, "the One" who is basically "God the Father," before the creation of the world. All growing things and fruits were attributed to Yavanna. In the Elvish language, Yavanna's name means "Giver of Fruits."

The art of preparing the lembas bread is said to have originated as far back as the Elves' Great Journey to Aman, when Yavanna brought to them a special corn grown on her own fields. These traditions were

passed on throughout the long ages from house to house of the High Elves.

This is very interesting. For what might Tolkien's "Great Journey" be an allegory?

The Great Journey was the march of the elves, the Eldar, from Cuiviénen, the place of their awakening, to Valinor. Valinor is elsewhere called the Undying Lands. Only immortals such as the elves and ringbearers are permitted to live in the Undying Lands. Valinor is, therefore, the equivalent of Heaven or the Promised Land.

When in salvation history was there a "great journey," or "Exodus", to the Promised Land? The Great Journey of the Eldar is an allegory for the Exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt. The Great Journey is the equivalent of the Wilderness Wanderings, the forty years the Israelites spent wandering in the desert and wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula.

But wait, what did the Israelites eat during those forty years spent wandering in the desert? Wasn't it some kind of *bread*?

## **The Manna**

The Manna was the miraculous bread that fed the Israelites for forty years in the desert, cf. Exodus 16; Numbers 11:6-9. It was bread from heaven. It fell during the night in small white flakes or grains which covered the ground and presented the appearance of hoar frost. These grains are described as resembling coriander seed and bdellium, with a taste like "flour with honey" or "bread tempered with oil" (Exodus 16:31; Numbers 11:7-8).

The manna formed on the ground as flakes or wafers. Does that sound familiar? Bread in the shape of wafers? The manna is clearly a prefigurement of the Eucharist, the bread from heaven which becomes the flesh of Christ during the consecration during the Catholic Mass.

Jesus' followers actually ask him about the manna at the beginning of the Bread of Life discourse, John 6:30-31:

Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'

This marks the beginning of Jesus' Bread of Life discourse. He declares that he, himself, is the "Bread of Life." Jesus' own flesh is the new Manna. The Eucharist is the fulfillment of the Manna.

If the origin of lembas bread wasn't enough, Tolkien makes even more connections between the lembas bread and the Eucharist. For example, he describes the lembas bread as a "wafer":

'Praised be the bow of Galadriel, and the hand and eye of Legolas! ' said Gimli, as he munched a **wafer** of lembas. 'That was a mighty shot in the dark, my friend!'[\[1\]](#)

In the *History of Middle-Earth*, Tolkien also describes how, during the First Age, lembas was wrapped in "leaves of silver [...] a **wafer** of white wax shaped as a single flower of Telperion."[\[2\]](#) Again, the lembas bread is described as a wafer, but also a *white* wafer. Just like the Eucharist. But there's more, where did these "leaves of silver" come from and what is "Telperion"?

For the answer to this last riddle of "Telperion", please stay tuned for the [next post](#). Hint: The next post will be about The Two Trees of *The Lord of the Rings* ...

Please comment and share! Sharing is caring.

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[\[1\]](#) *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book Two, Chapter IX, "The Great River"

[\[2\]](#) *The History of Middle Earth*, Vol. XII: The Peoples of Middle-earth, chapter XV: "Of Lembas"

## About me



Hey, my name is Scott Smith. I'm an attorney, author, theologian, and pro-life activist. I live in southern Louisiana with my beautiful wife and three wild-eyed children. We live between two rivers in our hometown of New Roads... [Read more](#)

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## About me



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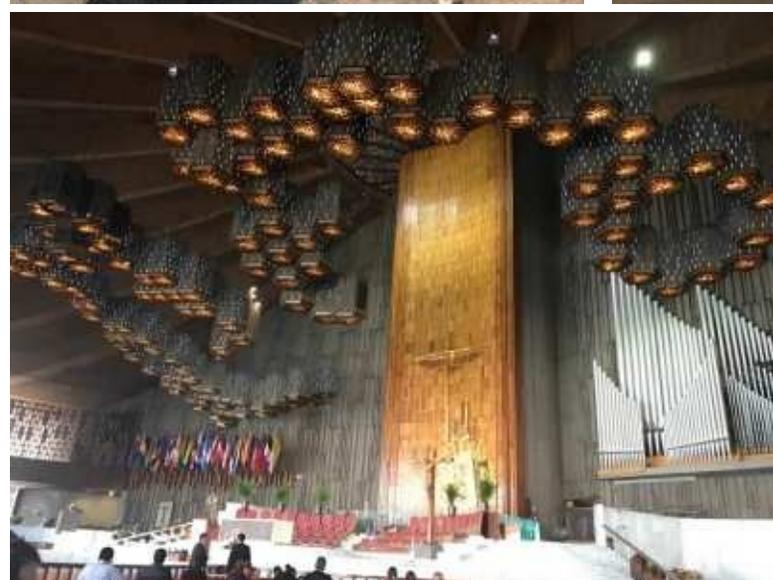
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# Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine Trip Report [at TASTE and SEE]

## Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe

My trip was wonderful!



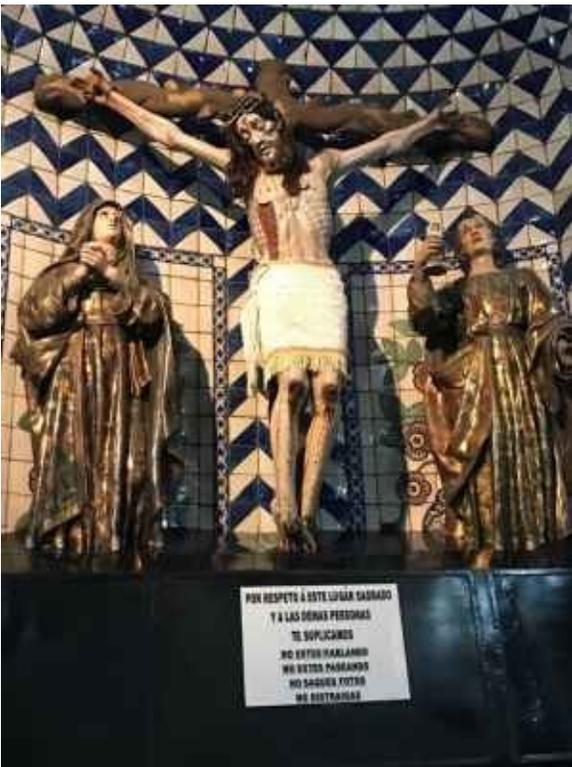
The Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City looks quite modern, and unbeknownst to me, there are several other churches and chapels, all open and active, on the same property. Juan Diego's tilma, or cloak, in which he placed the roses to convince the local bishop that she asked for a shrine at Tepeyac Hill, resides in the Minor Basilica. Read more details of the story of the Patroness of the Americas and Mexico, and the Patroness of the Unborn, [here](#). Be sure to scroll down once you're there.

Other churches on the site. The ones in the middle on the hill are at Tepeyac Hill.



It is very common to see crucifixes in Mexico with a bloody Jesus.

On the right - one of many murals in Mexico City.



Eastern-looking Church, but it's not.



Depiction of Juan Diego w/his roses in his tilma.



**VISITING:** If you go to the Shrine, I'd recommend taking a commercial tour on one day so you can get the lay of the land. My fellow tour mates had to keep calling me so the tour could move on to the next section. I just wanted to rest in prayer at each stop - which is why I went back the next day on my own. Then I could take it in in a prayerful manner. It was wonderful.

[Click here](#) to view the video. If Facebook prompts you to create an account, you don't have to. Just click on "No Thanks" (or whatever version they use that day) at the very bottom and you'll be taken to it.

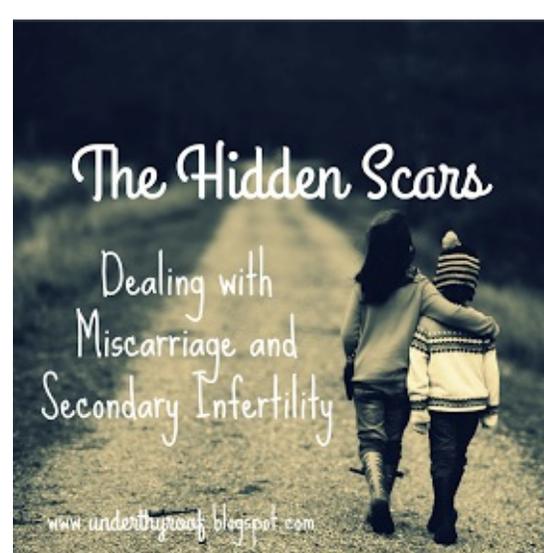
Many Blessings, Kathleen +

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This contribution is available at <http://tasteandsee2.blogspot.com/2017/06/our-lady-of-guadalupe-shrine-background.html>  
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# The Hidden Scars - Dealing with Miscarriage and Secondary Infertility [at Under Thy Roof]



I am told I am lucky.

I got my boy and my girl right off the bat.

"You're so lucky!," say strangers on the street. "Now you're done!"

Ummmm, why? I always wanted to finally turn around and ask, "What makes you say that?"

Because I didn't feel lucky.

When we had an early miscarriage after our second child was born, it was much more heart wrenching than it had to be due to social pressure to fall within certain reproductive expectations.

The following are real quotes real people have really said to me.

Like to my face.

And meant them.

Once you have a boy and a girl it's "so nice you're done!" It's a statement, not a question.

Any pregnancy less than two years after the last child was born must have been an accident. Because "why would you even want that?"

DEFINITELY never tell anyone about a pregnancy before 12 weeks. Because "what if something happens?!"

[Well something did happen](#)

, and, ya know, it was not helped by keeping my child some deep secret.

Following our miscarriage it took a lot longer to get pregnant with our next baby than expected.

It's impossible to convey, without living through it, just what it's like to hope so hard every month.... and then see that tell-tale temperature drop on the chart and know that it wouldn't be this month.

Or the next.

Or the next.

But from the outside looking in everything looked perfect!

We're very healthy and active people. We have two cool kids who fill our days with antics and adventures.

But people are not Legos. You can't just swap out one kid for another, and my heart longed for the baby we lost and the ones I was no longer sure would ever be coming.

Sometimes it seemed like no one else even remembered that baby happened.

I entered a weird twilight zone where I would hope against hope that friends would make their pregnancy announcements on Facebook instead of insisting on telling me face to face. IKEA and Target on the weekends was like walking into a maternity catalog. It felt like every other woman in a 50 miles radius could get pregnant but me.

I faced the possibility that we might end up as a two child family.

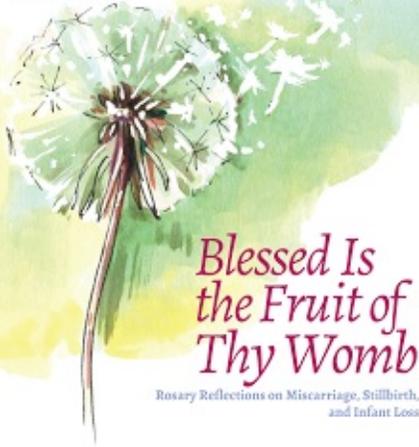
With our boy and our girl. Socially approved.

I recoiled from the social approval. It felt backhanded. "Good job meeting the Orwellian ideal!" No room for difference. No room for growth. No room for humanity or empathy in there.

I am currently pregnant with our "rainbow baby" who is due to arrive at the end of September. This was a pregnancy announced right away. This child will not be hidden, her birth order will not be excused, and I sincerely hope she's not the last.

I hope for a society that is less focused on a reproductive ideal, and solely focused on the gift of humanity present in each child. I hope for there to be love and understanding for mothers like me who are suddenly staring at a battle with infertility. I hope for a first child and an eleventh child to be equally welcomed. I hope for the silent struggles and wounds of our hearts to speak.

Heidi Indahl



Rosary Reflections on Miscarriage, Stillbirth,  
and Infant Loss

What saint better understands what it is like to lose a child than Mary? The book prays through the rosary using meditations from Scripture, reflections, and prayer intentions. What I find most valuable are the questions and journal space within the book to write down the emotions and thoughts that arise from our prayer.

The book does a great job of grounding the reader in the guidance of Mary and Scripture while consciously allowing the reader to process her own grief and experience. That processing is always followed up with a prayer intention for the larger world.

Our grief is not unique. So many mother's hearts all over the world and throughout history bear the scars of child loss. Own your story, write it down, talk about it, don't forget your children, but also remember that others are with you bearing the same grief. Bearing the same wounds. Reaching out to each other, beginning through prayer, can be the first fruit that reconnects us back to each other.

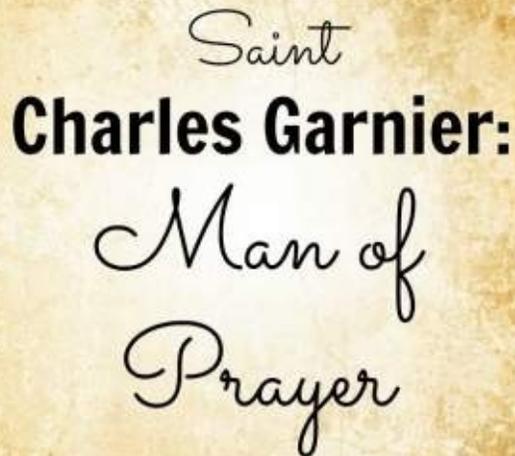
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**Saint Charles Garnier was born into a wealthy family in Paris, France, on May 25, 1605.** He was martyred in New France when he was only 44. During his priesthood, he often expressed a great desire for more time to spend in prayer and at Mass. As moms, most of us are busy with day-to-day tasks as Fr. Garnier would have been. Like him, we can still strive to find a few quiet moments for prayer and Bible reading.



Saint  
**Charles Garnier:**  
Man of  
Prayer

THE  
KoalaMOM.com

Charles entered the Jesuit order at the age of 19, studying at Clermont before teaching for three years. When he was ordained in 1635, he was chosen for the missions in New France. However, his father hadn't fully supported his choice to become a Jesuit. Garnier thus delayed his departure until the following year, when he finally gained his father's approval and sailed with Father Isaac Jogues. Even as an adult, he demonstrated the importance of honouring and being obedient to one's parents.

## The Voyage to New France

The fleet of eight vessels that Fr. Garnier and his companions sailed on reached Quebec on July 2. [In a letter to his father](#) after his arrival, Fr. Garnier wrote,

“The voyage is not without its crosses. And this is particularly so for a member of a religious order because he has no privacy away from the noise and the crowd in order to pray. I don't mention here those other inconveniences and sea sickness which takes the heart out of one.”

## Charles Garnier in Huronia

1636 was a difficult year in Huronia as influenza devastated many villages. Just two years earlier, a smallpox epidemic had swept through New France. Having never seen these illnesses before, the Huron blamed the missionaries. Many priests feared for their lives.

Fr. Garnier had some training as a surgeon. In a letter home, he says, “This is the type of work I do in this country. I don’t operate, but tend a multitude of small wounds and burns.” He worked at learning the Huron language and mentions visiting and instructing the sick. The missionaries baptized any who seemed in danger of dying, thus losing most of their flock as soon as it was formed.

### **Fr. Garnier speaks often of struggling to find time to refresh himself spiritually:**

“The principal obstacle is the difficulty in which we find ourselves of praying and getting a little rest away from the noise. There is also the deprivation of Mass, which we either cannot say at all, or only very seldom.”

The Huron, not understanding the Mass, likely viewed it with suspicion, as they did the Crucifix and other strange objects the missionaries brought with them.

## **The Mission of the Apostles**

In 1640, the *Jesuit Relations* records that Fr. Garnier and Fr. Isaac Jogues were selected to begin a mission to the “Tobacco Nation,” so named for the abundance of tobacco plants grown there. The priests named this the Mission of the Apostles and gave the nine villages saints’ names.

In 1647, Fr. Garnier left St. Joseph to serve at a new mission among the Petun. Fr. Jogues and Fr. Garnier had traveled among the Petun in 1639 and now the Petun requested the missionaries to come. Of their work there, Fr. Garnier told his brother, “We were received very ill there the 1st year; in the second, we have been regarded in a tolerably favourable manner; thank God, we find some who listen to us.

The following summer, [Fr. Antoine Daniel](#), who had replaced Fr. Garnier at St. Joseph, was martyred when the Iroquois attacked and destroyed the village. Fr. Garnier spoke wistfully of being denied martyrdom; he and the other Jesuits saw it as a “crown” bestowed by God.

## **Saint Charles Garnier is Martyred**

In 1649, the Iroquois were again on the warpath. Hearing that St. Jean was about to be attacked, the men went out to meet their enemy. The Iroquois then attacked the undefended village on December 7. They burned St. Jean, killed the old men and children, and took many prisoners.

When the attack began, Fr. Garnier was instructing his flock. He told them, “Pray to God, and flee by whatever way you may be able to escape” (*The Jesuit Martyrs of North America*). Several asked him to flee with them, but he refused. While he was giving absolution to Christians and baptism to non-Christians, he was shot by a musket.

Left dying, Fr. Garnier prayed and then attempted to reach a dying man near him. An Iroquois struck him twice with a hatchet, killing him—but sparing him the torture other missionaries endured.

## **Saint Charles Garnier Today**

Saint Charles Garnier was canonized in 1930, along with seven other Jesuits who were martyred in New France. They are known as [the Canadian Martyrs](#). Their feast day is celebrated in Canada on September 26 and in the rest of the world on October 19.

*St. Charles Garnier, pray that I may desire daily quiet time in prayer and Scripture reading as earnestly as you did. Help me to make my spiritual quiet times a priority in my busy life and to honour my parents as you did. Amen.*



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## Way to Union (Winning Feeling) [at A Spiritual Journey]

When you let God transform you and the transformation takes place, you are amazed and can get quite excited, for something you've tried to change on your own without success God now does it effortlessly. Even though the Lord did the work, you can't help feeling that you have won! Now your relationship with him is more intimate than ever. As you continue to let God perfect you, the same thing happens again and again. *You are on your way to union with him.*

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This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2017/05/way-to-union-winning-feeling.html>  
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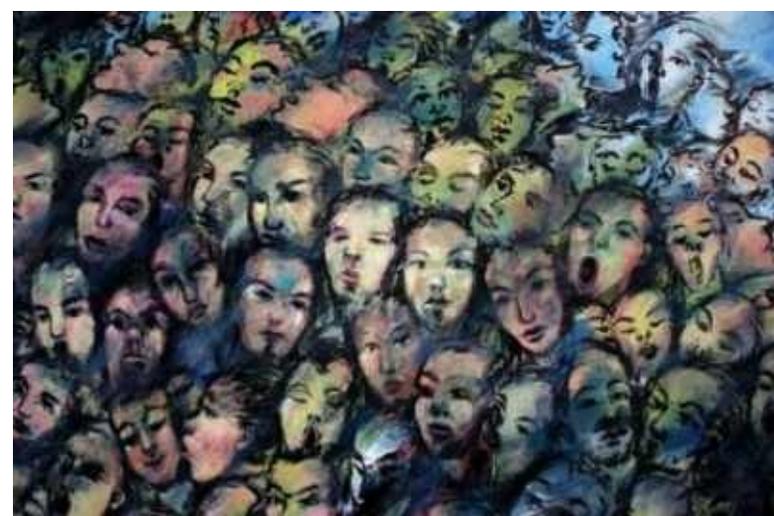
[Skip to content](#)



## Why Even 'Normal' Catholics Need Therapy [at joy of nine9]

I would wager that mental health issues are *especially* prevalent among the devout who are serious about their inner life because when people tackle deep inner issues which prevent God from working in their lives, their inner equilibrium is upset by stress, anxiety, and depression. This probably explains why most saints experienced profound periods of depression when they finally looked beneath their pious actions to face the reality of their own ingrained sin and subsequent need for inner purification.

Tragically, few Catholics discover the root of their spiritual malaise because often it means seeking psychological help. We all have psychological impairments, generational cycles, selfish habits, pride, controlling and other errant behaviors. God offers His children the means to become free from sin, bad habits and mental illness through the Church, prayer, confession but also through therapy.



Since mental illness is as common and invisible among the faithful as it is in secular circles, concern for mental health cannot simply be relegated to the secular sphere, especially during Mental Health Awareness month in May. I admit the topic of how and why Catholics experience mental illness might seem completely irrelevant to most Catholics. After all, many of us are too busy with daily life to actually step back and evaluate the state of our mental health objectively. Meanwhile, our fellow parishioners are just as concerned as we are that they appear healthy, happy, and whole in public.



connecting with [theology is a verb](#)

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# The Sun Peaks Through -- A Wedding and a Funeral [at Making It In Vermont]

Life was so divinely orchestrated yesterday, I felt like I was a character in a movie. First I attended the funeral of a good friend who at 76 passed away last week. She shared my love of Jesus, was a model of childlike faith, perseverance, and how to be a loving spouse and mother.

I first met Dottie five years ago when we each were teaching religious education at our parish, she taught in one of the first grade classes and I in the other. Our friendship began in earnest though 2 1/2 years ago when her husband was nearing the end of his life.

Dotty instilled in me through her stories of their love and through her own sacrifice what the actions of a mature love looks like. I would listen to her talk about how she viewed her husband, how deeply she cared for him, and sheepishly think to myself, “HmMMM that’s not how I always am with *my* husband.”

I found out about Dottie’s passing last Sunday in Mass. Even though I knew she hadn’t been feeling well for some months it still came as a shock. I mourned the loss of my friend. When I found out her funeral would be on my wedding anniversary though, I smiled.

Seventeen years ago yesterday I pledged to love, honor, and cherish, my husband Kevin, in good times and bad, till death do we part and for the first time in 17 years it looked as if Kevin and I were not going to be together on our anniversary.

Our oldest three boys and Kevin were scheduled to be on a retreat for Catholic Boy Scouts. Kevin was one of the arrangers of this retreat weekend which at one point had its date changed due to a scheduling conflict and somehow the fact that the rescheduled date was our anniversary weekend didn’t click with him till it was too late.

Any other year I would have let anger get the best of me over this, but by the grace of God this year I didn’t. I let it go, I let God handle it. Instead of being together on our actual anniversary, we planned that I would head over to the camp (about an hour away) the next day on Sunday for an intimate Mass in the mess hall. It would be something fun to do with the four little ones still with me and I wouldn’t have to try to wrangle them at Mass by myself.

On Friday as Kevin and our older boys were packing up to go, I felt melancholy. I knew it wasn’t “that big a deal” but I was sad that I wouldn’t see him on our anniversary. Trying to make sure I had all the info for Sunday, I asked him what time Mass would be at. He checked his email and he said the Mass was changed to Saturday afternoon. I would see him on our anniversary after all.

My friend Heather was so kind to come over to watch the boys for me on Saturday morning so I could attend Dottie’s funeral. Dottie always dressed to the nines for Mass often wearing elegant hats to complete her ensemble. I tried to honor her in the black and white sundress I wore. I hunted down a curling iron in a drawer it has sat untouched in for years, to give my hair a little lift too. Dottie’s is the first funeral I have attended in Vermont for a friend in the 11 years I have lived here.

I sat near her usual spot. I sang the hymns, praised Jesus, looked up at the statue of The Risen Jesus that was so close to Dottie's heart, felt her presence, and remembered her... Afterwards at a local Inn I had the opportunity to meet and talk to two of her three children and a few of her grade school friends. I was able to tell her children how much I loved their mom and that her life made an impact on mine.

As I drove back home after the funeral, time was running short for making it in time for the Mass at the Boy Scout camp. So when I arrived, I thanked my friend for watching the boys, got them packed up in the car, grabbed a few snacks, and our wedding candle (I thought maybe the priest could just have it lit at the altar or something). I didn't really have time to change so I just slipped on a pair of sandals instead of the heels I had on and we headed off.

I drove our big 12 passenger van over the hills of Vermont in and out of rain, the sun sneaking out here and there, following my directions to the camp. I pulled up as Kevin was walking the dirt road to meet us. Normally I would have felt self conscious to have been wearing a fancy dress to a Boy Scout camp, but this day I didn't, I was just happy we made it in time and happy to see Kevin.

The first thing that Kevin told me as we pulled up, after "Happy Anniversary!" was that the Mass was going to be said in honor of Dottie.

Perfect...

While driving the winding way through the country side of Vermont over to the Boy Scout camp I was thinking about our marriage and about how I had dealt with the little bump of not being together on our anniversary and how even though it hadn't been easy for me I had given Kevin grace for it and a few other moments like it lately. And I thought how different that was from so many bumps we have had in the past, and felt in my soul that not making a big deal about it gave us a peace instead of stealing it and gave Kevin a true feeling of love and me the opportunity to practice the "action" of love. I thought to myself about how our marriage has grown and how I was excited for our future married life together and how this was just the beginning...

As we were getting out of the van I mentioned to Kevin that I brought our wedding candle. I watched as he took it over to the priest to explain that it was our anniversary and to ask if we could have it on the altar during Mass or something.

Instead the priest suggested we use it in a ceremony during Mass where we renew our wedding vows.

Jesus took me from the funeral of my friend and a mentor in marriage to this humble scout camp where I would end up renewing my wedding vows. And just to tie a bow around the whole event with Kevin dressed in his uniform and I in my dress... we were even dressed for it. Our 7 sons and the other adults and boy scouts there watched as we again pledged to love, honor, and cherish, each other, in good times and bad, till death do we part, with Kevin's eye glistening at me through his smile just like he did 17 years ago.



pictured left: Our wedding 17 years ago. (photo by Cheryl Levine Photography) pictured right: Renewing our wedding vows at Mass at the Catholic Retreat for Boys Scouts yesterday.

Jesus you orchestrated it all...

How could I have ever doubted you?

Dottie, may you rest joyfully for eternity with our risen Lord and your husband Ed. Thank you for your friendship and your witness and Happy Anniversary to Kevin, my partner, my husband, my friend.

Sending you all love as the sun peaks through the clouds while driving through the winding hills of Vermont,

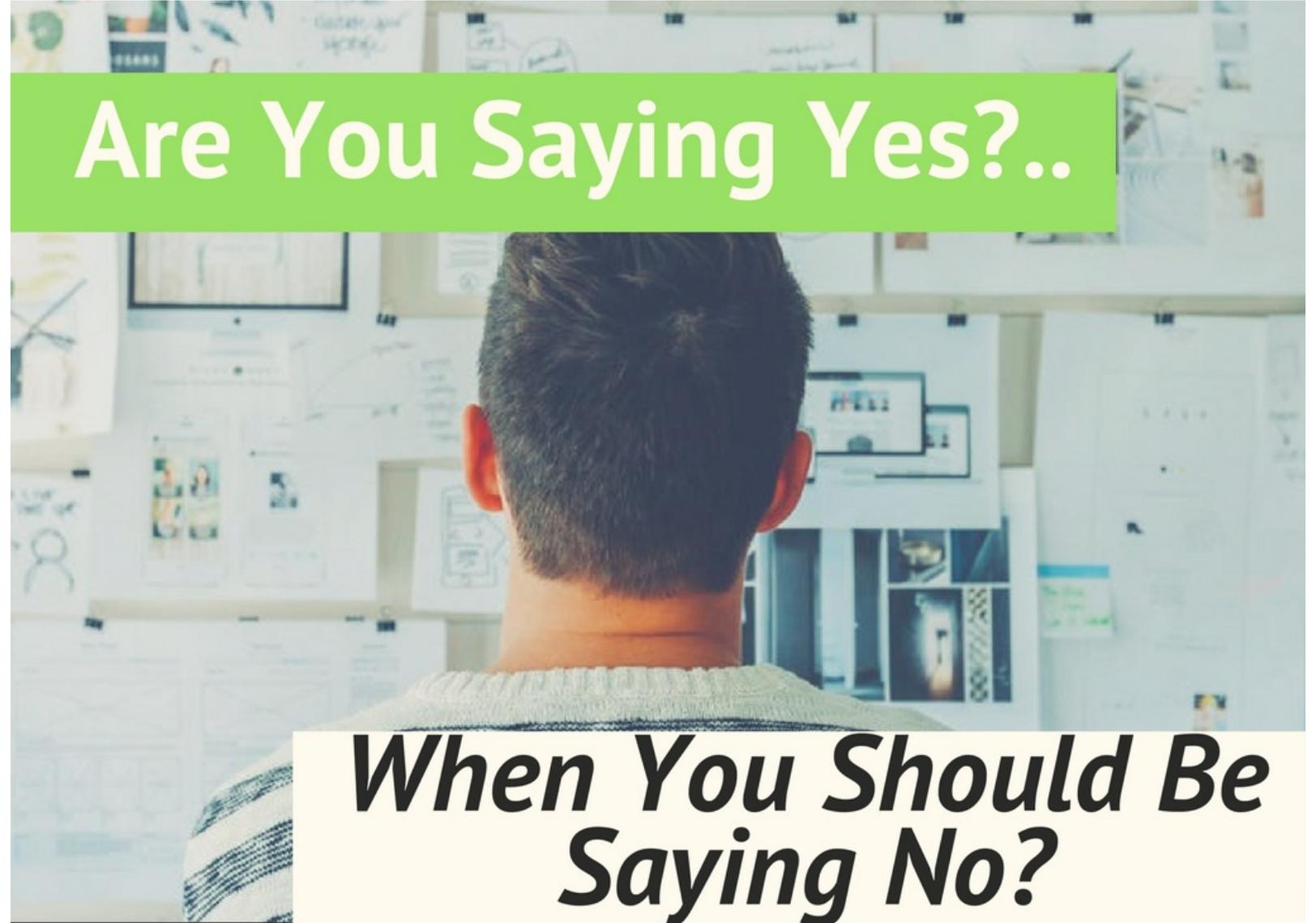
~Lisa

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## Are You Saying Yes... When You Should Be Saying No? [at Theologyisaverb]



Are You Saying Yes?..

*When You Should Be Saying No?*

Theologyisaverb.com

Today, perhaps you find that you had much rather be saying yes to the many things that come your way than even contemplating the word no. Maybe, you do so out of a well intended desire to please others, or the thrill from successfully multitasking a multitude of tasks. And still, though your yes may result in a benefit for yourself, your family, friends, or community does not mean that it is still the answer that God may have intended for you to give.

This is not an easy message for us as Christians, who are trained to offer our time and talents to the service of those placed within our care. We take the scripture from Romans 12 urging us all to present our bodies as a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” and neglect to heed the verses to follow:

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by **testing** you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Discernment isn't an add on when we find ourselves confused as to what path to take but it is essential in every choice we make. Even those opportunities which are in themselves good and promise to be fruitful. Take a moment to consider, if you will, whether you are inviting God into **each** of your decision making moments or just **some** of them. If not, why not?

## **Pride**

Ah, yes..that clever and insidious sin of pride. It creeps into even the smallest of places leaving us thinking foolishly that we are the only the only ones that can complete a task or the best one to do so.

“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”

Thus, inevitably we must prayerfully discern why we feel that our yes is needed and be careful not to take on a project out of pride. But wait..you mean someone else might be called to take on a challenge, or be given gifts to fit the purpose?

“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another..” Romans 12: 1-21

We are not being asked to do it all ourselves but in fact, are to call forth the gifts in our brothers and sisters to build up the body of Christ. Those around us do not always see their own gifts and releasing our own prideful motivation allows God to move others into action. It also permits each one of us to glimpse God actively at work as the best human resource manager and project manager for this world in which we live in.

## **People Pleasing**

So, maybe we do not feel we are the best qualified, are already over committed or not really inclined to take on a task but do so because we would like to say yes to the person who has asked. This is not a good motivation either yet admittedly is an easy trap for the kind hearted Christian. In parish ministry we often find the same people being called upon time and time again. They want to be helpful and usually are, but offer a yes when honestly it should be a no. Then later, burned out and tasked beyond reason they leave serving because there simply is no more to give. Recognizing your own need to renew and refill is a valid and essential reason to say no. While initially difficult to do, as well as an adjustment for the one asking it may be the right answer. In making space for quality prayer time and detachment from the reaction or approval of others we can begin to see that God's approval is the only one that matters.

## **Reflect:**

*Is there a decision in my day today that I might not be needed to say yes to? Have I invited God into the task? Would others be better served by my no?*

*Elizabeth*

Peace,

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## Sheep Gate II [at With Us Still]

Sheep, for the most part, are an abstraction to me. I see them in photos and videos from time to time, but as a city dweller, my up-close encounters with them have been limited. (*Thanks to some thoughts shared by a friend today, the notion of a **Sheep Gate** has now taken on an intriguing new depth — see his comments, added to my original blog post, below.*)

“Sheep” became a bit less abstract for me last summer though, on a vacation trip to Scotland and Ireland. When you get away from the cities in either country, you find sheep practically *everywhere*.

You also discover pretty quickly that they’re not the brightest animals God put on the planet.



Heck, the sheep I met last summer tended to make cattle seem like rocket scientists in comparison. Take, for instance, the cows we encountered while rounding the bend on one treacherous hillside road. Under the watchful eye of a bicycle-cowboy, the cattle didn’t need much more than a flexible rod to keep them marching single-file, along the narrow shoulder.



Sheep, not so much.

When we encountered THEM in the road, they tended to wander in flocks, all over the place – completely oblivious to the danger of passing vehicles.

Or maybe ‘*trusting*’ is a better word. Like the recently-shorn animals we visited in a sheepfold near Killybegs: As soon as we strangers wandered into their turf, much of the flock hustled on over towards us...looking to be fed.



A flock easily led astray...

All of which makes me scratch my head a bit when I hear what Jesus has to say about sheep in [this Sunday's Gospel passage](#).

**But [sheep] will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.**

Perhaps the sheep in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine were better trained—or more skittish—than those you find in Ireland today.

In any event, I find it instructive that the Lord compares the *faithful* to sheep.

Having met a few sheep last summer, I don't find the image altogether flattering. Still, there's a large measure of truth in it, especially when I consider just how easily I can be led astray.



This sheep, at least, remembers to pray...

And I find I can take comfort in the image, too.

Like the Pharisees that Jesus was trying teach that day, I may not always '*realize what he was trying to tell them.*' But I can certainly appreciate the promise the Good Shepherd makes, to everyone in his flock:

**I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved.**

It turns out there's quite a bit more to Jesus' self-description as "Gate" than I realized. Here's what I learned from a friend, Fr. Mark Dean, O.M.I., in response to my original post:

*[I am intrigued, lately] with some reading I've been doing about sheep gates.*

*One of the principle uses of sheep in ancient Israel was that they were the preferred and primary animal of Temple sacrifices. And in the Temple, next to the Sheep Pool, was a gate (the Sheep Gate) through which the lambs to be sacrificed were led into a holding pen, until their time was up. (There must have been a lot of sheep-sacrificing going on, as most people bought their animal at the Temple, being assured that way that their sheep would be found by the Temple priests to be good enough to offer to the Lord.)*

*For the sheep, this was strictly a one-way gate. Like the Hotel California, they checked in, but never checked out. The Sheep Gate was their entry to death. No sheep ever came out the other way from that gate.*

*The shepherds themselves did not go through this gate, only the sacrificial animals. They would come around by another way and from above pluck out the lamb to be slaughtered.*

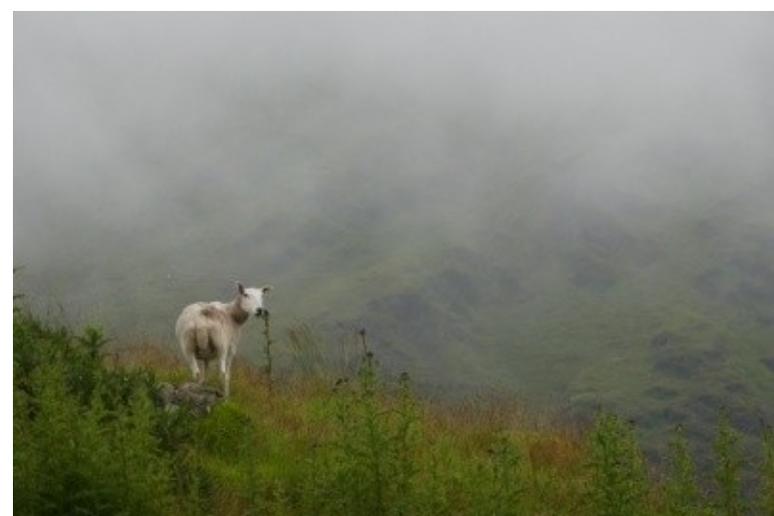
*John's Gospel early on, through John the Baptist, identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." This is a description of the lamb used in the Atonement ritual by which Israel was to be cleansed of her sins.*

*Now in [Sunday's] gospel we see Jesus as the Good Shepherd, who will enter in through the Sheep Gate, for he is also the Lamb to be slaughtered. But this Shepherd will also lead his flock back through the gate, literally from death to life again. Many shepherds have led their lambs to the Sheep Gate to be sacrificed... but none have led through back through the other way.*

\* \* \*

Not long after reading Fr. Mark's comments this morning, I noticed that we — as Church — pray in gratitude for this very grace, this gift, of Christ as "Gate". It's right there, in the Collect prayer at the beginning of Mass on Good Shepherd Sunday:

...lead us to a share in the joys of heaven,  
so that the humble flock may reach  
where the brave Shepherd has gone before.



Like lost sheep, Lord, we turn to You...

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

*IHS*

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# The Big Bang



There may be evidence for a Big Bang, but there is no evidence that there was simply nothing, 'no thing' whatsoever before it. What went bang? 'Nothing' cannot go bang. You do not need to be a scientist to know that, a two year old child knows that.

What created this surge of energy that has been bursting outward for 13.82 billion years? Energy does not come from nowhere, it comes from somewhere. Only atheists believe that it comes from nothing, because they are terrified of hell which for them is believing in God and having to throw in their lot with, what they call the 'god-lot,' who they cannot abide.

Whatever this something was that preceded the Big Bang, must have contained within it the most important energy of all that makes the world worth living in; it must have contained love. That means that what might at first sight appear to be 'something', must in fact be 'someone', because only someone can love and communicate love to others. The ancient philosophers who have never been surpassed in their profound reasoning, were able to reason to the existence of a first cause, but even the best of them, Aristotle, could not argue to a God of love, because love is beyond reason. If we experience the joy of hearing someone say to you, "I love you," then thank God for it, because that love ultimately comes from him. Don't ask, "Why do you love me?" because there is no answer to that question, because you do not deserve it. The first person to know where that love comes from with absolute clarity was not a great philosopher, but a great theologian. His name was St John who wrote the fourth gospel. He knew, not just because someone told him, but because he experienced that love. It was this experience, perhaps more than anything else that enabled him to see and understand, not just that God is Love, but that God is Loving and that he is Loving all the time, and that this Loving explains everything that he is, and everything he does.

Although Aristotle was able to reason to the existence of God, he was unable to define the inner nature of God, because he realised, quite rightly, that God is infinitely beyond the finite understanding of human reason. But, what reason did enable him to understand, was that whatever God's inner nature is, there can be no difference between what he is in himself, and what he does. If God is love therefore, he must be loving too, because he must do what he is, and be what he does.

Some years ago I had dinner with friends in London. On my way out they introduced me to their father

who was busy working in the garden. Without thinking I asked him what he was doing and he replied, "I do be digging the garden." Some months later I met a nun who taught Irish in Dublin and I asked her about this expression that I never come across before. She explained that it was an English translation of what in Irish is called the present continuing tense. "Well, what does it mean?" I asked, "What was he trying to say to me?" "What he was saying was this," she said. "I have been digging the garden, I am digging the garden and when you stop asking the obvious, I will continue digging the garden." We do not have such a tense in English, but the present continuing tense perfectly embodies the meaning of what St John learned from studying the Old Testament, and from his own personal experience of being loved by Jesus. When he said, "God is love," he meant that God has been loving us, is loving us now, and will continue to love us. In short, God is Loving.

You do not have to be a theologian to understand all this. Even I grasped it before I was six years of age, thanks to my favourite radio program, 'Toy Town', on what was then called, 'Children's Hour'. I loved Larry the Lamb who used to refer to everybody by what they did, just so they would never forget who they were. It was a case of "Good morning, Mr Policeman, sir," or "Good morning, Mr Magician, or "Mr Inventor", 'or "Mr Grouser sir". When one day the parish priest called, as they did in those days, he looked at me and then pointed to the picture of the Sacred Heart on the wall and said, "And who is that?" Without a moment's hesitation, I said "That is Mr Loving". Everybody burst out laughing except the parish priest who said, "He is absolutely right." But when he asked me who told me this, I said nothing. If I said I learnt it from Toy Town and from Larry the Lamb they would all have started laughing again. But I was right. Jesus is Mr Loving. But, he was more than that, for he came with a message that was revolutionary. Henceforth human beings will be made better, and made perfect, by love and by love alone.

I was an academic failure at school because I was dyslexic, at a time when nobody understood the why's or the wherefores of dyslexia. I would have ended up on life's scrap heap, a social drop out, and an utter disappointment to my family were it not for one thing. My mother loved me with an all consuming, but never selfish love, that gave me the strength to overcome my disadvantages, enabling me to teach myself to read and write. I therefore made a future for myself that ultimately enabled me to make a living as a freelance writer. It has been a long journey and I have fallen many times but somehow I have managed to get up fighting – so far. Love can make possible what is totally impossible without it. Love gives people strength, it gives them security, maturity and enables them to become ever more perfect human beings. If human love can do this, how much more can divine love.

The Gospel is the story of how God's love, the Holy Spirit, progressively penetrated the human nature of Jesus Christ. It was the tangible experience of being loved by God that was the source of his inner security and strength. His prime purpose in life was to tell people where the love that animated him came from, and then to show them how to receive and experience it for themselves, transforming them into ever more perfect human beings. That is why prayer was so important in his life on earth. That is why he continually turned to prayer himself, because that is the place where the love of his Father entered into him, making him into the most mature and secure and loving human being who ever walked on this earth.

The Gospel is not so much a story with a moral, but with a promise, and the promise is, if we do what Jesus did, then what happened to Him will happen to us. We too will be filled progressively with the love of God, the Holy Spirit who first conceived him in his mother's womb, and who continually entered into a life that was one long prayer. He practised 'the prayer without ceasing' long before he

recommended it to others. However, prayer without ceasing has first to be learned at set times, when we learn the most important lesson in life, and that is how to love God in such a way that we can become more and more open to receive his love in return. The great mystic Blessed Angela of Foligno said that prayer is the school where loving is learnt through practice. When more and more of us return to this school to learn the most important lesson of all, then the love that first set the ancient world alive with the love of God, will do the same again for our world. For with love all things are possible, that are quite impossible without it.

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## What is value without a cost? [at On the Road to Damascus]

There is no argument that BMWs are great cars. They run well, they handle well, they are safe, and they are stylish. If BMWs are such great cars why do so few people drive them? The answer, of course, is cost. BMWs are expensive to buy, paying retail anyway. They are expensive to own and maintain properly. Their cost puts them out of most people's reach. The people who do buy them care for them. They know not only the cost of a BMW but the value a well maintained one holds.

Today we live in a throw away culture that recognizes the cost of everything and the value of nothing. Cheap is always best. There is no reason to take care of or maintain something we own. When it breaks we just throw it away and get a new one. Cell phones are a great example. We barely have one model when we start looking at upgrading to the next, best thing. I just got the Universe 8 last week and the 8A is already available.

The throw-away culture is affecting our faith as well. The "nones", that is the people who check "none" when asked about religious affiliation, are the fastest growing group in first world nations. Catholics used to leave their faith for one the easier to follow Protestant faiths and now Catholics and Protestants alike are leaving for one of the many mega-churches that concentrate their services on feeling and experience over a relationship with Jesus.

Something that comes at great cost usually carries with it great value. Becoming Catholic used to come at a great cost. It used to take years instead of months to be accepted into the Church. As a catechumen you weren't allowed in the Nave during the distribution of the Holy Eucharist. Porters used to remove anyone not a Catholic in good standing and lock the doors. You were allowed one confession in a lifetime. That was made in public before the entire Church. Penance was harsh and took more than a year to complete.

Most would say that the Church was too strict in the way she did things. But the Church knew the value of what she had – the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ through which eternal life was obtained. The Church was strict, but the lines for confession were long and the Masses were full of people dressed in their Sunday best. That all started to change in a major way when the documents of Vatican II were used as an excuse to undo the shackles and open the Church up to a more liberal interpretation.

Sixty years of watered down catechesis has done its damage. Churches and church organizations all over the first world are closing due to lack of parishioners. We make things easier and simpler in the hope of keeping the modern parishioner from going to another faith that is easier and simpler. The fast before Mass used to start at midnight the night before. Today it is only an hour long and is too much of an inconvenience for some. Instruction to join the Church consists of a few hours a week for about six months. Lines for confession are short despite easy penances. We live at a time where everything seems to be permissible but nothing is forgiven. People understand what is happening at Mass so well that they see nothing wrong showing up to receive our Lord in the Eucharist in shower shoes, shorts, and T-shirts full of holes.

Because we have lowered the cost of our faith we have lost the understanding of the immense value it

has. It has become a commodity. It has become something we no longer need in our lives. Yet, the Church is thriving in third world nations where there still is a great cost to be Catholic. We have more Saints being created through martyrdom today than we did during the years of the early Church. People will walk through life threatening conditions for ten or more miles just to attend Mass. They have what we have lost – faith with value.

The house I grew up in has been torn down and replaced with new town homes so I cannot go home again. We cannot return to the way things were. We can only move forward. If we want the Church to flourish in this country once again we need to live our faith joyfully and publically. We need to pass down our faith through proper catechesis so those who are new to it will know the value without being charged the cost.

What value does the Catholic Church offer? We have the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus given for the salvation and redemption of all those who love him. Nothing on earth or in heaven is more precious. The cost? Your life. The value? Eternal life with God in heaven.



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## The May Crowning, and why I photographed it [at Peace Garden Passage]

It is among my favorite Masses of the year — the annual May Crowning. And as in the past, our school invited parents and others to take part in this beautiful celebration earlier this week.



As I approached the church, a sea of red uniform shirts were blazing a long trail from the school to where the Mass would take place, at our parish a few blocks away. Then this met me at the door. More red!



Inside, the coronation court had their red roses ready to be placed at Mary's feet. Being part of the court is quite an honor, and the kids always look very sharp and respectful.



Just a while before I'd left for Mass, in fact, a mother of one of the young men involved had sent me a message through Twitter, asking if I wouldn't mind taking a few photos of the Mass, since she would be working and couldn't attend. She'd seen me post things like this before, she said, and had hoped I'd be willing this time as well.

I'd hoped to capture an image of Mary with her roses, but now, this mother's heart was on my mind, and in my intentions, too. I was happy to try to bring a bit of her son's honor to her in her absence.

I didn't find out until later she'd been able to leave to see it after all — God is good! But not knowing this beforehand, I discreetly did my best to capture a few images of her son — or at least his back.



They were impressive, as were the red shirts lined up against the pew in front of me. Quietly, I took a few photos I hoped to share with others later to give them an idea of what the May Crowning is all about at our Catholic schools. I realize only a small portion of parents can get away to see it for themselves.



Later, I shared on Facebook some words from Father's homily, as well as the pictures I'd taken, and a very short video of the end of the very simple but beautiful Agnus Dei. The post garnered a nice response, based on "likes," but one who commented challenged me regarding the appropriateness of taking photos during Mass.

I took her words seriously, because like her, I believe Mass should be a time of prayerful contemplation. The Catholic Mass is a time of reverence and beauty. But as a communicator, I also have a natural propensity for wanting to bring the beauty, truth and goodness of our faith to others. And I have felt encouraged in this in the past.

Popes have been speaking for years now, on World Communications days, about the confluence of the New Media and New Evangelization. The two are, they've all concluded in one way or another, a fitting pair.

In 2016, Pope Francis noted [here](#), "It is not technology which determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use wisely the means at our disposal."

And in 2017, Pope Benedict XVI said [here](#), "When people exchange information, they are already sharing themselves, their view of the world, their hopes, their ideals."

Reading these papal pronouncements on communications through the years has no doubt influenced me, and helped me understand the balance between entering into the sacraments without intrusion, but also, respectfully attempting to communicate the beauty of our faith through modern technology.

I know quite a few fellow Catholic communicators who, like me, often take notes at Mass, desiring to share the nuggets of an inspiring homily, and when appropriate — and when done discreetly — have taken photos during Mass. I've also worked in more than one capacity in which I've been paid to do so. And on occasion, because of what I've captured and shared, I've been asked by our Catholic schools for use of pictures I've posted, or a blog post I've written — things that highlight the community in a good way. In that sense, I'm an unofficial ambassador of sorts. Not everyone needs to be, but for me, it's a natural part of who I am.

Of course, the goal is to be unobtrusive, to try to sit in a place that will maximize the chances of this, and to be respectful to others. I tried doing all those things at this week's special Mass, and was so glad

to have come away with a few treasures to share with others.

[This piece](#), “Laity called to be on the front lines of using media in new evangelization,” may offer insight on my decision to take photos at our school’s May Crowning. I also appreciated this discussion on the Catholic Answers forum on the topic of [“taking pictures during Mass.”](#)

One woman noted how she’d seen Archbishop Aquila installed in the Denver Archdiocese. I beamed to read this because I was at that Mass in person, taking notes, and many pictures, as a communicator for the Diocese of Fargo, where Aquila had just left. “What a celebration!” she’d commented. “The music and the preaching were top-notch.”

Then she continued, “As I am currently home-bound, I also participated in Mass solely by viewing it on TV on Sunday, listening to a few YouTube homilies, and then the deacon came in person on Monday to bring me Holy Communion. What a crime if I had not been able to hear God’s Word on His holy day, just because I cannot leave my home.”

She added, “You may argue about the methods of obtaining them, but photographs are an objective asset to the People of God, and the faithful should not be denied the experience of Mass just because you find cameras distasteful. Let the photographers act reverently and respectfully and let us all enjoy God’s gifts.”

I hope my exploration of this topic has been helpful.

In other, related news, [the Novena to Our Lady of Fatima](#) has begun. Join me if you’d like, during this beautiful month of May when Our Lady is present to us in a special way, for this nine-day prayer. As Father Charles said at the May Crowning Mass, “Jesus entrusted himself completely to the care of Mary...who gave her total self so we could have life through her son.” Amen.

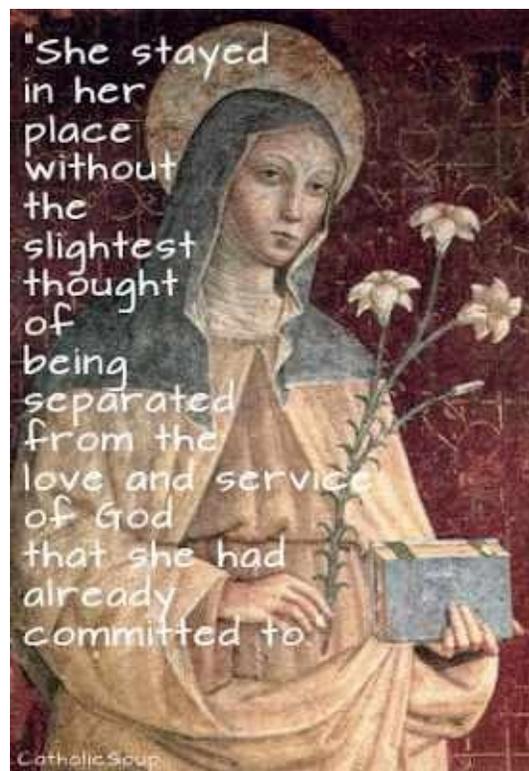
**Q4U: What are your thoughts about photography at Mass, and sharing images from Mass on social media, within reason?**

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This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2017/05/the-may-crowning-and-why-i-photographed-it/>  
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## Saint Clare of Assisi: A Woman of Light [at CatholicSoup]



These past few days I have been really fascinated by the life of St. Clare of Assisi. There are so many moments in her life that tell us how courageous she was, often trusting in God through providence, faith in his plan and portraying His light through her life of virtue. She was a model of virtue indeed, showing the people of her time true humility, obedience, firmness, gentleness, and compassion.

### [a Light born for Light]

Born a noble woman in a family of knights and wealthy relatives, her family was one of the largest in Assisi and they lived in the upper part of the city. At the time, only the wealthiest lived at the high ends of the city, while the poor lived in the lower city slums and the middle class lived somewhere in between. Born in 1194, she was given the name Clare from a vision that her mother had during pregnancy. As she was praying before the crucified Jesus for a healthy deliver, she heard a voice:

*“Do not be afraid woman, for you will give birth in safety to a light which will give light more clearly than light itself.”*

Amazed at these words, her mother asked that her daughter be named Clare, which means,

*light or clarity.*

At a young age, Clare was taught the basics of faith by her mother, whose name is Ortulana, which means,

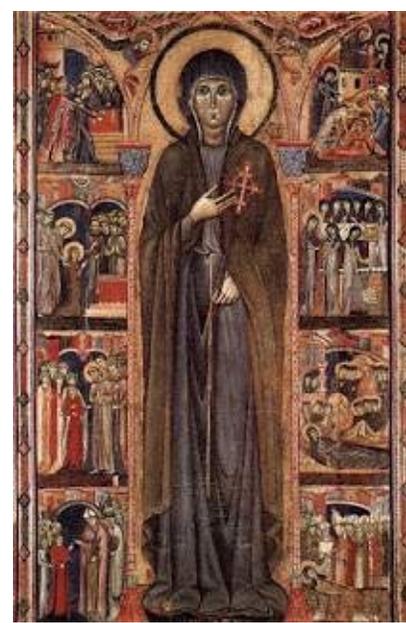
*gardener.*

A fitting name for a mother who cultivated a beautiful garden that would soon give many fruits for the whole Church in the years to follow.



### **[Splendor of an Early Saint]**

In her early years, Clare was known to have a sincere heart molded by the Spirit interiorly, always giving to the poor and the needy out of the goodness of her soul. She prayed frequently, keeping prayer on her lips always. She began fasting and acts of penance as a means of mortifying the flesh and the “mirrors” of the world. She wore hair-shirts, slept on hard beds, and ate close to nothing during meal times with her family. Many times, she would gather leftovers to give to the poor and pray especially for those living in the slumps at the bottom of her city. When her family asked her to be married, she refused. When Lord Ranieri di Bernardo of Assisi proposed to take her hand in marriage, she refused and vowed from then on to entrust her vocation and virginity to God himself.



In her late teenage years, around seventeen, she heard of St. Francis and his zeal for Christ and He also heard of her, mostly because of her care for the sick and giving of alms that she did throughout her life. The two soon-to-be saints would meet with each other secretly for the next year, confiding in each other, encouraging each other, supporting each other, and building that community of faith that was first founded by Jesus in the first Apostles with Mary. Clare would share with Francis her desire to serve Christ by living out the gospel, seeking advice on how to do so.

### **[the King's Marriage Proposal]**

In a planned event advised by St. Francis, Clare attended the Palm Sunday mass along with all the women in the city being “beautifully adorned with flowers, in brilliance and with all their finery.” The custom then was to dress for the King’s entrance into the city, they would have done the same with their noble knights during the years of war. As the people began processing through the Church to receive their palms, Clare stood still shy and nervous. When all of a sudden, the Bishop of Assisi makes his way down to her after seeing her face and places in her hands a palm branch. Clare immediately, consoled by the Bishop’s gesture affirmed in her heart by way of peace the desire to serve God with all her mind and heart. This event indicates a few things: The bishop’s permission to flee her home and follow Christ, it affirms that Clare is participating in a spousal relationship with Jesus and recognizing her Honor as a true Bride. The marriage has been set!



### **[a Happy Marriage]**

That night Clare sneaks out of the back door of her family's home, breaking through a door of wooden beams and an iron rod. She ran two or three miles through the city gates, down the hill of Assisi, and past the lower city slums to the small church, Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. There the brothers along with St. Francis would greet her and after putting aside everything she left in the city of Assisi she is sheared of her golden hair, and left with a tonsured head, a penitential act that is symbolic of entering into the religious life.

*“A happy marriage and a happy profession, a chaste embrace, a joyful love, a sweet union, a restless desire, a fervent love! Great is the piety, wonderful is God's honor through which the devoted soul is wedded to God, the fragile flesh to the Word, the lowly to the Most High, and the trifling to the dear!”*

### **[a Model of Love]**

Soon after her family found out where she was and rushed down to the church of the Portiuncula with the intention of bringing her back home. Clare immediately grabbed the altar cloths and as her family began pulling her away, she revealed her tonsured head and her family left. She stayed in her place without the slightest thought of being separated from the love and service of God that she had already committed to. Clare loved Jesus Christ so much that it bore fruit and caused many more woman to follow in her steps. She loved the Eucharist with great fervor and her love for Christ began to show in

her prayers and love. Then encouraged by St. Francis, Clare would write the new and holy observance of the

*Poor Ladies,*

also known today as the

*Poor Clares.*



*"O how great is the vibrancy of this light and how intense is the brilliance of its illumination! While this light remained certainly in a hidden enclosure, it emitted sparkling rays outside...Yes, Clare hit, yet her life was come to light. Clare was silent, yet her fame was proclaimed. She was hidden in a cell, but was known in cities."*

On August 9, 1253, two days before her death, she would receive the approved

*Form of Life*

issued and signed by Pope Innocent IV

Today, St. Clare is a model of faith, of light in the darkness of night. She's a model of trust when there is no surety and courage when there is fear! St. Clare, pray for us!

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This contribution is available at <http://catholicsoup.blogspot.com/2017/05/saint-clare-of-assisi-woman-of-light.html>  
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## Forgiving When They Stepped Over the Line [at Quiet Consecration]

The latest public freak out is over Kathy Griffin, a just-barely famous entertainer who currently is well known for hosting a NYE show on CNN with Anderson Cooper. I think she used to be a stand-up comic but I am not sure. I barely remember her from guest appearances she did on the old Seinfeld series. What I remember from that is that she stunk.

I am not the person to give you any kind of critique of her talent or her career. As previously stated the little exposure I had to her as an entertainer did not impress me.

I did see the horrific video splashed all over social media of her holding what appeared to be the severed head of the President of the United States, dripping blood. It sickened me. I was shocked and I immediately clicked it shut and will not look at it again.

The backlash does not surprise me. People in the entertainment industry have lost lucrative and/or rising careers for much less. Michael Richards was blacklisted for using the 'N' word during one of his routines. Billy Bush sat and listened to then-candidate Trump discuss his piggish actions towards women and lost his job as a result of not leaping to his feet, shouting, "HOW DARE YOU, SIR?" and stomping out of the trailer.

On the other hand, there are Pedophiles - both homosexual and heterosexual - still in power in Hollywood despite the death of a Cory and the vague accusations of another. It took almost 50 years to bring to light the actions of Dr. Bill Cosby but there are NFL players with 11 children scattered across the country all because they impregnated as many different women as possible and they are held up as role models for little boys trying to get out of poverty. A former President is accused of rape and sexual assault and the women who make the claim are vilified by the same people who screamed with horror at the tapes of the Billy Bush Interview of Trump. Their response to a man in power abusing women? They knitted little pink hats to wear in marches to 'resist' the current President. Their reaction to Mr Clinton abusing women while in a powerful position? They still swoon when he walks into the room.

If any accusations are made against a Catholic Priest it is front page news but suggest that there is something horrific about what is going on in the Public School System because of the number of teachers who cannot seem to keep their pants on around junior high and high school kids and the wrath of the Teachers' Union shall fall upon thee.

We are, in this country, definitely twisted when it comes to what we consider wrong and what we consider right. Maybe we always have been, I don't know. I mean, we can pine for the 'good old days' when we prayed in school and everyone saluted the flag and I will remind you that Once-Saved-Always-Saved Upstanding Deacons in the Baptist Church threw bombs into the basement of a Southern church where the people worshiped the SAME way they do. These same Christian Men blew up little girls in that basenent because those little girls were the wrong color. Start talking to me about how wonderful the familial systems of Native Americans are and I will be glad to tell you the story of St. Kateri Tekakwitha who had the NERVE to want to be a Catholic and, as a result, endured physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the natural and enlightened members of her tribe. And why is it I never hear ANYONE talk about Black Elk the Holy Man of the Lakota Sioux? Oh yeah, I forgot - wrong

religious choice again....quick, let's pretend he never existed.

My personal experience has given me an interesting perspective. I made some really dumb choices in my life, both before, during and after my reconversion to The Faith. I have been forgiven by Jesus and His Church but not so by many of the people in my life. I accept that as just punishment for my sins and I am okay today with who and what I am.

The choice made by Ms. Griffin was beyond dumb. It was even beyond 'poor taste'. However, before you all tear your clothes in lamentation, let's be honest. She is not the first person to show incredibly ugly aspects of her personality when it comes to criticizing a President she does not like; just ask those women who called Mrs. Obama a gorilla in a skirt. Ask the men and women who made sexual remarks about her husband loving a monkey to make her daughters. Some of those people were public servants. They thought they were so clever, so funny....and they revealed themselves to be degenerate scum, not much different than Ms. Griffin.

What makes Ms. Griffin's choice so awful is the absolute disconnect she showed between what is going on in the world today and her 'right' to voice her opinion. To hold up a 'pretend' severed head in a world that has been subjected to the videos of Islamic Fascists doing this for real shows she is either completely cut off from reality or she is as dumb as a box of rocks. To think what she was doing is ART is one of the reasons Artists are laughed at in the world. I mean, come on....Picasso you ain't, girly.

And now, of course, she has a lawyer (Gloria Allred's daughter, Lisa Bloom) and she is crying about being 'bullied'. She is crying that the Trumps are ruining her life. She is talking about getting death threats. She says he 'broke' her and her lawyer is suggesting that Mrs. Trump was out of line to question Ms. Griffin's mental health. Are you kidding me?

Ms. Griffin says she is the only person in the history of the United States to experience this type of backlash - you know, kind of like Mr. Trump's assertion that he is the only politician in the history of our country to be so horribly treated.

Golly, megalomania looks awful on everyone..doesn't it?

I believe that she has received death threats because that is how we roll today as a society. What I cannot believe is that she is surprised or shocked to have received death threats. For the love of all that is holy, Ms. Griffin, where were you when Leslie Jones was driven from Twitter for no other reason than she is a strong, tall, beautiful Black American woman? Did you honestly think the trolls and those as scummy as you would not LEAP on this opportunity to go after YOU?

Now...the big question is: Is it RIGHT?

Of COURSE it isn't right. NO one should be subjected to this type of abuse. NO ONE. I don't care who you hate or who you love, if you cannot express your opinion without being snarky and nasty and outright MEAN you should keep quiet.

You won't, of course....but you should.

And if your answer to what that woman did is to point at the opposition and shout the equivalent of "but

they started it", then shame on you.

I forgive Kathy Griffin. I forgive her because my religion requires me to do so and my experience has been that if I follow my religion I have a really good chance of having a happy and healthy life. If I forgive her, then I can walk with ease and comfort and grace and dignity.

Do I feel sorry for her?

Let me get back to you on that one, ok?

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This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2017/06/forgiving-when-they-stepped-over-line.html>  
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# The suicide of a loved one provokes an upheaval in the survivors [at In the Breaking of the Bread]

## WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE?

Human beings are mortal, that is, in our current condition we cannot avoid dying. Once we grow out of infancy - sooner or later - we come to realize that we will one day die, that our life as we know it on planet Earth will come to an end. How we understand our mortality and what we do with this knowledge determines to a great degree the quality of our life here, the range of possibilities for the time we have, our openness to meaningful relationships with others, and also what we can expect after the passage through our death.

Death precipitates or "forces" to happen what we call the "last things", that is, "What will happen to us after we die?" The Jewish and Christian traditions believe that God has revealed to humanity what to expect immediately after we die. Death is the first of the "four last things" which are: death, judgement, heaven, or hell.

## DOES GOD EXIST? -

Death is one of those human realities that is inescapable. Long before we may ever come close to our own death or even its possibility, we are confronted by the death of all other living things and, in time, the death of someone we know and may even love intrudes rudely into our life and awareness. As it does, it causes an upheaval within us of questions, doubts, and fears amid a whole range of human emotions, many of which are intense and unpleasant. The natural human impulse is to live in denial and avoid even the mere thought of death, but death is one of those things that just won't go away and, sooner or later, we need to face up to it.

One of the first effects which death provokes within us is the question about God. DOES GOD EXIST? Either God exists or he doesn't exist, which leaves every human being in one of three states:

1. I believe in God or
2. I think God may exist but I'm not sure or
3. I don't believe in God

### 1. I believe in God

We are all so different, but if God exists, then it makes sense that everyone should be able to come into a real and lively connection with God, based on the evidence from the Jewish and Christian sacred or inspired Scriptures contained in

["The Bible"](#)

. If one single thing is unmistakably clear from the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, it is that God exists and that He wants a real, personal relationship with every single human being who is willing to be open to what it is that God offers.

To believe in God is, in other words, to at least - or to begin with - to "give God the benefit of the doubt" or to go on with our life "as though God exists" and to believe that "God is trustworthy or deserves my trust or has given sufficient proof that He is good and means me no harm but only good.

This fundamental or basic act of belief and trust opens the human mind, heart, and spirit to the divine being that is God. God has revealed to Jews and Christians that He respects our freedom; so He needs our consent in order to enter into our life in a real and substantial way. Once a person is willing to believe in and trust God, their trust allows God to respond to their faith and He is now free, in full respect for their freedom of conscience, to take initiatives that the believer begins to experience in a more personal way.

How each person actually experiences God varies from person to person, given our unique human profile at every level, but there are consistencies because of the stability that is in God. The Bible records God's revelation to the Jewish People as He told them of his "ways". We know this to be true in our human relationships, that each person has his or her own "ways" of thinking, feeling, acting, behaving, and otherwise expressing themselves. Well, so does God have "his ways" and we can know what his ways are by reading the Bible, by sharing with other people, and through our own personal experience of God.

When all of these sources "line up" in a consistent way, then we know we are on the right track. When they don't line up and there are inconsistencies and contradictions, then we know we need to do more research, we need to consult those wise and holy people who know God better than we do.

## **2. I think God may exist but I'm not sure**

It is clear from the above that if God exists, then He is a being that wants a personal relationship with human beings. For this reason, as long as a person remains trapped in the labyrinth of the mind and tries to go about understanding God or his existence as a problem to be solved intellectually; then it is very unlikely that much progress will be made. There would remain too many unanswered questions such as those that follow.

One thing is certain and it is this, that as long as a person remains exclusively in the mind, it is not likely that they will experience God personally. Why not? Because God is bigger than our mind and we cannot succeed in trying to make God fit into our mind. God is a divine being, an infinite being who has no limits, which means that He is eternal. God had no beginning and will have no end, and we cannot understand that. If we try to understand it by our intellect alone, we are likely to come to the logical conclusion that it cannot possibly be true because it makes no sense to our intellect.

On the other hand, there is something in the human being that has a glimpse of the infinite, of the eternal. Believers understand that our human spirit or soul continues after death, that it contains the essence of the person we are becoming throughout our life, and this essence of who we are does not end in the death of the body but goes on. Our soul is in fact immortal, it will have no end. Our soul is not infinite or eternal like God, because unlike God, our soul had a beginning. It was created at the very same moment that we were conceived in our mother's womb. So our soul is "forever young" and it has within it a "homing beacon" aimed towards God or a "nostalgia for eternity".

Still, as long as we explore these mysteries and realities exclusively through the intellect, there remains between us a chasm that we are unable to cross by our own efforts. God wants a relationship and this

means we need to allow God room to take initiatives and to respond to our prayers and to provoke or challenge us; as any friend would do and actually does in real life.

As long as a person remains predominantly unsure or uncertain, then, it is probably because that person is keeping God at a "safe distance". It's sort of like a young man who loves women from a distance but feels very uncomfortable when one of them gets "too close" because he is not ready yet to enter into friendship with "a real woman". In reverse it's the same for a young woman who loves men from a distance but feels very uncomfortable when one of them gets "too close" because she is not ready yet to enter into friendship with "a real man".

### **3. I don't believe in God**

Some people appear not to believe in God but in actual fact they probably would believe in God if they could discover God as He truly is. In other words, many people seem to reject representations of God that are in fact an insult to the true God as He is in himself. As my friend Bishop Tom Dowd loves to say, "I don't believe in their god either!" In other words, the distorted image of God that people reject, well, we also reject those distorted images of God. In so many ways God has been given a "bad rap" and all too often those who are guilty are believers, both laity and clergy.

Other people who don't believe in God or who deny the existence of God come to this conviction because of their great love for humanity, for the environment, and for the universe. These are often very sensitive human beings and also very bright. They love life, other people, and the world, and it torments them to see the terrible state of human society, of the environment, and of life in general. Because we find ourselves in such a mess, these good folks find it offensive to think that God exists precisely because of the mess. This brings us to a few hard questions to which atheists or agnostics can find no answer.

### **IF GOD EXISTS, WHY DOES HE ALLOW EVIL?**

God has revealed much about himself, about his creation of the universe, about life, and about us in his "revealed word" in Sacred Scripture as we find it in

#### **[The Bible](#)**

. It is abundantly clear beginning with the creation narrative in Genesis right through to the end of the prophetic statement of hope in God's final triumph over evil in the Book of Revelation that God created us human beings with a very precious gift - our faculty of will - which includes intelligence, sensitivity and feeling, judgement, a capacity for decision and commitment, and conscience.

God created human beings to be free because He intends for us to enjoy friendship with God. Even though God is a divine being, mysteriously composed of three divine persons in one single divine being - as revealed by Jesus and as reported in the four Gospels - what is amazing is that this great and infinitely superior being has created us capable of friendship with Him. We can best come to understand the intentions and attitudes of God by looking at good human parents. Although they are superior to their children in age, experience, and wisdom, still they desire to one say enjoy with their children a relationship of friendship as equal to equal, though different. Parents desire that one day their children will get over their immature resentments and generously decide to show their parents respect and kindness, offering them the benefit of the doubt with regards to their parents' faults.

Parental love and devoted service is a fairly good reflection of the infinitely greater and more perfect love that God has for us human beings, his creations, as we discover that He is inviting us to come into a loving relationship with the Holy Trinity as beloved children of the Father, beloved brothers and disciples of Jesus Son of God, and beloved living dwellings of the Holy Spirit.

## **WHAT IS EVIL?**

Evil could then be defined as anything that would hinder the wonderful plan of God for the perfection of his creation and the unfolding of his desire that human beings experience life in all its abundance in a loving relationship with our Creator. Evil also includes anything that brings human beings to do harm to themselves or to others or to God's creation, or to hinder others from entering more fully into God's wonderful plan for our happiness and fruitfulness.

God has revealed that evil was first introduced by a rebellious angel, "Satan" or the "Devil" into his Creation and caused disorder - first among angels - and then among the first human beings. The names attributed to "the rebel" mean "the accuser" or "the opponent", that is, the one who accuses God, opposes God, and accuses human beings, the enemy of humanity and of God.

## **WHY DID and DOES GOD ALLOW EVIL?**

It was only out of love and extravagant generosity that God created anything at all, but especially that He created living beings with the faculty of free will; so that both angels and human beings, we would be capable not only of receiving love but also of giving true, selfless, self-giving love.

The simple existence of freedom introduces the possibility of disobedience, rebellion, or refusal to go along with God's plan, preferring instead to follow other plans and opinions, thereby rejecting God in order to pursue one's own "original paths". Only God loves perfectly and infinitely; so only God's plans can bring about perfect outcomes of love and abundant life for all involved. In rejecting the plan and will of God, the devil and other rebellious angels introduced chaos and instability into the order of God's Creation, and when human being succumbed to the same temptation, that chaos and instability was also introduced into our existence on Earth.

The result is that we are inclined now to reject God and prefer our own will, and in so doing, we do harm to ourselves and to others, and we have lost our capacity to enjoy God's friendship and love. All that we touch tends to turn out badly, and whereas death would have been a much anticipated and blessed transition from mortality to immortality, from Earth to Heaven; now death is something that we fear and loath. Ending our own life is the logical outcome of refusing God's will, of being unable or unwilling to trust in God or in his love for us.

Still, God has allowed evil and continues to allow it because, like a good parent, God our Creator and Father wants all his children to have the pleasure and satisfaction of working with our Father to bring about his perfect solution to all the evil in the world, beginning each of us with our own life.

## **IF GOD EXISTS AND HE ALLOWS EVIL, WHAT IS GOD DOING ABOUT EVIL?**

The entire Bible is a chronicle of what God has been doing and continues to do about evil. The highlight is when God sent his divine Son into the world to become human like us through the cooperation of Myriam of Nazareth - Mary - who accepted to conceive Him through the power and overshadowing of

the Holy Spirit and gave Him birth in Bethlehem, calling Him Jesus with the love and support of her husband Joseph.

Jesus showed us how it is now possible, with the help and power of the Holy Spirit, for human beings to live once again in friendship with God, as beloved children of God, in lively communities of faith which Jesus called his "Church" or "Assembly" of all those who believe in Him and have been initiated into his mysteries or, in other words, have been introduced into a sharing with Jesus in the life, love, and vitality of the Holy Trinity.

God tells us that we can know that we love God and have welcomed the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit into our lives when we see that we live and conduct ourselves just as Jesus did. We cannot do this on our own, but can only do it in a trusting relationship with God the Father through Jesus and by the power of love and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' Church is the "home on Earth" in the midst of which we have access to the divine life that is in God and which Jesus wants to pour into us.

## **IF GOD EXISTS, HE ALLOWS EVIL, AND HE IS DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT, THEN WHAT DO I DO?**

Simply put then, all that God asks and expects from human beings is that we accept to participate as fully as we can in our own life, in the lives of others as good neighbors and citizens, and in the whole world around us, and that we awaken to the presence of God, to the ongoing contribution of God, and to the love of God which is driving all that exists and all that God does. To put this in terms that our children would use and understand, it is like God is saying to humanity, "Here I am, will you come out and play?" We can accept to come out and play with Him or we can refuse.

Recap of the 4 "last things" - Death - Judgement - Heaven - Hell - with the temporary provision by God's mercy of Purgatory for souls in need of final purgation before entering into Heaven.

## **LAST THING # 1 - DEATH**

- here we mean the death of our mortal body, the surrender of our life breath, the beginning of our body's return to the "dust" of which we are made and to which we will return, all that is left once all the breath and water leave or are taken away. When we speak of death we also mean that at the end of life in our body on Earth, the essence of who we will have become until the moment of death, or our "soul", will go through a separation from this life and enter into another "realm", or level of existence, which we refer to as "eternity" or "eternal life".

## **QUESTION**

- Unless we understand what leaving our body behind means, where we are going next, or what we will need in order to be able to face what comes next; then how can we know whether or not we are ready to "move on" from this world into the next?

God has revealed to humanity through his divine revelation in the Sacred Scriptures of the Jews and Christians - The Bible - that human beings are immortal spirits embodied in a mortal flesh. When the body dies it releases the immortal soul or spirit into God's presence. The soul is of a nature designed to

"contain" within it in a living way all that makes up a human person in all their uniqueness. All that we think, feel, say, do, behave, take, and give - all our decisions, words, actions, behaviors, and deeds - continually build up the person we are becoming. When we die and the body releases our soul, our spirit is "fixed" in its final state.

It is somewhat like a piece of clay put into the kiln which is fired up. Once the clay is baked into a piece of pottery, it can no longer be changed. It can be glazed and put into the kiln again and comes out in its final form. This second burning could be an analogy for the process of Purgatory. The point though is that once we leave the body behind we lose our ability to modify, to change, to convert, to purify ourselves. We will have become helpless to improve ourselves and will be entirely dependent on the mercy of God and the prayers of the saints in Heaven, of the souls in Purgatory, and of the faithful on Earth.

For this reason alone, then, it is highly unwise to take upon ourselves the awesome decision about the moment of our death and give death to ourselves, but rather much wiser to leave the moment of our death in God's most capable hands.

Only God understands what eternal life will be and what condition we will need to be in for to be ready to endure the full intensity of eternal life in God's company. From God's point of view, then, it makes perfect sense to allow us on Earth to undergo any number of trials so that these trials may give us opportunity to struggle and be purified in our willingness to accept to endure the struggle with full trust and confidence in God and his mercy.

God knows what He is doing. Either I accept that or I don't, but woe to me if I don't, because then I am unwilling to trust in God, and if I can't trust in God, than in whom can I trust?

**SO WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE DIE? LAST THING # 2 - JUDGEMENT - God won't need to judge us; we will judge ourselves.**

First of all, we need to understand the teaching of our Roman Catholic Tradition on what happens at the moment of death. Unlike the "Hollywood" scenarios picturing us coming before God as a harsh judge sitting on a judge's bench with gavel in hand; we may be shocked to discover that what will take place as judgement will not so much be God passing judgement on us, but rather us judging for ourselves what is the truth about our life and, as a result, what we deserve.

**WHEN WE DIE THERE ARE THREE "DOORS" - 3 SCENARIOS**

**LAST THING # 3 - HEAVEN - is simply being with God, entering into the intimate family life of the Holy Trinity. Saints are souls who begin living in Heaven while still on Earth, already living in the radiant light of God's merciful love and trying to draw other souls in with them.**

**Scenario #1 - HEAVEN -**

This soul will see how God has prepared it for Heaven and will want to welcome his gift and accept his invitation to enter into "the Father's House". "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your master!"

[Matthew 25:21](#)

JOY!

**LAST THING # 4 - HELL - is simply being apart from God, refusing to have anything to do with the family life of the Holy Trinity, preferring instead the miserable and hateful company of demons and the damned. Doomed souls doom themselves by refusing all grace or aid or mercy or opportunity to change and repent sent by God. Already living in Hell while still on Earth, they try to relieve their misery by dragging other souls into the darkness with them.**

**Scenario #2 - HELL -**

This soul will see finally all the truth about God's love and goodness, but it will resent all of it because of the way it has chosen to live life on Earth for itself in selfish ways. Like those who hated and condemned Jesus because He was embarrassingly good, this soul will also hate God and refuse to enter into his presence, apart from the fact that it will find the intense burning heat of God's love impossible and excruciating to bear. Ironically, this soul will prefer to go to Hell with all the other miserable souls and all the demons; rather than have to endure any longer the presence of God. On the other hand, to continue for ever in its misery will certainly be torment, and equally painful will be to live for ever with the same impure desires which on Earth could never be fully or permanently satisfied. ETERNAL FRUSTRATION AND MISERY WITH ONLY ITSELF TO BLAME BUT INCLINED TO PASS THE BUCK OF BLAME TO GOD AND TO OTHERS....

**LAST THING # 3A - PURGATORY - is a temporary measure whereby God prepares souls for Heaven who aren't quite ready to endure the intensity of his radiant presence and love. Souls who on Earth trust in God's love and accept to endure all trials and sufferings that come are already experiencing this process of God's purifying mercy and love. The more we accept to endure everything that comes to us in this life, the less we will need to be purified after we die. One way or another, we need to submit ourselves with trust to the loving scrutiny of God before we can enter into the eternal company of the Holy Trinity and all the angels and saints.**

**Scenario #3 - PURGATORY -**

This soul will see that it is partially ready to go in to be with God for ever, and it will want to go in, but it will recognize that it is still "unclean" or impure in its thoughts, desires, feelings, or track record of behavior, or unrepented sins. Too embarrassed to be able to endure God's perfect love, it will be glad instead to go to the "waiting room" of Purgatory to be cleansed of all that cannot be allowed to enter into God's loving presence. However, not being able to go in yet into the wondrous beauty and love of Heaven will be quite painful, and this will be part of the fire needed to burn away impurities and prepare the soul for Heaven. PAINFUL WAITING....

**SO WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS THEN TO US WHEN WE DIE?**

**IT WILL BE DIFFERENT WHETHER WE BELIEVE IN GOD,**

**ARE UNCERTAIN, OR DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD**

*1. When a person dies who has believed in God and has entered into a personal relationship with God by opening up their whole life to God with trust, looking to know and do God's will as Jesus did.*

When true believers die, their death comes after many experiences - in proportion to their age at their death - and trials, and to the degree that they have truly come to know, trust, and love God; then to that same degree when they die and come face to face with God, they will find themselves at home. In the face of Jesus they will recognize the One who has loved and supported them their whole life long, the same One who forgave them their sins and faults so many times.

To the extent that there were still facets of God that they did not know about or that they only saw in distorted ways; then to that extent their encounter with God after death will also surprise them, but this new knowledge of God will purify their mind, heart, and spirit - this fuller revelation will relieve them of any burdens or shadows they may still carry on account of having partially misunderstood God and his ways.

*2. When a person dies who has believed in God, but has not entered into a personal relationship with God but has been loath to open up their whole life to God with trust; while still on Earth, they will have remained in their doubts, hesitating by the side of the pool but never diving in, and as a result will not have looked to know and do God's will as Jesus did.*

Unlike the believer who knows God and will find Him so familiar and welcome at the moment of death, the uncertain believer's faith did not actually make much difference in their life, in their whole outlook on life, in the way they valued their life while on Earth, or in the way they treated others or the environment during their lifetime. As a result, when they die and their soul comes face to face with God, they may be surprised and even embarrassed to find themselves looking into the kind and loving face of Jesus Risen from the dead.

When they finally see in all its clarity and wonder the full truth of God's infinite love for humanity, and the full extent of Jesus' courage in demonstrating the Father's love for us to the point of shedding his very last drop of blood on the Cross; then the doubting believer will probably experience varying degrees of embarrassment and regret. This person is unlikely to suddenly be ready to endure the full blast of God's intense and perfect love. Such a person won't want to enter into Heaven, at least, not yet, because the intense furnace of God's love would be felt as far too intense that it would hurt.

I believe that most human beings have at least once felt the intense love of someone for them and also found it uncomfortable for any number of reasons. One simple reason might be that this total intense love of someone makes me feel a burden of obligation to love them back the same way, and I may not be ready or may not want to love that much. This is one of the reasons why Jesus was put to death, that He caused, simply by being present, the religious leaders to feel excruciatingly uncomfortable.

The Roman Catholic teaching from the earliest times that God in his mercy would not force such souls into Heaven; nor would He condemn them to Hell, but would provide them with time to allow themselves to be purified by God's burning love, allow God to burn away all impurity of mind, heart, or spirit, for as long as it takes. This process, more than a place, is called Purgatory. When Our Lady of Fatima gave explanations and teachings to the three little shepherd children to whom she appeared in Portugal in 1917; she told them that some of the people whom they knew that had recently died would be in Purgatory until the end of time, when would come the Final Judgement.

*3. When a person dies who has not believed in God, they also will not have entered into any kind of*

*personal relationship with God, nor opened up their whole life to God with trust, nor looked to know and do God's will as Jesus did.*

For such a person, coming face to face with God is far more likely to be a very shocking experience indeed. Such a person will suddenly find the whole fortress of their atheistic reasoning crumbling in the brilliant glare and intense heat of God's selfless and boundless love. To the extent that they came to hate God, then their attitudes will cause them great and intense suffering upon discovering that God in no way deserves such treatment, but that they are unwilling to repent or let go of their hatred. They may find they have passed judgement on God and found Him guilty and are unwilling to change their judgement; so they will certainly not want to spend eternity in God's company. Their only choice then will be to enter into the miserable company of those consigned to Hell.

While we can expect that our loving God would never want anyone - angels or human beings - to spend eternity in Hell away from his loving presence in Heaven; nevertheless, it is only just that God create the possibility of Hell, for angels and human beings to be separated from God for all eternity. If there were no hell, then any demons or damned souls who would otherwise be admitted to Heaven would, in their misery, turn Heaven into Hell anyway. God's only option then is to allow Hell to exist, if for no other reason than to separate Satan and his demons from the blessed in Paradise to protect them from the devils' hatred and interference.

**AS SAINT PAUL WROTE, ONLY GOD IS COMPETENT TO JUDGE**

**DON'T BE SO QUICK TO CONSIGN PEOPLE TO HELL**

However, the person who while on Earth denied God or refused to believe in God may acknowledge at long last that the image and understanding they had of God while on Earth was either partially or entirely false. As Bishop Tom Dowd quips, "I don't believe in their (that false) god either." Then they may be able to warm up to the true God quite quickly, and may even surrender everything to God, submitting themselves to his righteous judgement and merciful love.

They may or may not be in need of purgation and, it is conceivable, they may possibly be forgiven and purified by God's merciful love in a single instant of all their sins and of all punishment due to all the many consequences of their sins. Only God can know and do this. So let's not be so quick to consign people to Hell based only on our superficial observations of their external behaviors, words, and actions while they lived on Earth. Only God knows the mind, heart, soul, and conscience.

**DON'T BE SO QUICK TO "CANONIZE" PEOPLE AND ASSUME THEY ARE IN HEAVEN**

For similar reasons then it would be foolish for us to assume that someone who has died is now in Heaven with God, and with all the angels and saints. There is nothing wrong with hoping and even believing that a remarkably good person who has died "in the odor of sanctity" may very well be in Heaven. This is particularly true if their death is accompanied by a fragrance as of flowers when there are none or by a more mysterious perfume with no tangible cause for it. Some saints have died amid such fragrances, and this gave rise to the expression "dying in the odor of sanctity".

Still, no matter how favorably we may feel about a person who has died, we do best to cultivate the

hope that God will admit them to Heaven while we continue to pray for "the repose of their soul", that is, that our prayers may encourage them to fully accept the mercy of God and submit themselves completely to his merciful judgement and, if need be, the process of purgation under the action of his divine mercy. This is why we pray for our deceased loved ones and for the souls in purgatory. This is a pious practice whereby faithful disciples unite themselves by acts of will and devotion to the saving action of God on Earth and in the heavens beyond the gates of death.

## LET'S NOT GAMBLE WITH OUR ETERNAL DESTINY - THESE ARE THE HIGHEST STAKES

Notwithstanding these considerations, it would be very unwise for human beings to presume in a cavalier way on God's mercy and fail to take responsibility for their own thoughts, feelings, words, actions, attitudes, and behaviors in this life and put it all off to the final moment. Only a fool would make such a risky gamble when one considers the value of unending eternal life. Yes, God is merciful and kind, understanding and patient, but He is no fool. We cannot trick God or bargain with Him, and it is very foolish to try. We may be able to fool other human beings, but we cannot fool God.

## HOLY WEEK AND THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

While on Earth, Jesus of Nazareth revealed that God our Father is a kind and wise God who knows best how to guide us in life and prepare us during our life for the eternal life which He has prepared for those who love Him. In his wisdom, God knows that most human beings need time to change, time to grow and understand, time to come to know Him and to put our trust in Him and, more time to come to love Him in return for his love to us. While it is difficult to love God back directly, the most direct way to love back the God whom we cannot see is for us to love the neighbor whom we can see. Holy Week, beginning today - Palm and Passion Sunday - is God's annual gift to humanity to walk with Jesus along the Way of the Cross, from Gethsemane to Golgotha and the empty tomb.

As we walk along with Jesus carrying his Cross, He helps us to see Him in our suffering neighbor in an infinite array of painful and suffering circumstances, which are so many opportunities for us to show our love and gratitude to God through loving care of our neighbor, of strangers, and even of enemies. Jesus showed the highest and most perfect love when He asked the Father to forgive his enemies, his torturers and executioners, and those who condemned Him to death. He even supplied them with an excuse: "... for they know not what they do."

[Luke 23:34](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://fathergilles.blogspot.ca/2017/04/the-suicide-of-loved-one-provokes.html>  
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HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Sat, 10 Jun 2017 22:15:14 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, 10 Jun 2017 22:14:33 GMT Cache-Control: max-age=259, must-revalidate X-nananana: Batcache Vary: Cookie X-hacker: If you're reading this, you should visit [automattic.com/jobs](http://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

# The Little Things Do Matter [at Shifting My Perspective]



**The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones... Luke 16:10**

Apparently Jocelyn and her little six-year-old friends have been playing a different kind of “dress up” lately.

Instead of raiding the toy chest filled with princess dresses, they have been raiding Jocelyn’s drawers and closet, creating all kinds of crazy combinations and outfits with her clothes. I don’t mind, except for the jumbled mess they leave behind.

When I was refolding her clothes for the 100th time the other day, I noticed all her underwear was gone. After searching a bit, I found them inside a basket. That’s not unusual; we use baskets for a lot of things. The unusual thing was, the basket was buried at the bottom of her princess treasure chest, turned upside down, covering the underwear.

I asked her about it. She explained that when she and her friends go through her drawers and closet, she gets embarrassed when they see her underwear. I told her there was no reason to be embarrassed: everyone wears underwear.

I then tried put them back where they belong, but she begged me to hide them away again. I told her the secret hiding place would be a pain in the neck for me every time I had to put laundry away. We struck a

compromise: I put the basket in a high drawer in a bureau on the other side of the room.

I thought the issue was resolved, but it kept nagging at me. I couldn't figure out why: it seemed so silly and insignificant. Then it occurred to me: although the issue was silly to me, it wasn't insignificant to Jocelyn. In fact, it affected her so much, she had created an elaborate hiding place for her underwear to avoid embarrassment. Shame on me for downplaying what mattered to her.

I have always wanted to be an approachable mom, no matter what. I want my kids to always feel comfortable coming to me with anything and everything, no matter how small, no matter how bad. Yet here I was, sending the message to Jocelyn that her take on this issue didn't matter.

Trust is strengthened, or weakened, in small, subtle ways, over time. Whether consciously or subconsciously, we test people with little things. If they keep our secret, protect our feelings, or support us, they pass the test. Then we trust them with more, and so on. However, if someone shares our secret, belittles our feelings, or scoffs at us, we know not to take things to the next level.

Here Jocelyn was trusting me with something that embarrassed her, and I wasn't honoring it. If she thinks she can't come to me about this, she certainly isn't going to come to me with the next thing she's concerned about, or the next. The ripple effect could be enormous.

Needless to say, when I recognized my mistake, I apologized to Jocelyn, and moved the basket to the secret location of her choice. It may be a hassle for me when I'm putting laundry away, but that's a small price to pay to have regained her trust.

### ***Questions For Reflection:***

- \* Do I always honor my kids' concerns, despite how trivial they seem to me?***
- \* Do I see the positive or negative ripple effects of my reaction to my kids' concerns?***

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This contribution is available at <http://shiftingmyperspective.com/2017/05/25/the-little-things-do-matter/>  
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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](#)

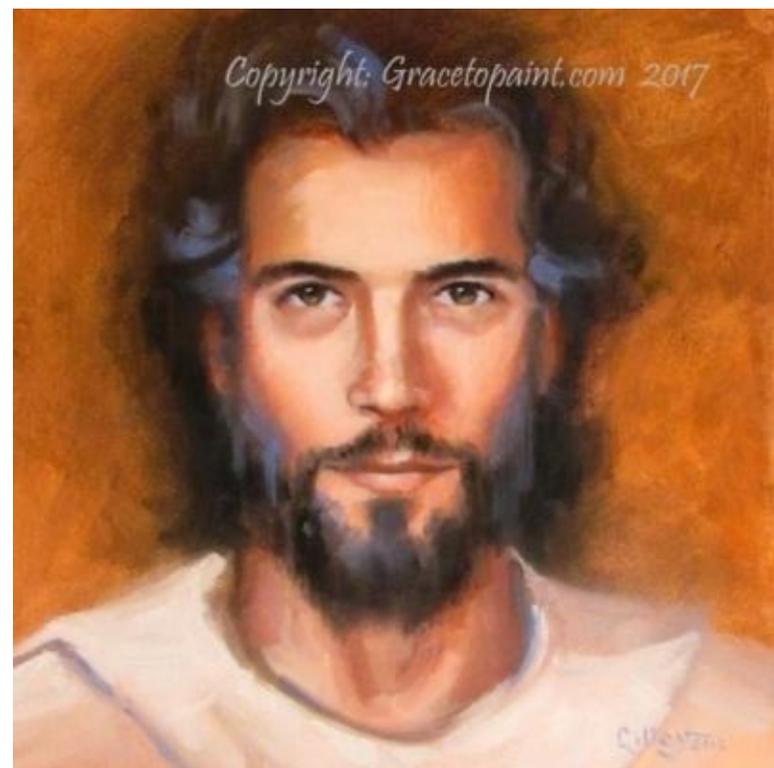
[Anxiety and Faith](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://everydavediths.wordpress.com/2017/05/02/the-messiness-of-marys-motherhood/>  
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# Jesus (on gold background) [at Grace to Paint]



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

These images of Jesus, I hope, can provide for a kind of modern day icon, or at least a little inspiration.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2017/05/23/jesus-gold-background-2/>  
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## Finding Happiness [at Do Not Be Anxious]

I know (and pray for) many people who have deep pain, suffering and/or unhappiness in their lives. Conversations with them easily drift into the problems and the unfairness of the life they notice and focus on every day. Conversations with them sometimes become somewhat one-way, because I can't very well respond with how much joy I find in my own life. They don't understand my thoughts, or at best would dismiss my explanations of joy with: "Well, you are blessed." And they can't conceive that they could be too.

I love Fr. Spitzer's description of the four levels of happiness. I'm reading references to them again in his latest book. He tells of the joy that comes to those in the higher levels of happiness --- and it is very well explained, and perhaps many who would read his words would desire that fuller joy of happiness, but something not easily taken to heart in his words is the fact that wanting happiness and achieving it are two very different things. When you want a higher level of happiness, really want it, you are at a state of saying: "Is this all there is?" Or perhaps you can even reach a state of introspection where you can honestly say to yourself: "I'm not happy." If you are married, you may say it to your spouse --- I had it said to me. Maybe you say those words to a co-worker or a close friend. Maybe you even say them to God. If you do, that's a start, looking honestly where you're at, not being content to stay there and even voicing it aloud to re-enforce the thought. You want change.

You are beginning to see one of the bits of wisdom God has instilled in my heart. I've lived a long life; read many words of men and women way wiser than I, and I have heard God's words making sense of it all for me. And, and here is a key point: I can live out all that wisdom that I have seen and heard. It was not just words of happiness as applied to others; I worked for it and found it for myself. I deserved it.

If you find yourself at a point of wanting more happiness, you need to realize a most critical point: happiness is a place; it is a place in your heart --- to be sure --- but it is still a place of being. And if you can come to realize that you are not happy, and can accept that happiness is a place, then you need to realize something else: you aren't there. Now if you wanted to be in Hawaii and looked around you and saw the Empire State Building or the Eiffel Tower, you would know that you are not in Hawaii, AND you'd know that to get to Hawaii you have to get off your butt and take steps to get there. Finding happiness is achieved the same way. You can't say "I'm not happy" and expect happiness to come to you, OR expect someone to bring it to you. You've got to take steps to get there, and, and, and, and, AND --- realize you won't get there soon. It is a journey to get to that place.

The book I'm reading right now by Fr. Spitzer concerns suffering, and finding the light that shines in the darkness (I'll write a summary review on it soon). In a way, deep suffering is an unhappiness, and it is natural to want it to end. Fr. Spitzer spends over 500 pages explaining how to end deep suffering, which is, in many cases, learning how to live with it, by changing your heart. This isn't just covering over your sufferings, making believe they don't exist, but it is not making them a major focus of your life.

Now you might say: "My unhappiness is that thing or that person, and it is not going away, and I can't move away from it." That's like saying I have this wreck of a car, but I can't fix it. You've got to want happiness; you've got to want reliable transportation. Focus on that, not the current situation. Perhaps

you can buy a new car, lease one, call Uber, or ask your neighbor for a ride. The junker may be sitting in your yard where you can still see it every day, but you can find a newer, higher satisfaction, higher happiness state. But, like traveling to Hawaii, you have to get of your butt and take steps to get there. And persist; it will take time.

There are many ways to get to higher levels of happiness. Fr. Spitzer explains some; the Bible has some. And you'll find some in the quiet of the chapel, talking to God. Persist in your looking. Change your ways of living as these sources suggest, and persist in your change.

Spitzer explains how higher levels of happiness are exemplified by moving from caring about yourself and your wants and needs, to caring about others --- and finding happiness in doing that. It sounds too simple: "I'll just dump my life and live with the poor." In fact, Jesus asked exactly that of the rich man; Mother Teresa did that when she went to Calcutta, and I personally know others who did just that too. And they are very happy. But that way of achieving a higher level of happiness is not meant for everyone; there are many paths. No, most of us cannot be teleported to Hawaii, or even get on a jet to get there --- the way is usually not that fast or direct.

We have to go out the door in a different direction and take steps, lots of them, and open our hearts beyond our own unhappiness, to focus on loving others. Acting with a loving heart is important for happiness. "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor," says St. Paul, "and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Cor 13:3). And even as heaven and eternal happiness awaits us, so does earthly happiness. It is there for everyone to achieve ---- to work to achieve.

I've gotten a long way forward on my journey to happiness. It's taken a long time to get there. If you have not begun it, I pray you begin your journey soon. Prayer is one of the few things common to all progress toward happiness; you must speak to God along the journey, call His Holy Spirit to be with you.

*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,  
the infant in her womb leaped for joy,  
and she was filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Today, in the Catholic Church, is the feast day celebrating Mary's visitation to Elizabeth. The Scripture describing their meeting notes that as Mary, and the tiniest infant Jesus in her womb, neared Elizabeth, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Pentecost will be celebrated this Sunday; the coming of the Holy Spirit. Getting the tiniest bit of Jesus near her caused Elizabeth to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Try getting a little of Jesus near you, too, and pray: "Come, Holy Spirit."

Once again, you have to start on the road to happiness sometime. Why not today? At least in the Catholic Church, the signs seem to be right for a change to the better.

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This contribution is available at <http://do-not-be-anxious.blogspot.com/2017/05/finding-happiness.html>  
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# Why Catholics Memorize Scripture [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

I posted to an online community an encouragement to fellow Christians – Catholics and Protestants alike – to stir them to consider memorizing portions of God’s word. You can find it here:

<http://bit.ly/2qmXIkJ>

It was not at all my intent to cause offense or to make anyone feel guilty about how they approach Scripture memory.

A short time later I received a reply from a fellow Catholic who wrote: “I don't see the point of memorization. In my life experience it's been more helpful for me to pray over bible passages and having Our Lord enlighten me.”

I thought perhaps she might have misunderstood my point. I do not negate the value of praying over Bible passages. In fact, in one of the books I wrote, “Prayer Strategies: A Series of Helps,” I devote an entire ‘prayer strategy’ to praying the scriptures.

But she did not misunderstand my point. In a follow-on comment she added: “Don't waste your time in trying to change my mind, because you won't. As a Roman Catholic I prefer our devotions and traditions and I'll go with praying scripture over memorizing scripture any day.”

I will not try to change her mind. But because she invoked her Roman Catholic faith as an excuse for not bothering to memorize Scripture, I thought that as a Roman Catholic myself, I ought to respond to her very un-Catholic view of Scripture. Indeed, it was the very Catholic St. Jerome who warned his fellow Catholics: Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.

My goal in this specific response is to provide some background regarding how Catholics in the past have treated the idea of Scripture memory.

The Roman Catholic Church traces our origin to the apostles and the apostolic age. So, let’s first look at what those first century men and women said about Scripture – and by implication, memorization.

In her Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) the Blessed Virgin Mary from memory quoted or alluded to at least six Old Testament texts (1 Samuel 2:1-10, Psalm 34:2, Psalm 35:9, Psalm 98:1, Psalm 103:17, Psalm 107:9). (What Catholic does not want to follow our Mother's love for Scripture and Scripture memory?).

In the Wilderness Temptation (Matthew 4 and Luke 4) Jesus responded to each of the devil's lies with a quote from Old Testament Scripture. (And it is hardly necessary to remind ourselves that Jesus is our example 'par excellence' in whose steps we should follow (1 Peter 2:21).

Before his martyrdom, St. Stephen (Acts 7) extensively quoted and alluded to multiple Old Testament texts from memory. St. Paul wrote to the Christians at Colossae: 3:16 *"Let the word of Christ richly DWELL WITHIN YOU (my emphasis), with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* And in which of the New Testament epistles did any of the apostles not quote from memory passages from the Old Testament?

As Roman Catholics, we are taught by the Church to revere Scripture. In his encyclical, *Dei Verbum* (The Word of God) Pope Paul VI wrote: *"The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord . . . [T]he force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life. . . ."*

And from the Catechism of the Catholic Church: 104 *"In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God". "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them."*

And again: 133 *The Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful. . . to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures."* And surely one can imply from these three Roman Catholic documents, memorization is an acceptable form of learning 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ.'

Regarding Old Testament Scriptures, the Catechism teaches: 121 *"The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, for the Old Covenant has never been revoked."*

What then does the Old Testament tell us of the importance of memorizing Scripture? For example, Proverbs 7: *“My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart.”*

Psalm 119:11 *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* And while we are looking at Psalm 119, can anyone read those 176 verses and come away not sensing the value the Holy Spirit places on reading, meditating, obeying, and hiding His word in our hearts?

I can list hundreds of other examples of the Holy Spirit’s injunction to His faithful to know God’s word, but here is just one more: Deuteronomy 6:

*4 “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*

Is it of value for Catholics and other Christians to memorize and pray the scriptures? Of the life and work of St. Benedict we find this: *“Benedict instructed his followers to practice sacred reading -- the study of the very Scriptures they would be praying in the Work of God. In this lectio divina, he and his monks memorized the Scripture, studied it, and contemplated it until it became part of their being. Four to six hours were set aside each day for this sacred reading. If monks had free time it "should be used by the brothers to practice psalms." Lessons from Scripture were to be spoken from memory, not read from a book.”* (Citation available on request)

St. Dominic, founder of the Dominicans, was a great proponent of Scripture memory, as was St. Therese of Lisieux and many other Catholic saints of past centuries.

If an individual Christian chooses to not memorize Scripture, that is certainly his or her decision. But to claim avoidance of that opportunity on the basis of being a Roman Catholic – well, there is simply no justification for that attitude in the historic teaching of the Catholic Church.

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This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2017/05/why-catholics-memorize-scripture.html>

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## Out of the Gate [at Walking the Path]



### AND THEIR OFF

For horse racing in the United States yesterday was the highlight event as the Kentucky Derby took place in front of 158,000 plus fans in Louisville, while millions of other fans watched on television. At the beginning of the race the horses are placed in stalls at the starting gate as waiting for the key moment when the gates are opened as they burst out full of pent up energy on their way around the 1 1/4 mile oval. What makes these horses go? Many of hours of training with the jockey who becomes one with the horse during these times. A horse will not respond to the commands of a stranger nor does the horse. Such it is with ourselves and Jesus the shepherd.

### THE ENDLESS TRACK

Jesus opens the gate daily for us as we sometimes with vigor and other times sluggishly enter into the stream of life. At times life itself seems a race around and endless track with no finish. Hopes are dashed with failures, illness, and brokenness. There seems to be many dead ends and perilous paths on this journey and one may find the road just too overwhelming too take. There is need for escape, but to where?



After Jesus was crucified the disciples did not dare venture out to continue the ministry. For them the gate was as good as closed. It was a dead end. Fear dominated them as they cowered in the upper room. But as Jesus promised he appeared bringing a new sense of life. Just as the horse who seems to lag as it races around the track and who with the prodding of the jockey suddenly regains strength and surges forward are we who need the urging of Jesus through the Spirit to carry on.

### PATIENT SUFFERING

**During a horse race the fans are full of angst as their favorite horse may falter and seem to be have lost the race or seems to be caught in the crowd. Just watch the faces of these people and you**

can see a wide range of emotions. But when the horse surges ahead the demeanor changes. Faces light up with joy, hands are raised, voices rise in exaltation. Peter talks of patient suffering in the second reading today. We are told that this is good for this is a grace. The horse and jockey that have trained for the big race undoubtedly experienced failure during the journey. We too come upon hardship and sufferings yet we find strength in the Risen Christ, the shepherd who guides us along right path.

We may be challenged by voices that tend to divert us from our journey with seemingly rewarding promises of satisfaction and glory. But much like the horse that is reigned in or guided by the jockey as it works through the crowded path to the finish line, we too are guided as well.

## THE PATH TO ABUNDANT LIFE

Once the Kentucky Derby is over the winner is joined by the trainers, owners and others in the Winner's Circle. The jockey and the horse is adorned with a beautiful bouquet of roses, the owner and trainer are given the trophy which is hoisted to the delight of those who followed and bet on the horse. For those who bet on the winner, there is a celebration in the windfall of money they have gained. Jesus also guides us the Shepherd to winner's circle. Along the path there are rewards for work well done, just as a horse is rewarded for a good workout, but the ultimate prize is at the end, the eternal reward.



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This contribution is available at <http://walkingthepathtoholiness.blogspot.com/2017/05/out-of-gate.html>  
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## ...The More I Come To Honor Mary, The More Aware Of Christ I Become [at Boldly Catholic]



For many years, I joined the throngs of believing Christians who thought the Catholic focus on Mary was too much, was idolatrous, was extreme and even cultic. That thought was borne of ignorance in many respects but also from my own intentional desire to be as completely Christ centered as I could possibly be as I chased being a faithful guy.

Now I'm finding that the more I come to honor Mary, the more devoted I am to her, the more I venerate her as the Father's chosen salvific vehicle, the more aware of Christ I become.

It is truly a God delivered mystery, one I've come to embrace fully and when I come across pieces like [this one over at Church Pop](#), I perk up as these are in fact myths I once had believed fully:

*Here are 5 of the most common myths about the Catholic Church's theology and veneration of the Mother of God:*

### ***Myth 1: Catholics worship Mary***

***Truth:*** *This is no where near the truth, yet it's still a common accusation made by Protestants. In reality, Catholics believe that Mary is just a creature, a fellow Christian, and saved by the grace of Jesus like the rest of us (see Myth 2).*

*In case there was somehow doubt about this, the Second Vatican Council in chapter 8 of [Lumen](#)*

[Gentium](#) is explicit regarding Mary: “[N]o creature could ever be counted as equal with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer. [...] The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary.” (LG 62)

### **Myth 2: Catholics think Mary didn’t need a Savior**

**Truth:** Catholics believe that Mary was saved by the grace of Jesus Christ just like everyone else. Protestants (or anyone) who think otherwise are usually confused about the Church’s dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception [says](#) that Mary, “at the first instant of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the Omnipotent God, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin...” “[H]ence,” the Church concludes, “she was redeemed in a manner more sublime.” (Ineffabilis Deus; emphasis added)

In other words, the fact she was conceived without Original Sin, and afterwards never sinned, happened due to the gratuitous grace of Jesus Christ. Thus, in Scripture, Mary in all truthfulness “rejoices in God my Savior.” (Luke 1.47)

### **Myth 3: Catholic Mariology contradicts the Bible**

**Truth:** Not only does the Bible not contradict Catholic Mariology, but it supports it. A lot could be said here, but here are a few examples:

Regarding the Perpetual Virginity of Mary: The Bible never says Mary had other children, and the “brothers and sisters” of Jesus traditionally have been understood ([even by Protestants](#)) as simply referring to close relatives of Jesus. In support of the doctrine, theologians since the early Church have interpreted Mary’s confusion about how she would conceive Jesus, despite the fact she was about to marry Joseph, as an indication she had taken a vow of virginity.

Regarding the Hail Mary prayer: The Bible says Christians should pray for each other (which is what the Hail Mary prayer asks Mary to do for us: “pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.”). And the first few lines are simply quotes from the Bible: “Hail Mary, full of grace” is how the angel Gabriel greeted Mary at the Annunciation; “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus” is what St. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaimed when Mary visited her. (Luke 1)

There's more at the link. Check it out and maybe learn something.

The faith is rich and deep and I really think most Catholics are so unaware.

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This contribution is available at <http://www.boldlycatholic.com/2017/05/-the-more-i-come-to-honor-mary-the-more-aware-of-christ-i-become.html>

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# Thou Shalt Not Covet [at Creo en Dios!]

I paused when I read this line from today's [daily meditation by Richard Rohr](#): "I've never heard a single sermon my entire life on the tenth commandment—'Thou shalt not covet . . . anything that is thy neighbor's' (Exodus 20:17)"

I did a quick scroll through my memory for sermons I've heard. And while I can't swear I never heard a sermon on the tenth commandment, I certainly can't recall a time that I did hear one.

Rohr's explanation for this absence is that "coveting goods is the only game in town now. It's called capitalism and consumerism!" Sounds right to me. We live in a society that values people by what we earn, produce, have and consume – and the temptations to go along with that way of thinking are strong.

How does one reconcile the tenth commandment with the reality of our world today? Do we just scrap that commandment and keep the other nine?

Or do we acknowledge the pull of the world and actively work against covetousness, making efforts to support each other in an alternative lifestyle that emphasizes other values? Values like:

Faith in God vs. security in what we have.

Giving vs. acquiring.

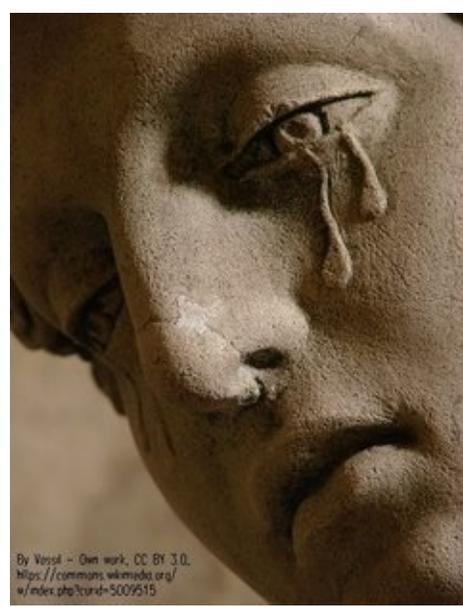
Simplicity vs. the need for the newest and best.

Rohr made his comments in the context of Paul's preaching about the importance of community. We need to both individually and corporately as Christians model a set of values different from those of the world in which we live.

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This contribution is available at <http://susanjoan.wordpress.com/2017/05/20/thou-shalt-not-covet/>  
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## Tears, For Our Bread [at The Mission of Saint Thorlak]



Two different times, the Book of Psalms uses this phrasing: “*You have fed us with tears for our bread.*” Seeing how we are an apostolate concerned with spiritual food, this is a matter of interest for our Missionaries, and is our thought for this week.

A powerful emotional relationship underlies this poetry. “You have fed us...” suggests dependency, particularly that of a child. “Bread” is a universal symbol of comfort and plenty. “Tears for our bread,” then, would be a shocking, even hurtful substitution. Do we assume the psalmist is lamenting that God seems to be sending tribulation instead of peace? Yes, in strictly historical terms. It certainly resonates with those times when we, too, have suffered with things beyond our control and wondered how we ended up with bitter herbs when we expected our daily bread. But let’s linger here, since we know both poetry and Scripture speak on as many layers as humans are complex.

Let’s think about tears. They are salty... wet... warm. An outward sign of our interior emotion.

We most often associate tears with sorrow, but they can also come with laughter, surprise, anger... actually, anywhere that emotions become more intense than our words can express.

We’ve all heard that human beings are the only creatures who shed tears of emotion. We are also programmed to recognize tears as a signal for our attention, starting the moment a child is born. Infants and children rarely suppress their tears, and adults dutifully respond. A gradual shift comes as children mature. Instead of crying easily, adolescents – despite having intense emotions – increasingly feel the need to hide their tears as an act of independence. This is a useful way to practice self-regulation and coping, but it should not imply failure if tears slip out. In fact, it is equally useful to see how peers are moved to compassion when they see you in a moment of high emotion. Adults probably shed the least tears of all the various age groups, but healthy adults still do cry as a part of living, and friends still (usually) respond with care when tears are spotted.

People with autism have a strained relationship with tears.

- Some cry easily because they experience their emotions with greater intensity.
- Others experience their emotions academically – but no less authentically – and do not show much facial expression, so can be unfairly labeled apathetic, stoic, or believed to be “taking things remarkably well” without anyone actually checking to see if this is true.
- Some fear crying because it physically hurts and feels overwhelming.
- Others have internalized the social nuances which ridicule crying, and so hold themselves to unrealistic standards (“*I must never cry.*”)

As you read over this list, it should occur to you that we could remove the words “

with autism

” and it would still apply to many. Difficulty crying is an “anyone” thing, just as tears themselves are not exclusively an autism thing. People with autism cry for exactly the same reasons as do everyone else. In fact, we’re all familiar with phrases like these (and they didn’t originate on the autism spectrum):

- E.G.: “I fought back tears.” Why? Did they pose immediate danger? Did your body produce them as an act of aggression?
- E.G.: “This song always makes me cry.” Makes you? As in, coercion? You have no active part in listening, thinking, feeling, wishing...?
- E.G.: “Oh, I must have something in my eye.” Really. Wait – yes, you do. It’s your humanity. And it’s nothing to be ashamed of.



Do tears really make us that vulnerable?

Well... yes.

Crying happens when our NEED can no longer be experienced alone.

Crying is not designed to be done in secret. When we cry alone, tears themselves are all we have – just salt and water, which nourishes no-one (and would be toxic if that were all we consumed).

When we allow someone to know our need, however, we give them a gift: the chance to respond, with leaven (= that which moves them to rise), balm (= oil) and sweetness (= sugar) to soothe our distress. Their acts of comfort need be nothing fancy, just simple solidarity – the grains of our experiences mixing with theirs, milling together in a shared moment of understanding (= flour). The warmth of our tears plus the warmth of their giving completes the gesture, and all the components of (spiritual) bread are in place. Tears DO become bread *when we share them with others*.

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It's true.

[ God feeds us with tears for our bread ] --> No! -->

God feeds us with tears

**, for our bread**

.

Note the insertion of the comma. That comma changes everything, and can be put there with a simple act of our consent. It takes a lamentation and turns it into a proclamation.

“God has fed us with tears for [= instead of] our bread” -> becomes ->

“God has fed us with tears [= which contain necessary ingredients]

**, for our bread**

.”

So, then. Our need, expressed in our tears, can feed our souls and can feed the souls of others...

- Unless we reject crying.
- Unless we reject others seeing our tears.
- Unless we fail to see the tears of others (deliberately, or by not thinking to look).
- Unless others fail to see our tears (deliberately, or by not thinking to look).
- Unless autism impacts or impairs our ability to shed tears.
- Unless autism impacts or impairs our ability to respond to tears.

Each of these “unlesses” can be changed... worked on... remedied... and transformed, as part of our spiritual commitment as Missionaries, including those last two. Autism DOES impact one’s ability to shed tears, and autism DOES impact one’s ability to respond to tears. But, if we take the impact autism has on our ability to cry and respond to crying, and

*consecrate*

it [dedicate it to serving God-in-others]... the ensuing love [CARITAS] will make that impossible task possible.

And so, for this week’s thoughts, we ask you to ponder this idea deeply.

Pull it apart, question it.

Knead it.

Let it rest.

Let it rise in your heart.

And let it become your bread.

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This contribution is available at <http://mission-of-saint-thorlak.weebly.com/activities/missionary-thought-for-the-week-of-may-22-2017-tears-for-our-bread>  
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## Out There [at bukas palad]



Year A / Eastertide / Fourth Sunday (Vocation Sunday)

Readings: Acts 2. 14a, 36-41 / Psalm 22. 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 (R/v 1) / 1 Peter 2.20b-25 / John 10.1-10

*The Lord is my shepherd*, we pray. And we picture him dressed in white, leading lambs onward, a halo around his head.

*The Lord is my shepherd*, we sing. And we envision him clean, never dirty, never smelling of sheep, dung or body odour.

*The Lord is my shepherd*, we read. And we paint him a doe-eyed good shepherd, carrying a lamb over his shoulders.

Gentleness, meekness and compassion are the qualities we associate with this good shepherd. Qualities to tame what is wild and unruly in the world, solve the unsolvable and answer the unanswerable, and protect us against the world's thieves and bandits who want to steal, kill, and destroy.

Perhaps, this is why Psalm 23 is truly consoling in the most difficult of times. The good shepherd will lead us to still waters and green pastures for rest. The good shepherd will accompany us in danger and give us courage. The good shepherd will prepare us a bountiful table in our enemies' presence. The

good shepherd will bring us to the Lord's house to rest.

Why then are we still struggling to find happiness, prosperity and progress? Why are we still searching for meaning and accomplishment? Because we live in a world that remains harsh and disorderly, that poses more questions than answers, that has thieves and bandits bent on destruction. So we continue to struggle to make sense of our Christian life. Hence, our pleas: "Lord, where are you?" "Lord, how long more?" "Lord, do you not care?" Yes, where is the good shepherd when we need him?

In preparing for this homily I asked myself: why do we ask these questions? Could it be because we need to live safety within the walled-off reality of a sheepfold? That secure pen to safeguard and protect sheep from harm in the wilderness? That safe space the shepherd leads them into? That sheep pen guarded by a gatekeeper when the shepherd is away?

There is an important detail in today's gospel passage that can help provide us an answer. We often overlook this detail because we are too familiar with this gospel passage. It is this: Jesus teaches that *the shepherd calls his own sheep by name, they hear his voice, and he leads them out* (John 10.3).

Out of the sheep pen. We always assumed that the shepherd will lead the flock to safety. But this isn't how Jesus is presenting the shepherd. The shepherd calls the sheep away from the safety of the walled-off pen. They follow him, not to safety, but to the open wilderness.

**To the wilderness because that is where the shepherd always is, this is where he is always shepherding.** Not in the sheep pen but beyond its boundaries and the walls, beyond its safety and comfort. In the wilderness, among the sheep is where the shepherd must be. This is where his hands get dirty, he labours hard and sweats, he cares for them and he smells of sheep. This is what the shepherd really does; this is who he truly is—**one out there for his own.**

And there, beyond the sheep pen is the pasture where there is abundant life. Abundant life is not necessarily a safe life. Beyond the sheep pen, there is most certainly green pasture and still waters, but there are also roaming predators, wolves and bandits, and a valley shadowed by death.

*Abundant life in the wilderness.* It seems illogical to us. But not to the early Christians John's gospel addressed. They were cast out from the safety of their sheepfold, their Jewish synagogues, for following Jesus. Yet beyond this safe space was Jesus, waiting for them, ready to be with them, poised to lead them onward. All they had to do was to continue following his voice to find good pasture to restore

their souls to life. Yes, Jesus is indeed their Good Shepherd.

Throughout the gospels, Jesus serves and ministers, forgives and loves, heals and gives life to the full. He breaks bread with the outcasts. He praises sinners for their profound faith. He befriends the despised. For the Jewish authorities, Jesus entered the spiritual wildernesses and sinful deserts of these people's lives.

Jesus calls us into these spaces. To go there to feed the hungry, to uplift the poor, to accompany the lonely, to value the disenfranchised as he did. We may fear entering them because they are soiled by sin, stained by pain, smeared by injustice. But we are called there. We cannot go until we leave our safe, comfortable spaces.

If we think that we go and do this because we must do what is right or help others out or repair them or make them Christians, then we will miss the point. If we find ourselves cast out of our safe, comfortable spaces into the wilderness, the point must be that we have no better place to be at than where the good shepherd is—in the wilderness, not in the sheep pen.

More significantly, we are there because **God wants us with Jesus where our lives will matter most—for someone else**. For Lilla Watson, an aboriginal Australian, being with another in need leads to salvation: “If you come here to help me, you are wasting our time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

That is the point. Our salvation is inextricably tied up to the salvation of all those outside the safety of our sheep pen. Their collective voices are the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd. He calls us through them into the wilderness of their lives, for there by serving them, salvation—abundant life—awaits us. Is Jesus calling you to abundant life through another?

Today we celebrate the gift of vocation. Its Latin root means to call, *vocāre*. Jesus calls us all to follow him; our right response is to listen and obey. As Christians we all strive to live the basic vocation to be holy through a Christ-like life. Some of us embrace the religious and priestly vocations, and so bear witness to a more radical way of living this holiness. Our lives should inspire others to become a religious or a priest.

Sadly, we have fewer religious and priestly vocations. Jesus still calls; many do hear but are distracted, afraid, unsure of their worthiness. We should stop complaining and help them to discern God's call in

their lives.

The Bible tells us that the language God prefers is silence, and the atmosphere God best works in is silence. “Be still and know that I am God”. Many a religious and priest will speak of discerning God’s call in silence. They speak of quiet prayer before the Eucharist or in a retreat. Sometimes it is in quiet reflection after a pivotal experience or encounter. For others, it came in silence in a life-changing episode such as a pilgrimage, service project, or World Youth Day. God never yells or shouts. His voice is gentle, soft, quiet.

You and I are responsible for promoting vocations. Our work is not just to talk about it or advertise it, or even to pray for more. It must also be to help the young and those discerning to cultivate silence as the way to hear Jesus’ voice and to let him speak with them. We need to teach them to stop talking and to listen and to follow.

To listen is our first vocation, not priesthood, religious life, marriage, the single life, or the lay ministry. In silence we will come to know Jesus, the Good Shepherd, so well, that when he whispers to us in quiet, we will hear his voice and know how to follow his call. Then, he can lead us out of our sheep pens into the wilderness to live with others, to serve and to save them, and so let God save us. Then, we’ll have all the vocations we need.

When that day comes, I’m sure we’ll joyfully proclaim: “Indeed, the Lord is our shepherd for he truly he provides shepherds after his heart: they have come to care for us”.

*Preached at St Ignatius Parish, Singapore*

Photo: j.rebanks, the telegraph

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## Amazed and Afraid [at Bible Meditations]



*But they were amazed and afraid, and said to one another, “Who is this man? He gives orders to the winds and waves, and they obey him! Luke 8:25*

While crossing a lake with his disciples, Jesus fell asleep in the boat. A storm hit. Some of the disciples were sea-faring fishermen, but even they were terrified and convinced they were going to die. No wonder they woke Jesus up.

Jesus gave an order to the wind and waves and immediately there was a great calm. Luke doesn't tell us the disciples were happy or even relieved. He says they were “amazed and afraid.” (GNT, NRSV)

No matter how good things may be, it's scary to feel our powerlessness. Although it's easy to forget when things are running smoothly, there are plenty of circumstances beyond our control. We're not in charge of the universe. We're not at the mercy of chaos, either.

The good news is that God, the Creator of the universe, *is* in control, even when it doesn't look like it. God is all-powerful. Yes, He loves us intimately. Yes, He's slow to anger and rich in kindness. Yes, His grace is amazing...but so is His power.

The word awesome has become trivialized by overuse. The word awful has a negative connotation. What word can we use to describe the mind-blowing, knee-shaking power and authority of the God who made the planets and stars but yet numbers the hairs on our head? To be known and loved by such a God is enough to amaze and frighten anyone.

Prayer: Glory and Praise to our Mighty God!

Reflection: When have you felt both amazed and afraid? How does it feel to experience your vulnerability? To glimpse God's power? To know you are loved with that same power?

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# How I Learned to Dress Appropriately for Mass

This article first appeared in this week's edition of [Vidi Dominum](#), the parish bulletin of St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church. Re-published here with permission.

If you Google Search – “how to dress for Mass”, you will find ten different articles explaining why it's important to dress appropriately, and a lot of different opinions in the comments. The reasons given are, for the most part, very similar. With the arrival of warmer temperatures here in Arizona and other places around the country, we tend to dress more casually. Many of us dress casually when we come to Mass as well. Should we?

Before I really dive deeper into this topic, let me say one thing – *I am not judging you in any way*. As one who works for the parish, it is my job, in union with our Pastor, Fr. Will, to help lead you closer to Christ. It's not about judgment, but helping you to grow in your faith. My hope is that many of you will read this article, understand it, and implement it.

## How did I learn to dress for Mass appropriately?

It goes back to the very first time I attended Holy Mass at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Steubenville, Ohio nearly nine years ago. I'll never forget the feeling of being totally underdressed when I walked into church. Even though I was wearing a \$200 pair of Joe's Jeans, an expensive Banana Republic polo shirt, and a pair of Johnston and Murphy shoes, nearly everyone else was dressed in their “Sunday best.” This was how I was dressing for Mass for years before that day. At least four of my graduate school professors, including Scott Hahn, were dressed in full suits with ties and their families were dressed to the same degree. Even as I write these words to you now, the feeling of that moment still resides with me. My first thought I was, “I need to go home and change into better clothes.” In the end, I stayed for Mass but sat in a back corner hoping that none of my professors witnessed my attire. Some might think this is extreme, but I learned long ago from my Dad that it's better to be overdressed than underdressed, and I was most certainly underdressed for Holy Mass.

From that moment on, I learned how to wear appropriate clothing to Mass every Sunday. Did I dress in a suit very Sunday? No, but I wore dress pants, dress shoes, a polo or button down shirt (most often button down with a sweater) and, on occasion, a tie. In recent years, I have begun to wear a tie nearly every week. I am grateful that this lesson was taught to me many years ago. Dressing appropriately for Mass completely changed my disposition at Mass. My outer disposition and clothing now reflect my inner disposition.

Although I am writing this article to all parishioners, I particularly hope that *my fellow Catholic men* who read this article will take my words to heart. If you wear dress pants/khaki's and a polo shirt/button down to work every day, but come to Mass dressed in shorts, a t-shirt, and flip flops – there is a disconnect. Why dress appropriately for work, but dress casually for Mass? Would you wear your work clothes to go to the pool, the beach or the lake? This seems like a common sense question, but if you were to visit the President of the United States or Pope Francis, would you wear shorts and t-shirt? In Rome, you aren't even permitted to enter a church building if you are not dressed appropriately.

Men – we can do better than this! It may not be a perfect expression, but the phrase “the clothes make the man” does express that the clothes we wear often affects the way we are regarded.

## **Practical Guidelines Appropriate Dress for Mass**

So we might be asking ourselves, “what is appropriate dress for Sunday Mass?” In order to assist you in this question, below are a few norms for your consideration:

Men...

1. Wear formal (dress) shoes to Church. Flip-flops, TOMS (I love mine, but not for Mass), beach sandals, or cross training/running shoes are not formal shoes.
2. Wear dress pants or khakis (not jeans).
3. Don't wear shorts.
4. Wear a button down shirt or a polo shirt, but make sure the shirt has a collar. Tuck the shirt into the pants. T-shirts with no collars, sleeveless shirts, and sports jerseys are too informal.
5. [For the more daring types] – wear a tie, a suit, or a sport coat with your attire. Some may think this is too stuffy, but not long ago, men wore such clothes every day, every Sunday to Mass, and yes, even to sporting events. Go take a look at a baseball game from the 1930's and 1940's – the men are wearing suits!

Women... (these suggestions came from fellow female parishioners)

1. Wear decent shoes to Church. Flip-flops and tennis shoes should be avoided.
2. Remember that for a skirt or dress, three fingers above the knee, or longer, is appropriate. Skirts and dresses should not be “see through” or have long slits in them. Shorts, especially “short shorts” should not be worn.
3. Don't wear jeans (just like men). Slacks are a good option, but they should not be too tight. Your goal shouldn't be to attract attention to the shape of your body when dressing for Mass.
4. Wear a nice blouse (if not wearing a dress). Tops should not be too tight for the same reason that pants shouldn't be. Tank tops, spaghetti straps, and midriffs are not appropriate for Mass. It's also important to make sure that undergarments remain undergarments. If any part of your bra can be seen by others, rethink your choice in top.
5. Cleavage should never be visible. You might think a shirt covers your cleavage, but take this quick test before you leave for Mass: Bow in front of the mirror. Whatever you see is what the Priest, Deacon, or Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion will see when you bow before receiving the Eucharist.

## **Common Objections**

With all of this in mind, let's examine four common objections to dressing up for Mass –

1. *“God doesn’t care what I wear to Mass”*: This is often heard along with – “Come as you are! God doesn’t care what clothes you wear! He just wants you!” This objection is conjecture. God does care what you wear – don’t use this excuse because laziness has set in. No Bride on her wedding day is going to say to her Groom – “Come as you are to our wedding! I really don’t care what you wear.” Jesus explicitly demands respectful attire in Matthew 22:1-14 (The Parable of the Wedding Feast).
2. *“It’s my personal prerogative – I don’t feel like dressing up”*: Here we have the objection that, because I dress up all week for work, on Sunday it’s time to relax. Yes, Sunday is the Holy Sabbath – a day of rest. However, not dressing for Mass appropriately falls into the sin of sloth. Sloth lacks discipline and the willingness to suffer. If Our Lord suffered in agony on the cross for all of us, we can dress appropriately for a couple of hours on a Sunday to glorify His name, and yes, even when it’s 110 degrees.
3. *“I never dress up”*: Some people that make this argument are non-conformists, or have a tendency to rebel against authority, but this comment also comes from people who aren’t ever required to dress up for work. Some employers have become lax on their dress codes for their employees. Regardless, this argument doesn’t really hold up since those same people who say they never dress up, actually dress up for a lot of things. We wear sport jerseys to games, dresses or tuxedos for Prom and weddings, uniforms for teams, or specialty (sometimes expensive) clothes for hunting, fishing, hiking or even working out at the gym. We actually “dress for the occasion” pretty often. Shouldn’t that concept apply to Holy Mass as well?
4. *“I don’t have money for dress clothes”*: Dressing nice for Mass does not need to cost a lot. Those who have limited financial resources can find clothes that are decent for Mass at discount or thrift stores. However, if you are truly unable to purchase new clothes and don’t currently have anything appropriate for Mass, don’t be ashamed to call the office and ask for help!

### **How we Dress for Mass Really Matters**

There are two main reasons why how we dress matters. First, how we dress conveys respect and honor. When we dress appropriately for Mass, we are saying to God, “You are worth the effort; you deserve my best.” It also communicates to your fellow parishioners that you take Mass seriously. It’s not just another casual event during the week.

Second, when we dress in a respectful manner it changes our interior disposition. Personally, when I have a suit on, or even just a tie, my words, thoughts, posture, and my general attitude is different. My father used to say to me – “a gentleman truly knows how to dress for every occasion.” Some will even argue that dressing up for Mass can be seen as spiritual discipline.

If you want to assist in bringing the changes needed for dressing appropriately, first make the commitment to dress more reverently at Mass yourself. Call up a friend from the parish and challenge each other to dress better for Mass. Next Sunday, make the effort to dress more appropriately. Once you are doing your best to express the seriousness of the sacrifice of the Mass in your outward appearance, then you can help your children to do the same.

**Postscript:** All comments are read by me and only approved with my discretion. Comments made should be done in regards to the article. Any comments attacking me, each other, or any entity associated with this post will not be approved. As long as these guidelines are followed, the comment

box will remain open. If they are not followed, the comment section will be closed. Thank you.

**Sources:**

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This contribution is available at <http://tomporna.org/2017/05/09/how-i-learned-to-dress-appropriately-for-mass/>  
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# I'm happy to host the blog tour for Jean M. Heimann's latest book:

## About the Book:

Fatima. Few place-names in the Christian world conjure up such powerful images and associations as that of this humble town in Portugal. For it was there that Our Lady appeared to three shepherd children beginning in 1917 apparitions that are intimately linked to pious Catholic practices such as devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the five first Saturdays, daily recitation of the Rosary with the Fatima prayer, as well as miracles attested to even by non-believers, such as the day the sun danced. The Virgin's message, as it always is, was penance. But she also predicted world historical events such as the rise and fall of communism, the second world war, and the attempted assassination of Pope St. John Paul II. She promised refuge in her Immaculate Heart to all who approach her – a promise extended, and urgently needed, today.

This beautifully illustrated volume will be treasured by long-time devotees of our Blessed Mother under the title of Our Lady of Fatima, as well as those, both Catholic and non-Catholic alike, who seek to learn more about the dramatic events related to the apparition that have unfolded over the course of the last century.

In *Fatima: The Apparition That Changed the World*, noted Catholic author and Blue Army member Jean M. Heimann traces the history of the apparitions at Cova da Iria and, assisted by over fifty full-color illustrations, guides the reader through the hundred years since the Mother of God appeared to three little children in a small town in Portugal.

## My Review:

I didn't know how much my knowledge of the Fatima apparitions was lacking until I read Jean M. Heimann's beautiful new book! As a cradle Catholic with at least average knowledge about my faith, I've long known about the Blessed Mother's appearances to three young Portuguese children in the early 20th century. What this book, replete with beautiful photographs, did, is provide depth and context to my superficial knowledge.

*Fatima: The Apparition That Changed the World* works as a reference book, a coffee table book, a spiritual work, and a primer in history – both ecclesiastical and 20th century world history. One of the most helpful features in the book is a timeline, setting the visions in context with historical events. (It was also a reminder of how slowly the Catholic Church moves, often with good reason.) The timeline is also traced in greater detail through the 20th and 21st century papacies.

Just in time for the centennial of the first apparitions and the canonizations of two of the three visionaries, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, later this month, *Fatima: The Apparition That Changed the World* not only educates and edifies, but brings to bear the continuing relevance of Our Lady's message today.

As private revelation, the apparitions, while approved (meaning that they are supernatural and do not

contradict good faith or morals) are not part of the deposit of faith. Even so, this detailed story of Fatima left me in awe of the majesty of God and the significant role Our Lady plays in salvation history.

## About the Author:

JEAN M. HEIMANN is a Catholic author and a freelance writer with an M.A. in Theology, a parish minister and speaker, a psychologist and educator, and an Oblate with the Community of St. John. She is a member of the Blue Army and founder of Our Lady of Fatima Rosary and Study group. Jean is the author of *Seven Saints for Seven Virtues* (Servant, 2014) and *Learning to Love with the Saints, A Spiritual Memoir* (Mercy, 2016). Visit Jean at her website <http://www.jeanmheimann.com/> through which you can access her award-winning blog, Catholic Fire. Her new book *Fatima: The Apparition That Changed the World* is available for [pre-order at Amazon.com](#) or at [TAN Books online](#).

## The Blog Tour:

May 1 – Carolyn Astfalk, [My Scribbler's Heart](#)

May 2 – Ellen Gable, [Plot Line and Sinker](#)

May 3 – Virginia Lieto, [Virginia Lieto](#)

May 4 – AnneMarie Miller, [Sacrifice of Love](#)

May 5 – Barb Szyszkiewicz, [Franciscan Mom](#)

May 6 – Steven R. McEvoy, [Book Reviews and More](#)

May 7 – Lisa Hendey, [Catholic Mom](#)

May 8 – Jeannie Ewing, [Love Alone Creates](#)

May 9 – Lisa Mladinich, [Amazing Catechists](#)

May 10 – AnneMarie Miller, [Sacrifice of Love](#)

May 11 — Barb Szyszkiewicz, [Catholic Mom](#)

May 12 – Allison Gingas, [Reconciled to You](#) and Marge Fenelon, [Marge Fenelon](#)

May 13 – Esther Gefroh, [A Catholic Mom in Hawaii](#)

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This contribution is available at <http://www.carolynastfalk.com/2017/05/01/fatima-apparition-changed-world-blog-tour/>  
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# On a Sad Sidewalk, a Small Foretaste of Jesus? Words, ?You Will Weep ? but Your Grief Will Become Joy? [at Community in Mission]



Something about today's Gospel (Friday of the 6<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter) reminds me of an incident on the front lines of the battle to end abortion.

*Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn,  
while the world rejoices;  
you will grieve, but your grief will become joy.  
When a woman is in labor, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived;  
but when she has given birth to a child,  
she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy  
that a child has been born into the world.  
So you also are now in anguish.  
But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice,  
and no one will take your joy away from you (John 16:20-23).*

**It was a mild spring day in front of the Planned "Parenthood" facility here in Washington, D.C.** Twenty of us were gathered to pray the rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet. The weather was fine, but as always the mood was heavy, knowing of the toll of life exacted at this facility and the outright confusion of those who think themselves righteous for advocating the death of innocent human beings.

**Two sidewalk counselors were courageously at work**, seeking a last-minute change of heart from the downcast women (often accompanied by boyfriends or parents) who entered. We supported the sidewalk counselors with our prayers.

**Five escorts in orange vests** tried to shield the entering clients from us who would shine the light of truth on what was really happening inside.

**Keep praying, I thought**, for indeed, some among our group were converts to the pro-life cause thanks to the prayers of others.

**A low moment came when** a few joyful "clinic" escorts shared the news among themselves that a

certain woman emerging from the center had “successfully aborted.” Smiles among the escorts, a high five between two of them, and a gloating look over at us from another one brought Jesus’ words painfully alive:

*You will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices.*

**Yes, the hardest part** of being on the front lines of the pro-life movement is hearing an abortion called a success and seeing some even joyfully announcing victory.

**I gathered close to my fellow prayer warriors and encouraged them** between the decades by quoting these words of Jesus’: *You will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices.* Yet we should also remember that He went on to say, *you will grieve, but your grief will become joy ... [You] are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.*

**It was not enough that we should grieve;** we should also offer our sorrow for the ones who were now rejoicing. We must offer our grief for their conversion. For Jesus says,

*Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep* (Luke 6:25).

**Indeed, if they are not converted now, they will answer one day to God.** Pray for conversion prior to judgement! It gave me the strength to go to each escort, look him or her in the eye, and say, “Think about it now. You know deep in your heart that this is wrong, that this is murder.” It was interesting to me that not a single one of them said anything in reply.

**In the distance, I saw one of our sidewalk counselors urgently waving for me to come over.** She had not been able to dissuade a certain young woman from entering, but her boyfriend had listened, taken it to heart, and was now asking for confession! He had tried to bring his girlfriend out to join him, but she refused. Now sorrowful and contrite, moved by the words of the sidewalk counselor and the signs our group held, he sought mercy. The counselor said to me, “He’s ready for you Father; he’s ready for mercy.”

**Thank you, Jesus.** We could not save everyone that day, but at least we saved one. Sorrow was turned to joy. I pray only, Lord, that our joy may one day be complete.

“Keep praying, witnessing, and working.” was all I heard.

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This contribution is available at <http://blog.adw.org/2017/05/sad-sidewalk-small-foretaste-jesus-words-will-weep-grief-will-become-joy/>

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## Man Acts! The Moral Act Must Be Based on Truth [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

Outside marriage, there is no opportunity for happiness in the sexual act. It is ironic that in all kinds of sexual sin, what is pursued is the happiness of the sexual act, but none is forthcoming, only repetitive pleasure, which leaves one feeling empty and drained.

Chastity begins like all virtues in an “apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom. It is long and exacting work.” (Catechism 2339) When temperance becomes a habit, the passions and sensual appetites are permeated with reason. The human person in his consciousness tries to reach for the true good in all his appetites and difficulties.

Take baby steps. Let your own voluntary decisions mother and father you through life toward happiness. St Peter calls us “*living stones... being built into a spiritual house.*”

In the foundation, we can begin to see occasional acts of kindness, restraint from curiosity especially in puerile things, patience in trial, moderation in speech -- a multitude of little choices. These in turn will strengthen the foundation, and allow a person to build himself into a good man or a good woman. It is his choices that accomplish this. Every good decision reinforces the foundation. Eventually finishing the attic of this spiritual house, you will notice you are putting the finishing touches on those powerful theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.

*“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says:*

*“See, I lay a stone in Zion,*

*a chosen and precious cornerstone,*

*and the one who trusts in him*

*will never be put to shame.”*

*Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,*

*“The stone the builders rejected*

*has become the cornerstone,”and,*

*“A stone that causes people to stumble*

*and a rock that makes them fall.”*

*They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.*

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1Peter 2:4-9)*

The message is simple. Seek to base your choices on the truth. Do not stumble because of Christ. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.



*Susan Fox is working on a master's degree in Marriage and Family at the International Theological Institute in Trumau, Austria. This is a paper she did for Fr. Rev. Prof. Dr. habil. Josef Spindelböck, a moral theologian faithful to the Catholic Magisterium. These are his comments: "I read your paper now, and is a very fresh essay with a good use of sources and literature!" Thank you for having done this wonderful work." Fr. Spindelböck. Follow Fr. Spindelböck on Twitter at @sepptirol or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/josef.spindelboeck>*

*Interested in studying at the International Theological Institute? You can apply [here](#). Each student at ITI is only charged 6,000 Euros a year in tuition, but the actual cost of the education is 20,000 Euros. Donate [here](#)*

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This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.co.at/2017/05/man-acts-moral-act-must-be-based-on.html>  
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# Volunteers Building a Safe Harbor

Reposted from [Leaven for the Loaf](#).

“A Safe Harbor for Mother and Child.” Step by step, [St. Gianna’s Place](#) is on the way to becoming a shelter for pregnant and parenting women. Administrative details are in place: a board of directors; nonprofit tax status. Now comes the work of [acquiring a house](#), most likely in Londonderry, New Hampshire.



St. Gianna’s is taking shape one step at a time, guided by board members and an increasing number of supporters. One of those supporters, Lynn, hosted me and several other women for coffee recently so we could meet Maria Szemplinski of the St. Gianna’s Place board.

Maria talked about the planned home and about the people whose vision has brought the project this far. She told us about the need for more shelter beds in our area: “our Calcutta is right here,” she said, evoking Mother Teresa. She talked about other shelters in the region and how their staffs have been generous in sharing their advice and experience with the St. Gianna’s team.

So what’s next? We asked Maria what we could do.

One obvious answer: fundraising. That wasn’t what Maria led with, though. She asked us to consider what our gifts might be.

I knew some of my fellow guests slightly, and had met others for the first time that morning: a student active in pro-life work at her school, people with experience working with at-risk youth, an adoptive parent. These were women with full lives, hardly in need of another project, but all of them eager to offer practical assistance to pregnant and parenting women. I was in a room full of potential mentors and teachers.

Our hostess was meeting one of St. Gianna’s most urgent needs by welcoming us for an information session. Spreading the word is critical to attracting the material support the project needs. Maria and her fellow board members welcome opportunities to speak with any person or group who’d like to learn more.

Maria made it clear that even at this stage, the St. Gianna’s board is on the lookout for people with the skills to work with women who want educational guidance, job training, and parenting skills.

Eventually, it will be time to furnish and equip the house that will serve as the shelter. There will be ongoing needs for food, baby supplies, and building maintenance.

There will be – there *is* – work for everyone who wants to make the shelter happen and help it thrive.

*Learn more about [St. Gianna's Place](#), about [the woman whose life and example inspired the project](#), and [how to contact the St. Gianna's Place team](#) for more information. Watch the [St. Gianna's Place Facebook page](#) for updates.*

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## The Heart of a Lion [at String of Pearls]

My dad's name was Leon, but to his friends he was "Lee." And to his "grandthings" he was "BIGFOOT." Always. He insisted on that. (If you were lucky enough to know my father, you know that he was a character.)

Dad passed away on November 25, 2016, one day shy of his 82nd birthday and about five months after celebrating his 60th wedding anniversary with the love of his life.



The end seemed to come quickly and suddenly, and it took our breath away. But Dad's death was not really unexpected; just a month and a half before, we had gotten the tragic news that after years of blood disorders, frequent trips to the hematologist, and regular transfusions at the cancer center, he had full-blown leukemia. Without treatment, he had maybe 3-6 months to live; but there was a slim chance that chemotherapy might buy him a year or two. He chose the chemotherapy route, because as hard as his life had become over the past few years, dealing with so much pain and illness, he had one goal and one goal only: to stay alive as long as possible so that he could take care of my mother. That was what he prayed for daily. That was what he was living for.

We had known for some time that Dad was failing. His family care doctor had told my sister this quite a while ago, and advised us not to nag him about things like his nightly vodka tonics or his excessive salt intake. We knew that he felt lousy most of the time, but we didn't know this because he complained about it. Trying to find out what was going on with him health-wise was like pulling teeth. He was almost heroically stoic when it came to his own aches and pains. (Poor circulation ultimately led to multiple surgeries and the amputation of eight of his ten toes, but he never once felt sorry for himself or asked, "Why me?") And he wanted to be independent. Thinking about him now, I believe he would have died much, much sooner if he hadn't been so stubborn and loved my mother so much.

To say that my dad loved my mother fiercely is an understatement. They met when they were kids (she was 19, he was 20) and were married within a year of their first date, a blind date arranged by a buddy at the Naval Academy. He knew she was the one for him almost from the very beginning and never had eyes for anyone else. Right from the start, he told her he wanted to be a dad (and by age 28, he was the father of five). It was the only role he ever wanted to have, our mother has told us; he lost his father to

suicide when he was six, and he spent the rest of his life making sure his own children had what he didn't.

About a year before he died, my four siblings and I staged an intervention. Mom had fallen and broken a hip already. Dad was getting increasingly feeble, and it had become the norm for him to call his children in the middle of the night because she'd fallen out of bed (yet again!) and he couldn't lift her. It wasn't safe at home anymore, we said; it was time for an assisted living situation. But my dad dug his heels in and said they were staying in their house. Period. He agreed to a couple of hours of daily in-home aid, but otherwise he insisted that he would take care of Mom himself.



So he did, by golly; he did. He did all the grocery shopping. He brought her breakfast and lunch to her on a tray every day, and he heated up frozen dinners for the two of them every night. He sat with his best girl after dinner and watched "NCIS" or "Blue Bloods" or "The O'Reilly Factor," and then he followed her back to their room and made sure that she got safely tucked into bed. He took her to her appointments when we didn't even think he should be driving anymore. I should have known the end was near in October, when he let me drive him to the hospital every day for his first (and ultimately, last) round of chemo treatments. It was so unlike Dad to relinquish control like that. After he died, I was so thankful that he was spared the indignity of having his driver's license taken away from him; for Dad, that would have been the last straw, the final assault on his manhood. Because even though he was failing, and he knew it, he had the heart of a lion and he still wanted to roar.

So often I am reminded of Dad, by little things that happen in the course of an average day. Like today, for instance. You see, it's garbage day here in our new VA hometown. And garbage day makes me remember Dad with a fondness that, unfortunately, I didn't always feel back when he was alive. (If any of my siblings are reading this post, you probably know where I'm going with this!)

Dad absolutely loved his job with the NY State Lottery, and if health issues hadn't forced his "early" retirement at 74, he would have happily worked until he was on his deathbed. So after he no longer had the stimulation provided by work, I think he just needed to have other jobs to do around the house, jobs that only HE could perform properly. (We're pretty sure he had OCD, although it was never diagnosed. But that's a subject for another time.) And garbage, for some bizarre reason, was of monumental importance to him. He had specific methods for tying the plastic bags, loading them into the big cans, placing the cans

*just so*

at the curb--and in spite of the fact that all of his past-middle-aged children had been successfully disposing of garbage at our own homes for decades, none of us could be trusted to do it right. We used

to joke that of course we couldn't help, because we didn't have our PhD's in garbage.

Even when the end was near for Dad, trying to get him to let you help with the garbage was brutal. He would follow you around, barking instructions, inching painfully along stooped over his walker while holding a tall kitchen garbage bag into which you were supposed to empty each of the small trash cans located throughout the house. Trying to convince him that you could take care of this task on your own was futile. I remember saying, "Dad, please sit and rest and let me do this for you. And even if I do the unthinkable and miss

*one can*

this time, it's no big deal. The garbage man comes every week!" He could really frustrate you with his inability to give up control.

Now I see that my father was just trying to do what he could still do, for as long as he could do it, when so much of his strength and vitality had been cruelly stolen from him. Now when I remember his stubborn refusal to let me take out the trash by myself, without him supervising me every step of the way (to the point of even watching from the door to make sure that I parked the cans in exactly the right spot at the end of the driveway), I realize that I shouldn't have gotten so annoyed with him. I should have been proud that he still wanted to roar a bit, that his lion's heart had not been completely beaten down by illness.

Knowing that I enjoyed doing artwork and creating homemade gifts, Dad once asked me to paint something special for him. An incurable Anglophile, he wanted me to make a coat of arms and incorporate a picture of a lion's head and the words

***"Coeur de Leon."***

The phrase "

*Coeur de Lion*

" is often associated with Richard I of England, the 12th-Century Crusader-King who is known as "Richard Couer de Lion" or "Richard the Lionhearted." In French, "

*Coeur de Lion*

" means "heart of a lion," and the way the French word "

*lion*

" is pronounced sounds very similar to my dad's name. So...get it? Dad was always a sucker for a good pun (the cornier, the better).

So here's what I made for him, as a gift for Christmas 2002. It's mine now and hangs on the wall of one of the guest bedrooms in our new house.



My father was a complicated man, flawed--as we all are--and sometimes hard to understand. He was even hurtful at times, without meaning to be; but at heart he was as good and strong and moral and brave and loving as they come. And never in his life did he demonstrate just how incredible he really was until his final days, about which I must write when I can bring myself to do it.

When I look at this painting, I think of my lionhearted dad and the way he roared through life for as long as he could...but then when he knew his death was imminent, gave himself over to God with the meekness and gentleness of a lamb. Even though it meant he had to do the unthinkable and leave my mother.

It is my fervent prayer that I've inherited even the tiniest piece of the heart of Leon, my father.

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This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2017/05/the-heart-of-lion.html>  
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Universal Utterings  
for May 23, 2017

Father us show Master

Philip said to him, “Master, show us the Father, 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’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves.” John 14:8-11

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart; in the presence of the angels to you I sing. Psalm 138:1

John 14:8-11 & Psalm 138:1

Seems impossible others would deny what Jesus was telling them when each and every one of them saw the works that he was doing surely realizing that he was the Father in himself. It’s hard to know this I know we all want to ignore completely refusing to acknowledge anything that the Word of God is sharing as Truth. This is a desire I have to serve the Lord as David did singing often recording my words sharing what it means to live with love, faith and hope of serving the One and Only True God. Amen.

Join us in our daily prayer of forgiveness. I am sorry Lord. I believe You died and Rose for me. Prayers for all who have asked us to pray for them or we said we’d pray for. Prayers for JSRW. IN Jesus Name. Amen.

I am a poet obedient to Christ,  
Evangelist Thomas Cruz†Wiggins  
†Spirit led God inspired Christ fed†  
Ephesians 6:17-20

John 14 Eight thru Eleven

Father us show Master

Father us show Master  
Said Philip enough be faster  
Me know not Philip hereinafter  
Father is Me seen the Grantor

Say how Father us show  
Father in I not spoken words alone

Works believe Father in Me will grow  
Understanding works I have shown

© Thomas Joe Cruz†Wiggins  
May 23, 2017 @ 5:09 AM EST

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†Spirit led God inspired Christ fed†

\*\*Can somebody say, “Amen!\*\*

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## Why Do We Have to Die? [at New Evangelizers]

“Why do we have to die?”

This is a question that many of us wrestle with for as long as we’ve understood the concept of death. It is that thing that so many of us fear above all things. But the question is why we must die?

Did not Jesus die to free us from sin and death? If that is the case, why must we endure our going hence? I’m sure I could slap on some pat biological answer to this question, but I think the problem is deeper. If Baptism removes original sin, then why must its effects remain?

Let me say at the outset that I am only going to address this problem in a philosophical way. This is by no means meant to be a treatise on how to deal with the grief of death. When CS Lewis wrote *The Problem of Pain*, he attempted to address the intellectual problem that Christians have with suffering. But he understood that this was only a tiny part of the mystery. He wrote: “a little courage helps more than much knowledge, a little human sympathy more than much courage, and the least tincture of the love of God more than all.”

In the same way I am not pretending to have an answer to the sorrows of that loss. I am only addressing the intellectual reason why God still allows us to die.

The better way to frame the question is not why does God allow us to die, but “why does God not allow us to remain immortal?”

This is important because I think that if we can see our current state as it actually is, we will understand.

There were two trees in the center of the Garden of Eden: The Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” (Genesis 3:22)

This sounds like a punishment, and to some extent it is. But like any good parent, punishments are ultimately kindnesses. A parent who punishes a child for running into the street without looking is a parent who desires the safety of that child. God prevented man from eating the Tree of Life because He was saving us.

It is important to remember that sin is not something which is external to us. Often we fool ourselves into thinking that we can separate our sin from who we are. We excuse our little offenses and betrayals and gossips and jealousies and selfishness and say to ourselves, “I’m still a good person.” But what we do and who we are are inextricably linked.

Sin changes us. It warps us. And this is the state that must be cured.

Imagine I told you that I could give you immortality right now. However, that means that you would perpetually be the state you are in forever. So if you are 30, you will remain 30. If you are hungry, you will be hungry forever. If your leg is broken, it will be broken forever. How many of you would take up that

offer?

I would imagine very few. Now imagine if I said that at some point in the future, you will have to take up immortality under these conditions. When would you do so? I would imagine that you would wait until you were in the highest possible state, freest of pain and fullest of happiness. And it is in this state that you would choose to remain immortal.

This is exactly the fate that is awaiting all of us. We are becoming the things that we are going to be forever. If God granted us immortality as we are now, broken, sinful, selfish, then we would remain so forever until all of this world would ultimately become a hell. The reason is that as long as there is sin in us, there too is hell.

God wants us to be perpetually happy, and so we must remove all hell from our hearts. Baptism begins this process. Imagine a plaster image of your face. Original sin is like an axe that gets embedded in that plaster face. Baptism removes the axe, but the scar remains. And much can be done to heal and fix the wound, but there will remain that imperfection. That is our journey as we walk through this world. We not only are hit by that original axe wound, but we are constantly inflicting harm on our souls by our sins. And we can do much to be healed in those broken places, but the scars remain.

But even that imperfection must be done away with before immortality.

Imagine that plaster image now being taken by the master and broken down back into plaster dust and then used to remold once again that perfect image intended by the master.

That is what happens to the holy after death. If we have ruined our souls by sin, there will not be enough of our image to be reformed gloriously. But if we hold on to ourselves as much as possible by His grace, then God will restore us. But to restore us, he has to remake us.

Death is the great unmaking before the remaking. Even on a physical level this must happen. My wife has had arthritis ravaging her body since she was a little girl of four-years-old. I would hate for her to remain in that state forever. This mortal body of hers must be remade into a thing that will “run and not grow weary” (Isaiah 40:31)

And if we die to ourselves every day, then everyday we let God remake us a little at a time so that He has less work to do on us at the great remaking.

So death is simply the last step of letting go of any trace of hell in us and being remade into the heavenly beings we were always meant to be.

We have to die so that we can truly live.

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This contribution is available at <http://newevangelizers.com/blog/2017/06/05/why-do-we-have-to-die/>  
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# I Have Returned! A Reflection for an Important Day this May 14 2017, One Year Later [at Servimus unum Deum]

Hello Everyone,

I take it that some of you thought I was dead or gave up on the Latin Mass and/or blogging with smiles and many curses of victory. Nope! I'm still alive and still being a certain part of the Latin Mass. I haven't blogged lately as I work full time, commute at least 1.5 hours to my job, and my wife expects an equal contribution to the housework. Weekends are the limited time to maintain the house and get shopping and the like done. Oh and then there are those pesky weddings that pop up on weekends in your late 20's/30's cause that's the time all your friends are doing it. You try doing all that and having oodles of time to blog daily, unless of course you'd like to do that at your job and risk being fired. So life's been the barrier for me.

But don't think the EF has taken a back seat in my life because I don't blog as much. This year, I was privileged to have been invited to a good acquaintance's wedding which was a Missa Cantata in the Extraordinary Form, and I did make it out to an offering for an Extraordinary Form Candlemas, whereby I had candles blessed in the EF Rite. No darkness nor demon will be laughing at those candles when they are lit!

Serving-wise ... I have not served an EF Mass this year at the offerings that have taken place. I draw the line when it comes to that. I will attend offerings should there be no other ones with neutral parishes/groups, or organized "glad-trads," as in that way I do support the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite itself. However, if I altar served, this would be material co-operation against the goals of this blog and in support of those who violate my goals. I will not stray from that.

Now, onto more important things and the reason for my re-appearance on this blog. Today marks a special occasion for me. It was one year ago that I entered into Holy Matrimony, in the Sacrament of Marriage, with my lovely wife [name and pictures of her withheld to protect privacy, as well as Catholic parish of marriage.] in the Catholic Church of our Lord, Jesus Christ. While not an EF Mass, it was nonetheless a sacred, holy, and beautiful testament to the Love of Christ for all humanity, via His Holy Church, the Bride of Christ.

One of the most pivotal elements that made this day so special, was the liturgical music that was provided. While my wife was not open to a full EF Mass (as she wanted a Mass liturgy, and liturgical music, in a language she can understand,) she allowed a gracious compromise, and a promise to be kept by good friends who are truly doing the work of Christ in the Extraordinary Form community in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Since I have been faithfully loyal, in my service at the altar, my blog in vocal defense of, and my promotion of liturgies that would be otherwise unnoticed in public social media for, the St. Patrick's Gregorian Choir, they were more than happy to provide liturgical music for my wedding, should I venture down the vocation to marriage.

Well .... I did end up pursuing that vocation to serve my Lord optimally with my now wife, and sing to the heavens they did! In combination with vocalists that my wife wanted for certain portions, the St. Patrick's Gregorian Choir provided the liturgical music for the ordinary parts of the Nuptial Mass (e.g.

The Sanctus, The Agnus Dei ...) as they do every Saturday 5pm vigil at their downtown parish and base of operations, St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Toronto. Alongside my wife's vocalist companions, everyone's liturgical contributions brought to us a peace and sanctity in our Nuptial Mass, and a foretaste of Heaven alongside the one person who will assist me in that journey (as I must also do for her.). I am truly indebted to all of these great vocalists for being there for me, and making good on a promise they gave to both my wife and I.

One of the other vocalists even decided to join the Choir for the

[SPGC's 10th Anniversary, Solemn Latin Mass at St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica Mass last year,](#)

packing a whallop in the Soprano section, a young lady who might I add is an accomplished leader of choirs at both our parish of marriage and another parish nearby. Her skills continue to amaze me, as she can master and teach contemporary music, but also perform classical styles of music such as Gregorian Chant, and true ``Classical`` and ``Romantic`` period pieces in multiple languages.

Back to the SPGC Choir, here is the choir below, alongside myself and their accomplished choirmaster, Surinder S. Mundra, professional musician, whose talents have been highly appreciated in the classical music scene in Toronto:



Now, here I am. One year later, still in love with my wife, and wondering where the time went from this hectic, yet beautiful day. While the party was a good, grand affair, with the presence of a few reverend fathers we knew, I would rather focus on the liturgy of that day as that was the highlight of my day. Deo Gratias. May the Lord, in combination of her intercession and protection of her mantle of the Blessed Virgin Mary, continue to watch over us and guide us in the future. May the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, continue to play a part in our faith lives, and that it will positively grow in this Archdiocese of Toronto in union with Holy Mother Church and the Holy Father in Rome.

Pax Tibi Christi, Julian.

P.S. As per a ``t``radition, a portion of the wedding cake is saved and frozen, to be eaten a year later on the anniversary of our wedding. Alongside some flowers I purchased for my lovely wife, here is our

cake, which we feasted on this evening after dinner. Delicious and sweet like the Sacrament of Marriage!



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This contribution is available at <http://torontotlmserving.blogspot.ca/2017/05/i-have-returned-reflection-for.html>  
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# Hopes for Priestly Life: Credibility, Friendship, Honesty [at The Jesuit Post]

In less than a week, I will be ordained a Catholic priest.

*For the love of God, a priest.*

You may be wondering what sort of superhuman strength priests possess that other mortals do not. I'd like to know the same. For the life of me, I have not yet found it – whatever *it* is – and I do not have much hope of discovering it in the next few days. To be clear: I trust in the graces of the sacrament of Holy Orders — that God will strengthen us to live joyfully the life to which God has called us. The ordination rite draws on Paul's letter to the Philippians: "May God, who has begun a good work in you, bring it to completion." But priests are not superhuman. They have human aspirations and desires. Here, I'd like to list three rather human hopes I have for life as a priest.

**1. Credibility.** Can I offer a piercing glimpse of the obvious? Like any person, priests can get tired and worn down. They can be cranky and petty; brusque and backbiting. But at their best, priests can be even-keeled and magnanimous; kind and utterly uninterested in others' peccadillos. Priests are human, and they deserve the same scrutiny – and patience – as anyone who gives their life in the service of others. Like members of any professional group, priests inherit both the benefits – and the sins – associated with their guild.

So much of our opinion of professional, clerical classes – doctors, lawyers, priests – is colored by our personal experiences and unconscious typecasting. A thought experiment: If I say *lawyer*, what is your first thought? You may think of a sleazy ambulance chaser...or of the woman who helped your mom fight asbestos companies, as dad lay dying of [mesothelioma](#).

When I say *police* you may think of racial profiling...or of the high-school-athlete-turn-officer, who tries to keep up with teens on the basketball court in the park.

If I say *priest*, you may think of an aloof bachelor...or maybe you remember your well-seasoned pastor, who has been there for all your family's baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Every profession – priests included – has in its ranks those who improve, or tarnish, the image of the collective. Those who add credibility to the clergy, and those who drag it down.

*Among things devoutly to be wished: that all the priests ordained this summer be good ones, who add credibility to the Catholic Church in the 21st century.* How to do this? With the help of...

\* \* \*

**2. Life-Long Friendships.** Our superior in Boston, Fr. Jim Gartland, is a joyful, generous priest. He laughs easily and loves broadly. He is quick with a kind word or an encouraging pat on the back. He speaks easily of his relationship with Jesus, and his life testifies to that relationship. Fr. Jim reminds us 75 young Jesuits in his charge of the importance of regular prayer and transparency; of good friendships and closeness with the poor. He is a model priest and Jesuit. Fr. Jim gives and receives affection and

love — appropriate to his vocation — as well as any married person I know.

Like any healthy adult, priests rely on good friendships inside their profession and without; they know men and women who love them even on their worst days, and who respect and nourish a priest's life commitments. Looking back over eleven years of Jesuit formation, I think of several close friends who know me well — and they have stuck around anyway. I have friends from college who predicted I'd join the Jesuits, long before I would admit it to myself. I have brother Jesuits who can lovingly point out my inconsistencies, and who challenge my hasty conclusions or querulous presumptions. Good friends are like seasoned doctors: they recognize the ailments that afflict our soul, through different seasons of life. They know when to offer a word of challenge, and when to apply a soothing balm. When we're crazy, and when we are on to something. These friends help us put words to budding desires, and they know how to rein in our prideful ambitionings. Good friends — in religious life or not — do not just accompany us; they help reveal us to ourselves, and give us the room to grow over time.

*Among things devoutly to be wished in priesthood: life-long friendships. But how to achieve life-long friendships? Through...*

\* \* \*

**3. Honesty and Candor.** Chekhov writes, "If you are afraid of loneliness, don't marry." To this I would add, "If you are afraid of people, don't become a priest." Some priests are introverted; some are extroverts. There is a book to be written about how each camp eyes the other with suspicion. Introverts, it is said, are energized by solitude. As an extrovert, I have had a hard time understanding how people interested in priesthood find other people exhausting. In turn, my introverted brothers wonder how one can have any spiritual depth, when your pool of friends is a mile wide. From years of religious life in community, we learn from one another's best practices: introverts cultivate a small, tight circle of trustworthy friends; recovering extroverts learn to encounter God in silence, and to ignore the yammering FOMO Monster<sup>1</sup> that keeps us from enjoying the pleasure of solitude.

To introvert and extrovert alike, Fr. Jim would ask, *Who knows you well? Who can you be totally honest with? Who can you turn to when you're frustrated, angry, worn down, lonesome, or in desolation?* These are good questions for everyone: whether you're aiming for priesthood, marriage, or single life. If we all need a reliable friend or three in life, *Who could you call, right now, knowing they would happily listen to you? And who could call you, in return?*

*Among things devoutly to be wished: honesty and candor in life-long friendships.*

\* \* \*

I will be ordained in less than a week. And by the grace of God, I am not alone — thirteen Jesuits are getting ordained in the Midwest this June. Gesu Church in Milwaukee will be packed to the rafters. We'll be surrounded by family, friends, fellow Jesuits, mentors, and former students who travel near and far to be present. And we will have others who will be there in spirit. I marvel at the kind, encouraging notes that people have sent these past few months.

But a sly voice within whispers, *"If they knew all your foibles and limitations, they would not spend one minute with you!"* Who of us doesn't feel unworthy of our friendships? Unworthy of those good people who support us, in spite of ourselves? We want to shoo them away — *no really, go find better*

*friends!* But like Lassie, they return, faithfully by our side even when we have done nothing to earn their love. I take it as a good sign when both parties in a friendship feel like they're getting the better deal. Wow, *to be blessed with terrific friends.*

It takes nothing away from the grace of Holy Orders to say that terrific friends are a welcome support. Whether to marriage or priesthood, med school or the marines, life's liminal moments touch on our fears and uncertainties: *No really, we protest, go find a better candidate!* And that sly voice of discouragement again whispers, *"who do you think you are, coming forward for the priesthood? If only they knew all your foibles and limitations..."* Who of us doesn't feel a little...*unworthy* of what we feel called by God to do? Especially when many thoughtful, prayerful people feel drawn to ordained ministry, but cannot be. People of good will — who are not remotely interested in tearing apart the Church they love — find an all-male, celibate priesthood to be...a curiosity....a vestige from a different time...a source of pain. To hear their curiosity or anguish, and to let it unsettle us, is to stand where the tectonic plates of ancient faith and contemporary culture grind against each other. To labor as credible priests in our world today carries the added responsibility of exercising the priesthood worthily, humbly, and well — attentive to where our culture and Church chafe.

Priests are not superhuman; nor are doctors or religious sisters, policemen or parents. But any group committed to serving others is challenged to heroic living. As a person of faith — an unabashed, peccable, Catholic — I count on the graces of the sacrament to make me and my brother Jesuits good priests. I also rely on the sustaining friendships that have brought us thus far — friendships that God has planted along the way, to make our vocational commitments possible and life-giving.

For the love of God, these qualities — credibility, friendship, honesty — are devoutly to be wished. Good things for priests, yes; and good for anyone trying to live out God's call in life. Godspeed, friends.

And if you can spare a minute, say a little prayer for good priests.

~

*"Meditate on the law of God. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and put into practice what you teach."*

– From the old Rite of Ordination of Priests

Editor's Note: *Throughout June, dozens of young Jesuits in North America will be ordained Catholic priests. For more details on the mission of the Society of Jesus in the US and Canada, visit [here](#). If you know of someone considering a vocation to the Jesuits, visit [here](#).*

*For more information on mesothelioma cancer, click [here](#).*

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Featured Image, "Ordination" from Flickr user Saint Joseph, is available online [here](#).



## The Case of the Missing Prescriptions - A Story of God's Mercy [at Catholic Conundrum]



God's mercy is incredible. We all know that, right? Well, apparently God felt I needed another blazing reminder, so He allowed a pretty amazing thing to occur the other day; a story of love and mercy that just begs to be told.

The story started the week before, when my husband was given several prescriptions that needed to be filled at the pharmacy. Attempting the usual drop-off, the pharmacy tech and I realized that the doctor had somehow written down the date to be filled as the year 2012! Confused, (especially since the printed portion showed the year as 2017), the tech realized that she could not fill the prescription due to the incorrect date.

"I'm afraid that these are no good. You'll have to get new ones." Given the busy day I was already having and knowing that this doctor's office was 25 minutes away, I was a tad annoyed.

"Would you be able to call them for the prescription?" I suggested, hopefully.

"I'm sorry, but these prescriptions are for a drug that requires us to have a written prescription from the doctor." She paused, glancing at me with pity, adding, "With the correct date."

I thanked her and left, already dialing up the doctor's office to explain the situation.

Naturally, I had to leave a message.

That message turned into 2 messages, then 3 messages as the week continued. Since my husband would soon be going out of town for a week, the need to fill the prescriptions was becoming urgent and I could no longer wait.

I spent a full day calling repeatedly, and finally the doctor returned my call to say that she could not give me new prescriptions until I had returned the previous ones.

"No problem," I responded.

Sure...no problem!

After hours of fruitless searching in all of the expected places (followed by all of the unexpected places), I continued to come up empty. Stunned, I kept replaying the last time I had seen them, hoping for some sudden recollection that might lead me to their whereabouts. I did remember the thought crossing my mind that I could probably get rid of them since I no longer needed them. However, considering that I save almost everything, I felt that it was highly unlikely that I had tossed them. And when I say toss them, I mean *burn* them, since in my neck of the woods burning paper products is part of our contribution to recycling. I played that moment in the kitchen over and over in my mind, and always came to the same conclusion: there was no way I had put them into the "burnables" can.

Then where could they be???

I called the doctor and explained that I had not been told to save the prescriptions and could not find them, hoping she would understand and make things right, but again she insisted that she was unable to give me new ones, even though it had been her mistake in the first place.

The reality that my husband would have to go without crucial medication that he needed for his medical conditions for an entire month was almost too much for me to bear.

As I was driving in the car on the way home later that day after speaking to the doctor, real tears of frustration about the injustice that was occurring and the suffering my husband would soon be facing filled my eyes and I cried out to God. I had already approached St. Anthony, begged for God's help, etc. yet I felt lost and extremely worried

about the coming weeks.

Then, suddenly, as I prayed, I came to a realization. Although the attempt was there, I was not giving it over to Him - not ALL of it. I was still trying to control the situation, giving anger permission to take over my thoughts and rationale and allowing my pride to rule.

I realized that I was at one of those points when I could make the decision to truly walk the talk. My pride attempted to talk me out of it, but I knew God was calling me to something greater. I was at a spiritual precipice that, if maneuvered correctly, could really extinguish some of the fire in the devil's arsenal.

So, I literally took a deep breath and said out loud, "Lord I trust in You." Not completely sure what to do next, I then prayed the Diving Mercy Chaplet, focusing on trusting in His greater plan and asking for His mercy upon our situation.

After the Chaplet, I felt much calmer. Peace had found its way to my soul and I realized that I really *was* trusting the Lord and His plan for us. I began to replay those last memories of the when I had the prescriptions still in my possession, still coming to the same conclusion. I knew I had not burned them.

But wait...who says that they had to be burned?

I suddenly remembered waking up that morning to find that not one neighbor's garbage had been picked up, an extremely odd occurrence that virtually never happened. I had been concerned about it, hoping that the truck would finally appear since we needed to clear our very full garbage container.

As I sat remembering this as I drove home, my mouth fell open.

"Are You telling me that it's in the garbage container? Is that why it was never picked up?" I actually questioned out loud.

"No way," I mumbled, and I felt a spark of hope and excitement building.

I pulled into the driveway, astonished to find the garbage container still full and waiting. Trying to act nonchalant, I grabbed the container, pulled it down the drive and began burrowing through the bags. Disappointment set in as I reached the last bag. I had really thought I had figured out God's plan.

I opened that last bag, began my search, then cried out in triumph. Lifting two very soggy

prescriptions out of the bag, I praised God for His incredible mercy. How could I have ever doubted?

Today, I picked up my husband's medication, and I can only imagine the pharmacy tech's wariness as she handed it over to the woman with the goofy, knowing grin on the other side of the counter.

Yes, God is merciful. And now I don't have to look any further than my garbage can to remember just how great that mercy is.

May we never doubt His faithfulness!

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# The Signs of Jesus' Presence are Everywhere! [at A Moment From De Sales]

In Scripture, when Jesus walked the roads of Galilee, the crowds constantly asked for a sign that he was the Messiah. Today we still ask for signs, to know that God is real and he hears our prayers or simply that he is nearby.

We can rest assured that Jesus is still sending signs in our direction, but he wants us to discover him with eyes of faith. Jesus is present in the love family members give to us when the road before us is too difficult traveling alone. Those we love help ease the agony that doubt, fear, failure or simply life's disappointments cause. Through them, Jesus' presence says that he still cares.

Jesus presence shines through the support of good friends who love us no matter what may occur. We know we can depend on them, whether to vent our frustrations when things around us suddenly crash, or a needed shoulder to lean on when we just can't take another step. Most of all, they provide the needed pep talk when a reality check is in order.

Jesus is present in the selfless generosity of those who enter our lives when darkness suffocates us in despair and doubt. It is their kindness and company that soothes us into trying one more time.

Jesus is the courage we display running towards a tragedy or a catastrophe providing help to strangers in trouble.

Jesus is the handshake of reconciliation that mends a broken relationship and helps it return quickly to cooperation and collaboration.

Jesus is in the many wonders of small acts we perform unknowingly for others throughout our lives. Jesus desires intimacy and uses all creation to make this happen.

Jesus' nearness makes every step we take leads in his direction. We need to look around and never be surprised where we may find Jesus ready and willing to help us. It's his sign of never-ending love.

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As the Lord continues to conform me to His image I have come to experience this promise of “asking and receiving” more and more – yet there always remain unanswered prayers in my life. Through His Spirit in me, however I am beginning to understand more and more the the reason why some prayers are not realized.

It is not that I doubt in Him and His Promises. No, my doubt is in myself and my current spiritual state – versus the state that the Lord has predestined for me – that is a state of selfless dedication and separation unto Him! And, as I asked the Lord about my failing state I began realize the real reason why I am not always able to “ask in His Name” is that although He is slowly drawing me into Himself, I am not always totally “in Him” – because me “flesh” still occasionally still interrupts the Holy Spirit’s work in me.

The understanding given me by His Spirit being, that I, a mere human cannot truly speak “in Jesus’ Name” unless He abides in me and speaks through me! The reason being that it is the Father’s purpose to “conform us” to the image of His Son so that He can work in us an through us as He did with Jesus to initiate the manifestation of His Kingdom of LOVE in us so that His Will may be done here in this world as it is in Heaven!

The process of being conformed into His Image is a varying process depending on my cooperation in yielding to His Spirit in me – the more I empty of my “self” the more “His self” manifests in me. The reverse also being true – thus it is clear that my fleshliness, lack of faith and cooperation deters me in my ability to enter into a deep communion with Him so that He may manifest Himself through me!

When I repent of my fleshly episodes, and turn back to spiritual union with Him, His peace and presence begins to flow into me again. Not only that, His Spirit in me enables my faith and frames the content of my prayer so that in that in that immersion in Him, my petition becomes His petition so that when I ask, I truly receive! In the Word I am referencing, Jesus continued his directives to His disciples, telling them what I am now experiencing. That is, when I am truly come into spiritual union with my savior, I know that I am in Him and He in me so that I am enveloped in the Father’s Love and when I abide in that Love I can truly ask as Jesus Himself would ask the Father!

Jesus continues to prepare His Disciples by sating, ***“I have spoken these things to you as illustrations. A time is coming when I will no longer speak to you this way, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world. In turn, I will leave the world and go to the Father.”*** (Jn 16:25-28)

Brethren, I am sharing this with you because the Father Himself desires for all of us to enter into this type of spiritual union through the Spirit of His Son. For He truly is the Way the Truth and the Life. And it is only through Him that we can approach the Father!

However, the scripture I am focusing on here tells us that although the disciples responded in a positive manner, it was only in a “human” manner, because by their presumptive attitude they thought that by merely understanding his words as one human through another they could understand the spiritual meaning of his words necessary to take root in their spirits.

Continuing on ... ***His disciples said, “See, now You are speaking plainly and without figures of***

***speech. Now we understand that You know all things and that You have no need for anyone to question You. Because of this, we believe that You came from God.”*** (Jn 16:29-30)

As we can see from this scripture Jesus’ disciples were accustomed to Jesus’ continual use of figures of speech in His preaching and teaching, so when He begin speaking to them more straight forwardly, they told Him that because of this they had no trouble believing that He was sent from God.

In response Jesus amusingly responded to their fleshly inspired response... ***“Do you finally believe?”*** ***Jesus replied.*** (i.e., “do you really think you have moved into spirit-based faith from human-based faith?”, Jn. 16:31).

***“Look, an hour is coming and has already come when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and you will leave Me all alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take courage; I have overcome the world!”*** (Jn 16: 32-33)

Jesus of course knew their hearts and that although they thought they understood what He was telling them in their minds, He knew they really could not comprehend the spiritual reality of His Relationship with the Father, the promises He was declaring to them, and the events that were about to happen. So much so, that they would, in fact abandon Him.

We must realize from this analysis brethren that we are as human as the disciples, and we also initially tend to interpret the Word of God in a human level of faith, only to find out later in our lives, as we grow in the gifts of the Spirit, that there was something missing in our preliminary understanding – mainly the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is always through this inspiration that we enter into the depths of what God was trying to tell us personally through His Word, rather than what we perceived in the flesh that past moment.

As an example of how we, like the disciples, sometimes use our human-based faith in trying to interpret what God is telling us through his Word.

One of the cases we most tend to understand and thereby fail to experience is that of “the Promise of the Father” and its manifestation on the day of Pentecost.

In the Book Of Acts, for example, the apostle Peter explains to the crowd that gathered outside the upper room at Pentecost that what just happened to the 120 believers in the room was a fulfillment of the Promise God made to the Prophet Joel, by citing the actual word of the Promise which states that ...

***‘In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.  
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.  
(Acts 2:17-18)***

This then defines “the Promise of the Father” that Jesus told His disciples they were to wait for in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4) and that, from the manifestation of this Promise they would receive Power so they

could act as His witnesses to the world! That is why the spiritual gifts associated with the “Promise” are sometimes termed “the empowerment gifts”



### Opened Your Gifts Yet?

In Chapter twelve of his letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul describes for us these Empowerment Gifts that fulfilled the “Promise” on the Day of Pentecost. Look around you, how many Christians in our culture today believe, receive and operate under the spiritual gifts provided by this promise of God in their lives or in their churches? Could it be because we are not properly informed?

***“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed... Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.”*** (1 Cor. 12 ; 1-11)

Now, all Christians certainly believe that the “twelve” received Power at Pentecost and that this power was manifested in the variety of spiritual gifts (ie., the empowerment gifts or charisms) that were distributed among the Apostles. But how many of us know and believe that not only were these gifts given to the apostles but also to all of the 120 persons in the upper room?

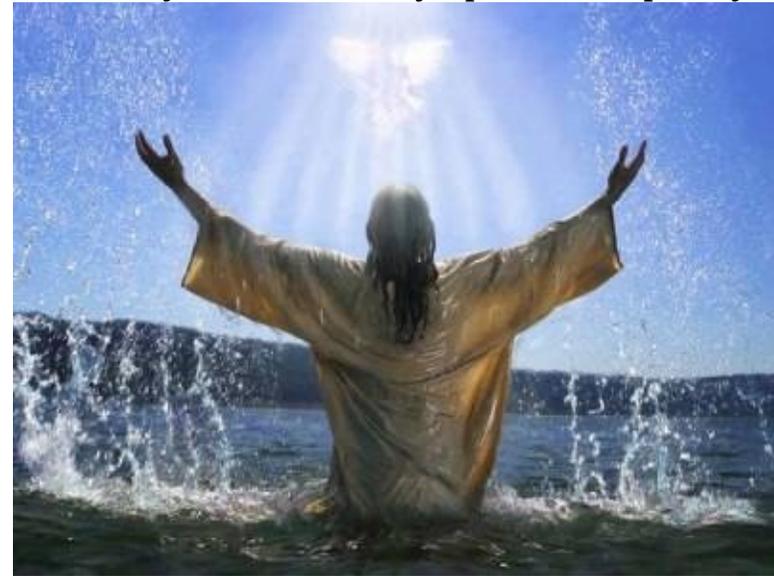
And how many of us Christians believe that the 3000 who converted after Peter’s speech also received a portion of these Empowerment Gifts, as distributed by the Holy Spirit?

Advancing my questions further, how many Christians today know and believe that all baptized Christians are eligible to receive these empowerment gifts in order to truly be empowered to fulfill the “Great Commission” and be His witnesses?

Remember, that Peter also told the crowd that “the Promise of the Father” (and the Gifts) are not just for the apostles but that ... ***“the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”*** (Acts 2:39)

So then, my final set of questions for you is: Have you answered your calling and received the Promise by unpacking the Empowerment Gifts that have already been made available to you?

If not, why not? If the Holy Spirit has inspired you at this moment, then, just ...



***“Ask and you Shall Receive!”*** (Jn. 16:24)

***“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”*** (Jer. 29:13)

...

I leave further understanding of this to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and your personal discernment of the Word. Your understanding of this message that I share with you today depends not on me but on your faith in God’s Word and what His Word states about the Promise of the Father!

Your fellow Pilgrim and Brother In Christ Jesus ... Bartimaeus

***Related Links ...***

***[# Prayer to receive the Holy Spirit](#)***

***[I Stand at the Door and Knock](#)***

***[Sweet Yoke of Love](#)***

***[Releasing the Spirit](#)***

***[The Kingdom of God: Our Spiritual Inheritance](#)***

***[Reclaiming Our Legacy In Christ](#)***

[Hearing God's Voice, and Obeying It](#)

[Pentecost and the Promise of the Father](#)

[The Empowerment Gifts \(Part 1\)](#)

[The Empowerment Gifts \(Part 2\)](#)



( B.R.Timeo and Bartimaeus' Quiet Place, [2008-2017])

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## The love of a Father [at Ordinary Time]



A few years ago my daughters were having some trouble with one of the other children at the bus stop.

I don't remember the details. What I do remember is at one point I made them write an apology out and take it to her in front of her parents. I had hoped that would end the argument and they'd go back to getting along. A few days later a little, angry man stomped across my driveway and stood over me in a threatening manner. He demanded that they stop bothering her or I'd be the one to answer for it.

Amazingly I remained calm and informed him that I'd just instruct my girls not to go near his daughter. I don't think he and I have spoken since. I have prayed for him but also for myself.

What I did not realize at that time, as I was just a new father and had not been doing this long, we dads often go to the defense of our kids. We are ready to stand up for them. When someone causes them pain we want to end it, but when someone is good to them we like that person even more. Jesus mentions something to this effect, if you love Jesus, the Father will love you. I've been a dad for eleven years now. I understand exactly what He meant. When someone behaves in an admirable way toward my children, my thoughts about that person instantly are better. Simultaneously, when someone is mean to them, even if they were someone I liked, I'm not going to be as generous in my feelings towards them.

What do we do then? We are supposed to love every person. How can I get upset with someone for hurting my kids? That's the funny thing about love, isn't it? It's a choice. It doesn't mean that we like the person. It also doesn't mean that we just simply let them do whatever they want. It rather means we want what is best for them. That when we pray for them, we pray for their best interest, not our own. That when we speak to them, it is the truth. We don't hide that from them. Instead, we speak the truth gently and humbly. As St. Paul declares eloquently in the second reading, do it with gentleness and reverence. That's a tall order sometimes, especially when we are feeling defensive for our children, our spouses, or even ourselves.

The hard part is we are called to evangelize. There is a Gospel message that should bring joy and hope to all who hear it. St. Paul informs us that we should always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope. What should we say? How should we say it? That depends

on the person, the situation, and even where you are at the time. It also depends on our prayer life, maybe even more than our own knowledge. It's good to learn scripture. It's admirable to memorize verses and to practice apologetics. One's time could be spent doing much worse than reading holy books by good, solid Catholic authors. The more we learn the better equipped we will be when the time comes for us to speak about God. That real key though lies not in our own abilities, but in our acceptance of the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to work through us.

When Jesus was about to ascend into Heaven at the end of his earthly ministry, He told His disciples that He would send an Advocate to be with us. This Holy Spirit, He tells us, will give us the words to speak when the time comes, and will remind us of what Jesus Himself said in our hour of need. This is not only a powerful promise but one that should fill us with hope and joy. I am not the smartest man. I did go to college for four years studying computer science and electrical engineering. After that, though I spent fifteen years as a commercial electrical foreman before I hurt my back. During those fifteen years, I didn't do a significant amount of reading. I played video games and worked. The finer philosophical and theological discussions were boring to me. When it came to faith, it was something I did on the weekend. I read the bible from time to time and even memorized some verses. In a way though, I trusted God to give me the words to say when I needed it.

I still trust the Holy Spirit to do just that. However, I want to study. I want to know more. I want to know the philosophy behind what we believe and the theology about who Christ is. Not because I need it to show off. Not because I need it to get into Heaven either. Rather, because I am so enamored with my God and Lord that I want to know everything about Him that I can. I know that when the time comes the Holy Spirit will inspire me to speak, but I also know that God gives us faculties that allow us to remember, to think, and to make our own choices. I know that when the time comes for Him to inspire me, He is going to use my own experiences, my own words, and my own love for Him to give me the words that will do such a meager job of describing something so beyond our understanding.

The other day we were watching a reboot of a series they made us read in elementary school, Anne of Green Gables. I remember when I had to read this book I had no interest in it. It was about a girl. What I didn't get was the powerful imagery in the story of an orphan. A child who believed no one wanted her. As we watched this poor girl disembark from the wagon at what she believed to be her new home, I was already feeling the emotional tugging that the director had so perfectly weaved into the story. Then the Lady of the House began to speak of how they must send her back. The moment when Anne fell to her knees and lost herself in her thoughts I began to realize the power of this story. She was an orphan. She was alone in the world. She feared that she always would be. Who would be there to help her? Who would care for her? Love her?

That's often the image we get in our minds of this world. That we are some strange being that isn't supposed to be here. I often hear said, "This world is not my home." In a way that's true. However, we aren't orphans. No, we have a Father in Heaven. We have a spiritual Mother in Mary, who was

given to us at the foot of the cross. We have an Advocate and Guide in the Holy Spirit, who leads mother Church to bring us as close to Heaven as we can be here in the Sacraments. We never need fear being lost in this world. As long as we exist we know God has not forgotten us! He is with us, loving us at all times. Even when we are at our worst He loves and cares for us. That's the promise of our hope, that's the joy of our hearts.

The thing is: God loves us exactly as we are, but too much for us to stay there. I've said it a million times but it never stops to be important. Jesus says it this way in the Gospel, "Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." That's our first step. Keeping His commandments. How do we know them? We learn them. The Church teaches them through the Sacred Scripture, through the Catechism, and through the Magisterium. So we study them. Through them, we draw closer to Him. Through them, we learn who Jesus is, and through Jesus, we draw closer to the Father. It doesn't take intelligence, just an open heart to be guided by the Holy Spirit, a thirst for the Sacraments to open the stores of grace and pour them into our hearts, and a love for one another that goes beyond simple emotion and pours out in the actions known as the Corporeal and Spiritual works of mercy.

His servant and yours,

Brian Mullins

*"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock, and my redeemer. - Psalm 19:14*

A reflection on the readings for the Sixth Sunday of Easter:

[May 21st, 2017](#)

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## Should - Five Minute Friday (More Rewrite) [at Loved As If]



### Sailing In The Storm

“You should hate him. After everything he’s done to you, everything he’s taken, you should hate god.”

“We’re back there again and all I suggested was that you read the Bible with me.”

“Why should I undertake a lengthy study of the bible?”

*Lord, You know he uses lowercase to taunt me.*

The atmosphere around me resonated, *Breathe!*

A long sigh, *Okay, Lord. What do I say?*

*You know what to say.*

My nails clacked against the keyboard, “How can I hate Him when He’s taken such good care of me?”

“‘Good care?!’ You call your life ‘good care’?”

“I call what God has done for me in the midst of all the horrors good care.”

“he caused the horrors.”

“No, He let them happen.”

“So you admit he could have stopped them.”

“Of course He could have.”

“Then how can you insist he loves when he didn’t protect you?”

*I know his fists were clenched when he wrote that.*

“Just admit it, god cares nothing for you or anyone else or he doesn’t exist.”

“I know God cares for me precisely because He didn’t protect me from the horrors but through them. He didn’t remake the world so that I’d be exempt from all the bad; He left me fully human. Instead, He made me able to ride the deluge without drowning. And He’s shown me that all I’ve lost was precious and great, but none of it was necessary.

“I thought my happiness depended on my family, the life I would have lived, not being thwarted at every turn, people who would support and encourage me to develop all the talents God has given me, a long lists of things. I was wrong. None of those that is the source of happiness. I hurt so much because of what I’ve lost. Then one day I looked around and saw myself sailing through waves that should have dashed me to pieces and knew I had gained more than I could ever lose. I have the power to be joyful in the midst of storms. That power came from God.”

<end 5 minutes but I need to continue>

“So it’s alright with you that god threw you down the stairs because it builds character.”

“He didn’t throw me down the stairs. But instead of shielding me from reality, He gave me the ability to live with joy in a brutal world. The horrible things haven’t destroyed me. I haven’t even been able to destroy myself. And that’s not my doing.”

“It’s not god’s doing.”

“Yes, Z, it is God’s doing. Don’t you know what makes life joyful in the midst of brutality?”

“What?”

“Someone like my Papa who was simply there. Who held me in his arms as we cantered through the salty spray. Who knew I could stay on a horse and I did. Who ordered extra maraschino cherries for me because I loved them. He loved me and I loved him. I had that kind of relationship with Marmar too. Even when the world went crazy, I was able to face it because they were with me. That’s the kind of relationship God has given me. He’s always with me, strengthens me, helps me live well in a world that rips people apart for living well.

“The world says I should wallow in pain and loss. I should be ripped apart and never truly healed; the best I can hope for is some sort of sentimental montage. I should be triggered by the rapes in the Metamorphoses and instead I ponder how cruel we can be to one another; and I note how often men are victims of women: no one escapes unscathed. The best I should be able to do is ride anger to some sort of success, use it to prevent others from doing horrible things. But instead, I found myself helping an actual person who wanted to rescue her nephews because I’m not powered by anger at injustice but by love for real people and the joy that comes from gift that will help them.

“Z, I’ve been angry but it just made me tired. Love and joy energize.”

“So I should read the bible and I’ll be like you.”

“Why would anyone want to be like me. The world already has me. We need you.”

“The world has me. I work every day to help the world. Why should I waste my time reading the bible?”

“Because it’s not a waste of time. Because it’s an excellent place to begin getting to know God who didn’t toss you down the steps to build character. God speaks to us in the Bible. You’ve got an amazing mind and I’m convinced you’ve got a heart and soul just as amazing. I want to see you shine like the sun.”

“If god wants me he can hit me with a blinding light.”

“He probably won’t come on your terms. We can have what we want or we can have our scripts but we can’t have both.”

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Save



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