

NewEvangelists.org

new  
evangelists  
monthly

*July*  
*2017*

# New Evangelists Monthly #55

July 2017

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

# New Evangelists Monthly - July 2017

- [Forward](#)  
...about this eBook
- [Adventism and blind people](#)  
Catholicism and Adventism by Stephen Korsman
- [Adirondack Scrapbooking](#)  
Campfires and Cleats by Chris Capolino
- [Psalm 139 ~ A Personal Psalm](#)  
Pauca Verba by Fr. Stephen Morris
- [On Our Own or With God](#)  
A Spiritual Journey by David Wong
- [It is Easy to Be Faithful When You Happen to Agree With the Church](#)  
If I Might Interject
- [Don't Fear the Reaper May Not Be the Best Advice](#)  
Carolyn Astfalk, Author by Carolyn Astfalk
- [Rest in Peace, Mumsy](#)  
Plot Line and Sinkers (Ellen Gable, Author) by Ellen Gable Hrkach
- [70 Yrs Ago My Sister and I... learned the Rosary](#)  
Children's Rosary by Blythe Kaufman
- [Children in Mass: Catholic Moms share their thoughts, hurts, and tips](#)  
The Koala Mom by Bonnie Way
- [Of Coddling Demons and Auricular Confession](#)  
God-Haunted Lunatic by Rick Becker
- [Grace](#)  
Afternoon Coffee and Evening Tea by Billie Jo Stoltz
- [Catherine's Mobile Stander](#)  
The Hahn Family Blog by James Hahn
- [How My Faith Helps Me With Grieving](#)  
The Not by Mary Cooper
- [Melkite Greek Catholic Bishop Nicholas J. Samra Ordains Deacon Dennis McCarthy to the Priesthood](#)  
TASTE and SEE by Kathleen Laplante
- [An Autism Ministry... For Everyone](#)  
The Mission of Saint Thorlak
- [The Gift of Hope](#)  
Amazing Nearness by Shannon
- [Mary's Relationship with the Eucharist](#)  
by Tom Perna

- [\*\*Living in the Fullness of Who We Are\*\*](#)  
Creo en Dios! by Susan Stabile
- [\*\*In Plain Sight\*\*](#)  
Theologyisaverb by Elizabeth Reardon
- [\*\*The Tree of Life in The Lord of the Rings\*\*](#)  
by Scott Smith
- [\*\*The Hidden Prophecy in The Lord of the Rings\*\*](#)  
by Scott Smith
- [\*\*Vocations, Veils, and Vintage Fashions\*\*](#)  
String of Pearls by Laura Pearl
- [\*\*The Hidden King David of The Lord of the Rings\*\*](#)  
by Scott Smith
- [\*\*Are Most Christians Clueless About Their True Identity?\*\*](#)  
joy of nine9 by Melanie Jean Juneau
- [\*\*Catholic Pro-Life Victory in Georgia: Handel Wins House Seat\*\*](#)  
by Scott Smith
- [\*\*Eucharist and Conversion \(Solemnity of the Body and Blood of the Lord, Year A\)\*\*](#)  
Gentle Reign by Roy Cooney
- [\*\*"Little Nellie of Holy God" -- The Toddler Who Inspired a Pope\*\*](#)  
It Makes Sense to Me by Larry Peterson
- [\*\*Skydiving with the Holy Spirit\*\*](#)  
Sweeping Up Joy by Alicia
- [\*\*Without Words, Always Inviting\*\*](#)  
CHOCOLATE FOR YOUR BRAIN! by Sherry Antonetti
- [\*\*Our Need for Prayer\*\*](#)  
Renew The Church! by Thomas and Deborah Richard
- [\*\*The Big Bang\*\*](#)  
by David Torkington
- [\*\*All Things\*\*](#)  
The Contemplative Catholic Convert by Rich Maffeo
- [\*\*Tobit and the importance of burying the dead\*\*](#)  
Catholic Deacon by Deacon Scott Dodge
- [\*\*Let us pray....\*\*](#)  
Catholic365 by De Maria
- [\*\*The Theology of Sacramental Bookkeeping\*\*](#)  
Quiet Consecration by Leslie Klinger
- [\*\*Pentecost Vigil: nightmares, insomnia, and depression\*\*](#)  
Hermano Juancito by Hermano Juancito
- [\*\*Jesus\*\*](#)

Grace to Paint by Sister Maresa Lilley

- **[The Best Motherhood Toolbox](#)**

Shifting My Perspective by Claire McGarry

- **[God's Abundance \(St. Michael's, Old Town\)](#)**

Peace Garden Passage by Roxane Salonen

- **[The Prayer That Makes ALL the Difference!](#)**

beautiful thorns by Lisa Ponchak

- **[anniversaries and gratefultweets](#)**

Maria Morera Johnson by Maria Johnson

- **[Renewed and Expansive Hope](#)**

A Catholic Citizen in America by Brian Gill

- **[You have the power!](#)**

On the Road to Damascus by Robert Collins

- **[Controversies rock female Christian bloggers. What do they reveal about the Church?](#)**

Are you there, God? It's Me, Generation X by Jennifer James

- **[Praise](#)**

Bible Meditations by Barbara Hosbach

- **[Ghost of the Machine](#)**

With Us Still by John Schroeder

- **[An Infinite Deal of Words](#)**

Association of Pauline Cooperators by Rae Stabosz

- **[Changing the World One Soul at a Time](#)**

Association of Pauline Cooperators by Mike Maturen

- **[So many times the walk is difficult.](#)**

Boldly Catholic by Rick Rice

- **[Two baptisms, three deaths, and a whole lot of grace](#)**

The Salt Stories by Amy Wiggin

- **[The Road Not Taken](#)**

Do Not Be Anxious by Tom Smith

- **[Sabbath Cross remain not bodies](#)**

Cruz Wiggins by Thomas Cruz-Wiggins

- **[Our culture seems to be obsessed with the living dead.](#)**

Ordinary Time

- **[Is the Spirit Calling?](#)**

Walking the Path by Christian Miraglia

- **[Corpus Christi: God Became Flesh in Order to Be Man's Eternal Food](#)**

Christ's Faithful Witness by Larry Fox

- **[Living in the Image of God Means Living in Communion](#)**

Christ's Faithful Witness by Fr. Joseph Mungai

- **[Pentecost! Reversing the Curse of Babel](#)**

Christ's Faithful Witness by Fr. Joseph Mungai

- **[The Communion of Saints](#)**

Veils and Vocations by Jennifer Elia

- **[Life is measured by how we live, not by how long we live](#)**

A Moment From De Sales by Fr. Richard DeLillio

- **[Deliverance From the Fowler's Snare](#)**

Bartimaeus' Quiet Place by Bartimaeus Timeo

- **[My own road to Emmaus](#)**

A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars by Ebeth Weidner

# 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)

**COPYRIGHT NOTICE:** Regardless of where you enjoy *New Evangelists Monthly*, either online or in this format, note that copyright is exclusively retained by the respective contributing authors. If you wish to use or redistribute any of their content, please contact them directly for licensing information.

## Adventism and blind people [at Catholicism and Adventism]



### Healing of the Blind Man

Read this story about a blind man: [Blind Man Straps Camera To Guide Dog's Back. When Wife Sees Video Later She's Horrified](#)

Leviticus 19:14 [KJV] – Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord.

What do you think of the way people treated this blind man?

Immoral? No. Not at all.

Or at least that's what some Adventists will tell you.

You see, Adventists often try to differentiate between a moral law, the 10 Commandments, and a ceremonial law, all of the rest.

Yes, when I've pushed Adventists on this issue, I've actually had them tell me that the biblical instruction above (not to put something in front of a blind man so that he falls over it) is a ceremonial law.

Which ceremony or ritual or cultic aspect of religion does it pertain to?

That said, I would think most thinking Adventists would ignore the logical conclusion of their "moral vs ceremonial" classification, and consider it morally wrong.

### Further reading:

[The Law of God vs the Law of Moses](#)



This contribution is available at <http://blog.theotokos.co.za/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Adirondack Scrapbooking [at Campfires and Cleats]

...from summer 2007...one entire decade ago!



[North Pole, NY...](#) Santa's Summer home, of course!



The Lake~



Happy to link at [Create with Joy](#) for WW!

...All these gorgeous flowers popping up throughout our yard were



I received as Mother's Day gift from all my boys three years ago!

I love it...use it literally every day!!

Thank you for spending some of your precious time today

---

This contribution is available at <http://campfiresandcleats.blogspot.com/2017/06/adirondack-scrapbooking-ww.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Psalm 139 ~ A Personal Psalm [at Pauca Verba]

**Psalms are the sung** poem-prayers of ancient Israel. Most of them were composed and used for communal worship, but some, like Psalm 139 are very personal to each of us. Click on the photo above to listen as I read the Psalm. Some reflections follow here.

Verse 1. God knows me in the details of my life...even my thoughts...not to catch me out like a spy or to make me blush, but that my existence matters to God. God is interested in how I'm doing, much as a good parent would a child who's perhaps been away from home for a time: "*What have you been up to?*" "*What have you been thinking these days?*" Some of us were taught that God is an irritable and suspicious super spy. It isn't like that at all.

Verse 2. God knows my life is a journey where I stop along the way because the trudging is often difficult and tiresome. God is acquainted with my ways: my strengths and weaknesses, my shortcomings and gifts - everything that characterizes me in and out.

Verse 3. God knows the words that come from my lips before I speak them. I'm thinking of the little cross we draw on our lips before the Gospel at Mass: *That I would speak the words of Christ*. We live in talkative times. There's little silence. A priest from Ukraine said, "*Where there are many words, sin cannot be avoided.*"

Verse 4. "You lay your hand upon me." I'm always within God's reach. God's gesture seems to say, "This is one is mine." What a lovely thought - God doesn't just have an eye on me, but a hand.

Verse 5. This knowledge is wonderful. I can't comprehend it, but we might try. We know so much about diets, TV shows, movies, politics, games, sports, where to find the best places to eat or shop, but so little knowledge of how God is with each of us.

Verse 6. "Where can I go from your spirit?" Sometimes we try to hide from God. Remember in school, hiding behind another student, to avoid being called on by the teacher? I wonder if we're afraid God will call on us. What might God ask? Maybe God would ask me to be better informed about what's going on in God's world? Or God might ask me to do something for someone else, something I'd rather not have to do?

Verse 7. "If I go up to the heavens, you're there. If I go down to the grave, you're there." God keeps popping up. Sometimes it's very inconvenient. We might prefer to keep God confined to the the one hour (or less) of weekend Mass or keep God confined to the tabernacle or the time it takes to go around a rosary. *Can God appear on the television screen during the news?*

Verses 8 and 9. "Wings of the morning" - going off to the farthest east, where the dawn of each new day begins for me. God will lead me and keep a hand on me in the *far and wide* of my life. Can you name that for your own life? Indeed, *God holds me the way the Mother of God holds the Divine Child in the icon.*



Verses 10 and 11. ""Surely the darkness will cover me." But for many people the darkness is interior: the inner darkness of depression, the dark cynical attitude, the dark view of other people, the dark view of the future. Christianity is all about light. The Christopher motto is: "Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." *Is it possible to discover God even in the inner darkness?*

Verses 12 through 14. These are splendid lines telling of how we are made. What amazing cameras now take photographs of the baby's development in the womb: the teeth are formed as little buds, how the child's face takes shape, even the appearance of finger prints. We watch not only the *physical* individuation but when the baby begins responding to sounds outside the mother's body.



I was on the New York City subways a lot in the 1970's when the metal wheels of the train against the metal track made the most god-awful sound. I remember seeing a young pregnant woman standing on the platform and when the screeching train approached the station she took the sides of her open overcoat and folded them across herself and her arms to hold the coat in place so to protect her developing child from the unnerving sound. She seemed to know *how marvelously we are made*.

And I must remember that we are *all marvelously made* - not just the people I like, or who are like me, or who believe the things *we believe*.





Verse 15: God has my development in his book. This isn't a list of my good deeds on one side of the page and my sins on the other - ready to whip out on judgment day, so God can decide whether to admit me to heaven or punish me. This is naive. Maybe the book is God's *mind*, delighting in you (me) in our individuality and the uniqueness for which God created each of us. "*You are one of God's thoughts; you are one of God's heartbeats,*" Pope John Paul II told a group of students while visiting a very gray part of the world.

We need to remember this - God delighting in us! A lot of people hate themselves because someone has told them they're not acceptable: your color, nationality, legal status, sexual orientation, religion, family history, athletic ability, physical beauty, sexy-ness, intelligence - *is wrong!*

Verse 16. Here the psalmist pays God a compliment: "*Your thoughts are great, God.*" This is why in an icon, Christ's head is large (especially the forehead) - because it is filled with divine thoughts.



"What imagination created the trillion, trillion galaxies?" the astronomer asked his colleagues. And what imagination created the nearly 18,000 different species of birds, each with its own structure and color, voice, nest type, egg design, habits and habitat. What imagination created *"that"*?

I never want to tire of these things - our minds so drawn to and filled with worrisome things, foolish things, petty, angry, resentful, obsessive things. I want my mind filled with the imagination of God, the loveliness of God, the attentive care of God.

And the final verses 22,23. "Search me out...know my heart...look well...lead me." We invite God into the interior place of our hearts from where (biblically speaking) our thoughts originate. *Is the door wide open?* "Search...know...look...lead me in ways everlasting." And for the Christian these words, "in the way that is everlasting," are the way of Christ-love. Father Alexander Men wonders aloud: Is it possible when I am going up an escalator or walking along the subway platform, do I look at and love all the people I see coming from the opposite direction? The "opposite" direction? *Get it?*

---

This contribution is available at <http://paucaverba.blogspot.com/2017/06/psalm-139-personal-psalm.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## On Our Own or With God [at A Spiritual Journey]

If you submit yourself to God, you let him take over and are taken care of by him for all eternity. On the other hand, if you say no to God and decide to strike out on your own, even if you work hard, you'd be extremely lucky to be able to take care of yourself in your brief time on earth. After this life is over, you have no more control. The best comment out of pity I could think of for you is "What a damn 'brave' fool!"

---

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2017/06/on-our-own-or-with-god.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

# It is Easy to Be Faithful When You Happen to Agree With the Church [at If I Might Interject]

One of the comments I often see in social media is the claim that confusion in the Church is unprecedented, and the fault of the Pope. I don't believe either statement is true. I think the chaos is caused by the fact that Catholics under St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI, thinking it was easy to be faithful to Church teaching they never had any intention of violating, suddenly found Pope Francis reminding them that it was not enough to say they opposed wrongdoing. Pope Francis reminded them that the true interpretation of his predecessors required going out and bringing those wrongdoers back. What this reaction did was show us that some Catholics were not so much faithful to the Church, as they were in agreement over some issues—but once that agreement ended, so did the obedience.

The Church exists as the means Our Lord established to bring the Good News to the world, teaching them to live according to His teaching (Matthew 28:19-20). That teaching will always obligate us to choose between God and our own desires. If we reject Church teaching because we think it too liberal or too conservative, we are placing our political beliefs above the Church. If we reject Church teaching because it prohibits us from doing something we want to do, we are placing our desires above the Church. But since God made obedience to the Church necessary (Luke 10:16, Matthew 18:17), rejecting the Church is necessarily rejecting Him.

The pontificate of Pope Francis seems to bring out what was less visible under his predecessors. With St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI, it was easy to focus on their teachings on sexual morality. Catholics who were enthusiastic about the sanctity of marriage and either intended to live according to Church teaching once they did marry, or intended to continue living according to Church teaching if they were already married. But when they spoke about other issues—social justice, the environment, etc., things were different. Often these views went against the preferred political platforms. In such cases, Catholics tended to downplay what they taught as “opinion” or worried that perhaps these Popes were softening.

Of course things cut both ways, and the Catholic who is enthusiastic about social justice and the environment while downplaying the Right to Life and sexual morality is behaving in the same way. While the conservative Catholic might misapply “prudential judgment” to downplay a teaching as optional, the liberal might misapply “who am I to judge?” to claim Church teaching was being changed. Indeed, when the Pope affirmed traditional teaching on morality, these Catholics complained he was “moving to the right.”

In both cases, the obedience or disobedience to a Pope exists only as long as the Pope appears in relationship to what they like. Once he steps outside of their view of what the Pope and the Church *should* be, the obedience vanishes, and undermining begins. People previously supporting a Pope begin to complain that he's moving to the left/right, while those who were disobedient before think he is finally moving in the right direction.

It is not my intent to say all Catholics behave this way, and do so out of bad will. Rather I hope to warn people that this is a temptation all Catholics will face. We all have preferences on the way things should be. But being a Catholic requires that we listen to the Church and amend our behavior when we run

afoul of her teachings. If we think that the Pope's reminder is moving from/towards error, that's a sign that we let our preferences interfere with hearing the Church.

If we accept that, when the Church teaches, we must give our assent, and if we trust God will protect His Church from falling into error, then we can trust that a Pope who reminds us that our moral obligation goes beyond our preferred topics of morality is not pushing from error.

This means giving up the left/right political spectrum of judging the Church, and turning to a right/wrong system of judging the world. We tend to view the Life issues as conservative and the social justice and environmental issues as liberal. Viewed that way, the Church appears to veer off in random directions. But when we think of it as having obligations in both issues, we can see that the Church does not change. Her positions are consistent. Rather it is our political theories which are not consistent with our Christian calling.

Usually, at this point, someone wonders if this is a call for a "seamless garment" where all issues are given equal weight. No, I don't hold to that. What I hold is we cannot *sacrifice* one Church teaching, as if it were of no consequence, in the hopes that another might be promoted. If we say the Church should stop "obsessing" over immigrants while abortion is legal, that is sacrificing our moral obligation on how to treat the sojourner in our midst. If we are the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), we are supposed to influence the people of the world to turn to Christ, and change society so it points in the way we must go.

If we would do this, we must be pointing in that direction ourselves. Otherwise we are blind guides (Matthew 15:14), leading others into a pit. So, we must accept the authority of the Church to bind and loose, and stop judging the Church by what we think best, being faithful when we agree and unfaithful when we disagree. Otherwise, we fail in our task and calling as Christians.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.ifimightinterject.com/2017/06/it-is-easy-to-be-faithful-when-you.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Don't Fear the Reaper May Not Be the Best Advice [at Carolyn Astfalk, Author]

I've never chosen [one word](#) for the year as seems to be the fashion lately. If you're not familiar with the concept, you simply scrap the lists of resolutions and focus your efforts on one word. For example, "joy," "courage," "mindful," or "simplify." Had I chosen a word for the year, I think it would've been "reap."

In my 21st year of marriage, 15th year of motherhood, and the 20th year in this house, for some reason, I feel like I'm doing a lot of reaping. And contrary to the old Blue Oyster Cult classic, doesn't seem like such good advice whether you add .

I don't mean fear as in cowering in a corner, quaking in my proverbial boots. I don't mean fear as in lost sleep and useless worry. I mean fear as in fear of the Lord – having a reverential respect for something.

I remarked yesterday that the house we've lived in for 19 years looks more like we moved in last week. (Reaping the harvest of years of neglect and poor decision-making.) The number on the scale shows I weigh more than I ever have before. (Reaping the harvest of years in which I failed to make time for exercise and eating healthy.) The too regular, too frequent arguments with my husband. (Reaping the harvest of more than a decade of averaging 1-2 date nights a year and not carving out time together at home.)

There are more that I'll spare you. And there are some good harvests too. Watching my children grow into responsible, kind individuals. (Reaping the harvest of long years of guidance and discipline.) Completing novels that at least some people enjoy reading. (Reaping the harvest of countless hours of writing, learning, editing, and slogging away.) Eliminating most debt. (Reaping the harvest of financial discipline.)

Of course, not everything follows a simple reap/sow equation. You can sow a perfect row, and weeds may still creep in. You can neglect the garden, and still reap the bounty. But for the most part, the two will correlate.

And so it is with life. With our souls. With our loved ones. I could take a lot more care in what I'm sowing. Because the long days pass quickly. Months fly by. The years multiply. And I may wish I'd had a little more fear. Sowed a little more carefully. And been more satisfied with the harvest.

HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Sat, 08 Jul 2017 18:42:17 GMT Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 Transfer-Encoding: chunked Connection: keep-alive Vary: Accept-Encoding Vary: Cookie X-hacker: If you're reading this, you should visit [automattic.com/jobs](https://automattic.com/jobs) and apply to join the fun, mention this header. X-Pingback: <https://ellengable.wordpress.com/xmlrpc.php> Link: ; rel=shortlink X-ac: 1.ord \_dca Strict-Transport-Security: max-age=15552000



## Rest in Peace, Mumsy [at Plot Line and Sinker (Ellen Gable, Author)]



It's been a few weeks since I posted here on my blog. My mother-in-law (who already had advancing dementia) started declining rapidly with the diagnosis that she had cancer. Despite her dementia, she had made it clear to my husband that she did not want to go to a home, that she just wanted God to take her. Shortly after that, a CT scan showed advancing cancer.

She entered the palliative care unit at the Arnprior Hospital on June 8th and was given pain medication to keep her comfortable. She passed away on June 13, 2017, with family by her side. The medical personnel were kind, caring and compassionate to her and to our family. [Her obituary](#) is below:

Shirley Hrkach

*Passed into eternal life on Tuesday morning, June 13, 2017 with family by her side. Shirley was the devoted mother of James (Ellie) of Pakenham; Jan of Hobe Sound, Florida; Jocelyn of Maui, Hawaii; and Jody (Karen) of Longwood, Florida. Loving "Mumsey" of Josh, Ben (Kayla), Tim, Adam, Paul, Ashley, Katelyn and Sean Hrkach. Also survived by many nieces and nephews. The last surviving of 11 children born to the late Charles and Katherine (née Legree) Laderoute. A long-time parishioner of St. John Chrysostom Parish in Arnprior, Shirley was an active member of the Catholic Women's League for many years. She will be missed. The family will receive friends during visitation at the Pilon Family Funeral Home and Chapel Ltd., 50 John Street North, Arnprior on Monday evening, June 19th from 7 to 9 p.m. A Funeral Mass will be celebrated in St. John Chrysostom Church, Arnprior on Tuesday afternoon, June 20th at 1 o'clock. In memory of Shirley, please consider a donation to the St. John*



Although it was sad to lose Mumsy, she leaves behind a beautiful legacy in her descendants.

May her soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, rest in peace. Amen.

Requiescat in pace, Mumsy.

---

This contribution is available at <http://ellengable.wordpress.com/2017/06/22/rest-in-peace-mumsy/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).



## 70 Yrs Ago My Sister and I... learned the Rosary [at Children's Rosary]



Today we received this lovely card pictured above. The note dated June 25th 2017 begins:  
*My Dear Children,*

*Thank you so for praying the Holy Rosary that I receive on EWTN. Your clear voices & sweet faces rise to Heaven... Today is my 77th Birthday. 70 yrs ago my sister & I went to Holy Rosary Academy and learned the Rosary from the Sisters. Please find enclosed a ten dollar bill toward the roses you give to Our Blessed Mother.*

*Love to All R.*

The more I thought about this card the more beauty I saw in it. This card gives those of us who have not reached the age of 77 a peek into the perspective one has at that time in their life. One can look back over the years. What stands out? What is important? This letter strongly suggests that something 70 years ago made a deep impact on this women's life. She was only 7 years old, yet she remembers it clearly and with great love and appreciation. One can see the love this soul has for Our Blessed Mother that she would want to send a crisp 10 dollar bill to put toward fresh roses for Our Lady. Who does that but a person who cares a great deal for someone. Why does she care so much? Has it been that a 70 year friendship exists, one that began when she started praying the Rosary? What are the fruits of so many years of prayer? The cover of the card seems to suggest an attitude of thanksgiving and generosity. Blessings come from this heart to little ones who remind her of the tender years when she too learned to pray the Rosary. The Children's Rosary which airs on EWTN is a window into a Children's Rosary prayer group but for many people it is a window back 70 years ago when they were little ones and someone helped them to pray the Rosary.

A special thank you to this soul for showing all of us what happens when a child is given the gift of praying the Rosary. What does that gift look like 70 years later? Wow! It looks beautiful.

---

This contribution is available at <http://childrensrosary.blogspot.com/2017/06/70-yrs-ago-my-sister-and-i-learned.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The idea that “children should be seen and not heard” seems like an antiquated idea these days... except with children in Mass. Many a Catholic parent has come to dread attending Mass with small children in tow. Reactions to children’s natural energy and innocent noise from priests and parishioners alike is often humiliating and hurtful. Over the past nine years, we’ve had our share of ups and downs in taking our daughters to Mass.



Here, I’ve gathered a list of posts by fellow Catholic moms about taking children to Mass. If you are a Catholic parent with young children, I hope these posts will inspire and encourage you. A few share practical tips that may (or may not!) help as you venture into Church with your littles. I pray that you will find a welcoming parish for your growing family.

If you are a Catholic but not a parent, I’d like to invite you to read these posts with an open, prayerful heart. Please think about how you treat the parents of young children at Mass. Our parishes should be welcoming places for families of all ages and sizes.

## Catholic moms talk about children in Mass

[That Time I Cried In Church—How Parishes Can Be More Family Friendly](#) by Kirby at Under Thy Roof. *Yesterday was the first time in a long time, perhaps the first time at this parish, that I had a run in with one of the church ladies of internet mom lore. The ones who make it clear that they are tolerating your kids in mass, but that only extends as long as perfect silence reigns. One wrong sound and the glares start. Two and the snippy flares up.*

[Putting on the Armor of God to Defend the Souls of Our Children](#) by Anni at Catholic 365. *After the start of the Mass, the toddler boys (my child and the boy in front of us) seemed to take cue and became quite rambunctious. My little guy kept running toward me, and then running out of my reach quicker than I could grab him, and giggling at the little game he was playing. We got through the first 3 readings, and the priest got through 3 words of his homily, before the priest stopped his homily, looked*

at us squarely in front of him, and said, "I cannot compete with them. They need to go."

[\*\*Purgatory in the Narthex\*\*](#) by Jenny at Heart of a Mother. *For a few minutes, I gave thanks that I was living that purgatory there (with wiggly boys climbing all over me and battling for lap space), because with the suffering of purgatory comes the guarantee of eternal life with God. I remembered that there would be crazy-wonderful grace later in addition to the grace of the moment.*

[\*\*Mama, Bring Your Special Needs Child to Mass\*\*](#) by Ginny at Not So Formulaic. *Yes, these are statements I've heard. Though not always directed at me, they remain proof positive that churches aren't the friendliest of places for special needs families. If it's clear in the catechism that "the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone," (CCC 357) how long before we realize the problem lies not with the doctrine, nor with the children themselves? The truth is that the problem lies with us.*

[\*\*Preparing for Mass with a Tornado\*\*](#) by Alicia at Sweeping Up Joy. *For a few weeks we've been splitting up for Mass, so I was nervous about getting back on the "going to Mass as a family" horse. It sounds lovely, but in reality it's just **hard** at this stage with Moe. Actually, maybe it's good? I spend a lot of time praying, "Lord, give me strength," when at Mass with Moe. Does that mean he inspires constant prayer? Could that be a good thing? Hmmmm...*

[\*\*Take the Kids Too—In Your Sunday Best!\*\*](#) by Anni at Beautiful Camouflage. *It's Friday morning, and if you are anything like me, you are beginning to steel yourself for taking your children to Mass this weekend. Will they be quiet and reverent? Will they cause a scene, ensuring everyone is looking at you as you fumble your way out of the pew and sanctuary? Will they be redirected easily to pay attention to parts of the Mass? Will you be able to get anything out of Mass?*

[\*\*Undeniable Laws of Mass Behaviour\*\*](#) by Elizabeth at Elizabeth Clare. *I see lots of blog posts about surviving Mass with little ones in toe. There are lots of different views so I figure I might as well confuse blog-land even more by throwing my two cents into the ring. I'm hesitant to dole out much advice on this blog – that is the role of the Titus 2 women in your life. However, I do think it can be helpful to see how other families work. [I've](#) already outlined what we expect from our children at different ages and stages, as well as strategies we use to get us to our goal. Today, I'd like to give you a list of laws governing our little ones' behavior in Mass.*

[\*\*Catholicism from a Cry Room Window\*\*](#) by Elaine at Humble Dwelling. *There I was again, watching daily Mass through the sound proof window that separated the very audible babies from the rest of the quiet congregation. This particular Mass I had only my littlest 3 with me. My older three kids were quietly sitting with their friends in the front pews while my friend, Jean, graciously asked my middle child to sit with her. Slightly easier Mass, yes, but I was still spiraling down into a pity party as Henry was yanking my hair while I was nursing him, and Stella was crying because I wouldn't let her sit in the window sill so she could realize her dreams of smudging tiny fingerprints all over the stained glass. Each time Fr. Hough started to speak, Max asked me a question such as, "How high can Charlotte Bronte jump?"*

## Children in Mass:

*Catholic Moms  
share their thoughts,  
hurts, and tips*



**[No Magical Formula: Ideas for Mass Survival with Young Kids](#)** by Rose at A Blog for My Mom. *Nor is this a post with a magical formula to help you get your kids to behave during Mass. Believe me, I've read way too many posts with "The Answer" and nothing has worked for us. Here's the thing: I have no answers. BUT I have some tips that sometimes work for us, and if they work for us sometimes, maybe they'll work for you sometimes? They might be no-brainers, but maybe you'll learn something new! So share this with your friends with young kids, and share your strategies with me!*

**[On Gawking and Wayward Ducklings](#)** by Alicia at Sweeping Up Joy. *Now on to the Mass escapades on Saturday night. Grab some popcorn. Or maybe a stiff drink. Let's set the stage: our parish, most the young families attend on Sunday morning. The Saturday night crowd is more mature, typically with few kids. This week it worked out that Saturday night was an attractive option for us, even though we're usually Sunday people.*

**[Your Screaming Kids Are Distracting Me](#)** by Meg at Held By His Pierced Hands. *I was at a holy hour the other night, totally focused and immersed in my thoughts, when from the back of the church came the sound of a wailing toddler. Just like that, I lost it. I was completely distracted by some kid who was far too young to be stuck sitting in a church. And thank God for that.*

**[How to Help Young Children Appreciate Mass](#)** by Bonnie at the Koala Mom. *A few weeks ago, I found myself at a 5 pm Mass with the girls. We'd had a busy day out and they fidgeted back and forth on the pew. I gave the LOOK and rearranged their seating orders repeatedly in an attempt to separate each from the sister they couldn't currently agree with. As Mass continued, my frustration mounted. I wondered what the young man behind us thought of our busy family and how many other people heard Pearl's shrieks whenever her sisters did something she didn't like.*

**[What I Wish I Said to the Mom Who Approached Me After Mass](#)** by Theresa at Ordinary Lovely. *A few years ago, a woman I had never seen at church before approached me after Mass. She had a toddler with her, and because there are very few other children that attend the Mass we do, I was pretty sure it was the toddler I heard during Mass. I had a toddler of my own at my side, a baby in my arms,*

and two older kids off somewhere else (I think this was around the time the boys were infatuated with the confessional, so probably there).

**[4 Things I Learned from My 1-Year-Old During Mass](#)** by Sarah at Catholic Mommy Blogs. *Going to Mass with a one year old is always easy – said no parent ever. I am embarrassed to admit that recently I woke up on Sunday feeling a bit of dread about going to Mass. Just the thought of corralling my high-energy one-year-old while also attempting to pay attention myself was exhausting. Typically, I walk out of the church at the end of Mass feeling completely defeated and unable to recall any of the homily.*

**[In Pursuit of Good Behavior: Our 8-part strategy for getting kids to behave in church](#)** by Julie at These Walls. *I am about to do something stupid. I'm about to hit "publish" on a blog post on how to get children to behave well in church, mere hours before taking my own children to Mass. They're going to be terrible – I just know it.*

**[View from Behind the Pew](#)** by Jill at Veronica's Violets. *There are times when being in the back is a good thing. You know, like when you're at Sea World and the dolphins splash the crowds with water that goodness knows how many animals have done their business in since the beginning of the show. Or, when you're at a hockey game the puck goes flying over the protective glass. Those are times I'm glad I'm not front and center. But when it comes to Mass, I like being up front.*

**[The Theology of Cheese](#)** by Alicia at Sweeping Up Joy. *Mass. With kids. (cue the most terrifying music ever known to humankind) The last two weeks we've resumed attending as a family after trying for the past yearish to split up so Moe didn't go regularly. Sometimes we couldn't avoid splitting up, so Moe has occasionally gone to church in that time.*

***What thoughts or tips would you share on seeing or being with children in Mass?***



---

This contribution is available at <http://thekoalamom.com/2017/06/children-in-mass-catholic-moms-share/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Of Coddling Demons and Auricular Confession [at God-Haunted Lunatic]



*No being could attain a “perfect badness” opposite to the perfect goodness of God.*

~ [C.S. Lewis](#)

**The Gospels are filled with weird scenes** – which you’d expect from eyewitness accounts of an incarnate God. There’s no precedent for Jesus, no template or benchmark. He’s extraordinary in so many ways, so it’s no surprise that his actions and words would be extraordinary as well – at least on first hearing.

You know this from witnessing your own children thrill at the coming of Christmas when they were very young. The story of the Bethlehem invasion was fresh and exciting – and fantastic! The same goes for Passiontide as our young ones grew morose upon hearing of Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion, which transmuted into delight upon their discovery of Easter and the resurrection.

Then there’s us. We don’t think of the Gospel accounts as unusual anymore because we’ve heard them countless times, and we’re accustomed to their quirky narrative shifts – even if we don’t really understand them. Like Judas, for instance. We hear about Jesus choosing him as an apostle, despite his knowing (as God) that Judas would betray him down the line. The Lord even sends out the future traitor [with the other apostles](#) to minister to the crowds – what? Yet we just glaze over when we hear it proclaimed at Mass or referenced in a sermon. *Yawn.*

Once in a while, however, every once in a while, the Scriptures come alive again, even for us, even for me. Maybe it’s a particular [lector’s voice and intonation](#); maybe it’s an enlightening commentary or sermon; always it’s grace.

Such a grace came my way recently as I reviewed the Gospel accounts of Jesus and the Gerasene demoniac. There’s a version of the story in [Matthew](#), but fuller accounts appear in Mark and Luke. The action takes place in Galilee in the latter days of the Lord’s public ministry there. He and the disciples had just arrived in the region of Gerasa (or Gadara, or Gergesa – there’s some confusion about this) after a rough passage across the Sea of Galilee. A deadly tempest had terrified the disciples, but a sleepy Jesus had taken it in stride and quelled it almost as an afterthought. The disciples were duly impressed: “They were filled with awe, and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey

him?”” ([Mk 4.41](#)).

As if to answer that question, Jesus followed up his demonstration of power over natural forces with a startling demonstration of his supernatural dominion.

As soon as he and his crew hit the Gerasene shore, a wild man accosted them from a graveyard. I picture him as a combination of J.K. Rowling’s [Hagrid](#) and Marley’s ghost from *A Christmas Carol* – all hair and height, bruises and blood, with shackles and chains rattling about. The possessed Galilean tomb-dweller, hardly still a man, rushed the Lord and demanded an accounting. “What have you to do with me, Jesus,” he shouted, adding a confession, “Son of the Most High God?” Finally, a plea. “I beseech you, do not torment me” ([Lk 8.28](#)). When Jesus asked for his name, the wild man claimed, “My name is Legion; for we are many.”

**We’re definitely in strange territory here.** I see a walking stadium full of demons testifying to Jesus’ divine identity. Also, I see a tortured, lonely soul, a castoff loser and social threat, rebuffing the ministrations of the one he knows could totally heal him. Stranger still, Jesus is choosing to chat with him – or them (pronouns with Legion are tricky). But what’s there to chat about? Let’s free the poor guy from his spiritual affliction and restore him to his family already – ba-boom.

Yet, the strangeness only widens as the Gospel writers next draw our attention to a herd of pigs – pigs! a herd! – on a nearby hill. You’d think Jesus and his Jewish companions would’ve avoided this area altogether rather than risk even the slightest association with pork. Nope, and the pigs actually end up playing a central role in the tale. “Send us to the swine,” the Legion of demons begged Jesus, “let us enter them” ([Mk 5.12](#)). I envision a Messianic shoulder shrug and toss of the head, followed by the Aramaic equivalent of “Why not?” before Jesus gives in to the odd petition. “Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine,” continues St. Luke, “and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned” (8.33).

The Gospel narratives move on to the swift reaction of the swineherds and local townspeople (they “were seized with great fear” and asked Jesus to “depart from them”), as well as the equally swift recovery and commissioning of Legion (whom Jesus sent home to proclaim “how much the Lord has done for you”). But I’m stuck back on that hillside. “The demons puzzle us,” writes [Frank Sheed](#). “The pigs puzzle us.” Right, as does Jesus himself, for it seems to me that he took pity on those demons when he acceded to their request. Was the porcine possession a show of compassion for the hellish habitués? A bizarre amnesty, no matter how fleeting, granted by the Good Shepherd himself? I’m with Sheed who comments, “We long to read deeper into the mind of our Redeemer.”

Frankly, I’m also interested in reading deeper into the minds of those devils. They must’ve known that they were still destined to return to Hell eventually, for even if their pig-hosts hadn’t immediately rushed to a watery demise, they would’ve been butchered soon enough. Since Legion’s demons had no doubt about who and what Jesus was (and is), what could’ve motivated their plea for temporary clemency? Surely not love – but...hope? Is it possible that these damned creatures were displaying a last vestige of hope, however unlikely?

We’ll never know. What we do know, however, is that the graphic transfer of Legion’s burden to the doomed pigs was a stark display of release and liberation. Perhaps, as [Jerome Kodell](#) suggests, it was meant to broadcast Legion’s fresh start, providing his community “visible proof that the demons have left the man.” Granted it required significant destruction of property (which prompted the objections of



those swineherds), yet maybe such was justified in order to reassure Legion's people of his radical transformation – and even Legion himself.

**Weird as it is, I think the pig-demon transfer** in this Gospel story is a valuable illustration of why we have auricular confession. As the Catechism affirms, the sacrament of reconciliation requires the penitent to be contrite, practice humility, and “confess with the lips” ([CCC 1450](#)). Certainly there are exceptions – speech impairments, for example, and extreme debilitation – but ordinarily, in “accord with the law and practice of the Church, the faithful must orally confess their sins” ([Congregation for Divine Worship](#)). It follows that the confessor must ordinarily hear those sins and voice an absolution.

“But why do you have to confess your sins out loud?” my Protestant students often ask me. “Why can't you just confess them directly to God – in private? Or just write them down?”

Next time I get that question, I'll have a ready answer. “Because we're Legion,” I'll say. “Because our sins are like demons, and we need concrete, sensory reassurance that they've been excised from our souls.”

When I confess my sins, as humiliating as it is, I'm always glad to be getting them out of my head and into the open air. To hear myself pronounce my self-accusations, knowing that the *alter Christus* is craning an ear, means that my sins are gone, they've been sent over the confessional cliff, and they're drowning in grace – what a relief!

Then it's my turn to listen, and the priest's verbal funneling of the Lord's forgiveness is an electrifying largesse (CCC 1465). It's a [new beginning](#), every time. And every time, I'm sent out unburdened after my penitential encounter, but with an implicit (sometimes explicit) commission, similar to Legion's: “Go in peace,” [the priest may intone](#), “and proclaim to the world the wonderful works of God who has brought you salvation.”

They're words I never tire of hearing, and the strange mercy they bespeak never grows old.

---

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

---

This contribution is available at <http://godhauntedlunatic.wordpress.com/2017/06/25/of-coddling-demons-and-auricular-confession/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## Grace [at Afternoon Coffee and Evening Tea]

Some posts are more difficult to write than others. This one took me over eight years to write. I was torn between keeping something so intimate and personal to ourselves and feeling moved to share our story in hopes it may help even one other person who may stumble upon or be drawn to read it. Eventually, I chose the latter. And so...here is the story of our Grace.

Nine years ago, I was a young mother, blessed beyond measure with three healthy, beautiful babies. While none of our pregnancies came easily, I held on to the hope of having just one more. It wasn't happening, and Steve and I were just beginning to think about possible adoption, when one day after picking the kids up from school, I began to feel tremendous pain. Steve eventually talked me into going to my doctor, who immediately admitted me to the hospital. At this time, our children were eleven, seven, and five. My sister and mother came to stay with the kids while Steve waited with me at the hospital. Finally, with the help of medication, my pain subsided, and my doctor came in to tell us that I was pregnant! It was very early on, and he had some concerns. I will always remember how he sat down and spoke with me, as opposed to at me, and explained that he was a doctor, not God, and only God knew what would happen to this new little soul.

Later that evening, after Steve had left to go home to our little ones, I prayed until I fell asleep. I had a dream that night, a dream that this baby was a little girl, and when I awoke, I decided to call her Grace. Steve arrived, and while we talked, he told me that he felt too the baby was a girl, and so she became our little Grace. I was discharged after a few days, and while my HCG levels were not rising, I held out hope. My doctor discharged me with strict instructions to rest, and told me to call him when the bleeding started. It didn't hit me until I was home. He said when... not if...the bleeding started.

Steve and I decided then we would not share the news of this baby with our children. I realize this is not a decision everyone would make. For us, it was the right one. Our children wanted a baby as badly as we did. They prayed for a new baby all the time. We just couldn't explain this situation to them when it was so raw to us. And they were still so young.

Eventually I did in fact experience the heart wrenching ache of losing a baby. I experienced a miscarriage, and spent the following week having my blood tested to watch the HCG levels diminish. It was the most emotionally, physically, and mentally difficult period of my life. But my faith carried me through that dark time. And God let me know that our Grace was with Him, and we would be reunited with her someday.

I will never forget the ways that our sweet Grace reached across eternity to let us know she was happy and safe and at home with God. The first time it happened was shortly after our loss. I was giving Rhett a bath, and suddenly he looked right at me. Out of the clear blue, he said, "Mom...I gave my guardian angel a name. I named her Grace." I will never forget the feeling of our baby letting me know that she would always be with us. I literally felt her. I knew. I just knew.

A few weeks later, Steve and I went to the gift shop at the convent here in town. We were looking for something that would keep our little Grace near to us and a part of our family as well. The sweet little nun helped us pick out the perfect piece, and as we were leaving she smiled and told us that God would

bless us again very soon. I felt a sense of peace come over me when she spoke those words, and I clung to them during the difficult months that followed.

Later that year, on the day our little Grace was due to be born, Steve took me out for the day. We went to lunch at Red Lobster, and yet again I experienced the goodness of God. After we were seated, our waitress made her way over to our table. She was so happy, and approached our table smiling. Before she said a word, I knew. I just knew. She smiled again and said hello. Her name? Grace.

Finally, when we arrived home that day, the day our baby was due to be born, I saw that we had received a letter from our friend Father Leon. On the back of the envelope, he had placed a sticker. The sticker was of a young girl with long brown hair. She had angel wings. I knew once more. It was my Grace.

I am so thankful for those messages from God. Although this is a very personal part of our lives, I share it to give anyone who is in the same situation hope and peace...hope for the future and peace in knowing that God hears all prayers, and answers them in His own way, in His own time.

A year and a half or so after we lost our Grace and were comforted by a sweet nun in her gift shop, we welcomed our surprise blessing...our Flynn. Flynn Grace. I am convinced that our precious Flynn was sent here for us by not only God, but also by her sister Grace, as a sign that God does indeed hear all prayers. Our family is proof of that.



Our blessings...



Including our little Grace...



And the sign that touched my heart and let me know that our Grace was happy in Heaven.

---

This contribution is available at <http://afternooncoffeeandeveningtea.blogspot.com/2017/06/grace.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Catherine's Mobile Stander [at The Hahn Family Blog]

I've once again learned to not underestimate this girl. At school she has been receiving therapy using this stander to help her gain strength and stamina. We brought it home for the summer and I'm simply blown away.



I'm amazed at how proficient she is at maneuvering such a device. She is able to roll around corners, through doorways, over carpet and more. Catherine makes it look easy and she does so with the hand-eye coordination of a professional gamer.



However, what really amazes me is her disposition when she is in this contraption. There are tons of

[books](#)

and

addressing the power of posture, the power of physical positioning and it's influence on the mental position and mental health.

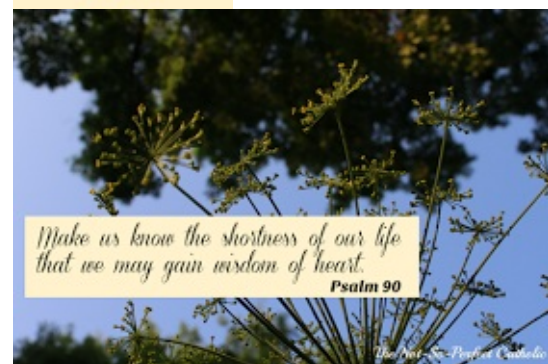
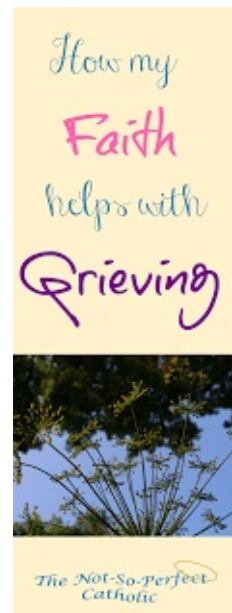
These short (35 minute) sessions that Catherine experiences twice per day confirms the theories. Each time she is placed in the stander her demeanor changes. She's happy, smiles more (if that's possible) and is more outgoing. She wheels around the house greeting everyone by name as if to say, "good morning, hello, look at me." This physical change affects her entire being. I'm excited to see how she will develop over the summer using this crazy looking device. Here's a video of her moving around the kitchen with skill and grace.

---

This contribution is available at <http://jamesmhahn.blogspot.com/2017/06/catherines-mobile-stander.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# How My Faith Helps Me With Grieving [at The Not]



I was speaking with a young adult one evening when he received a text informing him of his great-grandfather's passing. I gave my condolences by saying "I'm sorry", which sparked a conversation between the 2 of us. We spoke of what part our faith plays in our grieving.

Two very different passings

Why

do

people say "I'm sorry" when expressing their condolences, especially in the case of the elderly? I don't know how many people told me that when my father passed away. He was terribly lonely, with my mother passing away almost 3 years earlier. In fact, he was just miserable, he missed her so much. He was ready to go, and had been for several months. When people told me they were sorry, I responded with, "It's okay. He lived a long, full life. He was ready to be with Mama."

As I thought about writing this post, I came across a passage in Matthew Kelly's book

*Resisting Happiness*



. As I read page 62, I thought of my mother: She passed very unexpectedly. We (my siblings and I) expected that she would live the end of her days in a nursing home since she was showing definite signs of dementia. But, as someone pointed out to me, God is a merciful God. He called Mama home before her dementia was such that she didn't know us or Daddy. I had conversations with my father about that same thing. God showed all of us so much mercy by not making us live through that experience.

My father's passing was the total opposite, but again, God showed us all mercy by not allowing his illness to linger. He didn't suffer with his congestive heart failure long: He went into the hospital on Jan. 1 and passed away Feb. 1. That's another reason why I tell people "It's okay".

I miss both of them terribly, but I know I have 2 more people in heaven praying for me and my siblings. They weren't perfect, but they were just about the best parents anyone could pray for, and I can't even begin to tell you how blessed I am that God chose me to be their daughter. That gets me through those times when that hole in my heart seems enormous.

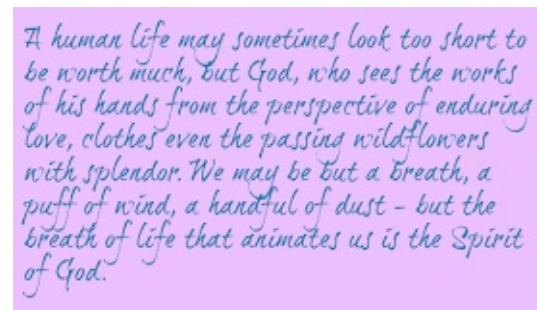
It's not them

After my mother passed, I went to the cemetery with my father pretty regularly, although it dwindled as the months passed. The cemetery is on a very busy highway & I was concerned that he may have an accident. I have to admit that, since his passing, I've only been to their graves a few times. Why? Because that's not them; they aren't there. All that is there is a shell in which their beautiful souls were encased. I don't go to their graves to "talk to them"; I talk to them all the time throughout my day. I don't think about their bodies deteriorating; that's not them.

In the May issue of

*Magnificat*

(p. 419), I read the following:



*A human life may sometimes look too short to be worth much, but God, who sees the works of his hands from the perspective of enduring love, clothes even the passing wildflowers with splendor. We may be but a breath, a puff of wind, a handful of dust - but the breath of life that animates us is the Spirit of God.*

That sums up how my faith helps with grieving. I think flowers are beautiful, especially dogwoods and Bradford Pears, but it seems that the blooms are gone with the blink of an eye. So it is with our loved ones. God places these beautiful people in our lives, and, in the grand scheme of things, doesn't it seem like they're gone with the blink of an eye, too? Even if you're fortunate to have them for many years, when you look back it seems to have gone too quickly.

Faith and hope

I was so very fortunate to have had my parents with me for so long, and that they were healthy in mind and body. I'm not going to sugar coat it: There are many tears, and there is a huge hole in my heart

where they once were. Their passings give me hope; my faith that they passed to me confirms that hope.

So, when someone tells me she's sorry for my loss, I have to wonder if what she really means is that she is sorry that I'm grieving, because I know my parents are in heaven, smiling down on me, and saying "We did good".

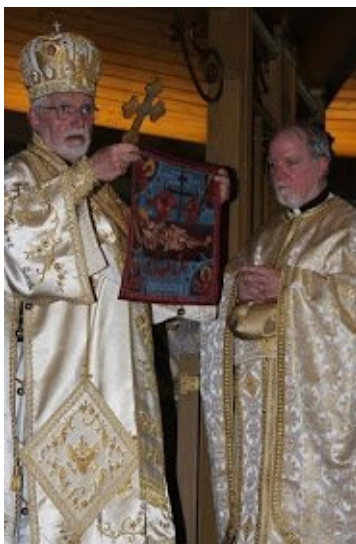
---

This contribution is available at <http://thenotsoperfectcatholic.blogspot.com/2017/06/how-my-faith-helps-me-with-grieving.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Melkite Greek Catholic Bishop Nicholas J. Samra Ordains Deacon Dennis McCarthy to the Priesthood [at TASTE and SEE]

Melkite Greek Catholic Bishop Nicholas J. Samra [Eastern Byzantine] ordained the married Deacon Dennis McCarthy to the priesthood on June 10, 2017. The ordination took place at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Greek Catholic Church in Worcester, MA, where a joyful reception was held afterward.





Fr. McCarthy is one of the few married Catholic priests in our country. This was made possible in 2014 when Pope Francis lifted the longstanding ban on Eastern Rite married clergy in the diaspora, which includes the United States. When the ordination was complete, many proclaimed, "Axios!" "Axios!" which means "being worthy of" or "deserving of." It is an acclamation often made by the faithful at the ordination of Eastern deacons, priests, and bishops.

Succeeding Fr. Ed Kakaty, Fr. McCarthy has assumed assignment as pastor of St. Ann Melkite Greek Catholic Church in Waterford, CT. Axios!

photos - Eric Ewanco Note: I was unable to attend. Eric Ewanco provided many of these details and the photos.

---

This contribution is available at <http://tasteandsee2.blogspot.com/2017/06/melkite-greek-catholic-bishop-nicholas.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# An Autism Ministry... For Everyone [at The Mission of Saint Thorlak]



Over the next few weeks, we will be examining the basics which frame The Mission of Saint Thorlak, including a job description for anyone who is ready to become a bona fide Missionary, and a greater, more detailed study of each our objectives.

Let's start with one of the more frequently asked of our FAQs: "How is this a ministry for people with autism/ASD, yet it claims to serve everyone?"

Here's how we see it.

1) We aim to be a resource for people with ASD who have aged out of primary and elementary level social skills [*"how to make and keep friends"*] and are ready for the more challenging adolescent and young adult questions [*"why is it spiritually beneficial to make and keep friends?"*].

There are several reasons to reach out to youth and young adults with ASD:

-Whether by circumstance or consequence, youth and young adults with ASD are generally more likely to be found on the outskirts of social circles and the community at large. The neurological realities of ASD make it extremely uncomfortable to be among noise, crowds or in groups whose purpose is unclear or not personally interesting. Also, people with ASD at any age have greater difficulty forming and maintaining relationships than people without. The root of this is the same anxiety that impacts early childhood, only now it is less socially acceptable to show it. This anxiety impacts all areas: physical (increased heart rate, for instance), cognitive (such as thinking about what might go wrong) and emotional (feelings of dread, embarrassment, fear, or even resentment).

-Ordinary living with ASD is filled with challenges that others don't see. There are no solutions, just determination to succeed. Sometimes, that can be exhausting, and socializing is often a casualty. Yet, putting aside relationships can become a habit which can eventually lead toward spiritual starvation. It is all a matter of balance.

-Young children with ASD now receive a great deal of social and emotional support. Once middle school comes, these supports start dropping off – right when the social scene turns volatile, unpredictable and confusing even for the most confident individuals. The Mission of Saint Thorlak offers guidance and support at this very level. Tweens, teens and young adults need something more elaborate, something that better anticipates adulthood than the preschool and primary social lessons they

had growing up. Learning about relationships in terms of spirituality is well suited to this age group, and that is exactly what we aim to do. We hope our particular Missionary training will pick up where elementary social skills leave off, and equip these marvelous young souls to live spiritually well-nourished lives for all their years ahead, in all that they do... and, that their mission work “accidentally” helps countless others in their paths to do the same.



2) As you read this, we hope you see that this echoes the needs of adolescents and young adults across the board. Why single out people with ASD when everyone can benefit?

Anyone can be at risk for spiritual starvation. There are all kinds of people who are isolated for one reason or another. Therefore, it's important to remember to check our margins, wherever we are, whoever they are, for hidden treasure. People with and without ASD face the same social and emotional situations across the board, and anyone can starve in spirit, ASD or not. (Hopefully, not on our watch!)

We feel there should be no distinction in who can learn the spiritual mechanics of friendship and spiritual nourishment. By only teaching people with ASD these skills, we exclude great numbers of “other” young people who need the spiritual nourishment of friendship just the same.

We see a very effective solution to both of these needs. In our ministry, we encourage people without ASD to seek out those people with ASD to genuinely learn from them – about the real value of relationships, and the importance of understanding the other person's point of view before labeling, dismissing or misconstruing their intentions. As we expect people with ASD to learn these skills, so we should expect people without ASD to learn them just as proficiently – and, who better to mentor them than the people with ASD themselves? Spiritual awareness and sensibility is invaluable as we all work together to combat and prevent spiritual starvation, and hopefully reinforce to people with ASD that their contributions are valuable just as they are to our community.



3) On that note, we admit our bias: We hope people with ASD will undertake this ministry with us... to understand, recognize, address and prevent spiritual starvation in the community at large.

By virtue of their diagnosis and developmental traits, people with ASD tend to have many distinct advantages which suit them ideally for our brand of mission work, and we hope they will forgive us for singling them out in direct recruitment. What can we say? We only want the best. Sports teams send scouts to high school and college teams with the best records to draft prospects; why can't we?

- People with ASD tend to be contemplative by nature, pondering and digesting questions slowly and deliberately.
- They are also very keen observers of groups and social behavior. They are veritable experts in human nature out in the field.
- As we have said, people with ASD have had formal training in social skills, expectations and appropriate behavior; most people without diagnoses have not. Essentially, people with ASD have been taught the forgotten arts of courtesy and manners, and thus are equipped to be the best social role models in the community.
- People with ASD are still PEOPLE, just like anyone else... and, because they are often less well known than the others in our circles, they are ideal candidates to be asked, "Can you be my friend?" [a hallmark of our missionary work] so that they might share their kindness, wisdom, interests and stories with others.

In short: People with ASD have experience and knowledge that people without ASD cannot. They have natural advantages in the ways of preventing spiritual starvation, yet many don't even realize it. That's okay; we'll step up and ask them to be our mentors.



4) Finally, in terms of human behavior, the idea of being sent on a mission fires people up to push past obstacles that would otherwise be too difficult or painful, especially when they are motivated by CARITAS. Our thought is that the very act of taking up our Mission will help people with ASD accomplish their social goals as greatly as the Mission itself. We hope that recruiting people with ASD stirs them to consistently put these social principles into action, in spite of the very real pain and anxiety they routinely face by living with ASD in a non-autistic world. It's easy to backslide into isolation when it's just you, but if you are a bona fide Missionary committed to ending spiritual starvation in the world, you know there are a lot of souls counting on you... and you find a way.

And thus, we reach our conclusion, in much fewer words than all the explanations above:

**We are a ministry for everyone, so that people with autism may find their way.**



---

This contribution is available at <http://mission-of-saint-thorlak.weebly.com/activities/missionary-thought-for-the-week-of-june-5-2017-an-autism-ministry-for-everyone>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).



## The Gift of Hope [at Amazing Nearness]

*“The most hopeful people in the world are the young and the drunk: the first because they have little experience of failure, and the second because they have succeeded in drowning theirs.”* – St. Thomas Aquinas

Hope is a topic of great contemplation in my household this spring. Hope rode high the tidal wave of Easter morning this year and my heart was filled with the promise of Christ Risen! We are an Easter people after all!

Of course life has a way of challenging hope. This season has brought many changes and with them many losses for my family. What illness hasn't stolen from those I love, time and circumstances have. To hope in the face of loss or failure as St. Thomas points out is no small thing, and I am neither young nor given to excess consumption of alcohol.

Humans seem to miss the gift of hope and instead focus on the despair or presumption that wall off our hearts to God. It is easy to despair of the good in the world especially when one's efforts seem to fall like a grain of sand in the desert. Like Frodo lamenting his role as the ring bearer and the darkness of the age, we seem to get lost in the dark caverns of Moria without hope of seeing the light of day once more. In despair we forget the ever-moving hand of *Providence* that always “works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Many bible loving Christians like to quote Romans 8:28, while leaving out the last phrase. “Who are called according to His purpose?” Scripture here is referring to those who love God. This is not those who think God is a super cool guy, but those who do His will. Love here is a verb. This love is ordered toward God's will and not our own. Presumption that our will and discernment is best, lays *God's purpose* aside in service to the false god of our feeble plans and designs. This is destined to fail.

We cannot bring about our own salvation no matter how clever or sophisticated our arguments are for the sin we commit. We cannot work against God and presume his blessings. This is not how mercy works. In God's mercy we find our greatest hope! It is false hope to assume that the life of grace remains in us when we continue to say no to God. Mercy follows repentance and this is true hope!

My 5-year-old son posed a question this morning at breakfast. He asked, “Mommy, what exactly is sin?” *Son, keep asking the questions that will get you to heaven!* If only more adults pondered this question, I thought. I replied, “Saying ‘no’ to God.” Oh, and how many ways we humans say no to God. Sadly, we say no to Love.

But there is reason yet for hope! The antidote for despair is faith. This is faith in God's love and the ever present work of Providence for our good, even if that good is only to be experienced in the next life with Christ in heaven. We are pilgrims after all and heaven is our true destination.

The antidote for presumption that robs humanity of authentic hope (eternal life) is now settled as breakfast table conversation with a five-year old. Don't say no to God. Only through Him and His will for our lives can we truly have hope for eternal joy.

So if the dark clouds have gathered in your world this spring, have hope! “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33

---

This contribution is available at <http://amazingnearness.com/2017/06/25/the-gift-of-hope/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Mary's Relationship with the Eucharist

With yesterday's celebration in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church of the great Solemnity of Corpus Christi (The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ), I felt the need to share with you some of the words from Pope St. John Paul II's encyclical, [Eucharistia de Ecclesia](#), specifically where he focuses on the Blessed Virgin Mary's relationship with the Holy Eucharist.

I think I have at least quoted some of these thoughts in previous blog posts, but have never brought them all together in just one article. The Holy Eucharist is a topic that I have written about numerous times in the past, most notably [the article](#) from my series, [Quick Lessons from the Catechism](#).

If you are a faithful, devout, and practicing Catholic, the Holy Eucharist should be an important aspect of your spirituality, most importantly Sunday Mass and Eucharistic Adoration. If your parish has Perpetual or weekly Adoration, I can't encourage you enough to sign-up for one hour to spend with Our Lord, particularly if you are involved with a liturgical ministry at your parish (sacristan, usher, lector, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist). I know countless people who have found a new love for their faith in an Adoration chapel.

If your parish does not have Eucharistic Adoration, I would highly encourage you to speak to your Pastor about bringing in this devotion to the life of the parish. For some reason, if you're having a difficult time with this endeavor, ask for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary to assist you. She knows exactly how important the Holy Eucharist is to the life of the Church, because she was there at its inception.

Knowing how important the Eucharist is to the life of the Church, here are 10 quotes from the aforementioned encyclical written by the great 20<sup>th</sup> century Polish Pope about Mary's relationship to the Holy Eucharist –

1. "If we wish to rediscover in all its richness the profound relationship between the Church and the Eucharist, we cannot neglect Mary, Mother and model of the Church. In my Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, I pointed to the Blessed Virgin Mary as our teacher in contemplating Christ's face, and among the mysteries of light I included *the institution of the Eucharist*. Mary can guide us towards this most holy sacrament, because she herself has a profound relationship with it."
2. "*Mary is a 'woman of the Eucharist' in her whole life*. The Church, which looks to Mary as a model, is also called to imitate her in her relationship with this most holy mystery."
3. "With the same maternal concern which she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say to us: "Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If he was able to change water into wine, he can also turn bread and wine into his body and blood, and through this mystery bestow on believers the living memorial of his passover, thus becoming the 'bread of life'"."



Our Lady of the Host by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres

4. “Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God’s Word*. The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord’s body and blood.”

5. “Mary also anticipated, in the mystery of the incarnation, the Church’s Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, she bore in her womb the Word made flesh, she became in some way a “tabernacle” – the first “tabernacle” in history – in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating his light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary.”

6. “In her daily preparation for Calvary, Mary experienced a kind of “anticipated Eucharist” – one might say a “spiritual communion” – of desire and of oblation, which would culminate in her union with her Son in his passion, and then find expression after Easter by her partaking in the Eucharist which the Apostles celebrated as the memorial of that passion.”

7. “For Mary, receiving the Eucharist must have somehow meant welcoming once more into her womb that heart which had beat in unison with hers and reliving what she had experienced at the foot of the Cross.”

8. “Mary is present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, the same ought to be said of Mary and the Eucharist. This is one reason why, since ancient times, the commemoration of Mary has always been part of the Eucharistic celebrations of the Churches of East and West.”

9. “Mary sings of the “new heavens” and the “new earth” which find in the Eucharist their anticipation and in some sense their programme and plan. The *Magnificat* expresses Mary’s spirituality, and there is nothing greater than this spirituality for helping us to experience the mystery of the Eucharist. The Eucharist has been given to us so that our life, like that of Mary, may become completely a *Magnificat!*”

10. "...let us *listen to Mary Most Holy*, in whom the mystery of the Eucharist appears, more than in anyone else, as a *mystery of light*. Gazing upon Mary, we come to know *the transforming power present in the Eucharist*. In her we see the world renewed in love."

During this week, let us contemplate these words and implement them into our daily prayer life. If you do spend time in Adoration, I would encourage you to do a "lectio divina" type of prayer with these words. Meditating and praying upon these saintly words might open for you another avenue in your devotion to the Holy Eucharist and in your relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is there always leading us closer to Jesus Christ in this sacrament of all sacraments.

**[Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament...Pray for Us](#)**

**Pope Saint John Paul II...Pray for Us**

---

This contribution is available at <http://tomporna.org/2017/06/19/mondays-with-mary-marys-relationship-with-the-eucharist/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Living in the Fullness of Who We Are [at Creo en Dios!]

I will leave the Jesuit Retreat House in OshKosh this morning, filled with gratitude for the many graces of this retreat. It was my privilege to direct four retreatants this past week, and it is always a joy to see how God works with each individual.

Yesterday, I had the additional privilege of preaching at Mass. The Gospel, part of the Sermon on the Mount, was the second of three Gospel segments that I sometimes think of as Jesus upping the ante – his series of “you have heard x, I tell you y.” (You have heard do not kill, I say do not harbor anger against your brother; you have heard it said do not commit adultery, I say do not lust after another, and so on.)

I suggested in my remarks that I think what Jesus is doing here is inviting us to get underneath the literal words of the commandments to the heart of the matter. He is encouraging us to a broader way of thinking about what it means to live in accordance with God’s standard, asking us to grapple with how we are asked to live our lives in an affirmative sense, not just to avoid the really big bad things.

That is a challenge in our world, which invites us to think in terms of minimum standards, doing just what is necessary to satisfy the literal requirements imposed on us. Being a good Christian (or any person of faith) is not all that challenging if all I have to do is meet the literal words of the “law.” I joked about how easy it would be to do our daily Examen: we could sit with our Ten Commandment scorecard and check off, “Didn’t kill anyone today, didn’t commit adultery, didn’t steal anything. I’m golden.”

But, what if do not kill means offering love and kindness to someone who seems unloveable rather than saying or doing something to tear them down?

What if do not steal means not taking more than a reasonable share of the world’s resources and avoiding wasting what I have?

What if do not bear false witness means having the courage to speak the truth in love in a situation where it is difficult for me to do so, but where I can do some good?

What if (to use example one of the other directors on the retreat used in his talk) not taking the name of God in vain means adopting a humility that accepts I don’t know all there is to know about God?

That is a lot more challenging. But that gets to the heart of the matter. It is not about rules and punishment, but about a choice (Ignatius always emphasizes choice) to live in a manner befitting our creation in image of God.

And that is what Jesus is inviting us to, to embrace the fullness of who we are, to live for the greater glory of God, not just to skate by on minimum standards.



## In Plain Sight [at Theologyisaverb]

# *In Plain Sight*

T h e o l o g y i s a v e r b . c o m



Every Spring my mom, though teaching full time, would find an extra reserve of energy to become attentive to the details of housekeeping that winter and life had placed on the back burner. Make no mistake, however, it wasn't just her responsibility but mine as well. Cobwebs and dust bunnies had no recourse but to succumb to her broom, keen eye and swift hand. What always surprised me in the course of these weeks was not the visible dirt but that which lay hidden in plain sight.

With pails of soapy water, a sponge for each of us, and a strong determination of mission we washed each wall from top to bottom. Not just once, but several times over, removing the unsightly grime that



somehow had made its home on ours. And while I longed to stop at the first attempt, to do so would simply make the dirt remaining all the more obvious. Yet, when the proper time and care was taken the work taken would reveal a well cared for home and the splendid true color of the original paint chosen.

I thought of this today in contemplating the housekeeping, as it were, of our souls. While we might easily recognize the walls that are broken or seemingly damaged beyond repair, do we see the layers of dirt and daily sin that fade the color of love that we are to reflect? Are we attentive only in confessing the obvious cracks or plaster in need of repair, or do we return time and time again to unearth the less visible sin we have accumulated?

For, much like the first pass of the soap on the wall, our awareness of the multitude of sin in our lives becomes apparent only when we begin to scratch the surface of the grime of time and habit. Too much work we say for such a small reward. Yet, this is the convincing deception of the venial sins in our lives. These small innocuous ways that we even unknowingly hide the beauty of God within, and become content to be less than what we were meant to be. If it has been some time since you have attended to this deeper spiritual housekeeping, God is ready and eager to provide the soap and water!

**Reflect:**

In what ways and areas do I need to attend to most in my spiritual life? What areas do I neglect? What might be revealed in tidying here that will let God's love shine brighter in my life?

Peace,

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

---

This contribution is available at <http://theologyisaverb.com/2017/06/12/in-plain-sight/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## About me

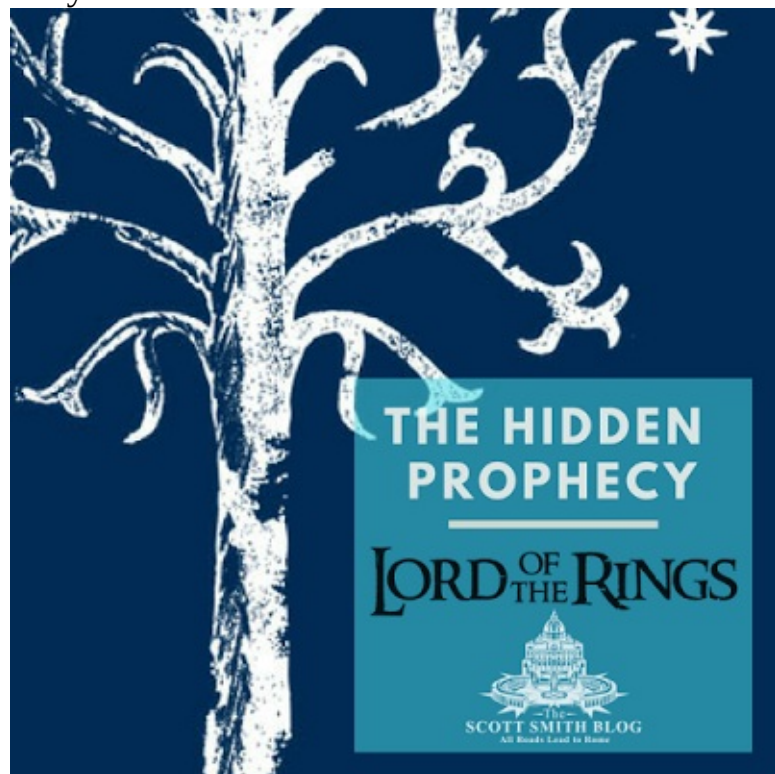


Hey, my name is Scott Smith. I'm an attorney, author, theologian, and pro-life activist. I live in southern Louisiana with my beautiful wife and three wild-eyed children. We live between two rivers in our hometown of New Roads... [Read more](#)

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.thescottsmithblog.com/2017/05/the-tree-of-life-in-lord-of-rings.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Do you remember the White Tree of Gondor?



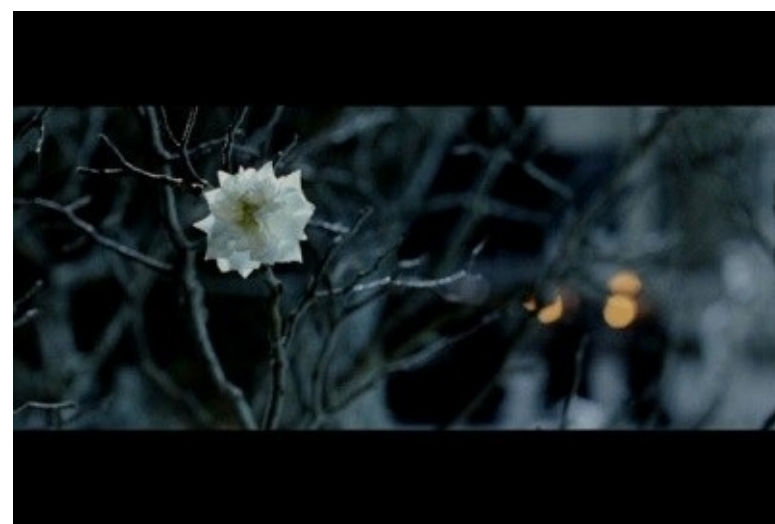
It was the symbol of Gondor. Faramir and the knights of Gondor wore the tree on their armor, their breastplates and shields:



The White Tree grew in the uppermost courtyard of the citadel of Minas Tirith:



The White Tree had withered in the years of the Stewards of Gondor, when the throne of Gondor was empty and there was no king. The White Tree mysteriously bloomed again at the Return of the King:



But why? What is the significance of the blooming of this tree?

## **The White Tree of Gondor & the Stump of Jesse**

As Jesus was leaving Jericho, a voice rose from the crowd. It was Bartimaeus, the blind beggar. He was sitting in the dust, along the roadside. The blind man cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47) The blind man was screaming, groping around in his private darkness and among the cruel feet of the road. Why had this blind man called Jesus the Son of David? What did the blind man see?

The great prophet, Jeremiah, announced the coming of the Son of David, cf. [Jeremiah 23:5-6](#):

*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a **righteous Branch**, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The Lord is our righteousness.’*

Jesus would be the son of David, i.e. a descendant of David, according to the flesh, according to Romans 1:3. This is why we are given the genealogy of Jesus at the beginning of Mathew's Gospel. But what of this "righteous Branch"?

The great prophet, Isaiah, also had something to say about this "branch", cf. [Isaiah 11](#):

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.*

*And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

*And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.*

The "stump of Jesse"? What is that and who is Jesse? Jesse is David's father. The tree that grew from Jesse was David and the lines of kings which succeeded him. When the line of kings was broken, the tree was cut down, leaving only a stump. Sound familiar?

Remember Bilbo's prophecy sung at the Council of Elrond:

*All that is gold does not glitter,  
Not all those who wander are lost;  
The old that is strong does not wither,  
**Deep roots** are not reached by the frost.  
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,  
A light from the shadows shall spring;*

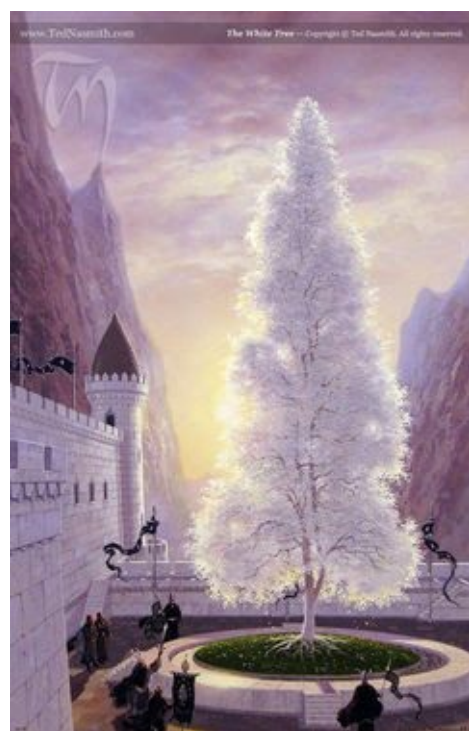
*Renewed shall be blade that was broken:*

*The crownless again shall be king.*

## **Isildur's Heir & the Son of David**

Note the association of the heir to a broken line of kings, an ancient tree presumed dead, and the tree suddenly putting forth new growth, “a shoot” or “a branch”. Jesus is the Son of David, his descendant. He is heir to David's kingdom as the new King of Israel. Aragorn is Isildur's heir as the new King of Gondor. After so long without a king, the coming of Jesus and the coming of Aragorn marks the “Return of the King.”

The original White Tree of Gondor was made in the image of Telperion, the elder of the Two Trees of Valinor. The First White Tree of Gondor was the seed of Nimloth the Fair of Númenor, which was the seed of Celeborn of Tol Eressëa, which was the seed of Galathilion, which was the seed of Telperion. The First White Tree of Minas Ithil was planted by Isildur in the Second Age. The Second White Tree was planted in Minas Anor by Isildur in the second year of the Third Age and lived 1,634 years. The Third White Tree was planted by King Tarondor in Minas Tirith and lived for 1,212 years before dying under the rule of the Stewards. Since no seedling could be found, it was left standing as dead wood.



After being crowned king, Aragorn II discovers with Gandalf's help a sapling of the White Tree growing upon the slopes of Mindolluin, high above Minas Tirith. This, the king reverently plants in the place where the Third White Tree so long stood. After standing dead for over 150 years, the Third White Tree is placed in the Tombs of the Kings, honored as though it were a monarch.

The genealogy of the White Tree reads much like the genealogy of Jesus, which is recited at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew and again in Luke 3. This makes sense because the tree was so closely linked to the line of kings as to be a king, itself – the Third White Tree was even buried as a king! The genealogy of Christ is evenly recited in Matthew in fourteen-generation sequences: “So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations” (Matthew 1:17). This genealogy demonstrates that Jesus is, literally, the Son of David. Similarly, the dynasty of the White Tree connects Isildur to Aragorn.

Remember, there are two genealogies of Jesus. While Mathew’s genealogy focuses on Jesus being the Son of David, Luke’s genealogy traces Jesus all the way back to God, through Adam, so as to describe Jesus as the New Adam. Similarly, the genealogy of the White Tree goes all the way back to Telperion, one of the Two Trees of Tolkien’s Garden of Eden, which were divinely created similar to Adam.

What a second! If Isildur's Heir and the Son of David are connected, what is Tolkien doing with Isildur and King David? For more, check out the next post!

[1] *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book Two, Chapter II, "The Council of Elrond"

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.thescottsmithblog.com/2017/06/the-hidden-prophecy-in-lord-of-rings.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Vocations, Veils, and Vintage Fashions [at String of Pearls]

Here I am again--blogging for the second day in a row! (I hope I can keep this streak going...)

This morning, my husband and I attended 8:30 Mass at our new parish in VA. (Joining us was our youngest son, who flew in yesterday from Germany to enjoy a couple of weeks of leave in the good old U S of A.) We have become quite fond of our new little parish church, located at the center of our new little town. We are also growing fond of our new pastor, a very holy and engaging priest who has had an interesting history: during his first career, before he answered a calling to the priesthood, he was a special agent in the CIA.

Today, Father spoke about vocations, and the need to pray for them. He quoted Saint John Bosco, who claimed that one out of every three men would receive a calling--think about that,

*one out of three*

! How, then, can Holy Mother Church be experiencing a "priest shortage"? He reminded Catholic parents of the need to portray the priesthood in a positive light so that our sons who might be called are willing to listen. What we need to really pray for, he said, is not so much the vocations themselves, because they are abundant; but rather we must pray that the men chosen by the Holy Spirit to have those vocations will be open to hearing and answering the call. I leaned over and nudged my son and whispered, "You're our only hope, now that all of your brothers are married!" And because great minds think alike, as we exited the church after Mass and crossed the parking lot to the car, my husband also gently teased him about the fact that he must be the one in our family who's destined to become a priest. He good-naturedly made sure to point out to us that one in three men didn't necessarily mean one in three men

*in every family*

When this youngest son of ours was in middle school, he was always scrupulously aware of the state of his soul; he used to come and tell us on Friday nights that he would need a ride to church the next day for Confession (a practice that would continue until he was a licensed driver himself). He seemed so advanced in his Faith for someone so young, and we used to wonder if he ever thought he might have a vocation. But he never really talked about it. Years later, he did admit that the idea did cross his mind on occasion. But he said that was mostly because random adults, completely out of the blue, would ask him if he ever thought about becoming a priest, and he couldn't help but wonder if this was God's way of letting him know that he'd been chosen.

Anyway, on the drive back home in the car, we talked about how the call to Christian fatherhood is also a noble and absolutely vital vocation in our increasingly fallen world. And that is the call our baby believes he is hearing--at this point, at least. He was always a serious and mature-beyond-his-years little guy, trying desperately to catch up to his four older brothers. He has tried to emulate them his whole life, and now they are all married to lovely Catholic women and bringing forth into the world a



small army of souls--of future soldiers for Christ--with those women. It is the sort of life he can well envision for himself one day, too.

Okay, this a "My Sunday Best" post, so I guess I should talk a little bit about Mass fashions now, shouldn't I?



Today I wore a cotton sundress that I've had for close to 10 years (it was a T J Maxx find, no surprise there) and a short-sleeved black cardigan with a lace collar that I've had just as long (also from T J Maxx). There are pictures of me wearing this same outfit at a wedding shower for Ginger (wife of son #2) back in 2014, and I don't believe I've put it on since. So I don't follow that common advice of closet organizers/purgers everywhere that states if you haven't worn an item of clothing in a year, it's time to get rid of it. My favorites can sometimes languish in the back of the closet for several years at a time before I decide to recycle them--and then they feel brand new.





For Mass, I also donned a veil, a practice I started about 8 or 9 years ago, after giving myself about 5 years to drum up the courage. This lovely mantilla is a treasure I discovered a few years back among my late mother-in-law's things when we were cleaning out my husband's childhood home. The buttery-soft vintage lace is so much higher in quality than the modern stuff you find at JoAnn's Fabrics these days. It's silver-gray and black, and one day in the not-too-distant future, it will match my hair just about perfectly.

I saw the most beautiful explanation for why I feel compelled to veil in a recent Instagram post, and I thought I'd share it with you here.



This young woman said it better than I ever could. Wearing a veil to Mass most certainly has nothing to do with wanting to seem "holier than thou." In fact, my fear that others would think that about me is what made it take so long to get up the guts to do it.

Before I sign off, I thought I'd show you some other vintage beauties that I acquired recently (as long as we're talking fashions here). My siblings and I held a garage sale a few weeks ago to clear out our mother's home before selling it, now that our dad is gone and she has moved into an assisted living facility. Mom put aside the things she wanted to have at her new place and then urged us kids to take whatever clothes, furniture, artwork, or knickknacks we wanted before the sale started. I came across some lovely vintage items that I couldn't bear to part with. Although I will probably never wear these classic accessories, I just wanted to keep them in the family.



The genuine fur wrap was my paternal grandmother's, and it has her monogram embroidered on the satin lining. And the long white gloves with pearl buttons were my mother's. She believes they are the ones she wore for her wedding. I think these pieces are so lovely. So classy! So Grace Kelly, so Jackie Kennedy! My husband, on the other hand, thinks that if I just added a turban to the ensemble, I could channel Chevy Chase in that attic scene in "Christmas Vacation."



So perhaps I have next year's Halloween costume all figured out.

On that note, I think I'll call wrap up this post. But head on over to

[Rosie's](#)

. There are bound to be much

*better*

Sunday Best fashions over there.

---

This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2017/06/my-sunday-best-vocations-veils-and.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

In [the last post](#), the prophecies of Jesus being the "Son of David" and the new "branch" from the "stump of Jesse" were compared to Aragorn being "Isildur's Heir", as well as the Return of the King being associated with the White Tree of Gondor blooming again. Clearly, Tolkien was connecting the Return of the King(s): Jesus and Aragorn.

However, there are still *more* connections between Isildur and King David -- perhaps even *more obvious* connections. So obvious, that you might even wonder why you never saw them until now! The two are very much alike, both in their epic successes and their epic failures.



## The Hidden Goliath

Sauron was decimating the armies of the Last Alliance of Elves and Men. Sauron towered above even [Elendil the Tall](#), the first High King of [Gondor](#) and the greatest warrior of all the [Dúnedain](#). [Sauron](#) had just killed not only the High King Elendil but the Elven-King [Gil-galad](#), and he had shattered Elendil's sword. At this supreme moment, Isildur took up his father's broken sword and cut the One Ring from Sauron's hand.

Call me crazy, but ... **Doesn't the slaying of the giant Sauron mirror David's slaying of the giant [Goliath](#)?**



Moreover, both Isildur and David were tempted and both committed massive, seemingly irredeemable, sins. Isildur turned back from casting the One Ring into the fires of Mount Doom. David turned back to [Bathsheba](#) bathing nude on the rooftop. Both of these sins crippled their effectiveness as rulers and rippled through their dynasties, as well.



# Isildur vs. David Infographic

# LORD OF THE RINGS

## KING ISILDUR IS KING DAVID

Here's why! Here are the connections between the Old Testament King of Israel and Aragorn's ancestor:



### GIANT-KILLERS

Isildur picked up his father's broken sword and cut the One Ring from the giant Sauron's hand. Similarly, David used just a slingshot to kill the giant Goliath.



### TRAGIC MISTAKES

Isildur turned away from Mount Doom without destroying the One Ring. David didn't turn away from Bathsheba. Temptation overcame them both and, ultimately ruined them!



### RULED UNIFIED KINGDOMS

Saul-David-Solomon and Elendil-Isildur-Valanir: both dynasties of only three kings, after which their kingdoms split into North & South (Arnor-Gondor, Israel-Judah)



### TREE SYMBOLS

The life of the White Tree of Gondor is bound to the line Númenórean kings. The rebirth of David's Kingdom in Jesus is prophesied as the "shoot" from the "stump of Jesse".



The  
SCOTT SMITH BLOG

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.THESCOTTSMITHBLOG.ORG](http://WWW.THESCOTTSMITHBLOG.ORG)

# The Hidden Israel

There is one last connection to mention, especially since it will introduce the next section. Again, we turn to the genealogies, but ascendants this time instead of descendants. Isildur's father, Elendil, was the first High King of Gondor. He ruled over both the northern kingdom of Arnor and the southern kingdom of Gondor, as well as all the remaining Númenoreans, the Dúnedain. King David, too, was the successor to the first High King. King David succeeded King Saul, the first king of a unified Israel. Later and in part due to David's sin, Israel would split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. For more on this, check back next week!

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.thescottsmithblog.com/2017/06/the-hidden-king-david-of-lord-of-rings.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |



## Are Most Christians Clueless About Their True Identity? [at joy of nine9]

A good friend, Martha, from Madonna House, “happened” to sit beside a self-proclaimed witch on an old bus heading towards the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. Noticing Martha’s large cross identifying her as a member of the Lay Apostolate, the witch cynically remarked that most Christians were stupid because they were completely clueless about the potential power that existed within each of them. Chuckling, she pointed out all the people on the bus who were Christians. How did she know? The witch could “see” a blue light or aura around every baptized Christian. She then mocked Christians who acted like weak victims but was pleased that the power of the Holy Spirit was usually wasted on them and lay dormant.

At the time Martha was having trouble fasting and praying in seclusion twice a week. When her seat mate boasted that she fasted regularly for the destruction of Christian families, Martha was appalled. If a witch could fast motivated only by hate, surely she could fast with the help of the Holy Spirit while motivated by love. Surely she, who had taken vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience could start relying more on the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within her to live out her vocation to intercede through prayer. That encounter with a witch radically altered Martha’s attitude, inspiring a renewed zeal to live fully in Christ.

God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. When we ignore His indwelling Spirit, it is like owning an expensive computer which we never bother to plug in and use.



first published on [Catholic Stand](#)

**The Holy Spirit Dwells Within All Baptized Christians**

Christians, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” ([1 Corinthians 3:16](#))

The light of Christ, His Spirit, dwells in all baptized Christians, whether we are aware of it or not. When Jesus said, “Remain in me as I remain in you” ([John 15:4](#)), He was stating a fact; He lives in us. Whether our experience seems to line up with Christ’s statement or not, the truth remains. Yet, most of us live our daily lives as if this were not the case; we are oblivious to the fact that we are actually the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul chastised the Corinthians for not recognizing this spiritual reality when he wrote: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

We cannot experience anything of the spiritual life in ourselves apart from Christ. We do not acquire something personal in our experience because all the spiritual experiences of Christians have already been experienced by Christ. What we call “our” experience is only our entering into Jesus’ history and experience. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is clear:

The One whom the Father has sent into our hearts, the Spirit of his Son, is truly God. Consubstantial with the Father and the Son, the Spirit is inseparable from them, in both the inner life of the Trinity and his gift of love for the world. In adoring the Holy Trinity, life-giving, consubstantial, and indivisible, the Church’s faith also professes the distinction of persons. When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure, it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him. ([CCC 689](#))

Saint Paul also prayed that people would become enlightened “... that you may know” ([Ephesians 1:18](#)). We need our eyes opened so we may know the truth that the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts; if the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts we have the Father and the Son dwelling within. This is not merely doctrine but reality.

To many Christians, the Holy Spirit is unreal. They think He is as simply an influence for good, like a conscience, and that the Holy Spirit simply tries to show them how to be good. The trouble with the Corinthian Christians was not that they had not received the Holy Spirit but that they were not aware of His presence. They failed to realize the greatness of the One who lived in their hearts. Saint Paul wrote to them: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Saint Paul’s words are for Catholics today as well.

## Through the Holy Spirit

... “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” [[Romans 5:5](#)].

... This love (the “charity” of *1 Cor 13*) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received “power” from the Holy Spirit [[Acts 1:8](#); cf. [1 Corinthians 13](#)].

By this power of the Spirit, God’s children can bear much fruit. ... “We live by the Spirit”; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we “walk by the Spirit” [[Galatians 5:25](#); cf. [Matthew 16:24-26](#)]. ([CCC 734-736](#))

A Christian is one with Christ, born again by His Spirit. A Catholic is not someone who merely agrees

with a set of teaching, or strives to live a good life in his own strength and power. Living in, with and through the Holy Spirit is not for a select few saints or for the so-called Charismatics or Pentecostals. The release of the Holy Spirit and life in the Spirit is for all because it is simply the normal Christian life. Let's honestly choose to humbly trust that God is wiser and smarter than we are and so give the Holy Spirit permission to take charge in our lives. Let's choose to live a Holy Spirit led life and thus allow God's power to heal and transform our world through us. Let's simply choose to be who we really are.

***Be who you were created to be, and you will set the world on fire. – St. Catherine of Siena***

---

This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanjuneau.blog/2017/06/26/are-most-christians-clueless-about-their-true-identity/>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Catholic Pro-Life Victory in Georgia: Handel Wins House Seat

On Tuesday night, it was announced that Karen Handel had won the most expensive House race in American history. While many are describing this as a defeat for the Democratic party, what's not being mentioned is that Handel's victory is a big win for the pro-life movement and a vindication of sorts for the Congresswoman-elect.



This is not the first time Georgia's new Congresswoman-elect has made headlines. Back in 2012 after an unsuccessful bid for governor, Handel was appointed the Senior Vice President for Policy of Susan G. Komen for the Cure. Shortly thereafter, the Komen foundation cut ties and funding to Planned Parenthood. According to the [New York Times](#), the change resulted in a halt of grants to 19 of Planned Parenthood's 83 affiliates, which received nearly \$700,000 from the Komen foundation in 2011.



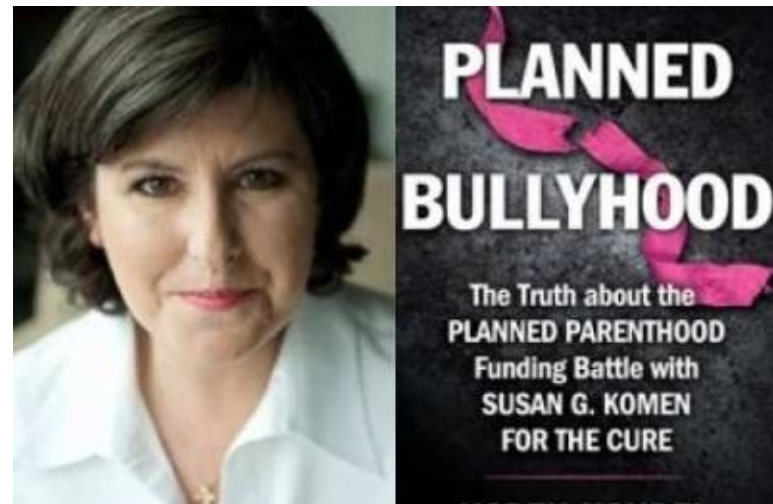
A Catholic herself, Handel cited the dozens of Catholic bishops across the country that had been calling on their parishioners to boycott races sponsored by Komen because, in addition to the Planned Parenthood grants, the group gave money for breast cancer research to medical centers doing stem cell research.

The Komen decision was met with fierce outcry from pro-abortion advocates and Komen quickly

backpedaled, restoring funding to the abortion giant. Handel resigned her position shortly after Komen reversed its position.

While it was clear that credit was due to Handel for steering Komen in the pro-life direction, Handel later noted [in her resignation letter](#) that she was "deeply disappointed by the gross mischaracterizations of the strategy" to cut ties with Planned Parenthood. "The decision to update our granting model," Handel stated, "was made before I joined Komen, and the controversy related to Planned Parenthood has long been a concern to the organization."

Handel later published [Planned Bullyhood](#) as an account of her role in the Komen controversy. It has been described as "a blistering insider's account of [Komen]'s decision to halt grants to Planned Parenthood and its swift retreat in the face of an intense, widespread backlash."



On Tuesday night, Karen Handel, a veteran Republican officeholder, overcame a flood of progressive money to win a special House election in Georgia to fill the seat recently vacated by [Tom Price](#). Price, now President Trump's health secretary, won the district by 23 points in 2016. Handel will likely be eager to assist her predecessor, a key figure in the overhaul of Obamacare.

Handel fended off [Jon Ossoff](#), a 30-year-old Democrat whose political experience consisted of little more than serving as a congressional aide. Despite obscurity, Ossoff was able to raise \$25 million, nearly all of which was donated by progressives from outside of Georgia. Through May, Handel's campaign had spent \$3.2 million compared to \$22.5 million by Ossoff, according to campaign finance reports filed with the FEC. Altogether, out-of-state interests spent [\\$26.2 million](#) on the Georgia special election.

In the end, outside interests elevated what would otherwise have been a sleepy local race into the most expensive House campaign in American history.

You can watch Congresswoman-Elect Handel's victory speech , in which she bids "hasta la vista" to her opponent.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.thescottsmithblog.com/2017/06/catholic-pro-life-victory-in-georgia.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

# Eucharist and Conversion (Solemnity of the Body and Blood of the Lord, Year A) [at Gentle Reign]



More and more in recent years, I've been seeing liturgy in terms of conversion, mostly because I'm understanding all of Christian life as a process of "turning around" from what we're taught is normal to what Jesus taught. Most of what Jesus taught is not really normal at all (in the sense of "business as usual," but it

*is*

actually more real. We might wistfully be glad Jesus is teaching all those bad people to be more like us, but unless we're understanding from him that his words both comforting and challenging apply to everyone and not just to those who're different from us, we're rewriting the gospel to fit how we're already living, and not really taking seriously its radical departure from the organizing strategies of the world.

We learn everything (we learn what is "normal") by imitating other humans, starting with our parents. We learn to walk, talk, eat certain foods with certain utensils, everything, all by observing and imitation. We're taught who is good and who is bad by those around us, who we're like and who we're not like, who is better than we are, and who we are better than. "Normal" is learned behavior. Because of that, we all learn to want the same things, whether it's certain toys, clothing, or cars, or whether it's security, power, authority, or property. And often it leads to conflict, so "civilization" (the way things are, and have always been) has organized us into bands of people who define themselves by who we aren't, who we belong to, to whom we owe allegiance, and who is an enemy. Religion often participates in this "civilizing" influence. And civilization does a pretty good job of organizing us into competitive groups and keeping something like peace, unless we happen to be in the out-group, which is where it's dangerous to be. We might look different, believe differently, live in a different country, not have enough money, any number of things that separates us from the dominant culture. Suddenly, we can easily be identified as "the enemy" and disposed of however enemies are disposed of. And in case it doesn't occur to you right off,

*everyone*

is in several "out" groups, as well as in groups. It's not just an us vs. them world, it's more like everyone vs. everyone else.

But Jesus came to show a different way. His teaching suggested a question, something like, “How’s that whole thing with (the Roman god-man) Caesar’s civilization working out for you? How’s normal for you? Happy? Let me show you a different way, a different authority. A different kind of empire, and a different kind of God.” He laid out the essentials in what we heard earlier this year, and also in the Lenten weekday readings, in the Sermon on the Mount. Call God “our Father,” because we’re all brothers and sisters, and what God wants is a family, and it’s a family that God will care for. Do unto others what you’d like them to do for you. Turn the other cheek. If you have two of something, give one away. Love your enemies. Don’t even call people names. If you want to be great, be like God, and serve everyone else.

Then the way he lived this out, with the words “Follow me,” was to eat and drink with everybody. Nice people, not-so-nice people, good people, throwaways, rich people, poor people. Everybody. This was such a “Jesus” thing that it became the way that his friends remembered him, and spread the good news he entrusted to them, after his death. In both Luke’s and John’s post-resurrection stories, Jesus cooking and eating with the twelve continues to be part of the story of presence and recognition.

Eucharist reflects all of this and more. It’s a meal for a new creation. Enough for everybody, and everybody gets the same. God provides, we share God’s goodness in the gifts we’ve been given. No one is privileged above others in the community of Jesus. Leadership is service in the Eucharist. In the liturgy, “follow me” becomes “Go and announce the gospel of the Lord,” or “glorify the Lord by your life.” The liturgy announces itself to be a *sacrament*, and outward sign of a reality we are living the rest of the week, month, year, the rest of our lifetime. *What happened here*, the liturgy says, *go make that real in the world again. Take the nourishment this gathering, God’s word, and the bread of heaven has given you, and share it with everyone. Go, team God. Peacefully. See you next week.*

But for a lot of people, those who believe in the competence and expediency of normal civilization, those whose idea is that power is control, that might makes right, and that one’s own “in” group has priority over all others in everything, including access to the good things of the earth, and freedom, and happiness, are not interested *at all* in the message of Christ. They will always push back, either by ridiculing the very idea of the gospel, or rebaptizing it in the name of their own gods, and turning it into a gospel of prosperity, or a gospel of nationalism. Those who believe otherwise are reduced to irrelevance, or worse. Persuasion and example take too long. We can sacrifice other people and their children so that our children can be safe. Better yet, we can assure ourselves that God will take care of them after they die, and feel better about ourselves. The end justifies the means. The gospel is an ideal. Muscle is real.

“When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord, until you come.” Caesar and those in power know exactly what the new empire is all about. The Romans thought they could put a stop to it. But the early church had *experienced* the resurrection. They understood, with Jesus, that God is life, for whom death does not exist. There would be no death for the word of God, no death for the

gospel. We who eat and drink the body and blood of Christ need to know that our future is the same as that of Jesus and the martyrs if we choose his way. But to be part of the “kingdom of God” means leaving behind the deathmaking, regret, and sorrow of “normal” civilization, and beginning here and now to live in the world of the resurrection. In the Eucharist, the Lamb who was slain by the normalcy of violence lives among us and shares the infinite life of the Spirit with those who gather to turn and follow him to live, here and now, in a different world. Blessed are those who are called to the table of the Lamb of God.

---

This contribution is available at <http://rorycooney.blogspot.com/2017/06/eucharist-and-conversion-solemnity-of.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |



# "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

©Copyright Larry Peterson 2017 All Right Reserved

---

This contribution is available at <http://slipperywillie.blogspot.com/2017/03/little-nellie-of-holy-god-toddler-who.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Skydiving with the Holy Spirit [at Sweeping Up Joy]

Okay. Quick aside since with crazy crazy life life I'm pretty much only able to write once a week.

I met Kirby from the Internet!

The delightful Kirby blogs over at [Under Thy Roof](#) about faith, mothering, and ballet. And it turns out



she's a real person!

We both attended a homeschool conference in Minnesota this weekend, being tempted by All The Books For Sale as well as listening to various speakers. It was worth the long car ride!

Now on to [My Sunday Best](#)!

As I just mentioned, we traveled this weekend for the conference, and shortly after Mass we hit the road for our four hour journey home. When we left on our adventure on Friday, we were having our carpets cleaned. All our furniture was crammed into our kitchen/dining room and bathrooms. That would have been one fun game of bathroom hot lava...



Thus we returned to a home perfect for dance parties, not great for actually living. Plus I had to keep the kids from spilling things on the never-looked-so-good carpet. Which is a full-time job. So David took My Sunday Best picture at 8:00pm. The optimal time is right before Mass— before wilting happens. But those minutes are so hectic, most my pictures happen after the sweaty wrestling match that Mass with a toddler is. Today's 8:00pm picture reaches new heights in harriedness and exhaustion. Well. You can see. You get the idea.

When I was packing on Friday, I forgot that this weekend was Pentecost. So none of us wore red. I was too busy stacking furniture in weird places to think deeply about packing. #pentecostfail

Mass was great. The priest spoke about being open to the Holy Spirit, which makes sense thematically since it's Pentecost.

He talked about how much openness to the Holy Spirit formed him. How it enabled him to do things he never thought possible. How it helped him utilize his charisms and accomplish more for the Kingdom.

He mentioned that Jesus didn't choose the brightest bulbs to be his apostles. (My words, not his.) They weren't all that well educated or amazingly virtuous. But with the help of the Holy Spirit? They became evangelization superheros.

Jesus is accessible. He's a human. I'm a human. We could get coffee— if either of us drank coffee, and we weren't separated by thousands of years and miles— and commiserate about our joys and sufferings and body-ness.

God the Father is a father. I have a father. He teaches me and guides me and fixes stuff.

But the Holy Spirit?!?! Definitely the hardest to relate to. What do you do with a-dove-fire-wind guy? Turns out you listen and get super powers.

The priest told the story about a fundraiser for their local Catholic school. All the area priests were encouraged to offer some sort of “\_\_\_\_\_ with a priest” as an item to be auctioned off. I’ve seen that before. Usually it’s something to the effect of the priest will cook a meal and share it with the winner of the auction. Pay \$600 and Father will make you a pie. Sounds like a good deal to me.

This priest picked “Skydiving with a priest” for his contribution. He said that lots of people he knew wanted to try skydiving, but they were afraid they’d die. So he said he’d do it, too, and give last rites if things went south. (Is that funny or what?!?!)

As he was preparing for the jump with the auction winner, the instructor said that most injuries happen from hesitating. People pause-panic-wait– and that wavering causes injury. The instructor’s advice was not to delay. To move confidently without thinking about it too much.

The priest said that that’s exactly how we need to approach the Holy Spirit. Just jump.

I’m in. But I’m not sure exactly what to do about it. I’ve wanted to [learn more about charisms](#) for many moons, but I didn’t know where to start. And so it fizzled. How do I just jump?

One thing I noticed at the conference this weekend was how many speakers began their prayers with, “Come, Holy Spirit.” Seems to imply that the Holy Spirit is polite– He won’t come where He isn’t invited. That’s simple enough. It’s an easy change to add that to my prayers.

What else? Any tips on growing in understanding of the Holy Spirit?

Better stop typing before I fall asleep on the keyboard. Happy Pentecost!

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.sweepingupjoy.com/msb-31-skydiving-with-the-holy-spirit/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Without Words, Always Inviting [at CHOCOLATE FOR YOUR BRAIN!]

It began as a consequence of reading three pieces. First, I read a piece over at Aletheia on "

[Practical Steps to Keep Your Kids in the Church](#)

." and subsequently, a bit of Sherry Weddell's writings over at Mark Shea's "Catholic and Enjoying it!" blog.

*In December of 1990, Pope John Paul II issued these words of prophetic power in [Redemptoris Missio](#):*

*God is opening before the Church the horizons of a humanity more fully prepared for the sowing of the Gospel. I sense that the moment has come to commit all of the Church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples.*

*Since then, I've read hundreds of very critical, even sneering internet comments because the "springtime of the New Evangelization" didn't just happen magically through bishops issuing a document or lay Catholics writing books. (Obviously, the sneerers aren't gardeners or they would be able to recognize the "signs of the times". The actual work of springtime is the most intense of all and that it begins in late winter and extends into early summer. Mid and late summer are the times when a gardener can relax in the midst of an abundant garden.)*

*In many ways, it was missional late winter when JP II published those words and late winter merges into early spring here in the Rockies. We had snow in mid May and the last frost here was on May 19. You spend late winter/early spring clearing the debris of winter and preparing soil for spring when it does come. You plan and order your plants and supplies and sharpen your tools. But you don't \*plant\* until after the last frost.*

*You know that when "full" spring arrives, things begin to move really fast. You have been prepping for months and then suddenly, massive change occurs seemingly overnight. Full spring and summer also merge.*

*Note that JP II talked about committing our energies to TWO things, one of which we never talk about: "a new evangelization and to the mission ad gentes." In 1990, it wasn't as clear as it is today that the "new evangelization" has merged with the "mission ad gentes" which refers to the first evangelization of people who have never been baptized or heard the proclamation of the Gospel. With the emergence of "baptized unbelievers" (Vatican term) or "baptized pagans" (Pope Benedict), the rapid cultural change in the west has blurred realities that in a Christendom setting were distinct.*

*Millions of "Marginal" and "non-practicing" Catholics dropping the religious identity altogether and spinning off into a vague spirituality that rapidly morphs into functional or self-declared agnosticism or atheism. Increasingly, "Catholics" in the west are already functional agnostics before they bother to drop the religious identity.*

*More and more, we can't start with a simple proclamation of Jesus and a warm invitation to come back home. We are going to have to get very serious about a new kind of mission ad gentes to the already baptized who are spiritually, imaginatively, intellectually, culturally untouched by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in any meaningful way. The categories of Christian and non-Christian are blurring in ways we never anticipated.*

*Now is the time to get really serious about "near" pre-evangelization" and "far pre-evangelization" for the millions who have experienced almost nothing of the faith but baptism as an infant or small child and were and are being raised by non-believing, non-practicing parents. Many who still have some extremely tenuous historic or familial connection to the name "Catholic" are a million miles away from the faith in every conscious and living way.*

*The work of late winter: building bridges of trust and rousing genuine spiritual curiosity about Jesus is the work urgently needed now in the post Christendom, post modern west. And it is something for which we have few structures, little vision, and little leadership – especially at the parish and diocesan levels.*

*This involves really leaving the ecclesial building. This involves a true "ad gentes" approach to the nations, going out to the far, far places of heart and mind and imagination for the sake of those for whom God become incarnate, lived, suffered, died, and rose again.*

I finished it off with Rebecca French's excellent piece,

[The Hardest Part is Watching...](#)

I agree with her. The hardest part is watching.

The combination roiled in my brain. We cannot "keep" our children in the faith, that is, we can do all the right things and still, they might drift or run away. You can do everything and still, free will taps into the equation. After all, God created Eden, He gave his first children everything and still, they rejected a relationship in favor of their own opinions. There isn't a formula, there's you care for them, you love them, you sacrifice for them, you witness to them, and you hope more of it sinks in than they admit. Other than that, you have to hope and pray and fast against the age.

When I finished reading, I looked up the term "ad gentes." It means, "to the nations," and is a term used in Vatican documents, as part of an address or decree. We're called to evangelize ad gentes, omnes gentes if my Latin is correct, which after a quick google translate check, it is. We cannot guarantee results, we are, as Saint Bernadette said, "to inform, not convince." We still have that free will which means, we're always invited to the table. It's will we come to the feast? I went back to the problem. How do we thaw the ground to plant the seeds?

The media dubbed the young adults of this age, "Nones." "Nones" are people who belong to no community, no faith tradition, even if they've grown up in one.

It seems to be that for the newly minted agnostic in all but name, the number one common denominator is a deliberate indifference to the Divine; sort of a "I don't know if God is, and I'm not about to find out," boredom with all things beyond the present. The "None" is a soul committed to being uncommitted and deliberately unquestioning. Because they still are, because grace is still possible,



they are like seeds sleeping. To extend Sherry Wendell's metaphor, it is Winter. Snow and Ice cover the ground. We need to begin the thaw. Except I'm not sure how.

The basic ways of evangelizing are Truth, Beauty, Love, Sacrifice, Miracles and Witness, but our age is soaked in Relativism. Everyone believes, "there is no truth." and no one is swayed by the irony of saying, "there is no truth," being professed as a truth. They do not see beauty as anything but aesthetics. Love is not sacrificial, or if it is sacrificial, it is too costly to seek or sustain. They do not see marriage as anything but a personal choice, and children are burdens, consumers of time and energy and effort.

All sacrifices are merely preferences; they hold no weight. And miracles? There are none. Witnesses, well, that's just proof of your preferences. The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference, and to me, indifference is the hallmark of the soul committed to not encountering God. I'd managed to depress myself in the process.

Then, I was tasked with writing a lesson for the Chapel room in my writing critique group, so I wrote: *Most people aren't converted by argument. Most people aren't evangelized by scripture quotations or sermons. Most people go deeper and deeper into their faith as a result of an encounter, and if you ask them about that experience, it's a story. A story isn't sensation or feelings. We can't share your feelings just because you tell us, these are my feelings. We can't know your awe of God because you state, I am in awe of God. We can't even appreciate your being overwhelmed with God's grace or mercy or forgiveness unless we know the why of that experience.*

It seemed to me, this is the problem with most CCD/instruction ABOUT the faith. It is about the business of the faith, not an encounter. How, not who. Which begs the question, how do you introduce people who do not know Jesus, to Jesus. I know how it isn't done. Walking up to someone and saying, "Do you know Jesus?" is like walking up to someone and saying, "Will you be my friend?" No one wants to answer yes, even if they might think "yes" in reality. We get a lot of direct frontal assault story telling in the Chapel room, the kind that uses sweeping generalities and sentimentality when what is needed is reality, and witness. I'd meant to try and illustrate how that doesn't work so I'd written more:

*To give you a better sense of what I mean, I could tell you my son has Down Syndrome. He is often the means by which God lets me know how to love my children. Saying that doesn't really convey anything that doesn't sound like a cliché. Telling you, "he brings his family closer to each other," may be true, but that statement doesn't move. I have to bring you into the story, to bring about the revelation.*

I illustrated the point:

*Taking my son to the ocean, he filled his pockets with shells. Next he dug and flung sand on all of us. His joy at digging overwhelmed even his oldest sister's cynicism, and she helped him dig out a fort. Covered from head to toe in sand, he tackled his brothers to take him into the water. For the next hour, they held his hands and helped him jump the waves. When they wouldn't jump, he'd tell them, "Come on guys!" They jumped until their shins grew sore.*

*We hadn't planned to spend the whole afternoon digging and jumping waves. Some wanted to go for ice cream, one for a jog. Three hoped to return to the cabin and play computer games, and we had a pool waiting for us. Nine children ranging in age from six to twenty-four scrambled to build a massive fort*

*big enough to withstand the first few waves of high tide. Paul had caught most of us in his play. However he wasn't satisfied with having 90% of his family with him, and began to search for the one sister who went jogging instead of coming to the beach, calling out her name.*

*His calling for her reminded me of when we serve dinner. He always wants everyone to come to the table, and won't sit himself until we either tell him, this is all there is, or everyone is seated. His desire for everyone to be there, mirrors my own. I always want everyone home. I always want everyone at the table, everyone involved.*

*I cannot gather all my children as I once could. Many of them are adults. However my son has no problem going to taking any of his siblings by the hand and leading them to the beach or to the table. He isn't about to be deterred by age or opinions. He simply wants them present. His simple desire for their company often brings them along. Sometimes, he calls and they come. Sometimes, when they don't come, he seeks them out. All I can think is, "And a little child shall lead them," and who knows, he might. He isn't interested in how they get to the table. He's interested in who's at the table, and he wants them all. It isn't full or complete or home without them.*

Who, not how. He is warm, and he invites constantly, and never with words. He trusts the invitation to do the work.

That's how we thaw, without words, always inviting.

---

This contribution is available at <http://sherryantonettiwrites.blogspot.com/2017/06/without-words-always-inviting.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Our Need for Prayer [at Renew The Church!]

Mother Teresa troubled the West when she noted that for all the wealth of our materialism, we are victims and perpetrators of a deeper poverty than the material poverty she knew back in her beloved India. She saw among us – citizens of a developed nation, a modern and advanced society – persons rejected, abandoned, alone. She spoke of babies rejected and aborted because they would require care, and love, and sacrifice. She spoke of the “disease” among the living of persons uncared for, unloved – a cultural poverty of love:

The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty — it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There’s a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.

— Mother Teresa, *A Simple Path: Mother Teresa*

There can be a kind of love without God – but it is thin, shallow, transient. Such love is never enough; it is barren, untrustworthy, unfaithful. The true hunger of persons for love is the deep longing for home, for our Origen, for our Destiny, for the meaning and reason for our very being. We cannot know such love apart from sacrifice, from self-gift, and from the receiving of the gift of another. Love completes us, and the only love that can still the deepest longing of our hearts, is the love that completes us to finality, to perfection, into timeless peace. “There’s a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.”

Christians have the greatest promise ever dreamed of in the history of all creation, and it is no dream: it is real, a real promise, an assurance, a treasure waiting to be received and gathered into each precious self, each person, each soul. God is seeking to be sought. God is seeking to be found. God is waiting to be asked; He is the flame of divine and eternal love, waiting to set ablaze human hearts grown cold in guarded and lonely chambers of isolation. God waits to pour life into souls lingering or wandering in the shadow of death, if we will but seek Him!

Prayer is our call to God, the ever-near God who waits. Prayer is the journey to life, the journey to Him. It is the journey to Him, all the while always with Him. We cannot take a step to Him, except with Him – indeed, except in Him, and He in us, an ever-present Companion. He reveals Himself only when it is time, and only enough to enable our strength for the day. He is calling us to holiness! He is calling us to life, to love, to communion – and because He calls us to Himself, the hunger in our hearts is deep, and strong: we must respond.

### The Journey of Prayer

The journey of prayer then is a journey of response to this place in our hearts made for God, made by God, satisfied by no other love but holy love, of and for the one true God. The journey of prayer is a journey of meeting with God, of communion with Him, progressively deeper and higher in communion with Him. Therefore the path both descends, deeper and deeper into our own souls, and ascends, higher

and higher to Him. The journey of prayer proceeds with greater and greater engagement with God, if and as we continue to grow in the interior life of prayer. In the very depths of the soul is I myself – who I am – my own unique name as God knows me and has created me. If then, in my ascent to Him in prayer, I come finally to meet Him there, in the depths and center of my soul, then my prayer has reached its rightful end, even here on this earth and in this body.

## **Stages, or Grades, of Prayer**

The journey of prayer proceeds in stages: Vocal Prayer, Meditation, Contemplation. We begin with vocal prayer – either “formula” vocal prayers such as the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the common prayer of blessing before meals, the Glory Be, and so on, or “spontaneous” vocal prayers that are prayers simply prayed in our own words. This is the way we typically begin to pray – words spoken, directed to God either directly or through the intercession of some saint. For many people, this is also the only way that praying is understood! But prayer includes more, much more, than “words spoken, directed to God” directly or indirectly.

The essential requirements to pray vocal prayer well, and fruitfully, are to pray slowly, carefully, attentively, with devotion:

1. pray with careful attentiveness, slowly, giving careful attention to what is being prayed: to every word offered in the prayer,
2. pray with reverent devotion and commitment to the words prayed; with a faithful sincere heart, with careful intent to be obedient to the meaning, the words, the intention of the prayer.

If we advance in prayer, we advance to include meditation, or mental prayer, as a way of praying along with our vocal prayers. We never “outgrow” the beautiful written vocal prayers of the Church – indeed the Our Father is our model for prayer, the perfect prayer. But vocal prayer, prayed well, invites us to pray better – more deeply – more completely – with our whole mind and heart. Vocal prayer prayed well invites us into meditation.

Meditation in the Christian sense is the intentional engagement of the mind – thus “mental prayer” – with the works and words of God. Fitting for meditation would be portions of Holy Scripture, for example: devoting time to carefully listening to a portion of Scripture, seeking to hear and understand it as fully and deeply as possible, seeking to fully open one’s own mind and heart to this passage which is “of God”. In this way we seek to know Him more and more, in truth, and to understand His will and His ways, so as to love Him with our whole mind, and heart, and soul – by seeking to live in obedience to His will and His ways.

As vocal prayer has two “kinds” – formula and spontaneous – so meditation has three “kinds”. The three kinds of meditation are usually experienced in a sequence, each progressive kind being “deeper” and more “simple” than the preceding one: first discursive meditation, or effort to understand or grasp with the mind, using reasoning; then affective meditation, with more intense affect of the heart; and finally the prayer of simplicity, deep and intense engagement with great focus on matters of simplicity, purity, and mystical profundity.

The last-listed “kind” of meditation, the prayer of simplicity, might be called (and has been called) “acquired contemplation,” but it is not yet true contemplation – it is still meditation. All of the grades or stages of prayer listed so far belong in the category of ascetical prayer; the kinds of prayers of

contemplation, rightly understood, belong in the category of mystical prayer.

Ascetical and mystical prayer are radically, importantly and significantly different. Ascetical prayer can be prayed with ordinary habitual grace – the grace common to all in “the state of grace” and fellowship with Christ. All Christians in the state of grace given in Baptism can pray in the mode of ascetical prayer – all kinds of vocal prayer and all kinds of Christian meditation. Mystical prayer is different; contemplation, rightly understood, is different. Contemplation is a work of God the Holy Spirit not a work of man; it is initiated and caused by actual grace (not caused by, but still requiring the presence of ordinary habitual grace) infused into – given to – the soul by God’s initiative. Man cannot “do” contemplation; it is given to him.

There are five “kinds” of the mystical prayer, contemplation, all connoting stages of deepening, increasing spiritual union with God: contemplation as first experienced is called simply “infused contemplation.” The next grade of contemplation is called “the prayer of quiet,” after that, “the prayer of union,” and then, “the prayer of conforming union,” and finally, “the prayer of transforming union.” This last grade or stage of contemplation, the transforming union, is also called the spiritual marriage of the soul with God. It is identified with the seventh mansions of St. Teresa’s Interior Castle; it is the highest level of union with God possible in this life.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

In the beginnings of prayer – vocal prayer, using prayers such as the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the whole Rosary – we are beginning a *conversation* with God. In this beginning, it may be that we do all the talking, and possibly not even wait for God to respond! But this beginning of a conversation is intended by God to grow, to develop, to mature. The *fullness* of development, of maturity, of conversation with God is in the higher levels of contemplation, especially the last kind of prayer listed here, the prayer of transforming union. I hope that this brief post on the journey of prayer can encourage you to pray more, to pray with greater attention and devotion, to expand your praying into the prayers of meditation upon Holy Scripture, and on to the threshold of holy contemplation, and beyond.

## **“Assignment for the Learner”**

The *Our Father* is an excellent prayer (it is the perfect prayer!) to pray, and to meditate upon in prayer. I have a guided meditation on this prayer on my website, linked here:

## **[An Interior Pilgrimage for the Soul](#)**

The first page (the link above) is an introduction, ending with a link to a page beginning the meditation/pilgrimage. Try a plan of one page of the pilgrimage per day, until you complete the whole *Our Father* – and for the rest of each day, focus on the whole prayer the *Our Father*, especially the verse/petition especially highlighted for that day.

There is a space for comments/responses at the bottom of each web page – I’d appreciate hearing from you any questions or comments, especially about any way or ways this guided meditation has been helpful to you.

Learn more about the art and the science of prayer! I list some resources below:

## Resources:

1. ***Spiritual Theology***, by Fr. Jordan Aumann, O.P. Pages (on Prayer): 221-248. This book can be read on-line, for free. Fr. Aumann discusses all of these grades of prayer. An on-line copy is [HERE](#)
2. ***The Ordinary Path to Holiness***, by R. Thomas Richard, Chapter 4: Growing in Holiness: Prayer. Sorry, no copies available free on-line, only for purchase, paperback or Kindle reader. (See Amazon: [LINK](#) )
3. ***Encountering Christ in Holy Scripture with Lectio Divina***, by R. Thomas Richard. Sorry, no copies available free on-line, only for purchase for the Kindle reader. (See Amazon: [LINK](#) )

---

This contribution is available at <http://renewthechurch.com/2017/06/26/our-need-for-prayer/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# 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.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.davidtorkington.com/bang/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## All Things [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

For 40 days and nights the devil tested the mettle of our Lord Jesus. At one point the enemy “*showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.*

*Therefore, if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”*

I read that section again this morning and for the first time realized the Lord’s response might have been a not-too-thinly-veiled reference to the portion of Isaiah in which we find this partial history of the devil (Isaiah 14:12-15):

*“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! <sup>13</sup> “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. <sup>14</sup> ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’*

*<sup>15</sup> “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.*

While I considered this new understanding of the text, the Holy Spirit reminded me of what He said through St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians (1:16-18):

*“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.”*

Look again at the last clause. From the beginning of creation, it has been – and always will be – the Father’s intent that Jesus have first place in everything we do and everything we are.

Jesus should have first place in all our life goals. Our daily plans should seek to honor Him first. Our employment or unemployment should be done in such a way that Jesus has first place in it.

You might remember when Simon Peter’s mother-in-law was sick with a fever (Luke 4:38-40). When the disciples asked the Lord to heal her, He rebuked the fever “and she IMMEDIATELY got up and served them.”

We ought not gloss over that point. When Jesus healed her, she got up from her sickbed and waited on Him.

Our position and titles are not given us to serve ourselves, but to serve Him. Our time, talents, and treasures were each given us by God to serve Jesus. When He heals us – as with Peter’s mother-in-law – it is to serve Him. When He does NOT heal us – as was true of the many faithful men and women in Hebrews 11:36-40 – it is so that in our illness and suffering we might serve Him.

God formed us in the womb for His purposes. No one can read scripture from cover to cover with an honest heart and not come away with the ever-growing realization that our very being is for and through Jesus – that our Creator intends that Jesus have first place in everything.

*Oh, Holy Spirit, change my heart – give me a ‘sea-change’ of attitude that I might always remember my responsibility is to place Jesus above all things in my life. That He may always receive honor from my life. Amen*

---

This contribution is available at <http://thecontemplativecatholicconvert.blogspot.com/2017/06/all-things.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Tobit and the importance of burying the dead [at Catholic Deacon]

Because my parish celebrated Mass in the evening instead of in the morning today, I was able to assist my pastor at the altar on this Memorial of St. Boniface, who was a fearless evangelist. Like my patron saint, Stephen, Boniface's fearless evangelizing led to his martyrdom. I did not have a chance to do more than glance at today's readings prior to Mass. When I heard it proclaimed, I was delighted by the first reading from the Book of Tobit, which is one of the deuterocanonical books, which are usually called "Apocryphal" by Protestant Christians.

Tobit is set in Nineveh, the capital of ancient Assyria, during the time when thousands of Israelites were exiled from Samaria to Assyria in the eighth century BC. Tobit was most likely written centuries later, in the late third or early second century BC. The Assyrian exile was the population exchange that led to the Samaritans having their unique, syncretistic form of Judaism, the center of which was Mount Gerazim, not Jerusalem.

It is from the first chapter of Tobit that we receive a lesson in the Corporal Works of Mercy

I would give my bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked. If I saw one of my people who had died and been thrown behind the wall of Nineveh, I used to bury him ([Tobit 1:17](#))

According to the Book of Tobit, when Sennacherib succeeded his father, Shalmaneser, as king of Assyria, he took to killing Israelites. After Sennacherib killed them, Tobit would bury his fellow Israelites. Eventually, this caused Tobit to flee Nineveh for his life, leaving his wife Anna and his son Tobiah behind. After he fled into exile, all of his property was seized by the state, leaving his wife and son with nothing. Forty days after he fled, Sennacherib was assassinated. His son, Esarhaddon, succeeded him.

King Esarhaddon put Tobit's relative Ahikar, "in charge of all the credit accounts of his kingdom, and he took control over the entire administration" (

[Tobit 1:22](#)

). Ahikar interceded with the king on Tobit's behalf. As a result, Esarhaddon allowed Tobit to return to Nineveh. During the Festival of Weeks, called by Greek-speaking Jews "Pentecost," Tobit, being a man of mercy, told his son Tobiah to

go out and bring in whatever poor person you find among our kindred exiled here in Nineveh who may be a sincere worshiper of God to share this meal with me. Indeed, son, I shall wait for you ([Tobit 2:2](#))



## **Tobit Burying the Dead**

As he went to find a poor person to invite to share their feast, Tobiah came across an Israelite who had been murdered and whose body was thrown into the marketplace. On hearing this, Tobit went and retrieved the body of his fellow Israelite, brought it to his house, put the body in a room so he could bury it after sundown, when no one would see him. Tobit's neighbors were aghast, saying,

Does he have no fear? Once before he was hunted, to be executed for this sort of deed, and he ran away; yet here he is again burying the dead! ([Tobit 2:8](#))

Burying the dead in accord with their human dignity is important. It is one of the Corporal Works of Mercy.

I was struck by this reading because last week a man I have known for the past 10 years or so, John Ellichman, passed away. Prior to his conversion, John lived a dissolute life, which had brought him a lot of pain and sorrow. As a result, he was pretty much alone in the world. He would speak to his daughter in St. Louis once in awhile, but he had never really been part of her life. For several reasons, she is not traveling to Salt Lake for his burial. After his conversion, John was as faithful as anyone I know. He loved Jesus and, more importantly, knew he was loved by Jesus. John was without doubt one of the most humble, unassuming, unimposing people I have ever known.

John was nearly indigent. He was able to maintain a small apartment. He managed to pay his utilities as well as keep himself fed and clothed. Here is an example of John's faithfulness: after it was mentioned in a homily by a former rector of The Cathedral of the Madeleine that it was expensive to bury people and that the parish had, in recent months, paid for the burial of a number of people, John paid what he could for his own funeral and burial expenses.

John had heart problems the whole time I knew him. His doctors were amazed he was still alive. They were even more amazed that John walked everywhere. In all the years I knew him, John never owned a car and he didn't take the bus or the train. He walked everywhere, including to the 11:00 AM Mass at the Cathedral

*every*

Sunday, no matter the weather. He always wore a red bandana around his neck and a brown leather vest.

The only thing that is not paid for to decently bury John is his metal memorial plaque, which will serve as his headstone. Otherwise, his grave will be unmarked. The plaque will have John's name along with the dates of birth and death. The plaque costs \$425.00. To ensure John a dignified burial I have started a GoFundMe campaign to raise the money for his memorial plaque. Apart from the fee charged by GoFundMe to use their service, there is ZERO overhead. If any money is raised over and above

\$425.00, I will donate it all to Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery in Salt Lake City to use for others who, like John, need money to be decently buried.

This is an opportunity to do a Corporal Work of Mercy. No donation is too small. Twenty-five people giving \$17 each would cover it. To donate click

[here](#)

---

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2017/06/tobit-and-importance-of-burying-dead.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Let us pray.... [at Catholic365]

This is how Mrs. Melania Trump started her prayer on February 18, 2017, in Melbourne, Florida.

No one noticed.

On January 22, 2005, Ms. Melania Knauss was married to Mr. Donald Trump. As she walked up the aisle, a soprano sang, Ave Maria. And she wore on her person, her grandmother's rosary.

No one noticed.

Then on May 24, 2017, at an official Papal visit by President Donald Trump, Mrs. Trump had that same rosary blessed by Pope Francis.

Everyone noticed.

The world was buzzing. After the Pope blessed her rosary, she went to a nearby children's hospital and everyone noticed that she made the sign of the cross and prayed before a statue of Our Lady!

How wonderful is this? We prayed for a Christian President. And God put a Catholic in the White House. Truly, God works in mysterious ways.

Folks, God has answered our prayers. Who has more influence over a President than his wife? I don't think anyone does.

I'm writing this to ask you to join me in prayers for the Trump family. Especially for our newly discovered Catholic, Melania. Let us pray, that she may continue to influence her husband, to lead America into a new Springtime of faith in our Lord. And perhaps, that she may influence him to convert to the Catholic Church.

May God bless you.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholic365.com/article/6779/let-us-pray.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

# The Theology of Sacramental Bookkeeping [at Quiet Consecration]

When I began this job as the Coordinator of Children's Catechesis for a large Catholic Parish in California, I had limited understanding of what my role would entail. In fact, I had no idea what my job would be and since my hiring in April of this year I have learned more than I could have ever anticipated. For the first time in many years I feel as though I am fully engaged in life - body, mind and soul. I am working for The Church. I make very little money. It doesn't matter, because every day I discover a deep and loving theology behind each of the tasks my job encompasses. I am truly an important, though small, part of a great whole.

Recently we completed 'Sacramental Season'. With the exception of a few little ones who will be receiving in August, the majority of our children received either their First Reconciliation (went to confession for the first time) or their First Holy Communion (received the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the first time in their lives!) during the past few weeks.

The First Holy Communion (FHC) kids looked so wonderful. The girls, dressed in white dresses and veils resembled little brides - Brides of Jesus - while the boys looked so handsome in their formal attire. I made it a point to tell all the boys that if men knew how darn handsome they all look when they are dressed in suits and ties they would wear them swimming just so they could always impress the girls. They laughed, but I saw that some of them got what I was saying....every girl's crazy 'bout a sharp dressed man.

If all we had to do to make this occasion special was have them show up dressed to the nines, walk down the aisle and receive Our Lord my work would have been over the afternoon of June 10th, 2017. However, that is only the beginning. The real work begins

*after*

the Sacrament is received. It is then that the information is entered into the Sacramental Registers for the Parish, certificates are created, seals are made on those certificates and they become ready for distribution to the Faithful children to keep forever.

I really did not know how important this work was but God provided me with an angel, a former RCIA Director who offered to come and help with the task. This wonderful woman (a Persistent Widow, just like me) trained me, my Office Assistant and an eager volunteer in the task of Sacramental Bookkeeping.

There was more than training involved. My Angel imparted to the three of us the importance of the work we were doing. Covered specifically by Canon Law, the recording of Sacraments received must be done in a specific and special way. The names must be correct. The Baptismal information must be correct. Without it, or if not correct, a person could be prevented from future Sacraments until the information is substantiated.

In March of 1995, the book

[How the Irish Saved Civilization](#)



, by Thomas Cahill was published. I purchased a copy for my father that year as a present for Father's Day. In the book, Mr. Cahill argues that the Irish people, specifically Catholic Irish Monks, preserved information essential to the history of the people of Ireland, Scotland and the rest of Europe while Rome was being overrun and collapsing. These devout and devoted men, in particular St Patrick, St Augustine of Canterbury and St Columba (of Loch Ness Monster sighting fame) "single-handedly refounded European civilization throughout the continent." (p. 4), according to Cahill.

This might not seem important to a lot of people today; to me, I see the significance because I often read on social media an attempt by people with specific political agendas to re-write history. Example: recently, a man I know insisted that Napoleon hired Michelangelo to paint over all the artwork that depicted Jesus as an African man. The fact that the two men he wrote of lived close to 300 years apart does not deter him from his insistence that evil White European Men destroyed the 'truth' that Jesus Christ is a Black man, and that this was done in order to keep Africans down. This is a result of either poor scholarship or way too much marijuana - either way, it shows me that there is importance to keeping accurate records.

This importance is more than simply historical. There is a theology surrounding this task. Each day I correct another certificate, each day my office assistant re-checks my work against our records or makes another phone call to verify spelling, we find ourselves caught up in the Sacredness of our task. The beautiful volunteer right now stamping Father's signature on each completed certificate, and then sealing it with the Seal of The Church, is doing something holy. We are the modern day version of those devout, Irish Catholic Monks.

We are living the teaching of The Church that all work is important. All tasks done for the Glory of God mean something in His Kingdom. We are not just 'the people in grey' like the Kinks sang about - we are doing something lovely and important and meaningful in God's House. Our work matters - WE matter - and our determination to do it well and the lack of 'oh no not again why can't this be over' just indicates to me that the Holy Spirit has permeated our chores.

We love what we are doing.

Most of my life I wanted to matter...to people, to my family, to my husband, to someone. Today, because I took a chance and answered an ad in the Church Bulletin I get to be a small part of a greater whole. I get to do something that was done with love and determination and a sense of higher purpose by Irish Monks and Missionaries and prisoners and Catholics hiding in Catacombs. I get to preserve the information of the People of God.

Sacramental Bookkeeping - whether you are an ex-rock and roll wild child in California or in a monastery in Scotland, it means something.

I am so glad I get to be a part of this today. I am forever grateful.

---

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2017/06/the-theology-of-sacramental-bookkeeping.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## **Pentecost Vigil: nightmares, insomnia, and depression [at Hermano Juancito]**

The parish of Dulce Nombre celebrated the Vigil of Pentecost from about 7:00 pm on Saturday night to about 5:30 am on Pentecost Sunday morning. We started late with a bonfire and procession – we were supposed to begin at 6:00 pm – and we ended early with the rosary – we planned to end at 6:00 am. I made it through without a nap, but I'm exhausted and exhilarated.



Mass began about 2:15 am and ended about 5:00 am. We used all the Pentecost Vigil readings with their responsorial psalms and even added Luke's account

of the Pentecost in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, as well as the Pentecost sequence.

Padre German asked me about ten days ago to preach. I prayed, read, and thought about it many times and finally began with a question, "Where does the Spirit blow?"

But I started looking at where the Spirit is not present, using two of the readings – to throw some light on our situation here in Honduras.

The story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11: 1-9), the people who wanted to be famous, to make a name for themselves, brought to mind the domination and power over others that I see here in Honduras, not just in political and social elites but even among the poor and in the church. Those who have a little power lord it over others, seeking a name for themselves, or – at least – a connection with those in power.

The question that came up for me when I read Ezekiel's account of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37: 1-14) was "Where are the dry bones here?" I had worked with a group of young people who were going to do a socio-drama identifying some dry bones, but they didn't show up. But we had identified some – a person obsessed with revenge for the death of a loved one, a young woman looked down upon by others, a young man who had lost his sense of worth, an adolescent whose parents only accuse him of being useless. But I added some others – the way the society here treats

*campesinos*

as dirt, the way women are victimized and suffer violence and maltreatment. The list could go on.

But just a few hours before Mass, I began to reflect more deeply on the prophecy of Joel (3: 1-5), where young people shall have visions and the old shall dream dreams. I thought of all the young people who find themselves without vision, without a sense of meaning for their lives. I recall the words of a young man, now in the US, who once told me while I was trying to persuade him not to go to the US, "What does Honduras have to offer me?" The young cannot find jobs, even professionals. I ran across a young doctor a few weeks ago who was looking for a public health position; he was not hopeful, partly because he was not one to look for a job based on political connections. I thought of others who give up, and waste their lives in drugs or drink or sports. I thought of the young people who have lost hope. I also thought of the old who have lost their dreams and are worried about the lives and safety of their children and grandchildren, threatened by violence, gangs, and poverty. They need dreams, not nightmares.

Later in the Mass, Padre German took my ideas and clarified them for me. Where the Spirit doesn't blow, old men have nightmares, old women have insomnia, and the young are depressed.

Though the situation is desperate, I do not lose hope. I do believe that these dead bones can live again, as God tells Ezekiel.

I had meant to give some examples, beyond the story of the first Pentecost, of what happens when the Spirit blows, but I guess preaching at 3:30 in the morning can accelerate memory loss.

But when I wrote my notes I thought of signs of hope, signs of the presence of the Spirit.

There's the youth group that has become a full-fledged base community in their village, with about 20

young people meeting each week.

There are the catechists who take their students to visit the sick and pray with them.

There's the couple in their late seventies this past week in Plan Grande.

There are the growing number of couples who are considering the sacrament of matrimony.

There are people who help poor families in their villages and the communities that came together to prepare the celebration of the wedding here in Plan Grande and the celebration of the Pentecost vigil.

They realize that the gift of the Holy Spirit is also a challenge, a call.

And so I ended my homily encouraging people to look at the description of the Holy Spirit in the *Sequence* and to live that *Sequence* in their daily lives.

Come, Father of the poor;  
Come giver of gifts;  
Come light of the hearts.

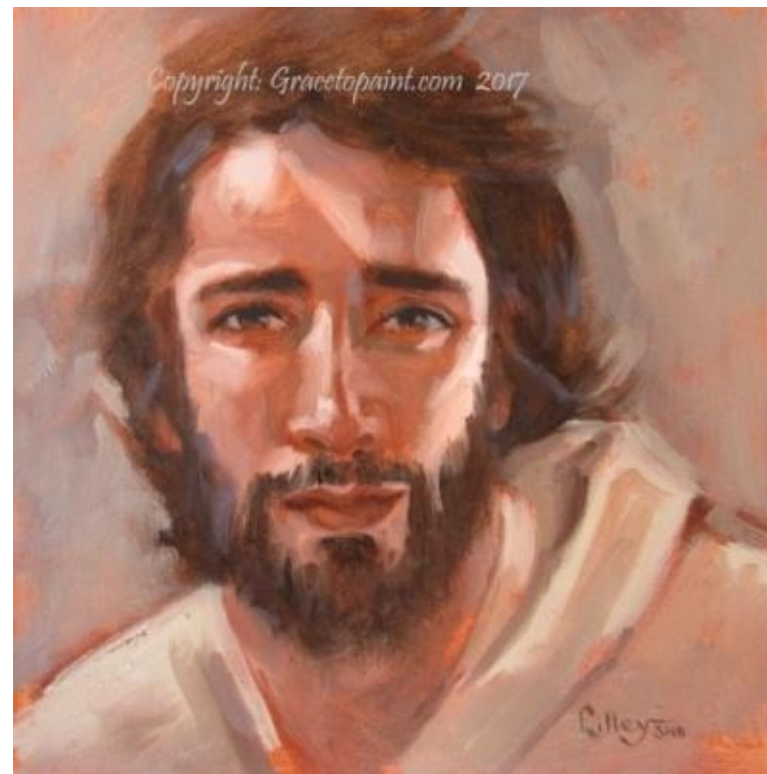
Clean that which is stained;  
Water what is dry;  
Heal what is ill;  
Bend what is rigid;  
Warm up what is cold;  
direct what has gone astray.

I closed with these thoughts:

Come, Holy Spirit - and let us do your work, so that we may be signs of the Reign of God in our world. Come, Holy Spirit.



## Jesus [at Grace to Paint]



8×8” oil paint on cradled artist board; use ‘comment’ below to inquire.

These images of Jesus are painted on cradled artist board, and so are painted on the sides, ready to hang.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2017/06/23/jesus-5/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Sat, 08 Jul 2017 18:42:28 GMT Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 Transfer-Encoding: chunked Connection: keep-alive Strict-Transport-Security: max-age=86400 Vary: Accept-Encoding Vary: Cookie X-hacker: If you're reading this, you should visit [automattic.com/jobs](https://automattic.com/jobs) and apply to join the fun, mention this header. X-Pingback: <https://shiftingmyperspective.com/xmlrpc.php> Link: ; rel=shortlink X-ac: 3.ord \_dca

# The Best Motherhood Toolbox [at Shifting My Perspective]

**And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:4**



Before becoming a mother, I saw kids as a clean slate. I believed it was a mom's responsibility to teach them everything: form every aspect of them. Based on that, I was a patient and creative mom with my first child, Zack. I almost never yelled or lost my cool.

Instead, I was always looking for new ways to trouble shoot any issue he had. Sometimes I copied the great tricks and techniques of the amazing moms I crossed paths with. Other times, I worked and worked at refining an idea until it solved the problem. Consequently, my motherhood toolbox was bursting at the hinges.

I thought I was good to go. Then Mason came along.

Mason is a completely different kid from Zack. None of the tools in my motherhood toolbox worked with him. I was pissed! Despite all the time and energy I had invested in crafting my tools, they were useless. That meant I had to start all over again, creating new techniques for Mason.

But by then, I was sleep deprived and exhausted. Zack was a VERY busy little kid; and Mason came just 22 months after him. Plus, the novelty of motherhood had worn off. So instead of finding new

techniques, I forced the old ones on Mason. It was like trying to bang a square peg into a round hole.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles. Not only did He fill them with wisdom, courage, etc., He filled them with the ability to speak in foreign languages. I always presumed that meant they could suddenly speak French, Italian, Farsi, you name it. I still do think that was the case.

But as I read about Pentecost from the perspective of motherhood, I think the Holy Spirit also granted the Apostles the ability to speak to people in the language of where they were at: at their cognitive level, in the individual style and approach that worked best for their listeners. I think He loaded up their teaching toolboxes with every technique under the sun so they were prepared for anyone and anything.

I believe the Holy Spirit can and does do the same thing for us mothers. When Mason is struggling, and I've exhausted every trick in my book that worked with Zack, I have no other recourse but to pray to Him for guidance and help. Suddenly, as if out of nowhere, I'll get an inspiration. Without fail, it always solves the problem. It feels like magic; but really it's a Holy Spirit miracle.

God was very intentional when He gifted us with our children. He knew our kids' abilities and shortcomings, and He knew ours as well. For those shortcomings, He gave us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has unlimited tools that are available to us for the asking. Best of all, they always translate into the learning language of whichever child we're dealing with.

I used to think I had to keep on trying to forge three different sets of tools for my three very different kids. What I was left with was an array of toolboxes cluttered with random tricks. A lot of those tools were broken and only succeeded in causing chaos in my brain.

Now that I'm dipping into the Holy Spirit's toolbox, life is smoother. Not only is His toolbox neat as a pin, but it's filled with flawless tools that always repair the problem.

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

***\* Do I try to use the same tricks and techniques with each of my children?***

***\* Or have I spent the time and energy to craft different motherhood tools specific to each of my kids?***

---

This contribution is available at <http://shiftingmyperspective.com/2017/06/08/cleaning-out-my-motherhood-toolbox/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).



## God's Abundance (St. Michael's, Old Town) [at Peace Garden Passage]

In my humanity, I often forget that God wants not only life for us, but life in abundance. That doesn't mean material wealth so much as spiritual abundance. Our God is a God of overflowing love — that's how we came to be. And so it is in God's very nature to want even more for us than we want for ourselves.

I was reminded of this once again during a trip with my daughter, two of her friends and their mothers, and I to the Windy City of Chicago – which turned out to have nary a breeze the week we were there.



But I did hear God's whispers throughout, including on our penultimate day there, when we took a bike ride through the city streets and along Lake Michigan. Among our sights on the guided tour was one I wish to highlight in particular this day — a stop at [St. Michael's Church in Old Town](#).



One of my favorite parts of vacationing as an adult is finding signs of God's life, including attending Mass in the places I visit far from home, only to rediscover I am home wherever God is present. And I find God especially present in the spirits of the people, and also, in a particularly marked way, his beautiful places of worship, where the thirsty come for water, the hungry, for food, and the weary, rest.



Before this stop, Mark, our tour guide, had explained various features and history of the buildings at which we paused, but we were only afforded an outside, pass-by look. I didn't know if our stop at St. Michael's would be any different, and yet I yearned to take a closer peek.



Conveniently, the church is under construction at the moment, so a service van was parked outside. This gave me my out.



I quietly slipped around the vehicle and, noticing Mark's explanation was taking a while, decided to venture in. I could feel God drawing me.





“Come closer, child.” Nothing else mattered in that moment but wanting to be near to Him. All the while, I was aware of the others and not wanting to be separated, so I did not linger too long.





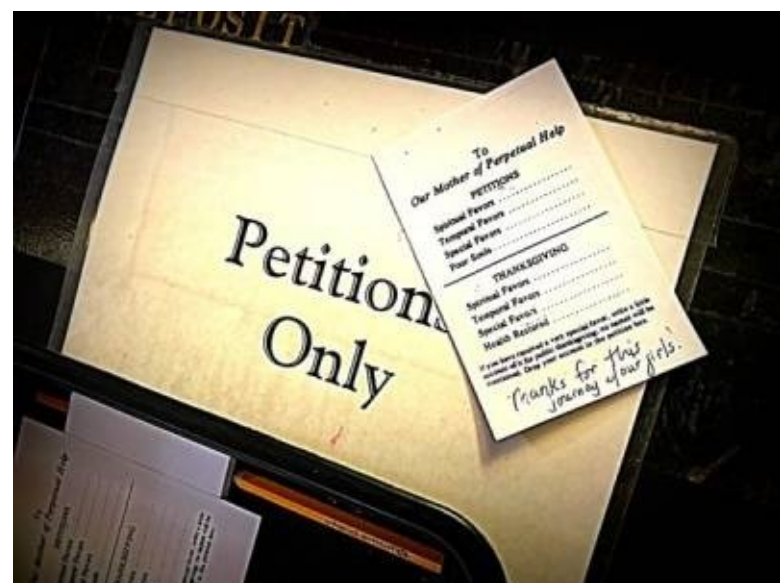




As I came out and rejoined them, Mark's talk was winding down, and to my delight, he was inviting our group to pause a little longer than usual and go inside to take a look. Not only would I get a longer gaze now, but our entire group, including my daughter and friends, would now have a chance at that same sizing up of this house of God. (The girls couldn't resist climbing the long, winding stairs up to the ambo...)



It is among one of my favorite memories of our visit. Even though it would have been lovely to actually experience Mass here, and to see God's people in worship and join them, our visit didn't fall on a weekend, and our tight schedule limited what we could take in, so this, I figured, might be our only chance to touch God in this way.



Not only was I grateful — I'd prayed before the trip that God would allow us a chance for worship along the way — but I learned the lesson again about abundance. All I figured I could hope for was a peek — and even that was taken a bit at risk. My quiet dash into the church was not part of the plan. But then, when all were invited in, I realized anew that God wants more for us than we even dream for ourselves.





It took me back to the World Meeting of Families in September 2015 at the Mass with Pope Francis, and how far back we were from the altar, and how we'd resigned ourselves to accepting a spiritual Communion, rather than sharing physically in receiving the Eucharist consecrated by our Holy Father.

When, to my great surprise, the Eucharist touched my lips, I found myself in tears. God had multiplied the loaves. Not only that, but after we ticketed pilgrims gained entrance, the gates were open to all. Many more than I could have imagined heard Pope Francis and worshiped the Lord with us that day. God offered us more than we could have wished.



I guess this is a lesson I will have to keep learning. My limited brain and heart cannot possibly conceive of all God wants for me, and for you. But I keep tasting the abundance, in small but delicious pieces, causing me to yearn for the plans God has for us, if we but only stay faithful and love him and others the best we possibly can.



## Q4U: When and how has God shown you life in abundance lately?

---

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.com/2017/06/chicago-trip-rewind-gods-abundance-st-michaels-old-town/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## The Prayer That Makes ALL the Difference! [at beautiful thorns]

Well, I made it through last week! Last week was VBS (Vacation Bible School) at our church. I was asked to lead the craft area. I said "yes" even though I wasn't sure what all it entailed and I was nervous because my mornings are usually rough. Especially after having the flu a couple months ago sent me into a flare-up with fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue and bursitis in all my joints. The Lord was faithful however and like always gave me the grace and strength I needed. Sometimes I forget that he will do that but he always does!



On a different note, I want to talk about intercessory prayer; what it is and what it is not. It seems there is a great need for prayer. Social media especially is providing a means for people to make known their desperate prayer requests. Intercessory prayer is a great way to grow in empathy for one another and help carry one another's burdens.

When interceding for our self and others however, it is important to have a correct view of God and proper mindset. How do we see God? Do we see him as a loving Father who has our best interest at heart or do we see him as a distant god, withholding his grace and gifts unless we jump through certain hoops?

We do not need to beg him to act! His mercy and gifts are abundant!

Scripture talks about Jesus interceding for us before the throne of the Father (Romans 8:34). That tells me his heart is for us and he has our best interest at heart. In light of this, I have been asking the Lord to show me how he is praying for me and for others. Once I receive a revelation of this, I partner with him and pray in agreement. It's amazing how quickly prayers are answered when praying this way!

Lately, I've been praying for a little boy from my daughter's first grade class. He recently had a brain aneurysm. I've been asking Jesus how he is praying for him. Two things have come to my mind. One was that a heavenly blanket of healing, love and protection would cover the boy. The other thing I saw

was a cactus that has water in the center and praying that the family would discover the Living water and sweetness of God's Spirit that can be found even in the midst of suffering. Well, the grandmother keeps reporting updates with how God is blanketing this boy with his love and protection and how God is healing him. She is also reporting the many consolations she is receiving and ways she is seeing God move in this situation. Pretty cool!!!

Now, getting in touch with Jesus' prayers for us and partnering with him is different than praying, "Lord, if it be your will, please grant my request." That type of prayer is praying out of hope instead of praying with faith. We are called to pray with expectant faith! What father would give his son a stone when he asks for a fish (Luke 11:11)?

One example that comes to my mind of someone using expectant faith is the [Loboda's](#) story. Their toddler daughter, Joy drowned in a pool and wasn't responsive when her father found her. He immediately started praying for her with the gift of faith. I believe he was in touch with God's heart. In one interview, he even talks about an experience he had: In the ambulance he found himself before the throne of God. He was bold and told God, "Yes, she is yours but she is also mine and it is not her time!!!" She ended up being miraculously healed!

That took boldness and courage! God likes it when we feel free enough to approach his throne of grace with all confidence, trusting in his mercy and goodness and our relationship with him (Hebrews 4:16)!

The Church also gives us many tools to use for prayer. When used properly, these tools are powerful. Two powerful tools are the Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet. The proper way to use these tools is to enter into the life of Christ, recognizing the Holy Spirit within us and pray with Him; getting in touch with His heartbeat. An improper way to use these tools is to view God as distant, praying toward him and striving to say as many prayers as we can so he will possibly hear and answer us.

Do you see the difference? When interceding properly, our relationship with Christ is also deepened. Then intercession isn't just intercession. It becomes a devotion and way to gain a better understanding of God's heart and way to grow in our love toward him and one another. What a wonderful gift that we are able to partner with the Living God!

Now, if you haven't always viewed God correctly or prayed the right way, don't beat yourself up! We are on a journey. We are learning! God makes up for where we are lacking and he can redeem anything! He still performs the miraculous in spite of our lack of faith and let's face it, sometimes things just don't turn out the way we think it should. God's ways are higher! What is important is what we do with the

knowledge we have now and how we move forward from here on out!

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.beautifulthorns.com/2017/06/the-prayer-that-makes-all-difference.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## anniversaries and gratefultweets [at Maria Morera Johnson]



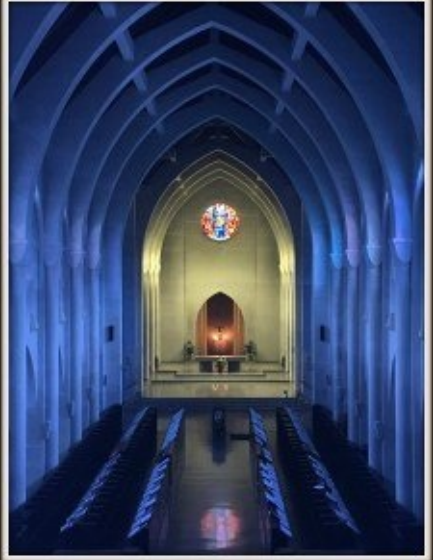
### Anniversaries

Anniversaries are often times for reflection. A year ago this weekend we moved into our new home in the gulf coast. It coincided with the homecoming celebration and picnic at the little Creole church that is now our parish. Although the actual date was a couple of days ago, the homecoming carries much more meaning for me. It was, and is, a homecoming of sorts for us, too.



We constructed our new house, so my husband and I were living apart for a few months, he to supervise the build from a borrowed RV, and me in our old home as I finished out my contract. We moved in as the tents were going up on the church lawn. John had already made a few acquaintances and was volunteering. I sold and signed a few books as part of our sponsorship of the event.

A year later, and oh what a year, I'm feeling a part of this community. I'm at home here, and it's a lovely gift.



I knew I would miss my afternoons at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, and wondered if I could ever find my peaceful spot here. All I need to do is stand at my kitchen window or step outside onto our porch and look at the bay. A bay, I discovered, named the Bay of the Holy Spirit, *la bahía del Espíritu Santo*, by the Spanish explorers in the 1500s.



Here I was, pining for the Holy Spirit. Silly me. I missed my blue-lit abbey; I got a blue expanse of sea and sky, and a continuous breeze from the water reminding me that God is here, surrounding me, lifting me, inside me, above me.



Every sunrise reminds me of this truth, that God is with us. I should know this, right? God is always present, whether we acknowledge this or not, but at this time in

our lives, [when the days could be dark and hopeless](#), I am acutely aware that he has brought us here to this place in the sun.

## #Gratefultweets

Some years ago, years — wow—[Matt Swaim](#) started this #gratefultweet thing. [Fr. Kyle Schnippel](#) further explained it, and I picked up the habit of tweeting with gratitude instead of vitriol. I don't think I've made social media any happier, but I can say that starting the day with a grateful heart has had an impact in my life. Every day is a gift. Every morning, when John and I survey our little piece of the bay as the sun comes up, we spontaneously offer a prayer of thanksgiving.



The birds are up at that hour, chirping away. If I'm paying attention, I see the dolphins swimming up to where the river empties into the bay, in search of breakfast no doubt. The osprey family that has nested next door goes out hunting. And I check out the yard for box turtles before sending Otis out. It seems they've found our little corner of paradise, too.

###

*Sometimes I feel like I'm killing my followers with the daily views of sunrises, but each one is different, unique in special ways, like all of us! You can follow my #gratefultweets [@bego](#).*

---

This contribution is available at <http://mariamjohnson.com/anniversaries-and-gratefultweets/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |



## Renewed and Expansive Hope [at A Catholic Citizen in America]



Wanting respect is reasonable. I think folks who support Gay/LGBT Pride Month for that reason have a point.

I don't agree with much of what's said on the gay/LGBT pride issue — and explained why I won't spit venom in today's earlier post.

Basically, I should love God, love my neighbor, and see everybody as my neighbor.

No exceptions.

Loving **and** hating my neighbor isn't possible. Not at the same time.

If I was a perfect person, living in a perfect world, loving each of my neighbors would be easy. I'm not, and this isn't, so it's not. Easy, that is. But I have to try, anyway.

Like I said, love matters. That includes caring about other folks.

For much of my life, I've known folks who care about my health and well-being.

Sometimes their love meant telling me that something I do is a bad idea. I generally didn't enjoy the experience. Not at the time.

### Good Intentions

Loving someone by 'being nice' won't turn a bad idea into a good idea. A few things are bad ideas, no matter what.

Lying is one of them. It's a bad idea and I shouldn't do it. ([Exodus 20:16](#); [Deuteronomy 5:20](#); Catechism of the Catholic Church, [2464–2499](#))

My gluttony, a disordered interest in food, doesn't define my personal identity. But it's an issue I deal with. It's also a bad idea.

My wife knows that I like food 'way too much. She's told me that it's a bad idea. A doctor said pretty much the same thing.

I didn't like hearing that, but I agree.

My wife is a wise woman, so she has been working with me to change my eating and exercise habits. I haven't consistently cooperated, but I'm learning.

But let's say that she didn't want to make me feel bad, and kept quiet. Or, worse yet, encouraged me to keep eating. That might feel good, for a while.

I'd still have the weight and health issues that my behavior caused. Lying to me would have been a bad idea.

So, I think, would labeling me a wretched glutton, and saying that God hates me.

I don't think that'd a reasonable response to anyone's undesirable behavior. Besides, I'd be concerned about anyone who'd enjoy that sort of treatment.<sup>1</sup>

Bottom line? 'I meant well' won't turn a bad idea into a good idea. (Catechism, [1753](#))

And saying the equivalent of raqa to someone is a bad idea. ([Matthew 5:22](#))

## Gluttony and Social Stigma

I talked about respect and dignity earlier. Basically, I'm obliged to show respect for the dignity of each person.

That seems reasonable.

Gluttony isn't generally considered a good idea in today's America, but my appearance doesn't make me a pariah.

That's a bit odd, or maybe not so much.

My weight isn't what's odd. It's simple cause-and-effect. I've eaten too much, and not exercised enough. My obesity probably isn't **just** caused by gluttony, by the way. [It's complicated](#), and that's another topic.

What's odd is not being shunned, or worse, because of my weight. I'm pretty sure that fitness fiends wouldn't use me as a role model, not a positive one. But they're easy to avoid or ignore.

The point is that I haven't spent a lifetime dealing with folks who seemed determined to fill me with guilt and shame. I'll grant that some health fanatics can be a tad overbearing.



**That's** what's odd, since obesity hasn't been a status symbol since the [Renaissance](#). Current American culture views gluttony, an obvious cause of obesity, as a bad idea. The attitude isn't entirely wrong.

But I don't remember running into anyone who attacked fat folks for 'religious' reasons. Not with the hatred I've seen expressed against folks with unusual sexual desires. Why that is, I don't know.

## Seven Sins

Gluttony is one of the seven capital sins. The others are pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, and sloth. (Catechism, [1866](#))

"Sloth," in this sense, isn't laziness.

It's acedia, a lack of spiritual effort, refusing to 'work out my salvation.' I figure that would include not my job as someone with dual citizenship:<sup>2</sup> in America, and Heaven. ([Philippians 2:12, 3:20](#); Catechism, [1949, 2094, 2733](#))

"Pride" in this context is self-esteem above and beyond the call of reason.

Humility, acknowledging reality, is pride's antidote.<sup>3</sup>

One reality I must acknowledge is that letting my desires and impulses control what I eat is a bad idea.<sup>4</sup> No amount of positive self-talk will change that.

Neither would throwing myself into the [fat acceptance movement's](#) silly side. I'll admit that I might enjoy organizing a 'fat pride day' protest. For the wrong reasons. There's a sardonic streak in me that's not good.

I must not let other impulses lead to indulging my gluttony, or expressing rage against folks like the Westboro bunch. ([June 18, 2017](#); [February 12, 2017](#); [July 10, 2016](#))

The problem isn't the impulses. ([October 5, 2016](#))

Condemning someone whose impulses aren't like mine seems silly. Self-righteous indignation at the actions of other sinners seems imprudent, at best. My own track record is far from spotless.

I think homosexual acts are not a good idea.<sup>5</sup> I emphatically also must think that everyone deserves respect and reasoned compassion; not unjust discrimination. (Catechism, [2357–2359](#))

Imprudent over-corrections of past injustices are, I think, understandable. But as I said, good intentions won't turn bad ideas into good ones.

Nothing I say or do can solve every problem we face. I am equally powerless to undo injustices like last year's murders at the Pulse nightclub.<sup>6</sup>



But I can suggest that love is a good idea. So is acting like love matters.

## Tradition and Nostalgia

Even if I could, I wouldn't take America back to the 'good old days' before [1965](#), [1954](#), [1933](#), [1848](#), or some other imagined 'Golden Age.'

Today's America is far from perfect, too.

That leaves one direction: forward.

Not yearning for a bygone era may seem odd, coming from a Catholic.

I've been asked why I think my beliefs matter in today's world.

The question makes sense, given all-too-common attitudes.

Some Christians act as if nostalgia and faith were synonyms.

Sometimes I run into a Catholic who says [Vatican II](#) ruined everything. Some of these folks formed their very own little churches, convinced that they're the only Catholics left.

I wasn't a Catholic before Vatican II, so my childhood memories include pleasant experiences in a Protestant church.

Even if I was a 'cradle Catholic,' I hope I'd have the good sense to see a difference between Tradition and tradition. ([June 2, 2017](#); [July 24, 2016](#))

Tradition with a capital "T" is the **living message of the Gospel**, maintained and passed along through the millennia. It doesn't change. (Catechism, [75–83](#))

Some of our traditions, lower-case-"t," are important, too. But they're **not set in stone**. Sometimes they stop being useful. Then it's time to change or drop them. This is okay. (Catechism, [83](#))

## Moving Forward

America in the 1950s was a 'Golden Age' for some folks.

I remember the trailing edge of their 'good old days,' and my memory's pretty good.

I remember when someone had to look more-or-less like me to get a decent job, and "she's smart as a man" was supposed to be a compliment.

The 'good old days' weren't.



And I thank God they aren't coming back. ([June 4, 2017](#); [May 12, 2017](#); [February 5, 2017](#); [October 30, 2016](#))

Many long-overdue reforms which were new in my youth didn't turn out as I had hoped. But on the whole, I like living in today's America. It's not perfect. But that's true of every society, today or in the past.

I must do what I can to help make tomorrow's America, and world, better. (Catechism, [1913–1916](#), [2239](#))

There isn't much I can do to change my nation, much less the world. But I can do something about myself.

Changing the world starts inside me, with an ongoing "inner conversion." (Catechism, [1886–1889](#))

Unless I act as if I think people matter, I can hardly expect folks to take me seriously.

Not when I talk about love, justice, charity, and respect for "the transcendent dignity of man." (Catechism, [1928–1942](#), [2419–2442](#))

And I certainly shouldn't imagine that I'm one of the "righteous" few. Life isn't that simple. Neither are issues we're dealing with.

"...Here I think of the political history of the United States, where democracy is deeply rooted in the mind of the American people. All political activity must serve and promote the good of the human person and be based on respect for his or her dignity...."

"...A delicate balance is required to combat violence perpetrated in the name of a religion, an ideology or an economic system, while also safeguarding religious freedom, intellectual freedom and individual freedoms. But there is another temptation which we must especially guard against: the simplistic reductionism which sees only good or evil; or, if you will, the righteous and sinners...."

(["Visit to the Joint Session of the United States Congress,"](#) Pope Francis<sup>7</sup> (September 24, 2015))

What I said earlier:

Acting like love matters:

- My viewpoint
- Different angles
  - ["Jezu ufam Tobu"](#)  
Chiara, Everyday Ediths (June 15, 2017)
  - ["Your Blessing Hand, O Christ Our God"](#)  
Father Stephen P. Morris, Pauca Verba (June 14, 2017)
  - ["Worth Revisiting: Living Privilege"](#)  
Elizabeth Reardon, theologyisaverb (June 12, 2017)
  - ["In Plain Sight"](#)



Elizabeth Reardon, *theologyisaverb* (June 12, 2017)

- [“Do We Catholics Stand Against ‘Hate’”](#)

Fr. Robert J Carr, *carrbooks.com* (June 11, 2017)

---

<sup>1</sup> Deliberate, consistent, self-defeating behavior may eventually be recognized as a disorder. That topic has been discussed for at least three decades. I’ve run into folks who act as if they think it’s a virtue. I think it’s a problem, and inconsistent with love:

<sup>2</sup> Part of my take on citizenship and doing my job:

<sup>3</sup> Humility, in the Catholic sense, is acknowledging reality, giving God due credit:

<sup>4</sup> Experiencing desires and emotions is part of being human; so is thinking, or should be:

<sup>5</sup> Insights from:

- The Vatican
- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
  - [“Marriage and the Supreme Court”](#)  
Nationwide Bulletin Insert (Summer 2015)
  - [“One Man, One Woman, For Life, Lead Messages on Marriage Redefinition, Post-SCOTUS”](#)  
(Summer 2015)
  - [“One Man, One Woman, For Life, Lead Messages on Marriage Redefinition”](#)  
(June 17, 2013)
  - [“Heads of Military Archdiocese, Subcommittee for Promotion, Defense of Marriage Object to Defense Department Same-Sex Domestic Partners Policy”](#)  
Press release (February 15, 2013)  
(From [uscbb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/promotion-and-defense-of-marriage/index.cfm](http://uscbb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/promotion-and-defense-of-marriage/index.cfm) ((July 6, 2015))

<sup>6</sup> As the [song said](#), “nobody’s right if everybody’s wrong:”

<sup>7</sup> About freedom:

- [“Visit to the Congress of the United States of America”](#)  
Pope Francis (September 24, 2015)  
(From [w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150924\\_usa-us-congress.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150924_usa-us-congress.html) (September 24, 2015))
- [“Two coats of Paint”](#)  
Pope Francis, Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae (November 7, 2014)  
(From [w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2014/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie\\_20141107\\_two-coats-of-paint.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2014/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20141107_two-coats-of-paint.pdf) (August 29, 2015))
- [“Luigi Taparelli on the Dignity of Man”](#)  
Dr. Thomas C. Behr, University of Houston, Texas (International Thomistic Congress, Christian Humanism In the third Millennium: Perspective of Thomas Aquinas) (September 21-23, 2003)

(From [www.e-aquinas.net/pdf/behrr.pdf](http://www.e-aquinas.net/pdf/behrr.pdf) (September 27, 2014))

- [“Libertas”](#)

Pope Leo XIII (June 20, 1888)

(From [w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_20061888\\_libertas.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_20061888_libertas.html) (September 5, 2015))

---

This contribution is available at <http://brendans-island.com/catholic-citizen/renewed-and-expansive-hope/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## **You have the power! [at On the Road to Damascus]**

*"Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."* - John 20: 23.

The authority to forgive and retain sins was indeed given to the first bishops of the Church and is currently exercised in the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Catholic Church, but the authority to forgive sins was given to each of us on a much more personal level. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the two sacraments of healing. Open wounds do not heal on their own. Forgiveness acts as stitches that bind spiritual wounds closed and allow the healing to begin.

We have each been given the authority to forgive those who trespass against us. In the "Our Father" we give God permission to only forgive our sins to the same degree as we are willing to forgive the sins of those who have sinned against us. We tell God that it is ok for him, through his Church, to retain our sins and not forgive us for them if we are not willing to forgive those who have wronged us.

If your brother has wronged you the first step of healing that wound is not an apology from him. Healing can only begin by the person who has been wronged. Healing can only begin by closing the wound by forgiving your brother of his wrong.

There is nothing a penitent man can do amend for his wrongs to a god who does not forgive. God, our Father, is a loving God who will forgive our sins and allow us to show our deep sorrow to him through humble hearts and penance.

We in turn need to offer our brother the same kind of forgiveness for the wrongs we have suffered. We give God praise for his great glory when we imitate him and freely and completely forgive those who trespass against us. When we truly forgive from the heart we let go of the pain and suffering the wrong as caused. We close the wound, allow the healing to begin, and are liberated by love.

We live in a world where people want everything to be permissible but forgive nothing. We live in a world of hurt, anger, and hate where everyone seems so easily offended. Now imagine a world full of love and kindness where neighbors do not quarrel over trivial things. That world begins with forgiveness. That world begins with you.

In the next week find at least one person with whom you have had a long standing grudge and do your best to forgive them from the heart. Take that first step to mend an old wound. Let God's infinite mercy flow through you and see just how liberating forgiveness actually is.





---

This contribution is available at <http://damascusroadsojourner.blogspot.com/2017/06/you-have-power.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

---

**It has been a rough year for some top female Christian bloggers including three with books that have made the New York Times Bestsellers list. Before I highlight these controversies, a Bible verse and a word about blogging, which celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2019.**

---

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. — Ephesians 4:15-16

---

## Pioneers of the Mommy Blogosphere

With the advent of the Blogosphere in 1999, came the rise of mommy bloggers the world over. Because of sheer timing, they were almost exclusively and predominantly, [Gen-Xers](#). Born between 1961 and 1981, these women entered matrimony and motherhood as the first online diaries and online communities formed. They became the pioneers of the Mommy Blogosphere.

In short order, female faith bloggers emerged and created a popular and powerful sub-genre: **Christian Mommy Bloggers**. These, too, were almost exclusively Gen-Xers. In time, a fortunate few received lucrative book deals. Over the years, I've enjoyed and admired many of them and their writings. It's been easy to connect with their stories because, whether they did so deliberately or in passing, their memoirs paid homage to the collective Gen-X experience and narrative.

To characterize these female Christian bloggers as influencers in the context of content marketing and social media is an understatement. As Tish Harrison Warren wrote in a [March 2017 article in Christianity Today](#), many have become household names wielding enormous influence over their fans all while being **“disembedded from any larger institution or ecclesial structure.”** In other words, free from church governance. Once again, we see that the world is flat. As Thomas Friedman explained in his popular book, the Internet has dissolved many of the obstacles that once prevented individuals from communicating to a global audience. For better or worse, the Church has been impacted by this.

So, here are just three recent controversies that have involved top tier Christian bloggers. I've ended the post with some questions. I'd really love to hear what you think, because this has really been on my mind a lot lately.

Jen Hatmaker

### Jen Hatmaker

[Jen Hatmaker](#)

is a popular evangelical Christian blogger who has written several books including

*For The Love*

, which became a New York Times bestseller. After her blog post about kids and end-of-the-school-year drama went viral, she landed an interview on a national morning news show. After that, she and her husband along with their five kids were tapped for an HGTV show,

*My Big Family Renovation*.

The show featured eight episodes and aired in 2014-15.

## **Hatmaker Affirms Gay-Marriage**

In October 2016, Hatmaker, who attended Oklahoma Baptist University and lives in Austin, announced she supported gay marriage. [Lifeway Christian Book Stores responded by pulling her books](#) from all 185 of their stores. [Hatmaker wrote about the event on her blog](#):

...This year I became painfully aware of the machine, the Christian Machine. I saw with clear eyes the systems and alliances and coded language and brand protection that poison the simple, beautiful body of Christ. I saw how it all works, not as an insider where I've enjoyed protection and favor for two decades, but from the outside where I was no longer welcome. The burn of mob mentality scorched my heart into ashes, and it is still struggling to function, no matter how darling and funny I ever appear; the internet makes that charade easy..."

Following the controversy, Hatmaker's [Alexa rank](#), one of many tools used to determine the popularity of a website, fell about 100,000 places. Prior to that it hovered around 200,000, but once in free-fall it hit the pavement at 1 million. It spiked, however, after the above mentioned post and remains steady. More significantly, Hatmaker's new book, [Of Mess and Moxie: Wrangling Delight Out of This Wild and Glorious Life](#)

is currently #1 on Barnes and Nobles Top 100 Best Booksellers. Not bad for a book that is on pre-order until August.

---

Glennon Doyle

## **Glennon Doyle**

Glennon Doyle is the writer of Momastery, a blog-turned-online-community that she started on Blogspot in 2009. Doyle wrote consistently about faith and God and her struggles with motherhood, marriage, infidelity and addiction. You can see some of her early posts on the

[Wayback Machine](#)

In 2011, a viral post, *Don't Carpe Diem*, led to a book deal for her memoir, [Carry On, Warrior: The Power of Embracing Your Messy, Beautiful Life](#). I loved that book and couldn't wait for the next

one, [Love Warrior](#), which is, among other things, a raw disclosure on overcoming infidelity and betrayal. But, in August 2016, just as the book was about to be released (it became a New York Times Bestseller), Doyle announced that she and her husband Craig were separating. That post was [beautiful and gut-wrenching](#). One excerpt won't do it justice, but here is one:

...For the next several weeks, you do nothing but cry and talk. Sometimes it feels like that's all you ever do—because, it turns out, you have been grieving your marriage for years. But still, you cry and talk more. You close the bedroom door and sit on that bed and you talk. You talk about how hard you've worked together, how you stayed on your mats and didn't run from each other. Since you didn't run, you discovered together that fight or flight aren't the only options. There is a third way: heal.

“You talk about how broken you each were when you met, and how whole each of you is now. You say to him: *You've been my healing partner*. He says: *And you have been mine*. You talk about how you can forgive someone and love someone and at the very same time know that you cannot be with them anymore. You get more honest than you have ever, ever been before. You talk about how hard, how very brutal it's all been for the two of you. Since day one...”

## Love wins, but whose love? Doyle divorces in November, remarries in February

Just three months later, Doyle announced she was engaged to female soccer player Abby Wambach. When they married in February, her Facebook fans erupted in virtual applause, and, Glennon, sweet and fragile, repeated her mantra, **“Love wins.”**

Since these revelations and developments, however, [traffic to Momastery](#) has declined significantly. In October, the site had an Alexa rank well above 100,000, but today it's [fallen to around 350,000](#). These ranks, which can be greatly impacted by Google's algorithm, can tank and spike quickly and unexpectedly. They are not necessarily an indication of a long-term loss of audience or a damaged brand. After all, Doyle still has nearly 680,000 Facebook fans. She garners thousands of likes on her Facebook posts and hundreds of shares. I'm sure a third bestseller is in the works.

---

Lysa Terkeurst

## Lysa Terkeurst Publicly Outs Husband for Affair, Addiction

In 2007, Lysa Terkeurst was just another mom starting another blog on Blogspot. Today, she is a New York Times Bestselling author with more than 1 million Facebook fans. She is a national speaker at Christian conferences and the head of the highly successful

[Proverbs 31 Ministries](#)

. Sadly, last month,

[she announced on her blog](#)

that she has filed for divorce from her husband because of his infidelity and addiction. Here is an excerpt:

...When I first found out about Art's infidelity 18 months ago, I made the decision not to divorce him. I had just finished fasting and praying for 28 days and really felt led by the Lord that I was to love Art in my reaction to this shocking news and trust God for every step moving forward. I was still committed to doing everything I could think of to make our story one of restoration, even in the face of the worst kind of betrayal imaginable. I prayed continually. I sought counsel from family and other wise friends. And Art and I even made repeated trips across the country together for intensive counseling especially designed for marriages in crisis. But sadly, though I have repeatedly forgiven and accepted him back, he has continued to abuse substances, be unfaithful, and refused to be truthful to me and our family..."

Lysa's disclosure led to a spike in her Alexa rank. It had been on a steady decline falling to around 1 million, but rose to about 375,000 after she announced her divorce. Her ministry, however, has had a small dip. A year ago, it enjoyed a rank of around 50,000, which is no small feat. Today, the rank is holding steady around 130,000. That is still pretty impressive as Alexa ranks go.

What do you think about the controversies these three bloggers have endured? Did the controversies lead to audience decline or were they simply the victims of Google's ongoing algorithm changes? Here are a few more questions to ponder.

1. Hatmaker refers to the Christian Machine that damages the body of Christ. What does she mean by Christian Machine and is it possible that it's simply part of the Church, the Body of Christ?
2. **Regarding Doyle's mantra, "Love Wins." What do you think it means? Is it true? Does love always win? If so, whose love wins?**
3. According to [a recent Pew study](#), there is a dramatic generational divide in white evangelical attitudes on gay marriage. Has the divide over gay marriage impacted your church or faith community? If so, how?
4. **Regarding Terkeurst's blog post about her husband's infidelity, why do you think she chose to disclose his affair and addiction? Do you think she was under pressure from her publisher or a brand officer, PR practitioner or her board of directors? Do you think she did the right thing? If so, why or why not?**
5. What do these controversies reveal about the Church and Christianity in America?
6. **Do these questions offend you and if so, why?**

Finally, next week or sooner, I will publish a post featuring the top female Christian bloggers. Who do you think should make the list? Certainly, I will add my favorites: [Ann Voskamp](#), [Melanie Shankle](#), [Jennifer Fulwiler](#) and [Sophie Hudson](#).

Leave a comment or [join the conversation on Facebook](#).

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.jenx67.com/2017/06/controversies-rock-female-christian-bloggers.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## Praise [at Bible Meditations]



*Praise him—he is your God, and you have seen with your own eyes the great and astounding things that he has done for you. Deuteronomy 10: 21*

Ever been helpless? Ever made a foolish mistake or take a deliberate risk? Ever gotten yourself into a situation that you couldn't get out of on your own steam? If you're like me, you have. What got you through it?

What good things have we been blessed with that we didn't bring to pass? Do we have happy memories? That's a blessing. Do we have painful memories? We survived. Our joys and are challenges have all shaped us and brought us to the place we're in today.

If we count our blessings, including the hardships we've faced and survived, we'll see with our own eyes the great and astounding things that God has done for us, and we'll have reasons to praise him.

We can even praise him that he loves us whether or not we praise him, whether or not we even think of him. God's unconditional love is a great and astounding thing.

Prayer: Praise to you, loving Creator.

Reflection: What great and astounding things has God done for you that brought you to where you are today?

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.biblemeditations.net/archives/3119>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## Ghost of the Machine [at With Us Still]

Got back from lunch with a friend on Tuesday to encounter a most disconcerting situation.

My trusty iMac – vintage 2008 – had become a bit less trustworthy.

In point of fact, it had given up the ghost. Apparently the internal hard disk seized up, rendering my machine more or less worthless. What had been the digital scribe to my muse (both personal and professional) as recently as 11:30 AM...descended by early afternoon—and almost entirely without warning—into the ‘doorstop’ phase of its existence.



Goodbye, Mac. Hello, Doorstop.

I knew I was working on borrowed time: Nine calendar years equal a millennia (or two) in the lifespans of personal computers. So just a day or two before, Gerri and I had been discussing when best to budget for a new iMac. We’d get the new machine...and transition in a more or less orderly way to upgraded operating systems and software applications.

But then the weary hard disk forced the issue...causing the ‘upgrade’ ordeal to begin in earnest, in nothing like an orderly fashion.

I know what you’re thinking, and the answer is ‘yes, *I DO have backups.*’ A couple of different backup modes, in fact—one desktop, one online. And in a perfect world, that would have made the transition relatively painless.

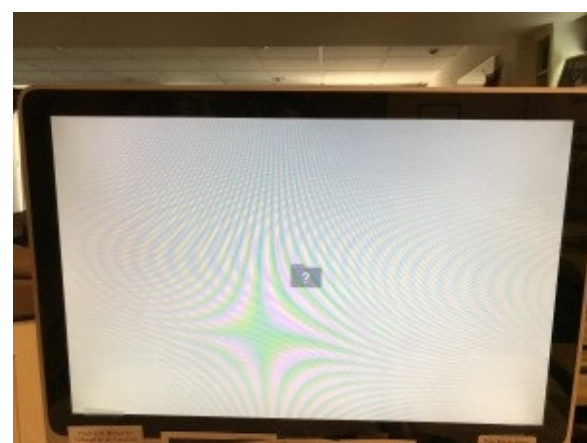
Alas, we live in broken, sinful world. A world in which a backup disk can quit—way back in 2012—without showing any signs that it’s no longer on the job. A world in which a pricey online backup service saves all your familiar ‘*folders*’...but not necessarily all their *contents*. AND a world in which clever programs like iTunes and iPhoto keep getting upgraded, so far and so fast along the technology chain that they no longer recognize their grubby hillbilly software cousins from a generation or two ago.



Bottom line, the past several days have been trying, to say the least. It's been a slog, working to revive the ghost in my machine. Late yesterday, I managed to put the final few software puzzles in place—so I think I'm pretty much back in business.

And with the crisis past, I've had a chance to reflect a bit on the experience. It occurs to me, for example, that what qualifies as a 'crisis' in my life...actually points to just how *blessed* I am. My digital distress wouldn't even register on the scale for tens of thousands of people across the many war-torn areas of our world today.

Even the *messenger* of the computer failure had become, by the end of the week, a blessing to me: A blinking question mark on an otherwise gray screen.



To a techie, it says '*start-up disk cannot be found.*' To me, it came to symbolize the *idols* I tend to erect in my life. Where is my *heart* these days? How *spiritually healthy* is my heart, if such a minor disruption can send me into an emotional tizzy for days on end? Could it be that God was trying to get my attention?



Then this morning, I joined in reciting the words of Tobit that appeared in the responsorial [psalm for today's Mass](#):

**Blessed be God, who lives for ever.**

He scourges and then has mercy;  
he casts down to the depths of the nether world,  
and he brings up from the great abyss.  
No one can escape his hand.

Tobit had something to teach me, I realized. We may be scourged at times, but that is rarely the *end* of the story. Rather, we come to find that God is merciful. That God raises us up from the abyss—and that this is pretty much a *universal* condition. It's simply part of being human.

A priest-friend and I were talking about Tobit's experience as we headed into Menard for [a Kairos reunion](#) today. He pointed out a part of the story that we didn't hear in the Mass readings this week—the [angel's command that Tobiah](#) carry a bag of fish gall, heart and liver with him to provide medicine for his ailing father. The journey took several days—a point which caused my friend to quip: '*Sometimes, the way God chooses to help us—it STINKS!*'

Having been through the computer failure, and its spiritual lessons, over the past several days, I can only say 'Amen.' And perhaps join in with Tobit, as he exclaims:

So now consider what he has done for you,  
and praise him with full voice.  
Bless the Lord of righteousness,  
and exalt the King of ages.

1. **Blessed be God, who lives for ever.**

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

*IHS*

---

This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2017/06/10/todays-find-ghost-of-the-machine/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## An Infinite Deal of Words [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]



**"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God , and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, ... and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." - (John 1:1,14)**



Have you ever suffered from language exhaustion? I have reached my limit just about now. Facebook, Twitter, news sites, other social media sites, all of these seem to be spewing an endless stream of self-righteousness, rage, insults and vitriol. So I want to talk about my brother, a man of many words. My brother Mark D'Orazio, whose nom de plume is "PERFESSER CREEK-WATER", is a wanderer with no permanent home. Like Forrest Gump, he has walked from coast to coast-- several times in fact. Twenty-five years ago or so, he lived in New York City, under a bridge, and sold his poems on the street. He called himself a "HOME\*LESS BY CHOICE WORD\*SMITH."

When Mark sold his poems on the streets of NYC, he separated them into two piles. One he called NICE WORDS, the other POLEMICS. He had a few regular customers, for whom he would select poems based on how the person was feeling that day. He would never select from the POLEMICS pile if the person was in a bad mood or feeling stressed.

"You need nice words today," Mark would say, and draw a poem from his NICE WORDS pile. It intrigued me that the two concepts were not opposites: nice words and polemics. They reflected two predominating passions of my brother--the simplicity and natural beauty of life on the road, and the quest for justice.

But Mark recognized that the quest for justice needed to be tempered by an appreciation for beauty, truth and goodness. Hence he refused to sell his polemical poems to customers who seemed in need of gentler words.

I wrote a few weeks back about the conflict in the film Dr. Zhivago between art, represented by the poet, Yuri Zhivago, and politics, represented by the Bolshevik, Pasha Antipov. My brother Mark, in the way that he distributed his poems, showed that a person can embody both impulses, the artistic and the political. Social media needs more folks who can do the same. Balance is what we need. I think I might overcome my exhaustion with words if there were more gentleness of expression spread among all those words that are a shrill call to arms.

Blessed James Alberione was a man of many words also. He correctly foresaw that the people of the 20th century and beyond would have a tsunami of words coming at them from the new means of communication that the technologies of the late 19th century were developing. These could be used for the good or for the bad:

"Throughout the night in every part of the world, thousands of great machines, operating at astonishing speeds, produce millions and millions of copies of magazines and newspapers. Each evening crowds of movie-goers watch motion pictures. For practically the entire day, radio and television are on the air with programs... Who is to say what percentage is good and what percentage, instead, is dangerous?" (Thoughts p. 168)

And so I will consider my brother Mark, whose percentage of words is near 100% good, even in his polemics. What kind of poem are you in the mood for today? The first is from his collection of "nice words", the second from his polemics. Could we please have more of a balance of each?

Note: Mark has been writing in all caps since before the Internet began, before it came to mean "shouting"\*. Now approaching 70 years of age, he has been experimenting with lower-case. But these are from his earlier works.

**EARTH + SKY** (From "NICE WORDS")

THE SKY IS MY ROOF

THE EARTH IS MY HOME

THIS MUCH IS TRUE WHERE\*EVER I ROAM

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE OUT ON "THE STREET"

RESPECT + COMPASSION FOR PEOPLE I MEET

I USE WHAT I FIND I STEAL FROM NO ONE

I LAY DOWN TO REST WHEN DAY'S WORK IS DONE

AND EVEN THO LIFE IS NOT ALWAYS A LARK

LOOK FOR THE LIGHT EVEN WHEN IT IS DARK

I TRY TO GO FORWARD EACH DAY AS I LIVE

IF YOU DO ME WRONG I AM QUICK TO FORGIVE

IF I DO YOU WRONG THEN I HOPE + I PRAY

THAT WE SOON CAN BE FRIENDS AGAIN

WITHOUT DELAY

SINCERELY - M.D. 1990

**THE BAGEL-BAKERS** (From "POLEMICS")

THE BAKERS BAKE THE BAGELS EVERY DAY

THE DUMPSTER SITs OUT BACK NEAR-BY THE DOOR

AND WHAT THEY DO NOT SELL, THEY THROW AWAY

A HUNDRED THOUSAND BAGELS, MAYBE MORE

ARE PEOPLE GO-ING HUNGRY EVERY NIGHT ??

OR AM I JUST A POOR DELUDED FOOL ??

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S WRONG + WHAT IS RIGHT  
OF THINGS THEY JUST DON'T TALK ABOUT IN SCHOOL

I SEE THIS BAGEL-DUMPSTER LOCK'D UP TIGHT  
WITH LOCKS + BARS + QUARTER-INCH-THICK STEEL

I PEEK IN-SIDE: SOME BAGELS ARE IN SIGHT  
IF I BE HUNGRY, HOW YOU THINK I FEEL ??

NOW SHOULD I MENTION THEIR ADDRESS ??

NO --- THEY KNOW WHO THEY ARE, I GUESS

NEW YORK CITY / 1989

-----

\*

In the preface to his writings, Mark always puts this advisory: "PERFESSER" CREEK-WATER KNOWS HOW TO CORRECT-LY SPELL MOST WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, AND CHOOSES ALTERNATE SPELLS TO HELP READERS BUST OUT OF HABITUAL THINKING-PATTERNS ... PLUS: HE LIKES HYPHENS.



Rae Stabosz has been a member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators since 2003. She and Bill Stabosz, her husband of 48 years, have six sons, three daughters, ten grandsons and eight granddaughters; they eagerly await the birth of grands #19 & #20 in October. Rae retired in 2007 from the University of Delaware, where she was a technology and media specialist for 27 years. She is co-founder and past president of The Society of Catholic Scholars of Delaware and proprietor, since 2004, of the Pious Ladies Bookmobile.

---

This contribution is available at <http://paulinelaity.blogspot.com/2017/06/an-infinite-deal-of-words.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Changing the World One Soul at a Time [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]



The family is in crisis. Anyone who has paid attention to the news over the past few decades is probably not surprised by this. But what to do? How can we bring families back from the brink of extinction?

Our Heavenly Father, who foresees all, has provided for us an example to follow and a foundation to build upon. The Holy Family of Nazareth may provide for us some insight into building a stronger family, a stronger faith and a stronger society.



Over the past few decades, a slow but steady deterioration of the family has taken place. Abortion on demand has made children a commodity to be accepted only when convenient. The degradation of traditional marriage has altered the face of the world...not to mention the very definition of the word "marriage". With the basis of a strong society under attack, it is time for Catholics, and all people of faith, to step up and push back.

Previous Popes saw this coming. His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, in *Humanae Vitae* stated that the use of contraception would lower the moral standards of society regarding sexuality. He went on to state that



the widespread use of contraception would lead to a devaluing of women and marriage. Sadly, the Holy Father was correct. More and more children are born out of wedlock, especially among the poorest of society. This leads to increased poverty among those peoples.



With Father's Day just around the corner, let us turn to the example set by St. Joseph. Although we know very little of the foster father of Jesus, we know that he was the foundation of the family unit. He took our Blessed Mother, at the time a very young girl, under his wing and cared for her. When faced with a potential crisis, Joseph did not run off and abandon Mary. He didn't divorce her or have her put to death. No. He stepped up to the plate and raised Jesus as his own. He instilled within Him a strong work ethic and taught Him the tenets of the Jewish faith. Joseph, in his actions, showed us what we fathers ought to do.

The charism of our wonderful Pauline Family is—as you well know—the use of the mass media. Of course, not all of us can be publishers, authors, artists or broadcasters. Those that have these skills ought to be using them daily to promote a strong family, a strong and orthodox Catholic faith, and a consistent life ethic of “Pro-Life For The WHOLE Life”. This includes not only being pro-birth, but also supporting programs and ideas that make it possible for women to have their babies. It also includes support of a strong economy, an adequate social safety net and care for those who cannot care for themselves.

Those who are unable to write, publish, speak or otherwise actively participate in the media, ought to be praying for those who do. We ought to be using the media in ways which are glorifying to God. How do we use Facebook, Instagram or Twitter? Do we post jokes that are questionable? Or, do we use it to edify the family, our society and our faith? We don't need to be preachers...but we DO need to be witnesses. I know that I have failed in this myself. It is an area of prayer for me...and probably for many of you as well.



So what is the ultimate answer? What can we do—really--to make a difference? First and foremost, of course, is prayer. One of the prayers we Paulines say daily is the Invocation to Jesus Master. One of the petitions in that prayer asks, “Jesus Way, may I be example and model for souls.” We have already mentioned that we are to be a witness to the world. We must do more than give lip service to the Lord. If our lives do not correspond to our faith, people notice. What kind of witness am I? What kind of witness are you?

Secondly, we can model our faith to others. This goes along with being a witness. This is the “roll up your sleeves and get your fingernails dirty” part of our faith. What do we do for the poor and under-served of our society? Do we simply feel pity...or not even notice them at all? Scripture tells us about the rich man who daily simply walks right by the beggar, not noticing or caring about his condition. In the Gospel of Luke we read, “22 The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; 23 and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Laz’arus in his bosom. 24 And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Laz’arus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.’ 25 But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Laz’arus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. (Luke 16:22-25 RSV-CE).

What sort of model was this rich man? What kind of difference would he have made, not only to Lazarus, but to other poor and suffering souls who have gone ignored by those best able to help them? Had the rich man shown compassion and mercy, would not other rich men have noticed? Perhaps. And perhaps then they would have acted on the example they were given. Thus one life, and then another would have been changed.

My challenge to the Pauline Family is this: Go and make a difference in the world. Use the media for good. Pray for those who are unable to help themselves. Then, let's work to become known as the Christians with dirty fingernails!

---



Mike Maturen is a member of the Holy Family Institute, having taken his temporary vows in September of 2012. Maturen ran for President of the United States in 2016 under the banner of the American Solidarity Party, a party largely based on Catholic Social Teaching. He and his wife Sue are active

members of their home parish, St. Anne Catholic Parish in Harrisville, Michigan, where they live on a farm with their two dogs, two cats and eight chickens. They have three grown children. In his spare time, Mike is a professional magician. He is the author of “A NEW DAWN: Weekly Wisdom From Everyday Life”, a weekly devotional. Mike has appeared as a regular guest on EWTN Radio's “Catholic Connection” with Teresa Tomeo, and has also been a featured guest on “The Journey Home” with Marcus Grodi on EWTN Television.

---

This contribution is available at <http://paulinelaity.blogspot.com/2017/06/dirty-fingernails-changing-world-one.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## So many times the walk is difficult. [at Boldly Catholic]

Not long ago, [Pope Francis, answering a young person's questions about doubt](#), said:

*“Walking is an art because if we always walk in a hurry we get tired and we can’t reach the end.”*

*“Walking is the art of looking at the horizon thinking where I want to go, but also to accept the tiredness of the walk.”*

*“So many times the walk is difficult.”*

*“There are days of darkness and some days of falls... but always think this, don’t be afraid of the failures, don’t be afraid of the falls.”*

*“Don’t be afraid of falling, in the art of falling what is important isn’t not falling, but not remaining down.”*

*“This is beautiful, working on this each day, this walking humanly, but it is ugly and boring to walk alone.”*

*“Walk in community with friends and it helps us arrive to the end where we need to arrive.”*

Having just completed the Sarria to Santiago portion of the Way of St. James (Camino de Santiago in Spanish) with my priest, two deacons, a seminarian and nine other parishioners, the Pope's words seem particularly rich and meaningful to me, and symbolic of what my takeaways are as my week long Camino trek came to an end. The hike was at times particularly difficult and there were those with whom I walked that did indeed fall. There were also moments when a number of us needed the help of a community of friends to arrive at our destination. Blisters, muscle aches and pains and one solid day of rain were at times obstacles that slowed us down yet, with perseverance and yes, prayer, we were able to complete a portion of this ancient pilgrimage that hundreds of thousands of people over many centuries had completed before us.

The earliest records of visits paid to the shrine dedicated to St. James at Santiago de Compostela date from the 8th century. Santiago, as the Spanish call St. James, was one of the twelve Apostles martyred by beheading in the year 44. Ever since his grave was discovered, hundreds of thousands of ordinary people have walked/hiked/trod the path across northern Spain, making the Camino arguably one of the most famous pilgrimages in the world. It continues to direct travelers today to the remains of the Apostle whom Jesus once called a “Son of Thunder.” And a couple of weeks ago, I became one of those “peregrinos”.

I've wanted to walk this ancient path ever since viewing the movie [The Way](#), starring Martin Sheen and directed by his son Emilio Estevez, some seven years or so ago and early this year, I accepted an invitation from my priest to do so.

The trek on the Camino, with its many long uphill and downhill stretches, was physically exhausting. Over the 7 days of our hike, including the walking to and fro that took place off the Camino, we walked

in excess of 100 miles, this according to the Health app on my iWatch (averaging roughly 15 miles a day) and according to the body aches and pains experienced. Though I had prepared for more than four months prior by walking at least 6 or more miles each day, I had hiked largely on flat and level land so was quite surprised at the challenges offered by the Camino's hills. Yet, despite the physical exhaustion felt at each day's end, my spirit soared.

There was truly something mystical and empowering about walking an ancient path that hundreds of thousands had walked before me, many of whom were looking to enlarge the sense of God's presence in their lives. I was particularly lifted by the Masses we celebrated in the ancient churches along the way, so many of them built in the 13th and 14th centuries. They were beautiful and holy and reverent. The tabernacles themselves were works of art, their beauty testifying to Who they contained.

Two weeks have passed since my Camino experience came to an end. What I'm trying to hold fast to as memories of that journey begin their inevitable fading is the camaraderie experienced with my fellow pilgrims, a camaraderie reminding me of the strong sense that The Way is never meant to be traversed alone, and the knowledge that God gets us through tough times despite our thoughts to the contrary when in the midst of them.

My duty is to trust Him, to ever be aware of the beauty and wonder that feeds that trust, and, as Pope Francis warned, to not “be afraid of the failures”, to not “be afraid of the falls” along The Way.

A prayer I prayed more than once along the Camino, I pray again now as I bring this to an end. Jesus, I trust in you... help me to trust You all the more.

Amen.

\*For those interested, I've posted some of my favorite pics taken on the Camino on [my Facebook Page](#).

# Two baptisms, three deaths, and a whole lot of grace [at The Salt Stories]

In the summer months we celebrate several anniversaries.

July 20th, is our Anna's baptism anniversary. A sweet and simple day that always brings back wonderful chrism smell memories. The reminder that our daughter is sealed in Christ.



Her anniversary reminds me that today, and everyday, no matter her physical, mental, or emotional state, God chooses Anna as his daughter. His mercy and grace are so big, that he would even offer them to a [baby who can offer nothing in return](#).

As I remember the water flowing over her head, her wearing a sweet white gown, passed down from the generation before, and the oh so holy smell of the oils on her head, my mind is also reminded of the loss we felt during this same time.

## Mary Ann Finn 1931-2013

The day we found out we were pregnant with Anna, was the day I returned home after my grandmother's funeral. She died so sweetly, at an old age. Her last years were filled with a child like faith as her mind gave way to Alzheimer's. All six of her children stood around her bed, singing, praying, and celebrating her life. She died July 26th, 2013. I can imagine baptismal water flowing over her head as her capacity to speak and reason gave way. God's mercy covering her after a life full in every way.



## **Mahfouz El-Tawil 1933-2014**

Again, not more than a month after Anna's arrival in the world, we lost my paternal grandfather on May 4th, 2014. My Geddo died quickly, in hospice, surrounded by his children and wife. He was a man dedicated to his family, accomplished in his life, and big in his laughter. It's a comfort to think about the hours he spent with others at the end of their life as a volunteer for a hospice organization and then how in his last days he was the one left in others care, entrusted to the love he built in his family and his community.



# Completely Dependent

As I consider the stories of their last days on earth, I am reminded of our helpless and needy Anna on her baptism. At 3 months of age, she could do nothing for herself, she was in complete need all the time. She was dependent physically on us and this loudly mirrored her dependence spiritually on the gift of Jesus. Both my grandparents lived full lives with ups and downs and roller coasters in between and I had the privilege to be a part of a quarter of those lives. Although I am not privy to every hardship and every joy, one thing is clear. In those moments, of physical death, as their bodies failed and they were dependent on the care of others, they were again, as always, offered an opportunity of abundant life in Christ.



Just as Anna, in her infant life, died to sin, she was reborn in baptism on July 20th. When I realize the abundance of grace in that moment I am overwhelmed, and know that this same grace and mercy was raining down on my grandparents as they took their final breaths.

In each anniversary, for the 3-month-old Anna, the 81-year-old Geddo and 84-year-old Grandma, it was God's grace sustaining and covering us. Whether at the beginning or end of a life.

## So it continues

And so the story continues for us, June 25th of this year our sweet Stuart Joseph will be baptized. The same day in 2005 that his great-grandfather and namesake Stuart Davis took his last breath.

With each new life for our family also comes the reminder of death, death to sin and death in body. But in this death the promise of life in Christ is made known.





"There is an appointed  
time for everything,  
and a time for every  
thing under the  
heavens.  
A time to be born, and  
a time to die; a time  
to plant, and a time  
to uproot the plant."  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

“There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every thing under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

---

This contribution is available at <http://thesaltstories.com/two-baptisms-three-deaths-whole-lot-grace/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

## The Road Not Taken [at Do Not Be Anxious]

I was meditating on the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, and the mysteries surrounding the Marriage at Cana. I read this line which I had written years ago: “The last wine was the best. It is not too late; He can help me to change.”

What struck me was the reference to it not being too late: the last can be best, and I thought that to the degree that my prior years weren't my best, He can help me to change things. Change, that's the key point. How can I, how can WE change, so that the latter years of our lives are the best? I recalled Mary's words which preceded that miracle at Cana: “Do whatever He tells you.” They're the same words God the Father thundered on the mountaintop at the Transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son; Listen to Him!” Listening to Him helps bring about changes in us --- even in our old age. And these last years can be our best, like fine wine aged to perfection. It is a good thing to think on.

Earthly life is short, considering our promised eternity, but earthly life is important. Life on earth sets the direction of our eternity. Each earthly life has a fork-in-the-road, a decision to be made on the direction of our eternal path. Like the wine at Cana, our life is about the changes we, in our freedom, choose. A spotlight shines on each life and all eternity watches: which path will we take at the fork?

Two paths: I imagined the first as like a walk on the beach on a warm summer's morning; I recall with joy many such walks. The sun, the waves, they felt so good. I chose the days; I chose the beaches; it was just as I planned. Those good walks are a joy to remember --- but I tend to forget that those walks were only a week or two each year. Other walks I chose --- also with the same intended joy --- didn't turn out to be so joyful. Some were more like walking on the beach on a stormy wintery day. Another thing I tend to forget is how slow the progress was in the sand; I really wasn't getting anywhere. Although I may have looked back with pleasure at the footprints I left behind me in the sand ---- like my work in the world --- I didn't think about how quickly those prints would be washed away, as if they had never existed. But doing it my way, choosing the comfortable path I wanted, seemed important at the time. In retrospect, much of my life was like that choice to walk the beach; I chose things I wanted and I thought were important: getting that new car; spending all that overtime for the boss' pat on the back; telling off that boss, or waiting for a replacement I liked better. There were so many things I chose that I thought important, but looking back they were all so fleeting, so in the moment. They don't seem nearly as important now, and I'm probably the only one who remembers those things I once thought so important. Perhaps because those decisions were all about me. That was the path I chose.

There is another path though, one I now choose to be on. I've taken the other fork in my life's road. I didn't choose this path to be comfortable, and it doesn't have the same type of happiness the selfish first path does. The path isn't like warm sand, but more like a superhighway. This is the path where Jesus paved the way. This path sometimes seems fast, like we're making much progress, and we are, but we need to be aware that we don't take a wrong exit. We notice others are on this path; we are not alone like walking on the beach, and we have to look out for other's safety, but they are looking out for ours, too. Unlike the beach, the focus on this path is not the passing scenery. We can stop and enjoy things along the way, but it is not meant to be a distraction. No, the focus on this path is where we want to get to: the promised eternity. We don't choose to linger as on the sand, focusing on the earthly scenery as if it will never end. It just seems endless. And on every beach, there will come great storms, and

unprotected, that may be our end. On the superhighway, there are rest stops, havens God has prepared for our safety when storms arise, and there are others there to help us. (I pause here to chuckle as I just glanced over at the seat next to me, where sets the next book I plan to begin reading. I just noticed its title: The Road to Eternal Life!)



It's said the road to heaven is often not taken. I don't know the relative truth of that, although it does seem that self-centeredness is more common today than when I was young. I do know, though, that Jesus made a great effort to construct this road for us to use. I recall how roads used to have names which cited their destination, as in: "This is the road to ...". I don't think most road names are chosen that way anymore. Perhaps that's the reason some aren't choosing the road Jesus laid out, because they've forgotten the destination of that path. Looking around at the beauty of creation, it is awful easy to focus on the journey, not the destination.

The last wine was the best --- but best in whose eyes? The walk through the sand may feel best to us, but God created the highway to heaven. "Do whatever He tells you! Listen to Him!" It's a choice we all have to make at the fork in the road of our lives. Do we choose the path we that seems immediately comfortable, or the one He made for us? We need to choose wisely, and not just for the short term.

- - - - -

A robin has built a nest in the hanging planter on my front porch (it makes watering the plant in it somewhat difficult). The bird has been sitting in the nest for this past week, but this afternoon as I sat in my living room I heard a robin's distinctive singing. Looking out through the glass in the front door, I could see the singing robin, standing on the edge of the nest and looking down. Were there new hatchlings, or had she only felt some movement in the eggs? Regardless, I felt I was privileged to witness an intimate moment in God's creation.

Going down God's path you sometimes find different scenery, different joys, but you often feel that you are sharing them with Him.

---

This contribution is available at <http://do-not-be-anxious.blogspot.com/2017/07/the-road-not-taken.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

# Sabbath Cross remain not bodies [at Cruz Wiggins]

Universal Utterings  
for June 29, 2017

Sabbath Cross remain not bodies

**Universal Utterings John 19 3137 – /**

Update Required

To play the media you will need to either update your browser to a recent version or update your

[Flash plugin](#)

31 Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for the Sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, 34 but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. 35 An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may [come to] believe. 36 For this happened so that the scripture passage might be fulfilled: “Not a bone of it will be broken.” 37 And again another passage says: “They will look upon him whom they have pierced.” John 19:31-37

Making heads or tails out of Scripture comes from a daily practice where you involve the Word of God in every aspect of your life even when it seems uncomfortable. To develop an understanding of the Sabbath means we understand the way the Jews took upon a day of rest as God had commanded reminding me of each Sunday choosing not to put forth any work and honor God that entire day. We often wonder sometimes why our legs become broken causing so much pain thinking death may be around the corner yet we understand that truth speaking comes from true testimony just as John does when he says, “So that you also may come to believe.”

We know the water from Christ’s site is an example of what it means to be given a baptismal bath from above knowing the water was there to cleanse those who would look up and see the Christ as the Messiah wanting him to clean all things in our lives as well. Scripture passage after scripture passage has been fulfilled in the scourging, crucifixion death and resurrection of Jesus as we struggle to place his example into existence when the world is pulling us from every way possible. Amen.

Join us in our daily prayer of forgiveness. I am sorry Lord. I believe You died and Rose for me. 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 19 31 thru 37

**\*\*Sabbath Cross remain not bodies\*\***

Sabbath Cross remain not bodies  
Day of preparation Jews always live  
Breaking their legs Pilate agreed embodies  
One solemn week day they give

Crucified thieves' legs broken came death  
Dead already legs Christ break forgot  
Water and blood side his lance thrust  
Believe truth disciple true testimony his spot

Fulfilling Scripture Jesus pierced broken bones not

© Thomas Joe Cruz†Wiggins  
June 29, 2017 @ 4:44 AM EST

® Universal Utterings is brought to you by;

God First Ministries, Inc.  
A Not for Profit IRS Certified 501 (c) (3) Ministry  
†Spirit led God inspired Christ fed†

**\*\*Can somebody say, "Amen!\*\***

---

This contribution is available at <http://cruz-wiggins.org/sabbath-cross-remain-not-bodies/>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Our culture seems to be obsessed with the living dead. [at Ordinary Time]

Lectionary: 375



Our culture seems to be obsessed with the living dead. We are bombarded with media that include sparkling vampires, lovable ogres, and even battles with the “Walking Dead.” I can’t help but wonder if part of the inspiration for the idea of a zombie came from that horrible and misunderstood disease of biblical notoriety: leprosy. These men and women were often treated as if they were the worst of sinners as if their soul was as dark as night itself. So filled with pestilence and hatred that it somehow had boiled over and seeped out their skin into the world itself. Not understanding the microscopic world of hygiene that we now have the privilege of entertaining, these unfortunate souls were pushed out of town and into the worst of conditions to live in seclusion.

Saint Francis of Assisi had an almost uncontrollable revulsion from the leper. When he saw someone suffering from this affliction he would go the other way or avoid them on the other side of the path.

One day as he meditated on the Scriptures he came face to face with a man in need. Seeing the image of the suffering Jesus before him, Francis dismounted and approached the leper, kissing him on the cheek. His revulsion gave way to love and mercy. He clothed the man in his own rich clothing and went on his way happy and whistling. Both Francis and the leper had received a gift that had freed them of the social stigmas of their time and brought immense joy into the lives of both.

That’s the beautiful thing about the image of Jesus healing the leper in the gospel today. We often forget in our world of overly sexualised imagery where intimacy is broken down into simple acts of gratification, just how powerful the touch of another human can be. To those of us who experience

handshakes daily and hugs from our families, we often fall into a rut of habit. Those gestures become “old hat” and we do them without emotion or feeling. To those who have been ostracized by society these simple gestures become amazing moments of connection. In the movie the Martian, we see the breakdown of the astronaut as he is reunited with his comrades. That moment when they touch, the first human touch he has had in years, breaks my heart every time.

That’s why it is important to realize that Jesus performed a much greater miracle than just the curing of a disease. Yes, curing a disease is amazing! It’s miraculous! It doesn't compare to the true mercy of God that not only heals but also unites. Not only breaks down physical barriers but mental ones as well. It freed this man from the constraints of a society that had turned its back on him. A society that tried to strip of his dignity to which the King of the Universe gave an emphatic no. You can’t take dignity from the other, it comes from God. He is waiting for each of us to reach out with our faith.

Yes, some of us need physical healing, and God can do that. I think all of us are the victims of many spiritual and cultural stigmas that separate us from one another.

Are you feeling like your dignity has been stolen? Or is someone trying to cover it up with lies, abuse or neglect? Jesus is the answer. He can take all your broken pieces, and not only put them back together, but in the process reveal the masterpiece of who you truly are. All you have to do is give Him the chance. He is there for you in the Sacraments, in the Scriptures, and in the silence of your heart.

Do you take the time to encounter Him? To learn about Him? Receive Him frequently and reverently? You can be freed from all that holds you back, all you need is to be like Abraham and have faith.

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*

---

This contribution is available at <http://the-friar.blogspot.com/2017/06/our-culture-seems-to-be-obsessed-with.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Is the Spirit Calling? [at Walking the Path]



## Questions of the Spirit

On this Pentecost Sunday I am brought to reflecting on questions that I had as youth and continue to have about the Holy Spirit/ Who is this Spirit one might ponder? What does it have to do with me? Does it speak or prompt me to take action? These are questions I had in my youth. As a child I could only visualize the Pentecost as an event found in biblical picture books and the idea of the spirit seemed far away, only something that crazy zealots might possess. I remember passing by a church in my community and hearing the congregation speaking in a manner that wasn't consistent with that of every day communication. It was explained to me that these people were speaking in tongues. I found that quite frightening.

As a more seasoned adult and with more spiritual maturity I have found that the Holy Spirit does exist and is present in me as long as I am open to it. Writing this blog I find that I usually inspired by the Mass readings and or by a Ignatian podcast that I listen to daily. However, recently I have been uninspired to write.

## The Spiritual Desert





What brings on this dryness? Am I without spiritual inspiration? This leads me to review the gifts of the spirit. Paul writes in the First Letter to the Corinthians about different workings of the Spirit. I would like to think that I have at least one of these, maybe the gift of discernment or at least the gift of knowledge and or wisdom.

Perhaps the Spirit is manifesting itself in different manners and I am not open to see this. I have at times in my life prayed that I may help others during the course of the day and lo and behold an opportunity arises where suddenly there is a person who is need whether a homeless person or a friend who needs a listening ear. Maybe that is all God is asking me for that particular day, to be open to Spirit. There are other days when opportunities such as these do not arise and I feel somewhat empty. But maybe that is how it is to be.

### **The Locked Closed Door**

Reading the Gospel reading today and hearing the homily today about being closed and locked up prompted a reflection on how I am very much like disciples cowering in the upper room in fear. I too am afraid that if I proclaim the good news of the Gospel I will be persecuted, shunned, and ostracized. But what if I have been blessed with gifts that are not yet manifest and due to fear I close and lock up my gifts, is this God's will for me? The Spirit is full of life, thus the imagery of fire emanating from the mouths of the disciples. It burns with strength and through the doors that we erect if we allow it. It can break down barriers that seem impenetrable. It can melt the lock that has sealed the individual inside the proverbial room.

### **Discernment**

Of all of the spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul I am drawn to the gift of discernment. Being somewhat impulsive about things, I have found that reflection on actions I am about to take in prayer usually brings about better results. There are times where I wanted to lash out at a person, but somehow I was moved to pray in the moment about what action to take. I found myself later calmly talking to the person in a manner that surprised me.

Discernment I find serves well with life decisions as well. Having undergone a myriad of tests for a

neck condition which has limited my ability to travel I was faced with making decisions about a long planned vacation, attending an out of state graduation and an impending surgery. I spent a lot of time in prayer although some of the answers did not seem to come as quickly as I would have liked, but they came.

Discernment allows me to recognize when I am at the point of spiritual emptiness and acknowledge it accordingly. I have found that there is nothing wrong with being at that point at times. I would welcome the opportunity to be on fire as the Apostles were as spread the word to the young Church. But for now that is not my calling and for a good measure as I would probably allow such power to inflate my ego. Discerning how to serve God today is my calling. If I am blessed with other gifts so be it. So my prayer today is that all of us be open to the Spirit calling in whatever mode it might be.

---

This contribution is available at <http://walkingthepathtoholiness.blogspot.com/2017/06/is-spirit-calling.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Corpus Christi: God Became Flesh in Order to Be Man's Eternal Food [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

*On June 18, 2017, Catholics in the United States will celebrate Corpus Christi Sunday; but today, Thursday, June 15, we celebrate it here in Austria with Mass and Eucharistic Procession.*

**by Lawrence Fox**



It was Sunday morning in Centennial Colorado; late spring as I remember. It rained the night before and the air and soil were damp even though the sun was fully exposed. Nature was slurping the wet soil and bathing in sunlight.

Sunday morning in the Fox household is one of hectic preparation so as to make Mass on time at St. Thomas Moore Catholic Church. Afterwards, we usually went to Sunday brunch, read or watched a movie. Sunday is a day of feasting.

While waiting for others to get ready, I glanced out the main large window in the front of the house. I noticed a flutter of movements in the branches and leaves of the white birch trees planted in our front yard.

That morning the whiteness of the bark stood out vividly against the green leaves. I went outside to observe the commotion more closely. Swallows and wrens were frantically hopping from branch to branch in search of nature's generosity. It became apparent to me that the birch tree was functioning as a dynamic bird feeder.

I moved several of the green leaves and there were -- to my chagrin -- tiny green aphids slowly digesting the underbelly of the tree's tender leaves. Theirs was a short feast since an army of lady bugs crawled up and down



thin branches onto the leaves where they ate the aphids. The small birds were aware of my presence but they were indifferent because they had mouths to feed. They were scooping up lady bugs, soaring away to their nests and bringing masticated groceries to their young.

I turned my focus to the ground and I saw how far the root system of the tree extended in all directions. I thought, “An integral part of nature is consumption.”



The tree was taking water from the soil, carbon dioxide from the air, and UV energy from the sun, converting it into cellulose and oxygen. The living tree was feeding upon the

non-living earth, and then offering its own life in return to little mobile sensing creatures, which were in return being consumed by other insects. These were being gobbled up by sensing birds able to move rapidly.

The tree was not aware of these activities on any sensible level. The insects seemed oblivious of their own impending doom. The birds were aware of the insects and my presence. I was aware of the whole event both subjectively and objectively.

I say subjectively since I was aware of my own emotions observing such consumption. And I was objectively aware that the various activities in the tree existed apart from me. With the help of my senses, I assembled images of what was taking place which were stored for later reflection.

My momentary observation of the cosmos was interrupted by a voice in the house, “It is time to go!” The Roman Catholic Mass is ordered so that each person’s inner conversation moves from



external distractions towards the worship of God -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- the Source of All Being.

The summit of Catholic worship, the celebration of the Mass, is a time of feasting on God's Spoken and Incarnate Word. During the liturgy of the Eucharist, the Catholic communicant hears the priest say, "Body of Christ." He responds "Amen," meaning "I believe." He receives the offered host. The communicant then hears "Blood of Christ," and responds "Amen." He drinks from



the chalice.

When I heard those words that day, I recognized something about the humility of God and His great passion for created man, whom He made male and female.

Created nature both feeds and consumes itself. God the Creator feeds nature and He is consumed Himself by a small part of that created nature. Man feeds upon created nature for physical life and feeds upon the Source of All Being for the sake of eternal life.

God became flesh in order to be man's eternal food. Both the cosmos and the Eucharist are instituted by God. In both, the essence of each thing is real and not symbolic.



| [Contents](#) |

# Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Sermon by Fr. Joseph Mungai

Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, June 11, 2017

Resurrection of Our Lord Parish, New Orleans, Louisiana



The story is told of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo -- a great philosopher and theologian. He wanted so much to understand the doctrine of the Holy Trinity -- one God in three Persons and to explain it logically.



One day he was walking along the sea shore and reflecting on this matter. Suddenly, he saw a little child all alone on the shore. The child made a hole in the sand, ran to the sea with his little cup, filled his cup with sea water, and emptied it into the hole he had made in the sand. Back and forth he went to the sea, filled his cup and poured it into the hole. Augustine said to him, "Little child, what are you doing?" He replied, "I am trying to empty the sea into this hole."

"How do you think," Augustine asked him, "that you can empty this immense sea into this tiny hole?" He answered, "And you, how do you suppose that with your small head you can comprehend the immensity of God?" With that the child disappeared.

The human man cannot comprehend fully the inner relationship of the Three Divine Persons -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is fully and equally God, yet there is only One God. It is a great mystery. If we expected today's readings (Ex 34: 4 -6, 8-9; 2 Cor 13:11-13; Jn 3:16-18) to give us a clear and elaborate presentation of the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, we have found out that they simply do not. The doctrine of three Persons in one God, equal in divinity yet distinct in personality, is not explicitly spelt out in the Bible.

The very word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible. Early Christians arrived at the doctrine when they applied their God-given reason to the revelation of Jesus Christ, which they had received in faith. Jesus spoke about the Father who sent Him and about the Holy Spirit Whom He was going to send. He said that the Father had given Him all that He has and that He in turn gave to the Holy Spirit all that He received from the Father. In this we see the unity of purpose among the Three Persons in One God.

In the story of salvation, we usually attribute creation to the Father, redemption to the Son and sanctification to the Holy Spirit. Though they are distinct as Persons, neither the Father nor the Son nor the Holy Spirit ever acts in isolation from the other two Persons of the Godhead.

Like Augustine, we may not be able to understand the how of the Trinity but I think it is very important to understand the why.

Why did God reveal to us this mystery regarding the very nature of the Supreme Being? The importance of this doctrine lies in this: we are made in the image of God, therefore, the more we understand God the more we understand ourselves. Experts in religion tell us that people always try to be like the god they worship. People who worship a warrior god tend to be warmongering. People who worship a god of pleasure tend to be pleasure-seeking. People who worship a god of wrath tend to be vengeful. And people who worship a god of love tend to be loving. Like their god, so the worshippers.

Then we discover that the so-called “I-and-I” principle of unbridled individualism which is acceptable in modern society leaves much to be desired. The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity challenges us to adopt rather an I-and-God-and-neighbor principle. I am a Christian insofar as I live in a relationship of love with God and other people.



May the grace of the Holy Trinity help us to banish all traces of self-centeredness in our lives and to live in love of God and of neighbor. Amen.

---

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.co.at/2017/06/living-in-image-of-god-means-living-in.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).



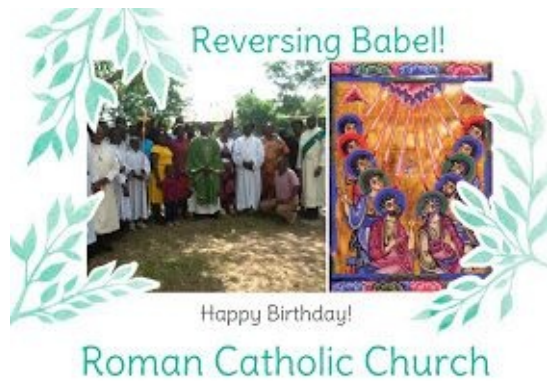
# Happy Birthday to You, Catholic Church!

Sermon by Fr. Joseph Mungai

Pentecost, June 4, 2017

Resurrection of Our Lord Parish, New Orleans, Louisiana

Today we reach the high point of our Easter celebration, the Feast of Pentecost.



Today has a significant meaning in my life since it was on this Sunday that I celebrated my first Mass after I was ordained a priest on June 7, 2014.

Pentecost -- meaning 50 days after the Passover — was the feast day in which the Jewish people celebrated the Giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. This is where the different tribes of Israel entered into covenant with God and with one another and so became the people of God.

Being a people of God means relating to God and to one another in a way that God Himself has mapped out -- not in the way that we think is right. Proverbs 14:12 says *“There is a way that seems right to a people, but in the end it leads to death.”*

The beginning of wisdom therefore, is when we realize that as humans we are limited and shortsighted, and so we ask God to show us how to be the people of God that He has created us to be.

Whenever human beings try to take the initiative in our dealings with God, what follows is disaster. An example is the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) where human beings decided to build a tower that would reach to heaven. In this way they hoped to manipulate God. But while they built the tower, God came and confused their languages. There was no more understanding among them, and they could no longer work together.

Tomorrow (Pentecost Sunday), we will read (Acts 2:1-11) of the disciples of Jesus speaking in other languages. But Pentecost is not a repeat of Babel, Pentecost is a reversal of Babel.

At Babel, human beings decided to build a tower to God by their own effort; at Pentecost it is now God who decides to build a bridge to



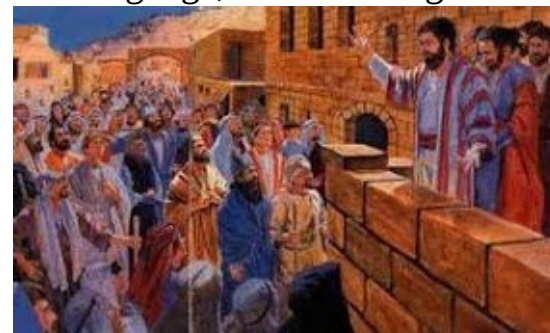
humans by sending the Holy Spirit. Babel was a human initiative, a human effort, Pentecost is a divine initiative, a divine activity through the Holy Spirit.

Imagine this. Before Jesus ascends to heaven, He tells the disciples to spread the Good News from Jerusalem to all Judea, to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. But clearly the task is too much for them.

How could these 12 uneducated fishermen from Galilee go out and address the learned world of Greek philosophers and Roman poets? Even their fellow Jews are hostile to them. So what do they do? They go wait and pray for God's initiative. And as soon as God gives the sign of the Holy Spirit, they go out on the streets boldly and fearlessly proclaiming the Good News.

What God asks of us as believers always seems impossible. And it is impossible if we rely on our own will power alone. But if, like the disciples, commit ourselves to waiting daily on God in prayer, God will not be found wanting. At the opportune time God will send the flame of the Holy Spirit to invigorate us, and change us from lukewarm to zealous, fervent, enthusiastic believers.

Babel was a requiem of misunderstanding. Pentecost is a chorus of mutual understanding. The miracle of Pentecost is very different from the disaster of Babel. At Babel, the people came together with one language, understanding themselves.



After God's intervention they dispersed no longer understanding each other. At Pentecost, on the other

hand, people of different ethnic backgrounds (Persians, Asians, Romans, Egyptians, Libyans, Arabs) came together unable to communicate. But after the disciples spoke on Pentecost, they said, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that we hear them, each of us in our own language?” (Acts 2:7-8).

When Peter spoke, people from all different language groups would hear Peter speaking in their own languages. The miracle of Pentecost was a miracle of mutual understanding, a restoration of that precious gift that humanity lost at Babel.

Does such a language exist that everyone could understand it? Yes! The name of that language is Love. Love is the language of the children of God, the only language we shall speak in heaven.

Babel resulted in the disintegration of the human family into different races and nationalities. Pentecost, on the other hand, brings all peoples together and reunifies them under one universal family, the Church. “Catholic” means “universal”. On Pentecost we celebrate the birthday of the Church. Today is, therefore, an opportunity to

rededicate ourselves to be active and faithful members of this family of God we call Church.

Fulton J. Sheen once said that even though we are God’s chosen people, we often behave more like God’s frozen people.



God’s frozen people indeed: frozen in our prayer life, frozen in the way we relate with one another, frozen in the way we celebrate our faith. We don’t seem to be happy to be in God’s house; we are always in a hurry to get it over and done with as soon as possible. Today is a great day to ask the Holy Spirit to rekindle in us the spirit of new life and enthusiasm, the fire of God’s love.



## For the Greater Glory of God

---

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.co.at/2017/06/pentecost-reversing-curse-of-babel.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# The Communion of Saints [at Veils and Vocations]

Welcome to another Beauty Tuesday. Please link your post below and remember to link back to this post. Thanks.



We live in a fallen world. Whatever can go wrong will. It is easy to feel alone or discouraged even when we know that God is always with us.

This is the beauty of the saints. I know that I know that I know that there is a God and He will never fail me, that Christ rose from the dead and He reigns. However, I am just a humble mom here on earth a little pin prick on the blue planet, a speck of life in human history.

What do I really know of our All Powerful God? The saints on the other hand, they are amazing but they were just like me. Many were simple moms, some were very young, others late bloomers, all were sinners.

The saints chose the better part here on earth and have gained their reward. Although I feel so deeply flawed, I know it is possible for anyone to become a saint. I also know those who have obtained the crown of glory, are praying for us still in the trenches.

Calling on a patron saint at any time is a great blessing of our faith. There is a patron saint for everything and anything. Did you know St Veronica is the patron of laundry??

The saints and angels surround and pray with us each Mass. We are incredibly blessed to get to meet Heaven here on earth and have the backing of those who have fought the good fight, know our incredible struggles, and are cheering us into the ever after of eternal rest.

Have you sought the aid of any heavenly friends today?

## Life is measured by how we live, not by how long we live [at A Moment From De Sales]

As we say farewell to President Obama, we are grateful for the many inspiring speeches he left behind. However, the words he spoke at the funeral of Beau Biden, Vice-President Joe Biden's son, linger in my memory:

*"We do not know how long we've got here. We don't know when fate will intervene. We cannot discern God's plan. What we do know is that with every minute that we've got, we can live our lives in a way that takes nothing for granted. We can love deeply. We can help people who need help. We can teach our children what matters. We can pass on empathy and compassion and selflessness. We can teach them to have broad shoulders."*

Beau Biden died in the prime of his life, but in his short life, he lived these words of President Obama. When someone dies we often look to God for answers. This is especially true when someone dies young. It makes us wonder what God's plan?

When God created us, He didn't promise any of us a certain number of years to live. What God did do is send Jesus to show us how to live each year we are given in the best way possible.

Jesus' words excited His disciples then, and us today, with the passion, vigor, gratitude, and generosity. His invitation, "Come and follow me," changed the world in His day and continues to change the world in our day.

The scriptures remind us that it is not the number of years we live that matter, but rather the *life* we put into each year that tells our story. We count the number of years with each passing birthday. But we also need to look at our actions from year to year.

As President Obama eloquently said:

*"We can love deeply. We can help people who need help. We can teach our children what matters. We can pass on empathy and compassion and selflessness."*

With the help of Jesus' grace to guide us, we can live fully with each step we take and each year we live! When some years become difficult to navigate, President Obama added, *"We teach them [our children] to have broad shoulders."*

St. Francis de Sales' words show us exactly who makes our shoulders broad:

*"Do not worry about tomorrow. The same everlasting God who cares for you today and every day will either take away your pain or give you the grace to endure it. Put aside then all anxious fears and imaginations."*

From these inspiring words, we gain the hope we need, realizing that God who created us will take care of us. God loves us all equally. Every year is a gift and God walks with us lovingly and caringly

through each.

We are always His people and He is always our compassionate God.

---

This contribution is available at <http://www.livetodaywell.org/blog/lt8etddtpgtzxpnhh29gwtca677d54>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

# Deliverance From the Fowler's Snare [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

## The Promise for Deliverance



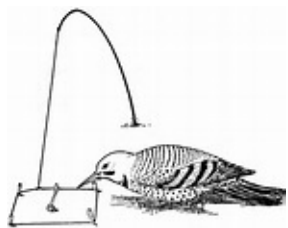
## Dwelling in the Shelter of the Most High

***Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*** (Psalm 91: 1-4)

My dear Brethren and Fellow Pilgrims in Christ Jesus,

One of the more complex areas we encounter in praying for family relationship problems is that of enemy strongholds that the enemy creates out of our personal character flaws and ancestral weaknesses (iniquities) that are passed on from generation to generation in our families.

## ***Falling into the Enemy's Trap***



The enemy has a tendency to use our human weaknesses to entrap us into vicious and sinful entrapments which are extremely difficult for individuals to free themselves. The main reason being, that we fall into these traps (or snares) of our own free will and it is very difficult for us to acknowledge our own mistakes and very embarrassing to get outside help to assist us. Some of these traps include addictions (alcohol, sex, drugs, theft, etc.), and the bearing of grudges and resentment based on un-forgiveness of unreconciled hurts.

In scripture this type of traps are called by the term: "a Snare of the Fowler". The main feature of these snares is that the enemy uses our own sinfulness and weaknesses to ensnare us, and keep us ensnared by our inability to help ourselves to get free.

In the case of relationship problems which turn into snares, the ensnared person deceives himself (or herself) after suffering a personal and emotional relationship trauma by creating a false narrative that explicitly judges another or others for the hurt in a way that sets up a wall of un-forgiveness for them to prevent (in the victim's estimation) being hurt by them again. This creates a vicious cycle that prevents



any discussions with the other person(s) that would lead to reconciliation, thus becoming a seemingly endless snare of un-forgiveness.

### ***The Way to Deliverance***

Release from this trap is very difficult for the individual because they must first acknowledge that they made a mistake in creating their hypothetical narrative of the hurting event, first by misjudging or over-judging the person (s) without knowing all the facts, and then by setting up a wall of un-forgiveness that prevents the parties from discussing the facts, motives, and miscommunications about what really happened, thus preventing that a process of reconciliation to begin. The false judgement(s) and narrative are usually based on preconceived notions based on resentment or bitterness already being held against the other person(s) and satisfy the victim's need for some sort of justice or retribution for what occurred.

Once one has entered into such a snare the "enemy" creates a stronghold in the victim that he uses to further alienate the victim from a true relationship with Jesus and uses his control over them to further bring others under his control to expand the spiritual damage.

The basic principle for deliverance from such a trap is indicated by the phrase Jesus used, as "you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free". Of course, the entrapped one doesn't want to know or understand the "truth" and so is held in bondage by the enemy unless they open their hearts to God's Love and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, to bring them to repentance and unconditional forgiveness of others.

The challenges for anyone, especially the person(s) being resented, to help the person held in the snare is almost impossible without the help of the Holy Spirit to break the wall of resentment that has been set up by the victim out of their own free will.

Of course there are many other types of snares used by the evil one to entangle us in sin and iniquity to keep us from our calling to be instruments of the Father's Love, but in this post we will concentrate on deliverance from this type of "snare".

It should be clear from what I have said thus far that we cannot and should not attempt to intercede directly for those who have been caught up in a Fowler's Snare without the help and empowerment of the Holy Spirit for we cannot enter into spiritual warfare without Him!

So certainly there is a need to pray for such an individual caught in such a snare and prayers of petition should always be offered (see 1 Tim. 2:1-6). But for intercession we, personally, need to ensure that we are in full fellowship with the Spirit of Jesus, where all intercession must be centered.

***"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all—the testimony that was given at just the right time."*** (1 Tim. 2:5-6)



And, since Jesus told us that “... *you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free*” (Jn. 8:32 ) and that “... *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*” (Jn 14:6) it must be that only through a personal relationship with Him can we humans be truly freed from a bondage to sin. And, thus, it is only through His Holy Spirit that can we enter into intercession for someone, to bring the spiritual truth the individual we are praying for needs to be freed from bondage of sin.

### ***Our First Steps...***

The First thing we must do then, is to yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit and ask that He prepare us, guide us, empower us to act in Jesus’ Name, and lead us through The Word so that we may act as instruments of the Father’s Grace as His Intercessors in the situation we have been led to enter into. Being very careful that we take no action or lead any prayer that is not a product of our fellowship with the Holy Trinity!

Of course, it goes without mention that we ourselves must be in a state of grace through a thorough examination of conscience and the sacraments of reconciliation and Eucharist. The adversary will use every flaw we have to divert our intercession, so plead the Word of His Promise in every instance,

***I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”  
Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence.  
He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*** (Psalm 91: 1-4)

*May the Spirit of Jesus be united with yours as you pray that His Glory be manifested through faith.*

### ***Basic Concepts involved***

The following contains a compendium of ideas provided by a spiritual advisor as to how a loving family members could intercede in prayer for such an individual.

Basic Concepts on interceding for a Loved one caught in a snare

If you are related to the individual and a participant in the actual or imagined relationship problem and hurt which brought on the snare and bondage situation.

1. You must sincerely assess your involvement in the alleged hurt which the individual, a loved one. is

charging you and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in that assessment and why you think you were charged. It may be that only God really knows why. but you may have an understanding of what resentments the individual had that led to the false or imagined charges. Keep these in mind for later when we pray for the individual.

2. Forgiveness is key. Before praying for your loved one you must first clear your conscience with God, asking forgiveness of all your sins and problems including any past relationship problems with the individual that may have led that individual to create a false narrative in an attempt to justify the alleged hurt of which he/she is blaming you. You, of course, do not know entirely why the person is blaming someone, you just don't want your own conscience to stand in the way of you intercession before God. What is most important is that we un-conditionally forgive the person in bondage and ask for God to forgive that person and that the Holy Spirit enlighten them regarding God's Redeeming Love in Christ for them and all of us.

3. The other thing that may stand in the way and which we have to pray for is that of evil spirits working on us due to the consequences of the sins of our ancestors (sins of the Fathers) thus opening a door for the evil one to create the "snare" into which we have fallen. For not only did our loved one fall into a snare but we also have been drawn into it because of unresolved sin in the lives of our ancestors. In order to prevent the enemy from using these sins to block our prayers we must invoke the "Blood of Jesus" over the un-repenteds sins of all our family so they may be washed away, family relationships healed and breaking all holds the enemy may try to place over our family, especially on our prayers of intercession for our loved ones.

4. Now, once the above is accomplished we can begin praying directly for our loved one who is in bondage in one of these snares. The thing we have to be very careful about is that we must act entirely out of "agape Love" or selfless divine Love. asking not for ourselves but rather that the Father's will be accomplished in that person's life. In order to go past the "wall" our loved one has placed against us we ask Jesus to open a door to that person's heart and so that He will enter in and Heal all of the hurts in that heart, including the ones that brought our loved one into bondage. We also ask Jesus to fill that individual's heart with His Love and His Peace leaving no place for un-forgiveness and hatred. Then, we ask Jesus to convey our own love and un-conditional forgiveness for that person so that the "truth of His Love" and our love may be manifested in spirit and deliverance may be achieved in His Holy Name! Amen!



Conclude your prayer by rebuking the Evil one and all His minions thus breaking Satan's hold on your Loved one and asking for the Holy Spirit to heal all the hurts and brokenness in the victims heart ... as well as asking the Him to envelop the victim in God's Divine Love so that the Father's Will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven!

Praised be His Holy Name!! Amen and Amen!!

Your Brother in Christ ... Bartimaeus

...

### ***Other Related Links***

[\*Healing the Broken-Hearted\*](#)

[\*A Heart-Rending experience\*](#)

[\*Putting On God's Armor\*](#)

[\*Escaping the Snare of the Fowler\*](#)

(© B.R.Timeo and Bartimaeus' Quiet Place, [2008-2017])

---

This contribution is available at [http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2017/07/05/\\$-deliverance-from-the-fowlers-snare/](http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2017/07/05/$-deliverance-from-the-fowlers-snare/)  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

## **My own road to Emmaus [at A Catholic Mom climbing the Pillars]**

It's been awhile since I wrote on the Pillars on a regular basis. Believe me, I have missed my enthusiasm and fire. During the past 10 years, (wow, it's been that long since I decided to share my thoughts and faith!) I have tried to inspire, teach, and just plain share my Catholic faith through the lens of my family life. Over these years our children have grown, my role as mommy has transitioned, and I have suffered depression like I had never experienced before. Our youngest, who also suffers with depression, went through a rebellious time and at this time she has settled down, but has not returned to the Church and does not share some of the moral values we taught her. Our other two children have since married and just recently my husband and I became grandparents for the first time.

During this time my faith has been severely tested, my prayer life: challenged, my very person; defeated, and my parenting; questioned. At one point, as I stood in the middle of our street watching my then 18 year old daughter drive away in a taxi to meet people she shouldn't know and do things she was taught better about, I turned her over to Jesus. My prayer life was spent, exhausted, and strained at best. In my desperation to survive the next unknown several hours I needed backup and who would be the only one that could do ANYTHING to protect her.....Jesus. I walked back up to the front porch to my husband with somewhat of a sense of relief, or at least the load on my shoulders lessened. My faith was hanging on barely by a heavily shredded string.

Throughout my life voices have driven me, guided me, and taught me lessons for the next phase of my life. Recently that voice was none other than my own husband's. He is not a Catholic, but has supported me while raising our children all these 24+ years. For the past 16 years, he has accompanied us to Mass every Sunday, even ushered when needed and loves being part of the hand-bell choir....crazy! One Sunday morning while we were in the throes of our child's rogue period, I sat at the side of the bathtub in our bathroom debating whether it was even worth going to Mass. I was exhausted from worrying, waiting, and praying for this child to apparently deaf ears, I thought.

My husband walked in to see that I was getting ready for Mass and finding me in a slump by the tub. He said, "You need to be getting ready for Church." I said, "I'm not going." He said, "You HAVE to go!" "No, I don't, why? No one is listening to me, No one cares about my prayers....so, why bother?" His eyes grew huge at that point and he said, "You HAVE to go to Mass, you just have to!" I said, "NO, I don't and I'm not." He then promptly walked away saying, "Well, I'm going to Mass!" "What??? Why are YOU going to Mass, you're not even Catholic!" I said. "Well, SOMEBODY has to go to Mass, and I'm going." he said as he walked into his closet to get dressed.

I walked away grumbling, but ended up going to Mass with him. Sitting next to him during Mass, I saw something that I had never seen in him before, his fidelity and conviction towards MY faith. Later, he told me that I had scared him and that I'd lost my faith. At that moment, I knew what I had to do.....I had to grow my faith back and give God my trust and faithfulness again.

My husband kept telling me that prayer doesn't work the way I wanted and needed it to, I fought him on this. He would tell me, "You can't just pray and expect things to happen the way you want them to." "But why not! These prayers are for the good of our daughter and our family...it's not like I am praying for a million dollars or something!!" He would just keep telling me that God doesn't work that way. Since

that time, about a year and a half, I have purposefully worked on my faith, I consecrated myself to Our Holy Mother, prayed the rosary nearly every day, and the Divine Mercy chaplet at 3 when I remember to. I attend Mass regularly as usual along side my husband and I am a bit smarter for it all.

---

This contribution is available at <http://acatholicumclimbingthepillars.blogspot.com/2017/06/my-own-road-to-emmaus.html>  
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |